President's Message
Bill Littler, CSI
This past year I had the pleasure of reading the book "Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption." It is the life story of Louis Zamparini. This man was a true American hero. He was the recipient of numerous awards including the Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, Air Medal, Prisoner of War Medal, and Presidential Unit Citation.

Thinking of all that Louis Zamperini did in what was then the United States Army Air Corps, made me think - who made it possible for all those planes to take off and land in these remote locations? How is it that at these primitive sites, large bombers and cargo planes could maneuver? Who were the unsung heroes who created the infrastructure for the efforts of the US Military in the Pacific Theater? Well, as I did some research, it appears we have much thanks to offer to the SeaBees.

At first I thought it was the United States Army Corps of Engineers (established in 1802). The CoE (as it is known in governmental speak) has a long, illustrious history of projects both in the military and civilian arenas. If you are interested in learning more about the CoE, read a brief history.
However, I found that the hands and feet, or in military vernacular, the "boots on the ground" that made these outposts functional were the United States Naval Construction Battalions - better known as Seabees. These soldiers comprise the U.S. Naval Construction Forces. Naval Construction Battalions were conceived to replace civilian construction companies working for the US Navy in the Pacific circa 1942. With their mottos Construimus, Batuimus ("We build. We fight") and "We do the difficult immediately, the impossible takes a little longer") they often did the impossible.

The earliest Seabees were recruited from the civilian construction trades and were placed under the leadership of the Navy's Civil Engineer Corps. Because of the emphasis on experience and skill rather than on physical standards, the average age of Seabees during the early days of the war was 37.

More than 325,000 men served with the Seabees in World War II, fighting and building on six continents and more than 300 islands. In the Pacific, where most of the construction work was needed, the Seabees landed soon after the Marines and built major airstrips, bridges, roads, warehouses, hospitals, gasoline storage tanks and housing. In construction and fighting operations, the Pacific Seabees alone suffered more than 200 combat deaths and earned more than 2,000 Purple Hearts.

Seabees in the Pacific Theater of Operations earned the gratitude of all Allied fighting men who served with them or followed in their wake. Their deeds were unparalleled in the history of wartime construction. With eighty percent of the Naval Construction Force concentrated on the three Pacific roads, they literally built and fought their way to victory. In the North, Central, South and Southwest Pacific areas, the Seabees built 111 major airstrips, 441 piers, 2,558
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There is much more to be said about these brave tradesmen and their heroic efforts, but I have limited space and time. If you are interested to learn more about the SeaBees, here are two webpages that will help fill in the blanks: Wikipedia and Seabees.

I want to conclude on this note - the next time you think of heroes in the world, think of the unsung heroes. Those who quietly go about their lives performing extraordinary feats of service to make it possible for all the rest of us to survive and thrive in our world today. Yes, thank soldiers for their self-sacrificing service of our country. Also, thank that tradesman - carpenter, electrician, plumber, mason, painter, glazier, sheet metal worker, etc. Without all their service, we wouldn't enjoy the many freedoms and comforts we do today.

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April 13th Dinner Program: Upcoming Improvements to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport

Location: Mirabella, 116 Fairview Ave N, Seattle, WA 98109
Date + Time: Thursday, April 13, 2017
Social Hour: 5:00-6:00 pm, Dinner: 6:00-6:30 pm, Program: 6:30-8:00 pm
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Location: 925 4th Ave, 4th Floor Board Room
Date + Time: Tuesday, April 11th, 2017 from 12:00-1:00pm
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