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PRESENT DAY SEABEES FASTER

Seabee battalions on the job today can build three times as fast as the battalions which first went out to construct bases in the Pacific, it is estimated by Lt. John W. Davis, CEC, USNR, who served as a design engineer during the development of both Espiritu Santo and Manus into major bases.

Lt. Davis attributes this increased efficiency to (1) more and heavier equipment, (2) more uniform equipment, (3) more easily and quickly obtainable spare parts, (4) greater experience in the handling and timing of construction traffic, and (5) the more efficient use of all equipment and manpower through the interchange of work assignments by several battalions.

Lt. Davis first arrived in the South Pacific in February, 1943, and after spending less than a month with the 35th battalion, was transferred to an assignment as design engineer at Santo, where he saw many of the early battalions at work.

"The men themselves were highly competent in the first battalions," he said, "but they were greatly handicapped by breakdowns in equipment and inability to get enough spare parts. Some equipment could be put back in operation through ingenuity and cannibalization, but this entailed delay and waste.

"Furthermore, with a single battalion working on a single job, some of its equipment and some of its skilled men could not be used to greatest advantage. Today, that situation has been relieved by the employment of many battalions working on enough different type assignments so that ---- through interchange of equipment and operators -- all can generally be kept pretty busy."

Citing an example of the stepped-up efficiency, Lt. Davis said that the huge base at Manus was useably completed in approximately six months, whereas the less elaborate base at Santo required a year and a half to build. "It is true," he said, "that more manpower went into the construction of Manus, but this was somewhat offset by tougher working conditions, particularly tremendous amounts of sticky red-lava clay that had to be moved.

"All in all," he concluded, "I think a battalion, equipped as it is now and operating under the present system, can build three times as fast as anyone of the first 35 or so battalions to reach the Pacific."

STEVEDORE UNIT REFLOATS LANDING SHIP

Unusual but efficient measures taken by a Seabee Special made it possible for a beached LSM to be refloated in time to leave the following day to take part in a new

amphibious operation.

The ship had been beached during a high tide. When the water receded, she remained solidly lodged on coral sand from her bow to her midship section. When the tide returned, normal efforts failed to dislodge her.

Called in the night before the scheduled operation, the Seabees built a false jetty of coral sand at low tide from a point aft of midships, and curving into the beach on the starboard side. A crane and dragline dug a trench 20 feet wide by 10 feet deep along the port side, from midships to bow, and a bulldozer dug a similar trench on the starboard side. The jetty was then broken by the drag line. As the tide was in by the time this operation was completed, the ship was immediately surrounded by water, only her bottom, from midships to the stern, resting on sand.

The LSM's screws were engaged in reverse, churning forward the water under her bottom and washing away the sand upon which she rested. Two LCT's ran lines from their sterns to the LCM's bow, one LCT being used on each side of the beached vessel. The LCT's, by engaging their propellers, also churned water forward under the bottom of the LSM.

As the ship began to float free, she reversed her screws. The two tugs, by means of towlines reaching from the stern of the LSM to their own sterns, took strain, one tug bearing 45° to port and the other 45° off starboard. At the same time the bulldozer pushed against the LSM's lowered ramp.

The method proved successful and the LSM was dislodged at 0418, five and three-quarter hours after the Seabees set to work.

FORESIGHT

On Tinian, where fresh eggs are something to dream about, men of a Seabee maintenance unit are enjoying them daily. And there is a promise of southern fried chicken in the offing.

While still at Pearl Harbor, the Seabees were told they were moving to a forward base. They decided to bring along their pet rooster, Reveille, and provided companionship for him in the shape of two hundred baby chicks they bought from Honolulu dealers.

Only 20 of the chicks were lost during the long sea voyage. And now the flock has been augmented by the surrender of many Japanese hens, lured from the hills and fields by the robust crowing of Reveille.

NEW WAY TO HAUL CONCRETE

In a pinch, Seabee stevedores can use their regular dock equipment as construction aids; a Seabee Special Battalion proved recently.

The battalion was called upon to lay concrete flooring in an island project, but lacked trucks and wheelbarrows with which to carry the mix.

Under the supervision of CMM A. F. Knoll, machinists raised the rear hooks of standard dock jitneys, added connections and hand-bars to quarter-ton trailers, and cut a pouring door in the rear panel of each trailer.

The jitneys pulled the loaded trailers to the job site. The trailers then were disconnected and pushed by the hand-bar to where the mix was needed.

SHOE REBUILDER TACKLES SUPERFORTS

How a Seabee cobbler was the man responsible for two grounded B-29's taking off on schedule for a bombing mission over Tokyo was told in a story originating on Saipan.

The two planes were out of action because special-type safety belts for side-blister gunners on the Superforts had been cut and required restitching. The cobbler, Joseph P. Sampugnaro, SSMC 2c, was the only man on the island who might be able to get the job done in time for the scheduled take-off the next morning.

Sampugnaro's standard cobbler's sewing machine was designed solely for sewing heavy leather. To attempt to stitch the pliable woven fabric from which the belts had been cut would, he pointed out, be a ticklish operation, with the likelihood throughout that he might run the heavy needle through his fingers. But, Sampugnaro said, he'd try.

He worked for two hours. Then he stopped. A deep, narrow groove had been worn in the forefinger of one hand, where the needle had pierced the skin whenever the fabric had wrinkled. Nevertheless Sampugnaro was satisfied. He held up the finished belts.

The planes took off for Tokyo in the morning.

HERE'S THAT BMU AGAIN!

The same battalion maintenance unit which hit the Guam beaches 36 minutes after H-hour and spent three days helping Marines hold off Jap counterattacks, is back in the news.

Ignoring a lack of materials with which to build their base, the unit started salvaging and built a complete base--theater, beer cooler and all--from Japanese materials. Only exception to the all-Jap complexion of the material is the canvas tenting and wire screening.

Some plyboard is questionable and the unit will yield a point--it may be American-made and taken by the Japs in 1941.

A NEW ACT ON THE FOXHOLE CIRCUIT

When Seabee Bill Doyle landed in a foxhole and went into a routine that combined the best features of a swan dive and a jitterbug's nightmare, his mates figured he was rehearsing for a survey examination. But when he swung into a strip routine, shedding clothes to the accompaniment of grinds and bumps, they began to worry.

The act ended like most similar routines, with Bill getting rid of his pants. The explanation, however, was new. Seems a hornet had moved into the Seabee's trousers while they hung in the barracks. When the siren blew, he put them on, hornet and all. The four special bumps his mates had watched marked the four times the hornet scored bull's eyes.

FOUR WIN COMMENDATION

Four Seabees of a Seabee Special have won commendations from the commanding officer of a Naval operating base for their "prompt action, keen observation and willingness to aid" during a fire which occurred aboard a ship. Those commended were: F. E. Rose, S1c; J. C. Marino, SK3c; B. T. Herrity, S1c; and J. N. Bedell, F1c.

ALL PURPOSE GAS TRUCK

The gasoline truck operated by Garth M. Lundberg, Cox; and Vincent M. McCormick, MM2c, is described by battalion members as "half submarine and half mountain goat" because of the rugged terrain over which the truck is driven.

Supplying motorized equipment with gasoline in all parts of one of the Mariana islands takes the 10-wheeler out on a 10-foot-wide dike where, at high tide, the water comes up to the axles.

In another place, the hills are so steep the truck has to be pulled up with a bulldozer. At still another, it drops down to 10 feet below sea level.

"But if it's gas they want then it's gas they'll get," vow Lundberg and McCormick.

They were salvaging a wrecked Jap jalopy when an enemy straggler tossed a grenade at them. They ducked just in time- but the gas truck caught a shower of shrapnel--and still carries the marks.

GETTING A BANG OUT OF LIFE

When a B-29 Squadron in the Marianas needed a large area adjacent to their

field cleared and graded, a Seabee special battalion sent over their chief cat-skinner, Edmund O. Otterson, MM2c.

Although the area was rough and uneven, with heavy cane underbrush and jagged sponge-like coral formations, and he had to rip out the road-bed of an old Jap narrow gauge railway, Otterson, working alone, completed the job in two days, much to the surprise of the B-29 officer in charge of the construction project.

"I got a tremendous bang out of watching those giant B-29s come in for a landing right over my head," said the Seabee, "One of them, returning from a bombing mission over Tokyo, had a motor shot out, a propeller bent and one of the huge wheels dragging about halfway out. But still he made it back."

Otterson came close to getting another kind of a bang on another clearing and grading job.

"The other day one of our 'dozers struck a buried Jap land mine and the explosion blew off the whole right side of the cat. The driver was leaning over the left side at the time and didn't get a scratch.

"What puzzled me," the Seabee said, "was that I'd been running a big cat over the same spot all the previous day and still when this small 'dozer went over it just once - everything blew sky high!"

THIRTEEN MEN AND A MOUSE

K. P. Hanson and twelve husky mates built a new mouse trap a few weeks ago, relates "Bolts and Bullets," battalion publication.

The men placed the trap in a likely spot, baited it with a piece of cheese, and waited for the first victim to show up.

"Pretty soon," says the paper, "they were rewarded with the appearance of a tiny mouse. Mousie casually walked in, ate the cheese, and walked out again!"

"At last reports, the platoon had gone back to their original method of throwing shoes at the pests."

TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE

To develop a spring-fed water system for their own and nearby camps, a Seabee detachment on Saipan capped a mountain spring, installed a concrete settling tank, and, with the aid of ten Army men detailed to the job, laid 800 feet of pipe through hilly countryside.

The job, routine from a construction standpoint, was a satisfying one to the Seabees because it sealed off from Jap stragglers what had probably been their last remaining source of water.

That the hapless strays already had become desperate was indicated by the discovery of shell cases they had laid out to catch rain.

NO DOWN PAYMENT FOR VETERANS' HOMES

If your post-war home costs \$10,000 or less, and you take advantage of federal financing, you will be able to buy it without making a down payment. The Federal Housing Administration insures the main loan, with Veterans Administration guaranteeing a second loan for the balance.

Under this plan, you will have 20 to 25 years to repay the government the money it advances.

"SAFE" WAY

When the combination of the Ship's Service Store's safe was lost enroute to the Marianas, Lt. (jg) Russell R. Kerr, CEC, USNR, substituted Seabee ingenuity for nitroglycerine, applied a stethoscope to the "heartbeat" of the tumblers and shortly after, was able to swing the heavy door open.

The Seabees in his battalion now have dubbed him, "Doctor" Kerr, D.S.A. (Doctor of Safeology).

EVEN THE GOAT DREW A LINE

A sad-looking goat wandered over to the Seabee camp on a recently-taken island.

"He looked so woe-begone," said H. F. Jakubowski, Cox, "we dubbed him 'Hogan's Goat'. He seemed awfully hungry and ate everything in sight, so we offered him the only food we had -- K-rations.

"He wouldn't touch 'em!" the Seabee vowed.

Without sharing the goat's preference for old rags, tin cans, and similar delicacies, the Seabees themselves objected to K-rations as a steady diet. They scoured the island for souvenirs -- Jap helmets, caps, knives -- anything they could find. These they took out to ships anchored off shore and traded for food. At last reports, they were dining well -- ham, bread, and "real butter".

STRANGE GOINGS ON

If there were any "revenooers" on Tinian, they'd probably converge on John S. Hendry, CM1c.

Every morning the Seabee disappears from camp and plods off to a small wooden hut, hidden in an isolated valley. Quantities of sugar cane have been observed to be shipped in to him regularly. The column of thin smoke emerging from the shack is accompanied, when the wind is right, by the odor of something cooking -- something hot and sweet. And it has been common knowledge that gallons of an amber-colored fluid are carted away by mates, many of whom appear to be steady customers.

The circumstances certainly could be called suspicious. But Hendry isn't engaged in the manufacture of the esoteric island beverage vulgarly known as gook juice. He's just operating the "Vermont Syrup Company -- Marianas Branch," a cane syrup mill built by the Seabees after a native Vermonter, Lt. (jg) James J. Fayette, SC, USNR, supply officer attached to a Seabee battalion, sprang the idea.

Hendry, John M. Taylor, SF1c, and other battalion mates built the mill almost entirely of scrap and captured Jap equipment. They salvaged fire brick, constructed a four-burner oil-heating unit, and had sheet-metal building pans made in the battalion shops. They imported a small Japanese can-squeezer from near-by Saipan, powered it with a dead-lined truck motor they repaired and hooked up for the purpose, and opened the mill for business. It now turns out 80 gallons of syrup a day, enough to smother the hot-cakes cooked in every galley on Tinian.

CROSSED THE BRIDGES FIRST

Advance planning and consequent clock-like performance enabled a Seabee battalion to develop the marine portion of a newly-won island base in 29 days. Senior officers planned the project and then moved on to another. So complete was the job it wasn't even necessary for them to return to pick up any stray ends. Surveys, soundings and probings were taken, the project was mapped, dredge cuts and method of running the pipe-line were laid out. When the dredge moved in, the crew and junior officers followed plans.

In 29 days they had removed 400,000 yards of coral and built 13 acres of new land--all by dredging.

INGREDIENTS ON HAND

From scrap enemy steel plate and the salvaged hydraulic lift of a Japanese fighter plane, CMM Inman Rothell, on duty at a Central Pacific base, has devised a compressed-air-powered tire spreader for use in the battalion repair shop.

MODERNIZATION

The old-fashioned wooden-dart-and-old-inner-tube slingshot used by native fishermen in the Hawaiian Islands to spear fish was "too crude" for Lyle V. Laurvick, EM3c, so the Seabee decided he'd do something about it.

Working in the battalions' armory, Laurvick found the stock of a surveyed cartine and on it mounted two gas pistons from a discarded Garand. Each piston was fitted with a recoil spring from a BAR, the springs secured at the base of the pistons by shingle nails.

The double barreled weapon fires darts the Seabee made of 3/16 inch brass braising rod, tipped with teeth from a broken rip saw blade. The 16-inch dart is forced into the piston, compressing the recoil spring, and is held fast by a steel sere which projects up through a slot cut in the bottom of the piston. The dart is fired by pulling a trigger which is connected to a metal block that depresses the sere, releasing the spring.

To prevent losing any of his carefully made darts, Laurvick has fixed a piece of brass rod in the stock near the muzzle, at right angles to the barrel. The rod projects two inches on either side of the stock and small holes have been drilled near each end. A 12-foot length of fish line is tied to the dart, passes through the hole, loops down, and is made fast to the stock. When the dart is fired, the line feeds through the guide hole and does not deflect the missile by its weight.

"The water is a little too rough for underwater fishing now," says Laurvick, "but in a month or two I expect to be getting a lot of fish. I shot a rat in the armory, the other night; he was ten feet away and going plenty fast, so I know the gun works."

CONSIDERATE

Seabee Rex Earnest was working on a ladder recently, says "Bolts & Bullets", his battalion's publication, and had cut part way through a metal girder with a torch. He stopped, shouted "Look out below!", then turned to finish the job. The end of the girder dropped -- and so did Earnest. The piece he had cut off had been the one against which his ladder had been resting.

LEFT-HANDED COMMENDATION

After a Seabee pontoon battalion had scurried over the beaches and hills and eluded treacherous land mines and booby traps to get Japanese equipment for the battalion's floating repair shop, a Marine major vowed the only difference between "did" and "died" was the spelling.

The battalion, marine specialists, needed small boats so badly they started salvaging the sunken Jap barges, repairing them in the floating machine shop they built with Jap material and enemy equipment.

CHORD OF MEMORY

The regular Sunday service was moving along smoothly in a Seabee chapel on Leyte. Along with the Seabees, a few soldiers from a nearby AA battery and several Filipino families were present.

A plaintive cry emerged from somewhere in the congregation. The men looked startled for a moment, then most of them smiled nostalgically. A young mother tried to quiet the little brown-faced youngster on her lap.

"That's the first time I've heard a baby cry in church in two years," said one Seabee after the service. "It sounded good."

"Didn't realize how much I'd been missing little things like that," said another.

"That youngster," summed up the chaplain, "raised morale more than a letter from home."

THEY KNOW HOW DEEP

Development of an amphibious probing device to "feel out" the bottoms of harbors prior to dredging has put a Seabee waterfront battalion's marine specialists one step ahead. The rig, mounted on an Army Mark II LVT (unarmored tank), drills holes 40 feet deep in 10 minutes and so accurately reveals the contours of the harbor bottom that engineers rely solely on its finding.

The rig was developed through the battalion engineering office which credits E. E. Swope, CM1c and W. W. Gray, CCM, for working out the details.

The Mark II LVT was chosen for the mount because it would crawl up on the coral heads and yet still have the strength and buoyancy to support the drilling frame and compressor.

COCONUT STUMPS REFLOAT SHIP

The Seabees have helped refloat a lot of ships, but it remained for a Pacific-based CBMU to do the job with bulldozers and coconut stumps as their sole equipment!

The ship was an LST. With bulldozers, the Seabees pushed coconut stumps under her bow at low tide. As the tide rose, the stumps prevented the ship from coming any farther on to the reef, and at the same time permitted the stern to rise. At high tide, the LST was free.

The operation was directed by Carpenters Adriance C. Platt and Jay L. Reed, both CEC, USNR. Other men in the relief crew were CCM H. J. Franey, CCM C. N. Andresen, W. M. Stackpool, BM1c, E. P. Swiney, BM2c, J. J. McGhee, MM2c, and E. Nemeth, GM2c.

BRONZE STAR TO 1005 OinC

A Seabee pontoon detachment wrapped itself in glory -- from a Bronze Star decoration for Officer-in-Charge Lt. Comdr. Al C. Church, CEC, USNR, to high commendations for the unit.

The Bronze Star went to Commander Church for "distinguishing himself

by meritorious services...during a period in which almost continual offensive operations were conducted against the enemy. Lieutenant Commander Church displayed exceptional skill and energy in conducting the activities of his detachment to provide base facilities for maintenance of ships and craft entering this port."

The commendation, covering work of the detachment said "during the past 19 months you have constructed all the pontoon causeway drydocks, cranes and lighters used in this area by allied Naval command. This successful accomplishment reflects upon your command exceptional ability and steadfastness.

THREE FOR FOUR

Maybe it's Aunt Minnie from Syracuse or that over-sized blind date from Providence -- somebody certainly is wasting stamps and stationery on Seabees stationed in the Hawaiian area.

CMaM William J. Walsh, chief in charge of the main post office for that area, reports that for every four letters Seabees receive, they write only three in return. And when you figure that the No. 1 gal friend is getting more than her share, the proportion of unanswered correspondents runs even higher.

AIRFIELD JOB WINS COMMENDATION

For reconditioning an airfield and building additional facilities despite "decided lack of equipment, materials, and time," a CBMU led by Lt. J. P. Peller, CEC, USNR, has been commended by Lt. Col. John D. Harshberger, USMC, Air Operations C. O., at the base.

"The all-weather condition of this field is one of the best in this area," he said.

STAR ACT

At least one Seabee at a Pacific base doesn't really start taking chances until his regular eight-hour work shift has ended.

Eugene Lechler, BM2c, former Barnum and Bailey circus star, now presents his spine-chilling high wire act nightly for service audiences at USO shows.

The best-received part of his routine in civilian days used to be his high-wire, top-hat-and-tails impersonation of a gentleman who had had more than one highball too many. Lechler wouldn't mind repeating the bit -- if he had either the dress clothes or the highball!

THEATER

B-29 crewmen, GIs, Army Engineers and Navy Seabees can see the latest in motion pictures in the AR-VY, a Marianas island theater built jointly by Seabees and Engineers and named in honor of both services.

The AR-VY can seat 2700 on the neat rows of bomb racks which serve as seats. About 85 percent of all the electrical equipment used was salvaged from Jap power installations. Army T/Sgt. George H. Grahl, who did the wiring, is proudest of a GE Poliphase Watthour Meter which bears a sticker with the information that the meter is a copy of a Japanese patent.

The AR-VY stage boasts of a disappearing microphone. Fitted into the air valve of a junked refrigerator, the mike is operated by compressed air and controlled from the projection booth. It can be raised or lowered as desired.

Director of the theater is 54-year-old Seabee Roy Newman, SSML3c, a former stage comedian and entertainer and the only member of Irving Berlin's "Yip, Yip, Yaphank" cast of World War I in service today.

AWARDED BRONZE STAR

Arthur B. Garrison, Jr., 23, MM1c, has been awarded the Bronze Star medal for "gallantry and intrepidity in action" during the invasion of Leyte. The citation said the Seabee carried out his duties in a calm and efficient manner in the face of heavy mortar, machine gun and sniper fire.

BU PERS TO GIVE COMMENDATIONS FOR SUGGESTIONS

If you have an idea you think will improve the efficiency of the Navy's personnel administration and accounting procedures, don't keep it to yourself. Pointing out that even minor improvements add up when applied to the Navy as a whole, BuPers has requested that suggestions be sent to the Chief of Naval Personnel (Att: Pers-21511) via official channels.

If your contribution is judged of sufficient value and merit, you will receive a letter of commendation, awarded by the Chief of Naval Personnel, which will become a part of your official Navy record.

For a more detailed listing of the kind of suggestions desired, check page 77 in the February issue of the BuPers Information Bulletin or refer to the directive itself, BuPers Circ. Ltr. 366-44 (NDB, 15 Dec. 1944, 44-1397).

BUT NOT THE "JUST-BARELIES"

Twenty-three months under a tropical sun has cooked the sense of humor out of one battalion's steel erectors.

For their own humor, they've dubbed themselves the "Hardly Able Construction Co., Steel Erectors." But it isn't wise for an outsider to use the firm name too literally.

SHORT SPORT SHOTS

BIG LEAGUE BALLPLAYERS in Navy. led by Lieut. Bill Dickey, USNR, former NY Yankee catcher, will make tour of forward Pacific bases. Games will be played at Saipan, Guam, Leyte, New Guinea and, possibly, Australia. The athletes, presently assigned to naval units in Hawaiian Area, include Johnny Mize, Billy Herman, Barney McCoskey, Peewee Reese, Bob Klinger, Mickey Vernon, Johnny Vander Meer and Johnny Rigney. Augmenting the baseball group will be Bobby Riggs and Norman Brooks, tennis stars, and Fred Apostoli and Fred Abrams, middleweight boxers.....

KING OF SWAT, Babe Ruth, celebrated his 51st birthday February 7. The Old Bambino, now tipping the scales at more than 260, thinks the 1927 Yankees, the team for which he lashed out 60 home runs to set the all-time record, was the best all-around club he ever played on. Best defensive team in the Babe's opinion was the Boston Red Sox of "1915 or '16"

MAJOR LEAGUES, in annual meetings, decided to go ahead with plans to operate on full - scale in 1945. Best news came from Senator Albert (Happy) Chandler, mentioned as possible successor to late Judge Landis as "czar of baseball." Senator Chandler made statement that Senate Military Affairs Committee "is convinced that we can spare 400 or 500 4-Fs to play baseball." Thirty Mid-western steel companies sent letter to War Mobilization Director Byrnes requesting some major sporting events be retained as "a stimulus and needed form of recreation." Leagues also adopted new agreement curbing power of new commissioner of baseball; named league presidents to represent game in Washington; announced gambling on baseball will be subjected to investigation and steps taken to ban advance information of pitching selections and other "inside" dope that might promote the illegal practice. Meantime, from American League Service Bureau came announcement that major leagues had raised more than two and one-half million dollars in the last three years for war relief.....

ALL-AMERICA football star and collegiate wrestling champion, Capt. W. Roland (Waddy) Young, reported lost in action after Tokyo raid. Pilot of B-29 "Waddy's Wagon", flying from Mariana base, Young was rated as best all-around athlete in 21st Bomber Command. He won all-American recognition in 1938 while attending Oklahoma U. and also won several collegiate wrestling championships. In 1939 and 1940 he played with pro football Brooklyn Tigers. He and his crew had participated in the first B-29 raid on Truk, the first on Tokyo and the first on Nagoya.....

BIG TEN met threat of gambling invasion into college sports, revealed by bribe of five Brooklyn College basketballers, by reaffirming rule that all basketball games involving conference teams must be played on college campuses. Only exception is for cases where special permission is granted by athletic directors to a member institution to play elsewhere. Conference also asked that basketball ratings and form sheets about college teams be abolished. No action was taken to select sports commissioner to succeed late Major Griffith.....

GAME, SET AND MATCH.....Lt. Joseph R. Hunt, USN, winner of 1943 National Amateur tennis singles title and former Davis Cup player, killed when his plane crashed at sea off Daytona Beach, Florida, during routine gunnery practice flight. Naval aviation student, Lt. Hunt, after graduating from U. of Southern California, entered Naval Academy, graduated in December 1941, shortly after Pearl Harbor.