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Mac: A life well lived with wit, charm, and courage

By John Harrington, editor

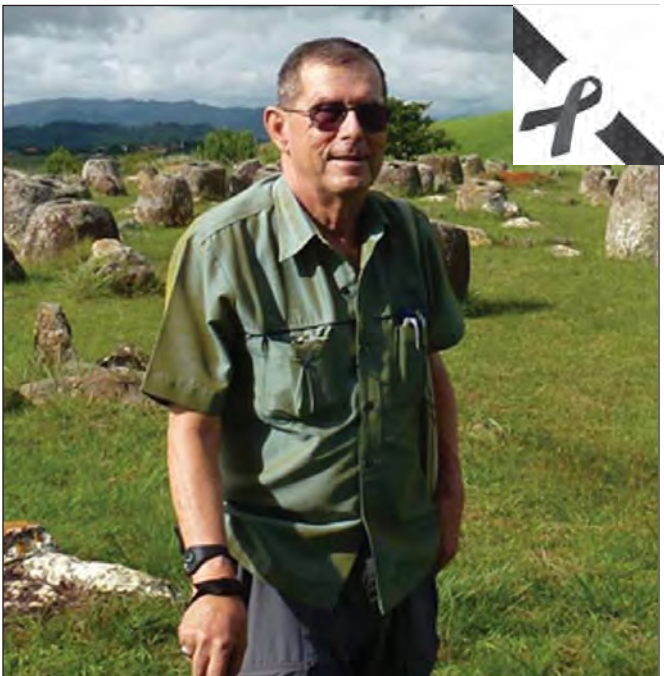
When we leave this realm, how many of us will rate a headline such as, “Refugee hero...dies,” in 30-point bold face type in an international newspaper, like *The Bangkok Post*? Not too many I would guess, but that was how TLCB’s man in Southeast Asia, MacAlan “Mac” Thompson was honored after he departed this life last December 17. In fact, the full head read:

“Refugee hero MacAlan ‘Mac’ Thompson dies at 77”

Like many other TLCB members, I had some memorable experiences with Mac (see “Memories” on page 11). The first was the winter of 2012, when I, then very new to the Brotherhood, and my wife, Eileen, made our first and only return trip to Thailand. My only knowledge of Mac was of reading an article by him in *The Mekong Express Mail*, then

edited by David MacDonald. I was advised by another member to contact Mac and get some reliable advice about traveling in modern Southeast Asia. (That trip would be the first time I was in Thailand since August 1968). Mac not only exchanged some emails with recommendations, but he quite firmly insisted on meeting us for a lunch, and also arranged for some other

See **Mac**, continued on page 2



Mac Thompson in 2015 on the *Plain of Jars* (PDJ) in Laos.

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TLCB members to be there. The lunch was great—some veterans trading stories—but it also provided Eileen and me with excellent tips about our planned visits to Phitsanulok (my home back in 1967 and 1968), as well as advice about getting around in Chiang Mai and Luang Prabang, which I would not have visited without Mac's endorsement. One of the other lunch guests, Les Strouse, told us to stop by a Military Museum in Phitsanulok, which had not been there back in "the day."

Prior to this meeting with Mac, I did not know much of his story, and when I asked him why he had stayed in Thailand, he merely said, "I developed an affection for Thai women and Thai beer." Clearly, there was much more to the story than that, but it was typical of Mac's characteristic modesty. ***A modest man, with so many reasons not to be so.***

I later learned that Mac's hospitality to relative strangers, with only a slight TLCB connection, was a not uncommon welcome to many uncertain travelers.

I later wrote an article about my trip, "Welcome (back) to Phitsanulok" for the *MEM*, which led to my being asked to become the newsletter's editor after David MacDonald's health declined. I doubt if I would have accepted or even written the article if it had not been for Mac's hospitality. So, depending on how you view my editorship, you can either blame or thank Mac.

As the editor of the *MEM* I would be regularly in touch with Mac since he often submitted his reports on his sojourns through remote parts of Thailand and Laos, looking after the projects sponsored through TLCB's Assistance Program, invariably accompanied by friends and acquaintances from the vast network of accomplices he had assembled over the years. The articles were much more than a litany of his visits to the projects, but a veritable off-beat guide to the joys of

unlikely spots in Laos and Thailand. Something I will always regret is not returning to Southeast Asia and rambling around, accompanying Mac on one of his treks.

Nearly four years ago, I asked Mac to write a mini-autobiography for the *MEM*. He agreed to do it and I soon was working my way through one of the longest pieces that has appeared in our newsletter during my tenure. As we all recognize, Mac was a fine writer and I had little occasion to make any changes. However, when I did suggest that in one instance, "I still are..." more grammatically should be "I still am," I was quickly and firmly advised that "I still are" was exactly what he intended and exactly what he wanted. Mac made it abundantly clear that he was the creator and protector of that memorable character, MacAlan "Mac" Thompson.

PS: "The Mac Thompson Story, As told by the man who was there the whole time." is reprinted beginning on page 3.



Sunee Thompson by her husband's side at the Buddhist funeral ceremony in Bangkok.

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The Mac Thompson Story

As told by the man who was there the whole time.

1964

How I Ended Up In Thailand

I was at Ft Belvoir, Virginia from November '63 to early February '64 for Engineer Officers Basic Course (EOBC). After EOBC, I had my orders in hand for Ft Devens, Massachusetts, for my two year ROTC active duty tour. Before leaving Oregon, I'd packed my car with all my hunting, camping, skiing, and skydiving gear, prepared to settle in.

Sometime in November or December, a guy came down from Personnel in the Pentagon and announced that anyone who wasn't really pleased with his current orders, and who could find another 2nd Lieutenant to swap, just let him know by a December deadline. Since we were all newbies except for the OCS guys who were steps ahead, and all had the same MOS 1331, no problem... except finding that someone to swap with.

I put my 3x5 card up on the bulletin board and stood by. One guy came up and wanted to swap with Korea. In January. Sez I, no way. Another guy came up with Germany, but that was for three years. I put him on hold.

About a day before the deadline another guy came looking for me, pleading that he was from about 50 miles from Ft Devens and that his wife was seven months pregnant. The assignment he wanted to swap for? Camp Friendship, Korat, Thailand! Of course I didn't know where in the hell Korat might be, but I did know the map for Thailand. Given the timing, with the deadline staring us in the face, we got on the phone to the guy at the Pentagon and said, "Swap us!" He did, and here I still are, 50 years later.

November 1965:

How I Ended Up In Laos

I was discharged from the Army in early November and back home in Lake Oswego, Oregon where I stayed in the furnished basement of my parents' place. At the end of the month, two former roommates from my earlier time at Oregon State U drove through from Anchorage. They were headed to Mexico City for the university there and they asked if I'd like to come along. Sure, sez I; nothing else to do for the moment.

First night was spent down in Ashland, Oregon, sleeping in my friend's '57 Ford station wagon. Breakfast in the morning was at the Southern Oregon College of Education's cafeteria. On paying the tab, I noticed a 3x5 card on the bulletin board with job info, and wrote it down: International Voluntary Services, IVS.

It was on to Sacramento for a couple of days, then down to

Los Angeles, where I about ran out of money. My two friends drove on south, while I caught a bus back to Portland, Oregon, and started writing job applications. I sent lots of applications out in December and January and even got a reply back from USAID: Rejected. I sent other applications out, private sector and government, including smokejumping in Fairbanks and to IVS. Out of money, so I got a temporary job in a local grocery distribution warehouse unloading boxcars to keep up with my gas, beer, and jump bills. It worked.

Along towards April 1966, I got two phone calls the same Friday evening. The first came from an IVS interviewer who was traveling the U.S. doing—what else but—interviews. He was passing through Portland Airport and asked, "Could I come out Saturday noonish for a chat?" Sure, no problem.

The next call was from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Fairbanks saying they'd had some no-shows for their current smokejumping training session and asked if I could get up there by Monday. I said I'd call him back on Saturday. Saturday, I met with the IVS guy and he sounded pretty positive, so I agreed to go with him. I phoned back to Fairbanks: Nope, no go.

June 1966 saw me off to Washington, D.C. for a two-week IVS orientation program, including State Department and USAID briefings, followed by seven weeks of Lao language training at State's Foreign Service Institute in Rosslyn, Virginia. Late August, I was off to the Philippines for two weeks of rural development training at the University of Philippines' facility at Los Banos. Manila was next, early September, where my group of 20 or so people was put on hold as the Wattay Airport in Vientiane was flooded. I said I'd go on ahead to Bangkok and wait out the flood up in Korat, and did so.

About 13 September or so, I received a telegram (remember those?) from the USAID/Laos Bangkok Operations Office (BOO), telling me to go to Udorn and report to the Air America office for a ride to Vientiane. Did so and caught an H-34 up to That Luang on 15 September 1966. After about a week in Vientiane, I learned that Wattay Airport had dried out sufficiently for smaller planes, and I got a Donier DO-28 hop up to Hong Sa, LS-62A, the start of my four years upcountry with IVS and USAID, followed by five years in Vientiane as the logistics guy for the USAID Refugee Relief program. My upcountry time was spent at Hong Sa LS-62, Nam Bac LS-203, Xieng Lom LS-69A, Moung Met LS-158, Sam Thong LS-20, and Ban Houei Sai LS-25, along with several months in spurts at

See Mac Story continued on page 5



Army 2nd lieutenant MacAlan Thompson, in 1964, at Korat.
Photos courtesy of Mac, in 2015.

2018 Donor Honor Roll

Of the Four Objectives of the TLC Brotherhood, our charitable work gets the most publicity and the most funding. Members support this work in various ways, but these donations pay for the projects.

Note: donors who made at least one gift in memory of Alice Waller are marked by an asterisk (*).

Mac Thompson died just before the new accounting period began but there was one 2018 donation in his memory(**)

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Kokkins, Stephen
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Lehtonen, Tom
Lewin, Howard
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Lombardo, Philip
Long, Lin
Lyons, James
Mango, Angelo
Matthieu, Carbonie
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McCarter, Edward
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Melton, John
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Moore, Alan
Moore, Jack
Mozzo, Martin
Mullen, Duane
Nelson, Earl

**Donors continues
next page.**

Nguen, Ha
Omps, Danny
Oubre, Carroll
Pack, Thomas
Palumbo, Frank
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Paul, Robert
Pierre-Benoist, John
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Powell, Darryl
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Whitfield, George
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Williams, Fred
Williams, Luther
Willis, Walter
Witt, Edward
Wolf, Richard
Wright, David
Yang, Shaw
Zanders, Carlon
Zola, Anthony

Mac Story *continued from page 3*

Luang Prabang LS-54. These sites are all shown on TLCB member Jim Henthorn's super MapScan Project, which I use online quite often, here: <http://911gfx.nexus.net/sea-ao.html>

So, it was just a bit of luck that I noticed that 3x5 card with the IVS info, wrote it down on a cash register receipt, and managed to find it after the drive a few months earlier. That scrap of paper led to IVS, then USAID, and retirement in Thailand in 1992.

1968, June-August:

How I came to USAID/ Laos

Mid-June finished the two year stint with IVS. I got \$500 to buy a plane ticket back to Oregon, but I spent it on local living expenses and job hunting in the area. I went down to Bangkok to submit a couple applications and also flew over to NKP in a Thai Airways DC-3 to the old gravel runway downtown, close by the Mekong River. Back in Vientiane, I was waiting for one of the applications to bear fruit and was running out of funds; hmmm. While having



Mac in Bangkok office ca 1980. "Even more refugees and even more paperwork."

lunch one noon in August at the American Community Association (ACA) cafeteria with several of the USAID/Refugee Relief Branch guys whom I'd run into now and then upcountry, one of them said that he was going on home leave shortly, and why didn't I take his job on a short-term USAID contract while he was gone. Sounded like a good deal to me, so I did the paperwork for a four-month contract. The job was doing the Vientiane portion of the logistics of ordering up, storing, and moving relief supplies, rice, salt, pots and pans and blankets, etc. out to the field of refugees.

Seems as though I didn't screw that up too badly, so in December I was asked if I'd like to go to Sam Thong on the same short-term contact basis and work in the field. Sounds good to me, and I went to

work for Pop Buell, didn't screw that time up too badly either, so I was asked if I'd like to convert to regular USAID foreign service status. Sounded even better; a real job, so I did the paperwork. In June '69 I departed Laos back to Oregon for a few weeks, USG security clearance cleared, off to D.C. for a month plus of orientation to the foreign services. I Bailed out of that early, and went back to Laos in September and on to ten months at Ban Houei Sai. June 1970, I transferred back to Vientiane to be the logs guy again, including the basic scheduling for the C-46 rice drop program flown by Air America and Continental Air Services (CASI). Les Strouse, also a long-time TLCB member, did this for lots of years.

1975, May-August:

USAID/Laos Shutdown and on to State Dept. Detail

26 June is an anniversary of sorts, the day in 1975 when I departed USAID/Vientiane and shut down USAID/Laos and was the last direct hire out the door. This was late afternoon,

See Mac Story continued on page 6

Donations in Mac's Memory

The following message was put on the autoresponder for Mac's email address after his death:

Mac requests that, in memoriam, donations be made to his favorite charity, The Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood at <http://tlc-brotherhood.com/wp/donate/> to continue this assistance work in Laos which he initiated and enthusiastically continued until he fell sick six months ago.

This wish of Mac's was known by all his close friends in Bangkok at the time of his death.

Mac Story *continued from page 5*

1700 hrs or so, after Gordon Ramsey, the USAID acting director, and Bea Perez, his secretary, had flown out at about 1400 hrs.

As background, about 23 or 24 May 1975, a large group of leftist students and a few Lao USAID people, along with armed Pathet Lao troops, surrounded the USAID housing compound at KM 6 and the Na Hai Dieo USAID office compound downtown, locked everything up and said “Go home!” This resulted in a five-to-seven-day standoff. Then the USAID American staff, and many to most Embassy staff too, departed Laos in a semi-orderly manner, a whole lot different from the American departures from Saigon and Phnom Penh a few weeks earlier.

A number of USAID Americans, perhaps 20 or so, stayed around for a few weeks to enable a semi-orderly closeout of the Mission. People departed, mostly via air to Bangkok, day-by-day in the final drawdown towards the end of June.

For the previous 30 days, I’d been working on getting household effects (HHE) out of rental housing and moving them to the contractor packing them up for evacuation by air to Bangkok or Udorn. About mid-June I’d also started moving personal vehicles over to Nong Khai for onward shipping to the owners, wherever they might be.

About noon on the 26th, I’d gone back to the Embassy to say bye-bye to Gordon and Bea, as I was already on orders to stick around for another month working on HHE and cars. Gordon gave me The Word: all USAID staff in-country, all three of us, were now declared “persona non grata” by the Lao government. Seems like Gordon had been over to the Ministry of Interior that morning to turn over the USAID managed “counterpart kip account,” really their money, but USAID controlled it. At times it was a lot, but USAID had been held up by the protesters earlier in June for increased severance pay, well beyond that required by Lao law.

Gordon, objected, but happily went along with it as the protesters were a small portion of the 2,000 or so Lao employees of USAID. He paid the severance out of the counterpart kip fund, actually paid for by the Lao government, even though they didn’t know it. Guess that’s what pissed them off when

Gordon informed them that the remaining fund amount was rather small.

So, I’m told I also have to depart. The Charge D’affaire, Chris Chapman, said that I had to go along with Gordon and Bea at 1400 hrs. I said, “Can’t manage that, need to go down to my house and get the few things I have left there.” He said, “OK, go on to the Defense Attaché Office C-47 at 1600 hours.” I said, “Can’t manage that either, and besides, I have my VW Camper over in Nong Khai, and want to pick that up.” He said something like, “Can’t go that way, the road to Thadeua has a number of checkpoints and road blocks managed by the bad guys.” To which I said, “Yes, and I’ve been through them lots of times recently, taking cars across to Nong Khai.” That seemed to surprise him, but Gordon backed me up and said I could manage an exit before COB. OK, done deal.

My real reason was that I had about 20 cases of Australian Foster’s Beer at my place that I’d just picked up from Ian McLeod and Steve Midgley, of the Australian Forestry Program, and I needed to change that back to \$\$\$! I also had my new dart board case, with swinging doors and three-headed elephant on the outside, being fabricated, and I wanted to pick that up, too.

There was a quick goodbye to Gordon and Bea, and around the corner to the Ozzie office, also near the That Dam. Ian out, Steve there. We headed up to the That Luang area to check the dart board. Not ready. I arranged for Steve to pick it up in a week or so and then drop it off at Lung Mee’s house down at Thaduea, across from Nong Khai.

I was off to my house, quick packing of clothes, loading of the Foster’s, and getting my \$\$\$! I was off to Thaduea by 1700 hours, 26 June 1975, done deal.

Later I saw a USAID cable that Gordon had sent when he arrived in Bangkok saying that USAID/Laos was no more, and that the last employee, me, had departed.

I spent a few days around Nong Khai, as I needed to get my own HHE in the pipeline for shipping back to the U.S. Back on 9 May, after seeing Saigon and Phnom Penh for down the tubes (DTT), I’d loaded up about everything I owned—stereo stuff, books, boxes of crap, clothes, etc, in my VW Camper and took it all over to Nong Khai, and left everything there. After arriving Nong Khai, I reloaded the van and headed down to the Udorn branch of Transpak Lao—I think it was just south of the airbase. I’d met a couple of the Lao staff there previously in Vientiane, which was handy as I needed to get my HHE packed in a plywood shipping box and labeled as “Duty free, in transit” for Thai Customs, and get the proper shipping documents slapped on the box. They did that, and moved the box on to the airbase and put in temp storage with other HHE, already evacuated from Vientiane. Nice folks, they were. I went on down to the USAID/Laos, Bangkok Operations Office (BOO) on Soi 1 Sukumvit to check in.

Mac Story continues next page



Floyd McGurk, also TLCB member, and me, in the BOQ area, me with the pipe and one-finger salute. Floyd in the white T-shirt, standing.

I then took a few days off and drove back up to Nong Khai, and on 15 July 1975, returned to Thaduea to pick up my dart board case. The Thai immigration guy said something like, "Hey, thought you'd been thrown out." Well, yes, but there's this dart board case I need to get. "OK, up to you," sez he.

Over at the Lao side, there were about the same comments. The "rightist" Immigration guy, who'd been there for a long time, and whom I'd passed by lots of times over a year or more, convinced the PL immigration guy that this was a reasonable request. No one would really want to abandon a new dart board case, especially one with a three-headed elephant carved on the front. Done deal; over and back to Thailand, then back to Bangkok.

I got the dart board (still have it) and went back to Thailand and on to Bangkok where I spent a couple of weeks helping to sort out the loose-packed HHE that'd been flown out of Laos and was just stacked in long piles in a warehouse. Then got a call from the Embassy, Tom Barnes I think it was, asking if I wanted to go up to Udorn and help out with the refugee influx from Laos. Sure, sez I; much better than the alternative of returning to USAID/Washington and getting laid off. I was still an "L" at the time, Limited Tenure, and USAID was then in a massive cutback program.

That State department "refugee" gig turned out to be about seven year's worth, with a couple of six-month breaks back with USAID in D.C., and ended in August 1983. Interesting times.

It almost sounds like Travels With Charley, but below is what I sent in a postcard just after I departed Laos in 1975, found by Anne, my sister back in Oregon.

Postcard, Mac to Mom, 28 June 1975, mailed from Thailand:

Hi. As I've always said, be flexible! Wednesday afternoon, 25 June. Got a cable from State Department, approving 30 days TDY for me attached to Embassy, Vientiane. So, Thursday afternoon rolls around, the Ambassador calls, and I have to leave Laos on two hours notice. At least I was the last USAID out. The other two left by air at 1530 and I came out through Nong Khai at 1630.

I'll be TDY in Thailand, now, for 30 days, and then, maybe a little vacation, so I should still be through PDX toward mid-August or early September, en route to D.C. After that, who knows?

Little did I know! During that month in Bangkok, July 1975, I got picked up by State's budding Indochinese refugee program, and except for a split 13 months back in D.C. in 1977 and 1978, didn't depart Thailand until August 1983, eight years on!

In late May 1976, I received a letter from USAID/Bangkok staying that my "TTLA" was being exercised. That's Termination of Time Limited Appointment. I was an "L" at the time. This gave me 30 days to depart Thailand and get back to AID/Washington for out-processing.

I had the "big sads," as we used to say in those days, when that same afternoon I received a relayed State cable from AID/



Mac at a "baci" party during one of his many trips to schools in upcountry Laos. At right, in a purple shirt, is Mr. Soundeuan Simsamay, Mac's main contact in Laos and now an official in the Xieng Khouang Province Office of Education & Sports. Find Mr. Soundeuan's heartfelt tribute to Mac on page 14 of this issue.

Washington saying only "If you accept appointment to the AMED program, action requested reftel will be negated." Not knowing what "AMED" was, and given the circumstances, I accepted. About 31 May 1976, I packed up my gear at Udorn and drove down to the Golden Palace Hotel on Soi 1, then over to the REF office to see Lionel.

Next day, I was off to USAID/BKK to talk to the EXO there. He knew of the AMED program, and said that it was pretty difficult to get into. It was a new deal, a two-year intense OJT to train management/executive officers. An applicant needed to be nominated, interviewed, etc. Hmmm, not me. What the hell, I said, go for it. It was back to the office, confer with Lionel, cable off to Shep to see about postponing my arrival from August '76 to later in the year. Shep wrote USAID, and December was agreed upon.

After I got back to AID/Washington and had been in the AMED for a few weeks, with the other five guys, three of whom I knew from USAID/Laos, our training coordinator told me that Homer Stutzman had heard through the grapevine that I was being shit-canned. It turned out that Homer had pulled the strings that worked. FYI, I never had the opportunity to thank him for that, because he was down in Central America by then, on reassignment, and died not too long thereafter. I did manage to send Jean, his wife, a note at a later date. I'd known Homer in Vientiane and Jean assisted at the ACA Library, where I often traded.

Back to AMED, I dropped out temporarily in August 1977, when Lionel and Shep rang the bell for volunteers to go to Asia and work with refugees. I went to KL for two months, then extended my leave from AMED for another couple of months, October and November, to go back to Bangkok with Lionel and Tom Barnes. December 1976, I was back to AMED

See Mac Story continued on page 8

Mac Story continued from page 7

until June 1978, when the shit really hit the fan when Lionel phoned from Bangkok, saying in essence, “Get your ass out here, could use the help!”

I dropped out again from AMED, this time permanently. I had several high level counseling sessions saying I’d be ruining my USAID career by doing this, but what the hell, I figured it’d be more fun and useful in the end. And it was.

August 1983—April 1987 was spent with USAID/



“My all-time favorite photo of Mac, who is smiling like a kid in a candy store showing off his HT-2 radio, from the Laos war, which he was always so proud of. He brought it each year—a prized possession. Behind him is Thai Lieutenant General (ret) Samphan Phousin. The light was beaming on Mac in the photo...as it always did.”
From Vaughan Smith

Washington, living in my small townhouse in Alexandria, Virginia. I still managed to spend about a month in Thailand each summer on vacation, if only to maintain my tolerance for Singha. April 1987 saw me off to Khartoum for two years with USAID. Sudan was not my favorite country, but happily I ran into several others who had spent time in Laos and must have been under a bit of a rain cloud. I got to know Les Strouse well during this period. Les also was my guru in making home brew beer, a necessary skill in Sudan. Bob Moberg was also there and it seems like we got together 4-6 evenings a week to tell lies about our former times in Laos. I should have taped these; had some good tales, all true, of course, no BS!

In June 1989, I transferred to USAID/Cairo, which was to be a four-year tour. I just couldn’t take that after Khartoum, so I called in lots of favors from just about everyone and made it back to Thailand with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in the Anti-Piracy Program. Vietnamese “boat people” were still escaping towards Thailand and Malaysia and being preyed upon by Thai fishermen, the “pirates.” The program was semi successful with at least 100 Thai fishermen arrested by the Thai Marine Police, the Navy, and civil authorities, taken to court and jailed. Then in summer 1991, the boat people just stopped coming to Thailand.

How I Decided to Retire

Fall 1991, I phoned back to USAID/Washington asking what they had in store for me now. They asked if I wanted to go back to Africa. No friggin’ way was my reply. Then how about back to USAID/Washington? Nope to that option, too. So with nothing else on tap, and with sufficient time and age for early Foreign Service retirement, I punched out 3 January 1992, right here in Bangkok.

A contributing factor to the decision to retire early could be that Sunee and I’d gotten together by this time. I finally bit the bullet and got married while back in Oregon in 1999, after eight years of “practice.” It seemed to be about time to do so. She’s been with me on lots of the Lao trips.

After retirement, I was making the occasional trip up to Vientiane for short visits, but no upcountry runs. I heard about the TLCB and joined about 1998 or ‘99, about the same time as Les. Come 2006, I made my first real road trip upcountry with author Roger Warner, to Long Tieng, really interesting after a 20-plus year absence. That got me thinking about the TLCB’s Assistance Program, so starting in 2007 I’ve made two to four trips a year working with local officials to improve their schools, largely new replacement tin roofs, concrete floors, toilets, furniture, etc, all funded by TLCB and some outside donations. A number of photo albums for these trips are online here: www.tinyurl.com/mfkz3rv

Time marches on, family here gets larger, two new grandkids have joined the household, grandson March 2014 and granddaughter in September. Keep things hopping, they do, but I still manage to carve out time for the occasional TLCB Lao trip. December 2014 was the last trip to Long Tieng and the PDJ area, along with a February 2015 trip with five TLCBers also to the PDJ.

In summary, I must say that my nine years in Laos and seven years with State on the Indochinese Refugee Program were the best and most satisfying years of my working life, and I wouldn’t change any portion of those times.



Break time during an NVA attack on 11 March 1967. The attack started after midnight and carried on sporadically until the late morning. This is Mac, on the right, and Col Khamphay, the commander, who is in the Los Angeles area these days.

Profile: Vaughan Smith

When Mac Thompson realized that he would no longer be able to travel to Laos for the TLC Brotherhood, he asked Vaughan Smith and Paul Carter to be his representatives there. While Paul will be able to support this effort only through April, Vaughan has agreed to head up our Lao Assistance activities with Glenn Black. At our request he has furnished this bio.

I was born in New Zealand in 1953 and finished a BSc in Chemistry/Biochemistry in 1974. I Jumped over the Tasman to save money in Australia to become a World Traveller – on the overland trip to Europe and the UK where all my grandparents are from. After 7 months of work and 4 months of hitchhiking around Australia, I flew from Darwin to Portuguese Timor (now East Timor), then flew to Bali, by land to Jakarta, by boat to Singapore, and by land to Laos via Malaysia and Thailand.

I was in Laos in February and March 1974 and, oblivious of the war going on in the east of Laos, except Vietnam, got buses and songtaews from Vientiane to Vang Vieng to Luang Prabang and back to Vientiane. In Luang Prabang, I decided my trip overland to Europe could wait. It turned out to be a 39 year wait to finally get there when our younger son got married in France. I wished to find work in Laos and I travelled Back to Thailand to get a working visa for Laos. It didn't come through, so I headed down to Malaysia. Lao and Thai tourist visas were only good for 1 month in those days. Arriving in Penang on 20 Apr 1975, I heard that the Vietnam war was coming to a close. I didn't get back to Laos until 2016 when I attended a funeral of a good friend in Vientiane.

I Returned to Thailand from Malaysia, but no Lao visa had arrived, and soon after, Laos and Cambodia fell too, so I looked for jobs in Bangkok. But I couldn't find a good one, and finally ended up studying for a MSc in Biochemistry, Mahidol University in Bangkok, starting April 1976. While waiting for my studies to begin, the Bahá'ís requested that I try and visit and support a thousand or so Lao Hmong Bahá'ís who had come into Thailand at Pua in Nan province. (I first believed in Bahá'u'lláh while in Malaysia and registered as a Bahá'í on my first day in Bangkok). This was my first contact with refugees in Thailand, although a Filipino Bahá'í took me to visit refugees near Luang Prabang in March 1975.

After my MSc was finished, I met a Peace Corps volunteer, Chaz McCormick, while in Pua in early 1980. While visiting a Refugee Transit Center in Bangkok, he bumped into me and introduced me to the Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) managed by the International Rescue Committee, which was contracted by the Department of State to 'process' Indochinese refugees to the U.S. This is where Mac and Lionel Rosenblatt had helped set up the refugee flow to the U.S., which led me to 19 years of work with the U.S. Indochinese Refugee Resettlement Program in Thailand, also briefly in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Sudan where I briefly met Mac Thompson again in ~1987. I also worked in Hong Kong for the resettlement of the remaining Nung Chinese under a program initiated by Ross Perot and the Special Forces, before the handover of Hong Kong in 1997. In 1992, I was in Cambodia interviewing 400+ Montagnards who had been disarmed and removed from eastern Cambodia by the UN forces. We also interviewed the Vietnamese boat people

who had been repatriated to Vietnam from SE Asian countries and Hong Kong in 1997/8).

I was initially hired as a caseworker to interview Lao Hmong for U.S. resettlement, but on the 1st day they put me into an expanding computer section which had just received the 1st Wang minicomputer in Bangkok. At that time, I couldn't use a calculator or even type. Within a couple of years, I learned to type and learned adequate Basic and COBOL programming. I was the shift supervisor, usually on the swing shift, 3 pm to midnight. I went through three heads of the Computer Section. Most had been in Peace Corps previously and they were getting ready to return to the U.S. to continue their studies leading towards a profession – and they believed the refugee program would end soon. I became head of the Computer Section and this continued, with many other duties, until the program fizzled out in 1995 and was taken over by the Embassy staff.

I was flexible and whenever there was a crisis in the camps, I would go to the camps to help with the pre-screening/interviewing of refugees to prepare them for their interview with the INS (now DHS). I much preferred being in the camps interacting with the refugees, rather than working in the offices in Bangkok. During those years, I met Mac a few times but we were not friends, nor did we socialize.

In my final four years with the U.S. resettlement of Indochinese refugees, I was hired by the Orderly Departure Program which was managed by the International Catholic Migration Committee (ICMC) and contracted by the DoS. I became one of two team leaders in Vietnam to interview the repatriated Vietnamese boat people for U.S. resettlement.

In 1999, I was hired by The Border Consortium (TBC), formerly the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), and the Burmese Border Consortium (BBC). TBC provided relief, principally food and shelter, to some 150,000 refugees from Burma housed in nine camps along the Thai-Burma border. I was hired as the Administrator supervising IT, procurement, accounting, HR, and the Bangkok office. As TBC expanded my job was split up, and I mainly looked after the IT matters, statistics, hard and software for our seven offices, and a simple website. I was released in 2015.

Since then I've been doing volunteer work with the Bahá'ís, with the small Mlabri tribe in Nan province, a personal project of TLCB member Lionel Rosenblatt. Over the past 3 years I've been able to make four trips to Laos with Mac and his team. I also have 14 old studio apartments for rent which also helps me keep busy and solvent.

Sunantha and I have been married for 42 years. Our two sons, Thep and Tee, aged 40 and 38, live in Bakersfield, CA and Sydney, Australia respectively. Thep has a good job with Chevron, and Tee is an industrial designer. Both are married and have two children each.



The Life Of Mac Thompson

by John Sweet, Past President and a TLCB founder

Les Strouse requested that I write a eulogy for Mac, and I am honored to do so, based primarily on the last eighteen years of his life while he served as the Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood Assistance Representative for Laos, carrying out truly amazing accomplishments by greatly enhancing the lives of thousands of children and personally overseeing the rehab and building of a tremendous number of schools throughout the remote jungle villages of northern Laos.

As Vice President and Assistance Chairman for the TLC Brotherhood, my wife Nancy and I met Mac in the year 2000, years after his retirement, when we ventured over to meet with officials in Vientiane and turn over funds to build a school project there. Mac offered to accompany us and volunteered to be our



Mac Thompson with his beloved wife Sunee, a native of Southeast Thailand. Photo from Mac's collection.

man on the ground in Laos on our return to Bangkok. Our program jumped across the Mekong with Mac leading the charge from where we had worked within Nakhon Phanom Province for several years.

For Mac's early career, I turned to Lionel Rosenblatt, his long-time partner in the refugee program, for assistance as pretty much all I knew was that Mac had grown up in Oregon, attended forestry

school, liked to jump out of perfectly good airplanes, and served as an Army Lt, hopping across Laos during the war. It dawns on everyone who learns about him how strikingly Mac was the picture image of the poster sketches of D.B. Cooper.

Lionel provided the following:

Starting in 1975, Mac Thompson was one of a handful of U.S. officials to lead America's efforts to protect, assist, and resettle hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees, leaving an extraordinary legacy of lives saved and improved. Having served in Laos with USAID, Mac focused especially on refugees from Laos, including the Hmong and other highland minorities who had played such a significant role with the U.S. in the Indochina war. Mac's commitment to this cause was not career-enhancing, but he never faltered in his work for refugees.

Mac worked first in Udorn and then in Bangkok as the key official to actually run the U.S. refugee program right through the peak years—keeping our office, staff, and work on track while enhancing support from

influential visitors for the Indochina refugee program, a complicated, but crucial, extra mission. Mac was much beloved by his staff and friends for his wry sense of humor and the way he kept everyone connected over the years through an Outlook Email List.

Jason Schoonover, a member of the Mac's Outlook list wrote the following:

I've known Mac since the Lucy's Tiger Den days. In a three-ring circus filled with wild, sometimes loud, often outrageous, always improbable characters, he was an island of normalcy. He was just one of the nicest, most positive, and happiest persons I've ever met – and a real people person.

Mike Eiland wrote:

Mac was incredibly fortunate — and deserving — to have such faithful friends as Vaughan Smith, Paul Carter, the Strouses, the Coopers, and I'm sure others in his last months. Anyone would be blessed to have such devoted friends. That's a big part of any last testament to Mac.

Thanks to Mac, Nancy and I and quite a few TLC Brotherhood members over the years got the trip of a lifetime, or two, accompanying Mac on missions into Laos checking on current projects and acquiring new ones. Mac even amazingly got us working in Long Tieng. Mac could do, and did do, the impossible. If something seemed impossible, go see Mac. He could whip out a pencil and work out a plan, stand in his infamous chicken stance and cut through red tape faster than a lawnmower. How did he do it? Mac loved everyone and they felt it. Mac did everything out of love and even his former Lao enemies came to love Mac. The governor of Xieng Khouang Province gave Mac a Certificate of Appreciation for enhancing Lao American relations. Mac also worked very closely with the Director of Sports and Education in the province for many years.

With his work in the refugee program, Mac brought thousands from despair to a new life of hope in a land halfway around the world. With his work in the TLC Brotherhood, Mac went back and brought hope for a new life to those left behind. Doctor Tom Dooley had nothing on Mac Thompson.

His friends will no doubt still meet occasionally down on Soi 11 or at Future Park or The Madrid, and his presence will still be felt as stories are told and memories shared, for Mac became the binder and glue within the pages of their lives. They will probably swear to one another they heard Mac say, "Next beer's on me!"

Past president John Sweet



Memories of MacAlan (Mac) Thompson

Lionel Rosenblatt

Starting in 1975, Mac Thompson was one of a handful of U.S. officials to lead America's efforts to protect, assist, and resettle hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees, leaving an extraordinary legacy of lives saved and improved.

Having served in Laos with USAID, Mac focused especially on refugees from Laos, including the Hmong and other highland minorities who had played such a significant role with the U.S. in the Indochina war.

Mac was the architect of the "point system" to ensure that refugees were accepted by the U.S. with a priority given to those who were most closely associated with the U.S. war effort. So, whatever the nationality and ethnic group, refugees were resettled on an equal playing field. Mac's commitment to this cause was not career-enhancing, but he never faltered in his work for refugees.

Mac's later passion was his work with the TLCB where he provided funding to build and reconstruct schools in rural Laos.

Mac was much beloved by his staff and friends for his wry sense of humor. By email, he kept an array of friends posted with news and his opinions.

No better leader, colleague, or friend.

Glenn Black

I met MacAlan Thompson in Khartoum in 1989 when he was the Contracting Officer for the USAID mission there. I was in Mac's office over some project freight and vehicles held up in far-off Port Sudan on the Red Sea. Mac handed over the paperwork and gave me the marching orders. I turned to go out of the office and on the wall beheld a large, framed panoramic black and white photo of an airstrip in the bowl of a mountain valley overlooked by a long, high mountain slope. At the end of the runway the mountains were rugged and jagged. I asked, "What and where is that?" Mac said, "Long Cheng, Laos, the ex-secret CIA airbase. I'll tell you about it another time."

The photo was mind boggling. Trench works were visible along the tops of the long mountain that I would later learn was "Skyline Ridge." Various transport and small fighter planes could be seen parked near an end of the runway. Fascinating!

I left Mac's office and USAID's merciful air conditioning and plunged into Khartoum's 130 F heat, at the time, never guessing that one day I might visit Long Cheng on more than a few occasions with Mac visiting future and finished TLCB school assistance projects.

Along with TLCB member Les Strouse, then the Chevron flight ops pilot in Khartoum, I was to learn a lot about Laos and Mac's history and fame in Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, not only as a development professional, rice drop expert, emergency project support/trouble shooting officer, but also the food, medication, and equipment supplier. He was the last USAID employee in country to close the USAID Office in May of 1975 and later, the most important refugee relief innovator, facilitator, and relief coordinators for Lao, Cambodian, and Vietnamese refugees on the Thai border. He was the first to think about

America's obligation to these tens of thousands of former U.S. allies piled up along the Thai border in squalid refugee camps. Mac assessed their situation and formulated processes to assist them, and to identify former U.S. staff and allies of our armed forces. Mac enlisted influential friends from the Department of State and other U.S. agencies to remind a reluctant and war-weary America that America still had obligations to its former allies. He was not to fail them. His processing and assistance activities lasted through most of the 1980s.

In 1990-1991 Mac finished USAID and worked on UN anti-piracy in SE Thailand bolstering the protection of the boat people. In 1992 to 1994 a truce among Cambodian factions was announced and UN peace keepers (UNTAC) administered Cambodia and I was employed in that operation. I often met Mac in Bangkok during R&Rs for many years onward. For a while Mac was just retired, but then became active in Laos with the TLC Brotherhood about 1996. I read Mac's TLCB Laos Assistance trip reports with interest and noted that his characteristically detailed organizational skills were being applied in support of the TLC Brotherhood assistance. In 2012 Mac invited me on my first TLCB trip with Tony Tambini. We visited Long Cheng, inspected schools on the PDJ, and did reconnaissance for future assistance sites near former Air Search & Rescue base, Lima Site 36, near Na Kheng. An extraordinary trip, and many followed.

Mac was beloved by his staff and friends for his wry sense of humor, for constant mentoring of staff of many nationalities, including Thai and Lao. He was known as "Than," a Hmong honorific title meaning father/grandfather. Mac will not be forgotten by the Lao and Hmong along the Plain of Jars for a long time, nor by a myriad of other nationalities he helped, encouraged, and advised. It was just in him to help others, and it was the right thing to do. But his special love will forever be for the Hmong and Lao people and their straightforward and disarmingly kind ways.

As one of Mac's colleagues and contemporaries in pre-1975 Laos once told me, "Mac never got Laos out of his system. He just would never let it go."

William "Bill" Tilton

Memoir 1

I first met Mac Thompson at the 1999 reunion at a DoubleTree hotel in Tysons Corner, in Fairfax County, Virginia, before we formally organized the Brotherhood. Mac and his wife, Sunee, combined that event with a trip to visit his sister in Oregon. We had passed the word around that there was a Thai/Lao restaurant down the hill on Route 7 from the hotel, and one evening, nearly everyone decided to go there for dinner. Some drove but most walked—it must have been a half mile. Of course, we swamped the little restaurant, and soon they started running out of things. No matter what you ordered they brought out whatever they had, and several times they told us there was no more Singha,

See **Memories** continued on page 12

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only to find more of it.

Mac and Sunee were seated in the mid part of the crowd, and Mac was typically regaling those around him with his many adventure stories. Finally, the proprietor himself came out to tell us that they were nearly out of all food. Suddenly he stopped and ran to Mac. He was too excited for words! It turns out that he had been a refugee whom Mac had helped get out of a camp in Thailand and to America, where he was able to start a new life and a new business. I don't remember what happened after that, it being nearly 20 years ago, but we were all stunned by the chance meeting, and I came by that to begin to understand what a positive factor Mac had been in so many people's lives. Like many others of us, I was able to join Mac on several trips to Laos later on.

Memoir 2

My second trip to Laos in the company of Mac Thompson was to include a revisit to the little village at Long Tieng, LS-20A, which Mac had somehow wangled his way into. Before that, the Lao PDR government had forbidden entry into that famous wartime CIA base that was at once top secret and one of the largest military installations in the country. On this return trip Mac wanted to go back to see if our funds had actually built the toilets for which they had had been donated. He did not yet know the Lao officials very well and was pretty nervous about it. As we approached the gate, he told John Sweet and me that if they had misused the funds, he would pay for it personally.

There was a young officer guarding the Long Tieng gate, and Mac said "no pictures" to John and me (too late!). As Mac was explaining our purpose, he spotted the teacher, his contact, coming down the road on a shiny new Chinese motorbike. He told us later that his heart sank at that moment—sure the Brotherhood funds had paid for that new bike. The teacher told him that the project was "not yet finished," and then he was sure of the worst! So up the hill we went, our Lao driver following the teacher on his lovely red bike, to the school. Surprise! There was a fine concrete outhouse, so that the children in that village no longer had to go out to the woods to relieve themselves. It had wooden doors and a tile roof—and so what was not finished? Only that the septic tank was not yet hooked up and covered. Mac was visibly relieved, and John and I were pretty impressed too. Of course, we now know that the whole Laos program went on to success after success from there.

John Lorenzen

After years of anticipation and planning, my wife Kay and I traveled to Thailand in 2008. Our trip was to include several days each in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket. I began thinking it would be great to visit Korat again after 42 years. As a new member of the TLCB, I was aware of Mac Thompson from his posts on the server—and that he too had been stationed at Korat (at Camp Friendship in 1964). I sent an email to him and told him I would like to visit Korat during my trip, and asked if he had any suggestions. He asked what days I would be in Bangkok, and what hotel we were staying at.

A couple of days after our arrival in Thailand, Mac and Les

Strouse met us at our hotel. We had a nice visit and were welcomed to Thailand—and learned about his assistance activities for TLCB in Laos and Thailand. Mac also informed me that he had arranged for a van and driver to take me on a day trip to Korat, and that he had also arranged for Jim Traywick to meet me in Korat to take me onto the base for a tour. The base appeared much different than in 1965, with mature vegetation and new buildings (it's an active Thai Air Force base). I was able to find my old hooch—which had been overgrown with vegetation for many years. I watched the beginning of a joint military exercise which included Thailand, Singapore, and the United States. After leaving the base, I asked the driver to wait for me for a few hours in downtown Korat, so I could wander about and reminisce, before heading back to Bangkok.

I have since learned that this was typical of Mac. He welcomed TLCB members to Thailand for mini-reunions. And he included those who wished to on his regular excursions into Laos, where he was responsible for many worthy projects. The TLCB will miss Mac, as will many people in Southeast Asia.

Jeff Hudgens (Impact Laos)

On one trip, Mac picked my team and me up from Suvarnabhumi airport to drive us to Don Muang for our flight to Nakhon Phanom. As we were departing the airport, a police officer motioned for him to pull over as he wanted a little "offering." Mac spoke in broken Thai and waving hand gestures (OK, waving for Mac), saying he didn't understand. This went on for a bit before the police officer waved him on without getting his donation. Mac, of course, was fluent in Thai.

Thelma Tilton

Remembering Mac and Sunee Thompson

Those of us who knew Mac are mourning his loss. Although many of you have not met Mac, you understand and appreciate the tasks he undertook to improve the lives of so many in SEA. A large part of those benefitting from his kindness and hard work are the children he helped with his efforts through the TLCB to improve school conditions in Laos.

A huge percentage of the TLCB are men who have great respect for Mac's accomplishments. I have met Mac and remember him as a kind, jovial, and excellent tour guide on one of his many treks through Laos when a group of us enjoyed the enlightening trip, experiencing many differences in culture, sharing the dirt roads with yellow dogs and water buffalo traffic.

We were so fortunate to have Mac's wife, Sunee, with us in the crowded van. On that expedition, she translated from the Lao and Thai languages, helped us choose what to eat and how to eat it, as well as explaining some local lifestyles. She has a beautiful smile and flashed it often, which made us women comfortable in this distant land and its new-to-us customs and ways. I think I may have been the only first-timer to Thailand and Laos on that trip, but all of us "girls" enjoyed her company and appreciated her help.

The reason for this note is to thank Sunee for that trip, but mostly for sharing Mac with all of us and the Hmong people

Memories continues next page

with whom he worked to improve their lives and grow their futures. During many of Mac's work trips, Sunee was at home carrying on the day-to-day family care without him. A widow's life involves many adjustments and different role assumptions. Sunee will be lonely and she will be sad. Thankfully she has family to lean on. Please keep her in your prayers.

William R. Peterson

Since 2005 I've been doing intensive research on the Battle of Lima Site 85 and the North Vietnamese Dac Cong (Special Forces) who overran our covert US Air Force radar operation atop Phou Pha Thi in northern Laos. This was important to me personally because I was supporting that team on a daily basis for five months, from their first day until their last, via a secure voice link from my mountain site in I Corps, Vietnam. Because the internet is filled with LS 85 stories riddled with errors, I set out to find the truth. Mac Thompson was one of my most reliable and consistent sources.

The value of Mac's help can't even be estimated. He was simultaneously a link to the past and to the present. If you read the books about Laos and Southeast Asia, you discover Mac's name in the text as an action figure. And he's credited as a

source by the best authors. They knew him, he knew them. When my questions went beyond his personal experience, he would provide a name and contact information of those living persons who could provide answers.

And perhaps the best day was at a TLCB reunion when I asked him to do me a great favor. It was on the occasion of one of my first briefings on the Battle of Lima Site 85 to our members. I was at the lectern, Mac was in a chair in the first row, and about 400 eyes were focused on the slides. I had asked Mac to critique the briefing with special emphasis on accuracy. My words were, "Be brutally honest." He said that there were no accuracy problems, and his personal assessment gave me courage to continue. The story is about a search for truth to overcome 50 years of misrepresentation of facts bearing on the conduct of American heroes. Mac understood this and saw the problems clearly. And when I gave him private information, he honored my request to keep it private. That was essential because there are two stories about that Battle and with knowing only one of them, you will never know the whole story. Mac's contributions were essential and I honor his memory by sharing this.



Future Plans for TLCB Laos Projects

A report from Vaughn Smith

After a couple of months in the hospital, Mac Thompson called Paul Carter and me to visit him in the ICU. We did not know he was ill until a month or so had passed. Mac asked us to look after the TLCB's land-based operation for North East Laos as he didn't expect to be able to return to Laos again. He hoped to continue to handle communications with all the stakeholders. Paul, who is doing his PhD in Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, will move to the Philippines, where he will be able to complete his research, but will no longer be able to help after April. I've asked Glenn Black to support the team and replace Paul. Glenn is based in Chiangmai and is a very knowledgeable guy who has been on more TLCB trips than Paul and I combined

I'm not sure why Mac and the TLCB came into my life, but I'm happy to render assistance to everyone who crosses my path; I believe that everything comes our way for a rhyme and reason, and I'll do my best to continue the TLCB's program, but none of us can replace Mac with all his knowledge, language, thoroughness, experience, logistics, and expertise... It will never be the same without Mac as our captain.

Our first trip without Mac is tentatively scheduled for mid-February. I'm in the process of contacting members of Mac's previous teams in Thailand and Laos. With Mac and Auke Koopmans, who also died last year, gone, and Paul in the Phillipines after April, the only 'permanent' members of the team are Glenn

Black and me. I have two ex-JVA friends, Tim Sawers and Larry Crider, who come and go between the U.S. and Chiangmai, and they have joined a few trips with Mac. Hopefully we can rope in some others when they are available, such as Gil Mueller, who now has a full-time teaching job, and Doug Vincent, who needs some medical treatment in the U.S. before he can return to Thailand. We will rely on Soundeuane and Somphou in Laos, and will try to do things as Mac did, but are likely to make fewer trips per year.

Let's see how next month's trip goes and take it from there.

The Assistance program's new representatives in Laos, with Mac at "The Craters" restaurant in 2017. From top left: Larry Crider, Paul Carter and Glenn Black. Front row: Tim Sawyer (inset), Vaughn Smith, and Mac Thompson.



In Remembrance of Our Honored Than Mac who has gone ahead to the beyond

by Ajan Soundeuane Simsamay

Xieng Khouang Office of Education & Sports

(delivered at the funeral)

Honored Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Brotherhood:

On behalf of the Xieng Khouang Office of Education and Sports, the many Teachers and Students, and my family, I, Ajan Soundeuane Simsamay, would like to express our sorrow upon the passing of *Than Mac Thompson* after battling a long sickness. As a member of the TLCB Association, he was instrumental in seeking funding for the development of education in Xieng Khouang Province. *Than Mac Thompson* was so very important in our work together. He was a devoted father and husband.

Than Mac with his Team of friends dedicated hearty efforts to secure funding for many communities in Xieng Khouang Province used to purchase goods and materials to build and repair schools, to lay cement floors and add sanitary facilities. Students now have a place to study and read and write at their own desks and benches. This has provided much needed assistance to the Lao Government in meeting the needs of poorer schools in remote areas of the Province. In places where he and his team provided aid, community members and teachers have recorded his good will with photos of celebrations of his visits in school albums of remembrance they keep with joy and will never forget.

As for me, I always found *Than Mac* and his Team to be very respectful, polite to everyone, relaxed and congenial with

all people enjoying eating and talking together and bestowing Baci wishes before leaving for home. *Than Mac* was genuine and sincere. He was kindly and good to everyone just as if they were old friends and relatives.

Together with our community and teachers I send our condolences to the family of *Than Mac* who has left us and gone on ahead.

On behalf of the leadership and of the teachers and members of the communities who were assisted by *Than Mac* with things of great value, let it be known that we will use them with care for education and always remind the students who come after of the good intentions and hard work of *Than Mac*.

May *Than Mac Thompson* rest in peace and happiness.



Mekong Express Mail Index

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

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

Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood

The 8 members listed below joined between the last issue of the MEM and the end of February. 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
1860	USAF	Korandanis	Stephen	Gardner	MA
1861	USA	Lawrence	Carey	Suwanee	GA
1862	USAF	Gaultney	Eli	Garden City	GA
1863	Other	VanSickle	Nancy	Anaheim	CA
1864	Other	Wayda	Ronald	Niles	IL
1865	USMC	de Triquet	Richard	Fredericksburg	VA
1866	USAF	Gadzinski	Leonard	Sterling Heights	MI
1867	USA	Mastro	John	Hartford	CT

In Memoriam

Stewart A. McGurk

U.S. Army Major Stewart A. McGurk, a TLCB member and the son of Floyd McGurk, also a TLCB member, died while serving his country on December 12, 2018. Major McGurk was a Foreign Area Officer regionally focused on China and East Asia. He was also an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) technician and team leader with international experience leading combat, humanitarian, and training missions. At the time of his death, he was serving in a training and advisory capacity in Mongolia.

McGurk graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2006 with a bachelor's degree in International Relations. He continued his studies throughout his military career, earning an associate degree with honors in Chinese Mandarin from the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California, and a master's degree in East Asian Studies from Stanford University.

McGurk's prior assignments included Commander, 702nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Co., Grafenwoehr, Germany; Operations Officer, 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, Afghanistan; and Operations Officer, 752nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Co., Baghdad, Iraq.



Stewart McGurk on a hiking trip.
Photo from Go_Fund_Me.

“Speaker is a Singer” Jonas to Perform at Reunion!

2019 Las Vegas Reunion and Annual Meeting, October 3rd through the 5th

The 2019 Reunion in Las Vegas will take place at the Alexis Park All Suite Resort on 375 E Harmon Ave. Las Vegas Nevada, which is near the airport and the Fashion Show Mall.

Reservation Costs: The hotel costs are \$69.00 for October 3, and \$89 for Oct 4th and 5th. If you wish to tour or party in Vegas before and after the Reunion, room prices are \$69 for Oct 2nd, 6th, and 7th. These prices are locked in at 2017 prices! All Vegas hotels have an entertainment fee plus tax per room per night. The Alexis Park Resort fee is \$14.00 each night you book, plus taxes. Watch the June *Mekong Express Mail* for more details.

Making Reservations:

Call 1-800-582-2228 or 702-796-3322. You must identify your affiliation with the TLC BROTHERHOOD REUNION TO GET THE GROUP RATES AT 2017 PRICES! Make reservations now while room suites are available! See you at the Reunion!

Note: Dick Jonas to Perform at Reunion!

Popular singer of “fighter pilot songs,” Dick Jonas, has been engaged to perform at the TLC Brotherhood reunion banquet instead of having a traditional banquet speaker. Many members will recall songs such as “Itazuke Tower,” “Throw a Nickel on the Grass” (Salvation Army), and “There Ain’t no Fighter Pilots Down in Hell.” Learn more about Jonas at WWW Erosonic.com.

Dick Jonas was born and raised in the Suwannee River valley of northern Florida. He served four years as an infantryman in the Georgia Army National Guard while attending Valdosta State College. He graduated in 1965 with a BS degree in Physics

and Math. He entered the Air Force and was commissioned at Officer Training School. In 22 years service he flew 3,000 jet fighter hours in the F-4 and the F-16. During 125 missions in Vietnam he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross with two oak leaf clusters and the Air Medal with 12 clusters.

Jonas recorded his first albums of military ballads in 1969, after returning from Vietnam. He retired from the Air Force in 1986 as a Lieutenant Colonel, and became an Aerospace Science Instructor in the Air Force Junior ROTC program.

During 1991 and ‘92, in 325 performances he played the leading role in “Guv: The Musical,” a stage production of the Mill Avenue Theater in Tempe, Arizona.

He retired from teaching in 2004 after 15 years service and is now a full time military folk music producer. His aim is to perpetuate the legacy of the warrior musician—*“the songs we sang about the planes we flew and the people we knew in the wars we fought.”* He has produced 31 albums and published three books about military folk music. He has published 4 books in a series about fighter pilot philosophy, called *A Fighter Pilot Looks at the World Upside Down*. He holds copyright to 120 musical compositions and he is a member of the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame in the Class of 2016.

Dick and his wife, Mary, reside in Chino Valley, just north of Prescott, Arizona.



TLC Brotherhood, Inc. Election NOTICE

The election for the TLCB Board of Directors will be held during the annual meeting of the corporation, on **Saturday, October 5, 2019 at the Alexis Park Resort, All Suite Resort on 375 E Harmon Ave. Las Vegas Nevada**

Nominating period for the 2019 elections begins April 15 and ends Midnight EST, May 15, 2019.

Submit nominations during the nominating period, via email or USPS to any member of the nominating committee. Prior to submitting a nomination, make sure your nominee is willing to serve. The board will not accept nominations after the nomination period closes.

Members of the Nominating Committee for 2019 are as follows:

Chairman:	Mike Vale	mevale762@gmail.com	873 Nevin Street Akron, OH 44310
Member:	Ken Schmidt	schmidt-kenneth@att.net	40649 Crystal Drive Three Rivers, CA 93271
Member:	Mike Frazier	manderalan1978@gmail.com	230 Avenida del Sol Indialantic, FL 32903

Send an email or mail submission to any Nominating Committee member

The following positions are up for re-election in 2019:

Vice President

Secretary

Chaplain

Member at Large (2 Positions open)

The publication of candidate bios is optional. The nominating committee will provide the bio publication procedure to the nominee and nominator upon receipt of a nomination. Bios will be published according to policy as set by the chairman of the Communications Committee.

“Base” Reunions Being Held in 2019

Nakhon Phanom RTAFB

NKP Gone but Not forgotten Reunion

Restricted to those who served at NKP and their guests.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: May 1, 2019

PLACE: Fairborn, Ohio

DATES: June 6-9, 2019.

WEBSITE LINK: <https://gonebutnotforgottenreunion.myevent.com/>

INFORMATION: The above link will provide details about event registration, hotel reservations, RV Parks, and the events itinerary which includes Wright Patterson Air Force Base, National museum of the US Air Force, Historic Clifton Mill, Huffman Prairie Flying Field, and more.

Ubon Reunion 2019

Fort Walton Beach, Florida

DATE: May 21-22

WEBSITE: <http://ubonreunion.org>

INFORMATION: The above link will provide details about event registration, hotel information and reservations, and the event itinerary.

SPEAKERS: Included in the program will be an address by The Chief James Helms, a 2000 pilot from Eglin AFB, and a special presentation by Christina Olds.

DESTINATIONS: There will be opportunities to visit the Armament Museum and Hurlburt Field.

Udon RTAFB 2019 Reunion

50th Anniversary of Udon Peak combat

DATES: Sunday May 5 check in, Wednesday, May 8 check out.

Las Vegas Nevada, *not* on the strip

CONTACT: URTAFB2019Reunion@Gmail.com for more information regarding hotel reservations, room rates, and airport shuttles

PRESENTATIONS: Kim Davis, Founder of *Preserving Our History* FaceBook page and daughter of Ervin Davis as well as speakers on Agent Orange claims and PTSD.

TOURS: Nellis AFB, Hoover Dam, Lake Mead dinner cruise, and more.

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 a note in the mail to TLC Brotherhood, PO Box 60, Aspers, PA 17304.

LIKE us on FACEBOOK—

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