



Mekong Express Mail

Volume 4, Issue 1

THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

The last, nerve wracking, flight out of Laos

By Les Strouse

Up until 21 January 1975 I was flying the C-46, Twin Beech H-18, and Pilatus Porter for Continental Air Services, Inc. (CASI), primarily in Laos, transporting people and cargo and making some aerial deliveries. On the 21st I was selected (hey, I was the junior C-46 pilot) to replace one of our C-46 pilots who was going on home leave. He was TDY to Bangkok flying a C-46 on an almost daily schedule between Bangkok and Phnom Penh. This was to be a 30-day TDY that turned into a 6 month TDY.

Let me explain some details at this point. My crew was

there was no particular requirement for airlift, we would fly out to a more secure airstrip to await our afternoon schedule back to Bangkok. Concerning the security at Phnom Penh airport, there was incoming artillery or rockets every day that I flew there.

My boss came down to Bangkok from Vientiane to observe our operation. He rode the jump seat to Phnom Penh. He was surprised that we, and all flights, came overhead Phnom Penh at 10,000 feet and made a steep spiraling approach to the runway in order to avoid ground fire. His next surprise was that we were actually parked *in* a bunker—that quickly followed by incoming artillery rounds. We spent 20 minutes on the ground and took about 15 rounds incoming. We flew out to one of the outlying strips and parked for the day. The boss had planned on staying in Phnom Penh to shop for oriental artifacts but the amount of incoming changed his mind. He did ask how often this happened and was amazed when we told him, “every day.” I did not get relieved!

Only twice during our tour did we have any really close calls. The first was when very shortly after landing the incoming started. The last passengers had just departed the

see **Out of Laos**, page 3



CASI C-46 evacuating personnel from Long Tieng (LS20A) in Laos, 1975.

made up of one permanently assigned Thai co-pilot and rotating flight mechanic and loadmaster, both Thai. The airplane was a C-46R, N337CA, with 66 plush, fold-up seats installed. The seats could be folded up against the wall to allow the airplane to be loaded with cargo without having to completely remove the seats.

From the 22nd of January I flew almost daily to Phnom Penh where we would off-load our cargo and passengers and then if

MI-17 in Cambodia
Former History Committee
chairman Ed Ulrich poses at
Phnom Penh airport.

See The History Page, page
8, for photos and story about
this super-secret mission as
Lon Nol assumed power from
Prince Norodom Sihanouk
in 1970.



Time to think Reunion

by Ed Miller

We are going “Back to the Beach” this year for another outstanding TLC Brotherhood Reunion. It is time for making your plans to attend this year’s reunion at Radisson Beach Resort, on Okaloosa Island (Fort Walton Beach), starting **October 2nd continuing thru October 5th 2003**. We encourage you to add additional days before or after our reunion dates. Remember the Air Commando Association’s reunion will follow our reunion the very next weekend period **Back to the Beach**, next page

Brotherhood Reunion - Ft. Walton Beach, Florida

Is this your last issue of MEM? Look on the mailing label for your membership date. If it reads 2003 or later you are in good shape. But if it reads 2002, according to our records you have not sent in your dues for this year. See page 5 for details on where to send dues, and how much to send.

Back to the Beach, continued from page 1

The Radisson Beach resort is located right on the Gulf of Mexico and its white sandy beaches. The resort is under new management and some renovations are being accomplished. You can expect "First Class" accommodations and service normally associated with the Radisson hotel chain. Go to <http://www.radisson.com/ftwaltonfl> to view and get info about the facility.

TLCB REUNION RATES:

Up to four per room, at the following rates: Standard/Atrium \$75; Poolside, \$85 ; Gulf Front, \$95; Gulf View Suite, \$95.

Check in: 4:00 pm. Check out: 1100 am. A credit card is required to hold rooms later 6 pm on day of arrival. Subject to 10% occupancy tax.

You should call the Radisson at toll free: (800) 333-3333 or call directly (850) 243-9181 for making your reservations and make sure you refer it to the TLC Brotherhood Reunion. You can also make your reservations online at <http://www.radisson.com/ftwaltonfl> Your hotel registration must be reserved NLT September 4, 2003 in order to receive our special rates. Please plan your stay only at the Radisson Beach Resort so that we can fulfill our obligation.

Registration fee will be \$60.00 each person (Children 12 and under \$30). Your registration fee will cover your Saturday night Banquet Dinner expenses, continental breakfasts, tours with local transportation, and other miscellaneous costs of the reunion. Please complete the enclosed Registration Form and mail with your check or money order: TLCB Reunion 2003 (Ed Miller), 139 Fulmar Circle NE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548-6431. Your check or money order should be made out to "TLC Brotherhood Reunion 2003."

Arriving by Air? Okaloosa County/Eglin AFB Regional Airport (Airport Code - VPS) is the closest to the area. It is serviced by Northwest Airlines (800-2252525), US Airways Express (800-4284322), and Delta Airlines (800-2823424). The Pensacola Regional Airport (Airport code - PNS) is located about 50 miles west and might be better connections for others. You just need to catch a shuttle or rent a car. Pensacola is serviced by Northwest, Delta, US Airways, American (800-4337300), AirTran (800-2478726 and Continental (800-5233273) airlines.

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

There will be local Tours available Friday (morning & afternoon) to locations on Hurlburt Field, Eglin AFB, and the Armament Museum. Please sign up for any of these during your TLCB Check-in. A Memorial service will be scheduled for Sunday morning like our previous reunion and further info will be provided in the next MEM issue and also on our Web

page. Saturday will be filled with some special events. In the morning the Annual Business Membership meeting will be held. This is a requirement of our bylaws and will include election of board positions that expire in 2003, along with reports of all committee programs. It is always very interesting. Saturday afternoon special events are still in the planning and this time may be also used as free time or optional activities for your spouse or children to enjoy the local area at your leisure. The hotel offers a wide variety of activities on the beach, and besides, you can walk down the beach to "The Gulfarium" (Dolphin/Sea Lion shows/Exhibits), Fishing Pier, Beach Boardwalk (with restaurants/bars). Charter boat fishing and shopping at the nation's second largest factory outlet mall, "The SILVER SANDS" Factory Outlet is 15 minutes east of the hotel.

Memorabilia (T-shirts & Golf Shirts) of the Reunion can be ordered when you register for the Reunion and all orders must be received NLT 1 August 03 to ensure they arrive at the Reunion Headquarters (See Registration Form). We will have a limited supply available for sale during the reunion. Members who cannot attend should also use the registration form to order any Reunion shirts (shipping and handling fee required and will be mailed out just prior to reunion starting date).



The Editor's Corner

This issue of the MEM follows Jeff Hudgens into Laos as he journeys to the site where his father gave his life to help others, the very essence of brotherhood. Seeing Laos and some of its people through the eyes of Jeff during his first-ever visit and through photos taken on the trip gives us a new perspective on a country that most of us have never seen on the ground. Only Jim Michener, our Man in Vientiane, lives and writes there as a permanent resident. There are, however, several among us who worked in Laos on duty stints during the war in SEA. They spent time at the American embassy, at Air America/CASI bases, at Lima Sites. They flew into remote parts of Laos to deliver rice, hard rice and agents. They flew in to ferry Hmong soldiers to engage the Pathet Lao, to guide fast movers to communist targets and to rescue downed flyers. They gathered intel. They built and maintained the navigation systems that helped to guide bombing missions to Hanoi and other targets in North Vietnam. They went in on the ground to watch the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Some of their stories have appeared on the Mission server but few have appeared in MEM. Mac Thompson described for us with mathematical precision the techniques of packing and delivering rice by air to communities in the rugged mountains. Les Strouse tells us in this issue what it was like to fly in and out of Laos in the closing days of American involvement. We want more stories in MEM from those who served in Laos in every kind of job. They should be original, not material that has appeared on Mission. If you want to contribute, get in touch with me at dav16mac@aol.com.

Dave MacDonald

DID YOU KNOW? If you send your address changes before MEM is mailed it saves TLCB about \$6. See page 5 for some ways to notify the Brotherhood.

airplane and were running toward the bunker when the crew and I deplaned and immediately flopped onto the ramp—under the wing—with all of that fuel! Not smart but there we were having our pictures taken as we covered there. My picture made it into Newsweek and Pacific Stars and Stripes. Big hero



At Phnom Penh's beleaguered Phnom Penh airport, evacuees take shelter from a Khmer Rouge rocket attack. Victims lie prostrate.

News photo of evacuees and C-46 crew under rocket attack at Phnom Penh. Pilot Les Strouse is prone figure at far left.

lying on the ground *under* his airplane. Five minutes of fame. Shrapnel did rattle off the airplane but did no serious damage. One piece hit me and again did no damage, except burn my finger when I picked up my souvenir! The second time was a late arrival, caused by one of our



CASI aircraft flown by Les Strouse. Above, C-46; right, Twin Beech H-18 executive plane; below, Pilatus Porter STOL turboprop utility plane.



VIP passengers arrival at Bangkok Airport late. Being typical flight crew, we were bitching about this. Anyway, we departed 30 minutes behind schedule. Landed at Phnom Penh about 30 minutes late and were parked far away from our normal spot with it's close-by personnel bunker. Well, it seems as though two 122mm rockets impacted in *our* parking spot *five minutes after our scheduled arrival time*. Had we been on time, I would

not be writing this. The next morning I had two new Buddhas added to my chain. BTW, the crew had always checked my Buddhas before every flight—no Buddhas, no flight!

Our last flight out of Phnom Penh was on 10 April 1975. Twenty three passengers in a 66-seat airplane. No panic. Our seats were offered to all takers except Cambodians. We had taken quite a few people out in the previous few days. There was no panic, just an orderly departure for those who wanted to leave.

On 5 November 1990, the same crew that had flown the C-46 out of Phnom Penh on 10 April 1975 flew the first Western commercial flight, a Bangkok Airways Dash-8, back into

Phnom Penh. What are the odds?

After the tension of the Phnom Penh operation we got a chance to relax in Bangkok with a couple of admin type flights and one U.S. Embassy Commissary flight to Rangoon. One three-day trip to Singapore to have an engine change kept me from some evacuation flights from Saigon. I guess I was just not destined to make ALL of the evacuations!

Our relaxation was short lived.

I flew the C-46 to Udorn and was transported across the river to Vientiane and started ferrying CASI airplanes to Udorn with one trip to Bangkok. That trip was in a Porter. My passenger was high on the Pathet Lao wanted list. The night before the flight I furnished him with a complete CASI uniform and ad-



vised him that a company car would pick him up at 0600 and he would be transported directly to the airplane and we would depart immediately. We flew direct to Khon Kaen where we refueled before proceeding to Bangkok. Mr. Pop, Edgar "Pop" Buehl, was out of Laos. And he never gave me back my uniform!

Now it was back to Udorn and my C-46. I was joined there

see *Out of Laos*, next page

Out of Laos, continued from page 3

by another C-46 and a C130 where the crews set about planning the evacuation of Long Tieng, the infamous Lima Site 20 Alternate. The evacuation would be flown out of Udorn without the knowledge of the Laos - we hoped.

The C-46s were stripped of their seats and ropes were tied across the fuselage to keep the passengers, who sat on the floor, from sliding into the back of the airplane on take off. I do not remember what the C-130 passenger load was but the C-46s were legally permitted to carry 35 passengers. What is this legal stuff? We took out 65 on each flight and if one engine had as much as coughed we would have not cleared the ridge. The engines did *not* cough!

We continued this operation, during daylight hours, on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of May. On the 14th, I made the last flight out of Long Tieng. We were being mobbed and Vang Pao and Mr. Jerry Daniels (CIA) had departed on a Bird Air Bell 206 helicopter to a nearby strip where they were picked up by a Porter and transported to Udorn.

We now started refugee shuttle flights from Udorn to Nam Phong—135 passengers per trip. As many trips as we could make before we just got too tired and called a break. The weather turned bad on us so the USAF Combat Controllers set up a temporary beacon and runway lights. I guess the reason we finally stopped this operation was that the Nam Phong facilities reached a saturation point. I did take Vang Pao and couple of his wives and hangers-on from Udorn to Nam Phong. That was the last time I saw VP.

It was quiet for a few days. Then, I was asked to bring my airplane to Vientiane for maintenance. I did not need any maintenance! But, when the boss asked, you did it. Immediately upon arrival, maintenance stands were pushed up to the airplane and mechanics swarmed over it. It looked like absolute confusion. Well, the idea was to confuse anyone who was observing. The CASI Nationalist Chinese employees were not allowed by the Pathet Lao to leave Laos. With all of the “maintenance” and cargo loading, 15 Chinese employees and their families were secreted in the “hell hole” under the cockpit. Must have been really crowded and claustrophobic down there. As soon as

the “maintenance” was completed we departed for Udorn and immediately after crossing the river into Thai airspace we got our passengers up for a bit of fresh air. They were all smiles and thanked us profusely.

Next afternoon we were again called to Vientiane for “maintenance”. Same, same last night but this time it was our Filipino employees who needed evacuation. Same scam and it worked again. But the crew and I were getting nervous.

We got another call to come to Vientiane to pick up “Company Cargo”. The crew and I discussed this tip and decided, “what the hell, let’s go!”. Upon arrival on the old Air America ramp we were told to shut down the engines but to stay in the cockpit and be ready to leave as soon as the cargo was loaded. It really was CASI Company Cargo, metal turning lathes and other sophisticated equipment.

The airplane was about half loaded when the “students” arrived declaring that the cargo was the property of the Laos People and that we could not take it out. We, the crew, stayed in the cockpit for 2 ½ hours while the airplane release was negotiated. Did I mention that there were anti aircraft guns on both sides of the runway?

The cargo that had been loaded was pushed out of the airplane onto the ramp and we were told that we could leave. We did, post haste. Post haste enough that I blew over a maintenance stand. The nice thing about that was that it was being used as bleachers by some Pathet Lao “students” spelled soldiers. On the Company radio, our CASI boss called us and told us to *never* come back to Laos no matter who requested it. We, the crew had already made this decision.

A nerve-wracking experience that was full of mixed emotions. Very happy to get out but I was leaving behind my home of almost five continuous years for an unknown future.

We flew the last Western civilian airplane out of Laos on the 25th of May 1975.

A few admin flights, within Thailand and another trip to Rangoon for the U.S. Embassy brought my initial SEA tour to an end on 1 July 1975 eleven years and one month after my first arrival. It would be almost 15 years before I would again be employed in SEA.



Assistance Container Finally Arrives at NKP

by Bill Tilton, TLCB President

During the first week of November, 2002, the TLC Brotherhood, in partnership with the Air Commando Association’s charitable subsidiary, The McCroskrie Threshold Foundation, delivered to Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, an oversize, 40-foot-long shipping container full of school and medical supplies that had been donated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This was not done easily! For those who are curious, I will summarize the ordeal, but also the benefits that were enjoyed when this container finally arrived.

General Heinie Aderholt, founder of the the Air Commando Association, had suggested the idea to us before, but it seemed a little too much for us to take on. At the 2001 reunion at Fort Walton Beach he was one of our banquet speakers. As he and

I chatted during dinner he brought up the container idea, which he had been discussing with John Sweet off and on for some time. General Aderholt pledged to me that if we could arrange for security and distribution at the destination, he would obtain donated supplies from the Mormon Church and ship them at no cost to the Brotherhood. I promised him the board would consider it, and after we made the arrangements with John Middlewood and the officials in Thailand, we finally agreed to the arrangement. Lists of desired medical supplies were drawn up and delivered. We took a deep breath, and plunged in.

Almost immediately, it seemed, a container was filled and dispatched in June last year from Salt Lake City to Long Beach,

see Container on page 14

Proud of My Dad—A Loyal Son In Lao Jungles

by Jeff Hudgens

Last fall the people of Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, province and city, hosted a get-together we called “NKP Days.” This was described extensively in the last issue. We mentioned an American, Jeff Hudgens, who attended NKP Days in memory of his father, Major Edward M. Hudgens. Ed Hudgens died on March 21st, 1970, when his A-1 “Sandy” was hit by antiaircraft fire during a rescue just South of Mugia Pass, in Laos. (On March 20th, 1996, his remains were buried at Arlington National Cemetery.) At NKP Days Jeff observed our monument project ceremony and witnessed our Assistance Program activities, and he also met Nick Ascot and the good people of North by Northeast Travel. He wanted to go see his father’s crash site for himself. This dream was indeed fulfilled, and here are Jeff’s notes about the adventure.

Said Jeff: “I was immediately welcomed into the TLCB group...I was astounded with the Memorial. I had envisioned a little something to honor guys like my dad. How wrong I was. Just the land donated alone was overwhelming. The lake and the property are beautiful and will be even more awesome when completed. What a beautiful and fitting place to honor those who lost their lives!

“The people of NKP have little and the care and concern for them by the TLCB shows to me the wonderful desires of its members. The people of Northeastern Thailand need the help and are very grateful for it.”

Excerpts From Jeff's Diary

Thursday/Friday Sept 26 and 27th

After landing in Hong Kong, I jumped on a train to Kowloon. Big mistake. I was a bit nauseous due to the 14.5 hour flight and ...the smells were something I had never smelled in my life and I immediately wanted to puke. I went indoors—more smells. I went outdoors—more smells. So, I forced myself to get back into a cab for a nauseating return trip to the train. I will never go to Hong Kong again.

Sept 27 – Oct 1st Bangkok

see **Hudgens**, continued next page



Jeff Hudgens in front of unexploded 2000 pound bomb in Laos, near Mugia Pass and the crash site of Major Edward Hudgens. Color photos and map on page 7.

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The TLC Brotherhood, Inc. is a tax exempt, non-profit charitable organization under IRC Section 501(c)(3). The registered address is 7813 New London Drive, Springfield, Virginia, 22153. TLCB was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1999.

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It stinks! I was nauseous from the first time I stepped off the plane. The smell was unbelievable. I seriously considered finding a different hotel. The problem was, it wasn't the hotel, it was Bangkok!

Tuesday Oct 1st Nakhom Phanom (NKP)

Phew, what an amazing past couple of days—the *complete opposite of Bangkok!*

To land in NKP was great. There really isn't much left of the place, but they still use the control tower. When we walked from the plane to the terminal, we were met by the mayor who gave us a welcome speech. Oh by the way, among the 15 or so of us was General Aderholt. He helped build this place back in the mid 60's, before he was a general. Being with a general has its privileges. After the welcome ceremony, we were greeted by some women in beautiful native Thai dresses who pinned corsages on us. Next came a bunch of locals who were very, very excited to see us and greeted us with big smiles and handshakes. When we walked outside there was a local band playing, and overhead were banners welcoming us to Nakhon Phanom. On the way to town, the first caravan vehicle was an open bed truck with the band, followed by 4 war era vehicles (owned by a local collector) and two vans full of Farangs (foreigners) parading through town! I thought, "here I am 15,000 miles from home driving with a caravan in an old army dodge with a guy who looks like he was a Vietnam era CIA guy, listening to Credence Clearwater Revival on a CD!"

We met with the provincial governor in a formal meeting room. He welcomed us to his province and gave us some

information about the people (Thai/Lao, with a substantial Vietnamese population—very unusual), population (about 700,000), income (about \$460USD annually), occupation (mostly rice farmers) and sites. We were then presented

a slide show and narrative about the city. Afterward, we went around the room and introduced ourselves. We had ex-GI's, a couple of Doctors, some nurses and ex-pilots—oh yeah, and a couple of FAC (forward air control) pilots.

At 6, we all piled into our caravan (minus the band) and headed to a local restaurant for dinner and a ceremony. Laid outside next to the outdoor restaurant on some mats was a tiered tray piled with food, fruits and flowers used in the "baci" ceremony. We all gathered around the trays in a circle where a Buddhist priest gave a blessing. Next those of us from the NKP Days group faced outwards and extended our right hand palm up. Our left hand was placed between our eyes thumb toward the chin—as though ready to give a karate chop. The non-NKP Days people then took a piece of string and whisked it across our right wrist over and over while saying a blessing. They then tied it to our wrist. It wasn't supposed to be removed, it had to wear off.

To start the dinner they had this party tray that had some nuts, ginger, salty/spicy pork and some fried fish about the size

of a sardine (I didn't care for it and when no one was looking tossed it in the river directly behind me—back from whence you came). I don't remember what it was, but I liked the main course. And there was some sticky rice, along with some soup that was good except for the chopped up raw fish—it was too fishy for me. During dinner there was a group of Thai musicians who used to play at NKP at one of the clubs and had reunited for this affair. Suddenly something blew out the power throughout the restaurant, so we all sat in pitch black until candles were brought out. As soon as we got them lit, naturally, the power returned.

Wednesday Oct 2nd Nakhon Phanom

A day for sightseeing...after the [Catholic] church, it was off to Ho Chi Minh's old home. We were told that he fled Vietnam in 1923 and lived in the NKP area for 7 years. We shuttled to his place where we actually touched a coconut tree that *he* planted!

My next adventure was to locate and visit the site where my father, Major Ed Hudgens, crashed in an Air Force A-1 Skyraider on March 21st of 1970.

Friday Oct 4th Laos

Led by Nick Ascot [owner of North by Northeast Travel, in Nakhon Phanom, and a member of the Brotherhood] and his employee Montri, we rode to the border crossing in a tuk tuk. From a busy little nondescript building on the Mekong levee we crossed a bouncy plank walkway onto a very large canoe type boat that barely ran. There were all sorts of people packed in so we rode on the stern of the boat. As we were crossing the river I paused to think about what I was about to embark upon. Where was I going? What would I see? Would I get

into any trouble? Would I run into anyone hostile? Would I ever make it to the crash site?

We arrived on the Lao side of the Mekong, filled out our paperwork, gave the immigration officials some money with our passports, and just like that

we were inside a third world Communist country!

Then we met our driver and some women who worked for Nick. After hopping into a mutated Toyota extra cab pick-up truck we were off, after a stop to let Montri pick up some water and French bread.

Soon we were out of town driving on a *very* bumpy road. Laos seemed to be one big rice field. It was harvesting time so the rice was up, and that made it very beautiful. The karsts made it look like Monument Valley in Arizona, except it is covered with rice fields and jungle.

After a couple of hours we pulled over to get something to eat at a tiny shack where the owner and her children lived in back. Nick ordered me some pork Pho (this was Vietnamese food). It was a soup with noodles similar to angel hair pasta, and pork. Nick doctored mine up with a really sweet sauce, fish sauce, and rice vinegar. On the table was a basket of fresh salad and herbs including mint and basil (or a brother of basil). With each bite of the noodles and pork one ate some fresh herbs. It

...the sun was setting and the low light reflecting off the nearby Karst was beautiful. Often while we walked we passed small round ponds of various sizes. These were bomb craters, and they were all over the place.

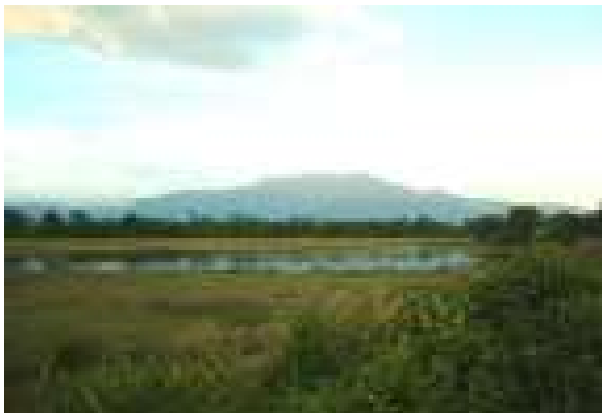


Left, for the first time, villagers see the face of American pilot, Major Jeff Hudgens, who was shot down and crashed near their village in 1970. Remains of Major Hudgens were obtained and returned to the USA in 1995 when villagers led searchers of the Joint Task Force/Full Accounting to the site. Village leader is at far left.

Below, left, the mountain just east of Mugia Pass, October, 2002. This scene is taken looking north, away from Ban Nahom and the crash site of Major Edward Hudgens. The pass entrance is about one inch in from the left edge.

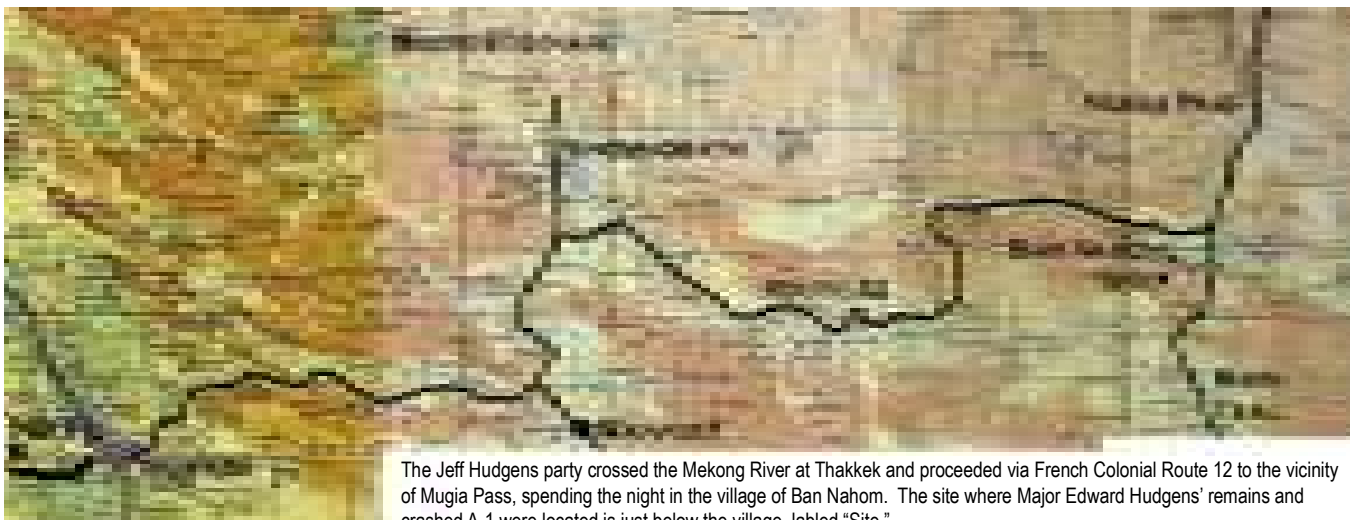
Ban Nahom, below, where Jeff Hudgens spent the night and met up with the people who took him to his father's crash site. This shows the appearance of a typical isolated Lao village. In the foreground is some unexploded ordnance (UXO) found in the area. UXO is more prevalent in this part of Laos than anywhere else in the world (see June, 2000 MEM for extensive discussion of UXO).

Photos this page: Jeff Hudgens



Approximate
Scale, st. miles

10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60



The Jeff Hudgens party crossed the Mekong River at Thakkek and proceeded via French Colonial Route 12 to the vicinity of Mugia Pass, spending the night in the village of Ban Nahom. The site where Major Edward Hudgens' remains and crashed A-1 were located is just below the village, labeled "Site."

Ed's Supersecret Mission to Cambodia



Left, troops boarding for delivery to Pakse, Laos.

Below, some of the C-123 crew members who flew this undercover mission with Ed. Bill Cooper is second from left.

Phot



In Cambodia, in 1970, the political system was in turmoil and threatened to become chaos after Prince Norodom Sihanouk fled the country and went into exile in France. Khmer Rouge leader Lon Nol was forming a new government. Former TLCB History Committee chairman Ed Ulrich was then Director of Air America air operations at LS 85. Ed was assigned to lead a super-secret mission to Cambodia, composed of three “sterile” C-123 transports and crews in civilian attire.

The mission was to deliver U.S. advisors to Phnom Penh to assist Lon Nol in setting up a cabinet, in hopes of having some favorable influence on the new government. They were also assigned to deliver and retrieve specially-selected troops each day at a CIA training camp near Pakse.

Each morning the three aircraft flew from Pakse, on the lower Mekong River in Laos. They took off before dawn in order to arrive at Phnom Penh before radars were turned on.

One pilot, Captain Bill Cooper, was later shot down while on a covert mission in Nicaragua. On that mission, his kicker, Eugene Hasenfus, survived and was detained, which led to a lengthy standoff between the U.S. and Nicaraguan governments. In October, 1986, Secretary of State George Schultz declared



Above, Ed Ulrich posing by Russian MiG-17 loaded with a U.S. 750 pound bomb, on the hardstand at Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Insignia is Cambodian Air Force.

Below, U.S. made 750 pound general purpose bombs in foreground and fragmentation bombs in background, at Phnom Penh.



Below, mission crewmembers. Ed Ulrich is second from right.



that plane and occupants had no connection to the U.S. government, and the CIA denied knowing anything about them. Ed Ulrich knew then that his old friends had been flying “hard rice” in yet another trouble spot in the world. (“Hard rice” was Air America slang for arms and ammunition).



was amazingly good!

We said our goodbyes and got back on the rough road, known since French colonial days as Route 12, headed due east. Not long after that I saw the last of the power lines. The roads also got worse until we came to an intersection and turned to the right. For the next 15 minutes we drove rapidly down a paved road. It was pure joy to be riding fast in the back of the truck actually making progress, but shortly we came to a bridge and the end of the paved road. Most bridges on our trip were one-lane trusses that sagged from having to bear overweight trucks. Others were nothing more than a big culvert covered by dirt. The roads and bridges were being improved by Vietnam, which wants the goods and services from Thailand, and the most direct way is through Laos, so they are improving the roads.

During the ride, we had the best time saying hello to everyone. Sawbidee is the word for hello in that region, so anytime we saw someone we would yell "sawbidee," smile and wave. The expressions on the Lao

peoples faces was great. At first they had this angry almost fearful look of "who are you and what do you want" and then when we waved hi, it would immediately change to a beautiful happy smile. I loved doing it. Also during the ride as we went from crossing bridges to crossing culverts, people would be taking baths in the river next to the culvert.

As we got closer to the turn off to our village we needed directions. We stopped one woman who leaned a bit and spit out a bunch of blood! No one else seemed concerned except me. I was trying to figure out how to mention to the guys that we should check on her medical condition when Nick explained that she was chewing on a natural narcotic called betel nut.

At last we came upon a low hut (most huts were on stilts) next to a trail. There was an older man and his 18-year-old son sitting on the "porch." We asked the 18 year old if he would take us to Ban Nahom village. He was reluctant, but a pack of Marlborough helped to persuade him. I grabbed one of my daypacks and some water and we headed out, walking trails along a river and then through rice fields. The scenery was breathtakingly beautiful. I told Nick that people just weren't going to believe where I was.

The "trail" we walked on was the berm between rice fields. It was approximately 1 foot wide and if you stepped off, you had about a two foot drop. Occasionally we would see someone on a bicycle, but mostly just pushing it. We encountered many water buffalo. They would often be free grazing or sometimes tied up to a stake to "mow" a particular circular section. At one point we saw a 4 year old boy pulling a 1000 pound water buffalo to move it to a new section. He was pulling with all his might on a rope that was attached to the buffalo's nose ring. The amazing thing is the boy won the struggle!

After about 20 minutes of walking we came upon a beautiful village. The buildings were on stilts, and interspersed throughout were these palm trees that made it look like paradise—right

Here I was some 15,000 miles from home at my Dad's crash site. I'd made it! This also was where my father had died. I felt so proud of him. I am honored to be his son. He died trying to save the life of two other humans.

out of the movies. The amazed faces of the villagers as we walked through were priceless. By then the sun was setting and the low light reflecting off the nearby Karst was beautiful. Often while we walked we passed small round ponds of various sizes. These were bomb craters, and they were all over the place.

After 45 minutes, we came upon an unexploded bomb. It looked to be about 1000 lbs and was surrounded by a stick fence to keep animals and people from touching it. About 750 yards from the bomb, we came to the village schoolhouse—well within range of the bomb, I thought!

We were soon met by an older gentleman (early 50s) and a younger guy (late teens). The older guy wanted us to take a picture of him, and we did, but Nick wanted to make sure they were cool with us before we took any more pictures, not wanting

to offend them. Then we came to the headman's house, which was different than the rest. Most homes are huts on stilts made out of bamboo with palm frond roofs, but this house was on stilts made with planks of wood. It also appeared a bit bigger than most. Next to the

main hut was a smaller one that was made out of bamboo. It was the kitchen and here we found the headman, known as "Gome." He was surprised to see us and quickly pulled trousers on over his shorts, but was friendly enough. We said hello and he and Montri climbed the ladder to his house.

After a few minutes, Nick and I took off our shoes and climbed the ladder. We had to be very careful of the porch. It was made from bamboo. They laid whole bamboo laterally as rafters and covered it with split bamboo. The bamboo rafters were about a foot apart and if we didn't step on them, we would break through. Nick and I entered Gome's house where Montri and he were sitting. Gome's wife had brought us some warm tea served in a plastic pitcher with two plastic glasses on a plastic tray.

Nick taught me a bit of protocol. When inside a building and someone is sitting down, you walk slowly and stooped to show respect. In fact, there really isn't a time when you are in a building that you aren't walking stooped and are Wai-ing. When you Wai, you put your hands together like you are about to pray and you bow your head in deference to the other person. You greet, say "goodbye" and "thank you" in this same manner.

Nick and Montri told Gome softly why we were here. Montri then presented him our official government paperwork that said we had permission to go to the crash site. Apparently Gome is the headman of his village, and there are five villages that fall under a "governor." Gome is also the deputy governor and wanted to know why we didn't go to the governor first. We explained we didn't know and Gome was satisfied. Next we went about appeasing Gome and gaining favor. Nick slowly opened up a pack of cigarettes and offered one to Gome. Gome took it and everyone had a smoke while they talked a bit. Nick then slowly pulled out two packs of cigarettes and set them next to him. They then talked some more. Nick eventually

see Hudgens, continued on page 10

slid them to Gome who took them with a thank you. The best I can describe the conversation was small talk followed by a pertinent question. The question was answered and maybe one more followed by more small talk. It was very frustrating to me because I'm an American used to asking direct questions and getting a direct answer. Here, we had to do it the Lao way and that was slowly, indirectly. In fact, most things were that way; slow, indirect.

During the conversations Nick learned that these people were called the Blue tribesman. They were mountain people and spoke their own language. Nick was having a hard time understanding them because of their accent. They had a hard time understanding Nick because of his accent. It was getting real dark in the hut so Nick pulled out a package wrapped in newspaper and set it down. He eventually, slowly, opened it and pulled out a long candle that he slowly lit. After a while, Nick asked if I wanted to take a bath. I said yes so we slouched out to the porch, carefully climbed down the ladder and headed to the "bath," which was actually the river next to the village.

We worked our way down the bank to the river. We encountered a lady already bathing, and she just smiled and moved on. We were followed by a bunch of kids who watched us from the banks. Nick wrapped a sarong around him and removed his shorts. When he walked into the water he made a big fuss about how cold it was, being very demonstrative, which made the kids laugh. Then Nick started laughing and I asked him what was so funny. He said, "It's the kids; they're repeating what we say." They would say in their own language "he said" and then in English "cold water" and another kid would say in their language "no, he said" and then in English "cool water." It was great I did as Nick had done, and came out feeling much better, got dressed and we walked back to Gome's.

Nick broke out the French bread and pate' we had bought in Thakkek, and we had a little snack. They were going to feed us dinner, but we wanted to wait until Montrí had returned. In the meantime, the hut filled with a small circle of people. There was Nick, Gome, the two we first met (the younger one was the schoolteacher), some older men, and outside the circle some women and children. For the next hour or so, we sat in our circle and talked. Many people came in and left and I realized we were celebrities here.

While Montrí went to the Governor's village to pay his respects and get permission locally, we had our dinner. Gome's wife brought out a tray of duck meat, and a dish of sauce, accompanied by two baskets of sticky rice. They chopped up the cooked duck, bone and all, into small pieces. Nick showed me how to eat the sticky rice. You make a small ball out of the rice and dip it into the sauce. FIRE! The sauce was chili with vinegar and a bit of cilantro. This stuff was hot.

The next morning we started with a visit to the school. The kids all lined up and spaced themselves in a military formation. We presented the teacher with a soccer ball and took some pictures. Then the kids disbanded to work the rice fields, it being harvest time.

We then headed out to my Dad's crash site. At one point we crossed a bamboo bridge that was 40 feet above a river. It was a

45-minute hike over mostly flat land. The last 10 minutes was up the side of the Karst and suddenly we were there.

The site was very rocky and covered by vegetation. One of the guys who took us to the site also helped in the excavation in 1994. He was able to point out that the plane crashed into *that* side of the mountain. He also explained that the rubble fell on top of the plane and there was a big explosion clearing all the vegetation. He also showed us where they found a wrist bone and my Dad's tooth. The tooth was the one major item that determined that it was my Dad's remains. We immediately started finding bits and pieces of the plane (all the big parts had long been scavenged). Throughout the area lay dangerous unexploded 20mm ammunition.

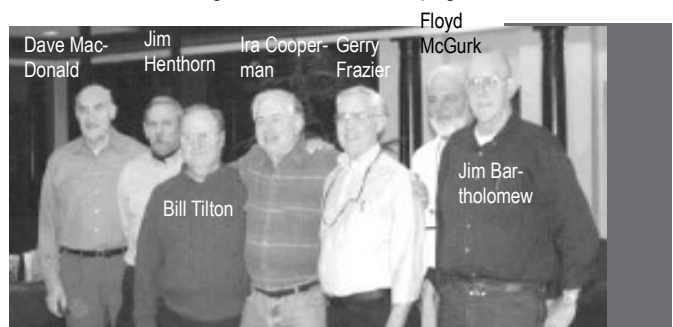
After a bit, I stopped to ponder the situation. Here I was some 15,000 miles from home at my Dad's crash site. I'd made it! This also was where my father had died. I felt so proud of him. I am honored to be his son. He died doing what he believed in. He chose to be there because he was brought up to fight for his country. Right or wrong, he died for his beliefs. He died trying to save the life of two other humans. That is what I am most proud of him for.

We gathered up what little wreckage we had collected and returned to the village, where they had prepared a Baci ceremony for us. We all received blessings from most everyone and had the strings tied around our wrist. It was a very emotional experience. Finally we said our goodbyes and headed out, accompanied by Gome and the schoolteachers. We took them back with us to Tha Khek, the village that is situated on the Mekong across from Nakhon Phanom. There we all spent the night.

The next morning we went shopping for the village. We purchased some notebooks (the type the teacher used), pens, pencils, chalk, toothbrushes, toothpaste, Tylenol, decongestants, Tums (lots of upset stomachs with the spicy food), Tiger Balm, 2 soccer balls, 2 Sepak Takraw balls, cigarettes for the guys, lotion for the younger girls and olive oil for the women (they use it on their face). All of this cost about \$100 (the most expensive item was the notebook paper). Gome did not have a hat so I gave him mine, looked him in the eyes and said, "Cop di lai lai du." Montrí took them to the bus station for their journey back to Ban Nahom. Then Nick and Montrí and I crossed the Mekong back into Thailand. I could not have made this trek without them. And now I am working with some friends to try and extend some help to the people of Ban Nahom at some time in the future.



Monumental Meeting; see "Contes" next page



How Aussies and Americans helped an orphanage

By Doc Ball

Doc was a disc jockey at AFTN-770 at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB 1966-67, AFTN-940 at Ubon RTAFB 1967-68 and AFTN-1450 Korat RTAFB 1969-70.

As a young Air Force staff sergeant, just assigned to Thailand, I got involved in a venture that would touch me in ways I could not imagine. I had reported in as a disc jockey on AFRTS a few days after Christmas 1966, broadcasting “information, education and entertainment” to the troops. It surprised me that we also had a mission to be ambassadors of good will to the Thai people.

That first year went by very quickly and I had not given much thought to the season. Christmas season of 1967 was relatively uneventful. I played Christmas music on the air. As Christmas approached, I found myself getting caught up in the Christmas spirit and getting involved in some of the off base events. Just playing Christmas music to the GIs was not going to cut it. The memory that has stayed with me most involved a small orphanage the men of our base supported.

We needed to find a way to do some big league fund raising, because these kids needed *everything*. Several years before, I had been part of a “radio marathon” to support another area-wide charity, so I had a pretty good idea what kind of funds those things bring in. Sure enough, those first efforts reached all the right hearts and we netted a bit more than \$5,000 for the orphanage. Not bad for a spur of the moment effort, but I figured we could do much better with some planning and advertising.

In the spring of 1968, in my second tour, I wrote to my wife back in Marysville, Kansas about the program, sending along a copy of the base newspaper account of the base’s involvement and what we had already done. I suggested she help us continue our fund raising efforts by involving the Marysville community in our efforts. She wrote back asking for details about the orphanage and suggestions for how she and her friends could help.

The people of Marysville took it from there. The town newspaper, the Marysville Advocate, ran an article about the project, with photos. It explained that it was a joint USAF and Royal Australian Air Force project, with the Aussies and Americans working side by side on construction projects for the orphanage. It noted that the building needed a good roof, which cost about

\$800 U.S. It also noted that the first year death rate for children under four years of age admitted to the orphanage had been 89 percent until Australian and U.S. Air Force doctors stepped in. Thanks to their work, the first year death rate dropped to four percent.

The people of Marysville got busy, enlisting the help of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, church groups, service clubs and citizens. In a month they gathered baby foods, layettes, clothing and toys that were sent to Thailand for the orphans.

That fall, we started organizing our marathon six weeks in advance. I got involved in the planning and advertising of the fund raising drive. The entire station got into the spirit. These guys devoted off duty time, contacting and visiting key organizations, getting ideas for their participation. Since I had done it before, I was the “in-station project manager” and coordinated the marathon from the station. Our Ubon call sign was AFTN-940 so it was natural that we set a goal of raising \$9,400. After a 37-hour marathon we collected \$11,000. It was a lesson in teamwork and camaraderie.

These days I fix my annual case of the holiday “empties” by shifting my focus from self-pity or longing for the “good old days” by focusing on people who desperately need someone’s help. The “radio-thons” in Thailand taught me that. It is a lesson I will never forget. I learned what a few motivated people could accomplish.

Keeping that Bridge of Friendship intact between Thailand and the United States is still a priority and you can do a lot toward that goal. It might help to remember that in today’s jargon, TLC means “tender, loving care.”



Contest: Name The Monument

Most MEM readers are by now aware of the monument TLCB is going to design and fund in Thailand. Officials in Nakhon Phanom have set aside some really attractive park land in the new Elephant Head Lagoon Park, on the west side of the city of Nakhon Phanom, and our design team is finalizing their recommendations. We have set a target of 1 June 2003 for completion of our design. Plans for fund raising are being drafted, with hopes of finding corporate and major private donations in the initial phase. Much depends on the final design, and there are still unresolved issues between the US and Thailand that will need more time to settle. But by June we expect to have a solid idea of what the monument should look like on site, and its potential cost.

Recently, several members of the Monument Committee, and board of directors members (photo at left) who were able to attend, met with chairman Gerry Frazier for an evening of

discussion in Manassas, Virginia, near the site of last year’s TLC Brotherhood reunion. The meeting enabled a number of decisions. The most fundamental change was to expand the theme of the monument. The committee will recommend to the board of directors (and Thai authorities in turn) that the monument be dedicated to honor “all who served” on the non-Communist side, and in remembrance of those who did not return. This is similar to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial—only those who died have their names on the Wall, but the monument honors us all. We hope our partners in Thailand will also embrace this change, if your board of directors does.

This is to be a substantial structure—covering a site 20 meters square—not just a stone in the ground. So far as we know, it will be the first and only such monument in Southeast Asia. Thus it will have significance for veterans who served only in Vietnam, as well as in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia—and elsewhere. It will serve as a focus of emotions for Thais as well, and Australia

see Monument, page 13

Armed HH-43Bs annoyed the squadron commander

By Jim Burns

My first arrival at NKP on a typical hot, humid tropical day, in July 1964 was loud, as the C-123 “shuttle” slammed its tires onto the PSP runway and it seemed that each plank clanked as the wheels rolled to a stop. We then taxied in to the PSP parking ramp and swung around and dropped the rear ramp. I helped the C-123 crew roll off some large fuel bladders full of JP-4 and then stepped off on to the ramp for the first time. This was definitely not the typical base that I was used to. I helped load some of the empty fuel bladders onto the C-123 and she taxied out and was gone.

As I scanned the “base” I saw three HH-43B helicopters, three or four shacks, some more empty and full fuel bladders scattered around the edge of the ramp, some large diesel generators, three or four trucks, an outhouse and about twenty GIs. I began to introduce myself and meet the “base,” all twenty or so of them. I arrived in mid-afternoon and after a short time I was told we had been released from alert for the day and we would be going into town. We all piled into the trucks and headed into town, about 10 miles or so the East, to our hotel, leaving the base and helicopters watched over by the two Thai guards who lived in a small shack near the “front gate” with their wives and families. The trip into town was like a parade, with all the kids and villagers along the way lining the edges of the road and waving to us like they had never seen a GI before. It was like this the whole four months I was there, both mornings and afternoons.

We arrived at the Civilized Hotel, where I was assigned a room in the two-story part of the hotel. We bunked two to a room and had GI beds in the rooms. These beds sagged so badly that after the first night, I had mine replaced with a Thai bed. It was a board with a thin cotton mattress on it. It slept like a dream.

We would get up each day and head out to the base to stand rescue alert for the Navy photoreconnaissance and other fighters flying into Laos and North Vietnam. I was told that the HH-43Bs were brought into Udorn on C-124s and re-assembled there for the flight to NKP. The birds were flown to NKP where they began standing alert. The clam shell doors had been removed as unnecessary for our mission, and we “tweaked” the flaps a little bit, to the point that when it was brought up to full power it only took a very small pull on the collective and it was flying.

Somewhere we had “traded” some rations or something with some group and got two BARs with ammunition, which we mounted from bungee cords in the rear cabin door opening. Now we thought we were AH-43Bs.

One of the Rescue

Jim Burns by a C-124, at left, and on his bike.



Above: two views of The Civilized Hotel in Nakhon Phanom, 1964



squadron commanders dropped in on a HU-16 one day to pay us a visit and got really upset that we had “armed” our helicopters. As a result of his visit, we hid the BARs any time one of the HU-16s or HC-54s showed up. We did not have any over the fence missions while I was there, but we went over a few times to practice pickups. We extended our hoist pickup height by adding a 100-foot rope to the hoist cable, so that if we had a pickup in deep forest we could attach one end of the rope to the hoist cable, throw out the 100 feet of rope and lower the cable to its maximum length. We could then raise the survivor to within 100 feet of the bird, hover up to clear the trees and then fly him to a clear area where we could let him down to the ground and either get him on the regular cable length or land and pick him up.

One day we made a flight to Udorn for something, and on the way over we got caught in a rain shower.



HH-43s on the flightline at Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base.

Right away you could hear the change in the sound of the blades as the fabric peeled back. Once on the ground, I used duct tape to tape the fabric back down and wrapped the blade with it. We had a successful flight back to NKP. Once back at NKP we changed the blades.

Most of our flights were only training flights during my TDY. We did a few PJ jumps to keep up their proficiency. We did not have any fire fighters on our crews at this time, as local base rescue was not our mission. We flew with two pilots, one flight mechanic and one or two PJs.

We were put on a higher alert status on Aug. 2 (Gulf of Tonkin incident) but did not know the reason for a couple of days. However we still would get released from alert and head back to the hotel, except that some of us now had to stay on the base at night to help guard our birds.

While I was at NKP my wife, back in Springfield, Missouri, was giving birth to our first baby, a girl, on August 6, 1964. We had been released from alert and a few of us were sitting out on the balcony of the hotel having a few beers and listening to Hanoi Hannah's music when she came on and said "We want to congratulate Airman First Class James W. Burns, at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, with the HH-43B helicopter unit, on the birth of your baby daughter. She was born on August 6, (she gave the exact weight and length) your wife Ann and the baby are doing fine." Well I nearly fell off the balcony, and decided I had already had too much to drink. When I finally got a letter from my wife about two weeks later Hanoi Hannah had it exactly correct, right down to the ounce.

Once we were relieved of alert duty, we all scrambled to be on the first truck to leave for town. There was a practical reason for this; if you got back to the hotel first you got to take

a shower with the water that had been in the small water tower, that had been heating all day in the sun. If you missed the first truck, the hot water would be used up and you were stuck with a cold shower. Brrr!

One day a C-124 from the unit at Hickam AFB came in, landed long and ran off the overrun at the South end of the runway. This unit had flown a lot of hours accident-free. It broke the nose gear scissors and I think it bent up a couple of props and was stuck in the mud on the overrun. We had to hire a couple of local Caterpillars to drag him out of the mud and back on to the parking ramp. I think it was still sitting there when I left in October.

I don't believe any other aircraft were ever stationed there while I was on this TDY. But we did have a few types stop by for visits and would have the Thuds buzz us on their way back after missions. We had no control tower, so the communications guys controlled everything. They would clear in with the comm guys, but the comm guys wouldn't tell us they were coming. All of a sudden here would be Thuds coming from all four directions, right on the deck, and what seemed like 500 or 600 miles per hour, and scaring the hell out of us. One day, I was working on the rotor head and they came over and I saw one of them coming up the runway and across the ramp right at my bird. He was so low that he had to rise up to miss me. He caused me to jump off the top of the bird to the ramp and he hit a tree at the edge of the ramp and knocked a limb on to the roof of the new mess hall that was being constructed.

The Seabees abandoned some heavy earth moving equipment in 1963. The whole time I was there in 1964 there were several Thai locals digging in a big pit at the South end of the field (behind our shacks). There were a couple of Caterpillars and a large earth scraper, buried by the Seabees before they left. When I came back to NKP in 1969, I was told that the Thais had dug them all out and had them running in town.

This TDY had been a great experience for me and I enjoyed my time in 64 at NKP greatly.



Monument, continued from page 11

lians, Koreans, etc.

The Manassas group also had another inspiration. We need a name for the monument, and they decided to invite suggestions from the TLCB membership. Thus, we will hold a "name that monument" contest.

Considering the theme (above) and location of the monument (Thailand), put on your "thinking caps" and submit suggested monument names. Try to keep them to a few words, and keep in mind that the name in English must readily translate to Thai.

The prize will be the honor of getting your suggested name used for the monument-how could we beat that? Here are the simple rules:

1. Everyone is eligible to submit entries.
2. Enter as often as you like.
3. Entries may be emailed to gfrazier@gisystems.net (Place

"Name the Monument" on the Subject line), or postal mail to: Monument c/o G. Frazier, 6821 Jerome St., Springfield, VA 22150

4. All entries received by 1 June 2003 will be considered.

5. Preliminary judging will be conducted by a committee comprised of the current president of the TLC Brotherhood, the chairman of the Communications Committee, and the chairman of the Monument Committee. The top 3 recommendations of these judges will be submitted to the board of directors, who will vote to select the overall winner, to be announced at the annual meeting in October, at Fort Walton Beach.

The prize may be humble, but this is a real challenge. We are looking for some great ideas from you, so get busy and let's Name that Monument.

Meanwhile, watch for the June issue of MEM and an artist's rendering of the final monument design.



Time to update those email addresses—the Secretary’s Desk

by Ed Miller, Secretary

Sawadee Krup, Brothers and Sisters. I am happy again to report to everyone on administrative business of our organization. First, I would like to thank everyone for his or her support in voting on our Amendment 2 By-law changes. There are no approved Board Minutes to publish for you this issue. Our last Board meeting ended November 24, 2002. But you are already seeing and participating in some issues approved from our last meeting. Look for a Summary in the next MEM issue.

Email Addresses. At the ending of our voting for our amendment it was like pulling teeth to get those votes submitted, but at the end it revealed to us a problem in our personnel records. We have the Brotherhood divided into four areas with one “board member at large” each representing an area. The President solicited the board members to contact members in their areas that had not voted and encourage them to vote. The process did work but revealed that over half of the 130 members not voting could not be contacted because of BAD Email Addresses. Many of us have changed email address at least once since joining the Brotherhood and the most common cause is that you have changed ISP (Internet Service Provider), changing from telephone dial-ups to newer and faster LAN or DSL providers. I am hoping this little reminder in the MEM will reach everyone and remind you to submit any email changes to Ed Heyliger, at AmazingDrH@webtv.net. Ed Heyliger (not myself “Ed Miller”) is the List Master and will in-turn send all necessary TLCB officers the update information. This is important even if you are not on-line and receiving emails from the Brother-

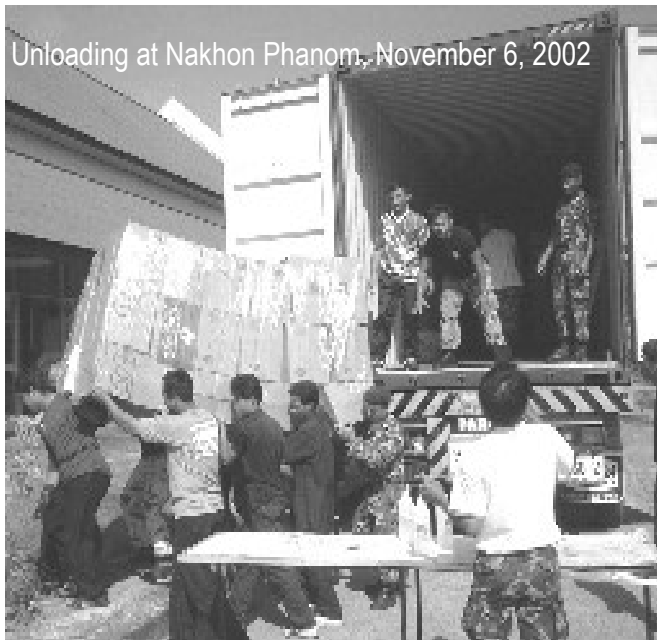
hood or Mission lists. Of course for you off-line members this MEM is our primary means of contacting you but if you later do get email access, please do provide us with your address. You will not be added to any of the email lists unless you request.

Certificate of Membership. By the time you receive this issue of the MEM all members that had renewed their membership (by January 31st) should have received your “Certificate of Membership” along with your permanent TLCB membership cards. We wanted to thank you for your loyal membership and continued support of the TLCB. This certificate I hope you can proudly display in your home or office. I know mine will be!

Help. Just wanted to put in a kind word in for Woody Freeman. I have asked and he accepted to become my assistant. I have given him one of those important Washington sounding titles, “Assistant Secretary of TLCB.” With Woody learning my duties, will ensure that my duties will continue to be accomplished (despite my travels to Thailand).



Container, continued from page 4



and thence to Bangkok. We had not even seen a detailed manifest, nor had we any idea what arrangements could be made to clear customs at Bangkok and get the huge container to its destination. Here’s where the story could be strung out into chapters. It involved numerous international phone calls and FAXes, several visits to officials in the Thai embassy in Washington, and even severe scoldings of gentle John Middlewood, who had almost no information about the shipment, by officials

in Thailand and even by a woman at the Hong Kong freight forwarding company’s Bangkok branch. Even though there was a no-cost delay when the container was unloaded at the wrong port, in the end bureaucratic delays and shipment within Thailand cost an unexpected \$3000 more, which our Assistance Fund paid. But the rewards were enormous! Furthermore, without the direct support and intervention of the Red Cross of Nakhon Phanom Province I think that container would still be costing someone demurrage on the dock at Bangkok!

As you can see in the photograph, the container really did arrive, and it really did have a vast quantity of supplies. In a well-organized process, the hospital received the bulk of 600 boxes of medical supplies. Unfortunately, while useful, much of this was disappointing for various reasons. But the school supply deliveries were supervised by John Middlewood, and went out to the most impoverished, most neglected of the rural schools in that part of Thailand, where they made a great impact. Over 900 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students received toys, and supplies such as notebooks, pencils, paper and teacher’s supplies went to 19 schools, covering about 3000 students. We estimate about 5000 children and parents benefited by clothing that was distributed to 20 schools. We were even able to use about 50 boxes of English language books. These were obviously of somewhat less utility, but even so each school accepted from 30 to 50 books and the balance went to the high school and the city library.

We learned some important lessons this time, and now John Sweet is making plans to do it again—only much better! *Watch for announcements.*

