

Fifty-Eight



Family-Gram

10 June 1966

Davisville, Rhode Island

Greetings:

As the training mentioned in previous Family-Grams continues, I thought I'd expand on the contents of the various programs being conducted. In this writing I'll cover military training and leave the technical training for next time.

The course is two weeks long, the first week being spent in the classroom at Davisville and the second at the training area at Sun Valley, located about seven miles from the Seabee Center. The classroom work during the first week covers the weapons used in the Seabee defense, such as the M-14 rifle, .45 caliber pistol, M-60 machine gun, 3.5 inch rocket launcher, and the M-79 grenade launcher. Nomenclature, characteristics, field stripping and cleaning, and the proper use of these weapons are taught. Along with topics such as riot control, chemical and nuclear warfare defense, JMWOC Forest "code of conduct", field sanitation, and first aid. During the week a trip is made to the rifle range for familiarization firing of the M-14 rifle and .45 pistol along with demonstration of the uses of the other weapons.

Following the first week at Davisville, the men are transported to Sun Valley where they remain for their second week of training. Instructions are given in the use of the compass; field communications; fire team, squad, and platoon tactics; and individual movements in a combat situation. On Thursday night a simulated attack is made on defenses prepared by the students to test their practical use of the material they have studied. On Friday the men march back to Davisville to end their training. As you can see, it is quite extensive and exhausting, and will be of untold value to us should we ever be required to defend ourselves.

One of the most interesting, and certainly important, aspects of MCB FIFTY-EIGHT's organization are the staff personnel who are attached. In addition to the personnel directly concerned with construction tasks, we have a doctor, dentist, and chaplain and their staffs to serve the physical and spiritual needs of the Battalion. We also have our own special services organization to provide recreation opportunities (athletics, movies, hobbies, reading, clubs, etc.) for us when we're deployed. The various activities organized by this group certainly make battalion life much more enjoyable.

Among the new arrivals of the past few weeks are the direct procurement petty officers from the Navy's new Seabee recruiting program. These men have had extensive experience in construction trades and are given a direct rating as petty officers to expand the construction capability of the Navy's construction forces in the most expeditious manner. We welcome these petty officers to the Battalion, and trust that they will find their first Navy experience to be both challenging and rewarding.

In addition to all of our other activities, the Battalion performed a formal "pass in review" on Friday, 27 May, in honor of Rear Admiral Drustina, the Commander Atlantic Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Norfolk, Virginia. It was our first full scale military ceremony since our commissioning. Our men once again lived up to their motto-"The Great Fifty-Eight" by doing a truly outstanding job. This is but one of the many indications we have of our battalion's ability to perform well whatever tasks they may be assigned. The training and experience we gain during this summer can only enhance this ability.

Sincerely,

W. W. DeGROOT III  
CDR, USN  
Commanding Officer