



# Mekong Express Mail

Volume 2, Issue 1

The Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

## Dangerous days over the Ho Chi Minh Trail with VO-67

By Larry Gire



At the height of the Vietnam War, a secret Navy 12-plane squadron arrived at the Nakhon Phanom Air Commando base in Thailand. The squadron aircraft were old P2V-5F anti-submarine patrol planes that had been considerably modified into armed, jungle green gun ships. Of course, every would-be comic that saw them at Nakhon Phanom asked, what's the Navy going to do, hunt for subs in the Mekong?

North Vietnam was moving massive amounts of munitions by truck and troops down the Ho Chi Minh Trail undetected in mid-1966. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara was opposed to attacking North Vietnam military targets and infrastructure and to stopping the movement of war materials into North Vietnam by mining their harbors as advocated by the military. In the fall of 1966, he ordered the military to submit a proposed plan for an anti-infiltration system designed to stop or greatly reduce the flow of men and war material from North Vietnam into South Vietnam.

The quickest solution available was to modify and employ the Navy's sonobuoy (a listening device used to detect submarines underwater) to implant in the jungle canopy to detect the movement of NVA trucks and troops. The converted sonobuoy, dubbed Acoubuoys, were camouflaged jungle green and parachuted into the jungle, snagged in the top jungle canopy, and hung unseen high off the ground. Sensitive microphones that replaced the hydrophones could pick up the sound of truck and troop movement below.

The Navy had a number of anti-submarine aircraft in its inventory with sonobuoy racks installed and capable of delivering the modified listening devices. The Navy determined that

available P2V-5Fs would be the quickest and the best delivery platform to modify for implanting the modified sonobuoys along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

By this stage of the war, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) had heavily fortified the trail with highly mobile ZPU-23mm, 37mm, and some radar controlled 57mm guns. Survivability of the slow, lumbering P2V-5F in this environment was questionable. But the need was urgent; our troops in South Vietnam were taking heavy casualties. The Defense Department decided to deploy the P2V-5Fs to provide an interim capability until Air Force F-4 jets could be modified to take over the task.

The initial overhaul was done in three phases at the Martin Aircraft Company in Baltimore, MD.

This overhaul and replacement of electronics included installing new self-sealing bladder fuel tanks (capable of holding 2800 gallons of fuel and sustaining small arms and shrapnel hits), and painting the aircraft a flat, jungle green. After this modification, the aircraft were redesignated as the OP-2E. Modifications to the aircraft continued well into the deployment and operational phase of the squadron. Much of the modification work was done by the VO-67 squadron maintenance organization. The APS-20E submarine search radar, with its large radar dome, and

the Magnetic Anomaly Detector (MAD) gear and boom (used to magnetically detect submerged submarines) were removed. Wingtip tanks were removed and extensive armor plating was added, primarily in the bombardiers nose station, cockpit, flight deck, and the aft gunner's stations to protect the crews.

Two underwing SUU-11 six-barreled mini guns were installed. A Chaff dispenser was added aft where the MAD boom had protruded. LORAN C, a new version of the Long Range

See VO-67 on page 2

### Reunion Announcement Issue! See page 4.



R and R at the Beach, Sep 28-30

### Dues Notice

### Please Check Your Mailing Label

### Dues Notice

If dues aren't received by March 31st the membership lapses. There is a code on every label, showing what year our records have you paid through. *If it is wrong, please let us know!* If it reads "2000," you need to send \$25 for 2001 ASAP. See FAQ, page 10, for other information, address, etc.



## Editor's Note

Our main story in this issue tells of the courageous Navy squadron based at NKP that launched the secret sensor-dropping program ordered in 1967 by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. Thanks to VO-67 squadron historian Lt.-Cdr Larry Gire for his authoritative article about this unusual Navy unit. And thanks to TLCB member Bob Reynolds, who served with VO-67, for putting us in touch with Larry Gire.

This issue contains as much information as we have to date about our Sep 28-30 2001 Reunion at Fort Walton Beach, Florida. You will learn how to register for the reunion and, separately, how to book your accommodation at the reunion hotel. There is an outline of the reunion program, FWB local attractions and ways of getting to FWB. We will publish updated information in the June MEM.

Did you notice the reunion logo and reunion dates on the envelope carrying your MEM? Thanks to Hank Maifeld, who handles distribution for the MEM, for the good idea.

The page of tickets you see in this issue is for a raffle that will be held at the reunion for a red, white and blue quilt that is being made by Sisterhood member Rosie Wheatley, with the profits going to the Assistance Fund. Be generous. You were last year and made the raffle for Rosie's quilt such a success that we were able to help many kids in Thailand.

The 1972 memo by MacAlan Thompson in this issue shows how a former officer of engineers approached the problem of costing, purchasing and delivering rice to remote sites in Laos for the Agency for International Development. Pilot Les Strouse of Air America, who delivered the rice, takes us through the journey and its perils, from briefing to drop.

Dave MacDonald

## Status Report on Project MAPSCAN

*By Jim Henthorn*

All of the maps for the Project have now been scanned and uploaded to my website. To see the results directly go to <http://www.nexus.net/~911gfx/sea-ao.html> and please have a little patience as it does take some time to download the entire set of 76 map images, even reduced in size. This completes Phase I.

Phase II is somewhat more optimistic. I will be developing a database of bases, camps, Air Fields, heliports, Lima Sites, Pakse Sites, Fire Support bases, geographic features and other locations throughout SEA, including South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. Locating all of these features will take some time to complete.

I need help. I need to locate the sites that were talked about, used, whatever. Do you know where the Rooster Tail is? The Bra? Arrowhead Lake? How about FSB Ripcord? LZ English? The major bases like Korat, NKP, DaNang, Quang Tri, the Lima Sites (Thanks to Mac and Les) and important places like Koh Tang are very easy. It's the others that I need help with. Do you know a spot? Don't think that "everybody's already sent him that!" because most likely they have not. With your help we can see this project through.

VO-67 continued

Aide to Navigation, replaced the old LORAN system used by the Navy at that time and was used to drop sensors during the monsoon season. Internal mounts for the M-60 machine guns were installed at both hatches in the after station of the OP-2E aircraft. These hand-held 7.62mm guns fired 550 rounds per minute and were manned by two crewmembers. To facilitate egress for the crew forward of the wing beam to bail out, the deck hatch to the nose gear tunnel was enlarged. Threat-detection electronics and a terrain-clearance radar were added. Bomb bay racks were fabricated to carry additional Acoubuoys. A Norden bombsight was installed in the plexiglass nose of the OP-2E. This was the result of the added mission of implanting the Air-delivered Seismic Detection Sensor (ADSIDS) that presented a problem that the old P2V aircraft was not equipped to handle.

The addition of the J-34s (small jet engines mounted for extra power) to the P2V-5Fs had reduced the under-wing launch stubs from 16 to 8 stations. VO-67 overcame this shortage of stations by using MER (Multiple Ejection Rack) weapon racks that could hold three ADSIDS on each of these eight stations. However, the real problem was the lack of an accurate delivery system for the ADSIDS. Navy patrol plane pilots dropped sonobuoys and torpedoes at low altitude by sight or timing. An accurate means of dropping the ADSIDS from 2500 feet or higher was needed.

The Norden bombsight had been used extensively in WW II and had been installed in the Navy's PB4Y-2 aircraft. VO-67 requested Norden bombsights and after demonstrating their accuracy at Eglin AFB, Pentagon officials agreed that the Norden bombsight was what was needed and had the Rock Island Arsenal overhaul twelve bombsights. To do this they had to locate and recall retired WW II Norden bombsight technicians.

An Air Force Norden bombsight instructor, Lt Col Conrad Brown, was found and sent to Alameda to help train the bombardiers. Lt Col Brown located a battered copy of a WW II training film on the Norden bombsight in the Smithsonian Institution. He had it shipped PRIORITY ONE to VO-67 and used it to train the Squadron bombardiers. Lt Col Brown deployed with the squadron to continue training the VO-67 third pilots who developed into qualified bombardiers.

The first flight of three OP-2Es departed Alameda on 6 November 1967 for Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base (NKP) in Thailand led by CAPT Wallace (Wally) Sharp. The last flight of three OP-2Es arrived at Nakhon Phanom on 15 November 1967. Much credit for the smooth deployment must be given to the Air Force Military Air Transport service for the professional job they did in moving the rest of the squadron. Eighteen C-141s arrived at Alameda right on schedule. Because of the runway landing weight limitations at Nakhon Phanom, each C-141 was limited to 45,000 pounds of cargo. One after another they were efficiently loaded and departed with loads ranging from large electronic vans to administrative files. In all, they airlifted 629,021 pounds of VO-67 personnel and cargo to NKP.

The personnel complement of VO-67 when they arrived at

NKP was 1 Captain, 8 Commanders, 3 Commander Selectees, 5 Lieutenant Commanders, 40 junior officers, 23 Chief Petty Officers, 220 rated enlisted personnel, and 14 Airmen. They also had 5 civilian representatives attached to the squadron - 1 from Lockheed, 1 from Hazeltine, 1 from Martin Marietta, and 2 from Sandia Lab.

On arrival at Nakhon Phanom, the VO-67 pilots immediately began flying combat missions with the Air Force FACs (Forward Air Controllers) in the small Cessna O-2A (Nail) aircraft to familiarize themselves with the Ho Chi Minh Trail and enemy gun emplacements. The Air Force FAC pilots helped the newly arrived Navy pilots tremendously. The FAC pilots became a valuable intelligence asset to the VO-67. CAPT Sharp initiated a close working relationship shortly after VO-67's arrival at NKP by inviting the FAC pilots to a party with the VO-67 pilots at the NKP Officer's club. The FACs flew every day and night and kept track, for their own survival and that of the strike aircraft they marked the targets for, of where the North Vietnamese moved their anti-aircraft guns. The FACs that had flown the night before provided the latest NVA triple-A firing positions for the following day's VO-67 combat missions.

Close friendships developed among the Air Force FAC and Navy pilots; two of them were highly instrumental in the later rescue of seven VO-67 crewmembers after their plane was hit by AAA fire and they bailed out over hostile territory. The Air Force O-2A FAC, A-1E, and Navy VO-67 pilots at Nakhon Phanom quickly bonded into a mutual respect support group.

Each VO-67 crew was responsible for planning its own assigned missions. They studied the NVA triple-A gun positions and terrain to determine the safest flight path and altitude profile in and out of the target area. Some missions were as simple as diving from 12,000 feet on the sensor implant heading, leveling off at drop altitude, slowing to drop airspeed, laying the sensor string, and climbing back to 12,000 feet and heading home.

Drop altitude for the Acoubuoys was always 500 feet. The ADSIDS were dropped from 2,500 feet and later 5,000 feet.

Missions in heavy areas of enemy AAA concentrations required the crews to use terrain masking wherever possible. The high karst outcroppings in some target areas were ideal for this tactic. Some called for jinking dives to sensor implant altitude and numerous heading changes to the target to avoid the anti-aircraft gun emplacements. Acoubuoy drops in heavily defended areas were made by running into the area at tree top level, popping up to 500 feet, laying the sensors, dropping back to the deck and flying the safest route out.

On 11 January 1968, the VO-67 Executive Officer (XO), CDR Dell Olson, was on an Acoubuoy drop mission over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. At 9:57 AM radio contact with his aircraft was lost (the FAC working the mission had also lost visual contact with the OP-2E). Two other OP-2Es were working the trail that morning. They tried to reestablish radio contact with Crew 2. One OP-2E went under the overcast and spent three hours searching the area. There were some karst outcropping in

the area but it was mostly dense jungle. The base of the overcast was above the highest terrain in the area so they were able to search the whole area. The jungle was so dense in most places that a plane crashing into it would not leave a discernible entry point and the crash could not be seen from the air. No trace of the Crew 2 aircraft was found by the searching VO-67 aircraft.

On 23 January an Air Force A-1 located a suspected crash site. On 25 January an O-2 from Nakhon Phanom photographed the site. Photo interpretation determined that the wreckage was that of BUNO 131436, Crew 2's aircraft. It was located on the north side of a cliff, 150 feet below the 4,583-foot ridgeline. Due to the hostile environment in the crash site area, it was decided not to insert an Investigation and Recovery team.

On February 17, 1968, CDR Glenn Hayden and his Crew 5 were dropping Acoubuoys over the trail in Laos. He had two F-4 escorts out of DaNang and an O-2A FAC spotter. After coming off his first target run, CDR Hayden reported that they had been hit by small arms fire in the starboard wing but were continuing on with their second assigned target run. During the second run, the fighter escort radioed to the OP-2E that its starboard engine was on fire, CDR Hayden acknowledged and reported that he was aborting the mission and returning to base.

The F-4s climbed through the overcast with the intention of joining the OP-2E on top and escorting him back to base. The last radio transmission they heard from the OP-2E was, "We are beat up pretty bad." The F-4s dropped back down below the overcast and found the burning wreckage of the OP-2E; no para-

## DONATIONS: The Facts

Donations paid to the TLC Brotherhood, Inc., are used entirely for our tax-exempt purposes. There is no administrative overhead. Any overhead expenses for our program are paid out of the treasury, which is supported by member dues.

You can learn more about the Assistance program and what good works we do by visiting our website, at [www.TLC-Brotherhood.org](http://www.TLC-Brotherhood.org). Find the "Assistance" button and click. You will find photos and a variety of events we have funded or sponsored in Thailand, and plans for Cambodia.

Our Assistance Fund receives donations at TLC Brotherhood, P.O. Box 2371, Seabrook, NH 03874. If you wish to include dues with your donation to Assistance, be sure and indicate that with your payment.

You can also include a donation with dues payment. If you wish to donate to our dues subsidy program instead, please indicate this preference; otherwise all donations go to Assistance.

*Next Issue: June, 2001. Don't Miss It!*

*Submit change of address ASAP.*

See VO-67, page 5



# R and R At The Beach !

## The TLCB Reunion and Annual Meeting, 2001

By Ed Miller

The TLC Brotherhood Reunion 2001 Committee is proud to announce this year's reunion is ready for your "R & R" at the beach. The reunion hooch headquarters is the Radisson Beach Resort, on Okaloosa Island (Fort Walton Beach) and official start date is September 28<sup>th</sup> ending on September 30<sup>th</sup>. But just how much Rest and Recuperation do you need? We encourage you to add additional days before or after our reunion dates. Remember the Air Commando Association's reunion will follow our reunion, the very next weekend period.

We have been given excellent rates for beachfront accommodations. Poolside or inside rooms are \$69 per night and Gulf side rooms or suites are \$79 per night. You should call the Radisson directly (850) 243-9181 for making your reservations and make sure you refer it to the TLC Brotherhood Reunion. (HOTEL Notice - In the event a guest who has reserved a room within the blocked dates checks out prior to the guest's reserved check-out due date, the hotel will add an early check-out fee of \$25 to that guest's individual account. Guest wishing to avoid an early check-out fee should advise the hotel at or before check-in of any change in the planned length of stay.) Remember it is the individual's responsibility to reserve and pay for their room(s). Your hotel registration must be reserved NLT August 28, 2001 in order to receive our special rates. Please plan your stay only at the Radisson Beach Resort so that we can fulfill our obligation and keep our expenses within our budget. It will also help us make your R & R a memorable one.

Registration fee will be \$50 each person. Your registration fee will cover your Saturday night Banquet Dinner expenses, continental breakfast, tours with local transportation, and other miscellaneous costs of the reunion. Please complete the enclosed Registration Form and mail with your check or money order: TLCB Reunion 2001 (Ed Miller), 139 Fulmar Circle NE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548-6431. Your check or money order should be made out to "TLC Brotherhood Reunion 2001." A receipt will be emailed or mailed to you depending on your online status (remember to bring it to the reunion). Upon checking into the reunion you will be given your tickets and merchandise (if ordered). Each Registration fee received by April 30<sup>th</sup> will receive a \$5 discount on a purchase of any one T-shirt, Golf shirt, or Beach towel.

Arriving by Air? Okaloosa County/Eglin AFB Regional Airport (Airport Code - VPS) is the closest to the area. It is serviced by Northwest Airlines (800-2252525), AirTran (800-2478726), US Airways Express (800-4284322), and Delta Airlines (800-2823424). The Pensacola Regional Airport (Airport code - PNS) is located about 55 miles west and might be better

connections for others. You just need to catch a shuttle (\$65 per person one way) or rent a car. Pensacola is serviced by Northwest, Delta, US Airways, American (800-4337300), and Continental (800-5233273) airlines.

Do you need a Rental car? If arriving at the Pensacola Airport, you might consider one, but Shuttle service is available from each airport. The Radisson does not provide any courtesy shuttle service. All major rental car agencies are available at both airports (Hertz, Avis, National, Budget and Enterprise). Once arriving at the Radisson you do not need a car, unless you prefer. Our experience shows that we always have sufficient POV's available to share and with a TLCB rental Van/bus will fill the remainder of the requirements of our Reunion guests. The hotel location puts all your needs in walking distance.

Weather and what to bring? Days will definitely be sunny and warm. Temperatures will normally be in the high 80s during the day and lows at night usually in the upper 60s. Casual attire (including shorts) is appropriate for all reunion activities, except Saturday night's Banquet will be *NO shorts*. Party suits/memorabilia shirts we encourage you to wear to the Banquet.

There will be local Tours available Friday and Saturday to locations on Hurlburt Field, Eglin AFB, and Armament Museum. Please sign up for any of these during your TLCB Check-in. A Memorial service is being scheduled and further info will be provided in the next MEM issue and also on our Web page.

We have to break you away from your R&R for a short period to attend our General Membership meeting. This business meeting will provide you with information about our budget, organizational changes, charter, and some important elections to vote on. (Remember this is FLORIDA, so bring a calculator and a rulebook)

Memorabilia (T-shirts, Golf Shirts, Beach Towels) of the Reunion can be ordered when you register for the Reunion and all orders must be received NLT 1 August 01 to ensure they arrive at the Reunion Headquarters (See Registration Form). We will have a limited supply available to sell during the reunion.

Optional Activities are available for your Spouse or Children to enjoy the local area at your leisure. The hotel offers a wide variety of activities on the beach and besides you can walk down the beach to "The Gulfarium" (Dolphin/Sea Lion shows/Exhibits), Fishing Pier, Beach Boardwalk (with restaurants/bars). Charter boat fishing and shopping at the nation's second largest factory outlet mall, "The SILVER SANDS." Factory Outlet is 15 minutes east of the hotel.

See you on R&R at the Beach!



chutes were seen or emergency beepers were heard.

Ten days later, VO-67 suffered its third combat loss on 27 February. CDR Paul Milius's OP-2E was shot down while implanting sensors in Laos. The aircraft was flying at 5,000 feet above the jungle tops. There were not any 57mm radar controlled guns reported to be in the area of his drop, but if it was not that, it had to be the best 37mm gun crew in the world. No flak was spotted before the aircraft was hit, so it almost had to be a direct hit on the first salvo. The aircraft was hit in the radar well area where the old APS -20E radar had been removed. One crewman, PO2 John F. Hartzheim, was killed instantly. The hydraulic and electrical systems were severely damaged and the aircraft immediately filled with acrid smoke and fumes. CDR Milius ordered his crew to bail out. He remained at the controls of the stricken aircraft until the remaining seven crewmen had successfully bailed out.

One O2 FAC pilot, Major Sam Weaver, flew alongside MR-7 as the crew bailed out and kept a plot where each crewman had landed. Another FAC pilot, Major Phil Maywald also came to assist in the rescue. The Sandies, A-1H aircraft, that provided fire protection for downed airmen, and the rescue helicopters, better known as the Jolly Greens and Buffs, were soon on the scene. Sandies were from the 602nd Fighter Commando Squadron and helicopters from the 37th Air Rescue Recovery Squadron at Nakhon Phanom participated in the rescue along with other Air Rescue Recovery Squadrons from DaNang and Udom. The FACs vectored the helicopters to each of the downed crewmen. Since they were in a very hostile area, the helicopters wasted no time in picking up the crew and getting out of there.

CDR Milius was seen to bail out, but never located and listed as MIA. He was promoted to the Rank of Captain on 1 July 1972. On 26 April 1978, he was officially pronounced "presumed killed in action" and posthumously awarded the Navy Cross. On 23 November 1996, the Aegis Guided Missile Destroyer Milius (DDG 69) was commissioned in his honor at the Ingalls Shipbuilding, Pascagoula, Mississippi.

On 29 February 1968, two days after MR-7 was shot down, the last one of the 12 fully modified OP-2Es arrived at NKP. With the three losses, VO-67 was now a nine-plane squadron. MR-11 was repainted to MR-7 and the rescued members of Crew 7 continued to fly as a crew.

The North Vietnamese Tet offensive of 1968 was an all-out effort to take the U. S. Marine Base at Khe Sanh. On 22 January 1968 VO-67 commenced implanting extensive Acoubuoy sensor fields around the combat base and its approaches to assist in lifting the siege of the Marine stronghold. The special bomb bay racks to hold additional Acoubuoys in the OP-2E were used for the first time in the close-in support of Khe Sanh. These Acoubuoy flights were classic mission

profiles of Squadron developed tactics and what they had trained for in California and Florida. The OP-2Es came into the area skimming above the jungle tree tops or rivers, popped up to 500, laid their string of sensors, dropped back down on the deck, and got out of there as fast as the old, lumbering patrol planes would take them.

Estimates of the number of North Vietnamese that took part in the siege of Khe Sanh vary, but most agree there were upwards of 20,000 NVA troops supported by tanks and anti-aircraft weapons. The latter accounted for eight U.S. aircraft during January and February. VO-67 flight crews that participated in implanting Acoubuoys in defense of Khe Sanh were awarded the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat V for missions that were, "of the very highest priority" and for achieving their goals, "despite poor weather, rugged terrain and enemy defenses which included surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft guns."

On May 25 1968, the Chief of Naval Operations set the date for the disestablishment of VO-67 as of 1 July 1968. At that time the mission was to be taken over by the Air Force's 25th Tactical Fighter Squadron. In June of 1968, the squadron received a message from the Navy disestablishing VO-67. As of 1 July 1968, the squadron no longer existed. Personnel were ordered to return to the States for further assignment. The last squadron combat mission implanting sensors was on 25 June 1968. VO-67 lost 25% of its aircraft in combat and 20 crewmen, less than half of what the planners had expected and predicted. This was due to the outstanding airmanship of one of the finest multi-engine squadrons ever assembled. However, a large part of the credit must be given to the Air Force FAC pilots at NKP and the training and intelligence they provided the VO-67 pilots. They taught the VO-67 pilots the Ho Chi Minh Trail and how to survive in the air spaces over it. The FAC pilots returning from night missions would mark the maps in NKP Intelligence with the location of the AAA guns they saw firing. This knowledge was an invaluable contribution to the survival of the OP-2E missions the next day.

CAPT Sharp became fast friends with Lt Col Palaster, the Commanding Officer of the O-2 FAC Squadron, as did many of the VO-67 pilots. He was so respected that when he was promoted to full Colonel while at Nakhon Phanom, the officers of VO-67 threw him a traditional Navy "wetting down" party and made him an Honorary Naval Aviator. The FAC pilots flying the little O2 aircraft came from Air Force fighter, attack, and even SAC commands and all the Air Force, Navy, and Marine pilots in the Vietnam War respected their daring and courage. The Navy and VO-67 owe a deep debt of gratitude to these brave pilots and good friends.

### The Mekong Express Mail

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How many American and South Vietnamese lives were saved by the courage and sacrifices of VO-67 in successfully planting sensors along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and around Khe Sanh will never be known. The Air Force reported that truck kills tripled, for a like period, after the sensors were implanted and used to detect and pinpoint targets. Senior Marine officers estimated that casualties at the siege of Khe Sanh would have been double that experienced if it had not been for the sensors implanted by the VO-67 Navy crews.

## Planning Rice Air Drops Into Laos

By Mac Thompson

*Editor's Note: This is a memo written on October 16, 1972 by Mac Thompson about rice dropping in Laos when he was with the Office of Refugee Affairs Logistics section of US AID.*

The USAID/Laos, Office of Refugee Affairs, has been in the rice dropping business for about 10 years. At present we are delivering approximately 2500 MT (5.5 million pounds) of foodstuffs per month by freefall drops; this includes rice, canned meat, salt, and PL-480 commodities. Some of the various problems, solutions, and alternatives we have met are as follows:

### THEORY:

1. That 40 kg of rice packed inside three each 100 kg capacity jute sacks will survive a free-fall drop with minimal loss and breakage.
2. That this 40 kg triple-sacked unit MUST impact perpendicular to the ground, i.e., drop vertical for a horizontal DZ or at an angle of about 45 deg for a DZ sloped at 45 deg.

### PRACTICE:

The process is composed of three basic steps, i.e., 1) rebagging of rice, 2) rigging/palletizing for drop, and 3) dropping. Each step, with some alternatives, will be discussed in turn.

1. REBAGGING: Rice is normally delivered to the warehouse in 100 kg net weight jute bags. As our requirement is for 40 kg rice, we have a "services" contract for rebagging the 100 kg single-bag rice into 40 kg triple-bag drop units.

We have two basic prices in this contract, 1) about \$24/MT if the contractor furnishes the bagging materials (sacks and string), and 2) about \$1.50 if the contractor furnishes labor only and the government furnishes the bagging materials. We normally use the \$24/MT rate and the contractor has the responsibility, and the attendant problems of buying, shipping, warehousing, and maintaining the materials pipeline for about 1.3 million jute bags each year.

We use empty reclaimed jute sacks, 29" x 43", of 100 kg capacity and jute twine for sewing. The cost of the reclaimed jute sack varies from \$0.20 - \$0.35 each and is presently toward the high end of the range because of the international jute shortage caused by the January '72 Bangladesh war. The twine runs \$0.50 - \$0.60 per kg. Jute bags are usually readily available in

SEA as most of the local agricultural products are transported in jute. Certainly if a rice rebagging/drop program is to be set up on short notice, jute bags will probably be the only material on hand.

Starting January '73, we plan to rebag utilizing two polypropylene bags and one jute bag rather than three jute bags. Still triple-sacked but the cost of Singapore poly bags is only about \$0.24 each thereby lowering the cost of the triple-sacked unit from \$0.90 to about \$0.75, or an annual savings of about \$100,000 on the AID/Laos drop volume of 20,000 MT. If this alternative were implemented utilizing U.S. origin poly bags the annual cost would increase by about \$150,000. Here are a few figures for reference:

- 1 MT rice in 100 kg sacks = 10 sacks
- 1 MT rice for drop (40 kg sacks) = 25 units
- 1 MT of 40 kg triple-sacked drop units = 75 jute sacks (25 units x 3 sacks/unit)

Therefore, when bagging 1 MT of 40 kg triple-sacked rice you need a total of 75 jute sacks of 100 kg capacity, 10 of which contain the 1 MT of rice delivered and 65 of which must be bought empty.

So, into the act of bagging. This sample is based on a 100 MT per day volume as used in Vientiane, Laos. Requirements are 100 MT of rice delivered/packed in 1000 jute bags, approximately 50 kg of jute twine for sewing, and 6,500 reclaimed empty 100 kg capacity jute bags, and about 50-75 laborers. The 100 kg rice is dumped onto the warehouse floor and is then shoveled into the empty bags in approximately 40 kg lots. This 40 kg bag, as yet unsewn and single bagged, is placed on a balance type platform scale and a small quantity of rice is either added from the pile or removed from the bag to bring the weight to 40 kg. This single bag is then hand sewn. The single sewn bag is then upended into a second bag, which is then sewn, being careful not to tie into the inner bag, and this double-bagged unit is again upended into the third and last bag for final sewing. This completes the 40 kg net weight triple-bagged drop sack; three jute sacks sewn separately with the middle bag "inverted" so that its hand-sewn seam is opposite the hand-sewn seams of the first and third bags.

To maintain this volume of 100 MT per day we run two production lines utilizing only hand labor. Each line is composed of 1) laborers unloading and emptying the incoming 100 kg rice onto the pile; 2) three laborers shoveling and weighing the 40 kg rice into the first bag; 3) the first of three sewing crews (as each bag is sewn it is passed onto the next crew who add a bag and sew); 4) the stacking/loading crew.

AID/Laos also bags rice, using the same basic system and materials, at two out-stations, Luang Prabang (L-54) and Ban Houei Sai (L-25). The volume at these stations rarely reaches 10 MT per day and can be performed by as few as 10 laborers.

Commodities other than rice can also be airdropped by using this rebagging system. For example, AID/Laos is dropping such rebagged items as PL-480 cornmeal, bulgur wheat, and noodles. We also drop what we call "hash," which is composed of 32 kg rice and 12 each 1-lb cans of meat. Cans suitable for dropping are available in Bangkok and can surely be manufactured elsewhere.



2. RIGGING: The second basic phase of rice dropping is palletizing and rigging the 40 kg triple-bagged rice for air drop.

Although rice may be loaded loose (i.e., not palletized) on the floor of an aircraft and then stacked 7-9 bags high in the door for drop, this system is not normally used by AID/Laos, mainly because of safety. There is little emergency jettison capability loading in this manner.

The system used here with the C-46, C-7A, and C-123 utilizes a flat wood pallet with two guide rollers and double tracks in the aircraft. The pallet is either plywood or laminated masonite and can be either disposable or not depending on the track system used in the aircraft.

Our earlier model of disposable pallet would probably be most suitable for use in a C-47, depending on the availability of either plywood or masonite. It is a 15 mm thick (about 1/5 inch) and measures 29" x 34". The corners are cut to prevent snagging and holes are drilled to provide tie downs for the drop rice. This pallet holds 9 sacks of 40 kg rice.

Six bags of rice are first placed on the pallet, and about an 18 ft length of rope is laid across the top. Three additional bags are added and are bundled together with a single turn of the rope. The long ends of the rope are then secured to the two side holes of the pallet and tightened. The purpose of tying these three top bags separately and securing them to the pallet is to prevent the pallet from striking the left horizontal stabilizer on the C-46 when the load hits the prop blast. To secure the palletized load during ground handling and while in the aircraft before drop, two lengths of rope are tied diagonally across the rice to the four corner holes in the pallet. One only of these ropes is cut before dropping.

In a C-46, this 29" x 34" pallet with guide rollers is used with two sets of double-tracks joined forward of the door by a Y-section which runs into a curved track to the door. The last straight track section extends about 8" outside the aircraft. Seven pallets are loaded on one track and six on the other. Because of cabin width restrictions, a C-47 would probably be restricted to a single double-track and a curved section and would be restricted by ACL to 4.5 to 5 pallets. One loaded pallet weighs about 950 lbs.

The reusable pallet is basically identical except for size. It uses 3/4" plywood, 32" x 48", and holds 18 bags of 40 kg drop rice in two stacks of 9 bags. The main difference is in the tracks on the C-46. The last straight section of double-track that extends outside the aircraft for use with the disposable pallets is modified to a tilt section. At the moment of drop, when the loaded pallet is pushed past the balance point of the tilt section, the pallet guide rollers engage flanges that are inserted in the tilt-track guide slot. The loaded pallet tips outside the aircraft, the rice drops off, the empty pallet tilts back inside, is slid out of the holding flanges, and the tilt track section is ready for another pallet for the next pass. A sample of this tilt section can be made available to interested parties.

Securing the drop rice to the recoverable pallet is simplified as there is no pallet leaving the plane to strike the stabilizer. One turn of 3/8" manila rope is tied around all 18 bags to prevent "floating" bags in the first 1-2 seconds after drop. Two ropes are tied diagonally across the load to the four corner holes

of the pallet. These ropes secure the load during handling and MUST be cut before drop. An alternative, which cuts down on rope usage, is to use a small rope loop at either end of the pallet and type XIII webbing with two hooks made from 1/4" rebar and a quick fit adapter (AN 6517, MS 2204, 48A7058). NOTE: The rollers used with this reusable pallet are threaded for a nut rather than welded as is the case with the disposable pallet. After 200-300 drops, when the track side of the pallet gets marked and grooved by the tracks, the pallet is turned over, the rollers changed and the pallet is good for another 300 drops. Another Note: None of the plywood used is of U.S. origin. U.S. plywood was dried and found to be too soft. Bangkok origin, and most commercial plywood in SEA, is made from comparatively hard wood and is not grooved heavily by the tracks.

3. DROPPING: The most important consideration in rice dropping is the principle (Law) that the triple-sacked rice bag MUST impact the ground at an angle of 90 deg. Any forward motion remaining from the aircraft drop speed when the bag impacts will cause the bag to slide across the ground and rip. This loss is quite evident when observing actual drops as the rice is spread out in a fan from the ripped bag in the direction of drop. In a "normal" broken bag from a 90 deg impact, the rice will be spilled radially 360 deg. This only solution to "fan" breakage is to decrease aircraft drop speed or increase drop altitude.

For the C-46, C-7A, and C-123 the drop speed is 100-11-knots at 900-1,000 ft drop altitude on a horizontal DZ. The drop altitude is correspondingly lower for sloped DZs as, even though the drop bag will still have some forward speed remaining upon impact, the bag will impact perpendicular to the ground slope.

The simplest drop system does not use tracks or pallets. The drop rice is loaded loose in the aircraft and brought to the door(s) in 7-9 bag lots. The first bag is laid in the door perpendicular to the axis of the aircraft and extends about 12" outside the aircraft. The next 6-8 bags are stacked on top of the first bag but parallel to the axis. At the buzzer, the 2-4 kickers tilt the bags out using the available "ears" of the first drop bag. The main disadvantage of this system is the lack of a quick jettison capability in case of an emergency. A modification to this system is to use tracks and pallets except at the door for dropping. If plywood or laminated masonite pallets are at a premium, this modification offers a degree of safety while saving materials.

When using the disposable 29" x 34" pallet with a C-46, two pallets are dropped per pass. The first pallet is pushed flush with the door and the second pallet is butted against the first. Three or four kickers are used, the first pair pushing the pallet in the door and the second pair of kickers handles the second pallet. At the drop buzzer, all kickers push and the pilot assists by tilting the aircraft to the left. Only ONE of the tie ropes is to be cut. The other tie rope helps prevent "floaters." The drop rice works loose from the second rope before impact (usually). As a C-46 normally carries 13 pallets, this system takes 7 passes to complete the load.

Dropping Rice, next page



Dropping Rice, continued from page 7

The free fall rice drop system currently in use by AID/Laos utilizes the recoverable plywood pallet and a C-46 with the "tilt-track" modification at the door. Three kickers handle one pallet at a time (18 bags/pallet at 90 lbs/bag). The pallet to be dropped is positioned just short of the balance point of the tilt-track section and, at the buzzer, is pushed forward. Seven passes are required per planeload.

## Rice Drops over Laos from the Pilot's Standpoint

By Les Strouse

The crew would receive a schedule the night before a rice drop with no details, only the crew names and time of takeoff. The crew would consist of Captain, First Officer and three Air Freight Dispatchers (fancy name for loadmasters). We normally called them Kickers.

Reporting time was one hour before flight time. First order of business would be to check with operations for any schedule/airplane changes and then preflight the airplane (in this case a C-46 from which the majority of rice drops were made). The load, which was normally seven pallets, containing up to 2000 pounds of rice per pallet, would be loaded onto a roller conveyor track that went down the middle of the cargo compartment of the airplane and then curved out the cargo door. Failure to properly secure the load to the cargo tie-down rings could result in an entire load of rice bags being dumped on the floor of the airplane. The AFDs did not appreciate this, as they would have to restack the rice before we could make the drop.

Next we would go from the CASI (Continental Air Services Inc) area to Air America Ops for a security briefing and to pick up our "drop sheet." The Flight Information Center (FIC) would have received the day's drop requirements from USAID (Mac Thompson) and would assign the drop zones (DZs) for each airplane scheduled for drops on that day. Normally the sheet would have a primary and two or more alternates, depending on the weather forecast. The alternates were normally NOT in the same area as the primary so as to increase the possibility of making the alternate drop if the weather in the primary was unsuitable. All of the DZs were listed by UTM grid coordinates and security signal.

We would normally have enough time left to grab a quick cup of coffee before departure. This would also give us time to chat with other crews regarding DZs. It was possible that someone had been to the DZ recently and would pass on information regarding terrain in the area, etc.

When airborne we would call our off time and time to Primary DZ. Only FIC and the pilots would know where the DZ was located for security reasons. Enroute we would report

our position every 30 minutes. An experienced crew knew most of the DZs from memory while newer crews would navigate to the DZ using mostly map reading. With the DZ in sight we could call entering the drop pattern at Primary or Alternate as the case may be. After the first dry pass over the DZ the folks on the ground were required to put out a signal made of white panels. The signal would normally be one or two letters. The DZ was required to put out the signal upon our arrival and remove it when the drop was completed. They were not supposed to leave the signal permanently on the DZ.

After receiving the correct signal a left hand drop pattern would be set up at approximately 800 feet above the DZ at a speed of 105 knots. The altitude would vary according to the angle of the DZ. Many were on steep slopes and the drop altitude would be much lower. The object was to have the rice bags impact perpendicular to the terrain - much less breakage that way. The Captain would flip a switch to turn on a green light in the back of the airplane. This would alert the AFDs. They would undo some of the tie-down straps and move a pallet of rice or other food into the cargo door and stand by for a bell or buzzer signal to push it on out the door. The Captain, using eyeball sighting only, would line up on the DZ while looking out his left window. At the appropriate time the bell/buzzer would be activated and the AFDs would simultaneously cut the ropes holding the rice bags onto the pallet and push it onto a

"Forward visibility would be practically nil and looking straight down there was no resolution...I followed a ridgeline for some minutes one day before I found out that it was a reflection of my trousers on the side window!"

section of roller conveyer track that stuck out past the cargo door. This section would tip at about 45 degrees and the rice would slide off the pallet.

The AFDs would retrieve the pallet and put it in the back of the cabin while one AFD would be hanging out the door to see where the load landed.

When back on downwind the Captain would look back and receive a signal from the AFD indicating where the load landed relative to the signal panels. We all tried to destroy the signal on each drop but obviously that did not always work. The next drop would be adjusted according to the AFD's report. The AFD, facing forward would use his hand as a DZ and point to the relative position of the load impact. Except when there was a bull's eye and then there was a big smile and a thumbs up. Some AFDs were slower to respond to the signal than others so it helped to remember how an individual reacted. A very quick AFD would result in the load impacting short and a slow one would result in a long impact. Left or right errors were only blamed on the pilot!! Who obviously blamed it on the wind!!

Okay, you ask, what happens when that 2000 pounds of rice goes out of the airplane! The airplane wants to nose over due to the loss of weight from the rear of the airplane while at the same time it wants to rise due to the rapid loss of weight. This can be very interesting when a pilot is first exposed to it but it becomes second nature to make automatic correction. Power reductions are also required due to the reduced gross weight. There is a lot of activity immediately after a pallet goes out the door. After the last pallet is dropped we head home for another load. Now



the copilot gets a chance to fly!

Sounds easy? Try all this when there is a lot of turbulence or when the weather is marginal and the workload increases tremendously.

Here is one of the worst situations that I encountered. It was during the smoky season. You have to remember that Laos has a lot of slash and burn agriculture. As I remember this reached its peak in February and March. Forward visibility would be practically nil and looking straight down there was no resolution. Everything looked flat. I followed a ridgeline for some minutes one day before I found out that it was a reflection of my trousers on the side window!

But back to the drops. We were assigned a DZ on the side of a mountain with a slope of near 45 degrees so we would be making a low altitude drop and crossing a ridge just after the release. Well, things were going well until the Hmong on the far side of the ridge started burning off their slashed vegetation. Not only was the smoke heavy, there was very heavy turbulence immediately after crossing the ridge with no chance to turn before the ridge due to a peak hidden in the smoke. The remainder of the load tipped over in the airplane. We went out over the valley while the load was restacked and made an extended pattern so that the AFDs could untie the pallets of rice in relatively smooth air.

*All in the life of a "Rice Drop Pilot" in Laos.*

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## How Your Contributions Help Kids in Thailand

*By John Sweet*

Here is the current situation with Assistance projects, showing the good that your contributions are doing to help children in Thailand.

Contact has been established by Vichit Mingrachata with John Middlewood, former SP with the 56th Special Operations Wing at NKP, now retired and a missionary living in a small village outside NKP. He has married a local girl and is building a house while teaching English to the village children. The Board of Directors has authorized a donation of one hundred dollars for his projects within the school. Vichit will deliver these funds and explain our requirements for receipts etc. If all goes well there is the possibility of major assistance to John's projects in the future.

At the Udorn School for Hearing Impaired Children, Vichit arranged a dinner for the children of their favorite meal, Som Tam (cooked ripe papaya) and roasted chicken with sticky rice. There are almost 400 children at the school. They enjoyed their feast on February 9.

At St. Joseph's School, Thare, on January 25, 2001 Vichit delivered 150 sets of desks and chairs. They were manufactured on the local economy for the TLC Brotherhood. Total cost was Baht 83,081. Pictures will be supplied later, when they arrive.

Vichit and Mrs. Tommy Thompson provided milk and cake to the students at the handicapped school in Phone Phisay Re-

habilitation Center, Nongkhai Province during a trip they made for instructional care to parents of the more than 100 children at the school.

At this time, a hand pedal car was procured which had been especially manufactured for the TLC Brotherhood for only 2,500 Baht (about \$60). It has now been delivered to a handicapped beggar in Udorn who has never had any assistance and was very happy and grateful to the TLC Brotherhood. This is a splendid example of how the TLCB is changing the lives of so many not reached by other organizations in a major way with little expense.

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## Acronyms Corner

*We will be running this occasional item in the MEM to translate some of the acronyms you see on Mission. With Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force members, it can get a little difficult to figure out what all those initials mean. Feel free to offer others. These acronyms cover different periods of the war. Thanks to all who helped to translate the following.*

A&E—Armament and Electronics Squadron (weapons and electronics personnel)

AEMS—Armament and Electronics Maintenance Squadron (56th AEMS was attached to 56th Air Commando Wing at NKP)

AMS—Avionics Maintenance Squadron

EMS—Electronics Maintenance Squadron

MMS—Munitions Maintenance Squadron (loaded ordnance including aimed rockets, serviced the guns)

AMMS—Airborne Missile Maintenance Squadron (serviced airborne guided missiles)

TACAN—Tactical Area Navigation (on UHF band sent out radio signal representing each degree of the compass relative to the TACAN site. If a pilot reported he was 085 at 60 from Channel 89 he was on a bearing of 085, roughly ENE and 60 nautical miles from the TACAN operating on Channel 89, which was located at NKP)

DME—Distance Measuring Equipment ( a feature of TACAN that gave a constant readout of distance from the station and was used to allow an impromptu rendezvous of aircraft from different bases or units, assuming they were at or near the same altitude)

TASS—Tactical Air Support Squadron (23rd TASS was based at NKP)

UTM—Universal transverse mercator. This is a type of map

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projection, or way of showing a curved Earth on flat paper. In military usage it usually refers to the maps the Army uses for land navigation. FACs were trained to use these, and the locations they found on their maps were referred to as "UTM coordinates."

## A Memorable Hung Start

*By David Cook  
The Regular Crewchief*

The F-4 had a cartridge starter system in the engines. The start cart was about 5 inches in diameter and about 8 inches long and filled with slow burning "gun powder." We used them sometimes at Ubon when we couldn't get a power unit.

Needless to say these things didn't always function properly, which was called a "hung start". When this happened we were supposed to wait five minutes before removing the hung cart, replace it and try again. Scattered around the revetments were steel barrels to hold used and "hung" start carts.

One day a crew dog in our section had a hung start. Instead of waiting five minutes, he promptly pulled the start cart housing out, extended his hand and arm straight over his head and walked to the nearest barrel to dispose of the thing.

While he was walking to the barrel the cart ignited and began burning fitfully. He never acknowledged the sparking, hissing fire above his head but threw the burning cart into the barrel full of expended and "hung" cartridges, turned around and went back to his jet, ignoring the frantic gesturing of the pilots and other people on the noisy flightline. He installed a fresh cart and proceeded to signal the pilot to start up the jet.

The fire department monitored the burning barrel for the rest of the afternoon. We didn't get to use starter cartridges any more.

## FAQ—How do I? —

### Change my information on the web page roster?

The roster is maintained by webmaster Jim Henthorn. You should send changes direct to him, at: [jhenthorn@home.com](mailto:jhenthorn@home.com)

### Stop or restart access to our servers?

Our servers are maintained by listmaster Ed Heyliger. Ed will promptly change your status whenever you ask. Email: [AmazingDrH@webtv.net](mailto:AmazingDrH@webtv.net)

### Pay dues or notify TLCB of an address change?

Mail to Bill Tilton, 7813 New London Drive, Springfield, VA 22153. You may e-mail address changes to Bill, or to Leigh Hotujec, Hap Wyman, or Ed Heyliger, and the changes will be shared with all who need them.

### Get dues paid by the subsidized dues program?

Those who feel they cannot afford dues can still join TLCB, thanks to the generosity of some members who have donated

dues funds. Request this help from Bill Tilton, president, at [wilton@erols.com](mailto:wilton@erols.com), or mailing address as shown above. (All requests are kept in confidence to avoid embarrassment.)

## Quilt Raffle to Help Thai Kids

*By Bob Wheatley*

Our first reunion of the new millennium will be upon us before we know it. Aside from the friendship and camaraderie always shared in those gatherings, a focal point of each reunion has been the various projects undertaken to raise money for the TLCB Assistance Fund.

Many of you will recall the TLC Sisterhood's Signature Quilt Project that was such a resounding success at last year's reunion in Colorado Springs. The Sisterhood's efforts netted more than \$1,481 to benefit the children of the Thare Orphanage in Thailand. Last year's quilt, a beautiful one-of-a-kind piece of art, pieced and sewn with Tender Loving Care, was raffled off at the reunion banquet. Brother Mike Ghames was the lucky holder of the winning ticket. Mike was not present at the drawing, but he received his treasured heirloom a week later by express mail.

This year, the Sisterhood will be embarking on another quilt project, the finished product to be raffled at the Ft. Walton Beach reunion in September. For those who know quilts, this year the motif will be a variation on Debbie Mumm's "Americana Stars." The color scheme, appropriately enough, will be Red, White, and Blue. Finished dimensions of the quilt will be approximately 60" x 72."

This size will make it great for use as a snuggle comforter on those cold winter nights watching the tube or reading by the fire. Or it can be used as a spread for a twin size bed. Rosie Wheatley of the TLC Sisterhood will handle the crafting of the quilt. Rosie is an accomplished, lifelong seamstress and a quilting enthusiast for more than twenty years. You can be assured it will be a quality work, crafted using quality materials and painstakingly put together with lots of TLC. A sample photo of the quilt will be posted for previewing on the TLCB web site.

Raffle tickets for the quilt can be found in the March and June issues of the MEM. Mail completed raffle tickets, with payment, to the following address:

John Sweet  
c/o TLC Brotherhood,  
P.O. Box 2371  
Seabrook, NH 03874

Checks should be made out to "TLC Brotherhood" with "Assistance Quilt" marked on the memo line. The price of tickets is \$2 each, or 3 tickets for \$5. Maximize your chances of winning - buy as many as you wish - there is no limit. You need not be present at the drawing to win! And keep in mind the proceeds will all go to help support the important work of our Brotherhood in aiding the needy people of Thailand in the name of our brothers who did not return with us. Let's pitch in and help make this year's Sisterhood fundraiser as big a success as last year's.

# Signing Up New TLC members At The Texas Lone Staar

by John Sweet

*Last fall, Assistance Committee Chairman John Sweet, Nancy Sweet, Wendy Liles, Jimmie Butler and Les Thompson flew to Southeast Asia. This is John Sweet's report on the events conducted on behalf of the TLCB during the August 24-September 7 trip. Ed.*

All travel was at the individual expense of those who traveled. No part of the journey was funded through Assistance Funds nor supplemented in any way by the TLC Brotherhood.

Several new TLC members were signed up at the Texas Lone Staar (that is how the sign reads!). Our organization is held in high esteem at this legendary hang out. Be sure to visit it if you are in Bangkok.

At Khon Kaen, we stopped at Post 10249 Commander Forrest Williams' home for a warm welcome and to view Forest's operations manufacturing walkers and crutches with funds provided by "Operation Crutch" of the TLC Brotherhood. I think Forest could make anything!

Forest conducted a tour of field operations surrounding Khon Kaen, including the facilities where the wheelchairs we provide are manufactured, and The Christian Foundation for the Blind. We viewed the operations, spoke with the directors and learned how the Braille textbooks are manufactured on site for use by the students.

In the afternoon we visited the Udorn School For Hearing Impaired Children of about 400 and Nancy spoke to the children directly in ASL (American Sign Language) even though she had no knowledge of Thai. The children held a question and answer period and it was wonderful to see their faces light up as they discovered they could become a success in life as well.

Upon our arrival in Udorn we immediately met with Tommy Thompson who was alert and waiting for us all day! It was so good to finally meet in person! We had a great time together and it was very encouraging to all of Tommy's friends and family to see him so actively participating!

A meeting was held with Tommy Thompson, Assistance Committee Assistant Chairman - Thailand and the Officers of Post 10249 Udorn Thailand, for the purpose of appointing an assistant to handle the visitations, purchase and delivery of items to the agencies we are assisting, until such time as Tommy is on his feet (Tommy walked a few steps while we were there!) to conduct the actual physical operations. Tommy will directly oversee the planning and implementation as always.

With the concurrence of President Bill Tilton, I recommended Vichit Mingrachata, who has been working hand in hand with Tommy for the past couple of years, for the position. As most of you know, Vichit worked for the American Embassy in Thailand, speaks excellent English and is a member of the TLC Brotherhood. It was felt the appointment of Vichit would be a

great asset and wonderful to have a Thai member working directly within the community. As this was immediately agreed upon by all, especially Tommy, Vichit was appointed as Assistance Committee Deputy Assistant Chairman - Thailand.

A fourteen-year-old girl is now being assisted on a daily basis for food by funds (2000 baht), which are distributed by Vichit's wife. Suninat (the girl, who is well known to Vichit and John Oles) attends school in Udorn and lives with her grandmother (her parents are deceased) and has been trying to sell small items on the street for food. The assistance of the TLC Brotherhood will insure she has a meal for several months and we will continue our assistance in the future. This is a splendid example of what a great difference we are able to make at a level not obtainable by many other organizations.

A welcome reception was held by Post 10249 and several members of the post used the occasion to submit their memberships to the TLC Brotherhood. It was an enjoyable occasion for us all.

We also visited the PhonPhisal Community Based Rehabilitation Center, whose Director is Daniel Ortiz. There we discussed the walker and crutch programs and viewed the small but efficient operations.

Each of the agencies was requested to contact Forest and Vichit with a list of needs that the TLC Brotherhood could use to provide assistance in the future.

With the indispensable help of Brothers Mac Thompson and Forest Williams, we made a one-day visit to Vientiane to begin investigating possibilities for future projects there. Jim Michener arranged for us to meet the U.S. charge' d'affaires late that day.

Finally we visited Sakon Nakhon for an appointment with Archbishop Lawrence W. Khai for lunch and a visit to Thare where the children were expecting us. They displayed their many hours of practice with their band instruments provided by the TLC Brotherhood and marched and played continuously for fifteen minutes. They played the music from "The Longest Day"! We each addressed the children and presented all of them with cookies we purchased at our own expense downtown on our way. They responded by singing God Bless America in Thai. There was hardly a dry eye in the place!!

With the successful establishment of a VFW Post in Phnom Penh (in October) by Forrest Williams and other Pacific VFW Officers, a representative for the TLC Brotherhood Assistance Committee will have been established in Cambodia as well.

Although the majority of our TLC members do not contribute to the Assistance Fund, those who do so have been generous and have made a great difference in the lives of those we assist.

Anyone who would like to make a tax-deductible donation may do so by dropping a check in the mail to

The TLC Brotherhood  
P.O. Box 2371  
Seabrook, NH 03874

The TLC Brotherhood is a recognized 501(c)3 non-profit charitable organization.



# President's Column

by Bill Tilton

Many new members have joined since we talked about the various activities of your Brotherhood. I'll cover a few of the more prominent goings-on as spring of 2001 comes upon us. In the last issue we covered our very active Assistance program (see the new article by Chairman John Sweet, describing recent activities in Asia), and in this issue editor Dave MacDonald has featured the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual TLC Brotherhood, Inc. reunion.

As most of us know, there were several reunions before we organized, the biggest being in Dayton where we decided to elect a board and adopt our own rules. That was in 1998. Now we are headed for Fort Walton Beach, Florida, where many of the Air Force members got their training way back when (and a uniquely charming place to spend some vacation time). Ed Miller is the Florida chairperson—be sure and read his reunion article elsewhere in this issue.

The reunion excitement is already building, and it isn't until September 28<sup>th</sup>! Bill Jaynes has been active with this group since the early days, and was a key force when we were getting organized. But Bill has not been able to come to any of the big reunions, and so he has never met most of us (even though we enjoy his posts all the time). The other night Bill posted a sentiment so many of us have felt: "I can't wait to see you guys in person." That's what reunions are all about!

The History Committee has an article in this issue, too, as Jim Henthorn brings us up to date on his epic mapping project. This committee comprises a vital part of the TLCB objectives, collecting and preserving the fading memories of that time many of us spent in the region we call TLC, during the Vietnam War era. Committee chairman Larry Hughes turned a small project into a major accomplishment, when he set out to collect all the call signs he could. He didn't plan it this way, but what he ended up with is an important record of far more than just call signs. The material he collected is available on a CD (see the BX webpage), and now he is gathering material to expand it. And by the way, the FAC Association, which is just now organizing, have put Larry in charge of the history of support personnel, so impressed are they by his Callsign Project!

The Membership Committee has been quietly recruiting all over the place, and we have some really interesting new additions. As of the first week of March we had passed the 330 mark. One trend has been finding more joiners with Army backgrounds, but we still have very few who were in the Navy. That's one reason I was so pleased to see Dave MacDonald come up with the lead article on VO-67 for this issue. We have two former POWs that I know of, one American and one Lao. Both survived horrible experiences in captivity that would have been the end for most of us ordinary people!

Where are our members? Some are overseas, with 13 in Thailand alone. We also have members in Germany, England, Laos, and Guam. Here in the U.S.A., California's lead has grown, now with 30 members. Florida and Colorado are next, with 25 and 17 respectively. New Jersey, Virginia, New York, and Texas each have 15 or 16, and these states have 10 members each: Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

We all can help this committee and seek out those veterans who need us but didn't even know such a wonderful group has formed. We owe it to our still-lost Brothers!

A very effective charitable program started last year is our subsidized dues. In organizing TLCB, we designed the dues program to be a mandatory component of memberships, and set the \$25 dues as a reasonable amount but high enough to show some commitment. Nevertheless it proved to be difficult for some Brothers to pay that, for various reasons. Other members volunteered to make the payments for those who needed help, and about 5 or 6 "assisted" memberships benefited last year. This year we already have enough donated funds for 11 such memberships, though so far only 2 have been requested. If last year was typical, these requests will come in at the last minute—or even later. Who wants to ask for help, after all? But for that reason we do not share the names of those who get the help, except for the 2 or 3 of us who need to know. I urge you not to be embarrassed to ask—after all, it makes us feel needed!

We are very gratified by the generosity of many members who have sent in Assistance donations with their dues. Some have sent in modest amounts, and some have apologized for not being able to afford a donation this time. No matter—we know your heart is in the right place. So far we have received nearly \$1600 in donations that were included with 2001 dues payments!

Donations to TLCB are generally tax-deductible if you itemize, in case you hadn't heard. That goes for Assistance, of course, but for any other donations as well. All of our activities that support the objective on the back of your membership card are recognized by IRS as tax-exempt activities. Please note: the reunion is not one of these activities and is specifically mentioned by the IRS. This must be self-supporting and the funds we pay for registration are not mingled with your dues or other donations. Leftover funds will be used for future reunions.

Some members have the misconception that we qualify as a "veteran's group." Not in the language of the IRS. We are *not* a veteran's group, but a charitable organization. Remember, military service is not a condition for membership.

Well, Gay and I have our reservations in Fort Walton Beach and we have registered with the reunion committee. For those who have not experienced a reunion, please try to arrange your life so you can be there. It's a wonderful experience no matter if you never before met anyone who attends! We seem to be all Brothers and Sisters there, and the activities offered serve as a wonderful framework to focus all that emotion. I look forward to meeting a whole new group of members and spouses this year, and to renewing acquaintance with some great people I have met in Dayton, Washington, or Colorado Springs.



Let's R and R at the Beach!