

SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

In order to encourage those battalions which have not already done so to undertake publishing of newspapers and to aid those which are now printing or mimeographing papers on a regular schedule, the Bureau of Yards and Docks herewith is offering the first of a semi-monthly news service.

Editors of battalion papers and those being published at training camps are privileged to make whatever use of this service that would best suit their purposes. No credit-line is necessary.

The Bureau's purpose in issuing this news service is to acquaint Seabees both abroad and at home with the accomplishments of their mates and the vital work being done by battalions throughout the world. The Bureau sincerely believes that it is only necessary to know what the Seabees are accomplishing to have pride in them.

As contributions of news from the several battalions are made to the Bureau, the scope and volume of this news service will increase. It is urged that each battalion keep an eye cocked for newsworthy material and to send it in along with battalion monthly reports.

SEABEES RESCUE FLIER FROM FLAMES

Flames began to shoot upward from an Army bomber which had just crashed. An officer shouted, "Get back. Her bomb load is going to explode any second!"

And inside, one of the plane's crew was seen to be struggling to get himself out of the wreckage.

What would you do?

This is the story of what four Seabees did when it all happened this summer up in Iceland. Lloyd H. Bloomingdale, Ptr2c, 31, of Troy, N. Y., and George V. Schaffer, CEM, 43, of York, Pa., disregarded the warning about the bombs exploding and raced on into the flames. First Bloomingdale and then Schaffer tried to get Sergeant Sam Kupferberg, of Bronx, N. Y., out, and between them, they succeeded.

In the meantime, Sam B. Freeman, MMLc, of Tupelo, Miss., and Porter A Davis, EM2c, of Casper, Wyo., ran up to the plane and the four men carried Kupferberg to safety and beat out his flaming clothing.

Not satisfied, Bloomingdale tried to go back to the plane to see if any more men were trapped. Fortunately, officers restrained him just at the moment the bombs exploded.

This is the story in back of the awards of the Navy and Marine Corps medal to Petty Officers Bloomingdale and Schaffer. Both were cited for "extremely heroic conduct above and beyond the call of duty".

Freeman and Davis won commendations for assisting in the rescue.

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SEABEES GREET LANDING OF MARINES

"Colonel, the Seabees are always happy to welcome the Marines."

This, according to the Associated Press, was the greeting extended by Lt. Bob Ryan, CEC, USNR, of Ventura, Calif., when he and his men greeted the United States Marine Raiders when they landed on the beaches of Segi, New Georgia, to drive out the Japs.

Shaking Lt. Ryan's hand, Lt. Col. Michael Currin of the Raiders could only say:

"Well, I'll be -----!"

The Associated Press related how the Seabees had scouted the Japanese-controlled jungle of southern New Georgia and surveyed the airfield sites before the Marines came in to secure it.

The Seabees landed at Segi with bulldozers, power shovels, and trucks on June 30, the day the American invasion of New Georgia started, according to the story. Most of the outfit hailed from Texas and Oklahoma, with the result that within nine days from the moment the first tree was uprooted, the first fighter plane made an emergency landing on the coral strip. The first pilot took off from the new field on the eleventh day after construction began.

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JOHN WAYNE, SUSAN HAYWARD TO STAR IN SEABEE FILM

Film Star John Wayne will play the leading role in Republic's feature production, "Fighting Seabees", it was announced by Lt. Cdr. H. S. Hunter, technical advisor of the movie. The feminine lead, that of the girl foreign correspondent, was assigned to Susan Hayward.

Wayne entered the movies via westerns as did Gary Cooper and Clark Gable. He graduated to feature productions and scored box office hits in "Stagecoach", "Long Voyage Home", and "Dark Command". He was an all-American football player, and according to Hollywood, is pretty much the same kind of guy off the screen as he is in his pictures.

The second male lead in "Fighting Seabees" goes to George Reeves, borrowed from Paramount where he just completed work on "So Proudly We Hail", which is now being shown.

Preliminary shooting of the million and a half dollar picture began late in August at Camp Rouseau and included construction of Quonset huts. Many of the scenes will be shot at Hueneme.

Those who have read the script by Borden Chase say that it is a cinch to make an exciting picture and one that will pull them in at the box office. It will go far toward educating the general public to the fact that the Seabees are doing a helluva lot to win this war.

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OLDER SEABEES WIN PRAISE OF COMMANDER

Anybody who says this is strictly a "young man's war" will find himself in an argument with Cdr. Eugene C. Lang, CEC, USNR, the Officer-in-Charge of a construction battalion in the South Pacific, who will match his men against any like number of sturdy youngsters with peach fuzz for whiskers.

The average age of the battalion personnel is 34 years, and the oldest is a mere 53, but they've done a swell job of erecting semi-permanent hospital units out in the South Pacific, in addition to the other hundred and one things that dropped into a Seabee battalion's lap.

Competing against a Marine unit, the "old men" of the Seabees outshot them with the M-1 rifle, and both the .30 and .50 caliber machine guns. But that's only one of the virtues of the older men, according to Cdr. Lang.

"Much of our work out on the islands is the unspectacular sort which requires steadiness and patience, and we've found that in these two essentials the older men show up very much to advantage," said Cdr. Lang. "Furthermore, they react better to discipline, because they understand better the necessity for it. Once an older man sees the reason for a certain course of action, he accepts philosophically whatever hardships it may entail."

Cdr. Lang admits that hard physical conditions bring out aches and

pains in older men faster than it does in the youngsters, but he also points out that the old boys get into less trouble, too--particularly on "liberty".

"What we really need--and we've got it--is a balance between the two. Let the younger men handle the work for which they're better fitted and let the older men do the work where mature judgment and greater experience are required," Cdr. Lang concluded.

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"CAN DO" DEFIES DELUGE AND MUD

In 13 days of killing work while 16½ inches of rain tried to mire them down, a Seabee battalion carved an air strip out of dense jungle on an island in the Solomons area. That's as much rain as falls in an average six months throughout most states in the Middle West.

The men, under Cdr. J. C. Tate, CEC, USNR, began building the strip at 0700 on July 2. They worked around the clock every day, until by nightfall on July 14, a 3,000 foot runway was complete--150 feet wide and covered to a depth of 18 inches with crushed coral. By July 19, another 1,500 feet was added to the length, and later the jungle was carved back as much more, making a total of some 6,000 feet.

In recognition of their work, the battalion was commended by Capt. Robert M. Fortson, USN, commander of the area Naval Base. His letter said in part:

"This accomplishment has been outstanding, and it is believed a record has been established for air-strip construction considering the work accomplished in a short period time.

"This accomplishment was due to sound planning, engineering, skill, and unprecedented spirit of co-operation and hard work, through long hours and difficult weather conditions by all hands."

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SEABEES HANDLE HOT JOB

You gents who have been bragging about heat down in the Solomons--listen to the hot job performed by five Seabees in north Africa.

The sun was beating down on a freight train and Edward L. Timberman, GM2c, who was on guard, noticed smoke coming from a car loaded with dynamite and small bore ammunition.

He called Harold E. Swanson, CEM, and three others, W. C. Smith, MMlc, Albert G. Delmar, MMlc, and Angelo Deceico, BM2c, and tried to catch the attention of the engineer so that he would stop the train. No luck, so the men headed back to put the fire out.

It was a job breaking into the car, and when they finally did, the ammunition was exploding, especially the .30 caliber cartridges. That's when the job became really hot! But they finally managed to bring the fire under control.

A memorandum from Warrant Officer Lyonel V. Margolies to Lt. Cdr. George A. Rezac, stated: "These men by their actions which were in excess of their duties, and in complete disregard of their own personal safety, saved much valuable Army and Navy equipment and ammunition from certain destruction."

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MAKES UNDERWATER TORCH

The problem was: How could a section of heavy steel be cut 20 feet under water out on an island in the Southwest Pacific without any tools for the job.

The problem was dropped into the lap of L. E. Damm, CMlc, of San Francisco, who decided an underwater cutting torch was the best answer. He took the problem to H. O. T. Ridlon, SFlc, Cleveland, Ohio, who scratched his head for a few minutes and went to work.

Taking an ordinary blow torch, he employed the conventional principle of enclosing the cutting tip in a compressed air bell. Some parts he had to make; some he converted. The torch was tried. It worked.

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SEABEES DIVE INTO ICY SEA TO SAVE BUDDY

Two Navy Seabees dove over the side of their ship into debris-littered, icy water during a midnight storm in the Aleutians to save the life of one of their mates, and today both men have been recommended by their commanding officer to receive the Silver Life Saving Medal of the Treasury Department.

The two men are Thomas H. Clark, 25, MM2c, of Graniteville, Vt., and Ralph F. Marstiller, 21, Flc, of Elkins, W. Va. They rescued Leonard L. Hogan, 22, S2c, of the LaSalle Hotel, Reno, Nev.

Hogan had been working as a deckman on the hatch of a vessel during the early morning hours of a dark and extremely cold night. A movement of lumber caused him to lose his balance and he fell over the side.

Heavily clothed and unable to swim, Hogan called for help. His cries brought Clark and Marstiller to the rescue. In order to reach him, they had to dive blindly from a height of 25 feet into the lumber-strewn and storm-whipped waters.

While Marstiller supported Hogan, who was then nearly unconscious, Clark passed a line around him. All three were pulled over to the ship's side and hoisted aboard to safety.

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BUILD HUGE WHARF IN RECORD TIME

Out on an island in the Atlantic, a Seabee battalion built a 560-foot long marginal wharf of concrete which was commissioned only four months after work on the project had started.

In order to get the job done this fast, the Seabees "turned to" working on the new wall in two daily shifts of 10 hours each. First work on the forms started early in April and the first section of concrete was poured on June 2 for the 26-foot high project. The final section was poured August 3.

Constructed in 16 feet of water, the wharf required 20,000 feet of assorted materials. Approximately 9,000 man days were expended on the project, including the placing of the fill, the operation of the crusher, and the cement plant and operation mess at which the men were fed.

Lieut. George L. Wey, CEC, USNR, of Melrose, Mass., was in charge.

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SEABEES SHOW "CAN DO" BUILDING SPIRES DOCK

Chief Carpenter's Mate John Scott Spires and the men under him did such an excellent job in building a 15,000 foot oil dock that the finished job has now been officially christened, "Spires' Dock".

The job required plenty of ingenuity or it wouldn't be finished yet. It required 57 days to sink the first 476 piles with an old improvised skid rigged driver. So the Seabees mounted a steam driver which they designed and built and a barge. Result: 567 piles in 11 days, with a record day's work of 86 piles.

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A BIT INFORMAL

The boys out in the Solomons Island area must be going in for somewhat informal dress. To quote from the estimable news-sheet, "The Beachcomber", --"Some people are forgetting a notice that appeared on the bulletin board regarding dress at chow. It is not expected that anyone must sacrifice comfort to the extent of wearing dress blues, but on the other extreme, the simple costume of a dog-tag seems hardly enough."

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AFRICAN LEAGUE CHAMPS

In addition to handling the tremendous assignment of speeding the flow of supplies to the Mediterranean battle front, the Seabees won fame for themselves by showing the rest of the armed services how to play baseball.

Here's an extract from the July report of one of the battalions:

"Our baseball field is considered one of the best in North Africa and has attracted all of the outstanding Army and Navy teams. By defeating the Oran All-Stars in a series, our team is recognized as baseball champions of the Services in North Africa."

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STAR IN KODIAK OLYMPICS

Seabee "Can Do" has been applied to building air fields out of soupy mud and coconuts and digging camp sites out of frozen tundra but the boys have never been long on military precision marching. However, a picked platoon from a Seabee battalion took a try at it-- and marched off with top honors at the Kodiak Olympics not long ago. Faces on the gents from several crack platoons of the Army are still red.

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20 SEABEES FULL 37 MARINES

Morale of Base Maintenance Unit No. 507 is reported to be "in good condition". It ought to be when you read what happened when the boys engaged in a little contest with other Naval men, Marines, and the Army at a Fourth of July shindig.

In his report, Lt. Cdr. John J. Bohan CEC V (S), USNR, said the Seabees did all right in the tug-of-war. Twenty of them held 37 Marines to a draw! With 20 on each side, the Seabees towed the Marines around at will. In boxing, the Seabees won three, tied two, and lost only one bout. The baseball team was reported as "not winning". Probably tired to play four men against nine, when the pitcher had a sore arm.

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PEARY RECEIVES 100,00th

The one hundred thousandth recruit was sent through the induction mill at Camp Peary on 21 August, less than eight months after the first recruit was processed at Peary on that muddy day of December 6, 1942. The recruit who had the figure 100,000 written in mercurochrome across his chest at medical inspection is Emil J. Mascotti, CM3c, of Bessemer, Mich.

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WAVE NAMED CEC OFFICER

The Civil Engineer Corps of the Navy, composed since 1867 of very masculine engineers, has accepted its first woman officer of this branch of the Naval service. Now 22 years old, Ensign Kathleen F. Lux, holds an engineering degree from Purdue University and has specialized in sanitary engineering. She's now at work in the Bureau of Yards and Docks, but she says would like to work out in the field--even on Island X. "But they'll never let me go," she reports sadly.

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"JOE'S PLACE" SERVES FREE HAMBURGERS

Seabee "Can Do" has been applied to hamburgers.

On one of the islands in the Southwest Pacific, you'll find "Joe's Place" operated under the direction of Joseph M. Hayden, Seabee from Middleboro, Mass. But what's remarkable is that "Joe's Place" specializes in free hamburgers.

Under Joe's direction, Seabees operate the eating place which is becoming famed far and wide. It is in a building of teak and mahogany, secured by the Seabees on the island, and is kept in spotless condition.

Joe got the idea for a free hamburger spot when he discovered a large herd of cattle on an island. He persuaded the Navy to buy them and set up a slaughterhouse. Then he put over his idea for a mess hall--for enlisted men on duty there. Almost as quickly as the mess hall opened, the pilots took over.

The place, operated by 20 Seabees who work in shifts over the 24-hour period, can serve 75 persons at a time. It now serves 400 pounds of beef a day and it is all ground into hamburger with a single small hand grinder. To Joe and the boys, "Life is just one long grind".