



Mekong Express Mail

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THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

The Last Days of the Republic of Vietnam - A Civilian's Experience

By Anthony Tambini

As a civilian working for Northrop International Aircraft in South Vietnam from May of 1972 through April of 1975, I believe I had a view of the final days of the Vietnam War that perhaps should be shared. Although American military withdrawals were under way in May of 1972, there was still a relatively small contingent of American military personnel in country. American civilian contractors were also being withdrawn as the American experience in the country was coming to an end. One memorable event in 1972 concerning the American military at Bien Hoa centered on two transit U.S. Marine A-4 Skyhawks. These two aircraft were loaded with bombs, and as they started their takeoff roll, the runway came under enemy rocket fire. With the aircraft rolling down the runway, both pilots ejected; as they descended in their chutes, the pilot-less jets continued rolling down the runway, gradually coming to rest in the grass near the end of the runway, engines still running. Quite an amazing sight!

Bien Hoa Air Base, some thirty miles from Saigon, was the base of operations for the Republic of Vietnam Air Force's (VNAF) 23rd Tactical Wing. The wing had a variety of aircraft assigned, A-1 Skyraiders, F-5 Freedom Fighters, and UH-1 helicopters. In May of 1972, the Skyraiders were in long-term

storage as there was a problem with keeping sufficient amounts of 115/145 aviation gasoline available to operate them. The F-5 contingent consisted of the single seat F-5A and dual seat F-5B. Both were used as ground attack aircraft in support of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). The UH-1s were used as both gunships, infantry assault, and air evacuation of the wounded.

South Vietnamese (VNAF) F-5 after a direct rocket hit in its revetment. Photos by the author



During 1972 we witnessed Arc Light strikes in the mountainous area quite some distance from the base. You could see the bomb strikes sending boiling flames and black clouds into the air. You could feel air pressure from the blasts shortly after the flames rose into the sky. All during my time at Bien Hoa the base came under 107mm, 122mm, 144mm rocket attack. There was also accurate mortar fire. One evening the base was hit by a salvo of rockets, destroying several fully loaded F-5A aircraft. Bright blue flames from the 500-pound bombs shot into the sky as the bombs cooked off, one after the other. For those who have not witnessed a bomb cooking off, the thick steel that comprises the bomb's shell blows apart like a banana being peeled. Huge slabs of metal fragments are thrown hundreds of feet, tearing through anything in their path.

In 1974 the VNAF started receiving new F-5E and F-5F aircraft. These were a bit more sophisticated than the earlier A and B versions. One very important fea-

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May be remains of a fighter that burned after double flameout on takeoff from Da Nang, owing to fuel contamination (water).

ture of the new aircraft was radar. F-5A and F-5B did not have airborne radar. The F-5E and F-5F had the AN/APQ-159 X-Band radar with a lead computing optical sight linked to it. As they came into the VNAF inventory, the F-5Es were sent to Da Nang to relieve the F-5As on alert duty. The VNAF maintained two F-5s on 5-minute alert and two on 15-minute alert at Da Nang. They stood alert at the same pads that the USAF used during its stay at the base.

In January of 1975 a few of us were asked to travel to Da Nang and assist the VNAF in readying several F-5s that were down for numerous maintenance and logistics problems. These aircraft had also been used as cannibalization aircraft when required. Knowing that the base might fall, the VNAF wanted to get as many aircraft operational as possible to be flown not only in combat, but also out of the northern military region of the country. Agreeing to go, I traveled to Da Nang aboard an Air America C-46. It is amazing how peaceful the Vietnamese countryside looked as we droned north, following the coastline most of the time.

The flight arrived at Da Nang Air Base in the early afternoon. Although the base aircraft contingent consisted of F-5 fighter-bombers, A-37 attack aircraft, and a variety of helicopters, it was not the busy base that I had visited many times flying in cargo from the States as a flight engineer on the C-124. However, looking around, I did notice that most of the buildings had been hit by enemy fire. There were no eating facilities on the base and no working restrooms. This was completely understandable, as the Vietnamese did not have the personnel or the support structure to staff and maintain such facilities while they were fighting for their lives and country.

Monkey Mountain, the most memorable site near Da Nang, was now the site of ARVN artillery batteries. At the end of the runway was a VNAF RF-5A that had crashed recently due to water in the fuel system. The aircraft had climbed a few hundred feet, when both engines flamed out causing it to crash into a sunken area at the end of the runway that had been filled with

rainwater. The pilot, on his way to photograph enemy troop movements near the base, died in the crash. Occasionally a VNAF C-130 would land bringing in supplies and taking out non-critical personnel.

In the city of Da Nang, I stayed in the outskirts of the city at what was called the Korean Hotel, a relatively small place with perhaps 10 rooms and a small kitchen/bar. Members of the Korean Army rented the hotel during their stay years before. Each evening we would contact the American Consulate and be briefed on the current status of the war in our area. Da Nang city itself appeared deserted. You could see very few Vietnamese civilians on the streets. Few civilian vehicles traveled the streets. Not many shops were open for business.

Work on the derelict aircraft started immediately upon our arrival. There were five F-5s that needed immediate attention. Three F-5As and two F-5Es sat in the covered revetments near the alert pad. All were in various stages of disassembly. Needing parts, we gained access to a building we were told was what used to be an American Air Force forward supply point for the alert aircraft. Inside we found numerous parts for F-4s and a few parts that we needed for the F-5s we were working on. For other required parts, we contacted Bien Hoa with our daily wish list. Parts that were needed were placed on aircraft that had been previously scheduled to fly to Da Nang and flown to us with other cargo that the VNAF and ARVN needed.

Work on the aircraft progressed at a steady pace. Near the end of February, we had four of the five aircraft ready for flight. The final aircraft, a brand new F-5E, was down for a directional gyro. All during our stay, there would be a weekly scramble. The klaxon would sound and the alert aircraft would fire up, taxi out, and be airborne in a very short period of time. One day in late February we were told that at or about noon the alert siren would go off and we were to stay in the covered revetments until the "all clear" sounded. The alert sounded and shortly thereafter we heard the sound of jet engines overhead. Wondering what was going on, we eased out of the revetment to catch a quick glimpse of two bright silver Mig-21s with North Vietnamese stars under their wings circling overhead in a race-track pattern. After two laps they departed the area. The VNAF

See Last Days, continued next page.

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

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

alert aircraft stayed in their revetments. We assumed that the MiGs were out to photograph the base, which they would soon occupy.

Starting in late February the base came under constant rocket attack. As we drove through the city and past the river we witnessed numerous barges floating down the river, all loaded with ARVN troops fleeing from what they foresaw as the imminent fall of the city and northern area of the country. None carried much in the way of personal equipment. All looked defeated. In late February the base was hit at night by both rocket and mortar fire. Unfortunately, a 144mm rocket landed directly in front of a fully loaded F-5E that was parked in a covered revetment. Standing guard at the nose of the aircraft was a young VNAF friend of mine, who was killed instantly.

All during our stay, right up to early March, the American Consulate briefed that all was well. On the evening of March 1, the base was hit with about 40 rockets. On the evening of March 2, we were informed that we would be evacuated the next day. The following morning we were taken to the base civilian terminal where vast crowds of Vietnamese civilians were waiting to board flights out of the area. We witnessed World Airways 727 flights landing, taxiing to the ramp, and before they could get stopped, the Vietnamese would rush the planes in an effort to board. Some women carried babies in their arms. God bless World Airways and their brave pilots and crews for taking care of those in need.

Our Air America C-46 arrived and we boarded with a planeload of Vietnamese civilians, mostly women and children. The aircraft was so full that a few of us sat on the floor throughout the flight back to Saigon. You could hear metallic pings on

F-5A that returned to Bien Hoa AFB after a combat support mission. It took a Strela (Soviet shoulder-fired missile) up the tailpipe. The Strela took out the utility hydraulic system but the pilot lowered the landing gear using emergency extension (mechanical unlock of the uplock hooks). Nevertheless, the gear folded on landing.



the fuselage as we lifted off the runway and climbed for altitude. The only sound in the cabin of the aircraft was the drone of the two radial engines. Everyone was lost in his or her thoughts. The flight landed at Tan Son Nhut, where we were greeted by the Red Cross, offering paper cups filled with orange juice. We headed down to the Gray House (the Air America compound) for more potent brew. A few days later Da Nang fell to the North Vietnamese Army.

Saigon was alive with activity. It was as if the war were in some far-off distant country. The city was full of life; motorcycles flew through the streets and taxis carried people around, whizzing through traffic with ease. Civilians walked at a pleasant pace through the city, shopping and apparently enjoying life. It was a bit disheartening in a way to see this and to know that brave Vietnamese were dying in the countryside to support the lifestyle of the Saigon residents.

The next day we went back to work at Bien Hoa, but were told that all Northrop personnel would be required to live in Saigon. This was because Bien Hoa was under almost constant rocket and mortar attack. I got a room at a hotel near Tan Son Nhut. We would live in Saigon and travel by small van to Bien Hoa. On April 4, during our trip back to Saigon, we witnessed the smoldering remains of the C-5A that had crashed near the airport. The aircraft was carrying civilians and a large number of Vietnamese babies out of the country.

On two separate occasions in early 1975, two VNAF F-5A fighter-bombers were struck by Soviet Strela shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles. Both aircraft were hit in the tailpipes, shredding the variable exhaust nozzles and blowing holes in the aircraft. However, the pilots of both aircraft were able to fly back to Bien Hoa. One landed and taxied back to the parking ramp. The other sustained damage to the utility hydraulic system. When the aircraft landed the gear collapsed.

On April 8 we witnessed the takeoff of a flight of four F-5Es loaded with bombs. We noticed that one of the aircraft appeared to be having trouble at the end of the runway. At first it appeared as though the nose gear would not "hike." The F-5E and F-5F had a nose landing strut that could be extended for takeoff, similar to naval aircraft). However, after the first three in the flight of four took off, the lone remaining aircraft started down the runway and lifted off without problems. This aircraft abruptly turned and headed in the opposite direction from the other three. Thinking that he was aborting, we watched as he disappeared towards Saigon. We later found out that he had attempted, unsuccessfully, to bomb the presidential palace, then defected to the North Vietnamese.

On April 8 the rice lift started. Contractor flights from Tan Son Nhut to Phnom Penh started. Douglas DC-8Fs from World Airways and The Flying Tiger Line were loaded with logistics supplies, primarily rice, then

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flown to the Cambodian capital, which was by then under siege. As a point of interest, I believe that the Associate Publisher and Editor of *Air Classics Magazine*, Mr. Michael O'Leary, was one of the many pilots who flew missions into the beleaguered city.

During early April, the enemy placed explosives on the Cau Hoa An bridge crossing the Na Be River into Bien Hoa. The explosion took place in the early morning hours. It dropped the center section of the bridge, rendering it unusable. Near the middle of the month, a VNAF C-130 was on its takeoff roll from Bien Hoa on a resupply mission, when the prop on the number one engine failed and threw a blade into the cargo compartment. The engine failed and the aircraft flew up the side of a small hill near the runway. Amazingly the aircrew walked off the aircraft.

After three years in Vietnam, I departed on April 15 and flew to Thailand to be with my wife and daughter. Day after day we would read newspaper accounts of VNAF pilots flying aircraft into Thailand. Some landed at bases in Thailand. Others landed on roadways after running out of fuel. After a three-

month stay in Thailand, we all flew back to San Francisco.

Years later, I would meet some of the Vietnamese that I had worked with. In the early 1990s, while working for Northrop in the Los Angeles area, I was invited to a wedding. The bride was the daughter my friend, the F-5 maintenance chief at Bien Hoa.

As a one-time employee of World Airways at the Oakland International Airport, the airline sent me a copy of "*A Random Selection of Media Coverage plus Letters to Edward J. Daly Commenting on World Airways Activities in Southeast Asia March, April, May 1975.*" The book is a keepsake that will be passed on to my grandsons, with a reminder of how our country abandoned a fledgling democracy to communist tyranny, but also how the persistence of some men can produce good out of a very bad situation.

Anthony (Tony) Tambini served with 41st TEWS/355TFW Takhli, Thailand 1966-67,

25th TFS/8th TFW Ubon, Thailand 1968-69, C-124 Flight Engineer, 1969-71 (USAFR) and as a civilian contractor at Bien Hoa/Da Nang/Tan Son Nhut, Vietnam 1972-75.

Elephants hauled equipment to map Thailand (in 1957)

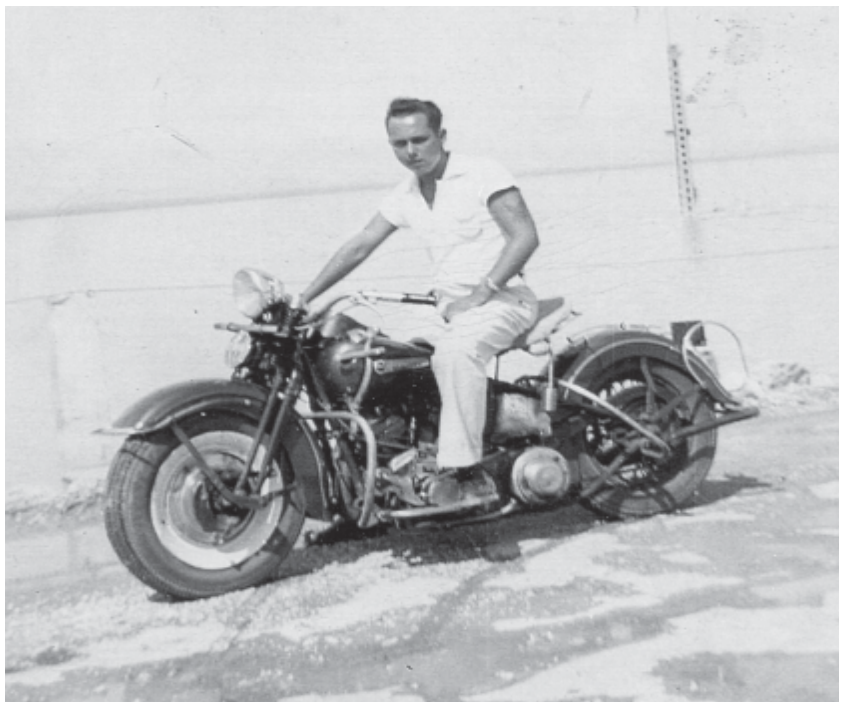
MEM interviews Bob Freudenthal

Did you ever wonder where the military forces got such great maps of places like Laos and North Vietnam? Browse Dusty Henthorn's "Map Project" web site some time. There is a link from www.TLC-Brotherhood.org. It seems amazing that they could have gathered so much detail about such remote and in some cases unfriendly areas.

MEM recently met a TLC veteran at a community aviation event and soon learned that he is "one of us." Bob Freudenthal, originally from New York City, readily agreed to tell some of his story for the benefit of our members. He lived and served in Thailand at a time when many of us were in grade school or younger, and for some of us, before we were even born. He served in the US Army in Thailand for seven months in 1957.

Bob's interest in airplanes started early. When he went to high school, his parents allowed him to commute from their home in the Bronx, New York, to an aviation-oriented, technical public high school in Manhattan. He remembers that one of their required projects was to build a scale aircraft wing, with fabric over ribs and a sheet-metal aileron. He had that wing for years before he gave it to an admiring relative.

In 1953 Bob enlisted in the Army and got sent to helicopter flight training. His timing was very bad, unfortunately, because the Korean War ended and the Army cut his class back by 75%.



Bob on his 1937 Harley Davidson during training in the US. Photos from the author's personal albums.

See **Mapping**, continued page 6.

Reunion Quilt Update

by Bob Wheatley

Brothers, we have reached mid-year already, and work on the quilt for the annual fundraiser raffle is well under way. As described in the March edition of the MEM, the American Space Program provides the theme for this year's project. Individual quilt blocks will commemorate various historic moments in the U.S. space program, beginning with the first manned flights through the more recent Space Shuttle missions. Hand assembled and sewn by seamstress Rosie Wheatley of the TLC Sisterhood with Tender Loving Care. The machine quilted finished product will make an eye-grabbing conversation piece, a one-of-a-kind work you can be proud to display in your home. The winning ticket will be drawn at the banquet during the annual TLCB reunion. You need not be present at the drawing to win.

You will find enclosed a sheet of ten tickets in this edition of the MEM. As in the past, tickets are priced at \$2 each, or \$20 for a full sheet. There is no limit to the number of tickets you may purchase. It takes only one to win, but of course the more tickets you buy, the greater your chances of having yours drawn. Remember, all funds raised by the raffle go to the TLC Assistance Fund to aid the needy children of Thailand in the name of our brothers who did not return. Whether you pur-

chase one ticket or a hundred, every dollar counts, and *every cent of every dollar goes to the intended beneficiaries*. Should you wish to purchase more than ten tickets, you may photocopy the enclosed sheet. We want to make it very easy for you to participate. If you wish to purchase a large number of tickets, but do not want the hassle of copying and filling out numerous sheets, we will be more than happy to make out tickets in your name and enter them on your behalf. Some folks use address labels on each ticket.

Send your tickets filled out with your contact information or send your order for a specific number of tickets for entry on your behalf. Make the check payable to *TLCB Inc.* In the memo section of your check write your member # and "Assistance Quilt Raffle". Send checks and tickets to

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

The 2009 reunion and the drawing will be upon us before we know it. Do not procrastinate! Send your entry today.

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

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

Always write *payment purpose* on memo line.

Dues (\$25 per year) **Student Assistance Fund**
Assistance donation **BX purchase**
Monument donation **Medical Fund.....etc.**

Reunion 2009: SPACE COAST of Florida

TLCB tax return and board minutes: On web site, in *members only* section.



The "jungle" village used by helicopters for forward support of Army mapping operations. Above and at bottom of page.

Bob did not make the cut but he stayed in the Army and soon held two aircraft mechanic MOSs; he was qualified to work on both rotary and fixed-wing aircraft airframes and engines.

Once he was trained, Bob was assigned to the 29th Engineers Survey Base, supporting the Army Map Service, Far East, which was working on a massive project to map the entire Far East. In 1957 he joined the Thailand unit, which had seven months to go on a three-year deployment.

It would be fascinating to know where, exactly, they were working at that time, but



Above, DeHavilland L-20 "Beaver" at Don Muang hangar. Below, for departure in C-124.



Below, Army aircraft mechanics in Don Muang workshop, preparing supplies for departure. Note 3/4 ton truck behind them.



Bob does not think he ever knew. What he did know is that it was “jungle,” and took about 45 minutes to get there in an L-20 (Beaver). He did mention that the trip included some flying over the beaches and that the ocean was on the right, so we may guess that the areas they were then mapping may have been in the direction of Cambodia from Bangkok.

Bob’s base unit lived in the Bang Kapi neighborhood of Bangkok, where JUSMAG had its compound also. The contrast between JUSMAG and the AMS funding was evident, he says. Every person assigned to JUSMAG seemed to have a new vehicle, while AMS had one old Jeep and an old truck, neither of which had reliable brakes. There were also some Navy personnel at this site.

Not all of the AMS personnel lived at Bang Kapi, of course. Bob and a few other mechanics worked at Bangkok’s Don Muang Airport, on the military side, in an old metal hangar. Their job was to support the field personnel who lived and worked at the “jungle” site, from which surveyors were deployed and supported by red and white H-13 helicopters to hilltops and mountain tops and other geographically significant sites for the purpose of precisely mapping the terrain and adding the features like villages, streams, swamps and towers. Each day the H-13s would drop the surveyors off in the morning and then go back and pick them up at day’s end. Sometimes they also used elephants to move crews and equipment around. One of the more interesting pieces of equipment the surveyors used was a radio-ranging device, called a telerometer, which used radar principles to measure distances exactly. In those days this device was bulky and heavy, and probably very expensive, but could be carried by an H-19.

At Don Muang they maintained the red and white L-20 Beavers, which served as aerial trucks to haul supplies of all kinds to the forward location on a daily basis. Some days Bob or other mechanics would ride along to help with the work of loading and unloading. On other days he would stay at Don Muang to work on whichever L-20 did not fly that day. Cargo included oil, gasoline, rations, beer, and especially the all-important mail. About once every month or two a C-124 Globemaster (Old Shaky) would arrive at Don Muang with supplies for AMS.

Some missions were anything but routine. For example, AMS once supported the Thai government, which was studying an area for a large hydroelectric dam project. They took the passenger entry door off an L-20 and had the Thai photographer sit in the doorway. Though he and Bob had safety straps on, they had Bob sit behind the photographer with his arms around his waist to make sure he did not fall out as they swooped around over the trees and hills making the survey.

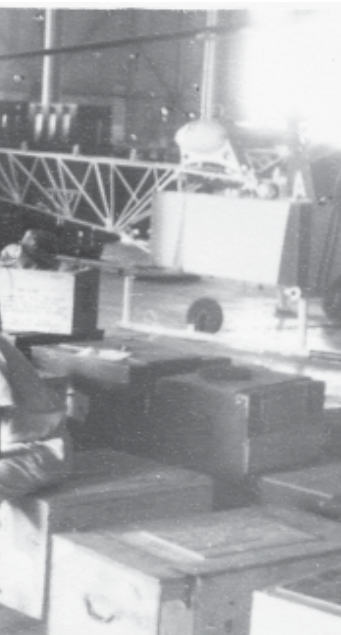
Operating out of Don Muang meant being near the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF). This was only 12 years after World War II, and the RTAF was still using JN-4 “Jennies” for training. They also had Navy “Bearcats” that had been given to them by the U.S.



L-20 prepared



parts and



Sailors rented (or maybe not) for JUSMAG party at Ban Kapi, near Bangkok.

see **Mapping**, continued on page 8



Bell H-13 used for mapping support out of Jungle village.

It was spring when Bob arrived in Bangkok, so he got to enjoy the summer monsoon. Many of our members will recall the daily warm rains and steaming humidity of Southeast Asia at that time of year. Life at Ban Kapi was good, but sometimes there were challenges. For example, after a really heavy rain-storm they had to wade in up to a foot of water to get to their hotel, and when they got to higher ground, they immediately checked for leeches since much canal water was mixed in with the floodwaters.

During this short period, Bob recalled, they did visit Pattaya Beach, south of Bangkok and very close to Sattahip. But this celebrity beach did not impress him. He says the water was too warm and it was full of jellyfish.

Thai food was very popular at Bang Kapi, and Bob still makes fried rice occasionally, the way he learned to make it 52 years ago. There were the familiar food carts to eat from also, but Bob mostly stuck to rice and boiled foods. Unlike many of his buddies, he only got "the bug" once. It was not for nothing that they referred to those vendors as "dysentery carts."

JUSMAG held service club parties at least once each month, and some of these got pretty wild. One time one of the men rented or borrowed a samlor (pedicab) and rode it around inside the club (see photo).

Rumors started to fly as the end of the mapping operation drew near. The surest one was that they would go to New Guinea next and work from an aircraft carrier because of the danger

Right, C-124 transport at Don Muang to carry Army mapping unit to next project.

of headhunters on that uncivilized island. However, the New Guinea operation was cancelled and they were sent to Korea instead. Their mission in Korea was to site short-range guided missiles around the perimeter of Osan AFB. These had to be carefully surveyed for optimal protection.

When the Korean job was completed, the unit packed up again and left out of Pusan AFB on a CAT C-46. His vivid memory of the departure is a surprisingly long takeoff roll. The unit moved to AMS headquarters at Camp Drake, at the town of Jujo, near Tokyo, Japan. At Jujo the AMS produced their paper maps right there. The Army Security Agency (ASA) compound was next to them, but of course they could not enter that top-secret facility. While in Japan, Bob was involved in an H-19 mishap. After an oil change, a mechanic had left an oil plug un-safetied and it worked its way out during a flight, allowing all the engine oil to drain. There was very little warning when

the engine seized, but the pilot put the boxy helicopter into an autorotation right away. They probably would have had a smooth landing, but at the last moment they had to extend the glide to make it over some telephone wires, and the landing in the next field was firm enough to bend the landing gear and do some other minor damage. Of course, oil starvation destroyed the engine.

Bob left the Army in September of 1959 and went to work for PANAM World Airways the very next month. He worked in jet engine overhaul for PANAM in New York until the company closed its doors 32 years later. He has been a truck driver since then, but that has become hard work to get in these financially difficult times. Bob has been forced into retirement at the young age of 73, living now in the far suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia



Time to *REGISTER* for our Space Coast 2009 Reunion

by Gary Beatty, Reunion Committee chairman

—at the **Radisson Resort in Cape Canaveral, Florida.** The Resort is 45 minutes from Orlando airport, which has plenty of shuttle services to the Canaveral area. My goal this year is to keep the cost as low as possible, so registration is only \$10 per person. This is possible because of the great deal we are getting from the Radisson Resort—so let's have a good turnout and fill our entire block of rooms.

Make your room reservations directly with the Radisson at either 800-333-3333, or the local number (321) 784-0000. (I recommend the local number). **BE SURE TO TELL THEM YOU ARE WITH THE TLCB.** If you encounter ANY difficulty making a reservation, let me know. Here is their web site,

<http://www.radisson.com/capecanaveralfl>

The rate is \$109 (+ tax) per night. This rate is good for your entire stay, both before and after the reunion dates - so if you want to parlay the reunion with a vacation in the area, you can take advantage of the rate, which is lower than any you will find along the beaches. The Resort stays booked and will only hold our block of rooms until September 1st. After that, the rate will still be the same—if there are rooms available. So do not wait until the last minute to make your reservation.

Schedule

The meeting/hospitality room will be open from noon Thursday, October 1st, through the memorial service on Sunday. All events take place in the meeting room. The agenda is as follows:

Thursday—1200 hrs - ? —Registration, meet and greet. Meals on your own. I will have a list of local restaurants.

Friday, daytime—trip to Kennedy Space Center, time to be determined. Meals on your own.

Friday evening, 2000 hrs— Assistance Auction

Saturday, daytime—0900 hrs—Business Meeting.

Saturday evening—1900 hrs—Banquet

Sunday—time and location to be announced—Memorial Service



The cost of the Kennedy Space Center excursion is still undetermined because I am working on getting a special discount rate and free transportation to/from KSC to keep the cost down. If you want to go, be sure to indicate that on the registration form, so I know how many to expect. You can pay at the time of the tour. KSC is an all-day tour.

You will also see that the entree choices for the banquet are a little different this year. In addition to the usual two choices,

you can have the all-you-can-eat seafood buffet that is served each Saturday evening at the hotel in the restaurant adjacent to our meeting room. The banquet staff is allowing us to have it as an option. You will need to serve yourself from the buffet, but if you like seafood, I can tell you from experience that the buffet is outstanding. **Please include the payment for the banquet with your registration.**

I am still working on getting a speaker for the banquet and am attempting to get former astronaut, USMC BG Charles Bolden, the new NASA Administrator, who is reported to have spent time as a pilot based out of Nam Phong. This is very tentative for now and will depend on his schedule. If Bolden is not available, I have some other interesting prospects—including one whose combat exploits were part of a major movie.

We will, of course, have our own cash bar. For those of you who have never attended a TLCB reunion before—we supply the alcohol, mixers, and snacks. You pay a flat, very reasonable, fee for drinks during the entire reunion—and the profits go to offset reunion costs, or to the Assistance Fund.

The registration form is enclosed with your MEM. You can download it from the TLCB Web site. Payment must be by check, payable to the TLCB, and sent with your registration form to:

TLCB
PO Box 343
Locust Grove GA 32408

Nomination Policy

Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood, Inc.

The following policy was adopted by the Board of Directors on May 15, 2009

I. Purpose

A. Intent – It is the intent of this policy to make the nomination process as fair and open as possible by establishing clear procedures for the membership and the Nominating Committee.

B. This policy shall be used by the annually selected Chairman and members of the Nominating Committee to determine various dates.

C. This policy shall lay out standards for biographical and/or campaign material to be reproduced by the Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood (hereafter referred to as the TLCB).

D. This policy shall provide guidance for the operation of the Nominating Committee.

E. This policy shall define how a nomination is made and transmitted.

F. This policy shall define an appeals process for the handling of disputes.

II. Definitions

A. Nomination – the proposal of the name of an active member of the TLCB, by an active member of the TLCB, as determined by the status of both individuals at the time the nominations are opened.

B. Nominating Committee – three active members of the TLCB, as determined by the status of the individual at the time of appointment, selected by the President of the TLCB (Bylaws #8 Section a).

1. One member of the Nominating Committee shall be appointed as the Chairman of the Nominating Committee by the President of the TLCB.

2. All members of the Nominating Committee shall have an e-mail account and postal addresses that may be published for use by the Membership of the TLCB.

C. Biographical/Campaign Information – a single side 8 ½” X 11” page, which summarizes a candidate’s position and/or biography.

1. Black and white photos are permitted but do not allow for the increase of the size of material beyond a single side page.

2. Color photos will not be reproduced in color.

3. Limitations are intended to control TLCB expenses and not to stifle free speech.

D. Mail Receipt Point – the location where absentee ballots are to be mailed.

1. The home address of an active member of the TLCB or

2. A commercial establishment such as “Mailboxes and More” or

3. Other alternative as may be approved by the BOD.

E. Appeal – the process for resolving disputes within the TLCB, when a decision of the Nominating Committee is called into dispute.

III. Timeline

A. Upon the establishment of the Annual Reunion and Business Meeting location and dates, the following shall be published in the Mekong Express Mail (hereafter referred to as the MEM) in each issue published, and on the TLCB Web site, up to the date of that Business Meeting:

1. The date of the Annual Business Meeting

2. The date range (open – close) for the acceptance of Nominations by the Nominating Committee.

a. Opening date is determined by Bylaw #8a and coincides with the required appointment of the Nominating Committee.

Note: Nothing precludes the President from appointing the Members of the Nominating Committee prior to the 3 months established by Bylaw 8.

b. The date that nominations shall be closed, as determined by Bylaw #8a, that is, 30 days prior to the Annual Business Meeting.

3. The deadline for the submission of biographical and or campaign information, to allow for the timely publication and mailing of such material to the membership of the TLCB.

4. Names, e-mail addresses and mailing addresses of the three Nominating Committee Members as soon as determined.

B. Dissemination of biographical/campaign information and absentee ballots

1. Biographical and/or Campaign information shall be received by the Chairman of the Nominating Committee not less than 28 days prior to the Annual Business Meeting as published in the MEM.

2. As nearly as possible, Sundays excepted, the Chairman of the Nominating Committee shall cause the Absentee Ballot, a self-addressed envelope, and biographical/campaign information to be mailed, first class postage, to all active members eligible to vote, 24 days prior to the Annual Business Meeting.

3. The same information shall be published on the TLCB website.

C. Compliance with the Timeline

1. The Chairman and members of the Nominating Committee shall, to the best of their ability, adhere to the dates established.

2. Circumstances that cause the dates to slip in anyway shall be reported to the President, who shall forward such information to the BOD, by the Chairman of the Nominating Committee.

IV. The Nomination Committee – Duties and Responsibilities

A. Nominations

1. Shall accept nominations from the date nominations open until midnight of the 30th day prior to the Annual Business Meeting.

2. Nominations may be made by e-mail or postal mail and shall be acknowledged upon receipt by the Chairman or member of the Nominating Committee to whom it was addressed.

3. Shall verify with the Membership Committee Chair that the Nominee is an Active Member.

4. Shall inquire via e-mail or postal service, to determine if the Nominee accepts the nomination.

a. The response, ACCEPT, DECLINE, or NO RESPONSE, shall be published on the Absentee Ballot that is mailed to the Active Membership.

b. Where time is of the essence, such as a late nominee, where the response would cause a delay in the fulfillment of the required timeline, voice contact shall be deemed sufficient but must be confirmed by follow-up e-mail, or postal mail.

c. Shall notify the Active Member making the nomination of the response of the individual nominated.

5. Shall inquire via e-mail or postal service, of the current office holder to determine if the incumbent will seek re-election.

a. If the incumbent accepts, then his or her name and the word “Incumbent” shall be published on the Absentee Ballot that is mailed to the Active Membership.

b. If the incumbent declines then his or her name will not appear on the Absentee Ballot.

6. Nothing shall preclude a member of the Nominating Committee from placing a name in nomination.

B. Establish a Mail Receipt Point in the city selected to be the host city for the Annual Business Meeting.

1. As soon as practical after being appointed, the Chairman of the Nominating Committee shall establish the Mail Receipt Point.

a. This step will allow for the timely preparation of the self-addressed return envelopes for absentee ballots.

b. Funding for this and other expenses shall be drawn from a separate line item to be added to the TLC Annual

Budget.

C. Publish the Slate, via the Absentee Ballot and on the TLCB Web site, to the Active Membership, as required by the Timeline established in III above.

1. The Absentee Ballot shall list the Office and the names of each Nominee for that Office in alphabetical order along with their status as ACCEPT, DECLINE, or NO RESPONSE.

2. In as much as nominations from the floor of the Annual Business Meeting are not allowed in our Bylaws, there shall be no provision for a write-in candidate.

V. Appeals

A. Appeals are limited to the protest of a decision of the Nominating Committee to include or exclude a Nominee on the Absentee Ballot, or violation of set policies and procedures in regards to nominations.

B. The appeal must be made to either the President or Vice President of the TLCB, whichever position is not up for election.

C. The appeal must be made in writing, either e-mail or postal mail and contain all the facts as alleged and must be filed no later than 15 days after the nominations close.

D. The officer shall cause the matter to be investigated and presented to the BOD at a special meeting to be held to consider the issue.

E. The officer will present both sides and the BOD shall consider and post a ruling within 10 days of the appeal.

F. The decision of the BOD shall be final and binding on all parties.

G. The Appellant shall be notified in writing, e-mail, or postal mail of the results of the BOD decision.

Christmas 1967 at a leprosarium in Kontum

By Jack Heslin

In November and December of 1967 I was living at the Forward Operating Base (FOB) 2 camp just south of Kontum. I was a flight platoon commander and was air mission commander for a number of Special Forces missions across the border into Laos and Cambodia. At that time it was a top-secret mission, known as SOG (Studies and Observations Group).



During that time there was a leprosarium/hospital run by, I think, a Belgian nun who had other nuns working with her. The leprosarium was located about 10-15 kilometers west of Kontum City. From time to time, the Special Forces (SF) FOB camp commander would ask me to help the nuns with the use of one of our helicopters to pick up supplies or even small animals. The camp commander was also very helpful in providing whatever he could to help the nuns.

On Christmas 1967, the camp commander and I were invited to the leprosarium for dinner. It was amazing. We drove out in a jeep. It was late afternoon, and when we arrived we were brought to a small open patio area where a small table was set up. The nuns waited on us, and the two of us had a wonderful meal. We asked the sister superior to join us but she declined, saying this was just for us.

After the dinner we were taken into a large room and given seats in the middle of the room. In front of us, there were maybe 20-30 beautiful little girls dressed in white dresses and boys in white shorts. As we sat there, the children sang a series of Christmas songs in English and finished with "Silver Wings Upon Their Chest," a popular song at the time about the Special Forces paratroopers. They sang in near-perfect English. When they finished, we were given two large bags of toys to hand out to the children - the toys

had been donated and flown up from Saigon.

It was such an amazing sight. Each of the children came forward, one at a time, with the youngest coming first – big bright smiles on their faces and an English "thank you" when each received a gift.

These were the children of the lepers who were in the shadows in the back of the room. When the children were finished, they also came forward to thank us—in Vietnamese. You may have seen lepers and know that the ravages of the disease on their faces is a sight to remember. I will never forget that evening.

When we left the leprosarium, the sister superior insisted on riding in the front seat of the jeep to take us back. It was dark, and although I had my pistol with me as did the camp commander, neither of us thought we would have enough firepower if we ran into an ambush on that little dirt road that night. The sister's waving white robe was clear to see even in the dark as we drove through the night with our lights on. On several occasions we saw VC troops come out of the darkness with their AKs in hand and then just step back into the darkness.

It was a memory that I will not forget. There were other occasions in the time that I was on that mission where we could provide limited support for the nuns, and we did.

Jack Heslin, who retired as an O-5, was an Army aviator who served two tours in Camp Holloway, Pleiku, Vietnam and fought in the 1972 battle of Kontum. He created the web site that tells the story of this important battle which was part of the North Vietnamese Easter Offensive. Read about the Kontum battle at <http://www.thebattleofkontum.com/>



Photos from the author's website. Top, Soviet tank destroyed during Central Highlands battle of Kontum. Right, USAF C-123 at Kontum.