

MEKONG EXPRESS MAIL



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It's a Jungle Out There: The Doug Vincent Story

Part 2: How I came to know the Lao Hmong, Jerry Daniels, and Mac Thompson

by Douglas Vincent

Part 1 of this article appeared in the September issue of the Mekong Express Mail, and describes how Doug came to join the Peace Corps and tells about his early experiences in Thailand.

In September 1979, I was hired by the International Rescue Committee to work for the US Embassy's Refugee Section known as the Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA). I first went to Ubon to interview Lao refugees. A couple of weeks later, we were all called back to a meeting in Bangkok. I was then sent to Ban Vinai in Loei province in early October. I immediately fell in love with the Hmong because they seemed so... independent, like they could care less about resettlement; they just wanted their country back. I had a fairly young Hmong interpreter by the name of Zia Thao. He said he had been a Special Guerilla Unit (SGU) lieutenant, but had taught English at either Dong Dok University or at the Chinamo Lao OCS in Viengchan. He gave me a basic Hmong book, and showed me how to pronounce the different sounds and words. I was able to increase my vocabulary in Hmong as I continued to work with them off and on for the next 10 years, and was eventually

able to conduct a full interview in Hmong before I was "riffed" in September 1990. I learned to speak, read, and write Lao because I worked with Lao refugees for several years as well. Also, the language is not so dissimilar to Thai, so

it was relatively easy for me to pick up.

Jerry Daniels had been a civilian "SKY" advisor to the Hmong, and was stationed at Long Cheng in Xieng Khuang province. Jerry was instrumental in getting the US government to accept the Hmong as refugees. He was in Ban Vinai doing EAO (ethnic affairs officer) interviews of people claiming to have been in the Lao military/Hmong SGU, but I didn't really get to know him until mid-November of '79, when I started staying at a Hmong friend of Jerry's (Moua Sue) house in camp. Jerry had been staying there for two or three years, but several JVA people stayed overnight (or "RON'ed, as Mac would say) there as well.

Jerry had a large photo collection that he would show a person to see if they actually knew the SKY advisers that they claimed they either knew or saw, the weapon they used, or the location that they claimed they were at. He showed me most of his photos, including one of a SKY adviser in MRIII or IV, a blonde guy with a moustache. Jerry said that he had been captured and tortured and "sang like a canary bird." (I've asked

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History of a Radar Site
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From the President

I want to thank the members of the TLCB for their vote of confidence in returning me for another term to serve you as President of this unique organization. As you see elsewhere in this edition of the MEM, we are still welcoming new members, despite the pandemic which forced us to cancel our 2020 reunion. Regarding the cancellation, a special thanks to John Harrington and the National Reunion Chair, Vice President Gerry Frazier, for all the work you did toward having it in Rhode Island. The location and agenda looked great. I've never been to Rhode Island and was looking forward to it.

As you can imagine, the 2021 reunion plans are still tenuous. With the uncertainty of the pandemic, we have no news to report at this time. Our members being in the vulnerable age group, safety is our foremost concern. Hopefully we will know more in time for the next MEM in March.

All of the current standing committee chairs, except one, have agreed to serve again. Les Thompson will continue his excellent stewardship of the Assistance Committee; John Harrington will continue as Communications Committee Chair, including oversight of our Facebook page, which is responsible for many of our new members, is being excellently administered by Ray Boas. John Duffin will continue as Chair of the Membership Committee.

Jerry Karnes has agreed to continue as our website administrator. He needs a volunteer, so anyone who would like to work with Jerry, please contact him or me. BTW, if you want to add something to the website, refer it to me.

We have an opening for the Chair of the Public Relations Committee. 'Willi Pete' Peterson, who has done such a great job in that role for many years, must regretfully step down.

He will remain as Chair of the Vietnam War Commemoration Committee. If you are interested in stepping up to the PR Committee chair, let me know ASAP.

Welcome to our new Treasurer, Thelma Tilton, to the Board of Directors. She will be taking over this vital job from Bill, whom she has appointed as our bookkeeper to minimize transition issues and maintain consistency in our finances. I believe I can speak for the rest of the Board, and the entire membership, when I say that Bill has done an outstanding job of managing our finances.

Finally, I want to congratulate Ray Boas and Roger Durant on re-election as Members-at-Large on the Board of Directors. Members-at-large are the first avenue for TLCB members to bring matters before the Board. Feel free to contact any of them. E-mails are in the Board of Director's tab on the website. I look forward to working with them and the other Board members during the upcoming year.

My door is always open, so to speak, to any member. My e-mail address is president@tlc-brotherhood.com. The buck stops here.

Gary Beatty, TLCB President

Dues Season Soon!

Brotherhood annual dues are payable in January. Check the enclosed dues card to see if you have already paid for 2021 or if you need to send in a payment now.

Dues are LATE after January 31st.

After March 31st unpaid dues are delinquent.

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Reunion 2021: Announcement soon!

The Radar Site at Phitsanulok, Thailand: A Brief History

by Paul Hauser, MEM Editor John Harrington, and Darl Stephenson

Introduction by John Harrington:

Phitsanulok was the site of Detachment 8 of the 621st Tactical Control Squadron (Dora control), based in Udorn. It was under the 505th Tactical Control Group, based at Tan Son Nhut, in Vietnam. It was established in 1966 and closed in 1971. Three TLCB members served there at different times in its short history, and two of them have returned there in recent years. Paul Hauser was part of the task force that set up the base in 1966. Paul is also the author of "Inherently Dangerous," a book about radar operations during the Vietnam War. I was there for a year, September 1967 to August 1968. Darl Stephenson was TDY to Phitsanulok for several months, from the fall of 1969 to early 1970. Darl and I have made trips back there, he in 2019 and I in 2012. Darl's write-up of his return, with some notes by me, will be included in the next issue of the MEM. This is a collaborative effort to detail the growth and termination of the detachment, as well as perspectives of Phitsanulok some 40 and 50 years later.

1966—The Set Up

by Paul Hauser

The Need For A Radar Site In Central Thailand

The following excerpts are from the 5th Tactical Control Group's semi-annual history and give a graphic representation of how our radar site, DORA, came about.

Between 1 December 1965 and 9 May 1966, the Tactical Control Group Siting Team, with permission from the Thai government and the Royal Thai Air Force, surveyed and started construction at the proposed DORA site. A TDY deployment package was formulated from within the original 608th Tactical Control Group located at Dau Area Training Site, Clark Air Base. On 20 April 1966, the 5th Tactical Control Group Radar Operations confirmed the names of squadron's personnel to be deployed with the package, and on 9 May 1966, the 13th Air Force published Operations Order 313-66 ordering the full deployment of Detachment 8, 621st Tactical Control Squadron to Phitsanulok, Thailand. The site was to remain in place until the MAP Site at Chiang Mai, Thailand, became operational. The Thai TPS-1D at Phitsanulok would be upgraded to an FPS-36 radar by PAC-GEEIA in the third quarter of FY '67.

**Declassified Project Document -
CHECO Southeast Asia Report**

DORA was, "To provide a rigorous program of training, to teach Thais the technique of operating a Tactical Air Control System not only to handle air defense functions, but to manage effectively the air war against the enemy on the ground."

Headquarters PACAF, 15 October 1968:

On the 23rd of June, 1966, our squadron members flew on C-130s from Clark AFB to a commercial airfield just outside of Phitsanulok, Thailand. Three weeks earlier Dwight Menard,

one of our squadron members, had been sent to Udorn to learn the Thailand Tactical Air Control Systems (TACS) and get checked out as an instructor controller. We were known as the Roadrunners, Detachment 8 of the 621st Squadron. The airfield was some ninety miles north of the Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base. The siting team had constructed DORA about

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The radar tower at Phitsanulok. Photo by Darl Stephenson.



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Top, the Hoa Far Hotel in downtown Phitsanulok. Above, Building the site. Below, Paul Hauser at work on the site water tower. Photos from Paul Hauser.

a mile or so from the airfield and our combat reporting post (CRP) was designated a part of the Bangkok sub-sector and would report to combat reporting center (CRC) DRESSY LADY at Green Hill, just north of Bangkok.

There remained a few tasks to finish before we became 100% operational. Some of us, me included, spent the first few weeks assisting with the construction of a water tower, elevated road, housing pads, perimeter security fencing, lighting, and the construction of two elevated guard posts on the back corners of the site. Elevated pads were absolutely necessary because during the monsoon season, we had somewhere around thirty-six inches of rain with which to contend. Our Site Commander, Major Stewart, authorized us to live off base until the base was fully operational, so I moved into the Hoa Far Hotel in downtown Phitsanulok. We contracted with local townspeople to clear dense underbrush on the backside of the base. This project was inexpensive, cleared a wide field behind our perimeter fencing, and put money into the local economy.

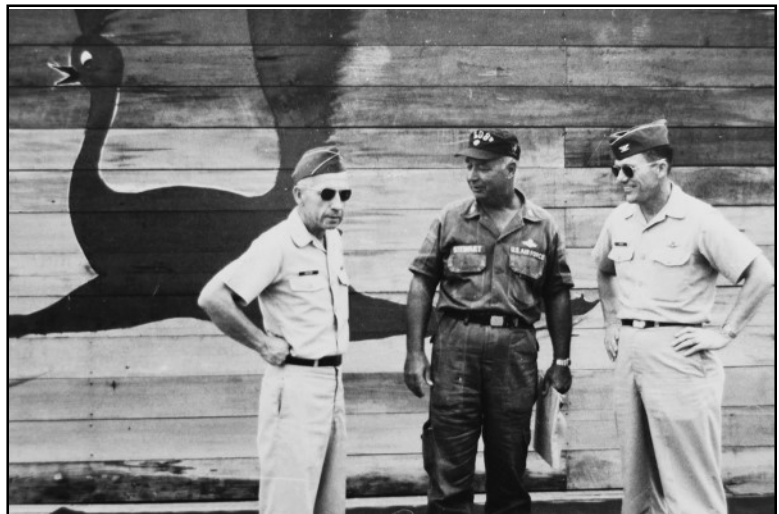
Security:

On the flight over, Major Stewart assigned me a secondary duty as our site security officer. I would have Staff Sergeant Olson, with military police experience, as my second in command, and a contingent of our airmen and Thai military guards to control the front gate and perimeter. I had a feeling then that this was going to be a showcase site for dignitaries and Thai military officials. As DORA radar was not associated with an active air base, we did not consider our site a high risk from enemy attack. We were, however, prepared for the slight possibility that enemy infiltration could blow up our radar/radio equipment. I was to learn much later that through 30 June 1972, enemy forces made five attacks on USAF resources located at three RTAF bases.

When time allowed, Sergeant Olson, Master Sergeant Lane, and I took our U.S. Air Force and Thai Air Force guards to a nearby shooting range. We set up targets and practiced with a variety of weapons at our disposal, and we practiced some hand-to-hand

DORA continues next page.

Below, Det. 8 Ccommander, Major Theodore Stewart, with two visiting site inspection colonels from the 505th TCG. Photo from Paul Hauser.





Above, the chow hall crew. Photo from Paul Hauser.

combat as well. It was a little unfair to pit a Thai Air Force guard, weighing 110 pounds, against Sergeant Olson or me, as we both weighed over 180 pounds; but they were all game.

I'm happy to say we never experienced a breach in security at the site. We did, however, have two incidents off base; an airman got into a serious bar fight with the husband of a barmaid, and a gang of Thai teenagers beat up a gay airman outside a movie theater.

Operations:

We became fully operational in July and did ground control intercepts (GCI) with F-102s out of Don Muang Airport. They were standing Air Defense Alert. There was another F-102 detachment at Udorn as well as at Danang and Saigon in Vietnam. Although those were Pacific Air Force (PACAF) aircraft, at varying times, the pilots were from the Air National Guard on temporary duty.

It was our mission to monitor northwestern Thailand for intruders, providing navigational assistance to all friendly aircraft and GCI for the F-105 aircraft out of the Takhli Royal Thai Air Base. On occasion, we were called upon



Above, welcome to Det. 8. Photo from John Beane.

to refuel the F-105 fighters at Green and Black Anchors north of our site. As time passed, we encountered a few inbound F-105 emergencies. Low fuel, battle damage, lost aircraft, and injured personnel were all causes for real concern. What really stuck in my gut was that somewhere along the way, some of my outbound aircraft had been shot down and I could only imagine how the pilots of the inbound aircraft felt about losing their friends.

At the scope, during one of three shifts, were Lieutenants Dwight Menard, Jim Farrish, Sammy Davenport, Bernard Talmadge Denton, Jim Cufley, Pete Stegenga, me, and Captain Ceil Charles. As we all became familiar with our surroundings and our equipment's capabilities, we helped to train our Thai counterparts, with guidance from Lieutenant Menard, in the aspects of air defense and the air war against the enemy on

the ground. Over the course of five months, I had the pleasure of explaining to Lieutenants Sawawut, Teerapat, Werawat, and Pattanapong the nuances of flight following the F-105s, Air America, and Thai military aircraft. They were a serious bunch of students, intent on learning the craft. One of the first permanent change of station (PCS) controllers to arrive on site was CWO Hal Pete. By the time I returned to Clark AFB at the end of October 1966, they were well on their way to becoming qualified weapons controllers.

I was sorry to leave Phitsanulok as the Thai people I met always gave me a smile; their foods were spicy and delicious. Thais loved their royal family and their peaceful religion of Buddhism and were open-minded people, very proud of their own unique culture and traditions.

1967 to 1968—Fully Operational

by John Harrington

I left Travis AFB in California on August 31, 1967, and arrived Phitsanulok five or six days later, after stops in Bangkok and Takhli RTAFB, the support base for Det 8 of the 621st TAC Squadron at Phitsanulok. Major Carl Sheets, commander of Det 8, was visiting Takhli, and I met him in the BOQ. With him, I took the train to Phitsanulok. The first night, I stayed at the Hoa Far Hotel, a pretty crude place, where most GIs stayed while waiting for other housing.

At that time in Phits, all the officers (about 10: the commander, one maintenance officer, and controllers) rented homes in town, referred to as bungalows, usually two or three to a house. I took the space of a controller who was rotating back to the U.S. I cannot at this time remember the names of the other lieutenants; however, by the end of October, I moved into another place, sharing it with Capt. John "JB" Steplen, whom I had hit it off with as soon as we met. JB was a Thai veteran, having served a TDY in Bangkok in late 1963 and a year at Nakhon Phanom, returning sometime in 1966. He had

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volunteered for the assignment to Phits and knew the operations officer, Russ Dugas, at a stateside base.

I was the first admin officer at Phits and still a 2nd Looie when I arrived. I was given most of the additional duties, which included things like the theater officer, the USO liaison officer, the BX officer, and a bunch of others I can't recall. Frankly, they didn't amount to much. In fact, neither did my admin responsibilities. My sergeant, SSgt Lonnie Hudson, had the work down pretty pat and most of what I did was sign 1098 forms, a core part of the USAF bureaucracy. What I ended up doing for the most part was being the site commander's assistant and keeping an eye on what was going on around the place. I became a "real" lieutenant on September 30, 1967.

Phitsanulok was a provincial capital, with a population of around 20,000. There was a USAID officer in town, who frequently came out to the site and used our safe for document storage. In addition, there was a JUSMAG unit in Phits as well, a Lt Colonel, two captains, and at least one Spec 4. Still, Major Sheets was regarded by the Thai establishment as the senior American in the area and was regularly invited to official functions, which he usually insisted that I attend with him. I think I enjoyed those events more than he did.

Oh yes, another of my extra duties was the athletic officer. We had an outdoor basketball court on site, and on several occasions we were invited to play against local teams. I was the coach, and had played high school basketball. We were considerably larger than most of the Thai players, but they were generally in better shape than we were and were good ball handlers. I think altogether we had about five games and lost two of them. One of our players, an African-American, was about 6'5" and a tremendous leaper. The Thais asked him to play on their town team, and we gave permission.

Det 8 was regarded a showcase site with the 621st, but also within the 505th Tac Control Group, located at Tan San Nhut in Vietnam. The 621st had, I believe, six units in Thailand and there were two other squadrons out of the 505th in Vietnam, the 619th and the 620th. As the showcase, it was not unusual for us to see a good number of visitors. I remember that the 621st commander, Lt Col Sestokas, decided to come to Phits for Thanksgiving, which didn't exactly thrill Maj Sheets. While we did have a pretty nice Thanksgiving dinner in the chow hall, the Colonel also wanted to do something in town, so I was told to set up something special. Working with the site interpreter, Praphat "Pat" Kraisormslip, we put on quite a feast, with plenty of Singhas and Mekong, the Thai whiskey, which was probably aged about a week. All of the officers not on duty and several of the senior NCOs attended.

Oh, did I mention that the 1st Sergeant was MSgt



Above, Phitsanulok Operations Building.
Photo from John Harrington.

Edward Johnson? He and I eventually became pretty friendly and we kept in touch for a few years. The last time I heard from him, he had made Chief.

Commander Change:

Shortly after the Tet Offensive in Vietnam at the end of January, we came under a new commander, Major Robert Lichvar, who was relatively young, 34, if I remember right. He was considerably more outgoing and very pleased to have his first command assignment. Toward the end of February, the

DORA continues next page.



Above, John Harrington and Wanida (Linda), who sold wood carvings on the site. Photo from John Harrington.

621st, our parent group at Udorn announced there would be a site commanders' conference in Chiang Mai. I was ordered to go there, and along with the squadron's admin officer, set up the arrangements for the conference. I guess they wanted to see if I could do anything besides sign 1098s and check in on the special duties I had been assigned, which frankly were not too demanding. Site commanders of the six detachments of the 621st were to attend the conference as well as several of the 621st staff members and the commander of the 505th Tac Con Group, Colonel Delbert Smyth from Tan San Nhut. I also got to attend the conference. Not bad duty: two TDYs to Chiang Mai.

The whole event went well, except for one thing. I had neglected to teach the bartender, who was to serve our two evening receptions, how to make a proper dry martini. For the first one, he poured half a glass of vermouth. He learned quickly.



Phitsanulok town center. Photo from John Harrington



The basketball court and the Thai- American Lounge over the theater. Photo from John Harrington.

On the last morning, Col Smyth gave a top-secret briefing for the site commanders and the 621st commander. Following that, Maj Lichvar and I caught a C-7 Caribou down to Phitsanulok. Sometime in flight, the Major said to me, "John, we're going to win the war. Col Smyth told us that just before he left Tan San Nhut, he was at a meeting where "Westy" (General William Westmoreland, commander of all SEA troops) let us know that he was on his way to Washington, where he would get approval for an additional 200,000 troops, and we'd soon be bombing everything in sight, day and night. That means we'll be busier than ever. When we get back to the site, gather all the officers together for a briefing."

For most of February, when the controllers weren't taking on their normal schedule, they were increasing their training routines. On the morning of April Fool's Day (it was the evening of March 31 in Washington), I sat with Maj Lichvar, Sgt Johnson, and a few others, listening to a major talk from President Johnson. We were certain that he would announce

the increased offensive to the nation. Instead, the president said that he was pausing the bombing of the North in an effort to negotiate peace in Vietnam, and he further proclaimed that he would not run for another term as president in November.

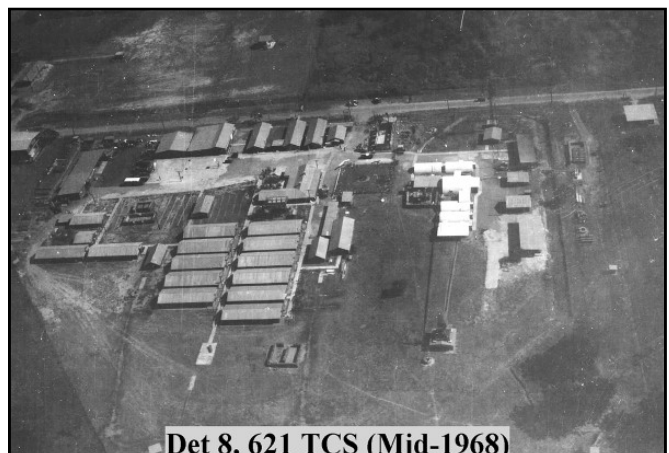
So, instead of being busier than ever, Det 8 had its workload practically eliminated. With not so much to do, Maj Lichvar turned to making some site improvements. We built a new dispensary, air conditioned no less, and we also air conditioned the Thai-American Lounge.

Not being a controller, the workload didn't change all that much for me, although the major did involve me more in some of his work, like drafting his monthly report to headquarters and traveling more frequently to Takhli to improve our supply lines. I guess I had demonstrated by my work on the Chiang Mai conference that I could be trusted with more significant projects.

Other Things:

Two of our group died during the year I was there. I'm a little foggy on the exact time frame, but I think the first was in late February or early March. TSgt George Knotts came

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Above, aerial view of Det. 8 in the Spring of 1968. Photo from John Harrington..

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Above, John Harrington in front of the site orderly room. Photo from Harrington.

down with spinal meningitis and passed away in a matter of days. I was away at an admin conference in Bangkok and by the time I returned, he had been air evacuated to Bangkok, where he died. The site was put on mini-lockdown, except for those of us who lived in town, which made it seem a little futile. A doctor from Takhli was sent up and spent three or four days there examining anyone with even remote signs. I was struck by the doctor's reluctance to confirm that Knotts had died from meningitis, but in the end that's what was on the death certificate. Major Lichvar named a small garden area, which featured a Thai spirit house, Knotts Gardens. Years later, whenever I heard anything about Knotts Berry Farm, the amusement park, I thought of Sgt Knotts.

A few months later, a SSgt Watson (can't recall his first name) died in a motorcycle accident, and Major Lichvar named the theater Watson Hall. I was in Thailand at the time of the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy.

Our group commander changed, maybe early or mid-July, and the new leader, Colonel Palaez, went around visiting several of the sites and, of course, he had to come to Phits, which was still regarded as a showcase unit. Unfortunately, the colonel was something of a by-the-book type and he was shocked when he found out that the officers were living in town, which he saw as a security risk. He ordered that we build additional hooches, which understandably damaged morale, since living in town

Mekong Express Mail Index

For an on-line index to all *MEM* articles ever published, starting with our first issue in June of 2000, go to our wonderful TLCB Website: www.TLC-Brotherhood.com. All articles are listed by issue year and month, by title, with the authors' names and short descriptions of the subject matter. Go take a look sometime!

<http://tlc-brotherhood.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/MEM-Master-Index-031317.pdf>

and really being able to get away was considered a great privilege. Fortunately for me, by the time I rotated back to the U.S., the hooches were not yet ready. There may have been some dawdling going on. The change was unpopular with everyone. Even Major Lichvar was planning on maintaining his in-town bungalow, as were several others, even though it meant the loss of housing allowance, which was higher than the cost of any bungalow.

Next Assignment:

In February, I had received my next assignment. I was going to Davis-Monthan AFB in Tucson, Arizona, after retraining as a Titan Missile Control Officer at Shepherd AFB in Wichita Falls, Texas. I had no issue with Tucson, but the assignment extended my Air Force commitment since I had not applied for an earlier date of separation (DOS). I raised something of a stink about it. Well, at least within my limited circles, but of course to no avail. Actually, it turned out to be a good assignment. I

loved Tucson and my wife and I have wintered there six times in the past 10 years. The assignment also gave me the opportunity to take graduate courses in Oriental Studies at the University of Arizona, learning much that would have been nice to know before I went to Thailand.

About two months before rotating from Phits, the site received a new unit manning document (UMD) and when I paged through, I found that the position of the admin officer had

DORA continues next page.

Below, going away party: John Harrington with Malee, who ran the chow hall girls (she was also in Paul Hauser's photo of them). Photo from John Harrington.



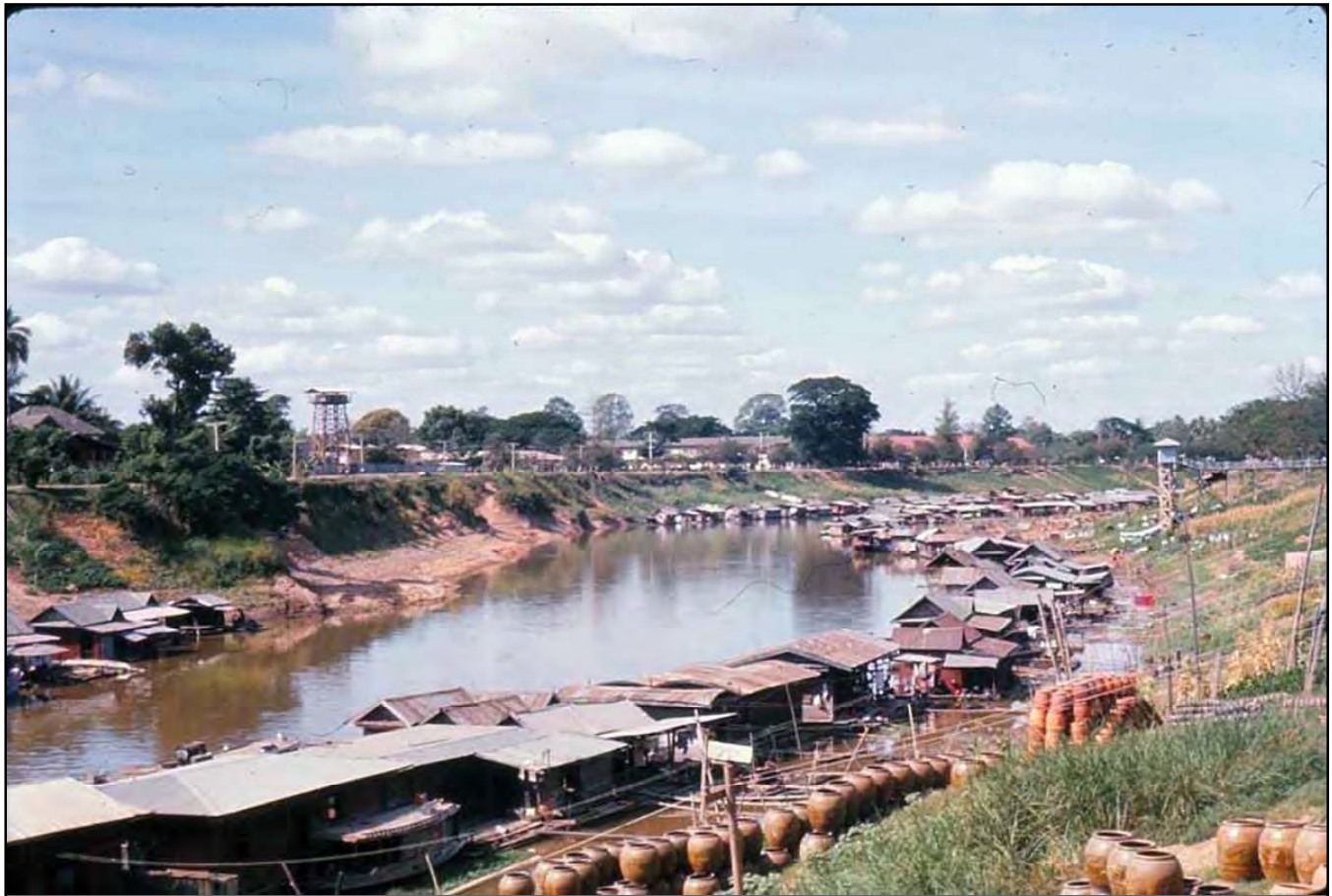
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If so, please let us know so that we can update the official database and ensure that *MEM* issues and official mail get addressed properly. You can send an email to BillTilton@gmail.com, or a note in the mail to TLC Brotherhood, PO Box 60, Aspers, PA 17304.

Below, J.B. Steplen, John Harrington, Papai and her husband (Papai was also in one of Hauser's photos). Photo from John Harrington..



Below, The Nan River, which runs through Phitsanulok, in late 1969.
Photo from Darl Stephenson.



been eliminated. Major Lichvar looked up from his desk when I told him, and said, "Well, John, it looks like you were one of a kind." I like to think that I immediately replied, "Aren't we all." Of course, Somerset Maugham once said that he became a novelist because he always thought of what he should have said a few days later. Maybe that's what really happened.

JB Steplen was going home a few weeks after I was: he was separating, and we decided to throw ourselves a going away party for the Thais on the base. That included all of the chow hall girls; several of the lounge employees; locals who sold jewelry on the site; Linda (Thai name Wanida), who sold wood carvings; the librarian, a young man who had been an American Field Studies Student (AFS) in Syracuse, New York, and Singh, who was the manager of the Lounge. (Darl Stephenson remembers Singh as the site interpreter and I have a vague memory of plans to take over that role sometime after I left).

We held the dinner at a local restaurant and followed it up by taking the whole gang to Saluby's, a local nightclub. The food was great, but we also provided for ample supply of Mekong and Singha. Most of our guests were not used to those heady brews, at least not in such quantities, and it turned out to be a pretty raucous event. I danced with most of the chow hall girls, American-style, and made attempts at more elegant Thai dancing. The next morning, it was generally noted that the service in the mess hall was decidedly slow. A night to remember.

DORA continues on page 10.



Above, Darl Stephenson with hooch girls, Somnow and Nepa. Photo from Stephenson.

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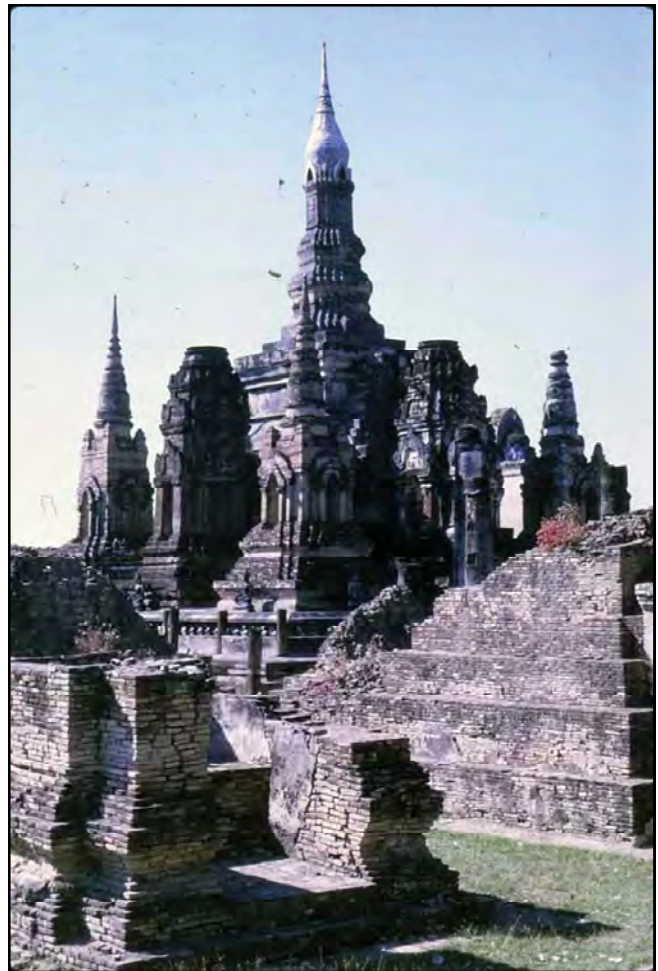
I left Bangkok around August 25th, I think, and arrived at my parents' home in Connecticut in time to witness the notorious Democratic Convention in Chicago. A shocking "Welcome Home."

1969 - 1970: Nearing the End

by Darl Stephenson

I arrived at Phitsanulok in the fall of 1969. As a young butter bar I was not privy to the fact that the USAF presence at the site was in its last months. I got checked out on our primary mission of refueling F-105s from Takhli in the Green Anchor refueling tanker orbit area. My primary instructor was Lt. Vince Andriello, a good controller and the source of much hilarity off duty with his crazy antics.

East of Phitsanulok, the water falls and river was a favorite playground.
Photo from Darl Stephenson.



Sukhothai, above. First capital, around 1200 AD, of Thailand, west of Phitsanulok.
Photo from Darl Stephenson.

Operations:

During my time, I do not remember us running a TAC scope for flight following. The workload was fairly light, with a couple of morning refuelings and the same in the afternoon. We kept a small night crew, but as far as I can remember, we had little activity. On-site entertainment included the "bubble checks" we called in, mostly F105s from Takhli, but occasionally other aircraft like F-4s.

Phitsanulok airport was a stopover also for Air America flights going up into Laos. We never controlled them to my knowledge, and the pilots were pretty closed-mouthed about their business if you talked to them in the club at night. Another highlight for the controllers was an orientation visit to U'Tapao which would include a flight on a KC-135 tanker to observe our most important mission from the aircrew perspective. Of course, an overnight stop in Bangkok was just an added attraction.

DORA continues next page.



At left, Going out the gate of Det. 8. Harrington photo.

Below, A photo of the formal turnover ceremony, which took place in late 1970, was taken and provided by John Beane, a friend of Darl Stephenson..

Shortly after being checked out, I got sent to Ubon to augment that much busier site. My first TDY was mainly to get checked out. I returned to Phitsanulok and a while later, had a longer TDY to Ubon. It was upon my return that I found out that the mission at Phitsanulok was ending and our personnel, who had enough time left, would be sent to other sites to complete their tours. After all my TDY time at Lion Control at Ubon, I was “PCS”ed there.

Although duty-related, we also had the chance to become much more familiar with our small arms because of a possible threat from Thai Communist forces, which were supposed to be in the nearby mountains. We got additional training on the M-16 and heavier weapons such as the 30-caliber machine gun.

Entertainment:

Feeding time for “Dora,” the Burmese Python, the camp’s mascot, was also an occasion for “entertainment.” We had regular shows at the combined club at the site, including one USO show with a trio of really beautiful Las Vegas showgirls.

Because of the light workload, we had a good deal of time to enjoy the sights of Phitsanulok, but also some of the attractions of the region. Phitsanulok had some fairs that were held occasionally, providing some entertainment. We would go on day trips to the first Thai capital at Sukhothai to see the magnificent ruins there. Another way to have some fun was to go swimming in the nice fresh, cool water of the nearby mountains.



Other opportunities Det 8 airmen had for recreation were trips to Chiang Mai. This was easy for the Phits troops to make by catching a hop on the Teakwood Airlines (TWA), the C-47 supply flight that ran from Takhli, stopped at Phitsanulok, and then went on to Chiang Mai. It ran about three times a week. Besides the sights in the ancient city itself, you could take tours to the hill people village, elephant preserves, and perhaps tours to the Thai National Parks in the mountains around Chiang Mai.” I think that pretty much picks my brain clean without going into the XXX rated stuff of life at Det 8.

Postscript:

The radar site at Phitsanulok was turned over to the Royal Thai Air Force sometime in 1971. A photo of the turnover was taken and provided by John Beane, a friend of Darl Stephenson.



JUNGLE *continued from page 1.*



Jerry Daniels in Laos, carrying a field radio.
Photos provided by the author.



Above: Karen hilltribe structures.

happened. So, I went and spent a few days interviewing the Hmong camp leaders, section chiefs, clan leaders, and a few of the people who had been no-shows about why there was such a big no-show rate. After I returned to Bangkok, I took a couple of days to write up a report based on my notes, and I gave it to Jerry. A few days later, he asked me to go with him to see the ambassador, who asked me several questions about their attitude toward resettlement. He then told me that the report was very well written and that he would use it in cables to DOS/Refugee Section. I think this event made Jerry think that I was a “good head,” in Jerry-speak.

We got to be good friends. We worked together in several hill tribe refugee camps and in the Bangkok office. We also went out “on the town” at times. I went with him to the Napoleon bar on Patpong, where he introduced me to several of his friends, most of whom he knew from Laos. I can’t remember any of their names or faces, however.

I was working in Aranyaprathet when I learned of his death from a Thai language newspaper “Thai Rath,” which had a short article about a US Embassy employee who was found

JUNGLE *continues next page.*

Doug Vincent at the grave of Jerry Daniels.

multiple people if they knew who that was, but nobody knew of any SKY adviser who had been captured.)

Between October to the end of December 1979, JVA worked 10 – 12 hours/day, nearly 7 days a week, and interviewed over 3,000 people. The Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) officers worked the same schedule, and approved just over 3,000 people; however, in January 1980, when the buses went to pick them up to take them to Bangkok so they could be moved on to the US, only about 30 showed up. The rest were no-shows.

In February 1980, Jerry, with the concurrence of the Director of JVA at the time, asked me to go to Vinai to interview the Hmong camp leaders about what had





This says: "Huay Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary, Uthai Thani and Tak Provinces, Wildlife Division, Forestry Department"

dead in his apartment, and it gave his name. I couldn't believe it at first, but then someone from the Bangkok office called and confirmed it. He also relayed that the director told him to tell me that if I went into Bangkok for Jerry's funeral, I would be "rified." I was angry and was going to go in spite of the threat, but decided not to. Instead, I decided to work another year, save money, and then go back to the US and go to graduate school. But in July 1982 this plan was waylaid because I met my wife,

Below, at Khao Hin Daeng, the wildlife sanctuary headquarters.



Above: Karen hilltribespeople.

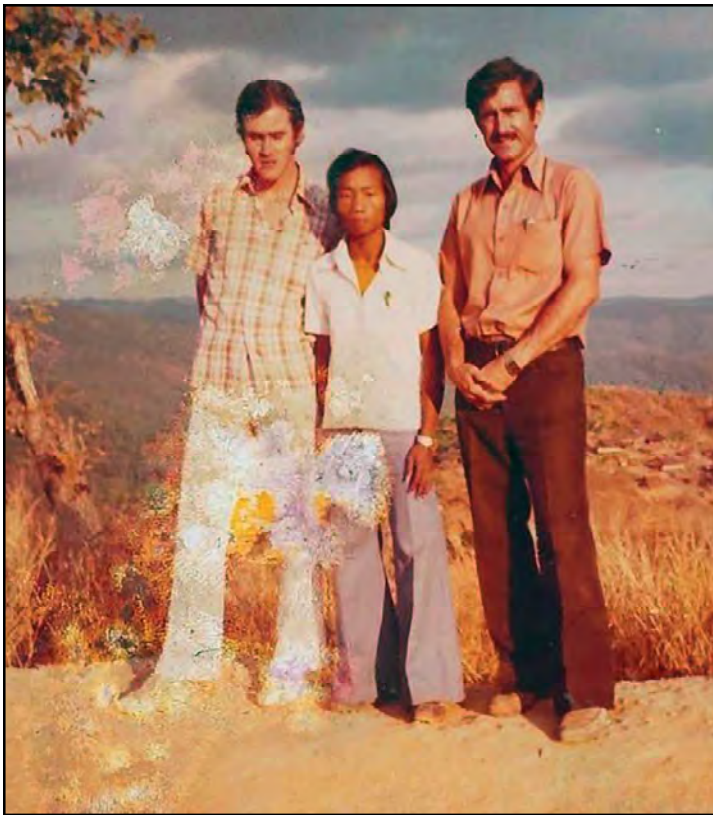
who was an elementary school teacher at a school near Loeng Nok Tha, Yasothon Province. We've now been married for 37 years, and have one daughter, who was born in Bangkok.

My wife and I went to Missoula in 1985 while I was on home leave. We visited Jerry's grave and went to see his mother,

Louise. We talked for quite a long time about him and she showed me several pictures of him taken with her when she went to visit him in Long Cheng. She gave me a photo of him when he was in the field. He has the Jerry "s***-eating" grin on his face as he is holding a field radio (PRC-25?).

I met Mac Thompson sometime in 1980 when he was working for DOS at the Embassy's Refugee Section. Mac had been in the US Army in Korat. When he was discharged, he joined the International Voluntary Service (IVS, similar to the Peace Corps) in Laos. He did this for a couple of years, then was offered a job with USAID helping Hmong refugees in Xieng Khuang province. He did this until April 1975,

JUNGLE continues on page 14.



Doug Vincent, Cher Yia Thao (Hmong interpreter), and Jerry Daniels.

JUNGLE *continued from page 13.*

then left Laos for Thailand just before the communist Pathet Lao (PL) forces took control of government. He was also instrumental in getting the US government to accept the Hmong as refugees.

Jerry introduced us, telling Mac that I, again, was a “good

head.” Mac once invited me to go skydiving with him in Lopburi, but I couldn’t go because I had to go upcountry. When I got back, Mac was wearing a back brace because he landed wrong and twisted his back. After I went back to the States in 1991, I would visit Thailand every couple of years and would join him in drinking beer at the Lone Starr Bar off of Sukhumvit Road.

In 2015 or 2016, Mac invited me to join the TLCB, saying that I would be a good candidate. I went with Mac to Laos in February 2018, about three months before he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He is missed by me as much as Jerry is; he was a “good head.”

We did go back to the States in 1991, and I went to graduate school at Ohio University in Athens, graduating with an MA in Southeast Asia Area Studies in June 1993. Shortly after graduating, I got a job offer to work as an asylum officer with the (former) INS. I did this for six years (1993 – 1999), then returned to Bangkok to work as an overseas immigration officer for six years (1999 – 2005). Upon return to the States in 2005, I became an intelligence research specialist with the Department of Homeland Security, working on national security and immigration fraud issues. I did this until the end of 2017, when I retired.

I plan on retiring in Thailand in my wife’s village. Since I retired, I unfortunately have had to deal with some health issues. I came to Thailand in December 2019, where I am currently living because I have been unable to return to the US due to the coronavirus, which is (?). But before my health issues, I loved to play golf, especially in Thailand, where you can hire a pretty female caddy for \$10 or so and play on a world class golf course for under \$50.



Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood



The 10 members listed below joined between the last issue of the MEM and the 15th of November. You can find more information on our website database. The Mekong Express Mail wishes you all a sincere “Welcome Home.”

No.	Branch	Last Name	First Name	City	State
1945	USAF	Repar	Robert Jr.	Folsom	CA
1946	USAF	Seitter	Randolph	Southampton	PA
1947	USAF	Bramswig	Robert	Travelers Rest	SC
1948	USAF	Riebel	Scott	Colorado Springs	CO
1949	USN	Egge	Dennis	Honolulu	HI
1950	USAF	Shane	Ronald	Tacoma	WA
1951	USAF	Kemp	Charlie	Johnson City	IL
1952	USAF	Burkavich	Gary	Owens Crossroads	AL
1953	USAF	Chrzan	Calen	Ft Worth	TX
1954	USAF	Chesley	Thomas	Ellijay	GA


DAR Veteran's Day Recognition

by Bill Tilton

The Gettysburg Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution recently invited me, as outgoing TLCB treasurer, to give a presentation on the Brotherhood for their Veteran's Day recognition on November 13th. My presentation covered the geographical and historical context of Southeast Asia, the Brotherhood and our four main purposes, and then focused on our charitable activities in Thailand and Laos. I had a few posters covering the main points, plus a hand-drawn map of Southeast Asia showing the countries, the main bases in Thailand, and the Ho Chi Minh Trail supply route. My 8" by 10" photos showed some of the projects we accomplished as well as the young children in their regional dress. The small,

COVID-correct crowd included six other veterans in attendance with a few more watching from home via the Internet.

The challenging presentation space was in a restaurant room that had once been several upstairs bedrooms in a very old house, called The Dobbin House. Those who have been to Gettysburg may be familiar with this place because it is in the oldest building in the town and is within walking distance of the cemetery that Abraham Lincoln dedicated in November of 1863 with his Gettysburg Address.

Several attending veterans came up afterward to mention their connections to the Vietnam War and we are hoping perhaps a few of them may join (always on the lookout and handing out our business cards)! 



Besides a free lunch for me and my wife, Thelma, the DAR presented me with a U.S. flag, shown above, that had been flown over the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), on June 10th, during its record-long deployment this past Winter, Spring, and Summer (161 days with no port calls, to avoid Covid-19 infection).



Above, Chapter Regent Edythe Sarnoff, and other chapter members, get a brief 50-year-old history lesson in an historic Gettysburg restaurant room.

Below, Other veterans who were physically present, held certificates from the DAR expressing special tribute for our service. Photos by Thelma Tilton.



Official Notice:

Results of the 2020 election to the Board of Directors

For President: Gary Beatty (final term)

For Treasurer: Thelma Tilton (first term)

For Board Member: Ray Boas (second term)

For Board Member: Roger Durant (second term)

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**The Official Thailand-Laos-Cambodia
Brotherhood page**

A Covid Brightspot in Pennsylvania

Boy Scouts Rescue Rosie's Raffle Drawing

By Thelma Tilton

It was the evening of the drawing for the TLCB quilt, a sad time for us because Rosie, our beloved quiltmaker/donor, is no longer with us. There was no reunion to meet with friends, make new ones with whom to share memories and current happenings — no appropriate place to draw winners.

A bright spot? What possibly could qualify for that description with Covid lurking? There had to be a new approach to the drawing.

An idea: We asked great nephew Boy Scout Scoutmaster, Bill Walmer, if his Gardners Troop 75 would do the honor. He immediately accepted and went to work making the event memorable for the Troop, the TLCB members reading this, Bill, and me. We had been to the out-of-the-way “Big Hill Scout Lodge” before, so we knew how the many meeting years, awards won, and donated furniture contributed to its great space and rugged charm.



Andrew, Austin, Nate, Bill Walmer, Drew, Charlie, Giuliano, and Bill Tilton kneeling. Photos from Bill and Thelma Tilton..



Above, rock-paper-scissors to decide who gets to draw. Below, the first winner is drawn.

When we arrived, the door was open and the Scouts, aged 11 through 15, were in “spit and polish” uniforms, smiles on their faces. A very bright and lively spot! It was touching to realize how the leaders and scouts had taken the project so seriously. We had asked if they had an appropriate container for a ticket drawing, and former Scoutmaster, Gary Thomas, toted several appropriate containers of different sizes. He brought among others, a WWII helmet from the movie, “Saving Private Ryan,” a 30mm machine gun ammunition case, and an empty wooden WWII era “Dried Peaches” crate that a soldier had used to send something to a girlfriend, address still intact, highlights from that era and a history lesson for the boys!

Covid be damned!

Since the door was kept open, with air flowing, we could not resist having the drawing inside, with troop excitement and memorabilia from as long ago as the early 1950s. Prior to their meeting, Scoutmaster Walmer had told the boys about our group, and Bill Tilton expounded with an off-the-cuff history about the TLCB and its assistance works in SEA.

Rock paper scissors: Scouts Andrew Helm and great, great nephew, Charlie Walmer, won the contest and drew the winners' names from the chosen wooden crate.

Quilt Winners:

Richard Headley and Thomas Paski were the delighted winners. Les Thompson, TLCB Assistance Committee Chairman phoned them with the news, certainly a bright spot in their day.

A Not-So-Bright Point:

Only 12% of the membership participated in this year's Rosie's Raffle. The money collected was only \$2130, which totally goes to the TLCB Assistance for SEA. In 2006, the amount was over \$3200. WE NEED TO DO BETTER IN 2021.



At left, the second ticket is drawn. At right, Scoutmaster Walmer burns the undrawn tickets. The wonderful stove was made from a section of the original World War II “Big Inch” natural gas and oil pipeline from Texas to New Jersey, built to avoid enemy submarines that were sinking tankers off our coast. This pipeline, now 36 inches, passes through the area about five miles from here..

