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14 December 1987

Dear Friend,

I am writing to ask you for your help. My brother, Gene DeBruin, an Air America kicker, was shot down and taken prisoner by the Pathet Lao on 5 September 1963. He and four others were photographed by the Pathet Lao in Tha Pa Chon Village prison in May 1964 (see enclosed brochure). In 1966, he and six others escaped. Two of the seven (Pisidhi Indradat-AA and Dieter Dengler-USN) reached safety. Reports indicate that Gene was recaptured and put in Muong Nong Village prison until January 1968 when he was supposedly taken away "northward." Throughout the seventies, numerous reports surfaced that indicated that Gene was still being held as a prisoner in Asia. On 27 September 1982 Colonel Khamla Keophitoune, in an unconfirmed report, indicated that Gene died in an escape attempt in 1982. Colonel Khamla has not surfaced in Laos since that report was made so it is difficult to follow-up to determine whether the report is true or like many others just hearsay. In 1986, a reliable member of a Lao resistance group reported that Gene is still being held as a prisoner in Asia. A subsequent report in October of this year verified the 1986 report. In addition, the Lao have promised information on Gene and two other Americans in February. What the nature of this information will be we do not know.

The November 1987 issue of Life magazine featured a picture of Gene on its cover and an additional photograph of him in a C-46 in the article itself. For whatever reasons, Life chose not to publish the Tha Pa Chon photo of Gene and the four others in prison. I am wondering if you would be willing to help by sending a note to the author of the article, Todd Brewster, requesting that a follow-up article featuring the Tha Pa Chon Village photo and a second photo of an American in prison in Laos (David Hrdlicka) be run in a future issue of Life. By doing this, it may just lead to some further information and possible release of some still being held in Southeast Asia. Todd Brewster's address is: Mr. Todd Brewster, Writer/Reporter, Life, Time-Life Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, NY 10020.

In closing, on behalf of all our family members, I would like to thank all members of the Air America Club for the fitting POW-MIA ceremony in Dallas last May. It was a sincere pleasure to meet many of you and to share similar experiences. Mom, Dad and all members of our family want to say thanks to you for a very moving ceremony.

If you have any information or ideas at all regardless of how insignificant they may seem, please write or call collect any time at your convenience. Thank you for helping our family. May you have a Peaceful Holiday Season and a Prosperous New Year.

Sincerely,


Jerry DeBruin

AMERICAN CIVILIAN DETAINEE IN ASIA



Eugene Henry DeBruin, 1960

Thank you for your interest and concern for Eugene Henry DeBruin, an acknowledged Pathet Lao prisoner since 5 September 1963. Eugene is the second oldest member in a family of ten which resides in Wisconsin. He is a four year veteran of the United States Air Force, a graduate in Forestry from the University of Montana-Missoula and a smoke jumper. Above is a picture of Eugene taken in 1960 when he was a student in Montana.

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Eugene Henry DeBruin, 1960

Eugene, a U.S. civilian employed by an independent airline in Laos, was shot down near Tchepone, Laos on 5 September 1963. He was on a supply dropping mission which included rice and buffalo meat for Lao villagers. He was first listed as missing.

THA PA CHON VILLAGE, KHAMMOUANE PROVINCE, LAOS 1964



Left to Right: American, Eugene Henry DeBruin; Thais, Pisidhi Indradat, Prasit Promsuwan, Prasit Thanee; Hong Kong Chinese, To Yick Chiu.

After several weeks, the Pathet Lao told us that Eugene and four other crew members survived the crash. They took this picture of the five which clearly shows the five as confirmed prisoners of the Pathet Lao. In 1964, the five escaped but were recaptured. In 1966, the five, along with two other United States personnel, escaped. One American and one Thai reached safety after the seven had previously separated into four groups to avoid recapture.

A subsequent report notes that Eugene was being held as a prisoner in Southeast Savannakhet Province, Laos in January, 1968.

LAOS, 1982



*Colonel Khamla Keophithoune
27/9/82*

Records held in the left hand of this man, Lao Colonel Khamla Keophithoune, contain vital information about Eugene Henry DeBruin's current fate and whereabouts.

In 1982, Lao Colonel Khamla Keophithoune supplied unconfirmed information about Eugene to a visiting U.S. delegation. Members of Eugene's family firmly believe that officials of the Lao People's Democratic Republic should release Eugene Henry DeBruin immediately or provide confirmed, well documented evidence of his current fate and whereabouts.

If you have any questions or information about Eugene Henry DeBruin, or if you have an interest in helping to further the search for him, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest and support.