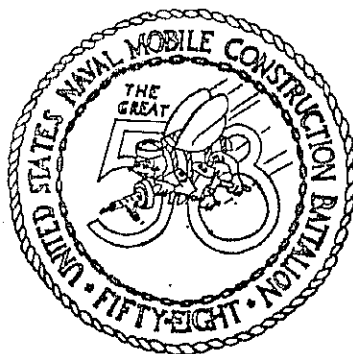


MCB Fifty-Eight



Family-Gram

Camp Haskins North
Red Beach
DaNang, Vietnam
17 January 1968

Greetings:

Once again we are back in Camp Haskins, the largest Seabee camp in Vietnam. Our old battalion camp at the south end of Camp Haskins is now occupied by NMCB SEVENTY-FOUR, however, they will soon be relinquishing it to another battalion. Located between the two battalion sites in Camp Haskins are the staffs of the 3rd Naval Construction Brigade and the 30th Naval Construction Regiment. Our new base camp has most of the same facilities as our first one, though the arrangement of the camp is quite different. The living area is more congested, but as a result all huts are close to the beach to take advantage of the cooling sea breezes in summer. Speaking of the weather, it has been cool, but fortunately with much less rain than last year at this time. Our galley is not as well equipped, nor as large, as it was last year, but we are in the process of making improvements and it soon should rival our previous one. The food is as good as ever. We have clubs for all our personnel and have already had several shows. In a future Family-Gram, I'll tell you more about the recreational program and facilities.

Christmas is now behind us and I know you regretted dearly to have your Seabee gone. Though we all missed our loved ones at home, we did have a Merry Christmas. As Christmas approached, decorations for the season increased throughout the camp. There were quite a few Christmas trees, complete with decorations. Occasionally a plane would fly overhead playing Christmas carols. We had several Christmas chapel services too. The real feeling of Christmas became more vivid during our Christmas party for a group of 400 Vietnamese children from a local hamlet. Each child was escorted by a Seabee. The festivity included a tour of the camp, a turkey dinner and a visit with Santa Claus who distributed gifts to the children. Some of our men were thoughtful enough to take hot Christmas dinners to some of the outlying Marine units and, naturally, we enjoyed a first rate dinner in camp.

I'm sure you must be interested in our daily routine. Our day starts with reveille at 0545. We have quarters at 0700 and by 0715 the sky is light and the men are heading for their jobs. They are on the job until 1800 with an hour off for lunch. After evening meal, there is time to watch the movie, chat with friends over a beer or soda or write home before taps at 2230. The only people working at night are the maintenance crews, an occasional crew working on some rush project and the security platoon. The security platoon guards our perimeter twenty-four hours a day. At night they man the bunkers, which are located at hundred yard intervals around our perimeter. Also the Marines are constantly patrolling outside the perimeter, so we are as safe as can be expected under present conditions.

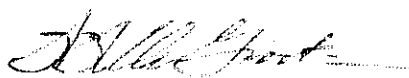
Of course, our only reason for being here is to build for the Marine and Navy combat and direct combat support forces in this area. The biggest job we have at present, however, is not a direct construction project. At the Happy Valley Quarry, about 5 miles from Camp Haskins, 120 of our Seabees comprise a crew that operates around the clock turning out crushed rock for construction projects in and around DaNang. The men who work at the quarry have their own camp, and though they lack some of the conveniences of the main camp, they do have a fine galley and a club. One of our other major jobs is just getting underway at Hoi An where we are building a complete camp for the Korean Marine Brigade. Hoi An is about 15 miles south of DaNang. We now have a small detail of equipment operators and a few other personnel there, but we soon will have a full company joining them. We have a large backlog of very meaningful work to accomplish on this deployment.

I am extremely pleased with the spirit and enthusiasm our Seabees have shown. They have tackled the jobs at hand with a real can-do attitude and I am confident that when "The Great FIFTY-EIGHT" goes home again, we will have left behind a record of which we all will be proud. This excellent attitude stems from our conviction that our nation is pursuing a righteous cause by the right means, and our sure knowledge that we will be supported by those of you at home in our endeavor to do our share.

In closing, I once again would urge you to write often to your Seabee. Cheer him up, encourage him, don't worry him needlessly, and, above all, don't worry about him. We have his welfare and well being at heart at all times.

You have my best wishes for a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Sincerely,



W. W. DeGROOT III
Commander, Civil Engineer Corps, U. S. Navy
Commanding Officer