

CONSTRUCTIMUS, BATUIMUS – “WE BUILD, WE FIGHT”



NMCB-8 NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 6, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 2006



EIGHT MONTHS AND COUNTING

DOLLYWOOD REUNION UPDATE

All of the seven NMCB-8 reunions have been held at Port Huneme, CA. or Gulfport, MS. At the last two reunions, it was asked: “Why don’t we go somewhere else for a change?” Well here is your chance !!! Lets make the DOLLYWOOD reunion the best one ever for NMCB-8. There will be discounts for everyone that attends the re-union, and also for the several shows in town. It’s a family kind of place so bring your whole family if you like!

We have 122 rooms blocked off at the Ramada Inn. We hope to have well over 200 people attending, so get your reservations in now. So far we have over 70 people who have signed up, and by the time you read this, the number could double. So make that call today, re-serve your room, and send in your reunion registration forms!

We have to keep a list of the number of people who plan on attending. We want to make sure that there is plenty of everything for all hands!!!

To those of you who have called or emailed me that you are going to attend the reunion, I want to say thank you. For everyone else, if you plan on attending, make your reservation and send in your registration forms ASAP. If you need forms, give me a call at (480) 807-3016 or send me an email at: dougalsr@aol.com

LET’S MAKE THIS THE BIGGEST and BEST REUNION EVER FOR “NMCB-8” !

Ron Dougal, Reunion Committee

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More Reunion News

By Troy Branch (On Site Reunion Coordinator)

The reservations have been coming in steadily (30 couples and counting). I expect reservations to speed up now that the holidays are over.

I would like to tell everyone who I am. I was in Alpha Company with EIGHT in Chu Lai and Hue Phu Bai. Maybe some of you remember me by "Creek" or "Reb." Since getting out of the Navy, I have worked for the railroad, CSX-L&N for 33 years. I'll be retiring this August.

I have attended four of the past Reunions since 2000. At the 2000 Reunion, we were discussing where we could possibly have future Reunions. Out of many suggestions that were mentioned, **Frank Pecjak** suggested this area in Tennessee. Since I have been a lifetime resident of Sevier County, I agreed to help get a Reunion together after I retired in 2007. Well, I guess the numbers were decreasing at the last couple of Reunions. There's only so much to do around the bases. **Ron Dougal** called in January 2005 and asked if I could put something together for 2006 in or around Pigeon Forge where Dollywood is located. I agreed to see what I could do with the help of **Ray McPeek** who also lives in the area. He served with EIGHT in Danang in 1966. Well, we set out to make a plan to submit to the 2005 Reunion ad hoc committee consisting of yours truly, **Ray McPeek, Ron Dougal, Frank Pecjak, Billy Boggs and our wives.**

From experience at other Reunions, we agreed the most important thing we needed was to have plenty of visiting time and sites to see. We have this, as well as many other interesting things to do throughout the area i.e. shopping at the outlet malls, the music theaters, museums of interest, fun parks, the beautiful mountains blazing in fall color, and of course Dollywood.

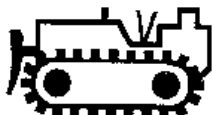
The Comedy Barn is good clean family comedy. The Dixie Stampede dinner show theater is a must see. Both shows are number one with tourists as well as locals.

We're only seven miles from the entrance of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. We're 30 miles across the mountains to the Cherokee Indian Reservation for those who would like to do a little gambling at Harrah's in Cherokee.

I know everyone will have a great time. Keep those reservations comin' in.

I'll see ya'll in September.

Troy



NOW HEAR THIS!

THE ROSTER IS SHRINKING

Where have all the Seabees Gone?

In the past year our membership has changed quite remarkably. Unfortunately, it has gone down not up, as one might expect. While we have added a few new members, we have lost more than we have gained.

The reason for the reduction in our ranks is twofold. Regrettably, several of our older members, and some not so old, have passed away. On the other hand, we have lost a number of members because they have moved without giving me a forwarding address.

Every newsletter has "Address Service Requested" printed on it. If someone moves and leaves a forwarding address with the Post Office, the newsletter will be sent on and I will be notified of the new address. However, this service only lasts for one year and is not foolproof.

Each time we mail out the newsletters quarterly or thereabouts, I get several back that cannot be forwarded for various reasons. The biggest ones are "moved, left no address" or "time expired unable to forward".

In addition, "Address Service Requested" is not free. Each time I get a notification it costs between \$.39 and \$.90 depending on the reason for the return.

The bottom line is, if we don't have your correct address and are unable to find one for you through our state reps or by using the internet, and we do try, your name will be deleted from the roster and from future newsletter mailing lists.

So if you want to continue to receive the newsletter and stay on the active roster, please take time to fill out the form on the back of the newsletter with any change of address, telephone number or e-mail if you have it. You can also email me the information at nmcb_8@msn.com.

If anyone has information, i.e., addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc. on the whereabouts of any of the "lost Seabees" listed below, please write **Ron Dougal** at his e-mail address dougalsr@aol.com or, if you don't have access to e-mail, please drop him a line at **6225 E. Des Moines St., Mesa, AZ 85205** and we will attempt to get them back in the fold.

Hosia Blankenship, CA; Randolph Buller, NM; William Burrece, CA; Barry Celey, OH; Daniel Crippen, SD; Charlie Cummins, TN; Bob Eberly, PA; Jimmie Evans, IL; Ronald Fields, MS; Eugene Gargano, CT; Morris Handy, IN; John Heath, NC; Gene Holladay, CA; Leonard Mechels, CA; Roger Salvato, CA; Donald Seitz, NV; Dennis Stanfill, OR;

Harry Davis, Newsletter Editor

GORDON GILMORE HONORED

Gordon Gilmore, the first President of the NMCB-8 Association, was recently honored by being inducted into the Athletic Hall of Honor at Texas A & M University Corpus Christi, TX. The honor is bestowed on individuals based on their athletic and scholastic achievements while in the University and on their performance after leaving school. He played football and baseball and was captain of the football team in his senior year.



Following is the article describing this notable achievement:

Captain Gilmore entered the U S Navy upon graduating as a petroleum engineer and had a distinguished career including tours of duty in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Japan, Washington, DC and other places within the U. S. Some highlights included serving with NMCB-8 in Vietnam, heading up a \$350 million construction program at the Elk Hills Naval Petroleum Reserve, and generating \$1.4 billion in profits the first year while serving as Director Naval Petroleum and Oil Shale Reserves. Among his awards, he received the Legion of Merit, Navy Marine Corps Medal, and Bronze Star Medal with combat V. Captain Gilmore retired from the navy in 1983 and entered private industry. He joined Lawrence Allison, an engineering and construction company, and served as its president from 1987 to 1993. From 1993 until 1995, he served as president of John Brown U. S. Services. He retired again in 1995 and started doing volunteer work in the community.

In 2000, Captain Gilmore was presented the Distinguished Service Award by Secretary of Energy Richardson.

Currently, Captain Gilmore and his wife Donna live in Bakersfield, California where they own and manage residential and commercial real estate.

A WORD ABOUT DUES

The reason you received this newsletter is because you paid dues sometime in the past. Some of you are life members and do not need to pay dues again. The rest of you have paid by the year. Some are up to date, many are not. So if you haven't paid dues in the past year or two, please help us out.

To make payment, send a check payable to NMCB-8 Association to **Ken Bingham, 1773 Tamarin Ave, Ventura, CA 93003**. Dues are \$10/year or \$100 for a life membership.

REFLECTIONS

by Morris Burnham

Harry Davis asked me to write a personal story for the NMCB-8 Newsletter. This request came after I had commented that I had kept a diary while in Vietnam (a diary that I had not read in a very long time). Well, I just again read my diary that began on 29 Jan 67 with the last entry dated 23 Mar 67. It's not a diary that details stories that can easily be described, and being less than 60 days is only a snapshot at best. My diary gives a portrait of a young man struggling for identity, a young man who has a drinking problem, a young man who has a poor attitude for successful adjustment, a young egocentric man; in this mix is also a young man with a vision for himself.

I have met many of us Vietnam Vets and have been told that my attitude was not so different. I don't know. I've never had a chance to thank all of you for adding something to my life during those years, so here's a sincere "THANK YOU!"

I've enclosed a picture taken along the South China Sea at Rosemary Point in Chu Lai where our camp was located. Next time I'll send a picture of being caught working. Don't forget to make plans for the 2006 reunion in Pigeon Forge!



A Sunday afternoon at the beach in Chu Lai

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION

On page 4 of the newsletter is a Memorial written for **Ron Dell** who served with EIGHT during the final Danang deployment in 1969. The tribute was written by his wife **Rneé Dell**. Ron and Rneé had been married just a couple of years, having met in 2002. Since Ron's death René has expressed an interest in finding out more about the Seabees, particularly what Ron did when he was with EIGHT and what the places described in the 1969 Cruise Book were like. If anyone knew Ron, when he served in Delta Company and what he was like in those days, Rneé would be grateful if you could drop her a line via e-mail and let her know anything you remember about Ron and what he did as a SW2 in Delta Company.

Her email address is rocknd@gmail.com

A TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND AND FELLOW SEABEE

By Richard Berry

Tom Gade was a plank owner in MCB-8. We met in Davisville R.I. in those chicken coops, and went through Builders School in Hueneme.

Tom was a hard worker. He was on the concrete crew in GITMO, pouring slabs for MEMQ's, and was a bricklayer in Morocco.

Tom also played hard. He was the only guy I know who ever chug-a-lugged a fifth of whisky (and almost died). However, he still had things to do. He was the only guy I know who bit an officer. Seemed Lt. Luck didn't like the guys having a beer party after work in the boonies. The EM Club was 5 miles away on a dusty road in a cattle car. So Lt. Luck and a few shore patrol decided to break it up. When the guys saw them coming they scattered into the jungle, but Lt Luck grabbed Tom and he turned around and bit him.

Tom came out of 4 years in Uncle Sam's canoe club a full seaman—same as out of boot camp.

About 6 months after we got out Tom called me in St. Louis. He bought a car and was bumming a night at other MCB-8'ers houses on his way to California from the east coast. He fell in love with Santa Barbara while in school and said he would go back when he got out. He stayed with us two nights sleeping on the couch, the kids bedrooms were full.

Years passed, but we got in touch when the family was grown. So on a visit to L.A. I dropped down to San Diego where Tom Gade finally landed.

I got to his house in Mission Trace—a high rent district of San Diego. On entering and seeing Tom's great smile, I saw the big living room was empty—no chairs, no carpet and the light fixture had a wire grill over it. Tom had gotten married to Susan who already had two boys, so he caught up with us family wise while the boys played soccer in the living room.

They were ready to move to a 4 family apartment he owned, and raze the house we were in and build a new one.

The next day Tom took me to his office—a high rise building on the 14th floor in downtown San Diego.

Seems he got a law degree, passed the bar, and set up shop doing construction contracts. On the back wall among his accolades was a picture of Tom shaking hands with President Jimmy Carter at a time when Tom was an active member of the San Diego City Council.

Tom was a great guy at 5' 9" tall and he affected a lot of people in a positive way, except Lt. Luck, he made life better, and used his 70+ years well. I personally am a better man for knowing **Tom Gade**.

Richard Berry, BU-2, MCB-8 Plank Owner, 1951-55

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tom Gade passed away suddenly on Sept. 1, 2005.

HOW IT'S WORKING IN IRAQ

A first hand account of living and working among the Kurds



Ken Bingham with hand on hip. "The guys with the AK's are part of a 75 man static guard protection force. The little guy showed up handing out candy in our hood, and made my day. God bless'm."

We're tasked with getting electricity to the locals in this Kurdish area. Most of our 75 static (25 per shift) guard protection is by the local Kurds. We rent 9 houses in a middle class Kurdish neighborhood. When traveling to site, our protection is South African (Dutch) ex-special force types. We travel in 3 up-armored Suburbans—us in the middle vehicle and shooters in the front and rear vehicles. When I was in Baghdad (Red Irish) our vehicles stopped once to engage but didn't—and we went on our way. Here in Erbil, it's very quiet and safe and most of the people are friendly to our presence. We're not allowed to visit some job sites, so we have to "remote-control" the projects through our local nationals. One of my Iraqi employees was seriously injured by an IED last week. We're attempting to get him out of the Tikrit hospital to a better one in Amman Jordan.

I like the idea of coming here and doing something good, and the pay ain't bad either. In Vietnam, I thought it was cool to see older civilians working for RMK-BRJ. Being part of something that's bigger than one's self also appeals to me. As for my politics, technology has made the world smaller, and cultures are rubbing up against one another. In this crowded "neighborhood", do we let others (say Islamic Fundamentalists) set the agenda for us and render a history swayed by their vision? Or, do we try and sway history more to our values and liking? We prevailed in the Cold War (Vietnam was just one of her battles) and we won. We do this already on a smaller scale, in terms of the war on drugs, crime, youth gangs etc. We engage, we don't let "them" set the agenda for us. Also, I think pain and suffering should be in the enemy's neighborhood, not in ours (911?). Struggle happens! We only have to look to our own blood stream (germs/viruses vs. cells) to know that struggle is part of life. It's this struggling that keeps us healthy. It's a matter of deciding which side you want to be on.

Ken Bingham, 1966-69

A Word From the XO

Tom Burton reported as XO of NMCB-8 in June, 1966. He remained XO until relieved by Joe Patterson in May, 1968.



Memories are a gift for our old age. Some fade, some strengthen with recall, most change to include only the parts we want to remember...but all enrich our later life. All of you are encouraged to make it to Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, in September to renew old memories and to create some new ones.

Some random memories of EIGHT's deployment to Chu Lai, RVN, December 1966 - August 1967, still mean a lot:

Thirty (or so) straight days of rain when we arrived...how cold it could get...the work accomplished anyway...the anger of **Captain Pap Phelps** at the lack of raingear for his men, and his special "buyer" sent to Taiwan to hand carry raingear back to Chu Lai...the depth of mud we drove through to get to the airfield...the special issue of the 'Eightball' on the first day with no rain...and the Christmas Eve party in the XO's hut, courtesy of the holiday cease-fire.

The village school constructed in large part by free-time NMCB-8 labor on Sundays...**Father Jim Harris'** fund raising from Marine units to buy materials, his personal recruitment of nuns to staff the new school, and his dedication speech in english and vietnamese.

Civic action visits to Ky Xuan island; amtrak rides to the island courtesy of the Marines; **Docs Hazouri and Kerr** holding clinics.

The 'IED' buried in the road south of Chu Lai, with trip wire leading into a rice paddy, that injured several EIGHT people including our Marine Sgt Todd...and the quick reaction of ROK Marine friends close-by who swept the paddies and burned some huts that hid the VC perps.

LTjg Roger Staubach throwing 60-yard passes in the field between our camp and Naval Support Activity...met him while having a Sunday afternoon 'working' beer with his hutmate... most all of our building materials and camp supplies came from DaNang via NSA LST deliveries. Staubach remains my favorite football player of all times.

The sound of mortar shells being 'walked' across NSA into the EIGHT compound-fired from our civic action island...the shock and grief for our casualties and the thankfulness for the quick reaction of those who led and helped.

The contest held for design of a new NMCB EIGHT logo to replace the shovel digging into an eight ball...the winning artwork by Russell Larson. If anyone knows how to contact him, please let me know.

The high level of professionalism, spirit, talent, and dedication of the men of NMCB EIGHT...the major demonstrations of these traits in the MAG 12 hangers and revetments, the TamKy cantonment, dairy plant, chapel, ice plant (with Korean plans, specs, and ops manual), bridges, and more bridges, and many other projects.

Again, let's all try to be at the next reunion in September to reinforce and add to our memories of being an EIGHT Seabee. I am looking forward to seeing some of you and sharing sea stories for the first time in over 35 years.

Tom

REMEMBER THEN....



Men of Charlie Company pouring concrete during the 1969 deployment in Danang



The tall guy in middle is Richard Swallow, CMA-3, who served with EIGHT from 1964-67. He is shown here with officers and a "Top" Sergeant from the 2nd ROK Brigade, Tiger Division. The picture was taken about 10 miles north of Quang Ngai, RVN.

AND NOW....



Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 74, deployed to Pakistan in October, 2005 to assist in the recovery effort from an earthquake that killed an estimated 80,000 people. Pictured above is EO-3 Craig Ries who lives in Gulfport, MS. Ries, his wife and two children lived in an apartment complex that was completely destroyed when Hurricane Kitrina devastated the Gulf region last August. Reprinted from the Kitsap Sun

Seabee Memorial, Washington, D.C.



IN MEMORIAM

In remembrance of those who served with us.

We have received word of the passing of several shipmates: **Rneé Dell**, wife of **Ron Dell**, let us know that he died on February 16, 2005. **John G. Brubaker**, 59, passed away in Tempe, AZ on November 15, 2005. **Theodora LaRue** informed us that her husband **Fredrick Larue** passed away on December 15, 2004 after a long battle with diabetic related health problems. **Karen Reilly** called to tell us that her father **Gene Reilly** passed away on February 6, 2006 after suffering a series of strokes.

THE BINNICALE LIST

Received word that **Arnie Cicerone** was in the hospital fighting a stubborn infection. He's at home now, late January, and well on the road to recovery. Heard over Christmas that **Jack O'Leary** was in the hospital but is now home and doing well.

VOICES FROM THE PAST

John Brubaker dying was sure a big shock to us! **Walt Gilbertson** and I attended the services to represent NMCB-8, and we sent eight red roses to symbolize NMCB-8. Also John's nephew is a Navy pilot, serving in the Navy, so he had a big navy emblem placed on the lid of the casket, and he gave a speech about John's service with the Navy Seabee's and all the things that he was involved with in Viet Nam. It sure was a tear jerker for Gilbertson and me, to relive all that.

Ron Dougal

I just now ran across the site for EIGHT and noticed the upcoming reunion. I was in EIGHT from Aug '65 until just after Chu Lai. I was an EA2 and was even on the yearbook staff for Da Nang. I just recently moved to Chattanooga from Texas, so the reunion really sounds great. You'll be hearing from me for registration shortly.

Roger L. Bewick

I am certainly going to try to make the reunion in Tenn. I have received the emails with registration forms and schedule. I lived in the Oxnard/Hueneme area for over 19 years after my retirement from the Navy.

Tom Burton

Thanks Ron, Don't think I can make the reunion, have to start cancer treatment, but please ask the guys if they remember me and they can contact me at this e-mail address. jvm1027@comcast.net

Jim Mecca

EDITORS NOTE: Several years ago at one of our early reunions, Joe Patterson made an interesting observation. He said we are an endangered species in that we will never have more people who have served in EIGHT as we did then. This is so true inasmuch as EIGHT was de-commissioned in 1969.

As we age as an Association, we have lost several of our members. When I find out about anyone who has passed away, I publish their name in our Memoriam Page. Occasionally, someone thinks enough about a friend they have lost and sends an article

to me recalling significant events in their life during the time they knew the person.

In this issue of the newsletter we are fortunate to have two such articles submitted by **Richard Berry**, remembering **Tom Gade** whom he served with in the early 1950's and **Rneé Dell** remembering fondly her husband **Ron Dell** who served in EIGHT in 1969.

Anyone wishing to memorialize a friend who has passed away is more than welcome to send in a tribute or a remembrance.

NMCB-8 SEABEES' ASSOCIATION

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Past Presidents Gordon Gilmore
Ken Kerr
Rick Reese
Recruiting Ron Dougal
Newsletter Editor Harry Davis

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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 two years, 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 !**

