

When the Sun Sets

By PH2(SCW) Eric Powell

In homeport, Seabees work and play hard. They fall into formation for morning quarters bright and early, perhaps stopping by McDonalds for breakfast before attending vigorous training, or volunteering for out-in-town, community relation projects. Swinging a hammer all-day or operating a bulldozer in the humid climates of Gulfport, MS, is what Seabees are trained to do, it's what they love to do. However, when the sun goes down, they go home to their families or meet their buddies at the local pub.

If you're a Seabee assigned to the 'Fearless' battalion, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion SEVENTY-FOUR, (NMCB-74) life in the desert is poles apart then the conventional training schedule of homeport. The workload triples, the environment transformation is significantly different, and when the sun goes down, there are no local pubs or families to go home to. What do these Seabees do subsequent to working all day in the scorching, Iraqi sun?

The battalion has a diverse crowd. So, there are numerous relaxation techniques or hobbies these individuals utilize to help alleviate the pressures of the taxing day-to-day operations. The battalion has designated Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) representatives to figure out ideas and activities these Seabees can take part in to ease their minds of the hostile country they reside in. "We are determined to set up a mini movie theater in the company spaces here on camp. This will bring a portion of the outside world for these Seabees to enjoy", said NMCB-74's MWR officer LT Bradley Jones. "Also, we have plans on coordinating softball games, but with the industrious work load, it's difficult to find the time."

Having time to relish moments in the desert is a rare opportunity. Seabees work all day, seven days a week on deployment. However, it is imperative for someone to arrange time for himself or herself in order to maintain their stamina to fulfill their daily tasking. Some find a secluded area on camp to read a book by their favorite authors, while others play cards or dominos with fellow Seabees to keep their drive going. "I enjoy reading, I am on my tenth book this deployment," said Equipment Operator 3rd Class Nicodemus Duncan. "I also have a goal on getting my Seabee Combat Warfare Pin this deployment, so that alone takes up a lot of my free time." A variety of Seabees benefit from a good workout for stress relents. "A trip to the gym everyday in the evening keeps my mind rational. When I first arrived in camp, going to the gym at night was nerve racking because of the incoming hostile fire. It still bothers me, but, it's kind of like thunder and lightning, people just get use to it," said Postal Clerk 1st Class Terrance Watt.

Another project NMCB-74 is assisting tension relief during weekly meetings on stress management. "I thought it would be helpful to the troops to get together and talk about what's bothering them and find out different ways of dealing with it," said LT Marc Massie, NMCB-74's Chaplain. "Also, LT Jones has attended seminars in Bethesda, MA, on breathing techniques and several other stress management courses. His knowledge on the subject matter is an enormous service to this battalion."

With the vast assets of stress relievers this battalion offers, one assimilates to the harsh environment these Seabees endure day in and day out. Therefore, they continuously improve their 'Can Do' spirit so they can finish this successful deployment and then reunite with their family, friends and local pubs in Gulfport.