

# MCB SIXTY-TWO FAMILYGRAM

6 May 1970  
Camp Hoover  
Danang, RVN

Dear Seabee Family,

The last flight of the NMCB 62 airlift arrived at the Battalion's new home, Camp Hoover, Danang, Republic of Vietnam on Thursday the 23 of April. From reports I have, all hands made the flight in reasonable comfort. We have now been here for nearly two weeks and our construction effort is well underway.

The deployment already has posed many challenging problems for your Seabee, and in many ways this will be a more demanding deployment than any yet experienced by NMCB 62. It has certainly kept me busy and on the move, and your Seabee also is and will be fully occupied with a good variety of construction work.

One of our toughest jobs is the task of upgrading Route LTL-4, one of the secondary east-west roads in the Vietnamese highway system. The road, some 18 miles south of Camp Hoover, runs west from Route QL-1, the main north-south coastal highway, out toward the western mountains. The highway has not been used in recent months because of its poor condition and blown out bridges. There is no doubt that this is an important job. Freedom of movement on this road will permit the government of Vietnam to increase its presence in the area and will generally facilitate extension of GVN control of the area. The significance of the road takes on an added dimension when you consider how it will improve the farm to market commerce in this area of Quang Nam Province.

As I said, this is one of our toughest jobs. Unfortunately the road has in the past been a prime area for enemy mining, and in spite of thorough sweeps by U.S. Marine Engineers we have had some equipment losses due to mines. In the process two of our Seabees have been wounded, although fortunately not seriously. (Don't worry, if it had been your Seabee you would already have been notified.) The U.S. Marines have taken steps to improve our security, and I hope that there will be no further mining incidents.

The crew for the road upgrade project is living in a secure compound with U.S. and Vietnamese Army security. Their living conditions are good. I have directed that we run our own small messhall, and we have provided berthing huts just like those here in Camp Hoover. Mail for this crew comes to Camp Hoover, and is delivered to the crew on the day it is received. The project is under the direction of the Alfa Company Commander, LT R.W. Meeks, CFC, USN, ably assisted by Senior Chief Equipment Operator Jarvis O. Wood, an NMCB-62 veteran who worked on a similar project for us during the last deployment.

Another challenging job is underway by Charlie Company, construction of the Ban Nit dam. This project when completed will permit the local Vietnamese officials to effect more equitable and efficient distribution of available water resources, and will be of great benefit to the local farmer. Essentially this is a civic action type project for the benefit of the Vietnamese people. Work of this nature, really "building for peace", is particularly satisfying in this war torn country.

Charlie Company also carries the load for the majority of the other vertical work in the Danang area, and they are working on several other projects.

Delta Company, or more specifically, half of the company, has been sent down south some 400 miles into the Mekong Delta area, south and west of Saigon. LTjg T.A. Wells, CEC, USN and about 40 of his men are now located in Binh Thuy working on two projects for the U.S. Navy's "Brown-water forces." In the very near future, about 100 more men including the rest of Delta Company and a sizeable group from Alfa and Bravo Companies will be headed to a construction site near Binh Thuy to begin work on a small naval base for the Vietnamese Navy. This base, called an ACTOV Base (for "accelerated turnover to the Vietnamese") is part of our President's plan to Vietnamize the war. When it is completed and occupied by the VNN a portion of our U.S. Navy men in the Delta area will have been replaced by Vietnamese and will no longer be required.

The ACTOV Base detail will be headed up by LT C.J. Bruce, CEC, USN. His men will move to a brand new site. Initially, for a week or two, they will live in a tent camp until they can construct some temporary facilities, and concurrently they will begin work on the base. Facilities to be constructed include a riverside pier, offices, barracks, shop spaces, and complete utilities systems. It is a fine project, but one in which we face some real challenges in keeping them supplied with construction materials. We are currently loading the first of two big barge loads of material, tools, equipment and temporary camp facilities. On this detail we will again run our own messhall. Mail for men in this unit will be delivered to Binh Thuy and on to the site by helicopter. If your Seabee is on this detail he will provide you with the correct mailing address.

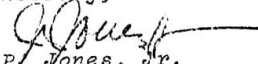
As you can see, the Battalion is already somewhat split up and the prospect is for even more men later on working on high priority projects in the Mekong Delta area. All of this keeps me and my staff really moving, and I find that I am spending nearly one third of my time down in the Delta. I will cover the construction work in as much detail as possible in future Family-Grams.

As I mentioned in my last Family-Gram, this personal letter from me to you is my way of keeping you posted on how Battalion life is going. You will hear from me on a monthly basis, and you will also receive once a month the Battalion newspaper, the Seabeacon. The May issue is now being prepared, and should reach you in mid-June. The delay is caused by a printing lag, since we must accomplish this by mail with government printing facilities on Okinawa.

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 please do not hesitate to write to me direct. 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.  
CDR, CEC, USN  
Commanding Officer  
USN MCB SIXTY-TWO

P.S. Please remember to write often to your Seabee. It does wonders for his morale to hear from home.



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# MCB SIXTY-TWO FAMILYGRAM

8 July 1970  
Camp Hoover  
Danang, RVN

Dear Seabee Family,

Another month has flown by for me, and seemingly all of a sudden it is time for me to write my last Family Gram as commanding officer of NMCB 62. This past month, like all those before, has been eventful, so before I say goodbye I will bring you up to date.

Our work down in the Mekong Delta (IV Corps Tactical Zone) on the ACTOV program is going exceptionally well. For those few of you who may be new to the battalion Seabee family, ACTOV stands for "accelerated turn over to the Vietnamese." Under this program we are tasked, along with other Seabee units, with building new Naval base complexes for the Navy of the Republic of Vietnam. As I mentioned in a previous Family Gram, this program is part of President Nixon's overall efforts to Vietnamize the war. When completed sometime next year, the majority of the U.S. Navy "brown water" operations will have been taken over by the Vietnamese Navy. At any rate our part in this program is going well. Detail Albany at Chau Doc, now with some 90 men, has completed a substantial portion of their project. We expect to complete the major part of the base, at least enough to permit its utilization by the Vietnamese, sometime in September.

A new detail, Detail Hollywood, under the direction of LTJG Don Keith, CEC, USN, moved this past month, about two weeks ago, to the site of a second ACTOV base at Tan Chau. LTJG Keith with about 60 men has essentially completed work on his temporary camp, and some work has begun on the permanent facilities.

I visited both of these details just a week ago and can report first hand that the men are working hard, and are in good spirits. At both sites the living conditions are excellent. We continue to operate mess halls at both sites, serving three hot meals each day. The men live in wood frame huts like those at our main camp in Danang, and in general have all the facilities enjoyed by the main body of the battalion. Even at these isolated locations mail service is good, and I believe that morale on both details is high.

On my most recent trip south I also visited all three of our Seabee Teams. These small teams of one officer and twelve men each are also located in the IV Corps Tactical Zone at the towns of My Tho, Lai Thieu and Thu Duc. Their primary work is on projects of a civic action nature, helping the people in the Republic to help themselves. They also conduct extensive training programs to raise the construction skill levels of the local people. All three of our teams underwent a thorough 5 month training program, as a team during our last homeport deployment, and among other things took a crash course in the Vietnamese language. I can assure you that they are putting their training to excellent use and are getting along well. A future issue of the Seabeacon will cover their activities and their individual base camps in some detail.

Back in the I Corps area around Danang we have also been busy. Alfa Company continues to work on the upgrade of LTL-4, and now has also picked up responsibility from a departing battalion for a substantial amount of work to complete the upgrading of the QL-1, the major north-south highway in all of Vietnam. Seabees have been working on this road for several years and it looks like we will have the satisfaction of completing the last of the sectors

which have been assigned for Seabee accomplishment. Our detail for finishing the work is under the direction of Chief Equipment Operator J.M. Jacobs, USN. Chief Jacobs, who also worked on a portion of route QL-1 during our Dong Ha deployment last year, has his detail located at LZ (landing zone) Baldy, some thirty miles south of Danang. This Marine base is well established and the men live in a small camp within the larger complex. Here also, we operate our own messhall. The work on QL-1 will continue for sometime.

I had hoped, in this my last Family Gram, to be able to report only progress and good news, but I am sad to say that this is not the case. On Friday the third of July we suffered our first death from enemy action. The incident occurred on LTL-4 and the death resulted when a U.S. Marine vehicle detonated a mine just adjacent to the point where our Seabee was standing. In another incident on the same day, two other Seabees were wounded when the vehicle in which they were riding struck a mine. (Don't worry, if your Seabee had been among those wounded you would have learned of it long ago).

On the following day the battalion chaplain led Memorial Services in memory of our deceased shipmate who died in the service of his country. I ask that you also pray for the wounded and for your own Seabee. In these trying times we all need the help of our God, and your prayers and moral support are a source of strength for us all.

One major new and unique project was undertaken this past month by the men of Charlie Company. As part of a large coordinated effort to resettle a rich agricultural area called Go Noi Island, a 450 foot bridge was required. The island, a large flat area of fields and rice paddies is surrounded by rivers. Until a few months ago this area was a VC stronghold, but it has now been pacified and the government of the Republic is reopening the area to the island natives who had fled their villages during the height of VC activity. As part of this project we were tasked with building the bridge. Work on the project was started on 20 June, and we expect to complete the structure by mid-July. Pictures of the project underway and completed will appear in future Seabeacons.

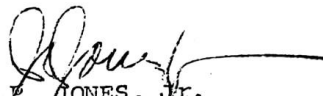
The last news item for the month concerns our forthcoming move from Camp Hoover to Camp Haskins. As another of our sister battalions departs from Vietnam we are relocating into the camp which they are vacating. The move will occur during the latter part of July. Camp Haskins, located right on the beach, is one of the oldest and finest Seabee camps in Vietnam. Living conditions for your Seabee will be as good as those he now enjoys, and recreation facilities, particularly the beach, are much finer than those now available. Once the move is completed I'm sure Commander Frank M. Newcomb, CEC, USN, my relief will brief you on life at Haskins.

And that really brings me full circle, for it was in Camp Haskins, in July 1968 that I took command of NMCB 62 and began to write these monthly letters to you, our Seabee Family. An awful lot has happened during these past two years. The battalion has had many successes, and a few tragic set backs. But your Seabee, whether he is an old hand or a new one, has proven time and time again that he is capable of magnificent performance under the most arduous conditions. He has consistently displayed courage and determination when in danger, and when on jobs that seemed impossible. I have been privileged, and it has been a great honor to serve as your Seabees' Commanding Officer. This tour of duty I will never forget.

To you the Seabee Family I express my utmost respect and gratitude. Your quiet acceptance of family separation, your unswerving support of your Seabee, and your patience and understanding for their problems and for mine have been invaluable. Without your support NMCB 62 would have had no success. I wish you and your Seabee fair winds and following seas and a joyous reunion at the close of this deployment.

May God be with you always.

Sincerely,

  
J.F. JONES, Jr.  
CDR, CEC, USN  
Commanding Officer

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