

MEKONG EXPRESS MAIL



The newsletter of the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc. Volume 19, issue 2

WWW.TLC-Brotherhood.com

Impact Laos: The 2018 Trip

By Dr. Tammi Clark and Dr. Theresa Whitney-Corvino

Editor's Note: During the Vietnam War, Major Edward M. Hudgens, an A-1 pilot flying out of Nakhon Phanom, died when his damaged craft crashed into a karst in Laos, near the village of Ban Nahom. In 2002, his son, Jeff, who never really knew his father, made a trip to the village and the crash site. Since then, he created Impact Laos and has made 20 trips back to the area, bringing medical and educational supplies and support, accompanied by a team of co-workers. Impact Laos receives support from the Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB) and the A-1 Skyraiders Association. The following article is excerpted from a much longer report on Impact Laos' most recent visit, written by two doctors accompanying Jeff Hudgens on the trip, Tammi Clark and Theresa Whitney-Corvino. If any reader would like to receive a PDF version of the entire report, please send me a request, at jharrington@nscopy.com

Day One: March 21, 2018

Impact Laos is once again on its way back to Laos! Four individuals have come together to form the 2018 Team. Jeff Hudgens will lead our team, coordinate logistics, and make sure everything runs smoothly. This will be his 20th trip, and by now he has things all dialed in! Well, at least dialed in enough to know that things rarely go exactly as planned. Dr. Tammi Clark will be returning for the third time, as lead of the clinical aspects of the trip, accompanied by her long-time friend, Dr. Theresa Whitney-Corvino, who will make her first trip to Laos. Chris Lucero will also be making his first trip and will go with a focus to investigate future opportunities to expand the technological infrastructure in the areas served. The entire team will work together to



Doctor Tammy Clark "a year later" with new mom. Photos provided by Jeff Hudgens.

bring compassion to the people it will serve, whether that be through individual areas of expertise, or through humanitarian interaction surrounding school projects and construction efforts.

Impact Laos continues on page 3

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Editor's Notebook:

This and That

The June 2018 edition of *The Mekong Express Mail* (MEM) certainly provides a good overview of the work of The Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB). We kick off with an update of the remarkable story that is Impact Laos, the project that Jeff Hudgens has undertaken in memory of his father, Major Edward M. Hudgens, an A-1 pilot who was lost in Laos nearly 50 years ago. Impact Laos receives support from the TLCB Assistance Program and is manned by a heroic group of volunteers that Jeff has assembled. Keep this great program in mind when the next Assistance Program solicitation comes around.

Page 13 shows the premier edition of "The Books of the TLCB," which was announced in the last MEM. It is of course incomplete, and we rely on our members to add to it and make it as accurate as possible.

With "They Called it Naked Fanny," we are continuing our off-again, on-again program of publishing excerpts from books written by TLCB members. As our new feature demonstrates, we have an ample supply of publications to draw from in the future. Scott Harrington and I are not related (that we know of), except perhaps by our literary ambitions.

Along with the profile of Scott Harrington, we include another New Member Profile, that of Barry Rowland. I'm not sure that I started this feature, but I certainly enjoy continuing it, and it certainly proves that the TLCB is a long way from fading into history since it continues to add new members; see the newest member list on page 9.

TLCB's Public Relations Chairman, William Peterson, provides an update and summary of his work with the Department of Defense Commemoration of the Vietnam War, reporting on TLCB's presence at an event at Maxwell Air Force

Base in Montgomery, AL (page 14).

Lastly, the MEM features some preview information about the 2018 TLCB Reunion, October 11 to 13, in Biloxi, Mississippi. With real regret, I will not be able to attend this year since I committed to be part of a continuing education program at the University of Rhode Island scheduled for those dates. I will be moderating a discussion of the legacy of the Vietnam War, which is part of the Osher Lifetime Learning Institute (OLLI) program that is available at many universities.

John Harrington
MEM Editor
jharrington@nscopy.com

Official Notice:

TLCB Election 2018

The TLC Brotherhood, Inc. Board of Directors election will be held on Saturday, October 13, 2018, at the Margaritaville Resort, Biloxi, Mississippi. The TLC Brotherhood Board of Directors has adopted the official slate, which was recommended by the Nominating Committee as announced in the March issue of this newsletter. Official Ballot/Proxy form enclosed.

As prescribed in the bylaws, write-in votes are permitted. The absentee ballot and a proxy designation form are included with this issue, for use only by members who are unable to attend the annual meeting. If you are going to be present to vote, do NOT use either of these forms. If not, use one or the other, but do NOT submit both forms.

NOTE: Candidate biographies are printed on the reverse side of the Official Ballot/Proxy form.

Mekong Express Mail ...is an official publication of The TLC Brotherhood, Inc. This newsletter is furnished to all active member households in support of the Brotherhood's objectives. The views expressed in articles published in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not reflect official TLC Brotherhood policy unless explicitly stated, nor is the TLC Brotherhood, Inc. responsible for the veracity of information furnished by our authors. All rights reserved by The TLC Brotherhood, Inc. in 2018. The TLC Brotherhood, Inc. is a tax exempt, non-profit charitable organization under IRC Section 501(c)(3), and was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1999.

TLC Brotherhood, Inc.

Tax ID #54-1932649

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2017-2018, showing year of term end

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Payments to the TLCB

Via website—uses PayPal, which accepts credit cards.

By check—make checks payable to "TLC Brotherhood, Inc."

Write payment purpose and member number on check.

Mail to (NEW ADDRESS):

TLC Brotherhood

P.O. Box 60

Aspers, PA 17304

Reunion 2018: Biloxi, Mississippi

Impact Laos *continued from page 1*

Day Two: March 22, 2018:

When we finally arrived at the district school we saw that TLCB-funded construction was well underway on the project



People from ten surrounding villages came together to collaborate in enlarging and improving this district school. Bricks are hand-made and wood is from local sources, and funding is from members of the TLC Brotherhood. Photos provided by Jeff Hudgens.

to expand and enclose the primary school. Prior to our arrival, a concrete floor had been poured, the library was completely enclosed, and the first layers of brick were being laid by hand with shovel-mixed concrete mortar; a string was used to keep the layers of brick level. People from ten surrounding villages were present to contribute their labor to construct a school for the local children. The sense of community was inspiring. The framing that would form the windows and doors were pieced together by hand with dovetail construction. Our driver explained that the wood was

Bridge to Laos! Did you know there is now a bridge from NKP to Thakhek? Notice the namesake distant hills in Laos.



contributed by different families and the bricks were all made locally. Truly a community project—and so beautiful to know that *we* were now a part of this community! As we walked around, we planned where we would set up our on-site clinic the next day and formulated our strategy for an efficient flow.

Day Three: March 23, 2018

We ended up providing hands-on care to well over 50 people that morning, all very appreciative. There were a number of clinically interesting and challenging cases, including a woman with a massive abdominal aortic aneurysm and a young man with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. Neither had ever been seen by a physician before. The greatest challenge of complex cases such as these is that there really was very little we could do for their serious conditions given the context of their lives and the healthcare system in Laos. What we could provide was compassion, some measure of relief for what we could treat, and the reassurance that someone cared about them.

Day Four: March 24, 2018

Today was a very special day from start to finish. “The best Monday ever!” It’s difficult to put today into words, but we shall try....

It began on the way to the village. As we were traveling along the dirt road, our driver suddenly said, “Why do people do this? It makes me so angry,” as he suddenly stopped and put the van into reverse. Then he exclaimed, “We’ve got to do something about this!” At this point, we still weren’t sure what he had seen or what he was talking about. It turns out that he had seen two small kittens huddled together that had been abandoned on the side of the road. Tammi got out and scooped them up out of the dirt...they were so small and scared. As she got into the van she passed one of them to Theresa and they were held so they could be close together. After some discussion as to what to do with them, our driver suggested we take them to a Buddhist temple and give them to the monks to care for. As it turns out, there just happened to be a Buddhist camp a little further down the road and off into the jungle. We found our way to their compound and as we pulled up, a monk (dressed in his beautiful orange robes) walked up to our van. Our driver got out and knelt in front of the monk and explained the plight of the kittens. The monk agreed to take them and with a smile waved to Theresa, Tammi, and the kittens to come over. He led us to what appeared to be a meeting area, complete with a big ceremonial gong...and a random blue refrigerator! The monk gestured to place the kittens (by now named Fluffy and Whiskers) on the floor at the monk’s feet. He bent over, gently picked them up, and placed them in a box in the middle of the meeting area. As we were driving away, we watched as he went over to the refrigerator and took out a can of milk. We felt certain that Fluffy and Whiskers would be well cared for and have a good life...as Buddhist cats! We all had a good laugh about what the monk must have thought of all of this—two white women randomly showing up out of nowhere with a couple of kittens!

Impact Laos *continued next page*

Impact Laos *continued from previous page*

As we were wrapping up our clinic time, the school official asked us to write out our names on a piece of paper for him. A little later, at an impromptu and very unexpected ceremony, each of us was recognized and presented a beautifully framed personalized certificate of appreciation for our service to the school and the community. This was an emotional and humbling surprise for all of us. The colorful certificates were signed and sealed by the director of the school and presented with such honor. Later in the day, our driver translated our certificates, which are written in Lao, and we were touched to find out that part of the sentiment included the acknowledgment of our compassionate service to the community and that our names were “recorded and will forever be associated with the building of the elementary school.” It made us all weepy just thinking about it!



Jeff Hudgens receiving recognition from school officials, whose gratitude was obviously sincere. The doctors felt especially honored.

Day Seven:

March 27, 2018

Following breakfast, we were picked up by our driver to begin our day to provide care at the alcohol and addiction recovery center about a two-hour drive north of Vientiane. Along the way, we picked up the founder of the New Life House, the alcohol and addiction recovery center that she started along with her husband. The idea for the New Life House was born out

of seeing street children in Vientiane who she came to discover were out roaming the streets to try to get money for their parents’ addictions. She first started a program for street children in the capital city, then went on to open the addiction recovery center, where she takes in addicts and their families, and helps them try to restore their lives. Most of the people there are addicted to methamphetamine or opium. We heard the stories of the painful detox process that can last months. Then there is the process of helping them recover their lives. She does amazing work with the most loving and enthusiastic heart!

Along the way we drove past many villages and markets, saw countless rice paddies, some dry ones waiting for the next rainy season to produce their crop, and some lush green ones, which are irrigated overachievers. We finally got to the very rustic ferry to make the river crossing that would take us to our destination. The ferry was a precarious looking craft made of scrap metal left over from the war (PSP from the runways) and what appeared to be four little outboard motors, one on each corner of the craft. But we drove right onto it and managed to make it from point A to point B! Once on the other side, we continued along the dirt road until we finally made it to New Life House.

Impact Laos *continued on page 5*

Ban Huay Xay School, in Laos.



Impact Laos *continued from page 4*

We were greeted there by people waiting to receive our care. We quickly set up our on-site clinic out on the warm veranda and began providing treatment to the recovering addicts, their families, the staff, as well as some of the villagers from the surrounding area. There were several ear wax impactions that needed to be cleared as well as a serious shoulder injury, and a healing fractured wrist to bandage. Many of the addicts had such tight muscles, reminders of the difficult and painful physical process of withdrawal. One of Tammi's favorite patients to treat was a new mommy...it was the same woman that she had seen last year when she was pregnant! On that previous visit, Tammi was able to let the new mommy listen to her baby's heartbeat for the first time, and this year Tammi got to meet that same baby; she was adorable!

Day Eight: March 28, 2018 Vientiane

From there we went to the COPE Center (Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise), an amazing organization that provides rehabilitative services, prosthetics, and wheelchairs, free of charge to people who are disabled and/or have been injured by unexploded ordinances (UXOs). COPE also partners with organizations to try to locate and clear UXOs from the Lao countryside. We watched a documentary about one of the organizations doing work in Savannakhet province, not far from the village where we had served. The documentary

All dressed up, waiting to receive TLC Brotherhood supplies.

really drove home the impact of the "Silent War" on the people of Laos – an impact that continues to this day. We learned that Laos is the most heavily bombed country on the planet! The stories are absolutely heartbreaking, even more so having provided care to people in villages just like the ones we saw in the movie. We were so struck by the fact that many of the seniors who we cared for were living in the area at the time those bombs were dropped. It is difficult to imagine the terror that the air strikes would have brought to these villages full of peaceful farmers who love to laugh. Such heartache, yet such hope at the same time.

Heading Home: We Were Honored

What a truly amazing trip this has been from start to finish! We met some incredible people, were honored to provide compassion and care to many, learned so much, and we hope that we were able to be "difference makers." It was truly an honor to work as a great Team of Four!



Mekong Express Mail Index

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

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



Book Excerpt

They Called it Naked Fanny

By Scott Harrington

Chapter 1

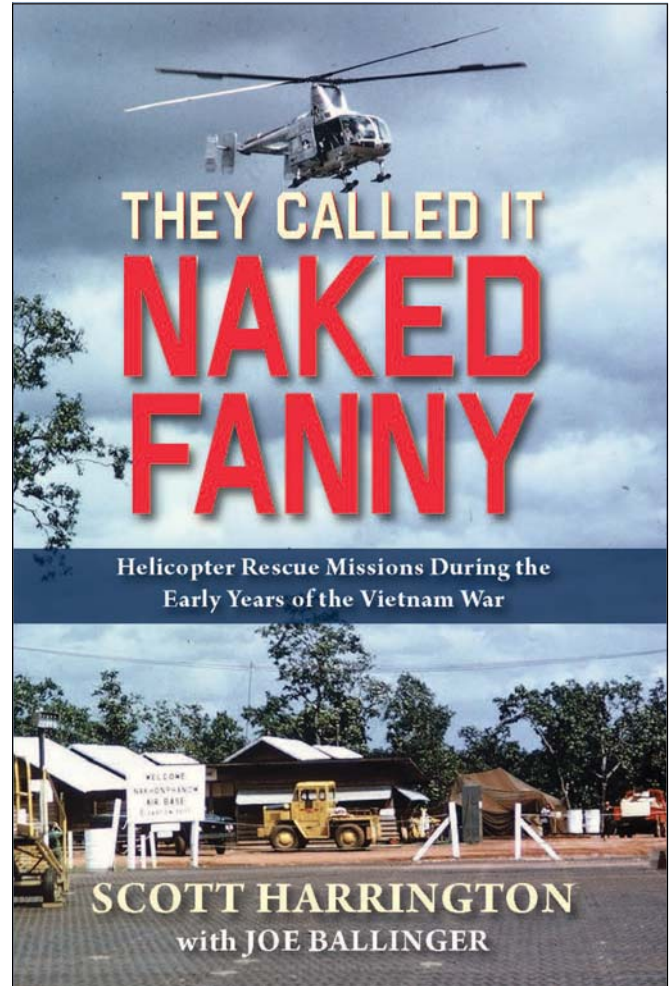
A PLACE CALLED NAKED FANNY?... That fosters memories? ...Must have been an after-hours hangout where GIs went at the end of their shift to help relieve the stresses of their work day. In describing Naked Fanny I'm reminded of the "old saw" or adage about Indiana. It is said about the Hoosier State that "North Vernon is in the south; South Bend is in the north; and French Lick isn't what you think it is." No, Naked Fanny wasn't a bar or, as they say in more polite circles, "a house of ill repute." In fact, its real name wasn't even Naked Fanny. But it's just as real as any of those other places and for thousands of Air Force veterans from the Vietnam War, it brings back tons of memories. You see, Naked Fanny was the nickname associated with a Royal Thai Air Force Base located near the northeastern town of Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. Leave it to a GI to slap a moniker like Naked Fanny on a city called Nakhon Phanom. The following summation is based on factual information gathered and published in an article entitled "The First Bridge," written by Lt. Col. Robert Hanson, USAF, Ret., which appeared in the December 2012 issue of Flight Journal. Portions used appear with his permission.

For the record, in 1962, plans were well underway to build an American airbase on the site of what was called Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base. As a matter of fact, the Seabees had already begun actual work on building the base in August of that year. So, it was not a result of the information that follows that the base was constructed. But since the whys and wherefores of locating the air base at Nakhon Phanom are steeped in international diplomacy; for our purposes a brief summary will suffice. And while it was not the results of a specific U.S. Air Force mission that occurred on January 13th of 1965, that were responsible for its existence, the results of that mission do give credence to the need for the base's being and for the overall mission it supported. The mission, ordered by General Curtis LeMay, Air Force Chief of Staff, involved the bombing of a wooden bridge on Route 7 in Laos.



Author Scott Harrington

To accomplish the destruction of the Ban Ken Bridge, the General called on four F-100 and 16 F-105 fighter bombers from bases in Thailand; four F100s based at Da Nang, South Vietnam; and a recce or RF-101 Voodoo reconnaissance aircraft for damage assessment. Although the Ban Ken Bridge was destroyed, unanticipated anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) placements near the target area brought down an F-100 and an



The cover of Scott's very engaging book.

F-105. While both pilots ejected and survived, it was truthfully "only by the grace of God" that they were rescued by Air America H-34 helicopters. Captain Al Vollmer, the F-105 driver, was rescued only because an Air America C-123 happened to hear his call on the universal emergency aircraft frequency known as the "guard channel" and was able to get in touch with an H-34 that was nearby in Laos on a cargo and personnel run.

Nakhon Phanom village welcome sign. Notice that the spelling on the sign is "NakornPanom," which is how the locals called it.

Captain Chuck Ferguson, pilot of the F-100, through the kindness of Laotian friendlies, was taken out of harm's way and picked up by another Air America H-34 the following day. The fact that the two pilots were rescued almost entirely by chance, underscored the urgent need for locating U.S. Air Force Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) men and aircraft

Naked Fanny continues next page

Below, Kaman HH-43B "Husky" on the PSP ramp at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand. Photos from the author.



nearer to what would become the field of air battle throughout the remainder of the war. Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base (NKP- RTAFB), Thailand was located approximately 350 miles northeast of Bangkok and about 10 miles southwest of the town of Nakhon Phanom. More than 16,000 inhabitants lived in the northeastern Thailand town. The installation was operated continuously from the early 1960s, to approximately 1976, and the base population would swell to nearly 6,000. From this location, personnel supported several U.S. agencies in conducting what became known as "The Secret War." The dangerous missions carried out in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam resulted in many aircraft and personnel being lost. For every one of us who served at Naked Fanny, or NKP, as the VOR (Visual Omni Range) designator for the airstrip was called, the memories are imprinted in our minds as surely as a branding iron leaves its lasting mark on the hide of a steer. Many of the events that triggered those memories may have been similar to events

Below, Major Robert W. Wilson (center) was rescued from a tree in North Vietnam after his F-105D fighter was shot down. He's shown with Captain Tom Curtis (left), a US Navy A-1E pilot and radar site commander Major Howard Douthit.



that occurred at other bases in Southeast Asia during that time. But the memories of Naked Fanny were made special because there was a certain unique feeling about the place. From the earliest temporary duty (TDY) troops who bivouacked there with only tents for shelter as they set up communication links; waited for the call to respond to a search and rescue mission; or established an operational search radar site; to the Air Commandos who fought the "Secret War," there was a feeling of camaraderie. No matter what your duty or mission was, for every guy on that base—whether it was during the early days with fewer than 100 troops, or later on with thousands assigned there—there was a feeling of brotherhood. If you were fortunate to have been there and experienced that special feeling, you were blessed. It was something that the men with whom I served never experienced anywhere else.

To give the reader an idea of what it was like for those of us who were there during the early days, imagine you are an Air Force GI assigned to a radar operations crew. You are off duty, but are still very much aware of the sounds of the small base made up of a radar squadron, a helicopter rescue detachment, a small communications unit and base support personnel. You would often hear the sounds of F-4C and F-105D fighter/bombers passing overhead in flights of four heading toward, or returning from bombing runs over North Vietnam. All of a sudden you hear the "whoop, whoop, whoop" of the blades of the Kaman HH-43B helicopters coming to life along the flight line. You know what is happening. A call has come into the "chopper" unit that an aircraft is down somewhere between Naked Fanny and North Vietnam and its pilot is in harm's way. Now, eight of the guys—four officers and four enlisted troops—men you may or may not know or associate with, even on a casual basis, but who are your guys none-the-less because they live, eat and sleep around you, are being called on to risk their lives in an attempt to rescue a fellow American,

Naked Fanny continued on page 8

Naked Fanny *continued from page 7*

on the ground in enemy territory. It becomes a personal thing—something very serious. And it causes you and others like you who are also off duty to draw into a shell. You go about your business; not making eye contact or talking with anyone else. The radar operations (Invert) crew members on duty draw into their own shells: totally focused on the mission at hand as they soon will be following those two helicopters as small “blips” on their radar scopes and “tracks” on the luminescent plotting board. They’ll need to make sure they keep track of the locations of those fragile birds by keeping in close touch with the pilots on their radios. And they’ll perform their jobs in the most professional way they know how, because eight or nine lives depend on them. And because the range of the radar may be less than where the choppers will go and those

blips will disappear, their hearts will be in their throats while the rescue attempt is being made. For other members of the helicopter rescue team, all they can do is sit and wait and pray for their comrades’ safety. The tension is so thick you can cut it with a knife. And it is present in every man on the base as every breath carries with it

the hope that your guys can get out to the site where the pilot went down; pick him up and return safely to NKP. This day, everything goes as planned and in addition to the eight men who left Naked Fanny a few hours ago, there is a ninth man who may be the most thankful man on the face of the earth at that hour. You hear the choppers coming. There they are! They’re home and it’s “Katy bar the door!” It’s time to celebrate. But first, the base had to be built.



New Member Profile

Scott Harrington

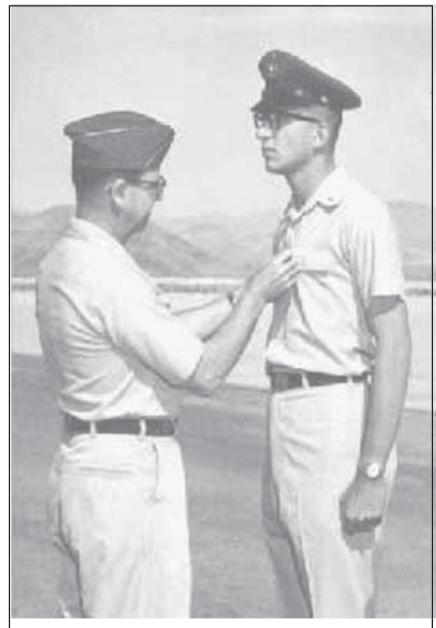
In May of 1965, as part of a contingent from the 5th Tactical Control Group from Clark Air Force Base, The Philippines, I was assigned to Nakhon Phanom (NKP) Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand. My TDY assignment was to serve as Senior Director (Weapons Controller) of a radar operations crew for a period of four months.

It was at NKP, often referred to as “Naked Fanny,” where I was to meet and work with some of the bravest men I ever met. These men, fresh from the states with no combat experience, were to fly an unarmed helicopter without aircraft armament, no armor-plating, no self-sealing fuel tanks, and with rotor blades made of spruce wood and covered with neoprene, into hostile enemy territory to rescue fellow pilots whose aircraft had been shot down by enemy fire. These men and their flying machines were dubbed— “Blades of Wood, Men of Steel.”

Over the years, a few of the stories of their rescue missions were shared on various websites and in magazines, but never in their entirety. I was fortunate to have kept in touch with some of these men following my time in the Air Force and was trusted to tell the stories of the five TDY helicopter units that

flew from NKP in 1964 and 1965.

As for me, I served four and a half years in the Air Force with assignments at Sioux City, Iowa (SAGE); Clark AB, Philippines with TDYs to Ton Son Nhut Air Base (Saigon); Nakhon Phanom, Thailand; Dong Ha, South Vietnam; and at Indian Springs, Nevada, in support of the Atomic Energy Commission’s underground nuclear testing program.



Above, Scott receiving his first Air Force Commendation medal. Photo provided by the author. I was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster for my service in Southeast Asia.

Following my military service, I spent 11 years in broadcasting as a radio news reporter/anchor and had a 26-year career in public relations where I received numerous awards. I now live in northwest Florida with my wife of 50 years, Jaci. We have four children and six grandchildren.



New Address!

Effective June 1st, 2018, the TLC Brotherhood Exchange, along with the official mailing address of the organization, is changed to the following:

**TLC Brotherhood
PO Box 60
Aspers, PA 17304**

Please do not use the Georgia address for any purpose.

***LIKE us on FACEBOOK—
The Official Thailand, Laos, Cambodia
Brotherhood***

We Served Where Assigned

By Wayne Urban

The latest TLCB articles about “coming home” and comments by other veterans about those of us who *only* served in places like Thailand, on the seas etc., have always bothered me because to be effective, the boots on the ground need support from many rear echelon troops. I have friends who did see combat and I have the utmost respect for their sacrifices. I had a very close friend ask, “Did you even set foot in Vietnam?” I attribute this type of statement to ignorance and the fact that many leaders, such as the highly decorated Colonel David Hackworth, referred to noncombat troops in his book as REMFs. *I don't recall having that much to say about when and where I served during my three years in the Army.*

I grew up in a small town in North Dakota and graduated from high school in 1962 and attended college there because I had a good job that allowed me to pay my way through school. It seemed to me that most people were somewhat isolated from the Vietnam War because not many had friends or relatives involved in the service in 1962, although we were now beginning to see the horrible effects on the evening news with Walter Cronkite. Of course, I had a deferment while in college (not the reason I attended), and most of my other friends had entered the National Guard, which was not commonly called up to active duty at that time. My name was about to go to the top of the draft list, so I figured I might as well enlist because the Army recruiter told me that I would be able to apply for OCS, which seemed like a good opportunity and would only involve an extra year.

I attended infantry basic and AIT at Fort Dix, NJ, spent 23 weeks at Engineer OCS at Ft. Belvoir, VA, and then attended 14 weeks training as an Ordinance officer at Aberdeen Proving

Ground in Maryland. I was TDY in Washington for a period of time before spending time at Ft. Hood with a maintenance unit. While there, I received orders to Korea, which were changed a few days later to Thailand. Of course, I was happy because being from North Dakota, I don't really like the cold. *I guess my point is that I didn't choose where I would go.* When I got to Thailand, I was assigned as a tech supply officer with the 57th Maintenance Company (go figure) at Camp Raim Chit Chi in support of the 809th Engineer Battalion, about 40 miles from NKP.

When I returned home to Jamestown, ND, I was basically treated with indifference by friends, locals, and even family. The local VFW, American Legion recognized our service by giving us a free year's membership, which I appreciated. Today I often see local units of the National Guard and the Air Force deploy and return as a unit and wish that would have been the case back then, during the days of the draft.

Allen Jackson, when singing about 9/11, asks, “Do you feel guilty as a survivor?” I would guess that anyone who served during the Vietnam War would have to ask the question, why was I so lucky while others had to pay the ultimate price? I ask this same type of question when I wonder why I have outlived my only brother by 25 years and why I lost my dear wife of 44years, and I am still here. Nobody gets to choose the way life will play out.

I'm proud to be an American, and anyone who served should be also, even if we know that the “powers to be” have totally made many wrong decisions and will no doubt continue to do so.



Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood

The 12 members listed below joined between the last issue of the MEM and the 1st of June. 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
01831	USA	Cartwright	Jimmy	Smithville	TN
01832	USAF	Nelson	Earl	Clanton	AL
01833	USA	Aretz, Jr	James	Montgomery	AL
01834	USAF	Harrington	Scott	Molino	FL
01835	USMC	Greenlaw	Jeffrey	Farmingdale	ME
01836	USAF	Sponder	Barry	South Hadley	MA
01837	USA	Carter	Marshall	Bowie	MD
01838	USAF	Stephens	Gregory	Jasper	GA
01839	USAF	Falls	Claude	Cleveland	TN
01840	USA	Berkley	John	Stockton	KS
01841	USAF	Secor	Craig	Mechanicsville	VA
01842	USA	Johnston	Alan	Windsor	ME
01843	USAF	Covington	James	Newsome	VA

New Member Profile

Barry Rowland

My entry into the Air Force in 1968 was inspired by a low lottery number and being in college and in the Army ROTC. I didn't think the Army was a place for me, so after my ROTC class on December 16th, while still in my Army uniform, I had a friend drive me to the recruiting station, and I enlisted in the Air Force. I received a delayed enlistment until the semester was over and headed to basic training in Lackland AFB in February of 1969. During testing and evaluations, I tried to get into something so that I could be a part of an air crew, anything to be in an airplane. That didn't happen and found out that I was going to be a 462, which was the AFSC for Aircraft Armament Systems specialist.



AFSC 462 put Barry in the NKP 456th MMS Gun Shop. Photos and captions provided by the author.

After tech school at Lowry AFB, I was sent to McConnell AFB in Wichita, Kansas, where I worked on F-105s and was initiated into the gun shop. In June 1970, I was on my way to Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, a place I had heard never heard of; and once I talked about it with guys who had just returned, I didn't know whether to believe the stories I heard or not. Most turned out to be BS after I got there, but some were spot on, especially about the pride of being a part of the mission



Replacing M-61A1 in F4-E at Da Nang



LA-321, F-4E landed at NKP with battle damage

that included rescuing pilots from Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam.

I was assigned to the 456th MMS and again, to the gun shop. Going from somewhat new technology of the M-61A1 gatling gun, I went back in time to work on percussion-primed M-3 20 mm guns. We also did some work with the SUU-11 mini-guns. The wing guns on the A-1s weren't that reliable and required constant maintenance. It was amazing that the Air Force still had repair parts for the gun feeders, slides, and other parts that seemed to never last more than a few months at best.

One thing that was reliable was the A-1 Skyraider. The pilots brought these things back with so much battle damage that you would not believe that the plane could actually fly. During SARS, our spare gun inventory would drop and most of us looked like we were true grease monkeys, between working on the guns and the oil on the sides and wings of the A-1s. More than once during monsoon season, or even slight rains, I lost my grip while changing or working on an outboard gun and ended up landing on my ass or back on the PSP. Fortunately, it wasn't that bad a fall. The really scary thing was slipping off the wing and having the gun follow you.

In November 1969, four A1-Es were used in the Son Tay prison raid and were launched from NKP. We all know the sad results of the raid, but the effort made was exemplary. I believe it shook the North Vietnamese up just to know that we were serious about getting our pilots back.

I rented a Thai taxi with a couple of other guys and we drove from NKP to Korat and on to Bangkok for R&R. It was a great experience meeting the always-polite Thai people. I spent most of my money buying gifts for my mother and sister and seeing the sites such as the Dusit Zoo and a lot of temples. We also went to a lot of bars and disco's. Some had decent food. All had Singha! In the restaurants, the food was excellent.

The Airmen's Club provided Mamie Van Doren for a night's entertainment. It didn't matter that she couldn't sing. Duane Eddy and the Rebel Rousers also played there with a lady named Jemima Smith, who was a knockout. At the theater, Roy Acuff entertained us as did a lady named Karen Wheeler who sang an exceptional version of "Mule Skinner Blues."

My time was winding down at NKP and the time came to choose, or at least wish for, my next assignment. I put in for all the places I'd never been like Germany, New York, and

California; instead I got a consecutive overseas tour to Da Nang, RVN.

The transition from NKP to Da Nang was strange. My orders said I was in the 366th MMS and I went to see the first sergeant. They evidently weren't expecting me. He asked me what I did and I said I've always been in a gun shop and he told me, "That would be a good place for you."

After the first rocket attack, the first night I was there, I was ready to go back to NKP, as it was a lot quieter! I worked on F-4Es and we occasionally used the SUU-23 pod guns, which were notoriously maintenance-intense compared to the F-4E nose guns. In July, I was sent back to NKP to pull the nose gun out of LA-321, which had come into NKP with about 50% of the vertical stabilizer missing!

I did things that could be considered really stupid back then, but I'm glad I did them. I met a Navy Lieutenant C-2 pilot



SUU-11 mini gun work at NKP

from Wichita, Kansas, who gave me a ride from Da Nang to the USS Kitty Hawk, sort of a day trip but definitely worth the effort. I met an Army captain from Abilene, Kansas, at Marble Mountain, and he lined me up with a couple of UH-1 pilots who let me fly with them to replace troops at a few fire bases west and north of Da Nang. I also flew in a CH-47 Chinook delivering a 150 Howitzer to a fire base. I wanted to see what the other guys were doing and I'm glad I did.

Somehow, I was awarded a Gunfighter of the Month Award. Col Dillard asked me where I wanted to go and before I could say anything, he said I could go to NKP provided I brought back a few dozen cases of Singha. Who was I to disobey? Besides that, I knew I could get really good food in NKP. By C-47, you didn't fly directly from Da Nang to NKP or vice-versa. The flights took about 4 hours each way.

In June of '72 I was on my way home and then, on the first of August, I checked in to Nellis AFB, NV. Surprise, I was in the 474th MMS gun shop. Bigger surprise, F-111s weren't allowed to fire the gun that was on a trapeze inside the bomb bay.

Another surprise: In September, we were told to pack our bags and put our cars into storage. The next night we were in a C-141 on our way to Takhli to assist with the last heavy bombing campaign. I was assigned to run a part of the weapons release shop, cleaning up the MERS and TERS and making repairs. The F-111s performed admirably, much better than the first

time they were there.

We came back in January. Most of the big efforts were done. POWs were coming home soon. I tried to get a 30 day early out for school. No such thing. "No suitable replacement for you so you will need to stay."

I got out February 16, 1973. I went to school at Kansas State University, majoring in Agronomy. Later I took classes in construction management and am glad I did because I couldn't make it as an orchardist on my small apple orchard near Hotchkiss, Colorado. Great scenery, skiing, hunting, and fishing to enjoy. I kept the place for 13 years. I also ran a water treatment plant and then worked for HDR Engineering for 34 years as a certified construction manager. I moved over twenty times, from coast to coast. In 1989 I married Donna Tossberg. We have a son, Graham, and a daughter, Laurel. Both completed college in North Carolina, Graham getting his master's to be a physician's assistant, and Laurel earned a degree in special education.

Donna and I live on Lake Norman in Sherrills Ford, North Carolina, and enjoy wake boarding (yup we still do it), golf, travel and horticulture.

I am so happy that there are now veteran's groups and organizations keeping our spirit alive and supporting each other. There is a lot of healing going on for "the forgotten and ignored" veterans of our time. It is an honor to be a part of the TLC Brotherhood.



Barry Rowland 2017 Memorial Day



Countdown to Biloxi on the Gulf!

October 11-12-13, 2018 / 195 Beach Blvd, Biloxi, MS 39530

Hotel Reservations

We hope the following will make hotel registration easier. **There are still some rooms available.**
Margaritaville Resort direct 228-271-6377
Alternate Number is Group Sales 228-271-6335

To make your hotel reservations on-line at
<https://www.margaritavilleresortbiloxi.com>, follow these steps:

1. Click on "Rooms & Suites"
2. Press "book now"
3. Select the dates you want and the number of people
4. Click on "Specialty Code" and enter "373"
5. Click on "Check Availability." It should show you your name & rate of \$120.20. (\$93.00 per night + taxes and fees).
6. Select "View Available Rooms." (There are 2 types available) Make your selection and complete your registration.

Ways to "waste away in Margaritaville"

- Within a 10-minute walk are 3 casinos and 15 restaurants,
- In 5 minutes you can walk to the Maritime & Seafood Museum
- On Friday, we'll hop on a bus, drive along scenic Beach Boulevard, to the Stennis Space Center. Among other amazing sights, you will see one of the largest engine test stands in the world. This is where all of the rocket engines launched from Kennedy are tested. While there, you will want to tour the Infinity Science Center and walk through a section of the International Space Station.
- Gulfport Outlet Mall—Not far from the airport.
- Downtown area—Has mall shops and some open-air sidewalk restaurants.
- Ocean Springs—Just on the other side of the bridge by the hotel, small craft shops.
- Cruise Options—There is a paddle wheeler, a working shrimp boat, and a tour boat to the barrier islands.



2018 Quilt Raffle Fundraiser

Have you or your significant other ever wished for a quality hand-made quilt, but found the retail price of such an item to be cost prohibitive? Such works of art require countless hours of tedious labor to produce, and they may sell for many hundreds or even thousands of dollars! Well here is the good news! As in years past, Rosie Wheatley will be crafting another quilt to be raffled off at the 2018 TLC Brotherhood Reunion in Biloxi. You need not be present to win. This queen-sized quilt will follow a patriotic theme done in fabrics of red, white, and blue, incorporating a central panel depicting a Bald Eagle backed by a waving American Flag. A similar quilt done some years past can be seen in the accompanying photo.



Raffle tickets can be had for only \$2 apiece. You will find a sheet of ten tickets in this issue of the MEM. You may purchase only one, but why not consider multiplying your chances of winning by 10X? Fill in your name and contact information on each ticket and mail with your check to **TLC Brotherhood, P.O. Box 60, Aspers, PA 17304**. Make your check payable to TLC Brotherhood, Inc., and please indicate in the memo line of your check

it is intended for the Quilt Raffle.

If you should wish to purchase more than a sheet of ten, you may make copies of the enclosed sheet. In fact, should you wish to purchase a very large number of tickets, all you need do is send your request specifying the number of tickets you want and your check to our Treasurer, Bill Tilton, at the above address. Your tickets will be printed with your contact information and entered in the drawing for you. What could be easier? Remember, as always every penny raised in the raffle will go to the TLC Brotherhood Assistance Fund to aid the needy people of Southeast Asia in memory of our fallen brothers who never returned. This is a way to contribute to the cause and give yourself a chance to win a beautiful, hand-crafted quilt at the same time. It's a win-win!



The Books of the TLCB

Editor's Note: Below is the first edition of The Books of the TLCB, a bibliography of books authored by members of the Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood. This project was first announced in my Notebook for the March 2018 edition of the *Mekong Express Mail (MEM)*. It was subsequently included on the online TLCB Forum. It is our intention to include The Books of the TLCB on a regular basis, not less than annually. The list is, I am quite certain, incomplete, and I am asking our members to help fill in the missing titles and authors. If it expands substantially, we will run an updated version earlier than the

June 2019 *MEM*. At a minimum, the submissions should include the following information: Author, Title, Category, Publisher, and Online availability. In the original announcement, I also requested that members submit books of interest by non-TLCB members; however, that is in fact unrealistic. Such a roll call would fill a year's worth of *MEMs* without trying. Of course, we continue to be interested in publishing excerpts from member's publications, so do not be shy about submitting your work. Send all information, whether additions to the list or book excerpts, to my attention at jharrington@nscopy.com.

Author	Title	Category	Publisher	Online?
Barrett, Dean	Hangman's Point	Fiction	Village East Books	Yes
	Kingdom of Make Believe	Fiction	Village East Books	Yes
	Memoirs of a Bangkok Warrior	Fiction	Village East Books	Yes
	Skytrain to Murder	Fiction	Village East Books	Yes
Butler, Jimmie	A Certain Brotherhood	Non-fiction	Cricket Press	Yes
Davis, Charles O.	Across the Mekong	Non-fiction	Hildesigns Press	Yes
Schreader, George	Hognose Silent Warrior	Non-fiction	Outskirts Press	Yes
Gleason, Robert L.	Air Commando Chronicles	Non-fiction	Sunflower University Press	Yes
Harrington, John	The Year of the Lieutenant	Fiction	Archway Press	Yes
Harrington, Scott	They Called it Naked Fanny	Non-fiction	Hellgate Press	Yes
Hauser, Paul	I'm Always Going Somewhere	Non-fiction	Createspace	Yes
	Inherently Dangerous	Non-fiction	Createspace	Yes
Martino, Joseph P.	The Justice Cooperative	Mystery	Elderberry Press	Yes
	A Fighting Chance: The Moral Use of Nuclear Weapons	Non-fiction	Ignatius Press	Yes
	R&D Project Selection	Non-fiction	John Wiley	Yes
	Resistance to Tyranny	Non-fiction	Createspace	Yes
	Technological Forecasting for Decision Making	Non-fiction	McGraw-Hill	No
McDaniel, C.R.	The Tales of the Six Tigers	Fiction		Yes
Melton, Alan	The Champa Flowers	Fiction		Yes
	The Green Parrots	Fiction		Yes
	The Libyan Bomm	Fiction		Yes
Morrison, Gayle L.	Sky is Falling	Non-fiction	McFarland & Co.	Yes
	Hog's Exit: Jerry Daniels, the Hmong, and the CIA	Non-fiction		
Tambini, Anthony	Douglas Jumbos - The Globemaster	Non-fiction		Yes
	F-5 Tigers Over Vietnam	Non-fiction		Yes
	Ice Meteors - The Danger Overhead	Non-fiction		Yes
	UFOs—An Overview of Close Encounters and Low Flybys	Non-fiction		Yes
	Wiring Vietnam: The Electronic War	Non-fiction		Yes
Whitcomb, Darrel	The Rescue of BAT 21	Non-fiction	Naval Institute Press	Yes

TLCB Delegation Honors Commando Club Heroes

By William R. Peterson, Public Relations Chairman

After-Action Report

This report to the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB) Officers and Board of Directors, is based on the official After-Action Report I filed on our behalf with the Office of Commemorations in Washington on 20 March 2018.

Background

The TLCB Officers and Board of Directors discussed the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Lima Site 85. The TLCB Chair for the Vietnam War Commemoration recommended that the organization should take an active role in this and send a representative. The Board agreed and sent William R. Peterson. At that point several members volunteered to attend as well, and this spirit of support was evidenced once we got to the event because we had three officials and two members present for duty. Not one other organization manifested itself in this manner.

Maxwell AFB, AL, March 2018

The event was hosted by the U.S. Air Force Air University, Barnes Center for Enlisted Education, which is located at Maxwell AFB-Gunter Annex adjacent to the NCO Academy and Library, located in northeast Montgomery, AL. Their event began on Saturday 10 March 2018 with a 5K marathon. This annual run was named this year to honor CMSgt Richard Etchberger who was a crew chief on the Commando Club combat team in Laos. On Sunday the 11th they had a tour of the NCO Academy Museum, and on Monday the 12th, there was the unveiling of the Commando Club & Lima Site 85 statue and the CMSgt Richard L. Etchberger reflective bench, followed by a Memorial Service in the Academy Auditorium. I'm told there were about 500 in attendance.

With much honor and appreciation for all the men of Commando Club, the service was marked by a semi-circle



The CMSgt Richard L. Etchberger reflective bench

of photographs, each with an unlit candle on a stand. As each name was read, a family member, or a USAF volunteer, went from their seat to the photograph and lit the candle as the biography was read to the audience. There was a prayer, laudatory comments, and a bagpipe playing "Amazing Grace." Following this service there was a Commemorative Luncheon for about 150 people.



Monument dedicated to the Americans who fought the North Vietnamese Army in hand-to-hand close combat atop Phou Pha Thi near Lima Site 85 in northeast Laos on 11 March 1968.

TLCB at Commando Club 50th Anniversary Left to Right Standing: Bob Pruikisma, Gary Beatty, Gerry Frazier, Duane Mullen Seated: Bill Peterson



TLCB President, Gary Beatty, presented Col

James D. Dryjanski, Barnes Center Commander, with a TLCB plaque made by William R. Peterson. The keynote speaker was Col Yvonne Schilz, USAF (Ret), Chief of Staff for the Office of Commemoration, Office of the Secretary of Defense. She awarded Gold Pins to families of two men killed in combat and other awards, including the official DoD Vietnam War Lapel Pin. Col Schilz singled out the TLCB, stating that we were known as one of the most outstanding of the more than 8,000 Commemorative Partners across the United States.





TLCB President, Gary Beatty, presented Col James D. Dryjanski, Barnes Center Commander, with a TLCB plaque made by William R. Peterson.

At the conclusion of the buffet lunch, we were fortunate to be able to spend well over an hour with some Commando Club family members, some of whom have lived for fifty years without having met their father, and one who lost her husband while caring for five children alone at age twenty-eight. They all shared one thing, a great desire to be given facts surrounding the loss of their loved one. To that end, the TLCB sponsored a conference open to anybody who cared about Commando Club. We hosted a discussion involving eleven people for over six hours, with the promise of continued discussions in the future. This sixth and final Commemoration Partner Event was an overwhelming success. Our prior events were: Dover AFB, Phoenix, Washington, Boston, and Dayton.

Gary Beatty, Bob Pruiksma, and Bill Peterson interrupt planning for a quick "photo op." Attendance of President Beatty and Chairman Peterson was TLCB-funded.



Summary of Events

The Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood is an IRS-recognized, international veterans group and charity organization. This event is our 6th Commemorative Partner activity. It is also the most fitting for us. The TLCB is based on service in the Vietnam War by personnel based outside RVN but operating in combat or combat-support roles.

In this event, we honored an Air Force unit which exemplifies our own service in the Vietnam War, Thailand, and Laos. The Battle of Lima Site 85 occurred in mid-March 1968 on and around the mountain named Phou Pha Thi in far northeast Laos. Two North Vietnamese infantry battalions and one artillery company (more than 3,100 troops), supported by a Pathet Lao infantry-blocking battalion and one artillery battalion put heavy fire on Friendly Forces. The 800 Hmong indigenous soldiers, augmented by 200 Thai and a small unit of Royal Lao, defended the mountain under the guidance of two CIA advisers with one USAF Combat Controller.

Atop the mountain was a USAF top secret covert radar operation (Commando Club) manned by sixteen "sheep-dipped" SAC personnel. The site had been operating since early November 1967 providing F-105 pilots with precision bomb guidance system voice commands. The unique TSQ 81 enabled pilots to operate in monsoon weather at night. While the enemy main force attacked the defenders at the bottom, an assault team of sixteen North Vietnamese commandos attacked the Air Force men on top of the mountain, while simultaneously attacking the CIA helicopter pad and HQ facility 200 meters away with a cell of four commandos. After a four-hour firefight, there were four USAF Commando Club survivors; the two CIA, the combat controller and a significant number of allies rescued. CMSgt Richard Etchberger and MSgt James Calfee received posthumous awards (MOH and SS, respectively). This event was hosted by the Barnes Center for Enlisted Education, and it was our privilege to spend over six hours of private discussion with the families and many 1st CEVG veterans.

This Commemoration Event narrative summary, statistical data, photographs and attached information are hereby submitted on behalf of the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood.

William R. Peterson
 TLCB Board of Directors
 TLCB Public Relations Chair
 TLCB Vietnam War Commemoration Chair



At right, memorial wreath, "LIMA Site 85."

Letter to the Editor

Enjoying the MEM

Hi John Harrington, John Duffin, and Bill and Thelma Tilton,

I just wanted to write and tell you how much I enjoy the newsletter, and to thank you for writing it because it is a piece of mail I really look forward to getting. The addition of color is fantastic. It is such a professional, interesting, and invaluable newsletter—you really deserve an award. You mentioned the increase in dues to cover the color addition. I would support the TLCB and the newsletter no matter how much the dues were increased, because it means that much to me, and many others I am sure.

The book excerpts are excellent, and I like your comments about books by non-TLCB members. The stories and New Member Profiles are so interesting and keep us connected and the memories alive.

I may have mentioned before that I spend six months of the year in Chiang Mai/Chiang Rai, with lots of travel to Laos and Viet Nam. I just returned 1 March and read with interest the discussion about the future of the TLCB. It was a thoughtful

discussion, well presented, with many valid points to consider. I agree it will be difficult to continue as we vets, and those with close associations with SE Asia, pass on. Yes, many grandkids are curious about what Grandpa did, but they can't relate to our experiences and emotions concerning a war many don't know or care about. It will be difficult to attract new members, and I really don't know the answer.

Besides traveling, I am working on what is turning out to be a multi-year project, assembling albums of my life, with ten volumes so far just dedicated to my two tours in VN and my five years in Thailand with a military contractor, '70-'75,. Maybe someday someone down the line will actually read the stuff.

I've also got 40,000 words on a book about how I met my wife in Thailand, and our adventures working around the world. I call it *Somwang: An Expat's Story of Love and a Life Abroad*. Have a long way to go. It is dedicated to Som, whom we lost four years ago after 45 years of marriage.

Thanks again.

Best regards,
Dave Hagen
Grass Valley, CA

At the TLCB Exchange

Our latest addition to the Exchange inventory--the Naked Fanny Camo Hat with Vietnam Service ribbon. Only \$19.00, including shipping cost! Get yours NOW! Go to: <http://tlc-brotherhood.com/wp/the-exchange/>



**NAKED FANNY
EXPOSED!**

Reunion Shirt!

At right is the Port Authority "legendary silk touch" polo, 5 oz., 65/35 poly/cotton pique shirt with side vents.

Below, shirt logo, which will be embroidered above the pocket. Ultramarine blue was chosen to represent the Mississippi sky behind this famous scene in Biloxi.

