



Mekong Express Mail

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THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

Combining fun and business in SEA

by *Bill Tilton*

This Fall, a group of like-minded souls took a tour that visited some of Mac Thompson's Laos projects and one project that the TLC Brotherhood helped the Air Commando Association (ACA) implement there. Planning started about ten months earlier, when John Sweet and I decided this would be a good time for another trip back across the Pacific. John put out invitations to all to join the trip, and then devoted many hours to researching prices, places, travel modes, and accommodations. Early on we drew Mac Thompson and John Middlewood into the process. When we finally made the trip, Les and Carolyn Thompson, Mac and Sunee Thompson, George Shenberger, and George's Pennsylvania, long-time friend, Monty Dubs joined John and

Sweet and Thelma and me. George's wife didn't feel like making that long trek again. Monty has since joined the TLCB.

The Itinerary

We will describe just a portion of what we saw and did with the limited space the MEM affords. In brief, the itinerary for the stateside crowd was to meet in Bangkok and take the overnight



Nakhon Phanom radio personality and TLCB member Phomphan Kulapa, at left, with microphone, hosted a special party in his own back yard. Photos by author.

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Xaysombon Update: Mac Thompson

Before our group came together in Bangkok on September 29th, Mac Thompson and his wife, Sunee, had already set out on a followup visit to an area that was not on our itinerary. Here is what Mac reports:

In Vientiane, we stayed at the Asian Pavilion Hotel, the somewhat famous old Constellation from pre-1975. It used to be the place where you could find journalists, CIA guys, Russian diplomats and KGB, and a host of other interesting

that they no longer have to double shift classes. In our opinion this was a good successful project.

Back at the Xaysomboun market I visited the district school chief. Since this first tranche of furniture had gone so well, we handed over another bundle of kip to buy furniture for another school with unused empty rooms. Then, since we'd done pretty much what we came to Xaysomboun for, we returned to the Asian Pavilion Hotel in Vientiane, and had two days free for catching up with friends there, whom I don't get to meet with very often. Then the TLCB travelers arrived on Sunday and things got real busy.



Above, empty self-help classroom at Xaysombon. Below, desks and benches provided by TLCB Assistance have already seen heavy use. Each has a TLCB sticker, but these often get picked off by students—kids are kids no matter where they live! Photos by Mac Thompson.



people. From here, Sunee and I visited Xaysomboun (XSB) to check on \$2600 worth of school furniture TLCB Assistance had paid for in May. This was to furnish a bare, three-room building the villagers themselves had funded and built to meet their shortage of primary school facilities. A local sawmill and furniture maker delivered 70 desk sets plus benches, desks, and cabinets for teachers for this cost.

Sunee and I were the only customers at the Phu Bia Hotel, built to handle hordes of tourists who have not yet found this to be an attractive destination. Next morning we visited the Xaysomboun District Education office, picked up an official, and motored about one hour east to the Moug Om valley, which is a really nice area of farming, cattle raising, and home to mostly Hmong villagers with some Khamu and a few Lao. At the Tham Lo school the kids were at recess playing in the school yard. The TLCB funded furniture looks great, and the kids and the teachers are quite pleased with it and the fact

train to Vientiane, where we would join up with Mac and Sunee midway through their trip to Laos (see story at left).

Next day we would travel to Luang Prabang for a few days of sightseeing, and come back part way by van to Phonsavahn on the Plain of Jars to visit some school projects. Leaving Mac and Sunee to drive home to Bangkok, we would fly to Vientiane from Phonsavahn to meet up with Jeff Hudgens and his party.

We would all travel by van to Thakkek to see the Air Commando Association's "Heinie Aderholt" project, then cross by ferry to Nakhon Phanom for the Buddhist celebration called the "Fireboat Festival." From there the party would proceed in various directions for sight-seeing or to return home.

Travel in SEA

We learned two important travel lessons this time. One is: do not expect luxury on the "1st Class Thai Railways sleeper service" between Bangkok and Nong Khai. Only take it because it is cheap and avoids the cost of a hotel for that night. The other lesson: the rainy season can extend way into October in Thailand! Bangkok was flooding, Thailand was flooding, and the thunderstorms kept rolling in! I hope that by the time you read this the waters will have subsided. But somehow weather and flooding did not disrupt any part of our main trip together. It was only after we were safely at home that Mac Thompson was forced to higher ground.

The basic group met in Bangkok, and spent some days acclimating and touring, and met Les and Myuree Strouse for lunch at a Patpong Road favorite bar called "Madrid." Les had some cheap in-country cellphones for us, just in case. We then headed by overnight train to Vientiane. The Thai railroad terminal is in Nong Khai. And the terminus of the tiny Lao National Railway, which seems to consist of two little passenger cars, crosses the Friendship Bridge from Nong Khai to a customs station just inside Laos, where Mac, Sunee, and Lao driver Somphou. They took us on by van to Vientiane, where we met local residents and TLCB members Art Crisfield (see September 2011 issue of MEM), Jim Michener, and Tony

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Assistance Committee Report for 2011

by John Schillo, Chairman

Each year at the reunion I give a report to bring everyone up to speed on what has been going on with the Assistance Program. Like many other members I was not able to attend the reunion this year, so Assistant Chairman John Sweet delivered the report for me. Let me take this opportunity to bring everyone up to date on the Assistance program.

Before we can talk about 2011, I need to close out last year. We finished out 2010 with a total of 38 motions that amounted to \$37,020.62, which brought our total expenditures to \$295,013.43. This is where we started 2011. In the first three quarters of this year, we approved 28 motions in the amount of \$38,119.26. Our overall total is now \$333,132.69. You can find the details of all of these motions on the Assistance page of our website.

all no doubt read Mac Thompson's reports from Laos in the MEM. Mac must rent a truck in Laos and when he gets that truck stuck in the river, we must pull it out. That's where your dues money comes in. A portion of your dues is set aside to pay the expenses that we must incur. (Unless you prefer we leave Mac in the river) So far this year the Assistance Expense Account has used \$3,077.50 to help accomplish our mission without using any donated money to cover these expenses.

While this report is a lot of dry accounting numbers and rather boring, I would like to point out that it is a pretty impressive operation considering we are only 400 plus people. While over \$333,000 may seem to be, and is, a large amount of money, it has taken almost 13 years to get there. When you break down the numbers, it actually averages out to be about \$60 per year per member. So, if you are wondering what your meager donation can do, the answer is, it can do a lot when combined with the donations of other members who are thinking the same thought. Included in this issue is a list of everyone who contributed in 2010 to make the Assistance Program a success. Remember, this is the 2010 list and does not include contributions made this year. That list won't be available until later in 2012.



One of the most successful and enduring items TLCB Assistance provides in Thailand is concrete tables and benches. Photos submitted by John Middlewood,

As of the reunion, our donations so far for this year amount to \$25,932.25. I depend on the Treasurer's Report and I only track motions versus donations in any year as a way of determining if the Assistance program is self sustaining. We don't have the luxury of engaging in deficit spending, but we do operate pretty close to the line. Rosie's quilt proceeds, the auction earnings, and the generosity of the board of directors keep us in the black from year to year. And again this year, those three events have put us on a good financial footing. I want to thank Rosie, the board of directors, and everyone who took part in the auction for their support, both those who bought and the auctioneers who "convinced" them to buy.

As you know, all of your donations go 100% to help the kids, but we can't do that without incurring some expenses. You have



At Ban Noi Na Nuea school, school official, Maew Middlewood, Phomphan Kulapa, and John Middlewood watch as schoolgirl models new shirts from TLCB.

Zola. The three of them joined us for lunch at our hotel with U.S. Ambassador to Laos, Honorable Karen Stewart. Since it was a Sunday, Ambassador Stewart was able to spend a very pleasant afternoon chatting with us about her mission and our projects, of which she is an enthusiastic supporter.

Luang Prabang

The royal capital of Laos until 1975, Luang Prabang is now a World Heritage site and a popular tourist destination. While there, our group made good use of our time, first taking an old river trade boat—now converted to tourist duty—to the Buddha cave at Pak Ou, followed by lunch across the Mekong in a charming, outdoor restaurant high on stilts on the riverbank. The Thompsons stopped off at a shop improbably named “Big Brother Mouse,” where they purchased ten packs of educational booklets, 30 to a pack, for distribution on our travels. We visited the royal palace museum the next day to see how Lao royalty was living in 1975, modestly, by the looks of it. We also climbed the 328 steps to the top of the Phou Sy hill, atop which sits a temple in the middle of the city, and then rode by van and powered pirogues, the “long-tail” boats with long propeller shafts, to see the waterfalls at Tad Se.

The Plain of Jars

After the sightseeing in Luang Prabang, on the 6th of October, we rode South on Route 13 to Phou Khoun, then turned East on Route 7, one of the most twisted and tortured roads in all of Laos, I’m sure, to the Plain of Jars, or PDJ. We checked in to our guest house in the town of Phonsavanh,



Nancy and John Sweet (waving carefully to maintain balance), ride with Mac and Sune Thompson to Tad Se waterfall in a “longtail” pirogue.

which has just a little bit of a tourist atmosphere because of the famous, giant stone jars that are strewn around the high plateau there. About 15 miles across, the area is a little strange for Laos because it is rolling grass and farmland, and there are conifers in the forests instead of the steamy jungle we are used to seeing. In this region we saw little if any teak, which is abundant elsewhere. Besides being considered one of the most important archeological sites in Asia, the other thing that attracts visitors these days is that the PDJ was where most of the land force combat took place during the Secret

War in the 1960s and 1970s. The Communist headquarters we knew as Ban Ban is about 20 miles to the East of the plain. Famous LS-20A, Long Chieng, is about 15 miles southwest of the plain. Art Crisfield joined us again for these visits, which was particularly important because Mac learned of these PDJ projects from Art. Art is fluent in the dialects spoken there and he did an excellent job of interpreting for us.

Khang Don School Success

The first stop was at Khang Don primary school, east of Phonsavanh, where we had funded a small library and a new, shortened soccer field. The village population is mostly Hmong, and the girls wore their colorful tribal dress for our visit. In a scene just like the one enjoyed by Mac and party in May (see previous issue of MEM), we proceeded through the gate and between two rows of kids who were clapping, salut-



Girls in traditional Hmong costumes of their tribe salute American visitors and Lao officials entering the school grounds at Khang Don primary school.

ing, and smiling, and placed paper chains around our necks.

We were truly impressed with how good this school looked in comparison to others we have seen. Much of the reason is work the TLC Brotherhood has done! While the classrooms are adequate, in nice weather such as we were having, the classes were held outside, and the teachers and students seemed to be enjoying the occasion very much. We watched the animated lessons of one teacher, who somehow held the rapt attention of his young students, even with these gawking farangs (foreigners) snapping photos and standing around. One little boy will never forget when he drew a blank and could not finish reciting an assignment, to the cheerful jeers of his classmates!

Soon the ceremonial part began, starting with the Lao traditional baci party. Guests are seated around an elaborate and colorful centerpiece, upon which are pre-positioned an abundant number of foot-long white, cotton strings. Fruit and boiled eggs surround the centerpiece. To symbolize and ensure harmony and balance in the soul and organs of the

See SEA, continued on page 10.

WAR COMES TO DONG HENE CLUSTER

Part 2

(Memories of my First Foreign Service Assignment)

Jack Huxtable, 2011

A RE-CAP

Jack's experience began in a remote Lao village near the Ho Chi Minh Trail in 1966 when he was 28. His job required three months of area studies and six months of language instruction prior to becoming a Foreign Service Officer. To quote from the previous MEM, his job with USAID featured "close association with villagers and lots of field work." Jack communicated with his family from upstate New York and Marge, a USAID nurse in Vietnam, while he was away and the saved letters helped him document times, places, and events for this article.

The plan for community development in Laos was following a cluster concept. The team would survey needs, develop plans with local leaders, and start small projects with hopes that the villager enthusiasm would spread with support for the Lao Government and its efforts to contain communism. This proved quite dangerous at times, as you will read.

JACK'S ADVENTURE CONTINUES

WHILE MEANDERING IN MALAYSIA

In Washington, Marge had been accepted in a USAID, Vietnam program. She was working diligently with an intensive course in the Vietnamese language at FSI and was preparing to depart in mid October. She was headed in my direction and I needed a few days off from the rigors of village life in Dong Hene, so we arranged a rendezvous in Malaysia. I wrote a letter in flight from Penang on October 22, 1966 on the way to meet Marge in Kuala Lumpur. I described beautiful beaches and the fancy bed-tea service which I said was a holdover from British traditions. We toured Malaysia for five days, including her Peace Corps site at Tampin, turtle beaches on straits of Malacca, and the incredible island of Kota Baru. We stayed at a government guest house where we both remember sampling some hand-rolled cigarettes made from medicinal herbs. One night just after a sunset joint there was a severe thunderstorm and a tremendous commotion in the kitchen. Monkeys had gotten in and broken into our food pack.

When she arrived in Saigon, October 31, Marge wrote home enthusiastically about the "fabulous week in Malaysia," and on November 10 she reported being on-the-job in Phu Vinh, a provincial capital 80 miles south of Saigon. Her USAID responsibilities included training Vietnamese nurses in a hospital and an orphanage. A special U.S. military unit provided security.

Back in Laos, November found us with expanded cluster development activities into villages of all three districts. Our Pennsylvania volunteer, Fred, and his Lao assistant, Chantay, were living in a bamboo house in the village of Pakannya and assisting villagers with school repairs. Lew (California student) and his assistant, Prasert, had moved 30 kilometers east to Muang Phalane. The District Chief insisted they take residence in an old, but very functional dispensary. They were working on a variety of projects with displaced villagers from the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Forty two years later, when Marge and I visited Phalane, former friends were still talking about Than Lew and his immensely successful community garden.

Given the political/military situation at the time, the decision to expand cluster activities, and therefore base Americans

in additional districts, was not taken lightly. The expansion meant increased exposure and additional vulnerability. Each new operating location required housing facilities, a vehicle, and a generator/radio for communication. We spent weeks discussing the idea with district leaders and those in USAID's bureaucracy. Whether the development potential was worth the risk was on everyone's mind. The volunteers were anxious to live and work as remotely as possible. USAID, and presumably the Royal Lao Government (RLG), were happy to claim an operating presence in those areas.

The year was coming to a close. On December 12, I was preparing for an important first-time field visit the next day by Director Joe Mendenhall and his wife, Noni. Sandy Stone, USAID area coordinator, and his wife Ruth, accompanied the group with appropriate escorts and fanfare. After touring a few activity sites with the Chao Muang and other village officials, the Director decided to make an impromptu speech. Guess who was called upon to provide simultaneous translation! Guess who was pleased with himself!

Marge and I met again in Vientiane for an exciting 3 days at Christmas. We toured the town, including an exciting trip to the morning market, That Luang, and night life in Dong Phalan. We tried unsuccessfully to fly back to Savannakhet so she could see the lay of the land, but when flights didn't work out, she returned directly to Saigon. By the next milk run south I was back at work in Muang Phalane. I never mentioned it by mail, but I know both Lew and I will never forget a New Year's Eve Party with Sandy and Ruth Stone. Lew and I drove from Phalane to Savane for the affair. After a cocktail in Seno with French hospital staff, we had a slight mishap on the road and had to drive part of the trip with a steaming jeep radiator that almost ruined the motor. Sandy could have been upset about the jeep, but instead joked about the mistake for several weeks.

MUANG PHALANE

Because of its unique location and political significance, the District of Muang Phalane deserves special mention. For the first few months of 1967, I worked from there and lived with Lew. After our June 24 wedding, Lew was gone and in spite

See **Dong Hene**, continued on page 6.

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Editor: Dave MacDonald (Dav16Mac@AOL.com)
Distribution: John Duffin *Composition:* Bill Tilton

TLC Brotherhood Contacts

Ed Stein, list master (estein1945@hotmail.com)
 Bob Norway, web master (examiner@cfl.rr.com)

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Board of Directors and Committee Chairmen

2010-2011, showing year of term-end

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Make all payments payable to **The TLC Brotherhood, Inc.**
 Mail them to the treasurer, at:

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 P.O. Box 343
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Write payment purpose and member number on check.

Examples:

Dues	Student Assistance Fund
Assistance	BX purchase
Medical Fund	etc.

Reunion 2012: San Antonio, Texas, Oct 11-14

TLCB tax return and board minutes: On web site, in *members only* section. Password: Castor as of 1/1/12

Dong Hene, continued from page 5.

of the questionable security situation, it was determined that Marge could live there. The District Center, or village of Phalane as we called it, is located in central Laos, 103 kilometers east of the Thai Lao border on Route 9. Most of its 300 or so villagers grew paddy rice. The road, which connects Savannakhet and Quang Tri on Vietnam's coast, was constructed from red lateritic clay and a few paving stones in the early 1900s during the French period. Major bridges were located at Dong Hene, Phalane, Muang Phine, and Tchepone. Old timers remember making the trip from Laos to the beaches of Vietnam in a day. In 1967, driving an all-wheel vehicle from Savannakhet to Phalane in the rainy season would consume at least three hours and might involve using the winch to climb out of the mud. A pile of debris and a fallen tree across the road at a point five km east of town marked the end of the way. It reminded us that we were headed toward the Ho Chi Minh trail and had better turn back. It was the same route that at one time during the war our Defense Secretary, Robert McNamara, proposed electrifying.

Today if you mention the name Muang Phalane some Lao will know the place is famous for the dinosaur bones discovered there a few years ago by a French Zoologist. A sign in the middle of town directs tourists to a path which leads to dinosaur footprints that you can clearly see in the slate stones on the side of the Sesamsoi River. The river flows over a series of steps south to the larger Sebanghiang and eventually empties into the Mekong. Every afternoon we lived there in

“Phalane might also be remembered as the birthplace of Kong Le...”

1967, Marge and I bathed and played in the Sesamsoi with the villagers. On real hot, humid evenings we often went for a second bath.

Besides being noteworthy for having footprints of Tyrannosaurus Rex, Phalane might also be remembered as the birthplace of Kong Le, a famous Lao General who took over the rightist government for a while in a 1960 coup. The physically small 5 foot 1 inch tall, 115 pound, but charismatic leader became even more famous when he appeared on the front cover of *Time*, June 26, 1964.

Ted Allman, a journalist specializing in Southeast Asian news, authored a 1969 article entitled, “Muong Phalane: Much Ado about Nothing” recounting the town's many battles between right and left forces. Describing its condition at the time, he wrote, “The current phase of Muong Phalane's notoriety began less than two years ago in the town apparently through a process of mutual disinclination to shed blood, rather than by roaring battle, fell to the Pathet Lao.” Thankfully Allman remembered to note the town's only fried rice/noodle, restaurant, owned by a Chinese man known locally as Chek Pat. Anyone who ever lived and worked in Phalane remembers the good taste of Chek Pat's fried rice, available around the clock.

AIR TRAFFIC GALORE

By early 1967 with the intensity of the “Secret War” increasing, skies over central Laos were noisy. All manner of military

Continued next page.



*Sesamsoi River
Muang Phalane, Laos, 1967*

Marge and Jack relaxing in Secret War! Phalane was 30 kilometers from The Trail. Photos furnished by the author.

aircraft were flying from bases in Thailand to targets in North Vietnam and Laos. Re-reading "The Ravens" by Christopher Robbins, I realized what a variety of aircraft were being used. Phalane was only 30 kilometers west of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, where much of the spotting and bombing took place. The main villages of that area were largely empty. We were compelled to help a trickle of those who ran from their homes. They told us in detail about their lives, sleeping in caves and tending their fields at night. Although some concern was expressed by the U.S. Air Force regarding short rounds, a term referring to inadvertently hitting friendly targets, we didn't think much about it and went about our work.

My note home, January 16, 1967, described development activities underway and some difficulty I was having with officials in Dong Hene. The District Officer there, Chao Muang, wanted a USAID jeep, which I could not provide. Because of this I detected some tension in the air, so I decided to stay more time with Lew Sitzer in Phalane. In the few months he had lived there, Lew had developed a close relationship with villagers and village leaders. He was already popular and well known for his gardening, especially helping those displaced villagers from the east.

I reported that a new communication link with Marge in Phu Vinh had been established. An Air Force friend was allowing her to use the radio during off-hours so we could talk once a

week between Muang Phalane and Phu Vinh. We used special code words so others on the net would not know who was talking, but after a month or so the USAID operator discovered our secret.

The village atmosphere in Phalane could only be described as friendly, peaceful, and quiet. Because it was situated at the end of the road, there was no thru traffic. A local bus ran between the village and Savannakhet once a day but didn't keep to any particular schedule. The roadside market opened at 5 A.M. and closed two hours later, making it necessary for early shoppers to use a flashlight.

SHORT ROUNDS

One sleepy morning, February 13, 1967, at 7 A.M. the tranquil routine in Phalane was abruptly interrupted. Three F-105 jets screamed overhead without warning. According to Lew, who was on his way to the village market at the time, the planes came from the west and circled once at low level. During a second and third go-around they dropped their deadly load of eighteen, 750 pound bombs. Three

villagers died almost immediately and another 15 were badly injured. At least 20 houses were destroyed and many others, including the school, were hit by flying debris. At least three of the bombs were time-fused so they didn't explode for a few minutes. Several others had to be dug out and detonated. One that was buried in soft sand near the temple eluded even the most experienced ordinance technicians for weeks. When the bomb's entrance was finally discovered one day, we were amazed at how inconspicuous a mark it made. When it was finally detonated, clumps of earth came raining down on the thatched roofs of 10 houses and damaged the temple walls.

For the first few minutes after the initial explosions everyone ran. Villagers were fearful of additional strikes. Lew tried desperately to contact the pilots with a hand-held ground-to-air radio. When that failed, he cranked up the portable generator and was able to radio a distress call to USAID Savannakhet, where I was located. Although complete details were never made available, we think the pilots must have realized their mistake during a third daylight pass and radioed the Air Force base at Nakhon Phanom (NKP), Thailand for help too. (An investigation several weeks later revealed that the intended target was Muang Phine, 24 nautical miles east of Phalane, which had the same river-road layout.)

Within an hour, Sandy Stone and I were on board an H-34

See **Dong Hene**, continued on page 8

Dong Hene. continued from page 7.

Chopper bound for Phalane's airstrip, known as Lima site 61. Jolly Green Choppers with medics were also on their way from NKP to evacuate wounded and provide medical assistance. After immediate medical care, our priority was to find, dig out, and detonate the remaining live bombs. We needed desperately to assure 200 terrified villagers that another mistaken strike would not occur. There were several doubters. For two nights they were afraid to stay in what was left of their houses for fear of another strike, so Lew ate and slept in the nearby



Main street of Phalane after airstrike by F-105s, February, 1967. Target was supposed to be Muong Phine. EOD expert from NKP came to assist with unexploded bombs while Jack tried to retain trust of terrified villagers. However, "...everyone automatically knew there was money to be made."

forest with them. We tried to show movies with a portable unit but they voiced fear that planes might see the lighted screen and hit us again. It was obvious that immediate reconstruction action was needed if we were to maintain their allegiance,

Without further ado my job description changed that day from Community Development Advisor (CDA) to Reconstruction Manager. We needed visual evidence immediately to convince our village friends that the U.S. could control planes in the skies overhead and that Phalane would be rebuilt again. Fortunately radio connection with USAID Savannakhet was still open. Thankfully too village leaders with whom we had a trustful relationship tried hard to understand our situation and believed we would stay and help.

Hours after the medical airlift, an ordinance demolition expert named Eddie arrived from NKP to help us identify bombs and manage the disposal process. An immediate order was sent for truckloads of rice, cement, tin roofing, hardware,

and carpenters.

Somehow everyone automatically knew there was money to be made. A committee was formed to assess damages, record names, and document claims. To help our capable assistants, Prasert and Somphong, we hired Khambang, from the nearby village of Ban Kalong, and Thongseun, a native of Phalane, to administer self-help activities, including bomb digging, that would soon be underway. Thai carpenters, truckloads of building supplies, and rice started to arrive.

DELICATE DIGGING

Eddie pointed to the lip formed by a bomb when it enters the earth. He convinced us that if they didn't explode within a few minutes after impact, you could safely dig out the undetonated bombs by hand. Contact by a shovel or pickaxe would not cause the bomb to explode he explained. Thongseun and Khambang formed a team of village bomb excavators who were happy to dig for six hours a day. Most members of their team were displaced villagers from the east. We paid each digger 500 Kip and a kilo of rice per day. According to my dusty old report, we tried to give everyone affected a fair deal. One man who lost his wife received a year's supply of milk for the baby. Relatives of the injured were transported from Savannakhet to Khon Kaen by the attaché plane on

at least two occasions. The district committee distributed rice, blankets, tarps, and other supplies.

TACAN TRIAL

On March 10, when U.S. Ambassador William Sullivan arrived by H-34 chopper, the anxiety level had diminished somewhat. Reconstruction work was underway for everyone to see. All but one of the bombs had been detonated, and repairs on several houses were proceeding swiftly. The Ambassador assured us, and I tried to assure the villagers by translating his words, that the U.S. would stand by its obligation to rebuild. He didn't announce it publicly, but made a decision approving the installation of a TACAN radar station at Phalane's airstrip three kilometers northeast of the village. He also placed a ten nautical mile off-limit radius (no fly zone) around the village and imposed a minimum of 15,000-foot ceiling for all aircraft flying in the vicinity.

TACAN is the military abbreviation for Tactical Air Navigation. It was the most sophisticated radio navigational aid of

Continued next page.

the time, and a few days later the mobile unit was airlifted in from Udorn. The station was included in a program known as Project Heavy Green which required electricity from three, 15 Kw generators and needed two U.S. technicians for its operation. The signal produced allows pilots to know precisely how distant they are from the transmitter antenna. According to experts, when used in conjunction with other units located at Phu Pa Thi in the north (LS 85) and Saravane (LS 44) in the south, the TACAN would greatly increase precision and lessen the possibility of short rounds or another mistake.

Using our best Lao language and with demonstration trips to the airstrip, we tried to reassure villagers that the sophisticated radios and two American technicians would prevent any more bombing runs. We then had the undamaged village bridge over the Sesamsoi River painted a bright orange. This we explained "would help pilots identify Phalane from the air." I remember discussions with Air Force personnel sent to Phalane to investigate the incident and hearing them note with amazement at how not one of the 18 bombs dropped hit the bridge. We assumed it would have been the most obvious target. Media coverage of the Vietnam conflict continued non-stop. No one bothered to write about a bombing mistake in little ole Muang Phalane and I was glad that no one at home had read about it in the newspaper.

TRAGEDY IN THE MOUNTAINS

Another setback to our cluster development plans came on March 25, when tragic news arrived from Pakannya. Our volunteer colleague, Fred Cheydleur, his assistant Chantay, and 12 Lao government troops were killed by PL Forces. The Aye Nong came into the village at night and shot point blank through the floor of their thatched houses. Somphong and I shuddered when we realized that we had traveled to the village by road and slept in Fred's house only two days earlier. Sam Haight, our Deputy Director of RDD, had traveled to the village and urged Fred to leave the very day of his death. Fred trusted everyone and could not be persuaded to leave. I was away with other USAID officers at a meeting in Vientiane. When we were assured that FAR troops had regained control, Tony Babb, CDA, Lahanam, and I went to the site by H-34 chopper to retrieve the remains. Fred's death was the second IVS tragedy that year. Arthur Stillman, who lived in a village near Pakse, had died in a road ambush a few months earlier.

We were devastated. Our cluster walls were crumbling. Could we possibly continue? Should we continue? After a memorial service in Vientiane for both Fred and Chantay, Lew took vacation leave in Cambodia where he wrote a memorable three-page emotional eulogy letter to his dear friend. Describing their friendship he said, "You were a younger brother to me and I was able to join in dialogue to help with your conflicts and pursuits only because I saw some of myself in you. Fred, we were vastly different yet we both realized and felt the thread of emotion and warmth that was always trying to bind us – warmth that was able to absorb all differences."

A USAID/Embassy security reassessment followed and all IVS volunteers were withdrawn from the cluster in April. I don't remember receiving any official written word, but apparently high level meetings were held and a decision reached. USAID

Cluster operations could continue. I was deeply concerned about what was ahead, but somewhat relieved that I did not have to move.

WEDDING BELLS

Fred's tragic death on March 25th impacted our lives in many ways. It affected our very personal plans too. I had purchased an engagement ring in Vientiane the week earlier and was scheduled to meet Marge in Saigon on March 26. With the lack of communication facilities there was no way to send a delay message to Marge, who was waiting at Tan Son Nut Airport just outside of Saigon.

Some days later I arrived in Savannakhet from Phalane with ring in hand ready for the excursion to Vietnam. Marge's Uncle Mike, who was working in Saigon at the time, met my plane and sent me on another flight to her headquarters in Phu Vinh. For three days we toured her medical facilities, met the Air Force personnel, and talked about our future plans. The ring seemed to fit. My letter home from Saigon, April 4, started out, "Brace yourselves one and all! The third hat of the Huxtable Clan has been thrown into the ring. Marge and I will be married on June 24 in Saigon." I explained that we would miss having everyone present for the occasion and noted that I had yet to meet her mother.

We continued plans for the June 24 extravaganza by holding weekly conversations over the USAID-Air Force Radio. We will never forget a close disaster on June 23. Arriving in Savannakhet late after a difficult drive from Phalane, I almost missed the DC-6 Royal Air Lao flight to Saigon. When my jeep pulled up the doors of the aircraft were already closed, the stairs had been removed, and the propellers were turning! Because I ran in front frantically waving a paper, they stopped and pulled me aboard. Yes, that's right.....they pulled me aboard. We were half way to Saigon before I stopped sweating.

Since none of our relatives were able to attend, Marge had enlisted the help of her USAID work colleagues. Max Walton served as Best Man and Yaeko Arashiro was Maid of Honor. Marge's good friend and classmate from Mercy School of Nursing in Pittsburgh, Helen Hornhart, served as photographer. Barbara Baden and several others participated in the Queen of Peace Chapel Ceremony. We got to the church on time with the use of USAID sedans and picked up the wedding cake by a motorized rickshaw. The bride wore her home-made dress and carried a bouquet of Vietnamese gladiolas. We will always remember hearing war-related explosions when Father Robert Crawford read our vows. The noise continued as we toasted with champagne during a sumptuous wedding breakfast atop the Embassy Hotel.

Festivities complete, we flew from Tan Son Nut to Don Muang/Bangkok where we took a train to Hua Hin. We vacationed at the beach in southern Thailand for several days, trained to Chiang Mai, visited Dennis Brennan in Chiang Rai, and finally returned to Laos by crossing the Mekong River at Ban Houie Sai. We didn't know it then, but in 1980 Dennis was to become USAID Director and my boss in Kathmandu, Nepal.



"Dong Hene," to be continued in a future issue.



In nice weather teachers often take classes outside. Kids followed this animated teacher with surprising concentration even while farang tourists gazed at them and took pictures, at Khang Don school in the PDJ.



Monty Dubs taking dance instructions from young expert.

body, this ceremony is a remnant of the times before Buddhism became the religion of the land. Hosts hand fruit and hard-boiled eggs to their guests, and tie the short pieces of string around their guest's wrists. By the time every host has tied a string around the wrist of every guest, each will have a dozen or more strings. Then the question is, when do you remove them? Some cut them off almost right away, but others let them stay for at least three days to ensure health, prosperity, and good luck. This ceremony is not to be taken lightly, as many Lao people are only subject of a baci once or twice in their lifetime. We then enjoyed some local food and some beer (try that in a US grade school) under the trees while officials greeted and thanked us and we expressed our pleasure through Art Crisfield's patient translations. With that, the music started and soon we were all trying not to look too stupid as we imitated the graceful native dances with the kids. We were gratified to notice that the Lao officials were no better at this than we were!

At Khang Don, we inspected the completed TLCB library project and presented our Big Brother Mouse book pack and

some quality soccer balls, bought for us by Art with discretionary funds voted on by the Assistance Committee in case our group found worthy ways to spend them. We also watched as kids threw themselves into an energetic soccer match on the fine new field we had funded. Clearly our money has been well-spent at this school. The TLC Brotherhood paid for the grading and materials and local citizens furnished the labor.

Long Piew, School in Need

After seeing what our money can do when carefully spent, we proceeded to another school to see a proposed new project. We drove East on Route 7 until coming to the small square of the once-famed Communist military headquarters town of Ban Ban, and then a few miles up Route 6 to the large secondary school known as Long Piew. Here we learned a little about the strong urge for education in Laos today. The remote villages, ethnically Hmong, Phoun and Khamu races, have no schools within walking distance at all. Long Piew has dormitories where children can come to live and continue their education at this school, albeit also to avoid hard labor with their parents in the fields. The demand far exceeds the size of the facilities.

At this school, which is clean and neat but somewhat rickety, we were shown the existing dorms and dining facilities. Our plan is to propose dorm rehabs and an additional building, a new kitchen, and new toilets. The children who live here cook all of their own meals in a kitchen that is really little more than an open shed over some rickety tables. In good weather it is merely dusty and uncomfortable, but in stormy weather it must be muddy and windy as well. Few of our readers would recognize it as a kitchen. Students cook food over charcoal braziers in the assorted pots and pans that are available, and there is neither refrigeration nor even running water and plumbing. Food or supplies cannot be stored in this open structure, of course.

We were invited to visit the dormitories, where the students sat politely on their sleeping platforms in neatly kept rooms. There were 20 girls in one room and the adjacent room

Continued next page.



Girls in their dormitory at Long Piew school, near Ban Ban.

slept 21 boys. The school guide told us that the children are very good, but it is a problem that the girls can hear the boys and vice versa, through the thin wall between them. The project that Mr. Soundeuan, our main contact with the Xieng Khouang Provincial Education Service, is going to propose will include a new additional dormitory building and upgrades to the existing ones. Art Crisfield and Mac Thompson will evaluate the proposal for submission to



So-called kitchen at Long Piew, where boarding students cook all their own food. Bucket-shaped objects on the floor are charcoal "stoves."

the TLCB Assistance Committee.

Ban Piew also held a baci ceremony for our party, but this time inside a classroom. The steps up were merely some boards loosely nailed together. Some of us worried that we heavy Americans might collapse them, or perhaps one of us would lose his or her balance and fall off, but nothing bad happened. After the ceremony, once again the speeches extolled TLCB for our fine works and celebrated the friendship that has sprung up between us and the Lao people. Our principal sponsor here, Mr. Soundeuan, prefers levity to solemnity and chided the local officials for being so formal. This loosened things up a bit, and again through Art's translations, we all ended up smiling and laughing. There was some mention of music being played, and students appeared with some instruments, but there was no electricity for the sound system there and in any case, it was time for us to return to Phonsavanh for dinner.

In Phonsavanh, we ate our meals at the now-famous Craters restaurant, which is family run and farang-friendly. Next door is an Internet café, and our hotel was little more than across the street and several doors further. Nearby is a small travel agency that will arrange to take tourists to see jar sites and war remnants, and across the street is an UXO (unexploded ordnance) office. Many of the businesses in Phonsavanh and other towns and villages here display recovered war materials and weapons. Guides here do sometimes give tourists anti-US propaganda, but none of us experienced that.

The Jars and Ban Phosy

After breakfast next day we visited one of the tourist sites of the famous and mysterious stone jars. Cleared of UXO, it was marked with signs and pathways. After walking around and taking photos without solving the mysteries of the jars, we proceeded to Ban Phosy primary school, where we met teachers, kids, villagers, and even

the naiban (village chief), and presented Big Mouse books and soccer balls. Ban Phosy was discussed extensively in a previous article. At this school, TLCB helped fund moving of a watercourse, with villager labor, to prevent the nearby river from eroding the schoolyard. We also funded most of the materials for a library and for the concrete floor and roofing tin for a large classroom building. Across from the school we found a fine kindergarten that was funded entirely by a private Asian donor. No additional projects are planned for Ban Phosy at this time, but it makes a TLCB member and Assistance donor very proud to see the contrast between this relatively fine school and Ban Piew, which is in such need of improvement.

We would have visited another jar site, which entailed riding over twenty miles more on the punishing dirt roads of the area, but a quick vote of the party determined that we were satisfied with the jars. On the other hand, we were willing to ride about half that distance to see Ban

Napia village, where the people make aluminum spoons in backyard foundries using aluminum scrap found in the battle areas of the PDJ. Some villagers also make woven goods to sell to the occasional tourist willing to tolerate the road in.

On the way out to Ban Napia we stopped at a school near Lat Khay, in the



Above, feedstock for spoon foundry. Below, at backyard foundry woman displays a mold used to make aluminum spoons. Foundry operates when they need some money. Scrap aluminum is sold by local scavengers.



district town, which has no regular water supply, especially in the dry season. It was a weekend and the school was closed, but we looked around the grounds. Our Lao escorts explained that the province water authority has surveyed the area but has determined that drilling a well is not feasible and no other solution has been proposed.

See SEA continued on page 12.

Art Crisfield has since explained further about this situation. He says: "When we have visited before, we have heard that Phaxay District has water problems just as Kham District does. This is understood to be due to the geology of the area having a porous, volcanic soil. In the rainy season, some areas flood but the water quickly drains away, even from intended reservoirs and fish ponds. The assistance we could give might be in the form of tanks to hold water for school use in the toilets or for tanks for drinking water. The water could come from the pond behind the school for a period of time but that too goes dry early in the year before the next rainy season begins. And water from local sources is far away." The TLCB has not received a request to help out there as yet.

On the way back from Ban Napia we came across a Russian tank hull, just off the road, marked clearly by a road sign. There was the stripped hull, surprisingly lightly armored, and nearby the heavy turret. Later a search on the web determined that this was the remains of a Soviet PT-76 "floating tank" that was used for armed reconnaissance by many Communist bloc countries.

The ACA "Heinie" Aderholt Project

Next morning we said our goodbyes to Mac and Sune, who would ride in the rented van to Nong Khai and then drive home to Bangkok while we and Art Crisfield flew out on a Lao Airways turboprop to Vientiane, where we met up with our own Jeff Hudgens. Jeff was in SEA to work on some of the projects, including drug rehab programs, which his own charity is working on in Laos. All of us enjoyed a great Western meal together in the Full Moon Café across from the Best Western Hotel in Vientiane before heading out next morning by van to Thakkek and Nakhon Phanom.

Riding in three vans, we drove down Route 13 on the Lao side of the Mekong to first visit the Air Commando Association (ACA) agricultural school project just North of Thakkek, which is the capital of Khammouan Province of Laos. It is also the city of mystery we veterans of NKP could see across the Mekong.

This school is an orphanage for the province, and the agricultural program is sponsored by the University of Nakhon Phanom. The project was funded by the ACA, who asked TLCB to identify a worthwhile educational program they could fund in memory of the late Air Force Brig Gen Harry "Heinie" Aderholt, founder of the ACA and its non-profit subsidiary, McCoskrie Threshold Foundation (MTF). Our Nakhon Phanom representative, Dr. John Middlewood, discussed the project with a professor, Dr. Somkiet at Nakhon Phanom University, and a plan was drawn up to provide certain significant improvements.

When we arrived at the school we were immediately welcomed by Dr. Somkiet and school officials and ushered into a meeting room of the somewhat rustic facilities. John Middlewood did not join us because it would cause him both expense and considerable visa problems to do so, but Jeff Hudgens, who was with us, has also helped with this project and was able to help us understand it.

The General Ethnic School of Khammuan Province is a province orphanage with approximately 400 resident students. School director, Mr. Insorn Latthachak, and other officials joined

us, and Dr. Somkiet, who had brought a projector with him, presented a Power Point briefing about the history and development of the improvements funded by the ACA through the TLCB. The school's cleared and fenced area had been only eight tenths of a hectare (about two acres), though the province owns ample land outside the original fenced area. Additional land was unusable because of roaming feral pigs



Mr. Latthachak welcomes TLCB representatives while Dr. Somkiet prepares to present a PowerPoint briefing about the history and progress of the ACA project.

and flooding of the nearby river. The plan called for adding fencing to enclose three hectares, about seven and a half acres. For this purpose the cost estimate came to \$7000, which was approved, paid by ACA to the TLCB, and delivered to Dr. Somkiet at Nakhon Phanom University, for the project by John Middlewood. John later received a complete set of receipts for the purchases made. The project included flood mitigation, irrigation water supply from the nearby river, and other improvements for the agricultural program. Students learn to grow crops for food and income, and these improvements will greatly expand their opportunities to learn. The

Continued next page.



John Sweet, Dr Somkiet, and Jeff Hudgens in front of sign honoring late BG "Heinie" Aderholt, in whose name the McCoskrie Threshold Foundation donated the funds.

marketable products of this farm are vegetables, fruits, fish, and a rich organic fertilizer.

A major point of Dr. Somkiet's briefing was that there was a budget shortfall resulting in their inability to purchase about 100 meters of the needed chain link fencing. They had ample funds for the concrete fence posts and other parts of the project, but were short of materials and labor to finish the fencing. The fence is necessary to keep local animals away from the student plantings. We asked for more details about this problem, which obviously degrades the success of the project. John Middlewood reports that the shortfall occurred because the price of fencing went up between the time the plan was prepared and the time funds arrived and purchases made. We have not received any requests for additional funding.

After the briefing, our hosts served a meal of various red-hot vegetables and sauces and a whole boiled chicken (feet and all), served in the local manner, which means served with sticky rice but no utensils and no plates. Many of our readers



Grab a ball of sticky rice and dig in! Monty Dubs, Jeff Hudgens, Dr. Somkeit, and Les Thompson "enjoy" a lunch together before going out to tour ACA project.

watched their hooch-maids and houseboys eat this way. It was an interesting experience, particularly without napkins to speak of, but there was a pan of water and a towel on the porch outside the room.

Dr. Somkiet then led us on a tour of the agricultural area and of some of the facilities. We visited one of the boys' dorms, which we found to be much worse than the crowded but neat dorm at Ban Piew, East of the PDJ. This room was crowded, had clothes hanging about, smelled somewhat like a locker room, and had a collapsed ceiling area, apparently resulting from a leak. The boys were polite and friendly, but they did not look like the disciplined and eager boarding students we had seen up in the distant hills. The institution has many challenges to deal with, and we are trying to assist them. We plan to encourage them to strengthen their curriculum in the areas of neatness and sanitation, which will be lasting benefits to these children as they deal with the modern life that awaits them.



Boys dorm in General Ethnic School of Khammuan, an orphanage near Thakkek. The school/farm is located very near the Lao entrance to the third Mekong River bridge, which opened on November 11th, 2011.

To Nakhon Phanom

We had timed this entire trip to arrive at Nakhon Phanom in time for the annual "fireboat" festival to celebrate the last full moon on the Buddhist calendar. This is sometimes called the Buddhist Mardi Gras, and it is indeed a spectacular occasion. We crossed the Mekong by ferry, with Jeff Hudgens providing much assistance in the chaos of the ferry docks and customs stations. Arriving in NKP, we found the town had gone into full-festival mode! The main street along the river was closed to traffic, except tuk-tuks, of course, and was lined with stands selling all sorts of goods and food to the Thai tourists who had at least doubled the population of the city.

Welcome to Phomphan's House!

That evening John Middlewood drove us in his van to the village where Kuhn Phomphan lives. Phomphan is a local radio and TV personality and sometime candidate for the Thai legislature, as well as a member and strong supporter of the TLCB. He invited our group to his backyard for a spectacular party that he had been planning for months. We enjoyed an evening of music, Thai dancing, a baci ceremony, and much



At right, John Sweet and a friend of Phomphan's attempt some Thai dancing at Phomphan's party, while George Shenberger looks on. SEA is continued on page 14.

SEA, continued from page 13.

joking and talking by Phomphan, who broadcast much of the proceedings on the radio next morning. Phomphan has become the SEA reporter for Voice of America subsequent to a visit we had arranged for him to VoA when he came to the



Les and Carolyn Thompson enjoy watching a "fireboat" glide past Nakhon Phanom on Mekong River. Each light is an oil lamp. Lights on Lao shore twinkle in the background.

2002 Manassas reunion at our invitation. He expressed his gratitude to TLCB for this and especially for the good works we do for the schools in his part of Thailand.

Fireboats

On festival day there were boat races and a massive four-hour parade, not to mention a crashing thunderstorm mid-afternoon. As the sun set and the lights came on, the crowds got thicker and thicker near the river. We forced our way through the crowds. Every tuk tuk and food stand in North-east Thailand must have been trucked to NKP for this event! John Middlewood had reserved a table for us next to the river. As darkness fell, the first of a three-hour procession of giant fireboats floated slowly by, covered with thousands of little oil lamps. Most of the designs commemorated two events: the scheduled November opening of the 3rd Mekong bridge, which could be seen just North of the city, and the 84th birthday of His Royal Majesty, King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Meanwhile, a

constant stream of little floating lamps bobbed in the river current. And overhead, little hot air balloons carried lamps aloft. On the huge nearby stage, Thai singing stars belted out the popular songs of the day. They talked between songs on the powerful sound system, which must have been audible in Thakkek! Many of the fireboats launched fireworks such as you might expect to see in Washington or New York on the 4th of July. The Lao launched a smaller but amazing string of boats as well, on the far shore of the wide Mekong. Mardi Gras? Well, no; it was no Mardi Gras. On our walk through the packed streets of revelers after the show, we found the usual Thai graciousness and friendliness to farangs, and none of us could recall seeing a single drunk.

Home

The original group that had met in Bangkok more than two weeks earlier said goodbyes at the hotel in NKP. After a stop at the 1920s home of Ho Chi Minh on the way to the airport, Sweets and Tiltons went to the new NKP terminal, where each year less of the old base is visible

as the jungle reclaims it. But we did discover a bit of misinformation from the time when the TLCB hoped to construct a monument in the area: the old FAA-style control tower still stands, despite reports it had been torn down. We flew out to Bangkok for a couple of days of shopping before our return to the USA. Les and Carolyn Thompson headed for a wonderful resort East of Ubon, to relax for a while, and George and Monty headed for a visit to Korat before their return to the States.

The itinerary John Sweet and Mac Thompson had worked on so long had worked perfectly. The flight is long, but if you purchase tickets well in advance it is surprisingly affordable, as are meals, hotels, and other expenses in SEA. You should consider making the trip!



George Shenberger and student pose at Khang Don School. George's suitcases got bigger and bigger as he kept seeing things to take home to his family.

Mark these dates on your calendar! 2012 TLCB Annual Meeting and Reunion

Thursday October 11th through Sunday October 14, 2012 are the dates of our next TLC Brotherhood Reunion, to be held in San Antonio, Texas! This is our first reunion in "The Lone Star State" and we are expecting a large turnout at this centralized location, with its historic and beautiful River Walk area of downtown adjacent to the Alamo.

Our Local Reunion Chairman for San Antonio is Dan Decker, who will be scouting several hotels in the near future which have been proposed by Military Reunion Planners, who gave

us excellent results previously at our Philadelphia reunion.

Of course as always, we will strive to achieve the highest possible discounts at a quality location to provide the greatest opportunity for your participation. One thing for sure, no one who has ever attended a TLCB Reunion felt left out or that they should not have come. We look forward to bonding with all those first timers out there, so mark your calendars and watch for further info in the next edition of the newsletter.



TLC Brotherhood Chaplain — I'm here to serve you

by Rev. Debora Stein, TLCB Chaplain; Pastor, Saint Stephen Lutheran Church

You don't hear from me very often. Generally, when I reach out to the brotherhood and sisterhood I ask all of you to join me in prayer for a member who is ill, or for the family of a member who has passed. This is the majority of what I do as your chaplain, and my daily life is not so different.

Here is my background snapshot: I graduated from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia last May, and a few months ago, I was officially ordained and called as Pastor at St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Syracuse, New York. I spent four years in seminary and I'm grateful to be putting my learning and experience to good use. I am also a veteran. I joined the U.S.M.C. active duty in 1976 and was stationed at New River Air Station (Helicopter) near Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Later, I joined the U.S. Air Force Reserves, serving with the 508th Combat Support Squadron at Hill AFB in Utah and transferred to the California Air National Guard, serving with 216th Electronics Installations Squadron in Hayward California, which is near where I grew up. I received an honorable discharge in 1984 as staff sergeant and Training NCO.

As an ordained pastor and your chaplain, I am here to serve you and am available to you and your family if you find yourself needing pastoral care.

As with most ordained clergy, contact with me in this capacity is strictly confidential, unless you request that I ask the Brotherhood for prayers on your behalf and you give me permission to use your name.

You may not know that when you post a notice on one of the servers, it does not reach everyone. Many members do not subscribe to all the servers, and I am one of them. I rely on my husband, Ed, or our president, Frank Marsh, to forward prayer requests or notices of death posted in various servers. I can miss your important posting unless you send it directly to me. As Chaplain, I'm authorized to post prayer requests to the board server, which reaches all members who have email.

I am honored to serve as chaplain for the TLC Brotherhood supporting the important work of our membership and providing assistance to those who need it, and am blessed to have the opportunity to serve in a pastoral capacity both in my church and for all of you and your families. I became your Chaplain over two years ago and have created an email address for the TLCB. Please use it whenever you would like to request a prayer for yourself, your family, or other members. If you're not comfortable sharing with someone you don't know, and you would like to test the waters by striking up a conversation on email or Facebook, that's great. I would love to hear from you anytime.



Please save my contact information below:

Facebook: as "Chaplain Deb Stein"

TLCB email address: tlcbchaplain@hotmail.com.

Cell phone number: (215) 668-3081.

I hope to see you all at our next reunion! May God bless you and keep you.

Final NKP flag goes to Museum of USAF

A decorative American flag, the last American flag to fly at Detachment 5, 621st TCS radar site, located on Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base (NKP), was sent to the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB. MSgt Chuck Gunter, who served at INVERT and did the final turnover of equipment to the Royal Thai Air Force, departed in the summer of 1975, taking home this flag. With the help of Ray Boas, the flag was delivered to Lt General John L. Hudson at Wright-Patterson AFB with the request that the flag be exhibited at the museum. Museum authorities said the flag would be shown. TLCB President, Frank Marsh, signed the letter asking that the flag be displayed at the museum.

Dues!

Please check your enclosed dues invoice. If you show paid through 2012 or later, you do not owe dues. But if you show paid through 2011 or earlier, please send in your \$25 before the end of January. If you owe dues and they are not received by the end of March, your MEM and TLCB Internet server privileges must be suspended. Per our bylaws, delinquent membership lapses at the end of the year. Lapsed members must submit a new, signed application to be reinstated.

Board of Directors Notice

Its work being completed, President Frank Marsh officially dissolved the Monument Committee, thanking Gerry Frazier for his hard work as chairman of the ad hoc committee.

Changes of address

To ensure continued receipt of Mekong Express Mail, please send change of address to any board member or to: TLCB, PO Box 343, Locust Grove GA 30248

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