

MCB 62  
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There was heavy fighting on one front this week, and while there were plenty of Marines nearby, they didn't join in the battle.

The front was in one of the many wooded areas of the Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and the shooting was part of a field exercise climaxing an intensive training program for the Seabees of Mobile Construction Battalion (MCB) 62.

More than 530 men from the Seabee Battalion arrived here about three weeks ago from their homeport at the Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport, Mississippi. Since then, the Marines of the Third Battalion, Sixth Regiment, have served up a thorough, in-depth and somewhat grueling program of ground warfare instruction to the construction men.

With weeks of instruction crammed into a few days, the Seabees have undergone training in communications, field medicine, infantry weapons, field messing, leadership, mine warfare, bridge building, counter guerrilla warfare and individual combat techniques.

Some of the time was spent in the classroom, but mostly, the Marines employed their favorite "learn-it-by-doing-it-yourself" technique to polish up the fighting skills of the Seabees.

For many of the Navy builders this meant crawling over a good portion of Camp Lejeune's 120,000 acres on patrols, fighting their way out of simulated ambushes or blowing up earth, trees and chunks of metal with a wide variety of weapons.

The training began for MCB 62 on the Monday before Thanksgiving, and the four-day holiday weekend provided a welcome break from the work in the field. Classes resumed on the following Monday, and the training was unusually intensive the second week to make up for lost time.

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The field problem this week put MCB 62's fighting abilities to the test. Early Monday morning the Battalion marched to its defensive area, encountering ambushes and sniper fire along the way. Once there, the Seabees set up a bivouac and dug in to defend their position for two days and nights.

During this period the construction men were attacked repeatedly by Marine aggressors and MCB 62 Seabees who had gone through the Second Marine Division's Counter Guerrilla Warfare School earlier in training.

While the men were dug in they ate canned field rations and slept in sleeping bags under shelter halves between vitals in the fox holes.

Wednesday morning the Seabees broke camp and returned to their barracks for hot food, showers and liberty.

On Friday the Battalion passed in review in honor of the 1st Battalion, the 3/6 Marines. Later, the first of the planes returning the Seabees of MCB 62 to the CB Center, Gulfport, will take off.

The instruction at Camp Lejeune is actually the second phase of training for the Seabee Battalion. Before arriving there the men had already had two weeks of classroom and field training plus a week of target firing with the M-16 rifle.

For most of the Seabees, this was the second time through the training program at Camp Lejeune. The first time was about 11 months ago, shortly after the Battalion was activated.

Since then MCB 62 has spent about eight months in the combat area of South Vietnam. Deployed at Phu Bai, Battalion Seabees erected buildings and bridges, built highways and worked with the Vietnamese people in civic action projects.

The Battalion took part in one of the largest Marine operations in Vietnam, Operation Prairie, providing support for the Third Marine Division.

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The construction of an interrogation center in the city of Hue for the use of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, a road through Viet Cong held territory from Phu Bai to the South China Sea and a field hospital for Alfa Medical Company, Third Marine Division, are among the achievements of MCR 62 Seabees during their deployment.

The Battalion was also responsible for maintenance of all water, electrical and road systems in the Phu Bai Combat Base and for the establishment, operation and security of a rock quarry in an outlying area.

MCR 62 expects to meet new kinds of challenges when it leaves for a second Vietnam deployment in late January. There will be other roads to build and bridges to mend, and there will be the ever present threat of enemy attack.

Of course, like any fighting men, the Seabees hope they will never be involved in battle. But if the occasion arises, they will be ready to call on their combat training and the Seabee "CAN DO" spirit to fight for their country in the best American tradition.

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