

Birthday Ball signifies 60 years for Seabees

JO2 Traci Feibel
Third Naval Construction Brigade

"All over the world at this time of the year, Seabees are joining together to celebrate their heritage, to tell their stories, and to remember the legends that make us great," began Rear Adm. Chuck Kubic, Commander, Third Naval Construction Brigade and Commander, Pacific Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command. "For Seabees spread across the globe, this year was full of stories of innovation, of ingenuity, of courage, and of success," he said, just before introducing the evening's guest speaker, retired Seabee, 82-year-old Donal J. Egelus at the 60th Seabee Birthday celebration.

The air thick with tradition, nearly 400 Seabees filled the ballroom of the Hickam Air Force Base Officers' Club to help celebrate the occasion. This year, the number of Reserve Seabees was higher than ever for attendance in the Oahu region, and the list also included Civil Engineer Corps officers and representatives from the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, celebrating their 135th and 160th anniversaries, respectively.

Some say the beginning of the Naval Construction Force happened right here in Hawaii, following the attack on Pearl Harbor and the insights of Adm. Ben Moreell's inspiration of a new kind of Sailor. Admiral Moreell is recognized as the "Father of the Seabees," and it was his vision of a fighting construction force in World War II that became the Seabees.

The Seabees were officially founded on March 5, 1942 and are known throughout the military for their capability to travel the seas as Sailors, build as constructionmen, and fight alongside the Marines.



JO2 Traci Feibel photo

Hula dancers from Germaine's Polynesian Luau surround a lieutenant from AROICC MCBH at the recent Seabee Birthday Ball celebration.

"Construction Battalions had the singular distinction of participating in every amphibious operation of the Pacific campaign, and served with every branch of the U.S. armed forces. Beginning at Bora Bora and Guadalcanal, they kept pace with the Army and the Marines and splashed ashore with the first occupation troops in Japan," explained Lt. Cdr. Ian Lange, Resident Officer in Charge of Construction (ROICC) Marine Corps Base Hawaii and the evening's mas-

ter of ceremonies.

Every contingency from World War II through the ongoing efforts of Operation Enduring Freedom, Seabees have performed feats of engineering and construction that have bordered on "magic." Often working under extremely primitive conditions, Seabees demonstrate resourcefulness and ingenuity by frequently conjuring materials and equipment seemingly out of thin air. As General of the Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur said, "The only problem with Seabees is I don't have enough of them." Marine Corps Maj. Gen. (Sel) James Mattis commanded the Seabees in Afghanistan while serving as Commander, Task Force 58 simply said Seabee accomplishments were "Herculean".

"Over the past 60 years, the Seabees have repeatedly demonstrated their skills as fighters and builders. From the islands of the Pacific and the jungles of Vietnam, to the sands of Saudi Arabia and the mountains of Afghanistan, they have built and fought for freedom. In peacetime, they have been goodwill ambassadors," said Lange.

Through all these conflicts, Seabees have served with distinction and character, celebrated year after year in anniversary gatherings like this one.

The night was completed with a traditional toast to fallen Seabees, with ceremonies highlighting the youngest and eldest Seabee, and with a night of fine dining among comrades.

The birthday ball brought remembrance of heritage to hundreds of Seabees who enjoyed their night together in Hawaii, where some say it all began.

As another year passed, the familiar motto of the Seabees still rings true, "The difficult we do at once. The impossible takes a bit longer. Can Do!"

USS Salvor dedicates 'Let's Roll Café,' features local art



JO2 Daniel J. Calderón photo

Dedicated to Todd Beamer, Ron Artis' image of an American eagle keeps watch over the "Let's Roll Café" aboard USS Salvor (ARS 52).

JO2 Daniel J. Calderón
Staff Writer

"Let's roll' is an outstanding motto, especially for a search and recovery vessel," said Lt. Cmdr J.C. Carter, commanding officer of USS Salvor (ARS 52), at Monday's dedication of the new mess decks aboard his ship.

Salvor is currently undergoing repairs and modifications. One of these modifications was to the crew's mess decks. Carter brought in local artist, Ron Artis, who had previously done paintings on the walls of the mess decks in 1997, to "touch up" his work.

Artis created a Hawaiian-themed mural on the ship's mess decks. Seascapes blend with visions of mountains across Hawaii, which in turn blend with surfers and idyllic beaches around the islands.

"I thought it was only fitting we have him back," said Carter. "Once he came in, I just let his artistic talent go to work. The crew would come by and make suggestions and items for him to add to the painting."

The name, "Let's Roll Café" was one of those

ideas. Carter said the crew came up with the name for the mess decks based on the last words of Todd Beamer, who died aboard American Airlines Flight 93. The plane was bound for Washington D.C and crashed in Pennsylvania, before it could reach its intended target. Artis was proud to be the artist for the project.

"My father is a survivor of the attack on the Pentagon," said Artis. "If the plane [Todd Beamer was on] had hit the White House, it would've been a blow to the soul of our democracy. I'm a military brat and grew up around the military so I'm glad I can use my talents this way."

Artis has done murals for many ships and Submarines in Pearl Harbor. Additionally, the 52-year-old artist has painted murals around Oahu.

"The whole objective for the painting is to boost morale of the crew and enhance their calm while their here," said Artis. "It's very personalized and I received a lot of input from the crew. Overall, I'm happy with the mural if the crew is happy."

"It's outstanding," said Electrician's Mate Seaman Apprentice Jovibson Conoy, who works in Salvor's Chief's mess. "I think the images symbolize 9-11 very well. The American eagle with the twin towers in its eye is my favorite."

Other Sailors enjoy the serenity evoked by Artis' Hawaiiana atmosphere in the various scenes.

"I've never seen anything like that before," said Mess Specialist Seaman Apprentice Kimberly Sims, who works in the "Let's Roll Café." "It makes it much more homey to work here. I think the ['Let's roll'] theme will inspire the Sailors because of what happened on 9-11."

Carter is pleased with the work Artis created on the mess decks and happy with the collaboration between Artis and the crew.

"I hope it stays there forever," he said. "We were able to reach the Todd Beamer Foundation. Today, we're flying a flag that we will mail off to them. We'll also send them a copy of the dedication we have on the mess decks so his family knows that he's not forgotten."



Ron Artis painted 'Lady Salvor' as part of his mural on the mess decks of USS Salvor (ARS 52) as an homage to the female Sailors serving aboard the salvage and rescue ship.

JO2 Daniel J. Calderón photo

New Pacific Fleet Deputy gives high marks on response to world events

U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

After six months on the job, the Pacific Fleet's deputy commander and chief of staff gives high marks to the fleet's response to recent world events.

Rear Adm. Robert F. Willard reported to Pacific Fleet headquarters after serving as Commander, Carrier Group Five, embarked on USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63).

He also praised the fleet's maintenance of its other key responsibilities.

"I'm truly proud of the fleet from top to bottom. I think everyone's ability to stay focused at a time like this has been really remarkable," Willard said.

Regarding Pacific Fleet taskings since the September 11 terrorist attacks, the admiral

said fleet forces have been able to turn to the crisis and provide a degree of flexibility that is unique to the Navy. Deployment of forces and to the Central Command.

Ensuring the world's waterways and trade routes are secure in such areas as the Straights of Malacca and the Indian Ocean and participation in the homeland defense of Hawaii and the West Coast are three notable examples.

"Everyone is at a higher OpTempo than they've been at before and they're meeting their mission requirements in a great manner. The response has been magnificent," he said.

While the nation's and the fleet's focus has been the war on terrorism, Willard said other standing programs or initiatives haven't rested.

Although there may have been a pause in some peacetime programs, improving the quality of service for Sailors, improving base infrastructures and improving ships, airplanes and submarines are all moving ahead.

"I think that's a tribute to Admiral Fargo (Adm. Thomas B. Fargo, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet) in the case of the Pacific Fleet. The senior leadership in the military, not just the Navy, did a nice job of transitioning into war while also realizing the need to keep our initiatives going," Willard said.

The admiral also addressed force protection, something that's taken on a new and critically important meaning since the USS Cole bombing and the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. He foresees a security force that will grow,

without a subsequent growth in overall manning. Importantly, he said ship and shore commands have to accept the fact that we have another fundamental warfare area; increased force protection responsibilities.

Another change on the horizon, Willard said, is the Navy's organization. With a new unified command promulgated from Washington D.C., staff changes at Pacific Fleet headquarters are looming.

"We've got an operational requirement with a war going on; we've got the requirement to do our peacetime course of business and we have an organizational change that is going to affect us. I think the staff's ability to weigh all those things and continue to do the work that they do is really remarkable and again, I'm really proud of them," he concluded.