

MEKONG EXPRESS MAIL



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE THAILAND-LAOS-CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC. VOLUME 14, ISSUE 4

What Did You Do In the War, Grandpa?

*An average commo day for an American soldier in Vientiane, Laos
1969-1971 during the so-called secret war*

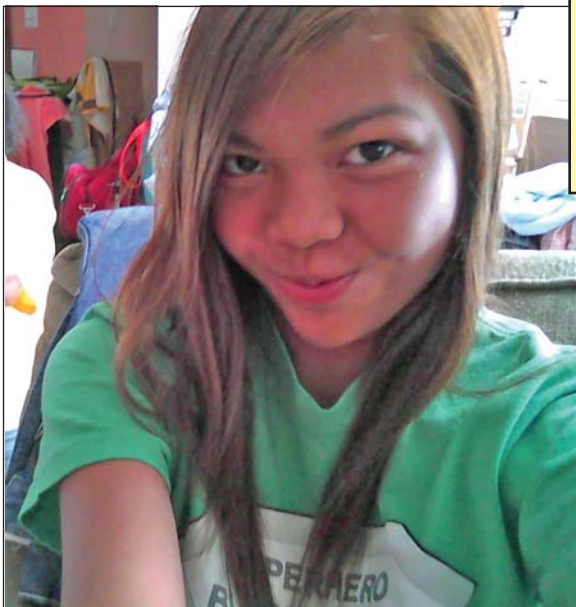
by Tommy "O.D." Odiorne

Editor's Intro: Tom "O.D." Odiorne is a long-time TLCB member who spent two tours in Bangkok, one in Vientiane and one in Vietnam, during his more than 20-year army career. He is now retired in Georgia. The story here began when his granddaughter, Parisia Voelkel, asked him about his military career, and if he would write a story that she could bring to her school to be read in class. He did, and it was a big hit!

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We lived in what was known as the Pimpa House, or Village House 18. It was a two-story concrete house with a 12 foot concrete wall with broken glass imbedded on the top of the wall. It housed

about eight of us communications guys who worked for Army Attaché in the Attaché Communications Center. It had six bedrooms on the second floor and two full baths.



The Inspiration: Parisia Voelkel. Photos furnished by the author.

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On the ground floor, there was a huge living room with two bedrooms off it, a dining room, and a kitchen. We had a Lao security guard who stood by the iron gate that lead into the compound where our house was situated. There was a Lao Wat, or Buddhist temple, across the street.

Those of us who worked the day shift in the communications center, 8 AM to 4 PM, would start getting up around six and mosey down to breakfast where our Lao cook would give us a choice of bacon, sausage, eggs, pancakes, or just cereal. It cost us \$40 a month for the food he fixed. About twice a month, a couple of us would fly down to Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand to its big commissary and pick

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**Odiorne**, continued from page 1.

up the food our cook prepared for us. He would fix breakfast, lunch, and supper Monday through Saturday and have Sunday off, which left us on our own that day as far as food went.

I would normally wake up around six thirty to shave and shower prior to going down to breakfast. Around seven thirty or so it would be time for me to get on my bike, a Yamaha 250cc, and drive the short distance to Na Hai Dieo or the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) compound, where I worked. The trip usually took about 10 minutes. Once I arrived, I would get briefed by the mid-shift, or the outgoing shift, as to what went on during the night and what was pending....mainly if there was anything hot, stuff like that.

We had three 100-word-per-minute teletype circuits going to different torn-tape, manual relays. Then there was our Automatic Digital Network circuit to Korat's Automatic Switching Center (Korat RTAFB in Central Thailand), which was a UNIVAC 1004 (a PC back then, our 1960's version of an interface to the internet). There was a radio room in the back of the comm. center, which would receive spot reports from all over Laos. They were combined with what other reports the "head shed" up front of our building received by other means. Those were then compiled into a daily situational report (SITREP) for all of Laos. We really didn't receive that much traffic, that is by the standards I was used to prior to moving up to Vientiane from Bangkok. Normal was probably a little over 100 messages per day, while sending out 20 or so. In Bangkok, at Joint United States Military Advisory Group Thailand (JUSMAGTHAI), that number had been 1,000 incoming and 200 to 300 outgoing per day. Of course, in Bangkok there were around 20 people on each shift, in Vientiane there were 2.

I, being Army Attaché (ARMA), was complemented by Gary Pearson, an Air Force E-5 who belonged to Air Attaché (AIRA). Most of the shifts were that way: one Army, one Air Force, and we had an Army Officer in Charge (OIC), and an Air Force NCOIC. I would say most of our traffic dealt with intelligence, administrative, and operations in and throughout Laos. The daily SITREP was usually around 15 to 20 pages long. Some of the stuff reported was sort of funny, like the bombing of a Pathet Lao Colonel's VW, somewhere south of Savannakhet.

Other traffic was deadly serious and since most of it was classified, it has to remain that way. Our little comm. center was cleared to send and receive traffic up to and including Top Secret, SPECAT, and offline encrypted messages. The SPECAT stood for special category messages. Usually, those pertained to covert operations, the planning, the execution, and after action reports. *The very secret stuff.*

For lunch, I rode back to the Pimpa House and ate there. Our cook would fix steak, pork chops, meat loaf with all the trimmings, and would usually include freshly baked biscuits and some form of pie and fruit, common to Laos, for desert. After lunch it would be time to return to the comm. center to complete my duty day.

Once a week, we would type up and send our weekly operational summary (OPSUM) of all that happened in Laos, which

See **Odiorne**, continued on page 4.

## Editor's Notebook

### *Stories, Stories and the Facts, Just the Facts, Ma'am*

Most of us, us being the TLCB members and our spouses, are of the age where we're very likely to be grandparents. And, how many of us who are, wouldn't be delighted if one of those grandchildren came up one day and said, "Grandpa, what did you do in the war?" (or of course, Grandma). Well, that's just what Parisia, the granddaughter of Tom "O.D." Odiorne, did, and the result was our cover article for this issue. For the rest of us, the message is "Don't wait to be asked!" I hate to remind everyone of this, but someday we're not going to be here, and there are going to be a lot of family members and friends who would like to remember us with more than a few old photos, no matter how well they can be preserved on digital. And those memoirs might have even more meaning if they are also preserved in a great publication, like the *Mekong Express Mail*. So, let me repeat, "Don't wait to be asked!" Get busy and write down those stories from back in the day and send them to the *MEM*.

Another member who has some great stories and has chosen to share them is Phil French, whose "U-10 Operations at Nakhon Phanom" starts on page 5. Phil is a darned good storyteller with a great story to tell, as you'll surely recognize. Dropped in, almost as an aside, is the fact that, prior to flying U-10s over Laos, Phil was a Peace Corps volunteer in Northeast Thailand. That's one of the great things in learning more about the TLCB members. Everyone is so much more than they initially appear to be. I'm planning on getting some more stories from Phil in the future.

Beginning a few issues back, the *MEM* started running a list of new members, partly because the membership is expanding at an extraordinary rate. Bill Tilton, who doesn't allow me to forget my editorial duties, tells me we're now at an historic high, closing in on 600 active members. That's one of the reasons for starting a new feature, mini-profiles of some of the new ones. I've been trying to contact them as their applications are processed and offer them the chance to provide me some basic facts and photos. Most of them are too shy, for no good reason to my way of thinking, but a few have stepped up. Maybe their willingness to give the rest of us a "Sawadee" will inspire some of the others.

Lastly, there's a report, with pictures, of the 2013 TLCB Reunion at Ft. Walton Beach, Florida. I hear the weather didn't cooperate, but that just proved that the real attraction of the reunions is the chance to spend quality time with other members. *A well earned salute to Ed Miller and his committee for a super event!*

John Harrington  
jharrington@nscopy.com

### **DUES !**

**Yes, dues season starts on January 1st. For your convenience, you may pay by check, using the handy envelope we have enclosed, or by using PayPal on our website.**

# 2013 Assistance Report

by Les Thompson  
Assistance Committee Chairman

First, I would like to thank all the Brothers and Sisters for their support this past year. This includes all who donate on a regular basis, the ones who participate in the Assistance Auction and the Quilt Raffle at the annual reunions, and those who support in other ways. Thanks also to John Schillo for his outstanding job as Assistance Chairman and his help in getting me up to speed.

Thanks to those in SEA who do the footwork in getting the funds to those in need, overseeing the projects, and making sure that our efforts are a success. In Thailand, we have John Middlewood, Ed Miller, and Khun Pomphan as our main ambassadors. In Laos, MacAlan Thompson and Jeff Hudgens lead the way.

The Assistance Committee has reviewed and approved 43 motions so far this year. We have funded \$15,795.04 in Thailand for Quality of Life, \$989.13 for Medical Assistance, and \$6,549.78 in Student Assistance. In Laos, we approved \$20,965 for Quality of Life projects. Quality of Life includes such things as desks, chairs, books, roofs, concrete floors, and other items to improve the quality of the children's educational

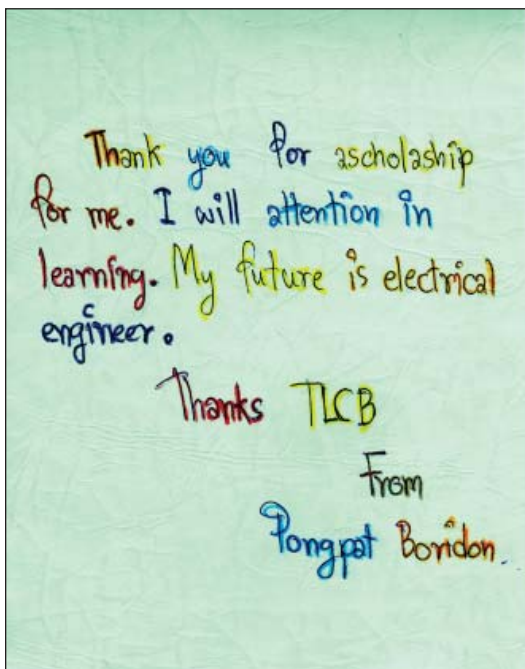
experience. Medical Assistance provides for transportation, food, and other expenses incurred while receiving medical care. In Thailand, the medical care is free, but getting the children's parents there, and living while there, is not. Student Aid provides tuition assistance, money for food, and other necessities that help keep the kids progressing in school.

I have been extremely fortunate to have been able to visit the schools in both Laos and Thailand. It is amazing what is being done by our small band of brothers. You truly do make a difference in the lives of these kids and reduce the burden on their families. The difference in school life and



attitude between here and there is tremendous. For the most part, the kids there are actually grateful for the chance of an education.

The majority of us voluntarily went when called and we did what was asked of us by our leaders. Many were also deeply offended by how these same leaders abandoned our allies. It is my opinion that what we are doing is a duty of honor that helps, to a degree, repay some of the debt we as a nation owe these people.



The TLC Brotherhood has received many expressions of gratitude from those we help. We show two recent examples, from our work carried out by John Middlewood in Northeast Thailand. Above, Mac Thompson gathers information for a proposed project in impoverished rural Laos.

**Odiorne**, continued from page 2.

was usually between 40 to 60 pages in length. Back in those days, 1969 to 1971, the different military region headquarters—Luang Prabang, Long Tieng, Savannakhet, and Pakse—were tied into Vientiane via radio teletype (RATT). If any messages from them were destined for someplace outside of Laos to anyplace in the world, the radio operator would bring us the tape and we would change the format from call signs, that the radio room used, to routing indicators, and send it out over our AUTODIN circuit. The same applied for incoming messages from outside Laos; we would give the tape to the radio operator and he would send it to whom it was intended.

Since radio teletype was slow, 60 words per minute teletype, slower than a snail can crawl by today's standards, a lot of the routine stuff and long messages would wait for the Saturday morning courier run going to the different military region headquarters. Only the most important messages went out over the radio.

Come four o'clock, the swing shift would relieve the day shift and receive their briefing on what happened and what was expected, and so on when the mids replaced the swing shift. We worked what I referred to as an Air Force schedule: 3 days, 24 hours off, 3 swings, 24 hours off, 3 mids and then 72 hours off. In all my time in communications, Vientiane was the only place that worked those hours.

There were some interesting times in the communications center. I think it was early in 1970 when Vang Pao and his Hmong Army captured the entire Plain of Jars (PDJ). That was first time the entire PDJ had been in Royal Government hands since at least WWII. This was when our little deception ploy occurred to help Vang Pao out. You can imagine how it made us feel as these reports came in regarding his successes.

I also was in Vientiane when Lon Nol overthrew Sihanouk in Cambodia, and that also led to some very interesting message traffic. The reverse was true when later that year, the entire Plain of Jars was lost to the North Vietnamese Army and their



Above, Tommy Odiorne's second retirement, taken at Fort Bragg in June 2012. Photos provided by the author.



Above, O.D.'s somewhat "salty" Embassy card.

Pathet Lao communist allies. That gave us a helpless feeling. There was nothing we could do except receive this traffic and pass it on.

For our unit, our war was the one happening in and around the Plain of Jars in Northern Laos.

We didn't pay any attention to the other war in Laos, the one for the Ho Chi Minh Trail. That second war was the responsibility of those in Savannakhet and Pakse. The fact is there were actually two wars raging in Laos, not one. Each was completely different from the other, involving different people, different equipment, air support, and even different communications.

One should keep in mind that the Vietnam War was composed of at least five different wars going on all at the same time: The war in South Vietnam, the air war over North Vietnam, the war in Cambodia, along with the two different wars in Laos. All were very different in scope, strategy, and tactics, with different

men and equipment involved.

But I enjoyed typing up the messages and breaking down the incoming. As to what our messages said, 2/3rds to 3/4ths were classified, so their contents can't be disclosed. Besides, there were so many of them, one could never remember what they said anyway.

After supper at the Pimpa House, there were a couple of activities we could participate in. We would pick up a movie from the admin section of ARMA and show it in our house at night. Movies started at 7 PM. We had a refrigerator full of beer, cokes, and snacks for those who chose the movie. There were also two huge book cases full of paperbacks for those who liked to read. There was no American radio or TV in Laos. If I remember correctly, Vientiane had only one movie theater downtown and it showed Thai flicks, so the movie was a really big deal back then.

Then it was off to bed to get ready to do this all over again in the morning.



**Editor's Postscript:** Hey, come on, O.D., we all know, no matter what the routine was, no two days in SEA were ever the same.

# *U-10 Operations at Nakhon Phanom*

## *Ever Heard of the U-10?*

*by Phil French*

**Editor's Note:** *Phil French has been a TLCB member since 2007. He was on active duty from 1966 to 1972, and then spent 21 years (USAF Reserves) as an Admissions Liaison Officer for the USAF Academy/AFROTC. He now lives in Washington Court House, Ohio.*

*This article was originally published in the Summer 2007 issue of "Friends Journal," a publication of the Air Force Museum Foundation. Photos furnished by the author.*



The author at Udorn RTAB to pick up passengers. Note the full-span wingslats. This feature was central to the U-10's remarkable STOL performance. Photos furnished by the author.

Thinking I was familiar with the USAF's weapons systems of the time, I was puzzled when my flying assignment to a U-10 came near pilot training graduation time at Webb AFB, Texas in June, 1968. None of my classmates or any of the T-38 instructors had even heard of this aircraft. A bit more research soon revealed that the U-10 was a Helio "Super Courier," a unique, high wing, single engine tail dragger with full-span, leading-edge slats, four seats, powered by a Lycoming 295 hp engine turning a three-bladed prop. The U-10 provided remarkable short takeoff and landing (STOL) capabilities and was procured by the USAF for special operations missions.

Upon graduation, I was soon off to Hurlburt Field/Eglin AFB, Florida for transition training. At first, the U-10 looked like a real come-down to a guy who had just finished six months flying the sleek and fast T-38. In reality, I was humbled pretty quickly and felt as if I had to learn to fly all over again. The many contrasts in performance and construction were about as stark as it gets, not the least of which was the U-10's unique main landing gear which featured free-castoring wheels, hence ground loops looking for a place to happen. I soon learned to love this remarkable flying machine.

After basic survival school at Fairchild AFB and the "snake school" at Clark AB in the Philippines, I was finally off to my

assignment at Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base known as "NKP," which was located along the Mekong River in extreme northeast Thailand. NKP was the closest of the six air bases in Thailand to the action over Laos and North Vietnam. Having lived for two years in northeast Thailand as a Peace Corps volunteer in a village near the Cambodian border, I was excited to be returning to somewhat familiar turf. Thai/Lao language skills developed during that earlier stint proved beneficial in this new USAF assignment, particularly during the more unusual missions on which I was often sent.

Upon seeing the 606th Special Operations Squadron's U-10s for the first time, I was surprised to see that they all sported a bare, shiny aluminum finish rather than the camouflaged paint jobs of the other USAF aircraft on the ramp

at NKP, or the U-10s I'd recently left behind at Hurlburt. I also noted that the 606th birds wore only small aircraft serial numbers on their vertical tails and no other USAF insignia. I guessed these U-10s' almost identical appearance to those flown by Air America was probably more than pure coincidence. Incidentally, the U-10s of the 5th SOS at Nha Trang, South Vietnam, the only other unit in Southeast Asia flying the Helio, wore camouflage paint.

The mix of backgrounds of the U-10 pilots at NKP was interesting. About half of us were recent Undergraduate Pilot Training graduates (UPT) serving our first flying assignments, and the other half were high-time KC-135 and B-52 senior captains and majors pulled from the Strategic Air Command to serve their one-year remote flying tours in SEA. Those experienced guys were having a ball. They claimed this tour was the most fun they had ever had flying. Mostly, with all due respect to SAC, those pilots were ecstatic to have "escaped" for a year.

Following a few hours of dual time and an area checkout, I was soon up and running on missions notable for their variety and challenging flying. As evidenced by our "Litterbug" call sign, our principal mission was dropping leaflets over hostile

See **U-10**, continued on page 6.

## U-10, continued from page 5.

positions, mostly the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos, as part of a wider psychological warfare program.

I will briefly describe the sequence of events of a typical leaflet drop mission. As hard-working maintenance crews prepared our U-10s for safe mechanical flight, others packed thousands of leaflets in boxes about 12-18 inches per side. These were tied with cord with fuses attached. The fuses were timed to sever the cords at a preset height above ground. The lower

often we simply climbed above their reach. This commonly put us at 8,000 to even 10,000 feet above ground level (AGL). You can now see why we needed to use the time delay fuses to prevent the leaflet boxes from opening until they fell to a lower altitude. Otherwise, leaflets would have scattered all over much of Laos and North Vietnam rather than our specific target areas.

These leaflet drop missions were usually flown as two-ship formations with a normal duration of just under two hours. For missions over "the Trail," we often sent a pair of two ships.



"Leaflet kicker" loading a U-10 with delayed-opening fused boxes of thousands of leaflets.

half of the left rear cockpit door had been removed, so when we arrived over the target, the "leaflet kicker" armed the fuses and began throwing the boxes out that hole. These leaflet kickers, who were most often young maintenance troops from our squadron, volunteered for these missions. This brought them some excitement and a sense of being a real part of the action. Not surprisingly, part of their motivation for volunteering was earning combat pay. These guys were real pros, and it was great having them along. We pilots could not have accomplished the leaflet dropping missions without them.

Backing up a little, I want to mention our pre-leaflet drop mission briefings held at the Tactical Unit Operations Center (TUOC). We received our target coordinates and some additional intelligence information to which we paid very close attention. The latter was the last known locations of anti-aircraft gun emplacements along our route of flight. These guns, which ranged from 12.7mm to 57mm, were capable of hits at higher effective altitudes as their size increased. To some extent we routed ourselves around the big guns, but more

Given the limited instrumentation in the U-10, we departed NKP only under visual flight rules (VFR) conditions. However, particularly during the monsoon season, we often had to climb above heavy cloud cover enroute to the target areas, which were typically from 40 to 80 miles east to northeast of NKP. To pinpoint our drop points in bad weather, we used either Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN) radials and distances from our onboard navigation equipment, or got steering from the helpful USAF controllers watching us from the radar site known as "Viking" at Mukdahan, Thailand.

Maybe one reason they were so helpful was that we air delivered their mail several times weekly. When leaflet drop missions were to areas without reported AAA gun emplacements, our two-ship flight discipline sometimes became a little too relaxed. During one such trip my wingman chose to descend far lower than the "book" 3,500 foot AGL for such areas, and this resulted in more excitement than we really needed that afternoon. He had a too-close call when he took a small arms projectile through the left wing, barely missing the fuel tank. That "act of aggression" called for immediate retaliation, we thought. I'm reluctant to admit this in print now, and

**U-10 is continued on next page.**



Phil French, left, and a "leaflet kicker" about to take off on a mission from NKP. Parachutes, survival vests, and M-16s were standard aircrew gear on out-of-country flights.

I never spoke of it openly at the time, but we instantly converted from psy-ops to “armed reconnaissance” U-10s.

My wingman, Capt George Spitz and I decided to attack the limestone cave from where we thought the lucky shot had come. We popped open the windows next to the pilot’s left shoulder, began left orbits of the cave, thrust our M-16s out the windows and “hosed the area!” Each of us fired two magazines of 5.56 mm ammunition loaded alternately with ball and tracer rounds. While any damage to the bad guys in and around the cave was doubtful, it was a fine adventure.

An unexpected drama unfolded when, after firing those two magazines from the M-16, I realized that my rudder controls were virtually locked up. The empty cartridge cases had deflected off the sloping open window back into the airplane, where they rolled down and under the cockpit floorboard. Fortunately, if handled gingerly, the U-10 continued to fly well rudderless. Luckily there was almost no crosswind requiring rudder control when landing back at NKP.

My main concern by that time was dodging the “official” bullet back at the 606th ramp. I imagined getting a royal butt-chewing from the squadron commander if he found out about the unauthorized “use of force” incident. Thankfully, the ground maintenance crew sensed my panic and got right to the task of taking up the floorboard and picking out the brass cases. The bird was quickly put back in service with all flight controls functional. Word never got back to the commander, and I learned a good lesson. Unfortunately, George Spitz was later killed in an EC-47 over Laos.

Beyond leaflet drops, our next most frequent missions were operations into short, rough airstrips where the STOL capabilities of the U-10 really came into their own. With slats deployed we could fly as slowly as 30 mph in level flight. Takeoff roll was just over 300 feet. The landing roll was often less than 250 feet if we employed an aggressive, high angle-of-attack, high-power technique which allowed the wing slats to deploy. Approach or departure obstacles had to be factored in for safe operation even though the initial climb angle after take-off was 18 degrees. So, we had to be careful not to land in places where we’d have a tough time getting back out of with passengers or freight added. Our normal cruise speed was 150 knots, and the U-10 had a full-fuel range of 600 miles.

These short field operations included so-called “civic action runs,” mail deliveries to remote USAF and U.S. Army units, one-time cargo or passenger transports to outposts throughout the northern half of Thailand, and even week-long temporary duty to locations in Thailand and Laos. Before landing, we commonly had to make a couple of low passes over airstrips to run off grazing water buffalo and the kids tending to them.

A memorable “civic action run” was one on which I flew the 606th commander to a small village in northeast Thailand not

far from NKP. Most of the project had taken place before my arrival in country, with the squadron having collected books for a new library at a small, rural school. This mission was to ferry the colonel so he could formally dedicate the new library. I was selected so he could deliver his message in English, and I could then translate into Thai for him.

All went as advertised, but the good colonel was awfully long winded. The kids and dignitaries got restless, and I quickly ran out of subtle Thai language variations for all the ways the colonel said the same thing. The library was a worthy people-to-people project, but that experience made me reluctant to get involved in any more international translation situations.

Another facet of our psy-ops mission with the U-10 was loudspeaker broadcasts over highly specific target areas, though we flew relatively few of these. The aircraft were only fitted with loudspeakers if and when such missions were assigned. The audio systems were bulky “blasters” with speakers aimed out the left side of the aircraft, and the messages were normally from prerecorded cassette tapes rather than done in “real time.” We had to fly tight left orbits in order to be heard on the ground clearly and flew lights out at night to minimize drawing small arms fire.

I recall flying a challenging speaker mission one dark night over a village in central Laos. Due to the absence of a visible horizon in that very remote area, I found it difficult to maintain the proper altitude (500 feet AGL) and the tight orbit at the same time. Using frequent instrument cross-checks, I got it done but was very glad to high-tail it back to NKP that moonless night.

Our U-10s at NKP were very much a “bush airline.” Beyond



*Helio U-10 “Super Courier” enroute to a leaflet drop over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Its call sign was appropriately “Litterbug”. French)*

the deliveries of people and cargo into improvised airstrips as earlier described, we ran a daily shuttle service to Don Muang Airport in Bangkok. The primary purpose was to pick up reconnaissance film and intelligence-related documents at Udorn and Takhli airbases on our way to Bangkok for delivery to Headquarters 7th/13th Air Force. Three passengers could ride too, and we did a brisk business when “forced” to overnight in the city on these shuttles, and we even had our own room permanently reserved at the Chao Phrya Hotel.

See **U-10**, continued on page 8.

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### **Mekong Express Mail Staff:**

Editor: John Harrington (jharrington@nscopy.com)

Assistant Editor: Thelma Tilton (thelmatilton@gmail.com)

Distribution: John Duffin (jduffin29@verizon.net)

Composition: Bill Tilton (billtilton@gmail.com)

### **TLC Brotherhood Website Contact**

Jerry Karnes, Communications Chairman

(JKarnes@tlc-brotherhood.com)

### **Payments to TLCB**

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**Reunion 2014: Colorado Springs, CO, Oct 2-5**

## **U-10, continued from page 5.**

After the obligatory night-on-the-town, we headed northeast the following morning to Karat and Ubon airbases for more film and document pickups before returning upcountry to NKP. Each pilot flew the shuttle a couple of times monthly, which was a welcome break from the combat missions over Laos. These "Bangkok Shuttles" were tough and grueling work, but, as they say, "somebody had to do it." These trips were an opportunity to kick back a little, do a little sightseeing, and have some fun flying. I recall one shuttle during which I flew at roughly 100 feet AGL the entire trip, only popping up to pattern altitude a few miles out as we approached the air bases. We needed this low level training, of course. The extent of such enroute "training" depended on how adventurous and/or appreciative the passengers on board were, too.

I feel quite fortunate to have played a small and unusual flying role in the Bob Hope Christmas Show when they stopped at NKP just before Christmas 1968. Someone came up with the clever idea of greeting Bob and his entourage using the airborne public address system. A U-10 volunteer pilot was requested, and I jumped at the chance to be that pilot. A cassette tape was found of an old Bing Crosby song, and this was loaded and ready in the U-10's powerful audio system. I was ready to launch at the end of the taxiway as the C-130 carrying Bob and his gang landed. As soon as they touched down, I took off and began a tight left orbit over the ramp as the C-130 shut down. As Bob came down the ramp, golf club in hand, I started the tape. He was surprised and amused as he raised his club and waved it at my U-10 circling above. That was a thrilling moment for me to be participating in a unique greeting.

A footnote to this is that I landed and parked the U-10 and jogged to the outdoor arena in record time. My squadron mates had saved a seat for me, so I didn't miss any of that glorious

Bob Hope Christmas Show.

I can honestly say that not even once was I bored flying the U-10 for a year in Thailand and Laos. We did our best to avoid boredom by devising a few antics to spice up the duty a bit. For example, we normally flew either straight-in or conventional box patterns into the large airbases in Thailand. Of course, the F-4s and F-105s flew overhead patterns, relatively high speed approaches right down the runway heading and then steep turns to downwind leg as speed decreased so as to lower gear and flaps. Drag parachutes were then deployed upon touchdown to slow the jets more rapidly. Well, not to be outdone by the "fast movers," I obtained a very small drag chute—about three feet in diameter. This was rigged to a 25 foot length of parachute cord. I had this folded and ready next to me in the cockpit. Several miles out from Takhli Air Base, one fine day I called the tower, gave them my call sign, and requested an overhead pattern. I swear I heard them snickering in the background, but they granted the request. I knew in advance which taxiway turnoff was nearest the ramp where I needed to park for a cargo pickup. So, I bore down on the runway at high cruise speed with landing lights on. I "pitched out" directly over the turnoff I would use and quickly slowed into a spiraling downwind/base/final combination. I set up a high angle-of-attack final which allowed the leading edge slats to deploy and the airspeed to bleed off to about 35 knots. I touched down a couple of hundred feet short of the turnoff and threw the makeshift drag chute out the window. By some minor miracle it didn't tangle in the tail of the U-10, and it opened beautifully. I must admit that it was a satisfying maneuver, and I guess the tower controllers had something out of the ordinary to share with their buddies at the club that evening.

See **U-10**, continued on page 12.



# *Newest Members in TLC Brotherhood*

Since the new TLCSB Forum was inaugurated over a year ago, we have grown by approximately double the rate of new members. The members listed below joined between the last issue of the MEM and the 1st of December. We have listed their locations, branches of service, and email addresses. You can find more information on our Website database. The MEM wishes you all a hearty "Welcome Home."

| No.  | Last       | First    | City             | State | Branch | Email                      |
|------|------------|----------|------------------|-------|--------|----------------------------|
| 1562 | Alonge     | Paul     | Garfield Heights | OH    | USAF   | AlongeOH@Yahoo.com         |
| 1544 | Ashbaugh   | Alan     | Lodi             | CA    | USAF   | ANashbaugh@YMail.com       |
| 1560 | Benner     | Stephen  | Yucaipa          | CA    | USAF   | SBenner2@msn.com           |
| 1563 | Boling     | Kenneth  | Grayling         | MI    | USA    | Kenbow11@Gmail.com         |
| 1557 | Buchsbaum  | Bill     | San Antonio      | TX    | USAF   | billbsatx@email.com        |
| 1556 | Diggins Sr | Hugh     | Pittsford        | VT    | USAF   | HDigginsSR@aol.com         |
| 1554 | Fitchett   | Alf      | DeFuniak Springs | FL    | USAF   | Fitchett4@embarqmail.com   |
| 1552 | Harms      | Gerard   | Nashville        | TN    | USAF   | TNbk@Bellsouth.net         |
| 1547 | Kelly      | Michael  | Jeffersonville   | IN    | USAF   | michael.s.kelly@att.net    |
| 1555 | Keur       | Cornelis | McClellan        | VA    | Other  | cmkeur@gmail.com           |
| 1548 | Landry     | Francis  | Chehalis         | WA    | USAF   | fe.landry@hotmail.com      |
| 1549 | Lee        | Elgin    | Vancleave        | MS    | USAF   | elginlee5sr2@yahoo.com     |
| 1553 | McAlpin    | Edwin    | Trenton          | FL    | USN    | noemail@noemail.com        |
| 1543 | Miller     | James    | Verona           | NY    | USAF   | NMiller2@twcny.rr.com      |
| 1561 | Moss       | Richard  | Boca Raton       | FL    | USA    | Mossman67@Comcast.Net      |
| 1551 | Nichols    | Stephen  | Ledyard          | CT    | AA     | Madriver.sn@gmail.com      |
| 1559 | Odom       | Jim      | Raleigh          | NC    | USAF   | odomjim@nc.rr.com          |
| 1564 | Powell     | Darryl   | Big Spring       | TX    | USA    | DarrylPowell@Banderson.com |
| 1550 | Remel      | Robert   | Niceville        | FL    | USAF   | RWraf2543@cox.net          |
| 1546 | Taylor     | James    | Covington        | GA    | USAF   | jastay1@hotmail.com        |
| 1558 | Vice       | Gerald   | Tacoma           | WA    | USAF   | skipvice@gmail.com         |
| 1545 | Welch      | Thomas   | Lynn             | MA    | USAF   | TomWelch99@gmail.com       |

## *The TLCSB Logo is Now a Registered Trademark*

*by Gary Beatty, Board Member at Large*

After nearly nine months of wading through federal laws and regulations, which repeatedly resulted in banging my head on my desk, I enlisted the help of an online legal service. I am happy to announce that our logo is now registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, registration number 4,406,244, effective September 24, 2013 (my birthday, coincidentally). The original registration certificate was given to TLCSB Corporate Secretary, Jim Closs, at the recent reunion in Ft Walton Beach. You should eventually be able to see it on our website.

So what does it mean that we now have a trademarked logo? Well, if someone uses it without our permission, we can demand that they cease and

desist from further usage, and if they somehow make money from using it, we will be entitled to some or all of their profits and possibly impose a fine. The logo can be used only with the express, written permission of the TLCSB, Inc. Board of Directors. For example, a member who attended the Ft Walton reunion received permission to use the logo on a very nice plaque he made for sale at the auction. All the proceeds of the sales went to the Assistance Fund. So, if you want to use the logo, contact a TLCSB Board member who can then present the request to Board of Directors. Your request should include a complete description of how you intend to use the logo.



## Assistance Program Impressions:

# *My Trips to South East Asia*

by George Shenberger

On September 18, 2011 to October 18th 2011, I travelled to Thailand and Laos with John and Nancy Sweet, Bill and Thelma Tilton, and Les and Carolyn Thompson. My wife, Ruth Ann, and I had toured over there in November 2001 with two other couples. We all enjoyed ourselves, but Ruth Ann hated the long flight to Asia, and she was not interested in making another long trip, so I asked my long-time friend since grade school, Montaque (Monty) Dubs, to go on the trip, and he accepted. Monty has since become a member of the TLCB.

He and I flew out from Washington D.C. to Incheon, Korea, and then flew on to Bangkok, Thailand where we met the Sweets, Tiltons, and Thompsons. We all toured a couple of days in bustling, historic Bangkok and took a primitive night train to the Lao border. We then went on to Vientiane, Laos where we met the United States Ambassador to Laos, Karen Stewart, and enjoyed dinner with her at our hotel. I had a combination Vietnamese dinner, which was so good I will never forget it!

After a couple days in interesting Vientiane, we all squeezed in the van for the trip over the Mountains to the more relaxed Luang Prabang. Most of the Laos terrain is rugged mountains and the rainy season is May thru November, so we did see some unusual sights and were in some trying situations. From Luang Prabang, we went south to Xiengkhoang (Phonsavan) and visited the mysterious Plain of Jars, where the U.S. had bombed heavily during the Vietnam War and people are still finding unexploded ordinance in much of the area.

We visited schools and an orphanage in Laos and Thailand, and I was amazed at the welcome they gave us even before we exited the van at the school. The teachers and administrators met us at the van and the smiling children, dressed in their best,


lined up to cheer us by clapping and giving us their traditional greeting, the wai, in which palms and fingers are pressed together and raised to their nose, and they said "sa wa dee" with a slight bow of their heads. This was an experience I will never forget. I had never before seen this kind of appreciation for what the TLCB does for those kids who really do not have much. We visited Nakhon Phanom (NKP) and Korat, Thailand cities filled with our memories, and even visited the base at Korat, which is now a Royal Thai AFB. It was a trip I will never forget!



Then this year, from August 28 to September 18, John Sweet, Les Thomson, Roger Durant, Monty Dubs, and I went back to the same areas in Thailand and visited schools and orphanages. On both trips, we met up with Mac Thompson and Sunni, his wife, who took us through Laos. Mac's knowledge of, and familiarity with, Laos and Thailand made the trips unforgettable experiences.

John Middlewood and his wife, Maew, also took us through several schools and orphanages in Thailand. What John and Mac do there

for the TLCB and the kids at the schools is a blessing!

I want to thank all the members who give to the kids and the members who make the TLCB possible. To all of us,   
"Welcome home!"

### *A special note from George Shenberger*

I want to thank everybody who voted for me for Member at Large and I congratulate the winners, Gary Beatty, and Mike Potaski. I would personally like to thank all the members who give to the kids and the members who make the TLCB possible.

## Assistance Program Impressions:

# Contrasts

by *Thelma Tilton*

George Shenberger's article, "My Trips to Southeast Asia," made me stop and reminisce about that trip to Laos and Thailand. I thought of the great camaraderie Bill and I enjoyed with George and Monty, the Thompsons, the Sweets, our capable and handsome van driver, and our wonderful hosts and tour guides, Mac and Sunni Thompson. I remembered the fascinating experiences we shared and began to evaluate the harsh contrasts of that trip as they relate to daily living and the TLCB. One of the most vivid disparities is the travel time. Remember, we are all borderline old folks who spent 14 hours in a van to cover 300 miles! No interstates here. Yes, 300 miles over mostly rutted, washed-out dirt roads sometimes covered by previous mudslides. I tell you my long legs were really stiff! And the traffic? We competed with chickens, water buffalo, yellow dogs, and even pigs for road space and speed. And the snacks along the way? At one roadside stand, besides the dried fish dangling from strings, there were ice cream sandwiches for sale...two pieces of regular bakery bread with ice cream between. I won't even mention the bathrooms...a huge aberration!

These intended comparisons make me smile, but the important differences are those we deal with and try to mitigate as TLCB members and donors, Rosie's quilt raffle proceeds, The Exchange sales, and the auction revenue. Here are some of the things I noticed as a result of visiting schools and an orphan-



At Lao school officials wait to greet TLCB visitors while kids line the welcoming path. Mac Thompson in foreground. Photos by Bill Tilton.

age in Thailand and Laos. George mentioned the welcome the school officials, teachers, and the students provided to show their thanks for the TLCB help and caring. They, and there were many, stood on both sides of the paths to the school building. Obviously dressed in their best, the boys wore white shirts and dark pants, and the girls wore their traditional Lao hats and clothing. Proud Lao mothers had spent hours stringing beads and embroidering clothing for tiny, dark-haired, lovely girls. They honor their heritage, these shy children with captivating smiles. They had made welcome chains of colored paper,

much like those we all made as children to decorate our church Christmas tree. They placed these around our necks and put their hands together, fingers in a point, and bowed their heads in a reverent welcome. There was also wonderful, traditional dancing, complete with exquisite grace of well taught hand movements as well as practiced feet.

At home in the U.S., our children have beautiful schools with delicious cafeterias, up-to-the-minute computers, well stocked playgrounds, gymnasiums and showers, instruments and bands, thick schoolbooks, and comfortable desks. Do you know how these children enjoy school, get their food?

Their smiles make it clear that they enjoy learning and being in school. We visited a remote school which houses children who live too far from the school to make the trip every day, so they stay in a "dormitory;" the boys in one area, the girls in another. They sleep above the floor, about waist high. A large, shelf-type wooden structure was built for them to sleep on.... with about a one-inch mat for comfort. They keep their items in a bag since there are no lockers or closets.

How do they eat? The kitchen is outside. There is a roof,



School kitchen where kids fix their meals. The "stove" is on the ground in front of the table. Kids at this school live too far away to go home every day, so it is a boarding school. Otherwise they would get no schooling at all.

a dirt floor, but no running water and no walls. There were two hibachis on which the children cook their rice. What are the schoolrooms like? You can see through the cracks in the wooden walls. There is no electricity and no heat. Sometimes the floors are cement, sometimes dirt, depending whether there is funding for this luxury. Bathrooms are totally primitive, the kind our folks *enjoyed* in the 20s and 30s. The orphanage

See **Contrasts**, continued on page 12.

## U-10, continued from page 5.

A one-week TDY into northwest Thailand illustrates the varied missions I've noted. My U-10, along with the able assistance of crew chief Sgt Matt Flores, was assigned to the U.S. Consulate in Chiang Mai. Each day we flew the consul general or others into some pretty remote locations with names such as Taek, Mae Sot, Chiang Kam, and Ban Houei Sai. One memorable mission on that TDY was to the Golden Triangle area, the common borders of Thailand/Burma/Laos. That trip was for a road dedication ceremony near Hin Tack. Our U-10 and an Air America Pilatus "Porter" transported an entourage of American and Thai officials into one of the "wilder" airstrips I had encountered. While by our STOL standards, the strip was a generous 750 feet in length, it featured a pronounced hump in the middle. Actually, the lower half of the runway was at nearly a 20 degree angle to the upper half. I tried not to let the "sweat" factor show to the dignitaries on board, but it was a tricky touchdown and takeoff at nearly maximum gross weight on that hot day. All in a day's work for the Helio "Super Courier," though. Its capabilities never ceased to amaze me.

I'll conclude by sharing a few facts and figures regarding the U-10s in the Southeast Asia war. As mentioned earlier, only two units operated this unique aircraft. In addition to the 606th SOS in Thailand, they were also flown by the 5th SOS at Nha Trang, South Vietnam. Both units had similar missions, but only the 606th flew routinely over Laos. My understanding is that the 5th SOS flew many more loudspeaker missions. These two units were also surprisingly small. My logbook indicates having flown twelve different aircraft during the one-year tour. We lost none, and I likely flew all the airworthy U-10s in the squadron. A total of twelve USAF U-10s were lost during the period 1962-1969. Eleven of those were lost in South Vietnam and one at Luang Prabang in northern Laos. There were five fatalities resulting from the twelve aircraft losses; no U-10 aircrew members were taken as POWs.

Earlier in this article I mentioned the bare aluminum finish of our U-10s and their striking resemblance to those operated by Air America throughout Laos. This non-USAF look served to fit in well in the short-term TDY assignments some of us had to a certain "non-existent" CIA base in Laos, known as Long Chieng, aka Lima Site-20 Alternate, or Lima Site 98.

Among all the terrific flying experiences logged during my one-year tour, I'd rate my stint at Long Chieng as the highlight, but that's another story for another day. I'll wrap up this article by saying I'm quite honored to have served in Southeast Asia as a USAF pilot. The flying experience was incredibly interesting and unique. The memories of missions and USAF comrades are vivid and will last forever.



***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)***

## Contrasts, continued from page 11.

we visited was in really poor condition. Besides being overcrowded, with no place for personal things, there was a huge hole in the ceiling. It was dark and depressing, worse than the shed I used to play in as a child.

What are the school libraries like? Our kids enjoy computers and supplies, the latest and greatest colorful, bound books, lots of them. These kids have a few simple paper books to share. Again, no electricity to help with lighting, and there are so few books, they hardly need shelves... a few bins actually. The library table and chairs are crude, as are their desks. Sometimes



Most schools in rural Laos are lucky to have paper and chalk, let alone a library, so this one is actually pretty good.

the kids are seated three to a desk because of seat shortage.

Often, the children and teachers hold classroom outside. We saw portions of playacting and students learning to mold clay into familiar animals. Typical of these children, there was a shy pride in their work. At one school, we saw the students playing a fast-moving soccer game. It warmed my heart to know that the TLCB had paid to level and grade the school property so that there was a soccer field. We also had the pleasure of seeing



On nice days they hold classes outdoors at this school. It was hard for the kids to concentrate on the lesson with all these "farang" around!

soccer balls donated with TLCB donations, and we also enjoyed seeing library books given to several schools.

***Please Give:*** Can each one of us make a small difference on these contrasts; brighten the children's smiles by improving their learning conditions and softening the harshness? They are well behaved and eager, and the teachers seem to enjoy their jobs and the children. Each one of us on the trip came away feeling that the TLC Brotherhood, Inc. is doing good works, but can't we do more? Many members send a check every month. This is your chance to make a difference. Please give what you can to the Assistance Program so we can help make the learning experience for these children a little easier and more enjoyable.



Above, right, George Shenberger and Thelma Tilton do their best to look as though they know what they're doing, and actually they didn't humiliate themselves any more than the Lao school officials, who were also good sports when the kids invited all to join them in a traditional dance. At right, schoolkids make animals and other figures out of clay in art class.

Below, Mac Thompson poses with a happy student all dressed up in her tribal finery for this special occasion. In the background kids play on the new soccer field that WE members of TLCB leveled for them. At extreme right, Sunee Thompson takes their picture. Even though their extended family keeps her hands full at home in Bangkok, Sunee has traveled on many of these Assistance trips with Mac.



# Nearly a Blowout! TLCB Reunion, 2013

A near-record number of TLCB members assembled at Fort Walton Beach, Florida, at the end of the first week in October this year, to celebrate our 12<sup>th</sup> year as an organized group and to conduct the business of our corporation, as required by Virginia law. The reunion was hosted by charter member Ed Miller and an experienced and motivated committee of local members. Their preparations for a great event were extensive. Who knew a hurricane would threaten a direct strike and the government would shut down, causing the Air Force to capriciously cancel all events connected with their personnel and facilities?

Yes, the government shutdown threw a huge wrench into the gears of Ed's carefully planned program, but TLCB members are nothing if not resilient and resourceful, and some said they had a richer experience than at any previous reunion! Members took the situation in their stride, found plenty to do, and spent a lot more time than usual just visiting with each other. The fact that many of us had flown in and lacked cars didn't seem to matter much either. Those who did have cars were quick to offer rides, and some of us did a lot of walking. Fortunately, despite the threat of a hurricane that was coming across Cuba, the weather was great most of the time. But alas, we did not get to see that Osprey Ed had arranged for!

This year we had an unusually large number of *new* members in attendance, who wore especially identifiable name tags so that we made sure to include them in our bull sessions and impromptu adventures. As usual, we also picked up a few new members *during* the reunion. One of these just happened to hear about us in a local restaurant as he was passing through on a trip. Excited to find somebody who understands his service so many years ago, he came to the hotel and found instant camaraderie with the brothers and sisters of TLCB.

No two TLCB Assistance Auctions are alike, and this one certainly had its own character—and characters! Thanks to an unusually broad amount of participation by those attending, this auction raised more than usual “for the kids,” and provoked lots of laughs in the process. And at the banquet the long-anticipated quilt drawing finally ended the suspense. The quilt went to Arnie Foltz, who was thrilled and delighted to win. And

Below, VP Les Thompson hawking some “genuine” Cuban cigars while Ed Miller pays the “cashiers” for an item he bought. From left, Les, John Sweet, Nancy Sweet, John Schillo, Jim Roth's back, Darice Schillo, and Ed. Photo, Bob Wheatley



Above, Ed Miller and Dick Wolf setting up registration with new Thai-made banner. Photo, Bill Tilton. Below, Jim Kidd, left, chatting with Col Ed Hubbard, our outstanding guest speaker. Photo, Bob Wheatley.



we hear he had contributed heavily to help make that happen. Many thought it was the best quilt Rosie Wheatley has made up so far, and as usual it brought in about two thousand dollars toward our Assistance Program activities.

Later that night we listened intently to a powerful motivational speaker, Col Ed Hubbard, whose message was made particularly compelling because it grew out of his inner struggles

Below, Roger Durant tries to raise bids on a shawl while WP Peterson looks on. Photo, Bob Wheatley



as a POW during the Vietnam War. He even had us on our feet belting out “God Bless America” as though we were in church!

The election was the first order of business at our annual meeting, on Saturday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, as required in our bylaws. This time there were incumbents for every open position, and as is usually the case, the incumbents easily kept their jobs. Some really worthy candidates had stepped forward this year and offered to serve. We hope they will not be discouraged and will be ready in the future to offer their services when vacancies occur.

President John Sweet conducted an interesting and lively annual meeting. Among the highlights were the gratifying results achieved by our Assistance program this year, and plans various committee chairmen have for advancing and expanding our activities and our membership. It was great to hear so many positive things about this unique organization!

Here is a summary of other notable highlights of the annual meeting.

- Treasurer Paul Lee reported that the Brotherhood has a total of \$74,015 in our checking and savings accounts.
- Gary Beatty reported that his special assignment to get our logo trademarked has been successful.
- With the help of Jim Henthorn, President Sweet announced that the Friday night auction had generated \$3,337 toward Assistance.
- Membership Chairman Gerry Frazier told us the Brotherhood has over 550 members now and that new arrivals are at an all-time high pace.
- Gerry Frazier also distributed new TLC Brotherhood tri-fold brochures, which were completely revised last year by board member Bob Wheatley.
- National Reunion Chairman (and also vice president and Assistance Committee chairman) Les Thompson announced that the 2014 reunion will be held in Colorado Springs during the first week of October.

Also, President Sweet announced that the recently proposed bylaws change had been adopted by the membership. The change extends the time for transition to newly elected secretary and treasurers.

Below, Woody Freeman and fellow performers at memorial service. Below right, VP Les Thompson, President Sweet, and Chaplain Debora Stein watch as Chuck Jennings and David Fredrickson place memorial wreath. Photos, Bill Tilton



As we met for our traditional Sunday morning memorial service led by Chaplain Debora Stein to honor those brothers and sisters no longer with us, we also gave special thanks to this year’s amazing reunion committee. Ed Miller can be justly proud of his third TLCB reunion in Fort Walton Beach, and he was particularly well-served by his assistant, Arnold Foltz. Besides Arnie, committee members who helped with just about everything were Bobby Barry, Dick Wolf, and Woody Freeman. Thelma Tilton prepared the registration materials and the raffle tickets; Ed’s wife, Pet, was his “right-hand man” in buying and setting up all that food and drink for the Hooch Bar. Ed says Pet also assisted by putting up with his “stress/mood changes.... haha.” Jim Henthorn once again designed a super reunion logo. Chuck Jenning had made the museum arrangements, but when the museum location was closed by the government, it left him nothing further to do.

No matter how many times we meet, the hardest part is saying goodbye. After the very meaningful memorial service many of us parted at the curb of the hotel, with shouts of “See you in Colorado Springs!” So now it’s time to start preparations all over again, and we do hope we will see YOU next October in Colorado Springs! Ed Wilson has already been working very hard making plans and advanced preparations. Watch for advance information in the March issue of Mekong Express Mail.



Above, Ed Miller (seated) with part of his great crew. Left to right, Dick Wolf, Bobby Barry, and Arnie Foltz, ready for cleanup in the Hooch Bar. Photo, Bob Wheatley



**New Feature:**

## ***New Member Mini-Profiles***

***Editors's Note:*** According to our Membership Committee chairman, Gerry Frazier, new members are joining the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood at a record pace. I would like to publish more information about the new members as they join. Some of them introduce themselves via our website, but we will also be publishing, in the MEM, mini-profiles of those who overcome their shyness. I will be trying to contact new members as I learn of them, and will also be contacting them through the website. Below are two.

### ***Al Fitchett***

My first assignment was January 1972 to November 1972, at England AFB, LA. 6th SOS, working on the A-37. I was then off to Udorn, RTAFB, from 18 November 1972 to 18 December 1973, with the DET1 56SOW. I was assigned to the Gun Shop on the T-28 aircraft. My next assignment was in January 1974 to March 1974, and was assigned to the 1st MMS, Macdill AFB,



*Current Address:*  
131/107 M5 Romyen 4  
Udonthani 4000, Thailand

FL., working on the F-4. I stayed only a short time and transferred to the Iowa Air Guard and worked on the F-100 and A-7D Aircraft as an air technician (civil service) until April 1983. I left there and moved to Niceville, FL and worked for the 919 SOW, Air Force Reserve ART program, until Jan 1985. In January 1985, I transferred out of maintenance and went to the Ops side of the house. I was a sensor operator on an AC-130A for the next 10 years, and retired from the Reserves in October 1995. Also, in January 1985, I landed a job at Eglin AFB and worked there running a mass properties measurement facility until I retired from civil service in March 2008. I am now living most of the time in Udorn, Thailand.



### ***Hugh "Buddy" Diggins***

I served at Ubon from December 1969 to December 1970, attached as a weapons load crew member on load crew #22 in the 408th MMS, loading F-4 Phantoms. Though I have many memories of serving with the other three members of my load crew, for most of us that served in that time period, the one event that stands out is the sapper attack on Ubon in January of 1970.

I am retired from General Motors and pastor a small church here in Vermont. My interests include reading, hunting, and drawing.

I've been married to my "Sweet One," Karen, for 44 years, and we have 3 children and 6 grandchildren.

Thanks to those who formed this brotherhood. Like many others, I never heard the words "Welcome Home," except from my wife.

*Current Address:*  
268 Furnace Road  
Pittsford, VT 05763

