



## The 58th Naval Construction Battalion ( World War II )



Created / Commissioned 26 December 1942 Decommissioned May 1946

Born in War and hardened in Battle. The 58<sup>th</sup> Naval Construction Battalion was brought to life on 26 December 1942 at Camp Allen, Norfolk, Virginia, under the command of Commander A. D. Lewis, CEC, USNR. After several months of military and technical training at Camp Perry, Virginia and advanced training at Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, California, the Battalion departed for Guadalcanal to await their first overseas construction assignment.

The Battalion's first taste of action came on 13 August 1943, when they arrived at Vella LaVella from Guadalcanal. The 58th was the first Seabee battalion to land with an initial assault wave in World War II. They quickly established a beachhead and began work on a fighter air base on this island in the Northern Solomons.

The new airfield was cut out of the jungle and built on and of coral rock. The 58th kept the airfield open during 26 days of Japanese bombing and for four months thereafter. This allowed Major "Pappy" Boyington and his F4U Corsairs of the Famed VMF 214 "Black Sheep Squadron" to bring the war to the Japanese at Rabaul.

For this action, the Battalion was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation Medal.

In September 1943, Lieutenant Commander L. I. Quayle, CEC, USNR, became Officer in Charge of the Battalion and completed the work at Vella LaVella. In January 1944, the Battalion moved to Auckland, New Zealand for a well-earned rest. Their stay was brief, for in April 1944, after having replenished their supplies at Banika in the Russell Islands, they were hard at work on construction of a PT overhaul base, personnel camp and fuel farm at Los Negros in the Admiralty Islands. There, Lieutenant Commander Robert E. Turrentine, CEC, USNR, took command of the Battalion in October, 1944.

Back on Guadalcanal from December 1944 to April 1945, the Battalion prepared for the invasion of Okinawa. There, on 1 April, they went ashore with the assault waves of the Sixth Marine Division and worked day and night to establish and maintain roads, bridges, water supply, communications and earthwork for permanent installations.

Even though there were 261 enemy raids during the period of 1 April to 30 June 1945, the Battalion succeeded in keeping Yontan airfield in continuous operation.

With the end of the war in sight the 58<sup>th</sup> redeployed home, arriving in San Francisco in September 1945. The Battalion was gradually phased out and in May of 1946, decommissioned after nearly four years of outstanding service.

The 58<sup>th</sup> and its Seabees were awarded many Citations and Decorations including: The Navy Unit Commendation, The American Defense Service Medal, The Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with three stars and The World War II Victory Medal.



## United States Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Fifty-Eight



Commissioned 15 March 1966 Decommissioned 17 November 1969

In late 1965 once again a call went out to the fleet and the trades that there was a need for Seabees and with that, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Fifty-Eight was brought to life on 15 March 1966 in Davisville, Rhode Island, with Commander Ward W. de Groot III, CEC, USN commanding. The new Seabees of Fifty-Eight trained at various sites, practiced amphibious landings at Nomans Land Island in the North Atlantic and took infantry training with the Marines at Camp LeJune, North Carolina. Now the Great Fifty-Eight was ready to deploy to Vietnam to help change the face of that Nation while providing construction support for the forces of the United States and its Allies, wherever needed.

In October 1966, the Battalion deployed to Red Beach One north of the city of Da Nang, RVN. While there, they expanded the base at Camp Haskins, built a galley and barracks for the Air Defense Marines on Monkey Mountain, constructed housing, warehousing and other facilities for the Marine Force Logistics Command and the First Marine Division. Similar support was provided to the Da Nang Naval Support Activity. Much civic action effort was put into improving the lives of hundreds of Vietnamese.

NMCB 58 Seabees returned to Davisville in June 1967 to rest, re-supply and train for their next deployment.



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In December 1967, The Great Fifty-Eight again deployed to Camp Haskins at Red Beach One for work similar to the first deployment. Detachments were dispatched to Hoi An, Quang Tri, the quarry and rock crushing operations at Happy Valley and Nam Hoa, Phu Bai, Dong Tam near Saigon and Vung Tau. Seabee Team 5801 went to Chau Doc on the Cambodian border. Seabee team 5802 proceeded to Saigon and Soc Trang. NMCB 58 was the first battalion in Vietnam to redeploy by road when they moved to Hoi An to provide direct support to the Korean Marines. The Seabees of 58 were heavily involved in the actions of the 1968 Tet Offensive in all locations. Commander Charles Matthews, CEC, USN took command of the Battalion on 31 May 1968, at Hoi An.

In August of 1968 the Battalion returned to Davisville once again for rest, re-supply and training for their third deployment.

During a New England blizzard in February 1969, The Great Fifty-Eight redeployed to Vietnam, this time to the Chu Lai Combat Base. The Battalion provided many services to Marine Air Group 12, notably recovery work after a major enemy attack. Fifty-Eight's Seabees maintained fifteen miles of Highway One and most of the Chu Lai base. A large detachment reconstructed a destroyed large highway bridge at Song Tra Bong while other detachments were building in the following areas: Quang Ngai City, Doc Pho, the Mekong Delta area, Thang Dong, Tra Bong, Minh Long and Tam During October 1969, the Battalion returned to Davisville for the final time.

Since the war was being turned over to the Vietnamese and the need for Seabees had waned, the Battalion was decommissioned for the second time on 17 November 1969.

This proud Battalion and its Seabees have earned many decorations including: the Combat Action Ribbon, a Navy Unit Commendation, a Meritorious Unit Commendation, the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with Seven Campaign Stars and Fleet Marine Force Combat Operations Insignia, the Vietnamese Cross-of Gallantry Unit Citation with Palm, the Vietnamese Civic Action Unit Citation with Palm and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Date Bar.