

CONSTRUCTIMUS, BATUIMUS – “WE BUILD, WE FIGHT”



NMCB-8 NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 8, ISSUE 3

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

DECEMBER 2008

NMCB-8 ASSOCIATION REUNION 2008 PIGEON FORGE, TN



Greetings from those who attended the 2008 NMCB-8 Association Reunion in Pigeon Forge, TN. The four day event (including the advance party) culminated in a banquet held on Saturday night.



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From Your President

Well, we had another great reunion at Pigeon Forge. I want to thank **Troy Branch** and all the people that worked to make it such a success. I would also like to extend my thanks to **Billy and Sally Boggs** and their team as they planned, prepared and served a great barbeque on Saturday afternoon. Billy and Sally showed their southern hospitality with a “Can Do” spirit, plenty of food, and grand company. The picnic area was terrific and easy to find especially with the signs **Ken Bingham** and I put up on the road! We all had a wonderful time listening to the old stories and hearing some new ones. By the way, Billy’s been appointed as the official picnic manager and cook at all future reunions.

The Association meeting on Saturday afternoon went very well. We elected the same officers in place for another two years. I am looking forward to working again with the old gang. A reminder to everyone that I will be contacting many of you via the telephone. It seems just writing about the help we need, as we have done in previous articles, doesn’t work. We need stories and pictures for the newsletter and help with the website.

I want to thank **Harry Davis** for staying with us as newsletter editor. We have the best newsletter of any retired military organization I know of, largely due to Harry’s efforts.

(See **REUNION**, page 2)

An Open Letter to MCB-8 er's

It is obvious that as construction men, writing news articles is not our large suite. Out of close to 1,000 plank owners there has to be some interesting stories that others would like to hear or relive.

When we served we were, for the most part, boys turning into men, for many the first time away from home, and these were our first "impressionable years". No longer with a father and mother but a barracks full of guys about the same age, all unfamiliar with what might lie ahead.

Nowhere in school, college, or work were we closer to each other living in the same barracks, eating together, working together, on liberty together, as a result making life long friends who, for the most part, found our careers and vocations, directly related to what we learned and experienced in MCB-8.

So if you can't remember those times in service, how about those years after and what you ended up doing with your life, just because, at one brief time you were a Seabee, living among the finest guys that ever made a world wide contribution for the good of others.

For my own part, I designed and built three homes doing most of the trades, and under the GI Bill got a degree in Civil Engineering, because I found out in the "BEES", that officers got better chow.

So let's keep this newsletter alive. You got a plea from B in the last newsletter that he can't make up stories so let's hear from these guys for a start:

Mel Schneider, BU1 was a retread from WW II who was our crew chief on building 803 in GTMO, and who practically built O'Fallon, Missouri as a general contractor.

Frank Beckman, BU1 was a general contractor in Omaha and was the guy who built up "Boys and Girls Town" when they expanded to include homeless girls.

Don Chia - A nicer guy never lived, a wood butcher like the rest of us and a farmer in Central City, Iowa.

"KC" Matuzak who started out working as a carpenter for the Cleveland School District and who recently retired as the Maintenance Superintendent of that same District..

Ed Myhre, BU2 - Are you still working at the family boat yard up on the Hudson or did you use your engineering degree from Rensselaer to move mountains?

Gordon Linder from Buffalo, New York, Where are you?

Art Hegeman stayed in the reserves after discharge and went to college majoring in Arabic Languages, got called up in Vietnam as an officer in charge of a Destroyer Flo-tilla before retirement.

In my tribute to **Tom Gade** in a previous newsletter, I pointed out he was a lawyer in San Diego who specialized in construction contracts (what else) and became one of the top experts in that specialized field.

So write in those incidents or life stories, as we plank owners are a dying breed., Once we're gone, who's left to tell the stories?

Your Buddy,

Rich Berry, BU2

***EDITORS NOTE:** Rich has contributed NUMEROUS articles over the years to the newsletter. I am sure there are those of you out there that have personal, and sometime funny stories, about your days in the Seabees. Send them into me and I guarantee they will be published for all to read.*

REUNION

(Continued from page 1)

I told Harry we'll get the articles and pictures he needs so lets all get going and be ready for my phone calls.

I also want to thank **Ron Sabbatis** for taking on the planning effort for our next reunion which we set for Branson, MO in 2010. We wanted to have it in Hueneme in 2010 to coincide with the opening of the new Seabee Museum. Unfortunately, it looks like it will not be ready on time for a 2010 reunion. The newsletter and reunion are the heart and soul of our Association. It's a great honor to be a part of this Association and to have served with our follow Seabees of NMCB-8. We belong to a special group with a special bond. Together, at the reunion, we provide support to each other and remember what we accomplished as "Seabees". As the years go by, and we decrease in numbers it's important we get good turnouts at our reunions.

Well, my youngest son graduated from high school this year and has enlisted in the Navy. He wants to get in the Seabees but they told him that currently quotas are full and he may have to go into the fleet. Either way, I very am proud of him, and he is excited. After graduating in June, he leaves for Boot Camp in August.

In high school he was Captain of the Surf Team and he surfs all over the State. As he showed me his ID, the first thing he said was, "Now I can get on the beach at Point Mugu!!" This is one of California's best surfing beaches but not accessible to non-military personal. Anyway, we will be trying to get him in the Seabees as each week he will be reporting in to the recruiter to see if there are any openings.

Please let's all work together obtaining articles and pictures for the newsletter along with pictures for the web site. **Ron Dougal** and myself are working together, forming a committee, with one member from each company as the focal point to provide the flow of articles and pictures for the newsletter. We also are actively seeking to increase membership in all areas, especially H Company.

Arnie

Operation Pendleton '08 Thrift Shop

December, 1967. US Naval Construction Battalion Eight was preparing for its deployment to Hue-Phu Bai, Republic of Vietnam. After months of construction training at the Construction Battalion Center at Port Hueneme, California, the battalion was sent to the Marine base at Camp Pendleton, north of San Diego, for combat and weapons training. We were immersed in the programs that our Leatherneck colleagues endured for their respective trips to 'Nam. We became very close to these guys once we landed in-country.

I have been a member of the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club for more than 16 years. We are a very active service organization of about 120 members. We have completed water wells in tiny villages in Africa, generators for Central America and built a school that now houses more than 5,000 students in Afghanistan. We recently completed designing and constructing a dormitory for girls at a university in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

Since the San Diego area is one of the largest US military installations in the country, I have always had a desire to do something for our Navy or Marines. Investigations uncovered the fact that, in order to survive, many of the lower rate Marines, who earn very little for their dangerous job protecting us, must buy used clothes, household items, children's toys, etc. from the Navy-Marine Corp Relief Society Thrift Shop on the Camp Pendleton base. The facility is a small converted swimming pool building so they have very limited space to display the used items. Shirts \$2.00, shoes \$5.00, pants \$3.00, high chair \$8.00, etc. etc. you get the picture. Stacks and stacks of donated items lay in piles four feet high. They need more space so more items can be displayed and sold .

When we brought this to their attention, our club members immediately decided that they wanted to do something for the Marines. Since we can't build a permanent structure without going through 5 years of government red tape, we decided on a tent. One of our members, **Steve Brown**, shown below, offered to buy the \$12,000 tent made in Florida. We organized over 100 members and guests to invade the base on Saturday, November 15 to erect the tent, assemble over 30 shelving units and assist with the sorting, tagging and organizing the STUFF. The project was dubbed "Operation Pendleton '08". It was also a special memory for me, remembering the snow falling as we were conducting a bivouac on the base in '67.

We are very happy with the results and feel that we have assisted in making life a bit better for those Marines and their families. It sure felt good to us! Semper Fi

RICK CLARK, LTJG, CEC, USNR
USNMCB-8 1967-1969



Completed Thrift Shop



Colonel James B. Seaton, Commanding Officer, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, with Rick Clark and Steve Brown admiring the handiwork of the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club.

Skipper's corner

EDITORS NOTE: The following message from Jack O'Leary was written prior to the reunion in Pigeon Forge. Jack asked me to deliver it to the reunion attendees at the banquet Saturday night.



Unfortunately, some health issues have come up with me and I am unable to travel at this time and therefore I cannot make the reunion this year. I hope you all have a wonderful time together in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee and I will be with you in spirit and thinking of you all during the week. Emily and I enjoyed our time with you at our last reunion there and I was really looking forward to seeing you all again.

I will eagerly await hearing where you have decided to meet the next time and God willing, I will be there with you. You were and still are the best Seabee battalion in the Navy and it was my proudest moment to serve with you. God bless you all.

Warm regards,

Jack

AND NOW YOU KNOW....



This photograph was taken at Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima on Feb. 23, 1945 by Staff Sergeant Louis R. Lowery, USMC, staff photographer for "Leatherneck" magazine. Later the second more famous photograph was taken by Joe Rosenthal of the Associated Press as another flag was raised.

2008 REUNION ATTENDEES

Attendance at this years 2008 reunion in Pigeon Forge, TN exceeded our expectations. Over 150 Seabees along with their wives and significant others showed up for another gala event. Below are names of those members of the Association that came from all over the country.

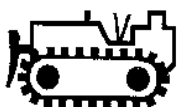
**Fred Bahr
Tom Barba
Ken Bingham
Billy Boggs
Fred Bowser
Carl Bolton
Troy Branch
Bill Bricking
Joe Brown
Ted Coe
Joe Capeuccio
Arnie Ciceronie
John Collins
Jin Daniels
Eric Davis
Harry Davis
Michael Dillon
Lloyd Dockery**

**Joe Dreisch
Dan Epplet
Dennis Fitzpatrick
Tom Gallo
Gil Gilbertson
Jim Glasgow
Jim Greyson
Homer Hamilton
Larry Hansel
John Hepel
John Hoogendoorn
Doug Jolley
David Joyner
Ron Kay
Terry Kelley
Dane Lane
Jim Lathan
Jessie Little**

**Fred Malone
Jerry Malott
John McGee
Ray McPeak
Leonard Mechels
Roger Mechels
Sam Mitchell
Michael Moroney
Asa Morris
John North
Bill Oliver
Joe Patterson
Frank Pecjack
Bill Pitzner
Jim Poole
Chuck Riley
Dan Rivera
Ron Sabbatis**

**Mike Schoolcraft
Ed Schreck
Frank Sergi
Joe Setting
Ed Sheridan
Vin Silvestro
Stephen Payton
Bruce Swenson
Donald Talley
Gary Thede
Larry Thomas
Allen Vortman
Lou Warzecha
John Whitwell
Ron Wick
Jack Williams
Ron Wunderlich
Tom Zopfi**

REUNION 2008 PICTURES FROM PIGEON FORGE, TN



SEABEES "CAN DO"



THE BARBEQUE IN THE PARK FRIDAY AFTERNOON



“WE BUILD WE FIGHT”



THE BANQUET SATURDAY NIGHT

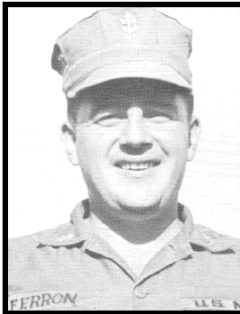


“Construimus, Batuimus”



THE PASSING OF A COMRADE IN ARMS

Leo Ferron, EIGHT's Operations Chief in 1968, died on September 27, 2008. I received word of his passing while attending the 2008 Association reunion in Pigeon Forge, TN. It was my sad duty to inform those attending the banquet on Saturday night of his death.



Leo was wounded in a landmine incident in January 18, 1968 near Phu Bai, RVN. He received severe, near fatal wounds. Although he recovered over time, he remained paralyzed from the waist down.

I remember that day vividly because I was driving the jeep that hit the landmine. **Jerry Goodman**, Alpha Company Commander, was riding shotgun and Leo was in the rear seat. We had left camp that morning along with our counterparts from NMCB-3 and were on our way to check out a potential site for a new army base camp that EIGHT would construct during the Phu Bai deployment. Although the jeep was well sandbagged, it was no match for the command detonated mine that went off as we passed over it. When the landmine exploded, the three of us were thrown out of the jeep. Jerry and I, although wounded, recovered and eventually went back to full duty. Jerry was able to go back to the Battalion and finished out his tour. Leo and I were

medevaced back to the States. After being discharged from the hospital, I was placed on limited duty for six months and eventually went back to full duty. Leo, after a long rehabilitation, was retired from the Navy on 100% disability.

Even though he was severely wounded, his spirit came through during the initial days of his recovery. I remember when we were both in the Long Beach Naval Hospital together, Leo's morale never wavered. One of the last things I remember just before I was discharged was his comment to me when he said: "Sir, I'm sorry this happened and I want you to know I'm going to beat it."

Well, beat it he did! Although Leo never walked again, he led a full and inspiring life. He basically did everything a full bodied person could do. He had a shop in his garage where he constructed many works of art from wood. According to his wife **Bonnie**, Leo had an insatiable love of life. His home displayed spectacular Christmas lights and was famous on the "Tour of Lights" in Manatee County, FL.

Leo had four daughters, 10 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren and one great great-grandchild. He was buried with military Honors at Arlington National Cemetery, October 24, 2008.

Several years ago Leo sent me the pictures you see on this and the following page. They show in part, how far Leo went in making the best of what he was dealt. His life's example was one of outstanding strength and courage that exemplified the Seabee Motto "**Can Do.**"

Harry Davis

Newsletter Editor



Another completed project.



Leo working in his shop.



Working on another project.



Leo and his two daughters at his home in Bradenton, FL.



Leo and Bonnie.



Christmas at the Ferron's.



Santa's sleigh, finished at last.



Leo and Bonnie's Christmas collection.



Leo and daughter Charlene in the finished sleigh.



Santa's sleigh under construction.



Leo's great-grandson, Jack.



Completed project. Way to go Leo!



Leo and his wife Bonnie.



HO! HO! HO! Merry Christmas!



Leo's original design. A chest for socks.



Grandson Ryan graduating from boot camp



Ryan thanking his Grandfather for coming to his graduation.

FUTURE FUN OUR 2010 REUNION HEADQUARTERS

Hello!!

The 2008 reunion is now but a memory. I think you will all agree that a good time was had by all. It seems impossible but the reunions keep getting better. Our contact with fellow buddies (wives & girlfriends too!) has grown into true friendships. It is rewarding to see this happen.

This is a new column where I will try to keep you updated on the latest information for future reunions. Any input you might have is much appreciated. As you might imagine, **Harry** and **Arnie** are the ones who convinced me that I should be the one to periodically write this column. I will try to do them proud. You KNOW that you cannot say NO to them!!

Before I get on to information on future reunions (specifically 2010), I want to reminisce a bit about our recent get-together. Thank you to everyone who was involved in the preparation and execution of our last reunion. The BBQ on Saturday afternoon was especially great and our thanks go to Billie & Sallie Boggs who drove from South Carolina with all of the necessary fixin's to help us have a grand ol' time.

At an Association get-together at the reunion on Saturday afternoon, Branson, MO. was chosen for the 2010 reunion and we are planning on a good turnout. I will be updating information regarding specifics of the progress periodically in this column. Again, if there is something that you want to suggest we do, please let me know.

We had considered going to Port Hueneme in conjunction with the opening of the new Seabee museum originally scheduled to be completed in early 2010. However, delays in the bidding process have pushed the opening date back to late 2010 or early 2011.

Long range plans were discussed with a tentative site for a 2012 reunion in Las Vegas. Start saving NOW! And way out in 2014 we discussed the possibility of a cruise that will be determined by the membership at the next reunion.

This column will be your connection to future reunions. Remember, these are your reunions. Being an active part in the planning and attending will just make our already great reunions be even better. You may call me anytime before 9 p.m. PST (I need my beauty sleep!).

Until we meet again.....

Your faithful servant,
Ron Sabbatis

e-mail: sabagus@charter.net

Phone: 831-359-0073

NMCB-8 WEBSITE

Are you aware that your Association has a web site? Some of you are, because several folks downloaded reunion forms for our last reunion from the site. Also posted on the web site are all of the newsletters that have ever been published (20 in number). In addition there is a list of all association members and their states of residence. Addresses and phone numbers are omitted for privacy reasons.

So navigate the site and see what you can find. The web address is: <http://www.nmcb8.com>

See you on line!

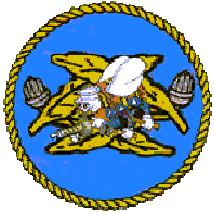
A WORD ABOUT DUES

Please note the mailing label attached to the back of your newsletter. Next to your name, you will see a date (month & year) denoting when your membership should have been renewed. The word "LIFE" next to your name denotes a life member and no renewal of membership is necessary. If your membership has expired but you would like to renew it in order to continue receiving the newsletter and keep up on the latest reunion information and other news, please submit payment by check to **NMCB-8 ASSOCIATION**. Send checks to **Ken Bingham, 1773 Tamarin Ave, Ventura, CA 93003**. Please do not send checks to me.

Dues are \$10/year or \$100 for a life membership. To bring your membership up to date, submitting a check for \$10 will be sufficient.

Harry Davis

Seabee Memorial, Washington, D.C.



IN MEMORIAM

In remembrance of those who served with us.

We received word that **Ron Brekke** of Port Orchard, WA passed away on 10/5/07. He served two tours in RVN with EIGHT. **Carol Quist** informed us that her husband **Bertil** passed away on 6/15/08 in Boylston, MA. **Leo Ferron** of Bradenton, FL passed away on 9/27/08. **Henry Hamilton** sent word that **Jim Buchanan**, a member of MCB-8 during the Chu Lai & Hue/Phu Bai deployments, died in his sleep in the early morning of November 1, 2008 at age 61. **John Whitwell's** wife passed away suddenly on 10/4/08 in Maumelle, AK.

PICTURES AND VOICES FROM THE PAST

Harry,

Thanks for the pat on the back and printing my stories.

I've contacted some buddies to tell you their stories. **Mel Schneider** was in Okinawa in WWII, Seabee reserves, and was called up as a 1st Class and became a plank owner in MCB-8 in 1951 when it was commissioned. **Art Hegeman** was also called back in made it a career and ended up a four striper in charge of a Destroyer flotilla. I will be in Ireland during the reunion (sorry).

Rich Berry, BU-2

Plank Owner MCB-8

EDITORS NOTE: Rich has contributed over 9 articles over the years to the newsletter. I am sure there are many of you out there that have personal, and sometime funny stories, about your days in the Seabees. Send them into me and I guarantee they will be published for all to read. See his "Open letter to MCB-8er's" on page 2.

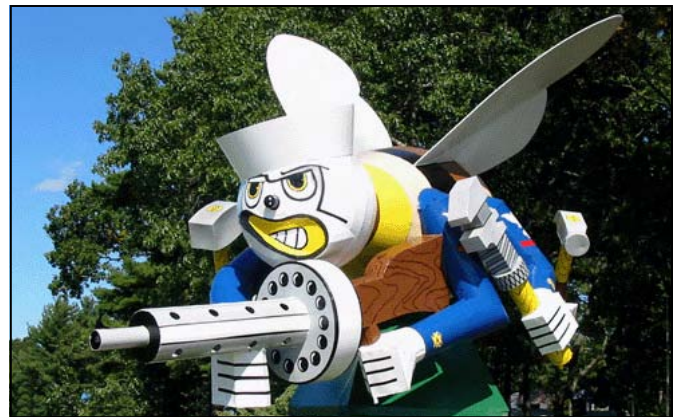


Enjoyed the news articles and pictures in the newsletter. I know Pete would have enjoyed them too.

Mrs. Pete Thackery

I found the web site by accident. Nice Job. I helped run the Mars radio station, bar tender and whatever else they could come up with.

Paul Fichter



This is a Fighting Seabees Statue which currently resides about 200m from its original location at 21 Lafrate Way, North Kingstown, RI. The Seabee insignia was designed by Frank J. Lafrate in 1942.

NMCB-8 SEABEES' ASSOCIATION

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President Arnie Cicerone
Treasurer Ken Bingham
Past Presidents Gordon Gilmore
Ken Kerr
Rick Reese
Recruiting Ron Dougal
Newsletter Editor Harry Davis

Web Page: <http://www.nmcb8.com>

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



SEABEES "CAN DO"



NMCB-8 ASSOCIATION ROSTER UPDATE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone & E-mail: _____

The mailing list and roster for the NMCB-8 Association needs to be continually updated. Only through a current roster can we ensure your receipt of the newsletter and information of current and future reunions. If you have had a change of address within the past year, you can update this information by filling out the above form. Please include your e-mail address, if you have one.

Detach the form at the dotted line and return to: **Harry Davis, 241 Windrose Drive, Port Ludlow, WA 98365.** If you have e-mail and want to make your update electronically, please do so. Send updates by e-mail to ***nmcb_8@msn.com***. **Thanks for your support !**