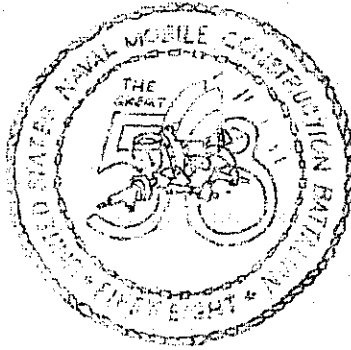


Familygram



Hoi An, RVN

18 April 1968

Greetings,

April normally means Springtime is well on its way in most states at home. Here in Vietnam we feel that it's more like summer with daily high temperatures often in the 90's. Arduous work in the hot sun, day in and day out, becomes an exhausting effort in this tropical climate so I've relaxed the working routine to normally provide Sunday afternoons off.

In a previous Family-gram, I mentioned that I would tell you about our recreational program. Many of the activities we had in Camp Haskins have been curtailed as a result of our move here to Hoi An, but every effort is made within the available resources to provide a variety of after-work activities. Sunday afternoons many men can normally be found a few hundred yards from our perimeter swimming at one of the finest beaches in Southeast Asia. Under the watchful eyes of two qualified lifeguards, both swimming and surfing have been favorite past times since we opened the beach about 3 weeks ago. In the evenings we sit on the sand or bring a chair from an office or tent for the nightly movie shown in two of our Hoi An camps. Bearing with the variety of films which would hardly rate an "Oscar" and the TV serials, "Wild, Wild West", "Bonanza" and "Gunsmoke", twice a week, we do enjoy just having movies. Our outdoor theaters generally attract a number of the other U. S. troops in the area as well as many of the Koreans. Our hobby shop does a good business, primarily selling model kits. Not infrequently do we hear the sound of a whirring model airplane engine in the early evening. Volleyball courts have been set up in two of the Hoi An camps and we have nightly beer and soda call. Our battalion library of paperbacks is constantly growing. Twice a month we contract for a different variety group to come to Hoi An for a Sunday afternoon performance. Such a show helped to top off our celebration of "The Great FIFTY-EIGHT's" second anniversary on the 17th of March.

Of course, recreation is not the purpose of our being here. Our purpose is to build - as rapidly and as well as we can - the support facilities which the Korean Marines require as a base for their combat operations against the Viet Cong and NVA. The Korean Marines are professional warriors - our Seabees are equally professional builders - the combination is unbeatable. Most of our time is spent in hard work and it never ceases to amaze me to see how much our Seabees can produce. Incidentally, we are told that the Hoi An job is the largest single project in Vietnam to be built by one Seabee Battalion. There are approximately 1300 buildings to be constructed, of which, at this time, we have completed about 480. Since there are many identical buildings, most are prefabricated in our camp and transported to the job sites, where they are rapidly assembled. Wood buildings are not the only type of construction to be accomplished. There are rigid frame steel buildings, water tanks, water and electrical distribution systems, roads and helipads and a number of special type buildings. One of the pleasant side lights of this project is the opportunity it gives us to work with the Koreans. They are an interesting people and we are surprised at how many of them speak English. We are each gaining something by working with the other.

Though most of the work and 2/3 of our battalion is down here in Hoi An, we still have over 200 men at Camp Haskins. The "Haskins Detail" includes a small group who keep open the logistic pipeline to Hoi An, most essential since we haul all our own material and supplies. The majority of the "Haskins Detail" is Alpha Company, which has been busily engaged in asphalt paving projects and support of NMCB 4. Our quarry detail of 45 men at Nam Hoa (near Hue) has finally completed it's move there from DaNang. The move was drawn out due to enemy activity and transportation priorities for the northern I Corps. Crushed rock is now being produced at that site, under most vexing conditions. We also have 18 equipment operators and mechanics working with NMCB 121 on road construction in the Phu Bai area.

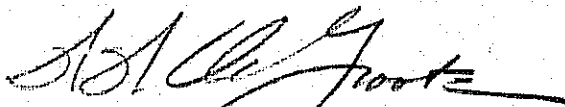
We now have both of our Seabee Teams deployed in Vietnam. I have just completed visits with Seabee Team 5801 in Chau Duc, and with Team 5802 in Soc Trang. Though they are newly arrived and just getting started to work, I was thoroughly impressed with their enthusiasm and the fine reception they are getting from the Vietnamese provincial authorities. Chau Duc is the most westerly Seabee Team location in the Mekong River delta - it is within 3 miles of the Cambodian border. Soc Trang is the most southerly Seabee Team location - on the Cao Mau Peninsula.

The foregoing should give you some idea of how far flung are the efforts of the Seabees of FIFTY-EIGHT during our second deployment to Vietnam. To help to orient you, I've also enclosed a map to point out the various places I've mentioned as well as a more detailed map of the area around our Hoi An camp site.

I've made this a lengthy letter because there is so much to tell you of our experiences and activities. I'll let you read the rest of the story of what we're doing in the BLAZE, a copy of which is enclosed.

I hope you will answer my letter with a letter to your Seabee, though, as always, I'd be glad to hear from you and answer any specific questions you may have.

Sincerely,



W. W. DeGROOT III  
Commander, CEC, U. S. Navy  
Commanding Officer

P. S. A word to the wives: Navy Wifeline is an informative magazine published quarterly by the Navy Wifeline Association. The association is a voluntary organization for the benefit of all Navy wives. You can write to them and ask to be placed on their mailing list. The address is:

Navy Wifeline Association  
Washington Navy Yard  
Washington, D. C. 20390

