

SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

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

NAVDOCKS P-117

ISSUE NO. 71

8 MAY 1945

79 PER CENT OVERSEAS

More than 79 per cent of all the Seabees in service are now in overseas billets, an official Bureau of Yards and Docks report disclosed at the end of April.

Station force complements comprise only three per cent of all enlisted Seabees.

TRAVELERS

A dozen men of a battalion who helped conquer the long, flat beaches at Salerno were in on the Okinawa operation to complete a lesson in geography the hard way. The men were among the first Seabees ashore in Europe and duplicated the performance in the Okinawa assault

Of a 16-man platoon led by Chief Carpenter Russel M. Stottlemeyer in the Salerno landing, 12 men are still attached to the battalion and 11 of them were at Okinawa. Four have been awarded the Purple Heart and all have been commended by three admirals.

In addition to Chief Carpenter Stottlemeyer, they are: J. D. McConaghy, CCM, Frank Kline, BM1c, Alf M. Newdahl, CM1c, Arvel Henlty, SF2c, William A. Dunn, BM2c, Michael A. Lukas, GM1c, Donald H. Stirk, EM1c, Carmine J. Ricciardi, CM3c, Wilson Ryan, CM1c, Donald Wham, SF1c, and Edward E. Wachter, CM1c.

DREDGING JOB PLUS

A difficult dredging project in the Palaus, which began only four days after the Japs had halted organized resistance, has been completed under some of the most trying conditions ever encountered by Seabee dredging units.

Involving removal of 551, 619 cubic yards of hard coral, the project was completed on schedule in four months. Nature of the job called for floating equipment able to reach the coral and still be powerful enough to dig it.

Trouble started early. Fifteen days after work was under way, a typhoon lashed the rigs and beached most of the clamshells as much as two miles from the dredging site. In the early stages, dredge crews kept an open clamshell bucket on deck only for use as an emergency foxhole in event Jap snipers roaming the hills persisted in taking potshots--which they often did. One crew mounted a lone machine gun as token protection. Construction problems were numerous--huge fragments had been broken loose, but had to come out. The maintenance of deck

engines was a constant source of trouble, salt spray causing heavy corroding. Grease fillings froze up and the supply became exhausted. When airmail shipments failed to arrive, the Seabees used fittings from wrecked automotive equipment.

Constant digging wore the clamshell lips, broke off teeth and loosened rivets. Bucket lips were strengthened by facing them with stainless steel welding rod. Steel cables, heavily corroded by salt water despite frequent lubrication, sang a taut and threatening tune and often snapped in high winds.

At one time, to seek cover from a hard, driving rain, one crew piled into a Northwest cab. Under the fore rake of the barge were dynamite charges, unexploded in the last shot--and the crew was unaware of it.

Powdermen nearby set off a blast and the unexploded charges under the barge were set off by the concussion. "All the anvils of hell broke loose," one of the crew said. The barge lifted out of the water, cab windows shattered down in splinters. The rig stayed afloat, but the crew was at work most of the night, repairing damage and resuming work.

Adversity was so common, they concluded, that if it were raining soup, they'd all be standing outside with a fork.

But the project was completed four months and several days after the Japs had given up in the Palaus.

DANGEROUS KNOWLEDGE

One Seabee who landed at Iwo Jima with a causeway unit had more to fear from his own side than the enemy.

Chin Chung, Seaman, First Class, USNR, once of Canton, China and more recently of Boston, Mass., was the object of many speculative Marine eyes.

Chung wrangled a two-man armed guard for himself and smeared his battalion number and the word "Seabee" in big yellow letters on his trousers and shirt. The identification saved his skin -- for a while. Later, he was almost mobbed. The Marines had discovered he was the only man in the vicinity who could decode Japanese symbols on souvenirs.

ARMOR-PLATE SHOVEL TEETH

Flint-like coral, which went through a set of shovel teeth in a week, grinding and breaking them to pieces, presented heavy equipment maintenance men with a Seabee battalion in the Marianas with a tough problem. Ironically, it was a Japanese tank that finally provided the solution.

The Seabees had been attempting to build up the teeth with weld or rebuild them with worn-out teeth. Their efforts were almost entirely unsuccessful. Then CSF Fred J. Grzelak, 32, stripped an abandoned Japanese tank of its armor and used the armor to reinforce the teeth.

In the first five weeks of operation, the newly reinforced teeth have proved equal to the hardest digging. Not one tooth has been broken nor has one been replaced.

NOT ALL MARTYRS

The business about all Japs being willing to die by their own hands rather than surrender is the bunk, in the opinion of Edgar J. McIntosh, CM3c, of Bloomingsburg, Ohio, whose own experience in the Marianas tends to strengthen his argument.

Eight "sons of Heaven" walked out of the jungle-like woods recently with their hands over their heads to surrender to the surprised and unarmed Seabee.

McIntosh was alone, filling the tank of his water truck, when the strange procession emerged from the heavy growth a few yards away. Marching in pairs, in military formation and carrying a large white flag, the Japs came toward him and indicated their desire to surrender. The Seabee obliged -- he called the guard.

COMPETES WITH BATTALION LAUNDRY

It didn't take long after Seabee Herman DeBoer, MM3c, of Whitinsville, Mass., had brought the advantages of the private enterprise system to Guam for his mates to discover that some of the advantages were DeBoer's.

Most of the men in his battalion had been elated when a laundry was set up to clean their clothes without charge. Herman, a Dutchman whose ancestors had been reared in the spotless-white-step tradition of Holland, didn't think the clothes were being returned clean enough.

He rigged up his own laundry. It consisted of a coconut tree, a bucket, some scrap lumber, and a few other odds and ends. With his own equipment, DeBoer promised, he would clean clothes just like "down town."

As "tattletale grey" disappeared from DeBoer's clothes, his mates asked him to do theirs. The Seabee agreed but, being a practical man, set up a price list. Blankets, for example, were pegged at a dollar apiece.

In a single week Herman received fifty blankets. And, incidentally, fifty dollars. If he continues to corner the laundry market, the official battalion cleaners may soon be offering a free set of dishes to every customer.

SOME HUNCH

A Japanese scheme to sink a U. S. Naval vessel at a Western Pacific port recently failed because the ship's commanding officer had a hunch and decided upon a personal inspection trip before retiring.

Aboard the ship at anchor in the port, Comdr. William M. Gibson, USN, of Piedmont, Calif., ordered the harbor swept with a giant searchlight and almost immediately the beam picked up two Japs stealthily swimming towards the ship, pushing an improvised raft to which was attached a mine. An instantaneous "open fire" order was given and, after a volley from machine guns and rifles, the two Japs disappeared beneath the water--but the raft and mine continued drifting toward the ship.

Small boats were launched with men to remove the detonator and the mine exploded with the first blast from a 20 mm. gun.

REMOVED MINES UNDER FIRE: WINS SILVER STAR

For braving enemy mortar and artillery fire to remove mines, bombs, booby traps and duds which were impeding the construction of a vitally-needed airstrip during the battle for Peleliu, CCM Salvatore H. Impellitteri, of Newport, R. I. was awarded the Silver Star Medal for "gallantry and intrepidity" on behalf of Lt. Gen. Holland M. Smith, USMC, commanding Fleet Marine Force in the Pacific.

The temporary citation, accompanying the award noted:

"When personnel trained in bomb and mine disposal were not available, and though having had no previous experience in this highly dangerous occupation, Impellitteri worked tirelessly and skillfully and with complete disregard for his personal safety.

BAZOOKA BARRELS BECOME EXHAUST PIPES

Barrels from abandoned bazookas were pressed into service as truck exhaust pipes when standard replacement parts were unobtainable at a base in the Marianas.

Seabee Spencer P. Johnson, SF2c, of Clarksville, Tennessee, suggested the substitution, pointing out that the light-weight barrels would not be likely to break away from truck manifolds as heavier pipe had done.

BIG PUSH ON JAP EMPIRE NEARS

A major assault on the Japanese empire is in the cards in the near future, the Associated Press quoted Lt. Gen. Robert C. Richardson, Jr. The Army officer is commanding general of the Pacific Ocean areas.

TWO RECEIVE NAVY-MARINE CORPS MEDAL

Two Seabees who helped rescue twenty men who had been blown from or jumped off a burning transport in the Philippines have been awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. The presentation was made by Vice Admiral T. C. Kinkaid, USN, Commander, Seventh Fleet.

With two other servicemen the Seabees, James A. Honiff, CM1c, of Midlothian, Illinois, and Sava Salaja, Cox, of Milwaukee, Wisc., were in a LCVP off shore where they heard an explosion and saw flames shoot up from the ship. They rushed to the scene.

Japanese planes returned to strafe the vessel and the victims in the water, but the four men stayed on the job until they had hauled in every survivor.

SUGAR SHORT, SUPPLIES HIS OWN

Because CSK Elverne R. Parsons likes his coffee sweet, his entire unit now is enjoying a daily supply of cane syrup.

When the chief's battalion ran short of sugar, Parsons tried crushing some of the cane which grows abundantly on the Marianas base. He first experimented with cane press from a neighboring island. By this time, he had met a professional sugar grower from Louisiana and the two pooled their resources of experience and equipment.

Now their output of fresh syrup is used in the battalion galley for cooking purposes and the sugar saved there is placed on the tables. Parsons enjoys his coffee as he likes it -- sweet.

AND STILL GOING STRONG!

The Leatherneck at Guadalcanal who said, "Never hit a Seabee. He may be the father of a Marine," didn't realize how close to the truth he was. For the father of Marine Sgt. Charles R. Ruscher, serving with a Marine Air Wing at a Philippine base, is 64-year-old CBM Edgar W. Cady, of Salem, Illinois, now on his second tour of overseas duty.

Cady, a veteran of the Spanish-American War, was rejected for service in World War I but was accepted for duty shortly after Pearl Harbor. He put in 16 months in the Aleutians and, after a rest period in the States, moved to Hawaii and then to the Philippines where he met his son.

IT'S THE COMPANY HE KEEPS

Leonard E. Carlsen, HA1c, Navy Corpsman attached to a Seabee unit on Okinawa, learned how to drive a cherry picker in one easy lesson, relates Staff Sgt. James F. Moser, Jr., a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent.

The machine had been dropped into six feet of water while being unloaded from an LST. Carlsen, with a Navy doctor, was called to the ship to attend an injured Seabee. They rode out on the coral reef on a bulldozer.

Reaching the LST, they found the man had been removed to a nearby hospital ship for treatment. Since they were returning to shore they were asked to bring in the cherry picker. The driver of the bulldozer asked for a volunteer. The doctor declined, but Carlsen said, "Show me."

In three minutes he learned the driving mechanism and steered the machine as the bulldozer towed it ashore. He drove it to the Seabee camp three miles away.

"A little out of my line," he smiled. "But you know the Seabees."

EVERY MAN TO HIS TRADE?

For 25 months in the South Pacific, W. P. Allman has been a carpenter, truck mechanic, bulldozer operator, truck driver, phone repairman and deck hand.

Now, remembering the recruiting posters' promise of every man to his own trade, he wants to know when:

His trade? A bartender.

V-MAIL BLUEPRINTS

The escort carrier USS KALININ BAY, which took 25 shell holes in her skin during the Battle for Leyte Gulf, was returned to the Fleet in the record time of six weeks through a new technique of the Bureau of Ships which "V-mails" blueprints in microfilm to the shipyards while damaged ships are on their way back to the States.

EASY TO PLEASE

As far as ice cream is concerned, Seabees have a one-track mind, says Emil B. Tobbe, S1c, who speaks on the authority of six months' experience as unofficial caterer for his battalion.

"I used to spend a lot of time thinking up new ideas, begging or borrowing different flavoring extracts and giving the guys as much variety as possible," the Buechel, Kentucky veteran relates. "So what happens? Every time we dish out some fancy flavor, like pistachio or peanut butter or maple nut, about half the men yell, 'What! No vanilla?'"

Tobbe has the answer to that one now. He makes at least half of each run vanilla and his mates get their choice. For special occasions, he offers a topping of chocolate syrup and nuts.

NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL NOTE

Brake linings deteriorated so rapidly in the Aleutians Seabee truck drivers bolted useless pedals to the floor and wore crash helmets, then wrote "Keep 'Em Looping" on the cowls, according to Chief Herbert L. Nichols.

"Oddly enough," the Chief said, "we had few accidents. Truck pushers gave each other a wide berth and when pedestrians saw a truck coming their way, they climbed a power pole or went in a different direction."

Stopping was simple: The driver went into low gear, switched off the ignition and said a prayer. If that didn't work, a sure way was to carom off a soft bank along the road or slide the back wheels into a ditch.

"CARLI CALLING TOWER. . .GO AHEAD"

John G. Carli, 22-year-old San Franciscan, who claims he can make it blindfolded from Twin Peaks to the Mission and return, spent three hours one night trying to get out of a swamp on a South Pacific atoll.

He became lost in the swamp near his base, wandered around for three hours before getting out of the tangle. Next morning reconnaissance disclosed the area was 75 yards long and 50 yards wide.

"FORE!" TOJO

Henry C. Robertson, EM1c, former Oklahoma state golf champion whose title was largely due to his dexterity with irons, is still using 'em--in one way or another. Robertson, now on duty in the Marianas, is using climbing irons as a cable splicer with the telephone crew.

FULL STEAM AHEAD

When a 300-pound box of destroyer turbine parts was lost overboard recently at a Western Pacific naval base, Seabee divers from a dredging battalion working nearby were called upon to try to retrieve the vital parts.

Working in water 135 feet deep, amid scattered wreckage of war which littered the harbor floor, the divers found and brought to the surface the box of parts, without which the destroyer could not complete repairs. The battalion credits Carpenter T. D. Vinette and his crew for the work. The two divers who went after the box were A. M. Eberhardt, CCM, of Lorain, Ohio and R. D. Staben, EM1c, of Portland, Oregon.

WHO SAID "DON'T VOLUNTEER"?

His mates figured he was island-happy and said so when R. L. Sevier, a yeoman who had been attached to a battalion overseas two years, raised his hand in response to a call for volunteers.

The request had been for three yeomen to be transferred from the battalion to Forward Area Headquarters. Sevier, John C. Aldrich, and Charles D. McNealy were the men switched.

The other day Sevier's mates received a letter from him. The three yeomen, it said, were on their way to the States for leave.

The know-it-all boys haven't recovered yet.

SUPPLY PROBLEM

Fred Kruger, CM2c, of St. Paul, Minn, with a Marianas-based Seabee battalion, didn't realize what he was letting himself in for. Because the Ship's Service Store was fresh out of wooden shower shoes, Fred hand carved himself a pair out of native "coca bola" wood found in the ties of an old deserted Jap railroad.

Other disappointed purchasers heard of Fred's handiwork and the orders began pouring in. At present he's turning out a pair a night but, he says, if the demand continues he'll be forced to take on more help.

MEMORIAL TO DEAD

A battalion athletic field in the Pacific has been named in honor of two members who died in line of duty. Known as the Clark-Boardman Field, it honors Elliot W. Clark, PhoM1c, of West Roxbury, Mass., and Earl W. Boardman, MM2c, Canaan, Conn.

P-38 ASHTRAYS

The "P-38 Ashtray" which is the souvenir specialty of John F. Prodziewicz, SK3c, may or may not be new, but there's no question about it's being good.

The ingredients, he says, are mostly Jap-provided but Seabee-procured. One large shell -- 90 mm. or up -- several smaller ones, a handful of .45 calibre slugs, and aluminum from wrecked planes. Cut here, shave there, file this, trim that, mix well, polish all over -- and Prodziewicz displays the finished product, a miniature Lightning poised daintily but sturdily above a brass base.

FOR EFFECT ONLY

Harry Hohnstein, 36-year-old MM3c, who has spent his spare time making souvenir knives of spring steel and vari-colored plexiglas salvaged from wrecked planes, has turned out many knives for friends and souvenir-buyers, but the best one of all he kept for his brother, Philip, a machinist's mate aboard a destroyer.

The day came when Harry heard that Philip's destroyer was in the harbor. He hurried out, carrying the knife. But he was still fifty yards off when the warship weighed anchor and steamed out to sea.

More time passed and eventually Philip's ship returned. This time Harry made it. Unannounced, he surprised his brother in his quarters and the knife in his hand didn't deaden their greeting.

EVILS OF THE MACHINE AGE

Home-made washing machines are a boon to many Seabees, but at least one mate, Albert J. Andersen, S1c, of Hollywood, Cal. is disturbed at the possible consequences.

"Ever since the first Seabee arrived on some tropical island, noticed the laundry situation, and decided to do something about it, washing machines have been invented by "ingenious" Seabees and stories have been written about them," Andersen says. "These tales have lead the folks back home to believe the thought uppermost in the mind of every Seabee is, 'Do I have a clean change of clothes for chow tonight?' This may or may not be true.

"No one has ever bothered to write of the catastrophe these thousands of washing machines scattered over the Pacific are certain to bring about," he continues.

"For hundreds of years the head of the native family has kept his wife busy washing his dirty loin cloths and whatever other linen he happens to have, in the nearest creek. The husband figures that not only can he loll nearby in the shade, but he will be keeping his wife busy enough so that she will never have time to think of such a thing as 'women's suffrage.'

"When the Seabees leave, as they eventually must, the native women will fall heir to all the washing machines," Andersen predicts. "The machines will cut their work in half or even less. This will give them time to think of the inequalities which exist between them and their husbands. This, in turn, is bound to result in a social upheaval. There may even be bloodshed. And the blame can be placed directly upon the ingenuity of the Seabees and their washing machines."

QUICK HARVEST

A 19-year-old Seabee in the Marianas recently found a new way to capture a Jap. He did it by going farming.

Melvin E. Wilson, S2c, of Dixon, Miss., was driving a tractor, clearing ground on which an FEA garden was to be planted. The Jap popped out of the brush, hands high. Wilson kept him in front of the tractor and paced him to the stockade.

SPEEDS HANDLING OF BOTTLES

A simple device, conceived and constructed from scrap metal by F. H. Burdette, CM2c, and R. L. Soulon, Cox, of the 301st Battalion, has cut the time required for handling oxygen and acetylene bottles by 25% and at the same time, has eliminated a lot of hard, back-breaking wrestling with the unwieldy cylinders.

The device consists of a "T" bar 5-feet long, suspended with 2 1/2-foot chains from a 6-inch hanger ring. Six hooks are suspended from the bar on 18-inch chains. The hooks are inserted in the openings in the caps of the gas bottles.

A "cherry-picker" can handle up to six bottles at a time.

GUARANTEED BETTER THAN THE ORIGINALS

Any serviceman at a Marianas base can send home a Japanese officer's Shinto ring as a souvenir if he wants to -- provided he can afford one and doesn't mind its origin as an airplane transmitter condenser.

The craftsman hawking the unusual souvenirs is J. A. Drozdowski, MoMM2c, Brooklyn, N.Y., Seabee. Drozdowski got the condensers from a Zero which had been shot down. His technique is to crack the letters off each condenser in small square forms. Each letter is inserted in a separate ring. The result appears thoroughly authentic.

The Seabee offers a varied stock of souvenirs to mates with excess folding money. He has everything from standard cat's eye rings to exclusive specialties. Some of the higher priced mementos are an umbrella stand made from a five-inch Japanese naval shell, picture frames which began life as shells and still another shell with a hand-engraved picture of a native girl. Drozdowski completed the engraving in a week with the aid of a file and hacksaw.

GRENADE-PROOF

Seabee William L. Tescher, MM1c, of Alliance, Ohio and Maton B. White, MM2c, of Livingston, Texas, considered themselves mighty lucky to escape injury from three grenades tossed at them during an infiltration attempt by remnants of

the Jap force on Iwo Jima. Not until later did they discover exactly how lucky they really were.

Guarding equipment in a tent when the fireworks started, the two waited for an unwary Nip to stick his head through the flap. The Japs crossed them up; instead of coming through the front way, they slit a hole in the tent and tossed the first grenade inside. The bomb fell behind the seabees' sea bags. Filled with clothing, the bags took the full force of the explosion. Two other grenades ripped the tent to pieces, but failed to do additional damage.

"It was then," said Tescher, "that we started to mumble something about being lucky--only to discover a fourth grenade, one that failed to explode, lying less than a yard away. That one would have been a one-way ticket to the next world for both of us.

FIZZ WATER

Although his knowledge of water-carbonating plants was limited to those he had seen in the states and a repair job he had performed on a ship's soda fountain, CSF John E. Lerch of Nazareth, Penna., started assembling parts for a unit when he discovered an adequate source of carbon dioxide gas on Tinian.

From the wrecked remains of a Jap searchlight came a speed reducer; a grounded B-24 contributed two oxygen tanks; a piston pump was improvised from scrap brass; hosing was obtained from a beached landing craft; and the power unit was "borrowed" from a damaged electric saw.

Lerch's plant is capable of carbonating water at the rate of 60 gallons per hour. And 60 gallons of soda water, plus concentrated soft-drink syrup, adds up to 768 10-ounce drinks per hour.

WINDING IT UP

When a banding machine was needed to bind crates at a base in the Solomons, CBMUer Louis P. Stewart, MMS2c, of Grapevine, Ark., dug up an old truck crank, sawed a one-inch groove in its end.

Warehousemen found Stewart's "Bander" foolproof. Here's how it works: place the ends of the banding strip into the slit and turn the crank handle. This tightens the strip around the crate. Pound nails through the metal into the box, snip off the loose ends of the strips; and the crate is ready for shipment.

SHORT SPORT SHOTS

ALTHOUGH still in its infancy, the 1945 major league baseball season already show signs of being the dizziest of the four wartime campaigns. The Chicago White Sox, pre-season favorites to wind up at the bottom of the American League, got off to a flying start by taking their first five games and lead the league in batting and total hits. The champion St. Louis Browns, favored to repeat in the AL pennant chase, dropped five straight, a longer losing streak than at any time in 1944. The Boston Red Sox lost eight straight at the start of the season, then took the next five in a row. Bill Nicholson, home-run king of the senior circuit for the last two years, hit only one round-tripper in 11 games while Mel Ott, supposedly near the end of his career, leads the league in batting, has three homers and has batted in 11 runs. Butch Nieman, who wasn't even listed as a regular with the Boston Braves, tops league with four homers and 14 runs batted in. Likewise in the junior league, Russ Derry, rookie outfielder of the New York Yankees, leads his league in runs batted in and homers. The Yanks, who led the AL in fielding last year, are last in that department with 24 errors in 11 games. And Frank McCormick of the Cincinnati Reds who had stolen only 17 bases in his eight years in the majors, this season has pilfered four, three in one game while George Stirnweiss of the Yanks, whose 55 successful steals was tops in the majors last year, was nailed dead on his first three attempts this year.

JOE Haynes, 27-year-old White Sox right-hander who almost gave up pitching because he couldn't make the grade, this week came within one pitch of hurling baseball's first perfect game since 1922 when he shut out the Tigers, 5 to 0, with one hit. Haynes faced only 28 men, walking none and striking out one. Skeeter Webb, Haynes' teammate with the White Sox last season, spoiled the perfect performance with a single in the third inning. The Tigers hit only six balls into the outfield in addition to Webb's single. Coincidentally, it was Charley Robertson, also of the White Sox who turned in the last perfect game, a 2 to 0 triumph over the same Tigers.

LIKE the proverbial bad penny, former world's heavyweight champion, Max Schmeling, keeps turning up. Reported shot to death by an Australian soldier while attempting to escape from a POW camp during the invasion of Crete three years ago, Moxie, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, has turned up again--this time in France. According to Lt. Col. Howard C. Greer, of the 30th American Division, the body of a well built German, with Schmeling's dog tag attached was found in the ruins of St. Lo.

GUNDER Hagg ran the fastest mile of his 1945 tour but still took a beating in his farewell appearance. The Swedish star wound up his unsuccessful tour at the Penn Relay Carnival by finishing fourth in a special handicap mile run with a 4:12.7 from scratch, nearly two seconds faster than his best indoor time. Hagg's fellow countryman, Haakan Lidman, made an unscheduled appearance in a 120-yard high hurdles run on grass, hit the ninth hurdle with his foot, stumbled but recovered in time to nose out his nearest competitor.