

20 June 2015

From: Ralph Norman, UT2, NMCB 62, third and forth Deployment.

To: Norm Hahn, NMCB 62 Secretary

Apparently John Paul Jones, Jr sent letters home to our families while we were deployed in Nam. My mother passed away in 2012 and while going through two large plastic containers of her papers we found four that she saved.

(secretaries note: there is no page 2 received for the 27 Sep 1969 Family gram)

14 April 1969
Camp Barnes
Dong Ha, RVN

Dear SEABEE Family,

The last flight of the NMCB SIXTY-TWO main body airlift arrived in our new home, Camp Barnes, Dong Ha, Republic of Vietnam late in the afternoon on Sunday the 6th of April. All hands made the trip safely and with reasonable comfort, in spite of the fact that the journey took them half-way around the world. We are now pretty well settled down to the Vietnam routine, and today marks the beginning of our second full week of construction effort. More about that later in this letter.

The Battalion camp is located within a much larger U. S. Military Installation known as the Dong Ha Combat Base. Other units within the larger base include U. S. Marines of the 3rd Marine Division, and some elements of various U. S. Army and Air Force units. Militarily the entire complex is every bit as strong as, or stronger than any other base in the I Corps area.

The camp itself, while lacking in some of the comforts of home, is adequate in every respect. Company berthing areas are spread out around a central administrative area. The berthing spaces are typical South East Asia huts, commonly referred to as "hootches".

We operate our own laundry and messhall, barber shop, small retail exchange facility, and special services store. In addition, there is a fine basketball court, and of course there are clubs for all hands. There are many other features of the camp which contribute to making it a livable home away from home, but I'll let your SEABEE tell you more about it in his letters to you.

The weather since our arrival has been pretty good. Rain only once or twice, and the days have not been too hot yet -- although they will get hotter. The monsoon, or rainy season, is over, so the weather should be good for us for almost the entire deployment.

Your SEABEE has really "turned to" this past week, and for our first week on the job we managed to get quite a bit accomplished. Our work currently includes the upgrading of two roads in the Vietnamese National Highway system. We are working on Route No. 1 south from Dong Ha to Quang Tri City, and on Route No. 9 west from Dong Ha. The road crews from ALFA Company got off to a very good start, and more than a mile of Route No. 9 was paved during the past few days. For CHARLIE and DELTA Companies work includes bridge construction and repair along both highways, and the construction of various facilities for the Marines, Army, and Air Force here in Dong Ha and at smaller outlying bases. It is apparent to me that we have lots of good construction work to tackle, and I am certain that this will be a challenging and interesting deployment for

14 April 1969

SIXTY-TWO. I will cover the construction work in more detail in future Family Grams.

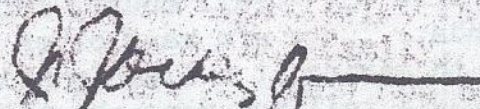
For those of you who are receiving the NMOCB SIXTY-TWO Family Gram for the first time, let me welcome you to the SEABEE family. I use the Family Gram as a way, once a month, to let you know how Battalion life is going, and to pass on information which I hope will be of interest to you. You will also, on a once a month basis, receive a copy of the Battalion newspaper, the SEABEACON. Articles and photographs in the SEABEACON will provide you with another picture of Battalion life in Vietnam.

Before I close I would like to add a comment about mail from home. Receiving a letter from home is the highlight of every SEABEE's day, and probably does more for his morale than all the good food and fine USO shows in Vietnam. May I suggest that you make your letters to your SEABEE cheerful and newsy, and above all, frequent.

In closing I repeat the offer that I have made before in previous Family Grams. If I can be of assistance to you in any way, or if you have questions about the Battalion, please do not hesitate to write to me direct. Either I will answer or your SEABEE's Company Commander will answer. In either case a reply will be prompt. Our Chaplain, LT R. R. Crowe, CHC, USNR is also available for assistance and will be glad to correspond with you.

May God be with you all, and please remember your SEABEE in your prayers.

Sincerely,



J. P. JONES, Jr.
GDR, CEC, USN
Commanding Officer
USNMOCB SIXTY-TWO

MCB SIXTY-TWO FAMILYGRAM

14 May 1969
Camp Barnes
Dong Ha, RVN

Dear SEABEE Family,

I started writing this letter this past Sunday, on Mother's Day. As I am sure you have heard before from your own SEABEE, "somehow I got sidetracked and had to start over today." Nevertheless, I did want to comment, belatedly, about Mother's Day and what it meant to me personally this past Sunday.

As always is the case, the Battalion Chapel services began at 0800 on Sunday morning. The Chapel was full, and the services were being conducted by the THIRD Marine Division Chaplain, standing in for our own Chaplain Crowe who had gone to Saigon for a brief visit with our SEABEE Team members who are deployed in that area. Imagine my sinking feeling when I realized from the Chaplain's comments and the Scripture lesson that Mother's Day had arrived, and I had not even sent my Mother a card.

I am reasonably sure that I was not alone in overlooking Mother's Day. Here in Vietnam there are no newspaper ads, TV commercials, or drugstore card displays to remind one of special occasions. But learning of the arrival of Mother's Day in that Chapel service, away from the state-side commercialism, just made the day more meaningful. The service was beautiful and appropriate, and those who attended could not help but come away feeling closer to home in spirit than before. In this troubled, frequently dangerous and often depressing environment these are cherished feelings. For me, and I suspect for your SEABEE too, that was the real significance of Mother's Day.

The days, or rather the nights, following Sunday have been pretty hectic. Early Monday morning, before dawn, the Dong Ha Combat Base was hit by a rocket attack. One of the incoming rounds actually landed inside of the Camp Barnes perimeter, but fortunately we sustained no casualties. That morning a nearby aircraft fuel farm was ignited during the attack, and men from ALFA Company were called upon to assist in fighting the fire. Under the leadership of the Company Commander, LT Ronald G. Bates, CEC, USN, the men of ALFA Company provided valuable assistance to the Marine fire fighters, and were instrumental in preventing the spread of the fire.

14 May 1969

The Combat Base was again attacked by rocket fire on Monday night and on Tuesday night (last night). Several of the rounds impacted close by Camp Barnes, but again we suffered no casualties. The hope of every SEABEE is that the attacks will soon cease, and that we will have no wounded comrades. In any event, the closeness of the protective bunkers, one under each living hootch, is comforting and offers good protection to all hands.

In spite of the hot weather (frequently over 100 F at mid-day) and the recent night harrassment of the rocket attacks, your SEABEE has continued to produce a substantial amount of high quality construction work. As I mentioned in my last Family-Gram, we continue to work on Route No. 1 south from Dong Ha to Quang Tri City and on Route No. 9 west from Dong Ha. In the recent past we have upgraded and assisted in the paving of several miles on both of these highways.

ALFA Company personnel produce the asphalt and haul it to the lay down location. They also are responsible for the preparation of the road surface for paving. This involves spreading and compaction of the rock base material and often the hauling and placing of large quantities of earth fill in area where the existing road must be widened or raised.

14 May 1969

BRAVO Company men are heavily committed in installing an electrical distribution system for the Dong Ha Combat Base, and soon will be working on a new water distribution system. We also rely on BRAVO Company to keep our own Camp Barnes water and power systems going and to do the camp maintenance work that is required.

CHARLIE and DELTA Companies continue hard at work on various projects. CHARLIE Company is building the Cam Lo River Bridge, a 490 foot steel bridge founded on steel piles. This job is a "one of a kind" project for our area of Vietnam, and the completed structure should be something for the entire Battalion to be proud of. Future issues of the Battalion newspaper will contain photos of the Cam Lo Bridge. We hope to be tasked with the construction of a similar, but longer, bridge here in Dong Ha later in the deployment.

DELTA Company is currently working on a variety of projects in and around the combat base and at outlying sites including gun pads and protective bunkers, and hootches and showers to improve the living conditions for some of our Marine friends. Delta Company also works hard with ALFA Company in installing culverts and repairing bridges while getting the unpaved stretches of highway ready for paving.

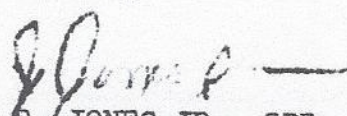
There is always a tendency while deployed to overlook the accomplishments of HEADQUARTERS Company, since they are not directly involved in the construction effort. For those of you whose SEABEE is in HEADQUARTERS Company let me assure you that he is appreciated. To these hard working men we owe our gratitude for fine meals, good service in such areas as laundry operation, special services, disbursing, training, Admin/Personnel and so on. The list is too long to cover in this letter. I will have the Battalion Journalist do a feature article sometime on HEADQUARTERS Company for the SEABEACON. With words and pictures he can tell their story better than I.

Speaking of the SEABEACON, by the way, the April issue should be mailed out very soon. It was prepared by the end on April, but since it was printed in Okinawa it takes some time to get back to us for mailing. We still plan one issue per month, though, and the May issue is now nearly ready for sending to the printer.

As I close this month's letter, let me thank those of you who have written to me since my last letter. I was pleased to hear from you, and glad to know that you received and enjoyed the Family-Gram. Perhaps others of you have specific questions, or subjects you would like for me to write about next month. If so, please let me know and I will be glad to try.

May God be with you all, and please remember your SEABEE in your prayers.

Sincerely,


J. P. JONES JR., CDR, CEC, USN
Commanding Officer
USN MCB SIXTY-TWO

U.S. NAVAL
MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION
SIXTY-TWO
FAMILYGRAM

23 August 1959
Camp Barnes
Dong Ha, RVN

Dear SEABEE Family,

It seems that recently I have done nothing but apologize for the lateness of the monthly Familygram. This month is no exception. As my self-imposed mid-month letter writing date approached and passed I found myself very busy, and then on an all too brief R&R trip in Hawaii with my wife. Nevertheless, I am back at the desk now and I hope you will agree, better late than never.

I left Camp Barnes on the 16th of August enroute to Hawaii. Upon my return a week later I was amazed at the startling progress that had been made on two of our biggest projects during my absence. Last month I wrote that we were involved in a major effort to complete the upgrading of National Route QL-9. That effort has continued with the commitment of the majority of our ALFA Company manpower and equipment assets, assisted by a major portion of the Builder/Steelworker assets of CHARLIE Company. Under the leadership of ALFA Company Commander, LT R.G. BATES, CEC, USN, the 150 man Detail BARRACUDA has continued to surprise even the most optimistic observers in the quantity and quality of their road-building work. Even in the brief period of my absence the change in the face of earth in that mountainous area of Vietnam was amazing. Where once there had been a narrow, bumpy, unpaved road skirting a vertical cliff face there now exists a 45 foot roadway, almost ready for paving. Blasting operations on the cliff face have been substantially completed. An adjoining fill several hundred feet long and about 25 feet high has been completed. In fact, only one significant earthmoving job remains to be done in the entire 10 mile stretch of road that is to be upgraded - and a significant portion of this road has already been completed and paved. By the time I write next month (particularly if I'm late again), the job should be very nearly complete.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention the efforts of the CHARLIE Company personnel who are members of Detail BARRACUDA. Working under intense pressure, Builder Chief Petty Officer VOLLONO and his crews have managed to improve and extend the old French drainage structures (mostly big masonry box culverts) at a pace fast enough not to slow down the ALFA Company effort. Now these same crews have demolished an old narrow timber bridge and are replacing it with a new 50 foot, structural steel, single span structure. Teamwork and cooperation between Builders, Steelworkers and Equipment Operators has really been excellent.

Another project in which I noted amazing progress is the Dong Ha Bridge. After only about six weeks of work, the piles have been driven for 4 of the 5 "in the water" foundation piers. Concrete pile caps at water level have been placed on two of these piers, and a third is to be poured this week. Structural steel supports already extend upward from one of the completed foundation piers. A large amount of the prefabrication and pre-erection work has been done on the shore at the south end of the bridge, and progress from here on should be even more spectacular. LTJG R.C. LUNDBERG, CEC, USNR and his crews are really racing against time on this job, since it is essential that they complete the "in the water" work before the start of the monsoon season. The river at Dong Ha has been known to rise over 10 feet in the space of just a few hours, swollen with the run off from heavy rains in the mountains. A flash flood like that now would seriously reduce our hopes for rapid and early completion of the project.

28 Aug 1969

The emotions of the officers and men this month have really been on a roller coaster. Early in the month, on about August 2, we learned that NMCB-62 had been selected as the "Best of Type" from among the other 12 Battalions of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. Along with this honor the Battalion is permitted to fly the Battle Efficiency "E" pennant for excellence in readiness and performance. More news of this singular honor will appear in the July issue of the SEABEACON, now in Okinawa at the printers. Naturally spirits were way up early in the month. The deployment half way mark had been reached, our hard work had been recognized by the "E", and our current work was progressing rapidly and smoothly.

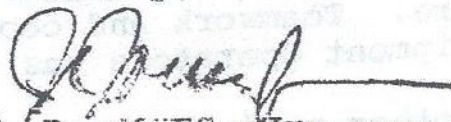
Then suddenly, hurricane Camille struck at our very homes and, as I'm sure you know, literally devastated much of the Gulf Coast area. For the 140 or so men of the Battalion with families in the Gulfport area there were many anxious moments waiting for word of the safety of loved ones. Fortunately, the families of the officers and men of the Battalion fared fairly well. Extensive property damage and loss was suffered by a few, and lesser damage was suffered by many more, but there was no serious injury or loss of life of 62's dependents. For this we are thankful.

News that reaches me from our homeport Regimental Commander indicates that the spirit of the SEABEES and SEABEE families in the Gulfport area never faltered. From the moment that disaster struck, there was a togetherness, a sharing of food, clothes and shelter, and a fine spirit of cooperation. Furthermore, the facilities of the Construction Battalion Center were thrown open to dependents and free food and shelter were readily available for those in need. I am also advised that the Navy Relief Society and the American Red Cross are doing a magnificent job in assisting our SEABEE families. This news has done much to cheer the men of the Battalion, and to make this time of crisis in their lives more bearable. To those of you who endured that terrible storm I extend my deepest sympathy over your losses, and pray that the future will bring you nothing but brighter days.

Well, SEABEE family, I have rambled on long enough. I will say one more word or two to thank the many of you who have written to me in the past two months to express appreciation for the Familygram. I wish I could acknowledge each of your letters personally, but time does not permit.

May God be with you all.

Sincerely,



J. P. JONES, Jr.

CDR, CEC, USN

Commanding Officer

USN MCB SIXTY-TWO

P.S. The May issue of the SEABEACON which I previously reported as lost in the mail has been found. It is now being printed and, though the news is a little old, will be mailed out soon along with the July issue.

MCB SIXTY-TWO FAMILYGRAM

27 September 1969
Camp Barnes
Dong Ha, RVN

Dear SEABEE Family,

Probably by now most of you will have heard that as a result of the President's decision to further reduce the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam, a number of SEABEES "working near the DMZ" will be going home. My mother wrote that they heard on a local radio station that NMCB SIXTY-TWO was included with those returning home. I'm sure that many of you have the same question that my parents had, namely, when will the return home take place. In the case of SIXTY-Two it doesn't really change much as far as our return is concerned. We were already scheduled to return after the end of an eight month deployment. Essentially, this remains unchanged. The actual dates of our return flights are still classified, but your SEABEE will know far enough in advance to let you know. Furthermore, for those of you who live in the Gulfport area, information on return flights will be published, when it becomes available, by the TWENTIETH Naval Construction Regiment Mount Out Control Center. I hope that I will be able to give you some more specific information when I write next month's Familygram.

Since I wrote last month, we have essentially completed the major upgrade program on National Route QL-9. Details and several stories regarding this project are contained in the August edition of the SEABEACON which will be mailed out in the very near future. ALFA Company has been assigned another two miles of secondary road which must be prepared for paving, and this is now underway. Remaining work on QL-9 is limited to minor repair and shoulder work. The shoulder work is of particular importance, though, to protect the road from damage by the heavy monsoon rains. Unless you have been in the tropics during a monsoon season, you would find it hard to believe the quantity of rain that can fall in a very short period. Last week we had one of those tropical monsoon rains in which over eight inches of rain fell in a single afternoon. The weather has since cleared, however, and we hope that the steady rains will delay for a little longer.

DELTA Company continues to make fine progress on the Dong Ha Bridge. They managed to get the last concrete pile cap placed just a day or so ahead of our first heavy rain. It is a good thing, too, because the river rose over six feet during the rain, and further placing of concrete would have been impossible. I mentioned last month that we were in a race with time, and it seems that we won, if only by a day or so. The remainder of the work cannot be hindered to any great degree by rain, and we now will have no real problem in finishing the bridge on time, and before we return home.

CHARLIE and BRAVO Companies are busily engaged in wrapping up the main area.

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