

Double Deuce

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Desert Issue

deployed

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Double Deuce

NMCB-22's bi-weekly newsletter
Al Asad, Iraq

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NMCB-22 builds camps and international friendships at Haditha Dam

Story and photos by JO1 Leslie A. Shively

AL HADITHA, Iraq – Flag signings and presentation of a commemorative coin to the battalion earlier this month marked the closure of Naval Construction Battalion (NMCB) Twenty-Two's mission at Haditha Dam, where a band of eight Seabees accomplished the work of many more.

Haditha is Iraq's second-largest hydroelectric dam providing electricity for a third of the country. Falling into disrepair toward the end of Saddam Hussein's reign, the structure was functioning at only about 30 percent when U.S. forces arrived. By June 2004, the dam was returned to capacity after major rehabilitation.

NMCB-22 Seabees provided construction support for both



The NMCB-22 Seabees who worked at Haditha Dam. Missing is EO2 Robert McCutchen who ran communications in the COC.

the U.S. forces and the Iraqi Security Force or ISF who are defending the dam. Their mission included building and upgrading SWA (Southwest Asia) huts, camp maintenance and a variety of other projects.



EO3 Michael Martin, left consults with SW2 Jesus Cepeda, far right during an air conditioner installation in the ISF camp. ISF troops interested in learning about the equipment helped install it.

"I have an Iraqi flag that everybody we worked with signed," said Chief Construction Mechanic Johnny Massingill, officer in charge of the detachment, citing one comment that read: "Chief and his seven men did the work of 100. Thanks for all of your support."

"We double-decked every one of the SWA huts in the ISF camp," explained EO3 Michael Martin. "We built a SWA hut from scratch because the prefab one was not usable by the time it got here and it is three times the quality of any of those that are here."

Martin explained that one big challenge to

working in the desert climate of Iraq is lack of good, straight lumber needed for SWA huts. Building materials are convoyed long distances and handled more often between supplier and end user, so suffer more damage and deterioration than materials in the U.S.

Besides building, the Seabees were also involved in many other projects.

"We hauled dirt and gravel, completed electrical projects, installed generators – everything," said EO3 Matthew Stephens.

"You can say we're total Seabees; a complete package," said UT3 Robert Lopez, adding it was very challenging work because their tasking included learning about and working with others from another culture. "Working with the ISF

Khaki community assembles pews for MAG-26 Group Chaplain

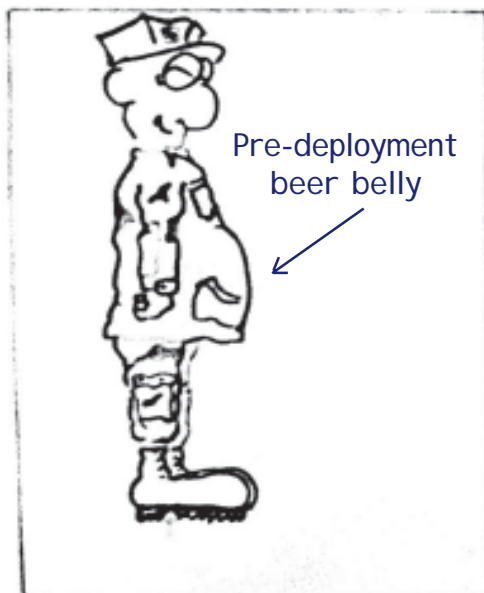


- Photos by UT1 Robert Semmelmann

John W. Seabee

- SW3 Christopher Green

Skipper's deployment 4 a.m.
fitness program belly



And for post deployment?

Seabees repair Al Asad's main water line

Story and photos by UT1(SCW) Robert Semmelmann

NMCB-22's Base Maintenance Shop received notification that the Al Asad Air Base's watermain was leaking on Thursday, December 8, from the Army 67th Area Support Group (ASG). I accompanied a representative from the 67th ASG to the site to assess the needed repair.

The repair required the water to be shut-off at the Water Treatment Plant in Baghdadi, Iraq, 10 miles away. The water was shut-off the next day by a representative of the ASG. It wasn't until the second day that the pressure in the pipe dissipated to allow for the repair.

While the crew waited for the pressure to dissipate, parts such as ductile iron pipe and dresser couplings were obtained from the Marines.

On Saturday myself, UT2 (SS) Samuel Ramon, and UT2 (SW) Joe Castaneda went to the repair site just inside the base



Ramon uses a hand-held concrete saw to cut into the water main to replace the damaged section.

perimeter wire to make the needed repair. It required the damaged portion of the existing pipe be cut-out using a hand held concrete saw, and a new section of pipe be secured into place by dresser couplings.



Ramon, Castaneda and Semmelmann.

KBR (Kellogg Brown & Root)'s horizontal construction crew provided the heavy equipment support for the excavation of the repair site.

Once the site was excavated, The water repair crew began work by identifying the locations on the pipe to

cut. While standing in two foot of water, Ramon made the necessary cuts to the damaged pipe with the assistance of Castaneda. Once the damaged section of pipe was removed, a proper measurement for the replacement section was taken.

The replacement pipe section was measured and cut and hoisted into place. With the pipe in place, the repair crew installed the couplings and secured the pipe to the original pipeline. With the damaged pipe now repaired, the trench was



The damaged section of pipe NMCB-22 replaced.

backfilled with gravel to the bottom of the pipe in order to support the weight of the pipe. The trench will be left open until the time the water line is repressurized and it is certain that there are no further leaks in the pipe.

This pipe supplies water to the entire base and without it the base has only a limited quantity of water that would run out quickly. Our crew's performance was outstanding in this critical mission.

Haditha Dam crew

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– they're totally different from us – some were very helpful," he explained.

"Our work will help the ISF have better living conditions and create basic communications – we're befriending them. It's vital and important, said Martin. "Working with them gives us a chance to learn a little bit about their language. I brought the chart they gave us and I showed it to one of the Iraqi's and he was showing me how to pronounce their language and I was showing him how to pronounce it in English."

"It's very important for our future," said Fadhil Abaz Mohammed, a translator with the ISF. "If this is a success I will go back to my civilian job. I leave my home because my country needs me."

During off duty hours the group found other odd jobs such as building a stage for the chaplain or extending the walls for the Post Exchange which forged relationships between each of the Seabees and helped make life better for others.

Massingill said the assignment was very satisfying and it was extremely tough for

him and his Seabees to leave. It was the personal relationships that bonded the team," agreed Massingill. "Everything we ever trained for over the years we got to apply during our mission," he said. "We supported several branches of the service while we were out there and we were working with people that needed things done. We met those needs and surpassed them."

Crossing paths in unlikely places: former principal and student reunite in Iraq

Story and photo by JO1 Leslie A. Shively

Guiding a Humvee through the Seabee compound at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, Utilitiesman 3rd Class Prisciliano Villanueva thought he saw a familiar face and brought his vehicle to a halt.

Suddenly, recognition lit his eyes.

Culinary Specialist 1st Class Juan Bravo, a reservist with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) Twenty-Two, was crossing in front, also ground-guiding a large truck.

“I remembered his face and I’m like, hey – you’re from Baytown, Texas, correct?” said Villanueva, who is currently with NMCB-3’s Material Liaison Office, describing their encounter.

There’s an hypothesis that everyone in the world is connected via a short chain of social acquaintances giving rise to the phrase “six degrees of separation,” but Villanueva and Bravo had a more direct connection.

In 1998 as a high school student, Villanueva moved from Oklahoma, where he lived with his mother, to Texas to be with his father. The move was a turning point in the teen’s life. He’d been having trouble in school and fighting with fellow students, so his father decided to send him to the School Community Guidance Center where Bravo was an assistant principal.

“When you have problems in a regular school there are alternative schools,” explained Bravo, adding that Villanueva, then known as Junior, came from a school with large ratio of students to teachers.

“If you bring them into a setting which is more controlled with 15 in the classroom max, it’s day and night. Most of them excel because they have more one-on-one. They’re not discipline problems, they just don’t educationally perform well in a big school.”

“If I had not gone to the school I might not have graduated,” agreed Villanueva.



CS1 Juan Bravo, left, shakes UT3 Class Prisciliano Villanueva’s hand. Villanueva recognized Bravo in the Seabee compound nearly eight years after being his student.

He graduated and then some. Several years later, Villanueva decided to join the Navy, remembering and then acting on advice from his ex-principal, although the two never kept in touch.

“I spoke to him before I graduated. I had gone to that school because of fighting and he gave me the idea to try boxing, which I’ve kept up for awhile now. He also asked me if the military was an option,” Villanueva said.

Choosing to join an active duty Seabee battalion, where he’s been for the last four years, Villanueva never dreamed he’d run into his former principal, who is also a Seabee. “It was unbelievable to find your principal in Iraq seven years later.”

“It was a good feeling – bumping into one of my former students out here in the middle of nowhere,” said Bravo who noted his own sense of accomplishment in his pupil who grew to be a successful adult.

“He’s got plans!” said Bravo. “I remembered his past indecisiveness as a teen and now as a young man he’s making decisions.”

Villanueva is married with a four-year old son. He said the decision to become a Seabee was based on a desire to spend more time with his family.

He also has convictions and believes the U.S. presence in Iraq is worthwhile and this is his second tour.

“We’re doing a good thing. I was here last year as a TMT (Tactical Movement Team) member, so we went everywhere and met a lot of Iraqi forces. This time I was in Fallujah and I met a lot of workers there too. You get the feeling from them that what you’re doing here is worth it and benefits them, so knowing that makes me feel good. It’s appreciated.”

S1 Shop: working behind the scenes for you

Story by YN2 Joy Fearn

The S1 Shop works quietly behind the scenes, but is a very important part of the Seabee organization. When most people think of Seabees, they think of the normal OF-13 rates that would be implied with construction force such as BU, CE, CM and the like.

But what happens behind the scenes? Who makes sure all those people get paid, have advancement exams and evaluations? That would be the S1 Shop.

The S1 Shop is traditionally made up of what is considered non OF-13 rates: YNs, LNs, PNs, and DK types. The S1 is usually a junior officer who also acts as the assistant to the XO of the battalion.

People sometimes wonder exactly what the S1 shop does in support of the OF-13 rates. They do a lot more behind the scenes than you see when you come to the office and ask for a copy of your latest LES.

The S1 shop supports the entire battalion by doing a multitude of projects. For instance, has anyone ever tried to keep up with the changes in the Navy? Massive amounts of research are done on a daily basis in the S1 Shop to determine how things are changing.

Are there new procedures on how to complete annual evals? Are there any new messages coming out and how do they impact us? Again the S1 Shop researches and answers the questions.

This information also needs to be put out to the members in a format that can be understood by all instead of the long-winded Navy messages. S1 personnel also research awarding of medals to ensure accuracy.

The S1 shop oversees the two most precious items to any sailor: pay and service records. The DK types handle all the money issues, including travel claims and various allowances. The YN and PN type personnel handle service record entries, correspondence, awards, messages, and mail.

All of these rates work together to give every sailor a high level of customer service and ensure their needs are met promptly. If they don't know the answer, they will find it.



YN2 Joy Fearn



NMCB-22 family grows by four feet!

Congratulations to IT2 Chen Wai Wong and his wife, Janine who have a new baby girl, Kaya Yi Jen Wong:



Congratulations to LTJG Leon Johnson and his wife Kristina who also have a new baby girl, Kristi Hope Johnson:





Thanksgiving On the Moon!

Story and photos by Chaplain William Stewart

I have had Thanksgiving in many places in this world ... Scotland, Japan, Australia and some others, but until this year, I never had the privilege of spending it on the moon! Well, maybe I'm exaggerating just a little bit, but one group of our Seabees in a remote location of Iraq's Al Anbar Province probably felt they were.

It was a great time though and our good friends the Marines really came through for us. They had hot turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn on the cob, apples, and even chocolate cheese cake brought out. What a sight for sore eyes and a great escape from the normal MREs (Meals, Ready to Eat)!

One of the greatest things that a person can experience during a deployment like this is to truly realize what really matters in life. Stripping away the materialism that so often traps many Americans is easy out here.

You learn to appreciate the most basic and important things of life, like your family and friends back home, a free country, a hot meal and a hot shower. Most Seabees are realizing that while we are out here, we are beginning to think differently.

Values, priorities, things we used to take for granted ... our views on all of these things are being redefined as we appreciate the simple, but most important things in life like never before.

Our prayer is that Thanksgiving will never again be just one day a year, but forever more a daily reflection as we are thankful to God and appreciate things more than ever.

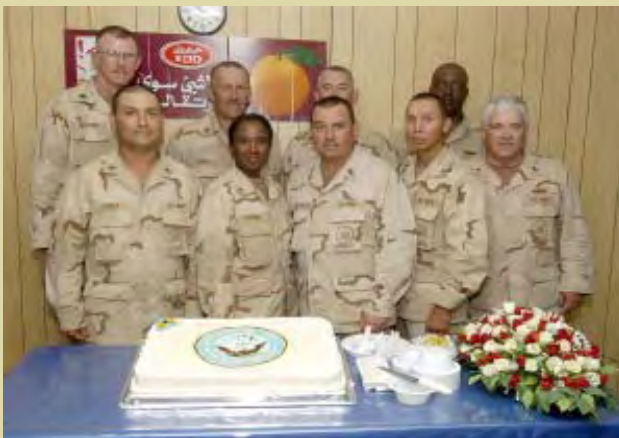


THE PRICE

For a few it was tradition
For others it was education or
travel
For some it was a way out of a
small town
—Or dead end job.
For several it was for God and
country
—Mom and apple pie
And for me
—I'm not quite sure.
I flew a flag at my house
—Long before September 11.
There was no war on
—When I took the oath.
I knew that freedom wasn't free
—and that someday
—someone would have to the
pay the price.
NOW
—that someone is **ME.**
I am an American
I am a Soldier
This one's on me.

*BU2 Michael Sanders
United States Navy
NMCB-22 Seabees*

...closeup on Camp Moreell...



- photos JO1 L.A. Shively, PH1 Lou Rosales, EA2 Jeffrey Boyd

ON POINT:

HADITHA DAM



photos by:
**MATHEW CM2
TATE**