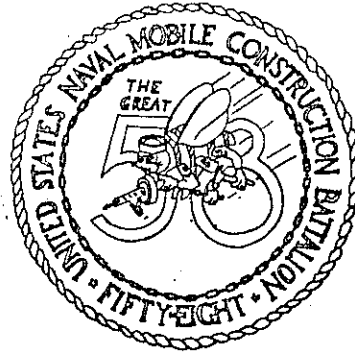


FAMILYGRAM



HOI AN
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

10 MARCH 1968

Greetings:

This Familygram originates from our new camp site near Hoi An. If you need help in finding Hoi An on the map, it is approximately 15 miles due south of DaNang; it is the provincial capitol of Quang Nam province. Our camp site is situated a few miles north of the city within a few hundred yards of the beach.

The move to Hoi An came upon us rather suddenly. Because of the heavy construction requirements in-country, an additional Seabee Battalion was deployed to Vietnam on relatively brief notice. NMCB 4 moved to Camp Haskins temporarily and took over most of our vertical workload in the DaNang area. We in turn moved to where the center of our workload was, here near Hoi An, leaving much of our Alpha Company and certain other support personnel behind in Camp Haskins. Our primary effort here is to complete the construction project for an 8000 man cantonment for a Korean Marine Brigade, a project spread over about 15 sites, all in the immediate area.

Our camp is not as modern a camp as our fine facility - by field standards - at Camp Haskins, but it is quite liveable. Except for a group of Alpha, Charlie, and Delta company personnel living in huts (subsequently to be occupied by the Koreans) at two of the work sites, we all are living in tents. Nevertheless we now have such conveniences as electric power, have "graduated" from the C-ration diet on which the advance party subsisted, have a nightly beer and soda call (with service direct from a CONEX box) and now even a movie each night. At present, most of us only expect to be here for about 3 months, so we are only doing the bare essential work in our own camp and directing maximum effort to the Korean cantonment construction. It seems that everyone is adjusting well and even enjoying roughing it for awhile as well as thriving on the heavy workload.

We'll plan on telling you much more about the project and this area in subsequent issues of the Blaze as well as in my future Familygrams. Incidentally, we've tried to make some

improvements in the quality of Blaze with the enclosed issue. I'd appreciate hearing from you if you have any specific suggestions on further changes which you think might improve the quality further. In the meantime, I hope you will enjoy this issue of the Blaze - which is dedicated to you - the FIFTY-EIGHT Family - who have supported us so well over the past two years.

I realize that many of you are concerned over the safety of your Seabee. In my last Familygram, I mentioned something of the security at Camp Haskins. Here at Hoi An, we maintain similar security and, in fact, have the added protection of the Korean defenses around us. Although some of our men have been involved in enemy harassment, we are thankful that none have been seriously injured, and it now appears that more of the area is being pacified adding further to our relative security.

Just prior to the VC TET offensive, which effectively eliminated the TET celebrations for all of Vietnam, the Battalion held a TET party for 400 Buddhist children. It was similar to the Christmas party I mentioned in my last Familygram, but of course the decorations were in keeping with the Vietnamese traditions. Again each child, escorted by a Seabee, enjoyed a fine dinner in our mess hall. Afterwards, fireworks were set off, according to Vietnamese custom, scaring away the evil spirits. Each child was then given a traditional gift of new money - ten piasters - and a small toy. Everyone who took part received a great deal of satisfaction from being with the children, who came from the very poor hamlet of Chon Tam.

On the 5th of March, the Battalion took a half day off from the seven day a week work routine to celebrate the Seabee's 26th birthday. After lunch and a free beer and soda call, we enjoyed a variety show (Australian) on our hastily constructed stage in the broiling sun. After the show, we had charcoal grilled steaks and our celebration ended with a cake-cutting ceremony followed by the announcement of the Great Fifty-Eight Seabee Queen in absentia, and her princesses, the selection having been made from photos and write-ups submitted by our Seabees of their wives, daughters, and sweethearts.

Once again, as I close, I would urge you to write often to your Seabee. Mail from home is at the top of the list of items which keep up the spirits of these hard-working men. If you don't receive mail as often as you'd like, I hope you'll remember that we're working 7 days a week, it's lights out at 9 PM and, consequently, there is little free time. Don't assume the worst if there are gaps in your Seabee's correspondence to you. But, if you are really worried, do feel free to write to me.

Sincerely,



W. W. DeGROOT III

P.S. I regret that the press of work prevents me from signing each Familygram personally this time. Be assured that my concern for you, and your Seabee, is personal.