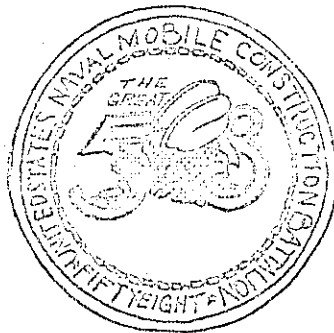


FIFTY-EIGHT



FAMILY-GRAM

17 March 1966  
Davisville, Rhode Island

Greetings:

The commissioning of our Battalion, which we were looking forward to when I first wrote to you, took place as planned at 10:00 A.M. on March 15th. The Commissioning Officer was Rear Admiral Caldwell from the Staff of Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. Among the other honored guests who were introduced by our Commodore, Captain Smith, Commander of Construction Battalions in the Atlantic Fleet, were the Honorable John H. Chafee, Governor of the State of Rhode Island; Rear Admiral Figer, Deputy Chief, Bureau of Yards and Docks; Rear Admiral Bullard, Commander Carrier Division Eighteen; Captain Schumacher, Chief of Staff, Service Force, Atlantic Fleet; and Captain Barker, Commanding Officer, Construction Battalion Center, Davisville. The ceremony was highlighted by the performance of our fine MCB FIFTY-EIGHT drill team. Afterwards, receptions were held for all hands and guests, refreshments were served, and Battalion cake cutting ceremonies were observed.

One of the highlights of the past few weeks' activities was the annual Seabee Ball, celebrating the 24th birthday of the Seabees. It was held March 4th at the Max Kiel Gymnasium which had been colorfully decorated for the occasion. After a buffet dinner and dancing to music by the Newport Naval Band, the 1966 Atlantic Fleet Seabee Queen was crowned. Our drill team was featured as the queen's honor guard. After the ceremonies, dancing resumed for the remainder of the evening. Needless to say, the Ball was well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by our Battalion.

With our commissioning, we have started a rigorous training schedule to prepare us for our future work assignments. Basic classes in the many construction skills needed a Battalion, such as Builder, Steelworker, Construction Electrician, Utilitiesman, Equipment Operator, Construction Mechanic, and Engineering Aid are being conducted for our non-rated men by the Construction Training Unit (CTU) here in Davisville. CTU is also conducting advanced courses in these skills for our Petty Officers. In addition, we are sending some men away for specialized courses. A two week military training course has also begun, and all of us will attend over the next few months.

We're all looking forward to the busy months ahead as we increase our abilities in the many trades and skills needed to make us a really competent Battalion. The daily encouragement from those families with us here at Davisville and frequent letters from you at home will give us a big boost in our effort to truly be "The Great FIFTY-EIGHT."

Sincerely,

Ward W. DeGroot III  
Commanding Officer