

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



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P. SMILEY

Seabees of MCB 53 Roll up Sleeves As They Begin Second Deployment

The Seabees of USN MCB-53 began their second tour in the Republic of Vietnam by relieving MCB-22 at Camp Haskins North, DaNang, Vietnam. Under the command of Commander R.K. Miller, CEC, USN, the 700 men from MCB-53 will operate throughout the Northern I Corps area.

The Advance Party for MCB-53 arrived in two flights on February 14, 1969 and February 18, 1969 respectively. The first flight carried 82 men while the second carried 38. These men successfully completed the equipment and camp turnover. They also assured a smooth arrival for the main body and made the necessary preparations to get the battalion functioning as soon after arrival as possible.

The main body arrived in five flights. The first three flights had 215 passengers, 189 passengers, and 165 passengers respectively. The last two were cargo flights and had only 17 passengers and 2 passengers respectively.

The flights followed two routes to DaNang. One route had stops in Anchorage, Alaska and Yokota, Japan prior to reaching DaNang. The other route had layovers in Oakland, California; Honolulu, Hawaii; Guam, and the Phillipines.

Similar to last deployment, the battalion will be working mainly in the DaNang area. However, many of 53's Seabees will be sent to different trouble spots to clear roads and construct buildings, helo pads and airfields.

MCB-53's previous tour of duty ranged as far south as Hoi An and as far north as Khe Sanh. Although the majority of the troops were stationed in DaNang, detachments were scattered across the I Corps in support of American and Allied Forces.

With the new deployment, new detachments are under way. The battalion's Foxtrot Company has already settled at Vinh Dai, a rock crusher site approximately six miles from the DMZ. This 175 man company will operate in that area until the battalion returns to homeport sometime in the fall of 1969.

53's Seabee Team 5301 has started work in the Mekong Delta Regions. Their objective is to work with the people and to increase their skills in the different construction fields. This 13 man team, headed by LTjg Louis M. Smith, CEC, USNR, are the only men from MCB-53 who will work out of the I Corps area during the deployment.

An eight man detachment under LT William Johnson was

sent south of DaNang to complete the Liberty Bridge. LT Johnson replaced LTjg Max A. Werner who slipped a disc. The construction of the bridge was started by MCB-3.

The detachment will also complete both approaches to the bridge and build two 60 foot guard towers.

Although MCB-53 has been in Vietnam a matter of weeks, they are already operating with the experience and skills gathered from their previous deployment to Vietnam.



BU3 T.L. Noggle (center) takes inventory while SK3 A.E. Stephens (left) and BU1 F.C. Hosinski unpack mountout boxes in preparation for MCB-53's second deployment in the Republic of Vietnam.

30TH NCR CO AND RELIEF VISIT MCB-53

Captain J.R. Fisher, relieved Commander of the 30th Naval Construction Regiment, and Captain J.E. Powell, Captain Fisher's relief, toured MCB-53's Camp Haskins North shortly after the battalion arrived in-country to be briefed on the battalion's progress to date.

Commander R.K. Miller, Commanding Officer of MCB-53, and Lieutenant Commander D. L. Forney, Operations Officer of MCB-53, briefed Captain Fisher and Captain Powell on the battalion's homeport training, both military and professional, and the current projects assigned to MCB-53 while deployed to Vietnam.

The homeport military training at Camp Fogarty, Rhode Island and Camp LeJeune, North Carolina was a major point of the discussion. This subject being extremely important if the battalion is to function as a mobile construction unit in Vietnam.

The major projects assigned



Captain J.R. Fisher (second from left), Commander of the 30th Naval Construction Regiment at the time, and Captain J.E. Powell (second from right), Captain Fisher's replacement, pause for a moment with Commander Miller (left), Commanding Officer of MCB-53, and Lieutenant Commander Forney, MCB-53's Operations Officer, during a briefing at MCB-53's Camp Haskins North.



Commander Miller (right) presents the "Battalion Motto" to Captain Fisher during the 30th Naval Construction Regiment Commander's visit to the battalion's camp. The flag was given to the command as the "Battalion Motto" by LCDr Shackelford, who served as MCB-53's Operations Officer during the first half of the battalion's last deployment to the Republic of Vietnam.

to the battalion were covered as well. The Liberty Bridge, started by MCB-3, is to be completed by MCB-53. Once completed, this bridge, located 21 miles south of DaNang, will provide a critical link in the highway system of the An Hoa Valley region.

The construction of a Data Processing building at the Force Logistics Command is another project that will require a great deal of time and effort on the part of MCB-53.

Given special attention due to the importance of their mission was a 175 man detachment to Vinh Dai. The detachment, located near the DMZ, will produce rock for the Lines of Communication Program as well as produce and place asphaltic concrete on Routes 1 and 9 in the Northern I Corps Tactical Zone.

Captain's Corner

We have been back in Vietnam for over a month. Our homeport period was a fruitful one, climaxed by a very successful Administrative Inspection by COMCBLANT and his staff. The impression MCB-53 left with the inspection staff was excellent. Captain Iselin said we were ready in every respect for deployment and were prepared to undertake any construction project which might be assigned to us.

We have already proved that. The second day we were in-country we were working on the two highest priority construction projects in the I Corps Tactical Zone--the Data Processing Facility for Force Logistics Command and the Liberty Bridge across the Thu Bon River. The Data Processing job is so important that the Commandant of the Marine Corps himself is monitoring our progress. Our mission in Vietnam is to support the Marines in the I Corps and we are doing it well.

These important jobs would never have been assigned to MCB-53 had not the 3rd Naval Construction Brigade and the 30th Naval Construction Regiment had faith in our ability. Our reputation is being enhanced by your performance.

Don't let the performance go to POT! Yes pot, or "tea," "grass," "weed," "Mary Jane," "MJ" or whatever, marijuana is potentially very dangerous. "Experiments" with drugs can lead to progressive deterioration--mentally, physically and morally. First of all, you are viewed as someone who lacks emotional stability and respect for the law. If you get caught using drugs illegally in the military--and those who try it usually do get caught--you'll have a mark on your record that will close many doors to jobs on the outside---and that's where you'll wind up, if not in jail.

Before you do get caught, you're a security risk. You can be blackmailed. You might overlook or ignore proper security measures. You're a loser all around and there is no room for you in the Navy. Ask yourself if you would trust your fate to one who is on marijuana. That's exactly what could happen if one of our posts were manned one night by some misguided Seabee who "just wanted to try it" while CHARLIE is throwing RPG rounds our way.

Remember, even though marijuana is relatively easy to come by over here, the price of cheap kicks on drugs is pretty high.

KEEP OFF THE GRASS!



The Esprit Of 53



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CDR R.K. Miller

Seabee Of The Year

Equipment Operator Second Class L.L. Losee, USN, son of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Losee of Nappanee, Indiana, was recently named USN MCB-53's "Seabee of the Year" for 1968.

Petty Officer Losee's citation read in part: "...Your performance during the recent deployment to RVN was of a highly professional nature. Your work within the battalion and on detachment to Khe Sanh during the TET Offensive was accomplished in such a manner as to bring credit to yourself and your battalion. This performance of duty is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service...."

Petty Officer Losee was one of four MCB-53 Seabees that went to Khe Sanh when the battalion first arrived at Camp Adenir, DaNang East, Vietnam, in January 1968.

The citation went on to say, "In addition to your work in the construction equipment field, your tireless efforts in the training of junior personnel reflect the Seabee "CAN DO" spirit."

Petty Officer Losee attended Nappanee High School. He joined the Navy in February, 1955, and reported to MCB-53 in April, 1967. He then deployed with the battalion to Vietnam in January, 1968.

Equipment Operator Losee is presently recuperating at the Newport Naval Hospital from injuries suffered in a car accident.



EO2 L.L. Losee

NEW XO JOINS 53

LCdr W.A. Simmons joined MCB-53 in March as Executive Officer, replacing LCdr D.L. Forney, acting Executive Officer.

LCdr Simmons was born in Wilson, North Carolina. He attended the United States Naval Academy, graduating in 1958 with a Bachelor of Science degree, and he received his Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree from Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute in 1960. He was commissioned an Ensign in the Civil Engineering Corps upon graduation from the Naval Academy.

LCdr Simmons' previous assignments include duty at Norfolk Naval Air Station as Housing Officer and Assistant Maintenance Officer from July 1958 to August 1960. After completing the eight week course at the

Civil Engineer Corps School at Port Hueneme, Calif., he served as Assistant Public Works Officer at NAS Sanford, Florida, from November 1960 to September 1962.

He then went to NAS Barbers Point, Hawaii where he acted as Assistant Public Works Officer from October 1962 to June 1964, when he was ordered to the District Public Works Office, Fourteenth Naval District, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, where he was Resident Officer in Charge of Construction for Housing from June 1964 to August 1965.

From September 1965 until October 1967 he was the Personnel Aid and Administrative Assistant to the Deputy of Naval Operations (Logistics) in Washington, D.C. where he was promoted to his present rank in December 1966.



LCdr W.A. Simmons

In October 1967 he reported to MCB-71 where he was Operations Officer until May 1968 when he became Executive Officer. LCdr Simmons then came to MCB-53 in March 1969 as Executive Officer.

LCdr Simmons is married to the former Gale Kleinman of Pearl River, New York, and they have two daughters, Sandra and Kristin.

Corpsman Wounded

Hospital Corpsman Third Class Claude W. Billman Jr. was wounded when the weapons carrier in which he was riding struck a land mine at MCB-53's rock quarry site located 10 miles west of Vinh Dai.

The Corpsman was enroute to the aid of a wounded G.I. from the Army's Comanche Tank Division, who had been hit by AK-47 sniper fire. The wounded Armyman was a crew member of a tank that had just finished blasting the area from which the enemy fire was now coming. They were situated on the hill adjacent to the one Corpsman Billman was on.

A hurried radio call for a corpsman brought Petty Officer Billman to the adjacent hill and while he was traveling up it, the mine was detonated by the weight of the weapons carrier. Both men were MEDEVACED shortly afterward to an Army hospital in Quang Tri, Vietnam, to recuperate from their wounds.

XO's Column

by LCdr W.A. Simmons

As we begin our second deployment to Vietnam, it is well to pause to consider why we, as Americans, are here, how this affects our everyday actions and what responsibilities it creates.

The United States of America was requested by the Vietnamese Government to assist in preventing the imposition of Communist rule on the people of South Vietnam, the majority of whom do not want to be governed by the communists. As a continuing response to that request, we are here for a second deployment to continue to support the fight, which is for the people, not the real estate of this country.

If you want land, all you have to do is put a fence around it and defend it against all opposition. However, to win the people, you must convince them of your purpose and strengthen them in their purpose to retain their freedom.

In our day to day actions which are almost constantly observed by the Vietnamese, and of course, in all our dealings directly with them, we must endeavor to act as guests in this country and treat them with the same respect we expect from our friends and shipmates.

How would we expect, yes even demand, that visitors in our country act toward us, our wives, our customs, and religious beliefs? Many rules of thumb have been developed for how to be the best ambassadors of our country, such as the MACV Nine Rules, but underlying all of these is the common sense Golden Rule. It can be expanded and stretched a dozen different ways, but if we treat them the way we would like them to treat us, our job here will be much easier and that of the VC cadre and recruiter will become impossible.

Pulpit Power

You Think You Have Problems

You're fed up. Just can't take it any more. Everything is beginning to bug you--everyone is jumping on your back all the time--wish they'd leave you alone.

You're discouraged---the job is getting old -- the people here could care less what you're trying to do for their country--you've been stuck on some mickey-mouse clean up detail every month--don't get along with the crewleader--he doesn't know as much about the job as you know.

You're lonely---- 10,000 miles is a long way--it's been two weeks since your girl, or your wife, wrote you--don't they realize how much you need their letters--you'd rather be back home and out of this crazy war--besides they need you back home.

Quite often we think that the problems we have; the loneliness, discouragement, despair are uniquely our problems--we're alone in these difficulties. However just for the record, there was a fellow a while back who had a pretty rough row-to-hoe.

This fellow met some guys that sort of got along with him. He had a lot to say--was sort of a rebel--didn't go along with the crowd. So they formed up into a band of men and had a real in-group for about three years. He was quite a character--got a lot of publicity, always was in the limelight--most of the people were crazy about him. kinda' nice to mix with a hero.

Then all of a sudden a tremendous change took place. Man, the same people that thought he was the greatest guy wanted to lynch the guy. What happened?... just when he needed help...just when he thought he could count on his "group"--they all beat it--said they didn't even know the fellow--talk about loneliness, discouragement,

wanting to "give up". That's more than a guy can take---- really alone in the world, in life.

That's what Easter is all about. This "fellow" wasn't just an ordinary rebel, with a justifiable cause. The Bible says he was the God-Man, sent to rebel against the hypocrisy and evil of love and truth and life in God. From His one "solitary life," a world was changed and millions found meaning and hope. It's the same for us here in Vietnam, 1969. Christ, the God-Man gives reality to life, replaces the loneliness, despair, "want-to-give-up" attitude with meaning because 2000 years ago He went through "Hell." He let his "admirers" kill Him, and then he defeated them in death--that's right,



Chaplain Fiol fords a "Viet Cong infested river" at Camp Le Jeune, North Carolina.

actually came back to life. So, when you get right down to it, He's capable of meeting every need of everyone who is concerned enough, and fed-up enough with things as they are, to seek Him out.

Even the Sandbags Were Wired

The day started normal enough for the six man security team that guards MCB-53's rock quarry site ten miles west of Vinh Dai. Vinh Dai is the battalion's rock crusher camp located 6 miles from the DMZ. The security force followed a minesweeping team to the quarry and unloaded one of the M-60 machine guns to place in the Lower Bunker. A 50 Caliber machine gun and another M-60 would be placed in the Upper Bunker on a hill overlooking the quarry.

As Equipment Operator Third Class R.E. Wentworth from Arcunum, Ohio started into the bunker, Construction Mechanic Third Class G.A. Aagard from Wadena, Minnesota grabbed him by the arm and pushed him away. Wentworth couldn't understand at first what Aagard meant when the mechanic started yelling: "Stop, stop! It isn't like I left it!" The

two footprints that Aagard had left as identifying marks the previous afternoon had been wiped clean. Someone had been at the bunker during the night and while smoothing out his own trail had done the same to the identifying marks.

The minesweeping team was called in to investigate. One of the men lowered himself into the doorway on his stomach and sure enough right in the entrance was a booby trap. Further investigation found two more well placed mines. Even the sandbags had been completely wired.

What could have been a disaster turned into only a little extra work for the security team. They had to build themselves a new bunker for the old one was left in ruins by the blasts from the mines as they were deliberately set off.

RECEIVE AWARDS FROM PREVIOUS DEPLOYMENT

In the first Awards Ceremony since arriving in-country, MCB-53 personnel were awarded three Navy Achievement Medals, one Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry and one MACV Certificate of Achievement. These awards were presented for previous accomplishments while serving with MCB-53 on the Battalion's first deployment in DaNang East, Vietnam. Commander Miller presented the awards to the Men.

Awarded the Navy Achievement Medals were Lt Peter P. Madden from New York, New York "for outstanding achievement in the superior performance of his duties from 20 January 1968 to 5 August 1968 as Company Commander of Charlie Company..."; Chief Construction Electrician Joseph J. Cerminaro from Carbonville, Pennsylvania "for outstanding achievement in the superior performance of his duties from 20 January 1968 to 20 May 1968 as Bravo Company leading Chief Petty Officer..." and Chief Yeoman Paul D. Haslerud from Peterson, Minnesota, "for outstanding achievement in the superior performance of his duties from 29 December 1967 to 20 July 1968 as Administrative Chief...."

The Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry was awarded to Utilitiesman Second Class F.P. Pappas from Tewksbury, Massachusetts "for his courage and performance of duty while assigned to the Ammi Bridge Project at Nam Hoa."

Construction Electrician Third Class Frederick Harris from Norfolk, Virginia was presented the MACV Certificate of Achievement "for his professional competence and devotion to duty in support of the Republic of Vietnam's struggle against oppression of world-wide Communism."

Also presented at the A-



LT Peter P. Madden (right) is congratulated by CDR R.K. Miller after being presented the Navy Achievement Medal during an awards ceremony at Camp Haskins North.

wards Ceremony was a Certificate of Commendation to Ship Fitter Second Class I. L. Osborne from North Kingstown, Rhode Island, for award of the Navy Unit Commendation to the USS Newport News. The members of the USS Newport News received the award "for exceptionally meritorious service from 2 October 1967 to 26 April 1968 while en-

gaged in operations against enemy aggressor forces in the waters contiguous to the hostile coastline of both North and South Vietnam."

Ship's Serviceman Second Class Harry H. Robinson from Arnold, Pennsylvania, received his second Good Conduct Award "in recognition of faithful, zealous, and obedient Naval service."



Chief Yeoman Paul Haslerud (right) salutes CDR Miller after receiving the Navy Achievement Medal during the battalion's first awards ceremony.

53's SEABEE ARVN



Tran Due The (left) is assisted by E02 J.E. Hardigree from Bethlehem, Georgia, in the operation of one of MCB-53's bulldozers.

When the war ends and the American troops pull out, South Vietnam will need experienced construction men to rebuild their war-torn country. They have started their own Vietnamese construction battalions but are lacking in experienced men to increase the skills of these Vietnamese Seabees.

At this time seven ARVN Engineers are taking on-the-job training at MCB-53's Camp Haskins North. Six of the men are equipment operators and one is a construction mechanic. Their rates vary from E-1 to E-6.

The EO's are learning to operate cranes, graders, dozers, front-end loaders and MRS scrapers. They are working alongside equipment op-



E03 Gordon Owen (left) from Williston, Vermont, instructs Tang Xe on the operation of a grader.



ARVN Engineers staying (standing, left to right) Thanh, Tran Due The, Nguyn, left to right) Pham Di.