



NMCB-8 NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2000



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RADM Ben Montoya, King Bee (Ret) is the Guest Speaker at the All Seabee West Coast Reunion in July



The "King Bee"

GOOD NEWS! RADM Ben Montoya, CEC, USN (Ret) has accepted Gordon's invitation to be the guest of honor and speaker at the forthcoming All Seabees West Coast Reunion in Port Hueneme this year from 27-30 July. Considering his busy schedule, we are extremely fortunate to be able to have the Admiral as our honored guest.

RADM Montoya served as Commander NAVFAC, Chief of Civil Engineers, and Commander of the SEABEES from 1987 to 1989. When he retired from the Navy after a distinguished 31-year career, RADM Montoya went to Northern California to serve as Senior Vice President of Pacific Gas and Electric. He moved

to Albuquerque, NM in 1991 and took over as President and CEO of Public Service Company of New Mexico, a large investor-owned gas and electric utility employing over 2800 people and serving over 100 communities in the State.

Those of you who served in Chu Lai may remember RADM Montoya. He was the Operations Officer of NMCB-3 when EIGHT relieved them in December 1966. At that time the "King Bee" was LCDR Montoya. Don't miss this year's reunion, or you'll miss the "rest of the story".

From Your President

You know, wonders never cease. I have been trying to locate Master Chief Babb and Senior Chief Hess who served with us on the early deployments to Vietnam and wasn't having much luck. Lo and behold, I find out that Master Chief Babb has been working right here in Bakersfield, California for a number of years. We talked by phone and then after the holidays, we got together for a three hour lunch. Senior Chief Hess was spotted in Phoenix, Arizona and we have done a little catching up by phone. Both plan to attend this year's reunion.

Currently we have over 300 NMCB-8 Seabees on our roster, up from 230 at the first mailing. The second newsletter will go out to everyone on the roster. However, in the future we may have to limit distribution to those who have paid their annual dues of

Gordon Gilmore

\$5.00. So if you want to ensure continued delivery of the newsletter, please send us your dues. If you pay soon you will be guaranteed a copy of the summer issue. (See page two for a list of paid-up members).

Let's talk about leadership of the NMCB-8 Association. I have headed up the start-up efforts and then the first year of Association activities in which we have;

- Built an NMCB-8 roster of over 300 Seabees, 62 of which have mailed in their dues to date.
- Developed a first class newsletter.
- Held our first reunion and we are well along in the preparations for our second one to be held at the end of July in Port Hueneme. (The enclosed flyer has all the details).

(Continued on page 6)

THE REMAINS OF OUR OLD ENLISTED CLUB AT RED BEACH, DANANG IN 1998

This little bit of history was submitted by Ken Bingham (pictured at the right). Ken joined EIGHT in-country in December of 1966 as a CEW3. He stayed with the Battalion on its return to home port. He deployed again to Phu Bai in 1968, and also on EIGHT's last deployment to Danang in 1969. He was with the Battalion when it was decommissioned.

I decided to re-visit Vietnam after completing a construction project in Saudi Arabia in 1997. The immediate impacts upon landing "in country" again were the oppressive heat, increase in population, (now 70+ million) and the still smiling faces of the Vietnamese people. Yes, they still like Americans. Many once familiar sites are now gone or off limits.

However, there are still a lot of familiar sights that a Seabee can experience. Roads, bridges, Hai-Van Pass, Marble Mountain, Red Beach, Phu Lock, Hue Col Co Rd., and Dong Ha are just a few (I didn't make it to Chu Lai this time). A lasting legacy of the Seabees'



involvement are the superior roads that they built. They are in good shape and heavily used. Our old 6x trucks are still used also. The Phu-loc rock crusher facility is a lot further into the hills, but is still blowing and going. The present Vietnamese boss-man still has fond memories of when he worked for the Seabees. I'll probably do another trip. Anybody interested?

Contact Ken by e-mail at jorden2323@email.msn.com

ATTENTION NMCB-8 ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

There has been a welcome response to our plea for new members to help support the newsletter and to also provide support for the next reunion in Port Hueneme in July of this year. In order to know if your name is on the membership list and to ensure you will keep getting the newsletter, check below. If you find your name, you are paid in full through June 2000 and you will receive the summer newsletter. In the future, membership dues will be due annually in July for the next year. We're still learning, so if you don't see your name but have sent in the five dollars membership dues, contact your Treasurer, Ken Bingham at his above e-mail address or Gordon Gilmore, President of the Association, at his address on the back page of the newsletter.

Dean Babb
Thomas Barba
Bart Bartholomew
Richard Berry
Ken Bingham
Hosia Blankenship
William Bricking
Vance Bryson
Tom Burton
Rick Clark
William Cleland
Patrick Corbett
Barry Cote
Charlie Cummins
James Daniels
Skip Dautel
Eric Davis
Harry Davis
Joe De Franco
Robert Degon
Ron Dougal Sr.

Pat Dukes
Jimmie Evans
Steven Everret
Clarence Foster
Steve Frankum
Joseph Garitta
Gordon Gilmore
Jim Glasgow
Donald Glass
Jack Groat
Chuck Hall
Dallas Hanson
Don Hess
Dr. Jerry Hazouri
Joe Henley
Ken Kerr
James Leinaweaver
Howell McCormick
Roger Mechels
Henry Merry
Thomas Navin

John North
Jack O'Leary
Joe Patterson
Mike Pero
Charles Polanski
Alfredo Ravasco
Gene Reilly
Ray Roberts
Harold Schell
John Seites
Dave Sharp
Lon Slocum
Bill Smart
John E. Smith
Richard Swallow
Larry Thomas
Roy Vahoviak
Bob Westberg
Ron Wunderlich
Paul Wyman

WHERE HAVE ALL THESE SEABEES GONE?

If anyone has information i.e. addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc. on the whereabouts of any of the ex-NMCB-8 personnel listed below, please notify Gordon at his e-mail address CECCB27@aol.com or, if you don't have access to e-mail, please drop him a line at his address on the back of the Newsletter.

Tom Mazako, Berle Sparlock, John Krielin, Alan Maden, T. Forman Lindsey, Richard Quinn, N. Johnson Franklen, Bud Dunning, Chaplain James. F. Harris, John R. Clark, Paul B. Fitzgerald, Timothy R. Holmes, James R. Lathan, George A. Metcalf, John A. Perkerson, Jr., Richard E. Platt, Walter H. Gammill, Jr., Paul Barker, Homer Reynolds, R. W. Chilton, K. A. Reber, J. R. Irwin, L. R. Neel.

Skipper's Corner

Jack O'Leary was EIGHT's Skipper from 1967 to 1969. He relieved Pap Phelps in Chu Lai on April 2, 1967. He then accompanied the battalion from Port Hueneme to Phu Bai and returned to Port Hueneme after an eight month deployment. He was relieved by Bob Westburg in 1969. He and his wife Emily are retired and living in Mill Valley, CA.



It was just thirty-two years ago when, with half the battalion arrived at a nowhere place called Gia Le and the other half in various stages of transportation on the way, we were hit with what came to be known as the '68 Tet Offensive. As an NVA military operation, it was a gigantic flop; but as a psychological operation, it marked the beginning of the end of our country's involvement in that war. Welcome to Vietnam. It's easy to see why the annual arrival of Tet never fails to take me back to that place and those times. My reflections on my days with MCB-8 are varied: pride in the work that we accomplished under very trying conditions; some chuckles over some of our wilder antics; the heartbreaking sorrow that came with the loss of Michael Estok and the injuries of a number of others, particularly Senior Chief Ferron who wound up permanently disabled; and the keen sense of disappointment and frustration with the subsequent outcome of the war. But most of all, I remember you, the men of MCB-8, men who answered when they were called by their country and who gave their best, serving faithfully and honorably to the end. I salute you all and I am proud and privileged to have served with you. It was great to see those of you who made our reunion last year and I hope to see an even better turnout at this year's reunion, particularly from the Chiefs. So make up your minds to give it a go this year. See you then, God willing.

Jack

HERITAGE

THE HISTORY OF NMCB EIGHT

From Iwo Jima to Morocco, from Guantanamo Bay to Dutch Harbor, to the Republic of Vietnam, 1942 to the present, this is the story of U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion EIGHT.

It is a story of men, both builders and fighters, their accomplishments and their proving grounds; but primarily it is a testimony to something called spirit, "Can Do" Spirit, for which the Seabees are known. NMCB EIGHT has had a part in building this spirit, upholding it, and now re-establishing and preserving it.

NMCB EIGHT, first commissioned in 1942, saw action during the Second World War from Dutch Harbor, Alaska, to the invasion of Iwo Jima in February 1945. After the war's end, EIGHT deployed to Hiroshima to aid Naval forces. In January 1946, after almost four years of service, EIGHT was decommissioned.

During the Korean conflict, a need for Seabees again arose, and NMCB EIGHT was re-commissioned in September 1950.

EIGHT then became the first Naval Construction Battalion to man a vessel as a part of the Atlantic Fleet. Upon commissioning of the APL-48, the Seabees of EIGHT boarded and took her to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The APL-48 became their home during the five-month deployment, and construction work was accomplished on the vast Guantanamo Bay Naval Base.

During this period of EIGHT's history, the Battalion deployed to Morocco, Bermuda, and Argentina, Newfoundland. After four short years of service, NMCB EIGHT was again decommissioned in 1955.

Continued in the next issue of the Newsletter

From Your Editor

Well, what do you think? After two issues of the NMCB-8 Newsletter, should we keep going? I hope you all agree we should give it a go and see what happens. I'm having a good time putting it together, and one of the things I didn't realize when I told Gordon I would do it, is that much of what happened in Vietnam is coming back to me as I sit down to put the Newsletter together. I guess over time your mind has a way of forgetting things. Much of what happened in Vietnam gets tucked in a part of your memory and doesn't surface unless you meet someone you may have served with or something in the news or on TV causes a flashback and you remember a particular incident that occurred on deployment to Danang, Chu Lai, or Phu Bai.

Harry Davis

For this issue Ron Dougal submitted a few pictures and a narrative about his time in Chu Lai. He pointed out something to me. He said, "Where does one begin? I figured writing an article would be easy, but it is not. It sure brings back a lot of memories". Ron's not alone. We all have memories, some good, some not so good. But they are memories, and many of them could, and should, be shared.

So let's hear from you, fellow Seabees, and help us make this little effort of publishing a Seabee newsletter a success, especially in the memory of those dedicated souls who sacrificed their lives in the service of their Country.

REMEMBER THEM ... SEABEE TEAM 0808

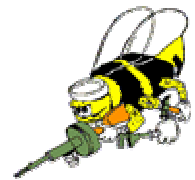


ON THEIR WAY -- Members of U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion EIGHT's Seabee Team 0808. From left: kneeling, CM1 C.A. Pfaffenberger, EAS2 W.A. Jordan, UTB2 H.H. Middaugh, EON2 W.N. Epperson, and EO1 F.F. Huggins; standing, ENS J.W. Owens, Officer in Charge, CES2 L.A. Wilmot, BUH2 C.J. Hogan, SWF2 L.D. Robertson, CMH3 R.L. Johnson, HM2 K.E. Holland, BUR2 J.R. Schaffhauser, Jr., and EOC R.D. Coles.

Following in the footsteps of 0805, 0806, and 0807; - 0808, the fourth Seabee Team to evolve from U.S. Naval Mobile Mobil Construction Battalion EIGHT, was formed when the Battalion was deployed to Chu Lai in 1967

AND WHEN WE RETURNED.

WHEN WE DEPLOYED ...



**"THERE'S MY
DAD"**



**OUR CHILDREN
WAITED ...**

FOR US TO COME HOME.



MY SON STEVE IN 1967



ALPHA COMPANY PASSING IN REVIEW AT PORT HUENEME OCTOBER 1967



WHO IS THIS YOUNG LAD?

REMEMBER WHEN ...



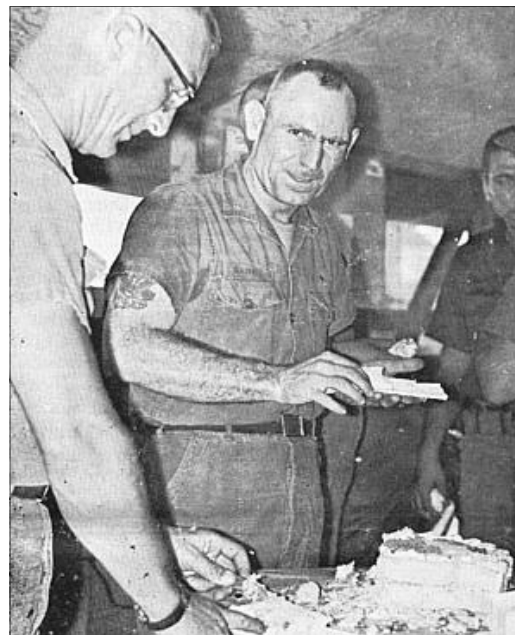
" You built a chapel for the Naval Support Activity Detachment, Chu Lai."



EIGHT completed the construction of aircraft hangers in Chu Lai for MAG-12.



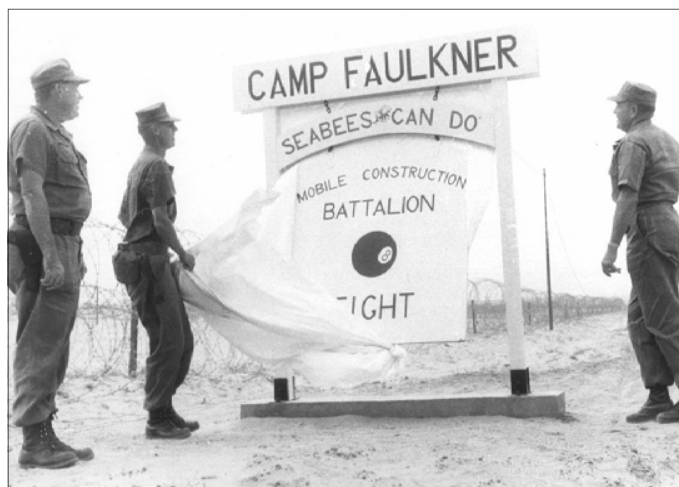
The men of EIGHT completed major repairs to a pontoon bridge spanning the Perfume River thus maintaining access to the SEABEE rock crusher at Nam Hoa.



Master Chief Dean Babb celebrated his 36th birthday during the Chu Lai deployment in 1967.



Four NMCB-8 personnel were wounded in an enemy mining and booby-trap incident 10 miles south of Chu Lai on Rt. 1. CM1 C. E. Shilling, EOH2 H. L. McKinney, 1st. Sgt. W. A. Todd, and BU1 J. J. Niemeyer were all awarded the Purple Heart.



Pap Phelps dedicated Camp Faulkner in Danang. On his right was General Walt, III MAF.

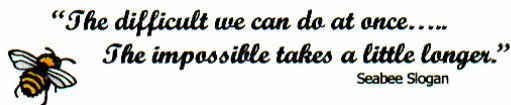
From Your President*(Continued from Page 1)*

These past two years have been extremely rewarding and I have thoroughly enjoyed getting re-acquainted with SEABEES I haven't seen for over 30 years. My reward is seeing you fellow SEABEES having a good time.

Now is the time for a new leadership team to move this organization up to the next level. Harry Davis has agreed to continue as newsletter editor and Ken Bingham will stay on as Treasurer. Both will be a great help to whoever takes over the reins of the Association. Harold Schell, I am sure will continue to help as I will. What I need are volunteers, or nominations, for the positions of President and Vice President; SEABEES who are willing and able to provide solid leadership over the next one or two years. I plan to introduce the new team at our reunion.

And finally, our thoughts and prayers go out to Gene Reilly and Dave Sharp who have recently experienced failing health. Welcome back SEABEES!

Gordon

**ATTENTION!**

The following accommodation information is being provided for those planning to attend the All West Coast Seabees Reunion in Port Hueneme from 27 to 30 July. *NMCB Eight is participating in this reunion.* If you plan to stay at the Channel Islands Inn & Suites, please make your own reservations by calling the 800 number listed below.

Channel Islands Inn & Suites

1001 East Channel Islands Boulevard
Oxnard, CA 93033

800-344-5998 (*Mention All Seabees West Coast Reunion*)

Room rates:

\$69.00 a night for room; **\$79.00** for a suite. Both come with a complimentary breakfast.

The enclosed All West Coast Seabees Reunion flyer has details on the reunion. Please read it carefully. If you plan on attending the reunion and have questions, please contact Ed Kloster at the address and/or phone number in the

The Vietnam Era Seabzxczxczcees are looking for new members

Quarterly Newsletter, Reunions
Seabee Camaraderie.

Membership \$5.00 per year

Write to:

Vietnam Era Seabees
P.O. Box 36781

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

By Ronald W. Dougal, Sr.



Serving with NMCB-8, each picture tells a story of the men who made up NMCB-8 and what they accomplished while serving their time in Viet Nam.

The first picture is of the convoy going from Chu Lai to Tam Ky, which had unforgettable countryside. The second two pictures are of the Batch Plant that was erected for the concrete work at Tam Ky. Looking back, I have good memories of the friends that I served with, and often wonder where a lot of them are these days.

Serving my country and being in Viet Nam is something I am very proud of doing in my lifetime.

If anyone knows of someone who has served with NMCB-8 the years that I served, and were not at the last reunion in July & August 1999, have them contact me at my Web site DOUGALSR@AOL.COM. I would love hearing from them and talk over old times.

Seabee Memorial, Washington, D.C.



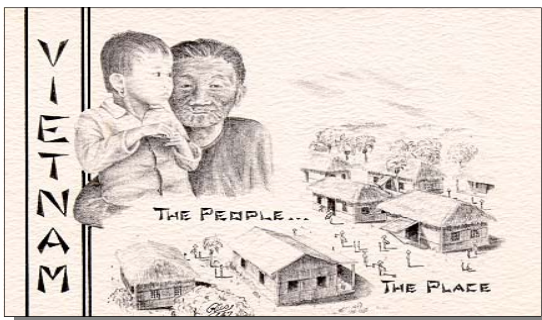
IN MEMORIAM

In remembrance of those who served with us



We recently learned from Scottie Shannon's wife of his passing in January of last year, and also of the passing of UTCS Bill Foley several years ago from Ed Bradley. Word was received of the passing of Nash Kennedy. Frank Symanoskie let us know that Jerry Goodman passed away about four years ago. *Jerry can be seen on page four leading Alpha Company in a pass in review in October, 1967.* Also, the name of Ron Laime, who passed away recently, was misspelled in the last issue of the newsletter. For that I apologize.

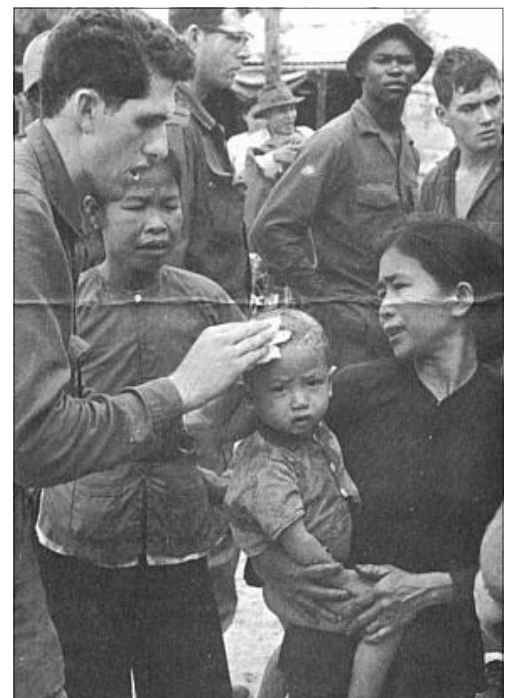
If additional information is available concerning the passing of friends who served in NMCB-8 that someone would like to post, please provide the information and we will publish it here. Tributes are also welcome.



Much heralded was the deployment of troops - the victories and defeats and regrettably the killing of both Americans and Vietnamese in a war that was the longest in American History.

Not every day was filled with acts of war, however, for there was another kind of war being fought. A war for the minds and hearts of the people. Much of this battle was fought through humanitarian efforts by way of Civic Action Programs. Pictured at the right is a Corpsman from NMC-8 on a MEDCAP mission to the village of Tam Ky near Chu Lai in 1968. Routinely, on Sundays, Seabees in small cadres headed by the Battalion Chaplains took time to leave the security of their camps and go into the countryside and minister to the people caught in the crossfire of war. They provided medical and dental aid, and through Construction Civil Action Programs improved the quality of life in the countryside villages. The SEABEE slogan "Can Do" meant much more than just building and fighting to the people of Tam Ky.

AN ACT OF KINDNESS



NMCB-8 SEABEES' ASSOCIATION

1405 Corte Canalete
Bakersfield, CA 93309

PresidentGordon Gilmore
Treasurer Ken Bingham
Recruiting Harold Schell
Newsletter Harry Davis

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



SEABEES "CAN DO"



Membership & Support Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone/e-mail: _____

Please check one of the following:

_____ Yes, I would like to support the NMCB-8 Newsletter and I plan to attend the All Seabees West Coast Reunion in Port Hueneme.

_____ Yes, I would like to support the NMCB-8 Newsletter but I will not be able to attend the All Seabees West Coast Reunion.

Enclosed is my contribution of \$5.00 which will help offset the cost of maintaining the NMCB-8 Newsletter for the next year.

Please make checks out to Ken Bingham and mail your contribution to him at **1773 Tamarin Ave. Ventura, CA 93003.**

In order to continue to receive the newsletter, your Association dues must be paid. If you have already paid you are current through June 30, 2000.

**MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN TO ALL SEABEES OF ALL ERAS!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**