

MEKONG EXPRESS MAIL



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE THAILAND-LAOS-CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC. VOLUME 15, ISSUE 2

TLCB Will Participate in the Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration

The Office of the Secretary of Defense/Commemorations will be commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, and the Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB) will be one of the official Commemorative Partners.

After initially being approached by DoD about participating in the program, which officially starts next year, 50 years after the official beginning of the war, and goes on for 10 years, the TLCB Board formed an exploratory committee. The committee eventually reported back and recommended participation. The committee was chaired by William (Willi Pete) Peterson, TLCB Public Relations chairman. It included Gerry Frazier, Membership chairman; and John Lorenzen, History chairman. The story of their work in a detailed report by Chairman Peterson, begins on page seven.

TLCB President on TLCB's Partnership with the 50th Anniversary Project

I am pleased that the TLC Brotherhood has become an official partner in the Department of Defense 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Vietnam War, authorized by the Secretary of Defense to honor the service of the men and women who participated in the war.

We owe special thanks to William Peterson, Chairman of our Publicity Committee and Gerry Frazier, Chairman of our Membership Committee, who met with the leadership of the DoD program and conducted briefings on the involvement of those who served outside the border of South Vietnam during the conflict period. John Lorenzen, our History Chair, also worked on the project. Thanks to their direct and informative briefings,

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the TLC Brotherhood will be honored with a story in their next newsletter of the DoD 50th Anniversary organization. They were very impressed by our organization and what we are accomplishing today in SEA. This national publicity will greatly enhance our potential for new members and our longstanding goal of spreading awareness of the TLCB to the vast majority of those who served in the TLC Theatre.

William Peterson has been appointed Chairman of the TLC Brotherhood 50th Anniversary Committee Celebration of the Vietnam War and has written a detailed summary of our involvement in the celebration, beginning on page seven.

Well Done Gentlemen!

John Sweet

Editor's Notes

Vietnam War 50th Anniversary: In the two years that I've been working with Bill and Thelma Tilton editing the Mekong Express Mail (MEM), I have often emphasized how distinguished I find the Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood is; and I have been connected with several other veteran's groups. Not only did the founders identify a unique niche that resonates for the membership, they have, over its history, established a special and, frankly, intimate fashion of reconnecting with the South East Asian lands where they once served. The most obvious, of course, is the remarkable Assistance Program, improving educational opportunities in Thailand and Laos in some of the poorest areas. However, beyond that, there are a remarkable number of members who have traveled back to SEA, some who might be called *frequent SEA visitors*; and beyond those hardy voyagers are a surprising number of TLCB members who live there, either full or part time. Now, the TLCB is becoming even more closely identified with SEA, through its formal association with the Department of Defense's Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, which is planned to begin next year and extend through 2025, the dates marking the United States' combat mission there. In this issue of the MEM, William Peterson, named by TLCB President John Sweet as our Anniversary Chairman, details the development of our official partnership in the Commemoration. This is a substantial achievement, one which will certify that those of us who served in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia played an important part in the Vietnam War. It will, through the MEM and the TLCB website, promote the commemoration activities as they develop, and it will provide all of the membership the opportunity to participate. You can correspond in any fashion you choose, but do correspond. Let the leadership know of your ideas about what the TLCB should be contributing. It is a great opportunity!

A New Feature: One of the suggestions I offered when I took over the editor's position from the nearly legendary Dave MacDonald, was the publishing of members' poetry and fiction, suspecting that there were some potential novelists and bards out there. We have included some poems and accounts of some adventures that may have contained a bit of fiction in them. Still, frankly, I've been a little disappointed that there haven't been more submissions, but I'm still convinced about the potential. Now, those of you who've read the two articles that I've written for the MEM may recall that I admitted to having created some fiction, based quite imaginatively on my Thailand experiences. So, to encourage more member submissions of poetry and what might be termed "autobiographical fiction," I'm introducing a new feature, The TLCB Member Fiction Corner, and I'm inaugurating it with a bit of fantasy I put together about 30 years or more ago. This may turn out to be an act of supreme ego, leading to the appointment of a new editor, or be the origins of one of the country's leading literary journals. Let me know. Like I've said, I've got a thick skin. Better yet, show us all that you can write better than I can. I'm sure you can.

John Harrington
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The TLCB Member Fiction Corner

As I have mentioned in a couple of articles that I've written for MEM, in the mid-70s, some years after I left the Air Force, I wrote some fiction - a novel and a handful of short stories - that were set in Thailand in the late 1960s, the time when I was stationed there. They never got published. Although I had some connections in publishing, it was a difficult time to sell anything that was even remotely about the Vietnam War. I put them away and went on with my life. However the work was never far from my mind, and I would take them out and wander through them from time to time. Frankly, and probably immodestly, I think they deserved to be published, and I have recently had all my old manuscripts entered into digital format.

I have a conviction that I'm not alone among TLCB members, and with that in mind, I would like to initiate a new feature in MEM, "The TLCB Member Fiction Corner." To get it started I'm including an excerpt from a short novel/long short story I wrote. My story might well be characterized as "autobiographical fiction," a term that might apply to what many other members have sitting around in their files, or in their computers. I welcome any submissions. We will consider length, and if the language and/or descriptions are a little graphic, we may suggest some editing. So with that in mind, I'll start this project off.

PS: At the end, I'll try and sort out the facts from the fiction, if I'm still able to make those distinctions myself.

Sunida: An Unfinished Love Story

by John Harrington

From September 1967 to August 1968, I, through fate, destiny, luck, circumstance, and the whim of the United States Air Force found myself assigned as the administrative officer to a small radar site in north central Thailand. There were no more than a hundred of us Americans at the site located alongside the village of Nakorn Sarang. Quarters were few and skimpy and the officers rented bungalows in the village. This initially proved very pleasant since it made it easy to get a feel for Thai village life and I spent many evenings early in my stay wandering about the streets and eating in the many restaurants. But after several months I wearied of this - the people were friendly but I found the language impenetrable and the small size of the place provoked a boredom - and I increasingly found myself spending more and more time on the site, drinking in the club, pondering our role in the war, and sometimes stumbling off to a rather iniquitous place called the Argo Bar, where I could drink Singha beers and for a modest rate secure some companionship to share my lonely night with. Sadly, I began to count the days and look forward to my return to the States.

On an afternoon early in November, while I was making a perfunctory inspection of the hooches, Sak, the site interpreter, found me and asked that I come back to the orderly room to talk to a girl who was looking for a job-

The girl, her name was Sunida, had shown up earlier in the day, asking the Thai Guard at the gate what she must do about finding a job on the site. When he told her she would have to talk to an American lieutenant she left. However, she was back in the afternoon, saying she would like to see the American. She rose when I entered the room; her eyes quietly turned away when I smiled. Standing, she appeared to be tall for a Thai, about five foot two or three. Her eyes were large and brown, sweeping up gracefully to high corners, and she had the sharper nose of someone with Indian blood. Her hair was straight and black, but she wore it close to her head and did not split it over the shoulders in the fashion of the bar

girls. We exchanged wais and I motioned for her to sit in the chair by my desk, but she seemed reluctant to do so before I did, so I quickly sat and she appeared to relax a little. I was smiling broadly (I couldn't help it. Her face was the most pleasing combination of gently curving lines I had ever seen) and I am afraid I made her uncomfortable because she would not let her eyes meet mine, and she kept turning her face down and away.

The interview did not, to say the least, go well. I asked what she would like; she said, "Work, please, Sir." I asked her what kind of work; she said, "Work, yes Sir. Thank you." I asked her if she could speak English; she said, "Yes, Sir, Thank you." Could she read and write English? "Yes, Sir, thank you, please." When I asked her what she would like to be paid, she only looked at me and smiled.

I was charmed, but I was also very frustrated. I had no choice but to say to her, "Miss Sunida, I am sorry, but we do not have any jobs right now. I will put your name on a list and if any jobs come up, we will call you. But I wish you had told me more about what you would like to do, because it would be easier to help you then." She smiled and said, "Yes, Sir, thank you."

For good measure, I asked Sak to repeat it in Thai. When he had done so, she rose, thanked us both, and began to leave.

She had her bicycle at the gate, and I escorted her to it. I held it for her as he got on, and when she reached for the handle bar, her hand rested shortly on mine; her skin was very soft, but cold and wet with perspiration, and she looked away again. Before she reached the corner, she turned, smiled, and waved. For the first time she seemed relaxed; I didn't think she really wanted the job, but for some reason she felt obliged to ask for it. I smiled back, raised my hand and waved, and then I continued to smile even after she had turned the corner and disappeared into the tall reeds that the site access road led through.

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

Sunida, continued from page 3.

Sak later told me more about Sunida. She was a teacher in Pitchit, a town fifty miles to the south, but her parents lived in Nakhon Sarang and wanted her to come home and take care of them, since they were both old and poor. She too wanted to come home, but there were no jobs in the schools in Nakhon Sarang. A friend told her to try at the American air base; so she did. Sak said, "Now she will go back to Pitchit and send money to her parents."

"How much does she make in Pitchit?"

"I think four hundred baht, twenty dollars."

"A week?"

"A month."

Twenty dollars! Why practically any job on the site would have paid her at least fifty dollars. "But how much can she send her parents out of that?"

A tired smile passed over Sak's face. "Obviously, Sir, not very much. She will not live well. In Thailand, to be a teacher is not a very good job."

I found myself thinking of Sunida often, and when I was in town I would scan the faces in the streets, hoping to see her; but she had gone back to Pitchit and I never did see her. When, three weeks later, the boy who worked in the library came and told me he was moving to Bangkok to go to the university, I went to Sak.

"Sak, that girl who was here, how well could she really read and write English?" When he said that he thought she was very good, I asked why then had she been so quiet?

"Sir, she was very frightened. She never even talked to an American before." So far he was telling me what I already knew, and wanted to have confirmed. I asked him, if she came to work at the site, would she become less shy, and would she do a good job?"

"Oh yes, Sir. She is very good girl and she would work very hard."

"Could you find her again, Sak?"

"She went back to Pitchit." I felt something tumble about in my stomach. "But I think, Sir, if I write to her, she will come back here to work," Sak grinned. "Because her parents live here and she feels she must be with them."

So Sunida came to work in the library for fifty dollars a month, or a thousand baht, and, as Sak had predicted, she adjusted well. She was still very shy, and, I am sure, the first days when the airmen crowded the library to see the beautiful new librarian were difficult for her. Sak once found her quietly crying, the shock of a roomful of loud, large Americans having overwhelmed her; but she needed the job, and she forced herself to adjust to it.

Fortunately the job was not difficult; the library was small and ninety per cent of the reading done by the men was of the sports magazines, the westerns, and the science fiction. We received only a few new titles, so the job consisted mainly of refilling the returned books back on the shelves. Books were something of an anathema to most of the men, so the library was thought of, for the most part, as a place to

kill time.

There were some incidents. Once, a sergeant, a few beers in him, while sitting in one of the lounge type chairs, reached out, as she went by, and grabbed her bottom. Sak, who she went to, came and told me she was quitting.

"Why?"

"I think, Sir, Sgt. Hunnicut, how you say, goose her."

"Oh, for Christ's sake, what the hell's he doing in the library anyway. I don't think he knows how to read."

Sak and I found her at the gate, sitting in the guard shack. She was crying and refused to look up at me, and she was saying she was sorry. It was clear she should not go back to the library that day. I told her to go home and rest, not to be sorry (she was sorry?) or to worry, and Sak and I would come and see her the next day. I added, "Please don't quit, you do such good work. I need you here."

By the time I found Sgt. Hunnicut, he seemed somewhat contrite. "Ah shit, Lieutenant, I'm sorry. I di'nt mean nothin'. I'z just sittin' there, six or seven beers in me, I seen her ass go by, I grab it. I guess I thought I was home."

There did not seem to be any overwhelming reason to do much to Hunnicutt. In fact, many of the other girls on the site were able to deal with the coarser instincts of the airmen quite effectively, and a hand reaching out to pinch or rub a thigh was often met with a slap and a laugh. Hunnicut, especially after what was probably closer to a dozen beers, could hardly be expected to make distinctions between who he could and who he could not pinch. However, I did suggest

that he stay out of the library for awhile.

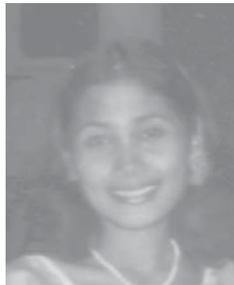
"Shit yes, Lieutenant. I don't know what the hell I was doin' there anyway. I can hardly read, you know."

After she had been home a full day, Sak and I met with Sunida at Sak's home and convinced her to return. I told her that Sgt. Hunnicut was very sorry, I promised her it would not happen again, and she quietly consented to come back. But

there was a sense of depression in me when we left because I saw great sadness in her eyes. She would, I am sure, have much preferred to never go near the site again, but she needed the money badly, and it was not my words or entreaties which were bringing her back, but her need. It hurt, but she would, in her own eyes, humiliate herself for the one thousand baht....

By December the library had become my favorite hideout. I wonder if others noticed how much time I was spending there. I would drop by two or three times a day. I read every magazine in the place, every novel that was at all bearable, and what few things there were about Thailand and Asia. When shipments of new books arrived, I was there to carry them, to open them, and, after Sunida had registered and marked them, to help put them on the shelves (the boy had done all of these things himself). I asked her if the room layout was satisfactory; maybe she would like to have the chairs and tables placed in a different pattern, or would she like to have her desk by door? She smiled and said no, everything

Sunida is continued next page.



was fine, thank you.

One day, while on my way from the BX to the orderly room and deciding that the two hundred yard walk was more than I could handle in such heat, I ducked into the library. A particularly baby-faced airman named Hendrickson, who was off duty and in his civilian clothes, was leaning across Sunida's desk talking to her when I came in. She did not seem to notice me and I sat in one of the easy chairs by the magazine rack and began to go through the most recent edition of *Time*. I was all the way through the section devoted to current national news and Hendrickson was still talking to Sunida. I stood up and yawned, replacing the magazine on the rack. I said out loud, "Oh well, that's enough of *Time*. What should I read now?"

Settling on a copy of *Sports Illustrated*, unnoticed, I turned and sat back down.

Hendrickson was still bent over her desk. The magazine was filled with pictures of football and basketball players, but I couldn't concentrate long enough to read any of the accompanying stories and my eyes kept drifting back to Hendrickson and Sunida. I could not hear what they were saying; they were talking very quietly and all I could hear was a low mumble, although occasionally I thought I could hear her laughing. I looked at my watch and realized I had already spent nearly thirty minutes sitting there. What the hell could they be talking about for so long?

On my way out, I stopped by the desk and asked, "Is there something I can help you with, Hendrickson?"

He looked at me startled. Sunida looked up and smiled. He said, "No Sir. No problems."

"Well, I saw you standing here so long, I thought maybe you were having trouble making yourself understood. You sure there isn't something I can find for you?"

"No thanks, Lieutenant, everything's just fine." He appeared a little annoyed at my intrusion, shaking his head and looking away. "Sunida and I were just speaking to each other in Thai."

"In what?"

"Speaking in Thai, Lieutenant. That's the language here, you know," I used to notice that when the enlisted men were particularly irritated by me they would address me as "Lieutenant" and couch their words with phrases such as "you know," "as you are aware," "most certainly," and "obviously," when what they had just said was otherwise rather clearly stated.

"You speak Thai?" I looked from Hendrickson to Sunida.

"Mr. Hendrickson speak excellent Thai, Sir." She smiled.

I stood there as dumbfounded as if I had just been told that Major Hudson had delivered the commencement address at Harvard. Of course, there was no real reason I should have been so shocked. Hendrickson, who was the assistant medic in the dispensary and generally stayed out of my sight, had given every indication of being a reasonably intelligent young man.

They started to speak again, in Thai and without any hesitation.

"Where'd you learn to do that?"

Hendrickson paused, turned slowly to stare at me, twisting his mouth slightly at the corners. "Excuse me, Lieutenant, do what?"

"Speak Thai."

"Oh, just around, talking to the chow hall girls, the guards, people in town, Sunida. You know, just kind of picked it up."

"No lessons?"

"No, just kind of picked it up."

"Just kind of picked it up?" But he didn't answer me again. Instead he turned and went back to talking to Sunida. They both laughed. At me?

When I left Sunida smiled, but Hendrickson didn't even look up. All the way back to the orderly room, I was talking to myself. "She must think I really am a dumb bastard. I don't know anything more than a few stupid phrases, and then I probably don't even pronounce them right. Hendrickson has been here only a little more than a month longer than I have, and he speaks the god dammed language like he was one of them."

Back in the orderly room, Hudson wanted to know where the PACAF-7 report was. I told him, "It's in the safe, Major. It's classified secret, as you are aware, and we can't leave it lying around on your desk, you know." He mumbled something I couldn't make out and then asked the head clerk to open the safe. While this was going on, I turned to Sak, whose desk was in the far corner, and said, "Sak, could you teach me to speak Thai?"

So, in a fashion, I came to speak Thai. Sak, however, did not turn out to be a good teacher. He was too intuitive in his approach and was not able to organize himself very well. In the end, my teacher turned out to be Sunida.

Several weeks after the Hendrickson affair (I imagine it would surprise both of them to see it called that), I was in the library and approached her desk. In Thai, I said to her, "I am learning to speak your language," and she laughed.

Nonplussed, I told her that, "Sak is teaching me to speak your language," and she laughed again.

"Why are you laughing?" I asked her in English.

She smiled and seemed a little embarrassed for having laughed. "Excuse me, but I laugh because I know what you mean to say, but it is not what you say. Your, how do you say, your sound, tone, flexion?"

"Inflection?"

"Yes, your inflection is not good. That is the most difficult part of Thai for farang to learn."

"Farang?"

She stopped and looked away from me. It was the first time I had heard her use the term, which was loosely applied to all non-Orientals, but which I sensed also carried a derogatory tone. I was a little set back to hear Sunida use it. I asked her again, "Farang? What do you mean by farang?"

When she at last looked up at me, she said, "Farang mean man who is not from Asia."

"I have heard it before and I thought it had a bad meaning."

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

Sunida, continued from page 5.

She shook her head slightly and was ill at ease. “Sometimes, yes. But not all times. All Americans are farang, but some good farang, some bad farang.”

I looked at her, and pointing my finger towards my chest, said, “Bad farang, yes?”

Her head shot up and she began to shake it rapidly. “Oh no, oh no,” she said, but when, she saw me laughing, she joined in.

I digress. After some more words, I asked her to teach me to speak Thai. She agreed, and even Sak was pleased, since he had only consented to do it out of politeness. I offered to pay her five dollars for two lessons a week. She felt it was too much and we settled on two dollars a week. I would go to her home after dinner on Monday and Wednesday evenings for one hour each night.



Fact and Fiction: *There is no town in Thailand that I know of named Nakhon Sarang. I was stationed in Phitsanulok, about a hundred miles north of Takhli, and that served as the model for the site and the town I describe in my fiction. I was the admin officer there, and I did have responsibility for the library, as well as just about every other extra duty available on the small site. However, the young Thai man who was the librarian there never left, and there was no woman named Sunida that replaced him. At the club, which served everyone (we weren't big enough for an NCO or Officers Club), a very beautiful girl worked, and my description of the fictional Sunida is based on her, but sadly I can't remember her name. I never did learn Thai, at least not more than being able to order food and negotiate a little with the local merchants. As for a personal romance with a Thai woman, let me just admit that, it being long before I met the woman who has been my wife now for nearly 42 years, I fell “in love” with every beautiful “pooying” I ever encountered. So, “Sunida: An Unfinished Love Story” is emphatically fiction.*

The Origins of TLCB Assistance

by John Sweet

How It All Began

Every once in a while I would stumble across the old shoe box full of pictures while searching in the bedroom closet for something. My quest would then become of secondary importance, and I would spend a few minutes while sitting on the bed, pondering over the dozen pictures I always left on top. They were pictures of Nakhon Phanom (NKP), or “Naked Fanny” as we all called it, and there were also photos of the orphanage at Thare. They were taken just a couple days before Christmas in 1969. During these recollections, the years would pass away and the flood of memories would return.

Another Buck Sergeant named Ted deserves the most credit for “Operation Thare,” for he convinced me to accompany him to the orphanage at Thare, which was near Sakon Nakhon, almost fifty miles away from NKP. To this day, I have no idea how Ted first met Father Khai, or how he managed to pull off teaching English to the children there during his R & R time, instead of being required to go to Bangkok. But he did!

Father Khai picked us up for the journey and returned us after dark that night, speeding in a cloud of dust over the twisting rut-filled red dirt road through the jungle. We used to say “If you didn't believe in God before you got in Father Khai's car, you sure did by the time you got out.”

It Took One Day

My one-day visit to the orphanage was enough to convince me that Ted was right; the kids needed all the help they could get. So together, we started a campaign to raise money. The project began in October and took off like wildfire. The men stationed at NKP gave generously and gathered assistance from everywhere. By the time a week before Christmas rolled around, there was \$5,000 in cash, as well as everything from baseball equipment to fingernail clippers. Somehow, don't ask me how, there were over a dozen large containers, each four feet square, filled with personal items for the children. There were combs, shampoo, scissors, sewing kits, handkerchiefs,

soap, socks, and clothes. I was amazed because they were all brand new and individually packaged. It certainly was going to be a great Christmas for the kids!

The units were competing amongst themselves, in a friendly way, to outdo each other. The most astonishing gift was the first one delivered, a huge pile of snow from Colorado with a Colorado spruce as a Christmas tree stuck on top! The kids went wild because they had never seen snow before. But I have to admit, when Santa showed up in the 21st SOS Jolly Green Giant, piloted by Captain Robert Arnau, they sure tied for first place!

Father Khai had not been idle either. The Bishop had come up from Bangkok for the celebration, which was an eleven hour drive each way. Somehow Father Khai had “found” a case of cold American beer and provided a feast on the verandah for Ted, several of the officers, and me. The older girls performed Thai dancing as entertainment while the other 1200 orphans watched, lined up behind them facing us.

The Joy of Giving

Passing out those gifts to the children is the fondest memory of Christmas I have. As they passed down the row of boxes holding out their newly acquired shopping bags, with handles, I won-

See **Assistance**, continued on page 9.

Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration

Congress – The White House – DoD – TLCB

By William R. Peterson, M.A., M.S.

TLCB Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Chair

The Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB) has four organizational objectives to which each Member subscribes, as stated on our Membership card:

- Provide an open association for the benefit of TLC veterans.
- Provide humanitarian assistance, particularly in TLC.
- Honor those veterans who did not return from TLC.
- Preserve TLC history and promote public understanding of TLC service.

We look for ways to accomplish these objectives – for example, at our Annual Reunion, at things we do with other veterans, by contributing to our TLCB Assistance Fund. And every once in a while there comes an opportunity we never imagined! This Spring the TLCB Board seized such an opportunity by joining with the Office of the Secretary of Defense/Commemorations as one of their formal Commemorative Partners (CP) in the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

Quoting from DoD documents (<http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/about/>)

In Accordance With Public Law 110-181 SEC.598; the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the Secretary of Defense to conduct a program to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War and “in conducting the commemorative program, the Secretary shall coordinate, support, and facilitate other programs and activities of the Federal Government, State and local governments, and other persons and organizations in commemoration of the Vietnam War.”

The Secretary of Defense shall determine the schedule of major events and priority of efforts for the commemorative program, in order to ensure achievement of the objectives specified in Law.

The commemorative program will include activities and ceremonies to achieve the following objectives:

- To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war (POW), or listed as missing in action (MIA), for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.*
- To highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces.*
- To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.*
- To highlight the advances in technology, science, and*



As a “Partner,” the TLC Brotherhood is authorized to display the 50th Commemoration logo, except for use in fund-raising activities.

medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.

- To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.*

TLCB and its Assistance Program has been an authorized 501(c)(3) organization since IRS approval in 1999, and as reviewed in 2004. Like most charitable organizations, TLCB receives requests for financial support from various people and organizations from time to time. Each is discussed and voted on by the Board after proper due diligence. Over the years, we have developed a healthy sense of skepticism in this area, so when we first heard of some organization “looking for Vietnam Veterans to join,” we saw a need to look into it.

After discussing the few facts known at the time of the 13 January 2014 Board Meeting, President John Sweet appointed me to chair an exploratory committee with two other members – John Lorenzen and Gerry Frazier – to look into this group and report findings to the Board.

The Exploratory Committee (ExpCom) was well suited to the task because we had served in the Vietnam War, and together we represented the current TLCB chairs of Public Relations, History, and Membership. That evening I produced an action plan to accomplish our objectives.

At our first ExpCom meeting on 27 January, we discussed our data after two weeks of research. We were able to advise

See **50th**, continued on page 8.

50th, continued from page 7.

the Board of three findings: TLCB is a good fit with them; TLCB can meet the DoD requirements; and we need to change and expand the DoD website “war education data” to show the contributions of those who fought the war from outside the Republic of Vietnam.

Our second meeting, held on 3 February, discussed the DoD “Education and Partnership” group. We voted that we could provide them improved information on the war for use on their website, classroom initiative, and traveling exhibit. We also voted to report to the TLCB Board that we recommend forming a partnership with the DoD group after we complete a fact-finding phone meeting with them. There were three crucial follow-on action items to complete as we finalize our exploratory work:

Gerry Frazier volunteered to obtain, read, and report on the “50th” DoD governing directives (DoD D 5410.18 and DoD I 5410.19) to ensure that their guidelines are something we can agree to without violating our own TLCB charter and by-laws.

Bill Peterson established first contact by telephone, obtained information for inclusion in a report to the TLCB Board, determined their attitude toward us, and set up a follow-on person-to-person meeting with them at the OSD Vietnam War Commemoration Office, in Arlington, VA.

Bill and Gerry met with the OSD group to establish rapport, discuss some ideas which could benefit their Group, get assurance that our tentative “event proposals” (TLCB reunions, public speaking, etc - at least 2 times annually for 3 years) would be acceptable. Once we have created a solid, trusting working relationship we would show them how important the inclusion of Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia is to their efforts. When they agree, then we make some general offers of assistance.

Prior to meeting with OSD we exchanged emails and phone calls which showed us they were anxious to have TLCB on-board. The Exploratory Committee was now convinced that OSD was serious, willing, and competent to embrace us as full Veterans of the Vietnam War. On that basis I suggested to John Sweet that our ExpCom file a complete report of our activities with our formal Recommendations to the TLCB Board by email. And in the absence of a negative response from the Board, we will apply for Partnership with the OSD Group. On 3 March, John Sweet and I filed our signed DD2955 Application Forms.

The date and time of the meeting was determined by General Kicklighter’s schedule because he was very interested in meeting TLC Brotherhood Veterans who were known to have some strong opinions about the necessity for including Vietnam Veterans who served *outside the Republic*. It is obvious from the outset that General Kicklighter is eminently qualified to execute this national program. He managed the same program for both World War II and Korean War Veterans.

We met on 19 March at 1300 and were warmly welcomed by Col Yvonne Schilz, USAF (Ret) who is the OSD/Commemorations office Chief of Staff. She had a half dozen key personnel join us, as they were very interested in two main areas: their education presentations, and obtaining an accurate history of

the Vietnam War.

Gerry and I had prepared for this knowing we had one opportunity to make our case with a Combat Arms Army general who served two tours in Vietnam in the Artillery Branch. Gerry served four years in staff positions in a crucial NKP Command and Control Center (Task Force Alpha/Igloo White) and other Intelligence positions at Udorn and Vientiane. I had served as Senior Director of Tactical Air Control Center-North Sector, Monkey Mountain, Vietnam (Rolling Thunder, Barrel Roll, and Steel Tiger Air Battle Command Center 1967-1968); served on the USMC III MAF Intell Staff at Da Nang; flew 20 missions in northern Laos and off Haiphong as Project Director for RIVET GYM Special Intelligence operations.

We had 30 minutes with General Kicklighter, discussing the war and the contributions of those who served outside the Republic. One sentence can make the point for all time: When you think of the American prisoners in POW camps in North Vietnam, where did those prisoners come from? The answer is: Thailand, Guam, and potentially Okinawa, the Philippines, California, and ships at sea. He then made presentations of our official OSD documents which made TLCB a Commemoration Partner and a working part of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

But Gerry and I were prepared for quite a bit more than one sentence. In fact, we had briefings which included the history of “The First Indochina War” followed by political and military events which became the Vietnam War. And when you see the total inclusion of the “Secret War” fought in the air and on the ground in Laos by U.S. personnel during the ten years of Laotian Civil War and North Vietnamese Occupation, it becomes crystal clear that the 50th Anniversary is celebrating the Second Indochina War. We briefed the OSD staff for four hours. General Kicklighter returned and joined us for another short session. At the conclusion, and in the weeks following, they referred to our session as “getting a Masters degree in the Vietnam War.” We achieved success on all points.

Following our formal acceptance into the Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration Partnership Program we decided to create two communications paths to keep our TLCB Members informed. The first to be put into action was when Jerry Karnes, TLCB Communications Chair, created a section of the TLCB Forum dedicated exclusively to this topic. President Sweet appointed me as the Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Chair. And I began writing reports in the new FORUM section at <http://tlc-brotherhood.com/Forum/index.php?board=51.0>. At this writing tonight, 26 April, we have had 23 Topics, with 48 Posts, with 785 views. The second path is via the *Mekong Express Mail*, both hardcopy and electronic. This MEM article, and the associated photos, is the first in a series that will continue as we perform our required duties as Commemoration Partners.

Gerry Frazier is keeping a keen eye on this opportunity for increased Membership. It is part of our program to increase the potential for new TLCB members via networking through the CP membership. As I write this there are now 5,567 CPs

Continued on the next page.

such as us, Veterans with wartime experiences. And being a CP is open to all Americans in accordance with the OSD Application Forms, for example Wal-Mart and all its stores. While the TLCB leadership is building bridges, I want you to know that you as a Member can build bridges too. This program is community-based, so check out the map of CPs and see if there is one near you. http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/partners/partner_map/

John Lorenzen is our TLCB Historian and he is finding a treasure trove of opportunity in this program. For example, as USAF units evolve and gain the benefits of new technology after leaving SEA they become forward-looking at their new mission. Yet they remain proud of their heritage. One case in point is the 553rd Recon Wing, EC-121 "BATCAT" aircraft at Korat RTAFB during the Vietnam War. They have evolved into the new Okinawa-based 353rd Special Operations Group, TALON II, with an airborne mission as an important element of the US Special Operations Command. As I said at our 2013 TLCB Reunion down the road from historic Hurlburt Field, Eg-

lin #9, "we are the TLCB - tied to a particular time and place." John Lorenzen is bringing heritage into play as a means of connecting our 1960s-1970s time and SEA place to new units who shared what we have – and could share their future with us. The Vietnam War Anniversary gives us opportunities we did not have before, if we will only make use of them! This is your portal to keep abreast of what's happening across the country - <http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/>

In conclusion, let me say that the OSD/Anniversary Commemorative Partners Program will actually begin in 2015 – the 50th year since Day One of the Vietnam War, officially. The Program will run for ten years – one year for each year of the Vietnam War, officially. You can count on getting the official word from your TLCB leadership via the TLC Brotherhood FORUM at <http://www.tlc-brotherhood.com/Forum/>

As General Kicklighter's staff was eager to say:
"A GRATEFUL NATION THANKS AND HONORS YOU!"



Assistance, continued from page 6.

Older girls at Thare Orphanage perform Thai dancing show for Christmas visitors who had brought them personal gifts, which is John's fondest Christmas memory.



dered who had connections with the bag manufacturer. The faces of the children portrayed the true

meaning of Christmas in ways I am not capable of putting into words. I always remember that day filled with joy in celebration of love and peace. I always wondered, each time I pored over the pictures in my shoe box, whatever happened to Father Khai and the orphanage at Thare.

Search Engine and Opportunity

One day while using my computer, I decided to test the claim of a new search engine on the web. When I entered the words "Nakhon Phanom," I was sure nothing would be found and I would be eligible to win a prize in their contest. I was wrong.

Funny how your plans change isn't it? I was headed to China by invitation of a Deputy Secretary of the Communist Party. A guide, translator, and transportation would be provided, along with permission to travel anywhere I wanted to go. The offer had been made over dinner a year earlier. My wife, Nancy, and I had assisted a delegation that had come to America to finalize negotiations with my company. They were staying in a motel alone for two weekends. They would never have the opportunity to be in America again, so Nancy and I offered to escort them

Below, Father Lawrence W. Khai at St. Joseph's School, October 1969; 50 km west of Nakhon Phanom.

This fine man was fondly known as "Father Khai" by the GIs because he held a prayer book in one hand and the hand of a small child in the other. He retired as Archbishop in May 2004, and he died in July 2007. Father Khai was a brilliant man of God who grew up in poverty, learned and spoke seven languages, and was loved by all who knew him for his kindness, charity, and humility. May God watch over him. Pictures by John Sweet

around Boston and southern New Hampshire, and they gladly accepted.

I never thought they were serious when they told us, "You are welcome to come to China" until I received a phone call from Sashi a month later, concerning the details. I got to thinking that maybe we could go to Bangkok if we were going to enter China from Hong Kong. Then I discovered that Thai Airways was flying up to NKP several times a week. When that worked out, I knew I was going up to have a look around.

In late June, I left a posting about my pending return trip to Nakhon Phanom on the United States Air Force 50th Anniversary Web Site - PACAF as well as another on the Vietnam Vets Message Board. A week or so later I received an e-mail



See Assistance, continued on page 10.

Assistance, continued from page 9.

from Suttida and David Brown. Suttida is from NKP and now teaches Thai at Princeton University, and her sister was a school teacher in NKP. Suttida kindly offered to assist me in any way, and offered to have her sister meet us at the airport. I then asked her if the orphanage at Thare was still there, and if they could locate Father Khai. She wrote back saying that Suttida would ask her sister to try to locate him and that the orphanage was still there. That same night I dreamed of returning to NKP, and maybe finding Father Khai, who was my only Thai friend that I could remember by name. I woke up when I thought, "If I find him what would I say? Remember when we helped you?"

Fundraising Begins

The very next day I began raising money for the orphanage at Thare, which was to be a donation in memory of the men from NKP who never returned home. That same night I received an e-mail from Dick Anderson, a former member of the 23rd TASS at NKP, who responded to my posting on the Vietnam

Upon arrival, Father Khai picked us up at the airport at Sakon Nakhon and drove us to his residence where breakfast awaited us. We then toured St. Joseph's School which is adjacent. The school today is very modern including a room filled with computers. All grade levels are taught English and computer usage. The children wear red and white uniforms and are extremely well behaved. The school also has a recent addition of a large gymnasium which has not been enclosed on the sides.

The orphanage at Thare stands across the street from the school. The old buildings I remembered in 1969 have been replaced, and a brand new church was also built. One of the Sisters who works at the orphanage was one of the children present when Santa arrived in 1969. Father Khai informed me that former students still speak fondly in remembrance of the American GI's visit to this day.

Most of the orphans who attend St. Joseph's School no longer reside at the orphanage, but rather live with families in the local communities. A family of their own has proven to be far more beneficial to the children; however, some still live at the orphanage as not enough families have been located.



John on rampside of modern Nakhon Phanom Airport terminal in 1997. Under his feet is still the WW2 pierced steel planking (PSP) with greasy stained gravel in the holes.

Vets Message Board. Dick had located several other members of the 23rd TASS over the years, and had a reunion with them at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC. a couple of weeks before. He said that it seemed like a good project for the 23rd TASS guys, and he asked for my address. The next thing I knew, I had checks in the mail from five men I had never met, including Roger Herrick, the brother of Captain James W. Herrick Jr. of the 602nd, who became MIA in October 1969 while I was at NKP. Two weeks later I had raised a thousand dollars and Suttida's sister had found Father Khai and e-mailed his fax number to me. So I faxed off my old pictures of him and me from 28 years ago and received a very warm response which was signed "Your Old Friend in Thailand, Lawrence Khai." Seems he was now Archbishop of Thailand.

Ideas, Keepsakes, and Donations

As I was boarding the plane at NKP, the stones used as underlayment for the PSP (pierced steel planking) caught my eye. They were lying there - covered with red dirt, grease, and oil stains from all those years ago. Somehow their significance became important as a link to a past which will remain in the hearts of all who served there. They also represented the loss of all those who flew off on a mission and never returned. I picked up five stones as keepsakes for each of the guys who had made a contribution to the orphanage and one for myself.

Upon my return to the states, I mailed off the stones. I was contacted by Gene Rossel of the Air Commando Association (ACA), of which I am a member. He asked me to write an article for the ACA Quarterly Newsletter about what it was like to return to NKP.

When I left, the last words I had spoken to Father Khai were that I would try to help the kids more. While writing the article I had an idea! I contacted Mac Thompson and asked him if he knew anyone up country who could go to NKP and pick up a whole box of stones. I figured there must be lots of guys who were at NKP in the Air Commando Association, and the newsletter reached over 6,000 members! All I had to do was exchange stones for donations to help the kids.

Udorn Involved

Tommy Thompson and several other guys drove down from Udorn to Thare, picked up Father Khai, and headed to NKP

See **Assistance**, continued on page 15.

The Springs II: TLCB Reunion 2014

by Les Thompson, Vice President/National Reunion Chairman

Mark your calendars; this year's reunion is the 2nd through the 5th of October in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This will mark the second time in Colorado Springs. The first time was back in 2000.

Our speaker will be Jim "Mule" Parker, his second time as well. He spoke at the 2004 reunion. Jim was a CIA liaison officer assigned to Long Tieng during the "festivities," Mac Thompson's favored description. His subject this year will be from his new book *Timeline Battle for Sky Line Ridge 18 December 1971 to 4 April 1972*. You can find more about him at his website, muleorations.com. Check out his "Rants & Yarns" blog there.

Building on the success of Ft. Walton last year, we will be concentrating on providing plenty of face time for everyone. If you want to explore the local area, there will be brochures and advice available, but no organized tours this year. You will be free to mix and reminisce on your own schedule.

We are planning on holding this year's memorial service at the Forward Air Controller Memorial in Colorado Springs.

This is a great locale and located near the hotel, which will make transportation to and from a lot easier. Here's a link to a website for the memorial: <http://www.ppcf.org/products/forward-air-controllers-fac-memorial>

While in "The Springs," you might want to visit Pikes Peak, Fort Carson, The Air Force Academy, and other attractions here at the very base of the vast Rocky Mountains.

If you are a new member, you will receive a special nametag. This is not for hazing new members! We all want to get to know you and for you to know us, and we will seek you out!

Be sure to bring your wallets and some cool auction items for the famous Assistance auction, and don't forget to pick up some raffle tickets—you just might be the winner of Rosie's Quilt this year. And even if you aren't, **all ticket and auction receipts go to our own Charity: TLCB Assistance!**

The registration form is here in the MEM and on the website, and so is the BX Reunion Shirt order form. We hope to see everyone wearing one of these in "The Springs!"



Hope "Springs" Eternal~Another Chance to Win the QUILT

As summer approaches, anticipation is building for another great reunion of the TLC Brotherhood. For the second time, this year's reunion will be held in Colorado Springs, Colorado. At our year 2000 reunion there, we held our very first quilt raffle to benefit the TLCB Assistance Fund. In the years since, through the generosity of our members, the quilt raffle has raised tens of thousands of dollars to benefit the needy people of Thailand and Laos in the name of our brothers who did not return with us from the war.

Rosie Wheatley, of the TLC Sisterhood, each year crafts a unique, one-of-a-kind quilt to be raffled off at the reunion banquet. As in the past, this year's quilt will have a patriotic theme that will go hand in hand with the reunion theme and venue. The quilt top will consist of 30 twelve-inch star blocks of varying shades of reds, whites, and blues. Each block consists of 47 individual pieces that strike an eye pleasing, intricate design. Five-inch borders in white, decorated with blue appliquéd swags, will bring the finished size to 70" wide by 82" long.

This is the first year of the TLCB's partnership in the Vietnam War 50th Commemorative event by DoD, and it is our hope that we will be allowed to use the official Commemorative seal, made into a patch, to command the center of the quilt appliquéd alongside the TLC Brotherhood patch. Our request for permission to use the seal on the quilt is presently under review by appropriate authority of the 50th Commemorative National Committee. Whether we are granted permission to use the seal or not, this one promises to be another beautiful quilt, a reminder of our 2014 TLCB reunion. Anyone will be proud to have it in their home.

Enclosed in this issue of the MEM is a sheet of ten raffle tickets. Tickets are \$2 each, or \$20 for the whole sheet. To enter the drawing, fill out one or more tickets with your contact information and return them to the address below, along with your check made out to TLC Brotherhood, Inc. In the memo line of your check, please indicate "Quilt Raffle." If you desire more than the 10 tickets on a single sheet, you may photocopy the sheet. There is no limit to how many tickets you may buy. After all, the more you purchase, the better your chances of winning! In fact, to make it as easy as possible, you may simply send your check with a note enclosed stating the number of tickets you want and your contact information. Your tickets will be printed and entered in the drawing on your behalf. What could be easier? Remember, every dollar raised in the raffle goes to the TLCB Assistance Fund. On this, our return to Colorado Springs, please help us make this one a record year!

TLCB Quilt
PO Box 343
Locust Grove GA, 30248



U-10 Crewmembers of the 606th SOS held their first-ever reunion

by Phil French, TLCB #1100

“Only” 45 years after they flew together at NKP way back-in-the-day, they finally got together. Attendees included the U-10 pilots plus a crew chief, a TUOC briefer, and a flight surgeon—all three of whom served as leaflet kickers on our countless over-the-trail psywar drops. Also, attending were

dropping missions.

The reunion’s first full day was filled with a tour of the National Museum of the Air Force’s Restoration Hangar, the Presidential Aircraft Hangar, and the balance of the day reminiscing as we toured the Vietnam era displays in the main museum. Dinner at a Thai restaurant capped the day.

The finale was a reunion banquet held at the Hope Hotel, where attendees and their wives roomed and which served as our hub of activities. Banquet guests included Col and Mrs. Jay Strayer. Jay spoke to us about his participation as an HH-53 pilot in the remarkable Son Tay Prison raid of November, 1970.

Preceding Jay Strayer’s talk, TLCB Membership Chairman, Gerry Frazier, provided an overview of our organization. The theme of camaraderie and the Assistance program were quite well explained by Gerry, and it is hoped the TLCB



The TLCB group of 5, left to right is Dick Saunders, Ron Thurlow, Phil French, Gerry Frazier and Dennis Petersen.

Mr. and Mrs. Gerry Frazier, TLCB Membership Committee chairman, and Don Glittenberg, a former C-130 pilot. Both Gerry and Don passed scrutiny to become honorary *Loudmouth Litterbugs*, the 606th Special Operations Squadron U-10 call sign—which connotes the U-10 Helio’s loud speaker and leaflet

will gain some new members. Five current members attended (see upper photo).

All those making the trip to Dayton found this gathering to be a rewarding, and long overdue, event. Needless to say, the war stories abounded, including many new and quite entertaining ones.



Photo below is the whole group. Most likely some MEM readers will recognize old friends and acquaintances here. Group plans to meet “every 45 years.”



Clean Water, Necessary for Good Life

by Gary Beatty

“To keep the body in good health is a duty, otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind sound and clear”.

The Buddha

Those of us who served in Thailand remember flooded rice paddies, klongs, and monsoons. There was plenty of water. But you didn't dare drink it. Providing clean drinking water is a cost-effective way the TLCB can benefit many people through our assistance program. One of the earliest assistance projects of the TLCB provided funds for a water purification system for Nong Yao Elementary School in Nakhon Phanom province.

My experience as a medic (90270/90250A) with the 56th USAF hospital at Nakhon Phanom (NKP) Royal Thai Air Force Base in 1973-74, affords me a unique perspective of the TLCB clean water assistance projects. Though my primary duties were working in the ER and emergency air med-evacs, I also worked with the 56th Special Operations Wing Medical Civic Action Project (MedCAP) throughout NKP province. On MedCAP operations, we traveled to remote villages to provide primary medical care to the villagers and to gather epidemiological data, including testing village drinking water sources.



Gary Beatty takes blood sample from Thai child, assisted by fellow medic, while Thai health official documents the sample, 1973

In my time in NKP, many villagers lived much as their ancestors had for generations—with no electricity or running water. Drinking water came from hand-operated wells that were frequently contaminated, or from rain captured in large earthen jars.

Though conditions have changed, the problem of fresh drinking water is still a major health issue in that region. Water-borne diseases such as Cholera, Typhoid fever, and

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, phone number, and address changes to us at JKarnes@tlc-brotherhood.com.

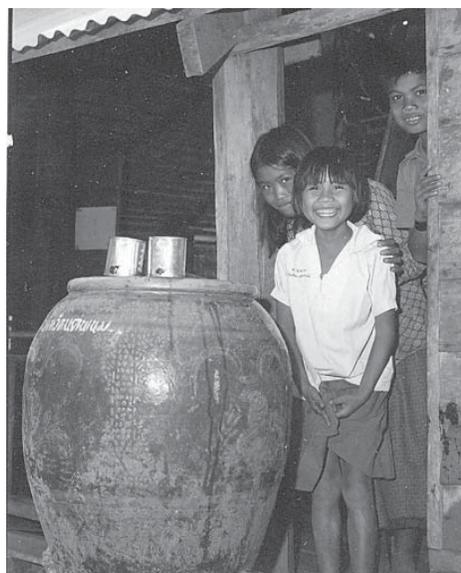


Nong Yao Elementary School Project

This water purification system was provided in part by the TLC Brotherhood Assistance Program as part of the Yang Yao Schhol project, near Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. Photos from TLCB archives.

Hepatitis are prevalent in Thailand. There was a cholera outbreak in Northeast Thailand in 2007, with 166 reported cases. Untreated, cholera can be fatal, particularly in children and infants. The simple expedient of a clean source of drinking water can significantly reduce cholera infection.

Through water purification system projects, the TLCB is uniquely



able to reduce water-borne diseases in the areas reached by our assistance program. If you wish to earmark a contribution to such a project, contact a member of the assistance committee.

Gary Beatty is a Member-at-Large of the TLCB Board of Directors.



Jar for catching rainwater, in rural Nakhon Phanom Province, Thailand. Photo taken in 1973.

TLC Brotherhood, Inc. ELECTION NOTICE:

The election for the TLCB Board of Directors will be held on Saturday, October 4th, 2014, at the DoubleTree Hotel, Colorado Springs. This will be the first order of business during the annual meeting of the corporation.

The nomination period closed on April 30th, and the nominating committee has reported the following nominees for open positions on the Board of Directors. No further nominations will be accepted, but write-in votes are permitted.

For president	John Sweet—Incumbent; uncontested
For treasurer	Bill Tilton—Uncontested
For member at Large	(two positions open; vote for two)
	James Green
	Paul Lee
	Tommy Odiorne
	William Peterson—Incumbent

Candidates were invited to submit biographies to help members make their decisions. These are posted on the TLCB website and are published in this issue of **Mekong Express Mail**, on page 15.

Absentee and Proxy Voting

TLC Brotherhood elections permit absentee voting if proper ballots are received by the published cutoff date at the address given on the form. Please note that absentee ballots are only valid if you do not attend the annual meeting. ***They are not valid ballots for voting in person at the annual meeting.*** Members who are eligible to vote, but are not attending the meeting, may appoint a proxy instead of using the absentee ballot. Voters cannot use both!

Newest Members in the TLC Brotherhood

The members listed below joined between the last issue of the MEM and the 15th of May. You can find more information on our website database. The Mekong Express Mail wishes you all a hearty "Welcome Home."

Member	First	Last	City	State	Email
1585	Clarence	Williams	Burleson	TX	igunsandsons@sbcglobal.net
1586	Glenn	Leming	Delran	NJ	fedagent1070@gmail.com
1587	Henry	Laurent	Cookeville	TN	DonnaAndHank@frontiernet.net
1588	Ronnie	Stripland	Red Oak	TX	
1589	Ronald	Campbell	Aiken	SC	FMX388@gmail.com
1590	Joseph	Koziol	West Linn	OR	josephkoziol2013@gmail.com
1591	Robert	Wood	Pioneer	CA	Woodlocks@volcano.net
1592	Guy	Plumley	Davenport	IA	CaptainGuy51@Gmail.com
1593	Louis	Mayo	Anchorage	AK	EarlMayo31@GCI.net
1594	Jack	Hokenstrom	Ham Lake	MN	Tiden.gar@Gmail.com
1595	Thomas	Turner	Abbeville	SC	MyLogCabin@WCTEL.NET
1596	Manuel	Carlos	El Paso	TX	EPStar1@aol.com
1597	Philip	Swayze	Everett	WA	PhilSwayze@gmail.com
1598	Tom	Nolen	Lockwood	CA	lockwoodwelding@gmail.com
1599	Clarence	Wilson	North Little Rock	AR	Clarence4271@ATT.net
1600	Martin	Kounine	Livingston Manor	NY	MartyKounine@Yahoo.com
1601	Allen	Eakle	Panama City Beach	FL	Al.Eakle@gmail.com
1602	Julius "Chuck"	Sabo	Conneaut	OH	Olddude@suite224.net
1603	Robert	Wiehr	Granite Falls	WA	Robertwiehr450@Yahoo.com
1604	Richard	Higginbotham	Largo	FL	OKIE.58@Hotmail.com

Assistance, continued from page 10.

Royal Thai Airbase. When they arrived and told the base commander what they needed and why, he started collecting the stones from the PSP along with Tommy, Father Khai, and a couple of other WFW vets from post 10249. When the other Thai officers and enlisted men saw their commander picking rocks, they joined in to procure rocks.

(He was Archbishop Khai by then, but I always called him Father Khai since he looked after the kids at Thare personally till the day he died. He is buried across the street from St. Joseph's School Orphanage.)

In the meantime, I'd contacted Canadian International Airlines, the airline which I had flown over on, and asked them if they would ship the box of rocks free of charge to me. They agreed to deliver them directly to where I worked in Gloucester, Massachusetts, as their Boston cargo supervisor lived in the next town.

Best Laid Plans

All went according to plan until the Thai Base Commander gave the rocks to his grandsons and had them washed and cleaned. "Oh No," Tommy said, "We need the ones with the red dirt, oil stains, and grease." So they tossed them out and collected new ones all over again with the Thai's mumbling about crazy farangs. Once reaching Bangkok, Thai Customs held up the package which was shipped "Rush Overnight Air" for several hours while they attempted to figure out what was the contraband in the package of rocks.

"I don't want a Rock"

When the ACA Newsletter hit the press, letters started coming with donations. Almost every letter said "I don't want a rock, but here are funds for the kids." I sent the rocks anyway; I figured they might have some associated pain to overcome, and the rocks might really help with those memories. True enough, the same guys sent pictures of their rock back to me; one mounted in a shadow box on his wall, one encapsulated in a glass ball with his plane engraved on it, and numerous other pictures of how they treasured their "unwanted" rock.

Genesis of TLCB Assistance

When a group of internet-connected TLC veterans gathered at Dayton and voted to form an organization, it seemed only natural to make our work for Thare a major part of our aims. And when we incorporated, we designated Assistance in TLC one of our four official objectives. Soon the crew in Udorn found worthy projects and our early work flourished until an untimely and massive stroke incapacitated Tommy Thompson. By then work in Nakhon Phanom Province had already begun when we and John Middlewood found each other, and within a few years Mac Thompson, Jim Michener, Art Crisfield, Jeff Hudgens, and others, whose work has been documented in these pages, have carried on and greatly expanded our Assistance activities.

From the start our Assistance program has been dedicated to the comrades we left in Southeast Asia, as they live within our hearts and memories till we join them on the other side of The Wall. Brothers Forever.....



Candidate Biographies for the TLCB Election

The TLC Brotherhood election for board members is scheduled for the annual meeting of the corporation, to be held on Saturday morning, October 4, 2014, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Candidates were nominated by members and by the appointed ad hoc Nominating Committee, whose recommendations were approved by the board of directors for the official slate. The nominees are listed in the official notice on the previous page. All nominees were invited to submit biographies for publication here and on the TLC Brotherhood Website. Submitted biographies are printed here, by position, and alphabetically.

James Green for board member-at-large

My name is Jim Green and I am running for Member At Large. I have been a member since 1999 with reunion attendance since 2007.

My tours in Thailand started in 1965 with TDYs from Kadena. In 1966, I was at Thakli for two months then PCA'd to Korat in May 1966. Three months after returning to the States, I returned to Ubon for another year. I spent 1970-71 in Nam as a gunner on AC-119Gs and UH-1P/Ns. In 1974-75, I found myself back in Thailand at Korat flying on the AC-130 and covering the evacuations of Saigon and Phnom Phen and helping recover the SS Mayaguez.

I believe strongly in what our organization represents and the mission we support. Our assistance to children in the areas we served in is a positive way we can honor those with whom we served. I consider it an honor to have been nominated and will do my best to represent the membership if elected.

Jim Green, CMSgt, USAF, Retired
Member # 265

Paul Lee for board member-at-large

I have been involved with the TLCB from the first, beginning long before we adopted the name TLC Brotherhood. I worked with Bill Tilton, John Sweet, and many others to formalize our group as a registered non-profit charitable organization in 1999. I served as the first vice president and currently I am serving as treasurer. I strongly believe in and support the objectives stated on the reverse of our membership cards. As for TLC service, I was assigned to the 23rd TASS at NKP where I was an O-2 mechanic in 1969. I retired from the Air Force in 1984 after 20 years of service. My retired rank is MSgt (E7).

see Biographies on page 16.

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Tommy Odiorne for board member-at-large

I am Tommy A. Odiorne, better known to you all as O.D. I have been a member of the TLCB for 12 or so years as I am not exactly sure when I joined. But belonging to the TLCB has been one of the best things that ever happened to me in my lifetime. I enjoy the comradeship and the sharing of experiences and ideas that has taken place over the years. The TLCB has been a great support organization for me also, I want it to continue and want to make it better.

I am an old Southeast Asian hand, and if things go right I will be retiring to Thailand next year with my Thai wife. I first arrived in Bangkok in May of 1967, first working in the Area Communications Center in the Capital Hotel, providing communication for DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI, the folks who provided the military personal and logistics and ammo to support the secret war in Laos. In mid-1968 I moved on over to the JUSMAGTHAI Communications Center located on Satorn Road. Not wanting to leave Southeast Asia in 1969, I volunteered and was accepted as part of Project 404 and went to Vientiane Laos to work in the Attaché Commcenter located in the Na Hai Dieo Compound for 2 years. Then I was on to Long Binh Vietnam for 18 months in 1971, first working in the Russell Army Major Relay and then at the USARV TCC. I spent my last 6 months in Vietnam on Ton Son Nhut working in the MACV TCC. Then it was back to Bangkok in March of 1973 where I went back to work in the JUSMAGTHAI TCC until July of 1976.

After returning to the states in 1976, I was a Drill Sergeant for three years at Ft. Leonard Wood, a COMSEC/NRAS custodian along with being a Squadron Commo and Regimental Commo chief for the 11th ACR in Fulda Germany, and finally finishing my 20 year active duty career as NCOIC of Willard Training Area at Ft. Gordon. But I wasn't done with the army as I would spend the next 26 years of my life working for them as a Department of the Army Civilian.

I first met and married my wife in Bangkok, we had three children which produced eight grandchildren, and the oldest one of those has added three great grandkids to my resume. Besides the TLCB, I also belong to the American Legion, the VFW, Bangkok post number 9951, the 1st Signal Bde Association, and the 11th ACR Blackhorse Association. One of my goals will be to get more members interested in posting and reading the posts in the forum. That, and expanding the membership, along with making those who join and all the current members feel at home. For them to know if problems arise there are those old comrades around to give them a helping hand or a pat on the back.

William Peterson, M.A., M.S. (incumbent) for board member-at-large

TLCB Board Member at Large

TLCB Public Relations Chair, TLCB Vietnam 50th Anniversary Chair

Bill Peterson, known by his Vietnam nickname as "Willi Pete," seeks re-election to another term as your TLC Brotherhood Board Member at Large (TLCB MAL).

The duties of a TLCB MAL are to serve as a full Member of the Board of Directors but as one who represents every TLCB Member worldwide. If you have a problem, a suggestion, a question – and you want an official response, I am here to represent you and your interests at a Board Meeting. After you and I discuss your position and you are convinced that I understand what it is that you need from the Board or TLCB Officers, I will represent you at the official meeting. We will pursue a resolution of the issue and I will get back to you with the Board's decision and the reasons for it. My perspective is to do the best I can for the organization as a whole.

For those of you who don't know me, here's a very brief personal history. I served 15 years in the U.S. Air Force and was selected for Lt Colonel. I served two tours in NORAD/Air Defense Command as a Weapons Controller/Senior Director; one tour in Vietnam 1967-1968, one tour as a USAF Security Service squadron Operations Officer and Commander with 1 RC-130, and two ground Detachments; four years in the Pentagon Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff/Intelligence; one tour as the Director National Security Agency Representative to the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Air Force Matters. I was selected to serve on the National Intelligence Estimates Team at CIA three times. I was also a Member of the CIA Camp David Accords Negotiating Team with the Government of Israel.

I volunteered for duty in Vietnam and was selected for the Top Secret/SCI Tactical Air Control Center—North Sector working as Senior Director for real-time air battle management of Rolling Thunder (North Vietnam), Barrel Roll (northern Laos) and Steel Tiger (southern Laos). We were located atop Monkey Mountain, 6 miles from Da Nang Air Base, RVN. In addition to air power operations in the North, my unit was immersed in Tet '68 in I Corps. In March and April 1968 I volunteered for classified missions flying north of the PDJ and was selected to serve as Field Project Officer, RIVET GYM EC-121D SIGINT operations. I flew 20 missions, 223 hours, in 42 days.

I am a contributor to the TLCB Forum on a weekly basis, and have written four lengthy articles for the MEM. I have served as the TLCB Public Relations Chairman. And recently I have been appointed Chairman of the TLCB Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration. I have served in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and upper Tonkin Gulf off Haiphong. I would like to continue to serve your interests as your TLCB Board Member at Large.

Willi Pete

Bill Tilton for treasurer

My main qualification for this position is my experience with the TLCB, having previously served three two-year terms as treasurer. I was also the founding president of the Brotherhood and served the limit of three consecutive terms in that position. While I have never had an accounting course, I have adapted the Excel spreadsheet created by Dusty Henthorn when he was treasurer, so that it provides the management information the board needs and for computation of the annual tax return to the IRS. Since Paul Lee was elected treasurer two years ago, I have continued to support him by maintaining this spreadsheet.

I joined the Air Force in 1961 and served twice in Thailand, in 1966 as a FAC at Nakhon Phanom and one tdy to U'Tapao in 1972 as a KC-135 crew commander. I retired at the Pentagon as a manpower management officer in 1981. I live in Locust Grove, Georgia and by the time of the election I will be 76. My wife, Thelma, and I maintain and operate the TLCB Exchange, as requested by then-president Frank Marsh. I also support editor John Harrington of the *Mekong Express Mail* by doing the layout and printing MEM mailing labels and other related tasks.

