



CONSTRUCTIMUS, BATUIMUS – “WE BUILD, WE FIGHT”

NMCB-8

NEWSLETTER



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WINTER 2001



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A 'HASTY EXIT' FROM MCB-8 IN CHU LAI

By Craig Fisher

As a "short-timer" with 29 days left before my separation, I faced the remaining days with typical bravado and thoughts of setting the world on fire when I returned home. Little did I know that in the early morning hours of May 13, 1967, my life would change dramatically.



Craig & Gina Fisher

I awakened to the sound of the distant thud of mortars and yelled, "In-coming." At that moment, since the mortars were not in the Charlie Company area, I dressed, tied my boots and grabbed my M-14 and web belt before getting in our mortar hole.

The rounds continued to come in and then stopped, so I jumped out of the hole and headed for the perimeter. I didn't get far before rounds started coming in again. I returned to the hole. This time, however, I was facing the opposite direction.

The rounds were getting closer. There was a flash and an explosion. I remarked to Connie Harrington and Ray Carr, the two men in the hole with me, that that one landed right behind us.

I experienced instant tinnitus (ringing in the ears), but did not yet know that we had been hit. I recall being unable to breathe and experiencing a feeling as though my consciousness was controlled by a light dimmer switch that was being lowered in increments. Feeling a wetness, I reached behind me and grabbed the hamburger that my buttocks had been rendered to. Until then, I did not know that I had been hit. The round had landed in our mortar hole.

When the in-coming mortars stopped, I

called for Ray Kingston to help us. Ray and Bill Sack and others carried me to sick bay. I was bleeding so profusely that I nearly slid off the stretcher when it was put down. My clothes and boots were cut off. Father Harris performed "Last Rites" to a good Catholic boy. The med-evac choppers were soon there and we were taken to FLS Bravo for initial debridement of wounds.

Father Harris came by the next morning and advised that my vocabulary was greatly improved from when he had last seen me. Although severely wounded, God was with me. Had I not gotten out of the hole and then returned facing the opposite direction, I would have been struck in the head and not writing this article.

The afternoon of May 13, Connie Mack Harrington and I were flown to Danang Naval Hospital. From there, we were flown to Japan for five days for stabilization, and then on to Great Lakes Naval Hospital. I was paralyzed from the waist down from the spinal cord trauma. After approximately three weeks, sensation started to return to my lower extremities. I remained a patient there for eight months.

On March 1, 1968, I was retired from the Navy because of my disabilities.

Following service, I attended Rochester Community College and the University of Minnesota. I entered a training program with the Disabled American Veterans during September 1971 to become a National Service Officer. As such, I represented veterans in their claims before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. I retired due to disability on October 1, 1997, serving the last 20 years as the officer supervisor in Minnesota.

I live in Burnsville, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis, with my wife, Gina. My daughter, Vicki~ and her family live in Rochester, Minnesota, and my son, Patrick, lives in Anchorage, Alaska, with his wife.

From Your President

Rick Reese

In the wake of the tragic events of September 11th, any other topic of this message would seem insignificant. As an association our thoughts and prayers go out to those who have perished and those who have lost loved ones.

As a nation we grieve the loss of American lives and the lives of peace loving nations. A loss perpetrated upon us for being "the brightest beacon for freedom" in the world.

As veterans we additionally mourn the loss of our colleagues at the pentagon who were doing their duty to protect our country and keep the beacon of freedom shining.

It is a loss that we veterans will never get used to, but a loss that we have endured in the past and we will unfortunately be forced to endure in the future. It is a loss that is perpetuated upon us because we have always gone in harm's way for personal freedom, safety, and justice for the greatest nation on this earth.

We have gone and those who now follow us will continue into the field each and every day in the name of freedom and justice knowing by design or accident we may be asked to pay the supreme price for keeping liberty, justice and freedom for our people and country. We have done this and continue to do this knowing that many will try to murder us based solely on our service to our country. They are so short sighted and mistaken, as this is a service steeped on ideals and morals of right and wrong. It is a service, which has been paid for in the blood of our fallen comrades and brothers in arms.

It is enduring trials and losses such as these that have built the common bond between service veterans and those who carry on a tradition of service. Service which can be traced to the first shots of concord and renewed each time America has had to send her servants of freedom to some conflict which threatens her people's liberty. It is a bond, which reaches from war to war, conflict to conflict, branch to branch. It is a bond forged in combating the worst evils the world has to offer. It is a bond forged in the fires of hell and tempered by the grace of god.

It is why we openly grieve the loss of our comrades as the heroes they truly are. They are heroes, not just for the acts of September 11th, but for each act they did every day until their fall.

It is because of these trails that we considered it a privilege to have served as the guardians of freedom. It is why we become so fiercely proud of who we are and what we have done as members of our nation's armed forces.

To our fallen comrades may god bless and keep you and grant you rest and peace. May he never call you back to duty, although he knows that you would answer. Further that you know that all veterans will remember your service to our country for all eternity.

In closing, I will wish each of you and your loved ones happy holidays and lets get together in Gulfport October 02.

Rick



Rick Reese-1967

WELCOME TO THE NMCB-8 ASSOCIATION

Once again, the list keeps growing. The 32 SEABEES listed below have joined the Association since the printing of the Fall 2001 edition of the Newsletter.

Robert Ambot, William J. Ambot, Frank L. Beckman, Anthony Bove, Ronald Brekke, Joseph Castronovo, Calvin T. Chunglo, Don De Groff, Paul C. Devan, Alfred Direnzo, Willis N. Eakin, William Engle, Lillian C. Farrington (WWII), J. Gornicki, S.D. (Buddy) Griffen (WWII), Thomas Kjennis, Raymond Kingston, E. Mark Knapp, Anton Kump (WWII), Woodrow D. Leach (WWII), Davis R. Luck, Dufferin R. McConnell, Lenard H. Moss, Jim Navy, Joseph Novotny (WWII), Ernie D. Pyle, Forrest M. Rickard (WWII), Robert C. Risley (WWII), Mrs. James L. Ross (WWII), Walter Earl Scribner (WWII), Richard Stone, Lewis C. Unger (WWII), Thomas A.E. Weir (WWII), Lloyd Wittenberg, James C. Wuerthele (WWII).

NOTE: If, through an oversight your name was omitted from the new members list, let me know and your name will appear in the next issue of the newsletter. **Editor**

ATTENTION ON DECK! REUNION 2002 UPDATE

The All Seabees West Coast Reunion committee will host two reunions in 2002, Port Hueneme, April 4-7, 2002; July 25-29 2002 during Seabee days. The local NSVA Island will host a reunion in Gulfport, MS in October, 2002. This is good news for many east-coast members of the NMCB-8 Association. Association emphasis next year will be on the Gulfport reunion and we encourage as many of you as possible to attend what will, I'm sure, be a "blast from the past." Watch the next issue of the newsletter for details.

NOW HEAR THIS!

About 25% of your Association's membership is now made up of Seabees from eras other than Vietnam. We have a number of members who served in WWII, in the Eighth Naval Construction Battalion, and several plank owners who served in EIGHT in the early fifties when MCB-8 was first commissioned. Also, we have a few members who served down on the ice in Antarctica during Operation Deepfreeze in the 1960's.

In view of this diversity in membership, we have given the front page of the newsletter a new look. All three logos which once represented the battalion during one of its eras now appear at the top of the page.

The "eight ball", with words above and below it, comes from WWII. The shovel digging out the earth was the logo from 1951 to 1967, and the large logo on the right side of the front page has been in effect since 1967. We hope you approve of this new look.

REMEMBER WHEN?



Operation Deep Freeze 1964



Shaving was outside on the ocean...



A walk meant carryin' protection



Richard Stewart did the popcorn

This was
our
home in
Chulai



Camp Miller 1967



8th Naval Construction Battalion
Company A Platoon 3 (WWII)



Fireman raise the flag over "Ground Zero" in New York

New York City Flag Flies Over Afghanistan Thanks to Seabees

SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN - American troops raised a flag of New York City given to them by city firefighters over the new U.S. base in the Afghan desert Friday to honor victims of the World Trade Center attack. The flag was brought to the base by reservists from **Navy Mobile Construction Battalion 133**, who joined Marines already deployed here, arriving from Guam aboard a C-17 transport aircraft early Friday.

They raised the flag - orange, white and blue with the city seal in the center - just below a U.S. flag on the same bamboo pole Friday morning, while Marines continued to dig in around the base perimeter and hone their weapons skills. "Two of our reservists had friends in the (World Trade Center) building, so when firefighters said 'Will you do us a favor? Wherever you go, please fly this flag to remember those people, we said 'yes,' Seabee Chief Petty Officer **Robert Tanner** said.

Many of the reservists worked as Port Authority police and in similar jobs and helped in the rescue efforts after the suicide hijackers' Sept. 11 attacks on the Twin Towers, said Tanner, 40, of Rensselaerville, N.Y. The Seabees also flew the flag in Guam, where they are usually based. The Seabees were sent here to improve the hard-sand airstrip and the camp.

The old airfield, seized Sunday night by the Marines, is within striking distance of Kandahar, the spiritual center and last major stronghold of Afghanistan's Taliban movement. The United States launched its campaign against the

Taliban after they refused to hand over Osama bin Laden, the top suspect in the attacks on the twin towers and the Pentagon.

The Associated Press was among the news media allowed to station a reporter with the Marines on the condition that they do not report on troop strength, mission plans, the exact location of the base or other sensitive issues. **Gen. Tommy Franks**, commander of the U.S.-led campaign, has said in the United States that between 800 and 1,100 Marines will eventually deploy at the base. At the Afghan airstrip, Seabee Chief Petty Officer **Tony Williams**, 31, of Norristown, Pa., said this was the first time since the Vietnam War that the Seabees have deployed so far forward with the Marines in a hostile situation.

From Thursday night through sunrise Friday, U.S. military helicopters, C-130 transport planes and the even bigger C-17s flew in more troops and equipment, including light armored vehicles. At the base's farthest perimeter, the infantry had dug into the sand and the light armored vehicles tested their weapons. The 14-ton, 8-wheel vehicles have small, tank-like turrets and can drive up to about 60 mph in the desert. Despite near-freezing overnight temperatures, sand and no amenities - not even tents - for any of the forward troops, most seem proud to be in southern Afghanistan. "Nobody really wants to go to war, but we are here because we have to," said **Chris Tidwell**, 22, of Tampa, Fla., of the 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Company. "From what I hear, everybody in America is pretty proud we are here trying to take out the terrorists. I think it's good, too," said Marine Cpl. **Jamyn Williams**, 22, of La Puente, Calif.

AND NOW YOU KNOW

Did you ever wonder about the legacy of the battalion named EIGHT? When was it commissioned.? Who were the officers who lead it throughout its existence? Below are those Civil Engineer Corps officers who became Seabees and commanded EIGHT from its beginnings during WWII, throughout the cold war years and during the Vietnam conflict until its de-commissioning in 1969.

OFFICERS-IN-CHARGE

LCDR Arthur W. Hefling, CEC, USNR
 CDR Earl M. Kelly, CEC, USNR
 LCDR William W. Aultman, CEC, USNR
 CDR William T. Powers, CEC, USNR
 LCDR William W. Aultman, CEC, USNR
 LCDR Clarence W. Palmer, CEC, USNR
 LCDR Gerald B. Briggs, CEC, USNR
 LCDR John H. Hanbock, CEC, USNR

DATES OF COMMAND

19 Jun - 4 Oct 42
 4 Oct 42 - 8 Feb 44
 8 Feb 44 - 7 Mar 44
 7 Mar 44 - 6 Sept 45
 6 Sept 45 - Nov 45*
 Nov 45 - Jan 46*
 Jan 46 - Jan 46*
 De-com. Jan 46*

* Approximate dates

COMMANDING OFFICERS

CDR William E. Norcross, CEC, USN
 CDR R. G. Witherell, CEC, USNR
 CDR J. A. Hiegel, CEC, USNR
 LCDR Archie E. Floyd, CEC, USN
 CDR George L. Hoffman, CEC, USN
 LCDR Joe. P. Trunz, Jr., CEC, USN
 CDR "Pap" A. Phelps, CEC, USN
 CDR Jack. O'Leary CEC, USN
 CDR Robert. Westburg, CEC, USN

DATES OF COMMAND

Aug 51 - Jan 53
 Jan 53 - Dec 954
 Jan 55 - De-com. Jun 55
 Nov 60 - Aug 962
 Aug 62 - Apr 64
 Apr 64 - Jul 965
 Jul 65 - Apr 67
 Apr 67 - Jul 68
 Jul 68 - De-com. Dec 1969

If the names of your OIC's and CO's bring back memories, please share them with your fellow shipmates. After all that what reunions are all about. Send me your stories.

Editor



A Gray Old Bunch; In front, Larry Nicks, Jack (Quinn) Dennis, John North, Jack (Okie) Williams. Rear: Ken Bingham

A Call to Duty

By Jack Quinn Dennis

Let me make one thing clear, this is written for John North, not me. I made a trip out to Minneapolis, Minn. It was just a small trip, a week-end, out on Saturday, back on Sunday. It was an inexpensive trip, cheapest airfare, special on the hotel, using public transportation instead of renting a car. It was a trip I'd like to call "the bed watch". It didn't cost that much. No more than the wife and I would spend on a day out at a fancy dinner or party for our company's industry events.

But it meant something. To me, even more than to John. It was two old friends getting together to swap stories, jokes, insults, and just plain time together.

John North may not be known by all of you, but he should be. He's that rarity in our times, a man who remembers things. And names. And faces. And, especially, incidents. Playing the "remember when" game with him was a trip down memory lane. He wasn't there at Chu Lai, he didn't know everything about the battalion, but he was there at Phu Bai. He was there at Danang. And he was Bravo Company. He can name 'em all, and talk about them too. It's funny to hear the names drop. "Fitz", "Okie", even mine, "Dennis", I never had a nickname, just my last name.

John was in for a by-pass operation. They split him open, cut open his leg, and transplanted those veins. John also has Muscular Dystrophy. It's not only a child's disease. He's been operated on for it. His brother has it too.

He was there, the brother, I met him. He called me "that guy from California". Then he turned over the bed watch to me, that's what he called it, "the bed watch", and said he'd come back on Monday after I'd gone home.

The bed watch. I hate hospitals. And I don't like visiting people in 'em because of it. I never know what to say, I want to leave as soon as I get there. But I had the bed watch. I had to be there. For John. Not for me, not because I wanted to, but because I had the bed watch. And I learned. I had a good time because John is who he is. He

came alive because I was there. He sat up and talked. He became animated and enjoyed our time together. And we traded insults, we traded stories, we traded memories. Mine were a little sparser than his. I'm sorry I didn't take my video recorder to tape him. In fact, it's a project we should think about. A video record of all those little memories that make up our years together. Sort of like the CD's that Ken Bingham is working on. "Memories of Vietnam, USNMCB-8". Think about it.

And the next time you hear of one of ours in the hospital, the next time you hear of one of ours being sick at home, think about "the bed watch". Let us all know. At least let me know, but remember; it just might be your turn for duty, your turn for "the bed watch".

I AM THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

My name is Old Glory. I fly atop the world's tallest buildings. I stand watch in America's halls of justice. I fly majestically over institutions of learning. I stand guard with power in the world.

Look up at me and see me.

I stand for peace, honor, truth and justice. I stand for freedom. I am confident. I am arrogant. I am proud.

When I am flown with my fellow banners, my head is a little higher, my colors a little truer.

I bow to no one!

I am recognized all over the world. I am worshipped - I am saluted. I am loved - I am revered. I am respected - and I am feared.

I have fought in every battle of every war for more than 200 years. I was flown at Valley Forge, Gettysburg, Shiloh and Appomattox. I was there at San Juan Hill, the trenches of France, in the Argonne Forest, Anzio, Rome and the beaches of Normandy, Guam, Okinawa, Korea and KheSan, Saigon, Vietnam know me, I was there.

I led my troops, I was dirty, battle worn and tired, but my soldiers cheered me and I was proud.

I have been soiled upon, burned, torn and trampled on the streets of countries I have helped set free. It does not hurt, for I am invincible.

I have been soiled upon, burned, torn and trampled on the streets of my country and when it's by those whom I've served in battle - it hurts. But I shall overcome - for I am strong.

I have slipped the bonds of Earth and stood watch over the uncharted frontiers of space from my vantage point on the moon.

I have borne silent witness to all of America's finest hours; but my finest hours are yet to come.

When I am torn into strips and used as bandages for my wounded comrades on the battlefield, when I am flown at half-mast to honor my soldier, or when I lie in the trembling arms of a grieving parent at the grave of their fallen son or

**MY NAME IS OLD GLORY, LONG MAY I WAVE.
DEAR GOD IN HEAVEN, LONG MAY I WAVE.**

Skipper's Corner

Bob Westburg relieved Jack O'Leary as CO of NMCB-8 at 1100 hours on the 16th of July, 1968 at our camp in Phu Bai, RVN. He remained CO until NMCB-8 was decommissioned in December of 1969.



In previous NMCB Newsletters the comments from the "Skipters Corner" has emphasized our experiences in our Vietnam Deployments and our very successful reunions. Now as I try to come up with a subject to discuss I can not help but have my attention shifted to the recent incidents in New York City and Washington D.C. and the "War on Terrorism".

Looking at what we see on TV of the terrain in Afghanistan and hearing the weather predictions for the winter months, it is clear the environment will be much more severe than we experienced in Vietnam. In our deployments to Phu Bai and Danang our projects included construction of roads, bridges, camps, aircraft shelters and more. What will the jobs be this time?

I have not yet heard of any Seabee Battalions making deployments to Afghanistan, but as there is an increase in ground forces, Special Forces and Marines, I can foresee the need for some of these same construction projects. Then when the Combat Phase is over there will probably be a form of "Marshall Plan" for humanitarian aid and a need to

rebuild hospitals, schools and restore the infrastructure. This could be a long-term need for Seabee Battalions. Maybe they will have to recommission MCB 8 after 32 years. There is another reason we may need more Battalions. Have you heard of ITEMPO? It is a new law which changes the deployment rotation to 6 months deployed and 10 months in homeport. Remember our 9 months deployed and 6-month in homeport? I think this can be overruled in case of war.

I am looking forward to the Seabee Days in Port Hueneme in July of next year and the Gulfport Reunion in September or October of next year. With all the potential challenges ahead for Seabee Battalions and having no idea what will happen between now and the reunions, I wonder if it would be possible to have a speaker who could bring us up to date on how things have changed in the last 30 years and what is happening with Seabees in the current War on Terrorism. Another issue, which needs to be addressed

before our reunions, is how the increased security at the bases may affect the activities that we can have at the reunion.

I am looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the reunions.

Bob

From the Editor:

Jack (Quinn) Dennis served in Bravo Company, NMCB-8 from August 1966 through February 1968. A CE1, he was wounded in action on 11 February, 1967 during the Chu Lai deployment.



Jack as a recruit

I'm happy to see you on these pages. I'd like to give a hand to Harry Davis for a fine newsletter, over the past years he has done a magnificent job.

As your new editor, I intend to continue the tradition started by Harry, with current events and news from those of you in the Association who want to share your experiences, and your stories with us all. So keep the cards and letters coming folks, I need all the help I can get.

On a more somber note, the events of the past two months have seemed awfully familiar to us. Another war in a strange and bitter landscape. More evidence of hate-filled people struggling to lash out at our country. I won't argue the issues in these pages, nor will I debate the "rightness" or "wrongness" of the war at hand, but I will protest my "right" to fly the flag in honor of the heroes who died on September 11th. And I will protest my "right" to support the men and women of the Armed Forces who are flying, and sailing, and marching "in harm's way". That support, in the form of a flag of my country, is my "right". As I am sure that some of you would like to fly that flag, just contact me, and I will forward information on how to obtain car flags, house flags, and flag decals for rear windows.

In honor of those people who have given much for their country, each issue will contain a story from our own battalion. From those who received wounds in defense of their country or those who suffered in doing their duty to the battalion. These stories are part of our history, part of the fabric of our lives in the service of our country, and too long left untold. With your help, there will be more...

Jack

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"The difficult we can do at once.....

The impossible takes a little longer."

Seabee Slogan



Seabee Memorial, Washington, D.C.



IN MEMORIAM

In remembrance of those who served with us.

We received no information of the passing of shipmates and friends since the last newsletter so we are dedicating the remembrance to all who died in the terrible tragedy on 9/11. Our sympathy goes out to the families and friends of those who lost love ones, and especially to any of you who may have been personally affected by this national tragedy.

THE BINNICALE LIST

In the last newsletter we reported that **John North**, who has muscular dystrophy, was going into the hospital to have heart surgery. We are happy to report that John had the surgery on 28 November and is doing well. **Chuck "CB" Hall** has returned home and is considering undergoing another round of intensive chemotherapy. Keep them both in your thoughts and prayers. Ron Dougal writes that **Walter Gilbertson** is recovering from surgery he underwent on 12, December in Phoenix. If anyone would like to send cards or emails to Gil, send them to him at 10822 N. Balboa Dr. Sun City, Arizona 85351 or to his new email at gilofsuncity@aol.com



The "God" Box

I have searched for significant words for these 9.11 times. Millions of words have already been unleashed, and a million more will come. It is fitting, just and proper that the Seabees participate in a very public



Father Harris

prayer. As you read these words, I ask you to think of the variety of beliefs, customs, skills, culture and experience that bond us together. Our diversity demands we come together and unite our thoughts and concerns and find unity no matter our like mindedness or our extreme differences.

Together we join with the nation and with the whole world as it publicly prays commemorating the massive tragedy of death and destruction that entered our conscious life on Sept 11, and will live on as part of our history.

We cannot allow deep grief and destruction to stand in the

way of renewal and resolve to continue our journey to build and defend what we build in a culture of peace and right minded community and global relationships.

The journey really never ends, and the demands remain forever intensive. We find strength of purpose in rejecting mere revenge, cynicism and bigotry; and acknowledge, each in our own way, that out of these tragic events, it is possible to build and to grow and begin to dialogue on a variety of issues affecting the public good.

May the Lord help us to keep hope alive, to be with us on this most demanding journey, to sustain us, and to also restrain us, but especially to lead us. We pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer. Amen.

Father Harris

With compassion for others

We build, we fight

For peace with freedom.

With willing hearts and skillful hands

The difficult we do at once.

The impossible takes a bit longer.

-- Seabee Motto

NMCB-8 SEABEES' ASSOCIATION

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Newsletter Editor Jack Quinn Dennis
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



SEABEES "CAN DO"

ATTENTION: Anyone interested in submitting articles to the newsletter should send them directly to Jack Quinn Dennis at his e-mail jgteach@yahoo.com; or home address P.O. Box 311 Pittsburg, Ca. 94565.

NMCB-8 ASSOCIATION ENROLLMENT AND ROSTER UPDATE FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone & Email: _____

Dates served with EIGHT _____

In order to receive the **NMCB-8 Association Newsletter** I understand I must join the **Association**. Enclosed are my dues of \$10 which will maintain my membership in good standing until **6/30/2002**.

*Detach form at dotted line and return, along with dues to: **Ken Bingham Treasurer, 1773 Tamarin Avenue, Ventura, CA 93003.** Make check or money order out to **NMCB-8 Association.** Please do not send cash.*

A roster of members of the NMCB-8 Association will be reprinted yearly and mailed to all members in good standing in the fall of each year. It is to your advantage to ensure that roster information is correct and up to date. Use this form to submit desired changes to: **Harry Davis, 4720 NW Terrace View Drive
Bremerton, WA 98312**