



# NMCB-8 NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

FALL 2000

## SPECIAL REUNION 2000 EDITION



*All West Coast Seabee Reunion 2000 guests attended a Memorial Service at Heritage Park aboard CBC Port Hueneme on Saturday, July 31, 2000. Over 150 people attended the reunion spanning four days. Once again, EIGHT lead the attendance with over 100 Seabees and their guests present.*

The advance party began arriving Thursday and the main body took over the Channel Island Inn and Suites by the next afternoon. There was a “buzz” in the air. By Friday evening the place was full. Seabees were everywhere! This year the West Coast Seabee Reunion 2000 was represented by 7 battalions with a total of over 150 Bees and their friends enjoying the camaraderie that is a natural part of any reunion.



*Chaplain Harris leads the Memorial service at Heritage Park.*

What made this reunion extra special was the miraculous way in which we found Chaplain Jim Harris, CHC (Ret), EIGHT’s Chaplain from 1966 to 1968 in Chu Lai and Phu Bai. Our new Association President Ken Kerr’s wife Jackie, heard that Father Harris was living in Florida. She began looking up J. F. Harrises in Florida and, miracle of miracles, she found him on the first call. That’s right, the first one!

As if time stood still, Father Harris once again lead his flock of faithful Seabees at the Memorial service on Saturday at Heritage Park, and at a church service and communion on Sunday morning at the Channel Island Inn and Suites. It was mentioned by several people that there was more than luck present when Jackie made her call.

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**From Your President****Ken Kerr**

I have agreed to take over the Presidency of the NMCB-8 Association. I must thank Gordon Gilmore for paving the road for me. He has served as President for the first two years and has been instrumental for the huge turnout of NMCB-8 veterans at the Seabee reunion held the past two years at Port Hueneme, CA. Gordon will remain active as Past President and has agreed to assist us in recruiting new members.

I am a dentist by profession and served as the battalion dentist in the Chu Lai deployment in 1966-67. I have been in private practice in Oxnard, CA for 30 years. I have had the pleasure of having several Seabees and their families as patients.

Thanks goes out to the All West Coast Reunion 2000 committee members who contributed a significant amount of their time to make the reunion a success. These include Bob and Judy Quinn, Jim Daniels, Dutch Filbry, Gordon Gilmore, Ken Bingham, Ed & Harvest Kloster, and Harry Davis. We must also thank the cooks who did an excellent job — Jim Daniels (doing double duty), Ed Evans and Tony Lopez. The weekend was such a huge success. So many of us reconnected with friends we hadn't seen in 30 years. It brought back so many poignant memories and we had a lot of good laughs together.

One of my main goals is to extend our membership. If any of you know where any of your fellow Seabees are, please forward us their address and urge them to join our organization. If there are special friends that you would like to re-establish contact with, forward us their names and we'll see if anyone has information on them. If you have any idea where they may live that would be helpful.

For those of you who have procrastinated in sending in your annual dues, I urge you to do so today. This is the only way we can continue to send you the NMCB-8 newsletter. Also, make plans to attend our 2001 reunion which will be held July 20-22, 2001 at Port Hueneme, CA.

And last but certainly not least, check out the start-up NMCB-8 web page being put together for the Battalion. Jack Quinn is volunteering his time to get it started. You can view it at: [www.mcb-8.org](http://www.mcb-8.org)

*Ken Kerr***WHERE HAVE ALL THESE SEABEES GONE?**

The list keeps growing. 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 Gilmore at his e-mail address [CECCB27@aol.com](mailto:CECCB27@aol.com) or, drop him a line at his address on the back of the Newsletter.

*E.A. Austin, R.E. Baird, Jr., Jerry Blaylock, G.E. Bockstahler, Gordon Callander, D.L. Champagne, R.W. Chilton, John R. Clark, Donald E. Conradson, H.C. Edwards, Carl Elbon, W.L. Enderle, Paul B. Fitzgerald, N. Johnson Franklen, J.W. Gaster, C.F. Gilman, Paul.L. Harbert, Homer Hauser, John Heppel, George Holloway, Timothy R. Holmes, J.L. Howe, Jr., David Hume, J. R. Irwin, R.E. Keel, B. J. King, M.S. Kofoed, John Krielin, J. Kuit, Roger Labrie, Russell Larson, James R. Lathan, T. Forman Lindsey, M. W. (Buzz) Longacre, Alan Maden, A.T. Marks, Tom Mazako, J.B. McCarthy, James V. Mecca, George A. Metcalf, E.A. Meyer, Jr., Geoff Miner, L.R. Neel, E.B. Olson, Leroy Pass, Robert A. Piesco, Richard E. Platt, Richard Quinn, Homer Reynolds, Louis Ricco, Larry Riggs, Charles Schilling, L. M. Selvidge, D.L. Starrett, 1st SGT W.A. Todd, USMC, L.J. Wallace.*

**NOW HEAR THIS!**

NMCB-8 cruise books are available on CD's for \$12 each including S&H. We have volumes from WW II, and all of Vietnam. If you order the entire four CD set the cost is \$45 including S&H. The following cruise books are available: **CD-1 1942-45**, Iwo Jima, (125 pgs.); **CD-2 1960-62**, Gitmo, Lejeune, Davisville, (89 pgs); **CD-3 1965-66**, Da Nang, Chu Lai, (242 pgs.); **CD-4 1968-69**, Phu Bai, Danang, (278 pgs.). When you order be sure to ask for your choice by CD number(s). Send your checks to **Ken Bingham** at his Address below address below. We are currently looking for volumes from 1951-64. Please send them to Ken for copying. He will reimburse you for postage and will return them in good shape. Check with him first before you send any books so he doesn't get swamped.

**From Your Editor****Harry Davis**

The Association membership rolls have increased significantly since the mailing of the last newsletter in May. As you read this issue, know that 168 members of NMCB-8 from your era and other eras have joined your Association and are enjoying reading about the history and remarkable feats of our Battalion. Unfortunately, this number is only about forty per cent of the total number of people (375) receiving the newsletter.

In the last issue we indicated that only those who were current on their dues would receive this issue of the newsletter. Now, why did I go back on my word? Good question! The reason is because you and so many other fellow EIGHT alumni have sent in their dues to join the Association. This exceptional support will allow us to send a copy of this newsletter to all 375 people on the mailing list **ONE LAST TIME**. I am glad this is possible because, as you see in this issue, we are branching out to other eras of

EIGHT Seabees, due in part to submissions of articles from SEABEES outside the Vietnam era.

I said before this would be the last issue of the newsletter and, unfortunately, it will be for those who elect not to join the Association. That would be a shame, especially if an article appeared in a later issue of the newsletter describing a time, a place or an event in which you and your buddies were the main characters.

"How do I know my dues are paid", *you* might ask? "Simple", *I* might add. If you've paid at least once in '99 or '00, then you're current until 1 July '01. We'll let you know in the next two issues if you're due again.

In order not to miss future issues of the newsletter, please submit dues (\$10.00) to **Ken Bingham, 1773 Tamarin Ave. Ventura CA, 93003, tel. (805) 659-2224**.

# REUNION MEMORIES IN PICTURES



## REMEMBER WHEN .... IN WORDS

**EDITORS NOTE:** In 1951 during the Korean War, NMCB-8 was re-commissioned. Upon completion of training in Davisville, EIGHT deployed to Morocco, North Africa. After the Morocco deployment, EIGHT came home to Davisville and completed a successful homeport training schedule. The battalion then deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in 1952.

The story on this page was provided by **James E. "Jim" Buckley**. The pictures and captions here and on Page 5 were provided by **Richard "Dick" Berry**. Jim and Dick are plank owners having been among the first Seabees to join the battalion when it was re-commissioned. Dick and his wife Doris live in Lakewood, CO while Jim and his wife live in Altoona, PA.

With all the years having elapsed, my memory of specific dates and details are a little fuzzy, but here goes for what I can recall.

MCB-8 was initially commissioned 25 Sept 1951, at Davisville, RI. As a plank owner, I was quartered with several hundred new personnel in terrible shacks with asphalt-impregnated walls, flat roofs, masonite floors, and kerosene heaters. Each shack holding about 40 men. We had poor protection against RI winters. It took several months before the Battalion was fully complemented. Our first Commanding Officer was W. E. Norcross, CDR, CEC, USN, a great skipper, true engineering professional, and he took care of his men under all conditions.

Our first deployment (1st half of 1952), was to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. No quarters existed, so we were berthed on APL 48, a self-contained barracks ship with mess facilities and power plant but no propulsion. It had to be towed from Gulfport, MS. Our main project was to build two-story "H" & "J" housing for Naval Base and Air Station personnel with families.



APL-48

(2nd half 1952): Eight's main body deployed to Argentia, Newfoundland. A 100-man Detachment (Fox) went to Bermuda to perform work on Naval Station and Air Station buildings. They also performed street repairs and electrical

upgrades to street lighting and the chow hall. One project consisted of a ditch dug in a large triangular pattern (in that lousy coral!) for a direct burial seismic cable system.

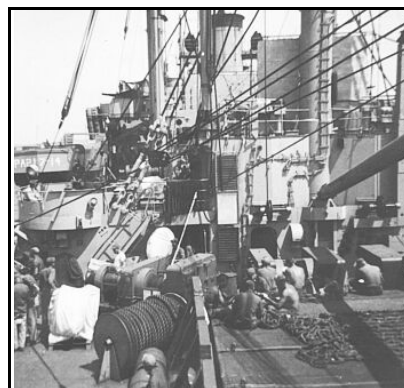


Debarkation Gitmo 1952

I will never forget the frightening LST voyage back to RI from Bermuda. We got caught in a hurricane off the Carolinas. A normal 3-day trip took 5 days. Such an event focused one's mind when on fire watch. Lashed to a main-deck stanchion, you see the outline of the ship's bottom (no keel) on nearby swells. The Skipper ordered two brand new cosmolene

coated, D-8 Cats cast loose overboard from their chained moorings on the bow, as ship's steerage and stability were practically nil with minimal steerage by engines only.

When we finally arrived we were treated to a big dockside reception at Quonset Point with band music and brass on hand from Quonset Point and Norfolk. Apparently some people thought we would not make it back.



EIGHT men aboard a seagoing LST

One thing's for certain, LST's are not designed for rough seas (a nerve-racking experience when you see main deck welds open up!!)

(Mid 1953): We deployed to Gitmo again, this time quartered in barracks miles from nowhere! Not sure who built our base. When on fence patrol at night I heard gunshots. This was a preface to Battista's overthrow by Castro. During this deployment, Eight completed various Naval Station updating projects in conjunction with Base Public Works.

(Early 1954): Off to Port Lyautey, (French) Morocco where Eight completed airstrip lengthening and runway lighting projects. Thanks to Special Services, we took several 6X6's to the Atlas Mountains area of the Western Sahara Desert for an R&R barbeque. Horse-and-camel mounted Berbers rode down to see us. They had never seen a truck before! They were "complete" with curved swords beneath their tunics.

At the end of the deployment, we boarded huge MSTs ship with USAF families at Casablanca for the States and our new Seabee base in RI.

Other people I remember from the battalion: our Executive Officer was LCDR J. L. Pierce. My "D" Company CO's were LT's James Thorp and LT D. R. Duck. Our electrician gang boss was CWO Frank Bridges.

I was honorably discharged from the Navy at Quonset Point, RI on 24 September 1954.

*Jim Buckley, CE1 (ret)*

### NOW SEE THIS!



Thanks to Barry Cote for submitting this very cool license plate. Barry hails from Augusta, Maine. If you look closely, a Seabee can be seen at the bottom.

.... AND PICTURES BY JIM BUCKLEY AND DICK BERRY



Personnel inspection on the grinder in Gitmo in 1952.



BUC-3 Dick Berry receives a Good Conduct Metal in Gitmo during a Fleet inspection in 1952.



Commander Bill Norcross First C.O. of EIGHT after its re-commissioning in 1952.

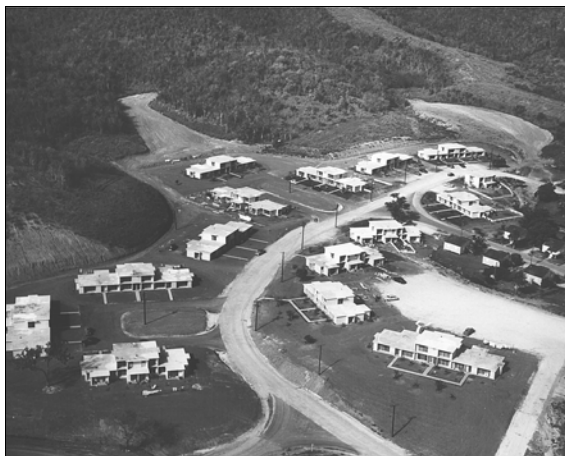


**Married Enlisted Quarters Port Lyautey, Morocco**

Before EIGHT arrived, MCB-6 took the quonset huts apart and trucked them up the hill and re-assembled, one every four days. EIGHT knocked out the chimney, put a U beam through the partitions, and trucked up the whole hut on a lowboy. We were able to finish two a day, way ahead of schedule. We had enough time left over to put in sidewalks and stairs. WILL DO, CAN DO, AND IT DID WORK! 12/52



Dick's "D" Company leaving for NAS Bermuda to build seaplane ramps. "After this deployment I got back home and took my new wife to Niagara Falls and Grand Canyon on a honeymoon." 2/28/53



**Married Enlisted Men's Quarters, Gitmo**

Dick was a composition floor tile setter when he worked on the construction of these MEMQ's. The battalion worked tropical hours from 0700 to 1500. At 1030 the food truck came by with two bread sandwiches and an orange. That was all to be had until the evening meal at 1700. 1952



A group of EIGHT Steelworkers actually volunteered to take out this old reinforced concrete silo on a quay in the Bay at Gitmo. It was considered a flight hazard. Other Battalions refused. These guys tied themselves on and jack hammered the concrete out that they were standing on 80' or so above the ground and then burned the steel rebar off. 1952

## Skipper's Corner

For those of you who received the inaugural edition of the Newsletter in September, 1999, you'll recall that Pap Phelps authored the first "Skipper's Corner". A year has passed and he has volunteered to write another article. Pap 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 truly a grand occasion and our thanks go out to Ed Kloster, Gordon Gilmore, Harry Davis, Bob Quinn, and all the other "quiet" guys and ladies who put our reunion together so well, and also thanks to all of you who came! It was a joy to renew auld acquaintance again and catch up on our individual odysseys since the 1960's. It is also a joy to see EIGHT leading the way in the Seabee reunion business out here in the West. One direction we would like to head is to get more involvement of Seabees in NMCB-8 from other times in addition to our Vietnam days. The names of the places say it all: The Aleutians, Iwo Jima, Guantanamo, Morocco, Spain, Greece, Antarctica, and so on. Our editor would like to hear from those who were there.

On my refrigerator, that universal bulletin board of our society, there is a small magnet placed there by my wife, probably for my benefit, which reads: "When all is said and done, there is a lot more said than done". As this message is exactly at eye level for me, and as I am a frequent visitor to the fridge, the thought is re-impressed on me daily. The saying certainly seems true in politics and in the courtroom. In contrast, however, I've often thought that we who served with the Seabee's have been blessed with plenty of things to do, and we have done them all as a way of life. The satisfaction of seeing a building, a pier, a water tank, an airfield or a bridge about which we can say "we built that" is the special reward for all builders. As we look back at pictures from our Seabee days, we can still enjoy that unique pleasure of the builder. No one of us built these things by ourselves, but each of us contributed our special skills that went into the accomplishment of the many facilities that we built. For example, I like to remember the contribution of our cooks in Vietnam. You have to admit that we were fed very well, and that our hammer swingers received plenty of high-quality, morale-building fuel. Today, everyone who has served in NMCB-8 can step back, look over those project pictures, and say with pride: "I helped build that". We had the pleasure and blessing of doing a lot more than we said.

Many of us went on to build many other things in many other places. However, when our Vietnam Seabee veterans look back at their accomplishments, our projects in that strife-torn country will always stand out as some of the most important things that we have ever built, and that we built under the most difficult of circumstances. I'm sure that our WWII veterans have the same feelings. Perhaps this is at the heart of our answer when someone asks us: "What did you do in the Navy?", and we reply simply: "I was a Seabee."

"Pap"

## SPECIAL REUNION 2000

(Continued From Page 1)

Below are the names of 54 NMCB-8 Seabees who attended the second annual reunion. This an increase in attendance of 24 over last year. An asterisk after their name indicates they attended last years reunion as well. They came from all over the United States. Many of them brought their wives and friends along to help celebrate what we all know is becoming a long and fruitful tradition.

**Bill Barker, Lou Beland\*, Ken Bingham\*, Troy Branch, Herbert Broussard, William Burreece, Rick Clark\*, William Clerke, Ron Cottman, Jim Daniels\*, "Skip" Dautel, Eric Davis\*, Harry Davis\*, Earl Day, Jack Quinn, Ron Dougal, Sr.\*, Gordon Gilmore\*, Donald Glass\*, Chuck "CB" Hall\*, Henry Hamilton, Fr. Jim Harris, Gerry Hazouri, Don Hess, David Kain, Ken Kerr\*, Calvin King, Gerald "Tiny" Koenen, John Malmos, Robert Mapel, Howell McCormick, Harold McCrea, Leonard Mechels, Roger Mechels, John North, William O'Ferrall, Jack O'Leary\*, Joe Patterson\*, Franklin L. Pecjak, Pap Phelps\*, Charles Polanski\*, Howard Potter, John Reed, Rick Reese, John Seites, Lon Slocum, Jim Smith, Miguel Soliz\*, Howard Talley, John Teichman, Ralph Vatalaro, Bob Westberg\*, Jack Williams, Ward Williams, Jack Wilson**

## Chaplain's Hut

Father Jim Harris

### Reunion 2000.

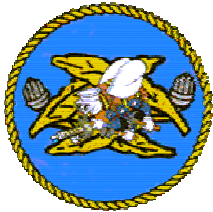
The joy of coming together in Hueneme didn't hit me until I got home. Why did I fly ocean to ocean knowing that my feet would swell, and it would take me a week or so to overcome the jet lag? I thought about these facts, and I must confess to all of you, that I put aside making a decision to attend Reunion 2000 for some months. As I thought, I realized it had nothing to do with swollen feet or jet lag. I was afraid. I have been afraid before, but there was something very special about this fear. It was a deep down in the soul kind of fear that is not easily dismissed. I wondered if those memories that meant so much to me would be as equally meaningful to you. Within minutes of arrival in your midst, I was assured by your greetings that somehow in some unexplained way we stood together as old and dear friends. It was as if time stood still, and we came together as if we were never really out of sight. For me this reunion of NMCB-8 was like a time machine. We jumped together into this little bit of time and remembered yesterday like it was today. We remembered each other sometimes at our best and times at our worst. The gift of these memories we gave to each other were as a kind of tonic, an elixir, a grace, an absolution prayer of great significance. For the gift of these memories, I ask the Lord to shower you and your families with abundant blessings. Peace to your homes, and to all who dwell and visit therein. **MCB-8 Chaplain Jim Harris, 78 Farragut Drive, Palm Coast, FL 32137; 904-445-1476**  
e-mail: [mjharris@bestnetpc.com](mailto:mjharris@bestnetpc.com)



"Jim"



# Seabee Memorial, Washington, D.C.



## IN MEMORIAM

*In remembrance of those who served with us*



We recently learned from **Colleen Bullock** that her husband **David John Bullock, SWC (Ret)** passed away on December 31, 1999. **Bruce Lenning** told us that his father **EQCM Walter E. Lenning** passed away in 1985. Walt was one of the “original Seabees” having served in WW II, Korea, and Vietnam. He was recently followed in death by **Anna**, his wife of 44 years. Word has also been received that **Willie Broughton** has passed away. **Consuelo Peterson** informed us that her husband **Thackery Peterson, BUCS (Ret)** passed away. Consuelo is a paid up member and enjoys reading the newsletter and stories about the Seabees.

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.

## THE BINNICALE LIST

**Ron Dougal** and **Rick Reese** have been busy since the Reunion tracking down their buddies who served in the two Tam Ky detachments. During this effort, they learned that **Walter Gilbertson** who served with EIGHT in Chu Lai has prostate cancer. They asked that Walt’s address be published so that the guys who knew and served with him could either send him a card or an e-mail note that we are all thinking of him and wishing him the best. His name and info: **Walter Gilbertson, 906 1040 Ave. E. Sumner, WA 98390. Phone: (253) 863-2960. E-mail: wgilbertso@aol.com.**

On October 6, 7 and 8, Ron, Rick and about a dozen or more of their buddies from EIGHT plan to visit Walt. **Joe Setting** will host this “mini-EIGHT” reunion at his home in Lake Stevens, WA. Ron promised me he would take some pictures and we’ll publish them both in the next issue of the newsletter and on our web page.

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**Gene Reilly**, who served as Alpha Company Commander during the Danang and Chu Lai deployments, is paralyzed on his left side from two strokes. He is in a veteran’s facility in Maine, about 150 miles north of his home in Steep Falls, Maine. **Gordon Gilmore** talked to Gene recently and said he sounded good and is optimistic that rehabilitation will restore the use of his left side. Gene was happy to hear that his friends in NMCB-8 were asking about him. He said it would be OK to print his telephone number in the newsletter. He can be contacted at the VA hospital by calling **(207) 883-7184** and ask for the B unit. The best time to call is 6:30 PM Eastern time. If someone wants to send mail, they can address it to his daughter **Karen Reilly, 54 Woodridge Dr., Steep Falls, ME 04085, telephone (207) 675-3583.**

**NMCB-8 SEABEES' ASSOCIATION**

4720 NW Terrace View Drive  
Bremerton, WA 98312

President ..... Ken Kerr  
Treasurer ..... Ken Bingham  
Past President (Recruiting) ..... Gordon Gilmore  
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 2001 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 \$10.00 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 kept current. See page 2 for details.**

**ATTENTION:** Anyone interested in submitting articles to the newsletter should send them to directly to Harry Davis at his e-mail [hdavis@kpud.org](mailto:hdavis@kpud.org); or home address **4720 NW Terrace View Drive, Bremerton, WA 98312.**