

# MEKONG EXPRESS MAIL



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC. VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1

## Going Over: Ramasun, 1969

By James E. Stanton  
aka M. H. Burton

It had all gone by in such a blur that I could not remember how many days it had been since I left the states. It had started with hours of standing in line in the cool damp of the Oakland Army Base, then an overcrowded bus ride to the airport, gear and all. After another long wait, we were finally airborne north along the California coast over moth-balled Navy ships, then banking left and out over the Pacific. Hours later, we experienced the breath-taking approach to Oahu. We were on the ground for another long stint, sweating with the unaccustomed heat and humidity and drinking in the sights. We were off again in another aircraft for a long pull to the Philippines. Once again on the ground for hours; there was standing room only in a crowded terminal, with heat and humidity even greater this time. The flight from Clark Air Force Base to Bangkok was not as long as the previous two legs, banking carefully around the flat, watery metropolis bathed in yellowish haze. A bumpy landing at Don Muang Airport, then we were off the plane and into a tin shed for immigration processing. The heat was stifling, and the air so was so heavy you could hardly suck it in. The next journey leg was covered by the city bus.

It was a different world, a different planet even, for a 21-year-old who had never before set foot outside the USA. There were small, dark people



squatting on the ground, wearing conical hats and outfits that looked like pajamas. There were Buddhist temples with gaudy, shining roofs, construction projects shrouded in bamboo scaffolding, hump-backed bridges over filthy sluggish canals, and narrow streets crowded with all manner of conveyances. There were masses of pedestrians scurrying every which way.

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## About the Author

James E. Stanton, aka M. H. Burton, grew up in a small farm town in the midwest, dropped out of the University of Minnesota due to lack of ability and interest in Civil Engineering, and was quickly sucked into the Vietnam War. Considering himself too large a target to survive an infantry tour, he opted for a four-year enlistment in the U.S. Army Security Agency and trained as a Laotian linguist at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, Virginia. From there he was sent to Thailand, first to the 83<sup>rd</sup> RRSOU at Mekhala Station in Bangkok where he arrived in February 1969, and two months later to the 7<sup>th</sup> RRFS at Ramasun Station where he spent the balance of his two and a half years as Laotian translator/interpreter. Two TDY stints took him to Laos but he always returned to Ramasun. Among those he served with in the Lao translation section were Jim Collins, Don Super, Roger Carlton, Tom Baker, Jim McLaughlin, Frank Nellis, Frank Zarkauska, Don



Draper (all Army) and Jerry Geghan, NSA rep but a former military liny. He found his future wife, Somsy, slinging hash at a little dive near the entrance to the Udorn Air Base and they rented a house in Non Sung village.

Returning to the icy welcome and unemployment that greeted many Vietnam vets, he eventually drifted from house painting to computer programming since it paid better and was somewhat more interesting. A largely self-taught programmer and systems analyst, he went on to start his own modestly successful software company, which he sold in 2001. Since then he has pursued his three great passions: golf, travel, and increasingly, writing. He currently divides his time between his cabin in Minnesota and his Thai wife's farm east of Udorn in the village of Nonglak. They have three children and eight grandchildren, none of them currently living in the USA. The last Stanton family reunion was at Nonglak

in January 2012 when his son, John, and family flew in from their NATO AWACS base in Germany to join the rest of the crew in Thailand.

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Next stop was a hotel, somewhere in the teeming city, which I could not find now if my life depended on it. We sat in the lobby waiting to be assigned rooms. Two other GIs from the same flight were arguing because one of them had tipped a boy who grabbed his duffle bag to carry it 50 feet into the lobby. We had been forced to change our U.S. currency into Thai baht at the airport because we were told that spending dollars in Thailand was forbidden.

The argument went something like this: "500 Baht. How much is that?" said the one who hadn't paid the tip. "It can't be very much. Thailand, Vietnam...all this gook money is just about worthless," said the other. They asked me what I thought, and not wishing to burst their bubbles I replied, "Well, the exchange rate is 20.8 to 1," as neutrally as I could. I was pretty sure that this would not help them, and it didn't. The argument continued. Finally, after counting fingers failed to yield an answer, the non-tipper dug around in his duffle bag until he found a pencil and paper. Then the real fun began. The first answer he came up with was \$2.40; obviously he hadn't mastered decimal points. The tipper thought that was wrong, way too high, so he turned the numbers around and got 41 cents. That was better. Finally we were called and given room numbers. As I was not in the same room as the two disputants, I could not resist. "Twenty-four dollars and some change," I whispered as they began to climb the stairs. "What?" questioned the glaring tipper. "It's Twenty-four dollars. Check it out," I replied trying to maintain my best deadpan.

After that bit of comic relief, the serious business of my

odyssey continued with a sleepless night in the hotel...my first experience with jet lag. I was so green I didn't know there was such a thing. Next morning, we had "orientation" in the hotel's conference room. The briefer was a staff sergeant who must have been chosen either for his extreme stupidity or the lumpiness of his skull, which was spectacularly showcased by a fresh, buzz haircut. He called Thailand "Thigh-land" without noticing the unintentional humor. Bangkok became "Bancroft" and his other attempts at Thai place names were unintelligible. He had a lot to say about relations with "foreign nationals," which confused me as the "foreign nationals" turned out to be the Thais even though it was their country. I was relieved when the whole sorry performance was over and I was directed to gather up my gear and present myself in the main lobby "ASAP" (I had to struggle to remember what "ASAP" stood for, more of my greenness) to await a trip back to the airport and yet another leg of my journey. I hoped it would be the last, but was not sure.

It happened that it was my last, also my worst. There was yet another long wait and then four of us were led to a remote corner of the airport where a battered C-130 sat gently dripping oil onto the hot pavement from several orifices. We clamored clumsily aboard. After some curt and unfriendly instructions from the loadmaster, we managed to strap ourselves in on a long, steel bench wedged between the palletted cargo and the fuselage for another long and uncomfortable wait in the rising heat. The engines coughed to life and added a thick cloud of dust to our sweatbox. As we trundled slowly out onto the run-

**Ramasun** is continued on next page.

way, the loadmaster pressed a button and the huge cargo door slowly swung shut. Now the dust abated, but the temperature shot upward. The air was close and heavy. We bumped down the runway, the engines straining. For a while it seemed as if we were going to taxi all the way to our destination, but eventually the rumbling of the tires ceased and the vibration of the aircraft changed frequency. We were airborne, though it was hard to imagine that we were very far off the ground. I could feel us banking through a 180 degree turn and then leveling off. The heat was almost unbearable, and I felt like I was on the verge of losing consciousness. Then I heard a hydraulic whine and the cargo door reopened. The fresh air was a life saver even if it was accompanied by a heavy draft of dust and exhaust. We flew low. It seemed that we barely cleared the tops of the highest trees though I am sure we were much higher. I just wasn't used to flying so low.

Below us was mostly open country. For a few minutes the outskirts of the Bangkok sprawl continued. Then there were rice fields still brown and awaiting the monsoon rains and small clumps of trees dotted with buildings that looked like mid-western farmsteads, but were actually whole villages. A half hour later we climbed over some low mountains which surrounded a high, dry rolling plateau. Now the air was drier and more pleasant, though still hot; the dust, however, was even worse. There were only a few, widely scattered signs of habitation. At the end of an hour the country below changed again. Now it was once more farmland with irregular checkerboards of rice fields stretching out as far as the eye could see. The choking dust was joined by smoke from dozens of fires that crackled in the fields below, their orangey flames flickering away around patches of black-burnt ground. The loadmaster became more amiable. "Another hour and we'll be there" he shouted over the roar of the engines through a dust-caked face, one more hour of this. The northeast, "Isaan" they call it, the poorest part of Thailand, poor and dry and dusty. But the rains will be here soon, and it will look better." He smiled causing little chunks of dust to slough off his cheeks.

One hour it was. We hit the ground at the big Udorn Airbase with all the grace of a load of bricks. A crew dashed out to unload our cargo. They were all so deeply tanned that at first I thought they were Thais, but they were too big. Then I thought they were Indians, from the subcontinent. I hadn't known that Caucasians could turn such a color, but then I was from Minnesota. I thought I had finally reached my new home, but I was wrong.

The four of us passengers had been given no instructions so all we had to fall back on was military S.O.P....If you don't know what to do just stand around until someone tells you what to do. We stood around for a long time and nothing happened. The C-130 was unloaded. Finally the now-friendly loadmaster came over. "Hasn't anyone come to pick you up yet?" he asked. The answer was obvious. He hailed an MP who was driving around the runway in a jeep. They held an animated discussion, shouting over the din of another C-130 firing up for takeoff. Then he came back. "Stay here. They'll send someone out...I think," he said helpfully.

Eventually someone in a pickup truck came out and we

squeezed ourselves and our duffle bags in for a trip to a nondescript building a block away from the runway. A small plastic sign on the wall identified it as "In-Processing Center," which sounded promising. We opened the door and were almost knocked down by a blast of frigid air conditioning. Behind a long, gray steel counter sat two Air Force sergeants who were shuffling papers and seemed to be making a conscious effort to ignore us. We waited, caps in hand, shifting from foot to foot and coughing the dust out of our lungs. Finally, one of the sergeants raised his head with a look of annoyance.

"Where are your orders?" he snarled. We fumbled to get them out of our duffle bags. Eventually, he shuffled his way to the counter as if he was too exhausted from his workload to move faster. He perused the orders slowly and sourly as if they did not meet his demanding standards. "You three over there," he ordered, pointing my companions to an empty table. He looked at me with malice in his eyes. "What the hell is the 83<sup>rd</sup> RRSOU?" he snapped. "I have no idea," I stammered. "It's that outfit down the road, something to do with communications. I think they call it the 7<sup>th</sup> RRFS now," drawled the other sergeant from the background. "OK, less work for us. All we have to do is put a stamp on this one and send him on. You got a phone number I can call to get them to come and pick him up? He's not our responsibility," he told the sitting sergeant. "I'll call 'em," said the other sergeant. So I sat down and waited.

Meanwhile, the grumpy sergeant dumped thick manila envelopes in front of my three fellow travelers and ordered: "Here, read this stuff and fill it out." It took them two hours to do so and another half hour for the sergeant to check it over. Then he gave each of them a slip of paper with a barracks assignment and practically booted them out the door. "You should have told them where the barracks was," said his partner. "Screw 'em. Let 'em find out for themselves," snorted the angry sergeant.

I sat for another hour or so, the lone "customer" in the office. Finally the door opened and a small blonde head poked in. "You got somebody for me?" it asked in a reedy voice. "Yeah, take him!" growled the surly sergeant. "Do I have to sign for him?" "No, you can have him free of charge, no strings attached. Just get him out of here." I jumped up and followed him, eager to get away. "I'm Steve Nellis, but you can call me "Nug;" everyone else does." said the small blonde GI. "Welcome to Isaan. What are you here for?" "Translator/interpreter for this 83<sup>rd</sup> place that no one seems to know much about," I replied. "Just where is it anyhow?" After so much travelling I dreaded another long "leg." "Not far. Out the front gate to the right and 15 clicks down the highway," he smiled.

I heaved a sigh of relief. We drove through the jumbled, dumpy outskirts of what I would later find was Udorn Thani City, then on into the dusty desiccated countryside. At one point we slowed to a crawl and made our way cautiously through the smoke of a grass fire burning in the ditch next to the highway. We turned off the broken, bumpy two-lane asphalt onto a broad cement thoroughfare. A blindingly white guardhouse rose up in front of us like an apparition, so unlike was it to anything we had passed so far. "Nug" chatted with the guards as I fumbled for my papers. After a brief review, we were waved on in. The

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road continued on—straight, broad, and spotlessly white. To our left sat the skeletal remains of a tent camp looking like the abandoned set of the movie “M\*A\*S\*H.” Ahead lay a well-ordered collection of low, khaki-colored buildings. Twisting my head around for a panoramic view I saw a perimeter fence surrounding a great expanse of real estate. Gray steel guard towers reared up at regular intervals along it. The buildings got larger. We passed through an inner fence, its gate open and unguarded. We pulled to a halt in front of a squat, single story building that sat behind a sign that was almost large enough to block it from view. The sign read “Ramasun Home of the 7<sup>th</sup> Radio Research Field Station.” The text was bracketed on one side by a painted representation of the Army Security Agency patch. The gold lightning bolt grasped by the white eagle (chicken) claw on its deep blue background. I was familiar with that symbol, and on the other margin stood a Thai monster holding some sort of battle axe. I later found out that this was

the mythical giant Ramasun, the Thai god of thunder. The battle axe was the equivalent of Thor’s hammer. Ramasun had a reputation for being powerful, hot tempered, and dimwitted. That was the name the Thais had given us and it accurately expressed their mixed feelings about our presence on their soil.

Now I had finally reached the end of my seemingly endless journey. A last gush of adrenaline was enough to get me through two hours of “in-processing.” Even the predictably surly personnel and payroll clerks could not put me into a bad mood. I got to my assigned barracks, found my spot, slammed my duffle bag into the locker, and collapsed onto my bunk for a much needed 18 hour sleep. I was home.

“Going Over” will appear in my upcoming book, under the pen name of M H Burton, soon to be available on Amazon.com. My collection titled “Tales of Ramasun” is already available. I’m not expecting it to be a best seller, but it has been great fun writing the stories and hearing from those who have read them.



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## Stories and Poems from a Returning Member

by Herb “Ghostman” Neeland

*Editor’s Note: Herb Neeland is a returning TLCB member, who was active through the mid-period of the last decade. In his own words, “I had a pretty unremarkable high school career. No big time sports, but I could have done something with baseball. I was drafted in the summer of ‘70, but enlisted in the Air force. I went to Lackland, then Sheppard, then back to Lackland at the ‘Neuro ICU,’ which was the hell of any neuro unit, and then on to SEA, where I was a medic with the 432nd CSGP USAF Hospital, in Udorn, Thailand. I was in charge of the morgue when I was on duty. We took Thai Army casualties, the beloved Hmong, whom I still see today at the local farmer’s markets, and some casualties that I have no idea who they were. A very big group of Hmong live in the northwest Arkansas area, where I now live. It’s good to see them here. After the Air Force, I was in nursing. I was an RN for many years, until being injured on the job in ‘99. I have been crippled up ever since. I still walk, but it’s getting to the point where it’s a son of a bitch to do anything. I have what they call ‘Arachnoiditis,’ or the ‘Spiders disease,’ in my back.”*

*Herb and Leslie Neeland live in northwest Arkansas. He has written some remarkable short sketches about his time at Udorn, as well as two beautiful poems. They are reprinted here, along with some of Herb’s own narrative.*



Herb and Leslie Neeland, 2010. Photos provided by the author.

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### Brave Thai Soldier

It was late 1974. By now I was probably psychologically immune to all of life’s “kicks in the teeth.” Well this night was little or no different from the rest. My partner, Buddha, and I were just sittin’ back, feet propped up on the desk. Then, the “RED PHONE”...couple of casualties comin’ down from the North. Word had it that a couple of Thai army had walked into a Claymore mine that the VC or Pathet Lao had turned around during the night. Well we knew what to expect, men blown completely apart or some with severe wounds or in need of

traumatic amputations.

When the jeep got there, I could hear the soldier’s scream before even reaching the loading dock. Hell, at least he was alive. The other one was DOA. We got to the jeep, where blood was flying in all directions. The soldier had lost both his legs from the thighs down. The guys who kept him alive from Laos to here, I thought, should have gotten a medal. We just grabbed arms and stumps, and got him to the gurney inside

See **Ghostman**, continued next page.

the ER. The doc was waiting and was putting in the IV lines. I grabbed some sterile towels and literally jumped onto the patient's left thigh. His femur was jutting out and I got a nice puncture right in the middle of my abdomen as a result. I held him with my body on top of him. I screamed for some thread and clamps so I could start tying off bleeders. By this time the entire crew was blood soaked. We had a nurse pumping blood to him and IVs were giving him much needed volume to compensate for the severe blood loss. He finally passed out from shock. I remember sewing, tying, and clamping anything that oozed. We had an ET tube down and he had two chest tubes. The entire surgery crew was called in, and we slipped and slid down the hall takin' this mangled boy to the OR.

Well my and Buddha's job was done. We hadn't noticed, but three and a half hours had passed. We were blood-soaked and exhausted. At a time like this, the damndest things are funny. Buddha looked at me, smiling, and said, "Well I wonder, who's gonna clean this mess up?" We laughed and did what we were supposed to do. I went

out on the back dock and thought that I had better get a "box" ready because I thought for sure that this boy would be in the morgue before morning.

Well, the morning crew came in and immediately told us to

get the hell out. We were still covered with blood and God knows what else. I made a detour and went down to the ward. I saw, much to my surprise, a half conscious soldier lying on the bed. He was groaning a little, and I could see it was him. I thought, "Well, I'll be a son of a bitch! He made it." I walked out the back of the hospital, turned onto the sidewalk, and went over the klong and into the barracks. Right before I got undressed and gave my soiled uniform to one of the house girls, I just looked at the heavens and said, "Well, thank you



Herb Neeland at Udorn, Thailand, 1974.

God." Or maybe I said, "Thank you Buddha," I don't really remember. 'Cause over there, I think you had two guys on your side. I can see that boy's face in my dreams to this day. Maybe selfishly I'm thinking he is thanking us too.

## Babysan

During the Monsoon, it's hard for all of us to see a hand in front of our faces, and this happened to be one of the staff car driver's problems one morning in Udorn at the RTAFB. I was on duty, gettin' ready to get off after a very busy 14 hours. The Red phone rang, and whoever was on the other end said that they were bringing a babysan in that was hit by a staff car. "A Babysan?" Heck, I had seen every wound known to man, I

thought. Panic hit me like a hammer, and I thought...I have done everything there is to do, 2 1/2 yrs in Neuro ICU, now ending my tour over here, and I don't know anything about babysans.

Well, in he came by SP jeep. They handed him to me, and he was thrashing, vomiting, and bleeding all over the place. I carried him to an open gurney and literally had to hold all four extremities down. A fellow medic came to my aid. I knew by his neuro signs, and it was "mach, mach, my dee." The other medic looked at me and said, "Now what?" I said, "Well, let's get an airway, get some O<sub>2</sub> to him, and hold him down. Dr. Simpson was just coming into the room. Well, I won't repeat what he said, and I gave him the stats. Thrashing, pupils fixed and dilated, pulse was like a rabbit's, and B/P just barely audible. He told me to get an IV line, using a butterfly needle. God was with me, and I got it on the first try. He said, "Pump some Dilantin in him and try to get hold of those seizures." I asked, "Uh, you know the dose on a baby?" "No, airman, I don't, but give it in small doses." He was busily trying to get an NG tube down. Heck, we didn't even have that size. But, hey, we were a "Can Do" kinda place.

One of the nurses came in. "Oh God, it's a baby!" I said, "No Sh\_\_!" I asked her if she knew the doses for Dilantin on a baby. Well, she said that she didn't, but we kept on workin'. My partner was holding the



Herb and the late Dave Harrington at the 2003 Ft. Walton Beach reunion memorial service.

See **Ghostman**, continued on Page 6.

baby down, I was trying to tie off some bleeders, and the nurse was baggin' the baby, trying to keep him breathin'.

Well, the CO was notified and came to the ER. He asked a very interesting question. "What in the hell is a baby doin' here?" Well, I thought what I wanted to say, but I bit my tongue. I informed Col Andrews that we needed transportation to Bangkok or we were going to have to put this child in a bag. He fumbled about pacing, and said, "I will call someone to take this child to a big hospital." God, he was brilliant. Well, we held this baby and worked the best we could for SIX hours.

All of us there knew that this child, if he made it, would be a vegetable in the end. After all that time, someone from the flightline came over, and the three of us worked on the baby all the way to the flightline, where he was put on an aircraft to Bangkok. We never knew the outcome.

It continued to rain that day, and the three of us shouted obscenities and cried. We got a ride back to the 432nd Hospital. I don't know about the rest of my crew, but I didn't sleep. I went back at 1630 and started all over again. My thoughts were selfishly not of the babysan. I had maybe 10 days and a wakeup. "How did I get all this blood on me? Damn! God, please let it be an easy night."

## Date of Separation

Wow! The Water Festival! How can a holiday, such as the Thai's, get carried away and so out of proportion that the American GI can make it his own? That's our nature I guess. Well, I was in the ER. My partner that night was Ed Burdine - called him Buddah. Hah! Well, he was as big as Buddah anyway. We had a maelstrom of water festival casualties that day. There were severe eye infections, yeah, from klong water, and broken toes from way too many drunken GIs droppin' fire extinguishers on their toes. Because of the fights that were the result of "I got you first!" we saw lacerations from broken glass and guys with busted noses, hands, you name it." Terrible day. We could only think about what the night would bring from the North. What sort of God-awful wounds would we see tonight? Seems that mine wounds were popular the last two nights, and you know, things happen in threes.

Well during this nightmare of a Water Festival, a senior NCO came walking in, green in the gills and holding his stomach. "Hey Sarge, what can I do ya for?" He just looked me in the eye, and said, "Got any paragoric?" "Sure sir, just have a seat on the gurney; I keep this for the really sick ones." He sat up on the gurney and started giving me a history of the previous day and night. He said, "lots of nausea, diarrhea," and he just felt like crap. Well, I sure had heard that a million times. I told him I would go and get his records and be with him in a second. I turned to go and had just rounded the corner when I heard a big thud. I looked around, and the sarge was on the floor. Experience told me from the look that this was not a viral thing.

He immediately went pale and on to blue. I quickly grabbed a bottle of O<sub>2</sub>, put a mask on him, screamed for Buddah, and started checking for pulses. None, no breathing. Oh God, he's

had a heart attack. Buddah grabbed the phone right away and called the Doc, who was trying to catch up on some needed sleep. I heard his footsteps come flying up the hall. Well, we performed CPR while Buddah was getting the heart drugs. I could hear the agitation in the background of drunk, hurting GIs with their little problems, worried about their injuries from the day's partying. I'm a big guy and I can be loud when I want to be, and I said, "All you guys get out NOW!" Most of them knew me, so out they went outside to the dock.

We worked on that guy for three hours and gave him every drug. We had a nurse come up and draw blood for the "oh so important" tests. Well, sarge didn't make it. When working on a patient like this, I usually had to be pulled off bodily, and this time was no different. Sarge had passed. I threw stuff around me in disgust. I wept, along with the nurse and Doc. I helped put him back on the gurney and did the never-ending cleaning of the patient, packing the orifices for his ride to the Philippines.

His squadron commander was called, and when he showed up, he was as shaken as I have ever seen a man. "My God, doctor," he said. "His DOS\* is tomorrow!" I came to find out, this senior MSGT, had extended for a couple of months, and his second DOS was in the AM. He died on his last day. There would be no "Wakeup." I cursed my usual curses, took him out to the morgue, prayed for him, and went back up to the dock amongst the crying, laughing, drunk GIs. "Hey sarge, give me something for this cut".... "Hey sarge, what kinda dope ya got?"

What an absolutely shitty day.....

[\*DOS is Date of Separation]

Two poems by "Ghostman" are presented on the next page.

## TLC Brotherhood Dues

We recently audited all dues payments since 2006 and a few member accounts were adjusted to correct the "dues year." Please take a look at the "dues year" printed on the address label of your Mekong Express Mail. This is the last year you have paid dues for. If it is 2012, then you need to pay your dues as soon as you can. You can use PayPal on our website, or you can mail your payment to the address below. If you have questions, please send an email to the TLC Brotherhood Treasurer, using this email address: [Treasurer@TLC-Brotherhood.com](mailto:Treasurer@TLC-Brotherhood.com).

**TLCB**  
**PO Box 343**  
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## Two Poems by Herb Neeland,

### “Ghostman”

#### My Green Clad Flower

##### November 1988 in Ft. Roots VA Hospital

*This is the Poem from my Timeline, "1973," Regarding a "Night at the Morgue." In 1988 I was admitted to the PTSD Unit at Ft. Roots VA Hospital, In Little Rock, Arkansas.*

*After a Trauma Group, which was held at 0800, I wrote this poem.*

Late one night we got a call, there were DOA coming in. The same green bags I'd known so well, their contents held within. They were usually South East Asians, no names, no chevrons, no stripes, just poor dead kids who gave their lives for something they believed was right.

We would put them in the morgue, so cold, their faces looked the same, eyes were closed, then some were not, who were these boys with no names?

Then one night, we checked the bags, like so many times before, the face I saw, wasn't just any face, it was no dog of war. It looked back at me with cold dead eyes, a dress this dead one wore, her fingernails neatly polished, a broach lay on her breast, this wasn't a South East Asian, this dead one was from the west.

I called out, "Just what the hell is this?" She doesn't fit the plan, she's not a soldier or a merc, she isn't even a man. I kept her cold the best I could, I packed her body in ice, I tried to make sure she didn't smell, I stayed with her day and night. Three very hot days and three long nights, I stroked her face and hair, I talked to her about her family who I prayed would soon be there.

The spooks knew all the answers, they knew about the death, they wouldn't tell me a God damn thing, not even under their breath. I didn't have a "Need to know," just handle it cause it's your job, oh dear God who is this flower, my heart continually throbbed.

Three days passed and then they showed in a cold gray/bluish car, the family I think or maybe not, please take this shining star.

I remember this lady to this day, usually under my blankets, I cower, what the Hell was she doing there, "My Cold, Dead Green-Clad Flower."

© Herb Neeland

### BOYS IN THE MIST

I guess it was a dream,  
only things like this can happen in dreams.  
Or can they? A lady sitting at an easel,  
pallet in hand, a smile so wide, it was almost a laugh.  
The arm going this way and that, brush strokes, painting,  
Hair blowing as feathers.  
Occasionally a feather would blow off her lovely head.  
A boy standing with a rifle; watching.  
The Rifle would drop, and in his hand the feather would land.  
He would look at it, with a smile and a tear.  
He would walk off into a mist.  
This kept happening.  
Rifles dropped, feathers caught, then the walk to the mist.  
How long would this last? How long would her arm last?  
She had to be exhausted.  
But the strokes only got stronger. The smile wider. Floating now.  
Watching right from her soft shoulder. What was she painting?  
Well, they were words.  
They poured from the pen like colors I have never seen.  
Reds, blues, yellows; colors I cannot describe.  
A feather flew from her head. I tried to grab it. I tried.  
I ran, I floated, just out of reach.  
I heard a voice. It was the Lady.  
She said. "Why do you run? These are not your feathers.  
They belong to those boys, there, in the mist.  
The boys, can you see them?" I said, "Yes."  
"You see, they have no rifles; they choose something else now."  
I wanted a feather so desperately.  
She said, "You have much to do.  
I have your feather. You just can't have it yet."  
She turned; without losing a stroke, the letters flowed.  
Again, colors I have never seen before.  
I looked again in back of me.  
There was another boy. He dropped his rifle, and reached so  
carefully and easily for his feather.  
He took it gently in his hand. He walked to the mist to join the others.  
I wanted so much to have my feather. I wanted to go with those boys.  
I turned to the lady.  
She was walking. She was so far now. Walking, almost floating.  
Her feathers were just hair now. Golden.  
She turned and looked at me. She smiled.  
She cried out in a voice, nearly like a song.  
"Wait now for your time, your feather will come.  
Go now and live, and love.  
Make paintings of your own if you wish."  
I could barely hear her now; she was so far.  
I thought I heard her say "Live, boy, live."  
Then the softest laughter; she was gone,  
but she was everywhere; I could feel her.  
The boys had long since gone into the mist.  
I thought there must be one of those beautiful feathers here somewhere.  
Then, I heard her voice again..  
"In time boy, in time."  
All I could think of was,  
"Thank you lady with the colors, the laughter, the feathers..  
"The Dream."

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**Payments to TLCB**

Payments may be made on the website, using **PayPal**, which accepts credit cards. Written checks should be payable to **The TLC Brotherhood, Inc.** and mailed to the treasurer, at:

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- |              |                         |
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**Reunion 2013: Fort Walton Beach FL, Oct 3-6**



Bangkok's "Floating Market" in 1966. A tow of rice barges snakes through klongs off the West bank of the river. Such a scene is no longer possible because the Floating Market has been moved out to a tourist location. A few of the teak rice barges have been preserved as houseboats and floating restaurants. Photo by Bill Tilton.



# Interview with William Peterson (MSFS'80)

*Major, U.S. Air Force Veteran*

**Editor's note:** Bill "Willie Pete" Peterson is chairman of the Public Relations Committee of the TLC Brotherhood, and has been very active on the Web, on the Forum, and at reunions. He was interviewed by the alumni magazine of his alma mater, Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C. Here, by permission, is that interview, which appeared in the Georgetown University online newsletter for about two or three months, beginning last November. Willie Pete says Georgetown is the home of the federal (DoD and State) "think tank" Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS) which is often featured on the Sunday talk shows and newscasts during the week. His program (National Security Studies) was closely affiliated with CISS.

**Could you share a memorable experience from your military service?**

In 1967, the People's Republic of China ambushed an unarmed fighter aircraft that was en route from the Philippines to Da Nang Air Base, near Hainan Island, China. The two American pilots ejected from the Phantom and were floating in the South China Sea, so I scrambled a U.S. Navy search and rescue helicopter to recover them. Meanwhile, the MiG



The Gulf of Tonkin, with Hainan Island at the top and Danang AFB at lower center/left. This is where the action took place.

pilots ran for home base. My F-102s saw the Chinese ship approaching our pilots and I ordered them to sink the ship. Our men were rescued. In 2010, I wrote an account of the ambush that was published in 2008. And to my disbelief, Joe Blandford, the brother of one of the pilots, Major Jim Blandford who died of cancer in 1999, located me and asked if we could get together. It's a small world—we both live on Kent Island, MD. During our meeting, Joe's son recognized my current medical symptoms, and with his help I was eventually referred to the University of Maryland Medical Center's chief of spine surgery. He not only corrected my spinal fusion but also removed a lethal sac of staph infection the size of a football. Two families, two lives saved—one by the other.

**What is your most satisfying accomplishment or proudest achievement after serving in China?**

From 1978 to 1980 I was a member of the CIA's Middle East Task Group, assigned to the Israeli team while negotiating the Camp David Accords (press photo, right). A senior Israeli negotiator and I became good friends, and he related



Georgetown University, just up the Potomac from Washington, D.C.

a story about nearly losing his life during a 1956 June war tank battle in Egypt. That night I was reading my Bible and noticed the inscription note. My Bible was given to me upon my confirmation in June 1956. I added a note about Camp David, and the next morning gave it to the general as a symbol of our commitment to Middle East peace. A few



weeks after the 1980 Signing Ceremony, I had a visitor at my Pentagon office—the first secretary of the Embassy of Israel bearing a present from the general. It was his personal IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] Torah with a reference to Ezekiel 33 and his inscription: "We are the guardians of the gates of Israel..." It's been 32 years and the treaty has not been broken. God is with us.

See "Willie Pete" on Page 11.

# Jerry Karnes – Communications Chairman

I was raised on a ranch outside of Victoria, Texas. We were what some in our area called “land rich and dirt poor” because it sure was hard to make a living raising cattle, unless of course you had some oil wells on that land...and we didn’t. Running miles of barbed wire, getting up way before dawn, doing chores before



school and well after, minding the cattle and corn fields, cutting and baling hay all made me a shoo-in for something else to do. The military fit the bill. I finished high school having just turned seventeen, and soon after enlisted in the USAF with my parents’ permission. I knew little about Vietnam but a lot about John Wayne, and it just seemed right at the time.

In early 1967, I went to Shepard AFB for training as a Medical Service Specialist. Udorn, Thailand, was my first assignment later that year. There were several of us from technical school who went over together. When I arrived we were first put up in the old hootches, but it wasn’t long before the new, modern barracks were opened for us. I honestly enjoyed the smaller hootches. During my tour I served in various positions at the 432nd USAF Hospital. It was nice to be able to rotate around and I served on a ward, in the emergency room, and performed various other duties. My favorite activity was to hop flights on the various types of aircraft and get over the Mekong and back. Besides getting a tax exemption, it was often really thrilling. I flew in T-28s, Jolly Greens, Hueys, AC47s, Hercs, Thuds, and a Phantom. I even made some flights with the RTAF. I probably became a pest, but when it was time for a penicillin shot or some good hospital fried chicken I paid them back.



Gerry getting ready for a T-28 flight at Udorn in 1967.



Neveen and Jerry at their daughter’s wedding. Neveen is first mate and head chef when they take their boat off shore for great deep-sea fishing.

After SEA, I served at Wilford Hall Medical Center as a technician in the Recovery Intensive Care department and as a supervisor at the inpatient clinic for trainees with the flu, colds, and other non-threatening illnesses. After that, it was off to Goose Bay, Labrador for two years where I cross-trained into AFRTS as a radio/television announcer. I did TDY trips to Thule, Greenland, which was a real hoot. I loved the hunting and fishing up there, but it sure could get cold. I finally came back to Texas and served out my 7+ years at Webb AFB in Big Spring, Texas in the Public Relations office. Of course Webb is no more, but I did enjoy all the foreign trainees we had there. It was like a foreign base with a Texas accent.

In the years since, I have had a full career as a Petroleum Engineer working in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Along the way I started programming computers because there was no commercial software available, and I wanted it for scientific and hydraulic programs. I suppose I have had nearly every type of computer available and written code in nearly all languages, so when I came back to the USA I decided to start a business with it. That was 1991, and my company is still going strong and we still have our very first customer. We write software for the petroleum industry, healthcare, adult and juvenile probation services, and for various other state agencies. I doubt I will ever retire. It just doesn’t appeal to me and I still find a lot of fun solving that next algorithm.

My hobbies are offshore fishing and hunting. In fact I will have my 30’ offshore boat at the Fort Walton Beach reunion so holler at me if you’d like to go offshore. I love serving the members of TLCB and working under Frank Marsh is a delight. He comes over with that tough Army stuff, but he’s really a nice fellow to work with and he has done a lot to help our organization.



*Can you tell me about your involvement in the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood?*

I represent a magnificent nonprofit organization of Southeast Asia war veterans. TLCB is unique in four ways: (1) We are an organization composed of members of all military services, plus members of the CIA, State Department, USAID and allies; (2) we are still active today in Laos and Thailand with a \$350,000 private assistance program; (3) we are aggressively trying to correct the mistaken view that the United States fought “the Vietnam War”—we maintain that we all fought a theater war known as the Second Indochina War and that it rightfully should include forces that were present in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia in addition to North and South Vietnam; and (4) we have given generously to the archives at Texas Tech University to document the events of the war based on our experiences. As the national public relations chair, it is my privilege to spread the word about

our accomplishments and seek new members.  
*Did your Georgetown education and/or experience play a role in your military career?*

One of my Georgetown professors was a U.S. Arms & Disarmament Agency negotiator with the Russians. Every time he spoke, you learned something new because it was coming from a guy who was hands on. He would negotiate with Russians and then come and teach us techniques. A lot of our professors in the national security studies program were teaching things at Georgetown that they were using on their job. I learned from that professor about dealing with the Russians. Prior to that, I had served on National Estimate Teams for the Soviet Union and wrote daily intelligence briefs for the USAF headquarters. The Georgetown experience taught me a different perspective about interacting with the subject I was writing about. It also served me well when actually negotiating with the Israelis during the Camp David Accords.



## Volunteers at the Tree of Life

by Tom Ungleich

This past February I and my wife, Kim, of Hollywood, Florida...yes, there is another Hollywood and it's in Florida, took a vacation to Thailand and some other places in Asia. I had recently retired from the Federal Civil Service, where I last worked for the U.S. Army in Japan as a civilian attorney. This was to be our very first opportunity to take a long and leisurely trip to East Asia. As background, I had been assigned to the 56<sup>th</sup> USAF Hospital, Nahkon Phanom RTAFB in late 1972, where I met Kim.

During our initial planning for the trip, we had decided to attempt to perform some volunteer work somewhere in Thailand. I had envisioned perhaps teaching English lessons at a school for a week, or working at a medical clinic or orphanage. Unfortunately, we soon discovered that the large, well-off charitable organizations do not want to be bothered with volunteers. Consequently, we had to embark upon an email campaign to find some small facility in Thailand that would accept volunteers for a short period.

Finally, we received some encouraging correspondence from the Tree of Life Orphanage in Buriram, Thailand, and we agreed that we would stay at the orphanage during the week of February 11<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup>. Upon our arrival in Thailand a few weeks later, we stayed at a comfortable apartment hotel in Bangkok for a week. It then came time to determine how to get to Buriram, a city located some 250 miles northeast of Bangkok, and one can get there either by bus or train. Although there are some deluxe express buses on that route, they depart from a terminal on the other side of Bangkok from where we were staying, and it would be necessary to also make an advance trip there to purchase the tickets. We decided to take the train, as the main Bangkok train station was conveniently located near our apartment, and we assumed that there wouldn't be any trouble bringing the several suitcases, etc.

The morning for our travel arrived, but the train trip quickly turned out to be a disappointment. First, it was 30 minutes late being pushed back into the station, and then there was a mad scramble as passengers started rushing to board the train because the crew wanted to depart right away. Nobody would



Statue of King Chakri on his elephant after a major battle in Buriram, the city where the orphanage is located.

help us with the luggage, so it became quite a “Chinese fire drill” getting settled into our seats just before the train started to move. This was a second-class train, which meant passengers had a padded seat, air conditioning, and a single toilet, but just about nothing else. The first thing I noticed was that the window was very dirty, so I had to spend the first 20 minutes of the trip using my personal facial tissue and drinking water to clean the window enough that we could see the scenery as we passed it. Upon departing the station, the train rumbled at slow speed on

See **Tree**, continued on Page 12.

rough track through Bangkok city and its suburbs, but then it accelerated a little bit as we moved into the countryside. At first, the trip was through flat land, mostly rice fields and small villages, but after a couple of hours the track climbed into some low mountains when the speed slowed again. Eventually, a porter came through the train taking orders for food. Fortunately, Kim speaks Thai, so we were able to order some dishes that we knew we could eat. Several towns later the train stopped at a small station where the food was delivered in individual boxes and distributed. Finally, after a seven-hour trip, we arrived at Buriram. I called Mr. Roger Walker, the orphanage's director, to pick us up, and we drove to the orphanage.

The Tree of Life Christian Children's Center and Orphanage [TOLO] was founded by Roger and Phongsri Walker in early 1998. They currently serve as resident director and center manager, respectively. Their dream of an orphanage began in July 1989 while they were standing on a rice field belonging to Phongsri's family, in Buriram. Roger envisioned a home for his family and orphaned children on that spot.



Tom (in white shirt) next to Mr. Roger Walker, director of the orphanage, with teachers from the elementary school that the orphanage helps support.

Over the next several years, while Roger was working in Abu Dhabi and United Arab Emirates, Phongsri oversaw the slow construction of a house as funds became available. Finally, on January 1, 1998, Roger arrived back in Thailand and took up permanent residence in their new home. On November 22, 1998, their home started to become a haven for the first orphans, abandoned and indigent children from throughout Thailand.

Tree of Life endeavors to provide a loving home, educational opportunities, and spiritual encouragement for all the children in residence. Most children who come to Tree of Life, regardless of age, will most likely continue in residence until they complete their schooling. TOLO relies completely on the freewill offerings and generosity of donors from around the world. If you are interested in obtaining further information, the orphanage's website is: <http://treeoflifeorphanage.com>.

The orphanage facility is a large, rambling house on the outskirts of the city. There is a Buddhist temple complex at the

end of the street, which helps make it easier to find. Fortunately, our room had air conditioning, which most of the house did not have, and it came with a private bathroom. Dinner is always a communal activity, with Mr. Walker's extended family and volunteers sitting at one table, while the kids sit at another. The quality of food varies with the funds available at the time. Frequently, the meal would consist only of rice and either fish or chicken. The first dinner gave us the opportunity to get acquainted with Roger, his wife Phongsri, their children, and the orphaned children. We learned that some of the kids came to the orphanage under very tragic circumstances. English skills among the orphan children varied by age and ability, but in most cases they could not communicate in English. They teach Christian principles at the orphanage, which is sometimes difficult in a country where Buddhism is the state religion and is taught in the schools.

As the trip from Bangkok had been exhausting, we retired early that first night. The first morning started with the crow of roosters at about 5:00 am. Shortly thereafter we could hear the patter of feet as the school-age children were getting ready. Roger would take them to school in his pickup truck, with most of the kids riding in the truck bed. This is okay for sunny days, but not a pleasant trip in the rain. Mostly, we would eat breakfast alone, which almost always consisted of cold cereal, toast, and coffee. However, depending upon the hour, Roger might be back from carrying the kids to school, and he would have his breakfast at the same time as we did. On the first morning, Roger briefed his new volunteers about the orphanage, the village school that they help to support, and the city of Buriram. As he had some errands to run, Roger decided to take us on a short tour of the city so we could get our bearings. That first day there was no work assigned to the volunteers. Later, I began to notice that one of the older orphan girls, named Ning, was always being tasked with helping to prepare supper and other chores. She always performed her duties with a pleasant attitude. In contrast, the young orphan children, Roger's own children, and his other in-laws who lived at the orphanage did not appear have tasks or chores, despite the fact that the orphanage was not able to employ any domestic help.

Buriram is not located in a prosperous area of Thailand, rather it is located in the poorer rice farming region of the country. The city consists of about 28,000 inhabitants and is a provincial capital. Unlike other cities in Thailand, it does not appear that much has changed in Buriram during the past 50 years. In ancient times this part of Thailand was actually ruled by the Cambodians, so some old temples have a distinctive architecture and most local people speak Thai in a unique dialect. Perhaps the most significant monument in the city is the imposing statue of General Chakri, later to be King Rama I, on his war elephant putting down an uprising.

The next day was Sunday, so everyone at the orphanage went to church together. Apparently, there are no English language Christian church services in Buriram, so we had to sit through a very long evangelical-type service conducted in Thai. Meanwhile, the children were attending Sunday school. Sunday is an "off day" for the volunteers, so we walked around

See Tree, continued on Page 14.

# Memories of Hog Daniels

by Mac Thompson

*Editor's note: Jerry "Hog" Daniels was a CIA case officer to Gen Vang Pao, and was "experienced, smart, and careful," in the words of author Gayle Morrison. Gayle says those close to Hog are very skeptical about how he died and are particularly suspicious because of the "Permanently Sealed" casket in which his body was returned to Montana. Gayle's new book, "Hogs Exit," is available from Amazon, and its advent inspired Mac to send MEM this short memory piece.*

Jerry "Hog" Daniels was a good friend. I didn't know him pre-1975. In '66-'68, I worked several places in the west of



Hog and Mac shared their birthday—exactly. Photos from Mac Thompson

Laos with IVS [International Volunteer Service] and Jerry was in the north-east as a CIA, aka SKY field Case Officer. He spent much of his time in the LS-36, Na Khang, area north of the PDJ. When I worked out of Sam Thong in the spring of

1969, Jerry was back in the U.S. for schooling. When he returned to Laos, I had moved on to Ban Houei Sai and then to Vientiane, so we never crossed paths.

Jerry flew out of Long Tieng on the last day of the air evacuation that TLC brother, Les Strouse, participated in, 12-14 May 1975. Jerry and Hmong General Vang Pao (VP) went to Udorn. VP then went on to the U.S. and Jerry stayed at Udorn to see what could be done about care and assistance to the thousands of Lao-Hmong who had crossed into Thailand later that summer in 1975 and were camped up at Nam Phong, Nong Khai, and several locations in northern Thailand. But, that's another story.

I departed Vientiane 26 June 1975, the last USAID/Lao staffer to do so. I spent a month TDY in Bangkok, and then went up to Udorn TDY with the State Department to process some of the refugees from Laos, although not the Hmong. That's where I really got to know Jerry. We both worked on the Indochinese Refugee Program in Thailand for the next several years, Jerry on detail to State from the CIA, and I from USAID. John Tucker, also a TLCB member,

Gayle Morrison and Mac at the 2004 TLCB reunion in Ontario, California. Mac has been a primary source for much of Gayle's research for her books on SEA. Photos from Mac Thompson.



Jerry Daniels' grave marker is in Missoula, Montana.

joined us in Udorn, then later in Bangkok. Lionel Rosenblatt, State Department, was our boss, and he's also a TLCB member. We were all TDY in and out for several years, but finally PCS in the fall of 1978.

I was sipping Singhas one evening with Jerry there in Udorn in the fall of 1975, and it turns out we were born same day-month-year, "Brothers of the Suds," so to speak. Our Embassy Refugee Section office in Bangkok gave us a joint 40th birthday party in 11 June 1981. Sadly, Jerry didn't make it to 41; he died of carbon monoxide poisoning one night in his Bangkok apartment 20 April 1982 and was buried in Missoula, Montana, his home town. Jerry was totally involved with Hmong issues from his arrival in Laos in the early 1960s on through his time working with them here in Thailand. He was a truly dedicated individual, and I'm proud to have called him "friend."

A very good book on the Hmong and their exodus from Laos is: *A People's History of the Hmong*, by Paul Hillmer.



the neighborhood and took some photographs of the temple and found an acceptable restaurant.

On the third day, Roger had an appointment at a local school he helps support, the Ban Yoei Sakae School, which was undergoing an inspection from the Education Ministry in Bangkok. He brought us with him, so we could see the improvements made at the school through the orphanage's sponsorship. We were quite impressed with the apparent quality and dedication of the teaching staff, as salaries for school teachers in Thailand are abysmally low. The principal used fancy PowerPoint slides for his briefing to the inspectors, followed by a question and answer period. Apparently, all went well because everyone had smiles on their faces at the conclusion of the formal inspection. They offered refreshments and some of the children put on a skit and performed some traditional, classical dancing. Roger pointed out that some of the improvements had been either funded by the orphanage or by donors to the orphanage, including some projects that were completed by past volunteers.

On Tuesday morning it was back to the school so Roger could meet with the principal to discuss an upcoming project to build a soccer field and swimming beach on government property adjacent to the school. In between Roger's meetings, we observed the kindergarten class, which is in a building separate from the older kids. I was impressed by the way the young kids all lined up to wash their hands before lunch was served, then lined up again to get toothpaste on their brushes so they could brush after eating. I don't think our American elementary schools place such an emphasis on personal hygiene.

Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday consisted of substantial painting around the facility. The only problem was the heat, as the temperature rose to around 90 degrees Fahrenheit each day even though it was still February. Thus, it was important to stay hydrated, and despite assurances from Roger and Phongsri as to the suitability of the local tap water, we would only drink the bottled water we purchased from a local convenience store. Anyway, at the conclusion of the painting task, the front compound wall looked bright orange, as did the carport area.

On Thursday they decided that the orphanage would begin preparing for a Christian Crusade, sponsored by the church at a soccer field in the city. Volunteers gathered and boxed up a lot of articles, and it took several trips in the pickup to deliver them. On Wednesday, the volunteers assisted in setting up a tent and some tables for the orphanage's display.

The crusade was on Friday night. Some missionaries from the USA came to Thailand to preach to the Thai citizens in various cities. This is a little harder than one would think, because 95% of the Thai people are Buddhist, and certainly at least a majority of Thais do not understand English, so there had to be a very hard-working translator present, who would repeat into Thai each of the missionary's sentences. The preaching went on for a couple hours.

On Saturday we had to continue our Thailand trip to visit some close friends who live quite a bit further north of Buriram. We talked with Roger and decided that the best way to

get there was by bus from Buriram to Khon Kaen, then change buses for another one going to Udorn Thani, where our friends would pick us up in their vehicle. After a series of long good-byes, Roger took us and our luggage to the bus station, and our week of volunteer work was at an end.

In summary, one of the most rewarding parts of our trip to Asia was the week we volunteered at the Tree of Life Orphanage in Buriram, Thailand. There are many worthwhile charitable organizations located around the world, and it would appear that many American tourists would enjoy sharing some of their vacation time by "giving back" to society. I know we would gladly do it again.



Tom, wife Kim (on right), and Mr. Walker, with some of the orphan children.

### **Tom Ungleich tells a little about himself:**

*I enlisted in the Air Force in 1969. They put me in the medics. After assignments at Lajes Field, Azores, and Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, I went TDY to Andersen AFB, Guam, for 6 months in early 1972. I arrived at Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, my last PCS assignment, at the beginning of December 1972. I arrived just in time for Operation Linebacker II, when I seemed to be on duty for 24/7 until after Christmas. After the Paris Treaty was signed in January 1973 our workload began to slow down, but on 15 August, with passage of the War Powers Act, all remaining operations over Laos and Cambodia [allegedly] ceased. Consequently, I decided that it was time for me to go back to college, so I applied for and received a one-month early out to start classes in September 1973. I later married my Thai girlfriend and have remained interested in the country until this day.*

### **How can we reach you?**

If we don't have your current email address you may be missing out on important messages about your Brotherhood. Please send email changes to us, at [JKarnes@tlc-brotherhood.com](mailto:JKarnes@tlc-brotherhood.com).

# Remembrance At the Beach!

*October 3~6 at Fort Walton Beach, Florida*

*Remembrance* is the theme of our October TLCB 2013 Reunion at Fort Walton Beach, Florida, and I am proud and excited to write to you about it. It has been 10 years since our last reunion at the "Emerald Coast," and my committee and I want to make this a great memory and a fun vacation for you and your family. The event begins on Thursday afternoon and continues through Sunday morning. We selected the weekend prior to The Air Commando Association's (ACA) annual reunion, to facilitate allowing our dual members to easily attend both great events.

Our hotel is the Quality Inn Bayside, 322 Miracle Strip Parkway (Highway 98), Fort Walton Beach, Florida 32548. It is located on the Okaloosa Sound and is in the middle of Fort Walton Beach activities along the main thoroughfare, which takes you East to the beaches and Okaloosa Island or West to Hurlburt Field. The room rate is \$73 plus taxes for smoking/nonsmoking, single or double rooms. This rate is probably \$40 cheaper a night compared to the past three reunions. What are you going to do with that extra \$120 you will save? You can extend your vacation or just splurge. Make your reservation by calling (850) 275-0300 or use the web at [gm.fl685@choicehotels.com](http://gm.fl685@choicehotels.com) Let's fill this hotel like the ACA has done for many years.

We will follow our normal schedule of past reunions. Thursday is check-in and you can socialize the entire evening in our hospitality suite, enjoying our well stocked "Hooch Bar." Friday is tour day. I hope we will have the tour descriptions available for our next MEM issue. If there is a special tour you would like us to set up, you can email me at [thinkp69@cox.net](mailto:thinkp69@cox.net) Eglin AFB has the new F-35 training program, which

might be our premier choice if available.

Friday night is our Assistance auction in the hospitality suite and yes, the Hooch Bar will be open for your enjoyment. Saturday morning brings our Annual Business meeting. The rest of Saturday is in the planning stages, including our evening banquet and guest speaker(s). Sunday morning will be our special "Remembrance" Memorial service with the location still not decided. As you see, our committee still has lots to do.

Traveling by air into the Fort Walton Beach area is much easier and cheaper compared to the past years. Northwest Florida Regional Airport, airport code VPS, has more flights and a new terminal, but making early flight reservations is important. [www.flyvps.com](http://www.flyvps.com) I recommend renting a car if you fly to our area as the area is spread out and has limited bus routes. Pensacola (45 miles) and Panama City (75 miles) both have airports you can also use to come to our reunion location.

Our hotel location has many eating establishments within walking distance. There are over ten Thai restaurants in the community and many fresh Gulf Coast seafood restaurants. We are right next door to a Red Lobster and a Waffle House

is in front of the hotel. The hotel provides a continental breakfast for you light morning eaters.

Northwest Florida has so much to offer for extending your vacation, and here is a good web address to help you look at the area. <http://www.emeraldcoastfl.com/>. I will post additional information, photos, and video on our TLCB Web page, Reunion tab.

Now I ask you, what makes a great reunion? YOU! We want you all to spend these four days with us and our Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Brotherhood family. Let's "Remember" together and never forget those who did not return.

*Ed Miller*  
Ft Walton Beach Committee Chairman



# Newest Brothers in TLC Brotherhood

Since the new TLCB Forum was inaugurated last July, we have experienced approximately double the rate of newly-joining members. The brothers listed below joined between the last issue of MEM and the first of March. We have listed their locations, dates they joined, and other information they provided on their applications, including SEA assignments, years there, skills and interests, and email addresses. MEM wishes you all a hearty "Welcome Home."

- Glenn Burton** Dallas TX 2/17/2013  
Udorn, 432 AMS  
71-72 USAF IT  
Jungle4U@hotmail.com
- Clifford Eisenach** Colorado Springs CO 1/26/2013  
TanSonNhut, NKP 2nd AD, TFA, MAC-V  
64, 68,75 USAF vol tourguide, sax in band  
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- Chuck Elrod** Johnson City TN 2/11/2013  
U'Tapao, NKP; 307 SW, 56 SOW  
71-72 USAF survival photographer  
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- James Garcia** Apache Junction AZ 2/17/2013  
NKP Udorn, U'Tapao, 56th ACW, 432nd, 6035th  
SPS, canine, AFSC 81150A dog handler  
70-71,73 USAF amateur radio  
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- Wendel Green** Montclair NJ 12/26/2012  
NKP, 56th CSG  
67-Aug to Nov USAF Vetrep for NJ DOL;  
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- Joe Greene** Aurora TX 12/5/2012  
Camp Nam Phung Dam, Thailand; 46th SFCA,  
A-4613, MOS 91B4S, medical specialist  
67-68 USA Thai language, aquaponics,  
teaching English;  
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- James Handlin** Udorn Thailand 12/22/2012  
Pakse, Vientiane, Saigon 72, Cambodia 74  
70-74, 01-12  
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- Timothy Hite** Cool Ridge WV 1/16/2013  
U'Tapao, Udorn; 43051E-F  
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- Ray Hohman** Brick NJ 12/7/2012  
Okinawa, Camp Friendship, 809th Engr Btln,  
radio operator  
61-62 USA MBA, CPA ret; acctng professor;  
golf, travel  
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Udorn, 432 Supp Sqdn  
71-72,75-76 USAF Camping, boating  
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- William Lynch** Somerset PA 12/2/2012  
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72 USAF Helicopters, history  
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- Terry McGowan** Katy TX 2/17/2013  
NKP 56 ACW, 606ACS, aircrew  
66-67 USAF hunting, fishing  
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- Paul Parrott** Syracuse NY 1/10/2013  
Udorn, Laos--L39, 54, 19, 25; 56th ACW Det 1,  
43171a, crewchief USAF  
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69-70 USAF Mechanical, air shows, fishing,  
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- Dewayne Thrift** Windermere FL 2/9/2013  
Mukdahan (Viking), Pleiku (Peacock) 5th TAC PI,  
Det 6, 621st, Det 2, 620th, 27330, 27350, 27311  
69-70 USAF pvt pilot, real estate broker,  
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67-68 USAF NKP vet  
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69-70 USAF music, motorcycles, pool,  
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