



# Mekong Express Mail

Volume 10, Issue 1

THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

## Needy Laos schools benefit from TLCB members' donations

by MacAlan Thompson  
photos by the author

My wife, Sunee, and I visited four projects during our Assistance to Laos December 7-13 2008 trip, two follow-ups and two new. Take a look at the map of NE Laos at the photo URL. Also, there is Jim Henthorn's super map scan project as a resource at: <http://www.nexus.net/~911gfx/sea-ao.html>

Sunee and I drove up to Nong Khai on December 7 and took a taxi over to Vientiane. After arranging for a 4WD pickup rental on Monday morning, we headed up to Phonsavan on the Plaine des Jarres (Plain of Jars - PDJ). It was roughly a nine-hour drive. On the way, we passed through some old towns with names familiar to "old Lao hands": Phon Hong LS-133, Vang Vieng L-16, Moug Kassy LS-153/249, Sala Phou Khoun LS-260, Moug Soui L-108, and into Phonsavan, the capital of the Plain of Jars in Xieng Khouang Province. We RONEd at the Nice Guest House, a place we knew to be good because we had stayed there before. While there are a number of restaurants in town, we mainly ate at the Craters Restaurant, which is now run by several Vietnamese folks who are still learning Lao. It is right next to the office of the Mine Advisory Group



Friend Art, Sunee, and Mac Thompson at Craters Restaurant in Phongsavan.

(MAG), the folks who clear UXO (unexploded ordnance).

It was cold up there, at least cold for us. It was about 61F

in the room at the guesthouse, got down to 58F in the morning, and was 48F outside. Sunee's first stop was the morning market for another jacket, an import from China costing seven dollars. That gave her five layers for warmth.

We ran into a group of eighteen Thai on BMW motorcycles passing through. They came in via Chiang Mai to Luang Prabang, going on to Vientiane, Pakse down south, then back to Bangkok via Ubon, a several thousand kilometers trip. They were nice folks, but they must have iron butts. I know a trip like that is not for me.

On the way back from Ban Phak Khae, Nong Het, out near the Vietnamese border, we stopped for some good pho soup at a place in Muang Khoun, aka Ban Ban. We saw a really interesting truck quite a few times during our road trip. I think it was an import from China, but perhaps based on Japanese technology. The four front wheels all turn together, which makes it easier to get around sharp curves in the roads, which are abundant in Laos.

We made a quick visit to Jar Site 1 for a photo op, which I will send to the *PARACHUTIST Magazine*. They have started a page of the magazine spotlighting interesting places around the world, and certainly the PDJ and the jars are interesting. Take notice of the cave.

We spent Tuesday and Wednesday morning visiting two school sites. Mr. Art, my main contact in Laos on education-re-



See Laos, continued next page.

Laos, continued from page 1

lated projects, and Mr. Sounduean, of the Xieng Khouang Provincial Education Office, accompanied us.

**Plain of Jars area:**

This is a follow-up to Ban Phak Khae funded during our May 2008 visit.

Proposed: An existing 25-year-old wooden school building at Ban Phak Khae, Nong Het District, Laos is scheduled for rehabilitation. The village is east of Phonsavanh out on Route 7 almost at the Vietnamese border. This was funded for \$1220.

The project is complete and includes new roofing tin, a cement floor, new wood for portions of the building, furniture, and a partition to create a small library at one end of the building. The school changed the concept of the project to provide for a teacher prep and meeting room, also to be used as a spillover classroom as needed. The library is a good idea. The books and portable bookcases are not "ours." The "before" photo shows that the building was pretty much stripped down prior to the rehab work.

FYI, just behind the school is a small community forest that students will use. It was recently cleared of UXO. Some



Ban Phak Khae school project started, above, and completed below and right. Upper right, library in rehabilitated school. Lower right, UXO poster used in most schools to warn children of danger.



4000 "bombies" were found in a 2000-square-meter area. This hilltop was pretty heavily hit pre-1973, as it contained an army camp. Several of the new roofing sheets on the school were damaged by shrapnel when the UXO people blew up some of the bombies in place. Note the two UXO posters, which are common in most schools in Laos. There is still a lot of ordnance lying around or buried and we need to keep the kids



See Laos, continued page 6.

# Ed Heyliger, list master and much more

photos from Ed Heyliger website, except as noted

## Ed Heyliger, 1948–2009

“We honor our lost friends—and our regard for our Southeast Asian comrades—through charity” is written in the first issue of the *Mekong Express Mail*. We brothers and sisters now have such a friend to honor. Edward B. Heyliger, 61, died March 1. Ed was a charter member of the TLC Brotherhood having joined in March 1999. We mourn his loss.

Ed, was the TLCB list master for both the “Brotherhood” and “Mission” Web servers, and faithfully kept members’ information current for the on-line chat areas. No member has served in the same job as long as Ed, in service to the members of the Brotherhood. Before formal organization of the Brotherhood, the group employed a huge and ever-growing header of addresses to exchange messages. Amid calls for some kind of “server,” former treasurer and Assistance Committee chairman, John Sweet (with NetWorx, in Newburyport, MA) set up the TLCB List Servers in late 1998 and served for a time as first list master (amongst other duties) until Bob Freitag of Pittsford, NY volunteered for the job in early 2000. After about a year, Freitag was unable to continue this demanding work, creating somewhat of a crisis since many members had come to depend on the servers for much of their social activity, and since new members were joining constantly. In the spring of 2001, Ed Heyliger volunteered to take over the function, even though he used only Webmail on his TV screen, thus becoming our long-standing list master for the TLC Brotherhood Internet servers.

Says John Sweet, “Ed was a very calm person, among his many other personable attributes. This enabled him to handle the most trying of circumstances with the frustrations of members when their email problems prevented them from access. Every member who knew Ed always held him in high regard; he will be greatly missed by all of us.”

Continued next page



Below, Thanksgiving, 2008. photo furnished by Christine Heyliger.





Below, Ed is second from left. Other photos show Ed at work in his avionics career field.



Ed, from Browns Summit NC, formerly of Fair Haven, NJ, served in the U.S. Air Force for 17 years. He served stateside and in Southeast Asia. He retired as field engineer for Eastman Kodak. Friends and family knew him to be outgoing with a passion for cars, WWE wrestling, and collecting car magazines. Dave MacDonald, editor of the *Mekong Express Mail* and Communications Committee chairman for several years, remembers, "Ed was a prince to work with; modest, solid as a rock, skilled at what he did, and always pleasant. He is a great loss to the TLCB."

Surviving are his wife, Pong "Meeda" Nam Heyliger; a son, Edward B. Heyliger Jr. of New York City; a daughter, Christine A. Heyliger of Greensboro, NC, and a daughter, Lydia M. Heyliger of Pittsburgh, PA.





# BX cuts tee shirt, golf shirt prices

By Bob Pruikmsa  
BX shopkeeper

From now until the end of July, tee shirts and golf shirts are one dollar off the price listed in the BX web page. Remember that golf shirts are available in light blue and in white.

Members, our BX sales are down drastically. In 2007 and 2008 we had 32 and 35 BX transactions respectively through April 1. Through March 17, 2009 we have had only 12 transactions. This makes my job easier, but does not help our assistance program, which benefits from BX profits.

Keep watching the BX web page. We will have another new item, probably in April. We also have two redesigned items, one available now and another any day. Our TLC coin now has our logo in full color. Our bumper sticker, due to arrive any day, has been redesigned.

I am working on another new item that will be offered first to those who attend our Space Coast reunion in October. BX prices will also be reduced for reunion attendees. We can do this because we save the shipping charges, such as postal rates, which have been steadily increasing. We may have to adjust our BX pricing to reflect this. Now would be a good time to place that BX order you have been thinking about, before any potential price increases.



Mystery Site: where in SEA is this? First one to guess correctly by notifying the editor at Dav16Mac@aol.com will be recognized in the next issue of *Mekong Express Mail*.

## 2007 Assistance Program donors list omission

In the December MEM list of 2007 donors to the TLCB Assistance program the name of Bob Santo should have appeared in the Silver category (\$100 and over).

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Make ALL payments of any kind, as listed below, payable to: **The TLC Brotherhood, Inc.**, and mail them to the treasurer, at:

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

Always write *payment purpose* on memo line.

<b>Dues (\$25 per year)</b>	<b>Student Assistance Fund</b>
<b>Assistance donation</b>	<b>BX purchase</b>
<b>Monument donation</b>	<b>Medical Fund.....etc.</b>

**Reunion 2009: SPACE COAST of Florida**

**TLCB tax return and board minutes:** On web site, in *members only* section. Password (5/1/09): Huguette

aware of the potential problem.



**New project, Ban Phosy:**

Proposed: The Phosy Primary School is to renovate one room in the old building for use as a library and a life-skills study area. This village is about 3 km south of Maung Khoun (old Xieng Khouang Ville, L-03), a 30-minute drive south of Phonsavan. The project is funded for \$1512. NOTE: There was a \$250 private donation for this project from an outside source, the cousin of a former USAID/Lao friend of Art's and

Ban Phosy primary school



mine.

The kids of the school were happy as classes were dismissed for the day because of our meeting with the district, local, and school officials. A contract/agreement was signed by several parties on the Lao side and me on behalf of the TLCB. Of note, one of the signers is a woman "nai ban," or village chief, which is not very common in Laos, or in Thailand. Following the school visit, we went to the head teacher's house for lunch: sticky rice, veggies, pork, chicken, Beer Lao, and a couple of shots of "Lao Lao." Ugh, it is still hard to take that stuff. We returned to the road heading south, via the old wat at Muang Khoun (see nai ban and wat photos next page).

The trip to the Long Tieng valley took a day and a half and an extra night on the road in a hotel at Paksan, L-35, much longer than the six to eight hours I had hoped for. I had looked forward to being able to make a river ford at Tha Vieng and head directly west about three hours to Xaysomboun/Moung Cha/LS-113 to arrange for additional furniture for Long Tieng. This did not happen. There is a light, cable-stayed bridge for motorcycles and people to cross the river, but it was not suitable for a pickup. Our valiant driver, who has been with us for six trips so far, volunteered to wade the river to check out the deep spot in the channel. When the water got waist deep and running fast, he gave up. Later we ran into several spots under construction, by a Vietnamese company of all things. Thus, we headed south another five hours on some pretty rough roads, spent the night, and the next day headed back north on the

Continued next page.



Above, nai ban, village leader, signs contract/agreement with TLCB. Below, inside teacher's house.



roads to Xayxomboun via Thabok. Perhaps the river will be down enough for our next trip, this being the dry season with no rains until May.

We had lunch at the pretty good local restaurant at the Xaysomboun market, shopped around a bit, and then visited the furniture maker to order additional school desks and stools for Long Tieng. Take a look at the high tech transport for the Satellite dish headed for someone's house and the local "bus" transport for the area. There are two more large buses that make daily runs back and forth to Vientiane and to the large Hmong town of Km 52, on Hwy 13N.

We had initially planned to RON at Xaysomboun at the Phu Bia Hotel where we have stayed several



Satellite dish transport.

times before, a good enough place. By the way, when we are upcountry we do like three things in guest houses we use: #1, hot water; #2, a sit-down crapper for me; #3, sat-TV for Sunee. Often we get all three, sometimes two, and rarely one. It is the "nones" that I do not like, but we have stayed at those too.

We decided to head west to Houay Kham, the "Gold Mine Junction" where the road to Long Tieng splits off to the north. There are several guesthouses here, including one of the "nones" we stayed at last year. We checked on a new one, the Villa Nam Ngone, which opened last year. It was great. It had all we wanted, plus a real enclosed shower, and great view in the afternoon and early morning with the ground fog. They brought dinner to the room from a restaurant about 100 meters up the hill. It was one of the best places I have stayed in Thailand or Laos.

The next morning we were out early, had no breakfast, and hit the small morning market and bought some eggs and veggies to take up to Long Tieng for breakfast there. We were on the

Old Buddhist wat at Muang Khoun

See Laos, continued page 12.



# 2009 quilt raffle to celebrate America's space program

By Bob Wheatley, photo from TLCB Web site

A key fundraiser, on which the TLCB perennially depends to help support our charitable Assistance works, is the annual TLC Sisterhood Quilt Raffle. Since its inception in 2000, the year MEM began publication, the Sisterhood's quilt raffles have raised many thousands of dollars for the Assistance Fund, thanks to the generous and enthusiastic participation of our TLCB members. As always, the drawing for the 2009 raffle quilt will be held during the annual TLCB reunion, which will convene October 1st on Florida's Space Coast.

Recent members of the TLCB should know that the raffle is one of the highlights of our reunions, a noisy, laughter-filled, thoroughly enjoyable evening of comradeship and generosity.

In keeping with the reunion venue, the quilt's theme is inspired by America's space program. Photos and graphics included in the quilt blocks will

commemorate historic moments in the space program, beginning with the early manned flights and continuing through more recent Space Shuttle missions. The finished quilt dimensions will be approximately 60 inches by 80 inches. As always, you can be assured this quilt will be a quality work, assembled, sewn and quilted with "Tender Loving Care" by seamstress Rosie Wheatley of the TLC Sisterhood. It will

make a wonderful memento of the 2009 TLCB reunion and the Space Program, and is a work of art you will be proud to display in your home, should you be the fortunate holder of that one winning ticket.

The price is \$2 per ticket or \$20 per sheet of 10. You will find one sheet of tickets enclosed in this issue of the MEM. You need not be present at the drawing to win, and there is no limit on the number of tickets you may purchase. If you desire more than 10 tickets, you may make photocopies of the enclosed sheet, or go to the TLCB Web site where you will find an Acrobat file for a ticket sheet that you can print on your home computer. Mail your filled-in tickets, along with your check in the appropriate amount to:

TLCB, Inc.,  
P.O. Box 343,  
Locust Grove, Ga., 30248

Make checks payable to *Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc.* In the memo section of your check, write your member # and "Assistance Quilt Raffle."

Should you desire a large quantity of tickets, but wish to avoid the hassle of filling out each ticket, simply send your check made out as described above, enclosing a note indicating the number of tickets you desire and the name and contact

information you want printed on them. We will be happy to print and submit your tickets for the drawing on your behalf. What could be easier?

With our TLCB Assistance outreach expanding into Laos, participation of our members becomes ever more important to

spread the good work while we continue what we have been doing in Thailand. Certainly we encourage you to buy as many raffle tickets as you can afford; however, I cannot stress enough, no level of participation is insignificant, and *no donation is too small* to matter. Even those small donations add up. If each member purchased just four or five tickets, we would far surpass that which we have raised in past raffles. It takes only one ticket to win a

beautifully crafted quilt, and every dime you spend for tickets will go toward improving the lives of the needy children of Thailand and Laos. Brothers, *you* can make a difference. Let us join hands to make this year's TLC Sisterhood Quilt Raffle a record breaker!

The December 2008 issue of the MEM (viewable on our web site) included an excellent article describing TLCB's medical assistance program at work in Thailand. In it, author John Schillo related how the TLCB is making a vital difference in the lives of children who are in need of medical treatment. Many of these precious children might not receive the life-saving medical care they need, if not for the efforts of our TLCB. In addition to the medical assistance program there are our long-standing and continuing assistance to schools, students, and local communities in Thailand, and more recently, in Laos.

These programs we carry out in the name and memory of our brothers who did not return with us. They will undoubtedly have a long-lasting, positive influence on the lives of the people of the land we came to know and love so long ago. Such acts of charity are made possible by *you*—our dedicated members who give of yourselves through your time and effort, your dues, by outright donations, and by your enthusiastic participation in the various fundraising activities of TLCB, Inc. and our sister organization, the TLCS.



Bob and Rosie Wheatley





# Time to plan for our Space Coast 2009 Reunion

The 2009 TLCB reunion will be held in Cape Canaveral, Florida, October 1-3. The site will be the Radisson Resort at the Port. Rooms will be \$109 (plus tax) per night, and that price is good for your entire stay before and after the reunion dates.

I have attended a number of events at their banquet facility, other TLCB members have stayed there, and all gave good reviews. You can see the facility at <http://www.radisson.com/hotels/flcocoa>

In addition to the restaurant in the Resort itself, there are many eating establishments within walking distance, including a Thai restaurant across the street, and others are less than a mile away at Port Canaveral. Cocoa Beach and the entire Space Coast are nearby. Orlando's airport is just 45 minutes away, with ample transportation to the Resort.

Activities will include a visit to the Kennedy Space Center (KSC). The public tour is an all-day experience for anyone interested in the space program or just science and technology. We are exploring the possibility of a VIP "behind-the-scenes" tour of KSC, however that will depend on security factors. Although there is no shuttle launch scheduled for that time, there are unannounced, unmanned satellite launches from nearby Canaveral AFS, so there is no telling what you might see. The Radisson Resort is an ideal viewing location.

Nearby Port Canaveral is home to several cruise lines, so parlaying the reunion into an ocean cruise is an option. If you want to just walk miles of beaches, you will not find a better place. If you are feeling nostalgic for 1960s TV fantasy, you can visit I Dream of Jeannie Lane, in Cocoa Beach, though Jeannie has not actually been seen there for years. She is, however, doing commercials for a local hospital.

There will of course be the annual events, the business meeting, auction, and banquet. We have a couple of options for unique banquet speakers this year, which we will announce as the reunion gets closer.

To ensure you get the reduced rate, be sure to say you are with the TLCB when making your reservation. Registration forms will be included in the next MEM, or you can obtain one at the TLCB Web site.

Hope to see a lot of you there!

Gary Beatty  
TLCB Vice-President & 2009 Reunion Chairman



# Vietnam Center and Archive protects original SEA materials

By Stephen Maxner, Ph.D.  
Director, Vietnam Center

Greetings from the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech. I hope everyone in the Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Brotherhood is enjoying the new year. I want to thank Dave MacDonald for allowing me this opportunity to write this article for your newsletter. For those of you who are not familiar with our project at Texas Tech, I really appreciate the chance to introduce you to us. For our many friends in TLCB, I hope you will find this helpful as it includes some updated information about The Vietnam Center Archive.

First off, the Vietnam Center and Archive started in 1989 to collect and preserve the record of U.S. service in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Do not let our name fool you – we are as dedicated and committed to collecting and preserving the history of service in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia as we are to doing this for Vietnam. As you all know very well, you cannot look at the “Vietnam War” without looking at the other countries in SEA as well as the surrounding theater of operations.

Since starting these efforts 20 years ago, we have grown into the largest project of our kind in the U.S. We host annual conferences and symposia that examine many different aspects of the wars in SEA. Our March 2009 conference looked at Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, and the Vietnam War. We promote the study of these important events, and we have created the most extensive archive of related research materials outside the U.S. National Archives. The Vietnam Archive currently contains approximately 20 million pages of material and we receive on average at least one new collection every day. We also have a very active oral history project where we interview participants from every conceivable viewpoint from the war. We now have nearly 700 such interviews with men and women from every state in the U.S. and from 10 countries. This includes interviews with U.S. veterans who served in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia as well as interviews with Thai veterans.

The Vietnam Archive also has the Virtual Vietnam Archive, the largest online repository of Vietnam War related materials in the U.S.. Our Virtual Vietnam Archive currently contains more than three million pages of material and includes documents, photos, audio recordings, film, maps, and more. If you conduct a search of the Virtual Archive using each of the country names of Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, you will retrieve just less than 100,000 items for all three combined. This includes samples of everything listed above from documents to films.

The Virtual Vietnam Archive has become one of the most important components of our work at Texas Tech. Those of you who have visited Lubbock, Texas, can attest that while it is one of the friendliest places on earth, it is not really on the “beaten path.” We have always enjoyed a respectable number of visitors and guests from around the country and

world, but the Virtual Archive has increased the use of our archive resources exponentially. While we might have between 150-200 guests who visit us in person, *the Virtual Vietnam Archive now hosts more than one million online research sessions every year.* We like to make this extremely important point with our friends and donors—when you donate your collection to the Vietnam Archive, it will be used and accessible to researchers around the world.

I should emphasize that as an archive, we are primarily interested in preserving the actual material—whether it is documents, photos, slides, audio recordings (reel to reel or audio cassette), films (8mm, super 8mm, 16mm), maps, or any other material. We realize that some documents will be photocopies, such as after action reports or personnel records. But personal documents, letters, diaries, photos, films, and materials that were created by each of you as veterans is the stuff that archives live to preserve. If you donate your actual materials to the Vietnam Archive, they will be preserved in a state-of-the-art archival facility and stored in acid-free folders and boxes in a temperature, humidity, and light-controlled environment. This will allow them to last as long as physically possible. In addition, we will digitize the materials you donate and send you copies on CD or DVD to share with family, friends, and fellow veterans – so you never lose access to your collection. The materials we digitize are also made a part of the Virtual Vietnam Archive so that millions of researchers around the world will be able to use them to learn about this decisive part of U.S. history. In this way, we can work together to provide access to the true history of the war, the history through *your* eyes, as opposed to some Hollywood director’s filters and lenses.

You can learn a lot about us and our projects at [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu). I hope you will consider joining the Vietnam Center and Archive in this important effort. We have a lot of work ahead of us and only a limited amount of time in which to accomplish this vital mission. We welcome every one of you to join us. You can contact me at any time via phone at 806-742-9010 or via email at [steve.maxner@ttu.edu](mailto:steve.maxner@ttu.edu). Thank you for your service to our nation. I hope to hear from each of you soon.



# John Grove, of ACA, worked with TLCB to fund Thailand projects

by John Schillo  
Assistance Committee Chairman

In the past, I have talked about how the Air Commando Association (ACA) has helped the TLCB fund various projects in Thailand. The man behind all of this aid was John Grove, the Assistant Director of the charitable arm of the ACA, The McCoskrie Threshold Foundation. With John's help, we were able to do some large projects that normally would be beyond the funding capability of our Assistance Program. We built a computer lab and a library. We did large renovations on some schools and installed several water purification projects.

We were in the beginning phase of putting together a "Laos Initiative" to help Mac Thompson on his projects at Long Tieng and other areas. Then, totally unexpected, God gave an RTB call to John and he had to depart this earth. His departure left a large void in the lives of everyone he touched.

His loss not only affects the TLCB, but people around the world. John Grove also provided medical aid to the Dominican Republic and Guatemala. He provided support in the form of household goods and clothing to the Montagnards living in North Carolina. He helped "young" airmen with household needs through the Airman's Attic at Eglin AFB and "old" airmen through his work at the Tuskegee Home in Panama City, Florida.

He will be missed not only by the people he helped in Haiti, Honduras, and Peru, but by the poor in Appalachia who received warm clothing and the U.S. Indians in South Dakota who received medical supplies. John did not work for fame, but his work did not go unnoticed. Air Force Chief of Staff, General Norton A. Schwartz, awarded John Grove the Parker Green Award for Humanitarian Service. Lt.Gen. Wurster presented the award to John's mother at a memorial service held on 31 January 2009 at Hurlburt Field. Several hundred friends attended the standing-room-only memorial service.

I had the privilege of attending the memorial service and presented John's mother with a small photo album consisting of a list of TLCB projects funded by the Air Commando Association along with pictures of the various projects. We hope it will serve as a small memento of all of the good things her son had done for the people of Thailand.

The Assistance Committee wanted to do more to honor John's memory. We voted to fund a water purification project in Thailand and to dedicate it to John Grove. Fortunately, the project was finished before the memorial and a dedication ceremony was held on 26 January 2009. John Middlewood was able to e-mail the pictures of the dedication to me in time to be included in the album I presented to John's mother.

John Grove was a retired USAF Major. He flew CH-53C Pave Low helicopters with the 21<sup>st</sup> SOS out of NKP. John was awarded 3 DFCs, 3 Air Medals, 3 Commendation Medals, the Air Force Achievement Medal, and many other awards. Some would call him a hero, not a title we veterans ascribe to ourselves. We would call him a good friend who will be dearly missed. The world would call him a great humanitarian. Everyone would be right.



Thai official, John Middlewood, and Kuhn Phomphan honor John Grove in Thailand. photos provided by the author.





road at 0700 hours for the two-hour trip to Long Tieng.

**Long Tieng Valley:**

We arrived at about 0900 hours with breakfast done up at the pho shop. The "main man" we had wanted to see had already gone over Skyline Ridge to Sam Thong, so we had to scratch the idea of joining him. Perhaps we can do that on another trip because there is a large school at Sam Thong that perhaps could use some assistance.

Electricity has finally arrived at Long Tieng. The pho shop now has an electric hot water pot, a rice cooker, a drinks cooler furnished by Coca Cola, and best of all, a *popcorn* machine. Civilization, I guess. Cell phone service is expected in January, in and out to the world. No more SSB radios. I had a signal on my cell phone, but evidently the final circuits have not been connected.

We met with the teachers of the two schools we have been working with - the Ban Nam Ngoua Lower Secondary School and the Long Tieng Primary School.

**Follow-up to Ban Nam Ngoua water line funded during our August 2008 trip:**

This project was budgeted for \$400 but came in at \$295. It looks good and includes a large water tank next to the two-



squatter head, now in use by the kids. The villagers have done some good self-help work here with just a little input by the TLCB Assistance Fund.

**Follow-up to Desks & Stools, 50 sets, Long Tieng Primary School:**

There was a funding shortfall for this project during the August 2008 trip. The initial plan was for 70 sets of furniture, but funds were available for just 50 sets, which have been delivered. Note the small TLCB sticker on almost all of the desks. Some stickers have been scraped off, as "kids will be kids."



This cost came in at \$1333.

**New Project, Desks & Stools II:**

This "new" project was for 20 sets of desks and stools to make up the shortfall of the August trip. It was funded for \$600 (\$550 for commodities plus \$60 for transportation). The commodity estimate came in within budget and the transportation estimate was low. Diesel is still high up in that area, which is understandable, given the eight-hour drive to get a tanker up there.

Furniture was to be ready for delivery by 30 December. An additional approximately \$100 was handed over to pay for diesel and per diem for use of an army truck and four to six people to drive down to Xaysomboun to pick up the furniture.

**The New Year**

Time has passed, it is the beginning of February 2009, and it is back on the road for Sunee and me. We set out for Xieng Lom & Hong Sa, back to the beginning. For background, Hong Sa, LS-62, was my first "home" in Laos, September 1966-January 1967, when I transferred up to Nam Bac, LS-203, north of Luang Prabang. When Nam Bac got really hot the summer of 1967, I was transferred over to Xieng Lom, aka Xieng Hon, LS-69A, through the end of the year.

Sunee and I drove up to Nan, the provincial capital of this northern Thai province. We spent about 9 hours on the road and stayed the night at the same hotel where I used to stay in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Two large Hmong and Yao/Iu Mien refugee camps were nearby. A Thai friend, Mr. Piak, drove down from his home in Chiang Mai to meet us and pro-

Continued next page.



vide chauffeur services with his 4-WD, 4-door modified Isuzu pickup for the trip to Laos. I have known him since 1966 when he was working at the airfield at Ban Houei Sai, L-25; he is a great guy.

Next morning we took off to Huey Khon, on the Thai side of the border. The Thai and Lao had just agreed to make this an international crossing point in December so we were actually some of the first numbers to pass through this border crossing. One note: no Visa On Arrival at Lao Immigration - you must have a visa issued by a Lao Embassy/Consulate.

We arrived at Muang Nguen, which I had never visited before, although I had made rice drops there 40 plus years back. It is a pretty large town these days, and it is the crossroads for the area, so it will be growing larger. The road to the west goes to Xieng Lom, and to the east it takes you to Hong Sa, with connections to Luang Prabang and Sayaboury. To the north and the Mekong River, there is a connection to Pak Beng and the paved road on up to the Chinese border.

We drove about two hours to the west to Xieng Lom on a good gravel road that looks like it has been newly rebuilt. We arrived at Xieng Lom and I wondered just where I was. Back in 1967, there were only two roads/streets in the main village area and one 50 cc motorcycle. It was mine and was the only motor vehicle. Now? The town is in a grid pattern, with half a dozen streets each way, quite a few schools, ranging from kindergarten to upper secondary (high school), other government buildings, a large market area and lots of vehicles, all new since my last visit. The new things include, of all things, a reverse osmosis bottled water plant. They do not have to haul up water from the creek anymore.

We went looking for the school I had assisted in rebuilding back in 1967. It is located on the southern edge of the main valley, and was built on the site of the old WW II Japanese airstrip. We found it, still there, looking a bit worn, but still



School rebuilt in 1967, in Xieng Lom.

functioning.

We interrupted a meeting of the head of the school and a



few of the teachers. We introduced ourselves, explained the TLCB assistance program, and asked if they had any needs. The deputy principal immediately pointed up behind his head at the holes in the tin roofing and said all seven rooms of the school were in the same condition. Upon inspection, we saw



he was right. He requested 200 roofing sheets for replacement, but given the cost of almost \$900, I said we would take it under consideration for funding at a later date. We asked if there was anything else needing repair, and during a walk around the school, he pointed out the three-door outhouse and a small bamboo and grass-roofed structure that housed three



See Laos, continued next page.

of the teaching staff. See below.

He requested 30 sheets of roofing tin for an addition to the outhouse, which serves 217 students and 13 teachers. The villagers would provide the cement, water seal toilet, wood posts, etc. to do the addition. He requested 70 sheets of roofing tin for the bamboo teachers' house, with the villagers providing the balance of the materials.

Both of these requests came within the \$500 budget I had from the TLCB Assistance Committee, so I handed over baht 15,000 to the school principal. We then emphasized that any further assistance would be dependent on their performance with these two small projects. (As an aside, I got an email on March 16 from a friend in Vientiane who phoned the school. Some materials were already on site and others were ordered for delivery, so it looks like progress. This makes me feel better, as I am always a bit nervous when dealing with a new group and project.)

With school business finished, we did some wandering around the town. You cannot call it a "village" anymore because of its growth. We looked for the house I used to stay in, but were told that it is now in the local Army compound, so we skipped that one. We also looked for the old SKY compound which also had a STOL airstrip, LS-274, but it too has changed and is now the local police compound. We had to miss that



Pretty good guest house lobby.

one too.

We checked out the guesthouse situation. There are four in town, and we easily found two and stayed in a pretty good one. We visited one village just to the north, Ban Xang, and were looking for one old guy I had helped out back then, a below-the-knee amputee. I had helped him get a new artificial leg. He had lost it fishing with a 60 mm mortar round tied to a bamboo pole. He had dropped it after arming it and not in the water as he had intended. I had also given him a note sealed in plastic, a "to whom it may concern" note asking pilots, at that time Air America and CASI, to help the guy out with transport down to Vientiane for a new leg. He was a rice farmer and his problem was that the foot hinge rusted out after a while in the paddy water, and the foot fell off, and his leg just sank into the mud, making it difficult to walk behind the water buffalo. I

found his house and some of his cousins, but the man had died a few years back. I had wondered for some years how he made out with that note and whether he had showed it to the pilot of an MI-8 helicopter, for example.

We had dinner at a restaurant at the large morning market, and had OK eats. We went back there for breakfast the next morning, but it was difficult to find because of heavy ground fog. We drove around a bunch of the streets trying to find the place.

We left Xieng Lom and headed east back towards Muang



Heading north toward Muang Nguen

Nguen. Just before Muang Nguen there is a new road, still under construction, heading north. We decided to take a look, and 45 minutes later ended up on the Mekong River some 17 km upstream from Pak Beng, the southern terminus of the "Chinese Road," as it was known long ago. There is a new road across the Mekong that goes to Pak Beng and we had an offer to take our pickup across on two of the smallish long-tail boats lashed together. Nope, did not think the insurance would cover that! In any case, this routing might well be for heavy truck traffic in the not too distant future, trucks going back and forth



Pair of lashed long-tail boats across from new road end.

from Yunan to Bangkok. There are lots of changes in the wind.

We left for Hong Sa, which is located one hour to the east, also on a newly upgraded gravel road. We chose to stop at the

Continued next page.

Lao work elephants then and now. At left, in 1966 elephants hauling cement. At right, pack elephants today.



Sisophon Guest House for a couple of reasons. The first was that a sister of Lao refugee friends of mine in Minneapolis owns it. We got a discount rate, but paid for food and beer. Second, it is sited right between the school we worked on back in 1966 and our old IVS house. The guesthouse was handy, too, right opposite the market area and the "bus terminal," a sort of loose definition for commercial transport to Sayaboury and other local towns.

Hong Sa, like Xieng Lom, would be difficult to recognize from 40 plus years back. It is nicely laid out in grids, with several large government buildings, new schools and private homes of concrete block and new wood construction. They were doing street upgrading with heavy equipment as we watched. The only vehicles in the valley in 1966 were our IVS Jeep and the Lao Army M-35 deuce and a half, which did not work. The wood bridge across the small river where we used to bathe is now a Bailey.

We visited the old primary school next to the guesthouse and introduced ourselves to the principal. I asked where the old wooden building we had worked on back then was because there were three buildings on the site now. He said that it was long gone, torn down to make way for new construction. I asked about the dug well from the old days. The villagers had put in some hard labor to dig it back then. It was also gone, filled in because with the new city-supplied water, it was not needed any more.

The school principal asked why I knew about the old building and well. I replied that I had been IVS here in 1966, and had made 16 fun jumps back then. The principal sort of lit up and without coaching said, "Tan Mac!" Hey, that is me, nice to be remembered. He had been a first grader at the time. I handed over copies of a bunch of black and white photos I had from those days, taken of the school and some of his friends, most likely. I asked him to hand them out if any of the kids, now adults, were still around.

On initial blush, I did not see anything outstanding at the primary school that needed TLCB assistance so we did not

really raise the subject. Also, I did not have enough time to really survey the other schools in the valley, so I saved that for a subsequent trip.

The next morning, I was talking with a guy who turned out to be a former USAID heavy equipment operator for our Public Works Division. I asked him about an airplane crash site I had once visited just to the south of the long, Caribou capable airstrip. I had not taken any photos of it previously, but I remembered it as something like a single engine "Twin Beech," twin tail. I have wondered about that plane for years. Whose was it? Speculation was that it was an early commercial plane from the 1950s, perhaps. "All gone," he said,



"turned into scrap and sold." He mentioned another crash that must have happened after I had departed, a single engine, high wing plane. It sounded something like one in the Cessna series. I had never heard of this one at all.

We hit the lively morning market for a look-see. Sunee bought up a bunch of hand-woven cloth and a new "Nokia" cell phone from a young merchant whose first language was Chinese. He was a new arrival, I reckon, which is not an unusual occurrence in Laos these days, immigrants from the north. We had seen the same up at Phonsavan on the PDJ, at Long Tieng, and at Xaysomboun/Moung Cha/LS-113. We also met some very young Chinese immigrant merchants down at Gnommorath last year, not far from Thakkek and Nakhon Phanom.

Time was up for Hong Sa this trip, so we got back on the road to Muang Nguen, then across to Thailand, and back to Nan for the night. Day five was the nine-hour drive back home. We ran up about 870 miles on my van and 200 miles on our Thai friend's pickup on the Lao side.

BTW, color photos for this trip, and earlier trips, are at the url: <http://picasaweb.google.com/mactbkk/?pli=1>

Now to get planning on the next TLCB trip to Laos and another school project



# Proposed amendments to TLCB By-Laws

by Gary Beatty, Vice President

In the September 2008 MEM (Vol 9, Issue 3 - now available on line at the TLCB Web site) the Board of Directors (BOD) published proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation. These changes were to facilitate a more fair and efficient process for election of Officers and BOD members.

As explained in that publication, the BOD utilized the "opt-out" method of voting on the proposed amendments—meaning anyone opposed to the amendments was to submit a "No" vote in writing prior to December 1, 2008. Not a single "No" vote was received; therefore the amendments passed. The next step in the process is to amend the By-Laws.

Accordingly, the following proposed amendment to Article III, Sub-section 8 (a), of the By-Laws, is submitted for approval by the membership of the TLCB:

## a. Nominations

[existing by-laws language in italics]

*(No less than three months prior to the annual meeting the president shall appoint a nominating committee of at least three active members, to prepare a slate for consideration by the membership. This committee shall announce its slate to the membership no less than 30 days prior to the annual meeting, at which date the period for nominations shall be closed. Nominations from any active member may be addressed to the nominating committee or the board during the nomination period and will be reported along with the selected slate.)*

[proposed by-laws language underlined]

Not less than 90 days prior to the annual meeting, the President (or in those years when the President is up for election, the Vice President) shall appoint a nominating committee of at least three active members to prepare a slate of candidates for office. No current officer, or member of the Board of Directors, shall serve on the nominating committee. The Board of Directors shall adopt a

written procedure to be followed by the nominating committee in carrying out its duties.

Nominations for any position up for election in the current year may be submitted to the nominating committee by any active member during the nomination period. Nominations shall be published by the committee not less than 60 days prior to the annual meeting.

The existing sub-section 8(a) has been completely re-written. (Sub-sections 8(b)&(c), remain unchanged.) As you can see, the purpose of the amendment is to codify the nomination procedure—thus avoiding the nomination controversy that preceded the last election. That controversy arose because there was no formal written procedure in place. The other effect of the change is to provide adequate time before the annual meeting to publish candidate information in the MEM.

As with the amendments to the Articles, the "opt out" method of voting will be utilized. So if you are opposed to this amendment, you should mail a "No" vote to the official TLCB address: PO Box 343, Locust Grove, GA, 32408, by May 15, 2009. If "No" votes equal to at least 1/3 of the TLCB membership are received, then the amendment will fail. Otherwise the BOD will presume the amendment has passed.



## Tell us your new mailing address

If you move, temporarily or permanently, let us know as soon as possible. We cannot get your Mekong Express Mail to you without your current address. If we use your old address, the Post Office does not deliver the MEM, but notifies MEM that the address is bad, and charges the TLCB a fee.

Prevent this from happening. Let your local Post Office know immediately if your address changes. Get and complete a free *Change Of Address* card at your Post Office or on USPS.com. Click on "Receiving Mail." Send an email to the MEM editor at [David6mac@aol.com](mailto:David6mac@aol.com) and to Membership Committee Chairman Mike Vale at [Mevale762@aol.com](mailto:Mevale762@aol.com).