

BECON 10/28/22

I KNOW I KNOW THIS IS LATE!! My apologies...

Good morning my fellow exchangeites...THE GREEN SHIRTS ARE HERE!!!!!!

This morning's breakfast unfortunately featured zero bacon, so I don't remember what it was. But my coffee was DEEEE-licious!

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

*-Bill Kennedy announced the Veteran's Day ceremony that will take place in the Lockwood Auditorium on November 11, 2022, at 10am. At 11am the actual ceremony starts, where 3 of our local veterans will be honored by the Captain of the USS Billings.*

*On November 12, 2022, from 9-1pm all ACE Hardware stores will have kids selling wreaths for the Wreaths Across America program. They need to sell 1150 wreaths, so get out and get yours! They are \$15/wreath and the money will go to the National Cemetery where wreaths will adorn the graves of the fallen...*

*-Dina is looking for volunteers for the Festival of Trees event from Monday, November 28, 2022, through the following Sunday, December 4, 2022. Also, she is looking for donations for the tree that the BEC will be donating. The theme is 'Billings' so if you find specific ornaments or would like to donate the cash for them to purchase the ornaments, it is all welcome!*

*-Tony announced that the Dress A Child event took place on October 22, 2022, and all kids were taken care of, so thank you to all who attended to volunteer.*

*-Grateful giving baskets info will be out soon by Tony. There will be a raffle where all 6 Exchange clubs will sell raffle tickets. The goal is to sell a minimum of 2500 which will earn the clubs \$50k!*

*-Leif announced the beginning of the very first Exchange Club for folks with special abilities. 17 people came the first meeting on Saturday, October 22, 2022, at the United Way.*

*-Upcoming events are: November 9th - Bert Kreischer (comedian) and on November 12th, Dreamchasers Supercross.*

Our speaker today was Bob Dayton who is actively involved in what he calls his 'hobby' of locating and bringing closure to MIAs and POWs from the Vietnam War. This talk was incredibly interesting, and captivated our club. Bob brought props and a powerpoint presentation full of wonderful pictures of his adventures in Laos, where he has visited more than 20 times to accomplish this noble work.

The Breakfast Exchange Club was literally the second group he has ever spoken to about these adventures, as the Laotian government does not know they do this. They do this apart from the US government as well, and it is truly an honorable gift of their own time.

Bob worked in Laos back in 1968. One of his friends started this 'hobby' to bring closure to MIAs; most of the work was done in Laos. There were just over 600 MIAs, and over the past few years there are now about 200-250. All of our POWs came out of Vietnam, but not out of Laos. They go to Laos as civilians. Bob will return to Laos with his friend again in January to continue their efforts. The last trip he took was February of 2020 where he thought he wouldn't be able to make it back to the US due to the pandemic.

Laos was one of the most heavily bombed countries in the history of the world between 1963-1967; approximately 200 tons of bombs were dropped over this land. Laos is also known for the Ho Chi Minh trail which spans from North Vietnam, through Laos, all the way down into South Vietnam, with the majority of it running through Laos. (approximately 17,000 km long)

The first thing they do when they arrive is they buy all the fresh fruit and food they can possibly buy (rice rats not included), and water/juices. They don't buy any food unless it is cooked. They go into the back country where many of the villages have never seen 'white people.' Their road system is pretty terrible in many places which causes a large challenge for Bob's crew. There are just over 8 million people in Laos, and 103 million in Vietnam, so they are densely packed but it is still difficult to get around. It's mostly jungle, and there are around 200 minority groups located in Laos, however the Laotian government has only officially recognized 67-68 of them.

There are around 80 million bombs that never exploded that are still in land mines or the fields of Laos. They have some paths roped off around what has been identified, however this is a huge safety issue still today. There are indications of conflict left from the war especially on the Ho Chi Minh trail, where you will find wings from downed aircraft rusted and stuck amongst tree groves and the forest/jungle areas.

One amazing thing is how the people of Laos have used this downed aircraft metal. One woman makes pipes from the metal of the found aircraft, others have used the aircraft pieces as boats, or to lift their rice shacks up to keep the crops dry. Some make recycled silverware from these downed aircraft.

The people of Laos are content and happy, however one from America might look at this and see extreme poverty. These people do not know that. They have no indoor plumbing, and Malaria is a problem, but they are happy, and in that there is no need or lack.

When bringing closure to an MIA, they will get a bone fragment for DNA and they send it to Hawaii. Once confirmed, they can bring closure to that family. Some of the locals will show Bob's group where they have found a burial site, but they expect compensation to show them what they know.

Bob's talk was well supported with props and pictures, and while I had to leave for work and didn't get to hear the rest, it was truly a treat to hear what I did. Thank you to Bob Dayton for allowing us to hear what you do, and sharing this beautiful work. We will send you our prayers and blessings for your safety and success in the continuation of your travels to Laos.