

SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

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

ISSUE NO. 43

24 October 1944

SEABEES LAND QUICKLY AS YANKS MOVE INTO PHILIPPINES

Seabees racing against time to ready roads and airfields landed on Leyte Island soon after the first shock troops of the vengeance seeking Sixth Army waded into the Japs in the Philippines.

In support of the estimated 150,000 men who stormed ashore, the Allies provided General MacArthur with the greatest amphibious armada in the Pacific's history. Naval forces included the American Seventh Fleet under Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, an Australian squadron, and elements of Admiral William F. Halsey's American Third Fleet.

Overhead wheeled hundreds of carrier and land-based bombers and fighters, some of them from Morotai in the Halmahera group 600 miles south and others from Seabee-built fields in the southern Palau 650 miles southeast.

Preliminary reports indicated that casualties during the initial assault were low. Gordon Walker, representing the Combined American Radio Networks, radioed after the first landings that "up to now the American Army and Navy have caught the enemy completely off balance."

PHILIPPINES CALLED "WAY STATION ON ROAD TO JAPAN"

Warning that a long and tough campaign is ahead in the Philippines, President Roosevelt termed Leyte Island only a "way station on the road to Japan."

The President pledged that Japan would be made to pay for her treachery in a lesson she would never forget. While the Americans were glad to be back in the Philippines, he said, they did not intend to stop there.

Leyte itself, 700 miles from Formosa and 850 miles from the China Coast, has considerable strategic value, Mr. Roosevelt pointed out.

"We are astride the lifeline of the warlords' empire," he said, "and we are severing that lifeline. Our bombers, our ships and our submarines are cutting off the ill-gotten conquests from the homeland. From our new base we shall quicken the assault. Our attacks of the last week have been destructive and decisive, but now we shall strike even more devastating blows at Japan."

NEW INVASION DOOMS HALF MILLION JAPS, SAYS MACARTHUR

"A half-million men will be cut off without hope of support and with ultimate destruction at the leisure of the Allied Forces," said General Douglas MacArthur in a communique analyzing the probable results of the Philippine invasion.

"The strategic results of attacking the Philippines will be decisive," the

communique predicted. "The enemy's so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere will be cut in two.

"The conquered empire to the South, comprising the Dutch East Indies and the British possessions of Borneo, Malaya, and Burma, will be severed from Japan proper. The great flow of transportation and supply, upon which Japan's vital war industry depends, will be cut, as will the countersupply of his forces to the south."

FLEET MAKING HISTORY

Admiral Nimitz's forces, spearheaded by the great sea and air power of the Third Fleet led by Admiral Halsey and the Fifth Fleet under Admiral Spruance, have been making history almost daily, said Secretary of Navy James Forrestal in his weekly review of Navy news.

During the past four and a half months these two fleets have destroyed over 3,000 Japanese planes and have sunk, probably sunk, or damaged 905 enemy ships, in addition to numerous small craft.

"The recent strikes by these fleets against the Philippines, Formosa, the Ryukyus, Palau, and the Marianas," Mr. Forrestal declared, "are the opening moves in the unremitting pressure that is to be applied against Japan in the western Pacific.

"No one of these operations," he continued, "is in itself an overwhelming victory, but the steady accumulation of these blows is steadily and relentlessly crowding the Jap back into his own corner. For many months Japanese naval strength has been at bay and eventually it must stand and fight. In the operations between October 9-15, units of the Japanese fleet came within air reconnaissance of our Fleet but evidently decided that the time to fight has not yet come."

Even though the Japs are laying low at the moment, Mr. Forrestal warned, their naval force has a potential effectiveness far beyond its mere numbers. This is particularly true when war ships can operate, as the Japanese fleet can, under land-based air cover in their own waters. For that reason we have the tremendous margin of power we now possess and are still building.

"That margin of power," the Secretary said, "has enabled our Third and Fifth Fleets to keep the Japanese constantly guessing about where our next blows are to be struck, because we can send out individual forces each capable of meeting the Japs. It is that margin of power which enables us to send up to the front door of Japan forces which even though separated can deal with whatever the Japanese are willing to risk, and it is that margin of power, for example, which enabled us to protect the landings of the Marines at Saipan and Guam and at the same time to engage a substantial portion of the Japanese fleet in the sea-air battle of the Eastern Philippines.

"Our successes," he added, "are not due to material superiority alone. What our forces are achieving is also the result of the work of a finely coordinated fighting team under the leadership of men who measure up to the great traditions of our Navy."

PRECISELY

The following matter-of-fact notation is from the monthly report of the 72nd Battalion:

"No actual combat activities other than minor skirmishes with remnants of the enemy encountered by personnel while at work or standing guard duty. The results of these actions are as follows:

21 enemy buried
4 enemy captured."

NEGRO SEABEES VALOROUS ON PALAU

Marines under treatment at a base hospital for wounds suffered in the capture of Peleliu Island, in the Palaus, are unanimous in their praise of the "wonderful job" done by a unit of Negro Seabees.

"Those boys were only supposed to carry ammunition," one wounded Leatherneck told Sergeant Ray Fitzpatrick, a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent, "but they were all over the island doing all kinds of jobs. They carried wounded men to aid stations, they joined patrols, they helped knock out Jap pillboxes and tanks."

Said another Marine:

The Seabees have always rated high in my book, but I never saw an outfit that did a job as well as the Negro boys did at Peleliu. They had plenty of casualties of their own, but that only seemed to make them want to help us more."

The Marines told of one Negro Seabee who throttled a Jap who stole into his foxhole and of another, over six feet tall and weighing 225 pounds, who killed a Jap with a single blow of his fist.

BIG JOB AHEAD, SAYS SEC. FORRESTAL IN NAVY DAY STATEMENT

While the Navy has made great strides in the past year, it faces "the new and more difficult task of cracking the Japanese defenses in the western Pacific," said Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal in his 1944 Navy Day statement.

The full text of Mr. Forrestal's statement follows:

"The twelve months since we last celebrated Navy Day have been significant in the history of sea power. American forces, with the Navy in the vanguard, have swept across six heavily fortified island groups in the Pacific. In Northern and Southern Europe our Naval forces, collaborating with those of our Allies, successfully put ashore the largest amphibious invasion forces in history. In the Atlantic, the prediction of Teheran that no power on earth could prevent our destroying the German U-boats was fulfilled.

"Thus Naval strength has enabled us to conduct war on a world-wide scale.

"Now our Naval forces faces the new and more difficult task of cracking the Japanese defenses in the Western Pacific. To succeed, they need the undeviating support of the American people.

"For the safety of the Nation, this support must continue beyond the end of the war. Let us remember on Navy Day, 1944, an old saying whose wisdom becomes more evident each day: 'The trident of Neptune is the sceptre of the world.'"

SEABEES. ARMY SPEED UNLOADING

Slipping in under cover of fog and darkness at a newly-invaded island in the Southwest Pacific, several LSTs loaded with 84th Battalion Seabees and vital equipment hit the beach at dawn.

Ramps dropped on hastily-constructed landing spits, and men, equipment and supplies poured ashore in a steady stream. In four hours the first LST was completely unloaded, and two hours later, the last LST was emptied. The entire unloading operation had been completed within six hours.

Lt. Cmdr. R. F. Neal, CEC, USNR, OinC, who had preceded the battalion on the landing, and Fleet Engineering Officers, directed the operation which, according to the battalion publication, 'The Coral Seabee', "set a new high mark in landing operations, both in speed and organization."

Army Engineers assisted the Seabees in constructing the landing ramps which brought an acknowledgement from the Seabees for their fine spirit of cooperation.

An amusing incident occurred during the early phases of the unloading operations when rifle fire, machine gun bursts and air raid alerts were furnishing incentive to unloading details. Grizzled Army vets -- and Seabees -- were dismayed to find that one of the first pieces of "equipment" off the ramp was the battalion's piano, accidentally loaded ahead of its priority.

ONE-MAN PATROL

The middle of an ammunition dump is no place to be when enemy snipers are taking pot-shots. For Hugh D. Niday, MM1c, who was in charge of a Seabee working party on Saipan, the solution was to organize his own one-man patrol and remove the source of irritation.

He crept forward cautiously, but his opponents were well hidden and not until he had covered about 300 yards did he see a Jap slip into a dugout.

Niday tossed in a grenade. The enemy soldier responded by throwing one back.

The explosions brought four of Niday's mates running. W.A. Yates, CCM; R. O. Gray, Ptr2c; L. E. Stephenson, SF2c; and F. Hearn, CM3c joined him in throwing another dozen and a half grenades.

When the smoke cleared, Niday went into the dugout to see what was left. Nine

apparently dead Japs lay in a group but as the Seabee approached one raised his arm and attempted to throw another grenade. Niday finished him off with his carbine.

All told, Niday had a busy time of it in the Marianas. Besides the nine Japs he and his four mates killed in the dugout, he and J.F. Haverkorn, CM2c, accounted for five other dead enemy soldiers, four military prisoners, and eight civilian captives. On Tinian Island, Niday and Haverkorn killed five Japs who had been sniping at them from a culvert.

JAPANESE FAIRY TALES

Coincidental with reports of the Allied landings in the Philippines, and following wild assertions from the Japanese radios of the complete destruction of the American fleet operating in the Western Pacific, the Pacific Fleet Headquarters at Pearl Harbor issued the following special press release:

"Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the United States Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, has received from Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., Commander of the Third Fleet, comforting assurance that he is now retiring toward the enemy following salvage of all the Third Fleet ships recently reported sunk via Radio Tokyo."

Most fantastic broadcast by Radio Tokyo was one in which a "noted" Japanese geologist gave a vivid description of the "complete annihilation" of Admiral Halsey's Fleet. According to the United Press, the commentator reported that "it took 30 minutes for 500,000 tons of American warships and the 30,000 American fighting men to reach the bottom of the sea."

NOVEL WATER SYSTEM SUPPLIES ADVANCED BASE

A Seabee-built water purification and distribution plant in which there are more improvisations than standard units is supplying an advanced U. S. Navy fleet base in the Southwest Pacific area.

The system, capable of supplying a city of 60,000, is semipermanent, and it might be made permanent by a few substitutions. From the intake pumps to the storage tanks, sections were substituted or fabricated on the spot for those not available on the island.

The water source is a river in the coastal mountain overlooking the base. It was necessary to build 7,500 feet of road to reach the source. The water is taken from a natural pool ahead of a 100-foot waterfall. Thus the Seabees, who built the system in seven weeks, avoided the necessity of constructing a dam.

No water pumps were available on the island, so the water load is handled at various points in the system by gasoline and fuel oil pumps, shipped out from the United States for use in tank farms.

The sedimentation tank is a 10,000-barrel oil storage tank, and the agitator was improvised from a gasoline engine geared through a winch taken from the front end of a heavy truck.

The filters, housed in 15,000-gallon wood-stave storage tanks, were fabricated on the island. After traveling through standard beds of sand and aggregate, obtained and processed locally, the water is drawn off through a network of welded pipe. The intake pipe was constructed of a series of welded gasoline drums from which the tops and bottoms had been removed. The backwash tank was designed for oil storage.

A triumph of the on-the-job fabrication are the gate valves which control the flow of water. Gate valves were nowhere obtainable for the system, so shipfitters collaborated with carpenters and built gate valves, operating on the conventional wedge principle, of wood. Careful and persistent adjusting made the valves water-tight and serviceable.

Chlorine is piped into the system by gravity feed from a chemical mixing house, and the water then passes through a large oil storage tank which does service as a surge tank. More gasoline and oil pump force the water into five 10,000-barrel storage tanks.

Whereas the standard water purification plant employs mostly concrete construction, the Seabee plant uses concrete tanks only in the vats in the chemical preparation house.

The plant is capable of producing 2,100 gallons of pure water a minute, each filter turning out 350 gallons in that period. Approximately three million gallons of water are produced each day, of which a million is consumed by facilities ashore, and two millions are made available to ships.

Because the storage tanks are 265 feet above sea level, on the mountainside overlooking the base, the water pressure is 114 pounds per square inch.

The water is piped to the base facilities and to the fleet outlet through four and a half miles of welded and coupled 12-inch pipe, hooked into local distribution systems which originally carried water from local pre-fabricated emergency purification plants.

The plant would be valued at approximately \$400,000 in the United States, says Capt. Wallace B. Short, CEC, USN OinC of the Seabee Brigade which built the system.

In charge of construction, on which 200 Seabee craftsmen worked seven weeks, was Lt. Lewis G. Phillips, CEC, USNR. Comdr. H. P. Colony, CEC, USNR, supervised the project as OinC of the Seabee Regiment to which it was assigned.

OPENING NIGHT

From Manus in the Admiralty Islands comes this story of a theater premier.

There were no lights, no speeches, no champagne, and the only stars were in the sky overhead. It was the opening of a new movie theater on this island in the Southwest Pacific.

The Seabee audience arrived early, bringing its own chairs. The wiring still was being installed, but for two hours they sat on their packing cases and boards on the chance that the show might get under way.

Precisely at 1900--the lights went out because the sun went out--the film started. There was only one projector tonight, because its twin hasn't yet arrived. There were slight pauses between reels.

In the tarpulin-covered booth atop the trunks of four coconut palms, Robert E. Lentz, S2c, of Hollywood, California, operated the projector.

The theater is considered the latest thing on this tropic isle. It has a canvas screen, whereas the old theater had a screen made by sewing together mattress covers donated by the patrons. The projection booth was a discarded refrigerator packing case.

The new theater, still incomplete, but opened at the demand of the Seabees for movies, eventually will boast an elaborate stage and theatrical lighting effects, said Alan Ray, CY, recreation director of the Battalion.

And someday there will even be seats.

LESSON

Sole spectator to a short-lived battle between a husky Seabee stevedore and a Jap soldier on Peleliu air strip, was PFC Sebastian Uccello, USMC.

"The Jap lunged suddenly from the jungle and drove his bayonet through the Negro stevedore's shoulder", said the Marine. The big Seabee, who Uccello could not identify, dropped the load of ammunition he was carrying, wrenched the rifle away from the Jap, and swinging it like a baseball bat knocked him down, shouting:

"That will teach you to 'banzai' me, you"

It all happened so quickly, said the Marine, that he was unable to interfere.

AT A PREMIUM

The 130th Battalion is worth ten million dollars to Uncle Sam on the basis of government life insurance alone. A survey conducted by the battalion's newspaper showed that 98% of the unit's personnel held the maximum \$10,000 coverage. The remaining two per cent averaged more than \$4,500 each.

LARGEST AIRCRAFT CARRIERS TO BE NAMED CORAL SEA AND MIDWAY

Two 45,000-ton U. S. Navy aircraft carriers which will be the largest known ships of their type in the world, are to be christened "Coral Sea" and "Midway" in commemoration of the famous sea battles.

The vessels, now under construction in stateside shipyards, will serve as the base of operations for planes larger than any which heretofore have operated from the decks of aircraft carriers.

REFLOAT LCT

A damaged LCT, abandoned by another naval activity after three weeks of fruitless attempts to raise it, was refloated by the 69th Battalion in less than 24 hours.

Three padeyes were welded to each edge of the deck, starting 4' forward of the cabin and 11' apart. Five to seven turns of lashing were made about the padeyes and the top inboard angle of 1x6 pontoon strings placed on each side of the craft.

To prevent list of strings, cables were passed under the keel and attached to the upper outboard angle of the strings. The stern was raised by lashing a two by six pontoon string assembly connecting the transoms of the craft at two points to the center string angles, and the superdeck of the LCT to the outside string angles to minimize the list.

At high tide, the LCT was floated and moved with Sea Mules to a graving dock.

PASSING THE AMMUNITION

While refusing to claim any world records, the 30th Special, First Section, forwards the information that a 20-man Negro stevedore crew unloaded 56 tons of ammunition from the hold of a ship to lighters tied alongside in approximately three hours.

A breakdown of operations revealed that the fast-working "Specialists" handled the 112,000 pounds of explosives in a total of 63 man hours, or at the rate of slightly less than .89 tons per man hour.

The crew worked under the supervision of Carpenter J.A. Rascoll, CEC, USNR.

NEW SURFACING MATERIAL SPEEDS FIELD CONSTRUCTION

A new asphalt-treated paper and cloth surfacing material weighing only one-tenth as much as the steel matting previously used for emergency landing strips enabled Army Air Force engineers to build and restore more than 100 airfields in northern France in the four months following D-Day.

The disclosure was made by Colonel George Mayo, AAF engineer, who told the Associated Press the surfacing was conceived by British and Canadian engineers and developed by American engineers to meet the need for lightweight, waterproof runways.

The surfacing material looks like heavy tar paper and consists of a layer of cotton cloth sandwiched between two layers of heavy paper thoroughly impregnated with asphalt to make it water repellent.

The material is put down on the graded field in overlapping strips by machinery. It is strong enough to support planes as heavy as fighter-bombers, Colonel Mayo said. He added that the process takes only about fifteen hours for a runway 150 feet wide by 3,600 feet long.

JACK POT

Seabee souvenir hunters can be properly envious of Chief L. A. Pirtle of the 25th Special. The Chief started out in search of a small strip of metal and ended up by returning with an entire Catalina Patrol Bomber, damaged beyond repair.

"All I did," explained the Chief, "was ask for a piece of metal to make a bracelet and they gave me the whole plane!"

As soon as Pirtle recovered from the shock, he rallied several of his mates to his aid and with a tractor and lowboy dragged the plane to the 25th's bivouac. Word of Pirtle's bonanza had spread throughout the camp and hordes of souvenir makers, armed with tin snips, hammers, saws, axes, etc., began the process of dismantling even while the plane was enroute to the Hobby Shop.

The battalion publication, 'Stevie Seabee', says there's still plenty left and "if you hurry, you may find enough to build a P-38."

NOT QUITE STRANGERS

In the Admiralty Islands, Seabee CPO Louis J. Vernig met his kid brother but didn't recognize him until they had been introduced.

Vernig left home in Little Falls, Minnesota, in 1936, when his kid brother was eleven. They hadn't seen each other since.

The Chief now lives in Tacoma, Washington, and the younger brother, Robert Kenneth Vernig, who is serving aboard a warship, still lives at home.

SAVE CHERBOURG DRYDOCK

One of the last things the Nazis did before evacuating Cherbourg was to set off giant demolition charges which wrecked all of the port's waterfront facilities beyond repair -- they thought.

But six weeks after the first American troops had marched into the French city, a detail of Seabees, gambling with death, had completed repairs to a huge dry-dock, one which is capable of handling up to the largest battleship afloat.

Divers had ascertained that one of the German explosives had ripped a gaping hole in the inner bulkhead of the huge retaining cassion and had buckled and sprung plates in the outer wall. The harbor water had poured through these holes to flood the dock.

A ship's salvage crew pumped out the dock and the Seabees went down -- with nothing except the bent and twisted plates of the outer wall between them and the thousands of tons of water which rose from 50 to 100 feet above them.

Under a constant stream of water which poured through the bent plates, the Seabees worked in the bulkhead, cutting away the mass of twisted steelwork on the inner face of the cassion. The men worked around the clock to clear away the debris and then completed the job by filling the hole with reinforced concrete.

NEW VESSELS TOP EXPECTATIONS

Back from a six-weeks tour of the Pacific, during which he witnessed the Palau operations, Rear Admiral E. L. Cochrane, Chief of the Bureau of Ships, said the things that impressed him most were the precision with which American fleets can operate and the high reliability of the ships. The performance of some of these ships, he told press association representatives, has exceeded expectations by 300 to 400 per cent. Some destroyers, the Admiral said, were remaining at sea and getting five times the mileage they were expected to before necessitating overhaul.

LIGHTENING STRUCK TWICE

When the transport carrying Seabee William L. Black to the Admiralty Islands dropped anchor alongside a battle cruiser, Black recognized the ship as the one on board which his brother, whom he hadn't seen for a year and a half, was serving. But by the time he got permission to look him up, the cruiser had gone.

Disappointed, the Seabee nevertheless continued his vigil. After a two months' wait, his watch was rewarded when he saw his brother's ship out in the bay. This time, there was a reunion.

GARDENERS

Probably the most popular man at Espiritu Santo from April to November, 1943, was Warrant Officer Jim Taylor, CEC, USNR, of the 40th Battalion.

The reason for Carpenter Taylor's popularity was his truck farm which started out as a one-half acre plot and grew to seven and one-half acres in less than a month. Seeds were obtained from many sources. Radish and lettuce seeds were bought from a seed store in Noumea; tomato seeds came from tomatoes donated by crewmen of a passing ship; a letter to a stateside seed company brought packages crammed with seeds of various varieties.

Volunteer labor, mostly supplied by the censorship office, helped Carpenter Taylor and his assistant, M. C. Felix, SF2c, plant native corn, radishes, lettuce, tomatoes, mustard, parsley, collard, sweet potatoes, watermelon, hubbard squash, and several tropical fruits. In less than three months, the corn towered more than 10 feet high, with an average of three 14-inch ears to a stalk.

More than 3000 ears of corn were shucked by mess attendants and carted in dump trucks to many messhalls on the island. Other products also were distributed.

A new assignment ended Carpenter Taylor's cultivation at Espiritu, but did not end his tropical gardening. At Finschhafen, he started another, planting corn, tomatoes, squash and onions. Although the onions displayed a tendency to grow downward rather than upward, the tomato plants thrived, growing more than 5 feet high and bearing heavily.

Again Mr. Taylor had to leave before witnessing the final harvesting of his crop; going on to Los Negros where his battalion earned a Presidential Unit Citation -- not for planting victory gardens but for helping to plant -- permanently -- a lot of dead Japs.

NO NEW V 12 CLASS NEXT MARCH

No new trainees will be admitted to the V-12 program during the term starting next March. The decision is the result of the Navy's latest estimate of its future officer requirements. At present, 69,000 prospective officers are in training in the college program. Another 1,000 enlisted men are scheduled to enter during the term starting November 1st of this year.

MARINE PILOTS TO MAN CARRIERS

A number of new baby flattops (CVEs) will be manned by Marine airmen, it has been disclosed. Their prime mission will be to support Marine ground troops in assaults on Pacific beachheads.

While some Marine squadrons were carrier-based before the war, this will be the first time since Pearl Harbor that Leatherneck flyers will be operating from other than land bases.

GUAM SEABEES WORK TERMED "INSPIRATION"

The work of Shore Party and Engineer Troops, including a Seabee battalion, during the campaign resulting in the capture of Guam has been termed "a great inspiration" by the commanding officer of the Marine Division which played one of the major roles in the assault.

"Throughout the operation," said the c.o., "your outstanding performance of a difficult task, under adverse conditions, was worthy of commendation. Though subject to enemy mortar and sniper fire, your accomplishments in maintaining communication and supply lines, an adequate water supply, and a constant flow of much needed supplies, were an inspiration to those who observed your actions and benefited by your efforts"

SHORT SPORT SHOTS

FOOTBALL:..Only 19 "major" elevens remain undefeated and untied after less than one month's play..Notre Dame, Pennsylvania, Army, Ohio State, Tulsa, Georgia Tech, and U. of Washington top list with "Irish" and "Rambling Wrecks" only two still unscored on..U. of Washington tops in scoring with 247 points in 4 games against 12 for opponents..El Toro Marines evidently cream of service elevens, undefeated in 4 starts..Clark Shaughnessy, originator of T-formation, must feel like Frankenstein..Shaughnessy watched Army and Notre Dame, both employing "T", lick his Pittsburgh team, 69-7 and 54-0..Army's thumping was worst defeat ever suffered by Pittsburgh..Notre Dame ran up their highest point total since 1932 with 64-0 walloping of Dartmouth, most humiliating set-back for Indians since 1884..Philly's Eagles, Eastern Division favorite, dumped Green Bay, Western Division leaders, 38-13 in exhibition at Nashville, Tenn..Game, played for benefit of 20th Ferrying Group athletic fund, was first big-time pro football contest ever played in South..Cleveland Rams, on shelf last year, Packer's only serious competition for Western title..Frankie Sinkwich suffered appendicitis attack during game with Rams but remained in game to score all of Detroit's points..Taken to hospital after contest, Frankie told operation may not be necessary before season's end..Newly organized All-American Conference lured Bill Daley, former U. of Minnesota star, from National League..Daley, now in service, chosen by Pittsburgh in 1942 draft, signed with New York team for post-war play.

BASEBALL:..Despite runaway race, National League halted two-year downward trend in attendance and came up with increase over last year..According to AP, 4,178,744 paying customers witnessed NL games..Fifth-place Giants topped league with approximately 733,598 paid..Detroit led American League in attendance with 923,176 paid, an increase of more than 50 percent over 1943 totals..AL's season total was 4,995,233 paid admissions, more than a million over 1943..Oddities: 1944 AL pennant was won and lost on last day of season because Browns beat Yankees, 5-2, and Detroit lost to Senators, 4-1; on last day of 1943 season, when same teams met, Yankees beat Browns, 5-2, and Detroit whipped Senators, 4-1..Quito, Ecuador, is batter's paradise..city is 9,500 feet above sea level, thus balls will not curve on account of rare atmosphere and pitchers can throw nothing but straight balls.

SERVICEMEN'S SPORTS:..Army reported S/Sgt. Joe DiMaggio returned to US for "medical observation and treatment"..Diagnosis of illness not revealed although earlier reports from Pearl Harbor asserted Joe under treatment for stomach ailment..Sgt. Billy Conn to make ring tour of Mediterranean fronts after which, he says, he will meet Joe Louis in exhibition in Paris..Billy also asserts that "things are all set up" for title bout with Louis at New York "within six months after the war ends"..35th Seabees claiming "some kind" of basketball title..Team has defeated Guadalcanal champs, Emiriau and New Hebrides titleholders, all other "Island X" challengers; remain undefeated in 12 starts..2nd AAF set new scoring record for Kidd Field, site of New Year's Day Sun Bowl, with 89-6 triumph over New Mexico U..Van Lingle Mungo, former Dodgers and Giants hurler, given medical discharge from Army.

SIDELINES:..Boxing showing signs of reviving..Ray (Sugar) Robinson, returning to ring after 14 months in Army, scored TKO over Izzy Jannazzo in first round of scheduled 10..Juan Zurita, NBA world welterweight champ, KO'd Aldo Spoldi, in four..Pedro Hernandez scored 10-round upset over Jackie Wilson..The Alonzo A. Stagg Award, the highest honor of the American Football Coaches Assn., will be conferred posthumously upon Walter P. Okeson, former chairman of rules committee and commissioner of Eastern Football Assn.