

FEBRUARY 2025

EXTRA

BEE NEWS



Official Newsletter of the Navy Seabee Foundation



Snow Day at NCBC Gulfport!



Fort Sam Houston Cemetery memorial dedication

By Anthony Amesquita Jr
NSVA Island X-1 Texas Seabees, San Antonio

"In Honor of the Brave." Today, we remember the 7 fallen Seabee heroes who gave their lives in service and the countless others who have carried the torch of duty, honor, and sacrifice. This monument is more than just stone; it stands as a symbol of their unwavering spirit, their legacy of building hope in the face of adversity, and their sacrifice for our freedom. Placed by Seabees of past and present, this monument represents the "Can Do" legacy that unites us all. Together, we stand at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, not just to remember—but to honor, to preserve, and to build upon their legacy for generations to come. "We Build. We Fight. We Never Forget." Dedicated to: BU2 Jason B. Dwelley, EO3 Christopher M. Dickason, SW3 Ronald A. Ginther, BU2 Robert B. Jenkins, EO2 Trace W. Dossett, CM2 Scott R. McHugh, and BU2 Michael C. Anderson. Forever in our hearts.

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Hal Sperlich, Navy Seabee and Engineering Pioneer of the Mustang and Minivan, Dies at Age 95

Military.com | By [Blake Stilwell](#)

Whether you're a junior enlisted service member buying your first Mustang at 25% APR or you have a minivan to get your kids where they need to be, you can thank Hal Sperlich.

Harold K. "Hal" Sperlich is widely regarded as "the most influential auto executive you barely know," because he played such a critical role in developing some of the automotive industry's biggest winners. For some 40 years, he would help shape and reshape the American auto industry (and save one of its iconic brands) while creating some of the most memorable and best-selling models ever to come out of Detroit.

Sperlich died on Jan. 20, 2025, at the age of 95.

In 1960, Ford Motor Company's market research revealed the potential demand for an affordable but stylish car designed for the Boomer generation. Executives were wary of this kind of research; it was the same market that led to the disastrous and costly Edsel failure of the late 1950s.

It was a time when Americans wanted either the luxury Thunderbird or the affordable Falcon, and legendary executive Lee Iacocca was about to take another massive gamble on another midrange vehicle, one with a flair of distinguished style. To create what he called the "poor man's T-bird," Iacocca tapped Ford's most valuable resource: Sperlich, at the time the company's manager of special studies in product planning.

Sperlich was a Michigan native, a trained mechanical and industrial engineer who cut his teeth at Alcoa Aluminum and then deployed with the U.S. Navy Construction Battalions (better known as the "Seabees") in the Korean War. Sperlich landed a job at Ford in 1957 as a product planner.

When Iacocca got the green light from Henry Ford II to create a car that would target the coming-of-age youth market, Sperlich's team would cut up a Falcon and add the best parts of the Thunderbird and Lincoln Mark II to create what



became the most popular and (perhaps) iconic classic car of all time: the Ford Mustang.

"We found a way to make a comfortable car for a couple and two kids, with a good trunk," Sperlich recalled in a 2013 interview with MotorTrend. "The goal was an attractive, well-equipped, low-price family car to get us volume. Back then, if you wanted something nice, sporty, even luxurious, it had to be large, expensive, or both. There was no such thing as small-nice or small-sporty available to this new market."

The Mustang sold 400,000 units in its first year on the market in 1964 and set a record for the fastest-selling car in American automotive history to that date. Later, in 1976, Sperlich turned out the Fiesta, Ford's first front-wheel-drive compact vehicle.

But the project Sperlich really wanted to tackle was a low-cost, front-wheel-drive van that could fit in a garage, an idea that would eventually become the minivan. Sperlich pitched the idea aggressively, as did Iacocca, but Henry Ford wasn't buying it. Sperlich left Ford for Chrysler in 1977, and Iacocca joined him less than two years later.

in the 1970s, consumer demand and government regulation for more efficient cars hit Chrysler hard. The company also

had a reputation for poor reliability, which threatened to take the automaker down entirely

With the help of the U.S. government, Iacocca helped bring the company back to solvency while Sperlich developed his minivan concept.

"We had two oil crises in the '70s, and people were going nuts for fuel economy," Sperlich told MotorTrend. "So we said, let's do new front-drive compacts based on a stretched Omni/Horizon platform, but with good proportions, a good stance, and great fuel economy, to turn this company around."

Sperlich's first big success at Chrysler was the new platform he described, which became the K-car. It debuted in 1981 and was a total switch from many of the company's 1970s components. Most importantly, before the K-car, many Chrysler makes and models couldn't share parts, which was a major contributor to its previous financial losses. The K-car made Chrysler profitable once again, saving the company.

Meanwhile, Sperlich finished developing his minivan, and in 1984, the Dodge Caravan and Plymouth Voyager turned a previously nonexistent vehicle into a major sales category.

(Continued on next page)

Hal Sperlich, Navy Seabee and Engineering Pioneer of the Mustang and Minivan, Dies at Age 95

(Continued from previous page.)

The creator of the “ponycar” Mustang and minivan retired in 1989, then president of Chrysler Motors. He was inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame in 2009, remembered as a visionary, challenging today’s companies to innovate.

“Nobody is innovating, creating new segments,” Sperlich told MotorTrend. “Look at my history: Mustang, never done before. Fuel-efficient front-drive cars for America, never done. Minivans, never done. It was going outside of the rearview-mirror segments. A lot of new niches are possible. You could do a Mustang-type car again and have a car young people would love to have.”



Examples of his work include the Ford Mustang and Dodge Aries K, both making revolutionary impacts in the market.



NMCB 11 supports the christening of USS Harrisburg (LPD 30)

Parade the Colors:
Earlier this month, Lucky ELEVEN's honor guard supported the christening of USS Harrisburg (LPD 30) in Pascagoula.



NCB-14 completes FY25 Q1 AT/RTP at NCBC, Gulfport



The main focus of this quarter's training was to prepare NCB-14 Seabees for their upcoming FTX by performing CESE licensing on equipment, and personnel gear issue. Training included temporary camp construction class, a command post exercise, a field messing exercise, camp set up skills, and electrical power distribution safety. Great job 14!



ACB 1 Honors the Legacy of Heroism

ACB-1 had the honor of playing a vital role in preserving history as we placed a retired SH-60 Seahawk helicopter on its permanent pedestal outside Naval Air Station North Island (NASNI), Coronado, California. This iconic aircraft, now standing tall as a memorial to Medal of Honor recipient Clyde Everett Lassen, symbolizes the bravery, dedication, and sacrifices of those who have served in the skies and beyond.

With the precision and skill that define ACB-1, our crane operators, riggers, and support personnel worked seamlessly to ensure this delicate and complex operation was executed with the utmost care and precision. Special recognition goes to EO2 Cole, whose expertise and steady hands were critical in precisely placing the aircraft onto its mounting bolts with just 5mm of clearance.

This collaboration with the National Helicopter Association Historical Society, which generously funded this effort, exemplifies what can be accomplished when we come together to honor the past and inspire the future.

Thank you for your professionalism and hard work to all the sailors involved. Clyde Everett Lassen's legacy of heroism will now stand as a beacon for generations to come, thanks in no small part to your dedication and excellence.



ACB 1 Seabee wins the USO Worldwide DoD Madden Gaming Tournament

Join us in congratulating EO2 Walker on his incredible achievement! He took home first place in the USO Worldwide DoD Madden Gaming Tournament, earning two Super Bowl tickets, a brand-new TV, and, of course, a well-deserved Jimmy John's lunch. Great job representing the command and showcasing your skills, EO2 Walker!



NMCB 3 on deployment

In Okinawa, Japan, Seabees assigned to NMCB 3 construct a bunker during a training exercise to maintain their construction proficiency.

U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Austin Ingram.



Brookes Point, Philippines. Seabees, assigned to Detail Philippines, celebrate Christmas with local residents to foster host nation relations.



NMCB 3 on deployment

Brookes Point, Philippines. Seabees assigned to U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 3 install formwork for a concrete pad.
U.S. Navy photos by Builder Constructionman Anthony Zawatzki.



Detail Papua New Guinea

U.S. Navy photo by Builder Constructionman Samuel Lindsey.

Builder 3rd Class Darrin Carrillo carries construction masonry units to a new wooden pallet to be resorted.

Lt. Kevin Freedman moves a deteriorated construction masonry unit to a new wooden pallet to be resorted.



Construction Mechanic 2nd Class Zachary Jones and Construction Mechanic 2nd Class Bryan Castellon use an 11K forklift to move a pallet of construction masonry units to a more suitable location for storage.

Equipment Operator 3rd Class Elijah Greeson participates in medical training on how to treat a heat casualty in the field after a hard day of work.



Detail Chinhae South Korea



Seabees receive training on equipping a Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR) cargo truck to transport personnel.
U.S. Navy photos by Construction Electrician 3rd Class Esmeralda Becerra.

Detail Pohnpei



Builder 2nd Class Matthew Courter and Steelworker 2nd Class Kevin Flood present their project plan to Detail leadership.
U.S. Navy photo by Steelworker 2nd Class Kevin Flood.

Seabee camaraderie lives well past wearing the uniform



South Central PA

January 11th 2025 South Central PA Seabee Swarm held at Hoss's in Chambersburg, Pa.

L to R: Kenny Wilson, John Byrne, Ross Curtis, Marvin Peck, Larry Kunkle.

Prineville, LA

Great lunch on the 11th at Frank's in Prairieville, LA. Great to welcome a couple of new Seabees from NMCB 28 to our group.

L to R: UT1 James Hughes, CMC Todd Beall, YN3 James Dietz, CEC Pat Hodges and BU3 Ralph King.



Southwest ID

The Greater Southwest Idaho Seabee Swarm met today at the Garage where the food is good and the camaraderie is best. A Big Thank you for the Garage for their great food and Service. This establishment has been thoroughly beeped by 40, 18, 5, 7 & 3.



Southwest FL

It's hard to believe that we just had our 40th Seabees of Southwest FL swarm. We had 15 Seabees and two guests. As usual Fun was had by all. Our next Swarm will February 8th at 10 am at the I-Hop in Port Charlotte.

Front: Hank Williams, Pete Emmet, Dave Hayes, Frank Giordano. Back: Dave Smith, Bud Parker, Dave Levesque, Jim Arnold, Jay Smith, Butch Jones, Richard Myers Ron Carver, Steve Hart, Rich Kinard, Dan Perrine



Pacific Northwest, WA

The PNW Seabees met in Poulsbo, WA this month and mix it up by going to different locations each month, often resulting in some 'regulars' who travel to most locations and seeing localized Seabees at the events closest to them. And it's always a great time had by all!

L to R: Doug Heiner, Al Sims, Terry King, Tim Ralston, Bob & Betty Evans, Elynn & Vern Sturn, Paul Demoncada, Tim Willet (back), Andrea Lieber, Dave & Sussie Krones, and Todd & Lisa Bolden.



NMCB 133 homeport operations



Seabees, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133 (NMCB 133), build a small structure as part of a construction training exercise on Naval Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport, Mississippi. *U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Andrew Waters.*



Our Culinary Specialists from NMCB 133's Runnin' Roos lended a helping hand to the Naval Construction Battalion Center Gulfport galley today as they prepared a special meal in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. They worked in tandem to serve over 500 base personnel.



NMCB 133 homeport operations

NMCB 133's Runnin' Roos are conducting multiple exercises and projects simultaneously to maximize our training opportunities leading up to our next deployment. We are constructing a small building to train on multiple forms of vertical construction, building a fence used for vehicle yards and camp security, and preparing our airfield training pad for a strengthened concrete placement. Conducting all of these exercises allows us to stay ready to support the fleet and Navy Expeditionary Combat Command.



SAILOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

CONSTRUCTION ELECTRICIAN CONSTRUCTIONMAN
DYLAN TYE

CECN TYE IS NMCB 133'S BLUEJACKET OF THE YEAR FOR 2024. HE IS A NATIVE OF KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE AND HAS BEEN WITH NMCB 133 FOR JUST UNDER TWO YEARS. HE IS CURRENTLY WORKING AS THE ROMEO COMPANY COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISOR AS WELL AS WORKING ON CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS. HIS FAVORITE PART ABOUT HIS JOB IS GETTING TO WORK WITH A DIVERSE GROUP OF PEOPLE. HE WANTS TO SAY THANK YOU TO HIS MOTHER FOR ALWAYS PUSHING HIM TO BE HIS BEST SELF.



NAVFAC Pacific Awards NAVFAC Northwest Senior and Blue Jacket Sailors of the Year

*Courtesy Story
NAVFAC Northwest
Silverdale, WA*

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Northwest proudly announces that Commander, NAVFAC Pacific named two Sailors as the 2024 Sailors of the Year. These prestigious awards honor the exceptional service and leadership of Engineering Aid 1st Class (EA1) Cody Mercer and Builder 2nd Class (BU2) Miguel Alvaradoflower.

Senior Sailor of the Year – EA1 Cody Mercer, Public Works Department Kitsap

EA1 Mercer earned the Senior Sailor of the Year title for his exceptional leadership as the senior enlisted leader for NAVFAC Northwest. Among his notable accomplishments, Mercer managed 23 military programs, oversaw 14 Seabee Division projects, and contributed 560 person-days of construction, while saving \$92,000 in government contracting costs during fiscal year 2024.

He also designed and oversaw the construction of a 38-step, two-tier staircase with a 20-foot platform, addressing a significant safety hazard for pedestrian traffic. Concurrently, Mercer provided essential training on surveying, footer replacement, and slump testing to support the project, which serves a newly established SEAWOLF-class submarine command.

Under Mercer's hands-on deckplate leadership, three Navy Achievement Medals, 11 Letters of Appreciation, and NAVFAC Pacific's fiscal year 2023 Blue Jack of the Quarter award were awarded to his Sailors. He also developed and implemented a robust Sailor 360 program, which included training on advancement, safety, Navy programs, and personal growth—leading to a 43% advancement rate, improved safety reporting, and enhanced overall command readiness.

Blue Jacket Sailor of the Year – BU2 Miguel Alvaradoflower, Public Works Department Kitsap

BU2 Alvaradoflower was selected as the Blue Jacket Sailor of the Year for his exceptional leadership as a Seabee Division Project Crew Leader. Notably, under the direction of Mercer, Alvaradoflower led a team of five to successfully repair an elevated floor system for a work center which supports all submarines stationed at Naval Base Kitsap, Bangor.

Additionally, Alvaradoflower's dedication to physical fitness and mentorship contributed to a 96% pass rate in the command's physical fitness program, showcasing his commitment to the well-being and readiness of his fellow Sailors.

Beyond his professional duties, Alvaradoflower volunteered dozens of hours coaching a youth soccer team, mentoring young players in strategy and sportsmanship. His contributions extended to crafting a custom Lego table with storage cabinets for the Jackson Park Teen Development Center, boosting morale for children in base housing.

In December, Alvaradoflower advanced to the rank of second class petty officer, further cementing his reputation as a top-performing Sailor within the command.

"The achievements of EA1 Mercer and BU2 Alvaradoflower reflect their dedication to excellence and to upholding the Navy's core values," said Capt. Preston Taylor, NAVFAC Northwest commanding officer. "They both exemplify the very best of what it means to be a Navy leader."

Moreover, BU2 Ahrmaan Williams from NAVFAC Southwest was named Junior Sailor of the Year for his leadership in completing 12 infrastructure projects and advancing Sailor development through Sailor 360 training.

For BU2 Williams and BU2 Alvaradoflower, the NAVFAC Pacific Junior Sailor of the Year and the Blue Jacket Sailor of the Year are the highest recognitions they can achieve within their respective categories. EA1 Mercer will advance to compete for the NAVFAC Headquarters Sailor of the Year in spring 2025.

(Photos by Amanda Surmeier)



Rear Adm. Jeffrey Kilian, Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Pacific, presents the 2024 Senior Sailor of the Year award to Engineering Aid 1st Class Cody Mercer during an offsite meeting with NAVFAC Northwest on Jan. 10, 2025.



Rear Adm. Jeffrey Kilian, Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Pacific, presents the 2024 Blue Jacket Sailor of the Year award to Builder 2nd Class Miguel Alvaradoflower during an offsite meeting with NAVFAC Northwest on Jan. 10, 2025.

NCB 18 Seabees in Action: Supporting the Mission at Det Kitsap!

During drill weekend, Detachment Kitsap demonstrated the unmatched capability and teamwork of our Seabees by taking on a critical project that supported base operations, provided valuable hands-on training, and showcased what the Seabees are all about!

The Household Goods Department had been using a temporary space for years. When the USPS at Bangor, WA offered part of their facility for admin operations, NAVFAC faced a 1.5-year delay in scoping the project, with a quoted budget exceeding \$90,000. That's when our Seabees stepped up to make it happen.

Under the leadership of LCDR Slaby and the expertise of BU1 Austin—an industry professional with 15 years of experience in construction and tenant improvements—

our team scoped and executed the project during the drill period.

Scope of Work:

- ◆ *Removed a security door.*
- ◆ *Constructed new walls to separate Household Goods from USPS Receiving. This project wasn't just about construction; it was a unique opportunity to train and mentor our Seabees:*
- ◆ *EO3 Koto and BU2 Hetland with limited construction experience, quickly learned on the job.*
- ◆ *BU1 Doran applied his Builder skills alongside his expertise as a medical assistant, rising to the challenge after his recent promotion.*

◆ *BU1 Austin, Senior Chief Rimack, EO1 Samaduroff, BU1 Crombie, and BU1 Austin provided exceptional mentorship, ensuring both project success and skill development for junior personnel.*

The project phase completed during drill weekend, with painting scheduled for a follow-up. A special thank you to Ramon, the Region Postal Director for their outstanding support and hospitality, including treating the team to lunch on Sunday!

This project is a testament to the dedication, professionalism, and mission readiness of our Seabees. Wherever the Navy needs us, We Build, We Fight!



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01 February 1944: Seabees of Naval Construction Battalion 121 joined the Fourth Marine Division and landed on Roi and Namur, the northernmost islands of the Kwajalein atoll, while Army forces landed on its southern islands. A savage bombing and shelling all but destroyed both the enemy base and the defending force at Roi and Namur. Trees were uprooted and buildings destroyed. Clearing the debris and the dead was the first order of business, and the Seabees set to work. Members of Naval Construction Battalion 109 arrived a few days after the initial landings. The battalions ripped up and resurfaced Roi's triangle of three airstrips. Less than two weeks after the assault, a fighter squadron arrived to operate out of the base. On adjoining Namur, the Seabees built fuel tanks for an aviation supply depot and a pier.

01 February 1944: 138th NCB formed on Attu from CBMUs 547, 556, 576 and CBD 1018.

01 February 1955: United States Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (Special) was formed as part of the Construction Battalion U.S. Atlantic Fleet. Its mission was to build and support scientific bases in the Antarctic as part of Task Force Forty-three during Operation Deep Freeze I. Before the unit left the United States there were 166 men and 15 officers assigned to it. The commanding officer of the battalion was CDR Herbert W. Whitney, CEC, USNR.

01 February 1966: NMCB 40 was re-commissioned at Davisville, Rhode Island. Under the command of CDR Benjamin L. Saravia, CEC, USN, NMCB 40 was the first battalion reestablished in order to augment the Naval Construction Force for the Vietnam War.

01 February 1968: The NMCB 3 camp area received two rocket rounds during the lunch period. SN Richard L. Blevins was killed in action. One member of NMCB 8 was wounded in action. At the same time, NMCB 3's fourth flight to the continental U.S. was mortared while emplaning at the Phu Bai Airport.

02 February 2013: The 20th Seabee Readiness Group, located in Gulfport, Miss., was renamed Naval Construction Group 2.

04 February 2015: CE1 Brian Nielsen from NMCB 3 receives the Life Saving Medal award during an official awards ceremony of the Ventura County Fire Department at Simi Valley, Calif. When CE1 Nielson came across a wrecked truck, flames shooting across the hood and top, along a wet roadway near downtown Ventura, Calif. He took action, pulled an unconscious man from the inferno and saved his life.

06 February 1967: UTP2 James O. Miller was mortally wounded at the NMCB 8 detachment site at Tam Ky when an 82mm mortar round exploded about five feet outside his berthing hut. Miller died several hours later after being evacuated to a hospital in Chu Lai.

09 February 1943: The Acorn Assembly and Training Detachment was established at Port Hueneme, California. The chief functions of the unit were the organization, outfitting, and staging of Acorns. An Acorn was a "tailored" unit designed to carry out the rapid construction and subsequent operation of a landplane and seaplane advance base. Each Acorn had a construction battalion attached to it, as well as trained personnel to operate the control tower, field lighting, areological unit, transportation, medical, berthing, and messing facilities. A Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit also accompanied each Acorn to maintain the base after the initial construction was completed and the construction battalion had been withdrawn. During the Second World War there were Acorns sent to such places at Guadalcanal, Espiritu Santo, Green Island, Rendova, Treasury Island, and Majuro.

11 February 1974: UCT 1's permanent duty station changed from CBC Davisville, RI to Naval Amphibious Base (NAB) Little Creek, VA, effective 1 July 1974.

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13 February 1945: Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief of the United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, approved the retention of construction battalions as a permanent and integral part of the postwar Navy. When originally established in the Second World War, the Seabee organization was meant to be only a wartime expedient.

15 February 1974: UCT ONE and UCT TWO commissioned with Officer in Charge.

16 February 1942: The start of the Second World War sent naval survey teams up and down the Pacific coast looking for new locations for naval facilities. One team was looking for a site to build a Naval base to support Naval construction activities at advanced bases in the Pacific Ocean. The team came to Port Hueneme, California, recognized it as an ideal port and the only Pacific deep water port between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Word of the discovery was sent to Admiral Ben Moreell, Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, who was busily putting together the new construction battalions. Port Hueneme therefore was tentatively selected as the site for the advanced base depot on the Pacific coast. On February 16, 1942, Admiral Moreell sent his recommendations to the Chief of Naval Operations and it was speedily approved.

16 February 2012: Nineteen Seabees from NMCB 23 Seabees and five U.S Marines from High Speed Vessel (HSV) 2 Swift partnered with a 24 man Indonesian army, navy, and air force construction company to begin improvements on the National School and a dispensary in Caracol, Haiti. The program is a component of HSV-SPS 2012, a deployment of U.S. naval assets in the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility in the Caribbean, Central and South America.

17 February 1942: The first Seabee unit organized to build advanced base facilities overseas arrived at Bora Bora in the Society Islands to construct a fuel depot. These Seabees were called "the Bobcats" because the code name for Bora Bora was "Bobcat."

19 February 1945: The D-Day assault on Iwo Jima was made by the 5th Amphibious Corps, which included all of Naval Construction Battalion 133 and elements of Naval Construction Battalion 31. The 133rd Battalion operated on the Iwo Jima beaches during the initial stages of the assault, acting as a shore party for the U.S. Marines. While operating under heavy Japanese fire, the 133rd Battalion had the dubious honor of suffering more men killed or wounded in action than any other Seabee battalion in any previous or subsequent battle.

19 February 1966: The Navy began testing of the nuclear powered saltwater distillation plant at McMurdo Sound. The plant was installed and serviced by Seabees.

21 February 1966: CNO directs activation of CBC Gulfport, MS.

24 February 2008: Five Mobile Utilities Support Equipment (MUSE) technicians returned to Port Hueneme, California after making final adjustments to the prime power plant they installed at Camp Lemonier, Djibouti, Africa, to meet the camp's increasing energy demands. The plant, which began producing power the first week in February, is the largest expeditionary power plant MUSE installed since the Vietnam era.

27 February 1942: Advance Base Depot, Davisville, Rhode Island is established as a unit of the Naval Operating Base, Rhode Island. This was the first of a total of four advance base depots established during World War II. Camp Thomas, also at Davisville, was concurrently established this day.

28 February 1972: The Navy Seabee camp on the tiny atoll of Diego Garcia in the middle of the Indian Ocean was dedicated in memory of a young Seabee who lost his life while assisting in the construction of a U.S. Naval Communications facility. The Seabee site was named Camp Cummins in honor of Navy Utilities Third Class Charles Stuart Cummins. He died December 30, 1971, of burns suffered while working on a desalinization barge boiler on the atoll.

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Disclaimer: There is much more Seabee history each month than the two pages captured here and the goal is to share a little from each era.

The amazing story of a humble man, John Smith

Story by Dan Bower, President
"The Seabees of NMCB-74, All-Era"

NMCB-74 Veteran and member John Smith wins the World Championship in Power Breaking in 1998 while competing against many younger than he. He's been to many of our NMCB-74 reunions but most don't know that this humble man grew to be known worldwide in the circles of Tae Kwon Do, ultimately inducted into the World Wide Martial Arts Hall of Fame.



John was born in Millville, New Jersey and went to school in Millville, South Vineland and Vineland NJ. After graduating from Vineland High School, he attended four years of electrical trade school and became a journeyman electrician in 1964.

By 1965 the conflict in a place called Viet Nam was heating up and was in the news more and more often. Feeling that he was very likely to get drafted, he wanted to choose what branch of service he'd be in. While talking to the Navy recruiter, the recruiter told him that it might be possible with his background, to go into the Navy Seabees and actually only have a 2-1/2 year active duty and best of all, come right out of boot camp a much higher rank than the usual E-2 paygrade. The recruiter did some work on that while John was waiting for his appointments to go through all the

preliminaries such as the day-long physical and testing. Finally, the word came through that they have openings in the Seabees for him, and he joined up in July 1966.

He was sent to boot camp at Davisville, Rhode Island. He qualified for the higher rank after boot camp and sewed on a 2nd class "crow" as a CEW2: (Construction Electrician (Wire Man) 2nd class Petty Officer. In August he was given orders to report to Gulfport Mississippi to NMCB-133 and the 20th NCR. He was assigned to Base Special Services which included an Olympic-sized swimming pool, so he spent many off hours swimming that pool, getting in better shape. He was already well practiced in swimming because as a civilian he had experience in free diving and scuba.

However, the Navy needed him more in a Battalion being recommissioned at Gulfport officially named NMCB-74, so in September he was transferred to the new Battalion and the new Battalion was commissioned on Dec 3rd, 1966. The Navy needed John to get more advanced training so they sent him back to D-Ville for schools in motor rewinding and generator school. Upon finishing he was sent back to Gulfport and within a week was sent to N.C.O. school with the 2nd Marine Regiment at the huge Marine base in Camp Lejeune, NC.

By early Spring 1967 he was back at Gulfport going through the military training phases before the Battalion's 1st deployment to Viet Nam in July 1967. Upon landing at Danang Air Base, John was part of a detachment of 75 men taken by truck (called "cattle cars") to Monkey Mountain, serving with a group of Marines. Another Seabee Detachment was called "Detail Tango", which proved dangerous indeed, with 18 men receiving the Purple Heart. Some of those men on that detail belong to our organization today, including L.C.

"Sonny" Smith, who was one of those awarded a Purple Heart. John served for a few months on Monkey Mtn then was sent back to the Main Battalion as they continued to improve the Seabee base called Camp Haskins South, "Red Beach", where the Marines had landed in 1965.

On that deployment our Battalion was very busy establishing or improving Marine camps in I-Corps, (the northernmost quarter of South Viet Nam). Some of those places were projects building & improving ASP-2, Duc Pho, FLC, (right across Highway QL1 from Camp Haskins), also Hill 724, and LAAM. All in I-Corps and finally Project Beaver, the last job of the deployment.

In early February, 1968, NMCB-74's scheduled rotation back to the Continental U.S. (CONUS) was carried out right at the beginning of the Tet Offensive, which historians later wrote was the biggest overall battle of the war, from the Marines landing at Red Beach in 1965 to the official end on 29 March, 1973.

Upon his return John was sent home on leave and, because he didn't have enough time left in his enlistment to continue serving in a Battalion, was to report to NAS Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Arriving at the end of his leave, they told him they didn't have any billets open so they put him in charge of Special Services until his discharge on July 3rd 1968. He was then transferred to the Navy Reserve until completing his full enlistment in 1972.

While in the Navy he earned the following medals: National Defense, Viet Nam Service & Vietnam Campaign, Navy Expert Rifle and in addition, our Battalion won the Navy "E" for the "Battle Efficiency Competition Award".



(Continued on next page)

The amazing story of a humble man, John Smith *(cont.)*

(Continued from previous page)

Getting settled into civilian life was made easier with his marriage to his girlfriend Brenda in September 1968. They had two boys, Robert in 1970 and Matthew in 1972. John was very active in their upbringing and Brenda and the boys joined him in his next big adventure.



In March 1977 he was hired as an electrical superintendent in a large American construction company with a total employee count of 1800 skilled people. Flying to Tabuk, Saudi Arabia with his wife and sons, tasked with he and his crew maintaining electricals and maintenance of two powerhouses and all the electrical construction at the King Abdul Aziz Cantonment. On March 28th, 1978 he was promoted to Assistant Project Manager and on June 11th elevated to Project Manager until his time was up to come back to America in March 1979.

It was here in the sands of Saudi Arabia where he started what would become the biggest adventure of all. So here's the rest of John Smith's story.

During his employment in Saudi Arabia he cultivated looking just like the locals around him. He had to travel around in the country visiting job sites and knew it was safer that way.

One day he was transporting some of his crew to another jobsite when he saw over in another compound some people doing exercises. He felt he'd been getting soft and decided to stop on the way back and ask. They were finishing their session when he walked up to the leader, noticing that he was South Korean, which was not

uncommon in Saudi Arabia in those days. His name was Master Yeong Bae Kim, and previously during his younger days he was an advanced trainer of ROK Marines, honing their skills in Tae Kwon Do (T.D.K.).

Later Master Kim was on the security detail for the President of South Korea. By 1978 he was in Saudi Arabia working as a tradesman for a major company and staying in shape by teaching Tae Kwon Do to others who also wanted to stay in shape.

John started training in the same style of martial arts as Master Kim, and he was a tough instructor. Sometimes if John wasn't getting a move right, repeatedly, then Kim wouldn't "pull" a punch, in order to teach John to concentrate. John said,

"When he'd do that, it'd hurt!" As time went on he earned his 1st Dan (1st degree black belt) in October 1978. John noticed that one by one the other people in the original group were dropping out. John ended up being the only one still staying with Kim. Even though the training was tough, he was tightening up physically. He accepted Kim's rough style of instruction, and they began to become good friends.



It took many years of practice to rise in skills in that world, earning his 2nd Dan in 1988, 3rd Dan in 1990, then 4th then 5th--racking up more and more rankings and titles. John retired from his electrical trade in 1997 and then pursued the sport full time. In 2000 he was awarded Master of the Year "Tae Kwon Do" in the "World-Wide T.K.D. Association Hall of Fame" and "The World Karate Union Hall of Fame", with by then a 6th Dan ranking. He was named a "Professor of Martial Arts" in 2001 in the "Art of Ryoku Zen Yo Karati".

Year after year he continued to be awarded degrees and honors, finally earning 10th Dan (10th degree black belt) in July 2007. Brenda supported him through it all and his sons also got involved, which is tremendously important. Even though he retired from competition after 2007, he's known worldwide in that sport. Space here doesn't allow me to record the entire list of accomplishments, so I'll conclude with a few of the photos that he provided for this story. At first, he was hesitant with me, but I told him at our reunion at Biloxi in April 2023 that he must understand that his story should be written up for the CEC/Seabee Historical Foundation (Navy Seabee Foundation). After all none of us are getting any younger. So he agreed and provided an abridged historical outline and some photos.

On a personal level his dear wife Brenda passed away in 2012. He still goes on long trips, hunts and fishes in what we would consider exotic places. And he still stays in shape. He's now 81 and still rolls out of bed and does 50 pushups every morning to try to stave off the stiffness of age. Then he does special Tai Chi exercises for ½ hour, returning then to the mat for another 50 pushups. He told me that at one point he was looking at possible back surgery, and Grandmaster Tim Wolfe, the top man in the world in Panther Kung Fu, provided a video of these Tai Chi exercises—which are all in slow-motion. John says that he saw a big difference in one week, and at the end of a month he had no more pain, even now.

John, as I said at the beginning, practices kindness to others, and is especially quiet and humble in the years I've known him through the reunions. His "other life" was brought to my attention a few years ago by member Angelo Ranaudo, and later I asked John about this at our reunion in 2018.

Down through the years since my time in the 'Bees, I've gotten to know some genuinely tough, strong people occasionally, and in my experience, humility and a reluctance to say much about their own lives unless sincerely approached and asked, seems not

(Continued on next page)

The amazing story of a humble man, John Smith (cont.)

(Continued from previous page.)

uncommon in those people. So, if some young fellow comes up and harasses John, I imagine he'll put up with it with a smile for a while, but I would guess that before it's done the fellow will realize he has a tiger by the tail.

Postscript: I have followed John's outline he gave to the writer for this article, plus researched on the web and studied our Battalion's 1st RVN tour in the 1967-68 NMCB-74 cruise book. We are submitting this article to the CEC-Seabee Historical Foundation, John has proof-read it for accuracy. History should always be free of error and void of political narrative...which is the death of truth. ---Dan Bower, "In the Interest of History"



No... This Bengal tiger isn't "stuffed. Nor yawning.



Top and bottom:
Sparring with Master Yeong Bae Kim-1978



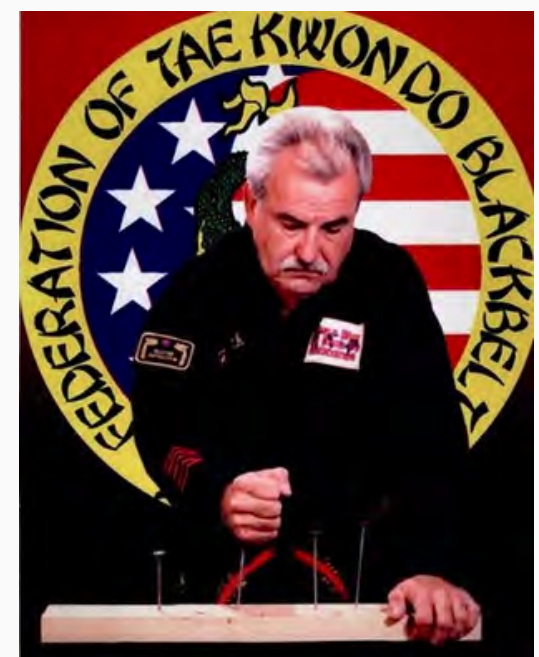
Top: World Wide Tae Kwon Do Hall of Fame induction with Grandmaster Pan Qing-fu, who made at least three movies:



Top: With T.K.D. Master "Super Stretch" Torres of "The Guardian Angels":

Bottom: Chong-Kwan-Jang-Nim (Grand Master) Smith

Bottom: Driving Harley-Davidson spokes into a 2X4 board. He still has the board!



Nonprofit in the Spotlight

In supporting Seabees, our “Non-Profit in the Spotlight” page highlights additional resources available for Bees.

It is our goal to share as much information as we can for nonprofit organizations that support military and their families. If you are part of a nonprofit or have experience with a nonprofit that you have found helpful, we would like to share it with our fellow Seabees, please send us an email at info@seabee.org.

About Blue Star Families

The families of our all-volunteer military make unprecedented sacrifices these days to serve our country. Blue Star Families was founded by military spouses in 2009 to empower these families to thrive as they serve. We're committed to strengthening military families by connecting them with their neighbors – individuals and organizations – to create vibrant communities of mutual support. We believe we're all stronger when we take care of one another.

Our groundbreaking research is raising the nation's awareness of the unique challenges of military family life. With the help of neighbors across the country, we are overcoming the isolation and alienation of frequent moves, deployments, and reduced support from the government. Our innovative programs are solving specific challenges for military families, including fighting economic insecurity with resources that foster spouse career development, creating family strength with rich family programming, and providing critical peer support for caregivers, whose numbers are only increasing.

With approximately 275,000 members in our network, including in chapters and communities all over the world, we touch more than 1.5 million military family members each year. Through our research and program partnerships, we ensure that wherever American military families go, they can always feel connected, supported and empowered to thrive – in every community, across the nation, and around the globe.

Our History

Blue Star Families helps transform America's understanding of military families, aiming to create a stronger foundation for the All-Volunteer Force.



Through groundbreaking research, modeling what right looks like, and mobilizing powerful coalitions of support, we are on a mission to change the way America supports its military.

When a diverse group of military spouses created Blue Star Families in 2009, military families were rarely a footnote in policy conversations. In 2024, two-thirds of Americans say military families play a crucial role in the mission readiness of the U.S. military. That's great news. We engage more than 1.5 million military family members every year through our free programs, and our superpower is strengthening military families by connecting them with their neighbors to create vibrant communities of mutual support.

Strength Through Community

Frequent moves and deployments make it challenging for military families to set down roots, make friends, find new employment and take care of their families. Blue Star Families is helping military families overcome these challenges and thrive in their communities as they serve.

We offer a wide variety of programs that enhance family life, help spouses find jobs, provide caregivers with essential peer support, and connect families with their civilian neighbors to build strong communities.

Each year, 1.5 million military family members around the world benefit from Blue Star Families' programs, and that number continues to grow as we expand our programs and, working with our community partners, innovate new ways to help.

PROGRAMS

- [Blue Star Books](#)
- [Blue Star Careers](#)
- [Blue Star Chapters](#)
- [Blue Star Kids](#)
- [Blue Star Museums](#)
- [Blue Star Neighborhood](#)
- [Blue Star Outdoors +](#)
- [Blue Star Outposts](#)
- [Blue Star Perks](#)
- [Blue Star Welcome Week](#)
- [Campaign for Inclusion](#)
- [Nourish the Service](#)
- [Peer to Peer Support +](#)
- [Spaces for Belonging](#)

GET INVOLVED

- [Ways to Give](#)
- [Volunteer](#)
- [Join a Local Chapter](#)
- [Join the Neighborhood](#)
- [Become an Outpost](#)
- [Join Do Your Part Coalition](#)
- [Adopt the 4+1 Commitment](#)
- [Become a Brand Partner](#)

For more information on how to support or receive these services, please visit:
<https://bluestarfam.org/>

REUNIONS & EVENTS

"If you never did, you should. These are fun and fun is good." -Dr. Seuss

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| FEBRUARY 2025 | | |
| 1 | ACB-1 Seabee Ball Saturday, February 20 - San Diego, CA | |
| MARCH 2025 | | |
| 1 | National Capitol Region Seabee Ball Saturday, March 1 - City Club of Washington | |
| | Hampton Roads Seabee Ball Saturday, March 1 - Virginia Beach, VA | |
| | 10th Annual Seabee Birthday All Military Ball Saturday, March 1 - The Ridges Resort, Hiawassee, GA | |
| | Midwest Seabee Ball Saturday, March 1 - Holiday Inn & Suites, Lake Elmo, MN | |
| | China Lake Seabee Ball Saturday, March 1 - Ridgecrest, CA | |
| 7 | NAVFAC Far East Seabee Ball Friday, March 7 - Tokyo, Japan | |
| | Hawaii Seabee Ball Friday, March 7 - Hale Koa, Honolulu, HI | |
| 8 | NSU State Dept. Seabee Ball Saturday, March 8 - Frankfurt, Germany | |
| 8 | NAVFAC Southeast Seabee Ball Saturday, March 8 - Jacksonville, FL | |
| | Camp Lejeune Seabee Ball Saturday, March 8 - Marston Pavilion | |
| 8 | Ventura County Seabee Ball Saturday, March 8 - Camarillo, CA | |
| | Pacific Northwest Seabee Ball Saturday, March 8 - Kitsap Conference Center | |
| 14 | San Diego Seabee Ball Friday, March 14 - Marriott Marquis San Diego Harbor | |
| 22 | Gulfport Seabee Ball Saturday, March 22 - IP Casino, Biloxi, MS | |
| APRIL 2025 | | |
| 23-27 | NSVA Island X-24 Reunion April 23-27 - West Knoxville TN | |
| 23-27 | NMCB 40 Reunion April 23-27 - Charleston, SC | |
| 30 | Gulf Coast Seabee Golf Tournament Wednesday, April 30 - Diamondhead, MS / SeabeeGolf.org | |
| MAY 2025 | | |
| 1-4 | NSVA Island X-1 All-Seabee Reunion Courtyard Gulfport Beachfront, Gulfport, MS | |
| 1-4 | NMCB-12 Reunion 1 May 1-4, 2025 - Gulfport, MS | |
| 9 | CECOS 80th Anniversary May 9, 2025 - Port Hueneme, CA | |
| 20-23 | MCB-12 Vietnam Reunion 1968-1969 May 20-23, 2025 - Bath, Maine | |
| JUNE 2025 | | |
| 9 | Washington DC Seabee Golf Tournament Monday, June 9 - Springfield, VA / SeabeeGolf.org | |
| AUGUST 2025 | | |
| 11 | San Diego Seabee Golf Tournament Monday, Aug 11 - Rancho Santa Fe, CA / SeabeeGolf.org | |
| 20-24 | NSVA National Convention August 20-24 - Orlando, Florida | |
| SEPTEMBER 2025 | | |
| 13 | Navy Seabee Foundation Seabee Celebration | |
| OCTOBER 2025 | | |
| 1-30 | 2025 OktoBEEfests www.OktoBEEfest.org | |
| 9 | Virginia Beach Seabee Golf Thursday, October 9 - Virginia Beach, VA SeabeeGolf.org | |
| | | Submit Your Event! Reach out to the Navy Seabee Foundation at info@seabee.org to add your event. |

APPLICATION OPEN NOW!

NAVY SEABEE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS
seabee.org

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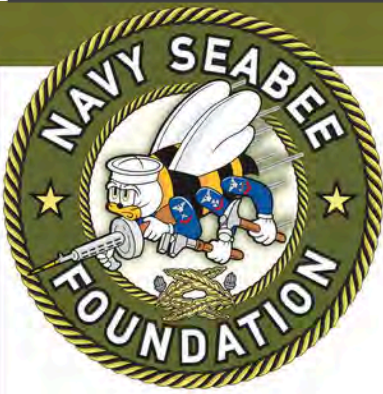


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