

# MEKONG EXPRESS MAIL



*The newsletter of the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc. Volume 21, issue 3*

[WWW.TLC-Brotherhood.com](http://WWW.TLC-Brotherhood.com)

## **Editor's Notebook:**

### ***New Members – They Served Then and They Continue to Serve***

Only a year ago, I wrote about a spurt in new members of The Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood, and we published profiles of four of them. Well, that uptick (there were 26 newbies on that issue's list) seems to have abated and this issue's count is eleven, which might be described as "underwhelming." Like last year, however, this *MEM* features three new member profiles—Terry Brown, Dick Harnly, and John Pollard, as well as a member profile from Mike Sand, who joined in 2007, and recently returned. Beyond that, there is part one of a long article "It's a Jungle Out There," by another new member, Doug Vincent, who has already flung himself into TLCB activities as an invaluable member of the volunteers

implementing our Assistance Program.

Well, it may be that our impetus has slowed, but I would not bank on it. What we may lack in mass at the moment, we more than make up in the intensity of the new members' urge to participate. The September 2020 profiles are remarkable for the lives the contributors have led in the many years since they served their country. In fact, they have each continued to uphold their country as solid citizens. Some words I wrote in this space a year ago are worth repeating.

### ***The Ongoing Lives of TLCB Members***

*In addition to bringing new TLCB members into the fold, the MEM has worked at enhancing its appeal by encouraging regular members to share their experiences. Frankly, that does not just mean recounting their experiences from back in the day, although those stories are certainly welcome; however, as a review of many of the new profiles demonstrates, members have continued to live exceptional and interesting lives long after they left SEA. They are regularly active and contributing members of their communities, in other words, good citizens. I think many of you would also like to read about what our cohorts did in the years since coming home, how their time in service prepared them for civilian life and the job market, and what they are involved with right now.*

*Related to the above, the MEM has occasionally run a series of articles entitled "Why I Joined the TLCB." Those have proven to be, for lack of a better term, inspirational to our readers, often encouraging others to submit their version on the theme. I started this feature in 2013 and it generated a fair response, but I must admit it has slowed up a little.*

*In an effort to get both of these reader-generated features*

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– “What I’m Doing Now” and “Why I Joined” – cranked up, I intend to start putting the arm on some of our more visible members to tell us their stories. Of course, you, any of you, do not have to wait to hear from me with a request. You can beat me to it and send something to me right now.

**Air, Ground, or Water**

It would be interesting to hear more from you Marines, Army, Navy, and Coast Guard guys. Let us know how your days went on the ground, in the air, or on your ships. Clue us in about your locations, assignments, and service experiences. You may think your job was not interesting, but to our readers, your work contributions might show how they tied to their efforts, or you may just have a funny experience or two to share.

The point, and this is important for increasing TLCB’s exposure, is that our members and our contemporaries not only contributed to their country by what they were doing 30, 40, and sometimes 50 years ago, but that they continue to serve their communities today in various ways.

John Harrington

MEM Editor

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**Important Dates for the TLCB**

- Board of directors election ballots must be received by: 11/14/2020, and will be counted by the vice president.
- The mailing address is on the ballot (June MEM)
- Results will be in December MEM
- Rosie’s Raffle received at TLCB address by 10/1/2020
- Drawing by local Boy Scouts will be on 10/15

**At the Exchange**  
**Have your SEA “Base Shirt” yet?**

The TLC Brotherhood Exchange (BX) has added a color option since the June issue. This instantly popular new product is now available in forest green as well as black. See the enclosed order form for more details. And don’t forget to “go shopping” at [www.tlc-brotherhood.com](http://www.tlc-brotherhood.com).



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**2020-2021, showing year of term end**

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- Via website—uses PayPal, which accepts credit card payments.
- By check—make checks payable to “TLC Brotherhood, Inc.”
- Write payment purpose and member number on check.

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**Reunion 2020: Cancelled**

## Member Profile

### *Raymond Michael “Mike” Sand*

*It seems like yesterday when I was over there. It is always nice to share old memories... especially the good ones. I hope this helps.*

#### **My story in brief is like this...**

I grew up on the east side of Detroit, Michigan mostly in a suburb now called Eastpointe (East Detroit back then). I graduated from East Detroit High School in 1965. My father was a WWII army combat vet and my mother married him in 1947. My parents were divorced when I was 11 and my two younger brothers, my baby sister and I lived with my mom. We were poor and college was out of the question for me back then because I had to start work at age 13 to help support the family.

My draft classification in 1967 was 1-A, which meant I most likely would be called to serve in Vietnam, so rather than being drafted, I was able to join the Air Force. My industrial education classes in high school really paid off because you had to score high on a qualification test to be accepted. I figured that if I joined, I would at least have some say as to my destiny.

I asked my high school sweetheart at the time, Barbara (Bobbi) to marry me because I wasn't sure if I would return from Vietnam since the war was really escalating. We agreed not to have any children until I returned home safely, and we married June 24, 1967. She had turned eighteen on May 20th, and I left for basic training August 27, writing to each other every chance we could.

My stateside training was at Chanute AFB in Rantoul, Illinois and McConnell AFB in Wichita, Kansas. Bobbi and I were able to spend some time together during this period, although living on a young airman's pay was very difficult. We ate a lot of macaroni and cheese with “honeymoon salads” (lettuce alone).

I was to become a fighter-bomber technician, specializing on the F-105 Thunderchief and the F4E Phantom II. The “Thud” as it was called, was used extensively during the bombing of North Vietnam and later the Ho Chi Minh Trail. My orders came and I was assigned to the 388th Tactical Fighter-Bomber Group, APO San Francisco, which really meant a secret air base in Korat, Thailand, a twelve-month tour of duty.



Mike Sand today. Photos from the author.

Bobbi went back home and worked as a secretary for Chrysler Corporation while I served overseas. I worked twelve-hour days, six days a week, six months on day shift and six months on nights, six o'clock until six o'clock every day but one. We constantly ran bombing missions around the clock and when we lost too many



Above, Mike on the entrance ladder of a Republic Aviation F-105 “Thud,” so nicknamed at a time when many were being shot down or crashing.  
Below, the McDonnell Aircraft F-4E.



“Thuds,” the F-4e Phantom was brought in to replace it. I also spent some time at Takhli RTAFB where I serviced EB-66s, UH-1 Hueys, UH-53s and many other Vietnam War aircraft including the famous C-47 “Spooky,” also called “Puff the Magic Dragon.” I witnessed aircraft crashes and we lost many pilots killed in action. We had many POW/MIAs that flew out of our base and were shot down or captured near the Ho Chi Minh Trail or in North Vietnam. In addition, I trained and befriended Royal Thai Air Force personnel and got to learn their culture, which really fascinated me. While in Southeast Asia, I received the Base Outstanding Airman Award and eventually the Air Force Commendation Medal for my achievements. I did not realize how unpopular the war had become back in the states. I left Thailand August 27, 1969.

After Korat, I received orders for Patrick AFB in Florida (the Space Center). It was a great assignment! Since I was married before I went overseas, Bobbi and I were thrilled to get this duty. We spent two years living right on the ocean in a really laid-back environment. My TDYs included places like Fiji, Australia, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Ascension Island, and more. The primary mission of our base was to support missile launches and the tracking of various types including Atlas, Titan, Polaris, Saturn, Minuteman, and many others. I also got to serve in an important role with NASA during Apollos 13, 14, and 15, which were awesome. In April 1969 I was struck by lightning while repairing one of the ARIA tracking aircraft and ended up

**SAND continues on page 4.**



**SAND** *continued from page 3.*

with a 100% disability through the VA. I later discovered that I had also contracted asbestosis, while in service, from working with various mechanical systems. Fortunately, I have not come down with cancer or mesothelioma thus far.

At the end of my four years, I decided not to re-enlist and we moved back to Michigan only to find high unemployment and nowhere jobs. I went back to school under the GI Bill while working in production at a GM auto plant. Eventually, I used the skills I acquired in the air force to get into the UAW Skilled Trades where I built industrial robots. My real goal was to finish my degree and become a Career and Technical Education (CTE) instructor.

After working six years to get my degree, I landed a teaching position at University-Liggett, a private school in Grosse Pointe, a very wealthy community. I loved it. It was 1977 and Bobbi and I bought our present home, having two kids at the time, and things were going well. Then, out of nowhere the school decided to focus on a new direction and eliminated my program. I was shattered. They liked me however, so they offered a position as physical plant administrator, which I reluctantly accepted and remained in that business for 18 years with three different school districts (very stressful).

Twenty years ago, in my third district, Fraser Public Schools, where our home is, I was talking with the personnel director, another Vietnam War vet, and he said they needed a technology teacher. I told him about my background and he offered me an opportunity to return to the classroom. It was great! I taught drafting, CAD, home design, woodworking, metals, home maintenance, and manufacturing technology. I loved working with the kids, and especially enjoyed sharing my “Vietnam” experience with them, since many of them, like me, had to make a tough decision as to whether or not they wanted to go into the military. Those who have gone on to serve tell me that they are glad they did and share the same pride I do, even though war is still not a popular subject.

On the home front, Bobbi and I now have five wonderful children: Amy 49, who has two master’s degrees, one in psychology and another in communications; Todd 47, a computer web site designer for Raytheon Corporation; Josh 39, works as a construction manager; Ellen 36, a beautician, and our caboose, Ryan 34, works as a facilities manager. Bobbi retired as an elementary school secretary in our local school district and volunteers for our church with the choir and Sunday school program. We are so fortunate. I feel that we have been blessed.

As far as my veteran experience goes, I joined the American Legion in 1971 after Nam (my father’s post) but didn’t feel welcome there. I paid dues for ten years but really didn’t get involved. In 1979 I met some guys at a political rally who belonged to a group called Vietnam Veterans of Michigan (VVM). They convinced me to join.

While attending college after my military service, I met a former South Vietnamese naval officer by the name of Xin Van Dam. Xin and his pregnant wife, Oahn, fled Vietnam during the fall of Saigon in 1975. Their sponsor was to be the base chaplain at a nearby Air Force base. They hadn’t been here long when their sponsor received orders to leave. After becoming friends, Bobbi and I agreed to take over the sponsorship until they completed their adjustment to living in the US. We became close as family and shared in learning each other’s culture and lifestyles. Xin and Oahn introduced Bobbi and me to the South Vietnamese community here in Michigan and, in turn, I helped them to organize and come together as a highly recognized and respected entity. Over the years VVA, Detroit Chapter 9, and our South Vietnamese friends have participated jointly in countless patriotic ventures such as, parades, ceremonies, festivals, weddings, and funerals to name a few.



Mike Sand on the flightline.

The camaraderie we share is extraordinary. As we recognized the 45th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, I must say how proud I am to share such a huge part of history with these brave and patriotic people.

In 1990 I was asked by then Michigan Governor, James Blanchard, to serve on the Michigan Vietnam Monument Commission where I served as Vice-Chairman. We completed construction of the monument and dedicated it on Veterans Day 2001. The project has really been a challenge but I have always remained dedicated to it. On that beam there are 2654 Michigan names who made the ultimate sacrifice. Other veteran

memorials I have helped with include, but are not limited to, are: Freedom Hill/Macomb County, Veterans Memorial/Eastpointe, Fraser WWII Memorial, Huey Helicopter Monument, Harrison Twp. Veterans Memorial, Ypsilanti Vietnam Memorial, The North Wall Canadian Vietnam Memorial in Windsor, Ontario, and I currently serve on the executive board of the Veterans Memorial Park of Detroit, Inc.

Today I am 72 and retired. I recently served as president of Vietnam Veterans of America, Detroit Chapter 9. In addition, I perform volunteer work in my community. I acquired my master’s degree in 2001 with a 3.97 GPA. I never thought I would ever do that when I was in high school. In February 2014, I suffered a heart attack and had quadruple by-pass surgery. Ischemic heart disease can be related to “Agent Orange” exposure, which I was, and I have received 100% total and permanent disability compensation with the Department of Veterans Affairs. I am married for 52 years to the best wife any man could ever wish for, and we have 10 grandchildren. Life has been good to me over all and I have made some great friends along the way, and it is awesome to have you as one of them.

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*[Mike joined the TLCB in 2007 and returned in 2020]*

## New Member Profile

### *Terry L. Brown*

I first arrived in Thailand in June 1971, through Bangkok, and was scheduled for the shuttle flight to Udorn after an NKP stop. We did not know that the flight was full, and they asked for one volunteer, and I raised my hand. What did I have to lose? After everyone laughed at me, they told me I would be spending a couple of days in Bangkok, pretty nice volunteer duty.

I had an assignment to Udorn with the 432<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing as an Inertial Navigation Systems (INS) Radar Repairmen and Forward-Looking Radar (FLR) on RF-4C and the F-4D/E aircraft, which was after attending the F-4 training at George AFB, CA. I also was an experienced Doppler radar repairman on the C-130 aircraft from my first assignment after Technical School.

First thing I did at Udorn was buy my Seiko watch at the gift shop across from the chow hall. Still have it and it works, well kind of! My work experience allowed me to work the flight line since I could work every aircraft our shop supported, and didn't have to be in the shop working systems on test benches. I enjoyed the freedom of going from aircraft to aircraft, testing the system and removing/replacing whatever components were required. There is truly something extremely peaceful about sitting in an F4 during monsoon rains, running a 45-minute Shuler Loop test on the INS with no one to bother you. It also allowed me to work on the Red Ball truck for aircraft launches to quickly assess any problems with the INS or Doppler, depending on the aircraft. This would lead either to the call to launch or scrub that aircraft.

The working conditions were not great; the hours were very long with heat, rain, bugs, etc., and 12-14 hours not being unusual. Of course, you had all of the Baht Bugs you wanted as they would dive towards the light carts, and we would collect

them and give them to the guards. I remember the FLR Radar would scan left/right, up/down, repeat during maintenance with the radome up.... Well the Thai guards were pretty fascinated with that and would stand right in front and watch with the radiation going. I would then try to explain in broken Thai and hand signals, that it was not good for the boys to be doing that. They would quickly get out of the way and stay far away after those

warnings. I did get to know the crew chiefs, who, if they wanted to, made your job much easier. I also made friends in all of the other electronics shops, especially with the IR shop, Phil Manni and my buddy, Stan, in INS. At one point, any aircraft that was not F-4, C-130 or the A-1E Sandies was ordered redeployed when we beefed up to around a 100 F-4s, with the aircraft from the PI joining us late in the 1971 campaign. But I learned so much during my first tour at Udorn from three of our NCOs who were as good as any I have ever had the pleasure of working for or with: SSgt Larry Cantely, SSgt Larry Allen, and TSgt Pappy Lowe. I also became good friends with a guy, call name Wolf, down in the Air America area. He wanted me to transfer from military to civilian and work with them. He said they could make that happen and I always wondered if it was true or not. We became good friends. He had a wife and two girls at Udorn and was a first-class guy; however, he disappeared one day and no one knew or would tell me anything, so that fell by the wayside. Never did learn what happened. As an addition, I also was trained at the Thai Army Base for Base Security Augmentation, good weapons training, but not much fun in those towers.

I would spend the majority of my time at a place called Moms out the back gate near the Thai Army entrance. It was nothing more than a grass hut and rotting bathroom floors, which a guy or two actually fell through, not a pleasant landing by any means. Mom, as I called her, took very good care of me and made sure that I wasn't any more stupid than normal. She was a great person and always watched out for me. Not sure why, but so thankful she did. She rented out a Baht Truck for the water festival



Terry after a long night on the flightline.  
Photos provided by the author.

Getting beer for a cookout, with Tom Bernaciak.



**BROWN** continues on page 6.



**BROWN** *continued from page 5.*

and as we were throwing buckets of water, some Thai Army troops grabbed my arm and pulled me into their Deuce-and-a-half Army truck and headed towards their base slinging water at everyone. Luckily, Mom followed and was able to retrieve her dumb American friend. Again, when the King's motorcade was coming to Udorn, I walked out to the road with a beer and no shirt. A Thai Army guy, with bayonet, started walking towards me not looking real happy. Mom again grabbed me and chewed my butt about showing respect to the King and never, never do that again. Well that lesson has served me very well during all my travels; have respect for the place you are visiting. Since we did not get any R&R during this year or Bob Hope, we got a magician for the Xmas show, which was a bummer. We would spend a lot of time recording music or doing photography work in the MWR facilities, ending up with way too much music and pictures. I do remember walking back at night from the NCO Club when we would often relieve ourselves on the Wing Staff cars. Eventually, they all had pretty bad stains on the doors. Udorn at that time was a pretty Wild West type place.

I was sent back stateside in 1971 and spent a lot of time in Panama with the aerial mapping unit out of Kansas. I was in Sacramento, but deployed with them from Kansas. Exactly eight months later I received orders to Keesler to attend the INS Targeting School for the system on the C-130 gunships, which was to be followed with an assignment to Ubon. I really enjoyed Ubon and the work on both F4s and the gunships. The gunships were my primary duty, but I still had time for the F-4. The INS System on the gunships was very impressive and allowed the targeting capabilities to increase pretty dramatically. Sitting in the targeting pod and watching real-time targeting was eye popping indeed. I actually saw my old TI from Basic Training at Ubon, a gunner on the C-130. Small world indeed. We had some major programs that went into action on the F-4 aircraft with new sensors and weapons. A very interesting time and like Udorn, I truly enjoyed my time, but also knowing that you were killing people was never good. We saw it as the mission and the safety of our guys was paramount. But being able to see the convoys through trees, lead and rear vehicles taken out, and Vietnamese drivers running through the woods being tracked by the gunners was pretty sobering, and you quickly realize what this is all about; however, the experiences that went with being in Thailand were just great. Loved the people and the country.

Since this was my second tour, I decided to live downtown with some friends. Tom Bernaciak is in the picture with me, on page 5, and he eventually became the best man at my wedding. Tony Rooney and Ron Block were the other two guys downtown. During this tour I met the one woman who I could ever see myself with. Having plans as a lifelong bachelor, I never counted on this. Ott, for some reason, put up with all my stupid things, playing football in the street and dislocating joints, wanting to go to weird places that no one else wanted to, or buying catfish to put in our pond in the Bungalow, which the house maid was always asking if they were for eating. She was truly a patient woman and saw something in me, I guess. We have now been married for 45 years and have two sons

who both have served in the Army and fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. I always tell her if her standards were not so low, we wouldn't be married.

I ended up serving 28 years, 12 enlisted and 16 as an officer. Turned down Lt Col to retire as it was just time to do something else. After I retired, I was a contractor for 3 years and then hired as Air Force Civil Service and retired after 17 years, interestingly enough at a Lt Col equivalent grade. Now I work for Georgia Tech Research Institute as a Senior Research Associate. I just enjoy working and it surely helps fund our travels. Everything I have achieved in life I owe to my wife and the Air Force, but especially my wife who always said, "do it" when an opportunity came up, and she always, always had my back. Ott and I have traveled back to Thailand every year for the last 5— Udorn, Chang Mai, Bangkok, Nan, Golden Triangle, the Phuket coast and islands, just great to get



Above, 2020, Terry and wife, Ott, at a temple in Bangkok.

back and enjoy the country. Interestingly, I have not yet been back to Ubon on our travels. Since we have friends across the country, it makes it so much more fun. No matter how many times we go, there is always something new to see or a new place to visit. No matter how many times I use my bad Thai and broken English, smiling and laughing at yourself makes it all OK! We will try to go again this year, depending on status of the virus. If not this year, then next year or whenever it is safe.

I learned about the TLCB from Lionel Rosenblatt and Vaughan Smith, whom we met on our trip this year in January when we went to Nan with him and his group to help out some of the mountain people. We traveled from Bangkok to Nan by van and stopped at most of the ancient ruins; just a great trip and so much history. We were able to help a little and they do great work and make such wonderful efforts. Experiences like that seldom occur, but also are so eye opening as to how hard some people still have it every single day.

We would like to go to the Savannakhet and Mukdahan areas in Laos, as there may still be distant family in that area. Should TLCB ever have a group go there, we would be glad to volunteer and join in any effort. Overall, my life experiences from Thailand and other areas have been so enjoyable and upon reflection, so important to our lives.



## New Member Profile

### *Richard “Dick” Harnly*

My father was a career Naval officer, so I moved a lot during my childhood. I attended five high schools, all in different states, graduating from the one in Bloomington, Indiana. Plan A was to attend the Naval Academy and I was successful in getting two congressional and a presidential appointment to Annapolis, thus following tradition set by my father, grandfather, and many other relatives. I also had a third alternate appointment for West Point, primarily because the tests were earlier than those for Annapolis and the experience would be helpful. The principal and first two alternates apparently had problems, because my third alternate appointment also came through. At about the same time, my eyesight seemed to be getting worse and line Navy vision requirements then were fairly strict (20/50 uncorrected) relative to the army (20/200 uncorrected). So, I

chose Plan B, went to West Point and, more or less happily, became the black sheep of my family.

Many years later, my mother told me that I was predestined to go to there. While pregnant with me, she and Dad visited West Point, ate lunch in the Thayer Hotel, and she threw it up in the bushes; thus marking my eventual return.

I was not well prepared for college-level academics, but managed to hang in there and survive. During yearling year, I was academically eligible for a weekend trip for only a single six-week grading period and the French Club had one, which I took—although ending up as the next to last man in the class in French. I even made the Dean’s List for the last grading period before graduation. West Point was “home” for me, perhaps more than for others, as my parents moved two more times before graduation.

I had an enjoyable 21-year career in the Army as an artillery officer with some data processing-related staff assignments and retired in 1980. I had several overseas tours including

two in Germany (60-64 & 77-80), one in Vietnam (69-70), and one in Korea & Laos (66-67). Stateside tours included Fort Sill, Oklahoma (59 and 64); Painesville, Ohio (65-66); Colorado Springs, Colorado (67-69); Fort Monroe, Virginia (71-73), and Fort McPherson, Georgia (73-77). My oldest daughter, Tamara, was born in Munich during my first German tour and graduated from Heidelberg High School shortly after my second tour.

My civilian career began as a systems engineer with Computer Sciences Corporation in Red Bank, New Jersey from '80 to '86. Most of it was on the Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS) project. Magnavox in Fort Wayne, Indiana, made me an offer I couldn't refuse and I moved there in early 1986 to continue work



Above, the T-28 pilot, at right, and me. We did not get along together. He shot at a village marked as friendly on my map, but he did okay directing other RLAF T-28s on a target that I knew about.

Photos furnished by the author.

Below, Colonel Sing, the Commander of Neutralist Army Forces in Military Region II, presented an AK-47 to me as a farewell gift. I shot up a clip of ammo at a tree in back, then mailed it to my unit in Korea, where I had it demilitarized. I still have it.



on AFATDS. It almost became a second career. I worked in the same building as a systems engineer and project manager on several different military command and control systems. Systems I worked on, besides AFATDS, included the All Source Analysis System (ASAS) Block 2, Crusader, Centaur, Future Combat System (FCS), and, moving to the dark side, the Navy's DDX. In 1995 Hughes bought Magnavox and in 1997 Raytheon bought Hughes; so, while the sign on the door changed, the projects continued. I retired from Raytheon in 2006.

I met my wife, Yvonne, at Fort Wayne and we were married in Hawaii in 1988. We each have two children from previous marriages. Daughters Tamara and Laura live in New Jersey, both are married, and each have 2 children. Daughter Anne is married, lives in Carmel, Indiana and has 2 daughters. Son Robert is unmarried and lives in Florida.

We have pretty much hunkered down at home this year due to the COVID 19 virus and will do so until a vaccine results in herd immunity. Yvonne and I enjoy traveling, have taken several tours to Europe and

**HARNLY** continues on page 8.



**HARNLY** *continued from page 7.*

Hawaii, and we visit Sanibel Island, Florida to collect sea shells about every other year. We are close to being movie junkies and participate in local church and a seniors' ski club activities. I used to jog more or less regularly and huffed and puffed through local 5K-10K races about 10 times a year plus a couple volksmarches until two years ago when my heart issues worsened. Shortly after retiring in 2006 the Little River Wetlands Project began weekly tours of their newly acquired Eagle Marsh, which I have attended pretty regularly ever since. We also work on shell craft projects to use up those we have brought back from Sanibel, and do some volunteer work. We plan to continue traveling, visit relatives, attend reunions, and dance, dance, dance!



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Fort Wayne, IN 46804

(260) 436-0912

The Fire Direction Center (FDC) crew I trained for the 4.2 inch mortar battery.



## **Approval of Minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting**

Due to cancellation of the 2020 Annual Meeting and Reunion, there will be no formal general membership meeting this year. The June *Mekong Express Mail* outlined the procedure for voting for officers and board members.

Without an annual meeting, the members will be unable to approve the minutes of the prior member meeting, so the board has approved the following procedure to approve the minutes of the 2019 membership meeting held in Las Vegas. The procedure to access the minutes will be posted on the Website under the members list tab, <https://www.tasapps.com/tlcbmembers>. You must log in with your name and member number.

If anyone objects to the minutes, or wishes to make an amendment, notify me, Paul Lee, TLCB Secretary, at [Leep81872@gmail.com](mailto:Leep81872@gmail.com) no later than November 14, 2020. I will determine if any such amendments are appropriate.

If a majority of the membership does not object to the minutes before that date, they will be deemed approved. (This is the same procedure we have used in the past when voting on amendments to our By-laws and Articles of Incorporation.)

**Paul Lee, Secretary.**

## **Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood**

*The 11 members listed below joined between the last issue of the MEM and the 31st of August. You can find more information on our website database. The Mekong Express Mail wishes you all a sincere "Welcome Home."*



No.	Branch	Last Name	First Name	City	State
1935	USAF	Howard	Peter	Roscoe	IL
1936	USAF	Subido	Gilbert	Patterson	CA
1937	Other	Kenning	George	San Marcos	CA
1938	USAF	Pollard	John	Catawissa	PA
1939	USAF	Peterson	Lawrence	Colorado Springs	CO
1940	USAF	Jones	Robert	Riverdale	MD
1941	USA	Peters	James	Tampa	FL
1942	USAF	Murray	Brian	Akron	NY
1943	USAF	Sandmeier	Jack	Oklahoma City	OK
1944	USAF	Weathers	John	Columbus	MS
1945	USAF	Repar	Robert Jr.	Folsom	CA



## New Member Profile

### *John C. Pollard*

I graduated from Northampton Area Jr. Sr. High School in Pennsylvania, June of 1969. I had already spoken to an Army recruiter who had told me about an opportunity to be a helicopter pilot, and that in 26 weeks, I'd be a Warrant Officer and fly my own helicopter. Also, several of my buddies from



John Pollard at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB. Photos sent by the author.

school kept after me to go along with them on the Buddy Plan and go into the Air Force. They were insistent, and I finally gave in and went along with the Air Force idea. This also made my Mom happy, not because I was joining any branch of service, but that it was not the Army and I would NOT be a helicopter pilot. She had read the newspaper articles and visualized all the stuff that went along with the war.

I left for Lackland AFB in August, along with four buddies from the class of 1969. We all completed basic in early October. One of my buddies and I went to Chanute AFB where I attended the jet engine course. I graduated in early January 1970 and received orders to go to Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai AFB, arriving in Thailand on February 14, 1970. This would be home for the next 12 months.

I was assigned to the 56 Field Maintenance Squad Jet Engine Shop, starting out in the buildup section, and when a position opened up on the flight line maintenance crew, I asked to be

assigned to it and was selected. Flight line supported CH-3 and HH-3 helicopters, C-123K models, OV-10 Broncos and the AC-119 gunships. For an 18-year-old kid, this was exciting stuff. I enjoyed working on the helicopters and learned a lot about them from some of the older guys on the flight line team. A lot of the helicopters were used for SAR missions and received a lot of battle damage. They would land at out-of-the-way places and we would send a team to fix engines and any other damages to them. I always volunteered to go along and got to travel all over Southeast Asia, and our team went places where I'm sure we were not supposed to, at least according to our government.

I returned to the states in February 1971 and was assigned to Langley AFB where I worked on C130 aircraft. There were 3 squadrons of them and they rotated through bases in England, Germany, and Turkey. I got married during the time at Langley and went through Operation Police Manpower just prior to separating from the Air Force. I came home to Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, and got a job at Bloomsburg University in the police department, where I spent the next 31 years. I was able to purchase my 4 years of Air Force time, retiring in 2008 with the rank of Lieutenant and 35 years of service.

My wife and I have two children, a boy and girl, and two grandsons with whom we spend a lot of time. Since retirement, I have worked part time in a small police department near Bloomsburg and retired from there in December of 2019. I help a local funeral home with driving families during funerals, serve at military funerals for our VFW and American Legion posts, and I'm active in the local Masonic organizations in Bloomsburg.

John Pollard now.





## Rosie Wheatley Memorial Quilt Raffle

After Rosie's passing, the TLC Brotherhood, Inc. Board of Directors decided to continue the quilt raffle in her honor. The quilt at last year's first memorial Rosie's Raffle was one that Rosie had designed, sewed, and donated, and its owner placed back for raffle.



Rosie Wheatley

### Generosity:

This year for the first time, we have a quilt made by an independent quilt maker and donated for raffle by a generous, dedicated, and long-time member.

### Two chances to win:

The quilter has created a beautiful patriotic design, including embroidery that notes that it is the "Rosie Wheatley Memorial Quilt for 2020." She also included a smaller quilt with the same dedication; thus, for the first time we will have two quilt prizes. It's a shame that we won't be able to have the usual, exciting live raffle at the reunion, but I hope that everyone will send in their raffle tickets.



This year's main quilt.  
There is also a smaller one to win.

### It's Easy:

Just fill in one information block on the ticket sheet, send it with your check or PayPal order on our website, and we will complete your sheet(s) and make sure your tickets are included for the drawing. The quilts were donated, so no TLCB funds have been expended.

### Pay it Forward:

To expand on the quilt donation generosity, this is a good way to provide support for the TLCB Assistance and to revere Rosie's memory. This is especially true since many of us attend the reunion, and for the first time since our inception, we are unable to donate to the cause at the auction or buy additional raffle tickets at the event. Please be generous!

*Les Thompson*  
Assistance Committee Chairman

## Nakhon Phanom Plaque To Be At Wright-Patterson

### Ray Boas wrote to the MEM:

Finally after 10 months of back and forth with the Air Force Museum and the Air Force Historical Department at Maxwell AFB, our NKP Plaque was approved and went in for fabrication. This is the finished product, which will be installed in the Memory Garden at the Museum of the United States Air Force Dayton, Ohio. I want to thank one and all who attended the first NKP Reunion and made this possible. The Legacy of Nakhon Phanom RTAFB will not be forgotten.



Ray Boas joined the TLC Brotherhood in 2003. He is a member of the board of directors and was local chairman for the highly popular 2017 TLCB Reunion in Dayton, Ohio. He is also the monitor of the TLCB FaceBook page.

**LIKE us on FACEBOOK**  
*The Official Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood page*



# It's a Jungle Out There: The Doug Vincent Story

by Douglas Vincent

*Doug Vincent, who was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand in the mid-1970s, is a recent TLCB member. He was recruited by the late Mac Thompson and has become a valuable member of the team that travels in Laos working on our Assistance Program. His contributions are enhanced by his fluency in both Thai and Lao, as well as Hmong languages. This is part one of his two-part profile, focusing on his Peace Corps adventures. Part two, "How I Came to Know the Lao Hmong, Jerry Daniels, and Mac Thompson," will be featured in the December issue of The Mekong Express Mail. Doug is pictured and mentioned in the June issue Assistance trip report.*

I have been asked to write something about my experiences before I joined the Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB). As a non-veteran, I feel humbled by those who are. I had a bad heart when I was kid and had open-heart surgery when I was 8, which effectively precluded me from any military service—and almost kept me out of the Peace Corps.

I graduated from Michigan State University in 1973 with a BSc. in Wildlife Management, and I joined the Peace Corps in 1975. While each Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) has their own unique experience, I think that my experience was a little more unusual. The following may be of interest to some of you regarding my Peace Corps service.

I arrived in Thailand in July 1975, just after the War in Vietnam had ended. For three days, my group (#54) was put up at the Liberty Hotel in Saphan Kwai, Bangkok, with which I am sure that many of you are familiar. When I first arrived, there were still a few GIs in country; almost all were gone by early 1976. After about 2 months of Thai language training, which included 3 weeks of technical language training, we were sent to our work sites.

My site was at the Huay Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary in Uthai Thani province as a wildlife biologist. The sanctuary is about 245 kilometers northwest of Bangkok; the headquarters



Me, back in the day!

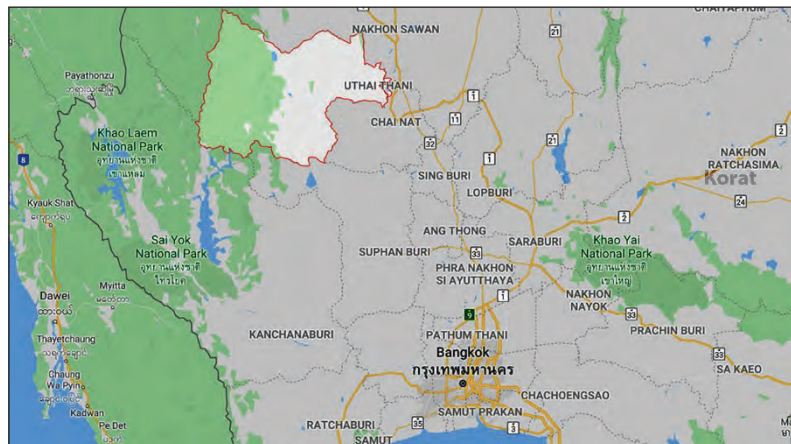
of the sanctuary itself was another 80 kilometers northwest of Uthai.

Huay Kha Khaeng, (or HKK, meaning “shin bone”), along with the Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife sanctuary abutting to the west, were recently (2014) named World Heritage sites by UNESCO. From the UNESCO website:

*Thung Yai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary World Heritage property lies in Uthai Thani, Tak, and Kanchanaburi provinces in the west of Thailand, alongside the border with Myanmar. The property combines two contiguous sanctuaries, Thung Yai Naresuan and Huai Kha Khang, separately established as sanctuaries in 1972 and 1974, respectively. Thung Yai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary encompasses two important river systems, the Upper Khwae Yai and the Huai Khakhaeng. The property, encompassing 622,200 hectares, is the largest conservation area in Mainland Southeast Asia and is one of Thailand's least accessible and least disturbed forest areas.*

These sanctuaries are home to many of the endangered species in Southeast Asia, including elephant, tiger, black panther, tapir, gibbon, langur (leaf eating monkeys), macaque, wild water buffalo, Sambar deer, barking deer, mouse deer, binturong, gaur, and banteng, among others.

I went to Uthai at the end of September 1975 and met the sanctuary chief, who told me that they



Map of Uthai Thani in relation to Bangkok; the green on the west is the HKK wildlife sanctuary; the green area abutting HKK west up to the Burmese border is Thung Yai Naresuan wildlife sanctuary

**JUNGLE** continues on page 12.



**JUNGLE** continued from page 11.



Map of Uthai Thani; HKK is in grey

couldn't get into the headquarters because of heavy rains and flooding, and suggested that I return to Bangkok. The next week, my PC advisor called the Wildlife Division of the Royal Thai Forestry Department and asked about the conditions, and was told they still couldn't get in. This went on for three weeks before I was able to finally load up the sanctuary's Mercedes Unimog vehicle and go into the sanctuary. The main road from Uthai Thani goes west for about 20 kms, and was paved to Nong Chang district, where the road diverges north and west. The road to the west continued on for about 60 kms to the very small district town of Ban Rai. The other branch went north. Both



Khao Hin Daeng headquarters

roads were made from laterite.

We went north and passed through what was then the small village of Lan Sak, about 40 kms from Uthai, which was basically a stopover for lumber trucks; that's where the electricity ended. The rest of the road continued north for 40 kms to the turnoff to the road to the sanctuary headquarters; there were no villages or settlements after Lan Sak. At the

corner of the "road" into the sanctuary, which was about 25 kms northwest of the turn off, there were a few houses made of wood and/or bamboo. From the condition of the "road," which was basically a track cut through the forest, I could see why it took so long to get into the sanctuary. ("Jungle" is not recognized as a botanical name, while "forest" is.)

The sanctuary's headquarters is in the northern part of the sanctuary and is called "Khao Hin Daeng" (red cliff), named



Typical meal, even for breakfast!

after the large red granite cliff that overlooks it on the west. There is a small river that had to be crossed, Huay Thap Salao, just in front of the headquarters. This was ankle deep in the dry season, and over 4 feet deep and swift in the rainy season. It's where I would take a dip shower most every day for the first year.

The headquarters was a typical Thai official's house, a two-room wooden building on stilts. One room was occupied by the sanctuary chief, with a basic bathroom with a Thai-style toilet in between it and the other room. I had the other room

Below, Karen women



**JUNGLE** continues next page.



and had a thin kapok-filled mattress, a woven mat (low-tone “seua”) to put the mattress on, a mosquito net, and a thin Thai-style pillow. There was a bare light bulb for when they turned the generator on at night (when there was fuel). And that was it. There was another wooden building for four rangers and about five workers.

There were two other ranger stations located south of the headquarters. One was called “Sap Fah Pha” (lightning hot springs), which was around 20 kms away, and another called “Thung Ngu Hao” (“cobra field” because the field was supposedly full of cobras, though I never saw any), about 25 kms further south. This had been burned down by poachers before I got there. It was rebuilt in 1977.

The sanctuary runs north to south and is roughly pear shaped, with the Huay Kha Khaeng river dividing it into west and east. It is fairly mountainous, with elevations up to 2400 meters (8415 feet) in the west, and 2100 meters (6900 feet) in the east. There were two hilltribes living in the immediate area of the sanctuary: Karen, who mainly lived in the lower elevations just south of the sanctuary, and Hmong, who lived in the higher elevations inside the western part.

There were two other ranger stations south outside the sanctuary; one was about 25 kms from Ban Rai and near the end of the road at the Karen village of Ban Mai, while the other station was in Thong Lang village, located about 30 kms north from Ban Rai. The inhabitants of this village were ethnic Lao Phuan, the descendants of Lao who had been captured by the Thai during one of the wars with Laos in the 1800s and taken to Thailand. They speak a different dialect of Lao which was hard for me to understand then, but one that I can probably understand now.

When I first arrived, I could barely speak Thai. I hardly

passed the Thai proficiency test given to all volunteers at the end of training, but I figured that they had made an investment to get me there, so they may as well keep me! Nobody spoke English at my site or in town. I had to learn the hard way, and kept a Thai/English-English/Thai dictionary with me for the first year. I also decided to teach myself to learn to read Thai because some, if not all, of the signs in town were in Thai. Learning to read and write Thai helped my spoken Thai tremendously. I was able to read books, magazines, and newspapers in Thai by the end of my PC service, as I had a lot of free time, especially in the rainy season.

I did elephant research on the elephant population in the sanctuary to try to determine how many were left, and to make recommendations for a conservation plan. My (nominal) Thai counterpart was supposed to be the sanctuary chief, but neither of the chiefs who were there ever did anything, and the rangers rarely went out into the forest. I would go into the forest with a guide carrying rucksacks as heavy as 50 kilos (and I only weighed 135 lbs.), as I could be gone for up to three months. I wore surplus Vietnam “jungle” boots, used a surplus GI rain poncho as a ground cloth, had a rain jacket and a rough grey cotton blanket, plus food and water, all of which I had to hump in over mountainous territory. I also carried a plant press to collect plant samples and plastic bags to collect soil samples from salt licks that were analyzed by a lab in Bangkok. My guide would carry most of the rice and some other essentials. When we made camp, we usually slept on the ground.

I had two guides, one a little guy who looked like a munchkin and said he was born in Battambang, Cambodia when it was part of Thailand. He was an opium addict. I did not like him because we would have to stop every 2—3 hours so he could smoke, and then another hour while he slept it off. I also suspected him of checking out where the animals were so he could come back with his friends and poach them. So, I got rid of him after only one trip and hired a different guide who was ethnic Lao Phuan. He said he had been a poacher before but changed his ways when it became harder to find any wildlife because of poaching. His wife was ethnic Karen. His only “vice,” if you can call it that, was that he was a marijuana “addict” and was unable to do anything without it. He would constantly smoke a “joint” that was rolled up in newsprint even while hiking up and downhill. He actually helped me learn how to walk up and down mountains when he saw that I was having difficulty (walk slow enough so you don’t raise your heartrate). By the time I left, I was able to readily walk up and down mountains with ease.

I was at HKK for three years, September 1975 – September 1978. I kept my research restricted to the eastern half because the sanctuary was on the southern tip of the Golden Triangle. The Hmong grew and sold opium, mostly to the Karen, but there were Thai drug smugglers who went there too. My guide did not want to go too deep into the western side because he was afraid that they would think



Huay Kha Khaeng wildlife sanctuary, looking west

**JUNGLE** continues on page 14.

## JUNGLE *continued from page 13.*

that I was with DEA/CIA and would kill me. But there were often small groups of 3 – 5 Hmong who came down to the sanctuary headquarters on their way to Uthai to buy salt and other necessities. I have a photo of me standing towering over of a group of them.

I asked them what word they called themselves in their language, but either they couldn't understand my Thai, or they didn't speak much, because they said that they called themselves "Meo." They once asked me if I would go to their village to teach their children Thai and English, and told me that they would pay me with a kilo of opium. I thought about it, but decided that PC would frown on it.

In early 1977, as my guide and I were going into the forest again in the south, we heard a lot of noise from bulldozers, saws, trucks, and other heavy equipment. We found out that the trees they were logging "belonged to" Adm. Sangad Chaloryu, the leader of the right-wing junta that had overthrown the democratically elected government in October 1976. This coup was bloody. Many students from Thammasat university were killed and many others fled into the forest and joined the communists. They had extended the road from Ban Mai to another Karen village around 25 kms away (I can't recall the name of this village offhand), and then about 30 kms beyond that. This was close to the southern border of the sanctuary. We told the chief of the sanctuary, who came to see for himself. He then decided that we needed another ranger station, which was built about 20 kms from that Karen village and finished in October 1977.

In early 1978, a small contingent of Thai military, probably military intelligence, made camp in that Karen village. One time when I came out of the forest to get some supplies from the Karen, I heard that the lieutenant in charge wanted to talk to me. He asked me what I was doing, where I had been, and if had I seen anything unusual. I told him what I was doing and pointed out on a 1:50,000 topographic map of where I had been, and that I hadn't seen anything unusual (well... *I had* met about 15 heavily armed Hmong, but... they asked me what I was doing and I told them; then I asked them what they were doing and they just said "ma thiew," meaning, just come for "fun"). A couple of weeks later, I was called into Bangkok and asked by my PC advisor what exactly I was doing. Apparently, the lieutenant had reported me to his commander, who then contacted ISOC (Thai internal security), who then contacted Peace Corps. My PC advisor was satisfied with my answer,

### ***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](mailto:Treasurer@TLC-Brotherhood.com), or a note in the mail to TLC Brotherhood, PO Box 60, Aspers, PA 17304.

and I returned to the sanctuary. Shortly, later in early 1978, the Special Action Force police (Nuay Patibatkan Phiset, or Naw Paw Phaw, a subset of the Border Police) came and made a camp at the village school.

Early one morning in March 1978, my guide and I were alone at the ranger station when we heard the sounds of automatic gunfire and explosions coming from the village; communist insurgents had attacked the police outpost. We heard the sounds of M-16s, AK-47s, and M-79 grenade launchers. The fighting between the insurgents and the police went on for 30 or 40 minutes, then stopped. We were afraid that we would be attacked by the insurgents next. The only weapon we had was a shotgun with maybe five shells. But after a couple hours, when it became apparent that we were not going to be attacked, my guide and I cautiously walked the 20 kms to the village. My police friends said that one of them had been killed. The military unit that was nearby did nothing to help them.

A couple of weeks later, a truck carrying around 10 Special Action Force policemen was ambushed on the way in from Ban Mai, killing all of them. A few days later, the deputy sanctuary chief came with the sanctuary's Toyota 4-wheel truck and told us to pack our things and leave. I was handed a shotgun for defense. It was a tense time as we slowly went back the 45 kms that would take us to Ban Mai and safety, especially since I was sitting next to a 50-gallon drum of gasoline. We learned a short time later that the ranger station was burned to the ground by the insurgents.

I went to the Thung Ngu Hao ranger station. I didn't have a guide; the guy I liked, who was married to the Karen woman, found out she had been sleeping with the sanctuary's driver. I felt really bad that this happened. But whenever I went into the forest to do research, I would only go for a day, and I carried either a S&W .357 magnum revolver, a Colt .45, or an M-1 carbine that I borrowed from the other rangers there for "defense."

In 1980, one of the main leaders of the Thai students who had fled into the forest, Seksan Prasertkul, surrendered to the Thai military at Huay Kha Khaeng along with several followers.

**Part II, "How I came to know the Lao Hmong, Jerry Daniels, and Mac Thompson" will appear in the December issue of *Mekong Express Mail*.**



## ***Mekong Express Mail Index***

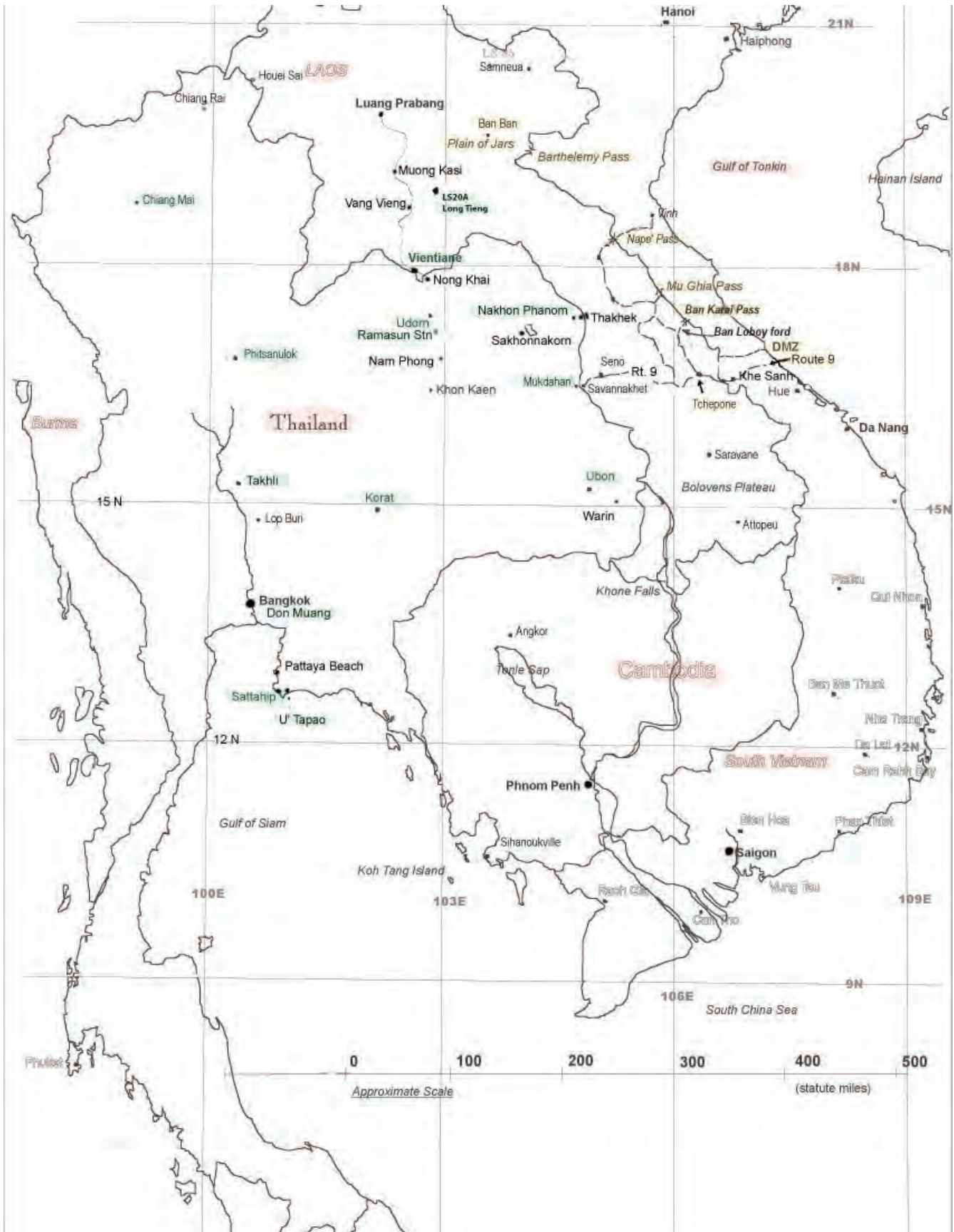
For an on-line index to all *MEM* articles ever published, starting with our first issue in June of 2000, go to our wonderful TLCB Website: [www.TLC-Brotherhood.com](http://www.TLC-Brotherhood.com). All articles are listed by issue year and month, by title, with the authors' names and short descriptions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

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



# Guide to TLC Brotherhood Bases in Southeast Asia

Prepared and published by the Mekong Express Mail



# *Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood Authors List*

*List of works published by members of the TLCB, so far as known by The MEM.*

<b>Author</b>		<b>Title</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Barrett	Dean	Hangman's Point	Fiction	Village East Books
Barrett	Dean	Kingdom of Make Believe	Fiction	Village East Books
Barrett	Dean	Memoirs of a Bangkok Warrior	Fiction	Village East Books
Barrett	Dean	Skytrain to Murder	Fiction	Village East Books
Butler	Jimmie	A Certain Brotherhood	Non-fiction	Cricket Press
Davis	Charles O.	Across the Mekong	Non-fiction	Hildesigns Press
Gleason	Robert L.	Air Commando Chronicleles	Non-fiction	Sunflower University Press
Harrington	John	The Year of the Lieutenant	Fiction	Archway Press
Harrington	Scott	They Called it Naked Fanny	Non-fiction	Hellgate Press
Hauser	Paul	I'm Always Going Somewhere	Non-fiction	Createspace
Hauser	Paul	Inherently Dangerous	Non-fiction	Createspace
Martino	Joe	The Justice Cooperative	Mystery	Elderberry Press
Martino	Joseph T.	Weapons	Non-fiction	Ignatius Press
Martino	Joseph T.	R&D Project Selection	Non-fiction	John Wiley
Martino	Joseph T.	Resistance to Tyranny	Non-fiction	Createspace
Martino	Joseph T.	Technological Forecasting for Decision Making	Non-fiction	McGraw-Hill *
McDaniel	C.R.	The Tales of the Six Tigers	Fiction	
Melton	Alan	The Champa Flowers	Fiction	
Melton	Alan	The Green Parrots	Fiction	
Melton	Alan	The Libyan Bomm	Fiction	
Morrison	Gayle L.	Sky is Falling	Non-fiction	McFarland & Co.
Polifka	Karl	Meeting Steve Canyon	Non-fiction	Createspace
Rossel	Eugene	USAF Air Commando Secret Wars from Laos to Latin America	Non-fiction	Xlibris
Schreader	G.F.	Hognose Silent Warrior	Non-fiction	Outskirts Press
Schreader	G.F.	The Nexus Colony	Science Fiction	Outskirts Press
Schreader	G.F.	Sergeant Doughboy	Non-fiction	Outskirts Press
Schreader	G.F.	Unsung Hero: Forgotten War	Non-fiction	Outskirts Press
Stephenson	Darl L.	Headquarters in the Brush: Blazer's Independent Union Scouts	Non-fiction	Ohio University Press
Tambini	Anthony	Douglas Jumbos - The Globemaster	Non-fiction	
Tambini	Anthony	F-5 Tigers Over Vietnam	Non-fiction	
Tambini	Anthony	Ice Meteors - The Danger Overhead	Non-fiction	
Tambini	Anthony	UFOs - An Overview of Close Encounters and Low Flybys	Non-fiction	
Tambini	Anthony	Wiring Vietnam: The Electronic War	Non-fiction	
Whitcomb	Darrel	The Rescue of BAT 21	Non-fiction	Naval Institute Press
* Note: all works are available online except as marked.				