



Mekong Express Mail

Volume 13, Issue 2

THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org



Rosie Wheatley at work on "The Quilt" Photo by Bob Wheatley

Made with smiles, stitches, & love

by *Bob*

Wheatley

Wow! Here it is June already, and plans are well underway for the next reunion of the TLC Brotherhood. This year we will convene in old San Antonio, a long-time military community and a city steeped in history. San Antonio is the city where many of us began our time in service to our nation, and therefore, this locale will hold many memories and special meaning for us. In any case, it promises to be a reunion to be long remembered by all who attend.

A major part of every reunion is our effort to raise funds for the TLCB Assistance Program to aid the needy children of Southeast Asia. An annual event since the 2000

See **Quilt**, continued on page 2.

Quilt, continued from page 1.

reunion in Colorado Springs, the TLC Sisterhood Raffle Quilt has become a popular tradition and a very important part of our fundraising efforts at every reunion.

Rosie Wheatley of the TLC Sisterhood has designed another beautiful and meaningful quilt that will tie in with the reunion venue and its rich history. This year's quilt is of the "log cabin" design and will be a beautiful commemorative of our 2012 TLCB San Antonio Reunion. Consistent with a desert Southwest theme, Rosie uses earth-tones, including white, subtle reds, browns, tans, blues, magentas, and turquoise. At the center of the quilt will be an appliquéd graphic drawing of the Battle of the Alamo, where in the year 1836 one-hundred-eighty-five brave patriots held out for thirteen days against Santa Ana's army of five thousand, ultimately sacrificing their lives to win the independence of Texas. It was in the tradition of such unselfish service that many succeeding generations of warriors would step forward to make our nation the bastion of freedom it is today.

Blocks surrounding the center block will incorporate appliqués of the Texas flag, the state bird, the state flower, and one will hold the four-inch embroidered patch of the TLC Brotherhood. Finished dimensions of 80" by 80" make it suitable for use on a regular or queen-sized bed. Last year's winner enjoys her quilt as a striking, memory-filled wall hanging, which is surely destined to become an heirloom.

"So" you newbies may be asking, "how can I get a shot at winning this beautiful keepsake of the 2012 TLCB Reunion?" Let me first emphasize, you need not be present at the reunion to win, and buying chances couldn't be easier. Ticket purchase is not limited to TLCB members. If you have friends or family who wish to participate, you may enter tickets on their behalf.

Inside this edition of the MEM, you will find a sheet of ten raffle tickets. Each ticket costs \$2, so a twenty dollar bill buys the whole sheet. You may buy as many as you would like, from one to hundreds of tickets. We certainly hope you will buy more, and of course, the more you buy, the greater your chances of winning. Win or not, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing every penny will go to the TLCB Assistance Fund to aid the children of SEA in the memory of our brothers who did not return with us.

You may either fill in the raffle ticket sheet completely or use address labels to make things easier. As an added incentive, the really easy way is to fill out just *one* ticket completely, provide the total number of tickets you wish to purchase, and the TLCB will print the tickets for you and get them to Rosie. Don't forget to include your contact information. Want to easily increase your chances even more? Make a copy or copies of your filled-in raffle sheet. Make your check payable to TLC Brotherhood, Inc.; write "Quilt" and your member number, which you can find on your MEM mailing label, on the memo line, and mail your ticket sheet(s) with your check to:

TLC Brotherhood, Inc.

P.O. Box 343

Locust Grove, Ga., 30248

We will hold the drawing at the reunion banquet on Oc-

tober 20th, where the lucky winner can pick up the quilt. If the winner is not present, the TLCB will contact him or her immediately, if possible, and send the quilt in a few days by insured, registered mail.

We're looking forward to another great TLCB reunion and another very successful fundraiser. We thank you for your ongoing, enthusiastic, and faithful support.



Reunion

2012~Come to

San Antonio

Let's take a stroll on the River Walk!

The 2012 TLCB Reunion will take place at the Crowne Plaza San Antonio Riverwalk Hotel. The Crowne Plaza is a 4-Star Hotel located dead center in San Antonio on the famed San Antonio Riverwalk. The dates for the Reunion are 18-21 October.

The majority of the TLCB membership is former Air Force. We also are fortunate to have members who are former Marines, Army, Navy, Coast Guard, CIA, Air America, USAID, and some foreign military services. We especially hope those with no Air Force affiliation enjoy the reunion.

Most of the membership went through Basic Military Training at Lackland AFB, in San Antonio, way back in the Stone Age, so for many of us this reunion will represent a return to Basic. One highlight of the reunion will be attendance at the Basic Military Training Graduation Ceremony on Friday, 19 October, as honored guests; however, we won't have confirmation of the BMTGC attendance until July.

THURSDAY, the 18th of October, will be dedicated to flying in and driving to San Antonio, hotel check-in, reunion registration, and getting re-acquainted with old friends. If you drive, self-parking in the hotel parking garage is free. If you fly in, you will have to catch the hotel shuttle at the airport. Cost of the shuttle is \$18 per person, one-way, but you can save a few dollars by buying round-trip tickets. The Nipa Hut will be in full swing when you arrive at the hotel, providing liquid refreshment, snacks, music, and comradeship. You will meet old friends and make new ones on a face-to-face basis. You will also be able to put faces on e-mail message traffic.

FRIDAY, the 19th, will begin with a free, hotel-provided breakfast. Following breakfast, we expect to be boarding buses to Lackland AFB for the graduation ceremony, after which TLCB members will have an hour to wander around the perimeter of the parade ground and enjoy looking at all the static-display aircraft. You will be able to take pictures of one of the few remaining F-82 Twin Mustangs, an SR-71 Blackbird, and another couple of dozen aircraft for your viewing pleasure.

See **Reunion**, continued next page.



Remember to bring your cameras and plenty of film—or pixels.

After you have had your fill of airplanes, (Is that even possible?) we will get back on the buses and go back to the center of San Antonio for lunch at the 750-foot tall Tower of the Americas. The cost of riding to the observation deck, about 550 feet, is \$10.95 for Adults, \$9.95 for seniors and military, and \$8.95 for children. You will have your choice of lunch at the Tower Café or the Chart House Fine Dining Restaurant. Again, have your camera ready for the most panoramic views of San Antonio.

After lunch and photos at the Tower of the Americas, we will walk over to the Imax Theater and watch a short documentary film about the Alamo. The only way to find out more about the Alamo is to take a Texas history college class. There are truckloads of misinformation out there about the Alamo, fostered by the movies and television presentations of the Battle of the Alamo. The reason facts are few and far between is two-fold. First, the few Texan survivors of the battle were kept in the chapel for their protection and they didn't see everything. Second, the only survivors outside the chapel were members of the Mexican Army. We're not even sure of how many Alamo

Silent warbirds observe as yet another class of airmen graduates at Lackland.



defenders there were, numbers varying from 187 to more than 250. The film will provide you with what is known fact about the Battle of the Alamo. Admission to Imax is \$10.50 for seniors, more for adults, less for children. We will provide more on admission costs at a later date.

The Alamo Shrine is a memorial to the men who died there on 6 March 1836. There is a Gift Shop where you can purchase souvenirs. Please observe the Code of Conduct, which is posted and includes respectful sound levels, controlling children, etc. After the Alamo Shrine visit, members are free to explore the Riverwalk, the hotel, and Hemisfair Plaza. Friday night will be the famed TLCB Assistance Auction at the Nipa Hut! Donors can send items for auction to Dan Decker, 150 Karen Drive, Mountain Home, TX 78058. Remember – it's for the kids.

SATURDAY morning will be the TLCB Corporation Annual Meeting and election of board members, and Saturday afternoon is reserved for the members to use as they wish. There



USAF photo of trainees in the good old Lackland Obstacle Course...remember?

are other attractions that you may want to attend, such as 6 Flags Over Texas Amusement Park and Sea World. Other recommendations include further exploration of the Riverwalk or Paseo del Rio.

It's called the Riverwalk, but it is several miles long, so we recommend that you tour the Riverwalk via the water taxis. What can you see on the Riverwalk? A short list will include the Torch of Friendship, cannons, mariachi bands, Mexican food of every possible variety, souvenir shops, bars, (some are pretty raunchy!) restaurants, Ripley's Oddities from Believe It Or Not, and much, much more. You won't have time to see everything that is there for you to enjoy.

Saturday night is the TLCB Annual Banquet. Our guest speaker, Dr. Donald R. Spoon, POW at the Hanoi Hilton, January '67 to March '73, is confirmed. Part of the festivities at the banquet will be the popular drawing for Rosie's quilt. Be sure to get your tickets for this drawing! Rosie and Bob assure that it will be something really special!

SUNDAY morning, the TLCB memorial service will conclude the 2012 gathering of the Brothers.



I was good at what I did, and proud of it

by Steve Umland

I enlisted in April 1969, a really struggling 19 year old, rudderless kid. I made it through Lackland Basic, but don't know how I got through tech school at Lowry AFB Denver, Colorado since I did very poorly in high school academics. I really wanted to graduate and become an AFSC 20630 (photo interpreter). In October, I went home on leave after tech school. I arrived at Travis AFB en route to the Philippines, Tan Son Nhut, Bangkok, and Nakhon Phanom. I remember that the heat and humidity were oppressive while I waited for the flight from Bangkok to NKP.

I arrived at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB (NKP) in November, 1969, assigned to Task Force Alpha (TFA). While in NKP I grew up a lot for my naive 19 years. I loved my work as a photo interpreter. For many years, I have tried to explain to people the nature of our work and have had a difficult time doing so. I didn't have a clue how unique TFA was. What we were doing was really cool and I was good at it and enjoyed it. I regret not remembering names of guys I worked with because we were a great group and worked real well together. I loved the air conditioned environment of TFA!

Soon after I got to work at TFA, we discovered the first radar controlled ground-to-air anti-aircraft battery on the trail. It was just over the border in Laos. I was new, so my discovery had to be verified by an officer. Initially I was emphatically told, "No way; we have never seen one over the border." We verified the gun types from manuals; the clincher was the trenches dug between the central control unit to each of the AA guns. It was text book and I was just out of school.

I made some Polaroid instant photos and our officers briefed the pilots. They *laughed* at us, then during a mission a pilot said, "Hey I'm flying just north above the Dogs Head and remember that this new kid told us about a radar-controlled anti-air battery setup." (The Dogs Head was a bend in the river at famous Ban Loboy water crossing. From up high it had the shape of a dog's head, and was used by fighter pilots as a reference point). I would love to know who this pilot was and hear his version of what happened next because I remember being told that a moment later the entire sky exploded just a few feet in front of his OV-10 armed reconnaissance plane. The radar and guns were there, but their equipment wasn't



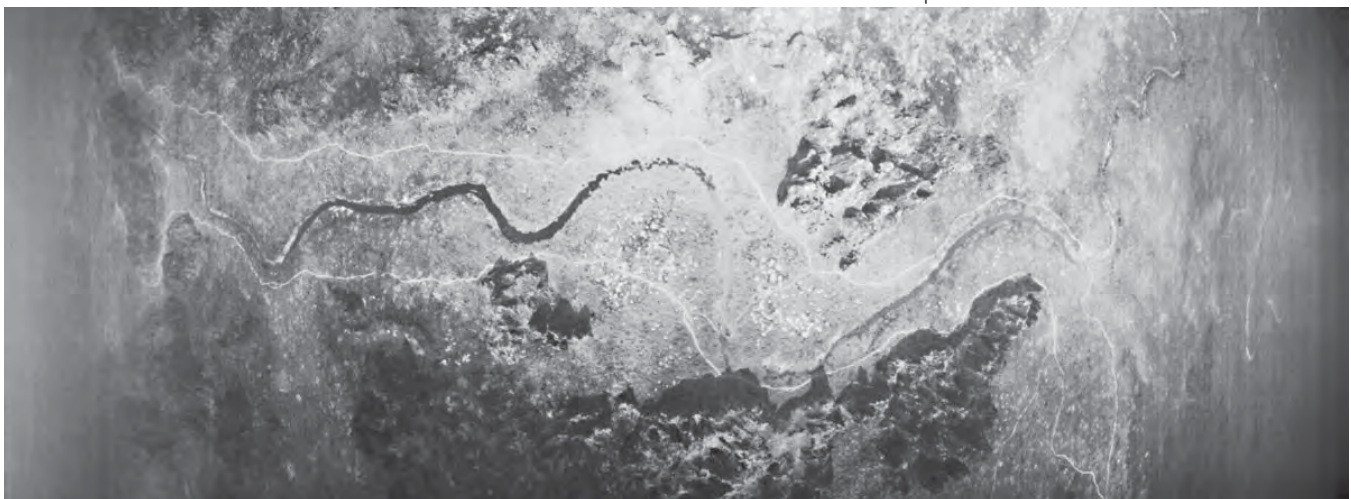
Task Force Alpha, or TFA, listening point for the electronic fence known as "McNamara's Wall," on the Trail in Laos. Photos from the author.

working properly and they miscalculated his air speed. Photo-Interpreters at TFA got a little more credibility with the pilots at NKP after that incident.

One day I found a few trucks in a spot that was really overgrown, but somehow didn't look right. The night before I had just sat in watching the board and seeing where the trucks were running through which strings. I was trying to calculate how many trucks stopped, and where. On film, the next day, I spotted a couple of trucks and I verified it with one of the other guys. It was a light day and we weren't finding many targets, so we put a strike in on the "spot." It turned out to be a fuel depot under the heavy canopy. The strike pilot said there were

See **TFA** continued next page

Photo reconnaissance print shot from an F-4. Dots are bomb craters.



too many secondary explosions to even count! It continued to blow up for hours and burned for two days. Somewhere I still have photos showing the bomb damage assessment, or BDA, from that strike.

The photo on the previous page was shot from an F4 that was out of Ubon, I think. It is a complete panoramic view, horizon to horizon, taken over the trail, showing more craters than undisturbed foliage. There are 500 pound bomb craters as far as the eye can see, and it just blew me away that they would rebuild the trail every night around each crater! This photo is marked "Ho Chi Minh Trail April 1970" on its back. I had it enlarged to 36 inches and framed it. Perhaps someone can recognize where it was taken.

In October 1970, I was short and rotated out to Yokota AFB, Japan and shortly after that, the entire squadron relocated to Hickam AFB, Hawaii for the rest of my enlistment. I would really like to hear experiences and stories from Task Force Alpha that others might have to share.

I just didn't understand the war. I was nineteen and not inquisitive about what I was doing and why. I regret not questioning myself and my surroundings at that time. An officer, who kind of took me under his wing in Japan, described me as being very immature, not flattering but probably accurate. Being in the Air Force was probably the best thing that could



Very young Steve Umland in front of his hooch at NKP.

have ever happened to me at that impressionable, critical time in my life. The Air Force taught me that I was smart, even though my high school grades tell a different story, and those critical four years with the experiences from South East Asia molded my desire to excel and not compromise when doing "any" task.



The Heinie Aderholt memorial project in Laos

by John Schillo, Assistance Committee chairman

It is hard to believe that we are approaching the two-year anniversary of General Aderholt's passing. As soon as we got the sad news, the TLCB Assistance Committee knew that we would fund a project in his memory and voted to make the funds available even before we had a project. That project turned out to be the dining facility at Chok Amnuay School. The Air Commando Association (ACA) felt the same as we did and began raising money for a memorial of their own. We were honored when they asked the TLCB to find a project and help bring it to fruition.

Prior to this, The Agricultural College of the University of Nakhon Phanom had contacted John Middlewood about a project they were working on in Thakek, Laos. The school in Thakek was composed mostly of poor children and orphans. The plan was to build an agricultural center that would train the children to raise food and become productive members of their society. It would also help feed the 300 students at the school. The problem was that it would take more money than they had and more money than the TLCB Assistance Fund could afford. They had tried for a couple of years to put this together, but despite having the interest of the Princess of Thailand, they were never able raise sufficient funding.



Sign at orphanage grounds entrance. Photos supplied by John Middlewood.

Could this be the memorial project the Air Commando Association was looking for? Maybe it would, but would the government of Laos go for it? I forwarded the information to the ACA and they gave us a preliminary "go ahead" to explore the possibility. John Middlewood contacted the people at the University. Things were starting to move.

Well, they were moving, just not fast. 2010 was now history and it was 2011. At this point there is a nice bridge across the Mekong from NKP to Thakek, but this was not the case back then and questions had to be answered before progress could be attempted. How do we get the material to the other side of the river? Where do we

See **Aderholt** continued on page 7

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

TLC Brotherhood Contacts

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

TLC Brotherhood, Inc. Tax ID #54-1932649

Board of Directors and Committee Chairmen

2011-2012, showing year of term-end

President: Frank Marsh (2012)

Vice President: John Sweet (Reunion Committee) (2013)

Secretary: Jim Closs (2013)

Treasurer: Bill Tilton (2012)

Chaplain: Deborah Stein (Memorial Committee) (2013)

Board members-at-large

Bob Wheatley (2012)

Les Thompson (2013)

Gary Beatty (2013)

John Binfield (2012)

Non-board committee chairmen

Assistance Committee: John Schillo

BX Shopkeepers: Thelma and Bill Tilton

Communications Committee: Jerry Karnes

History Committee: John Binfield

Membership Committee: Paul Lee

Public Relations Committee: Floyd McGurk

Payments to TLCB

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

**TLC Brotherhood
P.O. Box 343
Locust Grove, GA 30248**

Write payment purpose and member number on check.

Examples:

Dues	Student Assistance Fund
Assistance	BX purchase
Medical Fund	etc.

Reunion 2012: San Antonio, Texas, Oct 18-21

TLCB tax return and board minutes: On web site, in *members only* section.

Message to all TLC Brotherhood, Inc. members from President Frank Marsh

In the upcoming election, Treasurer Bill Tilton cannot run for re-election because of term limits. Bill has done an excellent job, and will work with the new Treasurer to assure a smooth transition. Though there is no suggestion of any problem in the management of our finances, a vocal minority of members has called for an audit.

The Board of Directors has discussed this request. An outside audit would cost several thousand dollars. Since assistance funds cannot be used for this purpose, the cost would have to come from dues. This would require either a significant increase in dues for at least the upcoming year or a special assessment levied on the membership.

To avoid an unneeded, expensive audit, and to ensure the membership of the integrity of our financial records, the Board has determined that an internal audit be performed - and that an outside audit be commissioned only if the internal audit reveals any discrepancies. To accomplish this internal audit, I have established a special, temporary audit committee - which will be autonomous and independent of the corporate officers. This committee will review all TLCB financial records, and report to the membership during the business meeting at our reunion in San Antonio. If the committee determines an outside audit is necessary, it will present their findings to the new in-coming Board after the election.

I have appointed Board member-at-large Gary Beatty as Chair of this committee. I appointed Gary because, as a lawyer and State prosecuting attorney, he can determine what we are legally required to do, and has experience reviewing financial

matters with an eye toward detecting impropriety. Gary will select the other committee members, none of whom will be officers of the TLCB, and at least one of whom will not be a member of the Board. Gary stated the following:

I am happy to accept this appointment, to assure the TLCB membership that our finances are in perfect order. During my tenure on the Board, I've had no reason to question any aspect of the management of TLCB finances - and do not anticipate finding any problems. If the audit reveals any credible evidence of mismanagement it will be aggressively addressed by all appropriate legal means. I welcome the input of any member who has credible information of importance to the committee in performing this audit. If any member wishes to serve on the audit committee, please contact me by e-mail.



Help us keep track of you!

If you move, or change your email address or phone number--or even your spouse--please give us the information so that your Brotherhood can stay in touch. Send changes to any board member or listmaster Ed Stein, at: estein1945@hotmail.com. Ed will make sure we all get it.

Aderholt, continued from page 5

buy the materials? In Thailand? In Laos? Vendors on both sides of the river were contacted and it appeared that the best way to handle it was to purchase the product in Laos. We now had the approval of the Lao Government and a source of supply for the building materials.

After only one year, it was now time to make a formal proposal to the ACA. They agreed to fund the \$7,500 cost of the project and made a donation in that amount to the Assistance Fund. In June of 2011, the Assistance Committee voted to proceed and the project was officially underway. The clearing process began. A backhoe was pressed into

Aderholt story continues on page 10, photos on page 8



At left, girls carrying concrete fence posts, paid for by Air Commando Association funds through TLC Brotherhood. Above, boys placing posts around agricultural perimeter. Fence is used to keep feral pigs from eating the crops the children will raise. Below, PVC irrigation pipe used to connect concrete pipe sections used as sub-reservoirs in the fields. Water is pumped from the nearby river. Below left, school and Thakkek Province officials observe new water flow to fields.





Photos show students planting and cultivating crops that will help feed their group while teaching them how to be productive citizens tilling the rich soils of the Mekong alluvial plain in Thakkek Province of Laos. The cooperative program is guided and assisted by the University of Nakhon Phanom, located just across the Mekong River in Thailand.





Bottles of potent, organic fertilizer, arranged along wall at right, are filled here.

Irrigation sysetm at work.



See Aderholt, continued on page 10

service for the big stuff. Soon, the building material began to arrive and the students, along with the faculty, began building their own school. A nearby river would provide water for the irrigation system.

It was originally planned that the project would be completed in October of 2011, in time for a group of TLCB Members to attend the dedication. However, and this should come as no surprise to those of us who served there, things don't happen on schedule. Ok, there was a flood, we'll give them that. Despite the work of John Middlewood and Phomphan Kulapa, our Thai emissary, a lot of work remained when our team arrived in October. Jeff

Hudgens, who was there working on another project, even took time to help move this project along; however, in all fairness, this project was big! It was the most extensive that we had ever tackled. Not only that, it involved two countries, one free and one communist, each with its own culture. It involved two veterans groups working together to honor one of their own and make life a little easier in that far corner of the world. Was it a pain in the butt? Was it hard work on everybody's part? Was there a time when tempers may have flared a little? Yes, but was it worth it? Look at the kids in the



Above, instructor observes students planting palms.

garden. Yeah, it was worth it. Is it finished? No. There is still a matter of some fencing that got "lost" along the way and will have to be replaced.

In February of this year, Jeff returned to the orphanage to bring some supplies for the teachers and students, as well as some games and crafts that the TLCB Assistance Fund provided. It was just a time to play some games and relax after all of the hard work. A good time was had by all. Thanks to Ed Miller, the video is on the website so we all can join in the celebration.



Funds for this project were donated by the McCroskrie Threshold Foundation, the charitable non-profit subsidiary of ACA. At left, TLCB members touring in October, 2011, visited the school. From left, Jeff Hudgens, Les and Carolyn Thompson, John Sweet, George Shenberger (hidden behind John Sweet), Monty Dubs, Dr. Somkiet (NKP University), Thelma and Bill Tilton, and university photographer.

Mini reunion at Dover, Delaware

photos and information from John Duffin

These photos were taken at the Dover Mini held in December of 2011. It was organized by John Duffin, and the group had a special treat. Harry Bright, a TLCB member, happens to work at the Air Materiel Command Museum and arranged to give the group a personal tour. The museum may face hard times soon, as DoD does not wish to continue funding it. This would be a shame—John says that in his opinion it is the best military museum after the Air Force Museum at Wright/Patterson AFB, Ohio. You can check out their website, at www.amcmuseum.org.



Above, F-106 tail and a pair of C-141s. Left, next to the F-106, Willie Pete. Below is Skip with a "Blue Canoe" military Cessna 310, under the wing of a jet-augmented C-123.



Below, in front of a C-130 #2 prop are, L to R, Skip Marvel, Walt Scanlan, Willie Pete Peterson, Harry Bright, Mike Dunn, and John Duffin. At left is a C-124 "Old Shakey," and below left is a C-133, which were stationed at Dover AFB for many years.



An interesting visit to Na Khang, Laos (LS-36)

by Mac Thompson

Bill Jaynes did a write-up in the last MEM regarding his time at LS-36 back in 1966, along with photos. My last, and only, trip there was in late February 1969 just before it went DTT, "Down The Tubes" in USAID/Lao speak. Since I was going on a TLCB school assistance run up in that area, I asked Bill to send me better copies of his photos and I would see about a current visit for some before-and-after photos. TLCB members Tony Tambini and Glenn Black were able to accompany me on the trip.

I had heard that the road to Na Khang, LS-36, was now doable and indeed, in January when I was up at Vieng Thong/Moung Hiem/LS-48, I saw a sign pointing to it. I was in a Toyota van, though, and was advised that 4WD was necessary, so I gave it a miss that trip.

For May, however, we traveled in a 4WD pickup up through old Moung Cha, LS-113, on through Long Tieng and Sam Thong to Phonsavanh. We went north up a newly upgraded dirt/gravel road towards Vieng Thong to the turnoff to LS-36. After another one hour plus, sometimes using 4WD, we got to the village of Na Khou. We went a few minutes onwards to the airport, with the camp on the hill on the north side.

Oops!! I can't really ID the "before" photos because everything is really grown up, brush and trees all over the camp area. The ramp area is obvious because of the shot-up fuel tanks there. The runway itself still looks decent and I wouldn't hesitate landing there in a light plane. We looked around on

Tony Tambini, at left, and Mac check out "spiked" 155 mm artillery piece in the overgrown base once known as LS-36. Map shows main stops for this trip. See the next issue of MEM for more photos and much more story.



the lower slopes of the hill and found the remains of a bulldozer, an Allis-Chalmers grader, and a steel-wheeled roller. We didn't really want to walk around much in the former camp area, since we were worried about UXO (Unexploded Ordnance) left over from the old days. We ran into a villager who has lived there since he was born some 57 years ago. He guided us up a trail to view some of the trench work and then pointed out a spiked 105mm gun, and close by, the carriage.

After an hour plus of visiting and wondering about the history of LS-36, we moved on to Vieng Thong to RON. After briefly visiting the hot springs, we headed back to the guest house.

Photos of Na Khang are on my Picasa page, along with photo albums of earlier TLCB trips. Go to: <http://goo.gl/7yzvZ> and look for a full report on Mac's latest Assistance trip in a future issue of Mekong Express Mail.