



Mekong Express Mail

Volume 12, Issue 1

THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

Finding contrasts in Laos

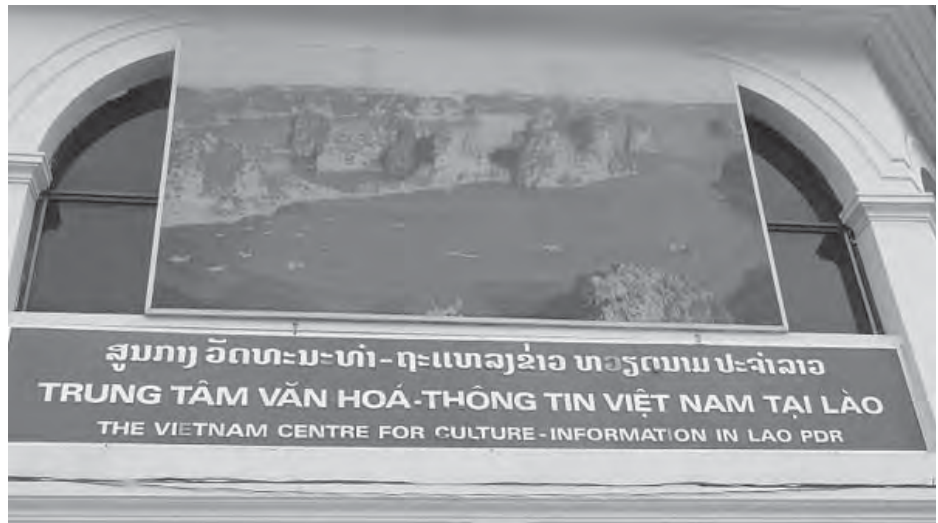
by Mac Thompson

I was on the road again, back to northeast Laos, Xaysomboun District, which includes the PDJ, Long Tieng, and old Moung Cha town. I will abbreviate Xaysomboun as XSB to save my fingers and printing ink. Bill Tilton remembered the name by singing the name to the old French song, "C'est si bon."

It had been two years since my last trip to XSB in December 2008 and a few months more than that since I had last had a session with our only contact there, Mr. Bounsouk. I figured that there had been some changes in the interim, and there were.

A major one was the closing off of the Nam Ngum River as a result of building the Nam Ngum 2 dam upstream from the earlier Nam Ngum 1 dam that was completed about 1971. The NN2 dam flooded out the E-W road between the main N-S Rt 13N, the road to Luang Prabang, and the lesser N-S road between the PDJ and Paksane, downstream from Vientiane on the Mekong River. The flooding took out a fair number of villages that had been in place at least since the early 1970s, including Ban Son, LS-272, where the upcountry USAID base was relocated just prior to the fall of Sam Thong, LS-20, in early 1970. I wanted to see if I could find any of the relocated villages.

Perhaps they could use some assistance from the TLCB, and I could also see what could be done in the greater XSB area other than Long Tieng, where we had visited several times in the previous three years.



Above, modern Nam Ngum lake project contrasts sharply with primitive Ban Hom Sai dirt floor school, left below, with reed walls. Photos by Mac Thompson.

Art, our resident guy in Vientiane, was unable to travel with me this trip; too bad, because Art speaks quite excellent Lao, and reads and writes it too. He has been invaluable on our assistance trips to Xieng Khouang Province. And just to make things more interesting, Sunee was also tied up, so to speak, at home during this period, so I was left all to my somewhat linguistically challenged self for the 4-5 day run upcountry. Well, I had been there and done that in the long past, so it was not a problem. I just talked louder and waved my hands around a lot—and I had a scratch pad available so I could draw pictures if need be.

Since the old E-W road to XSB from RT 13N, just south of Vang Vieng, is now flooded out, I went up via the town of Longsan. I hit this S-N road about 90 km on west of Vientiane on RT 13S. I had previously spent



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

Contrasts, continued from page 1.

a couple of nights in Longsan, but now there are two new guest houses and restaurants, and it looks as though they are expecting more travelers up through that area. I then went on to XSB town and checked in at the Phu Bia Hotel, which was government funded back in 1995. The first time I stayed there in 2006, I asked the desk folks, "why?" They said it was for the future influx of tourists to the area; the influx which has not yet materialized. No wonder, given the road conditions back then and the location of the town in a "restricted zone." Things are improved now, and these days there is a notice on the door that if you want a room and a phone, the desk clerk will come up to unlock the place and turn on the electricity.

The Phu Bia hotel in XSB anticipated a tourist influx that is overdue.



Such is life in the fast lane. In any case, there is room for a playfield out back. Nearby, there was a mini fair going on, part of the Hmong New Year festivities, which makes the kids and adults happy.

As it turned out, Bounsouk was tied up when I arrived at XSB, a fortuitous happenstance, so he turned me over to Mr. Bounkeo, the District Education chief and his deputy, Cheu Vang Xong Ly. Obviously Bounkeo had been briefed that there might be funds forthcoming from the TLCB if agreement could be reached on needs. Both gentlemen were cooperative and easy to work with, so we headed out on Day two to see what they had in mind.

We headed east from XSB town about 25 km to the Moug Om valley, old LS-22. I had not been here previously and was surprised how comparatively large it is, rolling hills like XSB, but lots more cattle being raised for export to Vientiane and other large towns. There is not much at all in the way of shops, but they did have electricity, cell phone service, and a few small gas/diesel pumps too. The valley is populated largely by Hmong villagers.

We made visits to five primary and secondary schools in the area and met briefly with their staffs to discuss their needs. There were no students present since it turned out that our

trip coincided with Hmong New Year and students and teachers were off for the week.

All of the schools we visited looked pretty good, but the overriding need mentioned was for furniture, two-seat-kid desks and benches, a teacher's desk, a cabinet for materials, and tables and chairs for meeting rooms. Much of the furniture they already have on hand is old or broken, and, for the students in particular, insufficient. There appears to be many more kids now than when the schools received their earlier supplies of furniture. Perhaps this will decrease now that they have electricity to watch TV in the evenings? In many of the schools kids are sitting three, sometimes four, to a two-person desk/bench. Three of the schools had some rooms with no furniture at all, which is the reason for the crowding of desks



Above, at the schools we are helping, some rooms are crowded with furniture, but others are bare and have dirt floors.

in other rooms. We noted several dirt floors, but the priority is furniture, which will be the subject of a budget request to the TLCB Assistance Committee.

I then went back to XSB town for a discussion with Bounkeo and his deputy. A thought struck me that since I also wanted to go to Phonsavanh in Xieng Khouang to review another project there with our main contact, Mr. Soundeuang, I asked

See **Contrasts**, continued on page 3.

Bounkeo if it would be possible to get a permission letter to just head north via Long Tieng, where we had been several times with no formal letter. I also wanted to go on through Sam Thong to the PDJ and Phonsavanh. He figured that should be OK, so he phoned the police security guy and we arranged to meet at the police station, where he showed up with his wife and kids, this being a holiday. Bounkeo explained what I was requesting and the reason for it, and he went over what we had been doing that morning with our school site visits. The policeman said OK and wrote out a letter to show if I was stopped along the way.

Great! I had wanted to travel that direct route to Phonsavanh for the last few years, but there was always some obstacle that precluded it, real or thought up on the spot by the authorities. It would also save a day and a half travel time since I would not have to go back via Vientiane, spend a night, then north and east an additional eight hours to get up to the PDJ. However, since we did not really know how the road was, even in the dry season, rather than staying in XSB another night at the somewhat "rustic" as some people might call it, Phu Bia Hotel, the driver and I headed an hour west to stay at a really nice guest house there at the "gold mine" area and the junction with the road that heads north to Long Tieng and beyond. You can ask Bill Tilton and John and Nancy Sweet what they think of the Phu Bia Hotel.

Early on Day three, we were off to Long Tieng, a two-hour drive. We stopped at one Hmong village on the way, which was celebrating its Hmong New Year. I got some photos of a couple of bull fights that served as entertainment for the villagers and



In Laos a bullfight is actually bulls fighting. Picadore Pig appears uninterested.

started off the festivities. We arrived in Long Tieng and called up the two school principals we had previously worked with there, and asked them to come to the noodle shop for a short meeting. I learned that there is a large, new secondary school that just started construction in the area and I made a visit to it. And it is large. I do not figure there are enough students right now in the valley to fill the place, so perhaps they are just planning for a future population increase. The school is being built by a Vietnamese contractor of all things, and in of all places, Long Tieng.

Also in Long Tieng, there is an actual guest house almost complete. When finished, it will have hot water, Sat TV, and

sit-down toilets. I wonder if the valley is going to be opened to tourism; at least I wager that the guy who is building the guest house hopes so. I did have to wait at the gate to Long Tieng, near the south end of the runway, for the local police to come down and scrutinize the permission letter for travel. I have never had any interaction with the police there; previously, I just pretty much drove on after a bit of gab with the Army guys at the gate.

After an hour, we hit the road north over Skyline Ridge and



Comfort, amenities, and a great view at the Gold Mine junction area guest house.

on to Sam Thong, former LS-20, an hour distant. We arrived and had to really look around to verify that I was at the right place, in spite of the sign saying "Xam Thong" at the village. There was absolutely nothing left from the old pre-'75 days, nothing—well, some concrete slabs. I was able to ID the run-

way and the karst on the west side; that was it. I would have liked to have walked around a bit to check out the positioning of some of the slabs, but ran into one Lao guy, perhaps in a bit of authority, who was not real friendly, so gave that a miss because I wanted to get back on the road anyway, since we had no real idea of the conditions ahead. On the next trip, I will stop and talk a bit to him if he is still there. I want to also talk to some of the other people in that small village. NOTE: The place is so small there is not even a pho shop! There is some road construction equipment there, so it looks like improvements are coming. The small, three-room Sam Thong primary school also needs furniture. Two rooms are OK and one is empty.

We moved on to the next village, Tha Tham Bleung, old LS-72, which is a bit less than an hour away over a bunch of ups and downs and twists and turns on the largely one-lane road. It is beautiful country, heavily forested, and kind of rough territory, though. Tha Tham Bleung is a large Hmong village these days and has a nice primary school. The Hmong New Year's festivities were ongoing when we arrived, so I stopped for a chat and a few photos.

We headed on to Lat Khay, a large town on the SW side of the PDJ where Jar Site #3 is located, a popular tourist spot. We stopped for a late lunch here....guess what we ate.... PHO, a favorite of Bill Tilton and the Sweets! We drove on to Phonsavanh and RON at the Nice Guest house, Hmong run, where

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

Contrasts, continued from page 3.



Above, a road jam in the jungle, on the "trail" to Sam Thong.
Below is the Sam Thong school.



Above and below, Lao kids enjoy a festive New Year.



The great American breakfast....in Laos. It sure beats pho!

we've stayed in the past. I had dinner at the Vietnamese-run Craters Restaurant close by, which serves good farang food and Beer Lao. It is a small place and was crammed that evening. I counted 24 farang tourists, jammed in, eating, Beer Laoing, and watching a VDO on "bombies" left over from the old days. There were lots more tourists in town, too, eating at the local Chinese, Vietnamese, and Lao restaurants. They were mostly snowbirds from Europe and Australia is seems.

Day four began with an excellent breakfast at the Cra-



Sam Thong village is in the lower left corner of this beautiful view of Lao mountain country.

ters. While waiting for Mr. Soundeuan to show, I talked with several Hmong who were staying at the Nice GH. They were from Fresno and Minneapolis and were back for the Hmong New Year, to visit their homeland and villages. Mr. Soundeuan arrived and we went off 28 km to the east to visit his next proposed project, a building rehab at a Hmong primary school. This building will be used as a school

See **Contrasts**, continued on page 6.

It's QUILT RAFFLE time again!

The TLC Sisterhood will be sponsoring a Raffle Quilt Fund Raiser again this year to benefit the TLCB Assistance Fund. The drawing will be held at the 2011 TLCB Reunion Banquet, and you need not be present to win. Raffle tickets are \$2 each, or \$20 per sheet of ten. There is a sheet of ten tickets enclosed in this copy of the MEM. If you wish more than ten, photocopy the ticket sheet and simply place an address label or fill in one ticket and request the number of tickets you desire. We will fill in the information you provide.

Make your check payable to **TLC Brotherhood, Inc.** and write "Quilt Raffle" in the memo line. Send your payment of \$2 per ticket to: **TLC Brotherhood, Inc., PO Box 343, Locust Grove, GA 30248.** For detailed information about the quilt, please contact Rosie Wheatley of the TLC Sisterhood via email at r_wheatley@frontier.com.



Center panel of Rosie's 2011 quilt. Photos by Bob Wheatley.



At right, Rosie Wheatley hard at work creating one of her annual TLC Sisterhood reunion quilts. Quilt raffles have raised thousands of dollars for TLCB Assistance projects in SEA. The quilts provide more than just warmth and beauty.

FINAL NOTICE: TLCB 2011 dues are DUE. On March 31st, all members whose dues have not been paid for 2011 automatically become delinquent and access to servers, website roster, and MEM are suspended. See below for dues payment information.

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

TLC Brotherhood Contacts

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

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Board of Directors and Committee Chairmen

2010-2011, showing year of term-end

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Payments to TLCB

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

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

Write payment purpose and member number on check.

Examples:

Dues	Student Assistance Fund
Assistance	BX purchase
Medical Fund	etc.

Reunion 2011: Washington, D.C.

TLCB tax return and board minutes: On web site, in *members only* section. Password (4/15/11): Epervier

Contrasts, continued from page 4.



Above, a quiet scene on brand-new Nam Ngum lake, near noisy Vang Vieng.

library and meeting room.

After lunch, we headed west via Moung Soui, LS-108, on the good paved Rt 7 to the Phou Khoun Junction and on south on Rt 13N to RON at Vang Vieng. On the way, I took a look-see at a new highway between Moung Kassy, LS-268, to Moung Nan SW of Luang Prabang that will bypass the hills and curves of Rt 13N and considerably cut down the travel time and accident rate between the two.

Vang Vieng is a town full of guest houses, restaurants, and hordes of young farang tourists just having their fun. Some of the Lao call Vang Vieng "Ban Farang" because of all these tourists; it is busy and noisy. Activities like caving, tubing on the river, getting wasted on booze, Beer Lao, and whatever, make it not a real fun town for us "old folks" to RON at these days, but a handy stop if it is getting dark.

Vang Vieng is on the west side of the new lake created by the Nam Ngum 2 dam, and the schools in this area come under the Vang Vieng District administration; however, there is a small sliver of land between Vang Vieng and the lake that is still under XSB District school administration. It is really inconvenient for them to visit since the lake is in the way if visits are necessary. Luckily, now there is long-tail boat service between the east and west sides of the lake, about an hour and a half trip across the water, which saves the long drive back via Vientiane.

We took to the road again early on Day 5 of the trip. An

hour plus up the gravel road, we found one of the new villages of people who were relocated as a result of the Nam Ngum 2 dam and lake, Ban Na Khi. The village is probably a far cry from what they left behind, but at least they have a decent school, built by the villagers themselves with salvaged wood walls and roofing sheets from the old school. They had to start out from scratch, clearing land for their new village. They prepared new rice fields, and a new life style quite a way off the beaten track, not quite like they had before. One of the teachers of this school offered to be our guide for the trip up in the hills to visit the school at Ban Hom Sai. It is a good thing he went along as I would not have been able to find it otherwise.

Bounkeo, the school chief at XSB, had requested that I visit this Ban Hom Sai School, and since I said I would, I did so, but via one hell of a rough road, the last hour plus in 4WD low, 1st and 2nd gears for a large part. The small, two-room bamboo-walled primary school at Ban Hom Sai could use a



Ban Hom Sai school.

concrete floor, toilet facility, and furniture (see photo on page 1). One room is empty, and there is one Hmong teacher for 60 lower primary students. This school was not on Bounkeo's list, so I reckon it will come up at a later date.

The earlier portions of this new road are quite good, easy grades, wide curves. The construction is being done by the Phu Bia Mine people for access to their new gold mine nearby at Houei Xai. There are new spurs off of the main road, too, so looks like perhaps another mine may be coming down the pike. They need the good roads, even if made of gravel, to accommodate their large 18-wheel ore trucks.

I do like the looks of the new lake, with its clear blue water just waiting for recreational boating if such ever comes to Laos. One could even do a bit of archaeological SCUBA diving and visit some of the older towns, such as Ban Xon, LS-272.

Thus ended the upcountry portion of this trip, so we headed back to Vientiane and got into town early enough, 1700 hrs, for me to pay the bills and head on across the Friendship Bridge to Nong Khai, where I spent the night. This enabled me to get an early start the next day for the eight-hour drive back home, completing a trip of 1659 miles, of which 921 were in Laos, which is still full of challenges.



Ban Hom Sai, "at the end of the road."



A tourist visit to Thailand and Laos

by Les Strouse

photos by Les Strouse

Les Strouse is an original member of the TLCB. He flew for Air America in Southeast Asia for many years, among other things. He and his wife, Mayruee, live in the Bangkok area of Thailand.

At about midnight on January 20, 2011, Mayuree and I picked up my brother, Dorane, and his wife, Terri, from Swampy (that's what we call Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport) and brought them to our home. The next day, we began our trip and departed for Lampang, where we stayed at the River Lodge, for baht 1950 per room. At today's exchange rates that's about \$97. This was a very pleasant place to stay, but it is best to go into town for meals.

The next day, we toured the elephant training camp and elephant hospital and picked up some elephant poop paper for the Assistance auction in August. Don't miss it! The paper is made from real elephant poop (don't lick the envelopes). We then



We didn't know they wiped.

drove via Doi Ang Khang to Chiang Mai, by a scenic switchback route returning to Doi Ang Khang, where we stayed at the resort.

We enjoyed our stay at Angkhang Nature Resort, which provided us with great atmo-

sphere and beautiful landscaping for about \$85 per room per night. We were delivered to our rooms by a small songtail truck. This is a pickup with two seats ("song" is the number 2 in Thai) along the sides in back. In the old days some of our readers called them "baht buses." The beds had electric bed warmers, which we greatly appreciated as the temperature fell to the low 50s before we returned to our rooms after dinner. For Thailand it was COLD, with a morning temperature around 48 Fahrenheit.

The next day we went back to Chiang Mai, staying at the luxurious Centara Khum Phaya. Mayuree has a Centara membership, so we got our room free, but my brother's room cost about \$105. We decided it was worth it. We were delivered to our room via electric "tuk-tuk." There was a free-form swimming pool and more wonderful landscaping. We all agreed that we



Les' brother, Dorane, having shirt painted in Chiang Mai's "umbrella village." In this section families make oriental umbrellas for sale.

could have spent a few days there touring in the Chiang Mai area.

In Chiang Mai we visited the umbrella village where we

had some painting done; my brother had his shirt painted. We took the Chiang Mai Night Safari, but would not have really missed much if we had not, except for Mayuree's excitement. After posing with some concrete pandas, Mayuree noticed that she did not have her purse. She panicked when she thought of her passports, credit cards, money, etc. She rushed back to the pandas and saw no purse, so we headed for a nearby security officer who took her to a customer counter where she was told her that "a tourist had picked it up and turned it in." WOW! Nothing was missing. This was a perfect example of "how to give an old guy a heart attack!" Those thieving pandas!

On January 24, our next stop was Phitsanulok, a central Thai city that served as the capital of several ancient kingdoms. We stayed in the Topland hotel, which is over a large shopping mall, for only about \$50 per night. We savored a great meal in the Chinese basement restaurant. The next day we toured Sgt Maj Tawee's Folk Museum, which provided us with another slice of very pleasant atmosphere with a non-museum nature. We enjoyed visiting the Buddha casting factory, a rather convo-



Above, random jumble of Buddha casting factory.

luted enterprise to say the least, but still quite interesting. We happened to wander into the aviary and saw some interesting birds. From Phitsanulok we headed to Udorn via Khon Kaen, to a stop at an "American Style" tourist area on Rte 12 called "Route 12." It reminded me of some of the old places on U.S. Rte 1 between Pennsylvania and Florida. It had old-style gas pumps, signs, etc. and decent prices for drinks and snacks, with

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Strouse continued from page 7.

American-style tourist trailer camp reminded Les of old US 1 in the Northeast.



lots of hill tribe articles for sale. There was a travel trailer park with three identical travel trailers, supposedly being set up as a motel-type operation, with room for several more trailers. It was a truly a pleasant stop in a very scenic area. In SEA, the bathroom arrangements are often novel for Americans. The urinals here were unusual and were mounted in large, hollow logs standing on end. One could admire the mountain scenery while taking a whiz! LOL

My brother is a market nut and he loved the markets, especially the Indochinas Market in Nong Khai on our way towards Laos, and, later, the one at the floating market on the way to Hua Hin. We left Mayuree's van and driver in Nong Khai and went across the bridge to Laos. Mayuree cleared customs in about 10 minutes. My brother, his wife, and I took an hour



Les referred to the massive arch in Vientiane as the "Temple of Defeat." Supposedly built with concrete intended for airport expansion, foreigners have traditionally called it "The Vertical Runway."

and ten minutes to clear—even though we had forms already filled out! There were *lots* of tourists. Mayuree negotiated a van for the rest of the day for only about \$25 or so.

Our van took us on a tour to Wattay airport. This was once so familiar to us, but we only recognized the three-headed elephant and old Air America (AAM) and Continental Air Services (CASI) hangers. The CASI compound was nowhere to be seen. We then went to Lang Xang Boulevard and the famous "vertical runway," reputedly built with cement imported for runway extension. This "Temple of Defeat" is the Lao version of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. The gardens were nice, but the inside was not well kept and showed graffiti. The upper levels housed souvenir vendors. It was dark and dingy, but the view was great.

After visiting the famous stupa (housing Buddhist relics) That Luang, which is a mecca for Cambodian monks, we visited the Lao version of Wat PraKaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Thailand's most revered temple of all). There was no resemblance to the Thai version, but it was still interesting with its differences.

We traveled back to the Lang Xang and over to the new river walk to watch the spectacular sunset over the Mekong with lots of other people, both tourists and locals. We all enjoyed the experience and lingered with many others for a while after dark before returning to the hotel.

We took pleasure with the dinner at the Lang Xang. It just happened that the "Women's Club of Laos" was having a shindig in the dining room so we got to take in a cultural show while having dinner. We were glad to be included. Several items on their menu were not available—one being ice cream. This is Laos!

After a leisurely breakfast we boarded our van for the trip to Vang Vieng. We stopped at a hill tribe market some distance outside Vientiane. I was amazed at how far out past Wattay the city has expanded. Not like my old days in Laos! We arrived in Vang Vieng after an almost four-hour trip over not-so-smooth roads. We checked into the Ban Sabai Bungalows, which cost less than \$50 per night. The area has a nice atmosphere right on the river, but it will soon be ruined by high rise construc-



Ban Sabai bungalows in Vang Vieng are very reasonable.

Strouse continued from page 8.

tion on either side. Thankfully, the buildings will not block the view of the river and karst. We took a tour up the river on long tail boats, two passengers per boat. Except for the VERY LOUD music coming from some of the riverside bars, it was a very nice trip. It was cool, but not too cool for the tubers, who were out in large numbers. We happened upon a group of buffalo in the brown river water with only their heads showing. I thought they were better looking than some of the tourists on the tubes!

After some searching for a place to eat we chose one of the "backpacker" places. It was crowded, but the food was good, and the other "backpacker" spot across the way was also filled with diners. But a large restaurant nearby, that advertised only Lao and Thai food, had not one single customer the entire time we were there. There were lots of drunken Europeans staggering around the streets and sidewalks, but they didn't seem to be bothering anyone, as they were just doing their own thing.

We had planned an early departure next morning, but we could not contact our van driver, so we enjoyed a delicious breakfast instead, including excellent baguettes and hot eggs for once! Our van showed up suddenly, and the driver loaded our luggage while we finished our meal. Then we drove off for the trip back to Friendship Bridge, the first highway and rail crossing of the Mekong. The driver asked if we wanted to go via the Nam Ngum Dam and I was out-voted three to one, so we did. We took a boat tour on the dead-looking water. Although there were no birds or aquatic life present, you could probably cruise for days among the interesting islands and coves without seeing the same thing twice. I decided I was glad that I had been outvoted.

After several hours on the rough roads, it was a pleasure to come onto a six-lane highway, mostly finished, that took us to the Friendship Bridge. The bridge crossing was quick, as was the Thai Immigration and Customs clearance. Back in Thailand, Mayuree's van and driver picked us up for the six hour trip south to The Resort, just north of Saraburi.

The next day, we took Dorane and Terri to Mayuree's mini farm and gave them a tour. Mayuree's driver harvested the goodies. We departed shortly after noon and took a scenic route, stopping at a favored "waterfall restaurant" for lunch before heading home to PathumThani. We arrived late in the afternoon and had time to unwind before a dinner with Vietnamese spring rolls. Dorane had been looking for spring rolls on every menu on the travels, but was not successful, so Mayuree called a couple of days ahead to have our maid make a batch for dinner. The next day, Mayuree dropped Dorane and Terri off at Dolphin Bay, south of Hua Hin, where they had stayed on their last trip three years ago. Mayuree and the van went to pick them up after a few days, and we had dinner at a local Vietnamese restaurant near home.

We left the house on the fourth of February at 0345 to deliver our guests to Swampy for a 0715 departure. We saw them to check-in, wished them a good trip home, and came home. We surely did lots of touring in a short period of time!



Meet the TLC Brotherhood, Inc., board of directors and committee chairmen



FRANK (TAG) MARSH
President, TLCB
SEA Service: '64-'65
Army MEDCEN Okinawa
Army Field Hospital Korat
Currently Retired: Army
Medical Laboratory (SGM
E9), Northrop Grumman IT
Division



JOHN "John Boy" SWEET
Vice President, TLCB
Charter member, TLCB
SEA Service: '69-'70
TUOC - 1987TH Comm. SQ
Nakhon Phanom RTAFB
Currently Retired from
Gloucester Engineering Co.,
Engineering Services



DAVE MACDONALD
Board Secretary, TLCB
Corporate Secretary, TLCB
Editor, *Mekong Express*
Mail
Sea Service: '58-60, Malaya
and Singapore
Currently retired



BILL TILTON, Treasurer
SEA experience: Twice -
April '66 to January '67,
forward air controller in
23rd TASS, NKP RTAFB
'71 KC-135, U'Tapao RTNAB
Charter Member and first
TLCB president, 3 terms;
now in third term as trea-
surer; Membership and
Assistance committees and
MEM staff, composition
Retired from USAF '81 and Dept of Veterans Affairs
'06. Work full time, via internet, for EconSys, Inc., Falls
Church, VA

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DEBORA STEIN, Chaplain Member TLCB; TLCB Chaplain since '10
 Joined the U.S.M.C. in '76; attended basic training at Paris Island, SC.
 Trained as automotive mechanic at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C.; stationed at MCAS, New River, NC '77, honorable discharge for medical reasons (pregnancy) '78, Joined U.S.A.F. Reserves; worked as mechanic and driver for the 508th Combat Support Squadron at Hill AFB, UT; achieved rank of Sergeant.
 '80, transferred to the CA Air National Guard; worked as driver training instructor and training NCO for 216th EIS at Hayward ANG Base, CA; achieved rank of Staff Sergeant
 Worked for Pitney Bowes for 23 years
 Worked as a facility manager for Holiday Retirement Corporation until '07
 Full-time seminary student, working toward a M. Div. degree, studying to be a Lutheran Pastor



GARY BEATTY, Board Member '71, enlisted to be PJ in the Air Force; trained as medic (902x0); first duty station, Tyndall AFB ; achieved both 7-level (90270) and cross-trained as flight medic (90250-A)
 '73-'74 Assigned to NKP RTAFB July, worked in ER of 56th USAF Hospital and 56th SOW in Medical Civic Action Project (MedCAP) in NKP Province
 Briefly assigned to the aero-vac facility in the hospital at Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, AL
 Released early from active duty under the Palace Chase program, then served in active-reserve aero-medical unit at MacDill AFB until honorable discharge in '77
 Worked as paramedic while earning undergrad degree from University of South Florida
 Worked at USAA insurance co; attended law school at FSU
 Works as a prosecuting attorney for State of FL



JOHN BINFIELD
 Board Member at Large
 Membership Committee
 History Committee Chairman
 USMC, Nam Phong '72-'73
 Engineer Equipment Mechanic
 3rd FSR, Task Force Delta
 Currently working for Pinellas County Florida
 Retired, but working on Deferred Retirement Plan

Keep your record current—

If you change your address or email address, please send an email to Membership chairman Mike Vale, at Mevale762@gmail.com, or a card or letter to TLCB, PO Box 343, Locust Grove GA 30248 and tell us so we can update your record.

Master-certified heavy truck technician, specializing in heavy equipment



LES THOMPSON, Board Member
 Member at Large – TLCB
 SEA '70-'71
 Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai AFB
 Det 5, 621st TCS
 INVERT
 Ground Radio Repairman
 Current Status - Retired
 Orange County Sanitation District
 Hughes Aircraft, Ground Systems Group

Charter Member - TLCB
 Life Member VFW – Post 10249 Udorn, Thailand
 Member American Legion – China Post 1
 Associate Member – Air America Association
 Member – American Mensa



BOB WHEATLEY, Board member at Large, charter member S.E.A. Service: '67-'68, Interpreter / Shift Supervisor, Mandarin Voice Intercept, Det 4, 6922nd Security Wing, USAFSS Ramasun Station, Non Soong, Thailand
 Retired Electrical Engineer - Integrated Circuits, Delphi Automotive Corporation



JOHN SCHILLO, Assistance USA, July '63 -July '66, 37th Ordnance Co. Korea '63-'64
 USAF, Aug '67 - July '71, Task force Alpha NKP '70-'71
 PA. ANG, Oct '73 -July '83 - 193rd S.O.W., Harrisburg, PA
 USAF Reserve, July '83 - Sep '93 - 926th T.F.G., NAS New Orleans, LA
 York College of PA – B.S. and A.S. degrees in Business
 Management Information Systems Management positions for several companies during past 40 years, mostly in health

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care systems. Certifications include COMPTIA A+ and Network+ technician, HP/Compaq Platform Specialist, Certified Network Administrator, MS and IBM Business Partner along with other hardware certifications

Partner in Professional PC Solutions of Hattiesburg, MS Retired May '07. Member of TLCB since '01; served as Assistance Committee Chmn since '07



MIKE VALE, Membership Photo interpreter assigned to the 548th Recon Tech Group in Hawaii Worked Headquarters PACAF reporting on Air Force activities in Laos; specialized in the Ho Chi Minh trail, assigned to this duty April '66 thru December '68. In charge of shipping and receiving dept. of adhesive company in Akron, OH, employed there for 40 years



ED STEIN, TLCB List Master '68, assigned to the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron, NKP / Ubon RTAFB Thailand Forward Air Controller Cessna O2A Flight Line Aircraft Mechanic Retired from Pitney Bowes as research analyst Adjutant of local VFW Post 676 Member TLCB since '05; maintain spreadsheet for TLCB member data

ROBERT NORWAY, Web Master SMSGT, USAF, RET.; examiner@cfl.rr.com Webmaster – Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Brotherhood; www.tlc-brotherhood.org Profile at Together We Served: <http://airforce.togetherwe-served.com/bio/Robert.NORWAY> Life Member AFA & AFSA, Member TREA Southeast Asia Service (SEA): Udorn RTAFB, Thailand; '70-'71; F-4, C-130 Automatic Flight Control Systems Specialist



Bob Norway

BOB PRUIKSMA, TLCB BX shopkeeper '68, entered Air Force as aircraft maintenance mechanic on reciprocating engine aircraft (prop jobs!); FSC was 43151A. First duty station was McClellan AFB, CA, assigned to 552nd OMS Super



Restoring RC-121 at Warner Robins AFB; C-123 in background.

Constellation aircraft Korat, Thailand, 553rd OMS, again working on Lockheed Constellations NKP RTAFB for 3 months; worked on C-123K Providers Travis AFB, 602nd OMS as C-141 Starlifter mechanic Discharged in '72 after four years of service Airframe and power plant (A&P) school for FAA commercial aircraft license. Worked for freight airline, Eastern Airlines, and currently employed by Air Tran Airways as aircraft maintenance technician Joined TLCB just prior to first reunion in Dayton, OH; attended every reunion except for CA in '04; and provided first TLCB reunion shirt



FLOYD MCGURK, Public Relations Committee chairman Civil Air Patrol April '97, Currently: MERSC, Asst Curriculum Coordinator, '04-'10 Previously: Wing: DDRA SCWG '99-'02; SC Wing Encampment Admin

Officer '98-'01, Sqdn: DCC SC014, '99-'02 - Asst DCC, SC014 '97-'99 CAP training: MER Staff College --'04, DDR Seminar Training May '01; ES comm; various other training. CAP awards and decorations: Torch Mentorship Award, Det 2 CAP-USAF, '00 MS, Arizona State University '66; BS, Mining Engineering, Colorado School of Mines, '61 Graduated USMC Amphibious Warfare School, Quantico VA, '69; project management courses '61-'76 USA. Combat Infantryman Badge, US Army Parachute wings, Jungle Expert Patch, Soldier's Medal, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Bronze Star; five campaign stars from two tours and two TDY assignments in Vietnam XO, 307th Engr Bn(Cbt) 82nd Abn Div; and tours of duty in Thailand, Japan, and Hawaii Member: TLCB, Ret. Proj Engineer, USA Corps of Engineers, USMA-West Point, NY



Back to the Wall, 2011

TLC Brotherhood Annual Meeting and Reunion News

The agenda of tours and activities for the 2011 reunion is still being fleshed out; however, we plan a group tour of the Pentagon as one highlight. The tour is guided by uniformed service members who escort each group to see and explain some of the many points of interest in this historic building. For many years the Pentagon was the largest office building in the world, with over 17 miles of corridors. Yet, because of its unique shape, a person could walk from any point in the building to any other point in about six minutes or less. (We will not test this point during our visit.)



If you visited or served in the Pentagon before 1976, you remember a shabby, dingy military office building showing signs of long-term wear and tear. Organized Pentagon Visitor Tours began during the American Bi-Centennial celebrations that year, along with efforts to spruce up the place. Many of us also recall the days when a service member could walk right into the Pentagon if in uniform, and retirees only needed to show an ID card. Unfortunately, those days are over. Our visit will require that we submit the names of attendees at least three days in advance, and everyone will be checked against that roster before our tour can begin. We trust that this inconvenience will be offset by visiting the nerve center for U.S. military operations and planning since WWII and one of the sites attacked directly on 9-11-2001.

The new U.S. Air Force Memorial is just a short distance from the Pentagon and is included in our planning, as is our traditional evening visit to the Vietnam Wall. We are considering other sites of interest to see how best to fit them into the plan, and we expect that the 2011 Reunion will meet your expectations for a full schedule of activities. Because our hotel is located in such an interesting area, we want to leave some time for local sightseeing in the Old Town Alexandria area, which is an area with lots of history and lots of things to see and do.



Sheraton Suites Alexandria, VA

The 2011 TLCB Reunion will be at the at **801 North Saint Asaph Street in Old Town Alexandria**, which is 4.5 miles from Washington, D.C. The dates of the reunion program will be Thursday August 18 through Sunday August 21. This is an attractive, historic area close to the Potomac River with a large, grassy area sloping down to the river's edge. The Sheraton is near Washington Street, named for our first president, who attended a church within walking distance of the hotel. It is an all-suites hotel and underground parking will be free to us. Room rates will be \$95 single or double, plus 14.5% room tax and a \$1 per room per night occupancy tax.



Old Town street scene near hotel

The hotel provides free Wi-Fi and PCs in the lobby; all rooms have a microwave, sink, fridge, a settee which folds out to provide an additional bed, and most have king-size beds. You can rent bicycles a short distance from the hotel and there are numerous eating places and a Virginia government liquor store close by. There will be a Nipa Hut where we can meet and socialize.

The nearby Metro runs to the Pentagon, Arlington National Cemetery, and downtown Washington, D.C. Hotel shuttle buses can pick you up and drop you off at the Ronald Reagan National Airport.

Book Hotel by July 19, 2011

- Call the Sheraton reservation center at **1-800-325-3535 or 703-836-4700.**
- **Mention that you are with the Thailand Laos Cambodia Reunion to get room rate and free parking (normally \$22/day).**
- Cancellation policy: Requires calling 72 hours before your arrival date and if you call later, there will be a cancellation charge of one night's charge plus applicable taxes. You can notify check-in personnel of early departure at or before check-in.
- Check-in time: 3 p.m. (1500 hours)
- Check-out time: Noon.