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the **ESPRIT**
of **53**

Captain's Corner

TO THE RELATIVES AND FRIENDS
OF THE MEN OF MCB-53:

Perhaps you wonder why we are in Viet Nam. Even more basic is the question which must bother each of you once in a while--Just what is my husband or son doing in the Navy?

I would like to try to answer these questions for you. To do so I quote from the April 1969 issue of ALL HANDS, the Career Publication of the Bureau of Naval Personnel:

"THE UNITED STATES NAVY--Guardian of Our Country"

"The United States Navy is responsible for maintaining control of the sea and is a ready force on watch at home and overseas, capable of strong action to preserve the peace, or of instant offensive action to win in war.

It is upon the maintenance of this control that our country's great future depends. The United States Navy exists to make it so.

Tradition, valor and victory are the Navy's heritage from the past. To these may be added dedication, discipline and vigilance as the watchwords of the present and future. At home or on distant stations, we serve with pride, confident in the respect of our country, our shipmates, and our families. Our responsibilities sober us; our adversities strengthen us.

Service to God and Country is our special privilege. We serve with honor.

The Navy will always employ new weapons, new techniques and greater power to protect and defend the United States on the sea, under the sea, and in the air.

Now and in the future, control of the sea gives the United States her greatest advantage for the maintenance of peace and for victory in war. Mobility, surprise, dispersal and offensive power are the keynotes of the new Navy. The roots of the Navy lie in a strong belief in the future, in continued dedication to our tasks, and in reflection on our heritage from the past.

Never have our opportunities and our responsibilities been greater."

Each of us in MCB-53 believes this; some to a greater degree than others. The time in which we live is a time of crisis. There are some who would deny that we can even mention the name of God in public, and others who say that patriotism was fine for our forefathers, but not for the "modern", "free", "young" generation. Your sons and husbands are patriots, however. Some might be embarrassed if they were indentified as such, but they are patriots none the less.

None of us has to be here. We were not forced to join the Navy, or forced to come to Viet Nam. We could have spent our time in jail, as a draft dodger, or tried to hide behind the conscientious objectors clause in the law of the land. But we did not, we chose to serve, and we still choose to serve.

Be proud of your menfolk, support them and encourage them in every way you can. They are not content to rest on the proud tradition of the Navy, they are building on this tradition daily, earning honor for the Navy and themselves as they work. Can you do less?



CDR R.K. MILLER

Leaves Battalion

LTJg Donald J. Mackinnon, USNR, was recently transferred from MCB-53 to the Naval Shipyards at San Francisco, California.

Having joined the battalion before commissioning in June, 1967, LTJg Mackinnon was made a member of the Commissioning Detail. After the battalion commissioning he was made Assistant S-2 Officer and shared the responsibility for the training of the men and for the maintenance of ordnance, security and communication of the battalion.

When the battalion deployed for the Republic of Vietnam in January, 1968, LTJg Mackinnon was made Company Commander of Sierra Company but was switched to Assistant Delta Company Commander half way through the deployment. When MCB-53 returned from deployment in September of 1968, he was made the S-2 Officer and served in that capacity until leaving the battalion in April, 1969.



LTJg D.J. Mackinnon

COVER PHOTO: A steel-welder from Charlie Company welds a beam on a butler building at the First FSR.

Robert K. Miller

ROBERT K. MILLER
COMMANDER, CIVIL ENGINEER CORPS
UNITED STATES NAVY

23 men honored *Awards Ceremonies*

Twenty-three men received medals, awards and commendations in MCB-53's two April Awards Ceremonies, held on the 6th and 20th of the month at Camp Haskins North.

LCdr William A. Simmons, Executive Officer of MCB-53, received the Bronze Star with Combat "V" for "meritorious service while attached to MCB-71 from 5 January 1968 to 2 November 1968"

"Lieutenant Commander Simmons," the citation read, "exercised foresight and personnel management ability in planning, organizing, equipping and training to lead an advance party of one hundred men and four officers to the battalion deployment site in Vietnam. His tireless efforts resulted in an extremely professionally executed advance party deployment."

Receiving the Navy Achievement Medal for "superior performance of his duties from 20 January 1968 to 20 June 1968" was LT Eugene P. Fucile, currently Charlie-Delta Company Commander. As Material Liaison Officer during the 1968 deployment, LT Fucile was "able to procure construction materials not available through normal supply channels."

CS1 John Oaks was also named March "Petty Officer of the Month" for his work

in cleaning and refurbishing the galley, and UTCA J.W. Crowder was named "Seabee of the Month for his dilligent work as mess cook."

ENS John P. Heinstadt was named Distinguished Graduate of the U.S. Naval Officer Candidate School Program by VAdm Charles K. Duncan, Chief of Naval Personnel.

The Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry was awarded to SW3 Michael M. Micklos and EO2 Clifford A. Cook for "their courage and technical ability...in building and defending the Ammi Pontoon Bridge.

The Good Conduct Medal was awarded to BU1 James W. Caraway.

Ten men received letters of appreciation from the commanding officer of the Patuxent River Naval Air Station in Maryland for their work while assigned to that base. They are BU1 W.E. Kelley, BU2 G.W. Gohmert, CE2 W.G. Currin, UT2 F.P. Pappas, BU3 A.D. Byers, EO2 C.A. Cook, BU3 R.C. Russell, CE3 G.D. Hutchison, EA2 C.W. Guenzel and EO3 G.A. Matone.

BU2 Raymond A. Hand received a letter of commendation from the commanding officer of MCB-58 for his work in preparing that battalion for deployment early this spring. Hand was an instructor at Camp Fogarty while the battalion was training.



LCdr Simmons is congratulated by CAPT Powell, Commanding Officer of the 30th Naval Construction Regiment, after receiving the Bronze Star.

Both EA2 B.R. Anderson and EA3 R.J. Steele received a letter of commendation from CDR R.K. Miller, Commanding Officer of MCB-53, for performance of duty while attached to the embark section of the battalion prior to deployment.

BUCA James C. Mason received a letter of appreciation for his work in helping members of MCB-58 in their Disaster Recovery Training at Davisville, R.I., and SW2 Willard J. Cheirrett received a letter of appreciation from the Commanding Officer of MCB-121 for aiding in the repair of the Ammi Bridge at Nam Hoa, Vietnam.



LT Fucile receives the Navy Achievement Medal from CDR Miller.



SW3 Michael M. Micklos is congratulated by CDR Miller after receiving the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.



EO2 Clifford A. Cook is presented the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry by CDR Miller.

CRUSHING ROCK...

Code

- 1 Living area
- 2 Officer and CPO living quarters
- 3 Laundry
- 4 EM Club and Exchange
- 5 Headquarters and Transportation hut
- 6 Dispensary and Underground Hospital
- 7 Mess Hall
- 8 Generator Shack
- 9 Supply
- 10 Welding Shop
- 11 Equipment Repair Shop
- 12 GSK and Armory
- 13 "Gopher" Crusher
- 14 "Sooner" Crusher
- 15 Future area of Asphalt Plant
- 16 Helicopter Landing Zone

This 192 man detachment, under the command of LT Bruce Runberg, is operating a rock crusher site at Vinh Dai, a

camp located near the Demilitarized Zone. They are producing rock for the Lines of Communication Program as well as producing and placing asphaltic concrete on Routes 1 and 9 in the Northern I Corps Tactical Zone.

The day begins at 6:30 in the morning, but the trucks are not allowed on the road until the minesweeping team has given the area a thorough check. Usually the trucks are in operation before 9 A.M. and the men of F Company are constantly on the go until

six that evening with the exception of an hour off for lunch.

The dump trucks pick up the rock at the Quarry approximately ten miles west of their main camp. They are protected by a six man security team that spends their days guarding the Quarry. The trucks arrive at the Quarry, pick up their load, and return to Vinh Dai to unload it. Here the rock is crushed for future use in the area. This process is continued until the working day is over.

Producing at a terrific rate, these men of F Company as well as their families have a lot to be proud of.



THE VINH DAI ROCK CRUSHER SITE AS SEEN FROM THE AIR



E03 J.V. Fagan from Herkimer, New York loads one of the dump trucks at the Quarry site.



E0C G.R. Sutton From Colfax, Illinois, puts a grader to work at F-Company's rock crusher site.



E02 L. F. Drinkwine from Willsboro, New York, operates the rock crusher at Vinh Dai.

... AT VINH DAI



Piling up rock at the Quarry site is E01 J.R. Oswalt from Weaver, Alabama. The rock is then loaded into dump trucks and taken to the base camp at Vinh Dai to be crushed.

At FLC*A new data
building for*

Digging a form for a concrete drainway at FLC are (l-r) BU3 Edward Swiski from Hatboro, Pennsylvania; BU3 Garrit Zwakenberg from Cave, Kentucky; BUCN Peter Uzzardo from West Mount, Illinois; BU3 Ronald DeRonde from Cincinnati, Ohio; and CN Stan Walker from Nome, Alaska.

Seventy Seabees from MCB-53 have devoted the first five weeks of the battalion's deployment in the Republic of Vietnam to the construction of a data processing building at the Marine Force Logistics Command, DaNang, Vietnam.

The two story building, a 60' X 120' wood frame structure with a tin roof, will house a stock account data processing facility. Combined with the other data processing building beside it at FLC, it will become the largest Marine Processing Platoon in Vietnam.

Three thousand six hundred square feet of this area will be used for computers, while 10,800 square feet will be used for office and administrative spaces. The computers will be used primarily for military logistic



Nailing in joists at the Data Processing facility are BU2 Henry Baldinger (back to picture) from Clifton, New Jersey and BU3 Gerald Pellecchia from McKeesport, Pennsylvania.

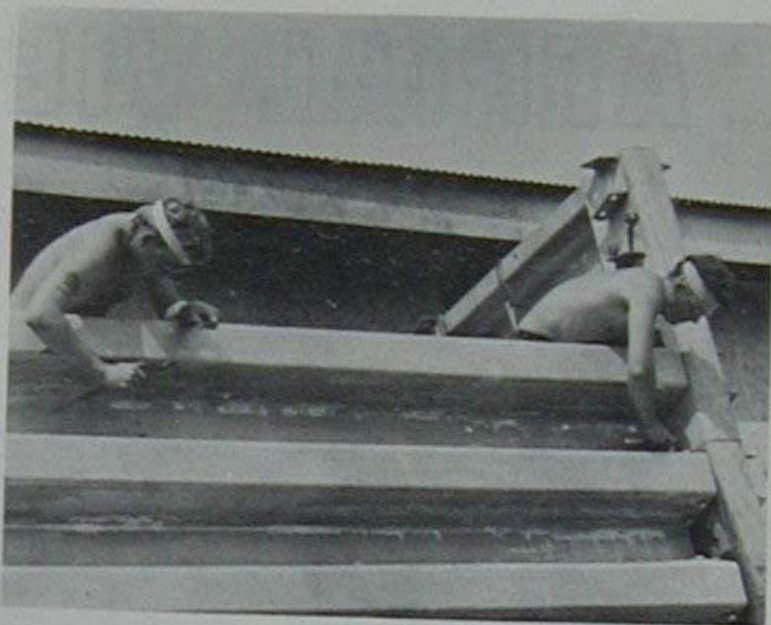
Processing for the Marines

support.

The entire building is insulated with fiberglass and is provided with a polyethylene dust barrier. The attached 45' X 26' equipment room houses air conditioning equipment rated at 81 tons, 40 to 44 tons of which is required to maintain the proper temperature and humidity in the computer room.

The computers are supported by a 'raised floor' set to .001 inch level tolerance. The raised floor acts as an air plenum and serves to keep positive pressure in the room which in turn keeps it dust free.

Surrounded by approximately 400 lineal feet of 16 foot high, laterite--filled "Armco" revetments, the Data Processing building is well protected against Viet Cong rocket and mortar attacks.



SW3 C.V. Sherwood (left) from Burlington, New Jersey, and SW2 M.E. Anderson from Sanford, Maine, put revetments together at FLC.



BU3 Richard Boyce (center) from Newcastle, Delaware, and SW2 Bill Ward (background) from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, tighten down revetment brackets during the construction of a computer facility.



MCB-53 Seabees, with the aid of a crane, put a generator in place that will be used for the Data Processing facility.

AERIAL VIEW OF CAMP HASKINS NORTH



[1] Enlisted Mens Club [2] Chow Hall
 [3] Chiefs Club [4] Red Beach [5]
 Outdoor Movie Theater [6] Delta Co.
 Berthing area [7] Charlie Co. Berth-
 ing area [8] Bravo Co. Berthing area
 [9] Alfa Co. Berthing area [10] Head-
 quarters Co. Berthing area [11]
 Chiefs Berthing area [12] Officers
 Berthing area [13] Officers Mess and
 Club [14] Headquarters area [15] Bat-
 talion Chapel [16] Medical and Dental
 Offices [17] Bravo Co. Shops [18] NLO
 and CTR [19] Alfa Co. Shop and Equip-
 ment area [20] Prefab Shop [21] Batch
 Plant [22] MARS Station [23] Laundry
 [24] Small Arms Range [25] Post Off-
 ice

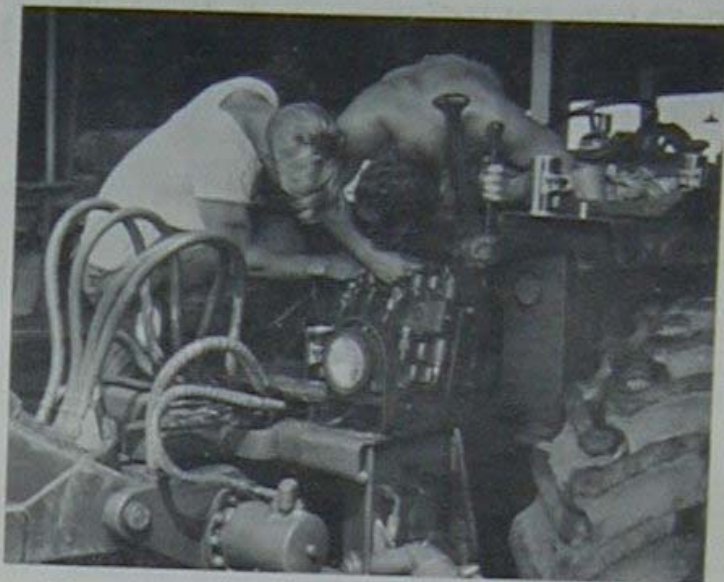
Keeping the wheels turning

Ingenuity seems to be the password in Alfa Company's light and heavy shops. Besides taking care of regularly scheduled maintenance on all battalion vehicles, the Alfa Company mechanics frequently run into many unscheduled breakdowns.

But their faces seldom stay sour for long with people like MR2 Vincent Bodner around who good naturedly claims that he "makes more spare parts than the mechanics draw out of the spare parts rooms." And then there's SW3 Terry Shaffer who, besides doing day to day welding on vehicles, likes to occasionally do a little "home improvement" welding like making bolt bins for the shop out of old ammo boxes.

Petty Officer Shaffer's welding torch also participated in CM3 Rodger's brainstorm. Rodgers designed a cart that would carry a battery starter-charger as well as a series of batteries, so that when he went into the field he would have the batteries to fall back on if the starter-charger couldn't do the job.

Petty Officer Rodger's cart, though not



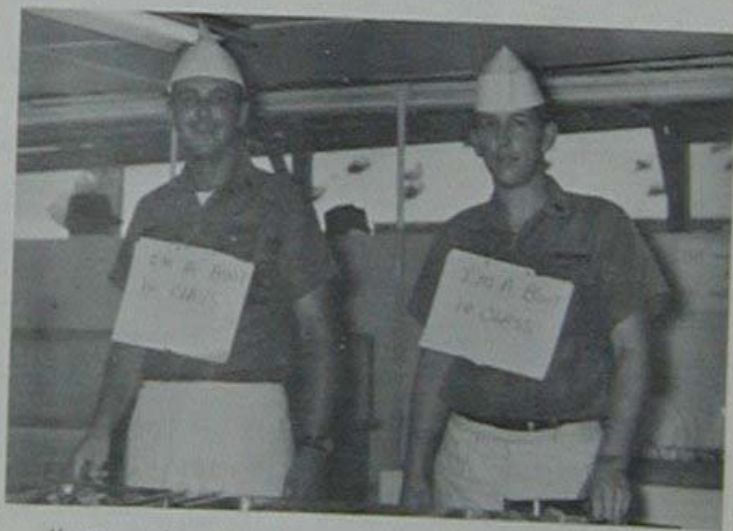
Surrounded by "Wink cans," CMCN Jeffrey Jasakonis (left) from Lynn, Massachusetts, and CM3 R.G. Maier from Poughkeepsie, New York, do some repair work on an airlift backhoe.

completely finished, has already "saved a lot of trips back to the shop and a lot of walking," said CMC Leroy Jefferson, who heads the light shop.

But most of the work that goes on in the light and heavy shops requires less imagination. The 28 men under Chief Jefferson in the Light shop and the 28 men under CM2 Donald Elder in the heavy shop spend most of their time on preventive maintenance and on repairing actual breakdowns. Petty Officer Elder says he goes over each vehicle every ten days, checking such things as bearings, brakes, oil filters, and Chief Jefferson employs a similar program.



CM3 Ed Thompson (left) from Frankfurt, Kentucky and CM2 Earnest Callahan from New Castle, Pennsylvania, work on a 671 GMC Diesel Engine from a 20-ton rock dump truck.



Messcooks of the day E01 Bille Best (left) from Evansville, Indiana and CM1 C.C. Iliff from Newton, New Jersey, prepare to serve in the First Class Mess Hall. As you can see both were recently promoted to their present rate and are taking some good natured harassment for the initiation into their new standing.

CIVIC ACTION...

FIGHTING THE OTHER WAR

It may sound slightly hackneyed to say that this war is for the minds of the people, but it happens to be true.

"This is a guerrilla war," said MCB-53's Chaplain LT J.R. Fiol, "and unless you have the people behind you and working for you, you'll never get anywhere."

This is the primary reason for the Civic Action Program in which nearly all military units in Vietnam participate. But there are other reasons.

THE PEOPLE ARE POOR

The people also happen to be poor and despirited and their country needs rebuilding. And so the Civic Ac-

tion Program also tries to "help the people help themselves," said Chaplain Fiol, who is in charge of MCB-53's program.

"This is not a give away program," he said. "We want to instill dignity, integrity and pride in the people, and we accomplish this by the way we go about helping them."

SUPPLYING MATERIALS

"Usually we supply the people with materials and they do the building. Of course, sometimes they ask for technical assistance and then we supply that too."

To prevent confusion, said Chaplain Fiol, most military units are assigned to speci-

fic areas for their civic action work. MCB-53 is assigned to four hamlets in the village of Hoa Khanh, which is made up of nine hamlets and is populated mainly by refugees.

One of several projects that MCB-53 is involved in is that of supplying materials for a refugee church in the village. A slight problem recently arose, however, when it came to supplying the brick--a problem because MCB-53 didn't happen to have any.

But a little thought quickly solved the problem. The Marine 7th Engineers at the nearby Force Logistics Command happened to have a brick factory but needed cement. And since MCB-53 happened to have cement, the trade was quickly made. The brick factory, incidentally, is run by Vietnamese refugees.

NEW MATERNITY CLINIC

The battalion is also supplying materials for a maternity clinic and a water-sewerage system at the Hoa Khanh Vocational School. Again, the clinic is being built entirely by the villagers, and they will also supply a midwife when it is completed.

The vocational school, which can handle roughly 200 refugee children at a time, trains its students in mechanical repair, carpentry, electrical repair, agriculture, sewing and secretarial skills. Money for the school comes from a variety of sources. Groups such as the World Relief Commission and the Christian Youth Federation, as well as smaller church groups in the United States, supply most of the funds.

One of the more important services offered by the battalion is the Medical Civic



Children gather around Chaplain Fiol during one of his many visits to the Sacred Heart Orphanage in DaNang.



Children of the Sacred Heart Orphanage at play on a Sunday afternoon

Action Program (MEDCAP). Twice a week HM3 Jeffrey L. Cater drives into the village and opens up a small clinic.

A line quickly forms as one by one the people bring their ailments to him. And the ailments are as varied as they are numerous. Skin diseases, cuts, bruises, colds, headaches, nausea are some of the main complaints.

Petty Officer Cater says he generally gives just enough medication to last until the next visit and usually it is in the form of shots.

VIETNAMESE SEABEES

Another of the battalion's programs is the training of seven Vietnamese Seabees--six equipment operators and one construction mechanic. The men live in camp and work alongside of the battalion's Seabees.

A newly initiated program is the orientating of battalion personnel in Vietnamese customs and courtesies. Short talks will be given to each platoon by EO2 Kenneth A. Bernier the chaplain's Civic Action Program Assistant.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Throughout the work two questions constantly come up --how do you measure success and, in fact, how successful have we been?

There are several ways the

people show their appreciation, said Chaplain Fiol. "Village chiefs or leaders of groups who have been aided often send letters of appreciation," he said. "The people also extend invitations to eat with them or will offer some kind of

gift."

And in these respects MCB-53 has been successful. Last deployment there was considerable response, said the chaplain, and though we have barely begun this deployment, the appreciation promises to be equally great.



Montegnard women at My Lac examine clothing recently brought to them by Chaplain Fiol and the Rev. Tom Stebbins, a missionary from DaNang. The clothing was sent by church groups in the United States, and distributing it is an example of the many little Civic Action jobs that come up unexpectedly for Chaplain Fiol.

SEABEES meet the HONEY BEES

Laughter, loud talking, the droning of a juke box--these are the sounds of happiness on a Sunday afternoon at the Camp Haskins North Enlisted Men's Club as the Seabees of 53 take a well earned afternoon off.

But on Sunday, April 13, there was a little added "happiness," and it showed up about 2 o'clock in the form of the "Honey Bees," an all Japanese show from Tokyo. Hired by MCB-53's Special Services, the band of five girls and 2 men put on an entertaining and rather professional show for a well packed club.

The band played everything from Gershwin, to rock, to Western, to hill-billy, and at least caught the sound of the various styles even if the spirit wasn't always quite authentic. Not that it mattered much. Anything that even sounds like home is welcome in Vietnam.



53's Seabees "climb the walls" as the Honey Bees, an all Japanese band, entertain them in the battalion's EM Club.

And apparently home for many of 53's Seabees is the

West and South, judging from their appreciation of the Country and Western type music. One enthusiastic Seabee even got on the stage and "tried" dancing to a little of it.

The lead guitarist did an adequate job in switching from playing style to playing style and further proved his versatility by hitting a few notes on an "electric violin." He may also have proved that he plays it better on his arm than between his legs, but a little showmanship never hurt anybody.

The singer, who was also the leader of the group, had an expressive voice that was rather effective on love ballads. Her English pronunciation was also rather good --though it was a little paradoxical to hear "Mustang Sally" come from such an oriental face.

So all in all the boys were entertained and happy and that is important when so much of their time is devoted to the serious business of war-time construction.



A female guitarist (right) and a dancer with the Honey Bees in action during the Special Services Show. The show played for approximately one and one-half hours.

Off the job

During the leisure hours at Camp Haskins North there are a number of things to do to help the time slip by and make our stay in Vietnam as pleasant as possible. Sports-minded individuals can participate in intramural basketball and baseball competition. The teams are set up through companies and they compete against one another.

Water sports are the main attraction. There is swimming, surfing, and sailing at the camp's beach and on a hot Sunday afternoon the beach is hopping with these activities. The battalion purchased two sailfins and three surfboards prior to deploying to their present camp. Many of the men use rubber air mattresses to float on while they soak up the sun.

There are also pool tables, shuffleboards, ping pong tables, and bingo matches to satisfy the different interests of the battalion. A weight room is handy should anyone desire to build himself a new body and there is a band room for anyone who wishes to increase his musical talents.

Then there is always the opportunity to sip a nice cold beer while you're shooting the breeze with your buddies or just relaxing.



A Sunday afternoon at Camp Haskins North brings the men of 53 away from the blazing heat of their jobsites to a cool dip in the DaNang Bay.



SK2 Noel Crawford connects in an intramural league game in which H-Company defeated the Chief Petty Officers of the battalion. YNC Paul Haslerud is doing the catching for the Chiefs as CS2 John Green calls the balls and strikes.

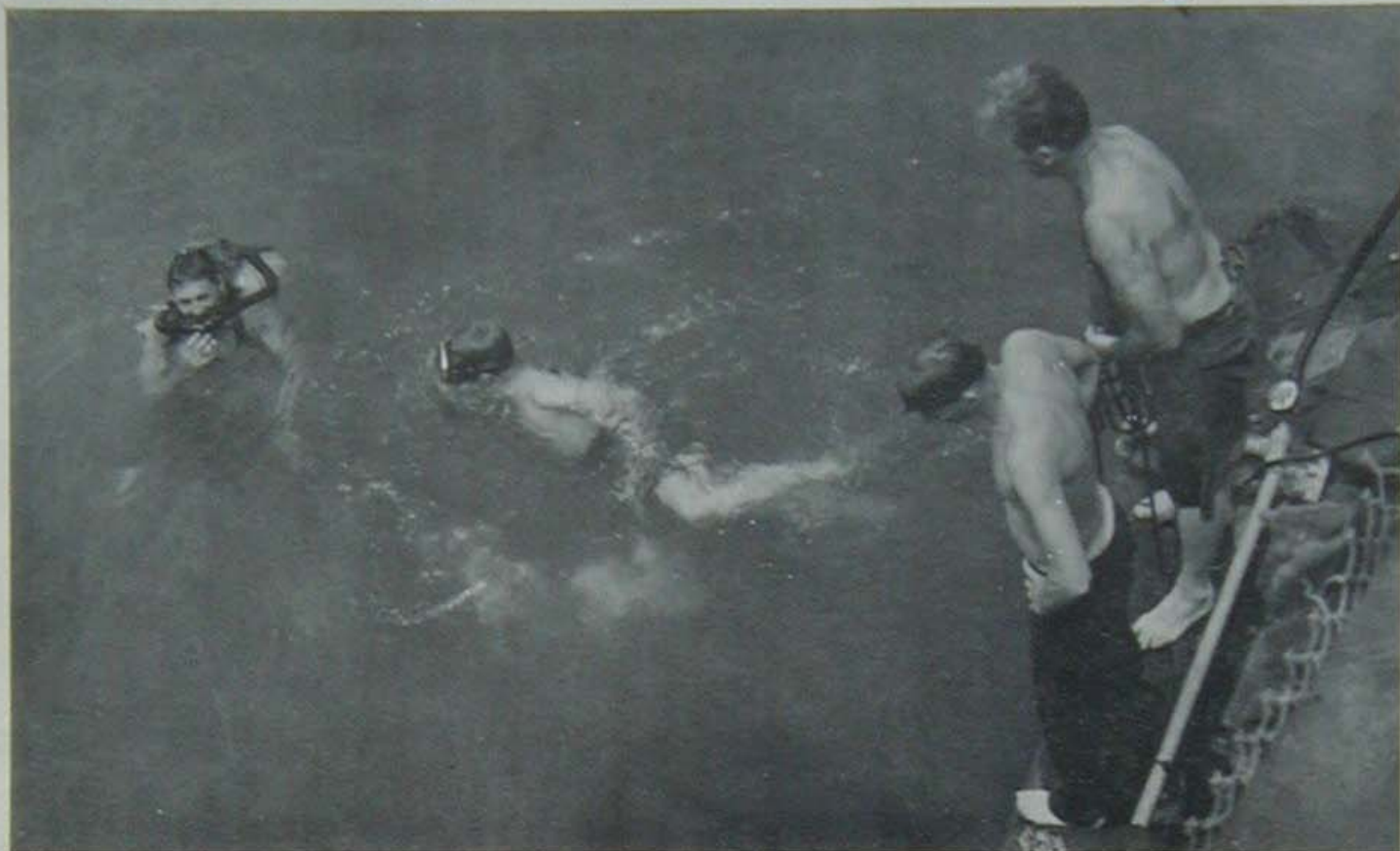


CE1 Dave Mills keeps his balance as he rides the "heavy surf" at Red Beach.



Relaxing in the Enlisted Mens Club are (l-r) BU2 C.W. Gohmert, BU1 W.S. Kelley, SW3 D. W. Owens, SW3 R.K. Braun, BU2 A.D. Byers, and an unidentified Marine.

Light crew stages 'bad scene' for Viet Cong divers



Viet Cong divers may soon be seeing spots in front of their eyes and it won't be because of something they ate. At least that is what MCB-53 divers hope will happen when enemy divers approach the Nam-O Bridge just north of DaNang over the Da De Song River.

The three divers helping Don Clark (far right), a civilian electrical engineer from NCEL in Port Hueneme, California, are (l-r) SF2 Ishmal Osborne of Bartlesville, Oklahoma; CE3 Earl Weldon of Moultrie, Georgia;

and CE2 Ray Martin of Jacksonville, Florida. They are building and testing an underwater lighting system that will blink in irregular sequence and hopefully confuse the enemy.

If successful, the system of 31 lights will replace the more expensive concertina wire system in which rows of concertina wire are laid in the water to physically bar any approach to the bridge.

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