



NMCB-8 NEWSLETTER



— U.S. NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION EIGHT —
November, 2019 — Happy Holidays.

— PRESIDENT'S COLUMN —

JAMES O MILLER UTP2
NMCB 8 2/6/67
DIED TAM KY VIETNAM

RAY L WILLIAMS BUR2
NMCB 8 3/13/67
DIED CHU LAI VIETNAM

MICHAEL D ESTOK BUR3
NMCB 8 5/13/67
DIED CHU LAI VIETNAM

HARRY H MIDDAUGH UT
NMCB 8 4/25/68
DIED BUNG KAN THAILAND

LOREN F STUDER SWF2
NMCB 8 5/31/68
DIED TAN MY VIETNAM

RUDY P KRISSMAN
NMCB 8 7/10/68
DIED PHU BAI VIETNAM

WILLIAM C LEGAT BU1
NMCB 8 10/30/69
DIED DANANG VIETNAM



I want to thank all that made the (Reunion) Meet and Greet with NMCB-3 located at the Desert Diamond Casino & Hotel in Tucson. I also want to thank Victor Horvath, President of the NMCB-3 along with all the members of NMCB-3 association that provided us with such a warm reception. The facility along with all the Festivities and a great banquet, were extremely good. Looking toward the future In order to enable us to have larger groups we will be combining more with various Seabee Units. This will help us with all the work necessary to support a Reunion, and enable us to provide Reunions each year and at various areas around the country.

It was great seeing everyone, Troy brought the famous Bee which was the talk all around the Hotel. We are trying to get the names to go with the photos in the newsletter, please go to the web site I intend to put the photos with lines drawn to each person. Put the photo number EX (SAM 1340 Item number 3 is John Doe) then send it back on the web site. We will then rearrange the photos with the names involved on the web site.

Ron Sabbatis is working on the new reunion at Port Hueneme this year. Our Reunion will be in conjunction with the All Seabee Reunion at Port Hueneme. The dates are October (1 – 4) 2020 please keep your eye on the web site for further information and current updates. The reunion will also be at the same time the Point Magu Air show (October 3rd and 4th) is scheduled. We will be contracting a local Hotel to provide our needs, Hospitality room etc. As soon as we select the Hotel please start to book rooms, remember you can cancel up to one day prior to your arrival time so lock in the room, and remember there may be a lot of people booking at the Hotel. We will have a flyer going out when we get all the details.

Each year we lose more members. This could be the last year we're able to see some of our brothers. With each passing year, some will not be able to travel and some will be gone but never forgotten!

I also want to extend an invitation to our nonmilitary friends and other veterans. In previous reunions, we've had various guests and friends join us to the festivities and banquet. They've had a great time. We are trying to get a special banquet speaker for Port Hueneme.

Rick Reese has been working with the photos on the web site please take a look. Remember if you can name some of the people please send it back on the web site.

Remember, we are Seabees, and NMCB-8 is still alive with our "Can Do" spirit. —Arnie Cicerone, President NMCB-8 ASSOC

JOE THOMAS PATTERSON, JR.
CAPTAIN, CEC, USN, (RET.)



1936 - 2019

(See page 3)

MCB-8 Answers the 50-Mile Challenge

By R.G. Barouw, SN, USN

On 13 August 1963, fifteen men from MCB-8 donned full battle gear and started out on a 50-mile hike. This "final exam" was organized by Charles R. Sanchez, CEW2, to test the results of MCB-8's physical fitness program.

The Seabees of MCB-8 left the Main Gate of the U.S. Naval Construction Battalion Center in Davisville, Rhode Island, at 0315. They started out going south on U.S. Highway 1, but decided that they would prefer the scenic route, so they turned off on to U.S. Highway 1A.

They strolled down U.S. 1A to Galilee, Rhode Island, which is a little over 26 miles from their starting point. At the two-thirds point on the way back there were 13 of the original 15 still going strong, but a combination of the heat of the asphalt highway and the weight of the field packs got the best of five of them. They were brought back to Davisville in a Navy truck. The remaining eight continued on to finish the 50-mile trek.

The finishers were: Victor J. Marino, EOH3; Denwood L. Fairley, EOH3; Robert N. Citowitz, BULCN; Elwin M. Knapp, SWFCP; Brian D. MacMillan, UTP3; Charles R. Sanchez, CEW2; Ronald T. Padykula, BULCN; and Roland P. Tantin, BULCN.

The right "heroes" were greeted at the Davisville Main Gate at 1545 — just twelve and a half hours after they began — by LCDR George L. Hoffman, Commanding Officer of MCB-8. He congratulated the boys on a job well done in the traditional Seabee "Can Do" spirit.



Denwood L. Fairley, EOH3 (left), and Victor J. Marino, EOH3, saunter down the main road in Wickford, Rhode Island, on the final lap of their 50-mile hike.



LCDR George L. Hoffman, CO of MCB-8, welcomes Elwin M. Knapp, SWFCP (left), and Robert Citowitz, BULCN, back to Davisville after the two Seabees completed the 50-mile hike.



LCDR George L. Hoffman, Commanding Officer of MCB-8 is flanked by hikers (l-r) Ronald Padykula, BULCN; Charles Sanchez, CEW2; Roland Tantin, BULCN; and Brian MacMillan, UTP3.

21 Nov '19
Ken,
I think the enclosed periodical or article tells the "50 mile" story.
Rough-out combat boots will stretch when wet. Robert & I were perched on a road-side stone wall, south of Wickford, tightening our laces, when a car stopped, photographer got out, and our photo appeared in the Providence Journal the next day!
Charlie Sanchez's program got recognized.
RA



THE ABOVE ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY MR. ELWIN M. KNAPP
21 Nov. 2019

**JOE THOMAS PATTERSON, JR.
CAPTAIN, CEC, USN, (RET.)**



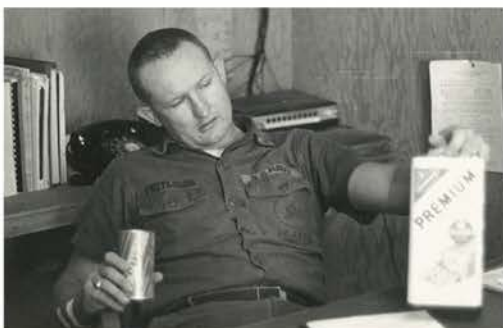
1936 - 2019



Joe's dynamic and caring personality impacted everyone who knew him. He was a scholar athlete that played baseball and basketball through high school and college while excelling in academics and the ROTC. He was a decorated military officer who was known for his leadership, guidance, reliability and loyalty. Covering almost three decades of selfless service to his country, he was awarded the Legion of Merit, a Bronze Star with Combat "V", a Meritorious Service Medal with Gold Star, a Navy Commendation with Combat "V", a Combat Action Ribbon and The Republic of Vietnam Galantry Cross with Silver Star. A trusted advisor and counselor, he affected the lives and trajectory of countless people, helping them to be successful in both their personal and professional lives. Most importantly, he was a beloved father and husband who put his family above all, making untold sacrifices to ensure their well-being, success and happiness. The world is a better place and we are all better people having known Joe. Simply saying he will be missed is an understatement that does not do his life and accomplishments justice.



THE CO HAS LEFT THE BRIDGE, THE XO HAS THE CONN.



The Great Seabee Tank Caper [MCB-121]

By Dick Jones

THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT, if not historical event, that took place during the height of the Vietnam War. It went completely unreported and was never mentioned again anywhere in the annals of the illustrious Seabee history archives. I am here to correct that error before everyone involved forgets or considers it too minor to mention anymore.

Sometime around March 1968, U. S. Navy Seabee history was made when the Mobile Construction Battalion-121, Alpha Company became the only military unit in the history of the Vietnam War to capture an enemy battle tank!



Above, Peter Atkins on tank with MCB133 at Phu Bai.

But before I go into detail on how that epic achievement was accomplished, I must give you, the reader, a little background and a lesson on military terms.

First and most important is the definition of a “Sea Story”. Although this is a true story, a sea story is not a lie, nor is it completely the truth. There could be an involuntary embellishment (which Seabees hardly ever make) of facts and figures, all with a certain amount of provable facts in support of the truth, with a plausible deniability.

It has been said that the difference between a fairytale and a sea story is the way they begin, a children’s fairytale begins; “Once upon a time”, and a Seabee sea story starts “This ain’t no shit”.

This story is told in the first person, because I was there, and that’s no shit. My name is Dick Jones and I was a member of Bravo Company, MCB 121 of the 32nd NCR, 3rd NCB, 3rd Marines in the I-Corps region of South Vietnam during the war.

All Seabees had their Battalion responsibilities as their primary job. Those jobs encompassed the full spectrum of what you would expect to see in a construction company building air fields, ports, roads, pipe lines, electrical distribution, barracks, etc. Alpha Company was made up of drivers, heavy equipment and such. Bravo Company was plumbing, electrical, steam production and such. Charlie Company were carpenters, and building trades. Delta Company were draftsmen, planners, etc. Then there was Hotel Company where the C.O. and staff personnel and supply sat. My

job was mainly the operator of a large portable boiler used in steam production used in every aspect of battalion life.

As is the case with Seabees, we all had two jobs depending on the circumstances. I was a watch stander, an operator for the steam plant. Many of us had routine watch standing jobs, every day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every week, someone was on watch in our primary areas of responsibility.

In my case, I had a choice of watch standing times and I always took the late night duty looking after a huge boiler for the battalion. As the boiler I was caring for had full automatic controls and safety switches with alarms, at night, I would hide in a loft of the boiler room and sleep the night through. Then bright and early after the next watch stander took over, I would head off to Alpha Company area where all the daily convoys were formed up and offer my services as a “Shotgun” rider on any convoys heading out, North or South of our combat base.

On some days if there was no need for a Shotgun rider, then I would head over to the Battalion Chaplain who often needed armed body guards to escort him when he went off to local churches and orphanages located in Hue, Dong Ha or at the furthest point North of our area down to Phu Loc, South, just before you get into the Danang valley. That area included such places as Quang Tri city and to the East as far as the Rock Pile and of course Khe Sanh.

This story is confined to Route 1 heading South from the Combat base at Phu Bai to the quarry near Phu Loc. I was riding shotgun on the re-fueler, as I often did on these rides. About 5 miles south on highway 1, at Xa Loc Bien was an old concrete bridge over a small river. Guarding that bridge was an old French tank, which had been there since the Indochina War some 15 years earlier. The tank was an old Chaffee M-24 given to the French Army during our post-war military assistance program.

For months we drove past that tank with more or less passing interest and the driver and I often spoke of dragging the tank on a lowboy trailer and taking it back to the battalion main camp. We fantasized about what the NVA or the VC would think if they saw a tank on our firing line?

Finally, one day on a deadhead trip back to the main camp, we had an empty lowboy trailer in front of us! And sure enough the tractor driver turns into a loop and backs up to the tank. A few Seabees, including myself hook up the tank to the lowboy winch and drag the tank onto the lowboy, and the driver jumps back into the tractor and pulls out, back onto the MSR road and head’s North. The whole operation from the tractor pulling in to get the tank and back out with the tank onboard, took only 10 minutes at most.

Finally, when we pulled into the main camp the tractor pulled over to the heavy equipment storage area, where broken things wait to get fixed. He off-loaded the tank and pulled away. What happened next, I’m not real sure, but it seems to me, with a 50 year old memory of this, that someone later that night painted the tank pink, ending the shock value of having it on the firing line.

So MCB 121 was the only American military unit in Vietnam to actually capture a tank and bring it into their battalion area in working order. Up on further inspection it was found that the tank still had about 30 rounds of 75mm rounds stored on the inside of the turret and under the floor platform. Had the NVA or VC ever

been aware of that fact, one can only guess the havoc that could have played on any American convoy traveling over that bridge.

Lo and behold, 50 years after the fact, I recently went to my first battalion reunion, October 2018. As we were trading sea-stories I told this one about the Great Seabee Tank Capers and no one there remembered it... until the Master Chief of Alpha Company, EQCM Green came in and confirmed the story to my skeptical audience.

There were many Seabee veterans of that first deployment who could not, for one reason or another, attend this 50th anniversary reunion. If any one of you can flesh this story out, please do. MCB133 was the battalion that relieved MCB121 at Phu Bai, anyone in that battalion remember the Chaffee tank left for their protection and amusement?

It is after all, Seabee History!

Posted by Dick Jones in History, Navy, Seabees, Vietnam, Wars

About Dick Jones

Dick Jones retired from the Seabees, USN in late 1984 with the rank of Senior Chief after 23 years of services, which included tours in Vietnam, NAMRU II, State Dept and as the AOIC Navy Exhibit Center, Washington DC. After the Navy he worked for the CIA, and as a diplomat for State Department. Serving at many overseas posts until 2008.

You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

*The above story copied from: U.S. Naval Institute Blog—
<https://www.navalhistory.org/2019/04/04/the-great-seabee-tank-caper>.*

Chaplain's Corner

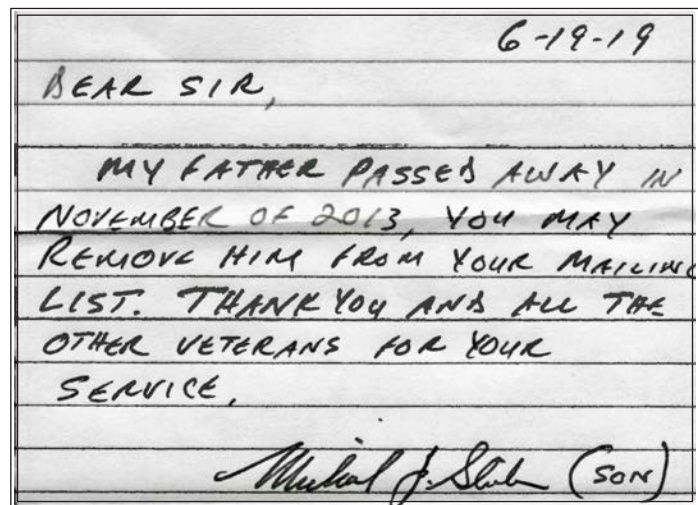
11/14/19

Happiness is a Choice

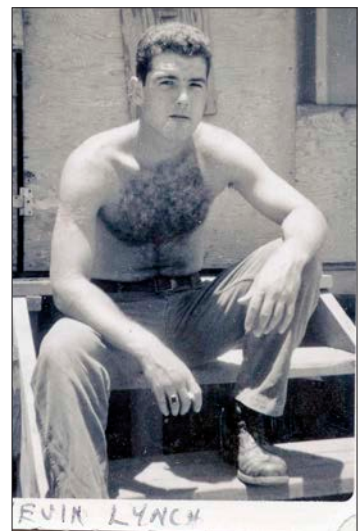
WELL, HERE IT IS, pumpkin and turkey time, a time when we Americans set aside time to be thankful. And, BOY HOWDY, do we have a lot to be thankful for!! I have come to realize that having a thankful heart goes a long way in making a person happy. I have also come to believe that we have a moral obligation to ourselves and to those in our lives to be a happy person. Now, I know none of us are immune to adversity, but we still have an obligation to display a happy attitude.

God wants us to be happy. We have the choice to follow God and seek the path He has set for us. If we travel life with God, our lives will be happy. We get to choose, and what we choose will make all the difference. As Abraham Lincoln said, "Folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be".

Happy Turkey Day! —Billy



Bravo Company
Members
1968 Vietnam



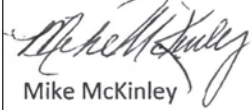
L_R: Lynch, Thede and Droughn.

Dear Ken:

I am glad we had a chance to get together on your last sojourn to New Hampshire. I thoroughly enjoyed our visit and look forward to more of the same in the future.

You asked me to send you some background on my life since leaving the battalion. That info is enclosed. Please feel free to cut and hack and use whatever bits of it you wish in the battalion newsletter.

Best Regards,


Mike McKinley

I JOINED MCB 8 AT CAMP FAULKNER in Danang, Vietnam in March 1966 as a replacement storekeeper and remained with the battalion through the 1966-1967 deployment to Chu Lai, Vietnam. I was assigned to the automotive repair parts section of battalion supply and was a fire team leader and automatic rifleman in the reactionary platoon known as "Keel's Killers." Following the Chu Lai deployment I was transferred to the Naval Supply Depot at Subic Bay, Philippines where I completed the first phase of my connection with the military being discharged in 1968.

I went on to attend college at Plymouth State College (now university) earning a Bachelor's Degree in history. I then went back into the military serving a three year hitch with the First Infantry Division at Ft. Riley, Kansas as a journalist/photographer with headquarters public affairs. I was also tasked as Bicentennial historian for the division preparing articles on the US Army's history, role and contributions during the country's first 200 years. While with the division, I also participated in two training tours in Germany.

After the Army, I continued my broken service career by serving another 7 years in the Navy. I served as a Navy journalist/photographer with the "Gator Navy" aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Ogden (LPD 5) assigned to Amphibious Assault Squadron 5, home-ported in Long Beach, CA. I became a Shellback and was initiated into the Order of the Golden Dragon having crossed the equator twice during two West Pac cruises.

After 3 years aboard ship I was transferred to Washington D.C. and All Hands Magazine. I was a feature writer and defacto naval historian with the magazine writing numerous articles on Navy history. While with the magazine I was sent on assignment to Antarctica to write a series of articles on the Navy's role in supporting the National Science Foundation down on the ice.

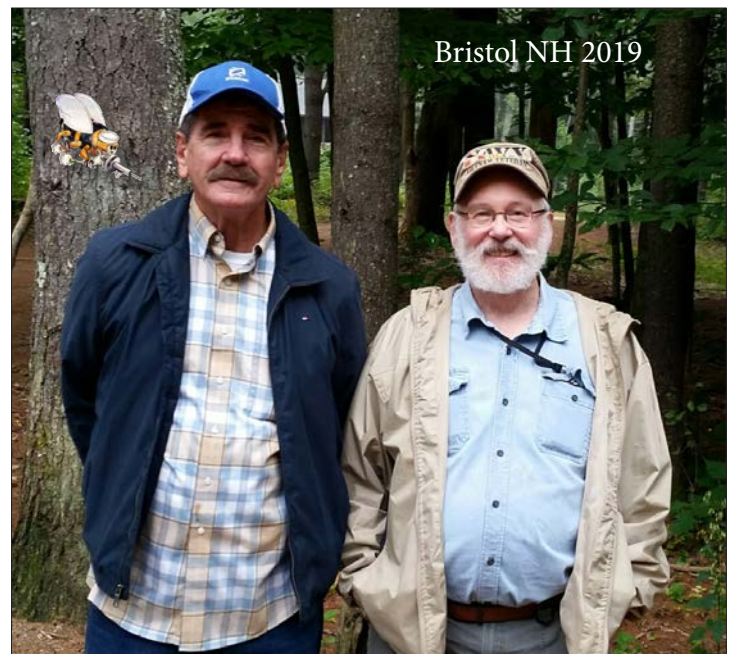
Upon my discharge from the Navy, I became a seasonal and later full time park ranger with the Idaho De-

partment of Parks and Recreation assigned to Heyburn State Park in North Idaho as a naturalist/interpreter and later Three Island Crossing State Park on the Snake River in southern Idaho as Oregon Trail interpreter/historian.

I left the state park system to attend the University of Idaho full time to complete my studies toward a Master's Degree in history (which was awarded in 2001). While working on my master's I became a seasonal interpretive park ranger with the National Park Service working at historic sites and monuments in the NPS system. As an inter-

preter I worked as a field historian researching, preparing, and presenting programs and tours detailing the significant events at the sites I was assigned. My park service assignments took me to the Fort Laramie National Historic Site in Wyoming; Colonial National Historic Site, Yorktown, Virginia; Mount Rushmore National Monument in South Dakota; Richmond National Civil War Battlefield Park, Virginia; Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota; Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Illinois; and Little Bighorn National Monument, Montana.

I am currently retired in New Hampshire and enjoy hiking and backpacking. As an independent field historian, I also stay busy presenting programs on history topics at various venues in the local area.



L-R: your editor Ken Bingham and Mike McKinley.

REMEMBER WHEN

EDITORS NOTE: *This article was submitted by George Schuster who served in EIGHT at Chu Lai in 1966-67. He was close to Mike Estok and recalls the night he was killed. Many of you were there also. I was moved as I read his account, and remembered "that night".*

I joined NMCB-8 in late August 1966. I had come from Davisville IPO school. I had no idea of what to expect except that I was going to Vietnam! I had enlisted two days before my draft notice arrived. I enlisted because I had read about the Seabees, had worked as a builder, and figured if I was going to Vietnam anyway, and it was very likely at that time, I may as well do what I was best at and enjoyed. It took me nearly five days to get to California on an airline with a pre-paid ticket.

This new service duty and service life was very boring the first couple of months with NMCB-8. I began to wonder what I had gotten myself into. All of a sudden there were classes, military training, and I began to feel I was "earning my keep". When we landed in Vietnam, I was pleasantly surprised. The Seabees were everything I had read they were and more! I was awed by their organization and accomplishments. I knew I had made the right choice. These memories both good and sad would come to last a lifetime.

One of the first new friends I met after joining NMCB-8 was Mike Estok. Like myself, he was an IPO. He was in my squad and bunked next to me. I remember he must have been an automatic rifleman because I can see his M-14 with the tripod laying on his rack. Mike was not a big kid but very well built and very strong for his size. His voice was very deep and almost didn't match his body. Mike and I ended up in the same hut in Chu Lai. We seldom worked together (revetments only) but I do remember Mike enjoyed his work. He often talked about where he was working and pouring concrete.

Mike was a smoker and like many of us enjoyed his beer. His best friend was Bob Mayberry. Mike was very much in love with his girl friend. He wrote her nearly every night and received a letter from her nearly every day. He would talk about her often. He learned she was pregnant not long after the deployment started. They were to be married before the baby was born. Emergency leave had been arranged with the Red Cross and Mike worked with Chaplain Harris. A date had been set, and I think he was booked to go home and marry a matter of days from "that night". I don't remember ever hearing of the birth of Mike's child. He or she would today be some 33 years old.

I have vivid memories of "that night", but I couldn't tell you the exact date. I would only guess it must have been late April or early May 1967. I was one of the first to wake up as I have always been a light sleeper. The incoming whistles followed by explosions got closer and closer. They were no more than 10 to 15 seconds apart. For reasons I will never know we all fully dressed, took full gear and rifles, and headed to our holes at the ocean front. This was

a distance of at least 200 to 300 ft. uphill! Bob Chilton and I ran up the hill at the same time. The rounds were hitting very close behind us as we ran. Our hole was directly behind the shower building straight ahead of the path and across the roadway. I don't remember how many guys ran behind us, but Mike must have been one of them.

Shortly after we were in our hole, and as the rounds began to hit, Elroy Fulps (sp.) joined us. He was a very big guy. There were now three in a two-man hole. Fulps was actually covering some of our bodies! He was heavy, and he was hurting me, but what did I care! Several rounds hit in the area of the showers. The tin roof and walls were "pinging" from all of the debris and gravel being thrown. We found Mike after it was all ended. He was on the roadway slightly left of the shower. I believe he suffered very little. He was less than 50 feet from his hole.

Our hut by this time became an actual family. Like any family we had our share of problems. I remember we all joined together for our own "healing". We had many open group discussions of what had happened. Some blamed themselves for what had happened to Mike. After all we should have just jumped out the door into our bunker in any form of dress! None of us had done that and none of us were to blame. I hope no hut members still think they were responsible to this day.

The members were as follows: Ron Sabatis, Ken Reber, Bob Wachtler, Jim Moorehouse (sp.), Terry Richart, Rich Cunningham, Mac McElligot (sp.), Bob Chilton, a Seabee named Winchester (sp.), and myself.

I have thought of Mike and "that night" from time to time over the years. Since my service years, I have marched Memorial Days, with the exception of one when I was in a hospital. I join fellow veterans on that special day of the year and it is Mike I think of.

Thirty-one years later, in the summer of 1998, the "Moving Wall" came to a nearby town. I had never seen "the wall", so I went. I didn't go in search of any "closure". That had happened many years before. As I stood for the longest time just staring at Mike's name in the sea of names, I can't begin to put on this paper all of the things that went through my mind. I was *indeed* moved in ways I *never* felt possible! I was glad that I had gone and seen, but in ways I wish I had not. I don't know what to say when people ask.

Mike's name appears on panel #19, line #105 on the East Wall Section.

BU2 George H.Schuster

THE ABOVE STORY IS FROM OUR NEWSLETTER

DATED SUMMER, YEAR 2000.

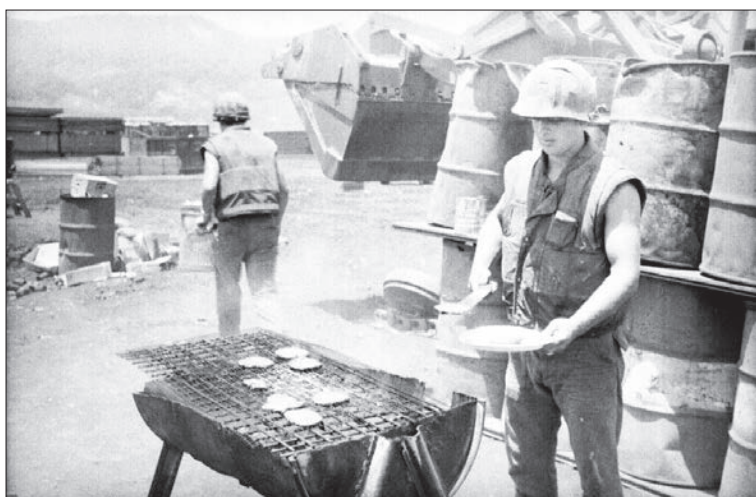
COMPILED BY EDITOR HARRY DAVIS.

MCB-8 Reunion—Tucson AZ
October 3, 2019









BBQ at Khe Sanh: photo by CBMU 301, March 1968 (U.S. Navy Seabee Museum)



The Seabees of the 111th Naval Construction Battalion give thanks in Normandy, France on Thanksgiving, 1944.

**NEXT MCB-8 REUNION
OCTOBER (1 - 4) 2020
Port Hueneme Calif.**

Our next reunion will be in conjunction with the ALL SEABEE REUNION at Port Hueneme Calif. Ed Kloster, and his wife Harvest, have headed up reunions for many years and they do a great job. We'll be a part of it.

The reunion will coincide Naval Base Ventura County Airshow - NAS Pt. Mugu, CA on October 3-4.

Please keep your eye on the web site for further information and current updates.



Seabees clearing route of buried mines, 1970 - History By Zim

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

To:

Note: The above numbers denotes your membership dues status (Month-Year).
(Due date)

-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:
Ken Bingham, 1773 Tamarin Ave., Ventura Ca. 93003. If you have e-mail and want to make your update electronically, please do so. Send updates by e-mail to: jorden2323@msn.com.
Thanks for your support!



JAMES O MILLER

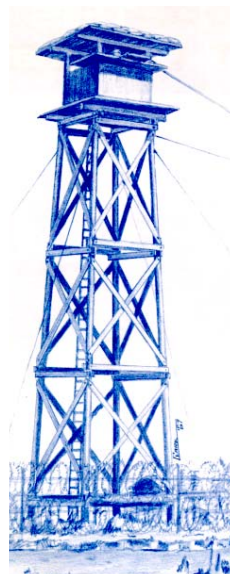
UTP-2 James O. Miller was mortally wounded during a mortar attack on the Tam Ky Detachment, February 6, 1967. He was the first NMCB-8 Seabee to be killed in action in Vietnam.

At a ceremony on July 9, 1967, Admiral Mike Marschall, Chief of Civil Engineers and Commander of the Seabees, dedicated Camp Miller in Petty Officer Miller's name.

Miller hailed from Colorado. He decided on an occupation in the building trades and was a plumber prior to entering the Navy under the direct procurement program. Like countless others before and after him, Petty Officer Miller chose to defend his country by joining the Navy and serving his country as a Seabee.

**"UNHAPPINESS IS THE HUNGER TO GET.
HAPPINESS IS THE HUNGER TO GIVE."**

Majesty of Calmness by William George Jordan 1898



*By Artist/Architect
Rick Clark.*



*The Above Story Is From Our Newsletter Dated Summer Year
2000. Compiled By Newsletter Editor Harry Davis.*