

# SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

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

ISSUE NO. 54

9 JANUARY 1945

## BUDOCKS ANNOUNCES RELEASE POLICY

The Bureau of Yards and Docks will not at this time recommend approval of applications for discharge or inactive duty status from Seabees or Civil Engineer Corps officers if their departure from active duty will affect adversely the military efficiency of the Naval forces.

This policy was announced this week by the Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks in response to "a considerable number" of requests from enlisted men for separation from the Naval service, and from officers for either service discharges or inactive duty.

The complete text of the Chief's statement follows:

"As a result of BuPers Circular Letter 257-44 and SecNav letter 44-1031 of 15 September, a considerable number of requests have been received by the Bureau of Naval Personnel from enlisted men in the Construction Battalions, as well as officers of the Civil Engineer Corps, who desire, in the case of the enlisted men to be separated from the service, and in the case of officers either to resign or be placed on inactive duty.

"Such requests may be submitted. However, the action taken will be entirely dependent upon the needs of the service and will be determined specifically by the effect the discharge of such man, or the release of such officers, will have on the military efficiency of the naval forces. Enlisted men and officers will not be severed from the service or placed on inactive duty when they are needed either in their present billets or elsewhere and are not otherwise acceptable with or without re-training; nor will they be released to return to civilian employment if required by the service in accordance with these standards.

"At the present time, due to the recently authorized increase in enlisted forces of the Construction Battalions, as well as the shortage of officers and the further expansion of Civil Engineer Corps activities, it is necessary to retain enlisted men of the Construction Battalions and officers of the Civil Engineer Corps on active duty.

"The Bureau regrets that regardless of the specific endorsement of the Commanding Officer of the Battalion it is only possible to recommend granting a discharge or release from active duty at this time in those cases where such discharge or release from active duty will not impair the efficiency of the Construction Battalions or the activities of the Civil Engineer Corps with regard to the war effort."

## 84TH BATTALION COMMENDED

The 84th Battalion has been commended by Major General C. P. Hall, United States Army, for "exceptionally meritorious performance of duty in operations against the enemy."

Citing roads, docks, hospitals and stevedoring activities, General Hall attributed a large share in the success of the island operation to the cooperative spirit shown by all units engaged, particularly the team work of Army and Navy units.

Lt. Comdr. Roger F. Neal, CEC, is Officer-in-Charge of the 84th.

## CLAY PIGEON

For Richard V. Oliver, MM1c, the longest 24-hours he ever spent were those on a grounded, ammunition-laden barge, continually under fire from enemy troops only a few hundred yards away.

Oliver, coxswain of the barge, underwent his harrowing experience the first day of a recent invasion.

"About 5:30 the afternoon of D-Day," he recalled, "the beachmaster told us the Marines were expecting a counter-attack against their beachhead, and they had to have the ammunition from our barge. We had 25 tons of the stuff.

"We started in for shore, but ran aground on a reef, only 150 yards from the beach.

"The Japs opened up with artillery, mortars, and machine gun fire. I still don't know how we kept from being blown up. We were hit twice by artillery fire, but both times it was the barge itself and not the ammunition stacked on top that was hit. One artillery blast knocked the fin off the steering unit on the barge.

"All that night we had to keep shooting at Japs who attempted to walk out to us through the shallow water. Several times we drove off Jap rubber boats attempting to sneak up in the dark.

During the night and until mid-morning the next day, the Seabees transferred their cargo of ammunition from the barge to Marine amphibious tanks and "ducks" which shuttled out from the beach. Twenty four hours after it grounded, the barge was pulled free by a Coast Guard LCM and Oliver and his crew went back to the supply ship for another load.

## LINED UP!

A mooring line lying slack in the water between his pontoon barge and another vessel caught in the center of a tropical storm, spelt the difference between life and death for Howard A. Thompson, MM2c, a member of a pontoon detachment which participated in the Peleliu invasion.

After nine days work with a pontoon crane barge crew at Peleliu, Thompson was assigned to a group of barges which were to help supply ammunition to units of the Third Fleet. At the rendezvous they were hit by a hurricane:

"The waves were coming over the deck three feet high," Thompson recalled, "and as the barge pitched, a wave swept me in between the barge and the ship we were moored to. I would have been crushed in an instant if I hadn't fallen across one of the mooring lines that lay slack in the water.

"When the barge heaved again, the line snapped taut, and I was thrown clear out of the water and over to the other side of the barge. It all happened so fast that I didn't even have time to get scared.

He did, however, have plenty of opportunity to become frightened while at Peleliu. His barge, grounded high and dry on the reef after its anchor chain parted, was the target for Jap mortar fire until the crew of an LCVP braved the fire to pull it clear; and, later while "taking a look" at Bloody Nose Ridge, he was pinned down by enemy machine gun and sniper fire until rescued by a Marine.

#### ADDED REASON

"Here's the one that had my name on it -- but not the exact address!"

Holding out a jagged, spent machine-gun bullet, Charles Sutton, MM3c, told how a Zero strafing a construction site on Saipan had almost caught him while he was at work on a new hospital.

Sutton said the Seabees went back to work on the building as soon as the "all clear" sounded.

"After seeing how close we came to having to use it ourselves," chimed in CBM Frank L. Halbin, "We were more anxious than ever to get the place finished!"

#### BULLDOZER FIREMAN NO 2

Credited with preventing the spread of a fire which threatened to destroy vital military stores at an advanced base, Joseph F. Claunch, MM1c, of the 12th Special, has been awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal.

The Seabee, disregarding the danger from exploding material, drove his bulldozer into a blazing warehouse to push burning supplies out into the area of the original fire, thus confining the blaze to one dump.

#### CROSS-RATING BAIT?

Seabee pontoon units at Peleliu went ashore, pooled their food supply, built a

chow hall and soon had such good food they were feeding "company" --and they didn't have a cook in the outfit!

Cooking facilities were scattered when they first went ashore and each galley took care of only about 20 men. They were using makeshift equipment--oil barrel stoves, pots and pans made of drums and tin cans.

They "acquired" some field ranges from other outfits, built a chow hall of tarpaulins and mosquito netting, soon even had a bakery in operation, in addition to a mess hall for 200 and an officers' mess.

They had a machinist's mate who had once worked in his father's bakery. He became the baker. For cooks they had a painter, an electrician's mate and a machinist's mate.

The opening day's meal was canned turkey, potatoes, peas, bread, apple pie, cheese, fruit salad and coffee.

"We had to do a lot of 'trading' to 'acquire' all these foods," one of the men said, "but we really had a feast."

#### CONVINCED

What's an invasion without souvenirs? Not a thing! So Woodford L. Malone, 44-year-old MM2c, wandered into Peleliu's jungles to see what he could pick up.

He trudged a way, ran into a Marine. "Where ya goin' grandpop?" the Leatherneck queried.

"Front lines," said Malone.

"Ya there now. Betta getthehell back to the beach."

"This the front lines?"

Whing! A Jap bullet came close to parting Malone's hair. Three more came almost as close.

"Suddenly," said Malone, "I decided that Marine wasn't fooling. I crawled away as quick as I knew how.

"I got the souvenirs OK -- but later!"

#### ADVANCED TRAINING--POST GRADUATE STYLE!

State-side advanced training is a breeze compared to the rigors of the Army's Unit Jungle Training Center on Oahu--ask the Seabee who's been there!

Patterned after the Army's Ranger course at Camp Forrest, Tennessee, the

unit sports three tough courses over which Marines, soldiers and Seabees go in a week of concentrated conditioning and "wising-up" processes before they set out for Jap territory.

The terrain is much like that to which they're headed--mountainous, jungle country affording ideal situations as to assault, defense, infiltration and other tactics.

Despite its hardships, only a few Seabees over 40 (and therefore excused), do not take the course. In seven days they get toughening classes in physical fitness, hand-to-hand-combat, construction and passage methods of barbed wire entanglements, booby traps and infiltration, stream crossing expedients, assault bayonets, assault of fortified areas, jungle living, first aid and evacuation of wounded. They learn what native plants are edible and how to prepare them, how to construct shelters and make shoes from coconut husks.

Slippery, winding jungle roads are good proving grounds for truck drivers. Assault methods against pillboxes and fortifications are demonstrated. An "abandoned Jap house" is rigged with every known booby trap device the Japs have ever used, "snipers" pop from the undergrowth and out of trees with a sufficient element of surprise to keep trainees constantly on the alert.

The assault area teaches use and methods in small arms, flame throwers, bazookas and grenades.

Said one officer at completion of the course: "We've practiced just about everything but a parachute jump."

### PRIZE PUPIL

Melvin E. Merrill, SF1c, who operated a supply barge for the Peleliu beach-head, came ashore as the Japs retreated inland and remembered his booby-trap classes just in time.

"I was walking along toward Bloody Nose Ridge," he related, "when I saw a wire across the path. I started to pick it up, thinking it was a scrap of telephone wire--and suddenly remembered warnings we had had on booby traps."

Merrill traced the wire, found it attached to a Jap grenade secured to a tree!

### FULLY SEABEE-IZED

Chamorros of the Marianas will salute any and all U. S. servicemen--and fully expect a salute in return, according to William E. Williams, CM2c, who tells this story:

"Here was this little Chamorro boy, trudging down the muddy road, clad in a native grass skirt, a pair of Jap khaki shorts and an enormous pair of GI shoes. In his left hand he clutched a large piece of candy; with his left hand was leading a reluctant goat tied to a rope.

"As he approached me, he acted just like a Seabee--he stuck the whole piece

of candy in his mouth, shifted the rope to his left hand and solemnly gave me a salute with his right. I returned the salute and the little boy marched past, dragging the goat with all the dignity he could muster."

### THE COMFORTS OF HOME

CBMU 513's Bob Baronoff may oversleep occasionally, but he has to have a lot of resistance to be able to do it.

Baronoff has gotten himself an alarm clock, attached the cord of the pull-chain lamp in his room to the alarm-wind handle so that when the alarm goes off, the handle winds and tightens the string, putting on the light. The Seabee also has hooked up a device by which the alarm turns on his radio. All he needs now is an automatic breakfast-serving tray.

### A BAD MAN TO RILE

A Jap sniper who sneaked into the tent of Chief Warrant Officer Alfred E. Denny, CEC, USNR, made only one mistake. He let the naval officer hear him. In the scuffle, the Jap lost his rifle, a few seconds later lost his life.

The incident occurred in the Palaus where Mr. Denny had been in charge of a pontoon detachment which participated in the operation from D-Day on.

Besides his brush with the sniper, the Chief Warrant Officer and his men had other close calls. Accustomed to being shot at while aboard the pontoon barges, the group sweated most when they were marooned on a Jap-held section of the beach. They managed to swim out to safety while a Navy gun boat covered their escape.

### COMPARATIVELY SIMPLE

Salvaging a sunken Jap dredge, Seabees on Saipan were unable to use American pipe to replace damaged odd-size pipe used by the Japanese and had to dig into rubble on the beach for replacement.

Said CSF Joseph M. Ponder: "This job isn't so tough. I have another one that gives me a damned sight more trouble. Every time we dig down a few feet while laying a pipe line, we hit a buried Jap ammunition dump!

"The Japs must have been in an awful hurry to leave this dredge," he continued. "All the damage it sustained was done by our own gun crews. Why, if I had to, in five minutes, I could ruin that boiler for good!

"What's more," said Ponder, "we won't run short of fuel for this thing. The Japs left more coal on the island than we know what to do with!"

## INSULT TO INJURY

Seabees on an island in the Marianas pay attention when they hear the sound of a Japanese bugle. For the bugle may be Japanese, but the bugler is not.

The "music-maker" is Karl S. Musser, GM3c, battalion bugler, who says that even though the horn is Jap-made, "it's a mighty fine instrument at that."

The bugle was found by Seabee souvenir hunters and was used first to blow taps for "Washing Machine Charlie," a Jap bomber. "Charlie" came over three nights in succession to disturb the slumbering Seabees, but, because of a previous "engagement", failed to show the fourth.

### EXPLOSIVE POSSIBILITIES

Claimant to recognition as "most versatile Seabee" is Paul W. Armstrong, SF2c, of the 101st.

Armstrong doubles as plumber and battalion dental technician; skillfully builds and repairs dentures even though his experience has been limited to a few months as an apprentice in a laboratory.

Mates, not too greatly worried about the possibility of Armstrong using a Stilson on a plate, do have one fear: if a plumber works out well as a builder of teeth, what's to prevent a demolition man from being assigned to extractions?!

### MAGIC FOX HOLE

Paul S. Tofte, CCM, chow hall master at arms, has a good word for construction speed of at least two of his battalion mates on Saipan.

The air raid siren wailed and the scramble started for helmets, gas masks and shelter. Two Seabees breezed past Tofte, headed for the battalion theater which uses filled sand-bags as seats.

"I followed quickly -- but by the time I got there they had a complete shelter built of sand-bags, and a roof on it to protect them from falling flak. How they did it so fast, I'll never know.

"But did I ask questions? Hell, no! I crawled in with 'em," he said.

### ALMOST GOT AWAY

The environment wasn't all it could be, but the 117th Battalion's Thanksgiving dinner was fit for a king -- and twice as precious. One hungry member, eating from the back of a truck while standing in ankle-deep mud, left his meal temporarily to fumble for a cigarette for a friend. As he fumbled, the truck drove away.

The still-hungry one emitted a screech, set off in hot pursuit and soon had recovered his first full meal in days.

### THE ODDS DIDN'T MEAN A THING

Our candidate for "man most likely to fill an inside straight" M. M. Clark, SF3c, of the 73rd. Clark disembarked on Guadalcanal, ran into a brother serving on a destroyer, turned around and met a second brother, the latter attached to a fleet photographic unit.

### ON THE JOB

Commended for completing a Pacific airdrome "in record time against severe handicaps of terrain, climate, and equipment deficiencies," the 60th Battalion has shown equal skill in airfield maintenance work.

When enemy bombers came over soon after the field had been completed, the 60th repair squads turned out immediately after the "all clear", worked all night, and had the field in shape the following morning so that heavy bombers could take off on a scheduled strike.

### CHIEFS ON THE CHOW LINES!

Chief Petty Officers of the 117th Battalion, manned the chow lines and handled the KP chores for a full day "just to give the KP boys a rest" aboard a troop transport.

It was no gag. The regular KP staff was topside, lolling in the sun; below, the 45 Chiefs were dishing out the food, sweating through a day of chow-line service and pots and pans -- even to deck swabbing at the close of the final meal.

William Ensley, CSKD, was the instigator "to give the boys a vacation, help break the monotony and give them something to talk about."

### PRODUCTION LINE SANTA CLAUSES

A North African-based battalion maintenance unit set up a Santa Claus sub-station and fashioned 2,300 wooden toys for the "neighbors" to highlight various Christmas parties held by Navy units.

Using production-line methods, they cut the Donald Ducks, Porky Pigs, Dopeys and Mickey Mouse figures from one-quarter-in stock, applied the various colors.



## HAIL KANSAS!

The bone of contention was a shell-riddled railroad boiler, a little lend-lease object from Germany to Japan, but it invoked a miniature civil war between Kansas and Texas when the 39th Battalion found it.

Repaired and converted into a steam boiler for the 39th's messhall and galley, it had to have a name. Nelson G. Summerfield, CMM, a Kansas Citian through and through, held out for the "Kansas City Short Line" in memory of a brief railroad of that name. Three stalwart Texans, likewise through and through, wanted "The Texas Tornado" painted across the Saarbrucken boiler.

Summerfield, who had the upper hand in the conversion and repairing, won out. It's the "Kansas City Short Line", perpetuating the name of the railroad which Summerfield says "ran about 40 miles from Kansas City to somewhere."

## 2,000 TO V-12 PROGRAM

A total of 2,000 enlisted men will enter the Navy V-12 program on July 1 for training as commissioned officers in the Naval Reserve. No trainees will be selected from civilian sources.

Basic requirements are: Be an enlisted man on active duty, a citizen of the United States, less than 23 years of age on 1 July, 1945, unmarried and agree to remain unmarried until commissioned; a high school graduate or have been in attendance at, or accepted for admission by an accredited college or university. No waivers of general sea duty physical requirements will be granted.

## STRANGER IN TOWN

A dog who's scared of a tree and refuses to get close to a fire plug! Joe B. Fleming, EM1/c, vows the description fits his battalion's mascot. The mutt, reared in the Aleutians, needed a reorientation course when Fleming brought him to the States.

## BOBSLED BUNKS WITH 'BRAID'

The 66th Battalion is still trying to solve the "Great Bobsled Mystery."

Specificially, a certain Warrant Officer still trying to find the Seabee who:

"Fell, or rolled off that blankety-blank bobsled halfway down a long, steep hill and allowed the sled to proceed on its merry, but lonely way, right through the Quonset hut to slam into a parking place right under my bunk--dammit!"

## INCREASE PILOT PROGRAM

Former aviation cadets and student aviation pilots who were separated from the pre-flight stages of the Navy's aviation training program since June 1944, are being

given an opportunity to reenter the program. Reassignment will begin this spring and summer.

The men, who were separated from preliminary stages of the training program through no failure of their own but as a result of an over-all Navy cutback in aviation training, were promised that they would be shifted back into flight training when the Navy's needs justified such a move.

Approximately 7,000 aviation cadets and students were effected by the June cutback. Re-accepted students will be entered at a stage of training commensurate with their position at the time they were separated.

### **JAPS EQUIP MACHINE SHOP**

When the 56th came ashore on a captured island its "machine shop" consisted of two small lathes, a drill press and some hand tools. Now, with the aid of heavy machinery left as useless by the fleeing Japanese, it sports one of the finest in the overseas business. The assault bombardment not only chased the enemy, but forced them to leave the machinery as bomb-mauled junk.

Now rebuilt into a thing of pride for CMM William C. Henley, who rides to work on a Jap-made bicycle, the machine shop's principal equipment is five "Yanma" type Japanese diesel engines, largest of which is a 100-horsepower unit. A second, of 30 horsepower, powers a generator which provides lights for the shop.

On Henley's shop crew are: John White, CMoMM, Rodney Culpepper, MoMM1c, H. S. Faskin, MoMM1c, George Obenhein, MM3c, Nom Sing Lau, MM3c and Tom Carey, PhM3c.

### **TIGHT FIT**

Can three husky Seabees find shelter under one and the same jeep? The answer, according to Chief Warrant Officer J. E. Peterson, CEC, USNR, is a loud, yes.

Working on an airstrip in the Marianas one night under powerful floodlights, Mr. Peterson and his five-man heavy equipment crew were surprised by a twin-engined enemy medium bomber which, with its motors stilled, swooped out of the darkness to bomb and strafe them.

Two operators and Mr. Peterson dove for cover under the only protection at hand --- the jeep. All made it, but, Mr. Peterson confesses, they are still trying to figure out how. None of the Seabees was hit nor was any equipment damaged.

### **PELELIU GREETING CLUB**

After threading his pontoon barge through mortar fire in the early hours of the Peleliu invasion, Joseph G. Ziemba, MM2c, Reading, Pa., transferred to a re-fueling barge to prow along the reef as a sea-going gas station. One of his first customers was Randall Hadley, from Ziemba's hometown and whom he hadn't seen since he played baseball against him at Reading.

It is related here that neither of them said "this is a small world."

### FAN MAIL

Everybody loves the Seabees, so please let's have no more walls from the outposts about the lack of mail. According to the Associated Press and Lt. Comdr. Earle D. Chance, fleet postal officer, Seabees get more mail proportionately than any other branch of the service.

Only the WAVES outdraw the Seabees in the continental United States, a fact which is explained by the Seabees "because the WAVES have prettier uniforms."

### SUPPLY CORPS OFFICER GOD-FATHERED SEABEES

The story of the Seabees' fighting bee insignia is familiar to every man in the Construction Battalions but how many of the more than 240,000 know that a supply corps officer was the first to suggest the word "Seabee" as a nick-name?

The officer, according to Lt. Comdr. Herbert M. Shilstone, Jr., CEC, USNR, who was the first OinC of the Technical Training School at the first NCTC at the Naval Air Station, Quonset Point, Rhode Island, was Lt. Robert D. Woodward, SC, USNR.

After the insignia had been developed, recalled Lt. Comdr. Shilstone, now assigned to the Washington offices of DIRLANTDOCKS, he and Lt. Comdr. Thomas Doyle, CEC, USN, showed the drawing to a group of officers in the BOQ and solicited suggestions for a name. It was then that Lt. Woodward suggested the phonetic pronunciation of the Letters "CB" as the "trade" name for the Navy's fighting builders.

At the time, Lt. Woodward was an Ensign; Lt. Comdr. Shilstone a Lieutenant; and Lt. Comdr. Doyle, a Lt. (jg), USNR.

### ROOSTER EARNS HIS LIVING

A platter of fried chicken or a dependable "alarm clock" to get him up each morning -- L. O. Johnson had his choice.

Johnson, a CCM with the 73rd Battalion, bought a rooster from "Island X" natives with every intention of enjoying a chicken dinner, but decided to fatten up the bird first. In a few days, the chief found he could count on the rooster's early-morning crowing to get him up on time; decided to postpone his feast until the first time the "alarm clock" let him down.

## SHORT SPORT SHOTS

S/Sgt. Joe DiMaggio, former N.Y. Yankee star outfielder, has his heart set on "coming back" but implied he doesn't expect to play major league baseball until war is over....At Atlantic City Redistribution Station Joe, was asked: "When you gonna clout 'em again, Joe?"....DiMaggie countered with "When's the war gonna end?"....Joe says he has not requested a discharge and doesn't intend to....Reports circulating state-side had DiMaggie surveyed because of recurrent stomach trouble....

Florence, (Italy) Spaghetti Bowl game between 5th Army and 12th AAF went off as scheduled despite Nazi threats to provide real "aerial" fireworks....Although game was less than three hours from front lines, via jeep, more than 25,000 GIs and WACs jammed stadium to watch Doughboys wallop Fliers, 20 to 0....Contest was held in perfect bowl-game fashion, including bare-legged drum-majorettes, floats, band, etc... All during game, P-38s in two dozen lots kept whizzing over field in direction of front..

Cpl. Billy Conn, now touring ETO with party of GI boxers, had two close calls all in one day--a plane mishap and German bombing....Shortly after taking off from French airfield, pilot of plane discovered his elevator controls were locked...."We circled over the field and sweated for two hours," Conn said, "while a mechanic chopped his way through part of the plane in an attempt to unlock the controls. But it was no soap, and it looked like we'd all get killed"....The pilot finally had Conn and three others run up and down the plane so their weight would lower the nose, then the tail...."We hit the runway at 150 miles an hour, and made it okay, but it left me shaking for two days"....Later that night while in Paris the Germans made their first raid on the city in four months and one bomb landed so close to Conn's hotel that the blast blew out the window panes...."They left me nervous like buzz-bombs in London," Billy said. "I don't like them worth a damn"....

Major league baseball is going ahead with plans to operate in '45 despite recent edict calling for review of 4-Fers....United Press survey of baseball manpower revealed that of 530 players, 233 are classified 4-F....club by club breakdown showed National League has 117 4-Fs, 106 players, including 11 in war work, between 18-38 draft age, 16 discharged veterans, 16 over age and 4 under age....American League has 106 4-Fs, 233, including 29 war workers in draft age bracket, 15 discharges, 16 over age and one under age....Although all 4-Fs will be called for another examination, magnates confident that most will be rejected under present service physical standards, since many of them have already been rejected as many as three times....

Horse racing banned in U.S. by War Mobilization Director Byrnes taking fate with little squawking, says wants to cooperate with government regardless of own interests....racing fans jammed Tropical Park; set three new betting records on last three days....Stables will be permitted to ship horses home....Sour notes were sounded by jockeys who say they will rest, pray until races are resumed....probably change mind when "Work or Fight" edict goes into effect....

Bowl games went pretty much to form, only upset being Tulsa's 26 to 12 victory over Georgia Tech at Orange Bowl....Underdog West team also sprung surprise with 13 to 7 win over favored East in Shrine game....Best game of day was put on at Sugar Bowl with favored Duke eleven lucky to nose out Alabama, 29 to 26....

Sportswriter Tom Meany, master of ceremonies on tour with group of ball players in ETO, introduces Nick Etten as from the American League, Ducky Medwick as from the National League and Leo Durocher, "from Brooklyn, which, as you know, is out of this world".....