

REF ID: A61117
LIBRARY

SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

PREPARED BY THE BUREAU OF YARDS AND DOCKS FOR BATTALION NEWSPAPERS AND BULLETIN BOARDS

ISSUE NO 16

18 APRIL 1944

SEABEE PONTOONERS PROVE VITAL IN MARSHALLS INVASION

The pontoon causeways manned by Seabees during the invasion of Kwajalein Island, said Rear Admiral Alva D. Bernhardt, U.S.N., Atoll Commander, were "life-savers" in getting heavy equipment, ordnance, and material ashore with dispatch.

While the Seabee pontoon specialists were on Kwajalein, all material unloaded from LST's travelled over their causeways. The Officer-in-Charge of the Seabee detachment, Lt. Cmdr. Jack J. McGaraghan, CEC, USNR, reported that two floating docks constructed from causeways furnished a permanent means of discharging cargo much sooner than would have been possible with any other form of construction.

The Seabees also used causeways to improvise a novel ferry system. With one causeway coupled to an LST as a landing and loading platform, a second was used as a barge. Two bulldozers provided "ferry power". A long winch-line from the first dozer, placed on the shoreward end of the causeway secured to the ship, was fastened to the barge or free causeway. The winch-line of the second bulldozer, on shore at the beaching point, was attached to the other end of the barge causeway.

The two winch-lines made it possible to load the free causeway from the other, pull it to shore, unload the cargo, and then pull the empty barge back for another load. Two large loads of construction equipment were transported ashore this way the first night. The same method later was used to load medium tanks aboard ship.

In the occupation of Roi and Namur, Seabee causeway platoons again were active. While on Namur this platoon was caught in a two-hour night bombing attack on ammunition dumps in their bivouac area. Shrapnel from exploding ammunition caused very heavy casualties among other units, reported the O-in-C of the Seabee detachment, but the construction men's calmness, their preliminary preparation of fox-holes, and the ability of their platoon leader, enabled them to escape relatively lightly. One officer was wounded by shrapnel, two men suffered broken eardrums, and most of the other men received burns of varying degrees, none serious enough, however, to require hospitalization.

Still another of the detachment's causeway platoons was with Marine forces occupying Majuro Island, also in the Marshalls. This action produced another novel use for the causeways.

The short distance from ship to shore made only one of the two causeway sections necessary. The remaining section was brought along side of the connected half and secured on the shoreward side. Lapping two-thirds of the connected

section, it provided a double traffic lane for some distance, and additional turning room for long-wheel base equipment at the end of the LST ramp.

FICKLE FORTUNE

A Twentieth Battalion Seabee hardly dared look at the giant pearl he had just bought for an infinitesimal fraction of its worth. He had taken advantage of the innocence of a South Pacific native to obtain this gem worth thousands for only \$5 in change and a two-dollar jack knife.

Finally, he decided his fortune was too good to keep to himself, so he allowed his mates to inspect the gem. As he slipped it out of its cotton wrapping, their eyes grew wider, and when he held it up between thumb and forefinger, they stood speechless with wonder --- until one of them recognized it.

The giant "pearl" is now back with the rest of the marbles in the Seabees' Chinese Checker game whence the native had swiped it, and the erstwhile Pearl King is out looking for a necklace of Polynesian front teeth.

"SEABEE AIRFIELD READY EVERY TIME WE ADVANCE:" SAYS PILOT IN NEW GUINEA

"I found my fanny in a real tight spot one day and force-landed on a dirt strip the Seabees had just hacked through the jungle a week before," wrote Lt. R. R. Loftus, with a bomber group in New Guinea to a Seabee friend.

"The Seabees work like a bunch of beavers around here," the air force man continued, "and every time we advance, much to our amazement the strip is ready and waiting."

AND NO CPO TO TELL HIM HOW!

An average Seabee battalion numbers 1083 men -- which as far as Henry Ondrick, MM1c, is concerned, is 1082 too many.

The 37-year-old Seabee, now in the Green Islands, recently returned from a special mission on New Georgia Island where, for four days, he acted as a one-man battalion, doing everything from preparing "three squares" a day to operating a bulldozer and building a dock for PT boats.

Ondrick, who volunteered for his hazardous assignment, travelled by LCT to an outpost on the northern tip of New Georgia. He took with him a water distillator, pontoons, and a bulldozer. His principal job was to build a dock from which PT's could secure fresh water. The Japs didn't like the idea, so the Seabee

found himself finishing up under enemy fire.

His principal regret, he says, is that it was "a little too hot" to go souvenir hunting.

WELL DONE

Although the Fourth Special lost four and a half days of working time when all shipping operations had to be stopped because of extremely rough seas and heavy storms, the Seabee stevedores still managed to better their record for the previous month, both in loading and unloading.

Increasing total tonnage handled by 6,060 tons as compared with January, the previous month, the battalion averaged 1,862.5 tons per day worked, or 1.29 tons per minute.

When an important bridge, located between the Seabees' camp and the docks was washed out, the men used water transportation until a temporary one-way bridge could be built. A fifty ton barge, previously used to dispose of the battalion's garbage, was pressed into service as a temporary means of transporting Seabees and Army working parties to the docks.

NEXT TIME THEY'LL SWIM

Seabees of CBMU 518 were at sea three and a half months en route to "Island X". Called upon for sixty work projects while aboard ship, the 518'ers had 12,000 man hours of labor to their credit by the time they set foot on their new island base.

RETURNS JAP FIRE WITH CAMERA SHOTS

Some of the best action photographs of the invasion and occupation of the Green Islands to reach the States were taken under fire by Roland Spencer, Jr., CPhoM, member of a Seabee battalion which landed with the first Allied forces.

The Seabee also photographed the invasions of New Georgia, Vella Lavella, Rendova, Kolombangara and Arundel and was among the first ashore in the Treasury Islands campaign, taking pictures all morning while rifle and mortar fire burst around him. In the Bougainville assault, he landed with the first LST. Heavy shelling and bombing didn't stop the click of his camera.

Reflecting on his Green Islands photographs which are being published in newspapers throughout the United States, the Seabees' ace cameraman said, "What gets me, is that I studied music and there I was taking pictures under fire.."

He doesn't allow himself much time to worry about it. Since his

battalion landed on Green, he's been working fourteen hours a day photographing Seabee activities and the work of other Allied units on the island.

BEATS THE PROMISE

What sounded like a Chinese puzzle was handed Bob Cullings, EM2c, of the 20th Battalion, by the commander of a naval task force. The officer wanted two portable blinker platforms which could be used to support guide lights for landing operations.

It was essential, said the commander, that each unit be light enough to be handled by four men and so simple that it could be assembled in fifteen minutes. It was not, he admitted, an easy job.

The platforms submitted by Cullings departed slightly from specifications. Instead of four men, only two were needed to set them up. Instead of fifteen minutes' assembling time, they required only four.

PRAY FOR WIND, MATES

Spurred on by tales of Seabee ingenuity in the face of overwhelming odds, Scott M. Pirkle, S1c and William J. Jordan, SF2c, of the 59th Battalion, put their heads together and came up with a contraption that will cause even Rube Goldberg to say "it ain't so".

Pirkle got an ordinary GI can; made a crankshaft out of a piece of hanger-rod; carpentered four propellor blades out of scrap plywood; built a frame from discarded two-by-fours; and put a smooth piece of tin at the end of a stick as an agitator inside the can.

The fan, motivated by the slightest breeze, turns the crankshaft which keeps the agitator moving up and down. Unlike the home-made laundry of the Seabee mate mentioned in a recent issue of the Seabee News Service, this one really works.

All that is necessary is to put the clothes in the can, add soap and water -- and pray for wind.

THE EYES OF TEXAS ARE UPON THE 47th

Governor Coke Stevenson of Texas in a letter to "the men from Texas" with the 47th Battalion, extended his personal recognition and greetings to Texans and their "companions from other states", and congratulated the former for their pride in "Texas heritage". Approximately 30% of the battalion are Texans.

ADMIRAL COMBS COMMENDS FOURTH SPECIAL

Rear Admiral Lewis B. Combs, CEC USN, Assistant Chief of the Bureau

of Yards and Docks, has personally commended the Fourth Special for the part the Seabees played in extinguishing a fire aboard a gasoline-laden transport. The blaze was the result of an enemy bombing attack.

PASSENGERS?

Seabees of the 117th Construction Battalion, en-route to "Island X", may have been carried on the ship's log as passengers but, according to the battalion's publication, Review, the boys really worked their way across.

They completed a wiring job; installed a ship to shore telephone; repaired Jacobs ladders; made gear lockers for landing boats; repaired evaporators to increase capacity by 25 per cent; rearranged ventilating systems; welded bulkheads; cleaned and repaired guns; painted some 600 signs; installed leather cushions in a Commodore's gig; installed an oven and manned the galley; and stood watch in the engine room, at the guns and on the signal bridge.

\$64 QUESTION

"If the Japs are supposed to be so skilled at judo," asks Yank, the Army magazine, "how do you account for the fact that the Japs hired an American, Roy H. Moore, now a Seabee CPO, to coach their 1932 Olympic judo team?"

SAVES MATE'S LIFE

Shocked into insensibility by a short in a defective electric hand drill, Andrew V. Alberso, F1c, of Detachment 1007, owes his life to a quick-thinking and quick-acting fellow Seabee, Conrad G. Gates, P1r1c.

Stumbling upon the unconscious Alberso, Gates first pulled the cord disconnecting the drill and then applied artificial respiration which, the medical report stated, was instrumental in saving the former's life.

Gates was commended by the detachment's OinC, Lt. Cmdr. Ward E. Guest, CEC USNR.

CHASE JAPS BETWEEN SIPS OF TEA

Veteran Seabees who figured they'd seen everything looked twice when hard-fighting New Zealanders stopped everything, tanks included, during the midst of a jungle Jap hunt, to enjoy their daily "spot of tea".

When they had finished, reported Roland Spencer, Jr., CPhoM, from

Green Island, the Anzacs briskly returned to work and did a neat job of dispatching the remaining enemy troops.

A MAN OF EXTREMES

A power shovel operator during official working hours, Andy Fruth of the 22nd Battalion also manages the battalion's "jewelry shop" in his spare time. His specialty is watch repairing. Fruth's watch crystals are shaped from plexiglass, ordinarily used for aviation instrument boards but, when there's a Seabee around, practical for other purposes too.

HISTORY REPEATS

When they recognized their railroad cars as old "40 and 8'ers" over whose memory they had downed many a beer, Seabee veterans of World War I, may understandably have confused their wars.

En route to a North African base, the Seabees were on the last lap of the trip. While riding the 40 and 8's, their menu was limited to C and K rations, cheese, and fruit juice.

The journey had its compensations, however. The Seabees now number themselves among the small circle of Navy men eligible for membership in the "40 and 8 Society."

SEABEES HAVE WELL-STOCKED CELLARS

Anyone looking for a well-stocked cellar can find one easily if he visits a South Pacific "Island X" in the midst of a Japanese air raid, reported Sgt. Bill Allen, a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent. Seabees, tired of dashing to distant foxholes, have holed out the center of their tents and covered them with logs so that they can "just climb out of bed and go downstairs". As word of their comfort and convenience passed around the island, the de luxe foxholes have been "stocked", not only by the Fighter Builders but by other servicemen as well.

CMDR DOANE CITED

Cmdr. Kendric P. Doane, CEC USNR, has been cited by Admiral William F. Halsey for "skilful and effective performance of duty under adverse circumstances while serving as the Officer in Charge of a Naval Construction Battalion at Munda Airfield, New Georgia Island."

38th COMMENDED FOR SALVAGE OPERATIONS

A machine-shop barge, driven ashore by storm-driven seas, was being pounded to pieces against another wreck on the beach until Chief A. R. Jackson and his crew from the 38th battalion arrived.

The Seabees pulled the barge higher on the beach, pumped her out, replaced the frames and plates that had been torn out and refloated her.

Their next job was even tougher -- reclaiming a condemned LCT that had foundered and been beached during an earlier storm. Railroad irons and 4 x 12 timbers were used to replace the landing gate in the bow and, after she was repaired and afloat, the Seabees built a decompression chamber on deck for diving operations.

Members of Jackson's crew were: H. Spomer, A. Gillette, R. Nave, R. Wallis, H. Moberg, G. K. Allen, S. Bell, C. Allerton, A. Brockmiller, W. McNeely and M. Onthank. All received commendations.

Lt. (jg) Myron E. Potter, CEC, USNR, and his detail were commended for volunteering to secure a pontoon dock and pontoon barge that had broken loose from their moorings during a storm.

For four hours the Seabees worked in the icy cold waters, with the waves often washing over them, to control the lines until the dock and barge were secured.

Meanwhile, the lieutenant waded through the surf, boarded the pontoon barge, disconnected the propulsion unit and attached the lines necessary to haul it ashore.

The others in the crew were: Chief W. B. LeSuer, H. W. Kane, D. S. Stratton, P. M. Laven and W. R. Kelley.

LOT OF CAKE

Celebrating its first anniversary, the 91st Battalion shared a 260 pound birthday cake. Two hundred eggs, fifty pounds of butter and seventy-five pounds of icing went into the makings.

WHERE THE TALL TIMBER GROWS

The 78's sawmill crew cut enough lumber every hour to surpass the height of the Empire State Building. The Seabees turn out the timber at the rate of 1,600 board feet per hour. The Empire State measures 1,248 feet.

The native woods include mahogany and ebony, the latter the expensive wood from which piano keys are manufactured.

'CAN DO.' SAYS VOLUNTEER -- DOES

Fully aware of the possibility of being buried alive in the bottom of a 41-foot pit, George Meade Wilt, S1c, volunteered to retrieve a section of a Seabee-designed suction bailing device which had worked loose in a sub-stratum of loose cinders.

For three days the Seabees of the 59th Battalion, had attempted to fish the job-halting obstruction out of the prospective water-well -- and had failed. Someone had to go down and get it.

Wilt volunteered and was lowered into the narrow hole. Forty minutes later, he was hauled out -- empty-handed. After a thirty minute rest, he went down again. A half-hour later, Wilt -- and the "bottom" -- were brought to the surface.

DON'T WRITE - SCUTTLEBUT!

Civilians call it gossip, bush natives the "jungle grapevine," and Seabees -- along with the rest of the Navy -- "scuttlebut." And to its effectiveness -- even out on Guadalcanal -- Seabees of the 14th Battalion will testify. Take the matter of ice cream.

On a certain day the jungle island would be the scene of mysterious comings and goings. Shadowy figures flit from place to place, here the mix was secured, and its owner promised a share of the end result; there a freezer was borrowed, and the lucky possessor cut in on the deal; and here again one of the refrigeration detail was cajoled out of some chipped ice -- and another guest added to the forthcoming feast.

At length the original Seabees effect a secret meeting with the small group picked up along the way, deep in the recesses of some jungle glade. After laboring with the freezer, the Seabees, exhausted but triumphant, are ready for the great moment. The freezer is opened, plates and spoons extended, and lo! -- from the block-long line of men impatiently waiting behind them comes the cry: "Me too!"

"Don't tell me!" growled a disgusted member of the 14th Seabees. "Four times I made ice cream and four times I got about one mouthful. The scuttlebut info on Guadalcanal was just about perfect!"

HOW ABOUT THE FLOWERS?

CBMU 507's "Buzzings" comes up with the story of a Seabee who found a wallet containing \$102, returned it to its owner and was promised free service by the grateful undertaker.

SHIPS' MASTERS COMMEND 'SPECIALS'

Seabees of the Second Section of the Sixth Special Battalion who unloaded 5,863 net tons of gasoline from a transport, in 83 working hours -- apparently a new record for that type of cargo -- and 4,279 net tons of general cargo, vehicles and 35-ton tanks in 72 working hours from another vessel, have been commended by the masters of the respective merchantmen in letters to the Officer-in-Charge.

E. H. Phillips, master of one of the ships, praised the Seabees for their exceptionally fine performance and also noted:

"...your division... (is) one of the hardest working and most cooperative group of men we have been privileged to work with."

Captain Peter K. Ostby, master of the other vessel, also acknowledged the quick and efficient work of the Specials and lauded them for their cooperation which "in every respect was all that could be asked for."

SEABEES EARN COMMENDATION OF ARMY COLONEL

Two Seabees of the 19th Battalion who drove a tractor through smoke and flames to make a fire-break when a grass fire threatened a number of tents in the vicinity of a hospital were commended by Colonel B. F. Duckwall, U. S. Army Medical Corps, commanding officer of the hospital.

O. C. Kelly and E. W. Stowers were the Seabees cited by the colonel whose commendation noted that "although one was overcome somewhat by the smoke, both men stuck to the tractor until the fire was brought under control."

Colonel Duckwall also commended the officers and the men of the battalion for their excellent work in the construction of the hospital. In a letter of appreciation to Cmdr. Thomas A. Woods, CEC, USNR, Officer-in-Charge of the Seabee battalion, Duckwall wrote:

"...your men have been responsible for building our roads, clearing area, construction of buildings, laying of floors and all jobs that we would not have been able to do with medical department soldiers."

LOVE S LABOR LOST

Members of the 26th Battalion, who can look back on a South Pacific tour of duty that took them to such strange, primitive islands as Tulagi, Mucambo, Gavutu, Tanambogo, and Guadalcanal, recall vividly one job into which they really put their hearts and souls.

On Guadalcanal they built the largest servicemen's Recreation Center in the Solomons Islands. Having gone many months without any kind of entertainment except an occasional movie, the Seabees were enthusiastic.

Constructed in the shape of a letter "H", the Recreation Center covered

11,200 feet of floor space, and housed the Red Cross, Island Chaplain, a library, recreation rooms, and a large Post Exchange equipped with an ice cream machine. But the 26th Battalion never got to use it. The Center was their last job; as soon as it was completed they received orders to leave the island.

'NUTS TO YOU, UNCLE ADOLPH,' SAYS NEW NAVY 'BOOT'

William Patrick Hitler, 32-year-old British nephew of the infamous Adolph, has been accepted for service in the United States Navy. His several earlier attempts to enlist boomeranged when he listed the ex-paper-hanger under "Relatives who are or have been in the armed forces of enemy nations."

William Patrick's Irish mother and German father separated after two or three years' of married life, the former going to England and the latter to Berlin.

THROWS LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT

James C. Smith, SF1c, and Charles J. Drake, SF2c, are a couple of Seabee welders who take as a matter of course the building of a steel boom section from an old, scrapped crane. What did provide them with some anxious moments was the effect of the climate on their welding rods, which just wouldn't function in the perpetual dampness of the rainy session on their "Island X".

Imaginative as well as practical, they hit upon a simple solution. They now keep the rods in a covered box in which a 100-watt electric bulb is kept alight at all times.

CBMU 513 SCORES WITH CAPTAIN OF LST

"Men of your unit voluntarily did much work of a technical and general nature, contributing greatly to the maintenance and improvement of the ship," wrote Lt. R. W. Emmons, USNR, in command of an LST conveying CBMU 513 to its advance base, to the unit's OinC.

"I desire to express appreciation of the general cooperation and orderly conduct displayed by your well organized body of men," the commendation continued.

YOU CAN'T KEEP A SEABEE DOWN

Hospitalized by the loss of the fingers of his left hand, Eugene S. Sickles, CCM, of the 10th Battalion used the time to build a scale model of the hospital reservation. The model now adorns the bulkhead of the office of the hospital's C.O.

While in the service, Sickles has done mural decorations for many Naval and Marine clubs. Among his best known works is a relief map of the battlefield at Gettysburg, Pa., his home town.

The Seabee's brother, Capt. Bud Sickles of the Army, has been an artist

for "Life" and is the creator of the "Scorchy Smith" comic strip.

CBMU 516 VICTOR IN WAR GAMES

In a realistic maneuver, heavily armed Seabees, members of CBMU 516, stormed from assault boats to capture an "enemy" island held by strategically-placed Marine defenders.

Overpowering opposing artillery and machine gun fire, the Seabees and other attacking units converged in a final fixed-bayonet assault to wipe out the defending force.

The 516'ers, whose "Island X" is not in a combat zone, had felt themselves by-passed by the war. The simulated raid, a joint operation in which Marines and Coast Guardsmen also participated, served both as a mental tonic and a rough-and-tumble physical conditioner.

MINOR INCONVENIENCE

Most divers whose helmets refuse to work would either quit the job or else continue until Uncle Sam started paying their widows insurance, but not Coxswain J. Eppelite. A member of the 3rd Battalion's Rigging left, he was called upon to fit a tarpaulin over the holes in the fuselage of a Navy patrol bomber sunk off shore. His helmet failed him, but he continued on the job anyway, with the bland explanation that: "It was good for a minute or so; after that I was on my own."

Working with Eppelite on the job was T. G. Jest, BM2c.

CHAPLAIN WOUNDED

Who was it who said, "Oh, for the life of a chaplain!"?

When the Army recently released figures which showed the casualty rate in the Chaplains' Corps to be higher than in any other branch of military service, 33rd Battalion Seabees understood why.

Jap planes bombed their LST enroute to participate in the invasion of the Green Islands, the first casualty was the Seabee chaplain, Lieutenant William I. Hay, ChC, USNR, who was struck by shrapnel and slightly wounded.

NORTH POLE EXPLORERS TOOK OFF FROM SEABEE FIELD. SAYS SEABEE

Alan D. Porter, WT1c of the 59th Battalion, is probably the only Seabee in the world who can brag about a unique kind of "Seabee" base building experience even before the word "Seabee" was even dreamt of, reports "Fifty-Niner", the battalion's publication.

Porter was one of the volunteers who built an airplane runway out of hard pack-snow in 1926 on Spitzbergen in King's Bay, so that Floyd Bennett could fly Admiral Richard E. Byrd 700 miles to the North Pole.

The Seabee said the runway was a typical Seabee Job -- "Everything improvised".

NIGHT AND DAY

Routed out of bed at 0100 to repair damage caused by enemy aircraft to a nearby bomber strip, sleep hungry Seabees of the 60th Battalion completed repairs at 0900 and then pitched into the regular day assignments.

SHORT SPORT SHOTS

BASEBALL: . Servicemen all over the world will hear play by play major league games broadcasts. . last hour of game will be broadcast from East Coast to England and North Africa every Monday from 15:30 to 16:30 (EWT). . from Tuesday to Saturday, last 45 minutes of game will be broadcast at 15:30 (EWT). . West Coast will send last hour of Pacific Coast games to South and Central America, Antilles, Caribbean, Alaska and Aleutians from 14:30 to 15:30 (PWT) Sundays. . also short-wave half-hour reconstruction of games five days a week to those areas and to South and Southwest Pacific, China-India-Burma theater. . Major league 1944 season opens April 18. . Rogers Hornsby quit \$10,000 year job as manager in Mexico League to seek pinch-hitting position in major leagues. . Pennant chances of Washington Senators suffers setback by expected loss of dozen or so Latin-Americans. . latter notified to register for draft or go home by June 12 indicated they would pack and leave.

RACING: . Apprentice Jockey Bobby Permane, 20, ran up 50 victories in thirty day Tropical Park meet. . rode five winners in each of last three days. . Field of 148 horses still eligible for Kentucky Derby. . probably be biggest field in years since no horse stands out. . Opening of Jamaica meet marred by strike of grooms who demanded \$5 to lead horse to paddock and back, \$15 if winner. . first race called off before temporary settlement made. . Star of Padula, only horse reporting to starter for first race romped the six furlongs and was awarded \$1,800 purse.

BOXING: . Hank Armstrong, only triple boxing champ in fistic history, once considered half-blind, accepted for service. . Beau Jack expects call any day. . Bob Montgomery, lightweight champ (NY version), reclassified 1-A. . Joe Louis reported in Britain on boxing tour. . Sgt. Ray (Sugar) Robinson, under medical care in NY hospital. . Barney Ross, received honorable medical discharge from Marine Corps.

HOCKEY: . Montreal Canadiens won Stanley Cup and world's hockey championship defeating Chicago Blackhawks 4 games to 0. . Chicago fans delayed second game more than twenty minutes. . showered ice with debris after questioning decision by official. . Ushers frisked fans before third game, collected steel bolts, smoked fish, rice, flour, toilet paper, boxes of soap flakes, other miscellany. . Walter (Babe) Pratt, Toronto defenseman named winner of Hart Trophy as most valuable man to his team.

SIDELINES: . Frankie Sinkwich, discharged from Marines last fall, joined Maritime Service as did Bill Pascal, top '43 scorer of NY football Giants. . Boston pro football team, entering league this year, picked Angelo Bertelli, as first player. . Bertelli in Marines. . Pilot John C. Riley sent entry for Boston marathon from New Guinea. . says can't compete but enters for "sentimental reasons".