

# NMCB-8 NEWSLETTER



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FALL 1999



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## NMCB-8 Leads First West Coast Vietnam Era Reunion in Attendance

Portions of the following article appeared in the fall issue of Vietnam Era Seabees SEABEE NEWS.

The Vietnam Era Seabees and NMCB-8 combined forces and attacked Port Hue-neme with a full fledged reunion on July 29, 30, & Aug. 1, 1999. Personnel vertically enveloped the reunion from as far away as New York and Alaska. Armed to the teeth with war stories, old times, rekindled friendships, and a sense of deja vu, the 118 Seabees and wives stormed the beer bar at Channel Islands Inns and Suites on Friday, suffering only moderate hangovers by the advance party.

Saturday saw the participants deployed around the Naval Construction Battalion Center (NCBC), attending memorials and starting old rumors. Rounding out the day (and the Seabees) was a fine dinner at Duke's Restaurant on the base. After the meal there were guest speakers including CAPT Pap Phelps (NMCB-8 CO in 1965-66), CAPT McConnell (current CO of NCBC), and Dutch Filbry (Commander, Veteran of all wars, and "Cat House" builder extraordinaire). Master of ceremo-

nies of this psychological warfare was CAPT Bob Quinn (former NMCB-40 and NCBC CO) along with the moral support of his wife Judy and the Vietnam Era



SEABEES CAN DO

Seabees President, Bruce McDougall (NMCB-40).....Logistics and direction was facilitated by Bob Quinn and CAPT Gordon Gilmore (NMCB-8 & OICC Cambodia, Thailand and Laos). Gordon was also successful in finding many of the lost NMCB-8 personnel for their reunion, thus making that group the main body of the reunion.



Reunion Dinner at Duke's

### From Your President

Many NMCB-8 Seabees over the years scanned the reunion section of military publications looking for a notice that the battalion was scheduling a reunion and others were working on address lists to try to make it happen. In 1999, we revived our "Can Do" spirit, gathered up every address list we could find and were determined to schedule a reunion if there was sufficient interest. Postcards were sent out and that precipitated numerous phone calls and letters basically saying,

### Gordon Gilmore

"We have been waiting for this a long time". Some Seabees ran up some pretty good phone bills telling me about the old days and of course I had to respond with a few stories of my own.

The net result was we accepted a gracious invitation by Bruce McDougall and his Vietnam Era Seabees to join their west coast reunion at the end of July 1999. The

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## What is a Seabee?

Between a soldier and a Marine there stands an individual called a Seabee. Seabees come in assorted sizes, shapes and weights, but all have the same code: to enjoy every second of every hour of every day, whether at work or at play, and to protest by griping (their most beloved privilege) when issued an order.

Seabees are found everywhere: on top of, inside of, climbing on, swinging from, running around, or more likely than not, turning to. Mothers and sweethearts love them, fathers are proud of them, brothers look up to them, sisters admire them. Airdales hate them. Company Commanders tolerate them, and Chief Petty Officers drive them.

A Seabee is a composite, he has the appetite of a horse, the digestion of a sword swallower, the energy of a pocket-sized atomic bomb, the curiosity of a cat, the lungs of a dictator, the imagination of a Paul Bunyon, the slyness of a violin, the enthusiasm of a firecracker and the spirit of a fighting cock. He likes: liberty, leave, holidays, weekends, girls, chow, beer, movies, gedunks, swimming, pin-ups, sleep and comic books.

He isn't too hot for: duty nights, watches, taps, reveille, routine discipline, officers, drills or secured heads.

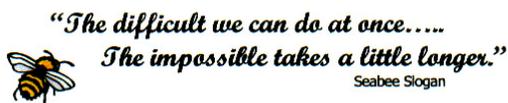
Nobody else is so early to rise without actually wanting to get up. No other person gets so much fun out of liberty or Shore Patrol. No one can have so much fun on so little money.

A Seabee is a magical creature: you can chew him out but you can't get the work done without him: he is dirty, unpolished, unkempt, often overbearing and sometimes reluctant.

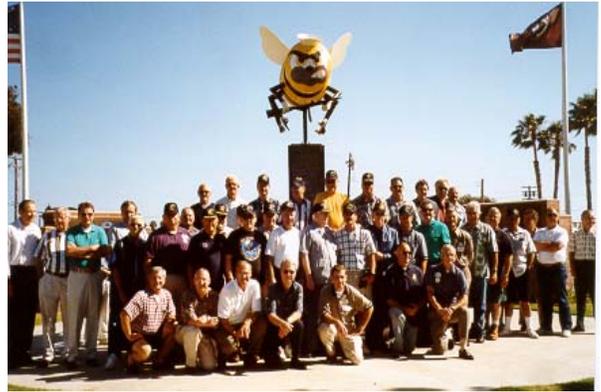
A Seabee is a man of magical abilities: he can weld, build, drive, repair and fight, he can wreck or he can beautify, he can make something out of nothing; work never fazes him nor does he seem to tire of it.

His motto is "Can Do," to which he has added "Has Done" and "Did;" this frequently miraculous occurrence is recognized in the form of a "Well Done" by everyone from the Commanding Officer on down.

The average Seabee is a thick-headed individual of a variety of nationalities. He won't admit it to anyone or anywhere except in the defense of his corps that his is the best job in the Navy. Without him the Fleet would have nothing to gripe about. Marines would have nothing to talk about and history would have nothing to write about.



## SCENES FROM THE REUNION



The Fighting Seabees of NMCB-8



Joe and Betsy Henley      Lois and Pap Phelps



CAPT. McConnell & Dutch Filbry cut the cake



We couldn't have done it without our wives

## MORE REUNION MEMORIES

*Of the 118 people that attended the Vietnam Veterans of America West Coast Reunion in July at Port Hueneme, NMCB-8 led the way with a majority of the Seabees, friends, and family in attendance. The success of the reunion would not have been possible without the hard work and long hours put in by Gordon Gilmore, Ken Bingham, Harvest Gulevich, Bob Quinn, and Ed Kloster, to name a few, along with the support of the Vietnam Era Seabees through their kind invitation for "Eight" to join in with their west coast reunion. "BRAVO ZULU" to all who were involved.*

*Below are the names of NMCB-8 Seabees who attended the reunion. They came from all over the United States. Many of them brought their wives and friends to help celebrate what we all hope is the beginning of a long and fruitful tradition.*

**Ken Bingham, Ventura, CA; Hosia Blankenship, Winchester, OR; Rick Clark, San Diego, CA; Patrick Corbett, West Islip, NY; James Daniels, Pt. Hueneme, CA; Harry Davis, Bremerton, WA; Eric Davis, Lexington, MI; Ronald Dougal, Mesa, AZ; Harry Fortune, Roanoke, VA; Gordon Gilmore, Bakersfield, CA; Donald Glass, Tulare, CA; Charles Hall, Norwalk, CA; Dallas Hanson, Ortonville, MN; Joe Henley, Bedford, IN; Francis Howard, Hodgenville, KY; Ken Kerr, Camarillo, CA; Jack O'Leary, Mill Valley, CA; Joe Patterson, Charlotte, NC; Pharo "Pap" Phelps, Moraga, CA; Mike Polanski, Newark, CA; Lyle Robertson, Chula Vista, CA; Harold "Chip" Schell, Reseda, CA; Bill Smart, Mendon, MA; Miguel Soliz, Chula Vista, CA; Paul Story, Litlitz, PA; Larry Thomas, Smyrna, GA; Bob Westberg, Trinidad, CA; Ronald Wunderlich, Normal, IL.**



### From Your President

*(Continued from page 1)*

reunion turned out extremely well and NMCB-8 personnel led the pack as noted earlier in the newsletter.

At an informal meeting held after lunch in the Galley, NMCB-8 attendees to the 1999 reunion got together and formulated a plan to hold the 2000 reunion. It will be held again at Port Hueneme on July 29th and 30th along with the West Coast Vietnam Era Seabee reunion. I was "unanimously" elected to be President of the newly formed NMCB-8 Seabee Association since I "allegedly" did such a good job this year.

One of the main purposes of this newsletter is to try and focus the interest of as many former members of NMCB-8 as we can contact to attend the 2000 reunion. Harry Davis

will try and publish at least two more issues of the news letter between now and the next reunion. Please help him make it a success and contribute either your time, articles or pictures of your Seabee experiences that you think will make for interesting reading.

Also, if you know of a fellow Seabee who has passed away and you want to let others know, please submit an article and, as space permits, we will print it.

There is an expense in keeping up the newsletter, and we are asking for your support. (Labor is free). See the back page as to how you can help make it succeed.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at our next reunion.

*Gordon*

**Skippers Corner**

*Pap Phelps was Eight's Skipper from 1965 to 1967. He deployed with the battalion from Davisville to Danang and back to Port Hueneme. He then accompanied it to Chu Lai where he was relieved by Jack O'Leary in April of 1967. He and his wife Lois are retired living in Moraga, CA.*



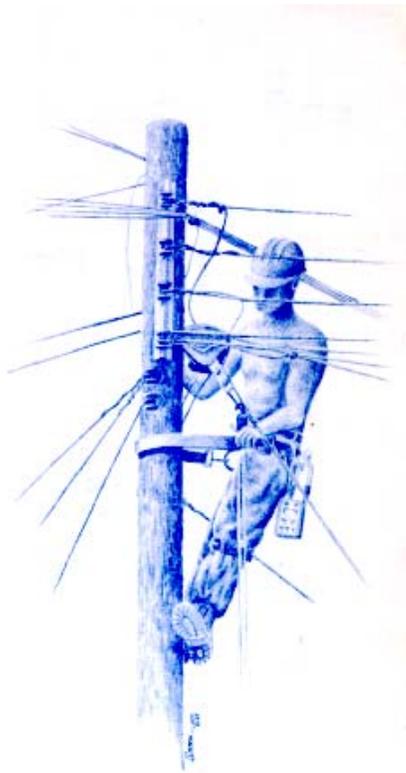
It was a rare pleasure to attend the reunion in Port Hueneme this summer and get a chance to see some of MCB-8's finest! Many of you have recollections of the heat, the rain and the hard work that went on seven days a week. These matters have dimmed in my memory over time (in fact the whole damn memory is dimming), but I have never forgotten the question that all of us asked ourselves about why we were there. Jane Fonda and her friends were performing traitorous acts against our fighting men and our country at this time and here we were out in a strange country trying to survive and to do our jobs well. Why? I know that I have always considered our Vietnam involvement to be one of the poorer sequences of judgment by our then-leaders of the country which yielded tragic results.

That said, it still doesn't change my commitment to the elected leaders of the United States, and to carry out assigned duties, distasteful or otherwise, on behalf of our country. Been there; done that; and I'd do it again.

One thing I can and will do is to vote for my choice among those running for political office, including the President. I can't say that many of the present candidates impress me much on the present political scene, but there is one guy that went through the Vietnam experience in spades, and who knows what it's all about. He's got my vote and support all the way.

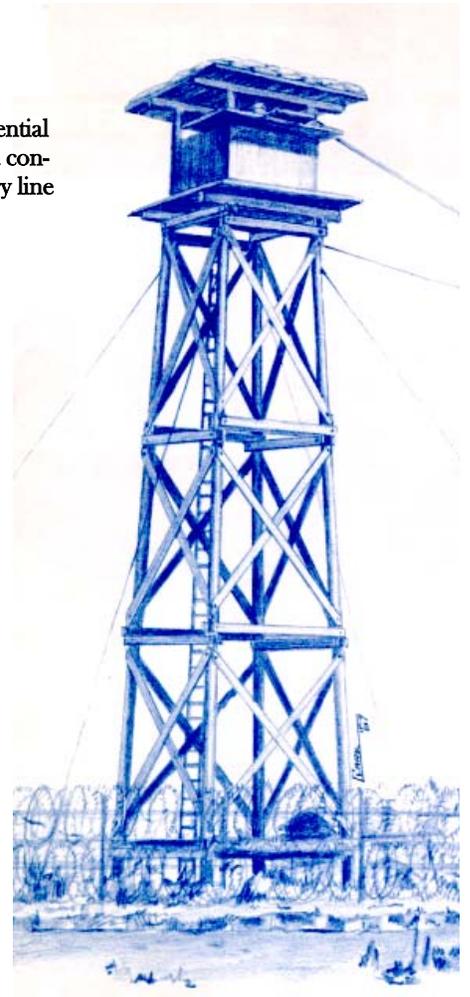
Whatever else you might believe, remember that the people who get elected are the ones who will send our children and grandchildren off to the next place in the world that they decide upon. So get out there and vote your choice, whoever it may be, and lend your influence to the future of your progeny. Good luck, good health and God bless all of you.

*Pap*



**Power distribution systems provided essential electricity to units everywhere. Here is a construction electrician repairing a secondary line on Col Co Island.**

Rick Clark was a Ltjg when he served in Vietnam in 1968 with NMCB-8. During his time with the battalion Rick sketched a series of illustrations of his impressions of battalion life and the lives of the Vietnamese people. The complete collection of his original work is on display in the Seabee museum in Port Hueneme. This and future issues of the newsletter will showcase some of his work. Rick lives in San Diego and is a principal in an architectural firm.



**Security watch tower provided visual control of the perimeter in Chu Lai.**

# Seabee Memorial, Washington, D.C.



## IN MEMORIAM

*In remembrance of those who served with us*



It is with sincere sadness that I relay to you that CMC James Whitlow passed away on 6 August 1999. Jim joined the Battalion in 1967. He was with the Security force when we were in Chu Lai. He again deployed with 8 to Phu Bai in 1968. Jim retired from the Bees and lived in Long Beach Mississippi. I know I will miss him. For being an IPO he was alright. *John Schaffhauser (YOGI)*

At the reunion this past July we learned from different sources of the passing of several comrades in arms who served in NMCB-8. In some cases names and ranks are incomplete. They are: Chaplain Tillett, Dr. Al Bratton, Doug Endland, EACS R.N. Allard, CMCS Russell Baumgartner, Ron Lamie, and EO1 D.C. Diebner.

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

### From Your Editor

This is my first effort at the publishing business and I'm looking forward to being able to provide a range of information that may be of interest to NMCB-8 alumni. I say "may be" because I'm not sure at this stage where to go with it. It's been fun learning how to put it together, but I need your help if you want the publication to continue. My battalion experience was at Chu Lai and a limited amount of time in Phu Bai. I have several old NMCB-8 newspapers and from time to time I will publish some historical news with pictures showing what we did during the Chu Lai deployment.

Many of you also served with Eight in Phu Bai, Danang, other pre-Vietnam deployments as well as with Seabee Teams and other detachments. If you have stories, articles, pictures or just want to honor a fellow Seabee with a sea story or tribute, I will publish them in future issues as space permits. (If you have the resources, scanning and sending pictures as an attachment would

### Harry Davis

be the most efficient way.) If you send articles by snail mail, I will return them if you enclose a self addressed and stamped envelope.

If you are looking for a long lost friend, someone you may have served with but have lost touch, a locator board could be set up if there is enough interest. For those of you who search the internet for friends, this may not seem to be such a big deal, but there are many out there who have not yet gotten around to surfing the net so a locator board tailored to lost or missing friends who served in Eight might be worthwhile. What do you think?

Fellow Seabees, this is your newsletter. The quality, quantity, and frequency of future issues will depend greatly on input from you. If you want it to continue, let us hear from you. Send comments to Gordon Gilmore at 1405 Corte Canalete Bakersfield, CA 93309, to his e-mail at [CECCB27@aol.com](mailto:CECCB27@aol.com), or to me at [hdavis@kpud.org](mailto:hdavis@kpud.org).

**NMCB-8 SEABEES' ASSOCIATION**

1405 Corte Canalete  
Bakersfield, CA 93309

President .....Gordon Gilmore  
Treasurer ..... Ken Bingham  
Recruiting ..... Harold Schell  
Newsletter ..... Harry Davis



**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 2000 Reunion In Port Hueneme.

Yes, I would like to support the NMCB-8 Newsletter but I will not be able to attend the 2000 Reunion in Port Hueneme

Enclosed is my contribution of \$5.00 which will help offset the cost of maintaining the NMCB-8 Newsletter for the next year and will provide funds to support the 2000 reunion to be held in Port Huneme, CA on July 29-30, 2000.

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

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