



# UNITED STATES NAVY SEABEE MUSEUM

## The SeabeeGram

The official newsletter of the U.S. Navy Seabee Museum providing regular museum updates and sharing historical information about the Seabees and the Civil Engineer Corps.

[Visit our Website](#)

### Museum News

The museum is open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 4pm

To help ensure physical distancing and a safe, comfortable experience, the number of visitors in the museum is limited and visitors are asked to follow these guidelines:

- As directed by the Department of Defense, all visitors to the museum two (2) years of age or older are required to wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status.
- Please do not enter the museum if you feel sick or have a temperature over 100 degrees.
- Exhibits requires one-way foot traffic flow.
- The STEM Bee Fun Zone is temporarily closed.
- The Seabee Museum Archive Reading Room is open to researchers Monday through Friday from 9am to 4pm (closed from 12pm-1pm for lunch). Reading Room access is by appointment only; [make an appointment](#)
- Maximum museum capacity is 150 visitors.
- Official Navy Events and Ceremonies for groups of 125 or less; [make a reservation](#).
- In-person tours available for groups of 10 or less; [make a reservation](#).

For the most updated visitor information, follow the museum on [Facebook](#) or visit the [museum's website](#).

[Upcoming Family Events:](#)



UNITED STATES NAVY  
**SEABEE  
MUSEUM**

THE UNITED STATES NAVY  
SEABEE MUSEUM PRESENTS

## JUNIOR SEABEE Second Saturday Program

The United States Navy Seabee Museum is proud to host a program designed for children ages 5-12 called Junior Seabee: Second Saturday Program. Together, we will explore the seven rates of the Navy Seabees with different interactive projects and Seabee guests each month.

EVERY MONTH @ 1:00 PM

Register at [SeabeeMuseumVisitor@navy.mil](mailto:SeabeeMuseumVisitor@navy.mil) or call us at 805-982-6180

3201 N. VENTURA ROAD, BUILDING 100,  
PORT HUENEME, CA 93043

### SEPTEMBER 11, 2021

Kids will learn about circuits with a **Construction Electrician** and create a Sea"BEE" that lights up.

### OCTOBER 9, 2021

Become an **Equipment Operator**! Join us for a "Big Rig" day at the museum. See and touch some of the trucks Seabees use.

### NOVEMBER 13, 2021

"Weld" with chocolate and learn welding techniques from **Steelworkers**.

### DECEMBER 11, 2021

Challenge your **Utiliesmen** skills by building a gravity-powered water pipeline.

### JANUARY 8, 2022

Learn hydraulic engineering with a **Construction Mechanic**. Build a hydraulic lift.

### FEBRUARY 12, 2022

Create a lasting keepsake and learn how **Builders** use concrete for construction projects.

### March 12, 2022

Join us for a scavenger hunt through the museum as we explore compasses and maps with an **Engineering Aide**.



Engineering Magic

YOU'RE INVITED TO:

# STORYTIME WITH A SEABEE

Join us at the U.S. Navy Seabee Museum for a book reading and craft. Books will be read by a Navy Seabee! Every week beginning August 5, 2021.



Perfect for Pre-K - 3rd Graders.

Every Thursday @ 10:30 A.M.

3201 N Ventura Rd. Port Hueneme, CA 93043  
(805) 982-5165

## Director's Welcome

2022 looks to be an exciting year for the USNSM as we commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Seabees. For 80 years, the Seabees have repeatedly demonstrated their skills as fighters and builders and while doing so they have built and fought for freedom both in peace and in war time. The men and women of the Seabees have been engaged globally in support of every combatant command worldwide constructing bases, building airfields, roads, bridges and other support facilities, as well as below the world's oceans and waterways conducting underwater construction. Additionally, 2022 marks the 155th Anniversary of the Civil Engineer Corps (CEC) and the 180th Anniversary of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC).

The museum will be offering a variety of education programs for both adults and children as part of the Seabee 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Please follow the museum on [Facebook](#) for the most up to date calendar of events.

Although much of Seabee history will focus on World War II and 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 2022 is also anniversary year for other iconic projects. For example, this edition of the newsletter commemorates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Seabees construction of a hospital barge in Lake Titicaca, Bolivia. The Seabees Titicaca experience serves as great example of how Seabees supported American foreign policy through military civic action efforts during the Cold War. Although very different in scope and purpose than the island hopping campaigns of the Second World War, the Seabees Titicaca experience serves as great example of how Seabees supported American foreign policy through military civic action efforts during the Cold War.

Happy history hunting,

Lara Godbille, Ph.D.  
Director, U.S. Navy Seabee Museum  
Naval History and Heritage Command

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### Project Titicaca: Humanitarian Action Two and a Half Miles Above Sea Level

In 1972, the Navy called the Seabees into action to assist Bolivian civilians living in remote areas around Lake Titicaca, 2½ miles above sea level, in the Andes. In January 1972, the Bolivian Government requested assistance from the US to build a hospital barge on Lake Titicaca to serve the neglected rural citizens living in the mountains and villages. The US Navy and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) worked with the Bolivian Navy to bring the project to fruition and assist rural Bolivian citizen in desperate need of medical services.





## Project Titicaca

Part of the Bolivian Navy's mission is to promote socio-economic development through military civic action. To meet this mission, Dr. Luis Kushner, director of medicine for the Bolivian Navy, developed the idea to create a hospital vessel on Lake Titicaca to visit rural villages and help citizens desperately needing medical and dental treatment. Project Titicaca provided medical services to over 200K Aymaran people living in inaccessible villages in the Altipano region. The Bolivian Navy, with the assistance of the Bolivian Ministry of Public Health, sponsored the project with the support of the US Navy and USAID.



Aymaran village on Lake Titicaca, 1972.

The US Navy used personnel, expertise, and surplus materials to assist the Bolivians in achieving their goal. Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) designed the hospital barge using an AMMI pontoon system and a prefabricated building, and order a Seabee Team be formed to construct the barge in Bolivia. Surplus hospital supplies and equipment from hospital closures and modernization were located and made available for the hospital barge project.

In March 1972, the Commanding Officer of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Seventy-four (NMCB-74) received orders to establish and deploy Seabee Team 7412 to Puerto Chaguaya, Bolivia to construct the hospital barge. This included erecting a prefabricated building and installing electrical power with generators, potable water and fuel storage; berthing and medical treatment spaces; and propulsion and anchor system.



Matting and launching ramp rails, Puerto Chaguaya, June 1972



Placing base for AMMI pontoon onto ramp, June 1972

The US Navy did not accomplish this assistance effort alone. They collaborated with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) who has the mission to help rural citizens in underdeveloped and emerging nations with humanitarian aid and public health assistance. USAID Bolivia Mission took part in the project by procuring construction materials and supplies.

### **Barge Construction**

Seabee Team 7412, consisting of nineteen members, arrived at La Paz, Bolivia, 2 June 1972, to finalize preparations before traveling 100 miles northwest to the construction site near the small mining town of Puerto Chaguaya on 4 June. A tent camp, which consisted of three “strong back” tents were set up and the matting foundation for the launching ramp laid. From 6-10 June the timber and steel pipe launch ramp was constructed.



AMMI Pontoon Repair

Work began on 11 June to build the 90 ft. by 28 ft. AMMI pontoon barge. Pontoons damaged in transit required considerable repairs before assembly could begin. On 11 July, the pontoon was completed and a D-6 dozer and front-end loader pulled the barge down the ramp and into the water. The Seabees built a prefabricated Lewis building on the barge to serve as the dispensary. Powered by two diesel outboard engines, the barge contained all the basic hospital and dental facilities of a small hospital.

One of the more rewarding aspects of the deployment was the contact the team had with 15 Bolivian sailors who worked part-time as construction trainees and another 15 who served as port and camp security. From the day the Seabees arrived at Chaguaya, the sailors and Seabees hit it off, and the sailors seemed fascinated by the Seabee's ability to build anything with their strange assortment of tools and equipment. The team provided vitally needed training in welding, diesel engine mechanics, and general construction skills, while the Seabees received valuable peacetime training in remote-area construction.





Seabee Team 7412 members constructing prefabricated building on AMMI pontoon, 1972.

The Lake Titicaca surface elevation is 12,507 ft. (3,812 m) making it the highest navigable lake for commercial craft. The elevation caused minor medical issues among the team including altitude sickness, waking up feeling near suffocation, nightmares, and difficulty concentrating due to low oxygen levels. Others had severe abdominal issues and severe bacterial infections even if it was a minor scratch when not treated immediately. This prohibited the corpsman from leaving the job site and performing normal deployment MEDCAPS services.

The Seabees completed the hospital barge on 6 September 1972 and turned it over to the Bolivian Navy after sea trials and training. On 15 September, the Bolivian Navy took the barge, christened the JULIAN APAZA after an early Aymaran leader, from Puerto Chaguaya to Copacabana where the final turnover ceremony was held.



Seabees performing sea trials and providing training for Bolivian Navy personnel, September 1972

Project Titicaca displayed the Seabee's abilities to assist emerging nations wishing to improve the socio-economic conditions for broad segments of their citizens. The US Navy's assistance to the Bolivian Navy in Project Titicaca carried special significance. The use of Navy resources to advance humanitarian causes in direct support of US foreign policy objectives was an embodiment of the post-Vietnam "swords to plowshares" concept. The interagency approach with USAID, augmented with assets donated by the private sector, provided a valuable example for future programs and projects that worked toward a common national objective.



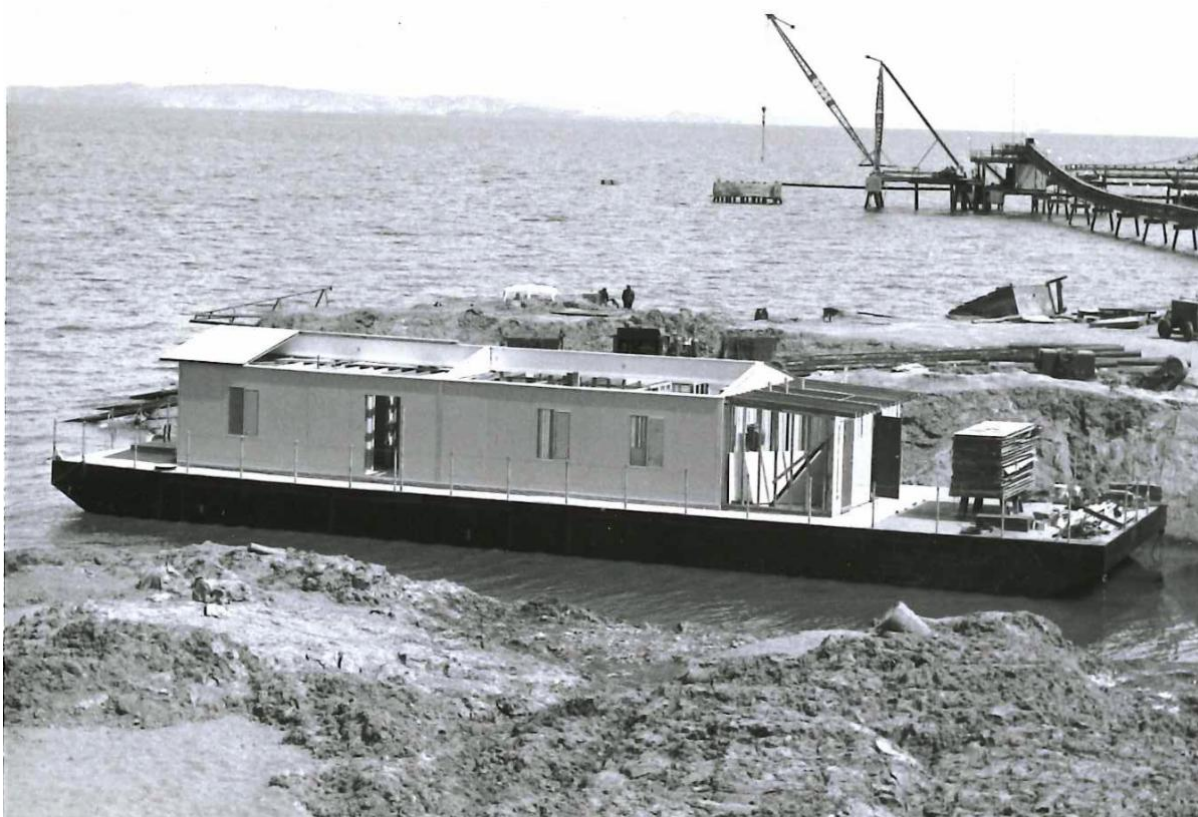




Hospital barge under construction, 1972







Completed hospital barge, 1972

## From the Collection

Eighty years ago this month the Navy established the first Seabee battalion. The First Naval Construction Battalion, later redesignated as the 1st Construction Battalion Detachment due to its small size, deployed from the United States and left Davisville on 17 January 1942. The men of this battalion called themselves “Bobcats” after the code name BOBCAT, given to the island of Bora Bora where they arrived one month later. Their mission was to construct a fueling station that would service the ships and planes defending sea lanes to Australia.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the accomplishments of the first Seabees.



## Seabee Corner

Last issue we asked: What is your proudest Seabee accomplishment:

“My proudest Seabee accomplishment was drilling wells in Kenya. We brought water to people who used to have to walk 20 miles each way to find it. We have changed their lives for the better.” – Abe N.

“The best thing I ever did as a Seabee building an orphanage in Vietnam. Later that year we were able to deliver toys and treats to the kids at Christmas.” - Dennis V.

The question for this issue is:

**Where did you attend your most memorable Seabee Ball and what made it so noteworthy?**

Tell us in 50 words or less.

Representative responses will be published in the March issue. Please submit your submissions to [SeabeeMuseum@navy.mil](mailto:SeabeeMuseum@navy.mil) no later than Friday, February 25th.

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## Connecting on Social Media

While the museum is closed, staff are increasing education activities and offerings on social media. Follow the museum on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for On This Day in Seabee History, interactive activities, insights into museum operations, and other fun information!



[Facebook](#)



[Instagram](#)



[Twitter](#)



[YouTube](#)



[WordPress](#)



[Website](#)

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## Seabee Historical Foundation

The SeabeeGram is published with support of the Seabee Historical Foundation (SHF). The SHF is the non-profit charitable partner of the U.S. Navy Seabee Museum chartered to support the museum and its programs. For more information about the SHF, visit their website at [www.seabeehf.org](http://www.seabeehf.org).



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## Contact Museum Staff

**Museum Staff is *always* available to assist you with Seabee-related historical questions or museum operations questions.**

General museum operations questions contact: [NHHC\\_USNSMvisit@us.navy.mil](mailto:NHHC_USNSMvisit@us.navy.mil)

Historical/reference questions contact: [NHHC\\_USNSMarchive@us.navy.mil](mailto:NHHC_USNSMarchive@us.navy.mil)

Information about donating historical material contact: [NHHC\\_USNSMcollections@us.navy.mil](mailto:NHHC_USNSMcollections@us.navy.mil)

Or visit the museum's website at [www.seabeehistory.com](http://www.seabeehistory.com)