



# Mekong Express Mail

Volume 13, Issue 4

THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

## 1964 Mission To NKP (The Empty Trunk Saga)

By Jim Burns

This adventure began for me in early June 1964. I was an Airman First Class assigned to the 31st Air Rescue Squadron, Clark Air Force Base, the Philippines (PI) as a HH-43B Helicopter Crew Chief/Flight Mechanic. I was called into the squadron commander's office, where he informed me of a classified TDY mission, stating that I had been recommended for it. He indicated that it would be approximately four months in length, but that was all he could tell me. Would I take it? I put up my hand and said, "Yes sir." He then informed me that I would need a locking footlocker, since at my assignment location I wouldn't have any way to secure my things. He also told me that I should be ready to leave the next day, and was to report to the base air terminal. Upon giving my name, I would be provided transportation to Saigon, Republic of Vietnam (RVN). Upon arrival, I was to report to a full colonel who would brief me about my mission. I can't remember his name; I think he was with the Pacific Air Rescue Center. He also informed me that I was to proceed on this mission on his and my contacts' verbal orders, without any TDY orders.

I spent most of the rest of the day trying to find a locking footlocker. Later in the afternoon I gave up on this project and found one of the "fly away" parts kit trunks in our parts room. I had found my trunk! The only problem was that it was not the normal footlocker with the hinged lid and hasp for a lock on it. This lid was completely removable and it had to be bolted on, as I remember, with about twelve bolts. A little foresight would have shown me that this would prove to be a major problem. Since this trunk was to be used at my destination, I had no reason to pack anything into it at the time, so I bolted

See NKP 64, continued on page 4.



HH-43B rescue helicopters sit on the WW II "pierced steel planking" (PSP) ramp at Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base. Photos supplied by Jim Burns.

### *What Do You Want to See in the MEM?*

From John Harrington, MEM Editor

As you may know by now, I have been asked to succeed David MacDonald as the editor of the Mekong Express Mail (MEM). That is a daunting task. My hope is to insure that The MEM continues to keep the members informed and entertained, while forwarding the goals of this remarkable organization.

I am relatively new to TLCB, having joined early in 2011, after coming across the site while surfing the net. I attended the August 2011 gathering in the DC area, but because of a business commitment, I was not be able to be in San Antonio this past October.

**General Thoughts:** Since the mid-1970s, I have worked in the magazine publishing business, not in the glamour side, editorial, but on the dull, business side, circulation and distribution. I still maintain a low-key consulting business, writing a newsletter and doing some trend analysis work. I am in no way an editorial expert, but one of the things I have learned about the business is that those magazines with long term histories of success have changed and evolved to surprising degrees over the years. Well known publications like *Time*, *People*, *National Geographic*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire*, and many others are surprisingly different today from what they were

See Editor, continued on page 2.

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only 20 years ago, let alone 30 or 40.

I am not saying that I plan on overhauling MEM; in fact I wouldn't think of it. However, I would like to introduce some modifications gradually to the look of it. Perhaps, they might include different typefaces, a modified logo, more use of color, not just in photos, varying layout styles? Your suggestions are welcome.

**The Continuing Work of TLCB:** One of the most remarkable things about the MEM is its continuing work with schools and other services in Thailand and Laos. It is truly an amazing story that a group of veterans, who primarily became introduced to that part of the world in the 1960s and 1970s, continue to contribute to those countries coming up on 50 years later. I know we regularly carry stories about some of our members' visits there, but would it be helpful if we occasionally revisited the histories of those schools and services, recounting how they got started, and details about their ongoing services?

Would there be a value in publicizing these services, to our government, to the media? It might generate other contributors (although such contributions should not be allowed to contain usage restrictions or requirements. They would have to be within the goals of TLCB). This could start by establishing a short list of key figures that we could send complimentary copies of MEM to.

**Member Stories:** I know we do carry these regularly. In fact, I have written two in the past year — one about my service in Thailand and one about my first visit back after nearly 43 years. However, I'd like to see more such contributions from a broader group of the members. We all have stories. They don't have to be great literature, just honest impressions.

Some of you might know some of the members who haven't contributed, but have interesting stories. You might begin urging them to put it on paper, even offer to help them.

**Member Profiles:** By this, I mean not just what someone did in SEA back 40 or so years ago, but information about what they did since then, and what they're doing now. I think this would add to the value of membership and might even spawn whole new levels of contact. This is one I'd like to pursue and plan to encourage such.

**More Photos:** All of us surely have a trove of pictures from back in our SEA time, but some might be shy about writing articles to go with them. Would it be worthwhile to dedicate space from time to time to a photo section? The only requirement would be some identification of the people and the locations. Maybe this has been tried in the past and I am not aware of it, but are there objections to re-doing it?

**Fiction and Poetry:** Those who have read the items I've written for MEM may recall that I said I have tried my hand at some fiction writing, related to my time in Thailand. I suspect more than a few of the rest of you have as well. What would you think of occasional short stories, or even poetry, in the MEM? There might have to be some guidelines, but I'd like to see it.

**Respond:** I hope I haven't put everyone to sleep, but let me hear from you. Agree, disagree, other ideas. There is no such thing as a bad idea. *Well, I may modify that statement depending on what I hear back.*

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# Subject: 2012 Assistance Report

by John Schillo, Committee Chairman

Before we can begin the 2012 report, I must first close out 2011. The final totals for 2011 indicate that we completed 33 committee project motions in Thailand and Laos for an annual expenditure of \$41,634.89, which represents an 11% increase over 2010. Our total assistance to the area at the end of 2011 was \$336,648.32. This "Mekong Express Mail" issue contains a list of those members who have so generously donated to the Assistance Program during 2011.

Year to date in 2012, we have completed 26 motions for a total of \$41,189.52. Notice that our total for this year has already approached our totals for all of last year. Our grand total is now \$377,837.84. Donations thus far have only come to \$33,900.50, which leaves us a shortfall of \$7,289.02 for this year. We have used surpluses from previous years to cover this shortage. Of course, the donations to date do not take into considerations the results of the reunion auction, the quilt drawing, or the generosity of the TLCB Board of Directors. This year was no exception. Because of the success of the auction on Friday, strong ticket sales for Rosie's quilt, and the board's donation to the Assistance Fund, we are well in the black for the remainder of the year and will have a surplus for next year when we will start all over again.

Mac Thompson is currently working on a \$9,500.00 project

in Laos, funded by a benefactor who wishes to remain anonymous. The donor wanted us to do something in the area to honor the memory of Combat Evaluation Group Skyspot, and Mac is working to make that happen.

The Aderholt Agricultural Center that was funded by the Air Commando Association (ACA) is basically complete thanks to the hard work of John Middlewood, Jeff Hudgens, and Ed Miller. Ed is currently in Thailand and Jeff will be going over around December. The ACA has provided some additional funds to complete the fence around the livestock area, and Jeff and Ed will be working on completing that project.

John Middlewood continues to coordinate the Student Assistance Fund as well as other projects in the area. He currently has a \$2,500 project for tables and other improvements

See **Assistance**, continued at foot of page 6.

**A Sample of the kids we help through the Student Assistance (tuition) Fund**  
*Supporting kids like these has got to make you proud!*  
**From selected Northeast Thailand schools in Nakhon Phanom Province, as shown.**

Chen Yean High School: Werabpat, Weeraya, and Goontida.



Koo Ta Boon High School: Tichanen, Namthip, and Jiraporn.



Goot Chim High School: Thidaporn, Saowalak, and Dararat.



Ram Rat High School: Suwanan, Phanee, Nootchanat.



Wang Gra Sae High School: Sriuporn, Wirapat, Kusama.



Photographs furnished by John Middlewood.

Above, TLCB member Dr John Middlewood chats with students at Goot Chim High School. John strictly enforces the Assistance Committee's insistence on high academic standards.



Left, Nursing College student, Spangdao.

At right, Nakhon Phanom University student, Bee, is helped with an application by John Middlewood's wife, Maew. The Brotherhood also sponsors an annual English Camp and other events.



the lid onto the empty trunk.

The following morning, I showed up at the base air terminal to catch a ride to my first destination, Saigon. At the terminal, I gave my name to the sergeant at check in, and after looking at one of his lists he directed me to an aircraft, which, I proceeded to with my duffel bag and "empty trunk." I can't remember what kind of bird it was (it was a civilian military charter jet, maybe a Boeing 727), but I do remember that I had to help wrestle the "empty trunk" through the hatch and into the cargo hold. We were barely able to get it to fit. Upon arrival at Tan Son Nhut AFB, I again had to help wrestle the trunk off of the plane. Once it was out, I grabbed it and my duffel bag and headed for the terminal. Inside, I was met by a major who had me toss my stuff into his jeep, and off we went to meet the colonel. A short time later, we arrived at a building somewhere in Saigon, and we went inside. I reported to the colonel and he said that he had been expecting me.

The colonel briefed me that I was headed to Nakhon Phanom (NKP), Thailand, where I was to work and fly with a TDY

aerial port at Tan Son Nhut. Once we arrived, he spoke to the folks in charge and told me that we needed to get me and my stuff out to a military charter jet that was about ready to leave for Bangkok. I think it was a Continental Airlines plane. We hustled out to the bird just in time for the "empty trunk" to cause more problems. The damn thing would not fit through the hatch in the cargo hold on this plane. The major saved the day by telling me not to worry – he would get it on a C-130 that was going over to Bangkok in the morning and I could pick it up there. With that taken care of, we threw my duffel bag in the baggage compartment and I got on the bird. After the short flight, I landed in Bangkok where I checked in with the aerial port for the up-country flight to NKP. Just like the colonel had said, they told me to be there at o'dark thirty, which is really early in the morning, next Thursday morning for the up-country shuttle.

I have five days of R & R before I even get to my TDY location. Such a deal! I asked the guys at the aerial port about a place to stay and they gave me a couple of suggestions for a hotel, one of which was used by the KLM Royal Dutch Airlines crews for crew rest. That sounded like the one for me and

it was the closest to Don Maung, so I grabbed my duffel bag and caught a taxi for the exciting ride to the hotel in Bangkok traffic. Once there I checked in and proceeded to my room. The hotel was a two-story motel-type facility. The buildings were in a horseshoe shape around a large central courtyard, with a restaurant/dinning room and swimming pool in the center of the courtyard. It was a nice facility and very peaceful and restful. I spent a little time in the bar that evening before hitting the sack. It had been a long, eventful, and sometimes frustrating day, thanks to the "empty trunk."

Saturday morning, after a great breakfast, I caught a cab to go pick up my trunk. The C-130 from Saigon had landed, but it was on the military side of Don Maung, so

it was a longer, but no less exciting drive than the day before. Once I showed the Thai gate guards my ID card and got them to okay the cab, its driver, and me to get onto the military base, we went to the cargo area where I was able to locate my "empty trunk." Now the task at hand was to get the damn thing into the cab. No easy task, since the cab was not what you would call a four-door, full-size car. In fact it was more of a four-door mini-car. There was no way it would fit into the trunk, even hanging out the back, so the cabbie and I started trying to stuff it in the back seat. After pulling the seat loose and moving it around to give us a little more space, we were finally able to get the trunk into the back seat. This was about a 30 minute process and I was getting more and more fed up with the "empty trunk." We succeeded in getting it into the back seat and headed for the base gate and the next headache.

The Thai gate guards wanted to see what was in the trunk



The "Operations Shack" at the South end of the field in 1964.

HH-43B unit of the 33rd Air Rescue Squadron. He said: we would be flying rescue cover for the Navy photo reconnaissance and other aircraft flying over Laos and North Vietnam, this was a highly classified mission, and I was not to inform anyone where I was going. He told me I would have to go to Don Maung Airport in Bangkok to catch the weekly shuttle ride up to NKP, and he indicated that there was a C-123 shuttle to NKP from Don Maung every Thursday. There I was, in Saigon on a Friday, and the Colonel looks at his watch, and says, "You have time to catch a ride out of here this afternoon and go on over to Bangkok. You really don't want to spend the time waiting here in Saigon, do you?" Well, after some lengthy deliberation, about half second as I remember, I replied, "That would be fine with me, Sir," trying my best not to seem too excited.

After the colonel finished my briefing, I left the building, piled back in the jeep, and the major took me back to the



This was the helicopter maintenance workshop at Nakhon Phanom in 1964.

before they would let it off the base. Both the cabbie and I tried our best to convince them that it was empty, but they weren't buying it. They insisted on seeing in it. So here we go again, both of us wrestling with this trunk to get it out of the back seat. After some time we were successful, but now came the next challenge...to get the damn lid off. If you remember the lid was bolted on and we had no tools. The guards insisted on looking inside, damn! Damn!! DAMN!!! I guess my Yankee ingenuity came to the surface, and by using my pocket knife and the cabbie's pocket knife, I was able to use them unopened, like a small vise, and get a grip on the bolt heads and get them finally removed. Thank God they weren't tightened all the way. I think there were about 12 of them. Once the guards saw the "empty trunk" was indeed empty, they were finally happy and said we could leave the base. One benefit

of this exercise was that with the lid off, it was easier to fit it back in the back seat of the cab, so we shoved it in and headed back to the hotel. By now I was hot and tired and totally fed up with the trunk. After arriving at the hotel we again wrestled the trunk out of the cab and after helping the cabbie put his back seat back together, I went to my room with my prized "empty trunk."

I spent the rest of that day around the hotel pool and bar. Sunday through Wednesday, I spent time being a tourist in Bangkok during the days and spent time in the hotel bar in the evenings. I had made a pretty good friendship with the Thai bartender during this time at the hotel. Playing on this

Shown below is the fabled "Civilize Hotel," parts of which can still be seen today just off the intersection where the "Ho Chi Minh" clock stands. While not up to "Western standards," this establishment had somewhat of a monopoly on TDY housing for many servicemen in the early years. MEM carried more of Jim's photos of this hotel in a previous story about his experiences in 1964 that ran in the March, 2003 issue.



friendship, I came up with a plan for the "empty trunk," because by now I had decided that I was not going to go through any more headaches getting the thing to NKP. I asked him if he had some place he could keep a trunk for me until I came back through on my way back from my "trip." He showed me a wine cellar below the bar and said I could store it there. I told him it would be about four months, and he replied that it would be okay and not to worry, like I was going to worry about this damn "empty trunk." On Wednesday afternoon the bartender and I "stashed" it in the wine cellar.

I caught a cab early on Thursday morning and arrived at Don Maung aerial port at o'dark thirty and caught the C-123 shuttle upcountry. I think NKP was about the third or fourth stop after Ubon, Mukdahan, and some other place.

With each stop, the airfields became more and more primitive. Our landing at NKP seemed quite noisy as the C-123 touched down on the PSP runway and rattled across each plank. We taxied into the PSP parking ramp and dropped the aircraft's tail loading ramp. I helped the crew roll two large bladders of JP-4 out the back and then grabbed my duffel bag and set foot on NKP. What a site to behold—three HH-43Bs, three or four shacks, some large diesel generators, three or four trucks, an outhouse, about 20-25 GIs, and miscellaneous full and empty fuel bladders at the edge of the ramp. The 33rd ARRS guys and the helicopters had already been there about a week before I arrived. There were also some guys, included in the 20-25, from, I believe, the 1st MOB, who kept the generators and radio gear going. There were some Thai guards who lived in

See **NKP 64**, continued on page 6.

NKP 64, continued from page 5.

a small shack by the “front gate,” with their wives and families, guarding the base. We helped load some empty fuel bladders on the C-123 and she taxied out to the runway and was gone.

I now had a chance to meet the detachment commander, aka “Base Commander,” and the rest of the “base,” all 20-25 or so of them. They told me to toss my bags in the back of one of the trucks because they had been released from alert for the day and we were headed to the hotel in town. We all piled in the trucks and headed out. The ride reminded me of being in a parade, with all the kids and villagers along the way lined up on the road waving like they had never seen us before. It was like that for the entire time I was there, mornings and afternoons. We arrived at the Civilize Hotel. As I remember, it was about a block from the main street along the river. I was assigned a room with a roommate, I can’t remember his name, on the ground floor of the two-story part of the hotel. I think there were about eight rooms in this part of the hotel, and the rest of the rooms were in single story, motel-style buildings next

to the two-story portion. Guess what? Yeah, you guessed it. There was no place to lock up anything, but I left all sorts of stuff lying around my room while I was there and never had a thing taken—so much for the need for the “empty trunk.”

After about half of the TDY assignment, the detachment commander sent me and a couple of others to Bangkok to “get some parts.” All of us got to go chase “parts” while we were there, which meant that since the shuttle only ran once a week, we HAD to stay in Bangkok for six days (damn!) and wait to catch a ride back to NKP. While on my “parts chasing” trip, I again stayed at the same hotel I had stayed at on my way upcountry. The Wednesday before I headed back to NKP, I asked the bar tender how my “empty trunk” was doing. He led me down to the wine cellar to show me. “See, trunk where you leave it.” I looked at the damn trunk for a few seconds, then turned to the bar tender and said, “Since you were so kind to store the ‘empty trunk’ for me, I’m giving it to you. Keep the trunk, I don’t want it back.” He was thrilled to death, and so was I. I had finally shed myself of the cursed “empty trunk.” I would find some way to explain to my boss what had happen to it when I got back to Clark. As it turned out, I was never asked by anyone where the trunk was. It just went MIA from the fly-a-way kit room and no one ever said a thing.

I finished my TDY in October ‘64 and made my way back to Clark, just a few days before my wife and our new baby daughter arrived from the States.

There are some more tales to tell while I was at NKP in 1964, but I’ll put them in separate stories.

There are some more tales to tell while I was at NKP in 1964, but I’ll put them in separate stories.

*Jim served in Southeast Asia in 1964 and 1969 through 1970. He retired from the Air Force as a senior master sergeant.*



This was the alert shack for the 33rd ARRS crews awaiting calls for rescues.

Assistance, continued from page 2.

to schools in the NKP area; however, he has been moving further out in order to assist the schools in the more rural areas of the region. In a way, we are a victim of our own success in that the schools closer in to town have been brought up to a higher standard, and we must move further out to find the more needy schools.

Thanks to the generosity of our members, the Student Aid Fund is now able to sponsor more children that do not have sponsors. We have 20 high school students in the program and 6 college students, and we hope that next year we will be able to expand this program even more.

While some of these numbers may seem amazing for such a small organization, to me the amazing thing is that you continue to send us money to continue the work. I know the economy is bad and most of us are retired and living on a fixed income. In addition, prices are up on everything from gas to bread, but

you keep coming through, year after year. I belong to other veterans’ groups, but this one is a far cry from ordinary. While the Assistance Program sets us apart, it’s the generosity of the membership that adds to the uniqueness. Over 49% of our membership donates to the Assistance Fund. A large majority of our new members have been donating to the Assistance Program and we are happy to see that some members have even begun to donate on line, a trend we hope will continue growing with our new website.

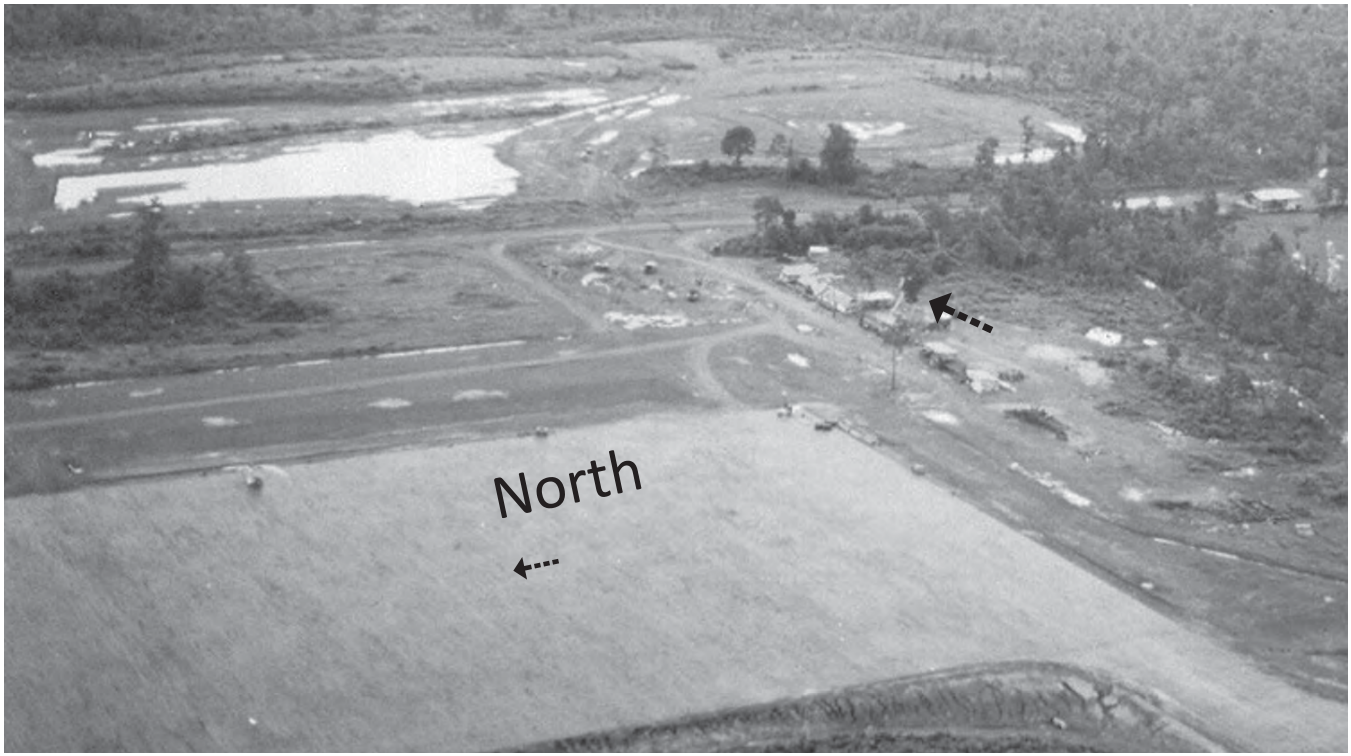
Our efforts are well received in Thailand and Laos. I have presented the President of the TLCB, Frank Marsh, with a plaque, which was given to us by NKP University for our work on the Aderholt Agricultural Center. I also maintain a folder with many Certificates of Appreciation that have been presented to us over the years.

I will close by just thanking everyone again for their past and continued future support.



# Nakhon Phanom Expansion, 1964 to 1966

The South end of the ramp. View at top is blown up from a photo taken by Jim Burns from HH-43B helicopter in 1964, looking toward the East. Below, slide taken by Bill Tilton from an O-1F on downwind to land, looking to the West in early summer of 1966. Tree off Southeast corner of ramp (arrows) is a point of reference in both views.



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**TLC Brotherhood**  
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**Write payment purpose and member number on check.**

**Purpose examples:**

Dues	Student Assistance Fund
Assistance	BX purchase
Medical Fund	etc.

**Reunion 2013: Fort Walton Beach FL, Oct 3-6**

## Members Reflect on San Antonio 2012

Smiles, hugs, laughs, interesting conversations, and learning more about friends and acquaintances are a big part of our reunions. Bidding for "treasures" at the auction, buying logo items at the exchange, checking out the town, the banquet and speakers, and hoping to win the wonderful quilt adds to the excitement. Several TLCB members have volunteered to share their "take" and special enjoyments about our time together in San Antonio.

### **From Frank and Gerry Walker (1st reunion)**

Thanks for a wonderful reunion. I've been a member for quite a few years but this was the first time I attended a reunion. Both I and Gerry, my wife of 38 years, really enjoyed ourselves. The report on TLCB activity in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia was truly inspiring.

After being identified as a new attendee by all, we were really taken care of. Because Gerry has to use a wheelchair most of the time, we appreciated everyone's kindness and helpfulness, including the staff at the hotel. Our handicapped room at the Crown Plaza was just great.

Not knowing anyone before the reunion proved not to be a problem, and we are now friends with most everyone. Gary and Brenda Towers became our "eating" buddies and we were able to find great food. Bohanan's on Houston Street was wonderful and the food at the hotel was just fine, including the good breakfast buffet. We were able to take the "River Taxi" almost all the way to the top of the "Tower of the Americas" for lunch and the great view.

We also enjoyed the auction, and the \$60 for the NKP

lapel pin was a "good deal"! The banquet was very nice, and I thought the memorial service Sunday was outstanding. Last but not least, our visit to Lackland AFB to witness 700 young men and women assume their obligation was inspiring, and being there for the presentation of the AF Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor, presented by the Chief of Staff of the US Air Force, was almost unbelievable. [Technical Sergeant Heath Culbertson was awarded for a daring rescue in Afghanistan.] If the hairs on the back of your neck didn't stand on end, you weren't paying attention. Can you tell we had a great time? We are looking to Florida next October.

### **From Bill Riedell (1st reunion)**

This was the first TLCB reunion that my wife Joann and I have attended. First I would like to thank all those involved in organizing and putting on such a wonderful event. Other than a few e-mails, I knew absolutely no one prior to attending, yet was warmly received and greeted by many members. We

REUNION is continued next page.



felt absolutely at home with this group and we experienced a wonderful time.

The hotel accommodations were great with a good restaurant in house and close access to the river walk. The nippa hut and auction were a blast! John, Les, and Ruben worked their tails off to raise money for a great purpose. The visit to Lackland AFB to observe the graduation ceremony was outstanding, and we talked to many graduates afterwards on the parade ground. Gary Towers' motorcycle was unbelievable! I talked to three young airmen who were admiring it as I walked by, and they kept discovering things as they walked around it and said they had never seen a prettier bike.

The business meeting held Saturday morning was professionally and seriously run and I felt all issues were honestly and thoroughly addressed. The reunion dinner held Saturday night was again an outstanding event with great guest speakers and food. Having a member of the Lackland Color Guard at each table was really nice and gave everyone a chance to talk to active duty personnel. We did not attend the service Sunday morning as we wanted to visit Padre Island for part of the day before starting our drive back to Kansas.

I had many conversations with other members and truly felt the bond that we all share, and I encourage anyone who has never attended a reunion to do so; you won't be disappointed.

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### ***From George Shenberger***

I thought the hotel and its location was excellent and topped off a great reunion! Everybody had a good time, it appeared, and everybody was very social. I met some new people at the reunion that I have never talked with before, and the atmosphere of everybody being so friendly and enjoying the get together is what made it that way! We all had something in common many years ago for a just cause and it's a pleasure to continue doing good things in Southeast Asia through the TLCB! My wife, Ruth Ann, and I enjoy the yearly reunions very much and are looking forward to next year's in the Florida panhandle!

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### ***From David and Virginia Gurley***

The reunion was pretty much what we've come to expect over the years; companionship with old friends and meeting members we know about only through the internet. There was a lot to see and do in San Antonio, and we enjoyed the visit.

We'd been through San Antonio four or five times over the last few years going to see our daughter's family at Loughlin AFB and Luke AFB, but we'd only stopped one time to see the Alamo. This was the first time I'd really been back for a stay since basic. The reunion occurred forty-four years almost to the day that I got my one-day pass off the base at the end of basic; a day I pretty much spent at the Alamo and on one of river boats. That was the extent of our visit this time as well. As I said before, this reunion was much like what we've come to expect, and appreciate with the exception of the following anecdote:

I'd been having trouble with my hip for a couple of weeks prior to leaving for San Antonio, and the thousand mile drive

didn't help any. This happens to me at the end of a garden season with all the ups and downs of weeding. The morning we were to leave for the graduation ceremony, I couldn't get my leg up to put my socks on, and when we arrived at the parade ground I knew I was in trouble when I saw the stands. I put my foot on the seat, but I couldn't step up. Then I put my hand down to steady myself and put my foot up again, and I still couldn't bring my other leg up to the seat. A Lt Colonel in dress blues saw my predicament, and reached down, grabbed me by the hand, and pulled me up into the stands. I wouldn't have made it without his help. I thanked him, and made sure to call him Sir even though I was at least twenty years older. Sitting in the stands and watching an impressive ceremony, while thinking I was here forty-four years ago, was very special for me. I was also thinking about the problem I had getting into the stands and told Virginia that had I known that it was going to happen I would have stayed at the hotel, because it was somewhat embarrassing.

At the end of the ceremony while walking around and taking pictures of the static displays, a newly minted airman came up to me and said "Thank you for your service Sir. This simple statement didn't help my hip any, but it sure put everything into perspective, and I was thankful I was given the opportunity to go to the ceremony.

---

### ***From Gary Towers (1st reunion)***

This was my first reunion, and it was good to put faces with some of the names that I have been reading emails from in the past couple of years! I met lots of people and made some new friends and hope to attend many more reunions, but as with a lot of you, our schedule is pretty packed and sometimes it is difficult to make the date, but we will try.

I just had more responsibility added recently when I was appointed to a National Council for the American Legion and was delegated to the National Foreign Relations Council. I am excited as one of their priorities is the MIAs! Anyway, thanks to all who serve on committees and as officers for keeping the organization going! Proud to be a member.

---

### ***From John Duffin***

Thoughts on the reunion: Another well organized reunion. I was extremely impressed with the Crown Plaza Hotel and their very attentive staff, and the city of San Antonio and its River Walk was quite an attraction. I have to say my most favorite experience was the basic training graduation ceremony with some 700 young men and women graduating, with the USAF Chief of Staff presenting the AF Distinguished Flying Cross to a returning combat vet. This was a very special day.



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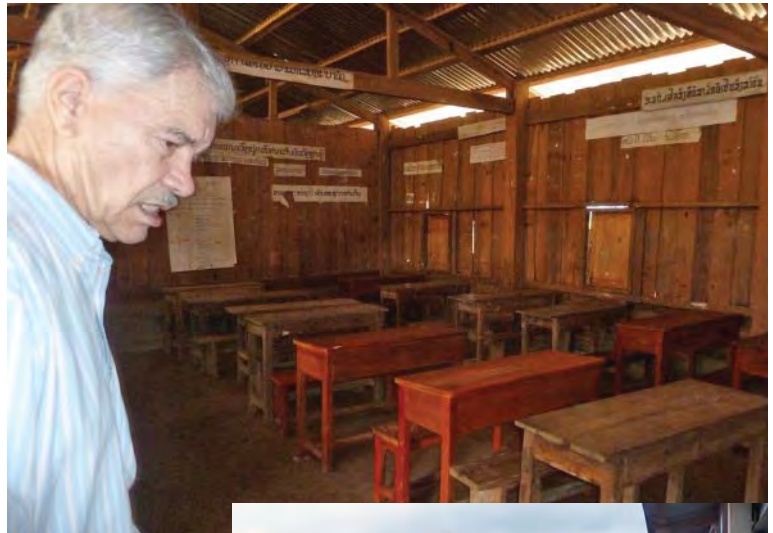
### ***How can we reach you?***

If we don't have your current email address you may be missing out on important messages about your Brotherhood. Please send email changes to us, at [jkarnes@tlc-brotherhood.com](mailto:jkarnes@tlc-brotherhood.com)



### Assistance in Laos

Above, "Mac" Thompson granting TLCB cash to Lao school official for an approved improvement project. At right, Art Crisfield and Mac visit projects several times per year to confirm project completion and correlate materials receipts with results. As in Thailand, **All** donated funds are used in this way--travel and other expenses are paid out of TLCB dues. And our thanks are all the salary these selfless heroes get!



At left, rain approaches the old market at Xaysambon, South of the Plain of Jars (PDJ). Above, even little villages that use car batteries for power have their satellite dishes!

Photos provided by MacAlan Thompson.



Above: this sign is typical of similar proclamations appearing in Lao communities we serve. My-uree Strouse kindly provided this translation: "The new tin roof and new floor were completed with donation from Thai-Lao-Cambodia Brotherhood Association, 11 May 2012."

At left, this classroom may look rustic, but the TLC Brotherhood improvements are visible and important. There is a tight new steel roof and most of the kids are sitting at new desks with plenty of workspace. And the floor is concrete instead of dirt.

# Guide to the New Forum

*Prepared by Jerry Karnes, Communication Committee chairman*

The new TLCB Forum has replaced email as the gathering place for members. We now have over 210 members enrolled in the forum and that number grows daily as others find out how easy it is to use and how powerful it is. Some of the highlights include the following:

- Everything is listed in easy-to-find sections so no need to read everything to find one thing that interests you.
- Handy quick-find buttons that let you see if anything has been posted to the forum since you were last there...and...what that may be.
- Urgent News for members is instantly available.
- The Jungle where you can finally talk politics and discuss things that were prohibited via email.
- General Interest areas where you can discuss things you like, such as hobbies, reading, writing, sports, photography, cars...you name it!
- The TLCB Mission, Where We Served and other special sections are easy to find and navigate.
- Our special Assistance section provides real-time updates of all the work going on in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. This is where a large portion of your money is spent and now you do not have to wait for a MEM to find out about it.

The following guide will help you get on the forum and then assist you with how to find what interests you. It is setup in a Q&A format for easy reference.

1. How do I get to the forum?

Answer: Point your Internet browser to [www.tlc-brotherhood.com/Forum](http://www.tlc-brotherhood.com/Forum)

2. How do I register when I get there?

You will be prompted to register when you first go to the forum. Enter a user name (preferably your real name) and a password. When you submit this I will set you up as a full member and you can then post messages.

3. Is there an easy way to check what is new on the forum?

Answer: Yes, just click on the highlighted text below your login name. See figure one.

4. Is there a way to see if anyone has replied to my messages?

Answer: Yes, just click on the highlighted text below your user name. See figure one.

see FORUM, continued page 12.

Figure 1.

The screenshot shows the forum's main page. At the top, there are several logos including the Air America logo, the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood logo, the USAID logo, and the United States Marine Corps logo. Below the logos, the text 'THAILAND-LAOS-CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD' is prominently displayed. A yellow callout box with a dashed blue arrow points to the text 'Show unread posts since last visit. Show new replies to your posts.' which is highlighted in blue. Below this, there are navigation links: Home, Forum, Shop, Help, Search, Admin, Moderate, Profile, My Messages. The main content area is divided into sections: 'News', 'Urgent News for Members!', and 'Membership'. Each section has a corresponding icon and a brief description. The 'Urgent News' section has 21 Posts and 7 Topics, with the last post by jkarnes on October 26, 2012. The 'Membership' section has 73 Posts and 7 Topics, with the last post by AnneF on October 15, 2012. The text 'Fig. 1' is written in the bottom right corner of the screenshot.

When you login check these for fast access to new posts or to replies to posts that you have made.

5. What are Private Messages?

Answer: Private messages are secure messages you can send to fellow forum members. Just click on any member User Name and choose Send Private Message. You can then click on the message button to see if a response has been sent back. See figure two.

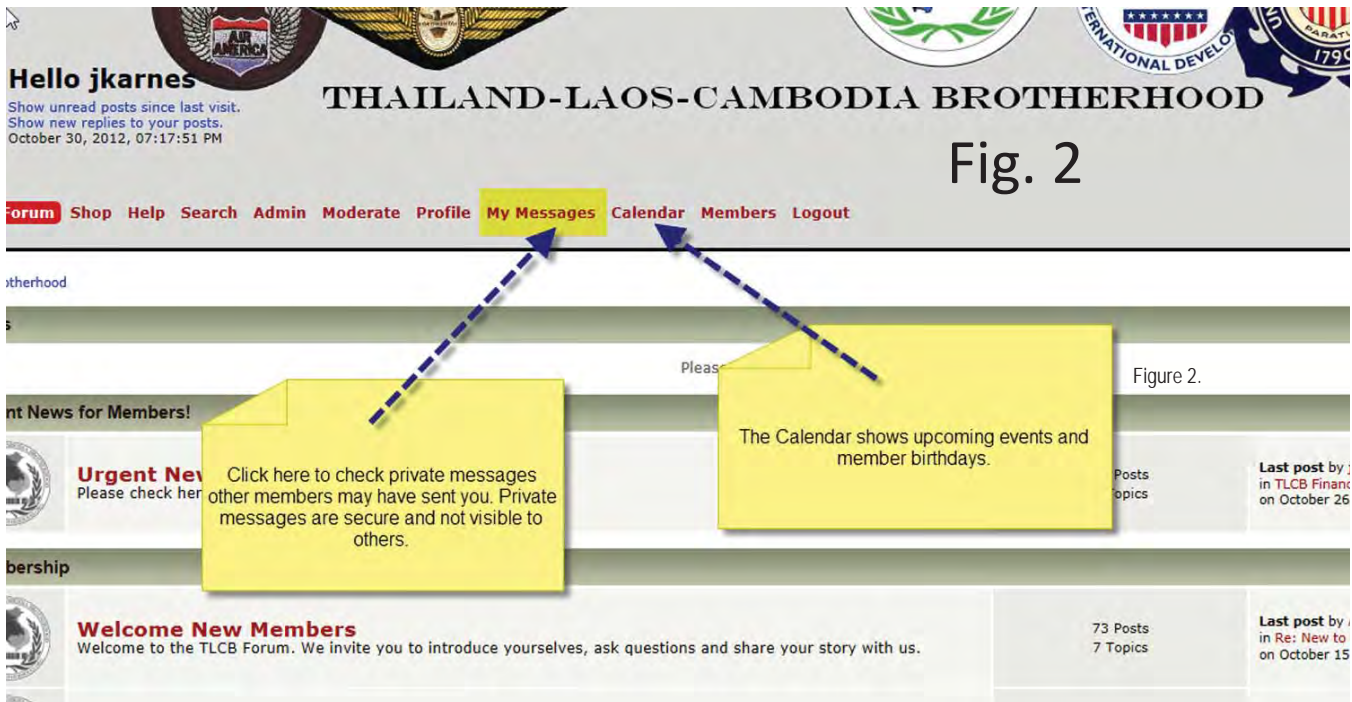


Fig. 2

Figure 2.

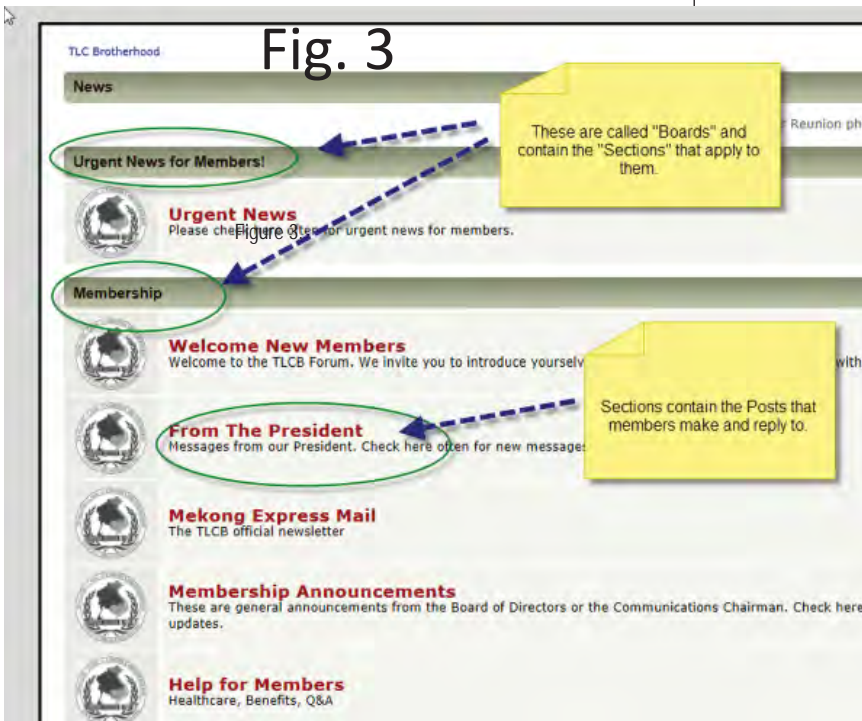


Fig. 3

6. What is the calendar?

Answer: The calendar is just that...a calendar where you can see what events are coming up and member birthdays. You can also post new events here. See figure two.

7. What are Boards, Sections, and Posts?

Answer: These are just the terms used to identify the parts of the forum. Figure three will show you the details but just think of Boards as the newspaper headlines and the posts as the actual story.

8. How do I add new messages and reply to existing messages?

Answer: This is really not much different from the send and reply on your email system. Figures four and five will show you this. Remember you can also post polls on the forum and if you have something really important you can request that it be "stickied" so that members can see it for a long time at the top of the section.

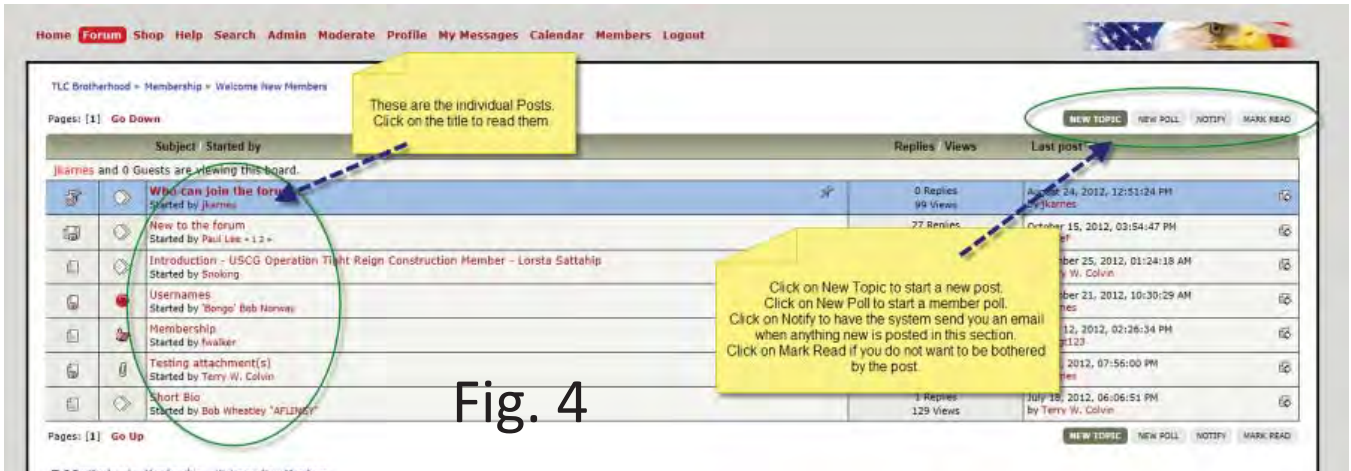


Fig. 4

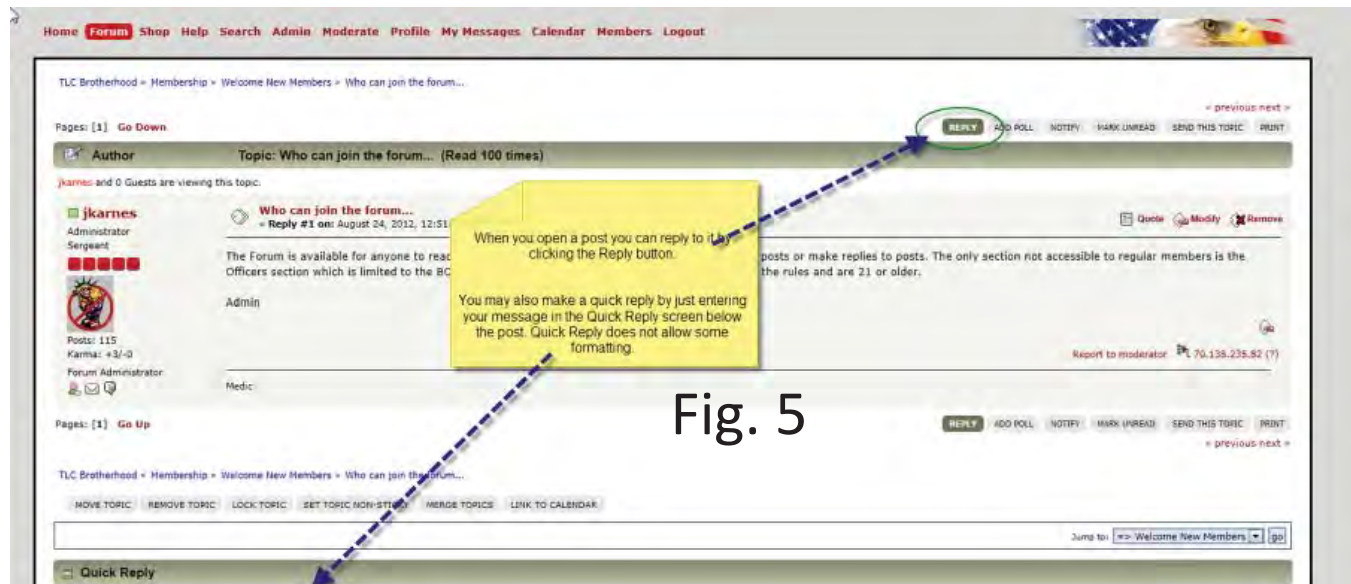


Fig. 5

9. Can I send a copy of a post to someone else?

Answer: Sure you can. Just see figure six for the correct button to use to send a copy of the post to anyone with an email address, including you. You can even set it so that any replies to a post will be sent to you via email when it occurs.

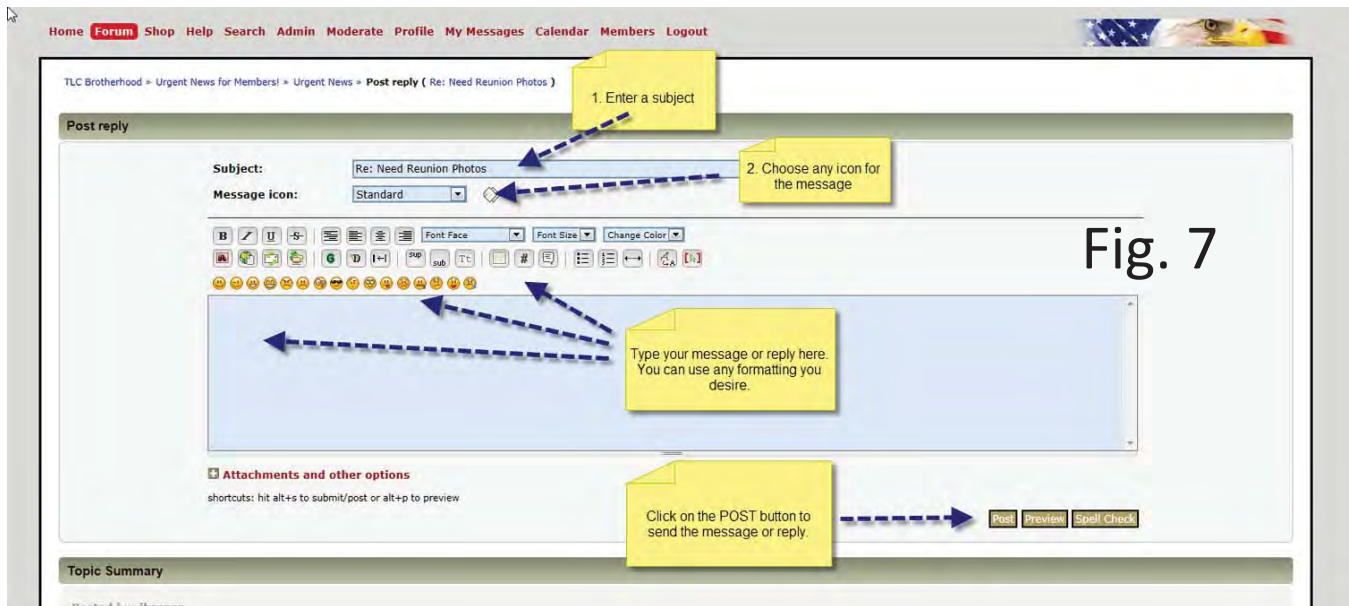


Fig. 6

FORUM is continued on page 14.

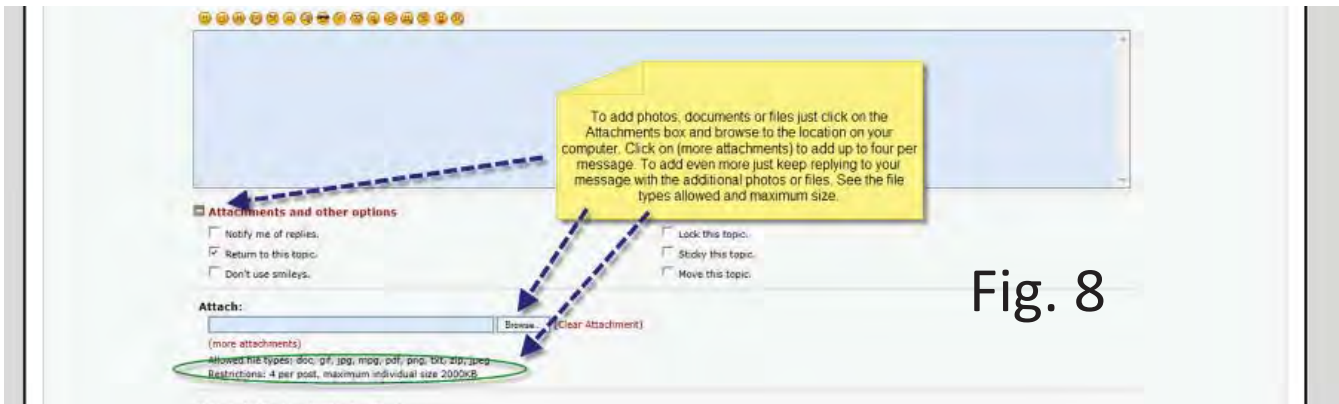
10. Can I format my messages and replies or use smiley faces?

Answer: Yes you can. See figure seven. You can also spell check your messages.



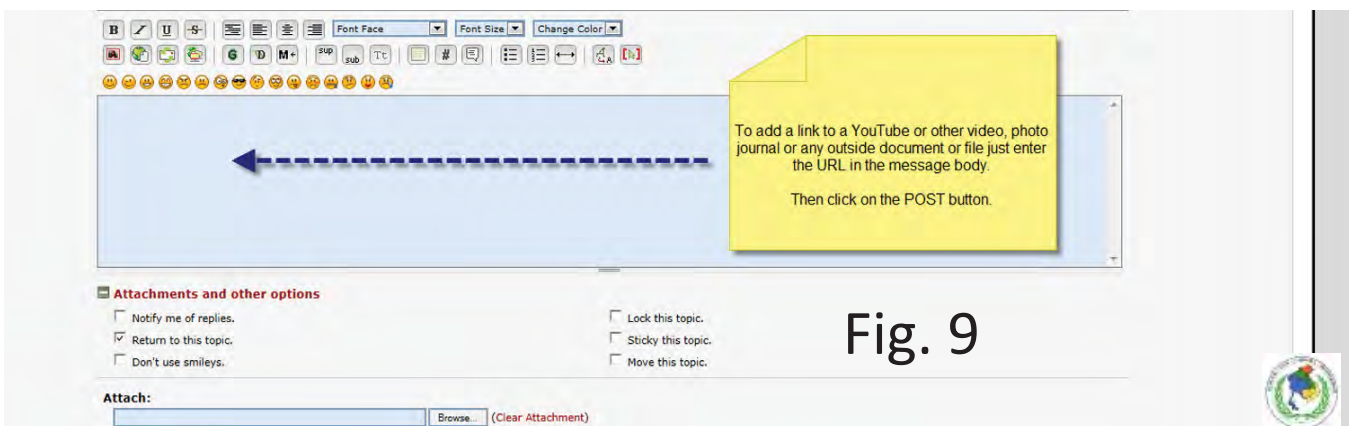
11. How do I add pictures or documents to a message?

Answer: See figure eight for details. Note that the allowed photo and file size is much greater than our old email system would allow.



12. How do I add a link to YouTube videos or other websites or locations on the Internet?

Answer: Just type in the link (URL) in the message body. See figure nine. Remember that anything you attach to a message may not be copyrighted unless you have permission of the author or it is public domain.



# FINAL REPORT OF THE *AD HOC* AUDIT COMMITTEE

In spring of 2012, Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB) President Frank Marsh received complaints from a couple of TLCB members, alleging unspecified misconduct in the management of TLCB finances. The complainants lacked specificity as to the nature of the misconduct, and failed to provide any facts to support their allegations. Nevertheless, to assure the TLCB membership of the integrity of our financial management, the TLCB Board of Directors (BOD) directed President Marsh to create an *ad hoc* Committee (Committee), pursuant to Sections 9,c, & 10, a, of the TLCB By-Laws, to conduct an audit of the TLCB finances. The BOD elected to appointment this Committee due to the excessive cost involved in contracting an outside audit.

Pres Marsh appointed BOD Member-at-Large Gary Beatty to chair the Committee (Chair) - based on Gary's professional experience as a State prosecuting attorney investigating and prosecuting financial crimes. In accepting the appointment, Gary insisted - and the BOD directed - the Committee:

1. Was to be independent of any influence, or control, of the TLCB Officers;
2. Was to be given unrestricted access to all TLCB financial records, and co-operation of all Officers and standing committees;
3. Must include members who were not on the BOD;
4. Report the results of the audit to the membership at the annual meeting in San Antonio, together with a recommendation whether there is any justification to incur the expense of an outside audit.

The June, 2012, Mekong Express published an announcement of the creation of this committee, including an invitation to the membership to both serve on the Committee, and provide any pertinent information concerning TLCB finances to the Committee.

Chairman Beatty solicited various TLCB members to serve on the Committee. Chuck Wilcox, and Mike Potaski agreed to serve. Chuck is a retired FBI agent, and Mike retired from a career in the intelligence community. Both have experience in the review, and analysis, of complex documents. (In response to the posting in the MEM, one other member contacted the Chair about serving - however when he was apprised of the duties, and work involved, he did not respond further.)

The Chair established the following working rules of the Committee:

- Each Committee member was free to independently review any TLCB records.
- Each Committee member was free to receive information, relevant to the audit, from the membership.
- Each Committee member was free to submit their own report, and recommendation, to the membership at the San Antonio annual meeting.

The Chair reviewed the relevant State and Federal laws to determine what, if any, are the legal requirements for an outside audit. The TLCB is incorporated under Chap. 10 (Virginia Non-Stock Corporation Act), of Title 31.1 of the Virginia State Code. We are a tax-exempt charitable organization, pursuant to 26 USC 501, 509, & 170, of the IRS code. Neither mandates an outside audit.

The Chair, as a member of the BOD for the past 5 years, has been provided with financial reports on a regular bases as part of the budget process. The Committee received full co-operation from Treasurer Bill Tilton - who provided all the documents requested by the Committee, and from the Assistance Committee Chair John Schillo.

The Chair consulted with a forensic accountant (a professional colleague), and Chuck received the assistance of another retired FBI agent who specialized in auditing financial records. Members of the Committee also met with Treasurer Tilton, at the reunion, prior to reporting to the membership.

During the course of the audit, Committee members were contacted by one of the TLCB members who initiated the original complaint. This contact provided no relevant information regarding financial matters, and appeared to be in pursuit of personal vendetta. The Committee received no information from any other TLCB member relevant to the audit.

## Conclusion

The Committee, *without dissent*, found nothing to suggest any impropriety, malfeasance, negligence or error in the management of the TLCB finances, or financial record keeping. There is *no evidence* which would justify the expense of an outside audit.

The Committee presented its findings to the General Membership at the San Antonio Reunion Business Meeting, on October 20, 2012. The membership present then voted, *unanimously*, that the Committee recommend the BOD should NOT incur the expense of an outside audit.

TLCB Audit Committee  
Gary Beatty  
Mike Potaski  
Chuck Wilcox



**Don't miss all the great member news. Join us at the TLCB Forum. Go to [www.tlc-brotherhood.com/Forum](http://www.tlc-brotherhood.com/Forum)**

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### Assistance News Bulletin

As MEM went to press, President Frank Marsh announced that he has appointed **Les Thompson** as Assistance Committee Chairman, to be effective on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

Les will replace long-serving **John Schillo**, who has requested a break from the responsibility and work demands of this job. Frank expressed gratitude for John's long and faithful service to the TLC Brotherhood, and his confidence in Les's ability to carry the work of the committee forward.