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The Peace Corps and the Military Contrasting experiences in the 1960s

by Phil French

Why is an article about the Peace Corps in our Mekong Express Mail? It wouldn't have even occurred to me to write one, but our esteemed Editor, John Harrington, thought the subject would be of interest. I'm honored to have served in both seemingly contradictory institutions, so my perspective is a bit out of the ordinary. So here goes...

Back in the Stone Age of the early 1960s, I was approaching graduation from Miami University of Oxford, Ohio. By current jargon I was an "activist" on social issues—somewhat involved with the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the American Friends Service Committee. I had visions of joining the demonstrations and freedom rides throughout the South. However, JFK's challenge to "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," plus the advent of the Peace Corps struck a chord with me. I envisioned "saving the world" and seeing some of it in the process. Somehow this idea trumped perilous freedom rides into the jaws of strife!

By that time, late 1962, the simmering Vietnam War wasn't foreseen as the cataclysm it would become just a few short years

later. JFK had begun sending "advisors" to South Vietnam, 11,300 by the end of 1962. Officially, no offensive combat operations were being launched back then. Beyond one uncle who went ashore on D-Day, I had no family background of military veterans, so, I was relatively clueless about the concept of such service. And like most others, I had little inkling of what was about to unfold in Southeast Asia. I wasn't hesitant or conflicted about applying to the Peace Corps.

My application was quickly approved, and my geographic area of choice was East Africa. Now that I look back on the crap shoot of military assignments learned years later, I shouldn't have been surprised that my Peace Corps assignment was not

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Phil gets a lesson in beating ripe rice kernels from the stalks. This was Christmas Day. Photos from the author.



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Editor's Notes:

It's finally Spring, which some of us in the Northeast were wondering if it would ever arrive. (And some of you in the more regularly frigid climates are reading and thinking those softies up there don't know what a real winter is like).

The June issue of *The Mekong Express Mail (MEM)* is once again an expression of the varied experiences of the Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood. Page 1 features "The Peace Corps and the Military" by Phil French. Hey, how many of our members are both Peace Corps and Air Force veterans? And with service in such contrasting operations? Yet, in some fashion, isn't the work of TLCB in both Thailand and Laos, through our assistance program, providing the same sort of contributions there that was the mission of the Peace Corps back in those idealistic days of the early 1960's?

"C-130 Takes a Round Through the Hog Trough" is a kind

Rosie Wheatley working on this year's stunning Assistance Quilt. Don't forget to buy a few sheets of ten raffle tickets—you might be the lucky winner, and you definitely will help the kids. Photo by Bob Wheatley.



of rollicking recap of the picaresque adventures of Jimmy L. Honeycutt, who after his Air Force days, spent a career as a Delta Airlines captain, and was not long ago awarded the "Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award" by the Federal Aviation Administration. The article was put together by Bill Tilton, who is modestly listed as responsible for composition for the *MEM*. You also may know him as the TLCB treasurer. I know him as the guy who keeps me on track getting out the *MEM*.

"An American Hero, Ed Leonard" is a moving salute to a courageous and resilient veteran, one who endured more than five years in North Vietnam as a prisoner of war. It was brought to us by TLCB member Paul Lee with the permission of Ed Leonard's daughter, Traci. Truly a tribute to the human spirit.

As TLCB members are well aware, it is now more than 40 years since the wars ended in Southeast Asia. For most of us, that time is simultaneously only yesterday and an often distant memory. Reading, from the *MEM* Archives, Les Strouse's "The Last Nerve Wracking Flight out of Laos" is a timely reminder of those difficult days. Of course, for many of us, we will be "rereading" Les' story. This feature is part of a series I initiated based on the conviction that with so many new members, the *MEM* archives contain a wealth of material that is worth revisiting. If any of the senior members have some favorites, please bring them to my attention.

Lastly, don't forget the 2015 TLCB Reunion in Boston, September 10 to 14. Besides getting together with the Brotherhood, it's a marvelous chance to visit the historically rich Massachusetts area. It will also be a chance for me to try and wring some future *MEM* stories out of you

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Editor, *MEM*

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C-130 Takes a Round Through the Hog Trough

And other stories, from an interview by Bill Tilton

Captain Jimmy L Honeycutt, who now lives about 35 miles south of Atlanta, likes to say that the highest rank he ever achieved was that of captain. True enough, but for a decade and a half he was an *airline* captain for Delta Airlines. Jimmy's full flying career started at a little airport in the mountains of North Carolina, just down the hill from Asheville, and has spanned over fifty seven years, during which he has amassed just shy of thirty thousand flying hours!

Recently, we were at an FAA safety briefing together, after which officials from the local Flight Standards office called Jimmy, and his lovely wife Sandy, forward for a very special surprise. The Federal Aviation Administration bestowed on him its most prestigious recognition—the “Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award.” This award specifically recognizes pilots who have an unblemished safety record in over 50 years of flying. I already knew that Jimmy's career would be of interest to TLCB members because his early years very much involved us of the TLC Brotherhood. Jimmy is a neighbor, so we arranged to spend an evening chatting about his three tours to SEA, flying the C-130E.

Leaning back comfortably in a rocking chair, Jimmy was soon reminiscing about how it all started for him. He knew from a very early age that he wanted to fly, and when he found out some people made pretty good pay at it, he knew that was for him. When Jimmy turned eighteen he told his parents he wanted a car. But he had some very wise parents, and instead they paid for him to take flying lessons at little Hendersonville, NC Airport, where his instructor was Oscar Meyer, also the airport owner at the time. Before he was out of high school, Jimmy had earned his private pilot certificate.

He then went west to Brigham Young University, where he joined the ROTC. Even then he had a vague plan forming, hoping to someday fly for the airlines. He figured the Air Force would be a huge help in getting him there, but of course pilot training carried a four-year commitment. Soon after graduation, Jimmy arrived at Laredo AFB down on the Rio Grande



The Captain
Photo from Sandy Honeycutt

in Texas. It was there that he first heard talk of some sort of combat action going on in Asia, and some of the better instructors were considered lucky to be getting approval for requests to go to advise foreign pilots in a place called Vietnam. This was 1964. Jimmy did well in pilot training and could have had an F-4 assignment if he had chosen to, but no airlines fly F-4s, and Jimmy still had that goal in the back of his mind. The four-engine C-130 transport was the closest choice available, and so he soon set off for Sewart AFB, just a few miles south of Nashville, Tennessee.

The training at Sewart was all about aircraft systems and basic flying of the beast, and Jimmy was only there for a few weeks before the Air Force shipped him off to his permanent squadron (PCS) at Pope AFB, next to Fort Bragg in North Carolina. At Pope they learned all the combat cargo landing techniques the '130 is so well known for, like dragging pallets out the back by parachute while flying a few feet above the ground. Both at Sewart and Pope it was well known that C-130 crews would soon be in Southeast Asia.

But at that time there was also a fierce struggle going on over “roles and missions” between the Air Force and the Army.

The Air Force was trying to show it could support any transport needs at any time and place for the Army, and the Army was trying to show that it could not. For the crews this just meant end-to-end temporary duty (TDY) trips and a huge buildup of flying hours as the services conducted exercise after exercise to make their points. Ultimately, the role of transport provider went to the Air Force, who picked up the Army's C-7 “Caribou” aircraft in the process. But it came at a high price in crew morale, as reflected in the high divorce rate and turnover of crewmembers in TAC's C-130 units. For a young warrior like Jimmy Honeycutt, however, this was all great preparation.



Jimmy Honeycutt and wife Sandy with an FAA official from the Atlanta Flight Standards Division, reading the citation that accompanies Jimmy's Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award. Photo by the author.

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Just as soon as that advanced training was done, Jimmy got his first Asia assignment—his unit went TDY to Mactan Air Base on the densely populated little Philippine Island where Ferdinand Magellan got mixed up in local warfare and was killed while attempting to be the first explorer to sail around the world (April of 1521). Mactan was the home of the C-130s in the Philippine Islands. This was in 1964, and the American struggle for Vietnam was just beginning to heat up. I asked Jimmy about his first impressions of the war and Southeast Asia. I was not surprised when he said, “It was surreal, but the war had not yet started in a big way.” He spent Christmas at Clark AFB, North of Manila, where he remembers that a “big band girl” in a white dress sang “Fry me to the moon.” That’s the kind of little detail that seems to stay with you from your first experiences in Asia. Out of Mactan, most of their initial missions to SEA were to Saigon’s Tan Son Nhut airport.

In Vietnam and Laos, when down low for airdrops or taking off and landing, crews often heard small arms rounds hitting the plane, and Jimmy recalls flying around at twenty thousand feet and musing about how lucky he was not to be in the fight on the ground. But sometimes they had to get down close to that fight. One time when going into Pleiku, their flight engineer earned an Air Medal for saving the aircraft and crew. On final approach, a large enemy round struck between engines number three and four, leaving a fuel-gushing hole in a main fuel tank. Seeing a real danger of destruction by fire, and with their precious fuel to get back out of Pleiku splashing on the ground, the flight engineer grabbed what was at hand—a broom, which C-130s always kept handy to sweep trash off the cargo deck. He managed to plug the leak by quickly pushing the broom handle into the hole and then snapping it off, stopping

C-130Es parked on the flightline at a base in Vietnam—most likely Nha Trang, which became less important as Danang and Cam Ranh Bay ramped up. Pallets are loaded with typical cargo—ammo, rolls of barbed wire, toilet paper (sometimes that was a high priority.). Often it was “live troops in, bodies out.” Photo Jimmy Honeycutt



A C-130 loadmaster at the cargo loading door. He was later shot down and killed on a mission into Laos. Photo by Jimmy Honeycutt.

the flow of volatile fuel. While they did hear bullets hitting the fuselage, many were so spent by the time they reached the aircraft that they only left a dent. It helped that the Air Force had inadvertently painted an effective defense on the tail of the C-130—the standard star and bars U.S. insignia. It made a great aiming point, but the gunners were not well trained in how much to lead an aircraft the size of a C-130, so most of the small-arms fire went behind them. Later, USAF repainted the C-130s in camouflage patterns, and made the insignia very small. Then the gunners started firing at the cockpit, but since their aiming lead was still incorrect, they tended to hit the wings and engines.

I was particularly interested in the “Klonghopper” mission around Thailand because so many of us had ridden that daily air connection with Bangkok and the other bases of Thailand. I reminisced how the clockwise route started out at Takhli, then to Udon, by noon to Nakhon Phanom, next to Ubon, and finally to Korat before landing back at Don Muang airport. Jimmy said this was pretty routine for C-130 crews, and he really didn’t remember too much about flying those except that they did it

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C-130 cockpit view from aircraft commander's seat. Windows were usually slid open because the airconditioning was "always broken."
Photo by Jimmy Honeycutt

a lot, and they didn't use the name "Klonghopper." It was just another mission, and he probably flew a hundred of them, he said. Oh well, too bad; because most TLCB members have their own vivid memories of those flights, or of waiting for the mail they brought. Many were stepping off a Klonghopper when they gathered their first impression of their new assignment, and a year later got the start of their great ride back to "The World" strapped into one of those web seats.

On his third tour, Jimmy got into Khe Sahn many times to resupply the Marines who were famously pinned down there for a time by the North Vietnam Army (NVA) forces. Khe Sahn sits right on strategic French-built Colonial Route 9, which crosses Vietnam just below the DMZ and then goes through Laos from Tchepone to Savannakhet, across from Mukdahan. The creation of the famous Ho Chi Minh Trail was made necessary by our blocking the NVA supply route through the DMZ and across Route 9.

The NVA was determined to make Khe Sahn into our "Di-embienphu," that bloody siege that effectively defeated the French in the mid-1950s. Round after round of artillery fire forced the Marines there to keep their heads down and live in bunkers—something Marines are not accustomed to doing. The Khe Sanh airstrip was their supply lifeline, and it was extremely hazardous. Some planes were destroyed on the ground, and crews unloaded their cargo just as fast as they could, with engines running.

On one mission into Khe Sanh, an engine "auto feathered." That is, the prop streamlined and brought the engine to a stop, with no action on the part of the crew. They had no idea what had caused the stoppage, but they continued the mission on three engines. Back at their base, maintenance crews later found a little bullet hole where they had picked up an AK-47 round in the "Hog trough," which was a conduit down the spine on top of the C-130 fuselage where many cables and wire bundles were located. A single "lucky" round pierced that conduit and

cut through a wire bundle containing the propeller control wires. As soon as the prop control wire was cut, the prop promptly feathered!

The C-130s often flew into Quang Tri, just south of the DMZ. On one trip, the pick-up cargo included a huge and heavily loaded Marine truck. The destination was Danang, just down the coast over water, but they were very heavy. The loadmaster got really angry because there was no driver for the truck, but he drove it on himself and chained it down. While Quang Tri was considered a secure base, it was not an easy

mission because the weather was really bad, with those heavy monsoon storms all over the place. Then on the way to Danang an engine caught fire and had to be shut down. An engine fire presents the risk of an internal explosion sending hot metal, including magnesium, into the next engine, not to mention the wing. So the loadmaster unchained all the cargo from the deck, just in case they lost another engine and had to dump their load in the South China Sea. Just as all this was happening they found the driver of the truck, asleep somewhere in the loaded truck bed. Jimmy mused and shook his head, saying, "We almost dumped him out!"

They flew a wide variety of missions on these tours, including many sorties as "Hillsboro" airborne command post, many troop-carrying sorties, and the scary flare drops. In these missions they usually supported the Marines in I Corps (the northern-most corps area in South Vietnam). These were really "hairy" missions, flying in orbits for seven or eight hours—all night—dumping programmed flares out the paratrooper doors one or more at a time to keep the battle area looking like daytime. Other missions were top secret, particularly those into North Vietnam, sometimes air dropping "guys in black jumpsuits." They also practiced picking up sandbags with the specially equipped HC-130s that had the forks out front. The purpose was to pick up infiltrators, but they never made any real pickups that way. They did fly as far as one hundred miles in North Vietnam, and on one occasion the MiGs got as close as ten miles while chasing them out. Fortunately those fighters were not loaded with rockets and so the C-130 was out of range when it escaped back into South Vietnam.

They had to take planes into Don Muang, at Bangkok, for maintenance sometimes, and one of these times they stayed there at the Federal Hotel for three months. Jimmy says he has fond memories of Bangkok, and I'm sure many of the rest of

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Certain missions required unusual credentials.

us can relate to that. Another kind of mission altogether was carrying the dead, which was grim and sad. The C-130s hauled many American bodies to Saigon’s Tan Son Nhut, or to Clark AFB, and occasionally to Mactan.

Not only were the missions in Vietnam pretty “hairy,” but there were quite a few characters in the crew force who made life a little crazy. One time, at Bien Hoa, with about twenty C-130s on the ground, the mission commander, a colonel eager to do his job regardless of good reason, ordered them all off the ground immediately. “Why would he do that?” I wondered. Jimmy said it had something to do with getting the mission done, and he would not listen to any complaints about having no fuel—he just wanted them on their way without delay. Some of the aircraft commanders actually received disciplinary action for attempting to argue with the colonel, and one was court martialed for refusing to take off when ordered. Perhaps the smartest was an aircraft commander who took off from Bien Hoa and declared an emergency as soon as he was out of the airbase traffic pattern, then landed at nearby Tan Son Nhut (Saigon) to get fuel. A colonel Jimmy flew with had come out of ROTC duty (the “Back to the Cockpit” program) to get his combat ticket punched. He intended to fly at 2300 feet down the river that leads to Qui Nhon, where opposing forces were shooting at

each other from opposite river banks! Perhaps the craziest of all was the co-pilot who would come aboard with bandoliers of ammunition slung across his chest, carrying a rifle. On one mission out of Bien Hoa they paired him up with the most nervous aircraft commander in the squadron. As they started their initial climb over the paddies and shacks



Jimmy bought this little motorcycle and sneaked it aboard on a flight home, even though the A/C had said “no personal stuff” to save weight. He says the A/C caught him rolling it out the back and got really angry! Photo from Jimmy Honeycutt.

beyond the base perimeter, this gun-toting hero slid his window back and started firing his rifle at the ground, with shell casings clanging around in the cockpit! The shaken aircraft commander shouted, “Why did you do that?” He replied, “I saw something move!” “You idiot,” shouted the AC, “those are our troops!”

Jimmy says he enjoyed his tour, but it was a young man’s game. One thing that did make it endurable were the excellent engineers and loadmasters and the first-rate maintenance they got. Except for the air conditioning! Apparently there was a shortage of parts for the C-130 air conditioning and it was “always broken.” So the crews often flew around with their side windows open.

Then there was the livestock. These C-130s hauled chickens and pigs from the South to the Montagnards, Mountain People, and that left the cargo decks pretty filthy. Jimmy said they were hard to clean. But the oddest living cargo they ever carried was the cows with parachutes! Apparently someone got the idea that if they could drop some better breeds of cattle into remote areas for the relatively primitive farmers, it would improve the DNA of the stock they were raising and they

would benefit economically and nutritionally.

The C-130 can operate from a 1500 foot runway, but the remote areas where the rural populations live did not even have these, so then the problem was how to get the cows into those remote areas. The solution was airdrop. That is, to put cargo ‘chutes on them and drop them in...and that is what was done. “Did the cows survive?” I asked. Well yes and no, it seems. They survived the airdrop just fine, but the wily Montagnards were



ARVN (South Vietnamese Army) troops loading onto a C-130E. Note the huge auxiliary fuel tanks, which enabled the C-130 to make very long over-water hops. The ARVN loaded 300 troops onto a C-130, which would carry 55 or 60 U.S. troops in combat gear. The soldiers had to stand up for the flight. Photo by Jimmy Honeycutt.

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Left, cargo readied with parachutes for airdrop includes some cattle to improve the Montagnard's herds. Cattle survived the landing, but the airdrop's purpose was misunderstood by hungry mountain villagers.

squatting on the ground waiting for them, as they sharpened their primitive knives. Steaks for everyone!

In 1965 or '66 Jimmy went to Taiwan in one of the first two squadrons into Tai Chen, or CCK. They called it "Tai Chen Air Base," even after they learned that in Chinese, "Tai Chen" means "air base." This was a six month tour in the 776th Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS), and they later went back on a PCS tour to CCK. This was fine with Jimmy, because Taiwan was a great place to be. He has a high regard for the people and the locale in Taiwan.

After that final thirteen-month tour, Jimmy ended up back at Pope AFB where his squadron found that he was "not combat

qualified"! Why was this? He had been so busy dodging bullets and making assault drops in a real combat zone that he had not had a formal check ride in over one year. So he was put back into the training program. Does this sound familiar? With only a month to go before he would leave the Air Force and commence his first civilian job with Western Air Lines, Jimmy Honeycutt spent his last days at Pope AFB training to do the same combat flying he had been doing for real. Probably it should have been him training the instructors, but that's not what the book says.

Finally, Jimmy Honeycutt's obligation to the Air Force was met, and in May of 1968, he achieved his real career goal and got hired by Western Airlines in Los Angeles. He started his civilian career as a Guy in Back (GIB) in Boeing 737s. This was

a union spat—they insisted on three-pilot crews, but the 737 had no flight engineer station, so one pilot had to take up a passenger seat in back. Later he got a great route, flying Boeing 707s to Hawaii. Then one day Delta bought Western. Of course that's another story. Or actually, a whole lot of other stories, as The Captain reminisces on about the years he spent flying "revenue" passengers. But he will never forget those few wild years flying the wonderful Hercules in Asia.



Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood

The 12 members listed below joined between the last issue of the MEM and the 17th of May. You can find more information on our website database. The Mekong Express Mail wishes you all a hearty "Welcome Home."

Member No.	Branch	Last Name	First Name	City	State	Email
1661	USAF	van Sickler	Court	New Braunfels	TX	cbvs98@hotmail.com
1662	USAF	Albrecht	Paul	Shelby Twp	MI	palbrecht3@yahoo.com
1663	Other	Corbett	Chris	Crail	UK	ChristopherCorbett3@gmail.com
1664	USAF	Atkinson	Willis	Royston	GA	WMAtkinson@netzero.net
1665	USAF	Mooney	Ken	Pacifica	CA	MoonMan45@sbcglobal.net
1666	USAF	Kelly	Don	West Hartford	CT	Luck95M5@Gmail.com
1667	USA	Weaver	David	Lisle	IL	Glacier2093@att.net
1668	USAF	Yoakum	Michael	Houston	TX	Yankyoakum@Gmail.com
1669	USAF	Scheall	Daniel	Port Townsend	WA	flowerfeet.scheall@gmail.com
1670	USAF	McAdams	Mike	Las Cruces	NM	Yuba9City@yahoo.com
1671	USAF	Silva	Raymond	Lowell	MA	Invert76@comcast.net
1672	USAF	Headley	Richard	King George	VA	HeadleyRichard08@gmail.com



Left, hauling water and mixing concrete to pour well casings. Three hand-dug wells were completed during Phil's tour.

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to Kenya, Uganda, or Tanzania, but to Thailand! I was a little disappointed at first, but soon got over it. Thailand sounded better the more I learned about the country, its people, and the rural community development project for which I'd be training!

It was to be a quick pivot from Miami University to Peace Corps training. In fact, I was ordered to report to San Francisco for orientation the day following my last final exam. No cap & gown routine for me. I was out to save the world! Forty-four trainees for the community development project in rural Thailand assembled, and we were soon off to Hilo, Hawaii, for three months of intensive training—everything from Asian cultural studies, a crash course in tropical agriculture, physical training, endless inoculations, to four hours of daily, Thai-spoken language instruction. Thai graduate students, on leave from the University of Hawaii for a semester, put us through our paces as we struggled to learn the five-tonal language. After just a couple of weeks we were forbidden to speak English at the dinner table, just Thai. Damn, it was quiet around that dinner table for several weeks!

Unfortunately, some trainees simply could not hear and reproduce the sounds. Though otherwise bright, dedicated Peace



Phil's Thai government-provided little house was "palatial." Note the galvanized steel water tank; contents were carefully conserved during the long dry season.

Corps hopefuls were "de-selected" from the program for language deficiencies and other suitability issues. For a bit of perspective on the success rates, we left Hilo with a class of 24 of the 44 who began the training. This group shrank to 18 within a couple of months in upcountry Thailand. The "culture shock" was simply too much for some; their idealism wasn't enough to carry them through the challenges of assimilation and acute isolation.

Believe me, living by myself in such a remote area just north of the Cambodian border, about 60 miles southwest of Ubon in northeast Thailand, was no picnic. Almost no one there had even seen a Caucasian before.

No English was spoken, so my language skills had to ramp up quickly. Though my language training was in "central Thai" a high percentage of the local folks spoke more of a Lao dialect, or Cambodian, which is a non-tonal language unrelated to Thai or Lao. I soon learned to converse reasonably well with virtually all of the men. Interestingly, the majority of the village women in that area only spoke their native dialect/language—virtually no Thai. Consequently, my conversations



Oxen were the common draft animals seen, but this Thai/Cambodian man used a pony to pull his wagon of sugarcane to market.

with many of them were quite limited.

As I settled in to life on my own, it was time to begin "saving the world" with meaningful community improvement projects. Very little was available locally in the way of materials to launch the introduction of new cash crops to the subsistence-level economy, or to initiate well-digging projects. The soil was poor, water mighty scarce during much of the year, and the villagers were reluctant to deviate much from their time-proven survival crop of rice. I eventually got some cooperation from USAID and the Thai Ministry of Agriculture for watermelon and other vegetable and field corn seed supplies, plus some fertilizer and insecticides. I had to take long trips by bicycle, ride a primitive rural bus, and take very long train rides to Bangkok to get necessary materials. Even more of a trick was to convince the

Continued next page.



His transistor radio was one of Phil's most valued possessions—and his only direct news source from the outside world

village farmers to actually try some new methods and crops. A much-too-long story shortened is that tangible success with community development projects was marginal by comparison with my expectations. Frankly, the word “frustrating” came to mind often! I did get along well with everyone, though, and there were no “Ugly American” incidents. I’m confident the states of Thai/American relations and perceptions were boosted during my two-year stay.

Incidentally, one day four years later while flying from Korat to Ubon, I diverted my USAF U-10 Helio southward down low over the village where I’d lived for two years. Little seemed to have changed from the time I’d arrived there six years earlier at the beginning of the Peace Corps stint. This was disappointing, but change comes slowly in such a backwoods area and the time-proven ritual of rice-only subsistence agriculture persists. So much for saving the world!

During those two years long ago of living in that part of the “Third World,” I came to have considerable respect for and a spirit of friendship with those village folks who were so removed from our modern world. My empathetic, positive feelings stuck as the war nearby escalated. I recall the angst of learning about the Gulf of Tonkin incident on my transistor radio in August 1964, as I listened to the *Voice of America* one night. It was quite distressing, and I didn’t relish the prospects of a long, questionable war being rationalized for rapid escalation by LBJ and the politicians. The validity of the Gulf of Tonkin incidents have come into serious question by released public records and military historians over the

years. Incidentally, U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam was still a modest 23,300 by the end of 1964, but was increasing dramatically every month.

My misgivings about the war did not rise to the level of my becoming a Conscientious Objector. I was willing to serve in the armed forces and to do my part in every regard. I won’t suffer readers through most of the details, but will share with you that my local draft board “wanted me” within a few months of returning from the Peace Corps assignment in May, 1965. Though they’d granted me a two-year deferment for that service, they were not sympathetic toward my recent acceptance to graduate school back at Miami U and request for another year’s deferment. I was unceremoniously sent to Columbus, Ohio with a busload of rowdy 18-year-olds. We all took draft physicals that day, so the wheels had been set in motion.

Good morning, Vietnam! What an inspiration to find a better way! At a USAF Reserve unit, I found a slot for Officers Training School (OTS), which meant thirty days only of active duty upon graduation, then the monthly drill routine. A very attractive deal! I was soon off to Lackland AFB, the 12-week OTS experience, and a commission. I can’t describe how boring that Personnel Officer duty at the USAF Reserve assignment was, though. Within a couple of months I applied for Extended Active Duty, specifying “for one year only” and to Thailand as an interpreter.

How naïve I was to expect that request to be honored! My orders specified a four-year assignment to Tinker AFB, Oklahoma, as a Personnel Officer. Not at all what I had in mind! Within a year at Tinker I’d applied for and was accepted to Undergraduate Pilot Training. My UPT Class 68-H graduated in June of 1968, and virtually all of us were in the “pipeline” to Southeast Asia. I was assigned to a U-10 (What the hell is that?) and found myself back in Thailand by October.

Considering my deep, long-held reservations about our engagement in the Vietnam War, I’ve often wondered how I’d have reacted to an assignment to an F-4 or a Thud. Yes, I would have done that to the very best of my ability; however, the comparatively benign mission of our unarmed U-10s, the chance to drop in to numerous Thai village airstrips on special operations missions, to fly into Laos, and to communicate with the local folks made for my perfect flying assignment. Superb memories, and I didn’t have to shoot up villages and their occupants, though there were plenty of “bad guys” out there who were hell-bent on killing us Yankee Air Pirates.

Go Air Force! Go Peace Corps!



Khiem Tong, Phil, Awut. The two monks stopped by often for informal English lessons.

Candidate Biographies for the 2015 Election of the TLC Brotherhood Board of Directors

My name is Gary Beatty

I am currently the Corporate Secretary of the TLCB, and am asking for your vote for another term in that position.

I served with the USAF in Thailand as a Medic (90270/90250A) with the 56th USAF Hospital and the 56th SOW MedCAP program at NKP in 1973-74. Pictures of one of my MedCAP ops are posted on the TLCB Website (photos.tlc-brotherhood.net).

I joined the TLCB in 2004, and have attended every reunion—except one—since then. I was elected TLCB Vice-President in 2007, and served as reunion chair for the Philadelphia (2008) and Cape Canaveral (2009) reunions. In 2009, I was elected as a TLCB Board Member-at-Large, and was re-elected to that position in 2011 & 2013.

In 2012, I was appointed by then-President Frank Marsh to Chair an ad hoc “Audit Committee,” that reviewed all TLCB finances. The report of that committee was presented to the membership at the San Antonio Reunion. You can review it in the December, 2012 *Mekong Express Mail*. In 2013, at the request of the Board of Directors, I applied for—and obtained—trade marking of the TLCB logo through the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

In 2014, when the TLCB Secretary resigned in the middle of his term, President John Sweet appointed me to fill the remaining term as secretary. Since assuming the secretary duties at the reunion in Colorado Springs, I am compiling all official records of the TLCB since its inception—an on-going process, which can then be maintained by the secretary. If elected to a full term as secretary, I hope to complete this compilation.

At the 2014 reunion, the board directed President Sweet to establish an ad hoc committee to review the TLCB Bylaws. I was appointed to chair that committee, which is presently engaged in the review to be completed by the upcoming reunion in Boston.

For the past 28 years, I’ve been employed as an Assistant State Attorney in Brevard County, Florida, home of the Kennedy Space Center. In addition to prosecuting criminals, I’ve been teaching law and training law enforcement officers for over 20 years.

I will appreciate your vote as Secretary of the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood. If you have any questions, please e-mail me at: beattygd@yahoo.com

George Shenberger

I am running for Member at Large and would like to tell you a little about myself.

I was in the United States Air Force from November 1965 to February 1969. I went to Chanute AFB and Aerospace Ground Power Equipment Repair School there after basic at Lackland AFB. After graduating from the ground power course, my next assignments were Mather AFB in Sacramento for a year and McConnell AFB for more schooling on gas turbine engines. My next stop was Korat, Thailand for a year where I was a member of the 388th T.F.S. providing support for the F-105 missions over North Vietnam. After that, it was off to Nellis AFB in Las Vegas, then TDY to Naha, Okinawa. During my time there, the North Koreans captured the U.S. Pueblo, and I volunteered to go to South Korea, Suwon Rock AFB when the Air Force sent a squadron of F-101s to Sowon from Naha.

After my military service, I worked for Johnson Controls as a maintenance machine repairman for 34 years, and retired in York, PA in 2004. My wife, Ruth Ann, and I raised four children; three graduated from college and the youngest girl manages our preschool in York, Jkandjlnurseryschool.com. I am a full-time landlord in York,

PA and Wildwood Crest, NJ, where Ruth and I are property managers.

I have visited Thailand and Laos three times and have traveled the roads with Mac Thompson and visited John Middlewood, who was a blessing to everyone and will be missed by all. We toured the schools, orphanages, and some of the projects you read about in the *Mekong Express Mail*. These trips gave me an opportunity to see our TLCB Assistance Program at work! The appreciation the students and teachers show is unbelievable. Travelling at our own expense, and actually seeing these locations and what little the children and teachers have to work with, made me realize that I would like to help with the TLCB objectives!

With my past military experiences and my present, successful business ventures, I know I could be an asset to the TLCB and the kids, and I am asking you to vote for me for Member at Large.

George Shenberger

A&P graduate of Northrop Institute of Technology, Inglewood, CA

I am Les Thompson

I have been a proud member of the TLCB since February 1999, currently Chairman of the Assistance Committee and TLCB Vice-President.

My SEA duty was with Det. 5, 621st TAC Air Control Squadron, better known as Invert, at NKP from 1970 to 1971.

If re-elected, I pledge to fulfill my duties of office with honor and integrity.

Michael “Mike” Potaski

Is running for re-election as a Member-at-Large of the Board of Directors. Mike is a native of Massachusetts who enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1968. After Intelligence training at Ft. Holabird, MD he spent a year at the Defense Language Institute, Biggs Field, TX learning Vietnamese. Mike then spent a year and a half as an Intelligence Specialist/Interrogator in the Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam in Saigon.

He returned to the U.S. to a holding assignment with the G2, 1st U.S. Army at Ft. Meade, MD while waiting to enter the State Department’s Foreign Service Institute. After studying Laotian for a year at FSI he returned to Southeast Asia in 1973. Diverted from an assignment to Project 404, he went to Nakhon Phanom for duty as an interrogator/translator with the Joint Casualty Resolution Center. Following that assignment, he was transferred to the Deputy Chief JUSMAG in Nakhon Phanom as an intelligence specialist supporting the U.S. Defense Attache in Vientiane, Laos. In May 1975, he returned to Washington for assignment with the Defense Intelligence Agency preparing intelligence papers and briefings for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Following that assignment, he went to Headquarters, Allied Forces Central Europe in Brunssum, Netherlands.

After taking a discharge from the Army in 1980, Mike was hired by the Defense Intelligence Agency as a civilian analyst. He advanced from that position to Senior Analyst and then Branch Chief of the South and Southeast Asia Branch in the Office of the J2, JCS. He then went on to serve as Chief of the Analysis Division, Defense Intelligence Warning Staff before retiring in 1994 as Director of the DoD I&W Staff. Mike looks forward to the arrival of the *MEM* and reading about the experiences of other TLCB members. He returned to SEA in 2004 with members of the Assistance Committee to see first hand some of the projects we support. At that time, he took advantage of the opportunity and returned to Saigon for a brief visit.

An American Hero, Ed Leonard Lt Col, USAF, Retired

Tributes by Paul Lee and Tracy Leonard-Turi

I first learned of Ed Leonard while reading “The Rescue of Streetcar 304” by Kenny Fields. In May of 1968, Fields, then a U.S. Navy pilot, took off in his A7 from the carrier USS America on his first combat mission over Vietnam. Once “feet dry,” he and his wing man were diverted to Laos. Fields was shot down and a search and rescue (SAR) was quickly mounted. And that is when Capt Ed Leonard came into his life.

Leonard, “Sandy 7,” was flying his A-1E Skyraider out of Nakhon Phanom (NKP) as part of the SAR. Leonard was also shot down, his second time in his time there. He was able to evade searchers for about 18 hours before being captured and started on a journey to Hanoi. He spent 5 1/2 years in the Hanoi Hilton, over three in solitary confinement. He was released as part of Operation Homecoming in 1973. Captain Leonard was



At left, photo of Ed in front of an A-1E Skyraider as “Sandy 7” in 1968. By permission from Kenny Fields. Above, Ed in a happier time. Photo from Tracy Leonard-Turi.



awarded four Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, one with the Combat V device and the Prisoner of War Medal. He flew 257 combat missions and took part in the recovery of 18 downed aircrew members in North Vietnam and Laos.

I met Ed and his wife Suzanne about five years ago. After I told Kenny that we didn’t live far from them he encouraged me to make contact. My wife, Patti, and I were looking at houses in the Long Beach, Washington area and Ed and Suzanne lived just a couple miles away in Ilwaco. The day we met, we had breakfast together at Benson’s in Long Beach. Ed signed a

picture of himself in Kenny’s book and I gave him a 23rd TASS coin. Suzanne asked us to come by their home when we finished looking at houses that afternoon. It was nice to get to continue getting to know them. Before we left for home, Ed gave me a 4th Allied P.O.W. Wing coin. I will treasure it always. I am honored to have known such a great man.

Ed died on Veterans Day 2014; he will be missed. I salute you my friend.

The following is a tribute that Ed’s daughter, Tracy, wrote of her father after saying goodbye. She gave her permission for me to include it here.

Please say a prayer (and raise a glass) for my dad:
“I’ll See You On The Other Side”

Lt Col Edward W. Leonard, Jr. (August 9, 1938-November 11, 2014), written by his daughter, Tracy Leonard-Turi

Shortly after Memorial Day weekend in 1968, my father was shot down over Laos in his A-1E Skyraider, and the irony of this coincidence was not lost on him. He distinctly remembered that in spite of the angry cadre of enemy soldiers in hot pursuit, he had plenty of time to wager whether he was destined to be forever remembered on Memorial Day or Veterans Day. He didn’t yet know that he would survive a brutal capture, five years of hell in various prisoner of war camps, and three and a half years in solitary before coming home to tell his story.

Stories were his forte. He told lots of stories, and each time he told them the punch line became funnier and more audacious. He loved nothing more than to jubilantly recount episodes of his own trickery and juvenile antics: the hiding of secret messages to other POWs under human feces, the stealing of the prison guards’ chair dowel rods that he clandestinely carved into chess pieces, the lighting of farts, trickery that allevi-

Leonard continues on page 12

Leonard continued from page 11

ated the unfathomable boredom and also took his mind off the inhumanity of it all.

Over the years, he began to leave the diabolical details of his torture out of these stories, preferring the lighthearted versions and re-imagining himself as a grand character in his own movie. It was a wise tactic and one that made the past bearable. Yet, his stories were also powerful because they weren't just stories. They were parables about hardship and tragedy, parables that remind us all to never give up. To never, ever, ring that bell.

My dad was a man of great courage. "Sandy?" was stubborn and intrepid and he had grit. He looked danger in the eye and never backed down. Ever. He survived over 250 of the most dangerous combat missions of the Vietnam war. Every man he ever went in to rescue came home alive. Every damn one of them. And although it cost him five years of freedom, he never regretted one day of captivity. Never!

A verse in Mark Knopfler's song, "Brothers in Arms," a song about a soldier dying in the battlefield, perfectly captures my father's sentiments:

Through these fields of destruction
Baptisms of fire
I've witnessed your suffering
As the battles raged higher
And though we were hurt so bad
In the fear and alarm
You did not desert me
My brothers in arms

He was proud that he never deserted his brothers-in-arms. He was proud that they never abandoned him. And he always said that he would do it all over again: the fear, the hunger, the humiliation, and the pain, just to save even one of these men, these brothers-in-arms, all of whom he loved dearly and with his whole heart.

And, knowing my dad, he would do it all over again with the same irreverence, the same aplomb and the same wise-ass sense of humor that frequently cost him a rifle butt to the spine, or a broken jaw, or the inability to think straight for weeks on end as he lay splayed out on a rack at the back of his cell, knocked senseless and incapacitated, but still snickering quietly inside.

The measure of any man is whether he leaves this earth having added more than he extracted. My father positively changed the lives of numerous men for the better. In many cases they were strangers and he risked his life for them, prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, so that they could live.

He loved them UNCONDITIONALLY and GENEROUSLY and without regret. He was resolute in his dedication to his country, to his brothers-in-arms, to his fellow cellmates, and to his mission. My dad and all of these men returned home with honor.

My dad's grit had a long shelf life too. He was supposed to die a long time ago. Years of demonic torture had taken their toll. He suffered from congestive heart failure and advanced lung disease. His spine bore the scars of numerous fractures and was crumbling; many of his large joints had been replaced

multiple times.

But my father refused to capitulate to death, which he had defied many, many times over the years. When I flew out last week to say goodbye, it was clear that he still considered death, which he could see lurking in the shadows of the VA hospital, a far less insidious foe than any he had faced in wartime. Even as he and his fellow POW buddy, Dennis, hung out together one last time, remembering their years together as LULUs, I swear I saw them both gleefully giving the Grim Reaper the finger every time it limped furtively toward our doorway.

My father simply didn't have time for all that. Not when there was a steak dinner waiting for him at The Depot, pancakes at Benson's, seafood from Jessie's, Marionberry jam from The Berry Patch, and Mongolian barbeque with his good friend, Merlin. For years, his own doctor had categorically told him to cut it out with all those high cholesterol meals. He gave his doctor the finger too. He'd dieted for five years in Laos and decided he didn't have time for all that either.

In fact, for his last great evening on earth, he and Merlin enjoyed a prodigious Italian meal at Fulio's, one of his favorite restaurants in Astoria... a steak "as raw as the law allows," spaghetti ragu with two extra meatballs, steamer clams and an impressive basket of garlic ciabatta. What a way to go.

This afternoon, it finally took the angels themselves to descend from their perches and personally whisk my Dad away, cradling his spirit in their arms and protecting him from harm. He had his challenge coin so he could one day welcome his buddies to the other side. He was at peace. And, he will be forever remembered on Veterans Day, a very poignant and fitting end.

My father's final wish was for all the people he loved, and all of their loved ones, to be happy and blessed and protected from above. As a final farewell, I want to share with you a short blessing, "Beannacht," written by the Irish poet and philosopher, John O'Donohue. It is a blessing that I hope you will all carry with you in your hearts and minds for all your days, and pass along to every person you meet throughout your lifetime:

"Beannacht"

by John O'Donohue

On the day when the weight deadens on your shoulders and you stumble,
may the clay dance to balance you.
And when your eyes freeze behind the grey window and the ghost of loss gets in to you,
may a flock of colours,
indigo, red, green, and azure blue
come to awaken in you a meadow of delight.
When the canvas frays in the currach of thought
and a stain of ocean blackens beneath you,
may there come across the waters
a path of yellow moonlight to bring you safely home.
May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
may the clarity of light be yours,
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.
And so may a slow wind work these words of love
around you,
an invisible cloak to mind your life.



From the Archives

Editor's Note: Forty years ago in the Spring of 1975, South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos fell under communist control. One of TLCB's own, Les Strouse, flew the last Western civilian plane out of Laos on May 25, 1975. He wrote about it, in his own inimitable voice, in the March 2003 issue of the Mekong Express Mail. It certainly seems appropriate to reprint it in the Spring issue of the MEM.

The Last Nerve Wracking Flight out of Laos

by Les Strouse

Up until 21 January 1975 I was flying the C-46, Twin Beech H-18, and Pilatus Porter for Continental Air Services, Inc. (CASI) primarily in Laos, transporting people and cargo and making some aerial deliveries. On the 21st I was selected (hey, I was the junior C-46 pilot) to replace one of our C-46 pilots who was going on home leave. He was TDY to Bangkok flying a C-46 on an almost daily schedule between Bangkok and Phnom Penh. This was to be a 30-day TDY that turned into a 6 month TDY.

Let me explain some details at this point. My crew was made up of one permanently assigned Thai co-pilot and rotating flight mechanic and loadmaster, both Thai. The airplane was a C-46R, N337CA, with 66 plush, fold-up seats, which could be folded up against the wall to allow the airplane to be loaded with cargo without having to completely remove the seats.

From the 22nd of January I flew almost daily to Phnom Penh where we would off-load our cargo and passengers and then, if there was no particular requirement for airlift, we would fly out to a more secure airstrip to await our afternoon schedule back to Bangkok. Concerning the security at Phnom Penh airport, there was incoming artillery or rockets every day that I flew there.

My boss came down to Bangkok from Vientiane to observe our operation. He rode the jump seat to Phnom Penh. He was surprised that we, and all flights, came overhead Phnom Penh at 10,000 feet and made a steep spiraling approach to the runway in order to avoid ground fire. His next surprise was that we were actually parked in a bunker—that quickly followed by incoming artillery rounds. We spent 20 minutes on the ground and took about 15 rounds incoming. We flew out to one of the outlying strips and parked for the day. The boss had planned on staying in Phnom Penh to shop for oriental artifacts, but the amount of incoming changed his mind. He did ask how often this happened and was amazed when we told him, “every day.” I did not get relieved!

Only twice during our tour did we have any really close calls. The first was when very shortly after landing, the incoming started. The last passengers had just departed the airplane and were running toward the bunker when the crew and I deplaned and immediately flopped onto the ramp—under the wing—with all

of that fuel! Not smart, but there we were having our pictures taken as we cowered there. My picture made it into *Newsweek* and *Pacific Stars and Stripes*. Big hero lying on the ground under his airplane. Five minutes of fame. Shrapnel did rattle off the airplane but did no serious damage. One piece hit me

and again did no damage, except to burn my finger when I picked up my souvenir!

The second close call was a late arrival, caused by one of our VIP passenger's arrival at Bangkok Airport late. Being typical flight crew, we were bitching about this. Anyway, we departed 30 minutes behind schedule. We landed at Phnom Penh about 30 minutes late and were parked far away from our normal spot with its close-by personnel bunker. Well, it seems as though two 122mm rockets impacted in our parking spot five minutes after our scheduled arrival time. Had we been on time, I would not be writing this. The next morning I had two new Buddhas added to my chain. BTW, the crew always checked my Buddhas before every flight—no Buddhas, no flight!

Our last flight out of Phnom Penh was on 10 April 1975—23 passengers in a 66-seat airplane. No panic. Our seats were offered to all takers except Cambodians. We had taken quite a few people out in the previous few days. There was no panic, just an orderly departure for those who wanted to leave.

(On 5 November 1990, the same crew that had flown the C-46 out of Phnom Penh on 10 April 1975 flew the first Western commercial flight, a Bangkok Airways Dash-8, back into Phnom Penh. What are the odds?)

After the tension of the Phnom Penh operation, we got a chance to relax in Bangkok with a couple of admin-type flights and one U.S. Embassy Commissary flight to Rangoon. One three-day trip to Singapore to have an engine change kept me from some evacuation flights from Saigon. I guess I was just not destined to make ALL of the evacuations!

Our relaxation was short lived. I flew the C-46 to Udorn and was transported across the river to Vientiane and started ferrying CASI airplanes to Udorn with one trip to Bangkok. That trip was in a Porter. My passenger was high on the Pathet Lao wanted list. The night before the flight, I furnished him with a complete CASI uniform and advised him that a company car would pick him up at 0600 and transport him directly to the airplane and we would depart immediately. We flew direct to Khon Kaen where we refueled before proceeding to Bangkok.

Mr. Edgar “Pop” Buehl, was out of Laos. And he never gave me back my uniform!

Now it was back to Udorn and my C-46. I was joined there by another C-46 and a C130 where the crews set about planning the evacuation of Long Tieng, the infamous Lima Site 20 Alternate. The evacuation would be flown out of Udorn without the knowledge of

Out of Laos continues on page 14

On the Company radio, our CASI boss called us and told us to never come back to Laos no matter who requested it. We, the crew had already made this decision.

Out of Laos continued from page 13

the Lao officials—we hoped. The C-46s were stripped of their seats and ropes were tied across the fuselage to keep the passengers, who sat on the floor, from sliding into the back of the airplane on takeoff. I do not remember what the C-130 passenger load was, but the C-46s were legally permitted to carry 35



On the ramp at Long Tieng, refugees crowd the tarmac waiting and hoping for a flight out to safety and freedom. Les evacuated refugees from here on the 12th through the 14th of May, 1975, being mobbed on every pickup. The seats were removed from the C-46s and ropes were tied across the fuselage to keep people from sliding and shifting the load, which could have caused them to crash on takeoff.

passengers. What is this legal stuff? We took out 65 on each flight, and if one engine had as much as coughed we would have not cleared the ridge. The engines did not cough!

We continued this operation, during daylight hours, on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of May. On the 14th, I made the last flight out of Long Tieng. We were being mobbed and Vang Pao (VP) and Mr. Jerry Daniels of the CIA had departed on a Bird Air Bell 206 helicopter to a nearby strip where they were picked up by a Porter and transported to Udorn.

We now started refugee shuttle flights from Udorn to Nam Phong—135 passengers per trip, as many trips as we could make before we just got too tired and called a break. The weather turned bad on us, so the USAF Combat Controllers set up a temporary beacon and runway lights. I guess the reason we finally stopped this operation was that the Nam Phong facilities reached a saturation point. I did take Vang Pao and couple of his wives and hangers-on from Udorn to Nam Phong. *That was the last time I saw VP.*

It was quiet for a few days. Then, I was asked to bring my

An exceptionally good view of Long Tieng, LS20A, showing legendary Skyline Ridge in the background, and the busy "one way runway" with its limestone arresting gear at the far end. In recent years Mac Thompson has gained entry to this site and TLCB is providing school assistance in the village. Photos by Les Strouse.



airplane to Vientiane for maintenance. I did not need any maintenance! But, when the boss asked, you did it. Immediately upon arrival, maintenance stands were pushed up to the airplane and mechanics swarmed over it. It looked like absolute confusion. Well, the idea was to confuse anyone who was observing. The CASI Nationalist Chinese employees were not allowed by the Pathet Lao to leave Laos. With all of the "maintenance" and cargo loading, 15 Chinese employees and their families were secreted in the "hell hole" under the cockpit... must have been really crowded and claustrophobic down there. As soon as the "maintenance" was completed we departed for Udorn, and immediately after crossing the river into Thai airspace, we got our passengers up for a bit of fresh air. They were all smiles and thanked us profusely.

Next afternoon we were again called to Vientiane for "maintenance." Same, same as last night but this time it was our Filipino employees who needed evacuation. Same scam and it worked again, but the crew and I were getting nervous.

We got another call to come to Vientiane to pick up "Company Cargo." The crew and I discussed this tip and decided, "What the hell, let's go!" Upon arrival on the old Air America ramp we were told to shut down the engines but to stay in the cockpit and be ready to leave as soon as the cargo was loaded. It really was CASI Company Cargo, metal turning lathes and other sophisticated equipment.

The airplane was about half loaded when the "students" arrived declaring that the cargo was the property of the Lao People and that we could not take it out. We, the crew, stayed in the cockpit for 2½ hours while the airplane release was negotiated. Did I mention that there were anti aircraft guns on both sides of the runway?

The cargo that had been loaded was

Continued next page.

pushed out of the airplane onto the ramp and we were told that we could leave. We did, post haste. Post haste enough that I blew over a maintenance stand. The nice thing about that was that it was being used as bleachers by some Pathet Lao “students,” spelled soldiers. On the Company radio, our CASI boss called us and told us to never come back to Laos no matter who requested it. We, the crew had already made this decision. It was a nerve-wracking experience that was full of mixed emotions. Very happy to get out but I was leaving behind my home of almost five continuous years for an unknown future.

We flew the last Western civilian airplane out of Laos on the 25th of May 1975. A few admin flights, within Thailand and another trip to Rangoon for the U.S. Embassy brought my initial SEA tour to an end on 1 July 1975 eleven years and one month after my first arrival. It would be almost 15 years before I would again be employed in SEA.



Flying to Boston?

Transportation from Logan Airport to Crowne Plaza Woburn via Coach Line:

Take **Logan Express** Woburn to Anderson Regional Transportation Center. There are Logan Express Buses to many locations; be sure to take the one designated for Woburn.

Distance from hotel--3 Miles South West

Complimentary shuttle service from 7:00am - 10:00pm.

Call hotel at 781 935 8760 when you arrive at the station.

Logan Express stops at all airport terminals. Travel time is approximately 30-45 minutes.

At Logan Airport, purchase tickets on board the bus upon arrival. Round trip tickets are the most economical and convenient option for customers who are using the service for transportation to and from Logan Airport.

Stay Connected: Woburn Logan express buses have free wifi! Please ask the bus driver for password to access the wifi network.

Logan Express Woburn Fares:

Senior(65+) One-Way Fare: \$11.00

Senior (65+) Round Trip Fare: \$20.00

Adult One-Way Fare: \$12.00, and Adult Round Trip Fare: \$22.00

Children 17 and under ride free

Leaving Logan To Woburn

Weekdays

6:30 am—Midnight every half hour—and 1:15 a.m.

Saturday

7:00 am—11:00 p.m. every hour—and 12:15 a.m.

Sunday

7:00 am—1:00 p.m. every hour

1:00 pm—Midnight every half hour—and 1:15 a.m.

TLC Brotherhood, Inc. Election Official Slate

The nominating period for the 2015 elections ended April 30th, 2015. The election for the TLCB Board of Directors will be the first order of business during the annual meeting of the corporation, which will be held on Saturday, September 12, 2015 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Woburn, MA. No more nominations will be accepted, but write-ins are permitted on the ballot.

The TLCB Board of Directors announces the following slate of nominees for 2015:

Vice President	Les Thompson, Incumbent
Secretary	Gary Beatty, Incumbent
Chaplain	Debbie Stein, Incumbent
Member at Large	(2 Positions open)
Mike Potaski	Incumbent
George Shenberger	Incumbent

NOTE: if you are attending the Annual Meeting, do not mail in the enclosed ballot. This ballot/proxy is ONLY for absentee voters.

“DOVER MINI”

Willi Pete, VWC Chair

The TLCB & the Air Mobility Command Museum host VIETNAM WAR Event

Unlike previous Dover Minis, this one will be an official DoD-sanctioned Vietnam War Commemorative Partner event located in the AMC Museum at Dover AFB, Delaware in June.

The AMC Museum will have a special “Open Cockpit Day” so the public can get a warbirds aircrew perspective inside actual USAF TAC and MAC aircraft on the tarmac surrounding the historic hangar. Inside, there is a new room dedicated to the history of the Vietnam War. TLCB will provide posters, buttons, and brochures and will brief the visitors on the role of Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia in the war.

This is our first official DoD event in the Commemorative Partner Program. A second CP event will be held during the TLCB Boston reunion. Updates are available at the TLCB Forum www.tlc-brotherhood.com

How can we reach you?

If we don't have your current email address you may be missing out on important messages about your Brotherhood. Please send email, phone number, and address changes to us at JKarnes@tlc-brotherhood.com.

BOSTON TLCSB REUNION HIGHLIGHTS

September 10 – 14, 2015

**Crown Plaza Hotel 15 Middlesex Canal Park
Woburn MA, (781) 935-8760**

Be certain to make your room reservations directly with the hotel and inform them you are with the TLC Brotherhood Reunion. The room rate is \$115 and is also available 3 days prior and post reunion, space available.

This year Boston, known as the “Hub of the Universe,” is a fitting location as we celebrate the history of the American fighting men and women who keep our nation free. Our Reunion T-shirt shows silhouettes of both a Revolutionary soldier and modern battle soldier flanking a POW/MIA flag and our reunion logo “We ARE ONE.”

AGENDA:

Thursday September 10:

The Nipa Hut will be open and Registration begins at noon. The evening meal is pay as you go and will be at the award-winning “Best Of Boston” pub in the hotel.

Friday September 11:

Friday morning: We will carpool for a short drive to Lexington & Concord to view the historic Battle Road. The Concord Inn and the homes of some of America’s most illustrious writers, such as Hawthorne, Alcott, Emerson, and Thoreau, are all close by.

Have lunch on your own at The Concord Inn on the town green.

During mid-afternoon, there will be a Forward Air Control presentation comparing the techniques and aircraft used to interdict NVA supplies on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in central Laos in ‘66 with those employed in ‘71 in Southern Laos.

At 7 PM, Les Thompson will conduct a presentation on their February trip through Laos visiting several of the projects our members generously fund. To be followed by:

Assistance Auction

Saturday September 12:

9:00 am: The TLCSB Annual Meeting & Elections.

After lunch, William Peterson and Gerry Frazier will conduct a presentation on intel and air operations used in missions against the Ho Chi Minh Trail followed by a question and answer period.

6 PM: Cocktails and Banquet. The program will include the drawing for the 2015 Rosie’s Quilt.

**Guest Speaker, Captain Hugh Buchanan
Memorial Service**

Sunday September 13:

Escorted tour of Boston, using the “T” (The Metro public transport in Boston).

Potential sites include The Freedom Trail, Old Ironsides & Museum, Faneuil Hall, The Old State House, site of Boston Massacre, Paul Revere’s Home, and The Old North Church are just a few of the highlights and delights of “Olde Beantown.”

Monday September 14

For Those Extending an Extra Day

Guided Tour of Historic Salem, Massachusetts

Depart via the T (Metro) to North Station, Boston, and then a train to Salem. Following the tour, return to Boston via a beautiful one-hour, narrated cruise on the Salem Ferry, a high speed, 33-knot, 92-foot boat with two decks. Adults \$25, seniors \$23 children \$20. The ferry departs Salem for Boston: 1 PM, 4 PM, & 7 PM.

Salem was settled in 1626 and founded as the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The city has the House of Seven Gables; The Witch House, home of Judge Jonathan Corwin during the Witch Trials of 1692; and the former home of Roger Williams, founder of Providence, Rhode Island, who was banned from Salem with his followers for supporting Native Americans rights and arguing for religious freedom.

Salem holds many distinctions, including the only known grave of a Pilgrim from the Mayflower, Fort Pickering, founded by Captain John Smith, and the first muster of forces on Salem Common in 1637. The first armed resistance to the British occurred in Salem two months before Lexington and Concord. It is known as Leslie’s Retreat, when patriots forcefully escorted the Redcoats back to

Boston, in humility without cannon and powder. Salem also played a major part in the East India trade. The Salem Maritime National Historic site has tours daily, including the tall ship Friendship (1797) and the nearby homes of Elias Hasket Derby, who was America’s first millionaire. The Peabody Essex Museum, established by sea captains in 1799, houses vast collections that are unique to our maritime past. There are oriental treasures as well. There are many historic sites in Salem. Don’t miss the treasures of this city.



POW Guest Speaker

Hugh Buchanan is a retired U.S. Air Force captain who will tell us about his six-and-a-half year prisoner of war stay at Hanoi’s Hua Lo Prison, the “Hanoi Hilton.” He was taken while on his 17th bombing mission as co-pilot of an F4 Phantom jet fighter. Shot down over the Red River Delta near Hanoi, he ejected safely, landed near a small village, and was captured, spending six months in solitary confinement.

Come and listen to his exciting story!

