



Mekong Express Mail

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THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

Operation Aussies Home

by Jim Bourke

This article is a follow up to one printed in the previous Mekong Express Mail, Finding Magpie 91, which told about the search for the lost Canberra Bomber, its pilot, and co-pilot. The following account includes some information about the recovery of the other Australian men missing in action (MIA). As the initial article mentioned, Jim Bourke is a retired lieutenant colonel of the Australian Army and a leader of Operation Aussies Home (OAH). He reached out with a request for help to answer specific technical questions and provide background information, which might clarify the context for the November 1970 loss of a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Canberra bomber, call sign Magpie 91. The RAAF aircrew members were two of six Australian servicemen recorded as missing in action, killed in action, or body not recovered. Officer Michael Herbert and Pilot Officer Robert Carver were lost with the Canberra Bomber in November 1970. Jim Bourke continues his story.

BACKGROUND

In November 1970, Herbert and Carver were members of No. 2 Squadron RAAF, which was at that time under the operational control of the U.S. 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, flying out of PHAN RANG Airbase in the southern part of Vietnam. Herbert and Carver were part of a Ground Directed Bombing (Sky spot) mission on the night of 3 November 1970. The Mk 20 Canberra Bomber, A84-231, piloted by Herbert with Carver as navigator, disappeared approximately 70 kilometers southwest of DA NANG.

The Australian Government did little to provide a full account for the six missing men lost in Vietnam during the period 1973 to 2007. In May 1984, a government mission visited Vietnam with a task "to provide the fullest possible accounting of the last known circumstances" of the six servicemen; however, no useful information was obtained.

In the late nineties, the U.S. Joint Task Force for Full Accounting conducted two missions in the general area of the loss incident of A84-231— Joint Force Activities 57 and 60. They discovered wreckage that they thought might be that of A84-231. This information was eventually passed to the Herbert and Carver families, along with the fact that two bodies had been located. Unfortunately, the wreckage was later determined to be that of a U.S. OV-10. Naturally, the families were distraught and this incident engendered a level of distrust of the RAAF within the families.

STARTUP OF THE OPERATION AUSSIES HOME PROJECT

In early 2002, I was approached by staff at the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii (CILHI) regarding the process to obtain family reference samples for mitochondrial DNA analysis to exclude the possibility that there were Australians amongst the unidentified remains in the custody of CILHI. The Australian Defense Force was contacted. Unfortunately, they did not wish to assist for fear of upsetting the families; so, on my own account, I progressively obtained family reference samples for four of the cases.

Before contacting the families, I necessarily did some preliminary research on the six cases to obtain a basic understanding of the circumstances. Hence, the project, OPERATION AUSSIES HOME, came into being in mid 2002. The aim of the project was to account fully for the six Australian servicemen left behind in Vietnam. I use the term "full accounting," borrowed from the vocabulary of the U.S. agencies that search for American MIA. In the context of this research, "full accounting" requires that one of the following two outcomes is achieved:

- Identifiable remains of the missing are recovered, or
- Sustainable and convincing evidence is provided to show that the recovery of identifiable remains is not possible at this time.

An incorporated association, Operation Aussies Home Inc. (OAH), was formed in September 2005 to provide a legal entity to do business with the Australian and Vietnamese governments and others.

Dues Season is CLOSING

See envelope label for this issue. If it shows 2009, send dues and donations to: TLCB Dues, PO Box 343, Locust Grove GA 30248. Annual dues are still just \$25.

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RESEARCH AND REPORTS

Comprehensive reports were produced on the four Army cases by mid 2004 and were forwarded to minister assisting the Minister of Defense, Army HQ, and the Joint Task Force For Full Accounting, or Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), the successor to Joint Task Force For Full Accounting. Although the bulk of the research on the two RAAF cases was during 2002-2003, the report was not completed until September 2008.

IN-COUNTRY INVESTIGATIONS BY OAH

In late 2006, the Gillespies, family members of one of the six MIAs, requested the assistance of the appropriate minister to investigate their case and engaged OAH in a support and consultancy role. An Australian government team recovered Gillespie's remains in November 2007, with considerable assistance from OAH. After in-country investigations in November 2005, May 2006, and January – February 2007, OAH located the remains of two more of the missing men, Parker and Gillson, found in April 2007. Thereafter, the Army began to show an interest in their remaining case, Fisher.

ENCOURAGING THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO INVESTIGATE

In early 2008, OAH turned its attention to the cases of Herbert and Carver full time. I obtained the power of attorney (POA) from both of the RAAF families, which authorized me to act on their behalf. Armed with these two powers of attorney, I met with the Minister for Defense Personnel, The Hon. Warren Snowdon, MP, in Canberra on 14 May 2008. I offered the services of OAH to do the in-country work on the RAAF cases, free of charge. I had a fair idea as to what the minister would do – the Australian Defense Force would not want OAH doing the in-country work.

I moved forward on the research on these two cases and recruited the services of my good friend, Peter Aylett, to do the mapping. We needed a Canberra bomber expert and Lance Halvorson, a former RAAF navigator who had flown on Canberra bombers in Vietnam, volunteered to help and provided a copy of the flight manual. We needed some technical advice of the radars that were in use in SEA and the Tactical Air Control System that operated in Vietnam in 1970. William R. Peterson and his associates from the TLC Brotherhood stepped forward and assisted in developing a good understanding of the radar facilities known as PANAMA and MOTEL, as well as offering general advice on the conduct of the mission and the possible causes of the disappearance.

THE HERBERT AND CARVER LOSS INCIDENT

We examined the loss incident against known facts. The mission number was 6115. The details of this sortie would have been advised to Direct Air Support Center, PANAMA CRC, the relevant CRP, 1st Combat Evaluation Group, and OL-24 (Operation Location).

A84-231 departed PHAN RANG at 1900 hours and made contact with the Ground controller, Captain Bill Hanig, USAF, at OL-24 at PHU BAI at 2003 hours. Hanig directed A84-231 to

the target. After the release of the bombs, time on target (TOT) was advised by Hanig to be 2022 hours local. Hanig then gave the crew a brief description of the target they had engaged, and told them that their performance had been excellent. As reported by Jack Thurgar, who was the main investigator on the Defense Team in April 2009, "The bombs came close to knocking out the BT44 military command unit, where the North Vietnamese had earlier transmitted on a 15-watt radio, thus revealing their position to U.S. forces and setting them up as a target for Carver and Herbert's bombs." Michael Herbert, the pilot, acknowledged this message before signing off from Hanig to change frequency in the usual manner for the return flight to PHAN RANG.

Shortly thereafter, in a matter of minutes, the aircraft disappeared from the radar screen of the station that had been tracking the aircraft. The reported last known position (LKP) of the aircraft, obtained from IFF tapes from a "radar station in Thailand" was 15° 45' N and 107° 40' E.

In hindsight, it appears that A84-231 was being tracked by MOTEL using a primary search radar at Monkey Mountain, and that the details were being fed to MOTEL ALPHA at "...the Udorn Royal Thai Air Base in the northeast of Thailand near the Laotian border. It would be reasonable for this mission to be tracked by MOTEL, as opposed to PANAMA, considering that it appears the target had been acquired by signals intelligence." --Sian Powell, *Adelaide Advertiser*. Despite an intensive aerial search over the period 4 – 6 November 1970, no trace of A84-231 or its crew could be found.

OAH REPORT

OAH pushed on with the report and eventually provided the 40,450 word final copy to the minister and the RAAF HQ in early September 2008, with relevant source documents made available to the RAAF HQ in November 2008. I again acknowledge the assistance of Mr. William Peterson and other TLCB members in compiling this report.

The location of the target was established from the log of 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group (39 ARRGP), which operated out of Son Tra Airbase (MONKEY MOUNTAIN). The target coordinates were recorded as GR YC 6800 4530 (Datum: Indian 1961).

OAH wrote a computer program, nicknamed 'HUGO; its purpose was to calculate the flight path of the aircraft. It was shown that the most likely LKP was centered on "grid reference of GR YC 843 383 (Datum: Indian 1961). The LAT/LONG of the calculated LKP using WSG84 was 15 Deg 42' 37.1" N and 107 Deg 38' 54.6" E. It is noted that this calculated LKP is approximately 4,800 meters from the officially reported LKP on a heading of 205 Magnetic."

The OAH report stated:

"It is obvious that the Reported LKP of 15° 45' N and 107° 40' E cannot be the actual LKP based on fact that the aircraft would not have reasonably passed through the Reported LKP given the time constraints, the position of the target and the geometry of the most likely flight paths."

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TLCB team's fruitful Laos trip

by Macalan Thompson

TRIP REPORT, 13-18 JANUARY 2010, PDJ AREA AND SAM NUEA

Sunee and I were off to Laos again to check additional school support projects on behalf of the TLCB. We were accompanied by visitors from Oregon: my sister Anne, a TLCB member, and brother-in-law, Ray. Art Crisfield, who is resident in Vientiane, also came along for the TLCB portion of the trip. Another TLC brother, Glenn Black, rode over on his motorcycle from Chiang Mai to join us in Phonsavanh.

We checked out one completed project, turned over funds for a newly approved project, investigated the possibilities for two more, and almost by accident, found out about another needful project. Altogether, it was a fruitful trip.

In summary, our road time this trip was:

- Thailand, round trip, home to Nong Khai, and back: 1,325 km = 822 miles.
- Laos road travel amounted to 1,294 km, 802 miles, almost all of which was on paved roads for a change.

The first stop on the way driving up to Nong Khai, where we left my van, was a Thai temple, Wat Tham Krabok. The purpose here was to drop off a Subway "hoagie," Italian BMT, foot long, double meat, everything possible on it, to Monk Gordon, an American monk who has been there for almost 30 years. Gordon is in charge of the drug and booze detox section of the wat, for which it is justly famous. Even before 1975, USAID/Laos sent people down there, Hmong, Lao, even a few "world travelers" passing through. Gordon was also my main contact there in 2003-5 when about 15,000 Lao Hmong resided at the

for us lowlanders, about 50 F in the morning. The elevation there is about 4,200 feet. (Note: The LS and number, or Lima Site, refers to a Laos site/location. If you are interested, you can find airfield site numbers on Jim Henthorn's super Map Scan project at: <http://www.nexus.net/~911gfx/sea-ao.html>)

The next morning we continued on up to Xieng Khouang and near old Muang Soui. We met up with Mr. Soundeuan from the Xieng Khouang Provincial Education Service (PES), whom we have been working with on several projects so far in this province. The purpose was to visit Phou Kout District and a proposed school project there at Naxaythong village. The primary need here is a concrete floor for their main school building. We will hear more after they come up with a proposal. We noted and utilized the three-room toilet, but noticed that there was not much water available. When we enquired about the reason for the lack of water, they showed us the broken well pump. The well has lots of water, but no access to it at present. It seemed to me that a simple solution to this problem was to fix the pump. They had no funds, so that evening I passed a \$20 bill to Art and Mr. Soundeuan to see if it would pay for a simple solution. After we got home,



A stop to visit Monk Gordon. L-R, brother-in-law John, Gordon, Mac, sister Ann. All photos furnished by the author.

temple before they moved on to the U.S. as refugees. There are no Subway franchises out my way, but Anne and Ray were staying downtown and picked one up for him. I usually drop off an extra large pizza when I go by there.

On the road again, we spent one night in Vientiane and had dinner with friends at the Sticky Fingers. We picked up Art and our rental vehicle, with driver, in Vientiane Thursday 14 January. We passed through Vang Vieng, L-16, on through Muang Kassy, LS-249, and on up to a really nice, and new guest house near Sala Phou Khoun, LS-260, for the night. The place even had fireplaces in a couple of the rooms! It was a tad cool there



Above, kids show delight with the repaired pump.

they sent some photos and as you can see, the water is flowing and everyone is happy.

We had scheduled a late lunch at the village, but it seems like there was a bit of a misunderstanding on just how many people

see Laos Trip, continued on page 4



Left, one of two *buckets* of rice for 4 people! At right, Mac at Muong Kham (Ban Ban).

were coming in our group. Mr. Soundeuan had told them “3 to 4” people, but perhaps the cell phone circuits were scratchy because they had prepared food for 34! And good eats we enjoyed, except for the lao Lao, the home-brewed firewater. I still get goosebumps when I have that stuff. Driving out of

the village, I noticed a large hunk of iron by the side of the road; it looked strangely like a PT-76. I wondered why it hasn’t been scrapped and re-used.

We drove the 45 minutes to Phonsavanh town and to the Hmong-run Nice Guest House where we usually stay. We consumed early eats with Art, Mr. Soundeuan, and his boss, then joined Anne and Ray for dinner and a Beer Lao or three at the Craters Restaurant. I was going to try the local ATM machine, but could not really decide which side of the street it was on, although it surely seemed like I was standing right in front of it.

The next day we made a visit to another potential project at a school near Lat Khay, Phaxay District. Mr. Soundeuan joined us late for this meeting because he had been held up with a ceremony practice at a provincial-level project in Phonsavanh. He was to be the main presenter with ministry officials coming up from Vientiane, the German Ambassador and others among them. We rented another vehicle for him so he could join us a little later at the school. There are 359 students at this school and 17 teachers. One item they do need is a sufficient quantity of toilets. They have a 2-holer that works, but the water source disappears in the dry season. There is another toilet, a 5-holer, which has no water source and is boarded up. These might be in their proposal for assistance.

After visiting this school, we moved on to Jar Site #3 which was just a five-minute drive and a 10 minute walk away. The school principal came along as the tour guide. He also offered

Sunee visiting Jar Site #3 in the Plain of Jars



us some lao Lao (ugh!) at his house, but we declined since it was getting on in the afternoon. It is understandable that this area, the PDJ, is known as the Plain Of Jars. Its ancient origin is still unknown.

The next day, we were off to Muang Kham, aka Ban Ban, LS-10, one of the heaviest fought-over and bombed areas of the war. It was a major choke point for road travel coming into the



PDJ from the north and the east.

This is a TLCB-funded project, \$1,400, for the Chom Thong Primary School, which is

right in the main area of town. Their intent is to prepare a part of one building as a demonstration school for the Life Skills project, which basically aims to teach students practical skills and knowledge that they can use in the real world when they finish their more academic studies.

We are funding the partitioning of the main room into classrooms, a library, and the re-framing of the windows and doors so that they function properly. There have been some ground subsidence problems in the area there. We signed the project contract with the school, village, and district officials and had a photo op with the TLC banner, modified somewhat for use in Laos. There were UXO posters at the school and an UXO Lao vehicle that we saw down by the market area. UXO survey and clearance work has been going on in Xieng Khouang for a long time and continues today.

We had dinner that evening at a local restaurant where we were joined by five of the local Lao officials, where a good time was had by all. One of the officials raised another potential project that we had not heard of before, which is about 60 km out from the district. Art and Mr. Soundeuan visited this village the next day and are waiting for a proposal from the authorities. This project might be co-funded with a non-governmental organization (NGO), and Art is working with those folks to see what funding/help they can provide.

On the morning of the 18th, we left the guesthouse at Ban Ban at 0600 since we had a long day ahead. After two hours up the early portion of the Road of 900 Curves to Nam Neun, we stopped for breakfast of pho. We then progressed on up to Hua Muang District, in the vicinity of old LS-58, and traveled one hour down a dirt road to what is now my favorite project -- the dormitory at Ban Pakhe. This two-phase \$9,400 project was co-funded by the TLCB and the ACA, with the ACA picking up \$7,000 of the job. Phase I was a kitchen and the dormitory building itself. This project’s purpose is to accommodate lower secondary students, grades 7-9, who live too far from the school to commute on a daily basis. If these students have no place to stay, they have to drop out.

Laos trip continued next page

The original dorm project was designed to house 40 students, 24 boys and 16 girls. On opening day of school in early September 2009, about 155 students showed up for dorm housing! The school authorities pared the number down to 85 students and told the excluded ones that they would have to find other accommodation. At the time of our visit, we were told that residents numbered 87, but we did not see them because the students had returned home for the mid-year break. Some of the other students have found places to stay with families in the village, and a few have built bamboo shacks at the dorm site where they can sleep and share the kitchen, bathing, and toilet facilities.

I think this illustrates the popularity and the necessity of this project. Indeed, the local officials requested funding for

Spillover shacks for overgrown new dorm, which was shown in the last issue of MEM. Above, right, boy's and girl's bathing tank next to new toilets, at Ban Pakhe.



another dorm for Ban Pakha; the Hua Muang District education officer requested a similar project for elsewhere in his area, and the provincial engineer also asked for two more dorm projects for districts north of Sam Neua city. Funding? Funding? Funding?

After a late lunch in the school principal's house, and some more lao Lao of course, we hit the road. At this point, Art and Mr. Soundeuan went on to locate the possible project in Muang Kham District that we had heard about at dinner the night before, which would include possible co-funding with an NGO. They visited it after driving some 20 km. east of Route 6; they surveyed the needs and got back to Phonsavanh at 2300 hours, a really long day for them since we had all started out

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Always write payment purpose on memo line.

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Reunion 2010: Atlanta, Georgia

TLCB tax return and board minutes: On web site, in *members only* section. Password (4/1/10): Isabelle

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at 0600. Anne, Ray, Sunee and I, and Somphou, our valiant driver, went on for some non-TLCB visiting further in NE Laos for a few days.

Our first stop was Vieng Thong, old Muang Hiem, LS-48, for the night. We stayed in a new, two-story guesthouse there, a good one. We were told about some hot springs close by, so we went out in the late afternoon to take a look. It was a busy place, and it seems that lots of the Lao go there for their evening bath rather than endure cold, cold water at home. No one told me about the hot springs when I worked at Sam Thong, LS-20, during the spring of 1969 or I might have tried to go there back then. I might not have however, as the place had changed hands a couple months before I got to Sam Thong.

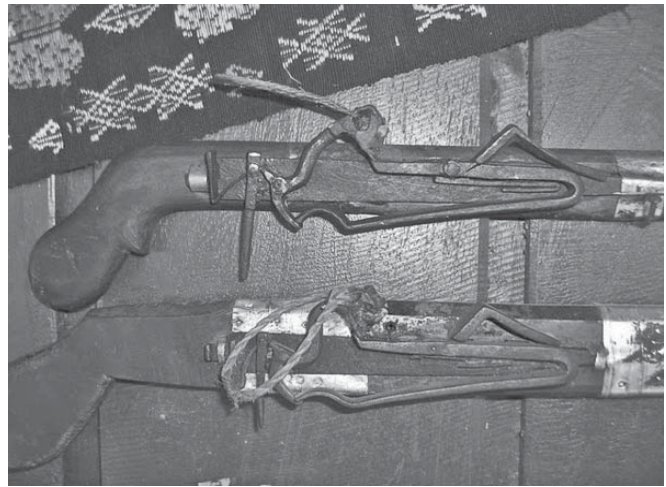
It was 47 F in the morning for breakfast, which meant eat fast or your eggs get cold! From there, we went west for about five hours to Nong Khiaw, a town on the Nam Ou River, which flows south to join the Mekong River upstream from Luang Prabang. There were good eats there at the CT restaurant and we remained overnight, or RONed, at a kind of rustic bungalow, which was OK, but nothing fancy. The owner of the CT had three "Meo" rifles on the wall, really good ones, two



Approaching Nong Khiaw, on the Nam Ou.
Above, right, Meo flintlock rifles.

of which had octagon barrels which I don't remember seeing before. There are lots and lots of foreigners in this town, world travelers coming by bus, van, motorcycle, and bicycle, and it was almost crowded. The place is scenic, for sure, but I guess I am just not used to seeing so many farangs.

On 20 January, Wednesday morning, Ray decided to take one of the boats all the way down to Luang Prabang. This is a common run so the passenger boats run several times a day for the six-hour run downstream to the Mekong then on to Luang Prabang. It takes 10-12 hours going upstream. We decided to stick with the vehicle and headed just 30 minutes west to Nam Bac, LS-203, where I had lived for several months during the spring of 1967. I went looking for the old airport there, and forded the stream to get to the slightly higher ground. I kind of IDed the runway, but everything is well overgrown with trees these days. We did pass by one old wat and stopped in for a look-see. There were no monks, but we talked with



the caretaker. It turns out he is a former RLAF H-34 mechanic and still remembers lots of English from his time at Lackland. We also ran into a truck selling salt, all the way up here from Ban Keun, just north of Vientiane. This salt is distilled from underground saline pools, not iodized salt like we used to buy when I was with USAID back in my "refugee" days, pre-1975. We bought sea salt from Bangkok. I wonder how much of a problem goiter is in upcountry Laos these days.

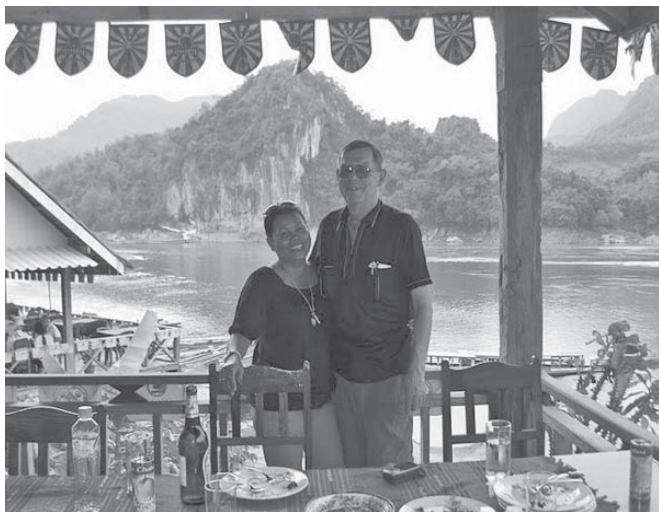
From Nam Bac, we drove south to where the Nam Ou River enters the Mekong and we had lunch where the rivers join. On the south side of the Mekong, you can see the Tham Ting Caves, and it is an interesting spot to visit, but we had seen them previously, so we gave it a miss this trip: http://www.pbbase.com/khanh_hwang/mekong_river__pak_ou_caves_

We moved on to Luang Prabang for two nights and Ray joined us late afternoon after coming in via the boat. We spent some time shopping and walking around town and the evening "tourist" market on the main drag; we climbed up the 328 steps to the top of Phu Sy; we took time for a photo op with what is left of a post-1975 AA gun there. We enjoyed a view of the L-54 runway, the really nice Khuang Sy waterfalls, and the National Museum, which is a former King's palace. We finished with

Laos Trip is concluded next page



Fording the river at Nam Bac, looking for the old runway.



Mac donates much of the cost for their trips on behalf of TLCB Assistance. But his generosity does have its benefits—Mac and Sunee enjoy lunch at beautiful Pak Ou. Below, all Laos Assistance requires elaborate contracts and ceremonial involvement of school and party officials. Here Mac signs a contract for one of our projects.



eats and Beer Lao. The only dampening thing about Luang Prabang was that it started to drizzle the afternoon of second day. A front had come down from the North.

Our last day was Friday, 22 January, out of Luang Prabang. We were driving in the drizzle and the clouds. It was too bad because we had wanted Anne and Ray to see some of the grand views out over the mountains and valleys as you drop down to the lower elevations at Muang Kassy/Vang Vieng. We arrived in Vientiane at 1700 hours, but we decided not to RON there because we wanted to get an early start for home the next day, which is eight plus hours just north of Bangkok. So, we crossed back over to Nong Khai to RON, eat dinner, and enjoy a Singha or three, then crash.

We arrived back home late afternoon on Saturday and Anne and Ray continued on to Bangkok for a couple of days. I reckon we were all kind tired of road travel, but we did have a bunch of fun, saw some new sites and sights, and felt that we accomplished a few things for The Kids in Laos by looking at and reviewing school projects.

Photos for this trip are at "2010-01": <http://picasaweb.google.com/mactbkk/?pli=1>.



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IN-COUNTRY INVESTIGATIONS BY DEFENSE

As mentioned above, the Army had started to take an interest in the MIA from Vietnam in mid 2007, and in August 2008, they recovered the remains of the fourth serviceman, Fisher.

In due course, as I had predicted, Mr. Snowdon tasked the RAAF HQ to organize the in-country investigation. The RAAF asked the Army History Unit to help out because they had had experience in Vietnam with the Fisher case. The RAAF went off and having been given the base data and the methodology, reinvented the wheel to a certain extent. They even had Defense Science and Technology Organization (DSTO) recalculate the track of the aircraft, which was given in the OAH report, and which had been on my website since 24 January 2003. The DSTO also suggested a revised LKP, also to the southwest. Eventually, in April 2009, the RAAF Newspaper reported that:

One of the Air Force's most significant mysteries may have been solved. An investigation team headed by Mr Brian Manns from the Army History Unit is confident it has located the remains of the missing 2SQN Canberra bomber in Vietnam. The team comprised SQNLDRs John Cotterell and Alain Middleton, MAJ Jack Thurgar, CAPT Caroline Kelly, Mr Tony Lowe and Mr Le Tu Binh. Australian Defence Attache COL Stuart Dodds accompanied them for the first day.

Minister for Defence Science and Personnel Warren Snowdon announced the discovery on April 21.

The team spent a week in the province gaining information and hiking in to the wreck site, and on April 15 found the wreckage of an aircraft. While no human remains were found, a number of military artefacts were discovered. They included an Ugly Club badge, which was instigated by 2SQN's ground crew. . . . SQNLDR Cotterell and MAJ Thurgar said it had taken them seven hours by lorry, boat and foot to reach the almost inaccessible site. There, they found the remaining wreckage covering a large area. 'The aircraft had struck at a steep angle,' they said. For a number of reasons, they believed the crew had

A photo of the Phan Rang 'Ugly Club' badge that was found at the crash site before human remains were located. Undamaged edge on the left shown for comparison.



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Repatriation ceremony in Hanoi.

not bailed out, nor that the aircraft was shot down.

The RAAF briefed the Herbert and Carver families on the discovery of A84-231 in Adelaide on 6 May 2009. Both families requested that OAH be represented on the Excavation Team. RAAF was subsequently directed by the minister to comply with the families' requests. Mr. Peter Aylett had volunteered for the job, so he was our man on site.

EXCAVATION

The Excavation team was dispatched to Vietnam in July 2009. Because I exercised the power of attorney for both families, the

RAAF was obliged to pass information to the families through me. I advised the families of the discovery and identification of remains on 30 July 2009. The RAAF Newspaper reported the operation in August 2009:

A SUCCESSFUL but sad answer to an almost 40-year mystery was solved when human remains were found in Vietnam at the site of 2SQN's lost Canberra bomber, A84-231. Forensic examination of the remains concluded they were those of its crew, FLGOFF Michael Herbert and PLTOFF Robert Carver, who were the last Australian servicemen missing from the Vietnam War.

Our man, Peter AYLETT, is in the whitest shirt, just above the center in this photo.

The LAT/LONG for crater Loc that was excavated in July 2009 in WGS84 was 15 - 42' 40.3" N and 107 - 37' 45.2"E. In the MGRS using India Thai Datum (as per Mil [Army] Maps of the day); this equates to 48PYC 82211 38420.



REPATRIATION

Representatives of the families and some comrades of the men flew to Hanoi on 28 August 2009 to be present at the hand back ceremony. Both families requested that I be a part of this contingent. There was an impressive ramp ceremony at the Hanoi airport on the 30 August. For the journey back home, the two coffins were loaded onto a C130 aircraft, with escort provided by some of the men's comrades.

PLTOFF Robert Carver returned

OAH continued next page

home from Vietnam on August 31, nearly 39 years after their Canberra bomber crashed in remote jungle. Family, friends, veterans, and servicemen were at RAAF Base Richmond for the return of the remains of the crew of Magpie 91 by C-130 from Hanoi. Tears were shed at a moving ceremony as the last of our Vietnam heroes were brought home. The ceremony marked the closing of a long and difficult chapter for the airmen's families.

FUNERALS

Carver was buried in his home town of Toowoomba on 3 September 2009. The town virtually came to a standstill. The ceremony was very well organized and quite moving. Herbert was buried in Adelaide on 7 September 2009, again at a very well organized and moving ceremony. Herbert's father, John, a member of the RAAF in World War II was seriously ill but was able to see his son returned and buried. John passed away ten days later, on 17 September 2009.

CONCLUSION

The RAAF was keen to give the impression that this was all their work. Unfortunately for them, very few people believe them: not the families; not the majority of the members of 2 Squadron; nor, Vietnam veterans in general. The simple fact is that if OAH had not initiated the recovery of the MIA from Vietnam, Herbert and Carver would still be there. In the words of Sian Powell, "Finally spurred into action by veterans, particularly Jim Bourke from Operation Aussies Home, the RAAF decided to forge ahead with an attempt to find the lost officers and their bomber. Bourke had been central to the 2007 discovery in Viet Nam of other Australians missing in action, and he had written an exhaustive report on Herbert and Carver. He never let up."

The rhetoric espoused by the Australian Government regarding the recovery of missing servicemen is often criticized by some veterans; however, my experience is that such rhetoric is in practice matched by actions and dollars. It may have taken a while to get things moving on the cases in Vietnam, but the last three recoveries from that theatre, as well as those from the northern France village of Fromelles, where the Australian 5th Division lost 5,533 killed, wounded or missing in one night in July 1916 during World War I; the work done in Borneo; and the recoveries in Papua New Guinea are clear examples of the officially stated attitudes being actualized. As a conservative estimate, the recovery of the six Australian MIAs from Vietnam cost the government in excess of two million dollars.

The recovery of the MIA from Vietnam was a team effort,



Top, memorial to Robert Carver at repatriation ceremony in Hanoi, Vietnam, with RAAF C-130 in the background. Above, memorial to Michael Herbert.

which crossed many borders. In the final analysis, it does not matter who started the ball rolling; who carried out the research or the investigations; or, indeed, who actually recovered the men. They are now 'Home at Last'.

"It's our sacred duty to these men who gave their lives. I think we, as a nation, have a moral obligation to their families. That's how I see it, and that's what's driven us. We're doing it for the families."



THE AUTHOR

Jim Bourke was born in North Queensland, Australia, in 1943. He joined the Army in 1963 and served in Vietnam with the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) in 1965. 1 RAR was under operational control of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in 1964-65. Bourke was severely wounded in January 1966 and was returned to Australia. In June 1968 he started his second tour to Vietnam, the highlight of which was a three-month secondment (TDY) to Fifth Special Forces Group (5SFG). Bourke retired from the Army in 1986 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and worked for NEC Australia Pty Ltd for the next 19 years. Over the last 10 years, Jim Bourke has been involved with the investigation of MIA cases, including one American, SFC Anastacio Montez (5 SFG). Bourke was awarded the Medal of Gallantry (MG) as a result of service in Vietnam and was appointed as a member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2009, for service to the veteran community as a result of his work in the area of MIA recovery.

Medical Assistance update on Sririlak



John Middlewood reports that Sririlak is continuing her treatment and her mother continues to travel with her, thanks to TLCB Medical Assistance funds.

Sririlak visits Middlewoods' back yard.

Election policy change

The election policy and procedures in place for the 2009 TLCB elections have proven unnecessarily complex, cumbersome to implement, and due to the requirement for a special mailing of ballots to all members, unnecessarily costly. Accordingly, the TLCB Board of Directors recently adopted a streamlined election policy/procedure, effective immediately and replacing all previous nomination and election policy.

The June issue of the Mekong Express Mail (MEM) is the designated vehicle for announcement of the official slate of candidates and for distribution of absentee ballots or proxies for those who cannot attend the annual meeting. This change eliminates the labor-intensive and unnecessarily costly separate mailing. In compliance with our bylaws, the board enacted other changes to simplify the process and ensure adequate time to adopt and publish a slate of candidates in the June issue of MEM, while protecting the interests of the membership and the candidates for office.

Members wishing to see the complete text of the new procedure may read it at the TLCB website, www.tlc-brotherhood.org, or may contact corporate Secretary Dave MacDonald (see box on page 5).

NOTICE:

The nominating period for the 2010 elections begins April 30 and ends midnight EST, May 15. The election for the TLCB Board of Directors will be held at 0900 on Saturday, September 25th, 2010, at the Hilton Garden Inn Atlanta Airport.

Members of the Nominating Committee for 2010 are as follows:

- Chairman: Ruben Encinas, Email: encinas@q.com, Postal: 5080 Usana Ct, Las Cruces NM 88012
- Ed Stein, Email: estein1945@hotmail.com, Postal: 7301 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia PA 19119
- Jim Closs, Email: JWCloss5011@bellsouth.net, Postal: PO Box 999, Porterdale GA 30070

Trusted agent for receipt and tabulation of absentee ballots, proxies, and ballots cast at the annual meeting is John Schillo. Address for absentee ballots or proxies will be published in the June MEM.

The following positions are up for re-election in 2010:

- President—Incumbent: John Loftus, eligible for two more terms
- Treasurer—Incumbent: Bill Tilton, eligible for one more term
- Member at Large—Incumbent: Bob Santo
- Member at Large—Incumbent: Bob Wheatley

During the open nomination period, submit nominations from the floor by email or USPS to any member of the nominating committee. The committee will not accept nominations received *after* close of the nominating period. Upon receiving a

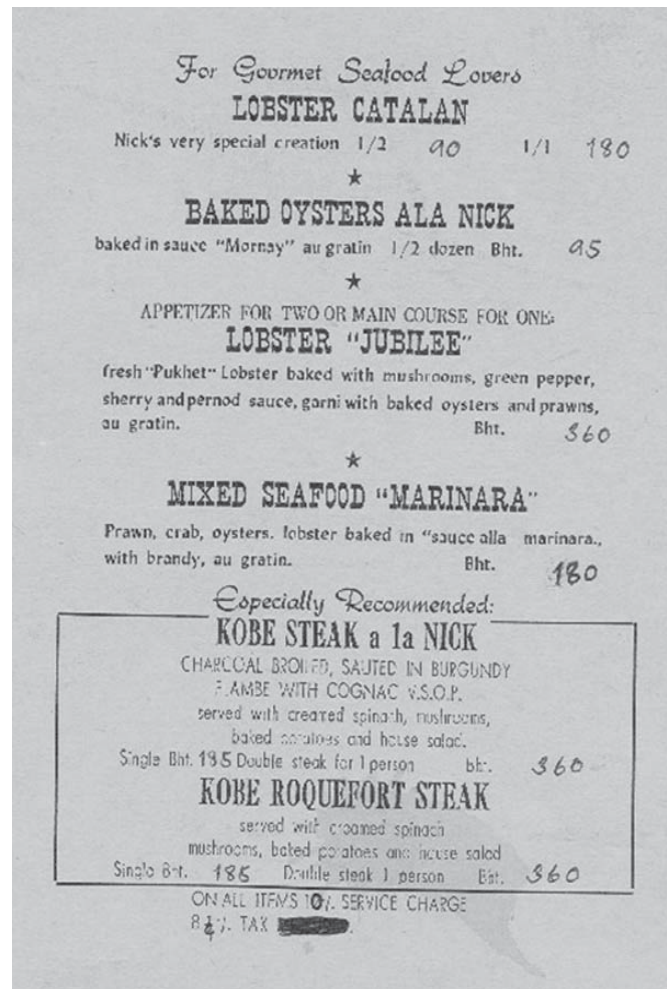
nomination, the committee will query the nominee regarding his/her willingness to accept the nomination and to serve, if elected. The nominee must transmit acceptance via email or USPS. The committee must receive the acceptance no later than three working days after close of the nomination period as announced in this March issue of MEM. The committee will acknowledge receipt of the candidate's acceptance within three working days of receipt. Nominees who fail to respond affirmatively to the committee by the deadline will not be placed on the ballot.

The publication of candidate bios is optional. The nominating committee will provide the bio publication procedure to the nominee and nominator upon receipt of a nomination. Bios will be published according to policy as set by the chairman of the Communications Committee.



NICK'S #1 BANGKOK RESTAURANT MENU, 1968.

Nearly everyone who visited Bangkok during the Vietnam War ate at least one wonderful meal at Nick's. Alas, we can find no trace of it now. Anyone know what became of Nick's?



Father and son served many, including TLCB

TLCB Chaplain Ted Ulrich, who died recently, brought much comfort to TLCB members who were ill or suffering the loss of a family member or close friend. His service to our organization was reflective of the family tradition in which he grew up.

His father, Ed Ulrich, died in 2003 at home at the age of 83 in Sharon, Pa., after a long illness. Ed lived a life of service, including service to the TLCB.

Ted enlisted in the U.S. Army, working as a photo lab technician in the Ballistic Research Lab at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland. He served in Korea and Fort Rucker, AL as a ground handler instructor for the aviation department, then was selected for Ordnance Corps Officer Candidate School, becoming supply officer in Germany for a heavy equipment maintenance company.

Ted moved to the Reserves, attended the Command and General Staff College and retired in 1983 in the rank of Major. He spent 27 years at the Northrop Grumman Newport News shipyard as a nuclear inspector on the Los Angeles Class and Virginia Class submarine programs.

Early in life, he was exposed to the jungles and mountains of what was then Dutch New Guinea, where General Douglas MacArthur led a World War II campaign, including the Royal Australian Air Force, against the Japanese in 1944. Ted lived in Sentani in the early 1950s, where MacArthur had his headquarters at one point. The general named it "The White House." The Ulrich family was there because Ted's father, Ed, who served in the U.S. Army Air Corps as an instructor pilot during World War II, had become a missionary pilot in Dutch New Guinea for the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Ed piloted a De Havilland Beaver to deliver large shipments of



materials to missionary teams in the Baliem Valley. He also flew a Sealand amphibian in to land on the Baliem River. This was perilous flying because heavy rains would cause buildups of gravel and sand bars that changed the current. The exact right spot had to be chosen for landing on the river. At times the landing conditions looked good until he saw tree limbs that could have ripped open the plane's underside.

The dangers of flying in New Guinea were emphasized by the 1955 death of Ed's close friend, Al Lewis, a superb pilot who crashed into a mountain. Later, Ed served with Air America in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. He was deputy base manager in Bangkok and chief pilot in Laos. Ed became the TLCB's History Committee Chairman. In the March 2002 *MEM*, he described how, while serving as Air America's chief Laos pilot, he landed in a Pilatus Porter at Muong Soui on the Plain of Jars, which was under pressure from the People's Army of Vietnam. He checked the condition of the airstrip, assembled a work force, and got the strip ready to receive C-123s and C-130s in three days.

In the June 2002 *MEM*, Ed's photos illustrated the March

Above, left, Ted Ulrich as chaplain in 2007. Below, on right, Ed Ulrich speaks with unidentified Air America pilot during evacuation of Hmong in Laos, 1970.



1970 evacuation of crowds of Hmong people from northern Laos, as the Pathet Lao and the NVA were advancing on them. C-130s were fitted with ropes across the interior fuselages, Hmong crowded in to hold onto the ropes, and the C-130s took off to a refugee camp 80 miles away with 600 Hmong at a time. Later, the Hmong's possessions, including pigs, sewing machines, and other items, were hauled in to the refugee camp.

Shortly after he told that story in *MEM*, Ed became ill and handed over his chairmanship to Gerry Frazier. When Ed and then Ted left us, the TLCB lost good friends who understood the concept of service to others. Our condolences go to their family members.

Dave MacDonald



Laurie, Elaine, and Ed Ulrich, at Manassas, Virginia, TLCB reunion, 2002.



REUNION 2010: ATLANTA

“BROTHERS ON MY MIND”

SEPTEMBER 23-26

THE AFFORDABLE (AND FUN) REUNION!

Tough times call for innovative actions, and the Atlanta Reunion Committee (ARC 2010) thinks it has gotten costs under control. Chosen in part because of the availability of low-cost airfares, Atlanta offers the Brotherhood ideal accommodations at a cost that is highly accessible for a maximum number of members and friends to come together.

FIRST ARC MEETING

Please consider Atlanta this year, even if you had never thought of coming to a TLCB reunion. Here are some positive points:

- Low airfares, three major Interstate highways (I-75, I-85 and I-20) and AMTRAK. The only thing we can't offer is cruise ships, but Savannah is only 200 miles east!
- Astoundingly low room rates: \$81.36 for king or two queen beds, including 13% tax, microwave and refrigerator, and a *full* hot buffet breakfast served until noon! A suite with additional sleep sofa is about \$12 more per day. More than 2 guests per room costs \$10 per person per day.
- Free 22-hour shuttle at least every 30 minutes to Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson Intl. Airport terminal, including the airport MARTA rapid transport station.
- The ARC is planning a stunning program unavailable anywhere else and *one of the most meaningful memorial services in years*. Don't miss it!

Many members will want to stay in Atlanta longer to take advantage of the many attractions here. If you wish to stay at the hotel outside the reunion period you *must* contact the sales manager, Wendy Smallwood, for shoulder date assistance. (Hilton Central Reservations will not be able to give you this rate—standard rates for this hotel are about double the rate we have negotiated). Wendy.Smallwood@Hilton.com

Make your hotel reservations now! TLC Brotherhood rates



Left to right: Phyllis and Bob Pruikmsa, Virginia and David Gurley, Mike Buffington, O.D. Odiorne, Jim Closs, and Bill Tilton. Photo by Thelma Tilton.

are blocked for September 23-25, 2010. Shoulder dates are available at these rates only through Hilton Garden Inn salesperson, Wendy Smallwood.

Reservations: 404-766-0303 or 800-877-782-9448.

IMPORTANT: You **MUST** ask for “TLC Brotherhood” special rates. *If you don't, we all lose.*

Hilton Garden Inn Atlanta Airport/Millennium Center, 2301 Sullivan Road, College Park GA 30337.



Please Let Us Know

If you change address or email address we need to know about it. Please send an email to Membership Committee Chairman Mike Vale, at mevale762@gmail.com, or a card or letter to TLCB, PO Box 343, Locust Grove GA 343 and tell us so we can update your records.