

ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, M.C., 2ND DISTRICT
OF RHODE ISLAND AT THE FIFTEENTH SEABEE REUNION, NAVAL CON-
STRUCTION BATTALION CENTER, DAVISVILLE, RHODE ISLAND, FRIDAY,
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When my good friend, Captain Ace Husband, asked me
to drop down to Davisville and to share with you in this
historic occasion, I am sure he knew that I - an ex-member
of the Naval Affairs Committee - could offer but one answer -
"CAN DO!" So it cannot be a surprise to him that I have made
the most of this opportunity to join with you in this
momentous and happy reunion.

Now that I am here, it is a great privilege and a
heartwarming experience to look out over this assembly into
the faces of men who are dedicated to build - not to destroy.

Speaking a bit more light-heartedly, as a lawmaker,
I feel right at home heretoday, for no other group of men in
the Armed Forces comes so near being the next-of-kin to
Congressmen. Seabees have virtually nailed down the
reputation of being all things to all men who bear arms.

The Congressman is dedicated and pledged to be "all things

to all his constituents." No job, big or small, is supposed to be beyond the realm of his capabilities. And I don't mind telling you that there are times when, trying to measure up to this tall order in my day-to-day performance, I could use, very handily, at least one battalion of Seabees. Many is the time I have thought that the Seabee approach could no doubt make quick work of some of the knotty problems and legislation I find so often stacked on my desk by some of my colleagues, who don't always see eye-to-eye with me on all issues. Facing these ominous piles of legal hedgehogs and political bulldozers, I will confess I often pine for a firmer grip on the Seabee's philosophy which holds that the word "impossible" doesn't belong in our vocabulary.

When I was invited to address this distinguished gathering, it was suggested that I might like to say something about the "SEABEES TODAY." This seemed appropriate since the

Seabees in our ranks as of this hour are the ones we are depending on to carry on the Seabee traditions. History is already emblazoned with the glowing record of achievements of both the Seabees and the Civil Engineer Corps of the past. The people of America are looking to you gentlemen here on active duty to add to that record, and I am confident you will.

Let us have a quick look then at what our Seabees are doing.

As a former member of the Naval Affairs Committee while serving in the Congress, I have kept a close watch on the work of the Seabees, and I have continued to be impressed with what I have seen.

As a result of my observations, I must say that the missions being carried out by the Seabees stretch even the boldest imagination, especially when we consider the geography involved and the number of men employed. Looking at the figures and a map of the world, I cannot help marveling

that such a small group of Seabees has successfully undertaken so many assignments in so many widely-separated places. Slightly more than 12,000 of them are carrying the Seabee banner today from Adak to the Antarctic and from the Philippines to Africa. Surely Seabee skill is a potent item in our arsenal when it is possible for the Navy to spread twelve thousand of them around the Globe.

At the present time, there are nine Mobile Construction Battalions and two Amphibious Battalions, plus a sizeable number of Special Detachments, carrying on some pretty complex and difficult construction assignments. They span the Pacific from Hawaii to Japan. On the Atlantic side, the Seabees from Davisville are stationed from Newfoundland to Africa. These sturdy young Seabees, molded of the stuff we will look to in the future for our construction leaders, are at this moment doing a bang-up job on Military Construction sites that are regarded as key points in our global defenses.

This achievement alone would be well worth boasting about.

But there is another point that cannot be neglected in this connection.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee it is my job to look at figures - - especially those preceded by a dollar sign - - with a fishy eye. It is the duty of my colleagues and myself to make sure that every dollar we allocate for the important job of National Defense goes where it will do the utmost to safeguard this great Nation. I feel deeply my obligation in this respect to the people of this State and of the Nation. Yet I recognize that the Seabees and Civil Engineer Corps, like other components of our Armed Forces, must stand ready to provide an adequate National Defense despite limited appropriations, and my admiration for your peacetime accomplishments is heightened by the realization that you have achieved the completion of your scheduled projects within the financial restrictions of a minimum military budget.

The men who make up our Seabee ranks now are a bit younger than some of you visiting gentlemen were when you were

carving the Seabee niche in history during World War II. Your average age was then 37 - - their's is 21. But don't sell these young men short. They are sharp -- they learn quickly -- and they adapt themselves to the Navy life readily.

As you Wartime Veterans probably recall, you were put to work in the heat of battle before you had had time to shed the grease, grime, dried mortar or sawdust from your last civilian job in Keokuk, Sacramento, Syracuse or Atlanta. There were few Seabee jobs that weren't wound up in record time under **five**.

You established tradition for all time -- and it is this tradition the young Seabees are building on today. I get great satisfaction in knowing that today's Seabee is one of the few men in uniform who is able to prepare himself and the Navy for their role in battle, if it comes, and at the same time build a tangible asset, in the form of a structure or an installation that can bring the country a reasonable return, if war does not descend upon us.

It is indeed a comforting thought to know that a Seabee's labors serve the dictates of both war and peace.

In winding up my remarks here today, I would like to say a word about today's Seabee Reserve Program. As we all know, our active Seabee Units are operating at greatly reduced strength. Yet it is to this strong right arm of the reserve that we will have to look for assistance in a real emergency. The entire reserve is made up now of only 5,200 Civil Engineer Corps Officers and 17,000 Seabees. But they are a strong and devoted body of men. Some 1,000 of these officers and about 9,000 Seabees are sharing with the Navy much of their valuable time in the civilian pursuits while earning a living. We are all greatly indebted to these men -- many of whom are here now -- and they deserve all the support we can muster. As long as we can count on this splendid reserve organization, we need have no fear for the future of the Seabees. I can assure you that I shall do my share in keeping both the active and reserve Seabees on solid footing and to pave the way for their future at each opportunity.

To end these remarks on a fairly high plane, I believe it appropriate to adopt a reverent theme for a finish. It is a variation on a piece of Seabee Doggerel, some of you probably saw posted on a Pacific Island during World War II. The original went like this:

"When we reach the Isle of Japan

With our caps at a jaunty tilt,

We'll enter the City of Tokyo

On roads the Seabee built."

My favorite version of the same legendary jingle would be:

"When we reach the Gates of Paradise

With our caps at a jaunty tilt,

We'll enter the gates of Heaven

On a road the Seabees built."