



Mekong Express Mail

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The Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

Lizards, Rats and Loran-C at Udorn in 1966

By Augie Whittum

I was a Radio Electrician (W1) when I returned to the United States in May 1965 after thirteen months of restricted duty at a Coast Guard Loran-C transmitting station on the island of Hokkaido, Japan. I was assigned to the 5th Coast Guard District electronics engineering staff in Portsmouth, Virginia, with responsibility for floating unit electronics support.

One of the tasks, already in progress, was outfitting several of our 82 foot WPBs (patrol boats) for duty in South Vietnam. This was big stuff! (for me). A Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officer, Elmer Hicks, I believe, had conceived a neat idea for mounting a .50-cal machine gun piggy-back on an 81 mm mortar. This oversize “over-under” was mounted on a deck stand in front of the pilothouse of the WPB and four more .50 cal machine guns were mounted aft - two on each side. Not bad for an 82 foot boat! We installed new electronics suites and generally modified them for the new task - wartime patrols. These small cutters were to join three groups of cutters providing close-in and coastal support from the DMZ south around to the Cambodian border.

I put in a transfer request to go with them, figuring that all that new electronics would need someone to provide maintenance support. I was right, but a bit too junior. A good friend got the job and headed for Saigon. I was told that, since I was a new arrival from restricted duty, I had to do six months in CONUS before they would transfer me overseas again. Back to work, doing what I was there for - providing maintenance support for 5th District floating units (from the major cutters to the 40 ft utility boats). Mostly it was a desk job with inspection visits to floating units and planning meetings at the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore Maryland. But I knew from being on the receiving end earlier, that if I did it right, someone would appreciate it. So I did as much as I could to make sure that the understaffed and under funded floating units got the people, parts and bucks needed to keep going.

A promotion to CWO (W2) in September 1965 helped with the rent, but did not seem to make any difference until late October, when the personnel guy at CG Headquarters called to let me know that my six months would be up soon and “are you still interested in going to SEA?” You bet! Well, it was not to be sea duty or ship support, it was something they would tell me about after I accepted the job. So I bit for the hook like a starving tuna. “Hello Project Tight Reign.”

Soon after that I was introduced to some of the new group making up the stateside contingent at that time. Then came a set of non-descript orders for temporary duty at the Coast Guard Supply Center Brooklyn, New York (31st and 3rd Avenue). The orders did not tell the story. My job was to help build a Loran

monitor station that would fit in four 40-foot trailers, and then take the station to DaNang, RVN.

We worked from just after New Years Day 1966 to the 29th of April 1966 to do the job. Three fiberglass trailers (and a steel one for the generators) were built by the Elder-Oilfield company in Houston, Texas; communications consoles and equipment were being fabricated by RF Communications Company in Rochester, NY and us guys in Brooklyn were laying out the Loran equipment between yellow lines painted on the wooden third floor of a warehouse. The yellow lines were painted to match the dimensions of the trailer walls.

Each trailer was mocked up on the floor. Wiring was cut to size and harnessed, equipment positioned for exact mounting hole dimensions, furniture positioned, and so forth. This information was passed to the trailer folks who drilled all the mounting holes, welded supports and laid in cable raceways to house the equipment and cables. So the trailers were all “fabbed” and ready when we got them. The communications equipment was shipped in from Rochester and then the trailers headed north. All the equipment, both Loran and communications, was checked out before the trailers actually arrived. It was a real kick! No one outside the project knew what we were doing. All they knew was—we had the grease when it came to getting stuff.

So it was a heady time. We were the first Coast Guard shore unit to be issued M-16s.

During the four month TDY period, I stayed on Governors Island, NY. Just off the tip of Manhattan, it was First Army Headquarters back then. They had a paradise right in the middle of New York Harbor. And they were giving it up to the Coast

see **Coast Guard** on Page 3



A Long Rainy Night Under Sapper Attack

By David Cook

On Good Friday 1972 the North Vietnamese launched the Easter Offensive, a full-scale conventional invasion of South Vietnam, from their sanctuaries in Laos, Cambodia, and across the DMZ. U.S. ground forces had been reduced from 550,000 in 1969 to 95,000 in 1972 under the president's Vietnamization policy. The USAF and the US Navy had been reduced to about one-third of their peak strength. To support the South Vietnamese forces, the USAF mounted a major move to SEA of air power from Korea, the Philippines and the United States. As part of Constant Guard II, my 307th Tactical Fighter Squadron was transferred TDY in June to Udorn RTAFB from Homestead AFB, Florida, relieving the 308 TFS.

On a dark, drizzly night on October 2, 1972 my roomy and me were hustling down the perimeter road after a helmeted eyeglass wearing maniac screamed at us from the door of our room something about an attack and report to your duty stations. "We have been hit once and we are going to be hit again!" he shouted.

As we went along the road in the drizzly wee hours I noticed everything was quiet—no guns, no flares, nobody. That nobody part scared us. We crouched down in a ditch next to the road and really took a good look. We were on the perimeter road adjacent to the main road into Udorn City just off the end of the runway.

There was absolutely no one about, across the fence or near us, no gunfire, nothing. We decided to wait for the shuttle bus. (We were not quite awake yet). At last, here comes the bus. We flag it down, it stops and picks us up. Slowly it dawned on me that an American was driving. Then I noticed the Americans on board were wearing ponchos and they were quiet. Then I noticed they all had M-16s, and helmets, and web gear, and radios, and I thought "Uh-Oh!" We hopped a ride with the SP reinforcements. They let us out at the 90 degree turn by the Redwood Inn Thai Restaurant and F-4 Gun Shop and so we walked down the ramp to a CONEX trailer that was our duty section where all the other 307th TFS crew chiefs had gathered.

There we learned that there had been some shooting and the base was on *Red Alert*. All through September there had been various alerts at all the Thai bases due to suspected guerrilla activity and we heard the rumors from the bargirls. The previous night the bargirls were adamant that we should not go to work, as they were sure that we would be killed.

As the night wore on, activity on the perimeter picked up— heavy gunfire and flares all over the place. Somehow this did not seem real; but there were some folks out there trying to kill us and we did not even know them. That feeling quickly subsided because we knew why they were there: to get our F-4s that were heavily bombing North Vietnam.

We went to the flight line Entry Control Point (ECP) to listen

to the SP radio. When we got there the American cop was scared. His helmet was on backwards and he had somehow jammed a clip into the M-16 backwards. It was not fully seated, but it was backwards. Keeping him calm and monitoring the radio we could keep track of what was going on around us. There was a lot of activity on the perimeter by the VC, "shootin' & scootin'." The AK rounds whizzed over (maybe around) us. We never saw any tracers but lots of flares.

During all this commotion an SP Master Sergeant ran us off and replaced the scared kid with someone steady. Then a dedicated sheet metal technician kept up an infrequent rapping with a rivet gun on an F-105 in the fully lit hangar adjacent to us. He scared the bejabbers out of us several times as we thought it was Charlie! He never quit working and repeatedly told us to get out.

Well, the guns were going pretty good when all of a sudden something blew up! We looked around as our hearts stopped and we waited for the next mortar. There were no more explosions. Soon the police radios were talking about damaged equipment in the "November" revetment in which, until 1-2 days before, an F-111 was parked. The radios were squawking about pieces of equipment and body parts all over the Triple-Nickel Ops and

the air-conditioned chow hall area. Suddenly two huge army trucks rolled up and SP's started jumping off and running to deploy in the openings in the revetments parking area. One of the cops told us that Charlie was running down the runway or taxiway in our direction.

After 15 minutes nothing happened, no one could spot people running down the runway and the cops left. Some TSgt told us to be careful, there might be some VC lurking around, and the cops left. All we had for self-defense were ponchos, flashlights and a 12" screwdriver.

Shortly after that the word came around that Specter was coming. Specter is an AC-130gunship, armed with 20 mm Vulcans, a 40 mm Bofor, and a 105 mm howitzer. The Specter also has an incredible array of sensors to detect heat and targets in total darkness. We knew this worked because as the Specter gunship orbited the base it would lock on to our group, and we knew this because the searchlight was "slaved" to the sensor system and it was slaved to the guns and it would snap right on to us when Specter passed over. Hmmm, not very smart of us to be in the open, and we were directed to get under cover.

Near dawn the rain stopped and we thought Charlie would leave when "big red" came up. Charlie stayed in the area for most of the morning. The guns had almost completely stopped

Continued next page



The Regular Crewchief, Udorn, 1972

and we were told to go back to the barracks and we left. On our way out of the flight line area we had to pass the Air America Compound. Someone suggested that we could get a drink in there. So we went in and promptly got asked to leave seeing that we were not there to search for UXOs (Unexploded Ordnance). We knew that because one of the civilian ladies sitting on patio furniture next to a pool said we were there to look for UXO. An older man asked what we were doing there and since our reply did not include “UXO” we were asked to leave. Polite, those CIA guys.

I went to the 307th TFS Operation and Orderly room to check in. In this compound was the HQ for the Rescue Squadron. Across the runway I could see their Pedro (an HH-43B) orbiting the perimeter and apparently taking groundfire. Specter had departed at dawn because they could not get permission to fire and the Ho Chi Minh Trail beckoned. As I watched the Pedro, an USMC H-46 approached from the direction of Nam Phong, “The Rose Garden”. I thought that they were bringing in reinforcements. The H-46 landed and took off and started circling along with the Pedro. After 10 minutes it left and the Pedro landed. It was near 10 AM and the showers would be turned on soon, so I boogied to the hooch for a shower.



We departed on October 31 just as the bar mama-san told us we would. She told us we would be home for Halloween and we were.

We learned later that one member of the North Vietnamese

Army “Dac Cong” Sappers had been captured. Two or more had been killed in the explosion. A satchel charge had apparently been detonated, cause unknown. Casualties off base were unknown. One USAF Thai guard had been wounded. One NF-2 Lite-all (a portable light cart) had been destroyed. No aircraft were damaged. However, no missions were launched on October 3rd, either.



Tail number 337 (F-4)

Years later (1977) I was assigned to Clark AB Transient Alert. The fellow giving me the orientation happened to have been at Udorn during the sapper attack. I asked where he was when it happened and he told me that he was assigned to the End-Of-Runway crew and spent a few hours in the bottom of a ditch as some crazy men were running around shooting and leaping across the ditch. During a lull they got up and left the area, running down the runway away from the firing. They took cover in an arresting cable/barrier building on the side of the runway until dawn. I sat in open-mouthed amazement. I told him that they were very lucky because there were 25 cops

waiting to blast those people running down the runway. Then I recalled seeing some guys emerge from a barrier shack waving to the cops that morning. He stared at me in disbelief. He did not know until 1977 what he avoided by sheer luck in 1972. I had never known that black men could pale from shock.

After the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood was formed and the web page was launched, I received an email in 1999 from a guy who claimed to be the pilot of the H-46 I saw land and takeoff. He wanted to know what was going on that day. I was amazed. After 20 plus years I told him the story of the sapper attack and asked if he had dropped off any Marines. He said no. They had no idea of what was going on and they were on a routine mission and did not understand what the tower was trying to tell them and they returned to Nam Phong.



Coast Guard from Page 1

Guard for a new consolidated CG Area command—two star admiral and all (post note: I think the Coast Guard left the island in 1997 or so, and returned it to Staten Island in a cost cutting move.). So I was on a “hot” Coast Guard project and living it up at an Army base. Also put me within striking distance of Quincy, Massachusetts—my home town. After a few trips home, my sister set me up. An invitation to a party. A new girl to meet ... and we have been married for 36 years now.

My wife and I were married on Governors Island on April 30, 1966—the Saturday after I put the locks on four trailers for shipment to DaNang. The first Coast Guard wedding on Governors Island.

A fast honeymoon and then I went to Washington, DC for language school. By the time that the crews for four Loran stations, plus the Section Commander’s staff, assembled at Berlitz for language training, a wrinkle surfaced. It was rumored that the site at DaNang had been leveled by the VC; and the Coast Guard was not planning on putting fiberglass trailers out for target practice. So I found myself learning Thai. It was only a week, but it was 12 hours a day and we learned fast. Then it was time to head for the Far East. Another wrinkle; adding 10 inch high metal skids to the trailers made them too tall to fly in a C-130. Oops! They went across by ship.

The entire contingent of people flew out of Dulles Airport in Northern Virginia. Commanding officers, executive officers, and all the enlisted ratings were divvied up between aircraft so that if one plane went down, enough knowledgeable people remained to carry out the tasks at each station. There would not be enough time to get a second crew together.

We all arrived safely in Bangkok. I do not think that we spent much more than a few days there. Just long enough to turn in our passports (for “safekeeping”), pick up some baht and head out.

No firm site had been selected for the monitor station at that point. So we headed off, not knowing where we were going. Our orders stated something like “SEA CONSTRUCTION DET” with an APO address. The other three units knew where they were headed. Lampang, near Chiang Mai; Sattahip; and Con Son Island, RVN. People assigned to the monitor station were split up to help construct the other three stations. This was my

Continued next page

second tour with that vintage Loran equipment suite, so I went to Sattahip to help a new guy. The Section Commander's staff took up housekeeping in Bangkok. Their families arrived later, I think. What did the staff do? They were our operational and administrative commander—and the link to the outside world.

During July 1966, I was with the crew at Sattahip tending to little details like installing 23 ft x 8 ft x 8 ft Loran transmitters inside prefab buildings. Putting the transmitters together was just like building a modular home - plumbing and all! The water-cooled power amplifier tubes - eight I think, generated 400 kilowatt Loran-C pulses. One of the stations might have been a Megawatt transmitter, the master station was usually a high power unit. We also got to watch the civilian tower crews put up 625 ft transmitting towers—one pipe at a time. And learned to live in hootches with snakes and lizards and rats and bugs.

The resident Coast Guard civil engineer (Sattahip) was a LT(jg) Pulley. He teamed up with the resident Army property guy and had a house built in downtown Sattahip (Right down the street from “The House of Blue Lights #1, The House of Blue Lights #2, The House of Blue Lights #3, etc.). I think that they each spent about \$600 for the construction. It had two floors, electricity and a semi-western style bathroom. I got the spare bedroom for the rest of my month there. Most of the crew stayed at the RTAFB at Utapao. The hootches at Utapao were built on 3 ft supports, but the snakes and lizards still made their way inside. One of the snakes, a baby cobra ended up in a jar at the AF Dispensary that month. I remember the excitement as the story spread and the snake got bigger. We never saw snakes on weather patrol in the North Atlantic!

Funny thing. In order to save time and get the transmitters up and running quicker, the transmitter tubes had been “baked in” stateside. That is, they were installed in operating transmitters and run with filament voltage applied for 48 -72 hours to “season” the filaments. This enabled the end user to install them and apply full power right away. Unfortunately, this made the filaments quite brittle and great care had to be exercised in transporting said tubes. They were not little ones either. With the plate cooling stub, each one looked like a small prop pitch motor - about Cessna engine size or so. Anyway, the first shipment arrived for installation at Sattahip and the Construction Lead from Chicago Bridge and Iron drove in to pick them up at the airport. Now this fellow was a hard driving, tough guy; ready to have a drink or a fight, or a road race, at the drop of a hat. So he got stuck with veeerrrrrry gently and slowly (less than 5 mph) driving the tubes back to the transmitter site. By the time that he arrived, his forearm muscles were all bunched up and his jaws were clenched and twitching! After we unloaded the tubes safely and got them inside, he hopped back in the pickup truck and left in a cloud of dust. It looked like a whirlwind as he tried to do wheelies and spin doughnuts in the construction patch. What a show! The tubes made it safely, though. After that, the replacement tubes were shipped out “virgin” and had to be baked in on site. It was not the CBI show that changed things, it was just common sense to ship them when they could take the shock and vibration associated with normal transport modes. Other lessons were learned along the way that made life

easier for someone later on.

Coast Guard Captain Thomas R. Sargeant was the Tight Reign Project Lead during the pre-construction and construction phase. He was responsible for everything, including land purchases, setting up liaison threads and whatever it took to get the system in country. As I understand it, he and his staff guys negotiated the purchase or lease of land adjacent to the RTAFB at Udorn for use as a Loran-C Monitor site (with a black bag full of US dollars – cash on the spot). This after the engineers back at CG Headquarters had crunched the numbers for that site and others. From a strictly technical point of view, DaNang would have been the best location for system area monitoring, and control of the Loran-C chain synchronization to maintain accuracy. But Udorn was good enough. So, one day in very early August, those of us at Sattahip, bound for Udorn, found our way to Utapao and the USAF passenger terminal. Since our orders were all verbal at that point, I had to wing it with the folks behind the counter. The radio dispatch said “get here quick.” To me, that meant Priority 1. So that is what I told the AF types. I found out later that four Colonels had been bumped to make room for us “Priority 1” guys.

Actually, I think it was August 4th - the Coast Guard's birthday, when we arrived at Udorn. Right during the summer monsoon season and with Udorn rapidly flooding out. The running joke was that we were there for flood relief. Once again. Construction, but this time it was easier, since it involved leveling a site, pouring some trailer pads and installing three whip antennas for our Loran-C timer-synchronizers and the communications equipment. We had a 100 meter by 100 meter square plot of mud wrapped up in a ten-strand barbed wire fence with trailer pads and a gravel driveway. The only people aware of what we were there for, at that point, were the colonel at 7/13 Communications-Electronics and the Wing Commander. As far as most other people were concerned, we were just another tenant command. Not really. Although we lived in transient hootches and used the messing facilities and clubs, our unit was physically outside the base and its defense perimeter. A point not missed when we started figuring out how close to trouble we might be.

Trying to maintain our command cohesiveness and still blend into the community took some doing. At first, the Air Force was not interested in keeping our crew together. Our people were scattered among the hootches willy nilly, based on the availability of empty bunks and some invisible “system” that we did not understand. Our new commanding officer, LT Jim Mueller, and I were lucky enough to get adjoining space in a transient hootch, along with the on-site Red Cross rep and some guys waiting to rotate home. The hootch was not bad: screened in with collapsing duck-board sides to keep out the dust, if it was possible to stand the heat. At some point we got a tin roof. The lizards and rats still got in, but I never saw any snakes in the hootch. There were enough outside, though.

No one should ever underestimate the entrepreneurial spirit of the average Coastie. Not too long after we arrived, and while our crew was spread out sufficiently to make loose ends inevitable, the military police raided one of the brothels in downtown

see **Coast Guard** on Page 6

President's Column

I am pleased to announce the results of the board of directors election at the annual meeting on July 13th, at Manassas, Virginia. All incumbents were reelected at this meeting with the exception of member-at-large Larry Hughes, who is making some big changes in his life and needed a break. Filling that position, I am pleased to report, is Californian Hap Wyman, who has served previously as Membership Committee chairman and is the first official most new members make contact with. We are delighted to add Hap, who will have the Western Region members as "constituents." Hap has never been shy about giving advice, though sometimes the forest fire season and the motorhome business interfere with TLCB business. His no-nonsense wisdom will be a great help on the board.



Hap, of Hemet



"Gerry, what you need is a GPS!"

If you look at the History Committee Page you will find Gerry Frazier's greeting as your new committee chairman. Gerry and I both thank Ed Ulrich for his service in that job, and for his willingness to continue working on the surveys to which so many members have responded.

The photo shows Gerry at the reunion, late Friday night, after he and fellow reunion official Dave MacDonald, along with member John Duffin, got left behind by one of our buses. This was quite a joke at the time, but for all who were there, I have learned that they got left because they were checking all the possible stopping places for stragglers, since the bus company turned out to be very unpredictable about following orders from us. They did this on foot, and got left to ride METRO for their trouble. In the photo, Mac (Thompson), from Bangkok, is offering Gerry his keychain compass, which he referred to as a "GPS."

Between now and the next issue the Assistance Committee will be doing some really dramatic things in Nakhon Phanom province, including donations of materials and sponsorship of two doctors. I'm sure MEM will tell us all about it in December. This will be happening during the October 1-4 celebration of NKP Days, following the Bangkok "Back to Thailand" celebration of units and organizations in September. At the same

time there will be a ceremony to declare the commencement of the Thai/American monument we have committed to design and fund (by collecting donations; not from dues). These are exciting developments, and there will be a group of very lucky people in Nakhon Phanom to take part. I wish I could be one of them! If you can make it—*do it!*

Bill Tilton

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Udorn. Two Caucasian males (Coast Guard), dressed only in towels, came downstairs to find out what was the problem. When queried as to their status, they responded that "we live here." Oops! After that, we were able to obtain use of a squadron hootch to berth ALL of our crew members. With a three-watch section schedule 0800-1600, 1600-2400, 0000 - 0800, it had been tough to keep tabs on folks. And we had not even been declared operational yet!

The months of August and September were spent getting equipment on the air and operational. As the kinks got worked out and the full Loran-C chain came "on air", we encountered local interference from the Air America radio beacon service down the road. Then, when we cleared that up, we found the Navy low frequency Morse transmissions from Japan were killing us for synchronization. As each problem got identified and solved, life became a little easier. And we got closer to real operations. We were declared operational in October 1966. Then it was a matter of keeping signals on the air and in synchronization around the clock - to tolerances tighter than anywhere else in the world, at that time.

Loran-C is a hyperbolic navigation system. The time difference in arrival of pulses from two different stations describes a hyperbole between the two stations. So, as the time difference increases from one station to the second, a whole series of hyperboles is generated. Add a third station to the mix and designate one as a Master (now called Primary) with the other two called Slaves (now called secondaries) and you have the ability to generate hyperbolic lines of position (LOPs) that cross each other. These permit someone to fix his position relative to known geographic characteristics (e.g., Haiphong Harbor). Back in the old days, it took three LOPs to make a legal position fix. Nowadays, two will do. The Coast Guard added a fourth Loran-C transmitting station at Tan My, RVN during a later project. That provided the third LOP and increased the accuracy even more.

Loran-C was a Low Frequency Radio Navigation system (100 kHz) and it was subject to atmospheric distortion, reflections, refracted waves, sky wave encroachment and everything bad that happens to radio waves. Our signals were sent from three different sources not necessarily solidly synchronized. Each station had its own frequency standards (atomic clocks) during those days. Still do, but they use cesium beam clocks now. Nonetheless, errors in synch creep in.

Our job at Udorn was to monitor the two time differences calculated to be at our antenna position and direct the transmitting stations to make very small changes in timing to maintain those time differences 24 hours a day. During operations that required special attention, we maintained better than 200 foot navigational accuracy within "the area of interest". Without getting specific, it was on the order of fractions of a microsecond in time. Nanoseconds, even. We were able to convert the time measurement to electro-mechanical stripchart recorders that could spread out a single microsecond of time over a ten inch chart. So "eyeballing" a timing change was pretty simple - tedious, but simple.

Throughout the early months at Udorn, I slowly adapted

to the constant thunder of RF-4's and RF-101s hurtling down the runways. I saw F-104's and marveled at how a pilot could climb up, strap a jet engine on his butt and leap off into space. Or so it seemed. The Spads hardly made a dent in my ear drums, although they were active all the time as well. I was really curious about T-28s with Asian pilots in front with obviously Caucasian faces in back. Especially when I noticed that most of the planes had removable "license plates." And one of them with a tail number that I had seen in a Newsweek article, about a so-called "Secret War" in Southeast Asia, before leaving the States for SEA. Jolly Green helicopters, Pony Express and Pedro were all represented, and one helicopter model that reminded me of the old HO-4S that the Coast Guard flew up until the early 60's. Kinda looked like a guppy. Watched them while they were apparently training or practicing flight events - like auto-rotation from "too high for Whittum" in the sky to a bouncy landing on the laterite. Picture taking along the flight line was a "No-No" back then, so I missed a lot of opportunities for some neat photos.

And Petula Clark! Thanks to the foresight of some RF-4 pilots, we had the Alconbury (England) Officers Club jukebox at Udorn. Seems that when the squadron deployed from Alconbury, they collected some "extra stuff" to make life easier in the wilds of Northeast Thailand. And yes, I remember Suzie and Dang.

So that is what it was like in the Summer of '66.



MEM Interview: Preston Bridgewater, USAF Huey Pilot

Preston Bridgewater was in the 606th Air Commando Squadron at NKP, flying UH-1F Hueys. The 606th was officially activated by President Lyndon Johnson in the Spring of 1966 to help the Thai Army by transporting them while their Huey pilots got trained in the "F" model. The squadron had about 50 pilots, flying "slicks" that came out of SAC, where they were used to travel out to remote missile silos in Arkansas. Thus it was they were called slicks: no weapons and no self-sealing fuel tanks.

The humanitarian mission soon expanded. For instance, once there was a firefight about 20 miles south of NKP [Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai AFB]. Says Preston: "We were sent to carry Thai soldiers in to surround some CTs who occupied an island. They called for air support from the Thai Air Force, but weather kept them on the ground at Ubon that night. All night a C-123 from our unit dropped flares, which was a beautiful sight. After daylight the Thai T-28s showed up and attacked the island; then the troops went in, but all they found was a dead farmer. Then the villagers scavenged the site for metal scraps from napalm canisters, to use in making ashtrays."

MEM: Did you ever fly outside of Thailand?

PB: Once in a while we did. Once I even flew as cover on a rescue mission into North Vietnam. I was assigned to fly high cover for a H-3 "Jolly Green," sent in to pick up a downed fighter pilot. Our own fighter cover, A-1s called "Sandy," flew down to cover the rescue, which was successful. But it sure got lonely up there at 8000 feet! We

Preston Bridgewater on page 12

How Intel On Laos Was Handled at PACAF HQ

By Mike Vale

Some of us never served in Southeast Asia but had unusual perspectives regarding the events in that theater of operations. My areas of expertise were photo interpretation and intelligence analysis. Laos was the country that I worked with. I was assigned to the Director of Targets, Deputy Chief of Staff/ Intelligence, Headquarters PACAF, Hickam AFB, Hawaii. My involvement with events in Laos ran from January 1966 until December 1968. I would like to show how our intelligence was gathered and what the information was used for from the perspective of a 21 year old E-4.

The primary function of the Laos Section was to report activity on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The other mission was to report on all USAF activities within Laos. The team was made up of two analysts, a supervisor and a captain. The Vietnam areas had teams with slightly different objectives. The final focus of our efforts were the daily PACAF briefing, weekly briefings and the bimonthly CINCPAC Rolling Thunder briefing. It would be easier to go through the routine of my day to make it easier to see what we did and how we did it.

My day began at 4 a.m. with a visit to the PACAF Command Center. There I picked up the sortie information from the previous day and other reports that had come in overnight. This is some of the raw data that will be used for the morning briefing. Then I went to the weather room to see what the type of weather Laos was having. All of this raw data was taken across the street to the 548th Recon Tech Group where I worked. The actual room is hangar sized with high partitions separating the different offices. The first order of business was to review what air activity went on in Laos. Every sheet contains information on a group of planes over Laos. Call sign, type of aircraft, weapons, target info, bomb damage, trucks sighted, and FAC information was all neatly on one sheet of paper. Other sheets contained contact information from the flare aircraft and Starlight Scope information.

The truck traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail took the most time. It had to be decided how many trucks were in use and how many were attacked and destroyed. We had developed a system of tracking convoys. It was not perfect but it was all that we had. We had to decide if flight "A" had bombed the same convoy of 10 trucks that flight "B" did two hours earlier. And was this convoy the same one sighted by Starlight Scope and called in? So instead of 30 trucks in one area there might be only 10. This information was added to our traffic file and used in other other briefings and reports. We were never given reports of other reporting bodies to compare the intelligence that we had generated. As far as we were concerned we were the only people doing this type of truck counting.

The other huge variable in counting truck traffic was the use of Laotian road watch teams. These brave people were assigned sections of road and reported vehicle activity. The brass seemed fascinated by the thought of what these people were doing. We had slides showing the approximate location of the teams that were used for briefings. We had access to top secret information

showing their exact location and we were usually able to track their location on maps and by using recon photos. This was for our own use and we never published what we knew. We used the exact team location to keep track of traffic.

The next subject was to try to get a feel regarding the intensity of Air Force action over Laos. What kinds of targets were being bombed? Were any new truck parks found?

Arclight or B52 strikes were always high on the list. How much AAA was near valuable targets? The briefing officer would use this type of information. We felt that it was our duty to insure that Captain Lawrence Luken was totally prepared for any question asked. By this time the Laos team was beginning to prepare for the morning briefing. The supervisor and officer had come in and we finalized our intelligence information. We completed the special projects from the previous afternoon that will be explained in the following paragraph. The captain left for PACAF Headquarters across the street and I went to breakfast.

The air war over Laos was to us a slow motion war. The sortie information was very impersonal. And the film was always a couple of days old. One thing that stands out in my mind after all of these years was the intensity and amount of effort used when a fighter was shot down. It was as we were reading a story by filling in the blanks. We never knew the whole story. The next day everything started fresh with new sorties and new trucks to count.

The second half of the day was totally different regarding intensity. Our focus went to photo interpretation. The two interpreters each had a section of Laos as their special area of expertise. Mine was northern Laos and Ban Laboy Ford. I had been involved with the ford since April 1966. This was my first assigned project in Hawaii and I kept files of photos over the years as it was turned into one large bomb crater. My focus was to review film and to prepare slides that would be of interest at briefings and to back up intelligence being presented. For example, if an Arclight attack was planned we would produce slides of the target area just before the B52s made their attack then just after produce more slides with our assessment of damage. Another function was to produce slides of targets or areas that would be of interest to people being briefed. An example was the Commando Lava program in which a section of road was treated with chemicals in the hope of melting or destroying the road without much success. We used Air Force aerial photography and later the navy provided film.

One thing that should be mentioned is that northern Laos is a beautiful rugged area from the air. One of my favorite things to do was look for photos of planes taken by the RF4Cs. Once in a while a lone FAC would come across my light table. I would plot his location and wonder what he was up to. On a rare occasion I could see a truck park in the process of being attacked. This put things into perspective. At 1230 my day was over.

Intelligence is a field where one cannot take the job home with you. When the day was over anything that you did that

Photo Interpreter on page 9

History Committee Page: A Word From Our New Chairman

For you I have not met, let me introduce myself. My name is Gerry Frazier. Earlier this summer, when Ed Ulrich announced that he was unable to continue in the position of TLC Brotherhood Historian, President Bill Tilton asked me to take the job. Suffering from heat, dehydration, and generally poor judgment, I accepted. Bill announced my appointment at the Reunion General Meeting in July.

The truth is, I'm no historian, but I'm still interested in figuring out how we got involved in SEA, what we did, why we did it, and what happened to everybody afterwards. I don't know about you, but while I was in SEA, I stayed too busy to give history much thought, but I didn't ignore it. I read what I needed to, to do my job as an intelligence officer. I talked to people, I wrote daily reports, read the Bangkok Post, occasionally the Far Eastern Economic Review, (and a few less noteworthy publications) and I listened to what people had to say. Our history happened while we were working.

I do not have a "program" drafted yet for TLC history. If you have thoughts about it, I would like to hear them. Ed Ulrich is still involved, compiling the results of surveys many of you completed, and when he finishes, I will pass along any significant results.

You can contact me by email at gfrazier@gisystems.net.

Recently, Bill Tilton loaned me a piece of history he owns. It is a WWII Army Air Force Evasion Chart, produced in 1943. The material is machine-woven white silk. Silk was used for wet/dry durability. It could be sewn into the lining of a flight jacket, and removed if needed. It was quiet when handled and easy to conceal. The map scale (both sides) is 1:2,000,000. It gives good area coverage, but lacks the terrain detail to be very useful for land navigation. In ocean areas, the prevailing winds

and major currents are shown, and there is a detailed compass rose. The high quality, color printing is all in English. There are no Thai, Lao, or other languages useful in getting navigation help.

On one side is printed "No.33, Central China". The area we knew as North Vietnam is on the Central China map. The western edge of this map cuts off east of Dien Bien Phu. To the east, the map shows northern Hainan Island and the north Gulf of Tonkin.

On the reverse side is "No.32, French Indo China," which covers most of the TLC area.

This map shows eastern Thailand and French Indochina, without the borders that later separated Laos and Cambodia from North and South Vietnam. The lay of the land is very familiar. The few terrain features shown are fairly accurate. For example, the lake at Sakhon Nakhon, a single peak representing the Phu Phan Mountains south of the lake, the curves of the Mekong, and the railroads from Bangkok to Udorn, and Ubon, are depicted. Most of the place names are recognizable, but a few are not. For example, where I would expect to find the city of Udorn, I see "Ban Mak Khaeng." Nong Khai and Vientiane lay to the north, and the rail line runs south, so I'm pretty certain it's Udorn. NKP and Ubon are clearly shown, while Takhli and Utapao/Sattahip are not, and Korat is "Nakhon Ratsima."

Evasion charts in the Vietnam War were made of plastic. Plastic was water and wind-proof. The scale was 1:1,000,000, so it was slightly more useful for land navigation; a few more features were shown. However, when warm, the plastic tended to stretch; when cold it could crack. And it was expensive to produce. Evasion charts today (Yes, we still make them) are printed on an unwoven synthetic fiber similar to the Tyvek

wrap used on new homes. The material is nearly waterproof, quiet when handled, makes a fair wind-breaker, and is printed in subdued earth tones on all margins, both sides, as camouflage. In the margins, the new maps show pictures of edible and dangerous plants and animals, and list navigation tips and cultural advice for the region. The scale today is typically 1:500,000. Better, but still not a hikers map.

Bill's WWII Evasion Chart is an interesting artifact, showing much in common with those we used 20 years later, and some distinct differences. Given the choice, however, I'd pick a new one. We have learned a lot about Evasion Charts over five decades.



day stayed in the building. We knew very little about the other functions within the group. There was a Vietnam team across the hall that did basically the same functions as the Laos team. We shared information with them because much of the photo recon missions were flown over both Laos and Vietnam. We viewed with interest the film showing North Vietnam but just as professional curiosity. Our business, especially at the lower levels is very fragmented with each group providing one piece of the puzzle.

Twice a month the "Rolling Thunder" briefing was held for the Commander in Chief, Pacific. This was a briefing reporting on the air campaign in Vietnam and Laos. All services were represented. Everybody of any importance attended this briefing. The Laos team provided our truck counts and large slides with written data showing intelligence of interest. Ban Laboy Ford usually had a slide. We were very proud of our efforts and knew that we were correct in our analysis. Another time we worked for days to prepare a briefing for the President. Again we never saw the completed puzzle but did the best work possible.

My involvement in the attack on LS85 was mostly back-

ground work.. The photo interpreters from all teams were picked up late one evening in staff cars and taken to work.. There was not time to change into uniforms. The off duty clothing was usually brightly flowered shorts and shirts. When we went into the building there were about 15 men with visitor security passes poring over maps. We were told about what was happening in Laos and that we were in for a long night.

The first order of business was to find the latest film of LS85. There were large overlays with recon mission photo runs laid out. This was done by a different section within the group. Since I had daily access to the Pacaf command center and had my headquarters access pass I spent more time bringing the latest information across the street. When the film cans arrived we began reviewing what was available which was not a lot. Men in Hawaiian shirts moved from light table to light table. Each light table was equipped with a microscope on tracks. There were many high ranking officers working that night but because nobody was in uniform we were not intimidated. For days after that we provided the latest photos of LS85 but other areas within PACAF provided most of the information.



SAC Aerial Refueling From Thailand

by Bill Tilton

Aerial refueling has a long history in military aviation, but the first combat use of aerial refueling tankers in the U.S. Air Force did not occur until the 9th of June, 1964. That day eight F-100s were refueled by four KC-135 tankers flying as "Yankee Team," on a retaliatory mission against Pathet Lao in the Plain of Jars. On both the 6th and 7th of June Pathet Lao antiaircraft artillery had shot down U.S. Navy RF-8 reconnaissance planes that were flying over their newly-captured positions. From that day, SAC Southeast Asia combat refueling was to continue almost constantly for nine years and two months, accumulating nearly a million hookups and passing 1.4 billion gallons of fuel. (As it happens, Boeing's nine years of KC-135 deliveries were finally *completed* in 1964).

The political and military situation in Laos was one of the first international problems faced by President John F. Kennedy, and had only grown worse when President Lyndon Johnson took office in November of 1963. Then in May of 1964 the Pathet Lao overran the Plain of Jars and turned their guns on US reconnaissance aircraft that were sent to assist Royal Lao forces in a quiet way. On May 22nd they hit one. Then on the 6th of June, and again on the 7th, Navy RF-8s were shot down. Washington decided to retaliate.

The KC-135s were rapidly replacing SAC's lumbering KC-97s as strategic refuelers (that is, in support of the SIOP, the plan for all-out nuclear war). The new jet tankers could stay with their receivers, which did not have to drop down to lower altitudes and slow down to near-stall speed in order to receive their fuel. But the need to bring these 707-based airframes in to support the growing operations in Southeast Asia was accelerated at least a year sooner than SAC had planned.

Not only was the war expanding, but TAC's obsolete KB-50 tankers were grounded after one crashed while climbing out of Tahkli. Inspection of the fleet revealed corrosion so serious that all Pacific-based '50s were cleared for one flight for disposal at the "Bone Yard," at Davis Monthan AFB, near Tucson. PACAF had to call on SAC.

The first KC-135s stationed in SEA were at Clark AFB, in the Philippines, and they were called the *Yankee Team Tanker Task Force*. This outfit provided 29 refuelings in their first eight days of operations. Then on the 5th of August, 1964, SAC put 48 tankers in the air from Hickam AFB (Hawaii) and Andersen AFB (Guam), to provide 172 refuelings for a TAC trans-Pacific deployment of 84 fighters, including F-100s, F-105s, and RF-101s. In December of '64 Colonel Morgan Tyler, Jr., took a survey team to Thailand and recommended Don Muang, at Bangkok, over Tahkli, as a tanker forward operating base (FOB). Tyler also inspected Kadena AFB, Okinawa, and reported it to be almost ideal for SAC's purposes as the main Pacific tanker base. The 4252nd Strategic Wing (SW) was activated on January 12th, 1965, at Kadena, as part of the 3rd Air Division at Andersen AFB, Guam. Col Tyler was assigned as first commander.

For ten years SAC had based B-47s at Guam, but in 1964 they had been replaced by B-52s. In addition to their SIOP role, Guam-based bombers had a little-known conventional bombing contingency plan which was to become famous, code-named "Arc Light." Colonel Tyler was in Omaha processing his PCS to his new command when the wing discovered it was a part of Arc Light (which they had never heard of). Without preparing the Kadena wing, SAC executed the Arc Light plan and dis-

see **Young Tiger**, continued on page 10

Young Tiger, continued from page 9

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see Young Tiger, continued on page 12

A Monument in Thailand

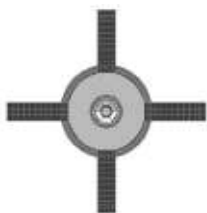
The work of our Monument Committee, under Nick Hoffman, is proceeding carefully but productively. Depicted here is the current leading candidate for the overall design, though various tasteful decorations are being considered. The side view does not depict the full width of the construction, which is about 55 feet for this concept. An overhead view, showing the lead-up steps, is shown below, left. CAD diagrams are by Chris Jeppeson, who is working with Jim Henthorn, Floyd McGurk, and Bill Person on the design team. You’ll hear about the other teams as they progress.

At right is a plan of Elephant Head Lagoon Park (in Nakhon Phanom city) which is dedicated to this monument. The plot allocated to TLC Brotherhood for the monument is on the right side of this lagoon, which has been a fresh-water catchment area for many years. Overall, the park covers about 7.5 acres.

Construction details for the monument are still being considered. As soon as the committee presents a proposed design to the board of directors, and it is duly adopted, the engineering, bid, and fund-raising phases can commence. Floyd McGurk has prepared a phased development plan for the committee.

During the “NKP Days” celebration, October 1-4, the governor of Nakhon Phanom Province, and TLCB Vice President John Sweet will go

to the future monument site and declare its dedication to friendship and as a memorial to the fallen of both Thailand and the USA. But we believe that the monument could become a destination for all veterans of the war in Southeast Asia, there being no other such symbol in that part of the world to our knowledge.



Reunion 2002: What We Remember

The 2002 reunion was a significant event for everybody who attended. For some, there were very special moments. Here are a few.

On Friday evening, 12 Jul 02, those of us attending the reunion had just completed placing a floral wreath at the base of the Wall, directly in front of the names of those who perished at LS-85. As my wife and I walked slowly along the walkway in front of the panels I was explaining the practice of making “rubblings” of selected names. Without looking I placed my hand on the Wall to illustrate my point. She suddenly said “Look where your hand is.” My fingers were touching directly beneath the name of Floyd G. Treat. Although no relation there has to be a message in here somewhere when you consider that out of almost 59,000 names on the Wall Floyd is the only Treat.

Dutch Treat

I think the most telling moment for me was Friday night. When the wreath-laying procession came down the walk by The Wall. When the group stopped and turned toward the panel, it seemed as though everyone within sight, all the other visitors, stopped talking. It got very quiet. The stillness seemed to last all through the presentation. It was a peaceful moment in time.

Augie Whittum

I had a big surprise after the banquet. Through Tom Penn’s completely fluent and enthusiastic wife, Phongsee, I was having a conversation with Khun Phumphan, radio personality from Nakhon Phanom and organizer of NKP Days, etc., who was visiting the Penns and some relatives here in the USA. In our conversation he mentioned the alleged home of Ho Chi Minh in the little Vietnamese village next to the lake between the Mekong and NKP airport (and one time RTAFB). I related that I had been fired upon in late 1966 while flying an O-1 over that village. The local spook later told Intel it was a villager who fired a gun at the little gray planes each Thursday. When he heard the translation Phumphan looked shocked for a moment. “Yes,” said Phongsee, “he knows that man! He is well known there! But now he has gone to China to live!” I said to tell him I bear him no grudges, and Gay said to thank him for being so inaccurate.

Bill Tilton

I went to the reunion a bit hesitant, not knowing anyone. When I arrived home in Philly, I knew I had experienced a very special weekend. It was a very emotional trip to the Wall on Friday and Saturday. Also, the trip to the Temple was very rewarding. I made many new friends and I look forward to the 2003 Reunion. Thanks to all who helped organize this event.

John Duffin

During our visit [to the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial] to read the names of those who sacrificed themselves I was approached

by three people who were obviously foreigners once you heard them speak. They asked me a number of questions about what WE were doing (reading the names, placing a wreath) and what the monument signified. They were very impressed with the dignity and reverence being shown by the crowds that passed by in viewing The Wall and told me that directly. Only then did I ask where they were from and I was a bit startled when they told me they were from Israel. Given the degree of sacrifice their own countrymen have made since 1948, I think they have a better perspective on national sacrifice than most Americans have themselves.

Bob Baer

While there, I thought of the loss exactly 36 years ago that month (July 1966) of **Vincent A. Chiarello**, my USAF partner whose name is on panel 9 East, line 85—as well as all our other fallen colleagues, friends and relatives. The words that came to mind were those of the American poet, Archibald MacLeish, who wrote the following poem, which he entitled “*The Young Dead Soldiers*.”

The young dead soldiers do not speak.
Nevertheless, they are heard in the still houses: who has
not heard them?
They have a silence that speaks for them at night and
when the clock counts.
They say: We were young. We have died. Remember us.
They say: We have done what we could but until it is
finished it is not done.
They say: We have given our lives but until it is finished
no one can know what our lives gave.
They say: Our deaths are not ours; they are yours; they
will mean what you make of them.
They say: Whether our loves and our deaths were for
peace and a new hope or for nothing we cannot say;
it is you who must say this.
They say: We leave you our deaths. Give them their
meaning.
We were young, they say. We have died. Remember us.

This poem seems particularly appropriate for those who were lost as a result of all the wars in Southeast Asia.

Ira Cooperman

I remember John Loftus striding down the path along the wall with the lasered-in photos of troops and planes at the Korean War Memorial, calling out the identities of each of the difficult-to-see aircraft, without missing a beat.

Dave MacDonald

Young Tiger from page 10

contingency plan which was to become famous, code-named "Arc Light." Colonel Tyler was in Omaha processing his PCS to his new command when the wing discovered it was a part of Arc Light (which they had never heard of). Without preparing the Kadena wing, SAC executed the Arc Light plan and dispatched 30 tankers from the force to the tiny new outfit. (The chaotic and disastrous first days of Arc Light refuelings were described in the March, 2002, issue of MEM.)

Meanwhile, Don Muang (Bangkok's airport and a Royal Thai AFB already) had been chosen over Takhli as the tanker forward operating base (FOB), out of Kadena. The main reason for this choice was fuel-handling capacity, but the Thai government was not fond of the very visible operational presence there and required a ceiling on the number of tankers that could be stationed at Don Muang. The day Arc Light was activated the 4252nd's new chief of maintenance was in Thailand trying to set the FOB up to support fighters operating in Vietnam.

Next: *SAC as Bully, and Young Tiger moves to U'Tapao*, in a future issue of MEM.

Preston Bridgewater from page 6

weren't used to flying with all that air under us."

MEM: Were there other out-of-Thailand missions?

PB: When the Mekong flooded Thailand and Laos there was lots of humanitarian support to Laotians, carrying rice and safe water to them. We even got sent into Laos with road teams, who were sent in to observe activity on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. After seven days we went back to pick them up at pre-planned locations, carefully avoiding areas of enemy opposition.

MEM: Did you enjoy your tour?

PB: I loved my tour of duty in Thailand. The people were great and the country was beautiful. Of course the mission changed a little from what we were told. The most fun was

our mission to Bangkok to support President Lyndon Johnson's trip to SEA late in 1966. But my most rewarding, most memorable civic action mission was when a little boy had his arm crushed by a truck wreck. For lieutenant Daniels and me it was our first night mission, about 50 miles West of NKP. You can't believe how dark it was there, once you left the bright runway lights. We had both forgotten to turn on our instrument lighting, since we never flew at night! I pressed my nose against the attitude indicator and called for Daniels to turn up the night lights. They turned on truck lights around a field so we could see to land. We picked up the boy and his father and flew them to Korat AFB, where they treated the boy. A week later we flew them home. It was quite a reception! The villagers were so nice, giving us great food, gifts, and many expressions of gratitude. I really felt good being in a position to help!

MEM: We heard your unit flew the first night rescue.

PB: Yes, our squadron got called in to rescue two Navy pilots one night. It was successful, but one of the pilots got caught in a tree while he was being extracted and they lost contact. At daylight they tried to find him, but never could.

MEM: You mentioned an A-26 pilot called the Red Baron. Many of our readers will know this to be Joe Kittinger, the Project Eagle operations officer, who led the squadron across the Pacific and incidentally holds some spectacular records he set in 1960 for highest ascent in a balloon, longest free fall, and highest speed attained by a human outside of a cockpit. Tell us your contact with the legendary Joe.

PB: He was a character! He had a red beard and wore a white scarf. One evening some of us were having supper with him. Somebody suggested we fill his bomb bay with garbage, so we did! Intel pictures next day showed the garbage strewn on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and somebody wrote 'litterbug' on the picture.

MEM: He still *is* a character!



Huey Drivers, Air Force and Army Style



Preston Bridgewater on humanitarian mission out of Nakhon Phanom, 1966. Shown carrying a bag of rice during a relief mission.



"Mekong Jim" Michener reading a map in Vietnam by his steed and his sleeping quarters, 1967. Cross-training from intelligence, he had the highest clearance in his unit, which resulted in his being assigned full-time to a Korean general. Jim had some very interesting jobs after that, and now lives at Vila Dara, in Vientiane, Laos. We have enjoyed some of his superb writing, and look forward to more.