

Reunion Letters Continued:

Stan Wilson: Please send my regards to all members. I am unable to attend this year's reunion because of other commitments. I was looking forward to playing some golf and enjoying the area and just seeing friends. Next year I hope.

Jerry Fink: Best of luck at the reunion. Say hello to everyone for me. I haven't heard, but I assume all is set up for a demo of the web site and its uses both to the Assoc. and to others.

Robert Davis: I am having health problems. Sorry but I will not be able to make the reunion. Have a great one. Maybe next year.

Charlie Davis: I have written a few of my thoughts of the reunion. Feel free to use any of it you want in the log. Congrats on masterminding a great reunion. See you all at Berkley.

"I was single when I was flying the H-34 for Air America during the mid 60's. My wife is quite innocent to war in general, and especially the "Secret War" in Laos. It was a rewarding experience to introduce her to so many people who I had known in Udorn and who I had written about in my book, *Across the Mekong*.

There was "the Boss" of the Udorn chopper pilots, **Wayne Knight**, who had traveled all the way from Australia for this reunion. **Jack "90" Knotts** has grown into a legend, both for his flying skills and his ability to party into the wee hours of the morning. How does a man of his years do it? Father **Fred Platt** blessed us all at the Saturday night banquet, and then the next day was a judge in a bikini contest! The quiet respect toward the crusty veterans **J.J. McCauley**, **Frank Stergar**, **Billy Zeitler**, and **Marius Burke** was still there. We listened to **Willie Parker** describe the helicopter crash he was in and the long wait to be picked up while suffering from intense burns. The comics who could keep us laughing for hours, **Steve Stevens**, **Gary Gentz**, and **Tom Hoppe**. The quick-witted **Frank Devito's** barbed tongue never let anyone get too serious.

Steve Stevens and **Geza Eiler** brought photo albums of the mid 60's that turned back the pages of time some 30 plus years. Sunday afternoon, under a slate-gray sky, my wife and I along with **Geza**, **Hal Augustine**, **Devito** and others, spent hours looking at these old black and white photos, while sipping our beers. When select comrades were spotted in these pictures, the funny stories poured out: **Tom Hoppe's** unscheduled and unauthorized deadhead from Thakhek to Udorn via Boat, Bus and samolar, while his chopper was stranded, pilot-less, in Savannakhet.

There were many more yarns. Every page of photos brought descriptions, laughter, and memories. Memories of a time in our lives when we were young...and craved and needed that adventure of life out on the edge. It was so important to all of us at the time.

For those of you who do not come to reunions for various reason, I can understand, because I did not attend them myself for many years. My reasons seemed good enough at the time, but looking back, those reasons seem so unimportant now. As the shadows of life grow longer, I am more aware of the uniqueness of the job that we did and of the extraordinary people who I knew and worked with at Air America.

This reunion at Cocoa Beach, brought back memories of those younger days, when we all paid our dues under fire, and now forever belong to that ancient band of brothers. To which no amount of money or connection can gain admittance. It was good to relive those days and to spend time with this adventuresome group of people for who I have a great deal of respect.

LETTERS & E-MAILS

George & Eileen Morrison: Sorry this is late, have been traveling (required when retired). Use the extra \$25 for whatever purpose needs it the most.

Had my car smog tested last week, the technician was from Cambodia, born and raised there, but of Chinese origin. He worked with the U. S. Government Engineering group and said he has a close relationship with Air America. His name is Souphomma Thao Vong. We had a very nice talk about old times, the result was my car passed the smog test without any problem.

W. Milton Bludworth: Please express my thanks and appreciation to the Association for the plaque presented to me, as well as for making me an honorary member of the Association. This is a double honor.

The dedication and resolve with which individual members performed extraordinary deeds for our country never ceases to fascinate me. It truly is an honor to work on the CAT/Air America Archives.

Marty Kaufman: Hope you all had a superb reunion, and know that the discussion included thoughts on those who were called to destiny in service of freedom. It represents a challenge of history and of great accomplishments, shared in some part by each of us who played a role in a part of the planet "long ago and far away." As Jim Spencer always said during our 5-1/2 years together on the Air America program, "Well, Kid, they can't ever take this [experience] away from us."

On a separate note, the medics released me yesterday, am on a reasonably short leash, but hope to get clearance to go to Sarasota for my father-in-laws 70th birthday.

MacAlan Thompson: How about passing this on to the newsletter. Might as well flood "B" with a bunch of mail. Wonder where Fr. Jerry Orsinois is now. Haven't had a letter from him for two years. Last I heard he was in southern Yuban province teaching English. Not too far from the Lao/Burma/China borders.

Got a letter from **Father Luke Bouchard**, from the far boondocks of Indonesia. It was dated March 26, 1997, was in response to a letter I sent him nearly a year ago, and reads in part: "Your letter took 4 months to get to me because it was sent to my old address. I am now working in the Semitau area, which is 100 miles downriver. I am now ministering to a parish which has 22 villages in the backcountry. Ten of these villages are visited on foot with a backpack and the others by outboard motor or riverboat. I'm glad to still have some walking to do in order keep my limbs from getting rusty. By the way, tomorrow is my 68th birthday. Address: Father B. - Pasturan Katolik - [REDACTED]

Letters Continued:

Blaine W. Jensen: I have been going to send the enclosed photograph as a donation the archives for some time. (Photo sent to Jane) I guess the last issue of the Log got me "off my duff" and thus I am sending it. I'm afraid that it has become a bit torn after travelling around the world for some 27 years!

I do not recall who it was in the Log, but someone wrote and said they would like to see something good written about the pilots. I suppose I never considered that "angle" since (as a "customer" for some ten years in Laos), I consider them the greatest for a lot of reasons.

The people in the photo are myself, Capt. Lee Mullins (one of my heroes from those early days) and Ian Baccam (known to the pilots as "Joe"). The timeframe is late 1965 or early 1966. I believe the photo was taken in Vientiane but I cannot be certain - it has been a long time.

Joe was one of two Laotian loaders/dispatchers for the aircraft as Sam Thong (site 20) in Northern Laos. I had completed my tour as a volunteer with IVS plus 2 six-month contracts with USAID. I was going on leave to the U.S. to visit my family and then return to Laos to work for AFD. I wanted to take Joe with me to see the states. However, on a past salary of \$75.00 per month, I quite obviously did not have the money to take him with me.

Capt. Mullins, Al Rich, and a number of others (it has been a long time) heard about what I wanted to do. They decided to get all of the pilots that worked with us to donate the money necessary for Joe's trip. The photo was taken when Capt. Mullins was presenting the "cold hard cash" to Joe. I do not recall the exact amount raised, but it was enough to cover the round-trip airfare, some meals, plus spending money.

This is just one small example of what the pilots were all about during that era. They saved my butt on numerous occasions: they flew in bad weather and under very "hostile" conditions (connected with the war that was going on); and I never recall one of them turning down a mission if it was "humanly" possible to do it.

Why you might ask? From the standpoint of our part of the operation, they knew that a lot of human lives depended on their performance. At one point in time, over one-half million human beings (refugees).

People were evacuated, often under extremely dangerous and hostile conditions. Rice drops were made from the air (it was the only food the people had to eat). Medics and medicine were delivered; sick, wounded, and pregnant ladies were evacuated to the hospital at Sam Thong. Blankets, cooking pots, utensils, vegetable seed, rice seed, iron bars (for making knives) and even live pigs and chickens were transported in order to help them get a new start once they had reached a secure area.

We could have never have done the job without those guys! I for one can assure you that it was appreciated more than they will ever know.

Was it done for the money - nope!!! It was done by a bunch of dedicated pilots who did their job cheerfully, courageously, with dedication and with a great deal of concern for humanity (people speaking languages that they could not even understand). There were personal hardships as well. Ask any pilot who RON'd at Sam Thong (prior to the building of the AA hostel) what living accommodations

were like. It certainly was not the Hilton! Ask them what it was like during the flood in 1966 when the hostel ran out of food and it took me several days to get some food up to them. Did they leave? Nope! They took it in stride.

We all had a job to do, and reflecting back on the situation, I firmly believe that it was mutual respect, team work, pride, concern for humanity, sometimes concern for our own survival, and (while it might sound a bit "trite") we were representing a great country. This is what made it work.

Robert L. Burn: I sent my application to Jane today. I was hired Sept. of 66, went to Saigon and flew as a flight mech., in the 204-B, for six months. I was transferred to Nha Trang as a senior inspector and was bumped up to Superintendent of Quality Control. In 1970 I was transferred back to Saigon as Maint. Supervisor where I stayed till I quit in 1971.

Reading my journals has really been something. I'd forgotten how tough it was to do the job we had to do over there. I've got hundreds if not thousands of slides and black and white photos of the A/C, stations and personnel in Saigon, Danang, Nha Trang, etc. What I might do is work up a memoir of sorts this winter and just throw in a picture of all the A/C we had in the area. It would take a lot of doing, but it is a possibility. Those journals are already on disk so it's a simple matter to cut and paste them, then scan the photos. We'll see. That would be a wintertime project.

Dr. W. M. Leary: My year at the Air & Space Museum is passing all too quickly. It is hard to believe that I have only five more months left on the appointment.

I have been in contact with Greg Barker of Phoenix Television, an independent producer out of London. I worked with Greg last year on a documentary on the U.S. Air Mail Service for the Learning Channel. I thought that he did an excellent job with the material. I suggested that he consider doing something on CAT/AAM, as the real story has never come out. He called last week and said that the Discovery Channel is about to contract with him for a two-hour treatment of CAT/AAM. I told Greg that I would pass the word to the people in CAT/AAM. From my past work with Greg, I am confident that he will produce a highly professional treatment of CAT/AAM. I expect to serve as senior historical adviser for the documentary and will do my utmost to insure the accuracy of the program. If anyone has any questions, they can contact me.

Frank Bonansinga: Enclosed is a cut out from last Sunday's LA Times that is a "been there done that" type of article that you, I and many from our Saigon Days of yesteryear will remember. (Too long to print)

While "visiting" Nah Trang we frequented a small rickety restaurant on stilts at the beach that was famous for its' South China Sea shrimp. Being raised in New Orleans where good seafood was common place, it was something for this adopted Cajun to see/eat some really good jumbo prawns. The owner, if I remember correctly was a former French Legionnaire. It was good to see my old employer Raytheon, prior to AA days, donated some cash to our archives

Letters Continued:

H. M. "Chic" Reynolds: I believe my membership has expired. I think I got a renewal notice and lost it. I have just hooked up to the Internet, not too easy here, all in Spanish and my Spanish leaves much to be desired. Is it possible to get a list of E-mail address?

Preston Myers: Decided to look at the web site. Enjoyed the info. I've had a web site now for about 2 years and was one of the first in Hawaii. Received many awards. Have had trouble with AOL subscribers not getting all the info. Too busy running a company to take time out for the reunion. Maybe someday.

Must say hi to **Roger Cook**, my initial helicopter instructor when going through flight training in Pensacola, FL. Talked to **Scratch Kanach** a few months ago. Have **Wayne Knight** stop by on his way to the convention. Like to see him again and find out how his house turned out. Last saw him in Cairns in 1980. Tell **J.J. McCauley** or anyone else who's interested.

Currently have 3 helicopters in full operation, possibly looking at a fourth by next year. 4 full time helicopter pilots under my employ, flying a Maule M-7-235B on the Big Island. Total employees for company now at 21. Thank goodness for my wife, writing all those payroll checks. **Mahalo Nui Loa.**

L. Michael Kandt: I would like to thank the members of the Air America Association who elected me to the open position on the Board of Directors. I felt honored just to be included on the list of individuals who had agreed to accept this post. To actually be elected was a shock. I promise to do the best job I possibly can, to work with the Board to define the purposes of the Association, set goals, and work to accomplish those goals.

I am very pleased that there were so many members who voted. This indicates that there is a very large group of members who want to keep this Association viable. I hope to contribute to that endeavor, active, for the next three years.

I often reflect on that eloquent paragraph printed on the last AAM schedule at Udorn. That fragile document once again hangs above this desk. It's off-center, faded, and ragged around the edges, but now in a special frame that, hopefully, will protect it better from yet another desert environment. **Dick Ford** wrote about the "final paragraph of a saga that may have an epilogue, but never a sequel." I believe that the Air America Association is that epilogue. A long epilogue that attempts to perpetuate and honor the memory of those that participated; the heroes and the villains - and so many that often lived in both camps, the airmen-ground support staff-administrative staff-cooks-bartenders (sure), and even the bosses, the great majority of many races, nationalities, and creeds, who were just doing a job in a difficult, demanding and often dangerous environment, their wives/husbands, and children. There is no other organization to my knowledge, so large and widespread geographically, that continues to meet and celebrate the associations of over twenty years. I am proud to be part of it.

Joe Stearne: I've been a fan of AA for some time. As a former Marine and Vietnam Vet I can appreciate how important your role was being provider of logistical support to the SEA area in the late 50's through the early 70's. Your web site is great, lots of info and a treat to read. (Not a member - email fan).

R. E. Eaton: My best wishes for a great reunion. Maybe I'll get a chance to make another one before too long.

I'm currently working in Nigeria- 56days/28days. Been to Bangkok and Laos three times since last November. Always see **Izzy**. Visited **Willie Utterbach** when he was last there, although spoke to him by phone from Izzy's.

VTE and LP seem little changed. I understand from some of the locals that there has been a dramatic relaxation of police state type mentality since 1993. Quite relaxed and peaceful now. Still seems a little strife in some areas. Not safe to drive from LP to PDJ. Area around 20A a "special zone." Off Limits.

Met a guy in LP who spoke quite good "American English." About 50ish. When asked where he learned his English said he had learned by book with three years of self-study. I thought, yeah right.

On my last return from LP (early May 97) I was talking to the Lao Aviation Capt., as we were weathered in for several hours, he was quite open discussing flying T28's, C123 and C47 for our side during the war. Said he had done some training in states in 60's and seemed to know U. S. geography. I did not mention my background. He said he experienced no difficulty switching sides "after liberation."

Also met another Lao in LP who had received study in Bangkok sponsored by old government. After 1975 he was recalled and sent to Hanoi for new government. Or so he said. Now working as bookkeeper for hotel in LP run by a Lao recently returned after years in U.S. Met several Lao returnees from U.S.

On the other hand, a Danish expat was telling me one of the record employees he uses at a fisheries project is an ex-AAM employee who spent 16 years in a relocation camp and is still having difficulties with the authorities.

Have also seen **Bruce Cochran** a couple of times in Bangkok. He's working in Indonesia and doing very well it seems.

We have some ex-AAM Filipino mechanics here in Nigeria. Glad we have them, as they're the best here. Still work till the job is done with a high degree of professionalism and no complaints.

If anyone is going to Laos and interested in maps, check out the government map store near the "arch". Very high quality 87-88 edition maps in all scales for whole country. They are excellent, Russian produced.

I'm enclosing a letter I received recently, thought it might be of interest. (See below)

Kou Seying (Thao): My family came to the states from Laos in 1976. I was just twelve years old then, but had a fond memory of Laos. Air America pilots and their planes were the most exciting part of a young boy's life in Laos especially if you were from the HMong ethnic group, I was no exception. When Air America left Laos, we missed it terribly. My dream was to someday become a pilot myself. I have fulfilled that dream since 1986 when I received my Private license and went on to instruct for a year before I went to the seminary to become a pastor. Currently, I am a professor at Concordia University in St. Paul with special emphasis on training HMong church leaders through the development of the HMong institute.

Letters Continued:

Joe Hazen: I have read Moser's letter and the circumstances do not fit. I also talked with Paul Ilg last November and his recollection does not fit. First, Paul's parachute was nowhere near the pickup site as he was several hundred yards away from where he landed. Second, Paul did not wave to any helicopter. He was hiding on the North Slope of a ridge near a burn spot. After a flight of AD's from his ship took out some huts on the ridgeline with 20mm cannon fire, I instructed him by radio to get over the ridge and a helicopter would be waiting. He did as I instructed, and after firing a second flare as the first one was behind the helicopter (I told the helicopter pilot to do a 180 and hover), the pilot spotted the second flare and got into position to lower the hoist, which had the old style horse collar on it. The collar was lowered into the jungle and Paul got into it and was raised through the branches into the helicopter. The helicopter then proceeded to LS-36, where I first met Paul face to face. I was supposed to fly Paul to Udorn, but one of two nosewheels on my aircraft, a Caribou, was flat and so he left on the helicopter that picked him up.

The next time I saw him was in Washington, DC in March of 1993. Paul told me that after he was hoisted into the helicopter, the mechanic asked him several times if he was hurt. Paul kept saying no and then asked the mechanic why he kept asking him the same question. The mechanic said that when Paul started to come up on the hoist, the helicopter banked slightly to the right and the mechanics automatic rifle slid out of the cabin and dropped right down the hoist cable.

There are too many differences, even taking age (and thus memory) into account, to attribute the pickup of Adm. Paul Ilg to Scratch and Luis. I do not doubt that Moser and Kanach made the pickup of a downed pilot. I feel that if the archives can be checked that it was Joe Potter who was picked up. Unfortunately, Joe and Bill McShane are both gone and I do not know who else was on the T-28 mission that day.

Dallas G. Wittgenfeld, Current Commander of The Elite Purple Heart Parachute Team: The early dawn's fog held fast to the swamps, vines and bamboo where we were hiding and watching the Viet Cong in his own back yard. We waited for some sound, something that would penetrate the silence of the dangerous cat and mouse war we "the special operations Rangers (Black Berets) and Green Berets played with the enemy.

I was a 19-year-old hiding beneath a giant tree with my 100ft. Antenna lost in the fog. The slightest squelch from my radio would alert the Viet Cong enemy only a stone's-throw away, as we were reconing an active intersection of two enemy supply trails. A (light) Ranger Team's worst nightmare is to be flanked by the enemy, who knows where you are, and be out numbered too, with nowhere to go and in the clutches of certain death. The fog had sealed our fate.

The whop, whop, whop of a single helicopter blade suddenly took the disturbing silence of the enemy's crunching steps on branches towards us to a loud and deafening whirlwind of leaves and branches which suddenly lifted the ground fog which concealed us and was swooshed up and away, and then there was "A Shiny Huey" slick with the American Flag sparkling in the

sunshine that it created. It was if a shiny ghost appeared in the swamp's fog. Our Commandos let loose with everything we had and the enemy laid down trying to figure out who was shooting who. In their one moment of confusion we boarded the shiny limousine for extraction. No wounded, no killed, job well done. I didn't call Air America to help in that mission and surely they hadn't been briefed by anybody we know of, but the only place they could have landed...they did. I had been calling for Army assistance continuously, but they were "weathered in".

A few months later I would be (promoted?) as a Thailand Ranger Advisor to the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Forces Panthers' Div. On a similar "special operation" we found 20 large enemy under-ground bunkers, which had to be a headquarters of some kind. My "long range" radio call for 20 crater charges fell upon deaf ears it seemed. As a rule, I never let a Thai soldier on my radio, but the Thai commander began talking on another combat frequency in Thai, my concern was, who the hell is going to listen to him, then suddenly to my surprise appeared the "shiny ghost from the fog" again. This time dropping 20 crater charges, detonation chord and one detonator through the top of the jungle's trees, almost beside me. I got the pleasure of blowing-up the entire underground complex with "one-click" of my Air America special delivery.

Even in the fall of Saigon the ghost appeared to me one last time as I watched our Vietnamese counterparts grasping with their arms reaching for the same savior that plucked me from the communists deadly route. I swelled up with pride and patriotism even in the end...it was the last helicopter to freedom. I believe the Air America "Saigon Huey" is a patriotic icon of important historical significance to men and women of the Vietnam War.

I have plans to find, resurrect, or replicate that Shiny Ghost as a National Historic Treasure that can be flown alongside other Aviation Foundation Military Aircraft of the famous Collings Foundation.

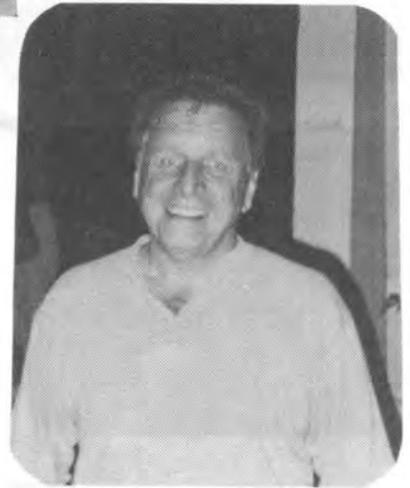
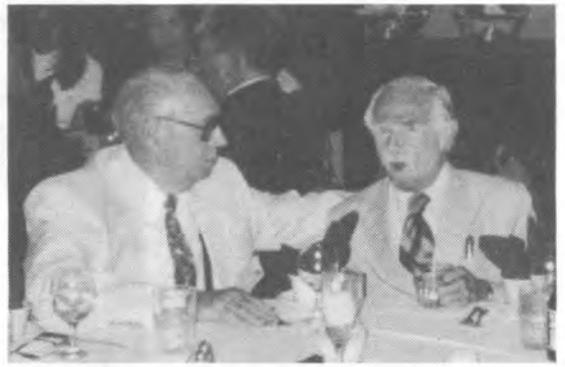
Times are changing and none of us "old secret soldiers" are getting any younger. Unfortunately for the Air America Assoc, their Veteran comrades think "they don't exist anymore" but nothing is further from the truth. Air America is alive and well. Their secret files are declassified for the archives, a memorial plaque is erected, and a postage stamp proposal is before the stamp committee.

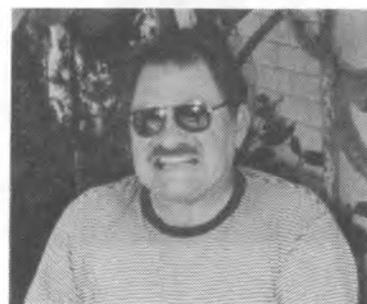
I believe that if the leadership and veteran supporters of Air America get involved and can muster another few patriotic "special operations" that Air America will finally have the "legacy of truth" that it wants to share with America.

I want to be an associate member of Air America so I can be the "point man" in that direction.

Ian Quinn: Just a note to say what a great web page and that something like this (stamp project) is long overdue in recognition of the pilots and other personnel. I was flying in New Guinea & Indonesia in the early 70's and of course had heard about AA. Even applied for a job and got a nice reply back saying my experience would be useful, but as I was not a U.S. citizen (I'm a Kiwi) sorry. These days I look as I aas from 35000 or so - it sure looks different at that height. AA did a great job and it's a pity the media are so badly informed (so what else is new?).









REUNION 1997 ATTENDEES:

Amy Adams & Scott Evans
 Harry & Jessie Aderholt
 Tank & Chris Allen
 Mike & Diane Ammundsen
 Fred & Son Herb Anderson
 Dave & Celilia Ankerberg
 John Athan
 Hal & Dang Augustine
 Buzz Baiz
 Frank Balsley
 Cal Bartlett
 Barney Baxter
 Val Bednekoff
 George & Boun Benolken
 Jack Berg
 Bill Bergman
 Harry Bernier
 Burma Berry
 Clarence Beverly
 Bucky Blair
 Jeff Blanchard
 J. C. Bond
 Hank Bour
 Jack Brennan
 Jason & Brenda Broussard
 Vlad Broz
 Greg Burch
 Marius & Vinetra Burke
 John & Son Jeff Burkhardt
 Mary Buttero
 John & Dang Carter
 Don Carver & Dora Crabtree
 Al & Lucette Cates
 Paul Certo
 Diane Chester
 Vince & Doris Clarke
 Brownie Coble & Lea Lent
 Bill Coleman
 Rick Comeford
 Dave & Suong Conley
 Roger Cook & Edna Doole
 Mark Cordozo
 Dave & June Crowell
 Fred Cuprenski
 Matt & Marilyn Daddio
 Lee Dammon
 Charlie & Susan Davis
 Arden & Niki Davis
 Bob & Betty Dawson
 Linda Delaney
 Phil Dembitsky
 Ben & Kippi Densley
 Frank DeVito
 William & Carol Dillon
 Virgil & Millie Domino
 Patric & Patrick Dorsey
 Phil & Hien Doyle
 Doug & Ann Dreifus
 Fred Duvall
 Gary Edwards
 Clyde & Mary Ellis
 Ray & Sherry Ferrante
 Dick Ford

Terry Fraser
 Larry & Glenda Fraser
 Dick French
 Dan Gamelin
 Gary & Marth Gentz
 Stormy Glindeman
 Ben Gowen
 Mark Grabowski
 Norma & Chuck Green
 John & Audrey Greenway
 Pinky & Son Von Halstead
 Cliff Hamilton
 Rich & Jess Harbeson
 Walfong Harney
 Al Harris
 Liz Hartman
 Joe Hazen
 Ben & Sahn Heathman
 Ted Helmers
 Chuck & Loretta Hilton
 Herman & Angela Hines
 June Hitchman
 Don & Benna Hoehn
 Chuck & Marilyn Hogan
 Don Hopp
 Tom & Diane Hoppe
 Chuck & Marilyn Horton
 Justin & Josh Hotujec
 Jeff & Leigh (Coleman) Hotujec
 Lee Howell & Linda Couch
 Pat & Mel Howrigan
 Jim & Mary Hyder
 Bruce Jachens & Carolyn Jones
 Herman Jackson
 Ray & Sompit Jeffrey
 Luther Johnson
 Bill & Rita Johnson
 Brian & Juliette Johnson
 Tiffany Johnson
 Dick Kaleta
 Mike & Phanh Kandt
 Howard & Julie Kanter
 Gretchen Kauffman
 Duane & Peggy Keele
 Nicole & Erin Keele
 Art & Tam Kenyon
 Jim Kilcullen
 Bob & Nita Kison
 Wayne & Lai Knight
 Jack Knotts
 Bill Korbel
 Al & Mabel Koty
 Fred Kroll
 Ed Leaf
 Ed Leonard
 Dee Lister
 Mark & Marie Livesay
 Joe Lopes
 Terry Luther
 Gil Maxwell
 Jack McCauley
 Betty McCluskey
 Jim "Tiny" McElroy

Reunion Attendees Continued:

Jerry & Jean McEntee
John & Sandi McRainey
Csaba & Tracey Medves
James Mehring
Cami & Rachel Melich
Hank & Joanne Melich
John, Chin & Audrey Melton
Boyd Mesecher
Jim Milne
M/Gen. John & Mary Moench
Austin Moon
Jim Moran
Clyde & Katie Morehouse
Ed Moreland
Inez Mulholland
Jane Mullins
Bob Murray
Jack Neiman
Bob Noble
Julie Olson
Larry Owen
Jim "Mule" & Brenda Parker
Dan (Son of Happy & Pete) Parker
Willie Parker
Jim Parrish & Nina Boyers
Dave Paulding
Stan Pelszynski
Richard & Dotti Pere
Luke & Dorothy Peters
Porter Pierce
Scott Pirkle
Robin Pirkle
Debbie Pirkle
Fred Platt
Walt & Kim Ranallo
Katherine Rath
Tom & Margaret Rath
Frank Renigar
Frank & Mayi Reynolds
Jeed Rhyne
Bucky Richards
Glenn & Daisy Riley
Chuck Rodehaver
Jim & Mary Roberts
Rob Roberts
Polly Rogers
Eleanor Rogers
Terry Rogers-Bishop
Joan Ryan
Tom Sailer
Larry Sall
Fred & Betty Sass
Hank & Madeline Schiller
Dawn & Michael Schiller
Al Schwarz
Mike Seale
M/Gen. Richard & JoAnn Secord
Vern Shelton
Bill & Patty Sherman
Rich Shields
John Shine
Jack Shirley
Jim & Pat Shive
Ray & Linda Shourds

Jack & Uyvonda Slager
Amy Southerland
Larry & Son, Scott Stadoulis
John Stallman
Jerry & Poppy Stemwedel
Bob Stensloff & Ann Young
Steve Stevens
Les Strouse
Emmet Sullivan
Chuck Taylor
Surachai Thatavakorn
Tom Thompson
Stan & Chau Thompson
Jack & Linda Thompson
Paul Thompson & Guest
Barbara Trees
Tom Trowbridge
Jack Trowbridge
David Trowbridge
Jim Trowbridge
Ruth Trowbridge
Mark Trowbridge
Julie Tubbesing
Terry & Linda Turner
Ben & Linda Van Etten
Keith Vasconcellos
Phil Vaughan
Stan Waite
Tina Walcott
Harold & Pat Wall
Joe Walters
Grant Walters & Carol Rennie
Jesse Walton
Jake & Barbara Wehrell
Ray & Janet Weininger
Bud & Margaret Wienker
Helen Wight
Dan & Jean Williams
DeLeon Wilson
Glenn & Wanda Woods
Wayne Wright
Kelly Zarvas
Bill & Lois Zeitler
Jim & Rosemarie Zimmerman
Tony Zumpano

CALIFORNIA HERE WE COME
REUNION 1998
June 5, 6, 7

Berkley Marina Marriott – Berkley, CA – (510) 548-7920
Please call early for room reservations. Remember you can always cancel but if you wait too late rooms and rates are gone. The Air America rate will be \$94.00 per day plus tax. As the name implies the resort is right on San Francisco Bay. The Banquet rate has not been set but we should have the particulars next issue. If flying to the reunion either San Francisco or Oakland will do. California is a beautiful state and this area has many things to see if you want to extend your vacation. **JOE MISH** will be our reunion host for 1998.

STAMP PROJECT

Gayle Morrison: We missed Gayle at our Florida reunion and do hope she can attend Berkley. Gayle sent the letter she wrote to the stamp committee she has also left additional copies of the one-page information and support message from the log all over the state of California, in places where Hmong and Lao congregate. Hopefully this will generate even more support. Gayle's letter follows:

"I am a historian and ethnographer who has worked with the highland hilltribe people from Laos for the past 20 years, in particular with the Hmong people who worked under the immediate direction of the U.S. Government during the Vietnam War. Because of their significant contributions to American interests during 15 years of war in SEA, almost 100,000 Hmong/Highland people from Laos were resettled to the U.S. after their country was taken over by a hostile communist government in 1975.

During the course of my work with the Hmong and Lao people from Laos, I have learned a great deal about their histories, in particular about the "secret war" in Laos and the incredible relationship that existed between the local populations and the Americans who worked in Laos. Most notably, the many pilots and support personnel who worked for Air America. Recently, when I asked in several communities if there are former soldiers from Laos who would like to sign their names in support of an Air America Freedom Stamp, there was a remarkable response. Everyone I spoke to was happy to have this chance to express their great appreciation for the many years of work done by Air America in support of both military and civilian populations.

Attached is a list of 100 signatures of support. Many of them wrote down their former military ranks in Laos, especially those from the Special Guerrilla Units of Military Region 2. It is noteworthy that almost all of the signatures are from male heads of households. As heads of extended households, these men were signing their names not only for themselves but on behalf of their wives, children, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles, and grandparents - all of whom were directly affected by the outstanding work of Air America. As such, these 100 signatures represent a gathering of support from a conservative estimate of 1,000 people.

I urge you to consider the 100 signatures listed herein as the tip of the iceberg, a small fraction of the enormous support that former refugees from SEA feel toward Air America. These former refugees are now legal permanent residents in the U.S. and many of them have received naturalized U.S. citizenship, further confirming their commitment to the American value of freedom. An AIR AMERICA FREEDOM STAMP would be a wonderful tribute to a heroic group of Americans who served their country well in duty, while acting as ambassadors of goodwill to the many people of SEA.

(Editors Note: I wish I had the space to list the names that Gayle received, but we do not, however, the Air America Association would like to thank each and everyone of them.)

We also missed **Judith Porter** at the reunion in Florida. Judith put together ready-made stamp project mail-outs that we had attendees sign on the spot to be mailed from our base in Castroville. It was a very attractive package and we want to thank Judith for her work.

Leigh (Coleman) Hotujec: Leigh has been very active in the Discovery Channel action. In connection with her work on support of that project she has garnered some extra support for our stamp project. This message was received from Dave who is with one of the Veteran's groups that have been so supportive to her over the past few weeks. Dave has taken the time to make a form letter out of one of the emails that I sent to make it easier for people to "sign and send" in support of the Freedom Stamp and the Discovery issue. I was thrilled to get this connection because there are 8000+ people on the mailing list.

SICK CALL

JAMES (PETE) PARKER has been under treatment for brain cancer. **HAPPY** and the family have an optimistic outlook for recovery. Their son **DANIEL** attended the reunion and is looking for stories from the membership that he hopes to turn into a TV series. This will fulfill a promise he made to his dad. Contact the Parker's at: [REDACTED]

SOMPORN WALTON wife of **JESSE** is recovering from a heart condition. The condition was diagnosed after she collapsed in April. We missed her in Florida and hope she will be in California next year.

FORREST (FOXY) FOILES has been in the hospital since May 23. **KAY** was out shopping for a new dress for the reunion and when she returned home found that Foxy had called 911 and was taken to the hospital. He had an aneurysm in the stomach, had surgery, and according to Kay did not regain consciousness until May 30th. When he opened his eyes, she asked him if he knew who she was; he nodded his head, which she felt was a good sign. At first the doctors gave him a 10% chance, at press time this was raised to 50-50. He was on a respirator at last report.

HANK EDWARDS has been in and out of the hospital twice during April and May. Hank is being treated in Bangkok for an intestinal blockage. As of press time we do not know his current status. This was reported to the log from **R. E. Eaton**.

ANDY ANDERSEN a former smoke jumper, AAM PDO, and pilot on the Porter is now retired in Wenatche, WA. He is not doing well after two hip replacements due to many smoke jumps in his younger years. "Big Andy" can be contacted at [REDACTED]. **A.J. (Tony) Durizzi** reported this to the log.

GEN. VANG PAO had a mild stroke in late January or early February. His doctor told him he couldn't travel for awhile and he went through a series of tests. However, he's had a couple of months to recuperate and has now been cleared to travel again. He will be heading to Minnesota in July for the Hmong Summerfest.

Leigh Hotujec: Leigh has been very active (with the aid of her computer and e-mail), in soliciting support against the Discovery Channel for yellow journalism toward Air America in their recent documentary, "The CIA's Secret Warriors". Leigh's letter to Discovery is printed below along with some of the responses. Some of those responses were more great stories about Air America.

"As the daughter of an Air America pilot who lost his life supporting the effort in Laos I must tell you that I was very disappointed with the misinformation that was related as "fact" in the above referenced documentary special aired between 3/31 and 4/2/97.

Air America was legendary in SEA. Unfortunately the rumors, that were started by outsiders who had no knowledge of the operation, alleging that the company was involved in drug smuggling and other illicit activities, have once again been given "credibility" because of the reputation that the Discovery Channel has for presenting quality programs. I am amazed that management allowed the program to be aired without thoroughly researching the material to be presented.

My father and every other employee of Air America and its counterparts provided a valuable service to this country in the defense of freedom. They confronted danger on a daily basis and many of them never returned home. For years they have remained unrecognized and undecorated by our government due to the nature of the mission - and of course, the too often used excuse of "plausible deniability". Recently, however, through the tremendous efforts of members of the Air America Association, we have come closer to realizing one of the most powerful statements of recognition for those who were involved in the SEA mission with the consideration by the United States Postal Service to go forward with a commemorative Freedom Stamp. It would be a real tragedy if this effort comes to a halt because you have allowed an unfair, and untrue portrayal of these gallant men.

My father was with Air America from 1962 until his death in 1972. He was killed on an Air America mission - flying food and medical supplies, not opium, into a village that had been cut off from any other supply routes for several weeks. It was well known that these rations were urgently needed, according to the crash report, and despite the weather conditions and the close proximity of hostile ground forces he and his crew attempted to make it into the site for the drop along with another plane on the same mission. He did not come back from that mission. But it was his job - it was the job of each and every one of the Air America team...from management, to the pilots and their crews, and on down to the maintenance personnel and so on. They gave their lives where democracy and freedom were being challenged! In the words of Jerry Fink, during the dedication of the Air America/Cat memorial wall at the McDermott Library (University of Texas at Dallas), "they made the supreme sacrifice serving the cause of freedom", while working for the U.S. Government and the CIA, which was their ultimate employer.

I would encourage you to visit the Air America web site and the links that are attached. And I encourage you to have your reporters/journalists research the files on record at the McDermott Library. And then, I would like to suggest that you go back on record with a statement,

disclaimer, public apology, and a factual documentary on the history of Air America and it's employees. Until that time this household will refrain from watching what we once considered one of the most reputable channels on cable today".

Tom Seybold: I have just recently discovered the Air America website and I must say, well done. As a pilot who flew for several of the Companies during 65 & 67, the CIA story on Discovery frosted me. I offered some months ago to Discovery a first rate video guy named Jim Lipscomb. Jim did "Carrier, Fortress at Sea" and also "African Odyssey" they both won awards. I spoke at length with Bill Leary, even meeting him at the Smithsonian in DC, as well as Charlie Davis, not to mention other who like me are not much for joining things but got upset by this shoddy and irresponsible reporting.

I wrote Discovery and let them know what my opinion was of their recent production. I also offered constructive ideas on how to do a real live documentary "warts and all" there are enough people to contribute and enough information to put a true and accurate picture together. I know that while like any other cross section of the population we had some less than perfect people, but I also know that the vast majority were dedicated professionals doing their job better than anyone.

Chuck, "Mountain State Veteran": Thank you for your email concerning the Discovery Channel. I will include it in my next issue of "MSV". Be sure to visit our site at: <http://www.syrnweb.com/mstveteran>.

J. David Murray, Chairmen POW/MIA Committee, New Jersey State Council Vietnam Veterans of America: Please send me addresses and information so that I can get letters out. The efforts and sacrifices of those that served with Air America should not be forgotten, and of course not discredited. I have to say that I'm not overly surprised at the Discovery Channel report. They have always tended toward "political correctness".

Barbara Parsons Rozell: Honor your task. I hope for success in your endeavor. As the daughter of an Army officer we traveled to Laos in 59, returning at the end of 60. As the American military wasn't supposed to be in the area during the time we weren't supposed to tell anyone where we were going, nor when we returned, where we had been. Upon our arrival in Vientiane, aboard Air America I might add, my father was greeted at the bottom of the ramp by his Russian counterpart, who greeted my father as "Welcome Colonel". A month later Radio Hanoi broadcast a message, welcome to Laos, Colonel so and so. I believe the only people we fooled resided on Capitol Hill somewhere. We often flew Air America to and from Bangkok, and when I was with the State Department in Saigon during the war, ran into a number of pilots in Bangkok. We teased them mercilessly about their clandestine operations! But, I know, after my time in Laos and Vietnam that Air America did do wonderful things for the people of Laos, as well as those Americans and other nationals who served there often as missionaries and healthworkers. I don't recall meeting any Air America families. Were they there at that time? My best to you. I believe you have an uphill battle. But I support you all the way.