



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

Familygram
18 June 1969
Chu Lai, South Vietnam

Greetings:

This fourth Familygram since our arrival in February finds us at the mid-way point in the deployment. The first four months have been extremely busy and productive ones for us. Every man has had to carry his share of the burden. At this point I'm happy to report that everyone has been pulling together to make this deployment a successful one for the battalion and its customers here in Vietnam.

You'll notice that you received our battalion publication, the BLAZE, along with this Familygram. We decided this was the best way to ensure that all dependents, relatives and friends in the 'Fifty-Eight Family' were receiving the BLAZE. Several articles in this month's edition give you a good idea of our progress to date.

The most significant event since our last Familygram was the completion of the airstrip repair job at the Duc Pho combat base. A word of commendation for a job well done goes to LT (jg) John Freeman, officer-in-charge, and the 80 men who were involved in rebuilding the vital airstrip. At our other major project site, work is progressing satisfactorily on the Song Tra Bong bridge. The bridge is being repaired systematically, section-by-section, with a projected completion date of mid-July.

In addition to our everyday projects in the construction field, the battalion is also playing a part in what we call 'civic action'-- direct assistance to the Vietnamese people. The bulk of our efforts along these lines is carried out by our "Seabee teams." Each team comprises 12 carefully chosen men and one officer, all of whom receive special training. The battalion currently has two teams deployed to villages in southern section of South Vietnam working to assist and train the Vietnamese people. The Seabee teams operate in support of the State Department's AID program and remain at their assigned locations for the entire deployment.

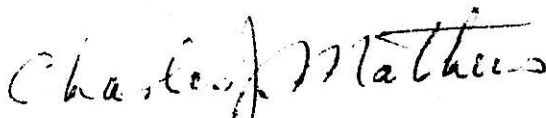
Civic action is also carried out here at the main camp and in our various detachments. Every week, our chaplain, doctor, dentist and their assistants travel by helicopter to Cu Lao Re island, 18 miles off the coast, where they provide treatment and assistance to the local Vietnamese citizenry. Our men have also been volunteering their free time and effort to assist with light construction at a school and orphanage here at Chu Lai. The men have hosted the children at several Sunday afternoon parties at Camp Shields. Through this type of person-to-person contact, the men of our battalion are doing their part to help the Allies win the "other war" in this country -- the one for the hearts and minds of the people.

We are now well into the hottest months here. Temperatures are in the high 90's almost every day. Many of the men enjoy the refreshing waters of the South China Sea after work in the evening and on Sunday afternoons. We are very fortunate to have the beach here at hand.

I know many of you have received telephone calls from your Seabee over the MARS radio system. During the month of May, our station placed approximately 200 calls for battalion members. The method is especially inexpensive for those living in the Davisville area, since the calls go through the Construction Battalion Center. The calls are relayed via short wave from our radio operator here to the radio operator at Davisville. The operator at Davisville then places a phone call to the party being called and connects them to the short wave hookup. The result is a conversation between Vietnam and the United States. If your Seabee hasn't called yet, why don't you ask him to give it a try?

Until next month, keep your letters coming and may God bless you all.

Sincerely,



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