

SEABEE NEWS SERVICE P

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LOST WITHOUT SEABEES, SAYS MARINE VETERAN OF BOUGAINVILLE

Seabees did the impossible at Bougainville, declared Marine First Sgt. Edgar D. McMurry, of Pueblo, Colo., veteran of more than 20 months' duty with Carlson's Raiders in the Pacific.

A high-ranking Australian Army officer and the majority of U. S. Marines agreed that it was physically impossible for the Seabees, even with their heavy equipment, to tear roads and airstrips from the heavily-jungled island.

A month later, as they watched huge 10-wheel trucks, carrying supplies and ammunition, rolling smoothly over "Marine Drive", an eight-mile, four lane highway built by the Seabees and dedicated to their Leatherneck mates, the Australian and the Marines cheerfully admitted they had underestimated the abilities of the Fighter-Builders.

"I don't see how we could have gone into Bougainville without the Seabees," was the way McMurry summed it up

During the assault, the Marine recalled, he saw one of the landing craft peppered by Jap fire. When the ramp crashed down, a Seabee, "bloody but unbowed", maneuvered his bulldozer onto the beach.

"He made a couple of turns and then started right in to tear up the jungle and build a road," said the sergeant.

The Seabees not only built roads, airstrips and other installations, but their surveyors also accompanied combat patrols, he added. In one instance, said McMurry, the Seabees grabbed up all available automatic rifles when the Marines were having some left flank trouble with the Japs.

ONE TO A CUSTOMER

"I was ashamed of myself when I saw him running after I shot."

Jose G. Vasquez, MM2c, of the 33rd Battalion, looked at the dead Jap on the ground before him.

"Yup, thought I'd missed him the first time," the Seabee continued, "I'd borrowed the bullets from a mate and I sure didn't want to waste any!"

Vasquez nabbed his Nip when the Jap tried to sneak past his post while the

Seabee was on guard duty. The Seabee, who, in his haste to volunteer for the detail, had forgotten his ammunition and had had to borrow ten rounds from a mate. Apparently he had to ration his shots -- "one to a customer".

"WHITE MAN'S MAGIC" FIZZLES

Somewhere on Woodlark Island, deep in the South Pacific, a native witch-doctor today is feeling mighty satisfied with himself.

A Woodlark tribesman, one of the voodoo specialist's paying customers, sustained a nasty leg wound while at work in the Seabee camp on the island. The two battalion doctors, Lts. M. M. Steiner and D. P. Cahill, spent the better part of the afternoon cleaning and bandaging the limb.

The operation a success, the black climbed from the spotless dispensary table, bowed his thanks to the doctors and the assembled pharmacist mates, and hobbled away through the bush.

Less than an hour later, one of the Seabees again saw the patient. He was at the hut of the tribal medicine man. The white bandage lay in a heap in the mud and, while the native looked on contentedly, the witch-doctor was applying a new poultice -- this one made of fresh killed rat entrails and chopped lizard.

WHEN SECONDS SEEM LIKE HOURS

How a Marine detail headed by two Seabees was almost swept off a mountain as the men laid heavy telephone cables by hand was told recently by R. C. Fox, EM2c, who, together with E. V. McKinney, EM3c, supervised the group.

The slope was too steep for the use of any kind of mechanical equipment, and the Seabees found only one spot where it was even possible to take the cable over.

Unreeling the heavy, tape-armored wire from a drum at the foot of the mountain, the crew slowly took the first cable up the sheer incline. With the men strung out all along the side of the mountain and the point about one hundred feet from the top, the three Marines in the lead shouted, "She's slipping! We can't hang on!"

Fox, standing at the foot of the mountain, knew that if the Leathernecks let go, the ponderous cable would sweep the men to their death, hundreds of feet below. Shouting to them to hold on as long as possible, he ran to their aid.

Three times the Seabee momentarily blacked out as he strained to make the ascent at top speed, but he managed to reach the crest while the Marines still were clinging desperately to the cable. Quickly he helped them secure the wire

to a tree. Then he breathed a sigh of relief that he'd been able to get there in time.

"You know what those Marines said to me afterwards?" Fox commented wryly, "They wanted to know what took me so long!"

ISLAND "ONE LARGE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT"

Seabee bulldozers and tractors ripping through the tangled jungle undergrowth and coconut plantations of Emirau Island have given it the appearance of "one large construction project", wrote Tech. Sgt. Murrey Marder, a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent.

The eight-mile-long island, part of the Bismarck Archipelago and lying northwest of New Ireland, was occupied (without opposition) by Marines. It is rapidly being converted into another Allied base.

THREE COMMENDED FOR TREASURY ISLAND DEEDS

Two Seabee officers and one enlisted man have been commended by Admiral William F. Halsey for "skillful and effective performance of duty" during and following the initial landing by Allied forces at Treasury Island, scene of MM1c Aurelio Tassone's bulldozer activities.

Lt. Charles E. Turnbull, CEC USNR, who was in charge of the detail of Seabees who landed under fire, was cited for "courageously" defying enemy fire to direct the movements of Tassone's bulldozer as the Seabee manipulated his machine to crush an enemy pillbox and its occupants.

Less than an hour after the Seabees had landed, a New Zealand Major, spotting the position of the Jap pillbox, ordered Lt. Turnbull to run a 'dozer through it. Tassone, shielding himself with the raised blade of the bulldozer, and protected by Lt. Turnbull who followed him afoot--with carbine in hand--charged the Jap emplacement, burying alive the 12-man enemy crew and their twin-barreled 37-mm. cannon.

Though Tassone was awarded the Silver Star Medal for bravery, he gave full credit to Lt. Turnbull, who he said "has more courage than any man I've ever known".

Lt. Turnbull also received further praise from Admiral Halsey for his "leadership, devotion to duty and tireless efforts" in blazing roads through hostile jungle.

Ensign John R. Bovyer, CEC USNR, received his commendation for directing the construction of roads and emplacements for special equipment "with marked judgement and efficiency" despite difficult terrain, jungle and the "hazards of enemy fire."

CSF Thomas J. Bailey, was cited for disregarding enemy fire to remain at his

post on the ramp of a beached LST to reorganize unloading details and for devising a conveyor system which expedited the unloading of the LST.

Admiral Halsey's citation added that Bailey's actions made it possible for the ship to "discharge its cargo completely before retracting."

WILL DO

If the Vice-President-in-Charge-of-Ship's-Bells doesn't want to court a nervous breakdown, he'll air-express a nice loud gong to Seabee D. D. Watkins. Until he does, not a ship in the Pacific can consider its bell safe.

Seabee Watkins, attached to CBMU 521, has built himself a fire-fighting truck using a Ford torpedo truck for the chassis. His fire engine boasts a two-hundred-gallon water tank and a pump powered by a Johnson outboard motor. But Watkins still isn't happy. He doesn't have a fire bell. At last report he was greedily "window shopping" the ship's bells in the harbor.

Don't say we didn't warn you, gentlemen.

ACCOMPLISHED MIRACLES

"The Seabees have accomplished miracles since they landed," declared Vice Admiral A. W. Fitch, commander of South Pacific Air Forces, after inspecting work on Green Island.

Admiral Fitch was particularly pleased with the progress made on an air-field which the Seabees are building in an area that is partly jungle and partly coconut groves, according to Marine Corps Correspondent, Sgt. Ray Fitzpatrick.

Riding in a jeep, Admiral Fitch spent several hours studying roads, landings, camp sites, and gun emplacements built by the men of the Construction Battalions.

SIDE LINE

When Chief Richard Wood and five other Seabees of the 20th Battalion were assigned to fifteen weeks' special duty aboard a destroyer repair ship, here's what they accomplished:

.....Installed intricate electrical units on World War One destroyers, the first time this equipment had been installed on ships of this class in a foreign port.

-Handled all maintenance and repairs of two squadrons of PT boats.
-Assisted in repairing the battle damage on more than thirty destroyers.
-Converted two four-stack destroyers into mine layers.

After their three-and-a-half month "vacation", the boys returned to their regular job.

HAS OWN "SUPPLY CORPS"

Seabee Escol L. Norman, a temporary resident of Bougainville, sings to "Betsy" every morning before breakfast.

In return for the song and tender care, "Betsy", a coal black hen, presents Norman with a daily fresh egg, writes Sgt. Leodel Coleman, a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent.

"My biggest trouble," said the Seabee, "is keeping the other guys from stealing her, or the egg."

ADMIRAL HEWITT, OTHERS, COMMEND 120th BATTALION DETACHMENTS

Three commendations, including one from Vice Admiral H. K. Hewitt, USN, Commander Naval Forces, Northwest African Waters, praising Seabees of the 120th Construction Battalion for their efficiency and performance of duty, have been received by the 120th's OinC, Cmdr. George Rezac, CEC, USNR.

The letters, issued by three different Army and Navy officers, were directed to three 120th detachments at three different locations.

Admiral Hewitt's commendation was forwarded through Commodore C. M. Yates, USN, Commandant of the NOB, who also added his congratulations.

The other commendations came from Captain L. Doughty, Jr., USN, Commandant at an NOB, and from Lt. Daniel B. Henon, U. S. Army, Port Adjutant.

TOO GOOD

The hot water plant Chief Ralph Fomby and other 20th Battalion Seabees conjured up from a pile of empty gasoline drums and scrap pipe worked so well the machinists almost regretted building it. Neighboring units deluged them with orders for six more when they saw the original in operation.

FIRST PLANE LANDED ON LOS NEGROS FIELD DURING BATTLE

"Before we came to a standstill, we knew we had arrived in the midst of a first class war," cabled International News Service War Correspondent Lee Van Atta, describing his arrival in the first American plane to land on bomb-blasted Momote airfield on Los Negros Island.

"Our impression was confirmed immediately," he continued, "when an artillery barrage backed by fourteen batteries let loose as our engines stopped.

"But even in the midst of that high explosive confusion, life around the strip and in camp headquarters proceeded with cool and reassuring dispatch. (Seabee) bulldozers rolled out on the strip as we taxied along, each with two men. One was the operator. The other was an MP flourishing a gun, keeping a sharp lookout for Japs.

"Bloated Jap dead can be found in nearly every cluster of the jungle fringing the strip. American troops are burying the Japs as fast as possible, but the airdrome takes first priority on heavy equipment, and a bulldozer is the only thing capable of shoveling up tens of hundreds of the slaughtered foe."

The correspondent quoted Seabee Chief Carpenter's Mate Frank Newman's description of the pile of a hundred dead Japs who had blown themselves to destruction by holding hand grenades to their bellies. "It was the most horrible thing I've ever seen," said Newman, "and we've seen plenty since we landed in this joint."

AND WHAT A PROBLEM!

The problem: a sinking barge, already 85% under water, and loaded with more than 400,000 pounds of high-explosive demolition bombs.

It was solved by a group of Seabees in the Russell Islands who were commended for their job of floating the barge and salvaging its cargo of more than 800 five hundred pound demolition bombs, detonating fuses, primer detonators, and fin assemblies.

A citation from the Commanding Officer of N.O.B., Russell Islands, commended Lt. James W. Adams, CEC, USNR, in charge of the salvage detail, and the other officers and men participating.

SEABEES SALVAGE CREW COMMENDED BY MARINE OFFICER

A detail of eleven Seabees of the 19th Battalion earned the commendation of the commanding officer of a Marine Amphibian Tractor Battalion, for salvaging two amphibious trucks after previous attempts by Marines had failed and "despite the handicaps imposed by the weather and the necessity for adaption to the task of inappropriate equipment."

The Seabees engaged in the operations were: Harry Nesbitt, CBM; William Eastman, BM1c; Raphael Guzman, MM1c; William Hardy, SF1c; Paul Jenkins, GM1c; William Madden, BM1c; Marshall Williams, BM2c; Edgar Wickstrom, BM2c; William McDonald, CM3c; Thadeus Kleniewski, S1c; and Joseph R. Toale, S1c.

A MATTER OF TASTE

When a group of Seabees in the South Pacific who had been supplementing their rather monotonous diet with deep-sea fish landed a "sea cow" their mouths watered. The meat had an inviting appearance and the "steaks" in the frying pan smelled so good the boys found it hard to let them cook long enough.

"But," said one of the Seabees a little later, "after fifteen minutes of chewing, we realized that sea cow is just another rubber substitute!"

TIP FOR TRANSPORTATION MAINTENANCE MEN

CMM Paul R. Richter went to work converting a grease gun. He first removed the parts from inside the housing, then attached two steel and two leather washers to the plunging rod. For tension, he installed a spring on the rod inside the housing. At the top end of the plunging rod Richter welded a notched knob which held the rod open after the gun was filled. A petcock was next welded on the ejecting end of the gun, and a piece of rubber hose was attached to the petcock.

Result: A serviceable brake bleeder now in daily use by his outfit in North Africa.

PACIFIC EPISODE

(Morris Schein, SK1c, a Seabee stationed in the South Pacific is the writer of this letter. It was reprinted in the New York newspaper, PM, and is also included in the News Service as an understanding description of a native's friendship.)

Telagai visited me last night. He said he'd come, and Telagai's promise is unbreakable. He noiselessly entered the tent and smiled.

"Hello, Schein," he said.

"Talofa," I returned the greeting.

He thrust out his hand in which was held a large shining shell. It was so beautiful that for a moment I could do no more than stare at it with appreciative amazement.

"Fafeti," I thanked him, and gave him the best expression I could muster up to convey my feelings.

He jumped on the table and sat on his ankles. I dropped in my home-made easy chair and exchanged grins with Telagai. Then we broke out in a duet of "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy..." While we were straining through the third repeat of the song I remembered the jar of candy in my locker. I brought it forth and opened the lid and we shared the contents with the ants.

We talked, depending more on pantomime than Telagai's English, which exceeds my understanding of his native tongue.

"Schein, Seabee, Telagai, Seabee." He was much pleased. More silence passed in grinning. Then "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine....." Several more times, until I asked him to dance.

Telagai went through part of the routine he did at Seva Seva. At the festival he was in his glory. He was a principal performer and each time his eyes caught mine he smiled broader and exerted greater effort to impress "his friend." Now, for sheer joy his muscles quivered to the music of his singing and mine. When he concluded I shouted: "Leilei!"

"Schein, flend, Telagai, flend," he said.

HOME-MADE HOT WATER HEATER

CBMU's 513'ers have improvised satisfactory hot water heaters for tents by welding five-gallon cans on top of conical steel wood-burning heaters. Pet cocks welded on the bottom of each can provide ample hot water for washing and shaving.

SAVE AVIATION FUEL DURING RAID

Two Seabees who risked their lives to save valuable aviation fuel when enemy bombers set fire to a Navy tank farm on Green Island have been officially commended by the commanding officer of their battalion.

The men are John Kurtz, SF1c, and Joseph C. Havlicek, Jr., SF1c.

The Jap squadron raiding the tank farm dropped a number of bombs, one of which punctured a tank and set fire to the aviation gasoline. Several adjoining tanks also were punctured by shrapnel, and the badly needed fuel was spurting out. Disregarding their own safety, Kurtz and Havlicek set to work while the fire was raging and successfully plugged the holes.

PRAISE SEABEES' ROLE IN PACIFIC WAR

Without the Naval Construction Battalions the United States would be standing off the enemy on its own shores.

This tribute was paid the Seabees by Rear Admiral Carl Cotter, CEC, USN, Director of the Pacific Division of the Bureau of Yards and Docks. Admiral Cotter's

observation was made following a 160,000-mile tour of the Pacific area.

Major George Fielding Eliot, nationally-known military commentator, backed Admiral Cotter's views the following day, writing, "The indefatigable Seabees (are) the very backbone of our mobile fighting power....(they) have been building air strips, docks, barracks, storehouses, roads, and doing everything else needful to convert coral atolls into bases for the greatest amphibious armada the world has ever seen."

KEPT 'EM IN STITCHES

The collapse of their fifty-year-old sewing machine was a catastrophe to the natives of a Southwest Pacific "Island X". Replacement parts were unobtainable; the company which had manufactured the relic had gone out of business before the first World War. The islanders, who for half-a-century had sewed their clothes on the hand-operated device, seemed out of luck.

Their friends, the Seabees, heard about it. Some of the Navy men carted the ancient piece of equipment to their workshop. A few days later, back came a completely rebuilt machine, with new parts tooled by the Seabees.

The men of the 20th Battalion were glad to lend a helping hand. To the natives, it meant more than a whole shipful of gadgets from the States.

DINNER MUSIC

What is claimed to be the best-camouflaged mess hall in the South Pacific has been built by a group of Seabees including Duane R. Erickson, CM1c, and Edward Clayton, CCM.

The mess hall, situated in a cocoanut grove, is built around the trees, with palm-frond tops extending through the roof.

The architectural plan is a bit on the bizarre side. For boards, the Seabees used native teakwood. They topped the structure with a roof of galvanized iron.

The iron was fine, said builder Erickson, except that "when the cocoanuts began falling off the trees onto the roof, it sounded like a flock of Nip planes had got through our defenses and were giving us hell!"

DESIGNED FOR SEABEE APPETITES

While home-made ice cream freezers are not new to the Seabees, the newest

one, built by Olin Stover, EM1c, of the Fourth Special, not only can produce ten gallons of ice cream an hour but can also do double duty in keeping the galley's surplus foods cold.

BLONDE BOMBSHELL A DUD

"The other day," wrote Rubin Kaplan, S1c, from a Southwest Pacific 'Island X', "the first female entertainers hit this rock. One of them held a dance contest and I had to do bumps-a-daisy with a beautiful blonde Hollywood star ... the first gal I'd seen in almost a year. ...I nearly bumped the poor girl off the stage.

"I was awarded the prize ... a kiss. I nearly blew my top.

"I gathered her in my arms and was all set for a real kiss when she pulls my head aside and kisses me on the cheek. I was a little disappointed but what could I do?

"Anyhow," concluded the Seabee philosophically, "I have the distinction of being the only guy around here to be kissed by a blonde."

BOUGAINVILLE BLUES

"You'll be sor-reee....."

A Seabee welcoming committee chanted the familiar greeting to its unhappy listeners, a green Army Quartermaster company newly arrived on Bougainville.

The "processing" that the jittery G. I.'s received their first day in a combat zone eclipsed even the old Camp Peary blitz. The Japs said "hello" with an air raid, then American and Japanese heavy guns staged an artillery duel, and finally, the local weatherman came through with the heaviest rain and electrical storm our men ever experienced.

As they saw the Army boys' spirits sink into the mud, the Seabees, island veterans of the early invasion days, cut out the kidding and set about helping the supply men through their baptism of fire. They struggled through the storm to help the G.I.'s set up tents. They threw open their galley and kept a stream of hot coffee flowing to the dripping 'dogfaces'. When the air raid sirens sounded, they made room for the newcomers in their foxholes and later in their own quarters.

While shells crossed paths overhead, the Seabees taught the G.I.'s to distinguish by sound between American and enemy artillery fire. And throughout the action they did their best to calm the nerves of the new arrivals.

SEABEE MARINE LENT TO NAVY" SAYS BOUGAINVILLE CAMPAIGNER

A man's best friend is usually his mother but when that man is a hungry Marine on an enemy infested Pacific island, says Marine PFC Leroy Kennedy of

Houston, Texas, veteran of the Bougainville campaign, his best friend is a Seabee.

"The Seabees, kept us Marines from starving," Kennedy added, defining a Seabee as "a Marine who was lent to the Navy."

Displaying several souvenirs including a ring made from a Japanese propeller, Kennedy said, "You can get all the souvenirs you want since the Seabees are good at inserting teeth in rings."

FUNNY. IT WAS HERE YESTERDAY...

Bogoslof Island in the Aleutians is one "Island X" on which there are no Seabees. Right now, there isn't even any island.

A Navy man who had been stationed on Bogoslof, which boasts an area of one square mile, explained that while sea lions outnumbered men 1,000 to 1, earthquakes and the knowledge that Bogoslof has a habit of disappearing kept life interesting.

"You could dig a foxhole anywhere on the beach," he added, "and the deeper you dug the warmer it got. The island was on top of an old volcano."

SOMETIMES RAGS ARE RICHES

Wiping rags and wiping grease are luxuries to plumbing ship fitters in the field. Arthur Koon, SF1c, of CBMU 513, uses an old shoe tongue for wiping joints. His grease -- a candlestick.

SHELL GAME

Frederick N. McElwee SF1c, of CBMU#513, specializes in conserving sheet metal. He procured empty shell casings from the scrap heap, burned the ends off with a torch, then welded the casings together into a stovepipe for use in naval headquarters. The remaining ends were converted into fine ash trays.

SEABEES WORK OF "INESTIMABLE VALUE" SAYS ARMY COLONEL

In appreciation of the splendid efforts of the officers and men of the 19th Battalion during the construction of a Port Project for the U. S. Army, Colonel Ray H. Lewis, U. S. Army F.A., commanding officer, has commended the battalion for their work, which he described as of "inestimable value".

Colonel Lewis' commendation noted that the lack of adequate civilian

labor threatened to delay the effective prosecution of the undertaking and the arrival of the Seabees "with its highly trained personnel and excellent equipment was most timely and welcome.

SHORT SPORTS SHOTS

BASEBALL: .. Opening day saw 120,000 faithful fans flock to seven major league parks .. Low scores featured day's play .. Vice President Henry A. Wallace threw out first ball at Griffith Stadium and then watched Senators drop 12-inning 3-2 decision to Athletics .. Pitcher Bill Voiselle of Giants gave Braves but six hits, struck out nine to become first NL rookie to win opener since 1912 .. Sports writers make Cardinals overwhelming favorite, picked Yankees to top leagues .. Red Sox sold First Baseman Tony Lupien to Phillies .. Pitcher Lum Harris, Outfielder Lew Flick, of A's, Danny Litwhiler, Card outfielder accepted by Navy .. Sixth Construction Battalion's softball team won official Navy championship at South Pacific base .. ran up perfect record of nine wins, no losses in league competition, defeated Ship Repair Unit in Little World Series in two straight .. In non-league games, Sixth won thirty, lost seven .. Dodgers proved in exhibition game with Phillies that they were ready for season .. Durocher's dillies got two men on third at same time and had both tagged out; outfielder Luis Olmo let two runners score after he caught fly ball and walked off field with ball in pocket.

RACING: .. Much confusion, a threatened strike by grooms, a tax dispute between Racing Commission and track officials ushered in Maryland Jockey Club's 201st racing season at Pimlico .. Starting time for first race held up an hour because state official, needed to settle tax dispute, refused to disobey ODT ruling against motoring to places of amusement .. while 15,000 fans cooled heels, official rode street car to track .. Jockeys Conn McCreary and Martin Bletzacker injured in two-horse spill .. Back in 1941, young jockey rode "Devil Diver" to upset victory in Hopeful stakes at Saratoga .. Today same jockey, Jack Skelly, is S2c with CBMU 587 .. Skelly booted home 250 winners in "temporarily" interrupted career.

BOXING: .. Aaron Perry, rising welterweight, koed Lew Hanbury in sixth round .. Fritzie Zivic in Army .. Beau Jack accepted for Army service .. Jim Jeffries, old-time heavyweight king, celebrated 69th birthday.

FOOTBALL: .. National League adopts two major changes and several minor changes in playing rules .. legalize coaching from sidelines in a restricted area, virtually eliminate out-of-bounds kickoff .. Bronko Nagurski will handle backfield coaching duties at UCLA .. Wilbur Moore, Redskin half-back, in Marines .. Capt. Maurice Britt, former Detroit Lions, received Medal of Honor for gallantry in Italy .. Britt suffered wounds which necessitated amputation of right arm.

SIDELINES: .. Sports world mourning loss of Lt. Col. "Tommy" Hitchcock, Jr., one of greatest polo players of all time .. "Tommy", 10-goal international star, killed in air crash in England .. served in World War I as member of Lafayette Escadrille.