

# MEKONG EXPRESS MAIL



The newsletter of the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc. Volume 25, issue 2

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## The Crash of Sheba Eight Zero

By Bill Tilton

*Note: Recently The History Channel took an interest in some wreckage on the reefs near Bermuda for their “Bermuda Triangle—Into Cursed Waters” series. They were ostensibly looking for a pair of British Airliners that vanished in the late 1940s. They interviewed me, three hours of taping, about “The Airplane Wreck” near Bermuda that they portrayed as “unidentified,” but which is in fact the remains of a KB-50J on which I was co-pilot in a 1963 bailout. After the episode “Falling Stars” aired in January, during which my TV interview was less than a minute, our editor asked me to write the full story for our newsletter. This is the summary of that event.*

### “The left wing’s on fahr...THE WHOLE LEFT WING!”

This clear but shrill intercom report came just seconds after aircraft commander, Captain John “Curley” Moore, and I had felt a slight yaw and heard a muffled “boom.” We had looked at each other and Curley shouted over the cockpit noise, “What was that?” I shrugged....and then came that distinct voice of TSgt Ed Corbin, the right reel operator. Curley looked back from his side window and said across cockpit, “It *sure is!*” Then right away on intercom, Curley said to all, “Well, *BAIL OUT!*” That immediate reaction surely saved our lives, but not that of John Moore himself, nor of passenger SSgt Ed Crigler. Six of us survived that October 20, 1963 crash. Incidentally it was the week before Operation Big Lift took place (you should look it up), and more significantly, a month before the assassination of President Kennedy.

It was a sunny, warm, Sunday morning in Bermuda as we lifted off for the final leg home after three weeks in the Azores

Islands and some more days at Kindley AFB, in Bermuda. We all, crew of six and two TDY mechanics as passengers, were very homesick and were let down when one of the four propeller engines misfired on initial startup and needed a two-hour ignition harness change. Sadly, we watched the two other tankers we were supposed to fly home with roar down the runway at eight and head west. We were all stationed in



On a reef about ten miles from Bermuda and thirty feet underwater lies the wreckage of the KB-50J that crashed here on October 20th, 1963. Photo by permission of LoneWolf Productions, Portland, ME.

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# The Lives They Have Lived

By John Harrington, MEM Editor

The feedback that we receive here generally supports the idea that among the most popular articles in The Mekong Express Mail (MEM) are those submitted by members about their experiences back in the day and their more recent ones as well. With that in mind, I am urging all of you to consider putting your stories into print and submitting them to us. For some time, I have written to new members asking them to put together profiles of themselves. This practice has resulted in some interesting copy; however, I am afraid that due to some complications in my family, I have not been as consistent as I would like to be. So, what I am saying here is that you do not have to be asked to write about your life, past or present. Just do it. Your story is more interesting than you think, and you can probably write better than you think as well. And the MEM staff will help you with that if you think you need it.

To give an example, I am including a somewhat modified version of an article from 2011 that I wrote about my time in Thailand back in the late 1960s. Throughout it, I've added comments in italics. Take a look at it, and I'm sure you'll be convinced you can do better.

## Ad Hoc Admin Officer

Detachment 8 of the 621<sup>st</sup> Tactical Control Squadron was located in Phitsanulok, the capital of the province of the same name, about 200 miles north of Bangkok, straddling the Nan River. Det 8 was one of six units of the 621<sup>st</sup>, which was headquartered in Udorn, in the northeast, a little south of the Mekong River. The call sign for Det 8 was "Dora."

*There were five other units in Thailand.*

The 621<sup>st</sup> was part of the 505<sup>th</sup> Tactical Control Group, located at Tan Son Nhut, South Vietnam. There were two other squadrons, the 619<sup>th</sup> and 620<sup>th</sup>, both in South Vietnam.

*For some time, there was a website devoted to the 505<sup>th</sup>, but it has since been taken down.*

Det 8 was opened sometime in early 1966 and was operational later that year. It was closed as a USAF site sometime in 1970, although I believe the Thai Air Force continues to operate it.

I arrived, still a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant, in the early days of September

1967, assigned as the administrative officer. At the time, there were approximately 100 personnel at the site. Our commander was a major. We had around 10 officers, most of them in operations, serving as weapons controllers. All the officers, as well as senior NCOs, E-7s and above, lived off base, renting bungalows. The rest of the men lived in hooches on site, which was not much more than four or five acres. We had a mess hall, movie theater, dispensary, and a tiny BX only open a few hours a day, which did not matter since it did not have much to sell.

We had a club, the Thai American Lounge, open to everyone, airmen through officers and the Thai military as well. When I arrived, it was not air-conditioned, which made the beer taste even better. The site was adjacent to a Royal Thai Air Force attachment, and its personnel worked with us. During World War II, the location had been the site of a Japanese prisoner of war camp, housing American and British POWs.

Lives continues next page

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Reunion 2024: Pensacola, Florida



The author in front of the Phitsanulok orderly room in 1967. Photos by John Harrington.

A provincial capital, Phitsanulok had a population then of around 20,000, and although some of us lived in the town and most of us spent a good deal of time there, our economic impact was minimal. There were no gaudy bars, nightclubs, and other attractions that characterized the larger U.S. bases at Takhli, Udorn, Korat, Ubon, and Nakhon Phanom.

*My wife Eileen and I later visited Thailand in 2012 and spent about week in Phitsanulok. By then, the city's population had grown to around 60,000 and featured a half dozen high-rise hotels adjacent to shopping centers with well known international shops.*

The main job at Det 8 was support of the 355<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing out of Takhli, about 100 miles south of Phitsanulok. Takhli was also our support base, providing supplies and personnel support. Most of the air traffic was refueling support for F-105s with KC-135 tankers. There was also recovery work and some contact with EB-66s, also out of Takhli. Frankly, as the admin officer, I was not directly involved in operations and my memory of details of the mission may be somewhat foggy.

As I said, I arrived in early September 1967, looking forward to putting on my silver bars at the end of the month and becoming a “real” lieutenant. The commander was Major Carl Sheets, who admitted to me that they were not entirely sure what I was going to be doing since they had only a few months before they got an admin officer authorized in the unit manning document (UMD), so I was the first one in the position. Besides the normal responsibility of managing the orderly room and generally assisting the commander, I ended up with just about all the extra duties, things like theater officer, supply officer, club officer, the library officer, USO liaison, and a hand full of other things I cannot really remember. The site, other than operations which was on a 24-hour schedule, operated essentially on a five and a half-day basis — Monday to Friday, 7:30 am to 5:00 pm, and till noon on Saturday.

Although it was not my job, I spent a good deal of time in the operations room, watching and keeping track of what the whole place was about. The bombing of the north was picking up in those days, and it was pretty busy. A common phrase, which anyone who has ever been in a radar room will be familiar with, was “22 hours of boredom and 2 hours of sheer terror.”

One of the benefits as the admin officer on a small site adjacent to a good-sized town was the opportunity to attend a number of official local events. Major Sheets was usually invited to attend as the senior American in the area, and he generally “ordered” me to accompany him.

Early in my tour (I remember I was then a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, so it was probably in October), Major Sheets was invited to a large dinner at the governor’s mansion, and he insisted that I go along to keep him company. We wore our civvies and were seated at a large table with Thai military and police officers. There were probably about 500 or more at the dinner. I was not familiar with Thai food and in fact was a rather fussy eater, but I figured good manners required me to eat everything they served—and use the chopsticks, which one of the Thais gave me some instructions on using. I also figured I should try the beer, Singha, and the whiskey, Mekong. The Thai officers were into both pretty good.

About halfway through the meal, most of the Thai officers were gently laughing at me as I made my way through my food. When I noticed them, one with a broad smile asked me if I knew what I was eating. I, a little anxiously, said, “No.” Then with an even broader grin, he said, as the rest of the table broke into laughter, “Monkey brains.” I gulped, looked down at my plate, and forced myself to smile. Then I said, “I like it. Could you pass me some more, please?” The Thai officers broke into applause. The funny thing is, ever since then I have eaten just about anything that I came across, but I have never had the opportunity to try monkey brains again.

*It's funny how a little incident like that can change your lifestyle.*

Another time, probably in the spring of 1968, since our commander was then Major Robert Lichvar, we were invited to the installation of the first Rotary Club in Phitsanulok. The speaker, who was the head of Rotary for Malaysia if I remember right, went on for quite a while, and he spoke in Malaysian. When he was done, his talk was translated into Thai, and it seemed like it was even longer than the original. I had picked up some rudimentary Thai by then, but still did not really have much idea what was being said. About halfway through the Thai translation, the audience was groaning, mainly because the Mekong on the table had run out.

The antenna for “Dora,” the powerful radar site at Phitsanulok.



*Lives continues on page 4*

### *Lives continued from page 3*

When the translation was finally over, everyone began to stir, ready to head out, and in Thai fashion for the men, party some more. But before anyone could really move, the master of ceremonies got up and announced that in courtesy to their American guests, Major Lichvar and Lieutenant Harrington, the speech would now be translated into English. That one was definitely the longest of the whole night.

*I had the sense most of the Thais blamed Major Lichvar and me.*

### *Back to the War.*

The workload was tiring, especially on the ops crews. Then, in February 1968, not long after the shocking Tet offensive in Vietnam, Major Lichvar and I went to a 621<sup>st</sup> Squadron Conference in Chiang Mai, with the commanders from the other sites, several personnel from our Udorn headquarters, and the group commander, Colonel Delbert Smith from Tan Son Nhut. I went because I had been assigned to set up the conference, which meant I got two trips to Chiang Mai. Not bad duty. I think I was being tested a little to find out if I could do anything except sign 1098s and watch over the library, BX, and whatever else I was supposedly responsible for.

The last event at the conference was a top secret briefing for the site commanders from Colonel Smith. When they got out of it, Major Lichvar and I got on a plane to get back to Phitsanulok. The major took me aside and said, "We're going to win the war." Colonel Smith had told the group that General Westmoreland was back in Washington and was going to get another 200,000 troops and we were going to bomb everything day and night. As soon as we got back to Det 8, the major sat the rest of the officers down and told them all the same thing. The mood was quiet, not jubilant, but there was some sense of relief that some steps were going to be taken to get the war off the grim standstill it seemed to be mired in.

For nearly a month, nothing changed, but the crews were practicing extended shifts and multi-tasking, to use a more modern phrase. We all wondered when the big push was going to start. Then, on March 31, along with the Major and the rest of the orderly room staff, we sat listening to a special address from President Lyndon Johnson. We assumed it was to announce the increased offensive. First, we were shocked when the president said he was ordering a halt of the bombing of the North, and then totally floored when he announced he was not going to run for reelection.

*I cannot absolutely recall my reaction to the president's announcement. But I was essentially a civilian in uniform, and like many, was entirely pleased with the U.S. program in Vietnam, from the way we drifted into it to the way we were conducting the war.*

I felt some of the minor corruption that was endemic to the Thai military was probably even more pronounced in Vietnam.

I, granted with a very limited knowledge, was skeptical that we would ever "win the war," at least in conventional terms.

After the bombing halt, the workload at Dora practically disappeared. It was primarily reduced to monitoring some recon flights and working on training operations. The shift in urgency created some morale problems; however, Major Lichvar responded by initiating a lot of site improvement programs. We built an officer and senior NCO lounge, which also served as a staff meeting room. We air-conditioned the Thai American Lounge, which was still where just about everyone, officers and senior NCOs as well, kicked back. Some of us also got more involved in outreach to the community, working with local organizations such as schools and the hospital.

Still, there was a distinct shift in mood during the spring and summer of 1968. I am sure many have seen "The Bridge



Phitsanulok was a small base, but we did have a basketball court.

on the River Kwai" and remember when the British colonel, played by Alec Guinness, says to some of his junior officers, something to the effect, "Gentlemen, you know that if we didn't have enough real work for the men, we'd have to invent some." So true.

A short, final moment. A month or so before I rotated back in August 1968, we received a new UMD. The position of the admin officer was deleted. Major Lichvar said to me, "Well, John, it looks like you were

one of a kind." Frankly, aren't we all?

Epilogue: In the mid-1970s, about three years after I left USAF, I began work on a novel loosely based on a place like Phitsanulok, involving a group of junior officers. I did finish something I called "The Year of the Lieutenant." I obtained a literary agent who began showing it around the New York publishing world. It was not a friendly atmosphere for Vietnam-related books and after about 18 months, I took it back and began a rewrite. About that same time, I got a good job in the magazine publishing business, which has been where I have worked ever since, even maintaining a consulting business today. As I continued the rewrite, I became increasingly displeased with my original work and have not ever tried to sell it again. I still take it out and work on it, and probably will until my final days, but I doubt if it will ever be available to the public.

*Actually a few years ago I did put the manuscript into digital and self-published it. It wasn't that I hoped to become a best-selling novelist, but I just felt that something I devoted more than a year of my life to was worth putting into a more substantial format. I did bring a few copies to a TLCB Reunion a few years ago and they were sold at our regular auction. If any of you actually read it, remember it is most definitely fiction.*

*And remember as well that the point of my publishing this in The Mekong Express Mail is that probably all of you could write a better book.*

*So get with it!*



# A Busy Trek to Laos

## December School Assistance Trip to Xiangkhouang Province

By Paul Carter

In December 2023, I and my wife Supa and Vaughan Smith traveled to Xiangkhouang Province, Laos, as part of TLCB's Laos Quality of Life Program, to inspect school construction and improvements which Lao villagers had completed with TLCB-funded materials.

Traveling to Nong Khai, Thailand, we met early on the morning of 10 December and crossed into Laos together. Vaughn was loaded with several bags of soccer balls and frisbees, so much so that immigration security screened his heavy bags!

One of the things Mac Thompson taught us years ago was to get as many immigration forms from the Lao immigration office as one could for future use. Filling them out before getting to immigration saves time. This time, Lao officials were stingy with the forms and only gave us one each; however, a stealthy slip of a 100-baht bill to an official yielded us many extra forms for future use.

On the other side, our faithful Lao driver and assistant Somphou was waiting. We were not prepared for the ride to Phonsovan, capital of Xiangkhong. Typically, a seven-hour ride, on this day it took us eight hours and 45 minutes of teeth-jarring bumps and swerves to miss potholes. Many overweight transport trucks have almost destroyed Laos roads and it is hard to imagine that they will ever get much better.



New toilet at SopOr School, thanks to the TLC Brotherhood Assistance Program! All photos courtesy of Paul Carter and Vaughan Smith.

### First School, 11 December.

Monday morning, we were off to the SopOr Lower Secondary School where TLCB had last visited in March. This school was for Khamu people. It was the poorest school we visited and the most remote, taking us three hours to arrive. TLCB spent \$3,651 to fund cement floors, tin roofing, and materials for the villagers to construct bathrooms. The needs for this school are many, and the Laos government had stopped funding the school over a decade ago, only paying the teachers' salaries. In fact, the teachers said they pooled their money to pay the electricity

bill. They were all so happy and grateful for our efforts, and as usual, had food and held a *baci* ceremony for us.

A special treat for us and the villagers was the presence of my wife Supa (I am biased) as she is from the Isan region, Thailand, and spoke their language. They seemed proud to see a woman in a leadership role, and the young female students flocked to her for pictures and questions. This school only provides a 10<sup>th</sup> grade education, and only one out of every ten students goes on to high school because they have to leave the village to do so. The girls told Supa that while they would like to go to college,

it is likely that they would stay in the village to care for their families. Supa told them that while college would interrupt their family care, they would in fact be better able to provide their families with the better-paying job that an education could provide. We left the school at 1530 but arrived at our hotel after dark.

### Second School, 12 December.

Our plan was to visit two schools that day. The first being only an hour away, Khai village primary school, where your generous donations had funded almost \$2,000 worth of tin and roofing materials to cover the entire school. The soccer balls and frisbees were such a treat for the children at every school, and both teachers and students were so grateful for the TLCB benevolence. As usual, a *baci* and food followed.

Departing around noon, we stopped enroute to NaPaen



Sop Or Lower Secondary School girls flocked to Supa Carter, who is from Isan and speaks their language fluently. Supa is Paul Carter's wife.

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**Laos Trip** continued from page 5



At SopOr Lower Secondary School, parents demonstrate the traditional Lao Hai, which is fermented but actually pretty tame.

school, where there are some huge holes in the ground, spanning a wide expanse of field that the U.S. Air Force had created decades ago, which Google maps calls the Ban Khai Bomb Crater. We then stopped off for 20 minutes at the Tham Piew Cave, open to the public, that served as a shelter for the local community during the war and where on November 24, a single rocket fired by a U.S. fighter plane killed 374 men, women, and children, according to the Lao.



Bomb craters left in a field from the war. The party passed these on the way to Ban Khai.



Above, Khai School's new metal roof, made possible by a grant from the TLCB Assistance Program. Tent is set up for the traditional lunch ceremony. Below, our Lao contact for many years, Ajan Soundoune, speaking to school officials as Supa Carter and Vaughan Smith listen.



Because there was flooding at SopOr before this concrete could be used, it hardened in the bags, which were put to use as makeshift steps anyway.



Above, from left, Supa and Paul Carter, Ajan Soundoun, local school official, Vaughan Smith, and another local official, at the celebration luncheon at Khai School.

Below, Khai School students at work at their desks, under the watchful eyes of parents and visitors..



**Laos Trip** continues next page



Above and below, at NaPaen Lower Secondary School. These girls reflect the warm welcome the group received everywhere they went. Our grants to these schools are obviously appreciated and utilized appropriately.. Vaughan posing in the photo below, showing some traditional Khamou dress.

### ***NaPaen Lower Secondary School.***

Your TLCB membership provided this school with almost \$3,000 worth of cement for exterior and interior plaster, plywood, and structure wood to add ceilings, which can prevent roofing tin from being blown away by windstorms. This had happened twice before. After the Baci, a special treat at NaPaen was a dance performance by Hmong students.

With each school visit, the first order of business upon arrival was to inspect the TLCB-funded school improvements. While we were busy counting plaster boards, we ran across a curious oddity that villagers eventually showed us how to use. It was called Lao Hai, which had something to do with fermented rice husks (photo page 6).

### ***Fourth School, 13 December.***

We had just loaded for the Pha village Lower Secondary School, which is very remote and about 93 km southeast of Phonsavan, when Ajan Soundeuane, local retired LPDR official and our coordinator and logistician in Xiangkhouang Province, informed us that there had been a terrorist incident the night before in the area near the school. It was conducted by “Vang Pao’s people” (Hmong anti-communist leader during the Second Indochina War) and we might not get permission to visit the school. Subsequently we were told that we could go

You can see the NaPaen School roof and floor repairs in this photo.



Below, group photo at NaPaen, showing sports equipment and the TLC Brotherhood banner our group carries on these trips.



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**Laos Trip** continued from page 7

but had to be out of the valley and past the police checkpoint by 4:00 PM. At the police checkpoint, I was able to secure an AK, but the Army official would not let me take it with me, so we traveled at our own peril.

We arrived at this primarily Thai Dom school at 10:30, to an excited group of students and teachers. The journey was approximately two hours. The TLCB had donated almost \$3,000 for tin and roofing nails for the kindergarten and middle School, and plywood and wood to repair the middle school ceiling. After a round of inspection and speaking with the headmaster concerning the school, Vaughan and Supa spoke to the students, giving a message of hope and encouragement, to which the students listened intently.

After lunch and a baci, we saddled up at 1230 for a school down the road, Nong, arriving at 1330. Time constraints did

Below, Paul Carter inspecting needed repairs to Pha School.



Paul Carter and AK-47, temporarily!



Above and below, parents and students preparing food in the Pha School "kitchen" for the Baci ceremony and lunch of gratitude.



not allow for a full-on bacci and food, so we met with the headmaster and teachers and then with the students. TLCB expenditures there were about \$2,400 for tin and roofing nails and plywood and lumber to repair the ceilings. To make it through the police checkpoint, we left at 1530.

**Final School, 14 December.**

Our sixth and final school was Laht Saen Lower Secondary School, where the TLCB had provided \$3,100 to buy 65 window frames and 13 door frames together with hinges, bolt locks,

**Laos Trip continues next page**







New doors and windows with new hardware and concrete repairs at Laht Saen Lower Secondary School, all thanks to TLC Brotherhood Assistance grants.



The girls in these villages are so pretty, in their traditional dress, you might get the impression that there are no boys. Quite the contrary, as seen in this photo, above, at Laht Saen!

Below, Paul and Vaughan join in the dancing...you should see the video!



Below, these Laht Saen School students know the friendship and support that our small team brings from the Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Brotherhood to their remote villages. Not just by the repairs and frisbees, but by the efforts of our volunteer team, who donate their valuable time and some of their own funds to carry out our work. The entire Brotherhood joins these kids, parents, and administrators in gratitude!



paint, pull handles for them, and cement to patch walls. Laht Saen school was the least poor of all the schools, simply because it was closer to town. We arrived at 1030 and began our activities for the last school of this trip.

The morning of Friday December 15, we split ways in Phonsavan. Vaughn and Somphou took the van on the grueling nine-hour ride to Vientiane, while Supa and I flew Lao Skyways to Vientiane. With the deteriorating road conditions, flying, with Vaughn and Somphou meeting us at the Vientiane airport, was a good alternate way into and out of Phonsavan. The TLCB team had not traveled to or from the Vientiane airport before, so this provided us with useful information on airport location and travel arrangements and such. Traveling to the border, Somphou then said goodbye, and we made our way past immigration and into Thailand. After showering at our guesthouse in Nong Khai, Vaughn boarded a night bus, while we drove home to Chiang Mai the next day.

This trip was a wonderful opportunity to come back together as a team. Vaughn and I had not teamed on a Laos trip since 2019, as I was finishing my doctorate degree and Covid hit. Vaughn has led several trips post-covid. With the TLCB Quality of Life Program expanding into Southern Laos and Cambodia, it will take an all-hands-on-deck approach to administer the program. Thank you, the members of TLCB, for your generous contributions. You can rest assured that you make a difference and are a very positive contributor to the lives of these Laotians.





### **Sheba80** *continued from page 1*

the 622<sup>nd</sup> Air Refueling Squadron (AREFS) at England AFB, near Alexandria, Louisiana. Old “117” (tail number) was a trouble-plagued tanker during that whole three weeks, with a malfunctioning main compass system and many other problems along the way.

Finally, we launched successfully at twenty-one minutes after ten. With four R-4360 recip engines at “climb” power and a pair of J-47 auxiliary jet engines at 98% of full thrust, we departed the area and headed toward JAX—Jacksonville, Florida, and then “airways” across Georgia and Mississippi, an eight-hour trip. As co-pilot, I made contact with Bermuda Departure Control who cleared us enroute, while Curley flew the plane. Before handing us off to New York Oceanic Control on long-range HF radio, the Departure operator asked me to help him check some alternate UHF radio frequencies, and we discussed the quality of transmission as we skipped from



During my first Atlantic Route trip I was spare crew with no qualifications. In this photo I had gone back via the tunnel past the two bomb-bays to the aft pressurized compartment. I'm seen here sitting in the left reel operator's seat. On the left side of the “blister” you can see J-1, the left jet engine. This is the one that caused the wing to catch fire.

Above, tail number 049 over the Atlantic on a refueling mission. The pod at the wingtip holds the hose reel for refueling. Between that and the #1 prop engine is J-1, the left J-47 auxiliary engine. Note the TAC shield on the tail. These were the last of the tankers in the Tactical Air Command. Photos by the author unless otherwise identified.

channel to channel. I estimate that we had reached about 7000 feet on our climb, probably planned for 24 or 26 thousand for cruise, and about 22 miles from takeoff, when the whole world changed forever.

My first reaction to the bailout order was great disappointment and reluctance to leave this chariot home! Just barely a 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant, I was not quite a year out of pilot training and still pretty green as a co-pilot, and I immediately tried to think what I should be doing. I would have to await my turn to leave. Curley, already struggling with the ailerons, said something about “Mayday,” and I punched the radio mic button, “Kindley Departure, Sheba Eight Zero; we have a wing on fire and are bailing out.” Departure gave me a routine-sounding, “Roger,” and then excitedly, “OH...Roger! Roger!” He immediately hit the rescue alert button and began marking our route on his radar scope with a grease pencil.

### **The Aircraft**

The B-50 was a souped-up Boeing B-29, the plane that bombed Japan. It was designed and tested in the last years of World War II and deliveries started in 1947, as an atomic bomber for the new Strategic Air Command. None of the 370 B-50s ever saw action as a bomber, but a camera-laden reconnaissance version flew in the Korean War. After that the bomber was converted into several other variants, including a weather reconnaissance model, a search and rescue version with a huge droppable boat underneath the fuselage, and an aerial refueling tanker. A B-50B, “Lucky Lady,” was the first aircraft to fly around the World non-stop, taking nearly 100 hours and four in-flight refuelings. Boeing produced a “double lobe” fuselage version as an airliner, the “Stratocruiser,” which was designated the C-97 and the KC-97 in the Air Force.

The B-50's main engines were the largest ever put into regular

**Sheba80** *continues next page*

Below, England AFB KB-50J refueling a pair of F-4s, crossing the Mississippi River on a typical training mission. Note each wing had two R-4360 prop engines, then a J-47 jet engine, and at the tip a pod containing an electrically operated hose reel using a Chrysler fluid drive to control a 70-foot hose with a conical "basket" at the end. Receiving aircraft carried a "probe" that was plugged into the "basket." Note the nose-down attitude of the tanker running at max cruise speed to keep the century-series fighter from stalling as their fuel load increased. Sometimes we would descend ("tobaggan") to give the receivers a better angle of attack.



production anywhere, with 28 huge cylinders in four rows of seven, hence its nickname, the "Corncob." The series on the B-50 reached 3500 horsepower at max power and swung a four-bladed 18-foot diameter propeller. Originally designed for the B-50, it was also used in the B-36, C-97, C-119, and the C-124. They were tested in a few fighters, including a "Super Corsair," but none were ever put into production. The B-36, B-50, and C-97 versions of the R-4360 were capable of operating above 30,000 feet because of huge external turbochargers. These engines were the B-50's main improvement over the World War II B-29. The B-50 also had a taller tail than the B-29, as well as boosted nosewheel steering, better metal alloy, and other improvements. As a refueling tanker, the KB-50 version had three reels that deployed 70-foot hoses, which were on the two wingtips and one in the tail. The "J" and "K" models were equipped with a pair of J-47 engines obtained from B-47 bombers in the "Boneyard" at Davis-Monthan AFB, near Tucson. The jets provided a significant performance boost, raising climb and cruise "indicated" airspeed from 160 knots to 190, and giving a much cooler, faster climb. And we could refuel century-series jet fighters at 240 knots indicated airspeed.

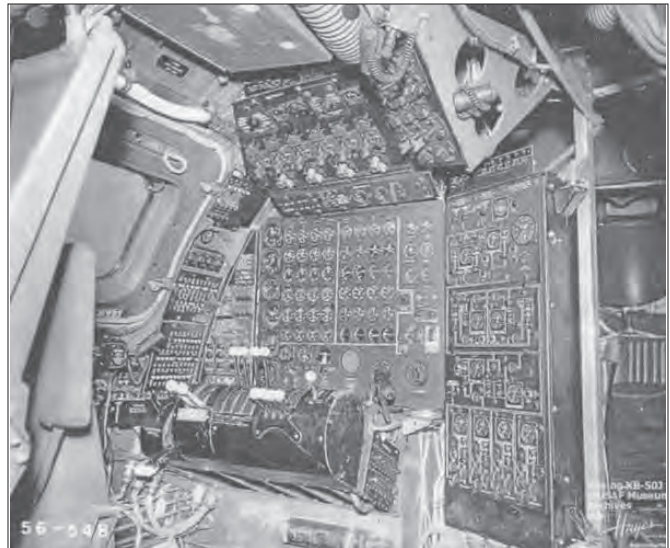
By 1963, as KC-135 tankers were coming into the inventory, the obsolete KB-50J was used mainly to train fighter pilots in the States and to refuel F-105s that were ferrying back and forth to Europe from the States. There also still were some aircraft ferrying missions in the Pacific, flown mainly out of Yokota, in Japan. We had several refueling areas out of both Bermuda and Lajes AFB in the Azores, and tankers from England (Sculthorpe) came out to meet them after the Azores topoff. This went on for one more year, and in early 1965, after another aging-related accident, the remaining KB-50J tankers went to the "Boneyard." The tanker did see service in SEA, refueling F-100s in Thailand. (*MEM* articles about this are in

the December 2003 and March 2004 issues).

## The Bailout

In the cockpit, the panel engineer, who operated the prop engines and the fuel systems, had some immediate tasks when Curley called for the bailout. First, he had to get SSgt Crigler, our passenger up front, to get off the nose wheel hatch. This was the entrance to the forward pressurized compartment, which had positions for the pilots, the flight engineer, and the navigator. Passengers generally got some seat cushions and sat, or slept, on this entry hatch. Beneath it were the two large nose tires, which filled a compartment, called the nosewheel well, beneath the floor. MSgt Joe Samaripa then had to raise the hatch and latch it open, then activate a special, covered toggle switch that enabled him to lower just the nose gear, leaving the main landing gear stowed. Next, Joe signaled to Crigler, who was known to be afraid of water, to bail out. Crigler shook his head and disappeared back into the darkness of the navigator's compartment.

Meanwhile the navigator, Capt Steve Sellers, had gotten his gear hooked up, which he told me later he had no memory of



Above, the flight engineer's station, with the complex fuel control panel at the right. The engineer had a full set of engine controls except for the two J-47 jets. Except just during landing touchdown and rollout the engineer made all recip engine power settings as called for by the pilot flying the plane. His panel had a switch to lower the nose gear for bailout. USAF Museum photo.

doing, nor of seeing Charles Crigler in there. Curley Moore had a strict rule about the regulations for overwater flights. The Tactical Air Command required that crewmembers have all PE (personal equipment) fully fastened while over water. This included inflatable underarm "water wings," a backpack parachute, and a large survival kit in place of a seat cushion, which was clipped to the bottom of the parachute harness and bumped the back of your legs when you walked around. In the forward pressurized compartment, we all complied except for Sellers, who found it difficult to lean over his table and climb up to the sextant in the ceiling with the parachute and survival kit hooked up.

*Sheba80 continues on page 12*

## Sheba80 continued from page 11

After Crigler refused to leave, Joe signaled the navigator, next in the bailout order, and he watched as Steve Sellers dove into the nosewheel well and instantly disappeared as the slipstream caught him when he emerged beneath the plane. Joe said that it scared him a little to see the wind catch Steve and me and to have us suddenly disappear. Meanwhile I could see that Curley was fighting the controls as the plane tried to roll to the left. Whether by choice or by chance, our track shows that we had done a U-turn and were headed back toward the island. I grabbed the control yoke and added some pressure to hold it to the right, which was fortunate because one or both of the left engines had started to overspeed—the whining sound gets your attention—and Curley needed to take a hand off the controls to get manual control of the props by toggling levers on the “floor stand” that was between the pilots.

At about that point Joe Samaripa reached around and hit me on the arm, shouting, “It’s your turn, lieutenant.” My feelings had progressed from disappointment, through bewilderment about what I should be doing, to a sudden urge to move quickly to get out of the way. The bailout order was repeated during every mission briefing, and I knew that others could not leave before I did and that there was little time. Sadly, there was no doubt that this homeward-bound conveyance had to be abandoned! I’ve often been asked if I was scared, and my answer is that I cannot recall any feeling of fear at that time. I attribute this to two factors. The first is that there was no time to dwell on the situation long enough to get scared. The second factor was the effectiveness of training.

At this point I knew just what to do; however, there were two things I should have done, and didn’t. First, the pilots had an alarm bell that we tested during every pre-flight. Neither of us rang that—in fact I forgot about it until the squadron commander asked me later if we had used it. Second, I had the day’s classified codes and code reader in my helmet bag behind the co-pilot throttles, and I was responsible to protect and secure them. I also gave them no thought at all, until someone asked me about them in the hospital, hours later. (Divers retrieved them that afternoon).

### ***Frenzy in the Rear***

Things moved much faster in the aft pressurized compartment, where the enormous flames were seen by all three men. A2C Bill Webster, eighteen years old, was the left reel operator. The left and right reel operators’ positions had a control panel, and at their side was a large plexiglass bubble, called

Right, scanner watching another tanker refueling an RB-66 from the tail reel.



the “blister,” for observation (and for defensive machine gun control, on the original bomber version).

As we settled in for the climb and cruise, Bill Webster scanned the wing and was just about to get up for a cup of coffee when he saw the tail-end of the left J-47 jet engine come off the engine and disappear, followed immediately by an eruption of flame from the inner half of the left wing. He later told me that he punched his mic button and opened his mouth but was unable to make a sound. Quickly then, he turned and reached over to hit the arm of right reel operator TSgt Ed Corbin. As soon as he saw the fire, Ed Corbin made that urgent but very clear call on the intercom, which was soon answered by Curley’s bailout order. By that time the flames were going past the tail of the plane and Webster’s blister had started to melt from the heat.

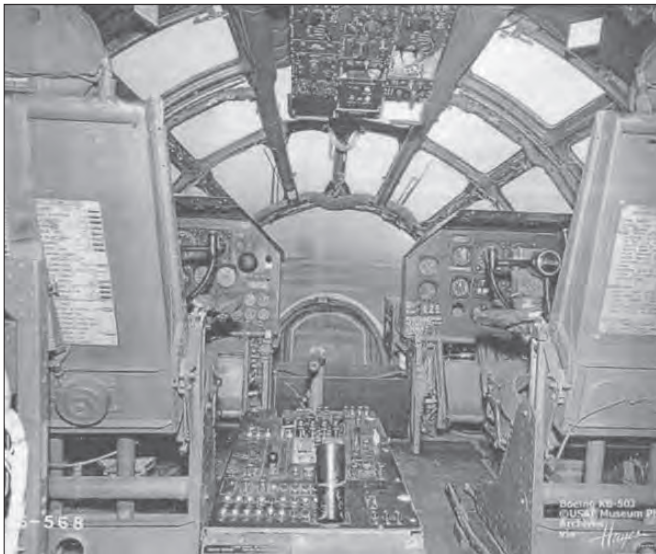
With no officer in back to enforce Curley’s overwater rule, both reel operators and the other passenger mechanic, A2C Ed Strong, had unsnapped their survival kits to be more comfortable, and in the urgent need to get out, none took the time to hook up. All three had only their inflatable underarm “water wings” as survival equipment. Strong was, like Webster, a very young and inexperienced airman. He and Webster raced to the rear entry door of the aft pressurized compartment. Exit from the rear was through the unpressurized tail section, and fortunately the engineer had not yet started to pressurize the plane, so the pressure door opened easily. The entry door was on the right side of the fuselage, and it had a loop handle that fit into a latch on the outside of the pressurized compartment to hold it open for bailout.

The aft entry door had a problem. The latch that kept it shut in flight was broken and had been written-up for repair when we got home. But we could fly with it because there were two thick “ditching bolts” that would hold the door shut if you had to land the plane in the water. They were used instead of the regular latch, and those two panicked airmen were kicking at them in a frenzy to open the door. Corbin saw what was happening and reached down between them to slide the ditching bolts

back. Then he held the door for them and was amused, he later said, “...to see them go out together almost as one person.”

Much later, Corbin told that he then grabbed a passenger survival kit from a pile by the door. These contained little more than a raft, but at least it would be something. The door would not stay open by latching to the bulkhead because the loop handle had been kicked off, so he held the door with his left hand and dove. It immediately slammed shut on both legs,

**Sheba80 continues**  
*next page*



This USAF Museum photo shows a B-50 "greenhouse" cockpit, looking forward from the entrance hatch, next to the rear-facing engineer position. The "J" and "K" models had a jet engine control panel attached to the side of the pilot's instrument panel. Each pilot had a set of throttles at the side. Pilots' propeller controls were on the "aisle stand," just under the nosewheel steering tiller. Co-pilot seat at right.

with him outside in the violent slipstream, which instantly pulled the little passenger survival kit out of his hand. He kicked one leg free of the door but the other would not come out. He reported later that he estimated that he hung like that for at least 90 seconds. It must have been horrible!

Having no other way to get free of the doomed plane, Corbin inflated the parachute by pulling the "D" ring on his chest. The chute opened with a jerk and by brute force it dragged him out from the door. As soon as the chute stabilized, he looked down at his leg and saw what he dreaded—there was broken bone sticking out of his torn flight suit leg, and he was bleeding. For flotation, he pulled the lanyard that inflated his underarm "water wings," and then he attempted to rip a tourniquet from his flight suit, but he had made little headway when he suddenly dropped into the 80-degree Gulfstream water. Thoughts of sharks and barracuda, known to be in these waters, came to mind; he also tried to think of what he could use as a signal device. Pathetically, his shiny Zippo cigarette lighter was the best he could do.

## ***I Go Out***

At Joe Samaripa's signal, I released the seatbelt and shoulder harness, pulled my headset off and dropped it on the aisle stand between Curley and me. Then I stepped over the aisle stand and past engineer Samaripa, whose seat was back-to-back with mine. Standing at the entrance to the navigator compartment, and right beside Joe's fuel system control panel, I faced forward toward the roaring nosewheel well, with the ocean far below, and pitched headfirst forward, as trained. It was easy.

Immediately, I was rolling slowly in the air, which was not unpleasant, and tried to spread-eagle to stabilize. (I had jumped once for fun, in Texas, and I remembered this instruction.) But now, I just kept seeing sky and then water, perhaps because of the survival kit on my butt, and so I pulled the automatic chute release. This has a barometer, and for high-altitude bailouts it delays automatic chute opening in case of unconsciousness,

until you're down around 7000 feet, as I recall. Knowing that I was below the automatic opening altitude, the chute didn't open when I thought it should (and I probably didn't wait very long!), so I pulled the ripcord and threw it away. Instantly I felt the jolt—then still, quiet peace came to my world.

Hanging beneath a descending parachute is a serene experience. Until the last few feet there is no sensation of movement and, of course, no wind. Except for a gentle descent, you are moving with the air. I could not hear the plane, either, after I bailed out. My first concern was to see how many chutes I could see. I learned later that the crew from the aft compartment were about five miles behind us, having exited the plane very quickly. But I did see one chute behind me (that is, further away from the island), and that would have been Sellers. In the direction the plane was flying I believed that I saw two parachutes. One of these was Joe Samaripa. Curley was later found in the wreckage. So, if I did really see two, then Charles Crigler escaped the plane. Unfortunately, he was never found. The investigation board doubted me on this, and on one other point—they thought it was Curley who made the "Mayday" call. It wasn't.

My attention then focused on the plane, which had a large ball of flame engulfing the inner half of the left wing and was descending and leaving a trail of black smoke. As I watched it, with Bermuda up ahead, it started a shallow bank to the right and then the smoke trail forked, and from that point two balls of flame dropped almost straight down to the water, perhaps from a thousand feet. A few moments later the muffled "boom" of that final explosion reached me.

KB-50J with tail number 049117 was gone to its scattered grave, about six or seven miles from the west end of the island of Bermuda on a coral shelf that's about 30 feet deep. The records show that it had been three and one-half minutes since I told Bermuda Departure we were bailing out.

On the golf course of the Navy station, a helicopter pilot, one of the more senior types, heard the final explosion. He looked out to the west and saw the smoke trail and the parachutes hanging there in the clear blue Sunday morning sky. Immediately he ran on foot toward the flightline. Along the way he saw a familiar helicopter mechanic pulling his clubs to the next green. Grabbing him by the arm he said, "Come on; you're gonna be a helicopter co-pilot." They went to the nearest flight-ready H-34 helicopter, got a fireguard and power cart, and started up.

After the final explosion, my attention turned to my own situation. Fortunately, I had just been through the Air Force Sea Survival Course (then at Langley AFB) about two months earlier. In a way I looked forward to using what I had learned. After all, it was beautiful weather, rescue couldn't be far away, and I knew what to do. I had pulled a cord that released the one-man raft and a bag of supplies, which hung about fifteen feet below me on a nylon lanyard, and then I inflated those "water wings" for flotation. Very soon I entered the water up to my armpits. I didn't even get my hair wet at that point.



**Watch for Part II, *Rescue and Investigation*, in a future issue of *The Mekong Express Mail*. Ed.**

# Candidates for Election to the TLC Brotherhood, Inc., Board of Directors

Election to be held at the 2024 Annual Meeting of the Corporation on September 17th at Pensacola, Florida

## PRESIDENT

**JOHN SWEET:** I am a strong supporter of all TLCB objectives and membership, and I am a candidate for President of the TLCB.

I was Born 1947 in Marblehead, MA, a suburb of Boston, and upon graduating from Salem High School in 1966, I joined the USAF and attended Technical Training School, Lowery Air Force Base as a 23450 Precision Photographic Processing Specialist for Satellite Reconnaissance, and cross trained to 70250, assigned to Headquarters Western Ground Engineering Electronics Installation Agency at McClellan Air Force Base, CA.

My orders took me to Vietnam at Bien Tuey, assigned to the 1987<sup>th</sup> Communications Squadron located with the 56th Special Operations Wing, TUOC Message Distribution Center, Nakhon Phanom August 1969-September 1970. While there, I established "Operation Thare" to assist the children at St. Joseph's School under Father Lawrence Khai, located at Sakhon Nakhon, Thailand.

I was assigned to 2014th Communications Squadron, Hanscom Field, Bedford, MA from September 1970 until July 1972, and assigned thereafter as Administrative NCOIC, Commander's Staff of the 2069th Communications Squadron, Nellis AFB and at Indian Springs, NV until July 1973.

In August 1997, I arranged A return visit to Nakhon Phanom and Thare Orphanage (St. Joseph's School), and met with Father Lawrence Khai, and commenced an assistance program. Father Khai became the archbishop and has since died.

If re-elected to the position of president, I will strive to strongly advance all objectives of the TLC Brotherhood and the concerns of the membership, working with the board of Directors. I would appreciate your support to achieve these goals and carry out our mission.

As to TLCB history, I founded the TLC Brotherhood Assistance Program in 1998, was Assistance Committee Chairman 1998 – 2005, TLC Brotherhood Treasurer from 1998–2000, TLCB Vice President for 4 terms (2000-2004 & 2009-2013), and TLCB President 3 terms (2013-2016), and now the incumbent president.

## TREASURER

I am Bill Tilton, candidate for Treasurer of the TLC Brotherhood, Inc.

My main qualification for this position is my experience with the TLCB, having previously served seven two-year terms as treasurer, with two two-year breaks, during which I assisted the elected treasurer as bookkeeper. I was also the founding president of the Brotherhood and served the limit of three consecutive terms in that position.

While I have never had an accounting course, I have adapted the Excel spreadsheet created by Dusty Henthorn when he was treasurer, so that it provides the management information needed by the board and which adds computations for the annual tax return to the IRS. I also account for Exchange transactions and all financial transactions of the annual meeting and reunion. I was audited once by a special committee of the TLCB and found to be in compliance with responsible bookkeeping. The annual tax returns I have submitted on behalf of the Brotherhood have never been questioned, so far, by the Internal Revenue Service. All deposits and expenditures have been supported and documented, and the records are saved and open for inspection at any time.

I joined the Air Force in 1961 and served twice in Thailand; in 1966 as a FAC at Nakhon Phanom and one tdy to U'Tapao in 1972 as a KC-135 crew commander. I retired at the Pentagon as a manpower

management officer in 1981. I live in rural Pennsylvania, near Gettysburg, and retired in 2018. By the time of the election, I will be 86, and so far, I am in excellent health. As treasurer, I assist my wife, Thelma, who maintains and operates the TLCB Exchange, as requested originally by then-president Frank Marsh. I also support editor John Harrington of the *Mekong Express Mail* by doing the layout and printing mailing labels and by contributing an occasional article. Associations I belong to include the Order of Daedalians, the Quiet Birdmen, China Post 1 In Exile of the American Legion, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Road Map Collectors Association, and the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society.

## CHAPLAIN

**Dan Pierce:** Greetings TLCB Members!

I became acquainted with the TLCB at an NKP Reunion and joined in 2021. My wife and I have had the privilege of attending two TLCB Reunions thus far. As my name appeared as a write-in for Chaplain at the 2023 Reunion at St. Paul, I was recently asked if I would consider the position. I do so with a degree of hesitancy as I felt that the office of Chaplain should not be a competition of sorts. Plus, I realize that I am a relative newcomer to the group, so, allow me to introduce myself.

I was born and raised in northern Vermont on the Vermont/Quebec border. After attending college for one year, and not

doing so well, I enlisted in the Air Force with the hopes of getting into the aircraft maintenance field. After a slightly delayed enlistment, per the recruiter, I arrived at Lackland AFB on October 31, 1968. Following basics, I took that long bus ride to Sheppard AFB and, yes, received training in the field I was hoping for - aircraft maintenance! Following tech school I served one year at Travis AFB working flightline maintenance. Before shipping out to Thailand in 1970, I received training at Hurlburt Field where I was familiarized with "recip" engines.

I arrived at NKP in August of 1970 and was assigned to the 606th Special Operations Squadron, a.k.a., Candlesticks, where I initially worked flightline maintenance prior to being assigned as crew-chief on a C-123k. Following my Thailand tour, I was



Dan Pierce

*Election Continues next page*

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*The Official Thailand-Laos-Cambodia  
Brotherhood page*

stationed at Dobbins AFB - Detachment 19 where I crewed a C-131. I was granted an early discharge in July of 72 as an E-4 to return to college.

After re-enrolling at Vermont Technical College, I graduated with an associate degree in agriculture in 1974. My wife and I were married in January of 73 and have been married now for 51 years. We have a married daughter and son and have 6 grandchildren. I worked in agribusiness for 16 years, and during those years, my wife and I both came to know Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior in early 1979, and feeling the call to ministry, I eventually attended Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, IN in 1990, graduating in 1994.

Following graduation, I was called to pastor a church in Saratoga Springs, NY, where we were blessed to serve for 18 years. We moved to PA in 2012 to be closer to grandkids—always a big draw, and we currently reside in Mount Joy, PA (Lancaster County). In my semi-retirement I worked at the world's largest auto auction, Manheim Auto Auction, for 9 years, fully retiring at the end of 2022. Since living and working in PA, I have served in various capacities in our local church and am also involved in pastoral-type ministries at the church.

Cindy and I have thoroughly enjoyed our times at both NKP and TLCB Reunions where we are being thoroughly educated as to my role in the "Secret War!" We have also made so many new friends and can't begin to express how truly blessed we feel! I would be honored to serve as your TLCB Chaplain and will serve to the best of my ability if you choose to have me. Thanks for the opportunity!

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### BOARD MEMBER

**Dave Weeks.** I am member number 00814 and am running for a board at-large position. I have attended almost all of the TLCB reunions over the past decade plus.

As to history, I was crypto maintenance (R306x0) in the Air Force and was honorably discharged in 1973 as a staff sergeant after completing a twelve-month tour at NKP. I was lead crypto for seven flag officers after the 7<sup>th</sup> AF HQ was moved to Task Force Alfa (TFA), including Gen John Vogt. I supported all organizations at NKP using cryptographic system (e.g. TFA; 6908<sup>th</sup> AFSS, 6944<sup>th</sup> AFSS, SAC), supporting various operations such as the weapons control center for Linebacker 11, Buffalo Hunter, etc.

In 1978, I earned my BS in Electrical Engineering from Texas Tech University, my master's degree in Admin Science from the University of Alabama - Huntsville in 1984, a master's degree in engineering from the Southeastern Institute of Technology in 1986, and all but my dissertation for a Ph.D. completed in 2008 from the University of Alabama - Huntsville.

I retired from NASA in 2008 as GS-15 after almost 32 years of federal government service, including 4 years at Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) with much of that time spent as the government chief engineer for work performed by Elon Musk and his SpaceX team in El Segundo, CA as well as their Falcon 1 launches at the Kwajalein (Marshall Islands) Reagan Test Site; one year US Army Missile Command at Redstone Arsenal, 1969-73 USAF; 27 years at NASA with home base Marshall Space Flight Center (e.g. Space Station, Hubble Space Telescope, X-38, propulsion systems, rocket engine testing) with tours in Washington D.C. at NASA HQ (Advanced Automation Manager for the space station) and Ames Research Center as Acting Branch Chief for 35 personnel in Intelligent Systems Technology.

I supported the US Army Space and Missile Defense Command HQ as contract Subject Matter Expert for Space 2008 to present, and was chief engineer for SMDC-ONE, the Army's first satellite

in 50 years, supporting numerous classified efforts with Top Secret/SCI/SAP clearances. I served on the board of directors at two non-profits, most recently two years on the National Space Club Board of Directors. I supported multiple church mission trips, both domestic and international. Sharon Weeks and I have been married for 44 years and we have three grown children, adopted as babies, and one granddaughter at Auburn University.



Dave Weeks

I would like to help enlist new TLCB members and find new ways to serve TLCB members (e.g. Agent Orange info/helps) and re-activate former members.

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### BOARD MEMBER

I am **Harry J. Bright**, member 01025, and I am running for the TLCB Board of Directors. I have been a member of the Thailand Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood since April 6, 2006, and served in the Air Force from 1965 to 1968. Hurlburt Field and Nakhon Phanom were my duty stations, and recip engine mechanic was my career field.

I strongly believe in the mission of our organization, the Brotherhood and Sisterhood, and the Assistance Program, on which committee I am presently serving. For our members living in the area, I helped John Duffin organize and host several mini reunions at the Air Mobility Command Museum at Dover AFB, Delaware.

My goals as a board member would be to encourage more members to attend our reunions, attract new members under our extended membership program, develop a format that would allow the general membership to submit ideas for reunion locations, and fine tune our reunion dates so as not to compete with other veteran organizations to which our membership may belong.

I am a life member of the DAV, Air Commando Association, Delaware City Fire Company, Townsend Fire Company, and have held elected positions of board of directors, treasurer, vice president, and president of both fire companies. I am starting my 59<sup>th</sup> year in the Volunteer Fire Service of the state of Delaware and have been a docent with the Air Mobility Command Museum since 2010. Under the first director of the museum, I was appointed as operations assistant, running the museum on weekends.

I look forward to serving the membership of our great organization and continuing to meet and develop friendships with all of you.



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### Changed your address? ...eMail?

If so, please let us know so that we can update the official database and ensure that *MEM* issues and official mail get addressed properly. You can send an email to:

Treasurer@TLC-Brotherhood.com, or write to:

**TLC Brotherhood**

**PO Box 60**

**Aspers, PA 17304.**

**INCLUDE MEMBER #!**

# 2024 Reunion—September 15-18

☀️ Pensacola, Florida ☀️

At the Holiday Inn Pensacola, Located at 7813 N. Davis Hwy.

**RESERVATIONS:** (850) 472-1400 (Be sure to tell them you are with the TLCB)

**ROOM RATE:** \$125.00/night + tax of 12.5%.

Good for 3 days prior to reunion and 3 days after.

Includes free Wi-Fi, parking, buffet breakfast. **RATE CUTOFF DATE:** 08-28-2024



***If you have not already reserved your hotel room—Do it NOW!***

## Tentative Schedule

Each Night's Lodging includes breakfast.

### Sunday, September 15

Noon Registration at the Nipa Hut.  
Meet and Greet evening meal on your own.  
Nipa Hut is open until 10pm.

### Monday, September 16

TBA Morning: tour of Hurlburt Field  
Limited to first **40 TLCB MEMBERS ONLY**,  
—with mandatory personal ID information.  
Evening meal on your own.  
Nipa Hut will be open until 10pm.

### Tuesday, September 17

9am Depart for Naval Air Museum at Pensacola NAS.  
—View the Blue Angels practice and.  
—Tour the museum.  
—ID Required.

#### 6:30pm Annual Assistance Auction

Evening meal included at the auction.

### Wednesday, September 18

8:30am BOD Meeting  
9:30am Annual Meeting of The Thailand, Laos,  
Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc.  
Lunch on your own.  
6pm-7pm Banquet Cocktail Hour  
7pm TLCB Banquet Buffet.

## Naval Air Museum Samples:



PB2Y-5R Coronado — Carrying Admiral Nimitz to the surrender ceremony, this was one of the first U.S. planes to land intentionally in Tokyo Bay in World War II. Below, In April, 1975, a South Vietnamese Air Force major flying this O-1E, with his wife and 5 children, dropped a note to the deck of the MIDWAY requesting permission to land on the aircraft carrier. The ship's captain ordered some helicopters pushed over the side, and the pilot successfully landed on the flight deck; the family eventually settling in the United States.



Questions? Email Ray Boas at [raymar711@gmail.com](mailto:raymar711@gmail.com) or call 937-307-0455.



## Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood

The four members listed below joined between the March 2024 issue of the *Mekong Express Mail* and this printing. You can find more information on our website database.

The MEM wishes you all a sincere “Welcome Home.” We are delighted that you have joined us.

No.	Branch	First Name	Last Name	City	State
02067	Other	Fred	Rohrbach	Black Diamond	WA
02068	USAF	Marvin	Wimmer	Choctaw	OK
02069	USA	Wilton	Gross	Gilbert	AZ
02070	USAF	Stephen	Wren	Mount Juliet	TN