

SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

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NEW AIR CHIEF LAUDS SEABEES IN PACIFIC

"We would not now be as far along in this war as we are had it not been for the Naval Construction Battalions."

With this statement, Vice Admiral Aubrey W. Fitch, deputy chief of Naval Operations for Air, concluded high praise for the Seabees at the Secretary of the Navy's press conference in Washington.

Questioned by correspondents, the new deputy chief said: "I think I would be unfair if I did not at this time again call attention to the great value of the Seabees in their effect on this war and primarily on my little part of the South Pacific." (Note: Prior to receiving his new post, Vice Admiral Fitch served as air commander under Admiral William F. Halsey.)

"There was no organization, army, navy, air corps, or New Zealanders," he continued, "who at that time and in that area were capable of building the airfields as rapidly and under the conditions of jungle, and so forth, that existed.

"The Seabees answered that problem in the most efficient and outstanding way," he declared.

ON THE JOB

Nearly 68 percent of the entire Seabee enlisted personnel already is overseas setting the stage for the final all-out offensive against the Japs and Nazis.

A recent survey showed, that as of May 1, more than 155,000 enlisted men and well over 4,000 officers were stationed outside the continental United States.

Of this figure, approximately 135,000 enlisted men and about 3,500 officers make up the complements of more than one hundred Construction Battalions, 77 CBMUs, and 32 Detachments, which are building and maintaining the many naval and air installations from which our fighting forces will launch their attack.

The remainder, more than 22,000 enlisted men and almost 700 officers, comprise the more than 20 Special Battalions who are earning high praise for their skill and speed in unloading supplies and equipment.

THE COMPLIMENT OF IMITATION

Airfield construction in connection with the landings at Hollandia in New Guinea gave every indication of having been a Seabee job, but reports were lacking on whether Seabee outfits participated.

However, an explanation was forthcoming in a press dispatch last week from Salamaua, New Guinea, which carries a high compliment for the Seabees. The dispatch follows:

"A construction corps of the Royal Australian Air Force, an organization patterned after the American Seabees, was one of the first units ashore in the recent Allied landings in the Hollandia area of Dutch New Guinea. These men, carefully trained in American methods, repaired the Tadji airstrip near Aitape and signaled in the first RAAF fighters for landings 42 hours after going ashore. During the repair job, part of the force was detailed to help infantrymen wipe out a Japanese patrol.

A PARATROOPER PAYS HIS RESPECTS

Just how tough a job is this handling of pontoon causeways?

The best answer comes from two paratroopers whom Carpenter George G. Bethune, CEC, USNR, met after the shooting had died down a little at Salerno. The paratroopers had just seen the hottest kind of action and were in a mood to belittle the dangers encountered by others in the fight. Their attitude showed plainly when they asked Bethune what the Seabees were doing.

"We've been handling the pontoon causeways," he replied.

The paratroopers started to walk away when one of them whirled around suddenly and asked: "Pontoon causeways?" he repeated. "You mean you're the guys who come in on those pontoon strings?"

"That's right," the warrant officer assured him.

The paratrooper reached out his hand. "Shake," he said, "We've been wondering who rode those pontoons. We thought we were the worst damn fools in the war, but I wouldn't get out on those causeways for nuthin'!"

LONG MAY IT WAVE

Versatility among Seabees reached a new high when the Navy's construction experts supplied one of Midway Island's precious milk cows with a new "fly-switcher".

Noticing that the cow--whose name, believe it or not, is Clementine--was ready for dry-dock after an accident deprived her of her tail, the Seabees secured a length of three-quarter inch manila rope to the stub of the original "boom". Her disposition improved; her milk output increased.

Grateful Clementine has been performing in the highest traditions of the dairy service ever since.

1 100 SEABEES WIN AWARDS

In little more than two years since the formation of the first Naval Construction Detachment, more than 1100 enlisted Seabees have earned individual commendations and citations.

Included in the awards are four Legion of Merits, six Silver Stars, fourteen Navy and Marine Corps Medals, and ten Soldiers' Medals.

Three of the six Silver Stars were awarded to members of the Sixth Construction Battalion for outstanding heroism during the early days at Guadalcanal. The first Seabee hero was Lawrence C. Meyer, S1c, who manned a machine gun during an air raid and brought down an enemy plane. Meyer lost his life several weeks later when an enemy aerial bomb made a direct hit on his gasoline-loaded pontoon barge, and the award was made posthumously.

Duncan J. Gillis, SF1c, and Howard L. Osborn, SF1c, were the other two members of the Sixth to earn the Silver Star. During a particularly heavy shelling by Japanese warships, the two left the safety of their own shelter to extricate seven shipmates who had been buried beneath tons of earth when a huge shell exploded alongside their foxhole.

Another wearer of the Silver Star is Richard H. Maurer, S1c, who, while serving with a Marine Raider outfit during an attack on a Japanese advanced outpost, manned a machine gun after every other member of the crew had been killed or wounded.

Admiral William F. Halsey awarded a Silver Star to Carl E. Hull, CM1c, after the 46-year-old Seabee, armed only with an axe, captured a Jap soldier in the Bougainville jungles.

Latest recipient of the coveted medal is Aurelio Tassone, MM1c, who drove his bulldozer into a Jap pillbox at Treasury Island, crushing all 12 occupants.

Seabee heroes are not all in the Pacific. Four Seabees of Detachment 1006, which assembled and operated the pontoon causeways at Sicily and Salerno, received Legion of Merit awards for gallantry and bravery during the Sicilian invasion.

The four, Thomas L. Coakley, Cox; William K. Parrish, S2c; Albert F. Unkenholz, CCM; and Charles W. Woodmancy, CM2c; defied fire, bombs and machine gun bullets to rescue some 90 soldiers from the heavy surf after Nazi aerial bombs had made a direct hit on an LST.

The remaining commendations and citations have been earned by Seabees for gallantry in battle, skill in construction, and bravery in the face of danger.

WORLD S LARGEST CAN OPENER

This is a case of ingenuity within ingenuity.

Not satisfied with using empty oil drums for purposes their manufacturers

never dreamed -- road construction, heads, drain pipes and the like --, Seabees of the 25th Battalion improvised a way to improvise them faster.

G. D. Hudson, CCM, decided that to cut the ends out by hand was too slow and strenuous, so he rigged up a power operated can opener that cuts both ends from a drum in one minute and 50 seconds and does more work in an hour than three men can do in a day.

A small 60-H.P. motor salvaged from a hyster furnishes the power. A roller salvaged from the same hyster was made into a small, cone-shaped blade and easily cuts steel drums. Mounted on a small trailer, the machine can be moved wherever needed.

CLOSE SHAVE SPECIALISTS

A hundred pound bomb is a hell of a thing to lose!

Definitely perturbed, the Fifth Special's armory boss, Willis A. Walter, GM1c, got nowhere in his search until he visited the camp of a neighboring Seabee unit.

Standing on end, in front of a tent from which came the brisk snapping of scissors, was the bomb -- painted boldly with alternating red and white stripes, and being used as a barber pole!

VETERANS RECEIVE PURPLE HEART FROM ADMIRAL COMBS

Three Seabee veterans of overseas campaigns have been presented with the Purple Heart by Rear Admiral Lewis B. Combs, CEC, USN, Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, at a ceremony at Camp Thomas, (ABD), Davisville.

Thomas A. Wiser, CMM, was decorated for wounds received during the invasion of Sicily. Nicholas Covelli, CM2c, received his Purple Heart for injuries suffered in action against the enemy at Bizerte. Alfred J. Kagan, SC2c, was decorated for wounds received during the Salerno invasion.

SEABEES HAVE MANY NEW SPECIALIZED UNITS

It has happened so gradually that it will come as a surprise to most Seabees to learn that in addition to regular construction battalions, there are now 14 different specialized service units at work.

The first to be organized, of course, were the familiar Special Battalions, experts in breaking cargo bottlenecks at advance bases. Next came the Maintenance Units, whose purpose has been to free regular construction battalions for further new construction.

The best-known type of Seabee detachment is the one composed of experts in the handling of explosives. Also well known are the spectacular pontoon causeway units. Only a few Seabees, however, have been aware of such specialized groups of men as the pontoon assembly detachments and the pontoon drydock units.

Three additional kinds of Seabee detachments concentrate on automotive repair work; amphibious repair; and heavy construction equipment repair.

A spare parts depot has been set up at Joliet, Illinois, where Seabees are trained to operate similar smaller depots at advanced bases. Several of these detachments now are operating in forward areas.

A new addition to the list of specialized units is the petroleum detachment. At least one is overseas now and others are in training at Camp Lee-Stephenson, Quoddy Village, Maine.

Other fields in which special detachments have been organized include such varied operations as electric generator maintenance; camouflage; and artificial fog generation.

FORGOT BIG TARGET

"Don't worry about me, Mum, I'll keep my head down," wrote Private John D. Collis from his front-line foxhole.

Collis' mother received another letter the following week in which the G. I. told her he had been cut by flying shrapnel.

"In the future," he said, "I'll keep both ends down."

FOUNDRY FOR VICTORY

A fortnight or so ago, wrote Correspondent George F. Horne in the New York Times, "I stood with a naval officer on the side of a hill overlooking our principal South Pacific naval base.

"This is the foundry in which great battles are made," he said.

"We slogged into this place in knee-deep mud in August, 1942, and every important operation our forces have embarked upon in the South and Central Pacific -- and some of the Southwest Pacific campaigns -- since that time has been mounted in large part from here.

"We have been here all of the time, all of us, and what you see here represents a lot of blood and sweat. Yes, and tears too. But you don't get citations for that kind of sweating. It is pretty hard for us to take it when some of the boys come back from the fighting zones and say: 'You guys are lucky, getting to stay here all the time.'"

When they first arrived, the Times correspondent continued, there was only one road and that was not always serviceable. Now there are 250 miles of roadway, 160 miles of it as good as first-class macadam highways at home, although made of coral. A great reservoir with a capacity of 1,600,000 gallons of fresh water daily was built. There are 55,000 miles of telephone circuits, vast tank farms, pipelines and a drainage system that, with other control methods, has eliminated malaria.

The adequate drydock system, brought over thousands of miles, is a saga in itself.

Millions upon millions of dollars have been poured into the base in permanent improvements.

It was strictly squatter stuff in the beginning. The menu for weeks, at every meal, was crackers, flies and tinned pressed ham of a brand for which familiarity has bred antipathy among our armed forces. But there was still something of boom-town quality in the place as we stood there and, according to some of the officers, the enlisted men have occasional dice games in which huge sums running into thousands change hands.

Some of the officers grind their teeth to stubs over a phrase applied to the base by one stateside traveler who called it the Coney Island of the Pacific. Yes, they have screens on the Quonset huts, ice in the little officers' club and signs on the shoe-cutting coral thoroughfare saying "U.S. Route 1" and "U.S. Route 40." You follow one of them far enough and you come to a hilltop signal tower where the rays of the sun reflected from the sea sent the thermometer to 135 degrees at 8 o'clock in the morning. But it cools off as the day wears on, say the burned, weary men stationed there.

The officer said: "Sometime when you get out on an assignment and we battle for an enemy base, just remember the advance naval base where all the boys work like hell ... Nothing anyone can do would dramatize our job. But just remember, will you?"

"This," said the reporter in his Times story, "is to remember."

RUSH REINFORCEMENTS

At least two Seabees in the South Pacific are more interested in pin-up babies at home than in pin-up girls on the wall of their tent.

Reading of a Minneapolis neighbor who had given birth to twins for the second time in fourteen months, Ernest Wolfson and Richard MacDonald sensed the parents might be facing a critical pin problem. The two Seabees, stationed on Bougainville, scoured through their sewing kits and came up with fourteen safeties. All fourteen now are serving on the diaper front in Minneapolis.

JAPS COUNTING UNHATCHED CHICKENS

Unmindful of the proverb about counting chickens, two Japanese experts have drawn up a list of conditions to be imposed "after the United States has surrendered." The proposed peace terms call for the complete destruction of American naval power and maritime trade, the abolition of private banking institutions and trade unions, and the eventual establishment of a "political authority" in the United States subservient to Japan.

One of the experts, Rear Admiral Tanetsugu, said that Japan should maintain "a strict surveillance" of the United States for ten or more years, "or perhaps indefinitely," according to the Japanese Domei news agency.

ATTENTION NEW YORKERS

The number of officers and enlisted personnel in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, not including the Navy Nurse Corps, reached a total of 3,014,771 as of January 31, 1944, the Navy Department announced recently.

New York led with 272,373; followed by California, 237,292; Pennsylvania, 218,968; Illinois, 181,863; Ohio, 156,047; Texas, 144,284; Massachusetts, 141,955; Michigan, 112,761; New Jersey, 112,566; and Missouri, 80,506

K O S CAT FEVER

A new oil which, when rubbed on floors and spread on blankets, traps bacteria and viruses of infectious diseases so they cannot spread into the air has been developed, according to an Army announcement.

Described as "a major advance in blocking the spread of respiratory ills", the odorless, greaseless oil, cut air-borne bacterial counts 74 percent when rubbed on the floor of hospital wards. Impregnating bed linens reduced the count 90 percent. When floors and blankets were oiled, 97 percent of the bacteria that formerly floated through the rooms were trapped in the oil film.

The invisible oil adds from 1 to 2 percent to the weight of a treated blanket, makes it warmer, and leaves it with unchanged appearance, feel or odor. Tests have shown no additional fire hazard to the blankets.

JUST BOYS

A good way to feel old before your time is to reflect on statistics released by the Office of War Information which reveal that 34.1 of the enlisted men in the Navy are under 20 years of age. Approximately seven of every ten (71.2 percent, to be exact) are under 26.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

A naval officer, Lt. Cmdr. Ernest G. MacMurdy, D-V(G), USNR, has discovered both magic and bitter realism at Seabee bases in the South Pacific.

"The way the Seabees have changed those jungle islands is nothing short of magic," he declared in a press interview following his return to the States. His introduction to the bitter realism concerned not the Seabees but the natives in the vicinity.

Cmdr. MacMurdy said he and another officer went out to purchase some souvenirs from the natives. "My friend had stocked up on cheap jewelry which he expected to trade with the simple natives. I went with him to a village, but the natives showed very little interest in his stuff until one saw a bracelet he fancied. My friend wanted to trade it for a war club or a grass skirt. The native shook his head, went into his hut and came out with a roll of American bills that would have choked a horse."

BAVARIAN BELL CALLS SEABEES TO CHURCH

Seabees of the 60th Battalion at a recently -occupied island in the South Pacific, attend church services to the tune of one of the finest bells in the world. Chaplain Watt M. Cooper and a party of Seabees made several trips to nearby battle-ruined missions to salvage church equipment for the 60th's chapel, and to save many historic and valuable church items from souvenir hunters.

Among the relics was the bell, cast in 1903 at Beyruth, Bavaria, which has been famous for centuries for the manufacture of fine church bells.

All items brought into the chapel will be left on the island for missionaries returning to that area after the war.

SIDEWALK SUPERINTENDENT

Diver R. C. Robinson, at work on a dredging project, looked around automatically when someone nudged his back. The gentleman doing the nudging, Robinson discovered, as he clenched his teeth to keep his heart from jumping out of his mouth, was an eight foot shark.

The shark, who appeared merely to have been peering over Robinson's shoulder watching the Seabee at work, lost interest. Moving over to Dan Jackson, another 73rd Battalion diver at work a few yards away, he looked on for a few moments, then peacefully swam away.

Both divers surfaced immediately and for want of anything stronger gulped several cups of hot coffee.

THE HARD WAY

You might know that if the Seabees ever went to sea, they'd go the hard way, and sure enough that's what's happened in the Aleutians.

Instead of learning to handle boats off the coast of Virginia or California, they learned in a climate where the weather changes every 10 minutes, where the nearness to the magnetic pole plays tricks with their compasses, where sudden fogs come in so thick the rigging leaves a wake, and where eight foot waves make landing on a rocky beach just a trifle difficult. But they learned.

"The men in my battalion took over entire operation of the harbor craft at our 'Island X'," said Comdr. Kenneth A. Lake, CEC, USNR, "and they became quite expert despite the world's worst collection of bad weather.

Commander Lake described how, in one instance, the Seabees accepted a challenge to deliver supplies and equipment by sea to an isolated outpost farther up the coast. If they failed, it would be necessary to cut a road through almost impossible terrain. The high surf and rocky shore offered a terrible threat to the success of landing small whale boats and barges, but the Seabee coxswains were willing to prove their skill. The supplies were landed undamaged, and the Seabees are still scraping the "salt" off themselves.

NO FAVORITISM

You've got to hand it to the WAVES for military courtesy. They never fail to salute -- and this one, stationed in a large town, was no exception.

At lunch-time she'd salute in approved style as she hopped along the street. One officer whom she met daily always returned her salute snappily with a particularly bright grin.

"Say, what's his rank anyway," the WAVE inquired of a barracks-mate.

"Can't say," said her friend, "but he's officer of the guard at the bank where I cash my check."

U S S YOKOHAMA JOINS U S S TOJO

The 60th Battalion's "Japanese Barge Salvage and Rebuilding Company" has launched another rebuilt Jap barge, according to "The Gag", the battalion's publication.

The latest barge, christened the USS Yokohama, is a sister ship of the USS Tojo which slid down the "ways" a few weeks ago. As the Yokohama was christened,

(with a piece of coral broken across the bow), a bulldozer gently pushed her into the water.

"While the Yokohama pulled away from the beach," said "Gag", "amid the cheers of two Seabees, three natives and a soldier (who happened to be hunting cat-eyes in the vicinity), the band broke into the Boat Pool song, entitled "Let's Go Up The River For Parts!"

CHAMPION SIGHTSEERS

In its March 1st issue, the Seabee News Service challenged other Seabee outfits to beat the record of Detachment 1012 for being scattered.

Detachment 1012 found itself in six different locations on both sides of the equator and working on projects in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

But now, Cmdr. George Rezac, CEC, USNR, O-in-C of the 120th Battalion, has written in to say that in comparison with the 120th, Detachment 1012 ain't seen nothin' yet.

"At one time," Cmdr. Rezac explains, "the 120th found itself working at a dozen different locations on two continents, two islands, in two countries and one colony, situated on one ocean and two large seas, with the two extreme detachments being approximately 2,000 air miles apart.

"The total number of stations at which the 120th has served in one overseas cruise is 27.

"Detachment 1012's situation," he concludes, "would be a 120th homecoming."

SAY THANKS TO RED CROSS

Thousands of Seabee veterans of Guadalcanal, Bougainville, the New Hebrides and the Aleutians, who have seen the American Red Cross in action at the many fighting fronts, dug deep into their meager earnings to contribute \$1698.48 during the recent fund drive.

The Seabees, now at Camp Parks waiting reassignment to the fighting fronts, are fully aware of the importance of maintaining Red Cross activities, and to many of them, the contributions were their means of insuring that the Red Cross always would be "At His Side."

COMMENDED FOR SAVING SAILOR CRAFT

A Seabee who swam through the storm driven waters of a South Pacific bay to prevent the loss of a valuable landing craft and then rescued a fellow sailor from drowning in the surf has been cited by Major General A. H. Turnage, Commanding General of the Marine Division.

When the craft was broken loose from its moorings by a 25-mile per hour wind and smashing waves, Robert I. Murray, S1c with the 25th Battalion, plunged into the surf and fought his way to the boat. After boarding the craft, he started and reversed the engines barely in time to prevent a collision which would have smashed the hull.

After picking up the seaman in charge of the craft, who was attempting to swim to the boat, Murray secured the vessel at a safe mooring.

Swimming to the beach from the craft, Murray's companion became exhausted approximately 100 yards offshore whereupon Murray assisted him ashore.

WUXTRE E E!

Early Seabee chow-hounds in New Guinea can read the latest daily news bulletins over their morning coffee because of the wide-awake tactics of the editor of a Seabee publication, "The Scoop Daily Bulletin"--the only early morning paper in New Guinea.

Edited by H. M. Sharkey, SF2c, the "Scoop" is in the chow hall at 0500 ready for distribution, seven hours earlier than its nearest competitor--an Army radio station.

BORROWED TIME

A PC boat living "on borrowed time" was able to continue on an important escort assignment, reported Lt. Ernest A. Burguieres, Jr., the ship's commanding officer, because obliging Seabees produced spare parts "dug up seemingly from out of nowhere" and also turned out to help "for long hours after their regular work."

The Seabees, members of CBMU 517, volunteered their aid when the PC's main generators, and fire and bilge pumps broke down.

FREES PROPELLER WITH KNIFE

Japanese troops on a certain Southwest Pacific island may not know it but an LCT-load of ammunition was "presented" to them on schedule only through the cooperation of Seabee divers of the 105th Battalion.

The LCT was headed up the coast to its rendezvous when its propeller became fouled in a heavy hawser. An emergency call to the Seabee divers, working nearby, was answered with dispatch. Diving equipment was moved and H. H. Burnett, BM1c, heading the detail, went over the side armed only with a knife and freed the propeller in a few minutes.

The commander of the vessel extended his thanks to the divers for their quick and efficient job and the vessel proceeded on its way with its consignment of "souvenirs" for the Nips.

AND NOT EVEN SPECIAL DELIVERY

On March 25th, R. G. Jensen, CM3c, mailed a letter in New Guinea. Four days later, it was in the mail box of his home in Salt Lake City.

The letter travelled approximately 10,000 miles at an average speed, Jensen figures, of 83 miles an hour.

SHORT SPORT SHOTS

BASEBALL: .Baseball clubs, race tracks, other sporting events have made arrangements to halt proceedings on "D" Day and unite all spectators in prayer for success of Allied invasion. .Detroit Tigers have 35 players serving in armed forces; Athletics have 33; Washington, 29; Cleveland, 28; White Sox, 26; Browns, 23; Yankees, 22; and Red Sox, 21. .Thurman Tucker, bespectacled rookie centerfielder of last place White Sox, pacing AL batters. .Veteran Dodger outfielder, Dixie Walker, tops NL. .Leo Durocher signed new player-manager contract with Dodgers. .George Munger, right-handed Cardinal pitcher, accepted by Army. .Catcher Ben Culp, Phillies, accepted by Navy. .Pete Gray, Memphis Chicks one-armed outfielder, leading Southern Assn. with 13 steals. .Cleveland Indians defeated Camp Thomas nine, 7 to 0 in exhibition. .Jack Kramer, Browns pitcher, credits boot training with Seabees for his fine showing this year. .Kramer, honorably discharged, also quoted as saying: "Those guys who complain about aches and sore muscles at a baseball training camp should try a little of that Seabee stuff. They really gave us a workout at Williamsburg."

BOXING: .Navy boxers defeated Army in four of seven Central Pacific Area Service championship bouts. .Hammerin' Hank Armstrong, bowling over opposition in latest comeback campaign, scored 6-round TKO over Aaron Perry, Washington welter-weight. .Willie Pep, recognized as world's champion (NY version), registered 10th straight and 72nd victory in 73 bouts by KOing John Bagnate, of Toronto.

RACING: .Shut Out, '42 Derby winner, retired. .won \$317,507. .Jockey Buddy Root booted home five winners in one day at Charles Town. .totaled 21 winners in 7 days . .Who Goes There, 20 to 1 shot, won Withers Mile. .Don Meade reinstated by NY Jockey Club. .leading jockey in '39 and '41, winner of Derby on Brokers Tip in '33, suspended since October '42.

TRACK: .Navy track team won I. C. 4-A title. .scored 81 points for record high total in 68 years of meet. .Bill Hulse, fastest U. S. miler, in Navy.

FOOTBALL: .Bob Masterson, captain of '43 Redskins, traded to Brooklyn Tigers, says he won't report. .Capt. Harold Van Every, U. of Minn. football star, reported missing in action. .Western Conference football coaches reached gentlemen's agreement to abolish deliberate out-of-bounds kickoffs.

SIDELINES: .U. of Chicago withdraws from all athletic competition in Western Conference because of manpower shortage. .83rd Battalion won "Island X" baseball championship, scoring 4 runs in 10th inning to defeat Army Medicos 7 to 4. .Ensign Adolph Kiefer of Bainbridge NTS unofficially bettered own world's record for 100-yard backstroke, swimming distance in 0:56.1, compared with recognized record of 0:56.8. .America's outstanding sports personalities will be invited to tour oversea camps and hospitals by USO Camp Shows.