

SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

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

ISSUE NO. 37

12 SEPTEMBER 1944

EIGHT MEN PREPARE AIR STRIP

Thousands of miles from the battle fronts and scores of miles from the nearest pinpoints of civilization, six Seabees and two officers used their bare hands and two hand shovels to build a landing strip on which planes could land with supplies

The Seabees, led by officers who are geology specialists, comprised a petroleum survey party who in two months this summer made detailed topographical maps of 164 square miles of tundra country near Pt. Barrow, Alaska.

The air strip which they constructed is located on a narrow sand spit in the center of a river in the area. Fortunately for their success, only a minimum of leveling and staking out was necessary to make this most northerly of all Seabee airstrips suitable for receiving planes.

How tough an assignment the survey proved to be is revealed by a scribbled note from one of the party's Eskimo guides. It seems the Seabees' pace was too much for the shoes and clothes the guides wore!

"My feet," wrote Charlie Edwardson, the guide, "is all peaking out. Will you please send me a pair of boots. If (the) Navy haven't got a pair for me, charge it to me. I need them very bad. Also Harry (the other guide) needs boots. They all worn out.... we won't walk any more if we didn't get any. Also Harry's pants and I need some adhesive tape. We're all right but our feet is bad."

The Seabees in the party are: Robert N. Grunigen, CM3c; Lawrence G. Gaartz, CCM; Prescott R. Reeds, CM3c; Lawrence J. Lyng, CCM; Ralph W. Delaney, CCM; and Noah T. Cannon, SC1c. Their officers were Lt. W. T. Foran, E-V(S), USNR, and Lt. (jg) Glen Woodward, E-V(S), USNR.

AROUND THE CLOCK

A battalion of Seabees, most of them battle-hardened veterans of the suicidal Japanese last-stand attacks during the Bougainville campaign, worked all day and then manned defensive positions in the hills of Guam every night for two weeks, it was revealed by Lt. Cmdr. G. J. Whelan, CEC, USNR, the battalion's OinC.

Landing early on D-Day, Lt. Cmdr. Whelan, his Executive Officer, Lt. Cmdr. B. W. Walker, CEC, USNR, crane and tractor operators and 30 men from the Headquarters detachment set up the Regimental Shore Party for the Third Marine Regiment. The balance of the battalion was formed into cargo-unloading details aboard 14 ships.

"The Shore Party work was very successful," Lt. Cmdr. Whelan said. "Ships unloading on the beaches assigned to the battalion were fully unloaded six hours before the ships of other transport divisions."

Besides working on the beaches, the Seabees set up watering points, established gravel pits and took over the job of keeping open the vital supply lines to the front line troops. New roads were constructed, old lanes cleared and widened. Destroyed bridges were repaired when possible and new ones built where the existing ones were found beyond repair.

Moving into the town of Agana soon after its capture, Seabee bulldozers cleared the main streets of mines and debris caused by the heavy shelling of the town.

"Great numbers of land mines were located and disarmed," Lt. Cmdr. Whelan said.

Other Seabees reconstructed the Naval Hospital and erected quarters for the Division Commander and his staff.

The road from Piti Navy Yard to Agana was re-surfaced and widened and a continuous flow of heavy traffic was maintained.

Despite the fact that the Seabees were under heavy mortar shelling and enemy sniper fire while on the beaches, the battalion suffered few casualties.

CLOTHES-LINE

Hitler's vaunted West Wall may not have been much good in keeping out the hordes of Allied troops on D-Day but Seabees on the French invasion coast have found something it is good for.

Units of a Seabee battalion, in temporary quarters in the captured German fortifications, use the guns of the master-race as clothes-lines to dry their socks, skivvy shirts, etc.

NO REDUCTION IN NAVY UNTIL PACIFIC WAR IS WON

The defeat of Germany will bring about no demobilization of the Navy according to an official Navy Department announcement this week.

"On the contrary," the announcement said, "the Navy is expanding and will continue to expand. The Navy cannot demobilize until Japan is defeated."

The collapse of Germany, the announcement continued, will present the Navy with new tasks. One of these tasks will be transporting men and material, freed from the European theater, into the Pacific in order to deliver heavier blows against Japan.

"Germany's defeat will result in a redistribution, rather than a reduction, of Naval strength," the statement said.

It was revealed, however, that the Navy has been at work on demobilization methods for more than a year and had completed tentative plans to meet any contingency. In developing these plans the Navy has worked in close cooperation with the Army with the result that present plans agree in principle with those announced by the War Department.

(To determine priorities for discharges, the Army will use a point system giving weighted credits for total months in the Army, total months overseas, decorations and battle clasps indicating combat service, and dependent children.)

The Navy will continue to work in closest liaison with the Army in an effort to establish, to the fullest extent possible, uniformity in demobilization policies and methods, the announcement said. Furthermore, since demobilization of the Navy must wait defeat of Japan, the Navy will have an opportunity to observe in operation the partial demobilization of the Army and will thus be able to profit by the Army's experience.

LUCKY LAUNCHING

A detail of Seabees who salvaged three German small boats at Cherbourg thought they had been pretty lucky even if they did have to make repairs to a marine railway and use a turntable to get one of the boats into the water.

They have just found out how lucky they really were.

Army units moving in to the ship yard later found that all the turntables had been mined by the Nazis, but the one the Seabees used had failed to explode.

SIDE-WINDER

Something new in tractors is a "side-boom" tractor crane which is helping Seabees of the 94th Battalion lay heavy cast iron and concrete pipe in the rough and rocky terrain of their "Island X".

Devised by Lt. (jg) J. P. Barnes, CEC, USNR, the home-made crane was constructed by CCM A. K. Brown and CSF A. L. Darr. Frames of 6" I-beams were cut and welded together for both sides of the tractor and bolted directly to the roller frame. The boom was made of welded 2" angle iron and lattice of 1 1/2" flat straps and hinged with a 2" pipe on the left frame.

Because of the caterpillar treads, the "side-boom cat" can work anywhere and is particularly ideal for pipelaying since it is able to move alongside the ditch. The side-boom can also be used for small loading and unloading operations.

If and when the "side-winder" outlives its usefulness, it can be quickly and easily reconverted to the standard tractor since all parts of the assembly are bolted to the tractor frame, using the bolt holes for the standard bulldozer blade mounts.

CHOW A LA MODE

Jap snipers on Los Negros probably would have stopped shooting and surrendered had they known the Seabees they were shooting at were ignoring them to the extent of baking fresh bread and peach cobbler.

The "galley gang" of the 40th Battalion had hardly come ashore before they had found a place to set up a mobile shop and were furnishing their mates with hot coffee for breakfast. Forty-eight hours later the bread and peach cobbler were on the menu.

During the entire operation, the crew progressed step by step with the fighting (which won the battalion the Presidential Unit Citation on recommendation of the Army), and before the last shot was fired, they were feeding 1,500 hungry Seabees in an hour and 15 minutes at each meal.

Feeding that many men for a single meal meant this:

1,500 steaks cut from fresh meat; 50 gallons of canned fruit for a single serving of pie; 80 pounds of sugar to give each man a piece of cake; 16 pecks of potatoes; 48 gallons of green beans; 85 two-pound loaves of bread; and 70 pounds of coffee.

And, yep, you guessed it, ice cream twice a week.

SHOW MUST GO ON

The screen suddenly darkened at the 129th Battalion's movie show recently; apparently an ordinary break in the film.

But in the projection booth, Ed Wilson was in a quandry -- movies are important on "Island X". The break had been caused by a worn carbon brush in the motor. No replacement was on hand or even on the island.

Ripping down an ordinary flashlight battery, Wilson extracted the carbon core, trimmed it down to size, and replaced the defective part.

Five minutes after the break, the picture flashed back on the screen.

21-DAY PT BOAT BASE

A bulldozer waddled down the ramp of an LST onto the virgin shores of a jungle island in the South Pacific last summer. Three days later the Special PT detachment of the 113th Battalion had completed sufficient facilities for PT boats to use the island as a patrol base, and 21 days after that the entire base was completed.

The first bulldozer started the job by building a landing ramp out to the ship and bulling through a road to a camp site. By nightfall of the first day, a radio and operations tent had been set up, and work of building the camp had begun. At 0730 the next morning, construction was started on a fueling-watering dock 8 feet wide by 80 feet long. Three days later at 1530, the dock was completed and ready for fueling. The next day the water line to the dock had been built.

At the same time work had gone forward on a large well to be lined with a crib of 2x10 wood sheet piling. On the day the dock was finished, the well was producing 35,000 to 40,000 gallons of water per day.

Five days after the initial landing a permanent galley and mess hall stood ready for use, and another four days saw the completion of an 18 x 50-foot sick bay, complete with concrete floor. The same day saw the completion of a timber access dock for the detachment's pontoon dry dock.

Other facilities followed in order, and in addition, according to Lt. Cmdr. R. C. Mather, CEC, USNR, acting OinC, a number of miscellaneous jobs were completed, among them this risky one:

"A request was received," wrote Lt. Cmdr. Mather, "to design and install a 4-inch manifold on a 300,000-gallon gasoline barge. The pump had to be ready to gas the P-T boats that afternoon for that night's operations, but there were no pipe cutters or pipe dies for this size pipe available. The detachment therefore turned out a "Can Do" cut and welded job, that was completed in time to gas the boats on schedule."

"CHATEAU SEABEE"

Impressed by the courtesy and fine military-bearing of Seabees quartered in their chateau since shortly after D-Day, the owners have decided to change the name of the old French castle from Chateau de la Vallee to "Chateau Seabee", according to "The Invader".

The owners, a M. and Mme. Rochard, have requested the battalion to make a plaque commemorating their stay which would be suitable for decorating the main gateway to the estate.

"BULLDOZER-FIREMAN" CONQUERED ENGLAND'S "WORST" FIRE

Details on the heroism of the "bulldozer fireman" who diverted a river of

flaming gasoline which threatened a southwestern English town in what some observers called England's most spectacular and terrifying fire were revealed by Herbert Morrison, Minister of Home Security, according to a London dispatch by the Associated Press.

The wave of fiery fuel splashed across a half-mile of country-side when a hidden dump was hit by an enemy air raider. The flaming torrent rushed from the tank at the rate of 1,000 feet a minute, said the AP, and rolled downhill in a stream that turned into a curtain of fire that sped toward the village.

Water had to be played on both firemen and houses because of the intense heat, and hope of saving the village had almost been given up until the bulldozer dammed the stream and the channel of fire finally burned out.

Although the AP report said the name of the American bulldozer operator was not revealed by Mr. Morrison, Seabee CBM Philip Bishop, (SNS issue #32), recently received an official commendation for just such an action.

HEAVY GOING

In a feat which the 141st Battalion's publication, 'The Island X-Ray', said rivalled Hannibal's crossing of the Alps, a detail of Seabees "walked" a 47-ton shovel 100 miles.

"Equipped with field rations, camping equipment, and depreciation reports, the men were set to keep the machine rolling until their destination was reached, if it took the duration and six.

"Shortly before going to press word trickled through that the big shovel had finally reached its destination," 'X-Ray' proudly proclaimed.

FLOATING BARRACKS

Japanese reconnaissance photo-interpreters probably have been burning the midnight oil in an effort to identify a most unusual American craft, the only one of its kind in the Pacific Ocean. It's the 14th Special Battalion's "Sea Hag."

Resembling a large double-decked house boat, the "Sea Hag" is the result of an acute housing shortage plus the inventiveness of 200 of the 14th's cargo handlers.

When the Seabees arrived at their first "Island X" in response to a hurry-up call for trained stevedores, they faced the problem of finding quarters on an already overcrowded island. The answer was the "Sea Hag", a 1500-ton Mississippi River barge with a few Seabee improvements.

The improvements consist of regular land based gear improvised for use

aboard the floating barracks and the construction of additional housing above decks.

In use less than a year, the "Sea Hag" already has seen service at three forward areas, being towed some 1800 miles since her initial operation.

RECORD?

The 101st Battalion lays claim to a new speed record in the erection of a "king size" quonset hut. A 17-man detail assembled the 40x100-foot structure in 14 working hours.

LUMBERJACKS

Since setting up its portable sawmill on the first of its two "Island X's" the 33rd Battalion has cut 2,007,500 board feet of lumber which has gone into the construction of every type of advance base structure.

Experts estimated the sawmill's production has resulted in the saving of more than 170,000 cubic feet of valuable war-zone shipping space which could thus be used for the transportation of ammunition, supplies and men.

NO PURCHASES REFUNDED

It cost A. E. Harriger of the 101st Battalion, \$3.90 to join the Seabees!

After "Harry" had been accepted by the Navy and was being readied for the oath, he was asked for his World War I discharge papers. Startled by the request, he had to admit that he didn't have them and, what's more, never had had them.

It seems that back in 1918 Harriger was on his way to report to his hometown board for duty when the Armistice was signed. Upon his arrival, the draft officials told him to go back to work and he did -- without any sort of release.

So, before the oath could be administered, Harriger had to wire the War Department for official detachment. The telegram cost him \$3.90.

BRING ON THEM BOMBS!

During a particularly heavy Japanese air raid, several Yanks took refuge in a crater. One bomb landed nearby, smashing everything in sight. Into the hole came parts of trees, tents, piles of earth, etc.

Only one article landed in the crater undamaged -- a full, unopened quart bottle of Scotch whiskey.

JAP WAR TO BE TOUGHER, SECNAV SAYS

The air war in the Pacific is "bound to get tougher", SecNav James V. Forrestal told a press conference in Washington this week.

"The fight will be a long and hard one," Mr. Forrestal warned.

The loss by Japan of some 50 outlying bases will permit the concentration of enemy air power in the Philippines, China and Japan proper, he said. In addition, the Japs will probably have more planes since they have been avoiding big aerial combats for many months.

Another reason the air war will be tougher, Mr. Forrestal said, "is that the Jap has recently made many important technical improvements in his aircraft."

Mr. Forrestal, however, expressed confidence that the still expanding air and sea forces of the United States would blast the Japanese from their "substantial major bases" even though they will be "better defended and better manned" as the American forces move closer to Japan.

SIX IN A ROW

For their speed in handling cargo, Seabees of the Fourth Special received six commendations from ship masters during July.

Typical of these commendations is one from J. M. Van Orden, master of the S.S. -----, who stated: "The cargo discharging operation aboard this vessel was carried out with the greatest efficiency that I have experienced since the war began."

He related how cargo was discharged at the rate of approximately 11.52 tons per section hour.

Also commending the speed of Fourth Special men, Captain G. Melgin, master of another vessel, declared: "The fine showing they made aboard this vessel compares favorably with that of veteran stevedore organizations in the United States."

During July, the battalion handled a total of 56,919 tons discharged and 14,420 tons loaded, an increase of 2,010 tons over the previous month.

NO OBLIGATION -- JUST A FAVOR

Seabees of the 119th Battalion saw how they could put an LCT back into service with a little fast repair work, so they volunteered to try. How well they succeeded is told by Lt. P. E. Ross, D-V(S), USNR, in a letter of commendation which stated, in part:

"Due to this fine gesture on your part, the ship was back in operation in three days ... instead of two weeks. Special thanks is given to Lt. E. L. Sheaks and William Hines, CSF, for their accomplishments."

SET NEW CARGO RECORD

Handling a daily average of 1,939 tons of cargo, the Third Special rang up a July total of 60,121 tons, an increase of 4,000 tons over its previous best month's record.

Lt. Cmdr. Jack Knapp, USNR, said the Seabees' performance coupled with that of other units at the base resulted in a total of 112,039 tons being handled, which exceeded all previous records for the port tonnage by 13,000 tons.

"This," said Lt. Cmdr. Knapp, "has been made possible by the thorough cooperation of all units handling cargo, including the Army quartermaster battalion which does the trucking and the Naval Supply Depot which receives same and unloads it from the trucks at their warehouses."

CORN?

The latest in the series of tall tales concerning the Seabees is the one about the Red Cross worker on a remote Pacific island who called the Army quartermaster and reported, "We've got a case of beri-beri here. What shall we do with it?"

Came the answer over the wire: "Give it to the Seabees; they'll drink anything."

RECEIVES COMMENDATION RIBBON

For swimming to the rescue of a drowning man despite extremely difficult conditions, Kenneth C. Van Hee, CM1c, of CBMU 559, was awarded a Commendation Ribbon by Rear Admiral Oliver M. Read, USN, and a citation signed by the Secretary of Navy.

The citation read in part: "Attracted by the cries of a sailor who had lost his grip on a steel cable and had dropped into the water, Van Hee unhesitatingly dived off the dock where he was working and went to his rescue. Securing a line to the helpless man, despite extremely difficult conditions, he succeeded in bringing him safe to the pier."

F.O.B. TOKYO

Salvaged Japanese equipment and supplies and materials captured from the enemy are helping the 113th Battalion construct another milepost on the road to Tokyo.

One of the first conversion jobs was made by the blasting crew. Finding the Jap drilling equipment similar to American tunnel machines, the dynamiters used an enemy tripod and mounted an American jack hammer on the shell of the Jap tunnel machine. With their own supply of dynamite temporarily unavailable, the blasting crew substituted Japanese picric acid. From a cave in the hills a supply of Jap gelatin dynamite was procured. This coupled with enemy caps and fuses made possible almost uninterrupted operations.

Other Japanese equipment in use by the 113th includes a rebuilt ten-wheeler truck which has been put into service by the lubrication department and is now making the rounds fueling and greasing heavy equipment in the field; another truck, mounting a compressor which provides power for the roadbuilding jack hammers; a repaired four-cylinder Yanmar Diesel electrical generator; and two Jap lathes.

FLOWERS TO CBMU 510

Proof that recognition is not dependent upon a glamorous assignment is a commendation received recently by CBMU 510 which is maintaining a Naval Air Station in the North Pacific area.

Wrote Captain A. I. Price, the C.O.: "The exceptional performance of the NCBMU No. 510 has been noticeable during my tours of inspection about the Naval Air Station and in the frequent reports passed to me by the Executive Officer, and it is most gratifying to see the facilities of the command in such an excellent state of repair..... To you officers and men, a resounding 'Well Done' is due. Your conduct, morale, willingness to do the job now has been in keeping with the best traditions of the Naval Service. I am certain that wherever you go you will be a credit to yourselves and an asset to your station.

RIGHT ANSWER

While the battle for Los Negros continued, a survey party of the 40th Battalion made its way gingerly through the jungle.

Suddenly, four members of the party brought their tommy-guns and Browning automatics to the ready and dropped back to investigate a rustling noise.

Creeping along in the approved jungle-fighting stance came a lone soldier.

"Where's the front, Mac?" the soldier whispered, hoarsely.

"It's a half-mile back; you've already passed it," one of the Seabees responded.

"Then what are you guys doing way up here?" the soldier asked.

"Working," answered the Seabee as he and his mates rejoined the survey party.

WIN MALARIA BATTLE

For virtually eradicating the breeding places of the dread anopheles -- the malaria-carrying mosquitoes--soon after arriving at their "Island X", the 88th Battalion's malaria control squad has received the commendation of the island malariologist, Major Curtis A. Beerman, MC, USA.

After lauding the unit for its "excellent" malaria control program, the major's commendation observed: "Undoubtedly, your control activities were a most important factor in the very low malaria rate that the 88th CBs have been able to maintain on this island."

BOTTOMS UP

Although many Seabees have escaped injury by the "skin of their teeth" Carl Ressor, S2c, of the 112th Battalion, is probably the only one ever saved by the seat of his pants.

A member of a carpentry crew, Ressor was carrying boards across a temporary catwalk some 20 feet above a roughly-finished concrete floor when a plank gave way. As he fell, the Seabee grabbed at a cross beam and hung on.

Tony Cotter, S2c, who was walking behind Ressor, wrapped his legs around a beam, grabbed the latter under the belt and by the seat of his pants, and hoisted him to safety.

PRAISED FOR ORGANIZATION

The 42nd Battalion has completed its part in the rebuilding of Port Chicago, the Navy ammunition center which was demolished by an explosion some months ago.

When the Seabees returned to Camp Parks, they bore with them an Army Captain's commendation for the best organization he had seen in any command in his 24 years' of service.

"It is a pleasure," added the officer, Capt. Allen Richardson, "to know the Army and Navy can work together hand in hand for the same cause, to get this war over.

"As for myself, I say this for all of you: When there are bigger jobs to do I am sure you will do them if they give you the opportunity."

BUILDERS BOUGHT

Seabees of the 68th Battalion have received a letter of commendation from the Office of the Secretary of Navy for their "outstanding record" during the recent Navy Independence Day "Extra" Cash War Bond sale.

The boys bought \$75,000 in "extra" cash bonds.

Total investment by the 68th amounted to \$100,000 -- equal to the quota set for the entire station.

SHORT SPORT SHOTS

BASEBALL: Yankees took over American League lead Labor Day but, by week's end, Browns had fought way back into tie. Odds still favor Browns who will play 17 of remaining 21 games at home. Race may not be decided until Yanks reach St. Louis last four days of season. With Dizzy Trout hanging up his 24th win, and Hal Newhouser chalk-ing up No. 23, Tigers closed to within one game of co-leaders. Three games behind, Red Sox's pennant hopes suffered another jolt with loss of Bobby Doerr, league's leading batsman and star second baseman. Doerr inducted into Army. In National League, Cardinals held 17 1/2 game lead over Pirates. took their 14th straight victory this season from Cubs. Mort Cooper scored his 20th win of season for Red Birds as did Bucky Walters, third place Reds' dependable hurler. Cubs and Giants fighting it out for fourth spot. Frankie Frisch signed to manage Pirates for his sixth year. Paul Waner, famous Big Poison of NL, released by Dodgers, signed with Yankees. Danny Litwhiler, Cards' outfielder, reclassified 1A, subject to immediate call. Dodgers will lose catcher Mickey Owen, accepted for military service. Milwaukee Brewers clinched second straight American Assn. race.

FOOTBALL: New Pro football league will begin operations in '45 in following cities: New York, Chicago, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. National League teams shaping up for season. Washington Redskins won exhibition games over March Field, Green Bay Packers, Brooklyn Tigers. Packers and Boston Yanks beat Sampson NTC eleven; Yanks lost to Cleveland Rams, returning to league competition after year's absence. Don Hutson, greatest pass catcher in pro history, lured from retirement again by Packers. Navy adopted NCAA 4-year ruling, making half-dozen former Navy stars eligible for another season's play. Carnegie Tech abandoned football for duration. Southeastern Conf. turned down East's revisions, will play under existing football rules.

SIDELINES: Ike Williams won 10-round split decision over Sammy Angott, former NBA lightweight champ. Williams headed for Army. Bee Bee Wright KO'd Cpl. Nick Lattos in 8th. Sgt. Frankie Parker won National Tennis title. Byron Nelson captured \$10,000 Nashville Invitational Golf. Equifox won \$59,050 Washington Park 'Cap. Pensive, Derby-Preakness winner, injured, out for season. Arne Anderson beat Gunder Hagg in 2000-meter and 3000-meter runs.

SERVICEMEN'S SPORTS: Athletics whitewashed Camp Endicott's nine, 7-0. Chief Ernie Koy, Sp(A), former big league baseball star, commissioned Lieut (j.g.). Capt. George Franck, Marine fighter pilot and one-time backfield star of U of Minnesota and New York Giants, rescued in Pacific after plane crash. Capt. Jim Tuttle, former Giant and Lt. Cliff Battles, ex-Redskin, assisting Lt. Col. Dick Hanley, Northwestern's former football coach, whip Marines' El Toro eleven into shape. Phil Marchildon, officer in Royal Canadian Airforce and former Athletic pitching star, reported missing in action. Lt. J.C. Stokes and Lt. (j.g.) V. L. Plattner of 112th Batt won Navy All-Seabee Tennis doubles. 8th Specials "Stevedores" captured Coral League baseball championship. Star-studded 7th AAF nine whipped 116th Batt's "Colonials" 14-2. During game, Seabee fan shouted: "Anyway, we can put up a quonset hut faster than you guys".