

U. S. NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION FIFTY-THREE

FLEET POST OFFICE

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 09501

MCB53:RKM:rha

28 April 1969

To the Parents and Wives of all MCB-53 Personnel:

Many weeks have elapsed since my last letter just prior to leaving for Vietnam. We have seen many changes and adjustments during these weeks and I am sorry for the slight delay in passing along information to you and in trying to keep you up-to-date on what the Battalion is doing. We have had a number of new arrivals report to MCB-53 since we have arrived "in-country" and to those who have just joined us we extend a hearty welcome.

As you are well aware, we are located in Vietnam just outside the northern coastal city of DaNang in what is referred to as the "I" or "Eye" Corps Tactical Zone. Our camp is immediately adjacent to the Bay of DaNang and we have a rather nice beachfront area. This is a most welcome advantage, enabling our men to spend some of their off-duty time swimming and even surfing. A large group of our Battalion is working away from our main camp at a place called Vinh Dai; involved in the upgrading of the road system and we also have a small detail working south of the main camp doing some bridge work.

Upon arrival in Vietnam we were assigned a variety of projects, many of which are of a priority nature, mainly for Army and Marine Corps units in our area. It has been tremendously encouraging to watch your men folk "turn-to" and continue to do the fine job for which MCB-53 is known. One of the large jobs just completed has been the Data Processing building for the Marine Force Logistics Command. This project involved primarily the men of Charlie and Delta Companies doing the interior work as well as the outside revetments. Bravo Company men installed a mammoth air conditioning system for the same project. Alfa Company personnel have carried on the sometime unglamorous jobs of batching concrete, doing fill work for the building sites and earth work around the approaches to the Lang-Co Bridge. Headquarters Company has the tedious task of keeping up on the paper work and providing support for the rest of the Battalion.

Our camp this year is probably one of the best Seabee Camps in Vietnam. There are only three Seabee Camps in-country that are on the beach, two here in DaNang, and one at Chu Lai. The beach is opened for swimming every day of the week and everyone gets a chance

ROBERT K. MILLER
CDR, CEC, USN
Commanding Officer

to cool off after work. Our working hours are long - we get up at 5:15 A.M. and we go to work at 6:15 A.M. We have a hot meal at noon, then go back to work until 5:30 P.M.; this is our schedule for six days of the week. On Sundays we "sleep in", have quarters at 7:30 A.M. and spend the morning engaged in training, weapons inspections, Church Services and more work. From noon Sunday, everyone except the duty section is off until Monday morning. We have had two Shows here in Camp Haskins, and at Vinh Dai. The shows are professionally done and provide a welcome break for all of us.

The Battalion is placing a great deal of emphasis on its Civic Action program while in Vietnam. Already we have been active in this field, carrying on several projects that MCB-22, the Battalion we relieved, had not quite completed. Among these is a Protestant Church in a nearby refugee village; a maternity clinic building for the village in our area of responsibility; and a vocational training school to train orphans and refugees of the local area in some trade. We feel that a large part of our task here is to gain the confidence of the Vietnamese people and to assist them through our skills and materials, to a better and easier life and to alleviate some of their problems. In carrying out this program we like to discourage "doing everything" for them, but rather make it a cooperative effort. For instance, in cases where we supply materials we ask them to provide the labor and do the actual work. The reaction and response to our desire to help the people help themselves has been most encouraging.

During the month of May I want to send to each of you a printed "Familygram" containing pictures of our camp, jobs and Civic Action projects so that you may have a better idea of what we write and speak about. Enclosed with this issue of the "Familygram" are several items of information which might be helpful to you.

Just a brief reminder that mail is often slow going and coming from Vietnam. Allow four or five days for mail to go one way. However, it is of supreme importance to your Seabee that he frequently receive letters from home. Write cheerful newsy letters. Do not write when you are angry. Tape recordings are also an excellent means of communication.

With best wishes from the men of MCB-53;

Sincerely,

Robert K Miller

ROBERT K. MILLER
CDR, CEC, USN
Commanding Officer

BULLETIN: TELEGRAMS AND MESSAGES TO VIETNAM

Recently there have been instances where relatives sent telegrams to personnel in Southeast Asia which were undelivered or delayed in being delivered. In order to alleviate this situation, here are a few rules to follow when sending telegrams to military personnel stationed in Southeast Asia.

1. If you must send an emergency telegram, you should contact your local Red Cross office.

2. If you live east of the Mississippi River and must send a telegram other than an emergency, it should be addressed to:

U.S. NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS STATION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20390

The text of the telegram must include the man's full name, service number, unit and number and zip code.

3. If you live west of the Mississippi River and must send a telegram other than emergency, it should be addressed to:

U.S. NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS STATION
ROUGH AND READY ISLAND
STOCKTON, CALIF. 95203

The text of the telegram must include the man's full name, service number, unit name and number, and zip code.

4. The correct address of all personnel assigned to MCB-53 is:

Name, Rate, Service Number
USN, MCB-53, Company _____
FPO New York, N.Y. 09501

Operation and information concerning, MARS Station (Military Affiliated Radio Service);

During MCB-53's deployment in Vietnam we will be operating a short wave radio station affiliated with Military Affiliated Radio Service. By means of this station, men of the Battalion will be able on occasion and when conditions permit, to contact MARS stations in the States, from which phone patches can be placed.

A phone patch is a technique by which messages transmitted over the air waves are relayed to the addressee over commercial telephone circuits. A two way conversation can take place. The only cost to an addressee is the toll charge from the Stateside MARS station to their residence, when long distance calls are involved.

Ideally a Seabee who lives in the Davisville or the Eastern area will be able to contact his family through the Davisville, R.I. station and little charge will result.

There are some limitations in using a MARS net. First of all, the calls originate from a War Zone, and news is transmitted to a War Zone. Calls can be monitored by anyone, including the enemy, so anything said must be considered fully before transmission. Of course, nothing can be said concerning military matters. Personal matters which are likely to cause great distress on the part of the parties cannot be permitted, since they not only effect morale, but can be used for propaganda purposes by the North Vietnamese. Emergency personal matters are best handled by telegrams (See enclosed bulletin) or by air mail.

There is also another limitation—that of system capacity. The station at MCB 53's camp will serve many other U.S. personnel as well as MCB 53. Calls will necessarily be limited in duration, and frequency will depend on schedules established between stations, atmospheric conditions, etc.

I am sure that many of you are already acquainted with this means of communication as you have used it many times, however, for those not familiar with the service the above might be of assistance.

WHAT TO DO:

IF THIS HAPPENS:

And you live near Davisville:

And you live elsewhere in U.S.

Your allotment check does not arrive when due, and allotment was filed prior to deployment.

Go to Disbursing Office, Bldg. 101, with your copy of allotment form 545.

Do not mail form 545, but send a letter containing the information U. S. Navy Finance Center, Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Your allotment check does not arrive when due, and allotment was filed after deployment began.

Write your husband asking him to check with MCB-53 Disbursing Office for form 545. If you are in serious financial difficulty, see Navy Relief.

You have a death, critical illness, or emergency in the immediate family.

Call Chaplain or Red Cross: 294-4511, Ext. 615

Contact your nearest local chapter of the Red Cross.

You have a death, critical illness, or emergency with friend or relative.

Write your son or husband to inform him. In most cases do not expect him to come home. If in doubt consult the nearest Red Cross Chapter.

You desire information concerning Medicare for dependents.

Call the Navy Hospital at Quonset Point, 294-4511, Ext. 3551

Contact the nearest Naval Base or Station or a Military Facility.

You need transportation to get yourself to a doctor, etc.

Call Navy Relief, 294-4511, Ext. 3364 or Red Cross, 294-4511, Ext. 615

Consult local Red Cross Chapter (not all of them provide this service) or your clergyman.

You need emergency ambulance service.

Call 294-4511, Ext. 3350 for Navy Ambulance, Members of North Kingstown Ambulance Association call Fire or Police.

Dial "0"

You have legal problems and want free advice.

294-4511, Est. 481

Call "Legal Aid Society".

You have legal problems and need a lawyer to represent you.

DE-1-4665 (Legal Aid Society)
GA-1-5740 (Lawyer Referral Service)

Call "Legal Aid Society" or find a lawyer in the yellow pages.

You have religious, marital or personal problems.

Call 294-3311, Ext 346 (Chaplain)

See the clergyman of your faith, or nearest military Chaplain.

You have a financial emergency.

Navy Relief, 294-4511, Ext 3364, Davisville Credit Union, 294-3311 Ext. 562

Contact nearest Naval Base or Station, and see Navy Relief or consult your local banker.

You do not hear from your son or husband after weeks, and weeks and weeks.

Write a short letter expressing your concern to his Company Commander:

Commander _____ Company
USN MCB FIFTY-THREE
FPO New York, N.Y. 09501

Remember, if anything happens to your man, you will be notified promptly by MCB FIFTY-THREE.

MAIL SERVICE

1. Most important for fast and accurate postal service, use a complete and correct mailing address.

2. Normal transit time for mail--

Average Time

Air Mail Letter
First Class Letter
Air Mail Parcel Post
4th Class Parcel Post
PAL
SAM

3 - 4 Days
6 - 7 Days
5 - 15 Days
25 - 45 Days
5 - 15 Days
5 - 15 Days

3. Best Means - (a) Air Mail is the best and fastest way to get your letters and packages to your Seabee. It is also the most expensive.

(b) PAL and SAM mail are your next fastest means of getting a package to Vietnam and it is much cheaper. Also, there is not much difference for time in transit.

(1) SAM Parcels (Space Available Mail)

Third and fourth class parcels not exceeding 5 pounds in weight and 60 inches in length and girth combined. Cost less than \$2.00.

(2) PAL Parcels (Parcel Air Lift)

You pay the regular 4th Class Parcel Post rate of postage. And with an additional fee of one dollar (\$1.00) your package is guaranteed parcel air lift service on a space available basis.

(3) Slowest and Cheapest

4th Class Parcel Post

4. PACKING - Another important item to remember is to pack all parcels well. They have a 10,000 mile trip ahead of them. Thin cardboard boxes do not make the trip. Use extra packing and stuffing. It may cost you a little extra, but it will arrive in good condition. Your Seabee enjoys your cookies--but doesn't enjoy crumbs.