



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

Familygram  
8 April 1969  
Chu Lai, South Vietnam

**Greetings:**

First of all, I hope you had a very pleasant and happy Easter. Church services were conducted Easter Sunday morning in our chapel. Judging from the large influx of packages before Easter, I know that many of you sent Easter candy and other small gifts to your Seabee. I think I can safely speak for the men in saying your gifts were sincerely appreciated.

The battalion is now well established in numerous jobs in the Chu Lai area and time is passing very quickly. As I mentioned in the last Familygram, most of our work continues to be in support of Marine Corps and Army units within the Chu Lai enclave. However, we recently assumed two important jobs off base.

One of these is the repair of the Song Tra Bong bridge, a vital link 10 miles south of Chu Lai. The project consists of replacing five 81-foot spans with pre-cast concrete segments. Three of the spans were knocked out by enemy action last November; the other two were destroyed in February. Total length of the bridge is about 900 feet. While work is in progress, an alternate route utilizing a floating pontoon bridge will be established. The project is expected to be completed in mid-July. We have 15 men living at the site and another crew of 20 men commuting daily.

The second new task is the repair of an airfield at Duc Pho, some 60 miles south of Chu Lai. Essentially, the job entails total replacement of aluminum matting on the damaged airstrip. The process will comprise lifting existing matting, preparing the base, soil-cementing the base, weather-preparing the base and installing new matting. Dimensions of the area will give you an idea of the magnitude of the project. The runway itself is 3,700 feet long and

60 feet wide. There are two 220-foot taxiways and a 25,000-square-foot aircraft turnaround area. Also, there's a 170,000-square-foot parking apron which will be lined with steel matting. We plan to accomplish all this with 50 men in six weeks. One interesting facet of the Duc Pho job is that the work must be completed in segments to allow the airstrip to remain open for supply purposes.

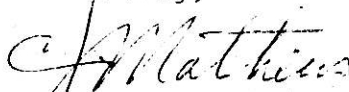
The old saying that an Army moves on its stomach could be somewhat modified to fit our case, that is, Seabees build on their stomachs. And one reason why morale and enthusiasm have been so high to date is the fine food served daily in our galley. I'm sure many of our Seabees have mentioned the outstanding quality and quantity of the food in their letters home.

Although our main reason for being here is to assist the Allied war effort through construction, there is another very important job to be done -- that of winning the confidence and support of the Vietnamese on a person-to-person basis. With this in mind, the men of the battalion conducted a party for approximately 100 children from a nearby school and orphanage on Sunday, March 23. The men volunteered their only hours off during the week to act as hosts and guardians for the children. After a dip in the ocean and a volleyball game, the children were treated to the American specialty of hot dogs, soda and ice cream. This personal contact seemed to give the men a greater sense of participation and deeper feeling of involvement in our effort here. I know most of the men who took part are looking forward to having the children over again.

One other important item since our last Familygram has been the initiation of a battalion sports program. This week, inter-company competition started in basketball, softball and volleyball. The company earning the most points will be awarded a trophy at the end of the deployment. Teams have been practicing in the early evening hours and we're all looking forward to healthy and enthusiastic competition.

Once again, keep those letters coming. Mail call is one of the most important times here in Vietnam.

Sincerely,



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Commander, Civil Engineer Corps  
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