



# Mekong Express Mail

Volume 3, Issue 4

The Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

## NKP DAYS—A Great Success !

*John Oles, adjutant of VFW Post 10249 in Udorn, sent us his impressions of the monument ceremony. John spent 26 years in the Air Force as a Chinese linguist; was at NKP 1971-1973.*

The convoy finally left the hotel at 7:50-ish after the former governor of NKP [Nakhon Phanom province] arrived with his wife and entourage. The convoy was led by a police truck with flashing lights, several personal vehicles, and a long line of motor samlors weaving their way through the streets from the hotel to the park on the edge of town. The town was decked out with banners hanging across the streets announcing "American Friendship Day" with an American flag and Thai flag on either side. The hotel even had an American flag flying out front! The park area was set off with several tents, seats for the 9 monks,

join in the ceremony. TV crews were present and a good many interviews took place.

The weather cooperated as the monks went into heavy-

**2003 DUES! See page 5.**

duty chant mode (if you just close your eyes and imagine what the monks are saying and take some deep breaths, it all goes by faster than if you're watching your clock). Clouds kept the morning sun from penetrating the tents almost to the end of the ceremony. After several welcoming speeches by Thai officials, John Sweet, Gen. Aderholt, and Phongsee Penn and further prayers and chants and ringing of the gong by the Brahman priest, the time came to place the two granite markers into the chrome frame prepared for the park. First Gen Aderholt had to hammer in 9 stakes around the frame, place a multitude of gifts for the spirits (food and such) at the foot of the frame, and then finally set in place the pieces of granite announcing the memorial, one in Thai and the other in English.

See Oles, next page.



Granite signs in English and Thai: "Future site of the Southeast Asia Memorial to the Thai, American and Allied Forces. Presented by the Thailand, Lao, Cambodia Brotherhood and Nakhon Phanom Province"

photo: John Oles

and numerous fine looking attendants serving soft drinks, coffee, and water. Once we arrived, city officials, other expats, and a good number of old-timer base workers showed up to

## Doctors Morley and TLCB Bring OmniMed to Rural Thailand

by Mike Morley, M.D.

This past October, TLCB invited OmniMed ( a volunteer, humanitarian organization, like TLCB, which works on international medical projects) to spend a week in Nakhon Phanom (NKP) to determine the feasibility of establishing a medical assistance project in Ampure Muang.

The OmniMed volunteers were overwhelmed by the friendliness and dedication of both the TLCB members and the people of NKP. John Sweet and John Middlewood were instrumental in helping us establish contacts at a variety of levels including the rural health care providers, the NKP Hospital staff, the government health officers, and the governor of the province. These introductions were invaluable.

OmniMed hopes to establish a medical assistance program that brings American physicians to NKP to teach at the District Health Stations and at NKP Hospital. We believe educating the Thai healthcare providers will yield greatest long term benefit. Our goal over the first year is to send 3-4 physicians to Ampure

Muang to teach the local providers in their field of medical specialty. The other goal during this phase of the project is to develop our relationships with the health care providers and understand what is needed to further develop the program. In addition, we will be looking for opportunities with a more tangible effect such as vision screening for the school and a cataract surgery project. During our visit to NKP Hospital, the doctors requested several pieces of medical equipment. This list has been forwarded to John Sweet. During the next year, we will look for additional opportunities to help the physicians at the hospital. Setting up a project like this takes patience, cultural understanding, and a team effort.

Currently we are working on a section for the OmniMed web page [www.omnimed.org](http://www.omnimed.org) explaining the Thailand project, recruiting doctors to participate, and fund raising.



One of the visitors in the group asked me if the ceremony was a touristy sort of display with all the monks and incense, candles, gong bonging etc. Naturally, none of it was. This is the way Thais “bless” a site and appease the spirits and only if the drink attendants had been wearing grass skirts would I have replied “yes.” I’ve been here 6 years and attended numerous functions such as this one (weddings, funerals, home/hospital/bank blessings) and I’m always moved by the chanting and symbolism of what’s going on. Looking around, I sensed the members of the TLC who were visiting were as enthralled as I was.

With the setting of the markers in the frame, the official ceremony came to an end and it was time for “Kodak moments.” Lots of them! I had a ball talking with a number of Thais who used to work on the base—a cashier in the bowling alley (I heard it was he who donated the land to the city for the monument), a bartender in one of the hooch bars, a supply worker, a communications maintenance worker, etc, etc. They all spoke better English than most younger Thais who haven’t had the benefit of working side-by-side with American co-workers on a daily

basis. It’s funny how you can pick these guys out of a crowd—just by the way they speak English. Handshakes, exchanges of business cards, and moments of friendship extended another generation, and the gathering broke up. When I broke out of my meditation-mode and finally looked at my watch, Mickey said it was just 9:30. The sun was just beginning to break out as well—just managing to print some sweat stains on our shirts but not enough to make it uncomfortable.

I don’t know about everyone else, but I was impressed with the turnout (considering this was a groundbreaking) and the kind of ceremony put on for the event. The hard part now is going to be keeping those promises fresh in everyone’s minds and seeing the monument through to the finish. If all goes as well as today’s ceremony, I’d say it’ll be a smooth ride.

*[Note: see many photos of NKP Days, the monument ceremony, school visits, and much more, at the “Assistance” link on TLCB’s website, www.TLC-Brotherhood.org.]*



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## *A Certain Brotherhood Summed Up A Great Truth*

by Tim Eby

*The following is a message posted on the FACNET September 2, 2002, and printed here with Tim’s permission. While Tim is talking about the FACNET, in the opinion of MEM his words express how we feel about TLCB and its servers and this newsletter. In a way it defines the brotherhood we share. We thank Tim for permission to publish it here.*

I have to tell you guys—you’re growing on me! After kind of a rough start, this FACNET and all you participants have become pretty important to me. Not only have I learned a heck of a lot that I didn’t know about our little police action in the 60’s and 70’s, not only is a lot of what you all write highly entertaining and enjoyable, but you have taught me lots of things about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The most important of those lessons is that I’m not crazy after all! Either that, or we’re all crazy together. An awful lot of what you admit, or explain so eloquently, or off-handedly remark about, is exactly what I have felt, or stuffed down, or thought, or experienced, or never admitted for the last 30+ years. For instance I, too, lost interest in hunting after Vietnam. Never really thought about it until you started talking about it, and I realized that there is more than coincidence to the timing of that lost interest. Yet I, too, would blow an intruder away without so much as an elevated heart rate (slight hyperbole for effect).

So many thoughts and emotions that I thought were all mine, alone, that no-one understood, so I just sat on them all these years. And then along come y’all and nail them dead center! Every time. I feel a whole lot better about myself, and not nearly so much like the Lone Ranger with all y’all (plural of y’all) affirming my experiences. I won’t tell you how many times my eyes have misted up reading you guys as you reach into my inner-most parts, where the secrets are.

Jimmie Butler summed up a great truth with the title of his excellent novel, *A Certain Brotherhood*. We all share a bond

that the untested just don’t know. And you have taught me that you crew chiefs, intel guys, radio operators were seeing the elephant right along with us who flew the friendly skies. Being supremely self-absorbed, I never realized that. I thought you just took my helmet and stuff after a mission because that was your job. Didn’t know you detected that another part of my soul had gone MIA on that one. I thought my Steve Canyon poker face was always in place. I’m sorry now that I didn’t look you in the eye and share more of the victories—and defeats—that I now know you were so emotionally involved with. That wouldn’t have been macho, I suppose.

And hand-cranking a Farmall H and turning the flywheel with the petcocks open to reduce the compression on a John Deere, plowing through the night with a two-bottom plow—you guys are great! Nobody else could bring up all those memories!

Besides the few I knew in Vietnam, I have only met FACNET members Charlie Pocock and Joe Sowa in person. But I feel a kinship with the rest of y’all as if we were old time buds from way back. I look forward to meeting a lot of you at the next reunion so I can put a face with a name. Keep those cards and letters coming, you never know who will strike the next chord.

Did I tell you about the time my dad was plowing with the Johnny Popper and a two-bottom plow, saw a rabbit, threw a hammer at it, hit it in the head (rabbit for supper), then promptly plowed under his best hammer...?

Calling in sane, Tim Eby Covey 540



# The Special Listening Mission of Queen Bee Delta

by Bill Person

*Bill got involved in AF intelligence during the Cuban Missile Crisis and never left it.*

In mid February 1965, the White House military planners had already approved the commencement of bombing north of the 1954 U.N. truce line. The bombing was intended as an inducement to encourage the communist leaders in Hanoi to abandon their pursuit of the war in the south.

A project codenamed "Queen Bee Delta" was set up using a specially equipped Lockheed transport aircraft with four propjet engines, dubbed the EC-130BII. A crew of ten highly skilled intelligence professionals operated electronics equipment installed in a secure metal container in the cargo compartment. This cocoon-like container was outfitted with an array of super sophisticated communications equipment that could intercept and record signals from North Vietnamese radios to determine the enemy's air defense capabilities.

By listening in on the North Vietnamese radio transmissions, the U.S. intelligence community could determine if the enemy could detect our planes flying close to and indeed over North Vietnam's air space. Small drones and U-2 spy planes were photographing every square inch of the country in broad daylight while the EC-130BII monitored their reactions. If there had been any serious capabilities to shoot down a drone, the big plane with the "ears" would soon detect it and report it.

Gathering information about a country, its air defense capabilities, passive radars and hostile guns, the most likely targets to bomb and a host of other information is called Intelligence. This tasking of the Queen Bee plane was deemed essential because no non-communist military observer had been up north

of the 17th Parallel since the fall of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. This cease-fire line established by the U.N. was designated as the DMZ, the Demilitarized Zone. U.S. fighter/bombers were going to cut the supply lines of men and materials to the south, and also deliver an ever-increasing punishment to the north. This approach was intended to crater their roads, knock out their bridges and destroy their supplies in a like manner of a giant hand squeezing the neck of a snake. It either stopped wiggling or was crushed to death. To a non-military press, the plan by the Secretary of Defense sounded convincing. Often called "king of the number crunchers" and a man who knew the cost of everything and the value of nothing, McNamara made it look viable on paper and maps.

He was a most convincing speaker and could vocally destroy anyone who was not absolutely precise with his facts. President Johnson liked this characteristic in McNamara and relied upon his judgment. The Secretary of Defense was determined to gather his facts slowly as he began to wage an air war even more slowly. McNamara was absolutely certain that if he proceeded ever so slowly in his bombing objectives, the risk to American



Bill Person, in official mood

Photo: Bill Person

airmen would be lessened. But the scarce amount of wherewithal for North Vietnam to be able to wage a war in the South was in concentrated areas around their port at Haiphong and at Hanoi, not scattered all along routes to South Vietnam as McNamara reasoned. Merchant ships registered to Canada, France and other nations friendly to America, as well as the Soviet Union lay at anchor off the coast. These ships were providing the very life blood to Hanoi to resist our initial bombings that did little real damage. The U.S. State Department did not want to risk offending anyone by bombing close to their ships there at Haiphong. The fighter pilots would laughingly call this the world's first enemy-friendly war.

The targeted areas that were approved by the White House were divided into seven parts. These were called Route Packs or packages for short. Actually, these parcels were targeted sections north of the DMZ and they were numbered Route Package One or RP-1 through RP-6. The lowest numbered Route Pack was RP-1 and it was located at and immediately north of the DMZ. It later became known as the infamous "Tallyho" for fighter pilots

who logged missions there. RP-6 was a zone stretching from Haiphong up to Hanoi. The ensuing numbered Route Packs were parcels of territory in between and the intention was to encourage the enemy to come to the negotiating table through a show of force without directly conducting an all-out frontal assault, total destructive type warfare.

It was in fact a new approach to warfare by slowly inflicting the least amount of injury as a means of demonstrating rather than actual punishing. No U.S. general worth his salt bought this approach while those who did were put in command.

While I was Queen Bee Delta Project Officer, my back-end intercept crew began to monitor Navy's Task Force 77 transmitting launch activities over hand-held radios. I knew that the Russians had ELINT/SIGINT/COMINT fishing trawlers operating nearby and that they would be intercepting vital intelligence about our strike force composition, ordnance and intended targets. I directed my 10-man intercept crew of linguists to record these transmissions and I sent seventeen reels of tapes to the Director of Intelligence to confirm my identification of a

see [Queen Bee Delta](#) next page

major breach of security.

The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and other members of the Pentagon sent a scathing message back, through channels, to say that the only means of getting such information was Queen Bee Delta and that was not my tasked mission. The CNO went on to state that I was neglecting my primary mission by wasting time recording these “friendly transmissions,” and that Navy’s Task Force 77 was not violating any security transmissions. I responded that the tapes had been recorded while en route to DaNang from Bangkok to pick up fighter escort prior to taking position at Yankee Station. I was directed not to do this anymore by the Pentagon. Gen. Blake, Director of the National Security Agency, (NSA) sent me an “Eyes Only” message to keep doing it and to send him the tapes via courier and not to tell anyone. Actually, Blake, as Director of National

Security was the boss over me and the Queen Bee Delta project and as such, should have been the one to make that call, not the Pentagon.

As the war progressed and I was seeing MiGs practicing an intercept technique that I had seen Soviet air defense pilots perform, while I was at Wakkanaï, I sent a special message suggesting top cover for fighter/bomber strike forces for both Air Force and Navy. I was told to let command decisions be made at the appropriate level and keep to my assigned mission, which was intercept and report, leaving the planning to Washington.

After we lost four F-105s to a single MiG that command said the North Vietnamese did not have the capability to do, and the Navy lost four F4s to Chinese MiGs, that changed. This took place on April 3 and 5 of 1965. In a little more than a month, North Vietnam had gone from a near defenseless condition to a level that started to seriously challenge America’s air power. I was concerned that aircraft commanders and Navy ship captains were not cleared to know what the mission was of ships and submarines specially outfitted to intercept foreign communications, knowledge that I considered vital in making decisions for their own safety

I doubt any of the aircraft commanders or their flight crews knew exactly what was taking place in their planes as they flew EC-118s, EC-47s, EC-130s, and EC-135s. Perhaps the SAC crews knew a little more in their RB-47s and RB-57s but I know that neither captains Cmdr. Lloyd Bucher of the Pueblo nor Cmdr. William L. McGonagle of the Liberty knew the extent of their missions.

The intelligence community had a myriad of collection efforts all over SEA and this was fed back to Wheeler AFB, Hawaii in what must have been a river of intelligence. We knew that the world press published everything they could find out about the day-to-day activities of the war and this served as a very good intelligence source to Hanoi. Perhaps because of this, special intelligence and the information picked up by CIA was sent directly through their channels and denied to combat commanders at all levels.

PACAF Security Region had reams of vital intelligence at Wheeler that could have been shared with the Intelligence

Directorate at Hickham but this did not happen. The information went straight to the NSA and the White House. President Johnson and Robert S. McNamara were the ones to review this intelligence and make the major combat decisions.

In January 1968, while flying as a Batcat on an EC-121R over the Laotian panhandle, I detected tanks moving down the Ho Chi Minh Trail on Route 9. I sent a message from Korat to report this, by-passing Task Force Alpha at Nakhon Phanom. The same intelligence office at Hickham where Larry Clum worked replied that Air Force intelligence estimates claimed the Vietnamese had no such tanks. On February 8th, 11 Soviet-built amphibious PT-76 tanks and 400 NVA troops with supporting artillery attacked the Army Special Forces camp at Lang Vei, overrunning it. The term, “tanks in the wire!” was used as U.S.

forces were routed from their base on Route 9.

The Siege began with Tet '68 with the

Rangers at Lang Vei reporting tanks in the wire, overrunning them. Later, it was reported that these were not tanks, merely amphibious PT-76s. I doubt the Rangers could truly appreciate the significant difference when this assault woke them by boring through the protective barbed wire.

I believe that President Johnson and Defense Secretary McNamara did not want the Commanders in the area to have such intelligence for fear that it might leak out to the press. This in turn might, as the Intelligence Community always reasoned, deny us that intercept source in the future. Like the press always knew, to reveal a source denied that and other such sources in the future, so you did not make them public. There was supposedly enough other source intelligence back then: photo-reconnaissance, trail watchers and direct reports from the forward areas.

I can only imagine what the commanders from Hickham, Tan Son Nhut, and Udorn must have thought when they examined the intelligence information they did see and then to have directions from Washington to assign a specific target about which they may not have had any information at their levels. I do not accept the term “we lost that war” but rather we were not allowed to win it and then were ordered out. The Queen Bee Delta project intercepted tapes that we recorded and dropped off at Da Nang for transcription, to be read in Washington. These tapes told us that we could have destroyed North Vietnam’s ability to fight a war in South Vietnam if we had bombed the 92 targets recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in March and April 1965 before the enemy had a chance to prepare for a protracted war.

I recall briefing President Lyndon Baines Johnson in September 1968 about the sensor war. He came to meet me in my small office, sat me in a chair and took one facing me. He grabbed hold of the armrests on my chair and pulled me up close to face him and started asking me questions. He really did not seem interested in what I had to say but kept asking questions that seemed to have no bearing on what we were doing over there. I got the impression he was not interested in being effective, only in us doing what we were directed to do, regardless of the result.



**I do not accept the term “we lost that war” but rather we were not allowed to win it and then were ordered out.**

# President's Report

The board made some important decisions this fall. The most significant is the bylaws update. Please, *please* read this over and vote by mailing the enclosed ballot. Our very tough articles of incorporation require 2/3 of the members to approve a bylaws change—your vote is therefore particularly critical, vital, essential. You will find a short summary of proposed changes, if you would rather not read through the entire document, and all changes are clearly marked for you. *Please*.

Early in 2003, fund-raising for the SEA Monument will commence. Overall design is nearing completion and there is an engraved sign at Elephant Head Lagoon Park in Nakhon Phanom, in Northeast Thailand (shown on page 1).

Membership has now risen over our 2002 target of 400, and the Membership Committee keeps attending veteran's events, sending invitation packages, and locating those who need the fellowship and understanding of this Brotherhood.

This issue is full of Assistance news, but I do want to remind you to consider regular modest donations (see box below for that and other important TLCB addresses). It's painless, it helps us "help the kids," and it can add up to a nice tax deduction!

Communications is trying a bit of color for the first time in this issue, on pages 7 and 8. This does raise our printing costs, but we hope you find the enhanced photos are worth it. Server

changes have been implemented too. The most successful was prohibiting messages to both servers on the same posting, which has noticeably reduced non-Mission postings, most of which are inadvertent. Also, as of January 1<sup>st</sup> users of both servers will have to be members, except for 60-day free trials. (We have had a policy of allowing the Brotherhood server to be open to

anyone who wanted to use it, as a service to the veteran community. The board concluded that the old policy was not serving the intended purpose and was unfair to those who do join the Brotherhood.)



**Back To The Beach!** The March issue will give full details and registration information. For now, be sure and block out October 2-5 for the **2003 Reunion and Annual Meeting**.



**Dues** 2003 dues are still \$25, payable in January at the address shown below. After the end of January, unpaid dues are late. After the end of March we regretfully convert unpaid memberships to inactive status. Remember, \$20 of your dues payment is deemed a donation that is tax-deductible just like Assistance donations (which may be included with dues).

## From the Secretary's Desk

Greetings TLCB Brothers and Sisters. I hope to use this space in our MEM to keep you informed about administrative issues. This will be done by making available to the membership the decisions made by your board. Initially, we discussed posting this information on our Web site but that would not help off-line members. It would be difficult to password-protect the information, which is for TLCB members only. It was decided that after the minutes had been approved, all motions (by number) and a short summary of each would be listed in my column. Be advised that there could be a time delay that could range from 3-6 months from the time when minutes are approved and their being posting in the MEM. If you wish a complete

see **Secretary's Desk**, continued on page 13

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**(reunion registration)**

**TBA-March issue**

# TLCB Assistance Appreciated in Nakhon Phanom Province

by Chairman John Sweet

On October 1, 2002 a large reception was held at Nakhon Phanom airport to greet us as we arrived from Bangkok. There were many Provincial, District and Nakhon Phanom officials and many locals to greet friends not seen in 30 years. The airport reception included a large contingent of Pu-Thai women in tribal costumes; flowers, dancers and a long drum performance, which accompanied the police-escorted motorcade to town. The vehicles included a 1967 Dodge 6-pack van, assigned to NKP in the late 60's and several jeeps maintained in excellent condition since their days at the airbase.

Following check in at the five star River View Hotel, situated on the bank of the mighty Mekong just South of town, all were invited to attend a meeting with Governor Wit where he officially welcomed everyone to Nakhon Phanom.

Discussions were then held between Governor Wit, his wife, officials of Thai Red Cross and provincial customs and health authorities with myself and General Aderholt concerning the plight of the cargo container which had still not cleared customs since arrival in Bangkok more than two months earlier. *[Editor's note: the container finally arrived after John left Thailand. It will be described in a later issue.]*

The Governor's reception dinner was held at the River Beach Restaurant the evening of our arrival. About 75-100 people attended the event. A band resurrected from the 60's and 70's that used to play at the NCO and Officers Clubs on base provided entertainment.

The main focus was dancers from Reyneu Nakorn who provided Pu-Thai tribal culture for the evening. Participants from our group joined in dancing and ceremoniously drinking rice wine with the beautiful Pu-Thai tribal women in their native costume and music from authentic instruments made it a night to remember.

Garbed in traditional attire a formal "Bai Sii Su Kwan" service was conducted to honor us as their guests, while a Brahmin chanted, calling guardian spirits of welcome, good luck, and safe journey. Elegant ladies then tied white strings representing the joining of Thai and American hearts to the wrists of all that attended. The banquet featured cuisine utilizing local produce, fish, and chicken. Especially enjoyed by all was the local wine produced in Nakhon Phanom from berries and herbs. The local chamber of congress presented Gen. Aderholt with a plaque in commemoration of the event.

On October 2, 2002, a large contingent of those attending NKP Days visited the NKP Town Hall, and the Roman Catholic Church at NKP which was re-built in 1970. From there the group proceeded to the two main events of the day; a visit to the old air base and Ho Chi Minh's house at Na Jok Village a few clicks away.

A couple of hours were spent at the base, which included a visit inside the old control tower where we could look out upon runway area. The last of the hootches, which belonged to Invert, have been removed, which still

remained two years ago. The PSP parking area has also now been completely removed and stacked welded together behind the former airport terminal which had previously been the Life Support building in former days. This is the last of the buildings from the former base still in existence.

Those who had not been to the base two years ago were amazed at their inability to ascertain locations of former buildings and the profound changes from the base they remember which today consists only of broken concrete slabs and jungle.

General Aderholt graciously signed the guest book at Uncle Ho Chi Minh's house where Uncle Ho lived from 1923 until 1930. We were all given a warm welcome and provided refreshments. Truly, the hostility of events from many years ago was no longer present.

John Middlewood, while these events were under way, took Doctors Mike & Kathy Morley and Susan, a nurse, on a tour of five district health offices. The director and deputy of public health for the district, members of her staff, and representatives from the Provincial health office accompanied them. The tour was extremely informative for the doctors and as a result several ideas for assistance through OmniMed will be researched and discussed. That evening the district health office hosted a dinner that was one of the highlights of the trip and many good long lasting relationships appear to have been established.

see NKP Days, page 9

General Heinie Aderholt, Nancy Sweet, John Sweet, Dr. Kathy Morley, and Dr. Mike Morley relax after arrival at the River View Hotel to participate in NKP Days. Photo: furnished by John Sweet.



Sign on old station wagon seen in procession during NKP Days. Photo: Phongsee Penn



**Names-Reading at 2002 Reunion (see article, next page)**



Left: TLCB Webmaster Bob Norway reads his list of names with the Washington Monument behind him.



Right: Jim "Dutch" Treat reads names as founder members Dick Anderson and Jim Young wait their turn to read more names.

Reunion Photos: Jimmie Butler

**TLCB Assistance at Udorn, with VFW Post 10249 (see article, page 12)**

Right: TLCB representative in Udorn, Vichit Mingrachata, left, and VFW Post 10249 Commander, Dale Wages, deliver sport equipment to school near Udorn.

Below: school banner greets Udorn VFW/TLCB party.



Photos: John Oles

**NKP Days (see articles, pages 1, 6, and 14)**

Below, left: The NKP Days event and monument "ground breaking" was inspired by provincial radio celebrity, Khun Phumphan, center. Phumphan helped plan all the activities, rallied the local citizens, advised and represented the governor, advertised it and even came to our 2002 Reunion at Manassas, Virginia, to discuss it with the Brotherhood. Shown with Khun Phumphan are the Omnimed husband and wife medical team who came to NKP at their own expense to assess how TLCB/Omnimed can render medical assistance in the area. They are Doctors Kathy and Mike Morley, from the Boston area.



NKP Days visitors were greeted at the airport by many citizens of Nakhon Phanom. The gentlemen shown here were eager to reminisce about the good times at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, where they once worked for the US Air Force.



Photos: Phongsee Penn

Robert Joseph Acalotto\*Thomas Yuji Adachi\*John Quincy Adam\*Michael Thomas Adams\*Russell George Ahrens\*John Scott Albright II\*Donald Deane Aldern\*Richard Kenneth Allee\*Henry Lewis Allen\*Leonard Peter Allen\*Samuel Almendariz\*Robert Wayne Altus\*Charles Richard Anderson\*Denis Leon Anderson\*Wayne Marshall Anderson\*Howard Vincent Andre, Jr\*Richard Duane Appelhans\*Martin Irving Arbeit\*Randolph Jefferson Ard\*Raymond Lee Armentrout\*Steven Ray Armitstead\*John William Armstrong\*Frank Alton Armstrong III\*Clayborn Willis Ashby, Jr\*David William Ayers\*Stephen C Chasin\*Leland Mc Lane Chestnut\*Joseph John Chisko\*Richard Neil Christy II\*David Edward Cinkosky\*Charles Castulo Cisneros\*Henry Patrick Clark\*Cecil Roger Clayton\*Deverton C Cochrane\*Raymond Frank Contino\*Robert Wayne Coons\*Ardie Ray Copas\*Gregory Scott Copenhaver\*Samuel Blackmar Cornelius\*Frank Rodriquez Corona\*Jeremiah Frederick Costello\*Robert Paul Cote\*Lewis Earl Cox\*Jerry Lee Cozad\*William Morris Cozad\*Raymond Jack Crow, Jr\*Carl Wayne Crowe\*James Edward Cummings\*Richard Savage Cunningham\*Thomas Lee Cusson\*Benjamin Byrd Newsom\*John Francis O'Grady\*Robert Joseph Panek\*Gene Thomas Pemberton\*Peter Potter Pitman\*Dean Andrew Pogreba\*Lynn Kesler Powell\*Thomas Edward Reitmann\*Robert Alan Rex\*Karl Wendell Richter\*Donald Myrick Russell\*Steven Roy Sanders\*Robert Harry Schuler\*Vincent Anthony Scungio\*Fred W. Shattuck\*Claude Arnold Silva\*Donald Maurice Singer\*Harold Victor Smith\*Howard Horton Smith\*Martin William Steen\*Robert Allan Stewart\*Charles H. Stone\*John Bernard Sullivan\*John Willard Swanson\*Kenneth Deane Thomas\*Robert E Staley\*Herbert D Stark\*Mark M Steeley\*William D Stepp\*Herbert J Stober\*Charles H Stone\*Edward W Strain\*Floyd Studer\*Richard C Swift\*Miles T Tanimoto\*Charles E Teague\*Calvin B Tibbett\*Thomas H Trebatoski\*Stanley E Truesdale\*Wilburn Fred Vaught\*Roy Walker\*Thomas L Waterman\*David L Weeks\*James R Weisler\*Richard M Welch\*Robert P Weldon\*Joseph G Wilson Iii, Elmer O Wray\*Paul E Yonkie\*and Jack M Youngs

## Reading at the Wall, 2002

*by Jimmie Butler*

On Saturday, 13 July 2002, approximately 30 TLC Brotherhood members returned to The Wall to read more than 1,600 names of Americans who died in Thailand, Laos, or Cambodia, or were shot down in Vietnam while flying missions out of Thailand or Laos. Since the Park Service doesn't allow any "demonstrations" close to The Wall, we set up on the knoll east of The Wall. TLCB members traded off holding each end of the TLCB banner, and the reader stood behind the banner facing The Wall. The other readers and observers stood in an arc around behind the reader. Jimmie H. Butler gave a few words of explanation, then called for a period of silence to begin the reading ceremony.

Starting a little after two p.m. on a mercifully cloudy day, John Sweet and Bob Pruiksma led off with the names of more than 150 F-105 crewmen who died flying out of Korat and Takhli. After their readings, John and Bob deployed closer to The Wall to explain to interested visitors what we were doing.

Each reader read approximately 75 names. Some had requested special groupings to be included in their names. John Loftus reader the names of the twenty men who died in VO-67 aircraft shot down out of NKP. Ira Cooperman read the names of Dogpatch 2's crew, which was shot down over Laos in 1966. Ira had flipped a coin with his best friend to see who got to go on the ill-fated mission. Jim "Dutch" Treat read the nine names of the men who died at Udorn when a battle-damaged F-4 crashed into the AFTN station. Those men are memorialized by VFW

Memorial Post 10249 at Udorn and include among them one of Dutch's roommates.

Among the other readers were Bob Baer, Tom Williams, Margaret Loftus, Bob Norway, Tom Lee, Dick Grimes, Paul Lee, Floyd McGurk, Jim Young, Dick Anderson, Jim Roth, John Duffin, John Bollwerk, Ed Miller, and Gerry Frazier. Among the observers were Tom's wife, Valerie Williams, Barbara Bollwerk, Forrest Williams (in from Post 10249 in Thailand), Ray Harris, and John Schillo, along with some other wives who gathered under a nearby tree.

TLCB President Bill Tilton closed out the readings with names of men who died in Vietnam, including Keith Rohring's brother, Kevin, and the two other Marines who died with him on 27 March 1967. Following the readings, the group lined up for a few moments of silence, then was called to Attention and to Present Arms in a final salute for the day to The Wall and the more than 58,000 Americans it represents.

Following the readings, Tom Williams led the TLCBers on a circuit around the grassy area in front of The Wall. He carried the new TLCB Flag he donated to the Brotherhood. We stopped for pictures at the statue of the three soldiers, then at a few special places along The Wall.

Thanks to all who took part and made this another memorable event of the 2002 TLCB Reunion. We've come to a consensus to make the name reading a part of each TLCB Reunion wherever we gather.



Continued from **NKP Days** on page 6

On October 3, 2002, Mike & Kathy Morley spent the day at Nakhon Phanom Provincial Hospital, touring and working with various physicians there gathering facts for their proposal to OmniMed for a continuous rotational program and conducting eye surgery with Thai doctors.

This was also the morning of the monument dedication. General Aderholt dedicated the monument and spoke of the great strides the Thai people have made urging them to continue moving forward while at the same time remembering those who gave their lives to provide that opportunity.

The monks chanted for a considerable time, with a single long string held between all of their fingers. There were nine monks who each received packages of gifts as part of the ceremonial customs involved with formal dedications. Each monk held about a yard of the string so this was evidently the origin of "the whole nine yards." There was also a spiritual ceremony conducted to appease the spirits and grant peace.

Following the dedication ceremony there was picture taking at the monument, of the group. It was a wonderful experience and very moving to be part of the commencement of the only monument in Southeast Asia dedicated to the American and Thai forces during the Vietnam War. This is another of the achievements of the TLC Brotherhood of which we can all truly be proud.

John Middlewood brought General Aderholt, John Schillo and his wife with Nancy and I to a couple of the schools in the afternoon as they were booked on flights leaving the following morning and not able to stay for the extended school tours the following day.

The schools have various programs underway including raising frogs and fish, making soap, cookies and concrete blocks. These programs provide nutritional substance and generate income for the schools to use for the children. All of us were extremely pleased with the great success of the many projects

Below, Dr. Suwat receives donated eyeglasses brought by John Sweet and delivered by Dr. Mike Morley, right. Photo: John Sweet.



John Middlewood has undertaken with funding from the TLC Brotherhood. All who accompanied us made a commitment to continue support for our TLC Assistance Program in any way possible.

There was a farewell dinner in the evening at Saun Mai Restaurant on the main drag by the Mekong River. There were more than 75 people attending the dinner which was to be initially a gathering of the Americans who came for NKP days to relive memories. The Governor, his staff and many other officials also elected to attend. Many new relationships have been established and much has been accomplished to improve Thai American relations at Nakhon Phanom.

October 4, 2002, Nancy and I, Doctors Morley, and the Governor's wife accompanied by the head of Thai Red Cross visited nine schools with John Middlewood. I invited the Governor's wife and the head of Thai Red Cross to view the TLC in action. The schools we visited had never seen the Governor's wife show an interest before in visiting their schools and were amazed. The receptions at the schools varied from a small group of school staff to over 400 people waiting an hour for us to arrive as we gradually became a bit behind schedule as the day progressed.

As the day unfolded the Governor's wife was noticeably impressed with not only the achievements of the TLC Brotherhood programs so admirably conducted by John Middlewood but with the great warmth of the people within the communities in greeting and interacting with us. Truly, it was a display on both sides of friendship, compassion and equality. By the time the afternoon was drawing to a close the Governor's wife's English was remarkably fluent and it was quite evident from our extended conversations

see **NKP Days** on page 10

Left, Schoolchildren line up to welcome TLC Brotherhood visitors, led by John Middlewood. Photo: John Sweet.



both she and the Director of the Thai Red Cross had become committed friends of the TLC Brotherhood programs.

The TLCB has made great impressions in the relatively short period of time we have been conducting operations at Nakhon Phanom. As a result of all our joint efforts, other government agencies in the area are commencing additional assistance at some of the schools.

On October 8, 2002 Nancy and I accompanied John Middlewood in visiting an additional eight schools which the TLCB is currently aiding. Our reception again was equally exciting, with the students and teachers showing great appreciation for our programs, which will have lasting results within Nakhon Phanom Province.

Being aware of our efforts and success in Laos the Thai Red Cross and government officials requested our assistance in their desire to enhance better relations and cooperation with Takhet in Laos. Of course I agreed to this exciting and most welcome development.

Blueprints were procured on tree location and soil information at the monument site. The Thais are excited about commencing construction immediately, however, which is not realistic. The Thai officials pressing for commencement were informed the Thai Monument Committee must be allowed to work with their American counterparts in submitting suggested changes until all parties agree upon a final design without political pressure to complete the task. I informed them only after following this process would publicity and advertising in the United States commence inflow of funds for construction based on design estimated costs and they should expect it to take probably one to two years for the monument to be built, perhaps longer.

Phumpan stated the Thais would build a scale model of the finished plan and place a sign at the construction site for community involvement.

Doctors Mike and Kathy Morley thoroughly enjoyed their visit and have approval from the OmniMed Board of Directors for their written proposal to enhance the presence of OmniMed in the forthcoming year by the visitation of several specialist and have high hopes for their future involvement within Thailand.

There is an abundance of construction at NKP with many new buildings going up including one with over one hundred shop stalls in a new market center just South of the clock tower along the river almost completed. There are even plans to remove the buildings surrounding the clock tower and extend the river walk all the way to the River View Hotel located about 3/4 of a mile south of town. A local architect and historian Khun Lek, is seeking to retain the buildings in the area of the clock tower along the riverfront as an historical preservation site. However, these buildings were constructed without any local authority and the land was not even purchased so there future is in doubt at this time.

Our current programs and future opportunities for continued success are well founded on the substantial achievements John Middlewood has conducted under the direction of the TLC Brotherhood Assistance Committee. Our only limitation at

this point is the need for increased participation by a greater percentage of the membership in our Assistance Program funding.



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## Return to SEA 2002

by Mac Thompson

An even 200 people signed in for the reunion in Bangkok that was hosted by the Air America alumni there. An additional 232 people signed in for the banquet, including many Thais. Besides a number of TLCB brothers and sisters, led by Vice President John Sweet, there were participants from Air America, American Legion China Post 1, the Air Commando Association, Ravens, Continental Air Services, the US Embassy to Thailand, US Agency for International Development, and others. Prominent among the guests were China Post 1 commander and adjutant Fred Platt, and ACA founder and president BG(ret) "Heinie" Aderholt (who is also a member of TLCB).

When the organizers arrived to make final arrangements at Bangkok's Ambassador Hotel on Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, they found that quite a few people had already arrived. It appears that impromptu partying and greeting of early arrivals continued pretty much through Wednesday. Official partying started at noon Thursday in a lovely hospitality suite that was stocked by Mac Thompson. The suite was in a bright, glass enclosed room with a round bar in the center of the room. Just outside was an aviary with large, tree trunk furniture that added to the atmosphere (and gave the non smokers an escape from the cigar smoke until they finally got the exhaust fans running on Saturday). Mayuree Strouse opened the registration desk and Sunee Thompson and Bob Vaughn opened the bar. It did not take long for the reunion to get into full swing, with meetings and greetings running through Friday and all day Saturday.

On Saturday the Thai participants started showing up in numbers before the banquet. Many of them had not seen each other for nearly thirty years. There was great emotion with these reunions between old friends and co-workers, both Thai and American.

The organizers had planned on having 320 people attend the banquet. Actually, they ran out of name tags, tickets, and patience after 432 and really don't know *how* many attended, but those after #432 got their dinner free! And by the way, the comments about the "hotel" food indicated that it was really top notch. The hotel kitchen managed to have enough food for all, even with the tremendous overage.

Before and after the official part of the banquet, Thai classical dancers entertained the guests. Bill Lair, founder of "Waterpump" in Laos, was the featured speaker, followed by General Pichit Kulavanich, a member of the Thai Privy Council. Heinie Aderholt also made a few comments. Jack Knotts was presented with a photograph of LS20A taken in October 2001. Tom Claytor, who took the picture, made the presentation. (Tom is flying his Cessna 180 round the world).

see **Return to SEA**, continued on page 12

# Unit Mascots

Many units in the TLC had mascots. The most famous, perhaps, was a dog named Roscoe who survived his F-105 pilot owner and earned the run of the entire base at Korat, where there is a marker in his memory today. And there was the giant constrictor that belonged to the SAC maintenance units on the flight line at U'Tapao, where pedestrians had to step over him while he soaked up the heat of the noonday sun. The following stories of two bears are taken from messages that were posted to TLCB's server on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002.

## ***Buffy the Bear Goes to the World***

*By Bob Blough. Bob is a member who was an HH-53 pilot with the 40<sup>th</sup> ARRS (Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron) at Korat in 1974 and 1975.*

In the summer of 75, with the impending closure of NKP (Nakhon Phanom RTAFB) and the uncertain future of the 40<sup>th</sup> ARRS, several of the Jolly pilots undertook a mission to find a suitable retirement home for our mascot. Since Buffy had been raised from a cub in captivity, we knew he couldn't survive in the wild. The St. Louis Zoo, near Air Rescue Headquarters at Scott AFB, Illinois, agreed to take Buffy if we could get him there from Thailand at no cost to the zoo. Somehow, enough money was scrounged to pay a professional live animal collector to transport Buffy to St. Louis. The collector provided a special cage used to transport "dangerous" animals, and Buffy was coaxed into the cage and given a tearful Sawadee. He was then loaded onto a truck for the trip to Bangkok airport.

A few hours later, the truck carrying Buffy returned to NKP. Seems Buffy was tearing apart the special cage. A couple of the pilots took a couple cases of beer to the Security Police and returned with a large dog transport cage. They then took some more beer to the motor pool, and welded reinforcements all over the cage. Buffy was again loaded onto the truck headed for Bangkok.

A few weeks later we got word from friends at Scott that Buffy had successfully passed quarantine, and was safely ensconced in his new home. He was by far the largest Malaysian Sun Bear at the zoo (was it the high-protein dog food or the Budweiser?). The guys at Scott arranged for a plaque to be mounted to the cage, detailing Buffy's service to his adopted country. They also reported that Buffy would run up to greet them when they called his name, but the zoo wouldn't let them inside to wrestle. I don't know how long he survived, but I like to think there are lots of little Buffy Jrs. and Buffettes running around.

## ***Eldridge the Black Panther***

*From a message posted by Rodney Bell, who was an F-4 crew chief in the 432<sup>nd</sup> TFW (TAC Fighter Wing) at Udorn in 1973 and 1974. Rodney is a past chaplain on our board of directors and is an active member of the Assistance Committee.*

One day in his home town of Baton Rouge, Rodney happened to meet a retired colonel who had been a pilot in Rodney's unit, the 13<sup>th</sup> TFS (TAC Fighter Squadron) at Udorn. The colonel told Rodney he had helped raise the famous bear named Eldridge, and later he sent a copy of an article that explained where the bear came from and his ultimate fate.

It seems Eldridge was first found in the wild by Air America pilots in Laos. A CIA pilot was raising him there when he became too much to handle. He was then given to pilots of the 13<sup>th</sup> TFS at Udorn, who let him share their quarters while they built him a hooch all his own.

Rodney saw Eldridge twice on the Udorn flight line, and says he was a beautiful animal. Some of the aircrew members who raised him used to take him around the base on a leash. Says Rodney, "I watched in awe one day at Udorn when he jumped up on the wing of an F-4 with ease. He was so black and shiny. I wanted to go over and give him a big hug, but didn't know how well I would be received. Quite an amazing beast, but tame as a pussy cat!"

In 1973 it was decided to take Eldridge to the states. A permanent home was found for him at the Tucson Zoo, where he was flown in November, 1973. His trip over was monitored by members of the 13TFS. Once in the states he had continued visits by Captain Dana Drenkowski up until two days before he died. Eldridge had a good life at Tucson, and passed away in 1993 of liver and kidney failure.



## History Committee Corner

*Gerry Frazier, Chairman*

I want to acknowledge receipt of an interesting contribution to the History committee from Mr. Ed White, a member of the Brotherhood from Saugus, Mass. Mr. White participated in refugee assistance, relocation, and settlement activities for Lao, Hmong, Mien, and Khmer refugees, many of whom have resettled in the US.

Ed White's note reminded me of something many members may not be aware of—that some of the hill tribes in Laos still had no written language at the time of the French departure from Indochina. When the US became involved in providing assistance to the people of Laos, the need for school textbooks in the native languages was recognized by, among others, the legendary Edgar "Pop" Buell. We will not recount the history of Pop Buell at this time—there are members of the Brotherhood who were personally acquainted with him, and others, like me, who knew him only by reputation. If you want to single out one individual in the history of US involvement in the war in Indochina who comes across as one of the "Good Guys", Pop Buell is your man. If you want to know more about his activities in education, feeding isolated populations unable to grow their own food due to the war, and moving large groups of refugees out of harm's way, as much as possible, try to find a copy of the book "Mr. Pop", by Don A. Schanche (1970, the David McKay Company, Inc. New York), or visit the Edgar Buell Homepage at <http://www.hndlink.org/culture%20&%20history/mrpop.html>. While there, visit the Hmong National Development homepage at <http://www.hndlink.org/>.

I have several History articles in mind for future editions of MEM, but if you have an interest in a particular topic, please contact me by email at [gfrazier@gisystems.net](mailto:gfrazier@gisystems.net)



# Udorn VFW Post 10249 and TLCB Assistance—A Team!

by John Oles, Post Adjutant

The TLCB donated \$4859.00 to a wide variety of orphanages, schools, and other activities between Jan and Nov 2002. Our goal in spreading out TLCB donations has been to help as many people as possible and to spread the seeds of friendship that the members of the TLCB maintain in their hearts after all these years. In each case, we try to educate the staff of the organization receiving the donation on the mission/goals of the TLCB. We also ensure desks, chairs, wall lockers, and water coolers are emblazoned with “donated by the TLCB” to remind our Thai friends of your sponsorship.

Members of our post made follow-up visits to the organizations/individuals listed below to ensure supplies provided by the TLCB are still in good repair and in regular use. In most cases, donations to schools are made in villages where members of post families live. Post members who make such a proposal are often in regular contact with school staff and frequently stop by to chat with them.

Sriaunreung Elementary School, Udorn, typewriter, 3 storage cabinets, 3 water coolers, 3 ceiling fans, 20 desks and chairs, miscellaneous sports equipment. A follow-up visit was made on 5 Nov. All equipment is installed and in daily use by students and staff.

Ms. La Kawjanda of Si Bun Ruang continues to use the wheelchair donated by members of the TLCB on a daily basis. Paralyzed after suffering a stroke 3 years ago, Ms. La Kawjanda’s family was unable to afford a wheelchair that would enable their mother to go outdoors and visit with neighbors. The wheelchair has given her renewed vigor and enthusiasm.

The Nongkai Boys’ Orphanage was pleased to receive sports uniforms for their soccer team, 21 wall lockers, soccer balls, and a 5hp water pump, all made possible through generous donations of members of the TLCB. Members of our post have stopped by the orphanage on several occasions and all equipment is in good use. The staff still consider the donation of sports uniforms as key to their first place finish in a tournament held shortly after the donation was made. The water pump and wall lockers are in good condition and provide essential support to the orphanage. All wall lockers are stenciled with the TLCB logo and in daily use.

TLCB donations allowed our post to purchase supplies for schools in Maha Sara Kham, near Khonkaen. Supplies included

desks, chairs, typewriters, water coolers, and sports equipment. During a recent follow-up visit, the staff spoke highly of the equipment they received and invited TLCB members to stop by as their guests at anytime. All equipment is in good condition and is in daily use.

In August/September, TLCB donations supported the purchase of desks, chairs, wall lockers, a typewriter, water cooler, and sporting equipment for an elementary school in Banprongsamran, a small village along the Mekong River. This school is visited on a regular basis by a member of the post. All equipment has been found to be in good condition and in daily use. Like all organizations who have received the benefits of TLCB assistance, the staff welcome members of the TLCB to stop by and visit at anytime.

A recently approved proposal to help an elementary school in BanDung provided a variety of tables, chairs, sports equipment and other supplies for students and staff. (See page 6 for photos of this event).

We apologize for the miscommunication between our post and the Nongkai Boys’ Home which resulted in our planning for 85 boys to come join us for the Independence Day picnic but not having them show up. Without pointing fingers, we’ve learned an important lesson and should not have a repeat of this problem in the future.

As you are aware, our post solicits proposals from within members of the post. Members are required to provide the TLCB/Post committee (Wages, Oles, Smith, Marohl, Vichit) a written proposal from the organization seeking assistance. Typically, the committee will take such a proposal and extract those items we feel are best suited for helping the kids in need (for example, we’ll often extract a request for a copier or for teacher’s desks, but we’ll submit a proposal for student desks and an occasional typewriter). We’ve also tried to keep each proposal in the range of \$1000. That allows us to spread TLCB assistance to a wider audience. Once the committee has reviewed an organization’s request for help, we forward the proposal (as amended by committee members) to the TLCB for approval.

We welcome any suggestions or feedback on our method of assisting the TLCB. Hope this provides the information you need to keep your contributions flowing.

## Return to SEA, continued from page 10

At 0030 on Sunday morning, Les Strouse gave the “30 Minute Notice”. At 0100 he went around the Hospitality Suite giving everyone last call. One of the hangers-on turned out to be Thai Royalty. HRH Prince Yugula. Mac says: “If Les can throw out a real Prince, he can throw out anyone!” But apparently the visiting resumed a little later that morning. At the end of the day the suite was dismantled and the organizers agreed to, “host another such reunion in 25 years.”

The youngest attendant was 4 years old and the oldest is rapidly approaching 90. One attendant is reputed to be the youngest China Marine. He is a double amputee but only wears one artificial leg. According to Mac, his reason for this.....”if you wear two artificial legs and fall down everyone thinks you are drunk and will make no effort to help you get up”. “If you only wear one they quickly come to your aid.” At one point he removed the artificial leg and asked Sunee Thompson to take it for a massage. “Just tell the girls that I will pick it up in half an hour!”



[See color photos from John Oles on page 7.]



Secretary's Desk, continued from page 5

copy (MS WORD Format) of the minutes, please Email me at [thainkp69@cox.net](mailto:thainkp69@cox.net) or mail me a request for a printed hard copy at: 139 Fulmar Circle NE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548-6431.

**Membership Cards 2003.** All "renewal" membership cards (2<sup>nd</sup> year issued) will become your PERMANENT membership card. You and your spouse's card will be *laminated* and will show that you have been a "member since \_\_\_\_ (date of joining)" and will continue to indicate Charter members. In subsequent years you will receive an email or post card acknowledging receipt of your annual dues payment. There will be a \$2 fee for replacing a lost card or for each additional card requested.

**Minutes TLCB Meeting April-June 2002.** Motions and Summaries are listed below.

Best wishes and Happy Holidays,  
**Ed Miller, TLCB Secretary**

Summary of TLCB Board Motions: 2002 Through October.

- 79: Monument in NKP. To place memorial at NKP, raise or solicit funding, appoint committee with choices by 6/1, inform NKP governor.
- 80: Approve Minutes of Nov 01.
- 81: Location of 03 Reunion. Hold reunion and meeting 2003 at Fort Walton Beach.
- 82: Approve Assistance fund. For Motion 12-02: To fund \$1,162 for lock-

- ers and other items for a school.
- 83: Donation to Foundation. To donate \$100 to ACA's non-profit foundation in memory of Jessie Aderholt.
- 84: Membership Certificate. To print and give to renewing members starting in 2003.
- 85: Assistance Dues Waivers. To waive dues for certain workers in SEA
- 86: Election Slate. To adopt the slate recommended by the nominating committee.
- 87: Container Shipment. Authorizing Assistance Committee to expend up to \$2400 to pay for shipping costs of the 2002 container for Nakhon Phanom Province.
- 88: Permanent Membership Card. To provide members a permanent, laminated, card when they renew membership the first time, with date joined, in place of annual cards.
- 89: Single-list Server Addressing Policy. Policy that no messages may be posted to either TLCB server that are also addressed to the other server.
- 90: Broaden Mission Server Scope of Permitted Traffic. Revise Mission server rules in that subjects involving military professionalism and the concept of brotherhood shall not be restricted to those involving only experiences in Southeast Asia; and, information on books, memorabilia, etc., related to the War in Southeast Asia, which shall not be violations of the no-advertising policy.
- 91: 2004 Reunion Location Candidates. TLCB will consider Las Vegas, Nevada; Colorado Springs, Colorado; and Dayton, Ohio as candidates for Reunion 2004. [Note: Ontario area of California has been selected subsequent to this motion.]
- 92: [Special board meeting] Budget Date. Waive budget adoption rules & slip due date.



## A Loyal Son Traces the Father He Never Knew

Along the Ho Chi Minh Trail an F-4 crew ejected and both pilots came to the dangerous soil of Laos just below the famous Mu Gia Pass, among low but rugged limestone karsts on the south side of the valley where Route 12 goes due West (see photo). Air Rescue responded from Thailand and Major Edward M. Hudgens roared into the area in his Douglas A-1 Skyraider, as a "Sandy" covering the rescue helicopters as they attempted to sweep in for the pickup. But anti-aircraft fire found Ed Hudgens, causing a crash into the side of a karst. This was on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1970. The wrecked A-1 then tumbled to the valley floor, where it lay until 1995. That was when the Joint Task Force/Full Accounting located the wreckage, with the help of local witnesses. Ed Hudgens came home at last. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1996, his remains were laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery.

Among those he left behind was Ed Hudgen's son Jeff. Through the years Jeff often wondered what really happened to his Dad, what the place was like where he went down, and what the people that his Dad had served with were like. When he heard about NKP Days Jeff knew he *had* to be there. He said goodbye to his wife and three children in San Jose and made the trek to Southeast Asia to help resolve a life-long yearning to learn more about his father, who had died trying to save the lives of others in a strange and remote valley along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos.

MEM will bring you Jeff's adventures in the next issue. You will read what he thought of Hong Kong and Bangkok, as contrasted with a primitive Lao village many kilometers beyond the end of the power lines. And there you will go along as Jeff shows villagers photos of the pilot who crashed into their karst so many years ago. You will find out how they received him, and what he actually found there. (Jeff joined the Brotherhood in mid-November).



Below: The sun rises behind the mountains at Mu Gia Pass, which runs North and South between the mountains, at the mark. Photo by Jeff Hudgens, taken from near the crash site of Ed Hudgens, his father.



# They Were The Best That They Could Be

by Jim Michener

The NKP Days group photo is remarkable for what it doesn't show: the jewels of allegiance to "country" that 20 American Vietnam veterans shoulder without letting you know: memories. It was memories, of course, which brought them together on a hot October morning in Nakhon Phanom, and they mostly came the way they had in the 1960s and 70s: singly, not knowing anybody, and from halfway around the world.

Also unseen is the breeze. There were signs of it as leaves trembled on the branches that arched above some of the American heads. The breeze came from Laos, carrying with it the spirits of those who had been left behind decades ago. Naturally, the spirits were the prized element of the treasured memories that played within the veterans' group that morning. How did it get to be 2002? It seemed like the 1960s and 70s all over again.

As flashbulbs popped towards the 20 veterans in front of the memorial plaques, one in English, one in Thai, black was blacker than black, white was whiter than white. They resumed being soldiers for a few seconds, rejoicing in what united them, stepping out of their shoes of self-interest into something loftier (what JFK had asked them to do), which was what had united them during war, and now reunited them in the bursts of light. Briefly, without losing their humanity, they forgot they were individuals. Briefly, they remembered the time-tested ideals of brotherhood on the battlefield, where what happened in the blink of an eye sometimes rearranged the furniture in soldiers' minds forever.

The US built memorials in Europe and Asia while WWII's embers remained hot, but the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington wasn't dedicated until 1982. What was happening in Isaan 20 years later had a simple psychological explanation:

making order out of chaos, dedicating a site upon which would be built a memorial to the veterans of the Vietnam conflict. Nobody could do it better than TLCB and NKP's residents. The veterans, Thai as well as Americans, joined hands to finish the unfinished business of 1975, laying the groundwork for an international symbol, a metaphorical bridge between inner and outer worlds, making public what had laid private for decades.

A friend who lived in Vientiane in the 1950s and served in Saigon in the 1970s, wrote two years ago: "In the little French town where we live, there is an American military cemetery from WWII. More than 800 soldiers have their graves here, and the many names of those missing in battle are commemorated in the chapel. I never can go there without being moved by the thought that it is thanks to them that we all live in peace. And I cannot help thinking that Private 1st class Lamb from some forgotten little and peaceful village somewhere in Ohio has never heard before of Draguignan, where he now lies for eternity. It was not his war, but it was his fate. Here understanding fails me." Members of TLCB understand the sentiment. Although few of them belong to the Greatest Generation (WWII veterans), it can be said they were the best they could be, and in NKP they still are.



**Among those shown:** Mike Balmer, VFW; Muni Lipski, VFW; Ed Hughes, VFW; John Middlewood, TLCB assistant for NKP; Tom Smith, Udon TLCB; Les Thompson, TLCB, VFW; NKP Governor's wife; Gene Hamner, Nail 68; former NKP governor; current NKP Province Governor; former NKP governor's wife; BG H. Aderholt, USAF ret.; Rocky (the NKP pizza man); Gene Foster, Nail FAC; John Sweet, TLCB VP; Steve Goldsmith, Udon VFW; Vichit Mingrachata, TLCB assistant for Udon; Jim Michener, TLCB assistant for Laos; Thai donor of park land; John Schillo; nurse "Suzie"; Jeff Hudgens, son of KIA pilot; Phongsee Penn; John Oles, VFW Post 10249 Adjutant; Dale Wages, VFW Post 10249 Commander.

**Note:** For many photos of the monument ceremony and other NKP Days events, go to [www.TLC-Brotherhood.org](http://www.TLC-Brotherhood.org).