

From: Richard Holmes
To: Norm Hahn
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2020, 09:20:01 AM CST
Subject: 69 tour in Gia Vuc website- Dick HOLMES

Norm,

Here's what is in the Gia Vuc SF camp's website that I did for the fellow who did it. This is what I sent him about our 69 tour. In photos that's me sighting level, Cheek Cataldo with level rod, me with kid, at beer party and burning shitters. I will send later what was in the Gia Vuc site on the 70 detachment to work on SF airstrips.

Dick

Camp Barnes in 1969-70

Here's what I know of Camp Barnes at Dong Ha. It was a small portion, as you know, of a large Marine Combat Base mostly 1st Marine Division. It was on a major road called Route 9. Route 9 is parallel to the DMZ and went on in to Laos. Also, Route 1, which was the north/south highway for Vietnam came through Dong Ha too. The famous base at Khe Sanh was on Route 9.



Bridge 9-12,
near DMZ
Holmes with rock monkey



Route 1
Near Dong Ha May
69

Đông Hà was the Quang Tri province capital and the northernmost town in South Vietnam. It was situated at the crossroads of National Highway 1A and route 9 and was overrun on March 31, 1972, during the initial assaults of the North Vietnamese Easter Offensive.

"**Camp Barnes**" was the Seabee camp inside Đông Hà US Marine Combat Base which provided surveillance of troops movements across the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The camp was named after Senior Chief Donald J. Barnes, who was MCB-11's first casualty. In 1967 the based was shelled daily with a direct hit to Dong Ha main ammo dump in September 67.



Our battalion had about 750 men with a lot of them out on different details and not staying at Camp Barnes.

I spent most of my time out on Route 9 living with the Marines and Army. We were paving Route 9 and Route 1 with asphalt and building bridges. I did the soil and asphalt testing and some surveying. We had our own rock crusher and asphalt plant. We set a Seabee record for miles of asphalt laid down in one day. I think it was 5 miles. We worked from sun up to sun down most days with a half of day off on Sunday.

When we fired mortars at night they would let us sleep in but it was too hot most of the time to sleep. Sunday afternoons were nice and we would grill out sometimes when we could find some steaks and beer. Beer was either free or 10 cents. Camp Barnes had a small ice plant that used a brine solution, but ice was still a luxury. Officers had air conditioned quarters plus the medical hut was air conditioned along with the MARS station hut. The MARS boys would patch me by short wave radio to a person in the U.S. who did it as a hobby. He would then get my parents on the phone and I could talk to them. There were 12 hours between us. Only problem was you had to say "over" when you were through talking so the other person on the end of line could know to talk and my mother could never get the hang of that. I did this about once a month so it was not often.



At beer party, Dong Ha, Oct. 69



Barry Condon and me



Bronco 06/69 Dong Ha airfield

Dong Ha had an airfield that had smaller planes and not jets that I remember.

A lot of FACs were there I guess because of the need for them along the DMZ area to keep an eye out for the NVA. We saw a lot of NVA, because of being close to North Vietnam and not as much VC.

The Seabees at Camp Barnes were pretty much self efficient. We had a famous mess hall that all the services liked eating at. Navy cooks are noted for their good cooking. Dong Ha Combat Base had a bread bakery that made bread for the entire base.



"Dick on Shit burning duty"
Dong Ha

We all lived in "hootchies" which were plywood with a tin roof and sand bags up to the screen windows. Each hootch had I guess about 12 men with two sharing a small area with partitions.

Between the beds, was a trap door in the floor that lead to a ditch that lead to an underground bunker. Went into it many times when in-coming rockets would come in.

We had toilets outside that were called shitters and big shower houses.

Some other combat bases on it were Cam Lo, Vandergriff, The Rockpile, Camp Carroll, and others.

Vandergriff and Carroll were Fire Support Bases (FSB) with some big guns. The Khe Gio Bridge (we called it Bridge 9-12) was on Route 9 too. It was overrun in 1970. Except for Khe Sanh, I was at all of these places. Seabee battalions rotated to Camp Barnes from home ports in the U.S. my home port was Gulfport, Mississippi. It is still there. Seabee battalions did two 8 month tours to Vietnam unlike the 12-13 months for Marines and Army. An entire battalion would go to Vietnam so MCB 62's headquarters would be at Camp Barnes too. There were a few Seabee battalions in Vietnam at one time. Another camp was Camp Haskins in Da Nang. That was my home base when I was working out of Ha Thanh. Our Battalion commander was Captain John Paul Jones. A Navy Captain is same as an Army brigadier general. I was in H Company which were mostly land surveyors, draftsman and folks who do typical engineering work.



The other companies had their own specialties such as utilities (electrical, plumbing etc), builders who contracted buildings, Steel workers who built bridges, and a company of heavy equipment operators and mechanics. The Seabees organization is structured much like the Marines except for our rank. We had battalions, companies, platoons, squads etc. Not at all like the Navy.

On Jan 18, 2020, at 6:01 PM, Norm Hahn wrote:

Hi Dick,

Thanks for this email. I'll copy and paste most of it into your database.

If you don't mind, email me the info about the SF site and I can add it easier that way.

Go on the website and log in. Is that the same Jacobs you are talking about? I have almost nothing on him. Never met him. Can you contact him and get a copy of the logbook he has and I will put it on the website. Depending on what he has, I'll award him some years alumni group membership.

Thanks, Norm

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Richard Holmes

To: Norm Hahn

Cc: Roswell A. Harris ; Al 62 Harris

Sent: Friday, January 17, 2020, 01:13:51 PM CST

Subject: Re: A special email about the 2020 reunion

Norm,

I looked in the 69 cruise book for a Roswell or Al Harris but did not find anything. Thought I might remember their faces.

If Buford is the detachment at The Rockpile, Camp Carroll, Cam Lo etc areas I think I sent you photos that I had taken in 1969. Chief Jacobs, who you may know became the "head" enlisted Seabee, kept a log. I actually got a call years ago from the family of the fellow who burned to death at The Rockpile in an accident involving gas fumes. You may remember that. I contacted Chief Jacobs who was living in Florida and he had it all written down in his log book. If he's still around, a copy of that log book would be good to have.

A friend of mine in England is a member of a Vietnam reenactment group. They are real serious about it. They are on Facebook at Rolling Thunder, The Vietnam Experience. Anyway, this friend did a website on Special Forces at Gia Vuc camp. He added other camps that included one I was at called Ha Thanh, A104. He asked me to write up my experiences at the camp. There about 10 of us Seabees that worked on SF camp airstrips during MCB62's 1970 deployment. You can print screen what I wrote and also the photos. The web site is Gia Vuc. Look for Ha thanh in the top bar and side bar. If you had rather, I can email you what I had added.

I won't be going to the reunion. Did go to one time years ago at Fayetteville, NC. I live close by.

Thanks for all the work you do which I know is a lot.

Dick Holmes
Raleigh, NC