

MEKONG EXPRESS MAIL



The newsletter of the thailand-laos-cambodia brotherhood, inc. Volume 17, issue 4

WWW.TLC-Brotherhood.com

Assistance Program Achievements Featured at the 2016 Reunion

Certainly a highlight of the September TLCB Reunion in Arlington, Virginia was the recap of the Assistance Program projects in Laos, presented by Art Crisfield, who recently returned to the U.S. after spending many years living in Laos and Thailand.

In Ban Vieng Xay, work on a school had stalled and a request was made to the TLCB. By last spring the work was completed at a cost of only \$3,520.

The following photos from Art Crisfield's delivery visually document the most recent progress in Ban Vieng Xay, Ban Nong, Xaysomboun, and Khone Sana.



Unfinished work falling into disrepair being swallowed by the jungle in Ban Vieng Xay. Another group was unable to complete the work and TLCB was asked to take over. Below, the TLCB/Lao team accomplished the project using local volunteer labor and less than \$4000 of Assistance funds. Photos provided by Art Crisfield.

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Editor's Note: The Future of TLCB

It is with some reluctance that I occasionally admit to myself that, 30 or 40 years from now I may not be quite as productive as I am at the present. It is a sentiment that I suspect more than a few of my fellow TLCB members share, most of whom are like me, somewhere in their late 60s to their late 70s. Well, to be a little more forthcoming, as I turn 75, it's probably more like three or four years from now.

This is surely what our new president, Gary Beatty, was referring to when, on the TLCB Forum, he recently wrote:

We all know that for the TLCB to outlive those of us who are veterans of the conflict in Southeast Asia we must begin the process of planning for the future without us. I believe the best way to do so is to begin the transition from a veteran's organization doing charity work, to a charity that was founded by veterans. This is not to forget our function as an organization for those of us who could not feel welcome in other groups of Vietnam veterans—but it does mean we need to pursue non-veteran members, which leads to my second goal. I believe that our children and grandchildren are potential new members who can perpetuate our legacy—and continue our charity work. I will create a working group to assist the Membership Committee in reaching out to our membership family members to invite them to join.

Subsequently, Gary asked me to chair that ad hoc working group, and in response to Gary's request, I wrote on the Forum:

I accepted Gary's invitation to chair this committee because I think the TLCB is doing wonderful work, particularly with the Assistance Program, and I want to see it continue well into the future. I will be asking several members, probably a working group of four or five, to be part of the committee; however, I assure you

that everyone's input is welcome and will be considered. I start with the idea that the current members should be encouraging friends and family members, particularly children, to become members. Next we look into Gary's initiative to make the TLCB a charity founded by veterans. Anyone seeking to contact me can do so on the Forum, or can contact me directly at my email address, JHarrington@nscopy.com.

Gary's first idea, the transition to a charity founded by veterans, is an ambitious goal, one that will require substantial restructuring of our organization. Yet, it is also an admirable and achievable one, which could also expand the scope of our assistance work in Thailand and Laos. His second idea, bringing friends and family members into the TLCB, could well be a stepping stone toward the broader goal of transitioning to a charitable foundation. Keep in mind that one of the oldest military veteran-related organizations in the United States is the Daughters of the American Revolution, the DAR. It does not seem inconceivable that the Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood someday could be known as the Thailand Laos Cambodia Family, or the TLCF.

As I said above, I will be contacting some of you to work with me on the Ad Hoc Future of TLCB Committee, but I also welcome all comments and suggestions.

* * *

Postscript: The King of Thailand. I would be remiss if I did not note the October passing of the King of Thailand, Bhumibol Adulyadej. All of us who spent time in Thailand were impressed by the reverence the Thai people had for their long-serving king and for the great concern and compassion he demonstrated for his people. We all sincerely hope his great example will serve the nation long into the future.

John Harrington, MEM Editor

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2015-2016, showing year of term end

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Reunion 2017: Dayton, Ohio

Why I Joined the TLC Brotherhood

By Randall E. Jenness, Army Airborne Ranger

A few years ago, my good friend, Glen Lowe, who shares a place with me in a therapy group at the Togus Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) in Augusta, Maine, suggested that I might want to join “this Brotherhood.” I asked him what the group’s purpose was, and he explained that it raised money for children in the back country of Southeast Asia. *YOU HAD ME AT CHILDREN!*

I needed some feeling of satisfaction and of paying back. I had been searching for a way to do so for over 45 years. During these years, the amount of guilt, shame, and anger that I had harbored was pressing a big toll on me. I buried myself in the bottle and my work. I was angry at myself and everyone, all the time.

Ever since my first day back from my service in Vietnam, when my mother, knowing I was an Airborne Ranger in country and with a vague idea of what I did, said, “What do I tell people? You’re home; you killed innocent women and children. You are such a monster!” I had just turned 19 upon coming “home.” In my home town, wherever I went, my mother had already been there.

I served proudly for another ten years in the Army, and was proud to be an Airborne Ranger and superb infantry man. I operated behind the Laos and Cambodian lines. We were dropped in about a click behind enemy lines and had a mission to accomplish. There are not many in my unit who returned, but I am proud of what we accomplished.

I guess that’s my connection to some of you. I became very close to a lot of Asians, but I didn’t know how to pay them back. Perhaps I am selfish; I didn’t know how to act. I wanted to feel better about myself, so I started donating to DAV, Vietnam Combat Veterans, and the American Legion. That was OK, but I didn’t feel fulfilled.

Since joining the TLCB, I feel better about myself and I haven’t been as angry. It feels good to

make a little difference in the schools and villages in which we donate. It gives me such relief. I hope down the road, I will be able to become a better member of society and a welcome addition to the TLCB. Thank you for letting me join and accepting me with open arms. It’s a great organization!

I hope I can become a good member of the TLCB...even though I am Army!

Randy with Nora, his sweet granddaughter. Photo furnished by Randy Jenness.



NEW PRODUCT: The Shirt of many colors and sizes

The 2016 reunion shirts were so admired and well received this year that we have decided to offer the same shirt type with a different look and choice of embroidered logos. Besides the great look, they launder beautifully. Anyone will be proud to wear these shirts.

Choose either the traditional, official, and colorful logo or the crest that has a 1.5 inch, complementary, one-color wreath encircling “TLCB.” This alternate “logo” looks more like a shirt crest, so you can wear the shirt handsomely, with a tie or without.

Making wonderful gifts for you, your children, and grandchildren, they are available in many colors on the web Exchange. This is a great way to patronize the Exchange, whose profits go to the TLCB Assistance fund, while wearing a good looking shirt, procurable in your size... even tall.

Rather than stock these items, we plan to take shirt

orders each month, have your chosen logo/crest embroidered, and then send them out all at once. This whole process should take between five and six weeks from the first order.



At left, the new “crest” logo. The new shirts come in both long and short sleeve, and a variety of colors. Purchase at The Exchange on the TLCB Website.



New Member Profile

Patrick Minoughan

Interview with a new TLCB member—our only one in the Czech Republic (so far).

It's Not a Short Story

MEM: How do you pronounce your name? Particularly the 'GH'?

You won't believe this but it is pronounced "Min-a-han," nothing like it looks. And here's the rest of the story.....My great grandfather was named Minoughan, my great grandmother was Boland. On all their children's birth (baptism) records, the parents' names are correct: Minoughan and Boland. They had 10 children (not much to do in Belmullet, Ireland, County Mayo in the mid 18th Century, I guess), all of whom had a different last name. Meeghan, Minaghan, Monahan, Minoughan, Mouahan, and the list goes on, ten different last names. When in Belmullet, Ireland, years ago I asked the parish priest how that could have happened and his answer was quite simple. Back then the child was born at home and after the baptism was ar-

ranged they would take the child to the church for services, baptism. After which everyone would return to the home and have a baptismal party. The priest would show up later and drink with the rest of the family. When the priest was ready to leave, they would fill out the paperwork (the baptismal book) and they were usually too drunk to spell the kid's last name correctly. True or false I cannot tell you, but since the priest in this Irish town told me this I have to believe it's true. He also told me as I was leaving the rectory that there is an excellent chance that if my last name started with an "M," I'm related to all the other "M"s in Belmullet.

By the way, because my grandfather was born in Ireland I was able to claim my Irish citizenship through a very time consuming process. I am able to stay in the Czech Republic because I am an Irish citizen, hold an Irish passport, and therefore am an EU (European Union) citizen. As an American, the Czech Republic said I had to leave after a while. So I have dual citizenship, use my Irish passport to travel the world, but am required to use my U.S. Passport to enter and leave the States.

MEM: How did you come to be assigned to Thailand?

I wish it was a simple answer like I volunteered and off I went, but it didn't work that way for me. I was at Edwards AFB in California. I did volunteer several times and they kept

saying no. Then one day, out of the blue, I get orders to the 1121st Special Activities Squadron (SAS) at Ft Myer, Virginia. Nothing more, just wear civilian clothes, do not bring any

uniforms, report there, no other information. So this sounds exciting to me. You have to remember I am 25 years old and not wrapped too tight in the head as far as excitement goes. I'm ready to go do whatever it is. That's me; let's do it.

I fly on an Easter Sunday from Los Angeles to Washington, DC. I finally get to Ft Myer and the taxi driver is driving by all these different Unit HQs, 1118th SAS, 1119th SAS, 1120th SAS, 1122nd SAS, I tell the driver to stop, back up. I looked again and there was no 1121st SAS. I checked my orders and told the driver to please wait.

I get out, go inside, and the Sergeant on the desk said, "Can I help you?" I explained everything to

him and he said, "No problem, get your stuff and sign in here." I got all squared away and he showed me to my room. Once in my room, he explained that I should be out front by 8:00 AM. There will be several others out front waiting also. A black limo will pull up, the driver will get out and explain everything.

Morning comes around, 5 or 6 of us are out front waiting, nobody is talking, and here comes the unmarked limo. The driver gets out, says "give me your names," we do, and he says, "Get in. I am taking you to the Mezzanine Building." We all get in quietly, nobody is talking yet.

We get to the Mezzanine Building, which was right on the



Patrick recently, with both U.S. and Republic of Ireland passports. Photos furnished by the author.

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We presume this is Patrick in his new career field. (Maybe a secret!)

river if I remember correctly. No name, no address, nothing on the door. We are told to have a seat as we enter. Someone comes around and asks us to sign in. A few minutes later they give us visitor badges and it's "have a seat" again. Sometime later, this guy gets off the elevator, calls out my name and some other guys' names, who I don't remember.

We all get on the elevator and go up to an office and there is this runt in an ugly grey suit, looked like he slept in it. He said, "Good morning, welcome, I'm Air Force Major [and I really can't remember his name]. He tells us, "You gentlemen have been selected for a classified assignment to the Middle East with the Central Intelligence Agency. At the moment, that's all the information I can give. When you leave here, please go down stairs and out front." He told us to wait for the, I think it was the blue bus, or the blue and white bus, to show the driver our badges and have a seat. The bus would take us to CIA headquarters and there, we were to follow the directions to Personnel. "You will be here for one week of testing for the assignment and then you will be able to return to your home base."

Well it was an interesting week, especially the last day, the day you went in to take your polygraph test and then head back home to your base. The polygraph should be simple, right? Take it and go home. Well, not that easy, not with those folks. After about five hours of test after test after test after test, the examiner got tired of telling me "Well, you got a little nervous when I asked you about all your girl friends. Let's talk about that." I guess after five hours he got tired of talking about it, trying to find out all their names and everything else they wanted to know. He finally said to me, "Look we don't care who, how many, where you diddled all these girls. We have to know who they are, in case someone tries to use them to blackmail you or your family or threaten your family. If that happens all you have to do is notify us and we will handle the problem because we already have all your information. That's all. It's only to protect you and your family."

Well, I fell for that and finished the test and they said I could go home. I was such a nervous wreck by the time I got out of there I went straight to the 1120th SAS and called American Airlines and said, "I want the first thing smoking to L.A." The

lady said, "All we have is first class." I said, "I'll take it and pay the difference." She said, "You will have to go quickly to Dulles." I said, "I'm on my way."

Caught a taxi to Dulles and made the flight. I remember sitting down in my nice window seat and this little TV in between the seats in front of me and the 6 p.m. news came on. It was the *Huntley Brinkley Report*. Then another passenger comes and sits next to me, and says, "Hi, Mr. Minahan." I immediately got quiet and thought this guy is following me all the way to L.A. How the hell does he know my name? It was a rough week, a rough day, and now someone sits down next to me on the plane heading to L.A. and says, "Hello Mr. Minahan." I have never seen him, I

don't know who he is, and I'm about to walk off the plane in panic mode, but first I want to know how the hell this stranger knew my name. So I came right out and asked. I said, "Excuse me. Can I ask you how you know my name?" He said, "Sure," pointing to the name tag on the top of my seat. In the early days of jet flying, American Airlines had a special touch of placing a name tag on your seat in first class. I didn't know that since I always rode baggage class. So now I am relieved he's not the CIA guy following me to L.A. After that it was a very pleasant trip back to L.A.

MEM: Pretty funny! But then how did you get to Thailand?

So Monday morning, I'm back at Edwards AFB after thinking about probably winding up in some dumb Embassy job in the Middle East. No action there. I talk with my personnel contact and tell him that I want to volunteer again for SEA again. He



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tells me that I can't volunteer again because a command has a hold on me. I ask what command has a hold, and he says, "Security Service Command."

Oh damn, I have to get to work on this right away because the Air Force is confused between the Middle East and the South East. So I got on the phone to my uncle who was an Air Force Colonel on the SAC IG Team, very good long time friends with Major General Sundown Wells, the SAC IG. I call him and he says that he'll call me back after he checks with a friend of his in SAC Personnel. He called me back and said "No luck." He asked what have I gotten myself into now because he even had Sundown Wells make a couple of calls and he was told to back off.

So now I'm screwed; I'm going to miss out on this war because I have to go sit in the middle of the largest beach in the world. Then I remembered I didn't volunteer for this BS. I was snatched from my bunk. All right I thought, let me try that with my personnel contact. My guy says, "No luck."

"But there is one thing we can try that I have seen work," he said. "OK let's do it," I begged. "You have to change career fields to the one most in demand right now, this week." He



Pat with Captain Jim White in the AFTN hallway. White's parents already bore a burden when Patrick was sent to see them soon after this was taken.

looked it up and said, "It's a TV program production specialist. They are now introducing TV in Vietnam and Thailand bases." I told him, "You have got to be shi**ing me. This is what is in biggest demand right now?" He said, "That's it." "Let's do it," I said. I had to do an audition for the base information officer (IO), then I had to attend 8 weeks of Radio and TV school at Ft Ben Harrison, Indiana. He told me that as soon as I start school, I had to write a letter to my congressman and explain everything to him about my desire to serve in Vietnam and the SAS command hold, everything.

I passed the audition, I started school, I wrote a letter to Senator Lawton Chiles of Florida, and before I finished my school I had orders to Takhli RTAFB, Thailand. Assignment: Television program director for AFTN-Takhli.

Listen, nobody said life was easy but if you are good at it you can sure have a lot of fun. Now I don't mean

to make light of the Vietnam War; however, I will say in most cases the type of war that many Air Force personnel conducted was far different from the Marines and Army and some Air Force personnel conducted in and around SEA. All I'm saying is if you play the game right, it can be fun. Not everyone will agree with me, but I played to win and personally, I had fun and won. Now aren't you sorry you asked me that question, "How did you come to be assigned to Thailand?"

Just don't ask me to describe what I did while I was there. I simply don't have enough years left in my life to tell you about all that fun. Some of it is pretty serious, but in my own sick mind I have been able to make it humorous for my own sanity. My



The old AFTN trailer at Takhli.

nature, my personality, and my sense of humor that I inherited from both of my parents have allowed me to mask and hide the things I don't want to remember. Most importantly, if I talk out of school someone is going to jail for sure, if they are still alive.

The attached photos are of me and my office, plus one with Air Force Captain Jim White, brother of Astronaut Ed White Jr., who was killed in the Apollo capsule fire at Cape Canaveral. Jim and I had just finished doing a TV program for the base about his deceased brother, the fire, and how it affected the family. It was really a good show, very moving. For once I wasn't funny until we got off the air. Sad thing is Jim went

continues next page



"Good morning Takhli troops!"

MIA in Laos near the Plain of Jars a couple of days after that photo was taken.

I was the one who had to fly all the way back to Florida and give his father a copy of the program. I walked into his dad's house and was immediately blown away. There in the foyer were three huge oil paintings of General White flanked on each side by his two deceased sons. I almost lost it when the General said to me, "Those are my two boys." Two boys, both killed in the service of their country. That one put a big lump in my throat.

MEM: Well, that is certainly an interesting story, but how did you end up in The Czech Republic, and how do you like it there?

Excellent question, and probably the easiest one to answer. In the late 1970s I was working for a company that had a government contract to enhance certain security systems in U.S. government buildings around the globe. I happened to be in Prague doing some work and I became acquainted with a nice young lady, and of course one thing led to another and we became very close, too close it turned out. I'm back in DC when I get a letter from her, saying she is pregnant. Being familiar with that type of scam, I just ignored it. However, when the iron curtain came down, I wanted to know for sure if it was a scam or did I have a kid running around the Czech Republic. As I got older, I worried more and more about that, so I decided to go to the Czech Republic. I found her. DNA was in it's early stages, but I took the very expensive test at the time.

Turns out I did have a son, who was already 17. From that day forward we became the best of friends. Over the years he would come and visit me in the U.S. and I would go to Prague to visit him. He didn't want to move to the U.S., but I could

see he was eager to learn so I sent him back to school. He graduated high school and went on to Charles University and graduated from there.

As I got older he insisted I move to The Czech Republic so he could take care of me. So in 2013 I moved here, rented an apartment on the top floor of a nice home in the country in the northeast corner of the country, in the mountains; what they call the mountains, I call them hills.

Everybody wants to know, "Do you like it there? What's the best part about living there?" For me it's the fantastic weather, I love it. What's the worst part about living here? The language! I will never be able to learn this very difficult language.

The minimum wage for these folks is roughly \$2.50 (U.S.) per hour. I don't care for that because they will never get ahead. It is changing, but very slowly. It makes me crazy when I see so many young people with no drive, no get up and go. They make \$500 a month and that's it. Most all shopping is done on the Internet. Most all of the businesses don't care if the customer is happy; they are open 9 to 5. It's like they don't want to expand or grow their business, they might have to work past 5 PM. It is frustrating for me to watch so many, many people that simply have no drive, no desire to improve themselves. My son always tells me to calm down. That's the Czech way. What do I miss most? That is speaking English face to face with anyone. My son calls my PC my wife because I spend so much time with it. *You Tube* is my best friend. I can watch movies in English, I have Netflix now, I have Skype, so I can talk with anyone anywhere anytime. That's pretty much it. If you have any more questions, fire away; my life is a tattered old worn out open book.



MEM: We may get back to you.

Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood

The 13 members listed below joined between the last issue of the MEM and the 1st of December. You can find more information on our website database. The Mekong Express Mail wishes you all a hearty "Welcome Home."

No	Branch	Last Name	First Name	City	State	Email Address
01754	n/a	Waller	Alice	Midlothian	VA	Dansals@aol.com
01755	USA	Goodrich	Christopher	APO	AP	Goodrich.christopher@gmail.com
01756	USAF	Franklin	Dennis	Loretto	TN	DNNSFranklin@Gmail.com
01757	USAF	Whiddon	John	Crystal City	MO	J.Whiddon@ATT.Net
01758	USAF	Ake	James	Tampa	FL	jimake50@gmail.com
01759	USAF	Brink	John	Edmonds	WA	Amidol1891@Yahoo.com
01760	USMC	Fernandez	Valentine	New Port Richey	FL	96marval@gmail.com
01761	USAF	Crielly	William	Ft Washington	PA	capsarpilot@aol.com
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01766	USAF	Barnes	Charles	Chelsea	AL	nexus05@charter.net

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Assistance 2016 *continued from page 1*

Another achievement was the rehabilitation of the school at Ban Nong, Paek District. The project for Xaysomboun was to supply furniture for eager students, and the Khone Sana project was the upgrade of a kindergarten, which is now in use.

Much of the success of the TLCB work in Xieng Khouang province is due to the work of Ajan Soundeuane, the TLCB's "Main Man" there, who evaluates the potential of applicants and oversees the implementation of the projects. In the photo on page 9, he is shown with the TLCB's Mac Thompson.

For its work in Xieng Khouang province, the TLCB was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from the governor, Boulasone Synouathong, as shown on page 9.

Also featured in Art Crisfield's presentation was the building of school toilets in Ban Tha, Ban Hai, Ban Nafa, and Khone Sana. These facilities are greatly appreciated; as otherwise, the children and staff must relieve themselves in nature.



Students like real floors much more than dirt.



In some locations the TLCB has provided the first toilets for the schools and in other cases we have replaced unsanitary facilities. Mac and Sunee Thompson at Ban Tha, above.



The deteriorating school at Ban Nong.



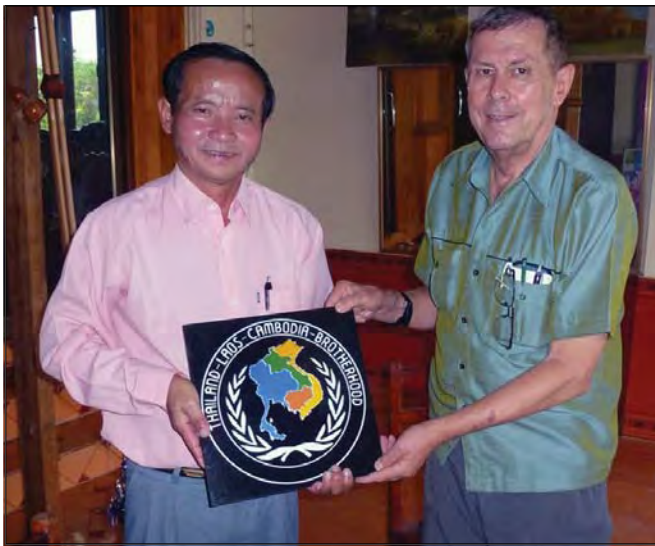
At left, new toilet at Ban NaFa, in Paek District.



At right, new toilet at Ban Hai, in Kham District.



Above, the TLCB/Lao school team inspecting a new roof and floor funded by member donations to the TLCB Assistance.



Above, Mac Thompson presenting a granite plaque of appreciation to Ajan Soundeuane. Soundeuane has been instrumental in finding and monitoring projects in Laos since this work began. Without his dedication this work would have been nearly impossible. The beautiful engraved tile was made and donated by TLC member George Oubre.



Above, Ban Nong School is nearly complete



At right, furniture at the school at Xaysomboun.



Above, for its work in Xieng Khouang province, the TLCB was presented with this Certificate of Appreciation from the governor, Boulassone Synouathong. English translation of this handsome certificate is shown below.



Above, the Khone Sana project was the upgrade of the kindergarten, shown before we started.

Upgraded kindergarten is shown in use at right.



Annual Meeting and Reunion, 2016

A Few Glimpses of the Events in Alexandria, Virginia



Above, newly elected TLCB President Gary Beatty hosts his first reunion banquet. Photos snapped by Bill Tilton. Members also elected Ed Miller as a member at large to replace Paul Lee. Paul was appointed to replace Gary Beatty as secretary by former President John Sweet before leaving office. The new board of directors is listed on page 2.

Below, once again it's Bonnie Encinas hawking those legendary New Mexico wines at the TLCB Assistance Auction—a great annual fundraiser. Thanks to folks like Bonnie, this year's crowd was especially generous. The funds are badly needed for our ongoing projects in Southeast Asia.



At left, John and Nancy entertaining the crowd a little just before drawing the quilt raffle ticket.

At right, the proud and very surprised winner of the 2016 Reunion Quilt was the local chairman's wife, Sue Frazier! The quilt was sewn by Rosie Wheatley once again, and we all agreed that Sue had definitely earned it.



Above, one of our newest members, Alice Waller, addresses the Annual Meeting. Alice is the sister of MIA forward air controller Lee Harley, of "Harley's Valley."

At left, Doc Vernon Wagner receives his Commemorative Partners pin from our speaker, Major General James T. Jackson.



At right, this memorial wreath was placed at The Wall section where the names of those lost at LS85 are engraved. It was made and donated by Sue Frazier. What talent!



Final Report to the TLC Brotherhood

By-Laws Review and Member Voting Procedure

At the Board of Director's (BOD) meeting held at the annual reunion in Colorado Springs on October 4, 2014, the BOD created a special committee to review the TLCB By-laws. President John Sweet appointed Gary Beatty as chair of that committee and asked that the committee report the results of its review at the 2015 annual reunion. The BOD agreed that the committee would be autonomous and that chairman Beatty would appoint the other committee members. Beatty appointed Bill Tilton as vice-chair of the committee, and appointed TLCB members Judge Scott Stucky and former BOD member Bob Wheatley to the committee.

At the 2015 annual reunion in Woburn, MA, Chairman Beatty reported on the progress of the committee. The gist was that due to the magnitude of the task, and the vacation and work schedules of committee members, the committee was unable to complete its task within the time originally designated—but that it would be completed prior to the 2016 annual meeting.

Early in the committee's deliberations, it was unanimously decided that the existing By-laws could not be simply "tweaked" because the various provisions that required change are so inter-related that even a minor amendment would require changes elsewhere. Accordingly, the committee decided that the only remedy was to undertake a complete re-write of the By-laws. That re-write is now completed, and enclosed.

Following the precedent set by the submission of the U.S. Constitution to the States for ratification, the re-written By-laws were submitted to the BOD in their entirety for approval/disapproval. On Aug 30, 2016, the BOD unanimously accepted the proposed By-laws for submission to the membership for a vote. Pursuant to Article VI of the TLCB Articles of Incorporation, amendments to the By-laws, which are proposed by unanimous recommendation of the BOD, require a simple majority vote of the membership for adoption.

Because of the geographical dispersion of the TLCB membership, the procedure for voting on recent By-laws amendments has been an "opt out" method—whereby amendments were published in the *Mekong Express Mail* (*MEM*, medium of record for official TLCB business), and members advised that if they objected to the proposed amendment they should submit a written objection to the BOD within a specified time. If the requisite number of objections is not received, the amendment will be deemed approved.

The BOD voted to present the proposed By-laws to the members at the 2016 annual membership meeting, to decide the method of voting by the membership. If, by a majority vote, those members at the annual meeting agreed, then the opt-out procedure would be employed by notice in the *MEM*—otherwise ballots for approval/disapproval of the new By-laws will be mailed in the *MEM*.

At the 2016 general membership meeting in Arlington, VA, By-laws Committee Chair Beatty explained the objective of the new By-laws, why they were re-written rather than merely amended, and the various voting options to the members. Extended questions, answers, and discussion followed. A vote was then taken, and with only one "No" vote, the members directed that the "opt-out" method be used for the membership to vote on approval/disapproval of the new proposed By-laws.

Procedure

The proposed new By-laws are included in this issue of the *MEM*. The "opt-out" voting will commence Jan 1, 2017, and run thru March 1, 2017 (60 days). Anyone wishing to vote "No" should send a written "No vote" to the official TLCB mailing address: **The TLCB, PO Box 343, Locust Grove, GA 30248**. Votes postmarked after March 1, 2017, will not be counted.

The By-laws Committee:

Gary D. Beatty, Chair

Bill Tilton, Vice-chair

Scott Stucky, Member

Bob Wheatley, Member



TLC Brotherhood Dues

Season—Do I owe?

TLC Brotherhood dues are payable each January. The amount is \$25 and there are two easy ways to pay.

The *easiest* method is online, at www.TLC-Brotherhood.com. Click on the "Membership" menu, then click on "Join/Renew" for the Membership screen. Members can find the *renewal* link in the last line, where it says **CLICK HERE FOR THE ONLINE REGISTRATION FORM**. With the form, you can submit your credit-card payment through PayPal.

By mail, use the annual dues card and mailing envelope that are in this issue of *Mekong Express Mail* (*MEM*). The dues card shows if you owe 2017 dues. If it says that you are paid through 2016, then you need to renew for 2017 now. Please include any changes, particularly address, email, and telephone numbers. The envelope is pre-addressed to: **TLC Brotherhood, Inc., PO Box 343, Locust Grove GA 30248**. If you're paid ahead, the card will show the year you are paid through, according to our records. If you think this is wrong, please let us know. We can research it and make corrections if necessary.

As you can see in this issue of the *MEM*, our Assistance program has really taken on some ambitious projects, particularly in the rural schools in Laos. These projects are getting more costly, so your generous donations are getting more and more important to our success. *Please consider including a donation with your dues payment*. Everything you donate goes **ONLY** to these projects. All administrative costs are paid from dues receipts.



The Bridge Over the River Kwai

CWO Charles R. Rogers, USA Retired

In the fall of 1967, I received a copy of my Request for Orders (RFO) assigning me to the Saigon Support Command, Vietnam. To make it a little more palatable, my assignment officer made my report date January 30, 1968 so that I would reap the benefit of tax break and receive combat pay for the month. I had just been promoted to captain. January 1968 was not an auspicious month for the United States. The USS Pueblo was seized by the North Koreans and the Tet Offensive had begun.

I departed Oakland, California on a charter flight. We arrived in Honolulu, Hawaii, at about 8:00 AM and deplaned so the aircraft could be cleaned and flight crews changed. After an hour, we boarded the plane again and began to get ready for takeoff. I looked out my window and saw a chubby Hawaiian man running to the plane. He boarded and we were given instructions to deplane again and report to the tri-service ATCO at 11:00 AM. At that time we were told our flight was cancelled and were given hotel vouchers and meal tickets and told we should be ready to leave at 5:00 AM the next morning. I spent the remainder of the day on the beach and enjoyed the Hawaiian hospitality. The next morning there were taxis to take us back to the airport. It was surreal. All these cabs were racing down the empty streets of Honolulu. Back on the plane, we left heading to Okinawa, and at Okinawa we were told to get off the plane and this time, we were put up in the transient quarters for almost 48 hours. We were loaded on C141s, and again, we began to taxi when the plane came to a stop and we deplaned.

If we had left at that time, we would have arrived at Bien Hoa in the dark and would not have been allowed to land. Finally, we boarded and flew the all-too-short flight to Vietnam.

I was initially assigned to the Saigon Support Command at Long Binh, but my stay there was short. After five days I was told to report to the personnel office where I was given a set of orders assigning me to the 558 Supply and Service Battalion at Can Rahn Bay. I caught a hop and reported for duty. The 558th had just been activated, in theater, for the express purpose of deploying to Thailand to support the Royal Thai Army. Half of our soldiers were new in country, like me, and the other half were soldiers who had served about 180 days in country. This was so we would not all rotate at the same time. After drawing our equipment and several delays, we finally arrived in Korat, Thailand for orientation. Our ultimate destination was Kanchanaburi where we were to operate a base camp there for Americans and issue equipment to a Thai Army brigade, the Black Panthers, getting ready to train and deploy to Vietnam. The plan was that we would eventually equip three brigades (a division) in rotation and then turn the operations over to the Thais. The facilities were still being built, for both us and the Thais. The U.S. Navy was in charge of construction while Army Engineers were responsible for site preparation. We initially lived in GP medium tents. It is the hottest I have ever been. When the base was completed it was nice.

Kanchanaburi is the location of the Bridge over the River Kwai. Our camp was actually about ten miles up the road at a little village called Ladya. At the time, this area was best known for Thai bandits and king cobras. It was remote, which was why they chose to put it there. We were about two hours from Bangkok, and were closer to the Burmese border. Most of the

locals had never seen Americans, so we were of interest to them.

Working with the Thai Army was interesting and had its challenges. For example, the Thais liked to drive the M151A1 Jeeps fast and kept flipping them over. This continued until the brigade commander announced that the next accident would result in a 30 day jail sentence for the driver. The accidents stopped. We issued M1 carbines to them only to be ordered to collect them back and then issue M16 rifles. Then no one wanted the carbines. The commander of the aviation maintenance unit wanted two sets of tools so that his troops could have one set for work and one set for display.

We could visit the bridge and the war cemetery, which was very well maintained. There was a Thai restaurant at the Bridge and we would go there and have a beer and maybe have some soup. If the tide was right, the wood pilings from the original bridge were visible. Once we visited some local caves reported to have been used to house POWs during construction of the railroad. At the time, they were inhabited by Buddhist monks, and for a few baht they would fire up the generator so we could see the inside. Very few Westerners visited the area. I have seen some pictures of the area recently, and the area around the Bridge looks like a park and there is also a POW museum to cater to the tourist trade. It was not like that in 1968.

In my readings I have never come across another Army unit activated in a combat zone and then deployed to another country. We were visited by General Johnson, retiring Chief of Staff of the Army, and General Westmorland as he made his final tour of Southeast Asia. They told us how important our mission was and what a great job we were doing. I think that this was an exceptional fete for which there was little recognition. The battalion itself had problems. As you might imagine, units being levied to provide soldiers used the opportunity to get rid of their problem personnel, including officers. The battalion commander was a micromanager, and very few were happy to be there—most just looked forward to leaving.

Shortly after returning to Ft. Lee, Virginia, I received orders for Vietnam. When I called my assignment officer, he was all but sympathetic and kept telling me that Thailand was an R & R site. He did not want to hear about living in tents or the conditions we originally endured. We were awarded the Vietnam Service Medal and the Vietnam Campaign Medal, but that didn't count for anything. Twenty months later I was in the Vietnam Delta on a MACV advisory team. This time I made sure I completed a tour. I remember that my assignment officer kept telling me that if you want to get promoted you have to go to Vietnam. So, I did and I didn't—but that's an entirely different adventure called "How I became a warrant officer."



Initiation into Manhood

By Casimir "Chuck" Hajduk

At two A.M. on a cool Sunday morning, I stepped out of a battered, blue Air Force bus, stopped for a moment, and surveyed my new home. A sense of relief was my initial reaction, for it had taken precisely six months, tons of paperwork, and most of my willpower to become a member of the United States Air Force. This feeling was short-lived however when a skinny young man, dressed in green with stripes sewn up and down his arm, started screaming at the top of his lungs: "*Fall in at attention!*," followed by some obscenities. I assumed he was directing his orders at our small armada of civilian misfits, some of whom were asleep in the bus. We had no idea what he was talking about. Stumbling, more out of fright than nervousness, we managed to form a ragged line, which temporarily quelled the anger from the man in green. Standing there, for what seemed like an hour, holding my breath so not be noticed, I sensed a yearning for my mother's presence. Aside from the cowardice and fear, I kept asking myself, "What am I doing here?" And "Why am I here?"

Graduating from high school, I had absolutely no goal for the future. I had planned to live life as it came to me. For six months thereafter, I was passively content with a simple job and no worries. It wasn't long before I started to realize how aimless my existence was. Added to that was a sense of immaturity, both physical and emotional, a quest for adventure, and a lack of female companionship. My appointed role in life as conqueror of the opposite sex, which so far, had been a losing battle. Remembering an old Van Johnson movie of him marching down a street, wearing an Army uniform adorned with medals, followed by precisely six attractive young ladies, my decision was made. I would enter the service and fill Mr. Johnson's shoes.

My initial entry into the service was rather a drastic change, but that was precisely what I had in mind. A new environment had been created for me. The first few months of service life saw my civilian blood draining and military fluids replacing it. They taught me how to think, act, breathe, smell, and fold a handkerchief in military fashion. My lessons were given in such far-off places as Amarillo, Texas; Denver, Colorado; and Omaha, Nebraska. Aside from the travel, which I longed for, I encountered new, interesting

people and experienced previously unborn feeling. My shyness and timidity dwindled away and I felt confidence in myself for the first time. Manhood was just around the barracks.

The four year contract I had signed ended 30 days earlier than expected. My last year was spent in Ubon, Thailand, the highlight of my service career, and the one-month early release I received was for convenience sake. Instead of transferring me to a new base, which often-times took 30 days to transpire, I was discharged. Although tremendously relieved and overwhelmed with joy, I felt a bit of sadness, for there were many places and many faces I would never see again. Intermingled with my emotions was a sense of accomplishment for I had finished what I had intended to do. Now there were new mountains to climb, new horizons to cross, and I had a brighter, more positive outlook of life. That young boy, who was nothing but skin and bones when he first entered the service, came out as a man, still skin and bones, but with hair on his chest.

Van Johnson, look out!



Chuck in Ubon.



Recent photo with wife Karen, Photos from the author.

Postscript: Karen, my wife of 44 years, suggested that I submit this article, which I wrote for an english course years ago (got an A). For two years after my discharge, I worked as an orderly and eventually rose to the hospital payroll department. Accounting seemed to be in my future, so i was attending Pierce Junior College in Philadelphia at night. Suit and tie, dull office space, and boring number crunching proved a lousy work environment for me. My wife had graduated from nursing school and I found her job fascinating, and again with her influence, I quit my job, went to school, graduated, and worked in the nursing field for almost 40 years. Critical care was my specialty. Both of us are now retired and love to travel. I volunteer at the USO and the New Jersey Honor Flight Organization. I've been a member of TLCB since 2015.



A Guide to “Space-A” Travel Across the Pacific to Thailand, Part 2

By: Thomas R. Ungleich

Previously: The next morning there was a flight to Guam and Yokota, but we were not called due to the large number of Filipinos wanting to go Space-A to Guam and from there get a cheap commercial flight to Manila. Later, we ran into another couple we know, who were in Hawaii for appointments at Tripler hospital. Anyway, later that evening we went back over to the Pax terminal and noticed a flight early the next morning going to Kadena AB, Okinawa. Knowing that there used to be frequent C-130 flights from Kadena to Yokota, we decided to go to Kadena, if we could get on.

Consequently, that night we went to bed early, so that we could check out by 4:30 am and get to the base for roll call. When we arrived there was much confusion, and it turned out that the departure time had been moved up, so they were already calling names off the Space-A roster! Thus, I had to scramble to get the bags out of the rental car so that we would be “ready” if called.

Anyway, we were very happy to be called for the KC-135 flight to Kadena, and were quickly processed and put into a holding room. I was charged a total of \$9.10 for two box lunches. However, the crew had overslept or something, so we ended up staying in the room for over an hour.

Finally on Space-A to Kadena

By 7:00 am we were wheels up at Hickam. The loadmaster announced that, due to headwinds, it would be a 10-hour flight to Kadena. Fortunately, we had purchased box lunches and also had some snacks with us. The old KC did have a private toilet, for which my wife was grateful. She took a Dramamine pill and slept, while I read some magazines. Finally, after many hours, I could see an island out the porthole, and shortly thereafter we landed on a much cooler Okinawa.

Kadena Air Base is the most Space-A friendly installation I have ever been to. First, they bring you from the plane to the terminal and announce that we must first wait for our baggage, after which they will take all non-SOFA personnel to the Japanese Immigration Office to be stamped in country. This was done, and the airman waited in the parking lot until we had all been processed in. He then brought us back to the terminal. After signing up for flights to Yokota we called base lodging, and were glad they had vacancies. The lodging office dispatched a van to the Pax Terminal to pick us up. We checked in and walked over to the Officer’s Club. Unfortunately, like many bases, the officer’s clubs have gone downhill, and their dining room was no longer open for dinner. They told us the enlisted club’s dining room was open, but we had to take a taxi over there, as the E-Club was simply too long a walk.

Anyway, it turned out that the food there was delicious and the atmosphere was very nice also. We then took a taxi back to lodging. The taxis are Japanese, which means it will cost a minimum of Yen 700 (around \$8.00, depending on the exchange rate) to go anywhere on base. Although I grumbled at the high cab fares, the alternative was eating a frozen dinner in the lodging room and watching AFN television all night.

On to Yokota

I recalled that Kadena has Space-A flight screens on their lodging televisions, so I could see that there were two separate flights scheduled for “mainland” Japan the next morning. One



Kim and Tom Ungleich made the best of a long visit to Hawaii. Extinct volcano, Haleakala, behind them. Photos furnished by the author.

was going to Atsugi Naval Air Station, while the other was going to Yokota Air Base. Knowing from a friend that there was an exercise going on at Yokota, meaning on-base lodging rooms would be difficult, if not impossible to get, I planned to first try to get on the Atsugi flight. So I called the Navy Lodge at Atsugi and made a reservation for the following night. Again, we had to wake up very early on Tuesday to pack, check out, and get a taxi to take us back to the Air Terminal since it was too early for the lodging van. Upon arrival, we were disappointed to learn that the Atsugi flight had either been cancelled or the pilot decided he did not want to take Space-A, but we were called for the C-130 flight to Yokota, which would take off around noon. That delay gave me the opportunity to go upstairs and buy a decent breakfast at the cafeteria. As the shorter flights did not offer box lunches, we were not charged any fees for the flight to Yokota. After takeoff they announced that the flight would be longer than normal due to headwinds—this time meaning

Space-A continues top of next page.

a winter storm. We eventually arrived at Yokota around dusk, and I could see that there was snow on the ground. When they opened the cargo doors, we could instantly feel the cold temperature and all of us grabbed our winter coats.

At the Yokota Pax Terminal I called lodging, but already anticipated their answer that there were no rooms available due to an exercise. I then asked the local national lady at the counter for some help, and she was very nice and called a hotel downtown by the train station and ordered a taxi for us. She also signed us up for flights to Singapore.

Yokota is not as Space-A friendly as Kadena. The commander won't allow Japanese taxis on base and he permitted AAFES to drop their taxi service a couple years ago. Plus, shuttle buses are very infrequent during evening hours and don't stop at the main gate. Finally, I had to ask the NCOIC if it would be all right to take a push cart out to the gate with our luggage. I was forced to push it up an icy ramp for the highway overpass, then I had to try to keep hold of it as it wanted to slide down the ice on the other side. If I had a bad heart, I am sure I would have been stricken during the extreme exertion. All this because the base commander, who I am sure was very comfortable in his warm quarters at that hour, wouldn't provide transportation for Space-A travelers arriving at his base.

Anyway, after a short taxi ride, we were dropped off at the very modern Toyoko Inn Hotel in Fussa. The rate was about Yen 7,000 per night, which included a minimal Asian-food-only breakfast. That would have been acceptable, except that we arrived in Japan during a period of very unfavorable exchange rates—only about Yen 75 to the one U.S. Dollar, which meant that the hotel price was about USD \$95 per night, well over what I wanted to pay. When we got to our room, we discovered that it was extremely small by Western standards. We were carrying 6 bags, and there wasn't even a closet to put anything into. Thus, we had to literally live out of our suitcases for several days, while walking back and forth to the main gate of Yokota base about one mile each way in freezing temperatures. Anyway, for the next six days we hung out with old friends, former co-workers, in the greater Yokota area.

On to Singapore

After several days it became necessary to think about departing Japan and getting to Thailand, which was our prime destination on this vacation. As there were no longer any "embassy run" flights that would stop in Thailand, the best strategy appeared to be to get to Singapore via military air, then fly commercial to Bangkok. As the result of continued U.S. troop presence in the Middle East, there were still chartered flights from Yokota through Singapore out to Diego Garcia or Bahrain. These flights were on a fixed schedule, so that one can make plans around them. In our case, we decided to take a flight on Monday, January 30th, so on Sunday I went over to the Pax Terminal and marked ourselves present. We arrived at the Pax Terminal about 5:00 am on Monday morning, and were called for the chartered modified B-737 without difficulty. Only a few other personnel were on the flight, and it departed mostly empty. No box lunches here—we were served with regular airline hot meals. Yet we were not charged any fees for this

Kim on a beach, somewhere in their world of Space-A!



flight. The flight was about 6 hours, and eventually we could see land below, probably Malaysia. There are three airports in Singapore: Sembawang, Paya Lebar, and Changi. The USAF flights land at Paya Lebar, the Singapore Air Force's airfield. After landing, we went through a very thorough immigration and customs examination (the card says "Death to Drug Smugglers") and they even confiscated my gum. We eventually got a cab to take us to Changi, the main commercial airport. It turned out that Air Asia is one of those ripoff, so-called budget airlines that sell you a cheap ticket and then overcharge you with baggage and other fees. We bought the ticket at one counter for a reasonable fare, approximately U.S. \$100 each to Bangkok. But then we had to go to another counter to check the bags, and they wanted SING \$600 for our luggage, the equivalent of almost U.S. \$400. I balked, but it was no use. Thus, I had no choice but to bite the bullet and pay the excessive baggage fees.

We Make it to Thailand and Then Home

We did fly Air Asia to Bangkok, and over the course of three weeks, we worked our way north by train and bus to Chiang mai. From there we flew on China Eastern Airlines to Kunming, and then Guangzhou, and several days later took a bus to Hong Kong. Although my plan was to fly commercial back to Tokyo and then try to catch the Patriot Express from Yokota to Seattle, it proved unnecessary when I obtained a very favorable frequent flyer mile redemption with United Airlines from Hong Kong to Fort Lauderdale. We arrived home exactly 70 days after we had departed.

Despite the fact that we did pay for a few commercial airline tickets, and did experience delays requiring us to stay in base billeting or motels longer than expected, I still believe that our Space-A flights saved us some money in the long run. Importantly, it also enabled us to see some interesting sights we had not planned to see, as well as get to all of those places that were on our "must see" list. The key to flying Space-A is to be flexible.



The 2017 TLCB Dayton Ohio Reunion/Annual Meeting

Ray Boas, Dayton Chairman

The 2017 TLCB Dayton Ohio Reunion/Annual Meeting will be held on September 21, 22, and 23



Location: The Holiday Inn, 2800 Presidential Drive, Fairborn, Ohio. *Make plans now to be there!*

Rate: The hotel rate is \$107.00 plus tax per night and includes a full, complimentary breakfast for up to 4 guests per room. The reunion rate is good 3 days prior to the Reunion and 3 days after and includes free parking and Wi-Fi.

Sign In: Registration for the TLCB Reunion will be at noon on Thursday the 21st and the hospitality suite will be open.

Food: There are 15-20 eateries within 3-4 minutes of the hotel and the famous Thai 9 Restaurant, located in the Oregon District in Downtown Dayton, is 15 minutes away.

Sites: The hotel is 5 minutes from the **Museum of the United States Air Force**, and is 3 to 4 minutes from the Fairfield Commons Mall, a large indoor mall. The Museum has expanded with a fourth hangar since our last visit 10 years ago, and 2017 will be the 70th Anniversary of the USAF.

Questions? If you have any questions, please reference "2017 Reunion" in the subject line and email Ray Boas at:
raymar1970@embarqmail.com



With Dayton being the birthplace of aviation, there are many historical locations to visit including The Wright Brothers Cycle Shop, The Wright B Flyer, Huffman Prairie Flying Field and Interpretive Center, all part of the Dayton Aviation Trail. The Neil Armstrong Air and Space Museum is an hour's drive North of Dayton in Wapakoneta Ohio.

