

# MEKONG EXPRESS MAIL



The newsletter of the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc. Volume 24, issue 3

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## Bird Dog Pilot

By Wayne Stretch, As told to John Denehy

This article was originally published in a different form in The Newsletter of the Bristol Memorial Museum, Bristol, CT. The late John Denehy was a military historian and friend of Wayne Stretch. The MEM has edited it in a limited fashion, with photos from Wayne that were not published before.

### Flying Wide Open

My rear-seat photographer tapped me on the shoulder and pointed downward to a bright green square which merged into the surrounding green Laotian jungle. “Look at that brand new camouflage job,” he shouted. “Want to check it out, Sir?” He was right. The bright green didn’t quite blend in with the rest of the greenery which radiated in every direction from both sides of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. I flew on for a few more minutes until we were out of sight and sound of the suspicious locale. I banked the O-1 and quickly dropped down in altitude so that I was just above the dirt road and headed back. I was flying wide open at an altitude below the treetops. As I suspected, we suddenly came upon the biggest and meanest looking anti-aircraft gun in all of Laos. The gun

was in a jungle clearing off to the left side of the road and was covered by elevated camouflage netting. I could clearly see a very surprised and angry-looking gunner running over to man it.

I zoomed past the gun and quickly pulled up and away before the guy could get a bead on me. I yelled back to the photographer, “Did you get a shot of that gun?” “I saw it too late and wasn’t ready,” he replied. “Oh damn!” I thought. “Get the camera ready, we’re going back.” This time I came in from another direction. The gun was now fully manned, but the crew didn’t have time to react to my intrusion. Click, went the camera. We got ‘em good. I winged sharply up and over the treetops and stayed low until I was far out of their

**Bird Dog continues on page 3**

### What’s Inside:

Editor’s Notebook and Reunion News .....	2
TLC Brotherhood Information .....	2
Continuing Search for the Missing.....	10
My Tour in the Secret War in 1962.....	13
Jim Roth, 1945 to 2023 .....	14
Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood .....	14
Start and End of the Student Aid Program .....	15
Assistance Funds a Teacher’s Dorm in Thailand.....	16
Reunion 2023, Last Minute Advice.....	16



Above, Capt Wayne Stretch and an O-1F Cessna “Bird Dog” prior to leaving Song Be, Vietnam, for NKP in 1966. Photos furnished by the author unless noted.

## Editor's Notebook

### **Returning to the Reunion**

The last Thailand Laos Cambodia Reunion I attended was the 2017 session in Dayton, Ohio. I was not able to go to the 2018 and 2019 events since I still had active business and work obligations that conflicted with those meetings. I was planning to attend the 2020 Reunion in Newport, Rhode Island, which in fact I was scheduled to chair; however, the Covid Pandemic forced its cancellation. Then as many of you know, my wife, Eileen, following back surgery, has been restricted to a walker and a wheelchair and has been unable to travel. She has since been following a very demanding therapy routine, and while she has made considerable progress, she is still very limited in her mobility. The progress has been sufficient enough that she is willing to get on a plane for the first in more than three years, and we will both be at this year's reunion in St. Paul. And I

guarantee that we are both looking forward to it.

Since I am essentially her care giver, it has been difficult to fulfill my responsibilities as the editor of the *Mekong Express Mail (MEM)*. While I have managed a good deal of it, it is an understatement to say that getting the job done without the outstanding contributions of the assistant editor Thelma Tilton and production manager Bill Tilton would have been impossible.

It will be exciting to meet with my TLCB peers again and hear their stories, and hopefully receive many ideas for some future *MEM* articles. Naturally, that means I will be after many of you to volunteer to provide materials. I am particularly interested in "Why I Joined the TLCB" contributions, as well as "New Member" profiles. So, please, don't be shy. Your stories are more interesting than you may think.

See you soon.

John Harrington  
Editor, *MEM*  
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### **Reunion News:**

Friday will start with a Hmong Special Guerilla Unit panel, then lunch at the Transportation Building, followed by a special joint SGUVF/TLCB Memorial Service at the two monuments and a guided tour of the MN Capitol itself.



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**Reunion 2023: St. Paul, Minnesota**

## **Bird Dog** *continued from page 1*

range. What a way to make a living! By my going back for the second time, I had virtually put my head into the mouth of a lion and pulled it out before the jaws could snap shut. Too many of my buddies had “bought the farm” by taking crazy chances like I had just done. I had to remind myself that I had a wife and baby waiting for me back home. But it wasn’t often that I could catch the elusive enemy in broad daylight.

**“What a way to make a living!”**

When I radioed back to the base for an airstrike, there wasn’t anything available — they were busy in another sector. What frustration! I knew that within minutes the gun and its crew would disappear into the jungle like a snake sliding into a hole in the ground. To make matters worse, I never saw the photo that my photographer took, although I’m sure that Intelligence must have found it most interesting.

### **How I got there**

Back in February 1965, I was an F-101 jet pilot with the 2nd Fighter Interceptor Squadron based at Suffolk County on New York’s Long Island. My orders for assignment to Southeast Asia had come out of the blue. Like most Americans at that time, I knew very little about Vietnam and I had to look the place up in an atlas. My interest was further piqued by a strange set of numbers after my Air Force Specialty Code. There were a whole lot of fours which, upon further research, added up to forward air controller.

I did not have to report to my new assignment until October and much to my surprise, the Air Force stuck to my original orders. Several other guys in the squadron got similar orders months after I had received mine and they ended up in Vietnam ahead of me. To be honest, I was hoping that the war would fizzle out before I had to go, but, as we all know, just the opposite happened.



Selfie, 1966 style. Wayne Stretch as seen in the cockpit of an O-1 Bird Dog, in the “VR,” for visual reconnaissance, phase of a FAC mission; or more likely in the “RTB” phase, meaning “return to base,” which could take an hour or more at NKP..

## **FAC Training**

In October 1965, I reported to Hurlburt Air Force Base in Florida for FAC training. The aircraft I would fly was a high-powered light Cessna designated by the Air Force as the “O-1 Bird Dog.” If my memory serves me right, we had two models: the O-1E with fixed pitch prop, and the O-1F, which had a constant speed, variable pitch prop.

I had to get used to flying a tail dragger all over again. On my first landing, I bounced the ship so badly that it started to porpoise. I was losing it and the instructor had to take it away from me. After flying the F-101, which was loaded with hydraulics, I had become used to holding the stick with only two fingers. With a firm grip on the stick, I greased the next landing, and I had no problems after that.

Flight operations were carried out at a little, triangular-shaped field called Holly Field. We were instructed to land on an extremely small area near the end of the runway and then quickly taxi off to the side. At first such a landing appeared to be almost impossible, but we ultimately did it quite regularly. If handled right, the Bird Dog could fly very low and slow and land on a dime. They were preparing us well for the small airstrips which abounded in Southeast Asia.

In about five weeks we covered standard airplane evolutions such as stalls, cross country flying, night takeoffs and landings, and rocket gunnery. The O-1 had been modified to carry two rockets under each wing. We would carry white phosphorus and, in some cases, high explosive rockets. The white phosphorus, or “Willie Pete, was used to mark enemy positions

**“Don’t be a hero and fly below 1500 feet,”**

in the jungle for our attack aircraft. If we were fixed upon by the enemy, we could fight back with the HE stuff. Most often, we were armed with an M-16 rifle and a .45 or .38 caliber pistol. I preferred the .38 because I couldn’t hit the side of a barn with the .45.

Not that we would go looking for a fight, but we quickly found out that once the enemy knew that they had been spotted, they would shoot at us with vengeance. God help any FAC pilot they could get their hands on. They knew better than anyone else what our purpose in life was.

I rounded out my FAC training with three weeks of survival school, and after that, I was given a short leave to clear things up at home and to prepare to depart for Vietnam. I sold my mobile home and moved my wife and baby so that they would be near her mother in New Jersey.

After a parting which was difficult for both of us, I was off, via an Air Force C-141, for Tan Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam. I arrived at Tan Son Nhut on 2 December 1965. Although it was December, the heat and humidity were almost overwhelming. Welcome to the tropics.

I was assigned further FAC training which

**Bird Dog** *continues on page 4*

## **Bird Dog** *continued from page 3*

was conducted at a small field near Tan Son Nhut. I flew with an experienced Air Force instructor to familiarize myself with combat procedures in the area. Standard altitude for normal flights was 1500 feet, which would usually be above effective small arms range. "Don't be a hero and fly below 1500 feet," my instructor cautioned. "If you want a closer look, use binoculars and be content to go home alive with an Air Medal."

### **Song Be, A Combined Effort**

After a few flights, I was cleared to go out on my own. I was then flown out of Tan Son Nhut by an Army helicopter, northwest to a small field, and then transferred to a C-7 Caribou transport plane. The Caribou took me to my new home, a village in Phuoc Long Province called Song Be. Song Be was a Special Forces "B" Camp located on the border with Cambodia in the III Corps area of operations.

The village was protected by barbed wire and fortified bunkers which were manned by Vietnamese militia and about forty U.S. Army Special Forces personnel. The Air Force was represented by four pilots and four enlisted men: two radio operators and two mechanics. Our CO was a former B-52 pilot and the rest of us represented just about every community in the Air Force: jet fighters, transports, and even helicopters. None of us had flown the O-1 before being assigned to FAC training back at Hurlburt.

We lived in Vietnamese-built hootches and ate a combination of U.S. and Vietnamese food. The food didn't bother me, but some of the guys couldn't stand the stuff. Between the heat and the "exotic" food, it was a great place to lose weight. Our three O-1 aircraft were located on the edge of a paved road near the village. The road served as our 1500-foot runway. The province chief's home was located at one end of the road. Often, we would take off away from the house and land directly at the building. As far as I know, no one ran into the house, but

there sure wasn't much room for error. The airfield complex was not protected by any perimeter defenses or barbed wire. The compound had been assaulted before I arrived and was hit again after I left.

Targets were determined beforehand by the U.S. Air Force and then had to be approved by the South Vietnamese. Before going out on a mission, we were given target coordinates by the province chief, and we were not to deviate from the assigned coordinates. Any target of opportunity would need the approval of the province chief or some other South Vietnamese or Air Force official.

A typical sortie usually lasted an hour to an hour and a half. While operating out of Song Be, I flew alone or with an observer. Later, while flying over Laos, we flew in pairs because of the greater distances and the rugged terrain. One O-1 would fly high to serve as an airborne command post while relaying radio transmissions to our air support center. The top cover O-1 could also keep an eye on the lower guy in case of a force down. We would fly out to our assigned coordinates and rendezvous with the strike aircraft. Once radio communication was established, one of us would mark the target with a "Willie Pete" smoke rocket and then direct the air strike relative to the white smoke on the ground.

There were few landmarks in our area of operations, but there was one fairly large mountain, which we called Song Be Mountain. We frequently used the mountain as a reference point to help direct our air strikes. I especially remember a small Special Forces or ARVN camp which was on the top of the mountain. I used to buzz the guys to break up the monotony. Shortly before I left for Thailand, the Viet Cong assaulted the camp at night and wiped out the whole place.

I flew out of Song Be for almost two months and placed my rockets within assigned coordinates without ever seeing an enemy on the ground. You knew they were down there, but they were masters at concealment. They were hesitant to fire at us because they knew what we could bring down on

their heads. They apparently ignored us, or they were just sleeping the day away under the triple-canopy while waiting for the onset of darkness. It didn't appear that we were hitting anything militarily worthwhile. We certainly made a lot of match sticks out of the jungle with some very expensive ordnance.

I remember one especially depressing assignment on Christmas Day 1965, when I directed a napalm and rocket

### **Bird Dog** *continues next page*



At left, Song Be Village in South Vietnam. The military area is at upper center and the runway is the former boulevard to the right side. At runway's end sits the village chief's house.

attack on a small hamlet which, in my opinion, appeared to be insignificant. We had dropped leaflets the previous day to warn the civilians to leave. The F-100s leveled the hamlet but missed one of the hootches after repeated runs. I had to go down and finish the job myself with one of my Willie Pete rockets. I certainly didn't leave all that senseless destruction with any feeling of Christmas spirit.

On another mission out of Song Be, I was flying cover for some South Vietnamese ground forces with American advisors, when someone began to shoot at me from the jungle. I couldn't see him, but I could hear the rounds flying by quite close, going pop! pop! I flew back over the same spot, but a little higher. It was the same thing, pop! pop! I radioed the guys on the ground about the fire I was receiving and directed them to the area where the fire was coming from. They swept towards the location I had given them, and the firing stopped immediately. Whoever it was had disappeared into the bush.

### ***Nakon Phanom and the Ho Chi Minh Trail***

In February 1966, I received orders to report to the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron (TASS), which was then flying out of a new base in Thailand called Nakhon Phanom. NKP, as we called it, was close to the Mekong River on the border with Laos. From this location, air strikes could be directed to the panhandle of Laos near the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam.

The Laotian Panhandle was the general area of the famous Ho Chi Minh Trail, which was the main Communist supply route from North Vietnam into South Vietnam. According to official Air Force sources, it was estimated that 4,500 men and 300 tons of supplies were being infiltrated monthly over the trail and into South Vietnam in early 1966. The Trail was made up of not one, but hundreds of trails, paths, and dirt roads. Some portions of the Trail were visible from the air, but much was obscured by the dense, triple canopy of the jungle.

Our job was to direct air strikes onto the road complex to destroy the trucks, bicycles, porters, or whatever else was being used to supply the Communist war effort in the south. Also, to create traffic choke points, any known bridges and mountain passes were targeted. The Air Force named the interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail "Steel Tiger." Since Laos was considered a neutral country, our involvement in 1966 was not officially acknowledged by the U.S. government.

I was instructed to fly to NKP with one of the O-1s from Song Be. With five other FACs from other locations in South Vietnam, we flew the whole length of South Vietnam along the seacoast to Da Nang, which was located in the I Corps area. My plane needed some engine work, so they gave me another one to take from Da Nang. At Da Nang, we teamed up with a couple of local FACs who led us around the DMZ. They pointed out the hot spots to stay away from and then sent us on our way towards Laos. When we arrived at NKP, we doubled

Below, Unfortunately way too dark, this is the only photo we know of that includes Lee Harley, at left. Lee, or "Duff," was Wayne's (and Bill Tilton's) best friend, who was shot down on May 18, 1966 in "Harley's Valley." His crash site and remains have never been found.



Below, a gathering of the early FACs at NKP, while still a detachment of the 505th Combat Support Group, 7th Air Force. From left, Wayne identified them as 1st lieutenants Tony Anzevino, Polluck, Hilban, Cool, Lee Harley, Harley Lawrence, Karl Worst, Capt Ben Witterman (ops officer), "and four others." The commander was (then) Major Louie Johnston, a B-52 pilot whose previous assignment was to set up the radar site at Dong Ha, just below the DMZ in South Vietnam.



the number of FACs at the base to twelve.

In early 1966, Nakhon Phanom had a 6,000-foot pierced steel planking runway, and the American garrison numbered approximately 500 Air Force personnel. There was a flurry of building construction going on and the base expanded almost daily. When I left six months later, there were approximately 3,000 personnel, more than a fivefold increase.

Originally based at NKP was a search and rescue outfit made up of six CH-3 "Jolly Green" helicopters and eight A-1 "SPADs." There were also a couple of C-47 "Puff the Magic Dragon" gunships. Sometime later, a group of A-26K bombers flown by Air Commandos of the 609th Special Operations Squadron arrived at NKP. The A-26s were specially equipped to operate at night when there would be a lot of activity on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The crews slept in air-conditioned trailers

***Bird Dog continues on page 6***

Below, a "heavy lift" power pole moving company at work at Nakhon Phanom. The base was rapidly growing throughout the time Wayne was there.

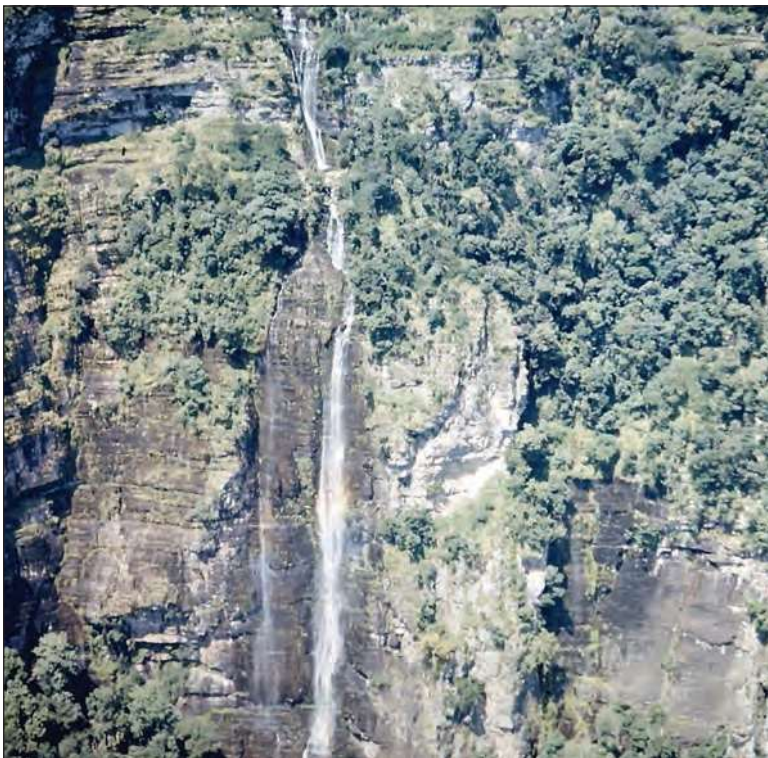


**Bird Dog continued from page 5**

during the day. Those A-26 guys were real hard chargers and they accounted for a goodly number of the truck kills which were rolled up by all types of aircraft during the time they were deployed at NKP.

As had been the case when I first arrived in South Vietnam, I had to go out with a more experienced FAC to become familiar with the terrain in Laos. Both Laos and North Vietnam are covered with extensive jungle, meandering rivers, bush, and hundreds of jungle-covered karst mountains which rise steeply to great heights. A beautiful and wild country indeed, but an

The mountains of Laos and Vietnam have many beautiful spots. This remote Laotian waterfall was Wayne's "favorite."



easy place to get lost or disoriented. *Everything looked the same, but after a while, we got to know our way around pretty well.*

When the A-26s first arrived, we took turns going out with them to help the pilots get oriented. The A-26s would drop flares and then tear up anything they found moving on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Shortly after they commenced operations, one of the A-26s was shot down and the entire crew, including one of our FACs, Tom Wolfe, who had gone along for the ride, was killed.

I flew sorties out of NKP for the next seven months, and with the exception of several bad experiences with some triple A gun crews, I never saw a living thing. Fields were farmed, rice was harvested, but no one was visible. Quite eerie. I did catch a truck one time and dove down after him. He saw me coming and took off like a scared rabbit. I had him cold, and I was on the verge of literally flying up his tail pipe. I tried to fire my rocket and nothing happened. The wire had become loose and was disconnected, and by the time I had armed another rocket, the truck had pulled off the road and into the jungle. Noting the general area where the truck had gone, we did get a strike in there later and there were some secondary explosions.

Obviously, night was the best time to catch any activity on the Trail. I did log one night mission with the crew of a C-47 gunship because of my knowledge of the area. The mission was interesting, but uneventful. A few days later, our CO lucked out on his first C-47 trip when, after dropping a flare, the crew caught a large group of Communist troops on the edge of a rice field. Not one of the enemy survived the deadly hail of fire which rained down from the C-47's guns. We knew they killed them all because the bodies were still there at daylight. Normally they would carry off all their dead and wounded after a combat encounter.

### **Carefully Following Procedures**

Rules of engagement in Laos were even more stringent than they were in Vietnam. They came directly from Ambassador William Sullivan at the American Embassy in Vientiane. We could not vary from assigned six-digit coordinates more than a meter. Trucks, bicycles, or any vehicles on the road, if we were lucky enough to catch them, were usually open game. Any target away from the road proper had to have the approval of the ambassador, who went out of his way to be protective of Laotian neutrality.

One time we were heading back to NKP from Laos when we saw a very severe line of thunderstorms directly ahead. The sky was so dark that it was green. A storm like that could rip an 0-1 to pieces, so we had to get down in a hurry. We dropped down to a small Laotian airfield near the Mekong River. Within a few minutes, six other FACs from our squadron, who were also avoiding the storm, landed, and taxied over to us. We were with our U.S. Air Force marked planes and flight clothes for the whole world to see. A Laotian general welcomed us to the field with hot coffee and

**Bird Dog continues next page**



After passage of a "green monster" thunderstorm deep in the rainy monsoon season. This was once the 23rd TASS day room. Luckily no one was hurt in the collapse.

a couple of Air America guys came over and invited us to take a trip into town with them. We could have a couple of beers at their apartment — a nice way to wait out the storm.

Shortly after we arrived at the apartment, the phone rang. It was Ambassador Sullivan's office; he was very upset about our presence in a "neutral country." We were told to leave as soon as the storm was over and not to come back again. Back at the Laotian airfield, I met a couple of CIA pilots who were teaching Laotians to fly T-28s. The CIA guys were involved in what we called "Sneaky Pete" stuff. They were using the T-28 fighter bomber. Their work was extremely dangerous, and I certainly didn't envy them.

During my tour at NKP, I completed six hundred and seventy hours in the air with one hundred and twenty-five sorties over Laos and thirty over North Vietnam. All that time, the engine on my O-1 performed perfectly and never missed a beat. I directed strike aircraft from all the services, ranging from Air Force F-100s, F-105s, and F-4s, to Navy F-4s, F-8s, and A-4s. My favorite aircraft to work with were the old B-57s and A-1 SPADs because they could loiter in the area for a long time and were easy to see and avoid when they made their bomb runs. My least favorite was the A-4 Skyhawk, flown by the Navy and Marines. It was a very small airplane and difficult to see. A mid air collision with a strike aircraft was always a major concern.

### ***Vulnerability and Bitter Losses***

We lost our first FAC pilot in March when he was run over by an F-105. The O-1 had been recently camouflaged and the F-105 never saw him. The F-105 pilot punched out and was later rescued by a Jolly Green chopper. We never found the O-1 pilot — not even a small piece of his airplane.

A month later, one of our guys was out over the Ho Chi Minh Trail when he was shot down by ground fire. He was making a radio transmission when his voice stopped in the middle of a sentence. Between February and June, five FAC pilots from our squadron were killed.

For an outfit as small as ours, such losses were bitter reminders of how vulnerable we were. No bodies were ever recovered, nor did any of the guys show up when our POWs

were released after the truce. We went out of our way to try to find them on our own. A squadron mate, Captain Warren Smith, was shot down while looking for a downed SPAD pilot who had been participating in the same area where Smith went down. At that same location, a large caliber gun fired at me the next day. I could see tracers flying between my right wing and right stabilizer. The gunfire sounded just like a popcorn machine and was coming from a triangular gun position on the ground. There were a lot of them in the area. Sometimes they were occupied by gun crews and sometimes not. Known flak sites were places to avoid — "hot spots" as we called them.

There was one whole mountain called "Flak Mountain." The area would light up like a Christmas tree every time one of our planes came within range.

At first, I thought the flashes were 20 mm from the strike aircraft ricocheting off the rocks, but when I saw all those black puffs in the sky simultaneously, I knew what it really was.

One time after I had completed a mission elsewhere, a couple of Navy A-4s came along with leftover ordnance and asked me if I had anything they could hit. I was on my way back to NKP and couldn't stay around because of fuel considerations, but I did manage to lob a Willie Pete rocket in the direction of Flak Mountain and told the A-4s to hit my smoke. Any hit anywhere on that mountain would be sure to do some good.



Capt Warren P. "Willie Pete" Smith went down in heavy groundfire while flying low beneath a cloud deck. This photo shows his broken O-1, tail number 623, which was flown in from Bien Hoa by Bill Tilton in April. The entry door was a different shade of gray because it came from another aircraft and had a bullet hole patch in the map case, making it the unhurt original pilot's "lucky door." On June 22nd its luck ran out. Vietnam was Smith's 3rd war, he having been a sailor in WWII and Korea.

By the time late June came around, the wet monsoons arrived and there were stand downs when we didn't fly because of the weather. I remember well one sortie during the monsoon season when I came very close to killing myself. Acting on what was considered to be very good intelligence, we flew out to assigned coordinates to locate a reported large truck convoy. The weather was absolutely horrible, and the target area was covered by rain clouds. I let down through the murk until I could visually see the treetops and then the road. I banked left and went lower so that I was just above the road and beneath

***Bird Dog continues on page 8***

## **Bird Dog** *continued from page 7*

the trees. The ceiling was getting lower by the second, forcing me even closer to the ground. It suddenly dawned on me that

**“How stupid can you get?”**

I was only seconds away from slamming either into the road or running head on into one of the numerous karst mountains in the area. I pulled back on the stick and climbed out of there in a hurry. How stupid can you get? Even if I had located the truck convoy, no strike aircraft would have been able to fly down through the overcast to where I had been. Wow, that had been close!

### ***Ants on the Road***

There were a few times during the rainy monsoons when we actually managed to shut down a vital segment of the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex. I remember a particular S-shaped curve which had a high embankment on one side of the road. We directed F-105s carrying three-thousand-pound bombs to hit the embankment and try to set off mud slides. We bombed that spot for a solid week until the whole curve was a quagmire. It stopped them for a short while, but, as usual, they managed to clear up whatever damage we did very quickly and return to

normal. Trying to choke off that road system was an exercise in futility and was bad for our morale as time went along. They worked like ants on that road, even to the point where they built trellises and covered the road with greenery. We solved that problem with an Agent Orange run. Anytime we wanted to find the road after that, all we had to do was to follow the brown vegetation.

### ***Luck had a lot to do with it***

On October 1, 1966, I flew my last combat mission. The tour had been quite an experience and I was thankful to have survived when five others from my squadron did not. Luck certainly had a lot to do with it. A quiet sector one day could be a death trap the next. As the war ground along in the months and years after I left, FAC casualties increased significantly as the Communist enemy continued to become even better armed and more brazen. Before being phased out, the Air Force would lose 175 O-1s to all causes. Newer and better performing aircraft such as the O-2 “Skymaster” and the OV-10 “Bronco” would replace the vulnerable O-1.

Despite the danger, FACs continued to carry on, always living close to the edge. Perhaps a quote from Al Adcock in his interesting Squadron Signal publication, *0-1 Bird Dog* best summarizes our story: “The FAC mission was performed by a special breed of dedicated pilots and observers who flew in



The high flat area known ever since May 18th, 1966 as “Harley’s Valley” is the upper left part of this photo. The Trail is obvious because of defoliation of the jungle. It crosses the diagonal ridge line (called “the parallel ridges”) and then descends to the notorious Ban Loboy water crossing, which may be the most bombed spot on Earth. At Ban Loboy the Trail crosses a river on a shallow rock ford that was very difficult to close. Lee Harley was shot down while flying beneath clouds headed in the direction of the upper left corner of this photo, which is to say, they were headed west toward Nakhon Phanom at the end of a mission possibly into North Vietnam, off to the lower right in the photo.





At right, on landing final approach at NKP. To avoid taxiing for a mile on bumpy PSP, O-1 pilots aimed for the last thousand feet of runway when landing to the south. Photos this page from Bill Tilton.

unarmed or lightly armed aircraft over heavily armed enemy territory. They routinely risked their lives so that all of the available firepower could be brought to bear on the enemy, saving American and South Vietnamese lives.”

**Note:** Wayne Stretch now resides in Bristol, Connecticut, with his wife Betty. Wayne retired from TWA flying both Lockheed 1011s and Boeing 727s.



Morning coffee at "Invert," radar site, where mission briefings were given before the TUOC was built, in spring of 1966. From left, FACs Byron Theurer, TLCB members Glenn Bremenkamp and Wayne Stretch (author), and unidentified Intel officer.

*This article is dedicated to the following FAC pilots of the 23rd TASS in 1966 who did not come home:*  
**1st Lt. Karl Worst**  
**1st Lt. Joseph Brown**  
**Capt. Lee Harley**  
**Capt. Warren P. Smith.**  
**1st Lt. Thomas Wolfe**

# The Continuing Search for the Missing

By Susan Crosby

In a 2018 edition of the “Mekong Express Mail,” there was a new member profile written about me.

## My Consistent Focus

The article talked about my POW-MIA bracelet that I’ve had for 50+ years with “LtCol Carter Luna, 3-10-69” inscribed on it. The bracelet is a gift from my mother who worked as a psychiatric nurse in VA Hospitals for 33 years.

I started seriously researching who air force LtCol Luna was and what happened to him during the Vietnam War, and I’ve made three trips to Laos since 2017 to honor him and learn more about his fate. My most recent trip in March 2023 and this article shares my research progress from 2019 to present.

## His Story and My Dedicated Research

Prior to my trip in 2023, I had really ramped up my research of the loss of Col Carter Luna on 10 MAR 69. Some of the most important documents I’ve acquired are the Search and Rescue (SAR) Logs that I have reviewed and made

Below, Susan Crosby, who furnished all the photos for this article.



**17.028N 105.975E**  
**last known position of Col. Luna**

spreadsheets from the day when then LtCol Luna and his weapon systems officer (WSO), Capt Aldis Rutyna, were shot down in Savannakhet Province, Laos. While conducting daytime bombing runs, their aircraft was hit by enemy ground fire. Both crewmembers ejected, landed on the ground safely, and had radio communication with SAR forces who arrived in the area a short time later. During the search and rescue efforts over the next few hours, Capt Rutyna was rescued, but radio contact was lost with LtCol Luna and no further information about his status or location, via his beeper, was known.

In the decades that followed, now Col Luna, become M.I.A. and ultimately classified as killed in action/body not recovered (K.I.A./B.N.R). There have been many investigations into his loss, as well as for the hundreds of other airmen who became M.I.A. during the “Secret War” in Laos, conducted by US government officials at Defense POW MIA Accounting Agency (D.P.A.A.), formerly Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), both part of the Department of Defense, along with cooperation from the Vietnam and Laos governments. Investigations often involved interviewing former North Vietnamese soldiers who operated in the area where Col Luna was shot down. Some of these soldiers had firsthand information about the fate of Col Luna while others had hearsay information. The most likely conclusion, based on the information available, is that Lt Col Luna was shot and killed when confronted by NVA soldiers searching for him in the area where he and Capt. Rutyna were observed to eject and land. Statements by NVA soldiers indicated that LtCol Luna was buried by a team of NVA soldiers. I’ve spent countless hours reviewing the investigative reports that are available on the internet and through other sources. Some specific joint field activity (JFA) missions led DPAA investigators to sites identified by NVA witnesses as a possible burial site of Col Luna.

## The Search Sites

In 2006, a surface sweep was conducted at coordinates near Col Luna’s last known position; however, there was no evidence found to warrant an excavation. In 2013, the same NVA witnesses led investigators to two sites, (but extremely close to being one location), which were 150 meters away from the one examined in 2006. The 2013 site was excavated but did not reveal any human remains or evidence that would relate to Col Luna. I found a notation from 2019 that strongly recommended that the location identified in 2006 be excavated, but to my knowledge this has not occurred. I think that based on all the information available to me, the location where the cursory check was performed in 2006, is quite likely where Col Luna’s remains could be found.

## Search Communications

During my research I have spoken to, or had electronic communications with, several people knowledgeable about Col

*Search continues next page*



Excavated site identified by Vietnamese veterans and investigated in 2013. While no human remains were found here, Susan believes it is very close to the most likely spot, identified by NVA witnesses in 2006, where Col Luna was buried. Photos provided by Susan Crosby.

Luna. Through e-mails, I have communicated with Col Aldis Rutyna, Ret. who was rescued on 10 MAR 69. Additionally, I have spoken to Capt George Marrett who led the SAR mission on 10 MAR 69. In his book, “Cheating Death—Combat Air Rescues in Vietnam and Laos” he recounts that mission and other missions that he flew during the Vietnam War. I’ve also had phone conversations with the crew chief who prepared the F-4D for what would be its last flight on 10 MAR 69, spoke with another air force officer who served with Col Luna stateside, though in a different squadron at Ubon RTAFB in Thailand, also flew on the day the colonel flew his last mission. He described to me the mood at the 8th TFW at Ubon upon Capt Rutyna’s return later in the day on 10 MAR 69 after being rescued — A somber yet hopeful mood that Lt Col Luna could still be rescued. It was not known at the time that the SAR mission had been called off. It has amazed me that 54 years after the event on 10 MAR 69 I’ve been able to have contact with these and other individuals. I’ve also been contacted by a few other people that wear a POW MIA bracelet with LtCol Luna’s name on it, and some stay in touch with me to find out if I have any new information.

### ***My Trip to Ban Kok Mak 2023***

During my trip to Savannakhet Province, Laos in March 2023, I went to Ban Kok Mak which is one of the closest villages to the rescue site of Capt Aldis Rutyna, and where LtCol Luna is last known to be alive. My driver/guide, Chris of Lao Adv Tours, a translator, and I met with the assistant village chief early on 21 March. During the conversation with our translator, the assistant village chief agreed to accompany us to the area where a couple of excavations took place as well as probable crash sites. Since LtCol Luna and his weapon systems officer (WSO) ejected, I have never had a lot of interest in the location of their downed F-4D, but if it can be found, it is a part of the history of what happened on 10 MAR 69 in Savannakhet Province Laos.

We traveled a short distance by pick-up truck to a dirt path to two excavated crash sites. The first site is known to be where

Capt Alva Krogman, USAF, crashed on 17 JAN 67. His remains were found in 2019 and he was positively identified in 2020. It was quite a moment for me to be standing in the middle of this excavated site. Arriving at the second site, we did not know whose loss it related to at the time. Upon contacting a source of mine, I found that this is most likely the site where Capt William Cogdell was shot down on 17 JAN 67 when he flew into the area searching for Captain Krogman and was shot down. Ultimately, this crash site was found and excavated in 1994 with his remains being positively identified the same year.

The assistant village chief directed us back to the original dirt path that we were on and pointed out an area where he said another U.S. aircraft crashed. He did not think that the site has been visited by the U.S. government, so we did not wander into the heavily wooded area because we doubted that it had been cleared of unexploded ordnance (UXO). I think it’s possibly the location where Col Luna’s F-4D tail number 65-0722 crashed.

After dropping off the assistant village chief at Ban Kok Mak, we traveled back to Vilabouly to stop at a market to buy food and water for the villagers. I had bought small toys that I had shipped to my son in Southeast Asia before my trip and now had them with me.

### ***A Purple Flower and Berries***

Before returning to the village, we stopped at two coordinates of interest related to Col Luna. The first was a cassava field that had been harvested so it was easy for Chris and me to walk through it. Chris then located the coordinate of Col Luna’s last known position in an adjoining brushy area. I’m still at a loss for words to describe how I felt standing on the ground in the



Were these a sign? Susan felt special meaning attached to the flower and the berries.

area where Col Luna had been 54 years earlier. If that wasn’t already an emotional moment, it became more so when Chris pointed out a purple flower to me. I looked at the flower and found two clumps of berries nearby. What was so unusual about this was that there were no other blooming flowers or berries in the immediate area. I took it to be a “sign” that we were in the right place. I picked the flower, which traveled 10,000 miles back to the U.S. with me, and three months later I gave it to Col Luna’s wife, Pat, along with some dirt from the area.

We then traveled about 300 yards by truck to the coordinate that was possibly the burial site of Col Luna. This location was about 10 feet off the road/Rt. 9116, which was known to be part

**Search continues on page 12**

## Search continued from page 11

of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This area looked to be untouched by investigators, but upon further investigation after my trip, I learned that we were probably a little bit off on the possible burial site coordinates. This area was also where the NVA had fighting positions and a kitchen. The coordinates still made sense to me because they are close to where Col Luna was last known alive.

### *The Village and Its People*

I think that the people in this village were puzzled by our presence there but were appreciative when we returned in the afternoon with food, water, and toys for children. I was so thankful that our translator could communicate with everyone as we passed out supplies. The looks on their faces showed the uncertainty they had toward us, yet they were very accepting, and we had a great time passing out toys, books, etc. to the children who gathered around us with great interest. I demonstrated sharpening a pencil, which amazed of the group of children—something that seemed to have never seen before. We also had a question-and-answer conversation with an elder who lived in the village (except when necessary to flee) during the “Secret War.” I have no doubt that when we return to Kok Mak in 2024, we will be remembered and be welcome to spend time with these humble people.



Kids everywhere love “stickers.” Susan is giving stickers to the kids of the village.



Susan Crosby presented gifts to the assistant village chief and a village elder. She interviewed both of them during her visit. At first villagers appeared wary and uncertain, but before she left they seemed to have accepted her and she expects future visits will find ready acceptance.

“They still live in conditions with no running water, using squat toilets, surrounded by millions of UXOs in and on the ground.”



If you served in the Secret War in Laos, you most likely saw the country from an aircraft. Veterans who have gone back to Southeast Asia say that it looks different 50+ years later, and obviously in many ways it is different. I can tell you from firsthand experience that the one thing that has stayed the same all these decades later is the harsh (by our standards) lifestyle of people in remote villages of Laos. They still live

in conditions with no running water, using squat toilets, surrounded by millions of UXOs in and on the ground. Yet, the people in the villages seem content and happy... it’s all they know.

### *A Meeting, Unscheduled Mission, and a Cancelled R&R*

In June 2023, I made a trip to Florida to meet the colonel’s wife, Pat, in person for the first time. In 2018, I had prepared a letter for the USAF to forward to the colonel’s next-of-kin. At the time, I did not know who that person was, but on Memorial Day 2018 I received a phone call from Pat after she had received my letter. I would find out during the time spent with her that the colonel had not been scheduled to fly a mission on 10 MAR 69, but ended up flying the mission in place of another aircraft commander. He had only been participating in the “Secret War” in Laos for two months, having been assigned to the 8th TFW, 435th TFS at Ubon in January. He was scheduled for an “R & R” with his wife in Hawaii the following month, but that didn’t happen because of the events that took place on 10 MAR 69 while piloting the F-4D, call sign “Papaya 02.”

The communist Pathet Lao stated many times that they held American prisoners, but of almost 600 Americans lost in Laos, no POWs were ever released; the U.S. government only negotiated for release of POWs in Vietnam. Although I don’t think that Col Luna became a POW, he is one of 285 men still unaccounted for in Laos, and one of 1,578 still unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. To read more about my investigative research, please visit my website: [www.susankrosby.com](http://www.susankrosby.com), and for information about tours in Laos and other initiatives I’m working on, the website is: [www.missionsinlaos.org](http://www.missionsinlaos.org).

My e-mail: [susan@susankrosby.com](mailto:susan@susankrosby.com)

*There are over 1,500 reasons to keep searching*



## New Member Profile

# *My Tour in the Secret War in 1962*

*By Richard Perry*

### *My Stay in Vientiane*

I was a microwave radio operator stationed in Okinawa, Japan, and was presented with a unique opportunity to serve in Laos in 1962. The CIA needed me to install a radio system that would enable communication between Vientiane, Laos, and Udorn, Thailand. I had civilian status there and was required to take an oath and undergo a background check to obtain a secret clearance, much like many of you.

Upon arriving in Vientiane, I rented a beautiful French-built house and shared it with another guy from Pennsylvania, Rick Gibbs, who was there for a separate project. Our living arrangement came with the added perk of a live-in maid, and we felt like we had landed in paradise.

On my second day, I was directed to a small compound consisting of a few Quonset huts. In one of the huts, I found three large crates that needed to be unpacked and contents assembled. Each crate contained a component of the radio system: a transmitter, a receiver, and a power supply. The cathode ray tube components were each approximately 24" square and weighed around 50 pounds. Luckily, the 100-foot antenna tower had already been erected, so I was able to focus on assembling the radio system without delay.

During my tour to Vientiane, I rented a Honda 50CC motorcycle, which allowed me to explore the countryside beyond the city limits, and as I rode through the villages, the locals stared at me curiously, perhaps never having seen an American before. Despite my attempts to communicate with

L-R: Dr Lee Pao Xiong, Rick Perry, Bill Tilton. Lee Pao is explaining the significance of the bronze Hmong memorial seen at right. This is on the Minnesota Capitol grounds, with the 2023 TLCB Reunion hotel in the background. A joint memorial service will be held at this spot on September 15th., officiated by Dr. Robert Holst and TLCB Chaplain George Shenberger. In a long and varied career, Dr. Holst served as president of St. Paul's Concordia University for twenty years (1991-2011). He and Lee Pao Xiong set up the Hmong Studies Center at Concordia U.



Captain Xai Nou Vang pinning a special medal on Rick Perry at the headquarters of the Special Guerilla Unit Veterans and Families (SGUVF) in St. Paul, last spring. He was one of Vang Pao's bodyguards, his food taster, and one of those who evacuated VP from Long Tieng on May 18th, 1975. The medal was personally designed by VP before he died.

them and offer to ride their buffalo, no one took me up on the offer. Maybe someday...

### *The Minnesota Hmong*

Did you know that St. Paul, MN has the largest population of Hmong people in the United States, with over 200,000 refugees airlifted out of Laos and Thailand? The Hmong are highly respected for their hard work and perseverance, having arrived in the US without knowing English. The Baptist community provided housing, food, and English lessons, and today, many Hmong continue to work in agriculture, while the younger generation has pursued education and careers in a variety of industries.

If you're interested in learning more about the Hmong in Minnesota, I highly recommend Googling "Lee Pao Xiong," a prominent figure who has worked tirelessly to advocate for and preserve Hmong culture. I had the privilege of meeting Lee Pao five years ago, and he graciously invited me to a dinner honoring the US Ambassador to Laos during her visit to St. Paul in 2017. When I told her about my experience in the Secret War in Vientiane back in '62, she suggested that I return, which I did with the help of "Legacy of War" from Washington, DC. Lee Pao was instrumental in funding my trip, and I've shared photos of my journey at [www.meditationgardenmn.com/laos](http://www.meditationgardenmn.com/laos). If you have any questions, I'll be happy to answer them at the September reunion. Hope to see you there!



# Jim Roth, 1945 to 2023

The following obituary for Jim Roth was provided by the Hartman—Graziano Funeral Home, Inc., Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

James J. Roth, 78, of Sebring FL, formerly of Latrobe, passed away on Saturday, August 5, 2023. He was born on January 6, 1945, a son of the late Joseph J. and Clara R. (Short) Roth.

James was a veteran of the United States Air Force. Prior to his retirement, he served as a Computer System Engineer for the Air Force for 20 years. He was a member of the Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood. One of his favorite pastimes was spending time reading sci-fi and fantasy books.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his sisters, Janet Volpe and Marilyn Aston. He is survived by his loving wife of over 48 years, Lydia Ann (Robinson) Roth; his siblings, Allen Roth and Charles Roth (Denise); his brother-in-law, Charles Volpe; and many nieces and nephews.

Family and friends will be received from 4 to 6 PM on Friday, August 11th at the Hartman-Graziano



Funeral Home Inc., 1500 Ligonier Street Latrobe PA 15650. A funeral liturgy will be held on Saturday, August 12th at 10AM in the funeral home chapel. Interment with full military honors accorded by the VFW Post #33 Honor Guard will follow at Saint Vincent Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to the Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood at <http://tlc-brotherhood.com>.

Jim Roth joined the TLC Brotherhood in August of 1999 as member number 00311. He and his wife, Lydia, attended all the early reunions and Jim took over the Brotherhood Exchange when founder Bart Bartholomew died. Jim ran the exchange for several years, but he suffered from a form of dementia that began to interfere

with this service. Lydia, legally blind and hard of hearing, was able to stay in touch with Jim's Brotherhood friends and to assist him until his illness took his life this year. We miss Jim's enthusiasm and willingness to help in any way he could.



## Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood

The eleven members listed below joined between the June 2023 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
02032	USA	Donald	Ormes	Bessemer	MI
02033	USA	Gerald	Mignon	West Babylon	NY
02034	USAF	Robert	Lien	Sioux Falls	SD
02035	USAF	Paul	Mussolino	Dayton	OH
02036	USA	James	Church	Payson	AZ
02037	USAF	Richard	Avila	Abilene	TX
02038	USAF	Joseph	White	Sayville	NY
02039	USAF	Francis	Kennedy	Baton Rouge	LA
02040	Other	Kristie	Samples	Belleville	NJ
02041	Other	Sean	Cunningham	Belleville	NJ
02042	USAF	John	Andersen	Telford	PA

# *Start and End of the Student Aid Program*

*By President John Sweet and Assistance Chairman Les Thompson*

The student aid program began as an offshoot from a motion by our TLCB Assistance representative at Nakhon Phanom, Dr. John Middlewood, when he asked for funds to assist two families with transportation and living expenses associated with their children's need for heart surgery at a distant hospital.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. John notified the TLCB Assistance Committee that there was a bright student, named Meechai, who had no funding for school and no shoes. John had been in contact with one of our members who offered help.

## ***Formal Assistance Begins:***

By the middle of March 2005, John had three children whom he was sponsoring himself, and he sent an email that listed other TLC Brotherhood members who were interested in taking on the role of supporting individual students. By the end of March, we had a total of sixteen students assigned under the program to commence May 1st, 2005 when school resumed.

Some of the members had sent funds directly to John, while others participated through our TLCB Assistance Program. At this point, it was necessary to set up separate tracking for the funding and expenditures assigned to the individual sponsors and students. A standard procedure for all funding would be directed through the TLC Brotherhood Student Aid General Fund, which was established by the treasurer so the sponsors would receive documented donation letters of thanks for their tax return filing. The treasurer investigated the tax law regarding non-profit grants to individuals and determined that it was not legal for donors to select individual beneficiaries.

## ***Our Student Aid Considerations***

The following policy was established for student selection and continuance:

John sent out word to the schools within the Nakhon Phanom Province, which the Assistance Committee was currently working with. He said that the TLCB would consider helping bright students unable to attend school after the fifth grade because of poor financial resources.

## ***The Guidelines***

The following process was established: School officials would make a request to our Assistance representative for student support, who would then review the candidate's record and circumstances. Each student was required to maintain an above average overall grade and a satisfactory attendance record. Each student was also required to meet monthly with John and provide a progress report to receive funding for the following month. In the event that a student failed, or did not attend the monthly review requirements, the student was dropped from the program and the Assistance Committee notified.

## ***Selection and Management***

When a candidate was selected, our Assistance representative submitted the selection to the committee for approval. Once

approved, a student was notified that they were enrolled, and the funding continued until graduation or withdrawal. Students entered the program as early as grade six when Thai public schools require families to pay for their children's education.

Our Assistance representative, Dr. John Middlewood, made a monthly report to the Assistance Committee of the amounts withdrawn, in local currency, from our NKP Pentagon Federal Credit Union account for each student. The Assistance Committee and the TLCB Treasurer maintained program oversight.

## ***Student Aid Program 2014 to Sunset***

The Student Aid Program had been running under John Middlewood's care since its unofficial start in 2004, and everything was going smoothly. Then in November of 2014, we were notified of Dr. John's passing. Although we were aware of his health issues, it still caught everyone off guard. Now there was no one at the helm in Thailand. John Middlewood had done all the management by himself, selecting students, monitoring their progress, writing the motions, and disbursing the funds to the students.

By this time there were 25 high school, 2 junior college, and 7 university students in the program. Donations didn't completely cover the monthly funding. With no one to locally manage the program and the funding shortfall, the Assistance Committee approved a motion to discontinue the program at that time.

## ***Good Stewards Step in***

Before the decision to discontinue was put into effect, charter member Ed Miller, who was in Nakhon Phanom (NKP), notified the committee that he would handle the motions and funding until it was time for him to return stateside. His support provided the time to look at all our options and find a full-time replacement for John Middlewood.

In February of 2015, John Sweet, Roger Durant, and Les Thompson made a trip to SEA, and in NKP they met with Wipada Kaewbhudta (John's widow, Maeo) and Satawat Sri-in at John Middlewood's church/school. Satawat, a professor at NKP University, is fluent in English, which allowed a discussion that ended with him agreeing to administer the Student Aid Program until the last already enrolled student finished.

## ***And the Program Continues***

After that meeting in NKP, the Assistance Committee approved the following motion: Motion 15-12; Student Assistance Program Continuance & Stewardship. Bob Wheatley made the following motion: "I move the Student Assistance Program be continued with Satawat Sri-in as the steward of the program. That the Student Assistance Program in NKP be continued as follows: When a student graduates from high school and plans to attend junior college or university, their funding will be continued at the rate for the new level. If

***Student Aid continues on page 16***

## Student Aid *continued from page 15*

a junior college student proceeds to university, their funding will continue. When a student graduates from university or drops from any level of the program, their funding will be discontinued. From this point forward, no new student will be admitted to the program. The program will sunset when the last student leaves the program.”

### ***The Sun Sets***

In 2015, when the above motion was approved, calculations based on the grade levels of the students in the program at that time, predicted that the last student would graduate university in the first quarter of 2024. As it turned out, that last student graduated early in the first quarter of 2023. Matchima Khanda entered the program in 2013, and in 2015 Sawini Manaonok was the last student entered in the program. In total from the

start to the end, the TLCB funded 100 students. One was in the program for only two months, and the longest was Matchima Khanda, 10 years.

Although this individual support program has ended, our support for students in SEA still continues. If you haven't seen the conditions of the schools in Laos and Thailand, you would be shocked at what they endure to get an education, with buildings that are nothing more than a thatch or tin roof over a dirt floor. There may be a floor or a wall fan for ventilation. Through our quality-of-life projects, we have given over a thousand students a decent place to further their educations. We've provided concrete floors, block walls, proper roofing, indoor restrooms, water wells and many other needed items.

Thanks to all who have and continue to support our assistance efforts.



## ***Assistance Funds a Teacher Dorm in Thailand***

**T**he *Mekong Express Mail* recently received these photos of the latest project at Pan Nam Phiang school, where members Monty and Potjane Dubs have been conveying local community school needs to the TLCB Assistance Committee. In previous issues, we have covered the construction of a new student bathroom, new freshwater tanks, and storage battery replacements. The remote village relies on solar power. This school is in Thailand's Mae Hong Son Province, which borders on Myanmar (Burma). This spectacularly beautiful region of rugged mountains and remote villages sits along the river Pai and parts are almost perpetually shrouded in mist. The name suggests that it is an ideal place to train elephants, which remain an important part of the province's culture.

The most recent project was the replacement of the teachers' bedroom. This involved demolition of the old structure and construction of a new, more solid building with a metal roof instead of the leaky roof on the old building. It is necessary for teachers to be here overnight to be with the 25 to 35 students who stay over for school because their homes are too remote.



Clockwise from top, the old bedroom with leaky roof, new bedroom nearing completion, receiving floor panels. Photos sent to Monty Dubs by the school principal.



## ***Last minute advice for the reunion—***

When packing for the reunion, consider the weather, as well as your own endurance. Friday afternoon, September 15<sup>th</sup>, will be spent outside the hotel, mainly in the Minnesota State Capitol and surrounding gardens. Minnesota autumn weather is unpredictable, so be prepared for whatever we encounter. These precautions should help. First, you could be on your feet for over an hour, so wear comfortable shoes. Next, pack umbrellas, hats and jackets in case we encounter chilly or rainy weather. If

the weather is nice, these items can be left in your room, but you will have them if needed. There is no seating in the area around the Vietnam and Hmong Memorials, so consider bringing a lightweight folding chair or camp stool that can be easily carried. If you get tired of standing during the memorial service, you can be seated.

**As of this printing the long-range forecast is for clear or partly cloudy with temperatures in the range of 64 to 75.**

