



**COMMANDING OFFICER  
U.S. NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION  
FIFTY-EIGHT  
FPO NEW YORK 09501**

Familugram  
10 March 1969  
Chu Lai, South Vietnam

**Greetings:**

We have finally settled down, accomplished our camp turnover, and are hard at work in our temporary "home." The battalion is located at Camp Shields at the Chu Lai Base, some 40 miles south of DaNang. As most of you know, the East Coast snowstorm played havoc with our flight schedules from Quonset Point, R. I. We were forced to cancel flights for three days with the result that the battalion was not fully operational until Feb. 16. However, that's the last delay we expect from snow for some time!

Once again we are fortunate in that our camp is located right on the South China Sea. In fact our chanel, recreational areas and some living quarters are directly on the beach overlooking the water. The weather so far has been very comfortable. The temperatures have been averaging in the high 80's during the day and dropping to the low 70's at night. A gentle sea breeze fans the camp continuously. So you can see the weather here is a refreshing change from the wind and cold of Rhode Island.

I'm sure you must be interested in our daily routine. On Monday through Saturday, reveille sounds at 5 a.m. Following a hearty breakfast, the men muster at quarters at 6:30 a.m. There, important announcements and information is passed. From quarters it's off to work. By 7 a.m. the first light of dawn is breaking on the camp. The men are on their jobs until 5:30 p.m., with an hour off for lunch. Following the evening meal there is time for recreation before taps sounds at 10 p.m. The Sunday schedule is somewhat different. Reveille goes at 6:30 a.m., with quarters at 8 a.m. We often present awards and citations, such as the battalion "Seabee of the Month," at Sunday morning quarters. The rest of Sunday morning is spent at work and attending church services. Sunday afternoon is reserved for recreation.

Speaking of recreation, our facilities here are very fine. The sandy beach rivals those of the world's best resort areas. Our clubs are open every night and Sunday afternoon, for all personnel. We have facilities for basketball, volleyball and baseball and are in the process of organizing teams for intra-battalion competition. There are movies practically every night and the USO shows are plentiful. In fact, we've had four shows already and another is scheduled for the middle of this month.

For the hobbyist, our Special Services office is equipped with kits, models and games. We just opened our battalion library. For those who wish to further their education, accredited college correspondence courses are available through the training office. I suppose your Seabee has told you that duty here affords an excellent opportunity for saving money. Many of the men have taken advantage of the government's overseas savings program which pays 10 per cent interest.

Of course, our only reason for being here is to contribute to the overall war effort of the Free World Forces. For Seabees, this means construction. We are currently involved in some 25 different jobs in the area, most of which are in the Chu Lai enclave itself. Our biggest projects include installation of a security lighting system on the base, construction of a headquarters building and hangar for Marine Air Group 12, installation of a parking apron and lights at the enclave's air freight terminal, and preparation of a sewage treatment facility for the 2nd Surgical Hospital here. We also have 98 men operating a quarry at Cam Lo, approximately 140 miles north of Camp Shields.

As most of you know, we recently passed through the annual Vietnamese TET observance. There was no repeat performance of last year's TET offensive. Some post-TET activity was felt, but this was not primarily directed at our area. We are thankful that during the few episodes we did have, all hands were highly professional in their response, thereby eliminating the possibility of any casualties.

As you can see, your Seabee is involved in a large and very important task here at Chu Lai. And the battalion as a whole is an integral part of the entire Allied effort. I am extremely pleased with the spirit and enthusiasm shown by the men at this early date. I am confident that during this deployment, "The Great Fifty-Eight" will live up to its nickname and carry on our proud tradition of service.

In closing, I urge you to write to your Seabee often. In your letters, don't worry him needlessly and, above all, don't worry about him. We have his welfare and safety in mind at all times. I will be writing to you again to keep you informed of our activity here.

Sincerely,



C. J. MATHEWS  
Commander, Civil Engineer Corps  
United States Navy