

# Seabees remembered



PH2 Chad McNeely photo

Members of the Navy regional ceremonial guard provide a 21-gun-salute during the dedication ceremony for the Seabee Memorial at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl March 17.

## The Seabees:

'We build, We fight, We remember'

## A local Sailor finds a way to honor Seabees at Punchbowl and be remembered forever

Articles in local Navy and civilian newspapers help raise funds

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Sailors strive for years to make the kind of impression that will leave a permanent mark on a duty station. One Seabee here has not only accomplished leaving a permanent mark on the island of Oahu, but he honored Seabees all over the world at the same time.

It all began last May, when Construction Electrician 1st Class (SCW) Clint Rainey thought it appropriate to take his parents to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl on Memorial Day.

At the end of the visit, his father, Kenneth Rainey, who had served in the Air Force asked, "If you are so proud of being a Seabee, why isn't there a stone honoring the Seabees here?"

"I didn't know," replied the 31-

year-old native of Summerville, Ga., who is attached to Construction Battalion Unit-413 Self-Help Center at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. "My Dad put me on the spot, but I said I would look into it."

Fueled by a strong sense of pride and initiative, Rainey set out to get the Seabees and Civil Engineer Corps who served in the Pacific Theater their own memorial stone at Punchbowl.

Rainey has been a Seabee for the past 13 years, working on construction projects on the mainland and in Guam, Palau, Spain, Germany and Bosnia.

"My own father challenged me to get something built," said Rainey. "I thought, how appropriate it would be to have built a memorial plaque honoring the Seabees."

"Punchbowl is the national cemetery of the Pacific, and the Seabees played an important role

beginning with Pearl Harbor. Anywhere in the Pacific during the last three wars — Japan, Korea and Vietnam — they were there," added Rainey.

First, Rainey contacted officials at Punchbowl Cemetery and the Veteran's Administration to request guidelines on establishing a memorial at the site. Administrators at Punchbowl provided the information and then referred him to Stan Nicholls, a retired World War II submariner who had placed a memorial stone a few months earlier in April of 1999 to recognize the Submarine Force. Nicholls provided information on fund-raising, establishing a memorial account and vendors who could produce the memorial.

Records show more than 38,000 names of those who are buried at the cemetery, including victims of World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Combat journalist Ernie Pyle, who was killed by a Japanese sniper during the Okinawa campaign, is buried at Punchbowl.

Among the honored dead are more than 13,000 killed in action during World War II, as well as 600 more from Korea and Vietnam, including 143 Seabees whose final resting place is at the National Cemetery.

The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific addition is a two-foot, sloping black granite memorial stone to fete both the Seabees as well as the Navy's civil engineer corps. Their new memorial, along the walk that leads to the Punchbowl Lookout, owes its existence to a volunteer group of about 100 Seabees and Seabee veterans, led by Rainey.

He began the drive right away, meeting with active-duty, and retired Seabees and civil engineer officers, members of the Seabee

Historical Foundation and groups in Port Hueneme, Calif., where the Pacific Fleet's Seabee headquarters is located.

Rainey knew time was short, due to a transfer to the State Department's Naval Support Unit in Washington scheduled for December. But, luckily, his orders were delayed just long enough to see the job completed and the black granite plaque inscribed with gold lettering unveiled on March 17, honoring the units responsible for building military infrastructure during war and peace.

"I was actually supposed to leave Hawai'i right after Christmas, but thankfully, my transfer was postponed," Rainey said. "It gave me and the other memorial committee members time to complete the job."

The Seabee Memorial committee includes other members such as Rainey's wife Patricia, whose father is a retired construction electrician.

"Although it has taken a lot of time and effort, I know how important it is to my husband," she said. "Being the wife and daughter of a Seabee, I am glad to see all Seabees honored and I am extremely proud of Clint for making it happen."

The Seabee Veterans of America (SVA), and many other Seabees and CEC officers throughout the U.S. made contributions and pledged their support to the memorial.

The purchase and placing of the memorial cost nearly \$5,000, and the goal was reached in just six months due to all of the support Rainey received.

In fact, Rainey received a large boost in fund raising, in part due to his unit's appeal to get the word of his endeavor out through Hawaii Navy News. A resulting article was published in the Jan. 26 HNN and generated interest from the Star Bulletin, which produced another article of its own.

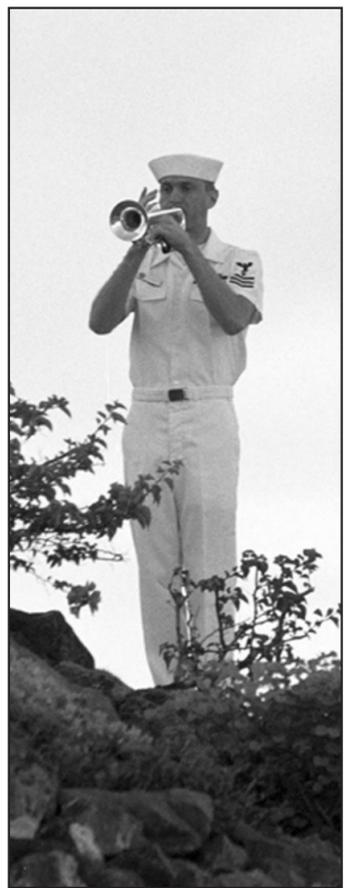
It came out on Friday and that following week, the response started kicking in," said Builder Senior Chief(SCW) Richard Montoya, Leading Chief Petty Officer at the CBU-413 Self Help Center. "We started hearing from more people and from there it went out to the [Star] Bulletin. At that point even more people were aware of what we were doing," he said.

"It all started with HNN, which generated interest from the Bulletin, and that really increased our fund driving overnight... it was like day and night, just a big difference," added Montoya.

"Clint came up with the idea, and the other Seabees rallied around him," said Ronald Yasuda, a member of the memorial committee and a retired Seabee whose father, Tadashi Yasuda, is buried at Punchbowl.

"Like any other Seabee project, it was a team effort," Rainey said.

The ceremony included a formal dedication, a 21-rifle salute and taps by a Navy firing detail. Capt. Wayne Shear Jr., Vice Commander, Third Naval Construction Brigade and



PH2 Chad McNeely photo

A lone bugler plays taps during the conclusion of the Seabee Memorial unveiling ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl March 17.

Commander, 30th Naval Construction Regiment, gave a keynote speech.

Also present at the dedication were retired Rear Adm. Spencer Smith, former commander, Pacific Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command. Smith, 86, also commanded naval construction battalions of the Pacific Fleet. Smith's Navy career began in 1941, in time for him to experience the Pearl Harbor attack. He was then the resident officer in charge of construction at Barbers Point Naval Air Station. He became a public works officer in various wartime capacities.

"The Seabees were really started here in the Pacific at the beginning of World War II," Smith recalled. "They are not only peacetime builders, but they are trained to build anything and to protect freedom," he said referring to the Seabees.

Established in 1941, the first naval construction troops were called "the Bobcats." After the Japanese attack, they helped to rebuild Pearl Harbor and constructed new bases, hospitals, highways, airstrips and piers on 300 islands throughout the Pacific during World War II. Members of the construction battalions — CBs — readily acquired the nickname Seabees.

There are now about 30 memorial stones lining the walkway leading to the cemetery's vista point, one being the Seabee memorial.



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Seabees unveil their memorial at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl March 17.