

FIFTY-EIGHT



FAMILYGRAM

Camp Haskins North
DaNang, RVN
29 July 1968

Greetings,

We are now drawing to the end of what has been a very memorable deployment. We arrived in DaNang in December and proceeded to send men out in all directions. Everywhere they went, from the DMZ to the Delta, they left behind a long list of friends and accomplishments.

In this last Familygram for this deployment, I would like to review some of the jobs we've done. An experimental bunker project, completed back in January, was a source of great pride for the battalion, and particularly for those who worked so hard to meet the very compressed deadline, as General Westmoreland and other military dignitaries inspected the work. In those early months, we completed a variety of projects for the Force Logistics Command, First Marine Division and First Marine Aircraft Wing. The battalion played a large role in the construction of the large cantonment and helopad for the Army's First Air Cavalry on Red Beach. Then there was the Korean cantonment at Hoi An, the largest project in Vietnam undertaken by a single battalion. You can read about the exploits of our Seabees on this project, the work at Vung Tau and the building of refugee housing in Saigon in the latest issue of the Blaze, which I have enclosed. We paved the roads and a helicopter pad at FLC, sent several details of our men to construct roads and bridges in the northern I Corps and repaired the DaNang River bridge under a tight schedule. We also operated two rock quarries, one at Happy Valley the first two months of the deployment and the other at Nam Hoa since then. Down South in the Delta, our Seabee Teams, 5801 and 5802, were making a name for themselves performing civic action work for USAID. These were the big projects, but there were also many small day to day jobs that had to be done and without them this deployment would never have been a success. Some of our Seabees also aided in the Battalion's Civic Action program and some of these stories are also described in words and pictures in the Blaze. We tried in every way to have a program emphasizing "help the Vietnamese help themselves", so, with the exception of MEDCAP, DENTCAP and the Saigon refugee housing project, we have only provided technical supervision while the Vietnamese did the work. The Vietnamese weren't the only ones helped by our Seabees. There are several Marine outposts where life is a

little more comfortable because a Seabee took the time and effort to help (and one of our number even spent his R & R in this manner).

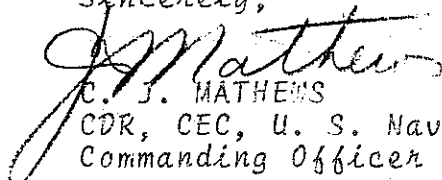
Our preparations for returning home to Davisville are well underway. An advance party departed earlier this month to set up a training program for the battalion. A second group will be departing shortly. This group consists mostly of those who will be starting Seabee Team training on the 19th of September. The rest of the battalion will be following shortly and I hope as many of you as possible will be on hand to greet us at NAS Quonset Point upon our return. An information center will be set up at Davisville to inform you of the arrival time of your Seabee's flight. The telephone number is 294-3311 (Area Code 401) extension 462/460 (the 469 number in the Blaze is a misprint). I urge you to use this source of information to the utmost as it will have the most accurate information available.

Our first action upon returning will be to allow a leave period of approximately 3-4 weeks for those who have accumulated the leave and desire to take it. Afterwards, we will commence formal training to increase the proficiency of our Seabees in specific skills. We will also conduct military training at Davisville and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. All the training will be in preparation for our next deployment to Vietnam. There will also be time for leisure. After working 65 hours a week here in Vietnam, I will provide as much liberty in Davisville as possible. However, there will be many new people joining us and the months ahead will call for a lot of hard work from everyone in order for us to maintain our standing pledge to be "The Great FIFTY-EIGHT".

I wish that upon our return I could personally meet with all of you to convey to you my appreciation for the job your Seabee has done. Since that would be impossible, let me take this opportunity to tell you that you have every right to be proud of him for his service to our Nation.

I also realize that many of you will be leaving "The Great FIFTY-EIGHT" family, as two-thirds of our men will either be transferred to another activity or separated from the service soon after our return. In saying farewell to you in this number, I want to thank you for your support from the home front-your interest in your Seabee and this battalion and for your prayers.

Sincerely,


C. J. MATHEWS
CDR, CEC, U. S. Navy
Commanding Officer