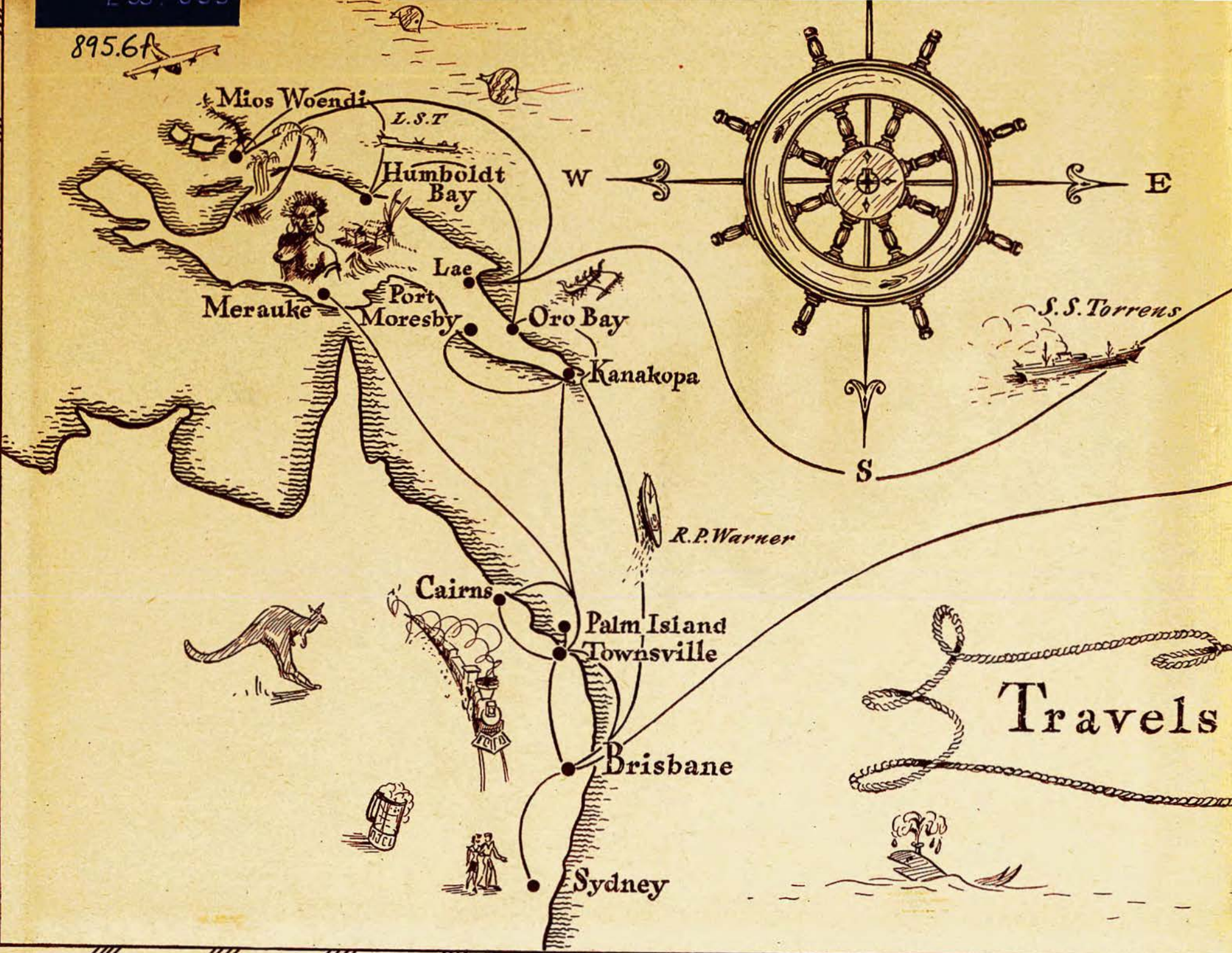




Seabees
=1942-1945=

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Mios Woendi

L.S.T

Humboldt Bay

W

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Lae

Merauke

Port Moresby

Oro Bay

Kanakopa

S.S. Torrens

S

R.P. Warner

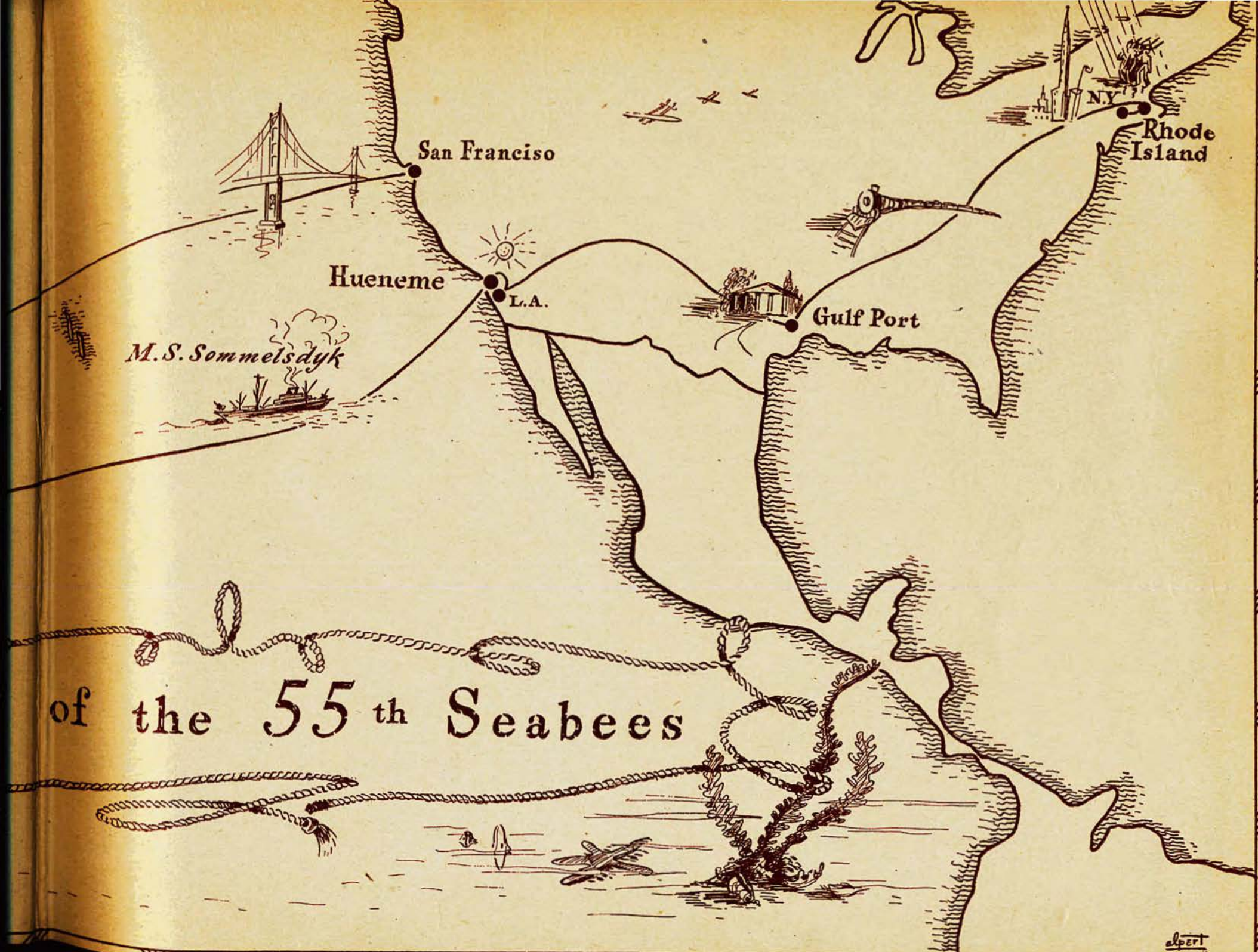
Cairns

Palm Island
Townsville

Brisbane

Sydney

Travels



San Francisco

Rhode Island

Hueneme

L.A.

Gulf Port

M.S. Sommelsdyk

of the 55th Seabees

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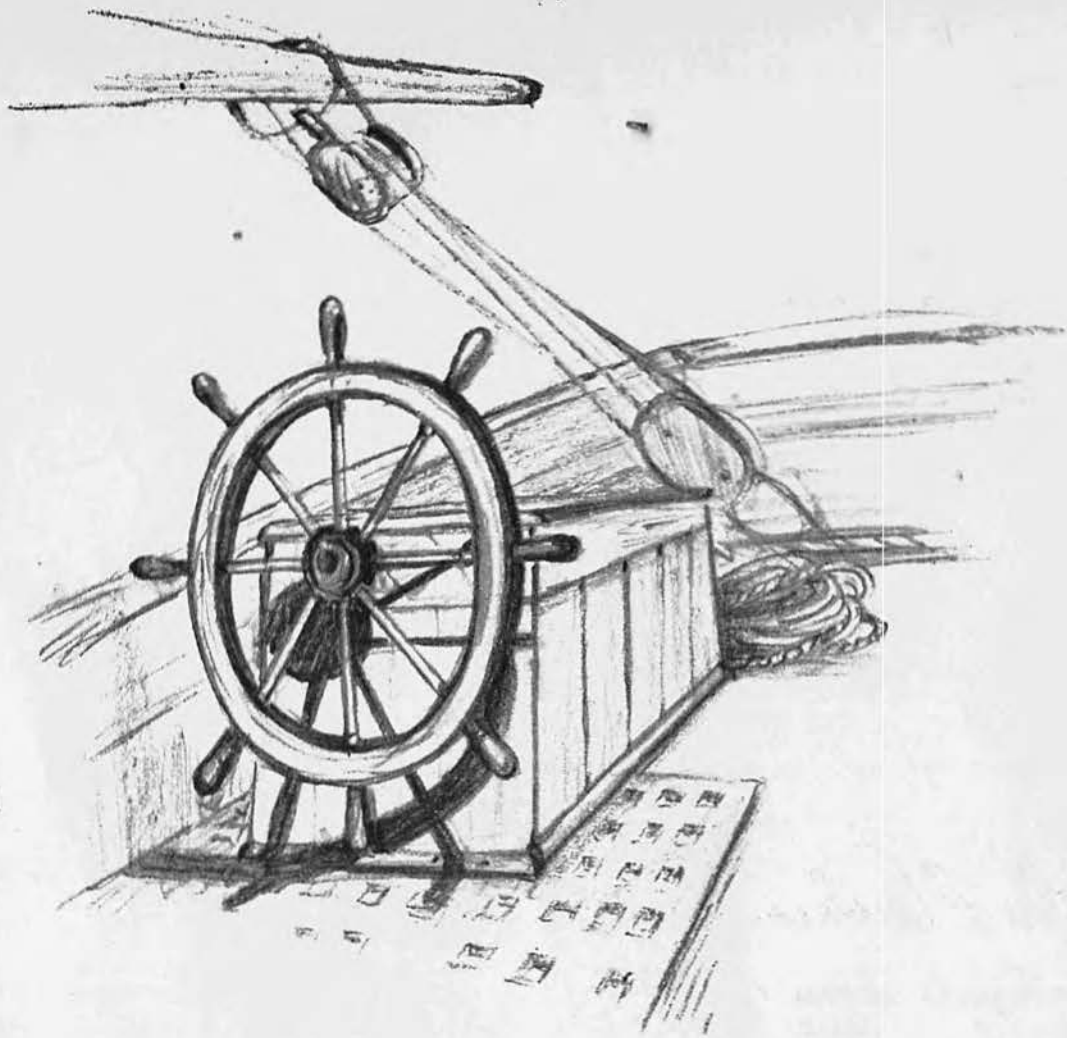
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This book is the graphic story of twenty-six months of the life and work of a Naval Construction Battalion, the story of a thousand artisans called from civilian to military activities on a wide front of the war.

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Seabees

— 1942 — 1945 —

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FROM RHODE ISLAND SNOW TO EQUATORIAL SUNSHINE



The 55th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion was commissioned on December 12, 1942. On this date the battalion broke boot in a cold New England camp in the midst of a reclaimed swamp surrounded by thickets of pale birches and hardy maples. A thousand men, sore of muscle from extended order and close order, weary from cat fever and coughing, aching from a half dozen shots in the arm, were everywhere across a frozen field carrying two cumbersome seabags filled with GI wardrobe. Then there was the casting off of boots, the picking up of the first liberty cards, and the waiting in line for crowded busses to East Greenwich and Providence, to the first dances, liquor, and women in over a month. The cocoon of boot camp had opened, and the 55th Battalion was beginning to strengthen its wings for its maiden flight into the unknown. We were at last a distinct unit with a whole month of history behind us. Now we could yell, "You'll be sorry, Mac," to fresh batches of recruits. We were oldtimers educated by boot chiefs and scuttlebutt.

Then came days of organization, officers meeting men, men meeting officers, chiefs feeling important with actual responsibility, seamen feeling unimportant but hopeful, a hurried whipping together before the most important event of our short career—

five-day leave. Westerners toured and drank their way through the East while Easterners went home. There were willingness and cooperation. Every man was trying to find his niche. There were nights of shivering beneath piles of pea coats, sweaters, coveralls, and seabags piled on top of two blankets that seemed gauze-thin.

There were long scuttlebutt bull sessions about where we would go for advanced training. Then, suddenly, the five-day leave was over, our gear was packed, we were marching in rain and the night to three trains that were to take us to the sunny south to Gulfport, Mississippi. There were rhythm and determination, expectancy and pride, in the beat and scrape of our unified feet on the dirt of a Camp Endicott back alley. We were an army advancing.

At last we were on our way, sweeping the New England countryside, tunnelling through New York, climbing through the mountains of Pennsylvania, down to the fertile Ohio Valley and out into the Indiana plains. Then we were hungry and soot-covered. We had failed to meet with our dining car. Some of us got ice cream and sandwiches at momentary stops at strange stations until finally our diner was hooked on and we began to file into it to eat as we crossed the mouth of the Ohio River, glimpsed the Mississippi, and headed straight south across a cottonfield and swamp tip of Kentucky. We were entertained by Negro children dancing alongside the train for pennies at Fulton; then we were in Tennessee, down toward Memphis in the dark. We slept; then we awoke to sunshine and acres of pine trees tapped for turpentine.



Davisville, Rhode Island



The battalion broke boot in a cold New England camp.



Mississippi

It was not long until we were on a siding moving into our advance base depot at Gulfport. The cold snow of New England was gone, and we were saying they could blow it out their bugle. We were delighted with the South despite a brisk breeze that cut into us as we left the train. We were pleased with sunshine and the freshness of green grass and sand. And already we were ready for more scuttlebutt as to where we would be going next. Would we shove off here, or would we go west? You could have had money on either.

Then again there were liberty, women, and liquor, more organization, more shifting of personnel, a pleasant holiday trip to a rifle range in a pine forest. The enjoyment of this trip was overshadowed by the knowledge that it could not last. We knew we must move on. But in the meantime we smelled the salt air of the Gulf of Mexico, heard the soft, easy

drawl of the South, saw tall-columned homes, and experienced southern hospitality.

Again it came time to move, once more in the rain and the night, but this time everybody had a pullman berth in cars that had no resemblance to the "cattle cars" that brought us from Davisville.

During the night we rushed through New Orleans and across the Mississippi and awoke next morning amid bayous and swamps deep with jungle mystery. We saw palmettos. We saw hundreds of live-oaks, bearded and gray with Spanish moss. Then we were out of the swamps and climbing northwest toward Texas. At Shreveport a young girl gave some of the boys her address when the train stopped. She wanted letters from overseas.

Texas was monotonous and vast, olive tan and gray with sagebrush, cactus, and dry earth. Texas was cotton country, English walnut and pecan country, oil country with derricks mushrooming out of acre after acre of land. Texas was wild and civilized with wide thoroughfares cities seemingly hewn from sunbaked earth and stone. Dallas, Fort Worth, and El Paso; then a nighttime trip of New Mexico, and on into Arizona; glorious sunshine, palm trees, and stucco at Tucson, huge yellow oranges at Phoenix; then Yuma and a glimpse into Mexico. At last for the Californians there was home soil, desert and barren though it was. There was disappointment for men of the East expecting a Chamber of Commerce California. Then came daylight and breakfast in Los Angeles. We were in California. We were in the semi-tropical paradise of the West, the artificial front gardens of a coastline. Easterners were no longer disappointed. Oranges were growing, yellow and beautiful. Trees were green. Orchards stretched for miles across irrigated valley after irrigated valley. Snow-capped mountains rose up in the east, and we were reminded of the magnificent sunsets and sunrises in the barren hills of Texas and Arizona.



Entrance to USN rifle range in a Mississippi pine forest.

wonder which would take us across the Pacific to some undisclosed island, Island X. We lost one officer and gained another. We received fifty-one new men from Camp Peary, Virginia, and lost two who were AOL and missed the boat. We acquired new gear and guessed what direction we would take. There were no sheepskins; so we knew we were not going to Alaska, and we were glad.

Finally, we boarded a Dutch cargo ship manned by a Dutch and Javanese crew. It was early in March, 1943. Our tour of overseas duty had begun. Amid fears of seasickness, submarines, sharks, and the first awesome mystery of the deep blue Pacific, we headed westward. In broad daylight we watched the tanned shore of California pull away from us, and gradually we knew we were on our way. Advance training was over. We had our assignment.

The ship plowed along, and some few stomachs became unsettled. Men were crowded into the holds to get settled in folding bunks, five high. There was adjustment to life belts and two meals a day. There was waiting for the Dutch voice to say, "The cluck will be set beck tonight twelf minutes." There was the grunting and snorting of "Susanna's a Funny Old Man" over the loud speaker. There were long hours of sitting in the blistering sun at the rails watching flying fish sail into the whitecaps of bluing blue waves, royal blue waves. There was wonder at the constant squirm of the sea, the mystery and vastness of it, the inky blackness of it at night, the soul-stirring sunsets, the loneliness of wind-beaten nights, the smell of salt air, and the peacefulness stretching to the circle of horizon.

There was excitement when the first whales spouted and the schools of porpoise bobbed like finned sea serpents. There was excitement with anti-aircraft practice and the deafening roar of the guns. There were homesickness and desire for companionship at night sessions with the battalion band. Remembering our families, we wrote letters that would not be mailed for days.

At last we were at that unpronounceable place, Port Hueneme, and we were ready for life in those glorified culverts, the Quonset huts, surrounded by stately rows of eucalyptus trees foreboding our next destination. Eucalyptus trees are indigenous to Australia.

Then came a mad rush for liberty, for leave so the Californians could visit their families. Californians argued that they should have leave because they were close to home. Easterners and Mid-westerners argued just as logically that if Californians got it, they, too, should have it because they had never seen California. All of us got it for thirty-eight hours. We saw Hollywood and the movie stars, the Pacific, the orchards and valleys of California, the stuccoed cities and sandy beaches.

Back in camp again we waited. We took sneak trips down to the docks to look at Liberty ships and



Port Hueneme, Calif.



There was much commotion when ribald ceremony changed hundreds of pollywogs to shellbacks, following the ancient tradition of the sea as we crossed the equator. There was hanging from every vantage point when the first palm-studded tropical islands, were sighted and passed. There were excitement and expectancy when our ship circled for a day; there was scuttlebutt of prowling submarines.

• • • THE COAST OF AUSTRALIA WAS SIGHTED

And finally the greatest excitement of all came when the coast of Australia was sighted. All of us were topside peering toward land, beautiful land, welcome land. A long journey was over. At last we were nearing Brisbane, our first stopping place.

After lying all night just outside the mouth of the Brisbane River, we were topside again as we sailed up the river and to port. Land never looked more beautiful. Trees were green and blossoming with their roots deep in solid earth. The strangeness and newness of Australia were inviting us to explore them and make them a part of our knowing of the world.

At the dock, American cigarettes were tossed to wharfmen in exchange for Australian pennies, big as half dollars.

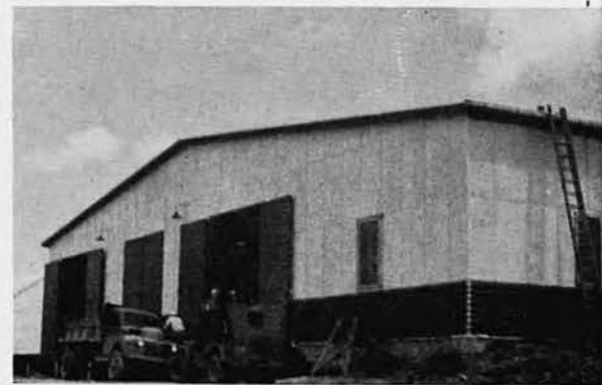
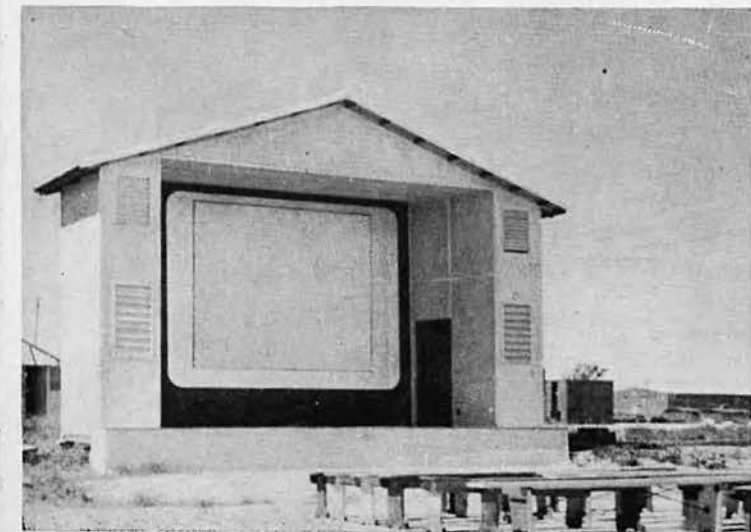
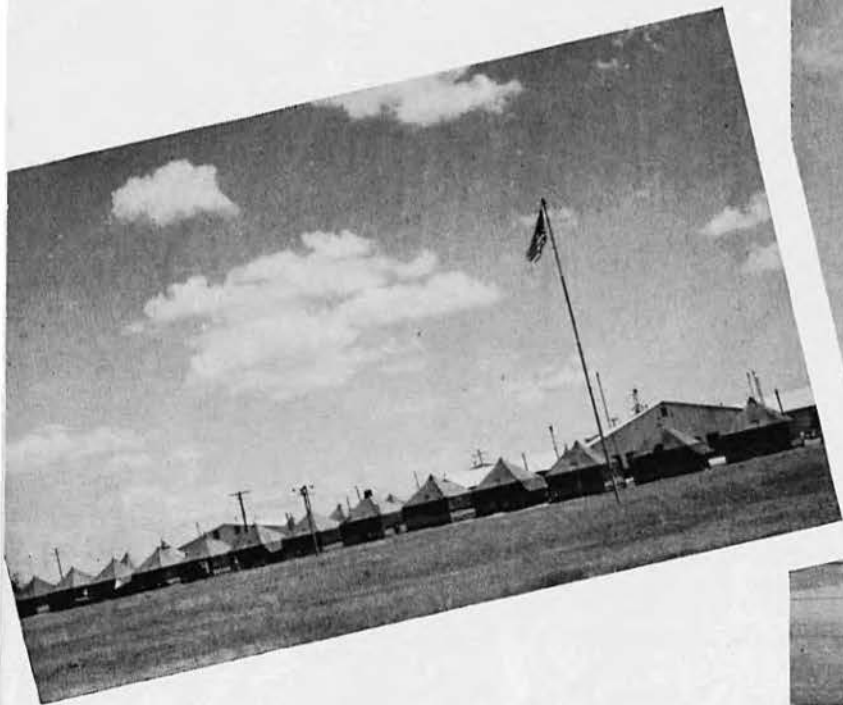
Packs did not seem too heavy when we landed and marched to Doomben Race Track for our first staging, our first experience in tents, our first experience with Queensland monsoons, our first experience with army chow.



Docking in Brisbane. Land never looked more beautiful.



CAMP SEABEE



Almost at once we were busy building our camp, CAMP SEABEE.

AUSTRALIA

Almost at once we were busy building our camp, Camp Seabee, on Eagle Farm Road, beyond the American Army stockade and the Australian CCC Camp. Our camp was ready within ten days, and we moved into it. Our first actual work was done, standing visibly a prelude to greater work to come. Artisans were at their trades and happy.

Then there was the first liberty and the adjustment to left-sided travel in the country down under. There were new customs and new slang to learn. We had to learn to say, "Right-O" or "Good on you" instead of "O.K." There were new people to meet, people much like ourselves with an English accent, pioneering people like we had been, people with vast areas of undeveloped country. There were tropical trees, poincianas, eucalypts, and the strangest of marsupials, koala bears, kangaroos, wallabies, platypuses, ringtail opossums.

We took boat trips to Lone Pine, train and bus trips to Red Cliff, Sandgate, Ipswich, Coolangatta, Toowoomba, Gympie, Sydney, and we were delighted that we could pronounce the words derived from the language of the aboriginies. We met Aussie girls and Diggers. We danced at the Trocadero, Coconut Grove, City Hall, Cantwell's. We learned the Jolly Miller and the Gypsie Tap. We crowded the pubs and milk bars. We found sly grog markets and the streets of midnight amusements. Many of us visited the Russian's. We bought monsterio deliscios, pawpaws, pineapples, passion fruit. We went to horse races and watched the horses run clockwise instead of counter-clockwise.

We built an advance base depot, a mine depot, a hospital, worked a sawmill, and built many ware-

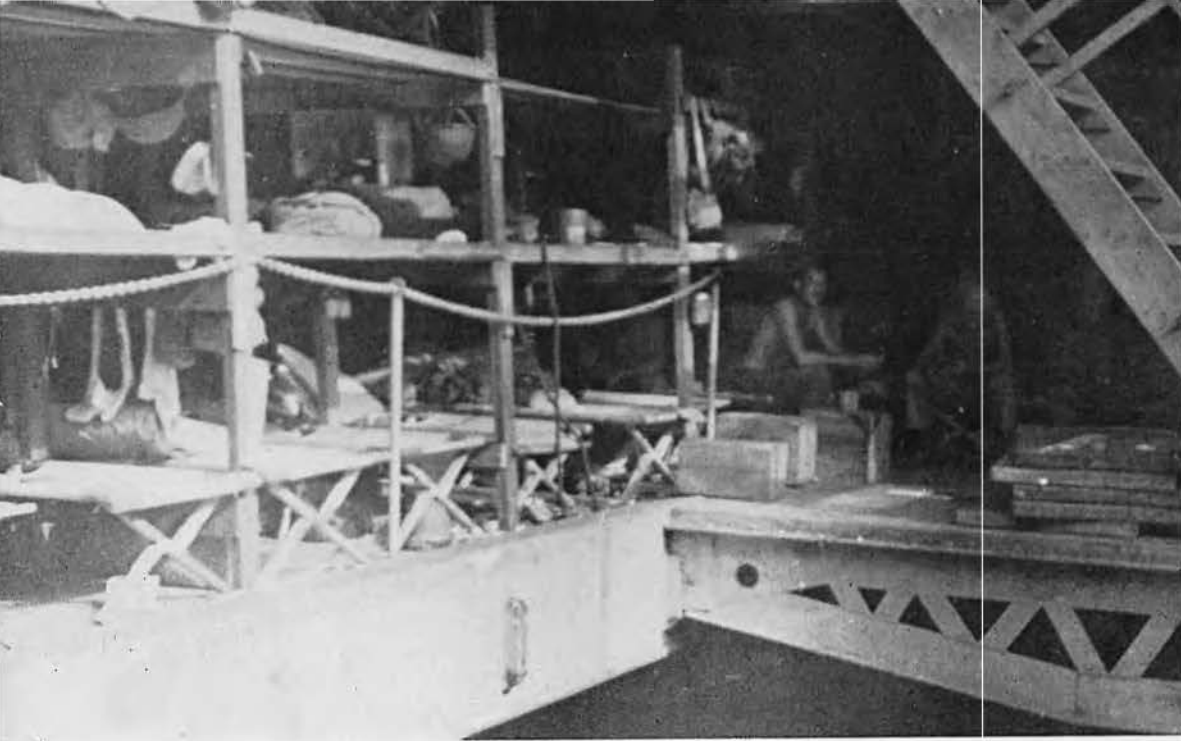
houses in and around Brisbane. We became Brisbane commandos, fighting the battle of Brisbane.

Then came the days when Company A left for Merauke, Dutch New Guinea; Company D left for Milne Bay; the lost platoon of Company B left for Port Moresby; and finally Company C left for Palm Island just out from Townsville. We were building docks, radio stations, PT boat bases, seaplane bases, hospitals, mine depots, supply bases. Company A was being bombed; Company D was in mud, rain, malaria country; the lost platoon of Company B was being forgotten; Company C was in sunshine; records were being established to be bragged about when the companies got together again. Company A had been to Merauke; Company C had learned how to play baseball; Company D had learned how to work in spite of malaria; Company B was split up and confused; Headquarters was the scapegoat of all the companies.

Projects were completed, and all companies returned to Camp Seabee with souvenirs and tall tales. Even the lost platoon was remembered and taken off its station force duties. Everyone got seven-day leave. Most of us went to Sydney, to King's Cross, and Bondi Beach, and came back bragging about how much more we had done and seen than anyone else had. Sydney was a city as fine as our own cities. The people were friendly.

Finally, after weeks of speculation and scuttlebutt, we surrendered Camp Seabee and Brisbane with its memories and broken hearts to the CBMU unit and our relief. We boarded two Liberty ships and sailed northward out beyond the Great Barrier Reef and into the Coral Sea.





NEW GUINEA BOUND

Again we were aboard ship watching the flying fish, blistering in the sun, wondering where we were going. Finally, we knew we were supposed to be going to Jautefa Bay at Humboldt Bay. We knew fighting and danger were there, at Hollandia, Cyclops, and Sentani Lake. We were excited. We were eager to get there.

But plans go awry, and journeys lengthen. We passed through the China Straits, passed Milne Bay and got a distant view of Company D's job of Kana Kopa. We went on to Oro Bay where we thought we were joining our convoy; then there were nineteen long and monotonous days of lying at anchor. Clothes got dirty, beards grew long, trousers lost their legs, skins tanned or turned yellow with atabrine, dispositions soured, reading material became exhausted. What the hell had happened? Why did we not move?



China Straits



Then the Army sent a fleet of ducks out to take us ashore. We got away from the monotony of watching amateur fishermen catch sharks, barracuda, sea bass, catfish. We got away from our own staled thoughts, away to the beach and the coconut trees. We saw Yankee women, Red Cross women, who fed us punch, crackers, and donuts. We saw Fuzzy Wuzzies with ear rings and armbands. We saw their women with visible and droopy assets. We took truck rides through fog-thick dust to Buna, out the Kokoda and Santananta Trails. We saw great fields of tall kunai grass and jungle laced together with clinging vines. We saw bomb craters, deserted foxholes and pillboxes. We saw the waste of Maggot Beach. We saw beheaded palm trees and found the lacework of jungle trails where fighting and death had been. We saw rows of white wooden crosses marking American graves. We were following in the wake of war.



The Army sent a fleet of ducks out to take us ashore.



At last we moved forward again. We circled out from Wewak, alert to danger. Humboldt we saw as a bay full of ships, a bay walled in by mountains. Shortly, we learned that our job had been changed. We were to unload our Liberty ships onto four LST's and go on to the Schouten Islands, the foremost front of the Southwest Pacific war. We knew that stiff fighting was going on at Biak. We were given a deadline for unloading, and every man was assigned to long hours of duty, emptying the holds, barging materials and supplies to the shore. Then we were given a day ashore.

We hitch-hiked or just plain hiked over to Hollandia or the airstrip. We saw piles of abandoned Japanese supplies. We smelled the musty odor of decaying rice and dried fish. We saw hillsides pockmarked with foxholes and ravaged by gunfire. We saw Seabees already at work while fighting was still





Oro Bay with Owen Stanley Range in background.



Hewing shell of native outrigger canoe—New Guinea.



First fresh water bath in a month.

ON TO HUMBOLDT BAY

going on just over the hills. We knew our first red alert of the journey. We saw the small and friendly natives among the ruins of Hollandia

When our LSTs came we made our deadline loading them; then Companies A and B with sections of Headquarters went on to the Schoutens. While the other companies sat in the bay, Noah's record of forty days and forty nights on water was exceeded. We watched eagerly and avidly for news bulletins which told the story of progress in the Schoutens.



We saw Yankee women, Red Cross women who fed us punch, crackers, and donuts.





First fresh water bath in a month.

ON TO HUMBOLDT BAY

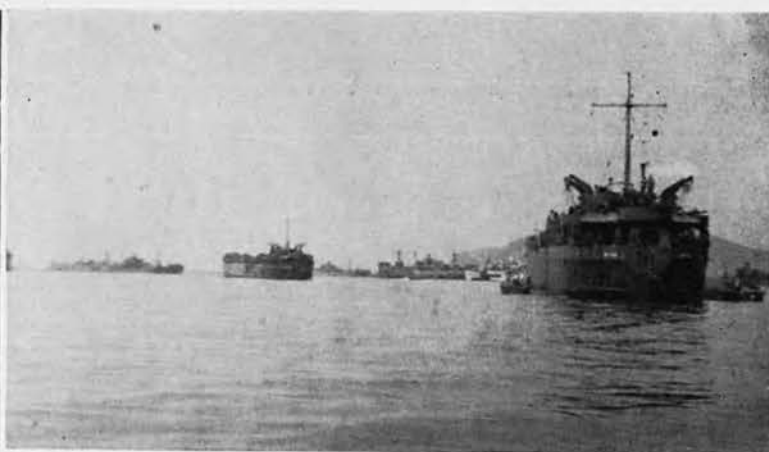
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Loading area at Humboldt Bay near Hollandia—May 3, 1944.



ARRIVAL AT MIOS WOENDI

Finally, after forty-six days on the way, we were all on Mios Woendi in the Paidido Group of the Schoutens. Our island was a mere flyspeck on the Pacific, well protected by coral reef. First impressions were the typical romantic ones developed in the Dorothy Lamour movies. But ashore, romance was lost among centipedes, land crabs, spiders, lizards, hermit crabs, and skin diseases, among rain and mud, long chow lines in the rain while we fed what seemed to be the whole Navy.

There were days when rain stopped and the sun came out making us wish it would rain again to smother the heat. We searched the jungle for personal belongings piled hurriedly everywhere because boats had to meet a deadline of eight hours and get out of port. We found materials and supplies scattered and broken but mostly usable. Tents were hurriedly set up in sand, under coconut trees.

Bulldozers began scraping up roads on a seashell base. Wells were dug, a sick bay was set up. Offices lined Inland Road at the corner of Back Bay Drive. BOQs went up along the beach of Back Bay Drive. Foxholes were dug and used occasionally during nightly alerts. The sounds of fighting on Biak mingled with the sounds of construction on Mios Woendi.

Gradually, as the jobs assigned to each company were in progress, our own conveniences began to appear, showers, screened-in heads, tent decks, scrub decks, a screened-in galley and mess trays, ice water, movies, occasionally beer and coca colas.

After forty-six days aboard ship, we landed on the beach of Mios Woendi. Amid frequent red alerts and the sound of gunfire on Biak, an eight-hour unloading deadline was met.





There were days when we had time off to visit Pia, Auki, Biak, and Owi and see battlegrounds, and barter with the natives. We waded out to the rim of the reef and found seashells and cateyes and made jewelry. We bathed in the salt water and sat along the beach in the moonlight at nights. We came to know the beauty of the island despite our reason for inhabiting it. We visited the thatched-hut villages of the natives and brought back drums, carvings, stirring paddles, woven mats, coconut ladles, Japanese invasion money, and we often left the natives better dressed in GI issue than we were. We saw our own men appearing about the base in g-strings until an order came limiting the amount of nakedness a Seabee could expose. We wondered what would happen if Waves were sent to our base. Would they be told to leave off brassieres lest they offend the native women?

Civilization came to the island with us. We built the evidences of it ourselves: great thoroughfares crossing the island, rows of tents, warehouses, stores, offices, living quarters, docks, ramps, parking areas for planes, towers, radio stations, a hospital, a jetty, PT finger docks, all naval base facilities. Development of the island was our job, and we worked hurriedly because we expected to go home when the job was finished.

At nights we could see ack-ack bursting around Japanese planes caught in searchlights on Owi and Biak. Twice we saw the planes fall. Several times we heard enemy planes over our own island and waited for the bombs which never fell. We went out with PT patrols and knew excitement of hunting for trouble, the shelling of enemy shores, the actual killing of Japs. We got dysentery, dengue, and stubborn skin rashes. We knew occupational fatigue. And all the time our work went on, keeping ahead of schedule.



Chow line in the mud. We seemed to be feeding the whole Navy.



Mios Woendi before we came.



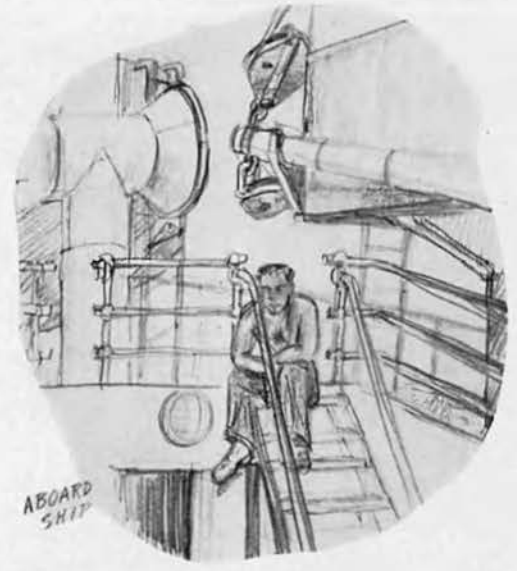




Biak—Jap bombers missed this spot.

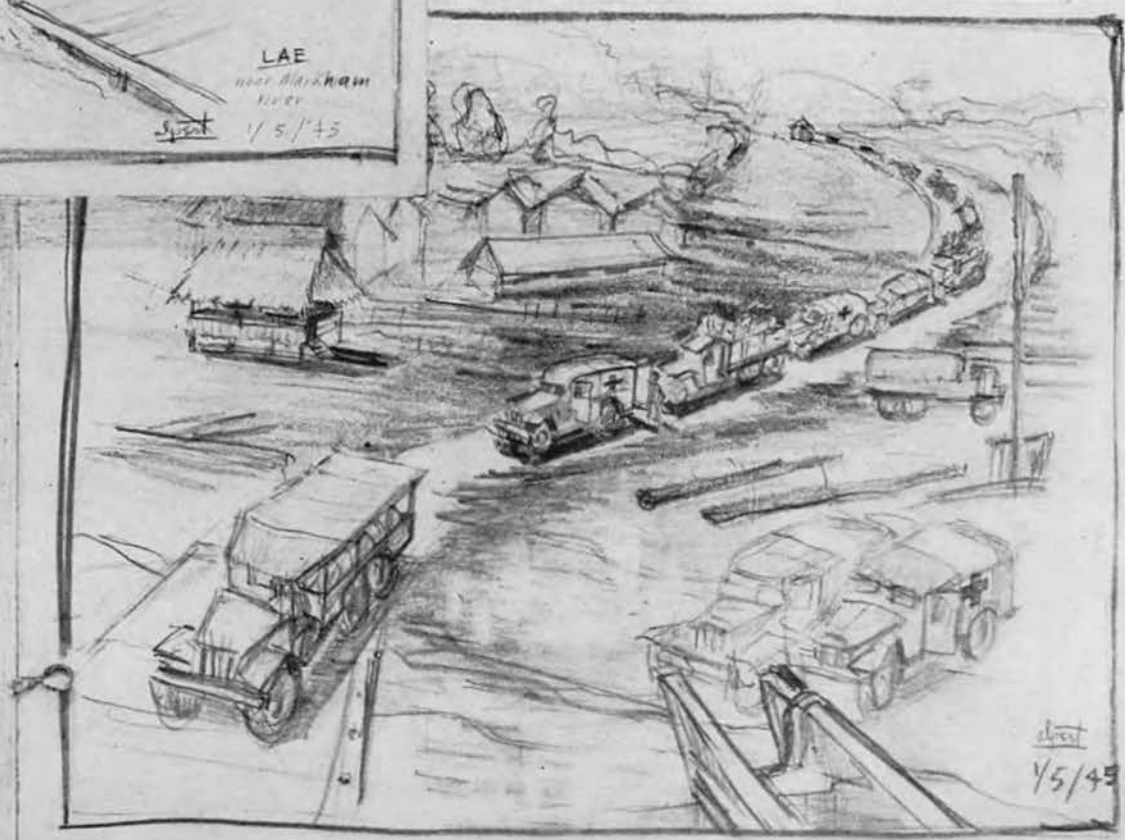


LAE
near BARKHAM
River
S. J. 1/5/45



ABOARD
SHIP

On the Way Home.



S. J.
1/5/45

WHAT HO? MATES

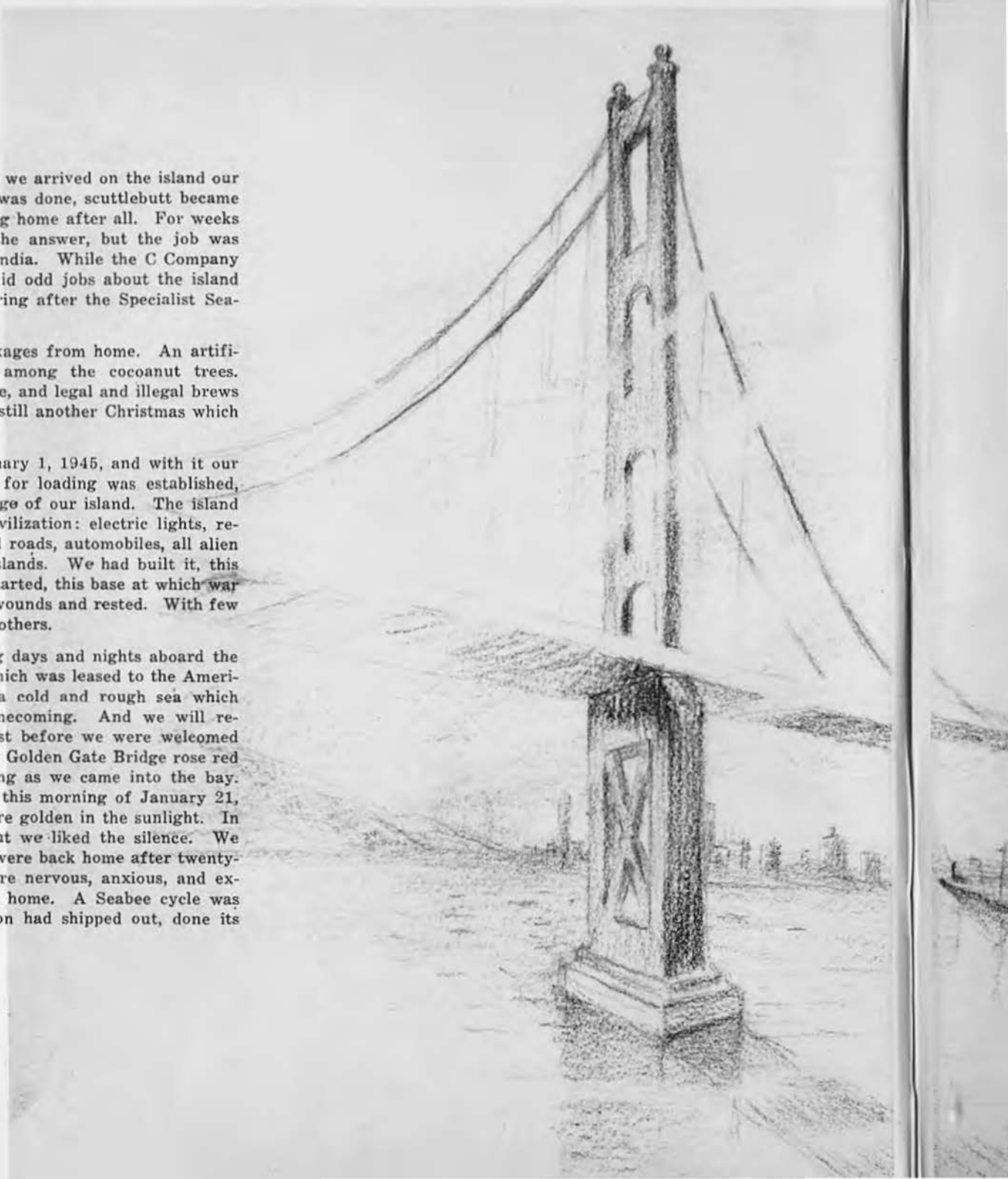


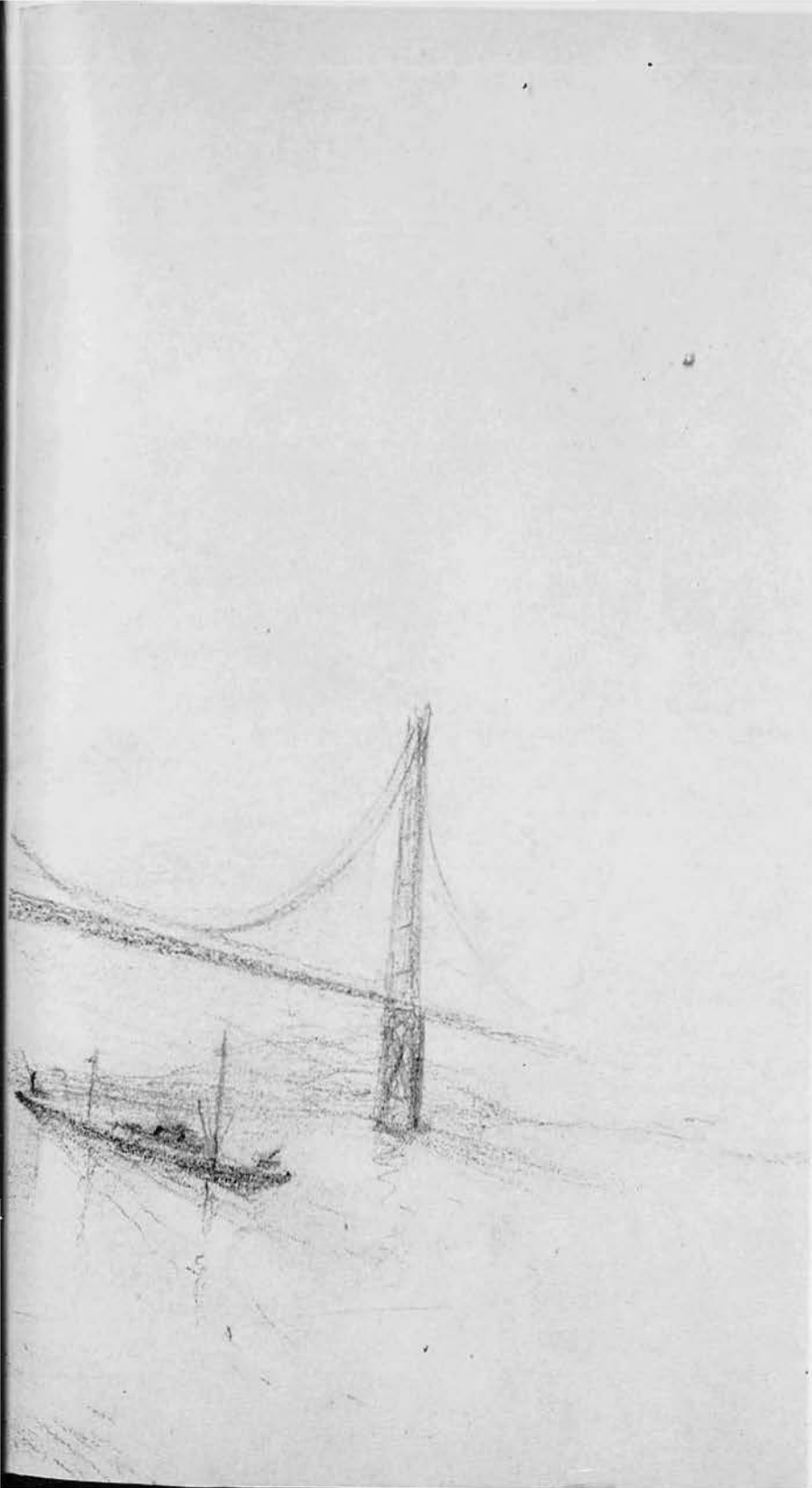
Two months and a half after we arrived on the island our job was completed, but before it was done, scuttlebutt became widespread that we were not going home after all. For weeks we were depressed waiting for the answer, but the job was only one for Company C at Hollandia. While the C Company boys were away, the rest of us did odd jobs about the island and were responsible for stevedoring after the Specialist Seabees left.

Christmas came with its packages from home. An artificial Christmas tree was raised among the coconut trees. Christmas lights blinked for a time, and legal and illegal brews helped us to forget that this was still another Christmas which we were not spending at home.

Then came New Year's, January 1, 1945, and with it our ship at last. Our fastest record for loading was established, and we moved out of the anchorage of our island. The island was alive with rugged Yankee civilization: electric lights, refrigerators, radios, movies, graded roads, automobiles, all alien to the fictional romance of the islands. We had built it, this base from which invasions were started, this base at which war ships and war planes licked their wounds and rested. With few regrets we left it in the hands of others.

We will remember those long days and nights aboard the Norwegian converted transport which was leased to the American Army. We will remember a cold and rough sea which seemed to fight against our homecoming. And we will remember the calm which came just before we were welcomed by the gulls out from Frisco. The Golden Gate Bridge rose red and beautiful in the early morning as we came into the bay. There was no fog over Frisco on this morning of January 21, 1945. The windows of Frisco were golden in the sunlight. In silence the town welcomed us, but we liked the silence. We liked the peacefulness of it. We were back home after twenty-three months away. Now we were nervous, anxious, and expectant, ready for thirty days at home. A Seabee cycle was ending. The Fifty-Fifth Battalion had shipped out, done its job, and come home.





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Saul Ravitch, Lt. Comdr., CEC-V(S), USNR.



WERNER P. JENSEN
Lieutenant Commander
MC-V(S), USNR



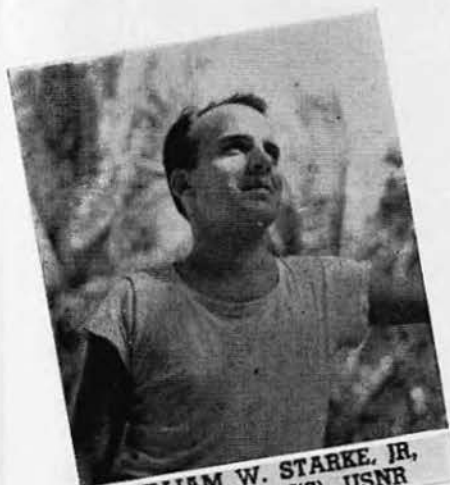
SAM DAUM
Lieutenant Commander
MC-V(S), USNR



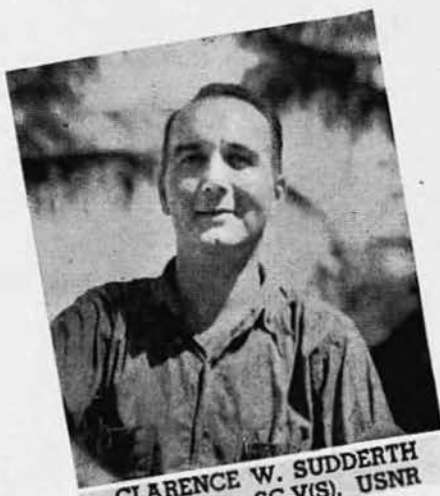
PAUL J. SECCARECCIO
Lieutenant (j.g.), DC-V(G), USNR



ALLEN S. JANSSEN
Lieutenant, CEC-V(S), USNR



WILLIAM W. STARKE, JR.
Ensign, CEC-V(S), USNR



CLARENCE W. SUDDERTH
Lieutenant, SC-V(S), USNR



LEMUEL P. PUTNAM
Ensign, SC-V(G), USNR



RALPH W. ATKINSON
Lieutenant (j.g.), CHC-V(G), USNR

Former
OFFICERS



CHARLES M. HERD
Commodore, CEC-V(S), USNR



CHARLES S. GALLAHER
Lieutenant Commander
MC-V(S), USNR



ADOLPH C. MOSES
Lieutenant, DC-V(G), USNR



W. W. SLOCUM
Lieutenant, CEC-V(S), USNR



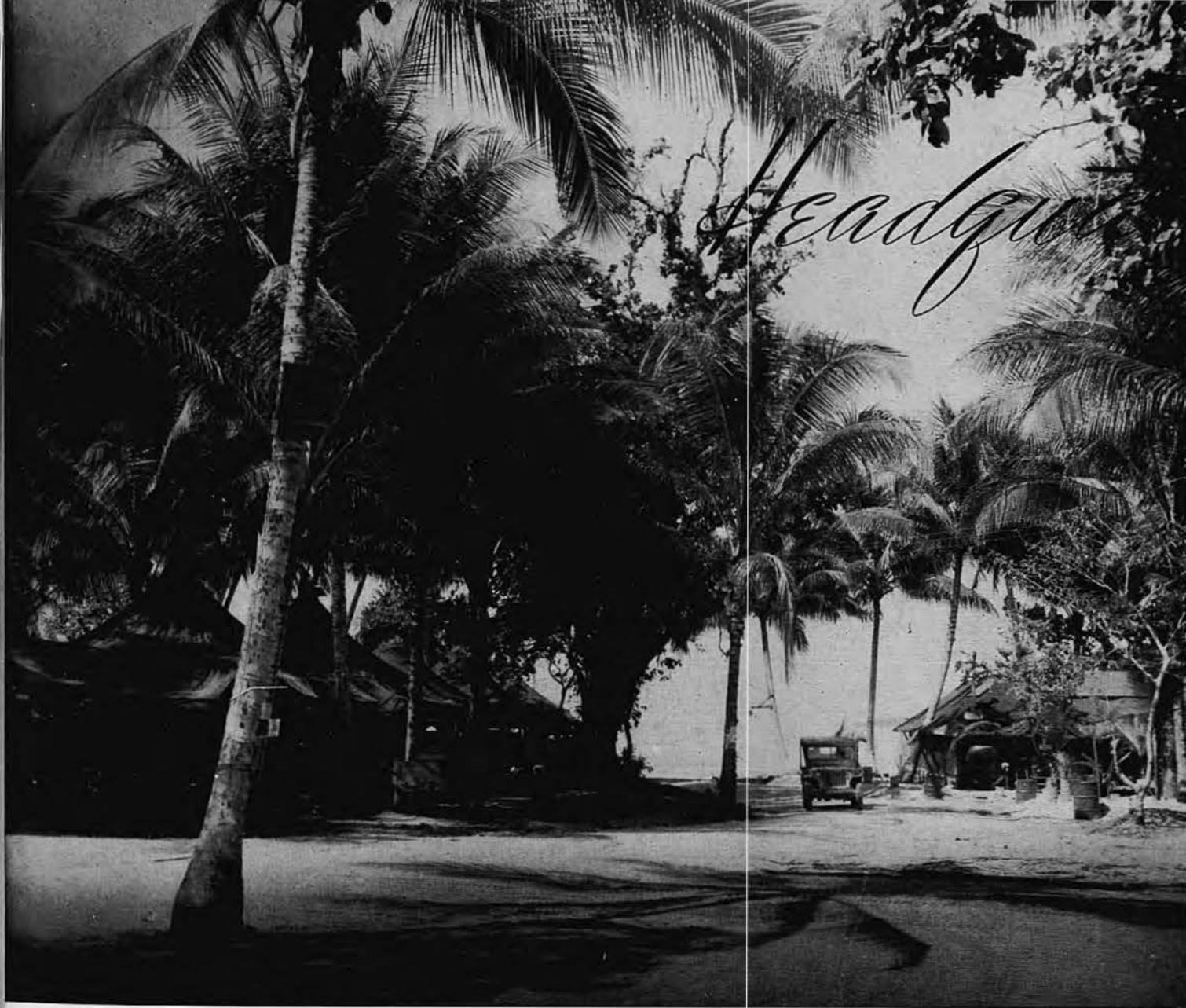
HERBERT L. THOMAS
Lieutenant (j.g.), SC-V(S), USNR



ROBERT O. HOLBROOK
Chief Carpenter, CEC-V(S), USNR



JOHN N. SPAULDING
Lieutenant, CEC-V(S), USNR



Headquarters



Top: HENRY M. FORD
Lt., CEC-V(S), USNR.

Below: MARMIE E. OLSON
Carp., CEC-V(S), USNR.



HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

Headquarters Company has had the problem of furnishing personnel for all companies on detached duty in addition to carrying on the necessary duties of battalion headquarters. When

the companies went to the forward areas, Headquarters sent cooks, bakers, survey parties, clerical workers, and hospital corpsmen along with them so they could work as independent units.

Headquarters has been responsible for administrative duties, for procuring and distributing supplies, for maintaining battalion records and reports, for mail service, for ship's service and ship's store duties, for running the transportation department and maintaining equipment, for feeding the men, for safeguarding health, for maintaining telephone and public address systems, for planning and designing construction work, for handling a library and recreation hall, for clerical work, and for all the necessary service duties of a military and construction organization.

Headquarters remained in Brisbane for thirteen months and became the "Brisbane Commandos" to the other companies.



HEADQUARTERS OFFICES, CAMP SEABEE BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

D. Abbott



M. Alpert



G. Andrews



A. Averyt



E. Bartlow



H. Bennight



H. Berger



C. Borgstedt





R. Cox



J. Dahlgren



F. J. Clark



E. Coppo



F. Cappello



H. Carver

R. Berkshire

W. Bierbaum

J. Bliss

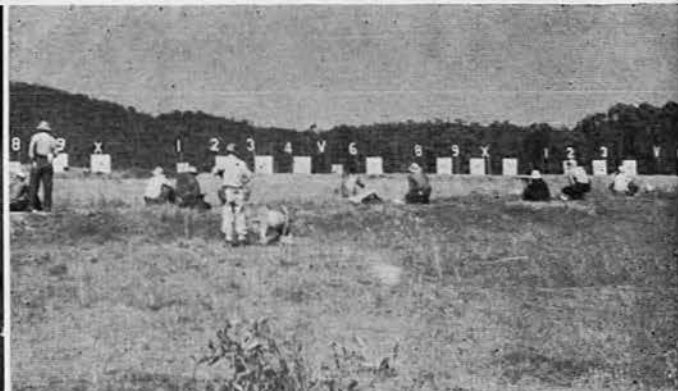
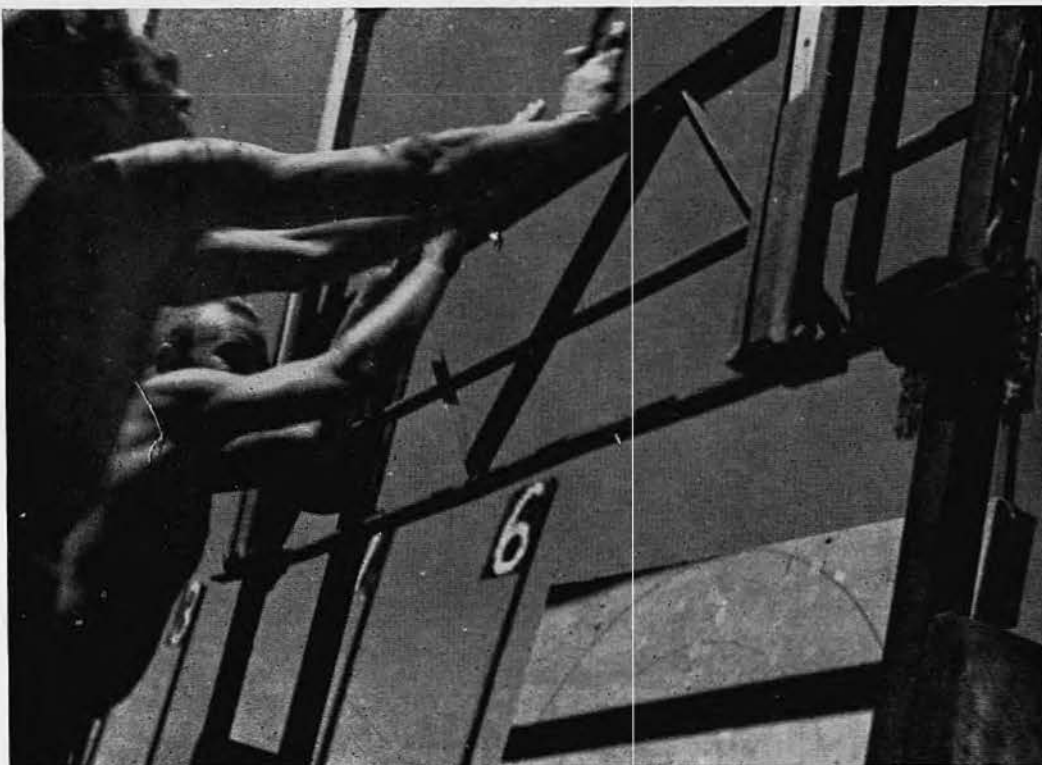
H. Bolstad

J. Bowman

E. Brock

E. Butler





Headquarters Company at Enoggera Rifle Range.

C. Dawe

N. Dean

M. Douma

L. Dubuc

W. Elzy

E. Farey

F. Fisher

H. Flynn



Now, Hear This!



Number Please!



L. Gunthorp



R. Hall



H. Grist



L. Gronseth



O. Gore



J. Gregg

M. Frey

R. Florence

G. Gentry

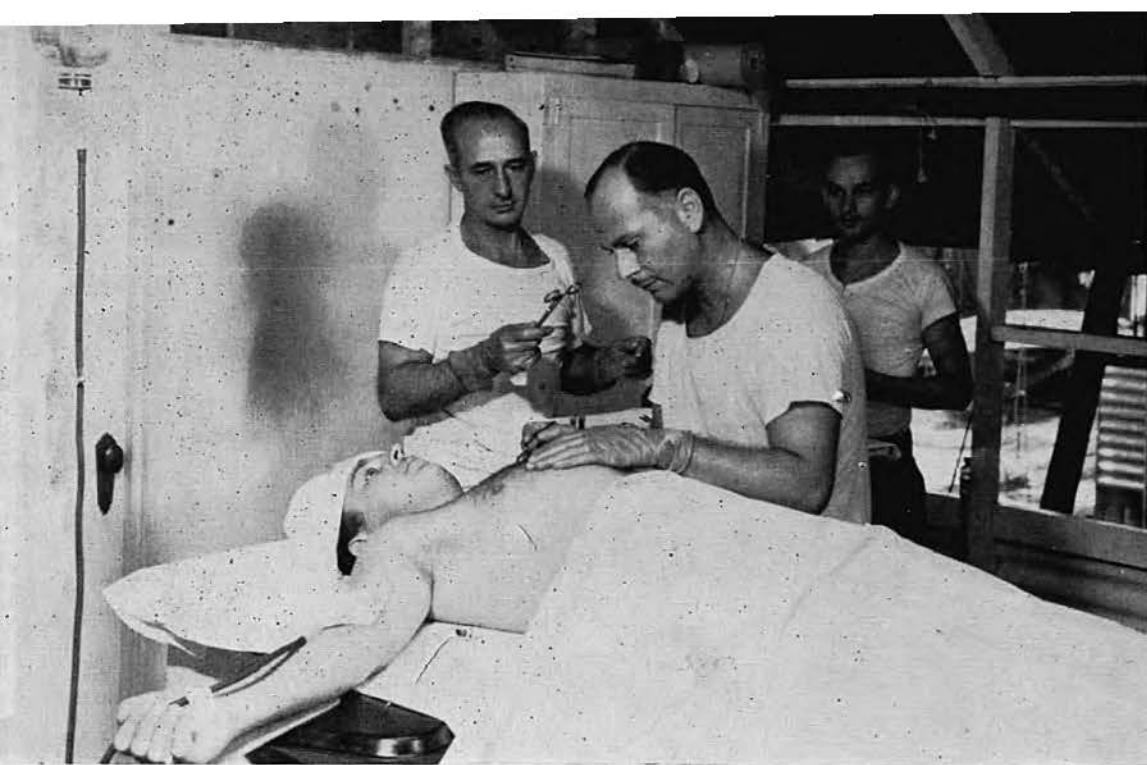
J. George

J. Gillespie

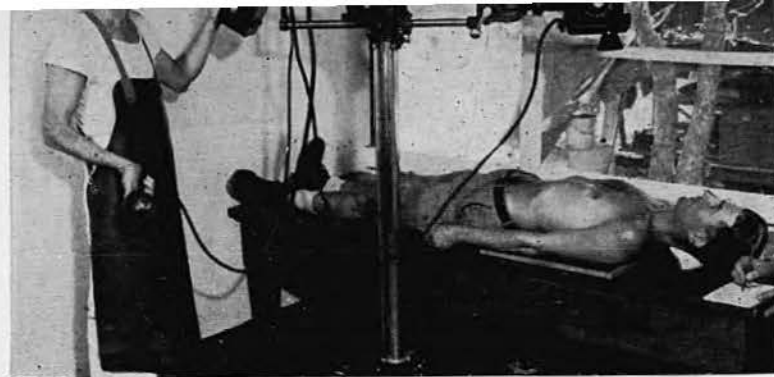
J. Gjeldum

F. Good





Operating Room.



Top: X-ray.

Below: Medical officers and corpsmen.

SICK BAY, MIOS WOENDI

J. Hardin



V. Hardy



F. Harvey



R. Havstein



R. Heaton



E. Heugatter



R. Hudson



B. Hoag





Ward.



F. McElroy



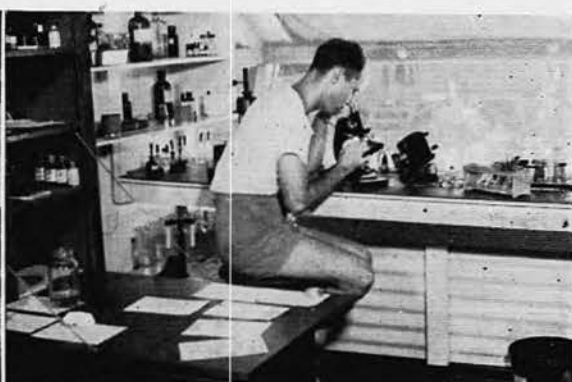
A. McFarland



W. Marshall



H. Martin



Lab.



S. Mandella



J. Marsalis

R. Kiele



S. Kochut



W. Larson



T. Last



G. Latapie



M. Lowell



J. Lucey



The Galley Crew.



I. Jarrold

F. Johnson

L. Johnson

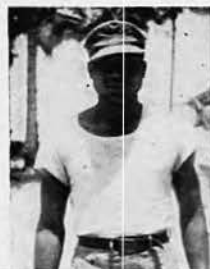
W. Jones

D. Kaufman

E. Keating

E. Keener

L. Keller





Chow lines were long. Cooks and bakers worked twenty-four hour watches to keep them going.



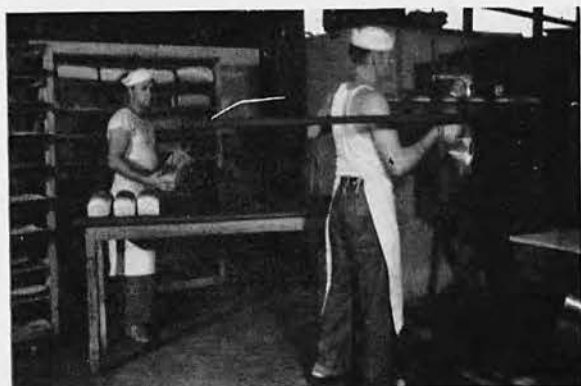
L. Pope

C. Pruitt



M. Petersen

B. Pikiel



E. Parkhurst

M. Pasternack

C. Nack

G. Neumann

H. Niemi

H. Odabashian

G. Packer

R. Painter

T. Palke





Chow Line at Mios Woendi



J. McGrath

C. McGuire

E. McIver

F. Mears

J. Meswick

F. Miner

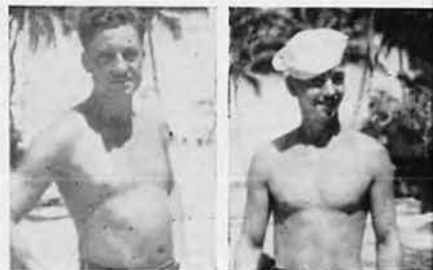
M. Mohamad

O. Reece





Supply Office, Mios Woendi.



C. Seeley

B. Smith



S. Pauley

P. Sciaiefe

This book was born here.



M. Rouit

J. Runge

C. Reeves

D. Richardson

G. Richardson

S. Robertson

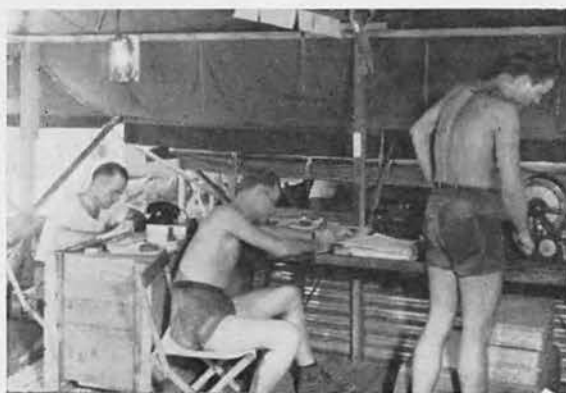
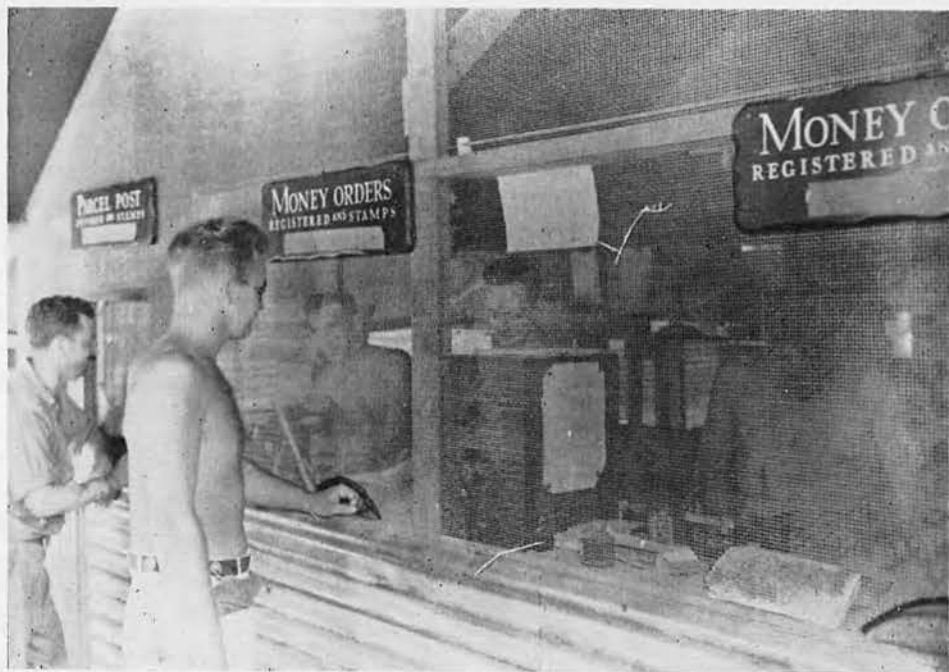
G. Robinson

V. Rollo

J. Ross



Post Office, Mios Woendi.



Top: Snaplain's Office.
Below: Files and Correspondence.

J. Smith

A. Spacher

E. Speicher

R. Stannard

J. Stecher

M. Stuckey

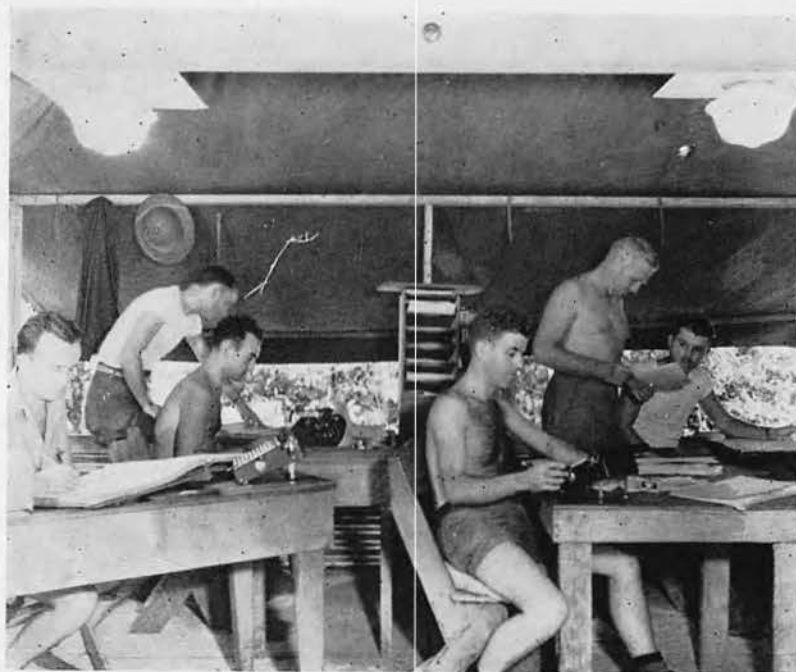
R. Taylor

M. Terry





Night life.



Disbursing Office.



L. Wilson



L. Winfrey



W. Williams



J. Wilson



O. Veal



R. Whitehead

C. Tibbles



E. Ticknor



R. Tobias



E. Turner



R. Turner



E. Twiggs

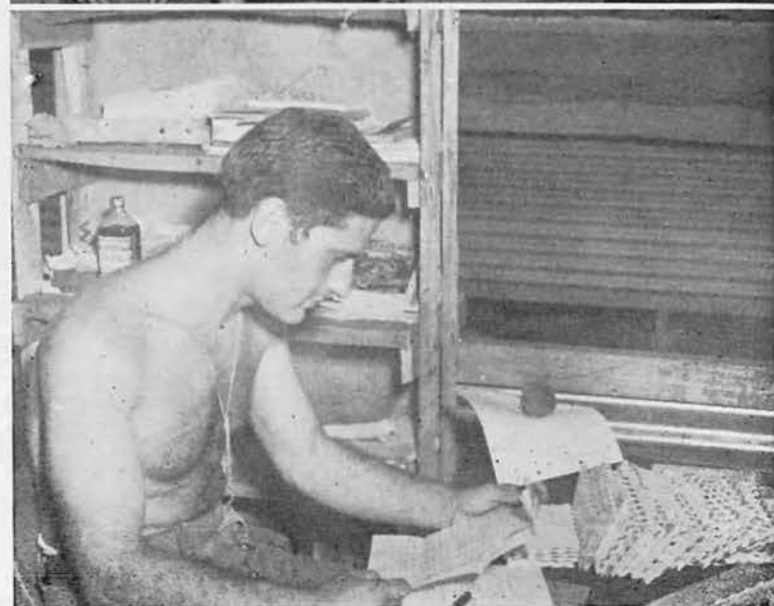


A. Ulvestad





Ship's Store.



Top: Telephone Office. Bottom: Outgoing Mail.

W. Wood



W. Wurster



V. Yrineo



W. Yeazell



W. Zink



E. Gibson





Machine Shop.



Transportation.

Webb



E. Morris



T. Mason



W. Cox



R. Bierman



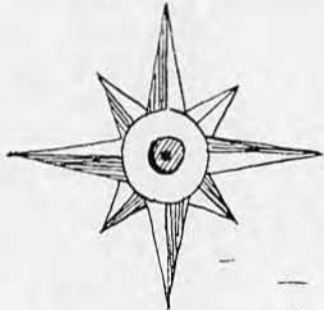


Native boy going after
coconuts.



COMPANY

A



MUD & MANGROVES

Mangroves



MERAUKE VILLAGE

FIRST CAMP



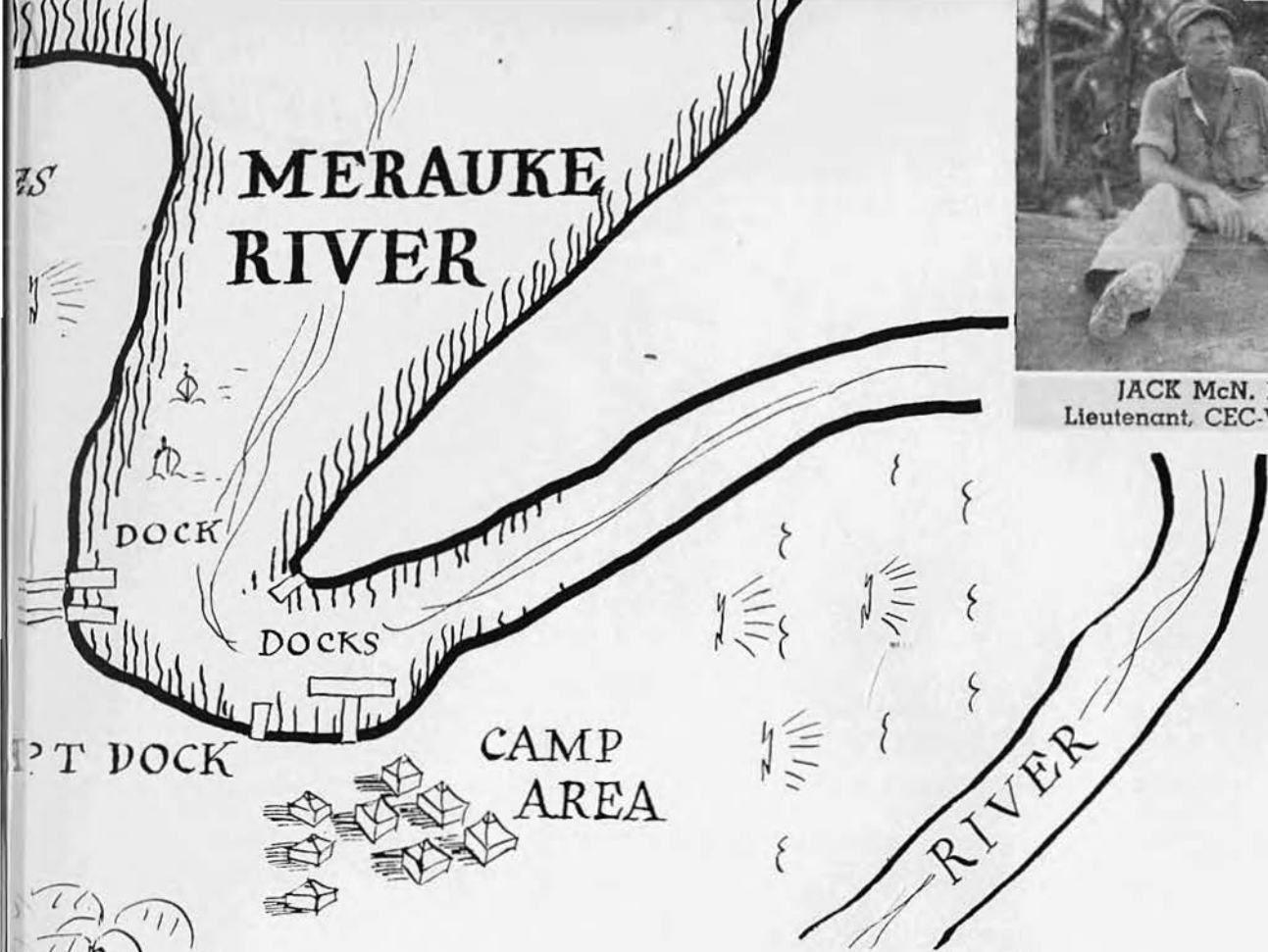
AIR STRIP



MERAUKE



PT D



JACK McN. BAIRD
Lieutenant, CEC-V(S), USNR

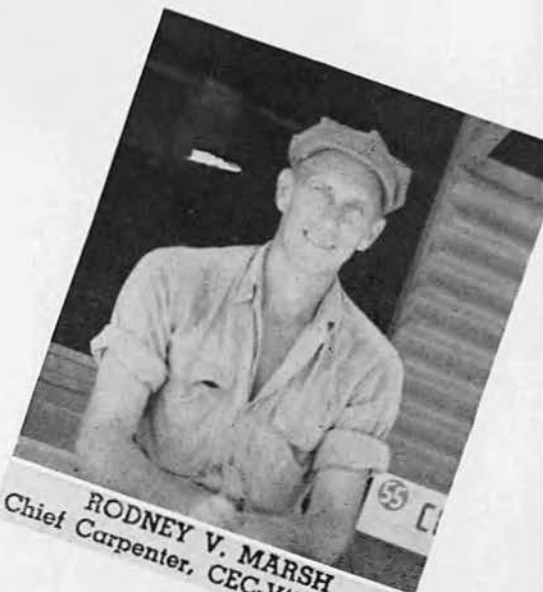


CLYDE D. HOOVER
Lieutenant (i.g.), CEC-V(S), USNR

Clyde Hoover
5-10-84



SHERMAN W. WILLIAMS
Ensign, CEC-V(S), USNR



RODNEY V. MARSH
Chief Carpenter, CEC-V(S), USNR





COMPANY A

Company A was first to go on detached duty. When the company arrived at its job site, Merauke, Dutch New Guinea, Japanese planes greeted the men with bombs. Recreation equipment, ammunition, tent decks, and a truck were hit, but none of the men was injured. While awaiting the arrival of dock materials, the company constructed an airstrip in eight days, for which they earned the praise of army officials. One man earned a citation for action in which a boat was saved from burning and endangering the lives of men.

When materials did arrive, a large dock was completed; then after one more bombing, the company moved on to Cairns, Queensland, Australia, and constructed an escort base before returning to Brisbane for rest leave.

On the battalion's most recent assignment Company A's major assignment was the construction of a dock and a jetty, finger piers, road construction, erection of steel and arch rib buildings, and erection of a fuel tank farm.



The dock at Merauke.



W. Adamson



G. Ade



J. Allmon



J. Archibald



A. Ayala



F. Badger



B. Bahls



L. Bain





Divers.

Native Family.



M. Breiner



R. Atkinson



Javanese natives held a farewell festival for Company A at Merauke.



G. Bobinger



H. Brandt



A. Birchler



C. Blake

J. Ball



S. Barker



J. Briner



J. Bartmess



P. Beachy



F. Belmont



F. Belyea





Left: Pile driving at Cairns. Upper right: Pontoon dry dock.
Lower right: Launching a pontoon string.

M. Brown

D. Bruneman

D. Burgess

E. Burk

P. Burns

H. Campbell

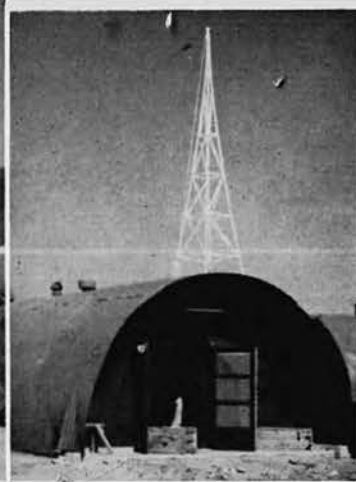
C. Cayou

H. Christiansen





Escort Base at Cairns.



Radio Hut.



G. Deatley



J. Whittington



A. Cardona



J. Roome



Camp Area.



Dry Dock.



L. Cunningham



C. Curran

A. Coller



E. Connerley



T. Cook



D. Cooper



E. Counihan



A. Cristilly



A. Croft





With the driving of the first pile, construction of the main dock on Mios Woendi began.



R. Dives

E. Dotson

H. Dutton

J. Enschede

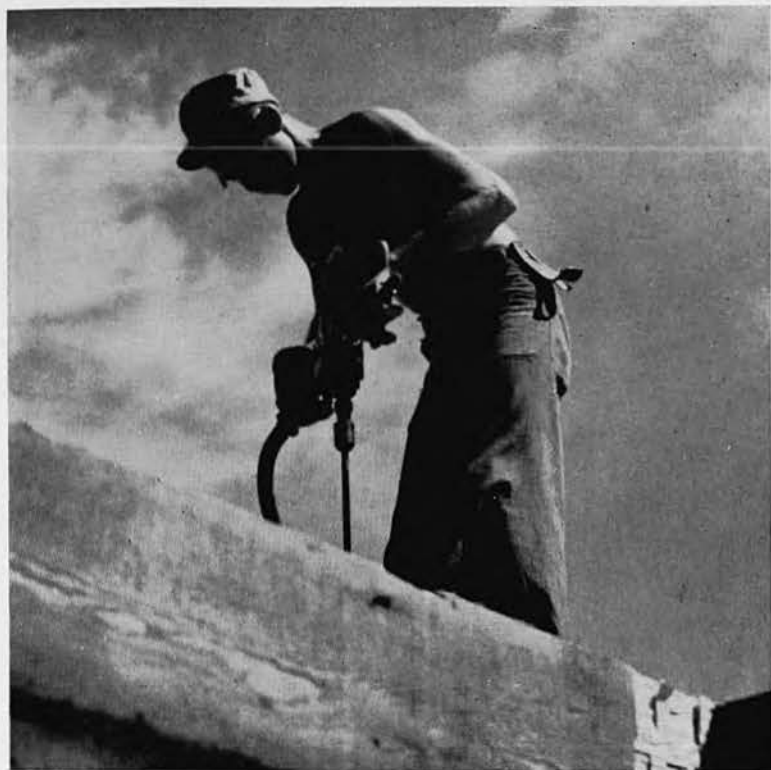
J. Esola

R. Evans

W. Everett

G. Ewald





M. Gibson



E. Gotchy



G. Garcia



J. Garwood



R. Fross



J. Gallagher

J. Farmer



H. Fellman



D. Fine



R. Forkner



E. Freitas



W. Friedman



O. Froholm



Placing stringers
on pile bents.



W. Grandi



O. Gridley



A. Gunderson



M. Gunderson



R. Hall



R. Hand



C. Haak



E. Haggerty





Driving piles in coral was easy, and the dock quickly began to take shape.



G. Jackson



R. Jacobs



J. Ingerson



J. Ivory



E. Hunt



J. Incaviglia

H. Hanson

M. Hart

G. Hedges

T. Hennessey

E. Hildebrand

E. Holms

D. Hoxworth





Cutting off piles to grade.



H. Johnson

W. Johnson

K. Kapp

J. Kates

E. Kennedy

W. Kilgore

C. King

E. Klimaszewski





Skilled workmen spent long hours setting heavy timbers.



C. McBee



L. McConville



J. Martin



E. Massett



F. Marshall



D. Martin

A. Kopplin



D. Larson



D. Lee



G. Lemmenes



W. Lundin



V. Lynam



C. MacWilliams





The dock as it appeared from shore.

H. McDonald

J. McKain

M. McKee

C. Meakins

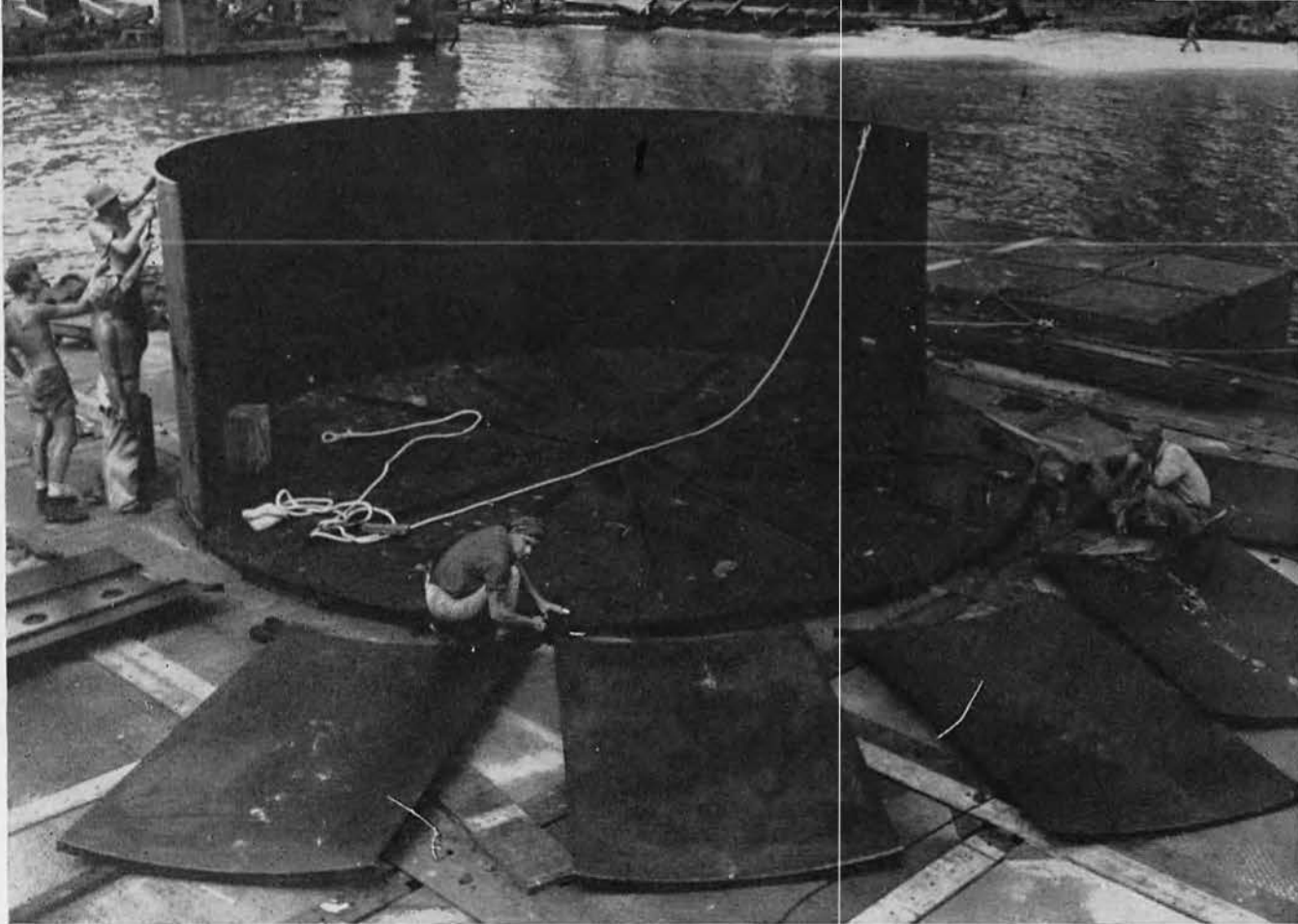
F. Meissner

T. Miller

P. Mitrovich

F. Montee





As the dock neared completion, work was started on barges and fuel tanks.



F. Parcell



D. Paris



J. Pasley



A. Pekkala



C. Peterson



L. Phillips

L. Morris

F. Nelson

K. Nerdin

R. Northup

L. Oderkirk

E. Olsen

D. Palmer



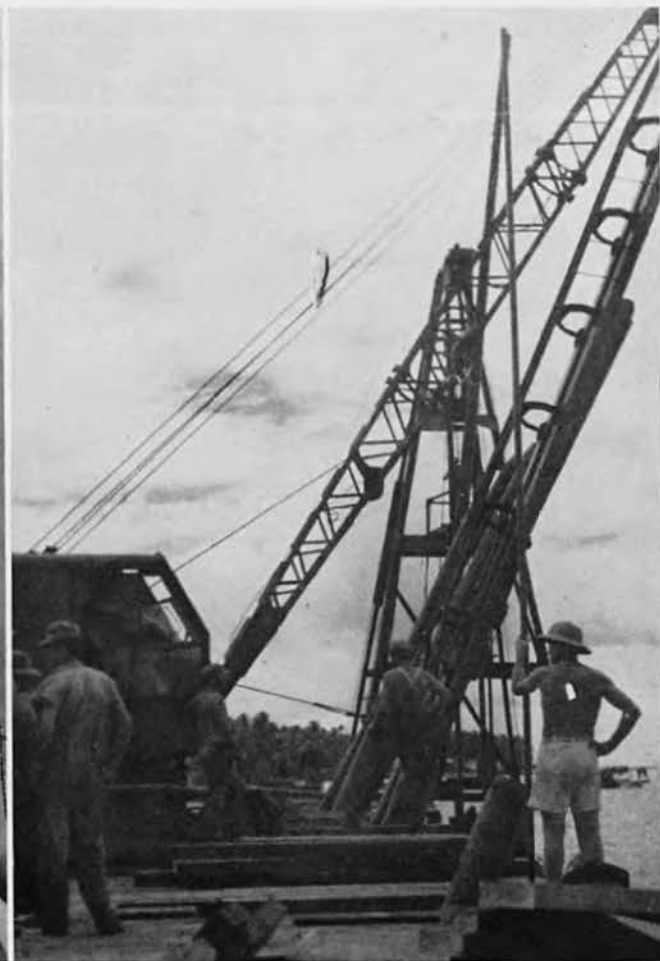
Company A's pile driver drove piles for three major docks in the Southwest Pacific.



Placing the deck.



Up in the clouds.



Driving brace piles.

B. Potts

L. Rains

F. Rey

T. Roady

V. Ronse

M. Rosa

E. Rothenbach

M. Ruecker



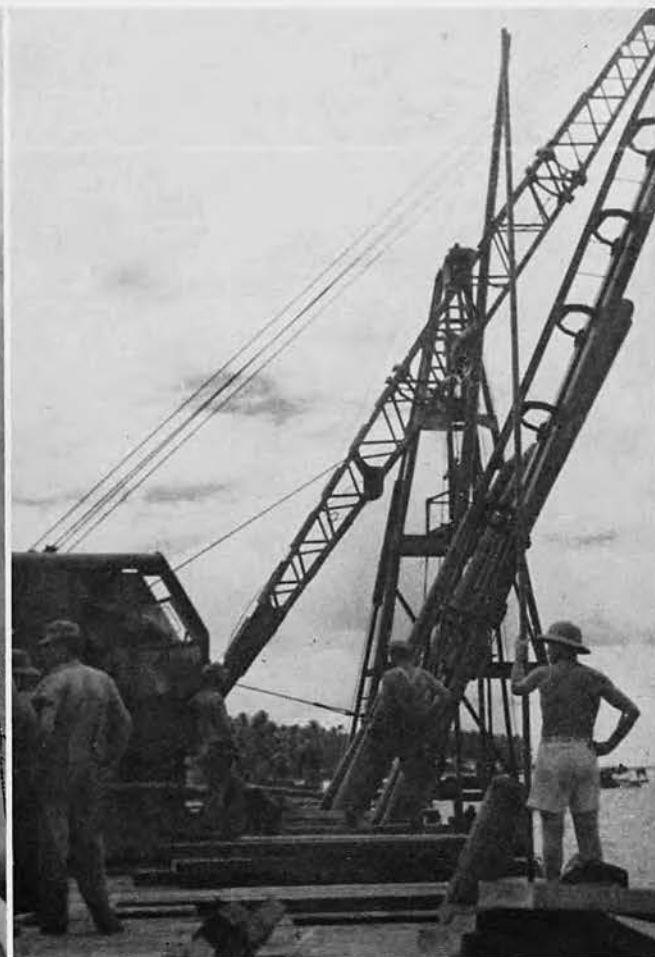
Company A's pile driver drove piles for three major docks in the Southwest Pacific.



Placing the deck.



Up in the clouds.



Driving brace piles.

B. Potts

L. Rains

F. Rey

T. Rody

V. Ronse

M. Rosa

E. Rothenbach

M. Ruecker





Pile driving
operations
nearing
completion.



W. Steves



T. Soli



R. Stiles



M. Swan



D. Stephens



F. Stever

H. Seeley



A. Shelton



R. Siders



L. Silva



C. Smith



S. Sorenson



L. Steen





Within thirty days the dock was completed, and ships began to discharge their cargo upon it.

Dock approach.



J. K. Taylor

J. F. Taylor

L. Taylor

C. Tebeau

E. Thompson

E. Tucker

A. Umiker

J. Turner





The first one.



H. Walker



J. Washabaugh



J. Watty



J. Wheeler



J. Whidden



M. White

L. Valo



J. Valov



D. Van Wormer



C. Varney



C. Vaught



A. Waggener



H. Wagner





L. Wicklund



M. Willett



L. Williams



E. Gardner



J. Winset



C. Wolfe

C. Wood

A. Young

P. Herring

V. O'Connor

Christensen

E. Morris

C. Van Groningen



Merauke Natives.





A. Wallace

Copyright 1944 W. C. Marshall



B

COMPANY

AUSSIE DOCK

PORT MORESBY

Army GHQ
Navy GHQ

Refueling Station

NATIVE VILLAGE
(HANA BADA)



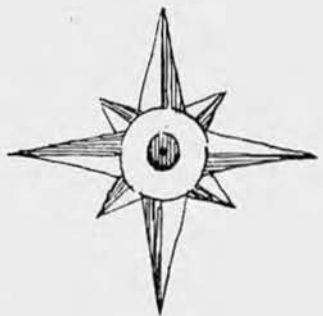
TATANA Is

American DOCK

CAUSEWAY

COCONUT PLANTATION





CHARLES P. LIBBY
Lieutenant, CEC-V(S), USNR

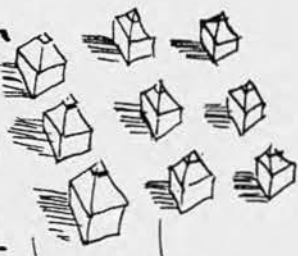


DANIEL J. TAPLEY
Chief Carpenter, CEC-V(S), USNR



FRANCIS E. CORNELL
Lieutenant, CEC-V(S), USNR

BRANT
CAMP
AREA



B

A

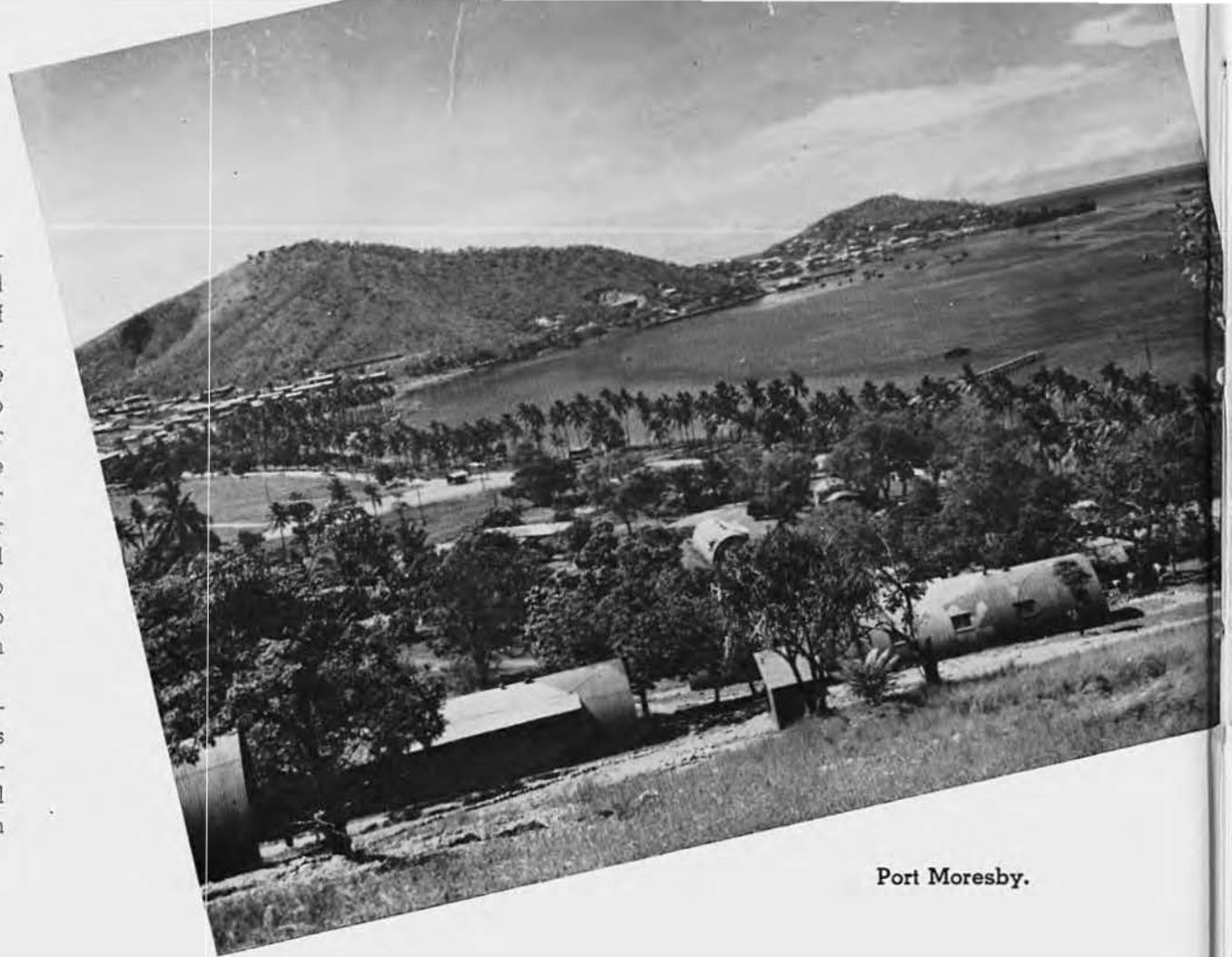


COMPANY B

For over a year scattered locations of projects necessitated almost continuous shifting of Company B personnel. Shortly after arrival in Australia, one group of men was assigned to

operate a sawmill at Yandina, Queensland. Another group constructed a mine depot at Brisbane. The "lost platoon" built a radio station and port director facilities at Port Moresby, New Guinea. The major portion of Company B remained in Brisbane several months helping to complete Camp Seabee and to establish an advanced base depot. Later, this group of men moved to Cairns, Queensland, and built an ammunition depot.

On the project just completed, Company B constructed the housing facilities for the Amphibious Repair Base and the Naval Advance Base Unit personnel and constructed a major portion of the steel arch rib storehouses. This company was active on various other small jobs on the base.



Port Moresby.

L. Anderson

H. Bates

M. Gates

R. Hotzel

G. Kruse

L. Bosley

G. Bowden

G. Brentner





Left: Radio Station, Port Moresby.
Below: Port Director Facilities, Port Moresby.



J. Chewning

C. Childress



F. Clark

J. Clark



R. Cobos

S. Coenen

M. Brewer

R. Brown

W. Brown

B. Browning

J. Bunch

J. Campbell

J. Carl





The Mine Depot near Brisbane. Scores of Quonset huts dotted the hillsides of a quiet meadow.



R. Coleman

J. Collins

A. Cooper

J. Cordero

T. Correll

H. Craig

V. DeWitt

R. DeWire





Part of camp area.



E. Feazle



J. Feeley



D. Fender



J. Fickert



Hut nearing completion.



A. Figone



E. Ford

W. Driggers



M. Dring



H. Duncan



J. Duncan



J. Dymus



H. Elliott



L. Else



Quantities of heavy materials were easily moved by mobile cranes.



Placing trusses with crane.

R. Folkert

A. Furtado

R. Gardner

R. Garner

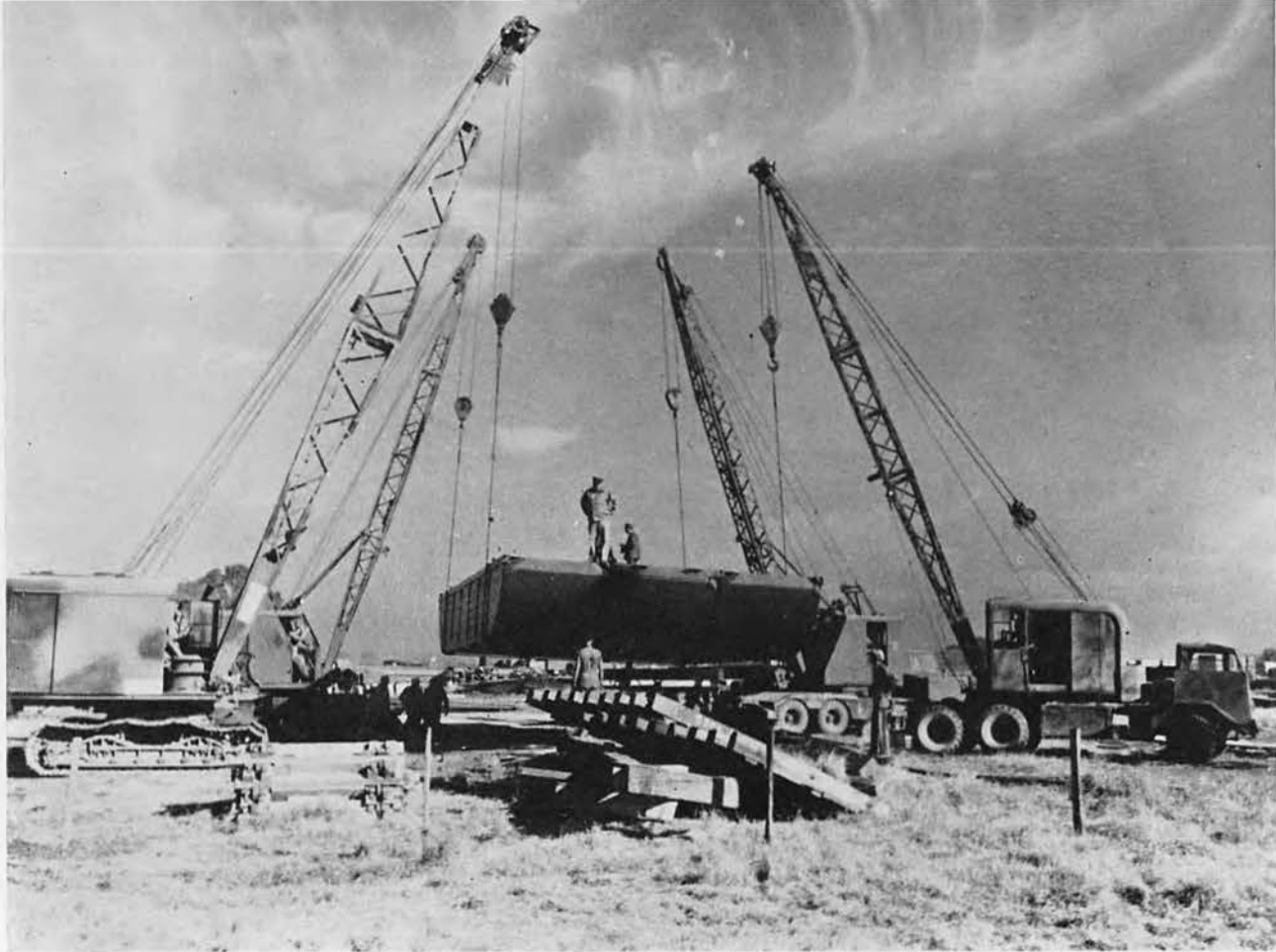
H. Giffin

A. Gobel

H. Godfrey

C. Gill





Picking up a pontoon barge.



J. Heuschober



J. Hill



R. Hochstein



W. Holmes



D. Hilton



R. Hirst

V. Golden



R. Gossman



C. Grimes



O. Hackler



W. Hall



A. Hansen



P. Hargous





A detachment of Company B men built a mine depot at Cairns.



H. Honnold



P. Herrel



G. Horning



H. Hughes



P. Hunt



T. House



K. Johnson



R. P. Johnson





Snaking logs with a bulldozer at Yandina, Queensland.



V. Knox



O. Korhonen



J. Kreitzer



E. Kvarnstrom



J. Kyle



D. Lafferty

W. B. Johnson



W. V. Johnson



M. Kerfoot



J. Kinard



R King



V. Kirby



H. Klickman





With seashells and coral sand for aggregate, tons of concrete were poured for building floors and foundations.

W. Lokie

J. Langendorf

R. Larghi

F. Laurano

R. Leavitt

V. Lee

A. Lien

M. Ligerman





Premix.



E. G. Luce



M. W. Luce



L. McCoy



C. McCreary



M. McCuiston



W. McFaden

C. Little



W. Livinghouse



J. Long



W. Long



E. Loos



H. Looyen



G. Loughner





Prefabricated materials contributed to the speedy completion of warehouses, galleys, offices, and shops.

E. McIntyre

T. McNallen

D. McVanner

F. Mahoney

F. Maneely

J. Martch

H. Martin

H. Martin





Framing a 40 by 100.



L. Miner



L. Miranda



L. Mork



C. Mortimore



L. Morton



W. Mosher

P. Martinez

H. Mason

J. Matteson

W. Meyer

E. Miller

J. Miller

J. Miner



Clearing operations start.



George G. Mullaney

R. Mowles

G. Mullaney

P. Murphy

W. Murker

G. McNaboe

H. Nail

A. Nagel

P. Priebe





Acres of jungle floor were cleared for tent areas.



G. Osier



S. Preitz



O. Penrod



H. Petro



H. Parker



C. Peck

C. Ollman

F. Olsen

R. Olsen

N. Pinkard

O. Osborne

F. Otis

A. Palmer



Chapel



E. Rafferty



L. Rice



C. Reid



R. Rosenblum



S. Rosengrantz



T. Norton



V. Ross



J. Ruebel





From a floor of white sand, St. Peter's Chapel rose on pillars of native palm.
A place of worship for all faiths.



E. Stoeckel



L. Syring



H. Stavig



W. Stewart



H. Stanford



F. Stark

W. Shepard



A. Sievt



A. Sliger



A. O. Smith



L. Smith



W. Smith



J. Sopwith





T. Hulse



J. Pember



N. Rankin



A. Tantarelli



D. Thimsen



J. Thompson



J. Tockstein



R. Vessell



L. Webber

W. Weeks

F. Welch

E. Wheelbarger

R. Wild

C. Wilson

W. Wolfe

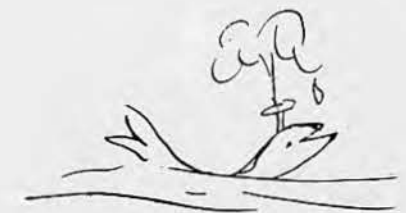
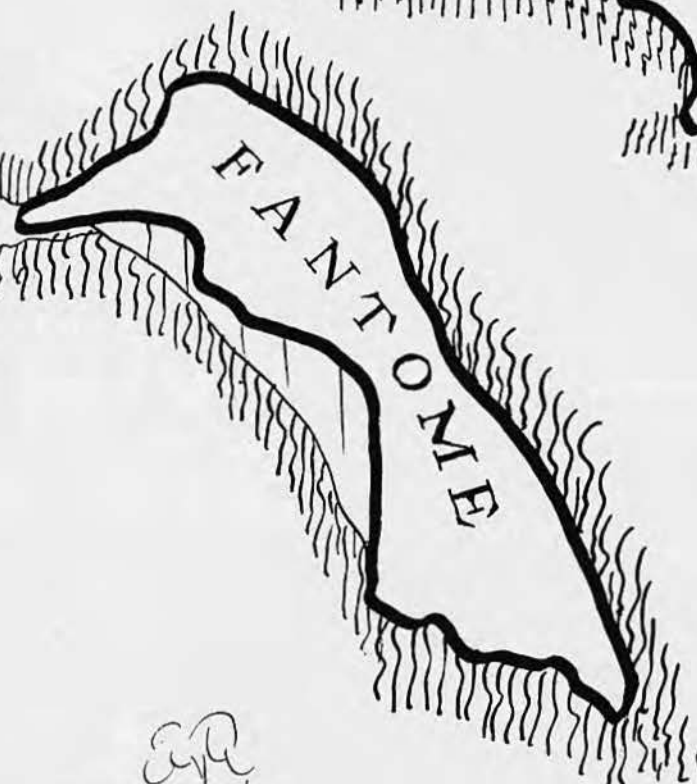
C. Wortman

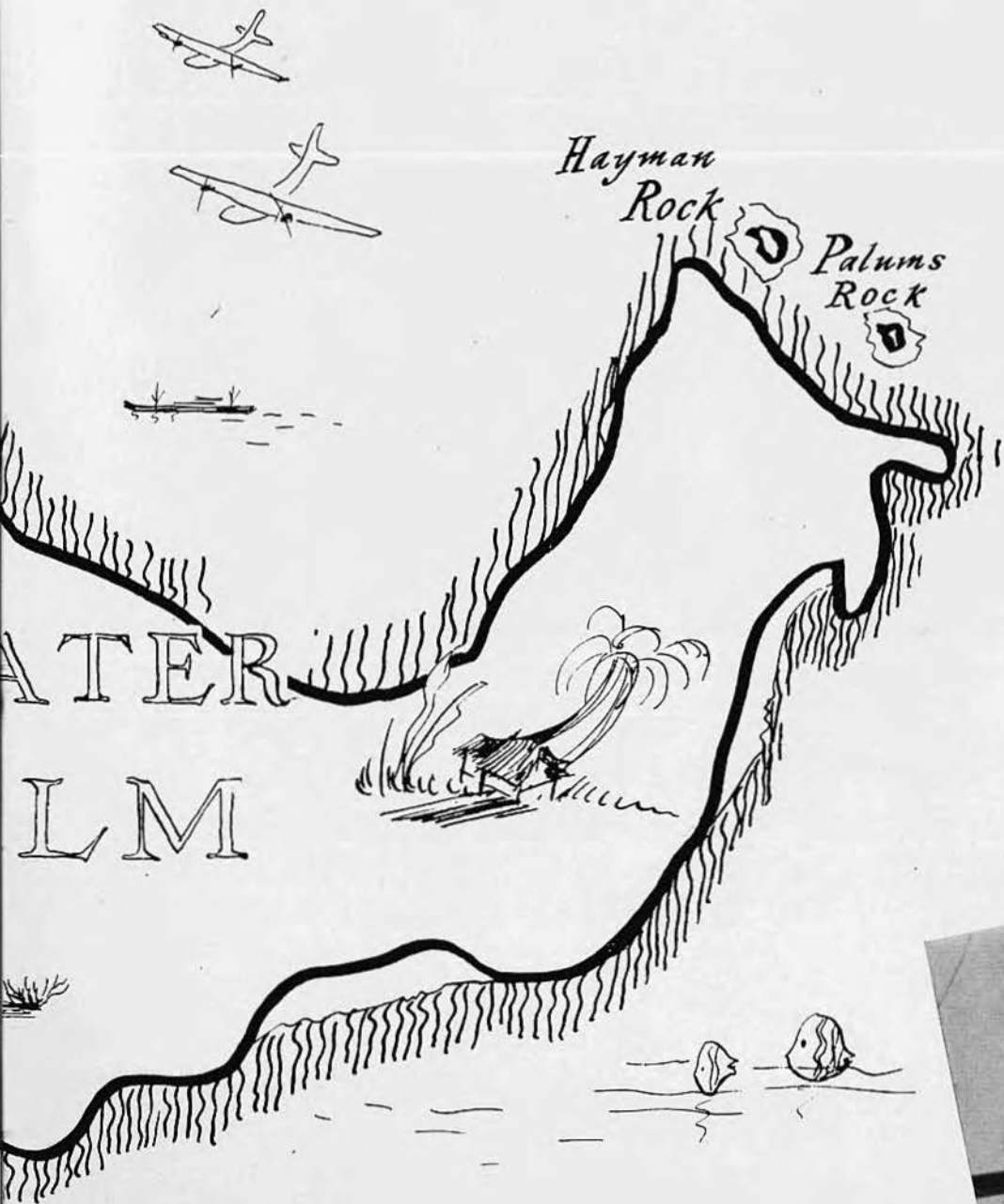




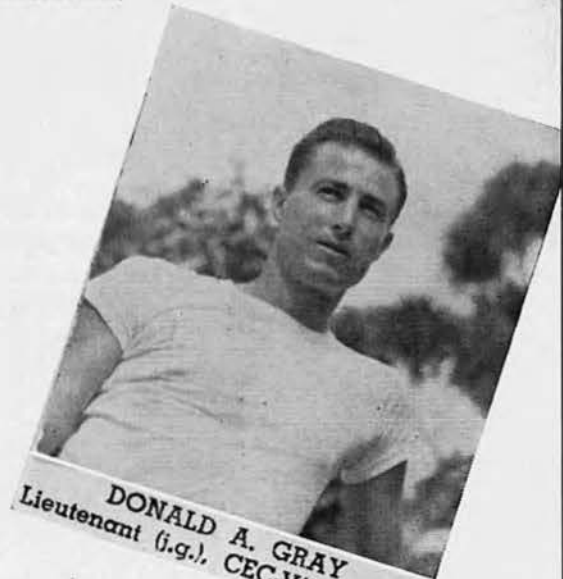
COMPANY

C





ALDO P. SAVIO
Lieutenant, CEC-V(S), USNR



DONALD A. GRAY
Lieutenant (j.g.), CEC-V(S), USNR



JOSEPH A. BURKE
Chief Carpenter, CEC-V(S), USNR



COMPANY C

After completing several buildings at Camp Seabee and assisting with construction of a mobile hospital at Camp Hill, Company C went for-

ward to Townsville, Queensland, and Palm Island. The major project, a seaplane base, was constructed at Palm Island, and a hospital was built in Townsville. Both jobs were completed in record time, and the company returned to Brisbane for rest leave. The Palm Island assignment was the choicest of all battalion assignments.

At the battalion's last job location, Company C had diversified jobs including construction of a seaplane base, a hospital, a recreation hall, and a theater in collaboration with Company A. In addition, the company supplied supervision for the battalion armory and the camp guards. After the completion of these projects Company C was sent back to Hollandia to aid other construction battalions on projects there.

Company C has been outstanding in athletics. It was awarded the winner's trophy in the Battalion softball tournament.



The seaplane base at Palm Island. From an original painting by a member of Company C.

L. Adolph

M. Allen

A. Anderson

R. Anderson

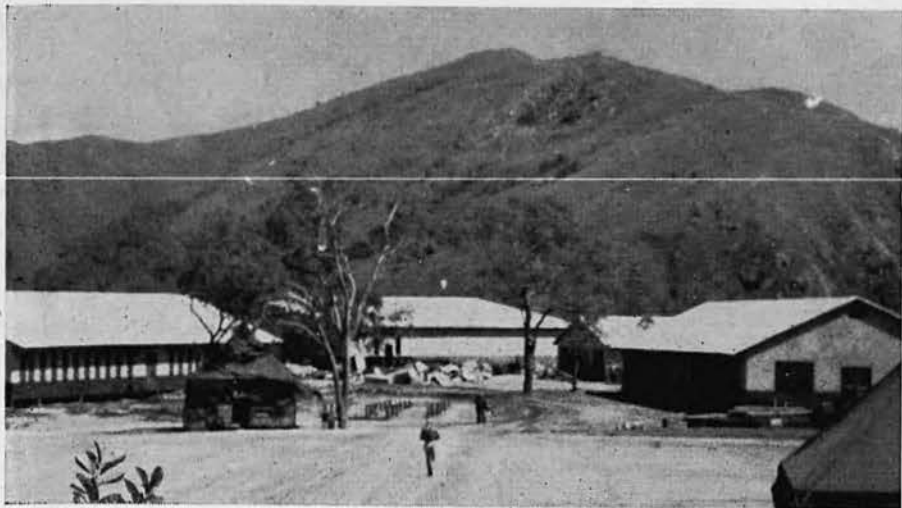
J. Anderson

E. Anderson

S. Ardbaum

R. Aubrey





Barracks, tent area, and
water distillation unit at
Palm Island.



E. Barrango



E. Beach



M. Bearfield



G. Beatty



G. Berglund



W. Bill

J. Badovinac



D. Baker



J. Baker



G. Banks



A. Bowen



C. Blackstone



R. Boehme



Lack of docking facilities made necessary the barging of all supplies and materials from ship to shore at Palm Island.



G. Calhoun

R. Caples

A. Carlson

R. Carrasco

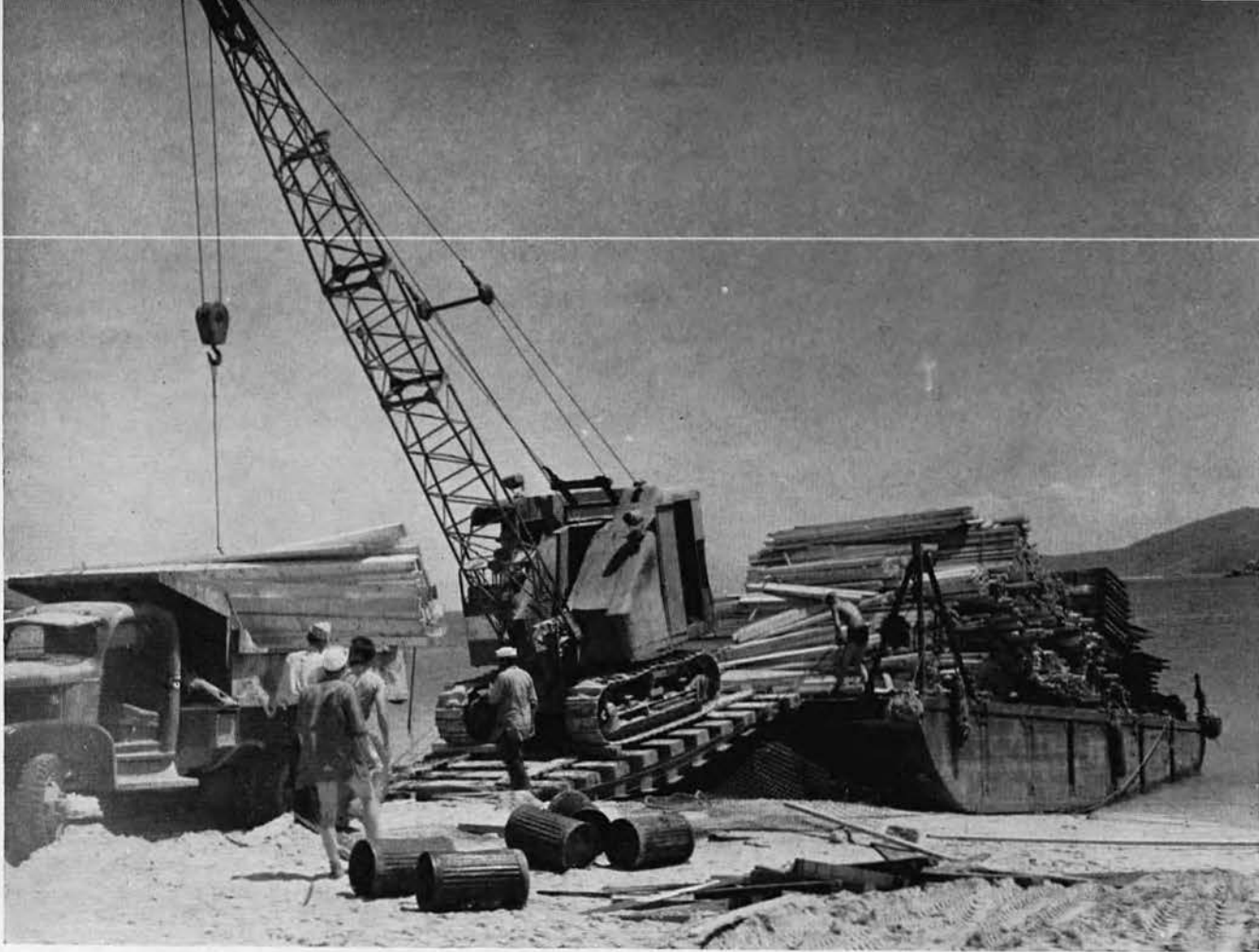
G. Carver

H. Case

J. Clanton

G. Clark





Barge to truck to job.



H. Eckes



R. Havestein



C. Daniels



J. Drinnen



H. Douglas



M. Dean

F. Coe



J. Collins



G. Crittenden



C. Cotter



P. Columbetti

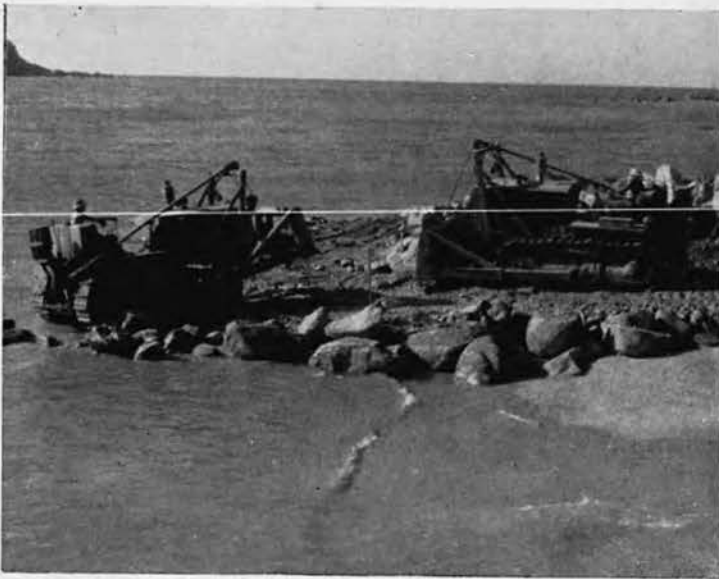


P. Cangson



T. Cornwell





A seaplane parking area was hewn from a field of kunai grass.

J. Clark

C. Foster

H. Fowler

J. Foster

C. Gore

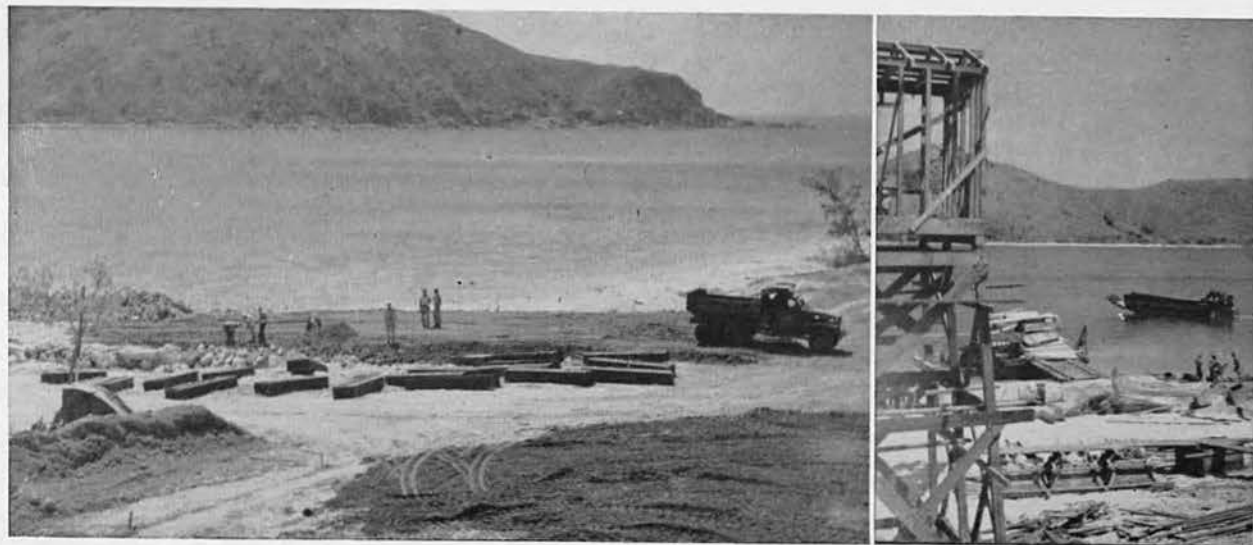
F. Gertsch

E. Getz

G. Gonzales



Hundreds of tons of crushed rock were used in the construction of a seaplane ramp.



E. Hutt



E. Hanley



H. Hanshue



W. Haaland



A. Hagan



W. Hackmack

M. Gouterman



L. Gehringer



R. Gilley



R. Gerow



P. Hopi



A. Hopewell



J. Hoffman





Upper left: Galley. Upper right: Junior officers BOQ. Lower left: Administration. Lower right: Senior officers BOQ.

P. Hopping

H. Head

J. Hamm

W. Hearns

R. Hill

L. Hires

M. Hirsch

A. Hotchkiss



Parachute loft.



G. Jones



R. Kubishak



W. Johnson



W. Johnson



R. Jordan



E. Jean

B. Inman

T. Johnson

A. C. Johnson

A. E. Johnson

W. Johnson

H. Johnson

J. W. Johnson



Mobile Hospital built in Townsville
by Company C.



H. Klinger

W. Kinney

V. Kosinski

T. King

C. Kohnke

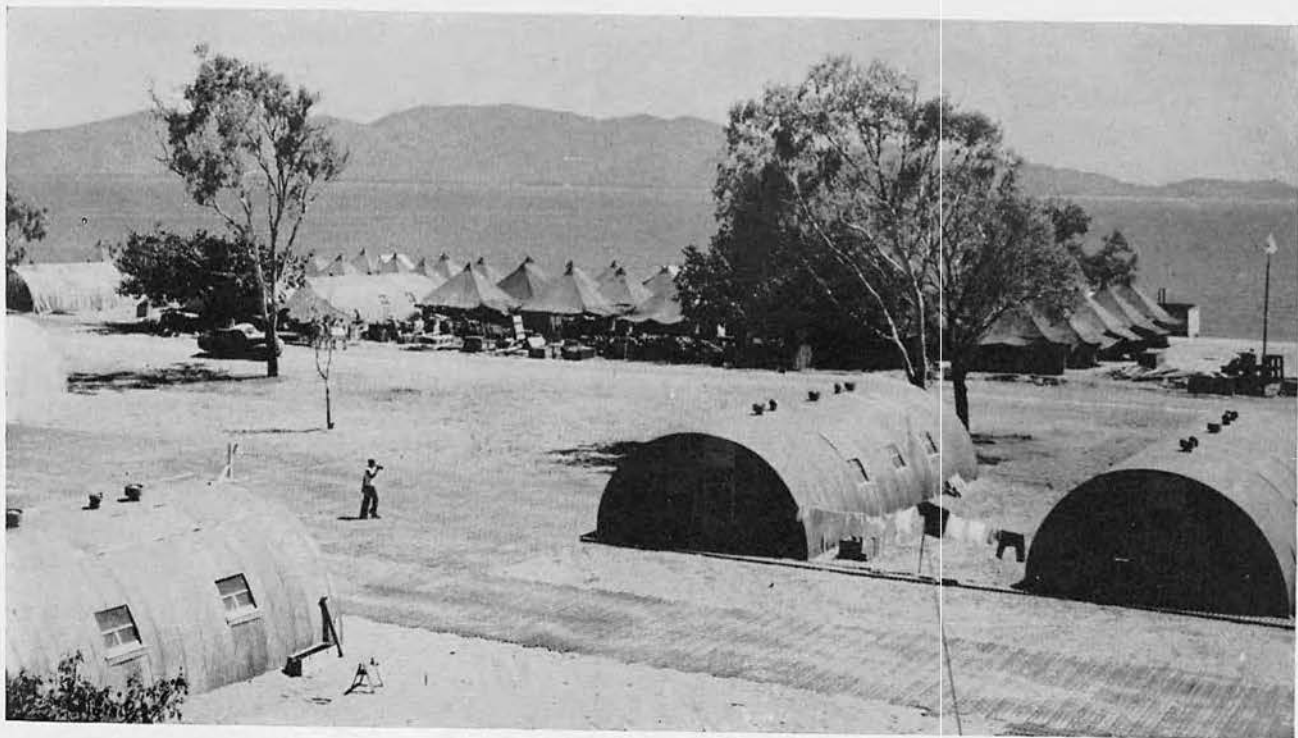
H. Kelley

L. Kerr

N. Kincheloe



Tent area near hospital.



E. Matson



A. Lopez



W. Lande



B. Lake



R. Labidee



J. Leathers

C. Kastle



H. Kemper



C. Kelley



H. Logan



E. Litke



W. Leonard

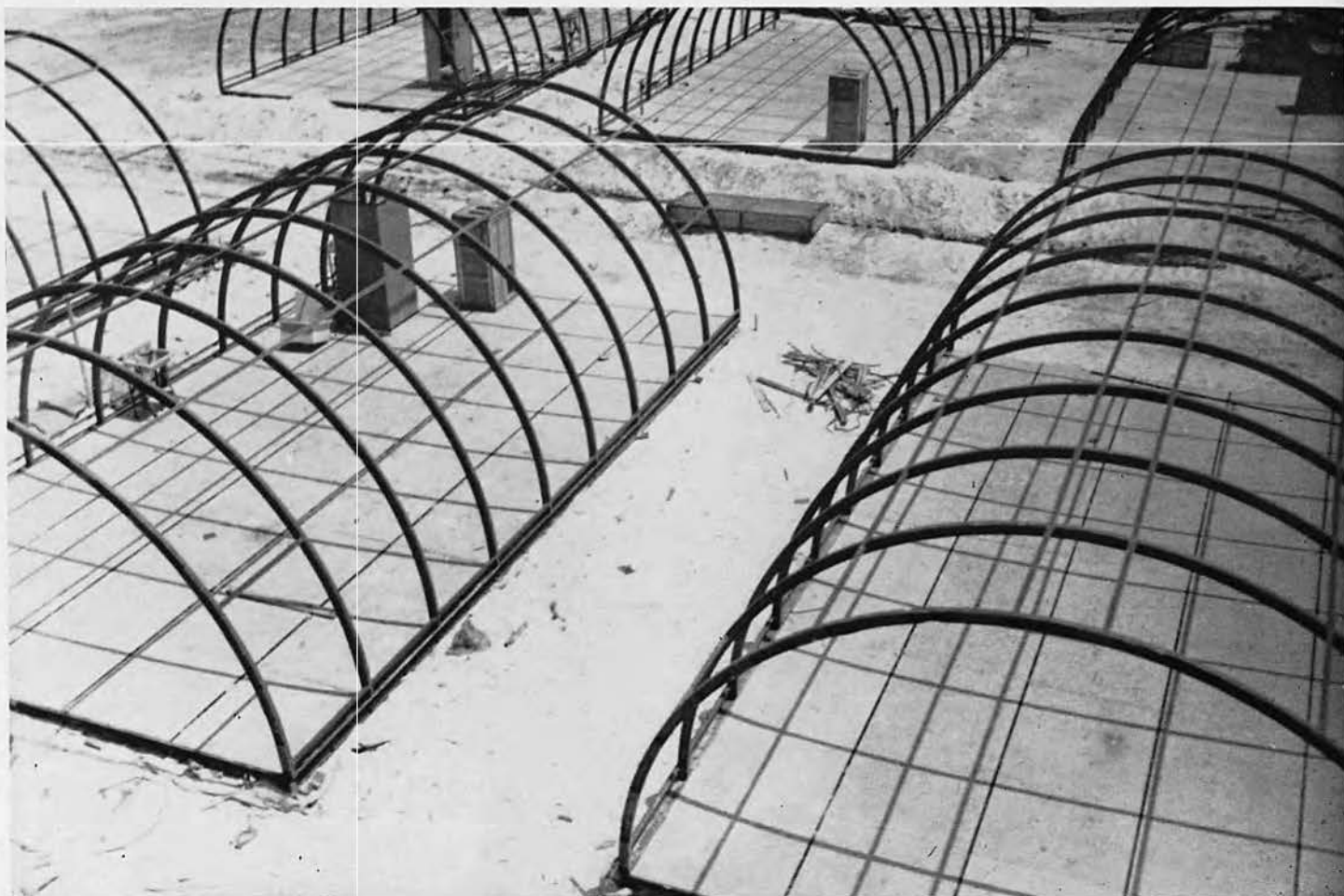


J. Lorenz





Rows of Quonsets.



G. McCormick

L. Micco

E. Madson

L. Miller

G. McCall

H. Martin

L. Mazeau

C. Morford



Mobile Hospital Unit built on Mios Woendi by Company C.



P. McClintic



B. McCoy



L. Nutter



M. McAllister



J. Nickel



W. B. Markell

C. Munding



J. Miller



W. Maul



F. Moore



R. Mouton

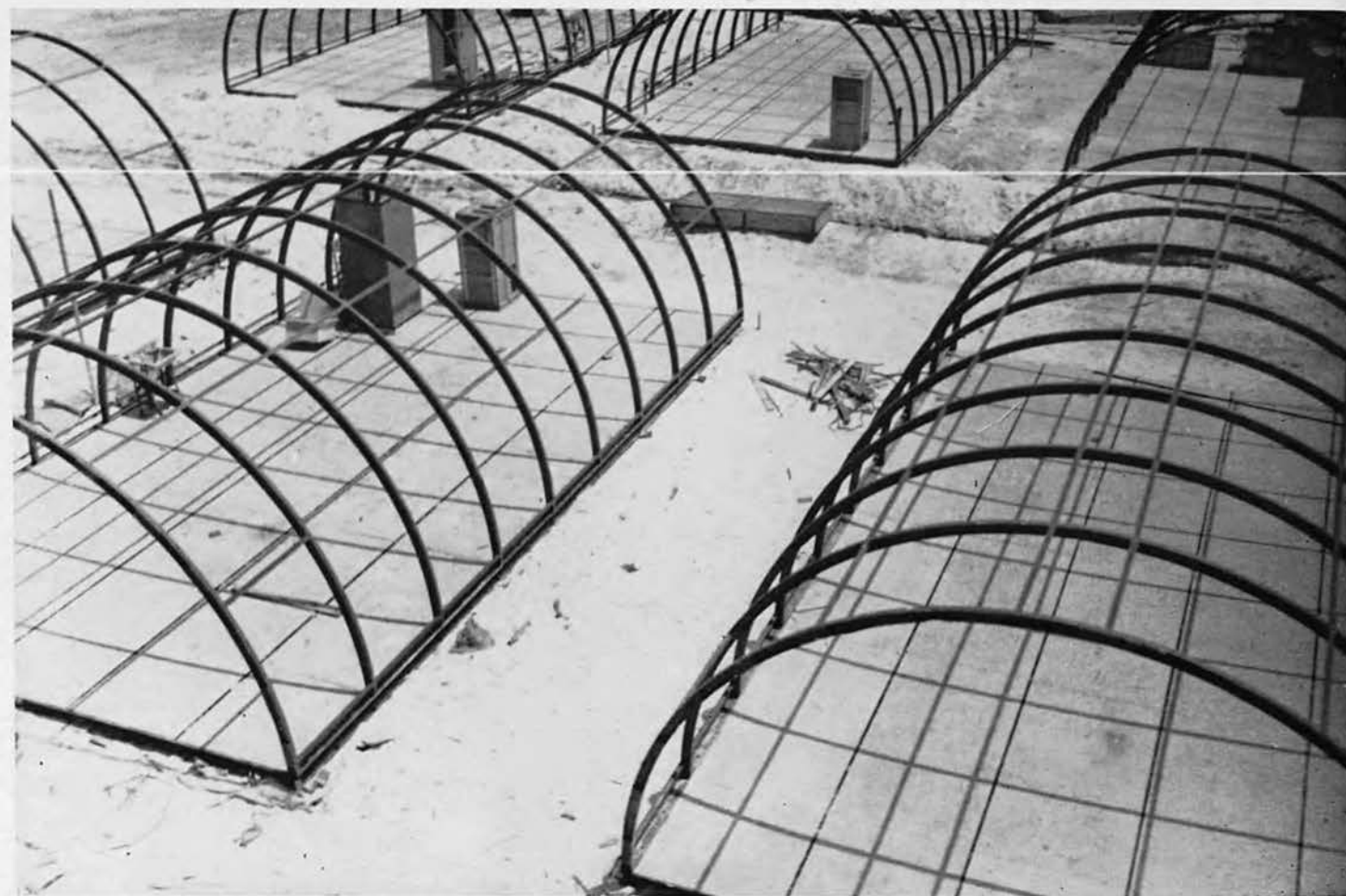


D. Morrow



T. Murphy





Rows of Quonsets.

G. McCormick

L. Micco

E. Madson

L. Miller

G. McCall

H. Martin

L. Mazeau

C. Morford



Mobile Hospital Unit built on Mios Woendi by Company C.



P. McClintic



B. McCoy



L. Nutter



M. McAllister



J. Nickel



W. B. Markell

C. Munding



J. Miller



W. Maul



F. Moore



R. Mouton

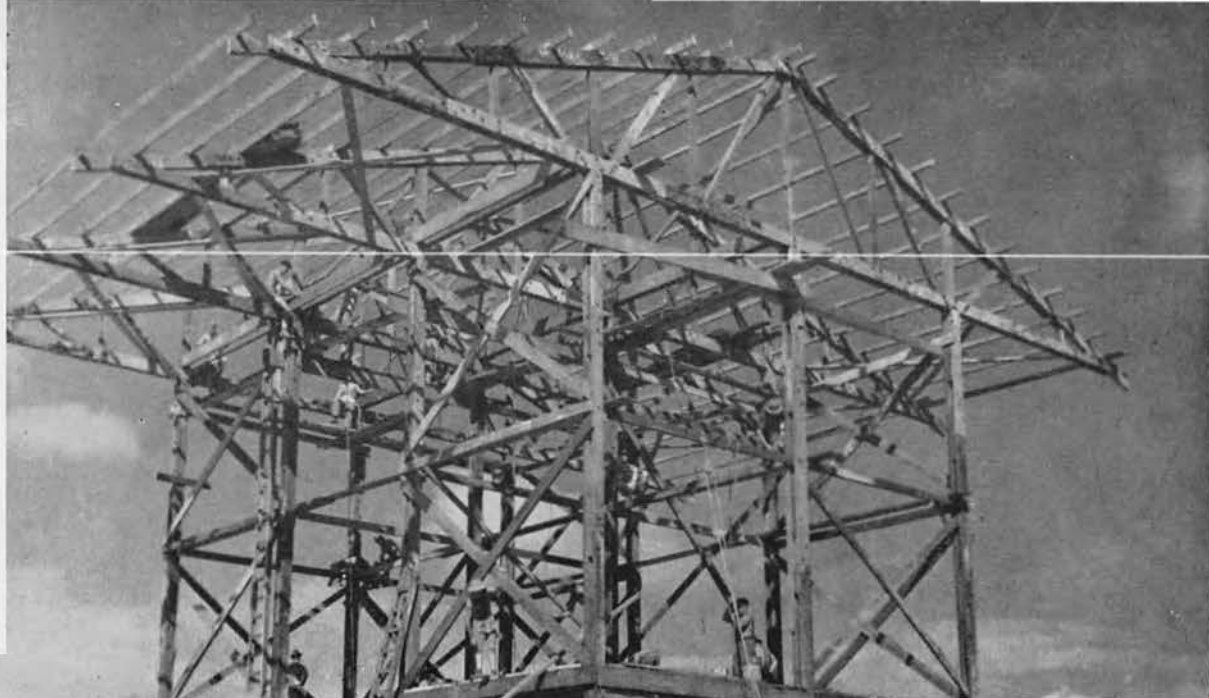
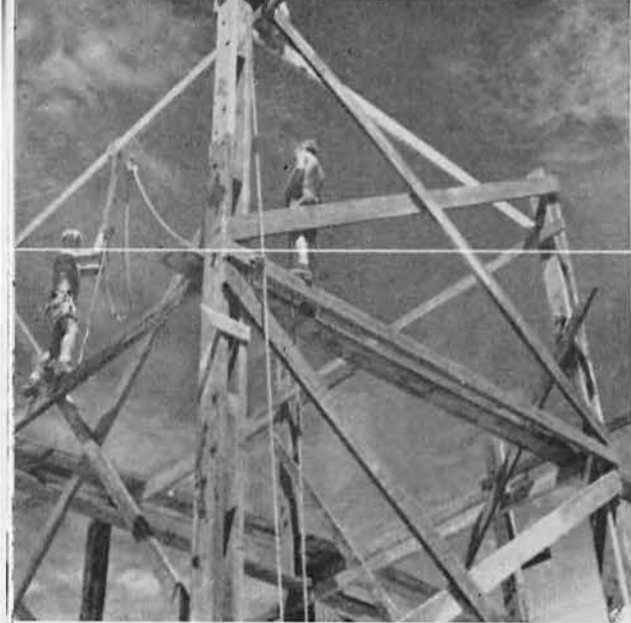


D. Morrow



T. Murphy





Seaplane dual nose hangar
on Mios Woendi.



E. Olin

B. Ottenberg

J. Oesterle

R. Olsen

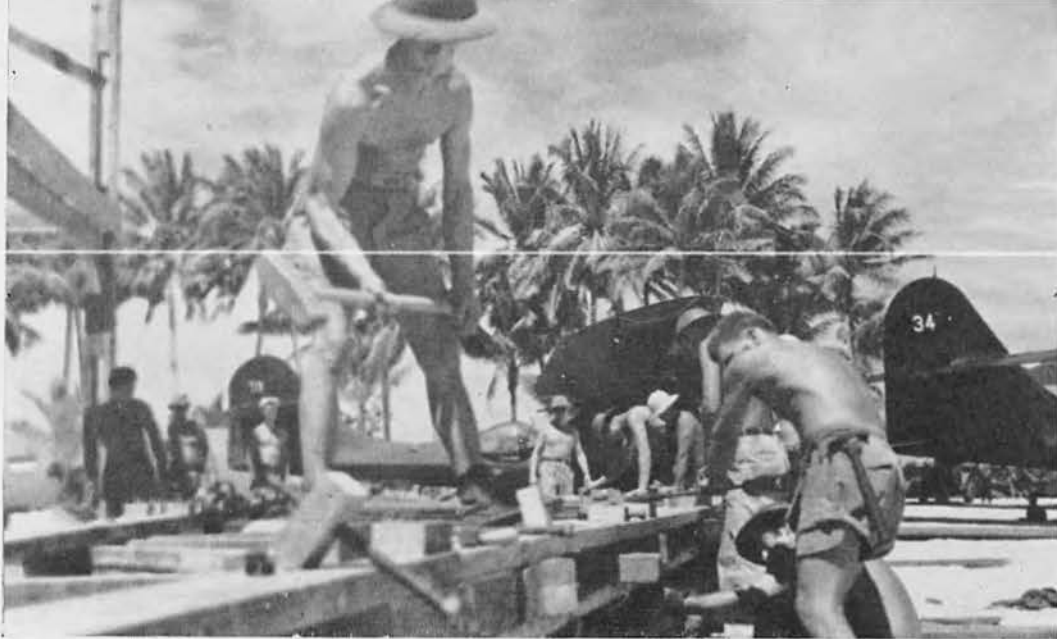
J. Polley

E. Pilarski

R. Price

J. Petteys





Prefabricating hangar roof trusses
on the ground.



J. Reading



B. Rose



D. Rice



L. Rider



L. Roth



F. Richardson

W. Peters



H. Podley



R. Profitt



L. Puzek



E. Padelford



L. Pearson



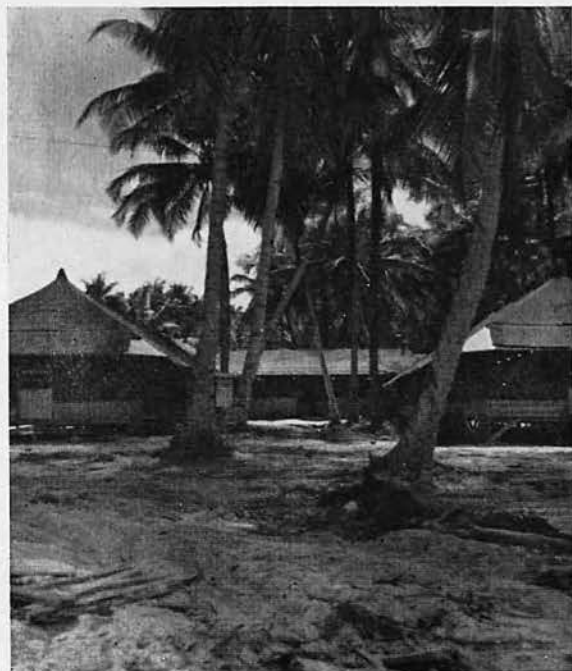
M. Prindle



Pumping station and water tower.



Seaplane base galley.



T. Radford



P. Robbe



E. Rushton



J. Read



J. Royse



L. Reynolds



T. Ridge



M. Reed





Laying deck for nose hangar.



F. Sanders



D. Skinner



M. Riggs



E. Shelton



J. Reinig



R. Shoemaker

T. Reynolds

B. Reynolds

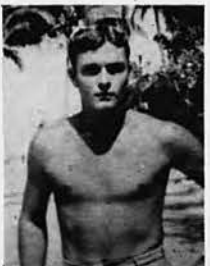
F. Reynolds

W. M. Reed

B. Ransdell

L. Rogers

L. Robinson





Top: Lumber yard. Center:
Living quarters for tempo-
rary hospital unit. Right:
Company C survey crew.



E. Sammons

C. Stoops

J. Snyder

B. Stussy

J. Smith

S. Schacter

T. Schwab

E. Stoddard





Upper: Base Amphitheater. Lower: Base
Recreation hall.



L. Trapp



L. Turner



E. Troutner



C. Thurow



A. Scharton



R. Taylor

I. Spalasso



W. Schwanke



J. Swart



R. Sword



J. Spinas



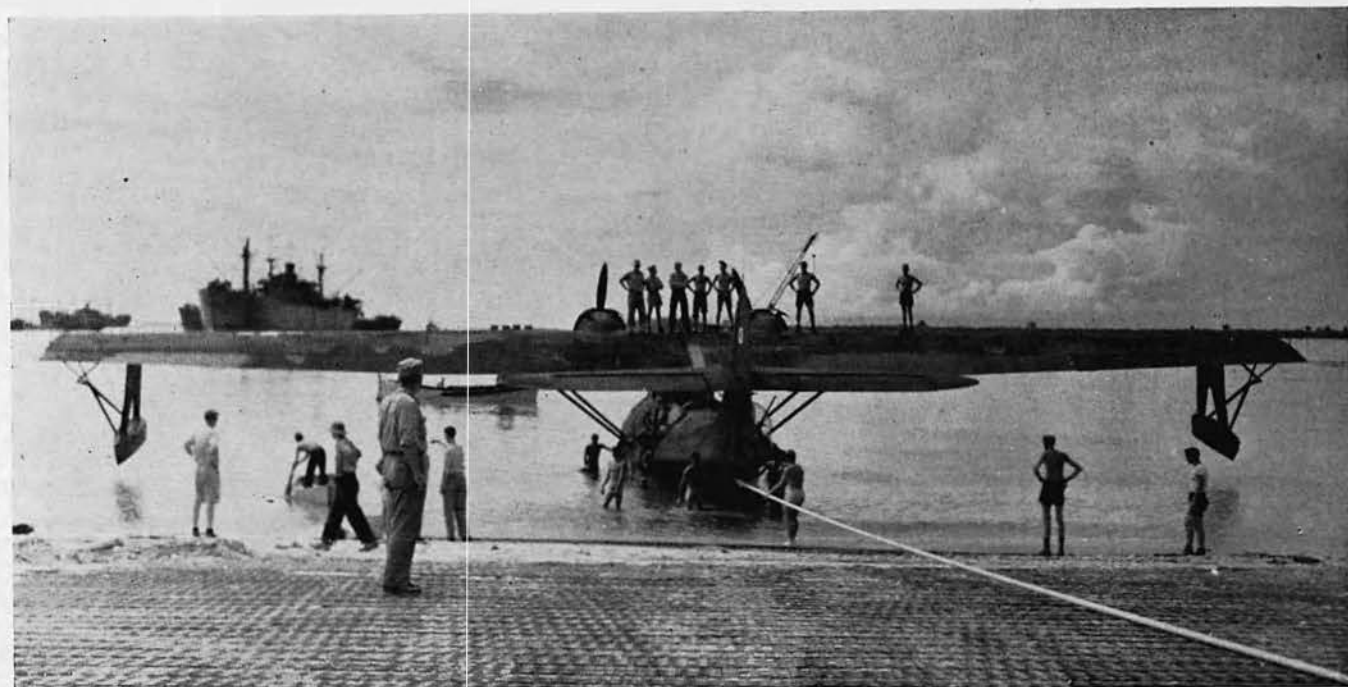
C. Skaggs



M. Smith



First plane is towed up the newly completed ramp.



H. Bell

B. Heiser

F. Richardson

R. Simpson

E. Tenikat

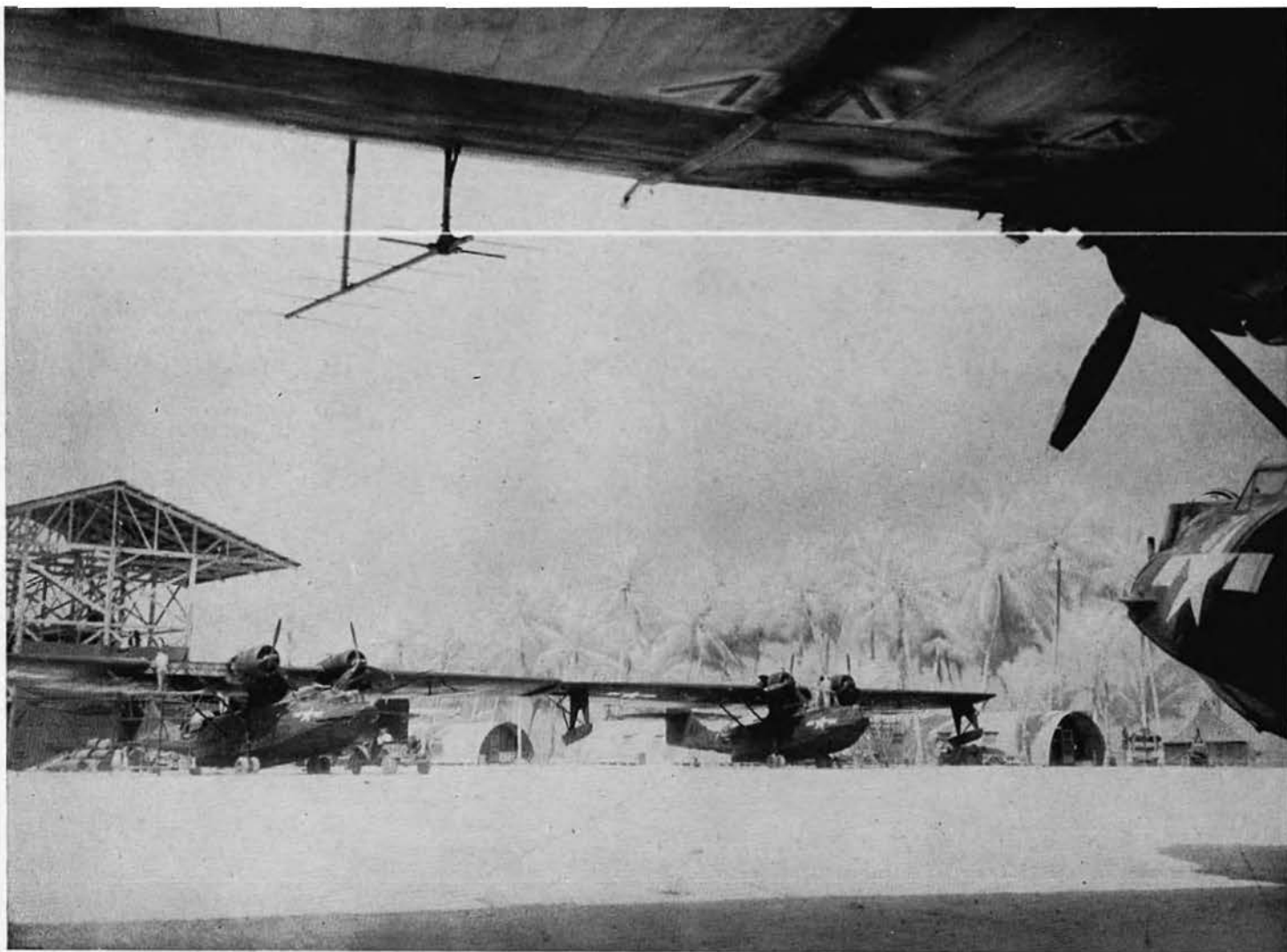
J. Uhron

L. Vaughn

J. Vickroy

R. Webb





Seaplane parking area.

W. Whiteaker



M. Wieland



G. Wickstrom



A. Williams



J. Williams



A. Wise



J. Wood





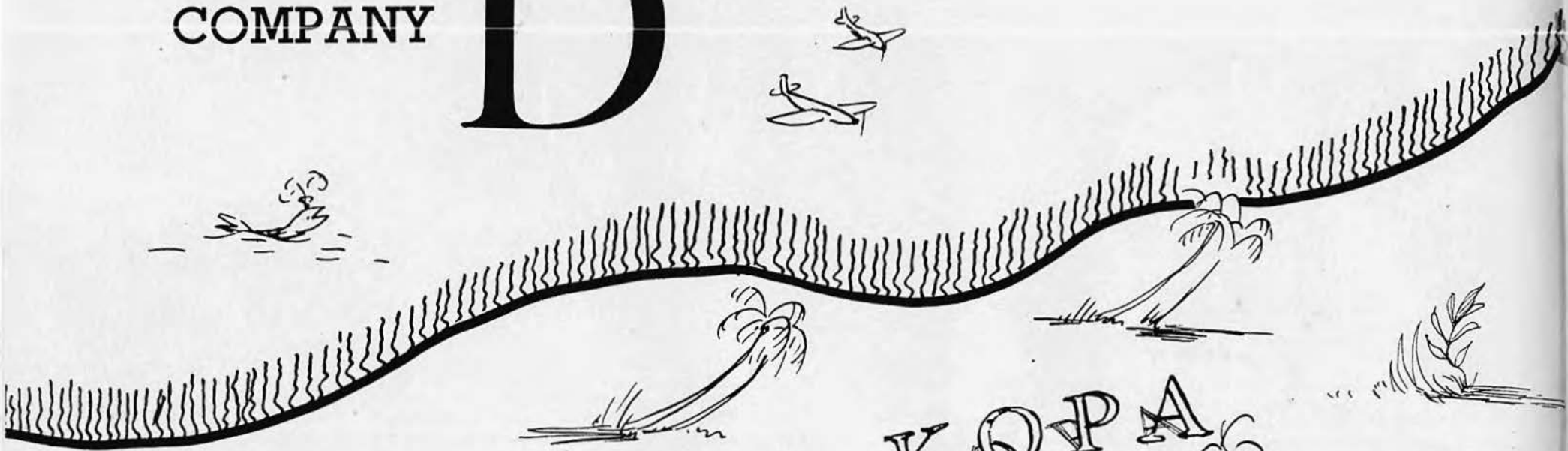
Base administration buildings, Mios Woendi.





COMPANY

D



KANA KOPA



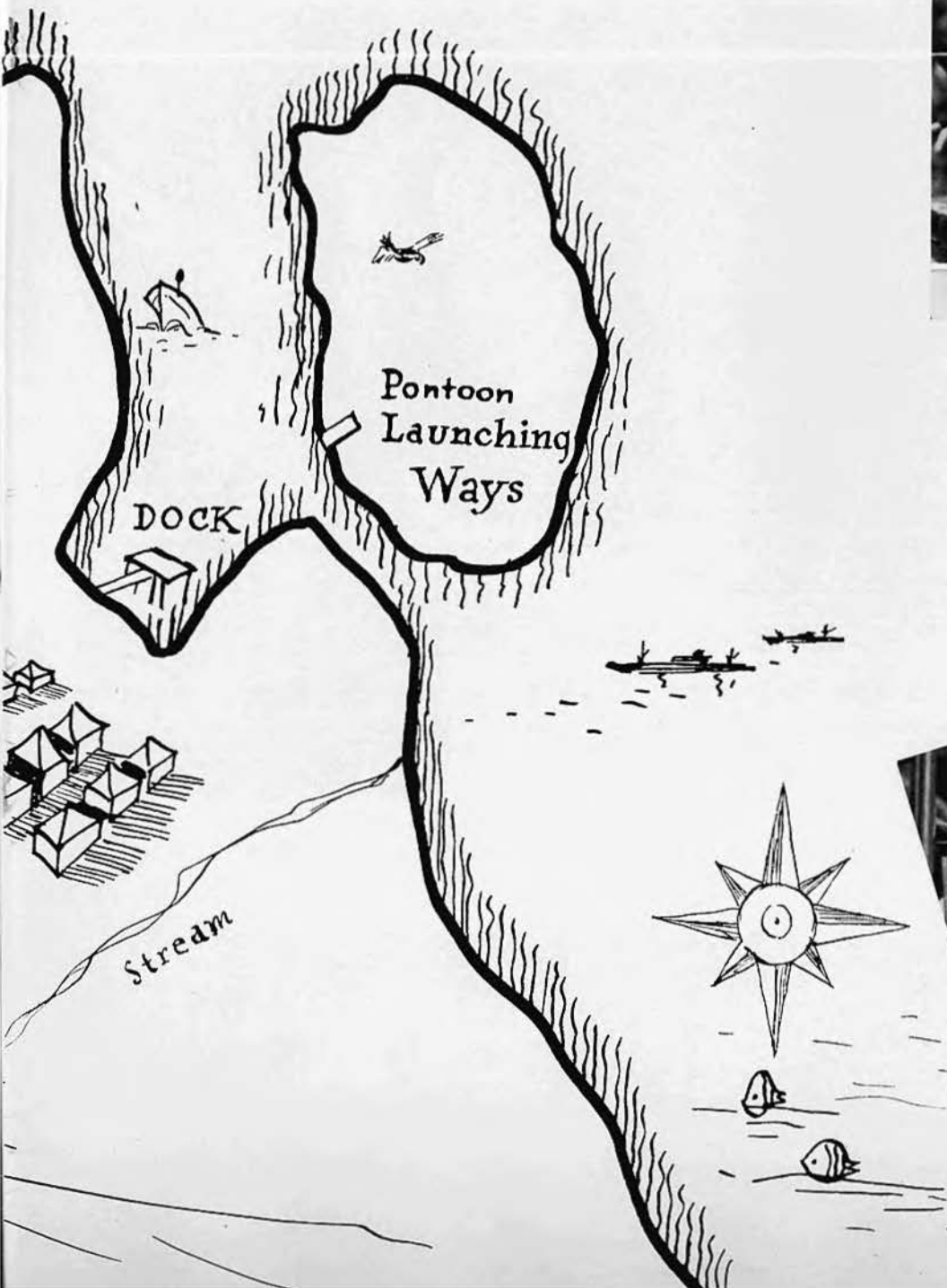
GALLEY

Camp Area



HILLS





HAROLD L. JORDAN
Lieutenant, CEC-V(S), USNR



WILLARD L. COLVIN
Lieutenant (j.g.), CEC-V(S), USNR



ADOLPH R. MANGELS
Chief Carpenter, CEC-V(S), USNR



COMPANY D

Company D arrived at its first job site at Kana Kopa on Milne Bay only a few days after the Battle of Milne Bay. From the very beginning, the company encountered difficulties of rain, mud, alerts, and malaria. This was the worst of all job sites assigned to the battalion, and Company D had more cases of malaria than all the other companies put together.

Company D completed a Motor Torpedo Boat base at Milne Bay and completed an addition to a similar base at Morobe, New Guinea, before returning to Camp Seabee for much needed rest leave. Time was needed for recuperation before going out on the next assignment.

On the job just completed, in addition to miscellaneous odd jobs, Company D constructed another Motor Torpedo Boat base and assisted with the Naval Advance Base Unit job. A small detail of men was sent to a nearby island to build port director facilities.



Company D's camp at Kana Kopa,
Milne Bay.

R. Allen

H. Anderson

O. Arms

J. Arsanto

E. Ashley

M. Atterbury

D. Barnard

J. Bell





"Slocum's Infantry."



B. Brown



R. Bruce



C. Brymer



J. Bulkowski



T. Burke



B. Burnip

A. Biscarro



G. Bixby



A. Bjorn



R. Bolleri



W. A. Bone



W. Boyd



T. Britt





A camp in New Guinea mud. When there was no mud, there was dust, and always there were mosquitoes and malaria. Camouflage was essential because of danger from enemy attack.



M. Butte

K. Carlson

W. Collins

J. Carr

L. Christman

C. Chisholm

J. Compton

A. Connor





N. Diebel



B. Dilsaver



J. Durrwachter



L. Draper



E. Edens



F. Easton

G. Connor

D. Cooper

V. Corse

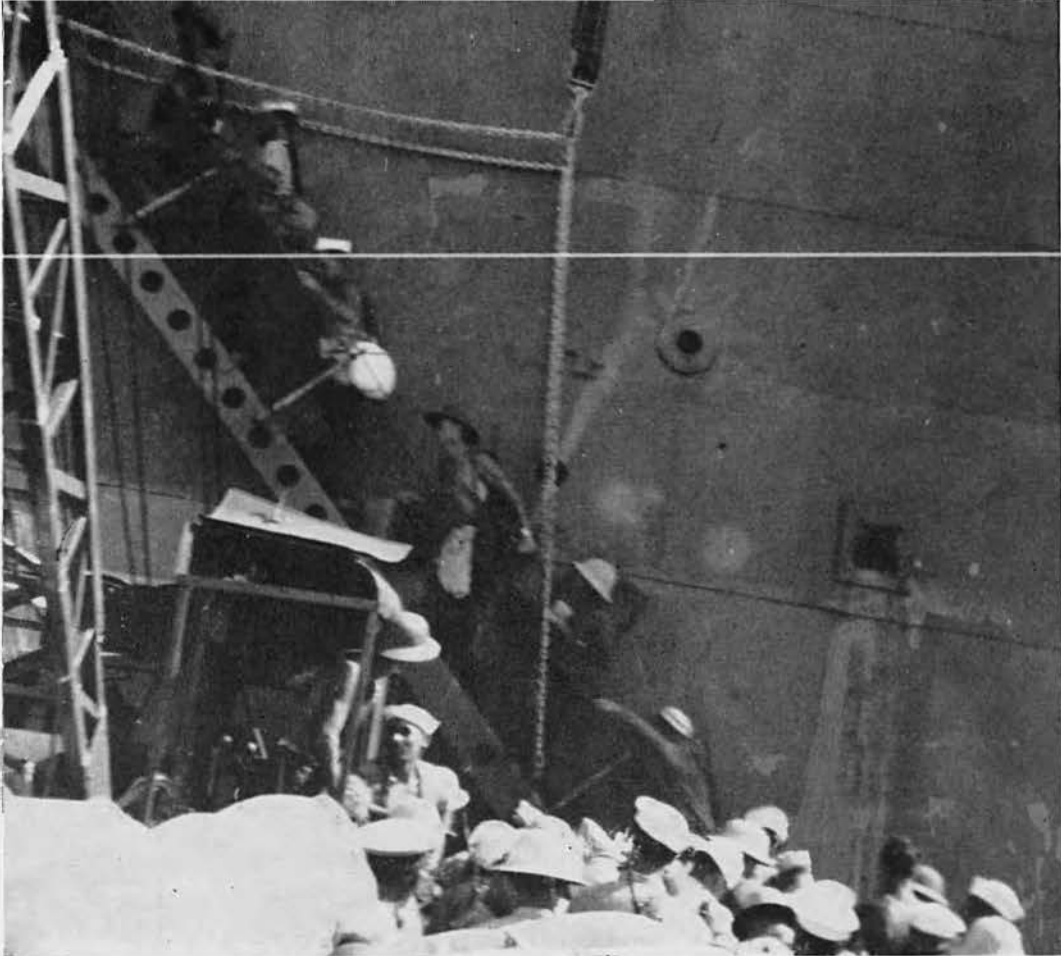
L. Eggen

V. Dennison

E. Dent

M. W. Devereaux





Boarding ship on the return to Australia.

Leaving Kana Kopa.



R. Engler

E. Estes

H. Fackenthal

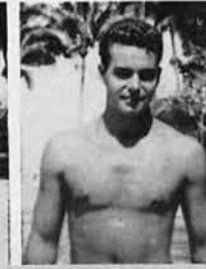
L. Files

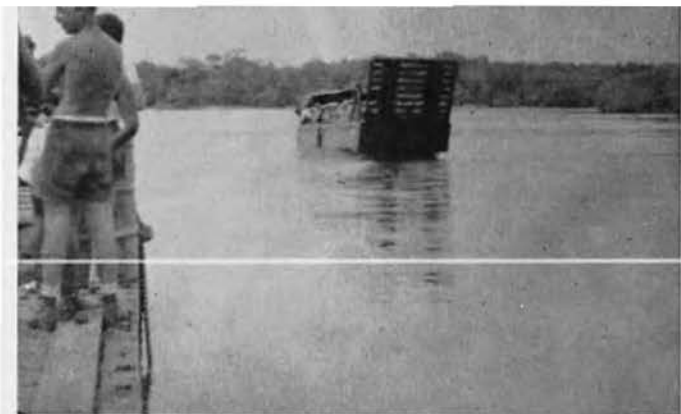
L. Finlay

J. Fisher

J. Fromming

J. Gambelin





Left: Liberty barge. Below: Bulldozer and operator pause a moment while cutting a road through New Guinea jungle.



E. Gustafson



W. Hackman



J. Hall



W. Hammon



A. Hansen



E. Hansen

J. Gaughan

B. Geyer

J. Goldade

A. Gordon

D. Grayson

R. Gries

E. Gross





Work at the mine depot.



G. Hansen

R. Harper

C. Haulman

F. Heller

H. Henderson

L. Hill

S. Holliquilla

F. Horre





L. Johnson



P. Johnson



F. Jordan



O. Kangas



C. Keller



M. Knowles

Company D's roads are a permanent feature of the Brisbane Mine Depot.

R. Huff

J. Humphrey

V. Hunter

M. Imberi

G. Jisa

A. E. Johnson

C. E. Johnson





Construction of a galley and mess hall
for PT squadrons at Mios Woendi.



W. Krug

D. Lawson

G. Loyd

A. Lund

J. Lutz

J. Lynch

G. Main

C. Mathews





L. O'Brien



T. O'Neil



W. Nelson



G. Obradovich



A. McCollum



R. McDonald

S. Menesey

J. Miller

J. Malone

G. Morris

E. Morrissey

J. Myers

J. McClelland





On foundations of concrete, many warehouses and shops rose beneath the palm trees.



E. Osborn

C. Owings

W. Pagliotti

G. Patton

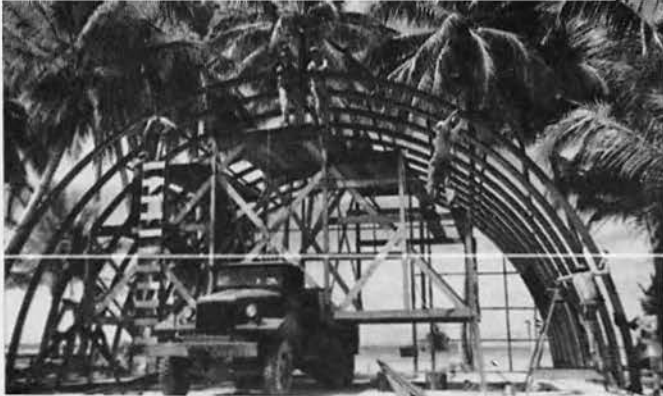
R. Peck

R. A. Petersen

J. W. Peterson

J. A. Peterson





L. Rodriques



W. Rogers



S. Riggs



S. Rivituso



H. Reck



C. Ridge

N. A. Peterson



W. Phillips



L. Porritt



J. Powers



J. Provence



J. Ransom



G. Rafferty





Ten wells supplied water for the various units on Mios Woendi

C. Robison



E. Roose



R. Roth



J. Ruffenach



R. Ruffo



E. Ruppert

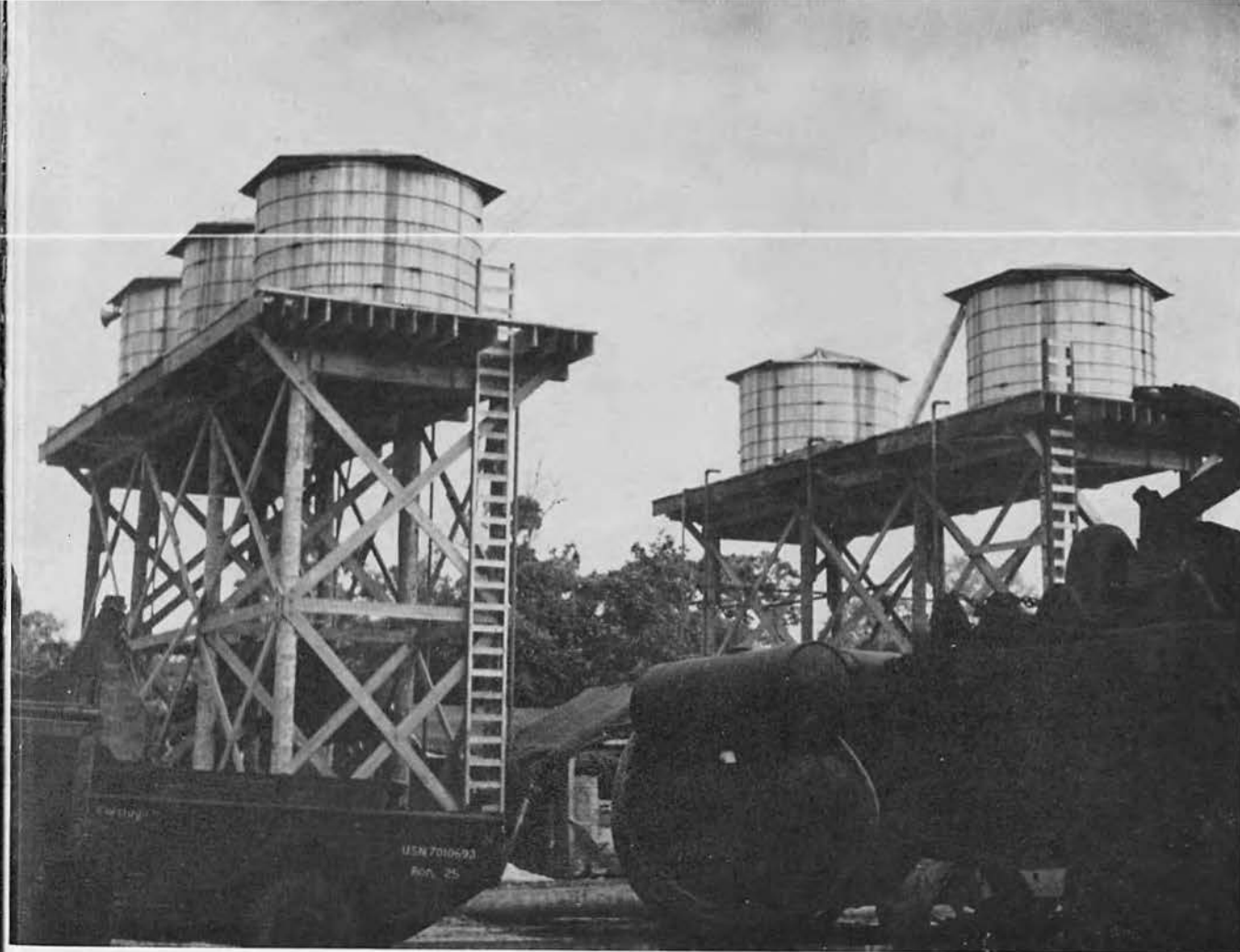


H. Rush



J. Russo





T. Sheridan



A. Sims



C. Severe



H. Shanks



A. Schock



G. Selby

F. Sailus

G. Saladino

A. Sanchez

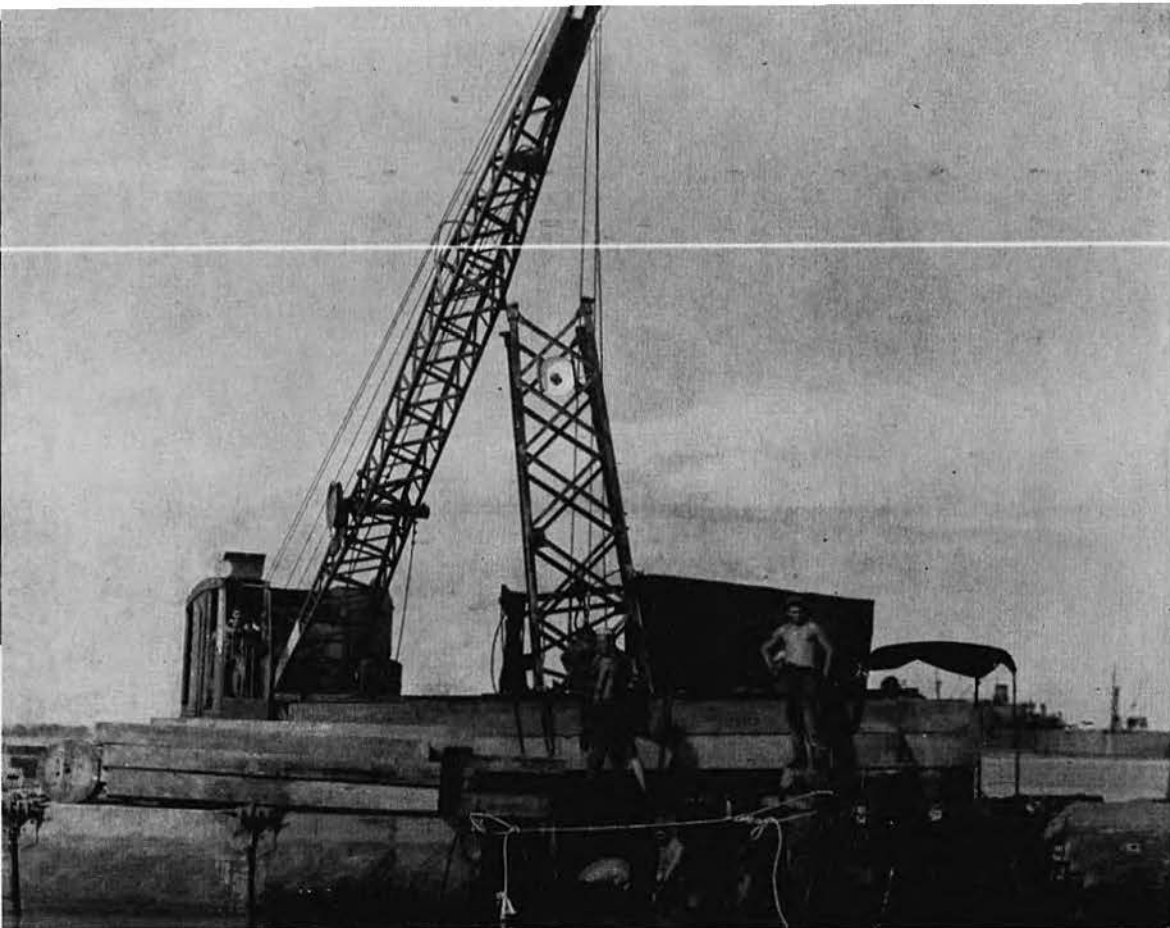
V. Santilli

W. Sauer

R. Saylor

E. Schmehl





Left: Salvaging a crane trapped by the tide. Upper: Laying foundations for battalion offices. Lower: Sign Shop.

A. Smith



C. Smith



E. Snell



J. Sowell



C. Stehman



J. Stevens

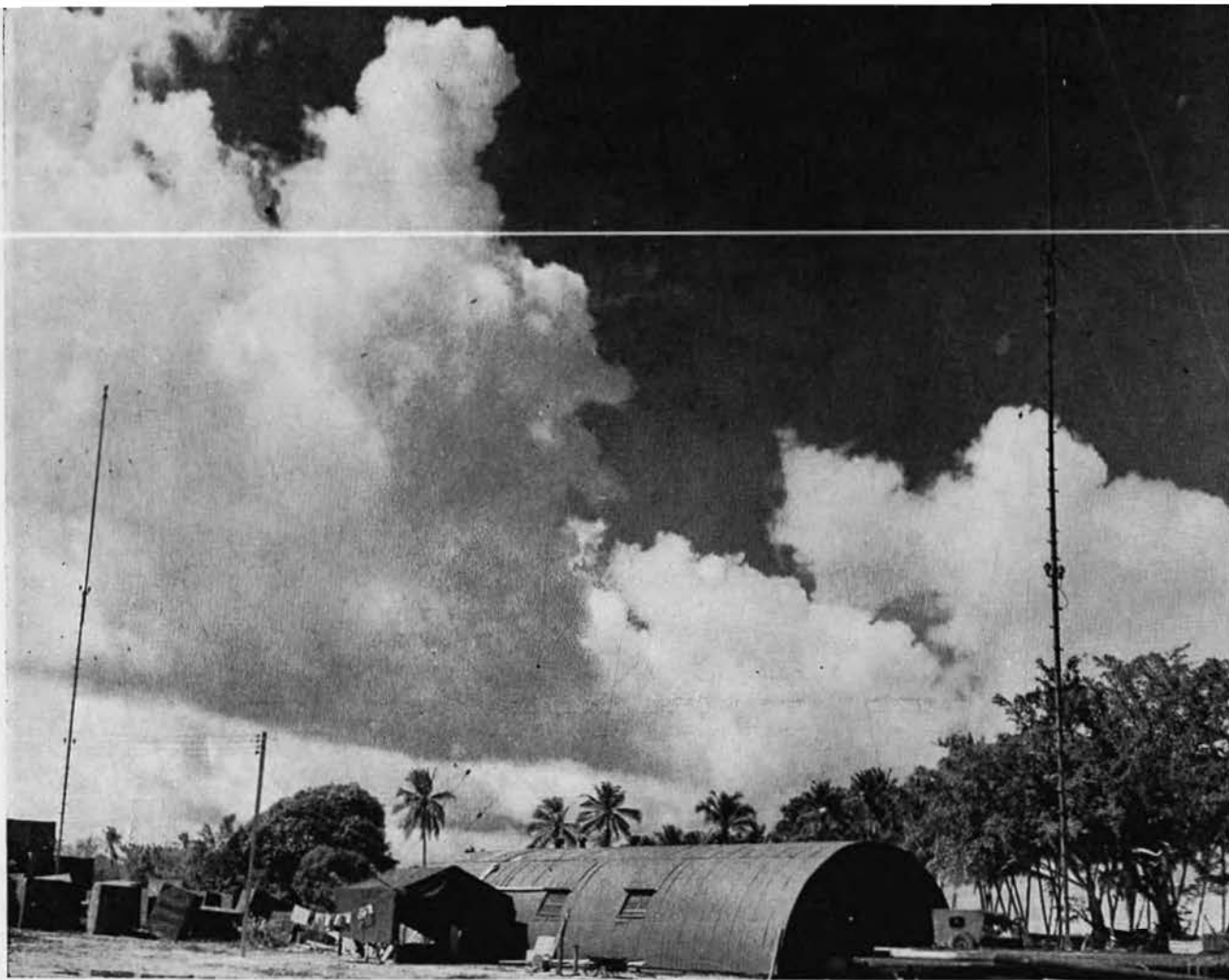


W. Wilson

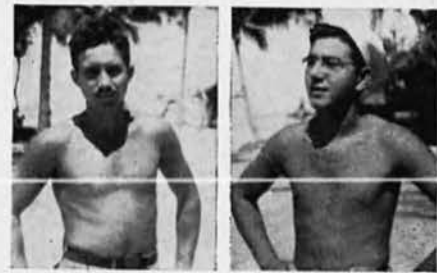


E. Stuckrath



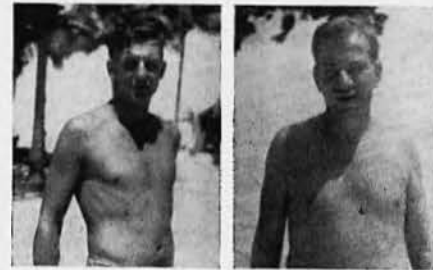


Radio towers complete with clouds for space in the air.



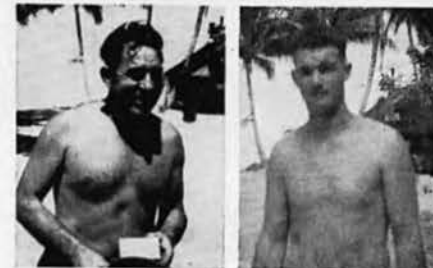
T. Verlin

J. Visco



J. Updegrove

J. Verbeck



J. Turk

F. Umphrey

J. Sullivan

R. Spriggs

R. Samuelson

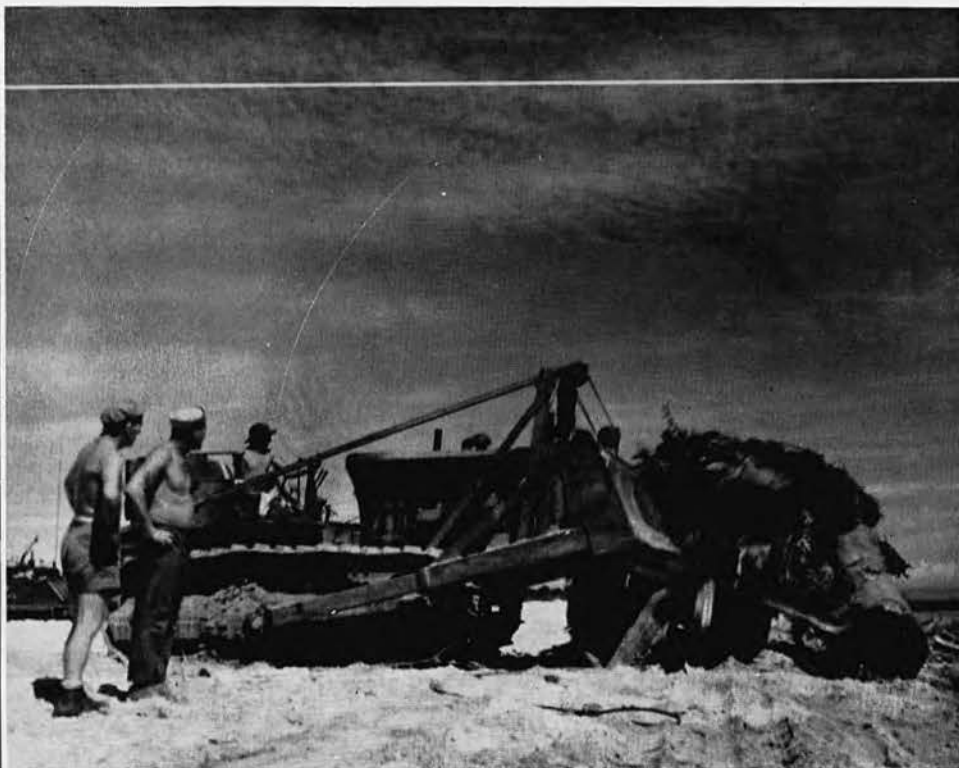
J. Tatum

W. Thomas

J. Tomsen

T. Travis





Left: PT moorings and drydocks. Right: The island was lengthened by 400 feet of fill.

W. Vogel

C. Voorhies

L. Wagner

A. Walker

F. Wallulatum

M. Walsh

H. Wara

H. Washburn





Pouring concrete floors for torpedo shop.



C. Bergman



F. S. Peterson



E. Freitas



M. Somers



W. Wright

L. Yahamovitch



W. Welch



D. Wells



E. White



A. Willbrandt

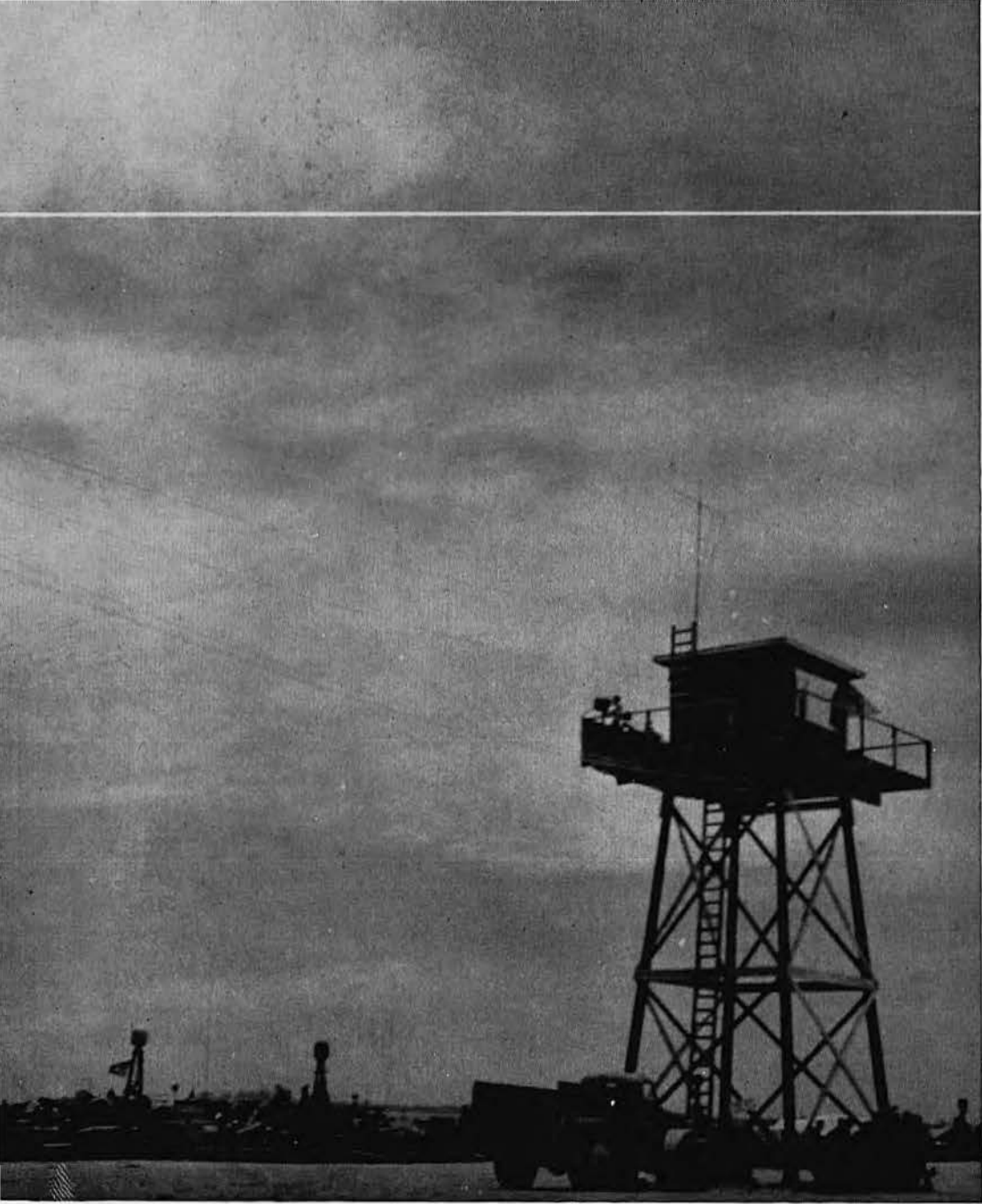


R. Williams



C. Wingfield





Control tower, Mios Woendi.

THERE WAS A TIME FOR RECREATION

First emphasis during the past months was placed on construction work, but there was time for recreation. While the companies were on detached duty, stories circulated that all companies were playing baseball and going on excursions to nearby points of interest; Company B was having a horseshoe tournament and amateur entertainments; Company C was fishing in addition to playing baseball; Company D was having boxing matches and musical shows. Back in Brisbane, Headquarters and a part of Company B were playing tennis along with the officers and going on swimming parties to the beach. Tommy House was runner-up in a base tennis tournament which was won by a member of the 84th Battalion.

When the companies returned to Camp Seabee, Company C won the championship in the base softball league, and Company D won the championship in the Brisbane Area softball league. Ed Pilarski, a newcomer to Company C, won the base horseshoe tournament from runner-up Jack Royse, another Company C newcomer. The new boys were showing the old men how it was done.

Again there were beach trips to Redcliff and Coollangatta. The Welfare Department operated a library and recreation hall and arranged for a number of dances and special entertainments in town.

In a marksmanship contest at Enoggera Rifle Range, 28 men qualified for expert rifleman, 86 qualified for sharpshooter, and 141 qualified for marksman. The following is the outcome of this contest by companies:

Expert		Sharpshooter		Marksman	
HQ	7	HQ	17	HQ	29
B	5	B	13	B	25
C	11	C	26	C	50
D	5	D	30	D	37

Company A did not return to Camp Seabee in time to participate in the contest, nor did all of Company B. Highest score was made by C. A. Blackstone of Company C with a mark of 185 out of a possible 200. In the preliminary qualifying rounds E. D. Turner won a special Headquarters Company trophy with a mark of 184.

On our most recent assignment, recreation was limited to the library, base movies, trips to adjoining islands, and participation in a base softball league.

RECREATION



VOL.

"WELL DONE!"

Officer-in-Charge Commends Men
on First Anniversary

"History can boast of no organization designed for construction that is as competent, versatile, self-sustaining and respected as are the Seabees of the Navy. These facts become more evident as each day passes. A little more than a year has passed since this battalion was commissioned. A great deal has been accomplished since that day. Work requiring ingenuity, skill, knowledge and experience has been but a phase of each day's work. Projects have required the individual attention of each man, and no man has failed in his duty. It is with heartfelt pride that I say: "I'm one of the men of the 55th Battalion."



A barbecue to celebrate our first anniversary overseas.



"Most of you have experienced some trying times, and lived under unfavorable conditions. Some of you have become intimately acquainted with mud and rain. Not one man of us will ever fail to recognize the inside of a tent nor will chow lines and mess kits be unfamiliar. These memories go with us, but the work that has been done remains as a dedication from you to our country.

"We cannot know what the future will bring. One thing is sure, whatever project we are called upon to build will be built with a speed and determination characteristic of every last man, and when we get home we will always be proud of having been Seabees."



Upper left: Company C's championship softball team. Upper right: Company D's championship softball team. Center: Horseshoe tournament finalists. Lower right: Champion battalion rifleman, 196 out of possible 200.

FLASH-BACK

Remember when Lt. Saul Ravitch got a softball club together at our Port of Embarkation? . . .

And the boxing and wrestling matches Company D held in the North? Where Benny Dilsaver, S1c., proved himself a fireball? . . .

And then there was the Seabee Ball Club at Camp Seabee about April or May . . . Then Company C left for duty in the North, and the whole idea died a natural death.

Company A was playing horseshoes about that time at their base . . .

Company B men were playing the horses—and still are—with the same results . . .

A little later, Pat (Pappy) Houley, Cox, detached, had an idea for a smoker at the base. Fights, girls, whiskey and soda . . . The idea left with Pappy . . .

The tennis courts were ready for use along in October and a new sport was added to our recreational facilities . . .

Swimming parties became popular in November. After a look at some of the girls on the beaches, it is wondered if swimming was the real attraction . . .



Night work—Company A's Monte Carlo.



Headquarters Company throws one.



Doctor strikes out.



Headquarters Company's
top-scoring rifleman.



Entertainment



Left: Vocalist. Below: Farewell to Brisbane. A dance at Cantwell Hall.





Battalion dance band.

Frances Langford Writes:

ON TINY ISLAND MEN SIT IN RAIN FOR HOPE'S SHOW

Somewhere in the South Pacific, Aug. 30, 1944—This was the island we had been looking for. It took us eight weeks to find it. It's a small island, little more than a mile long and half as wide and for the present it must remain nameless.

It has white sands you have read of, and still blue water inside a protecting coral reef. It has leaning coconut palms and a cooling wind.

You could set Dorothy Lamour down here and start cameras rolling without changing scenery one bit.

We came to it in a PT boat. We learned that it has been a taboo island with the natives of these parts—a burial place for their dead. Today, with dead-ly PT's lining its beaches, it spells taboo for the enemy.

MEN WAIT ALL AFTERNOON

We came here late in the afternoon through a driving rainstorm. There was not mud, just white sand. They told us Navy boys had been sitting in drenching rain since early afternoon.

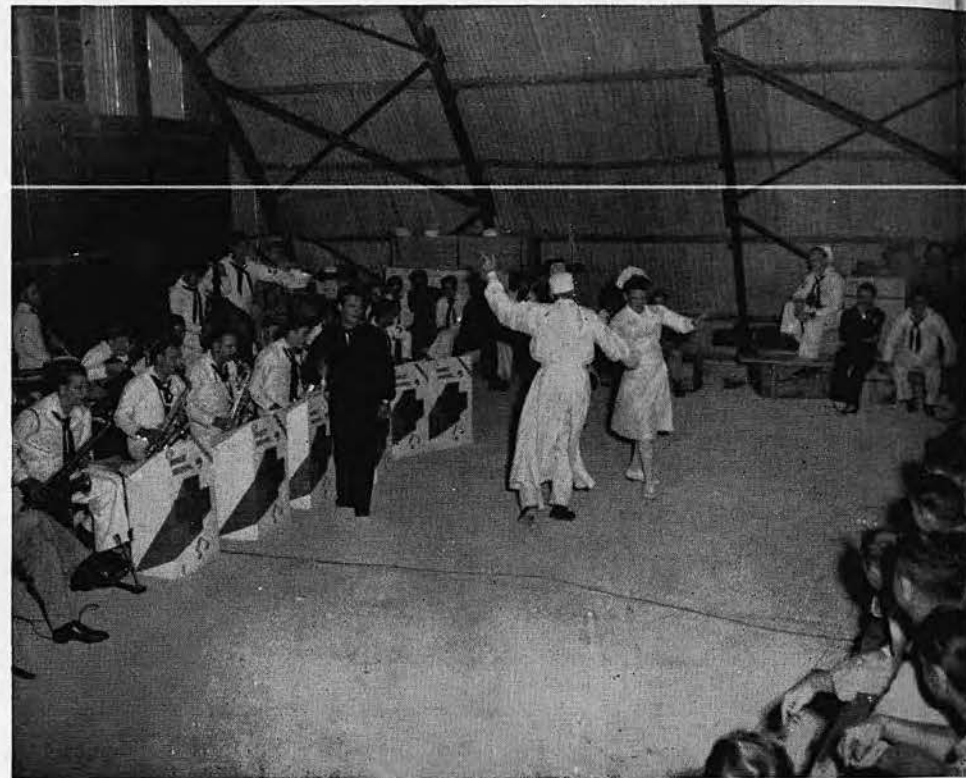
The men sat there completely oblivious of the water beating in their faces and coursing down their necks and they responded to every action on the stage—a very good stage which had been built on short notice by versatile Seabees of the 55th Battalion.



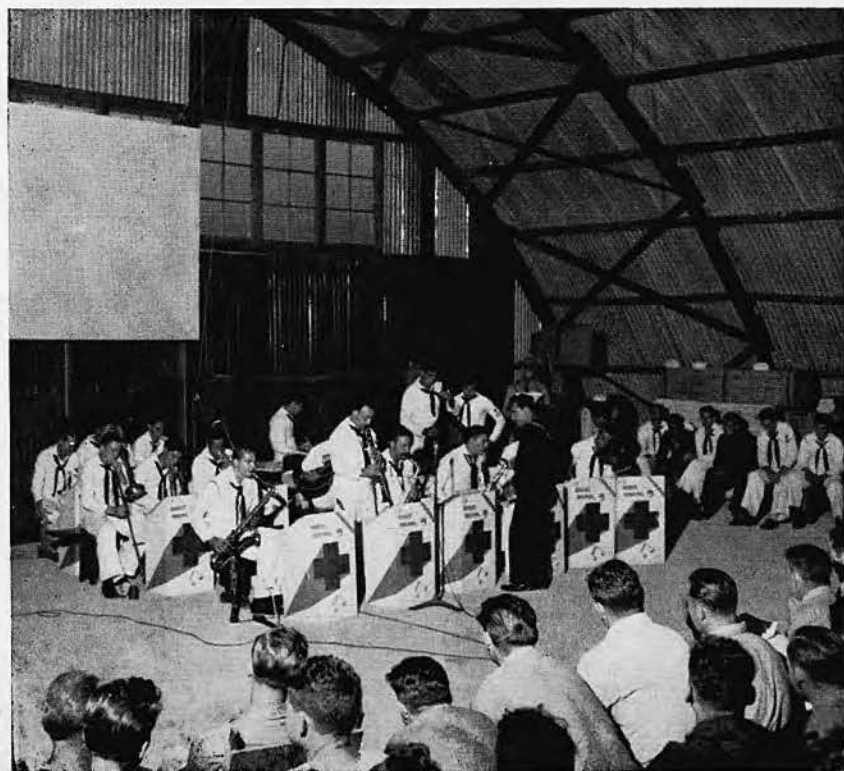
Frances Langford, Bob Hope, and Pat Thomas give show on Mios Woendi.



Military Band

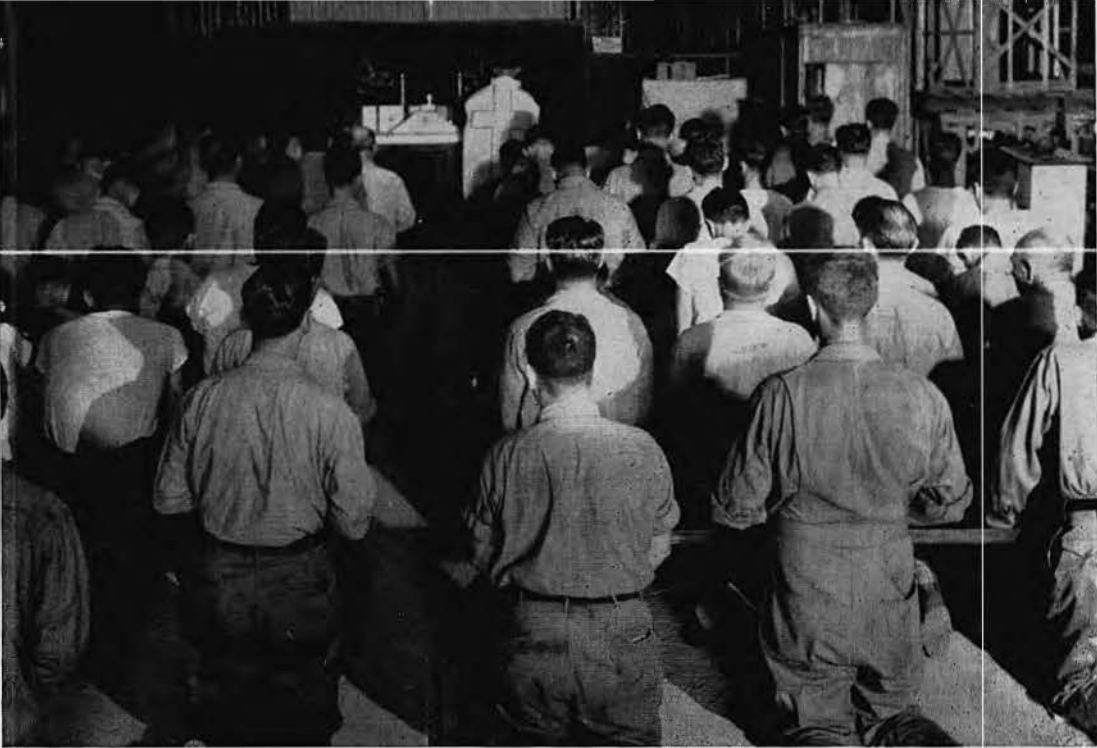


Mob 9 jitterbugs.



USO show at Camp Seabee.

Church Services

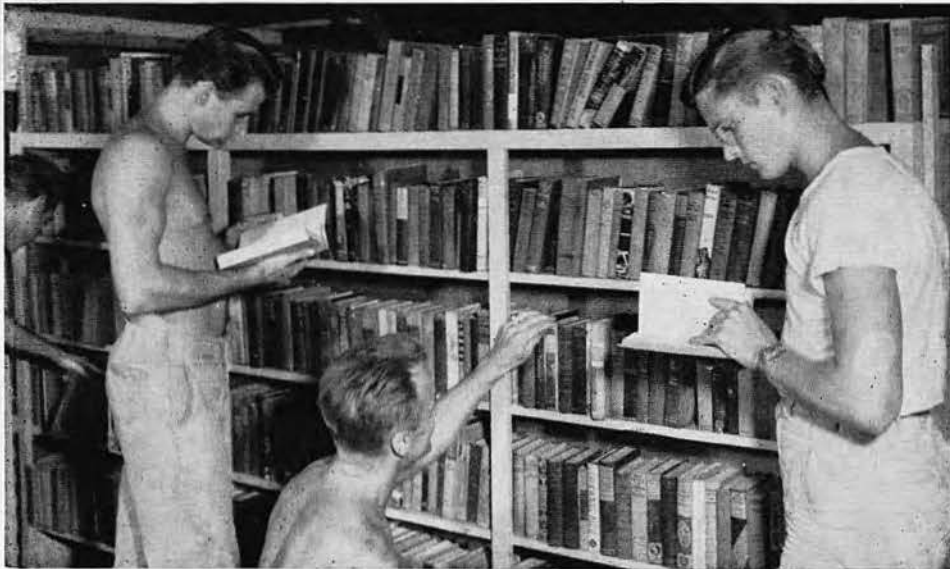


Above and lower right: Catholic Services.



Jewish Services.

Battalion library.



SEEING SEABEES



BATTLE OF RHODE ISLAND



SHOTS



1 THE NEEDLE, IT IS NOT SQUARE - YES?



CHOW HALL ONLY 3 MI.

THE END OF THE TRAIL

30 Mi. HIKE



LIBERTY BY HOOK OR CROOK



"I ORIGINALLY CAME FOR BREAKFAST - BUT IF LUNCH IS READY WE MIGHT GET DINNER"

HUENEME

9

GIVE THEM THE BRUSH OFF



WE SURE NEEDED THIS RAIN



WELL - THEY BLEACH OUT AFTER A FEW MONTHS, DON'T THEY?

MIOS'WOENDI ISLAND

Reserved CO.C BALL PARK

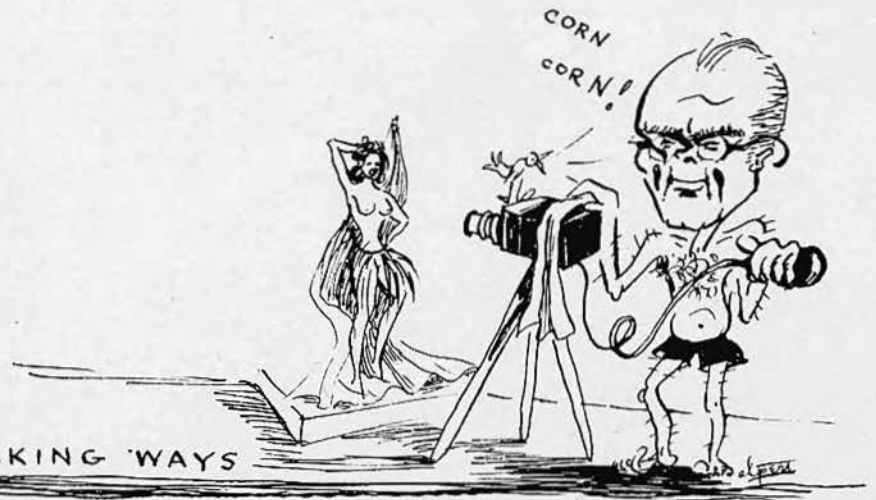


in the mess hall...

SNAFU THE SEABEE

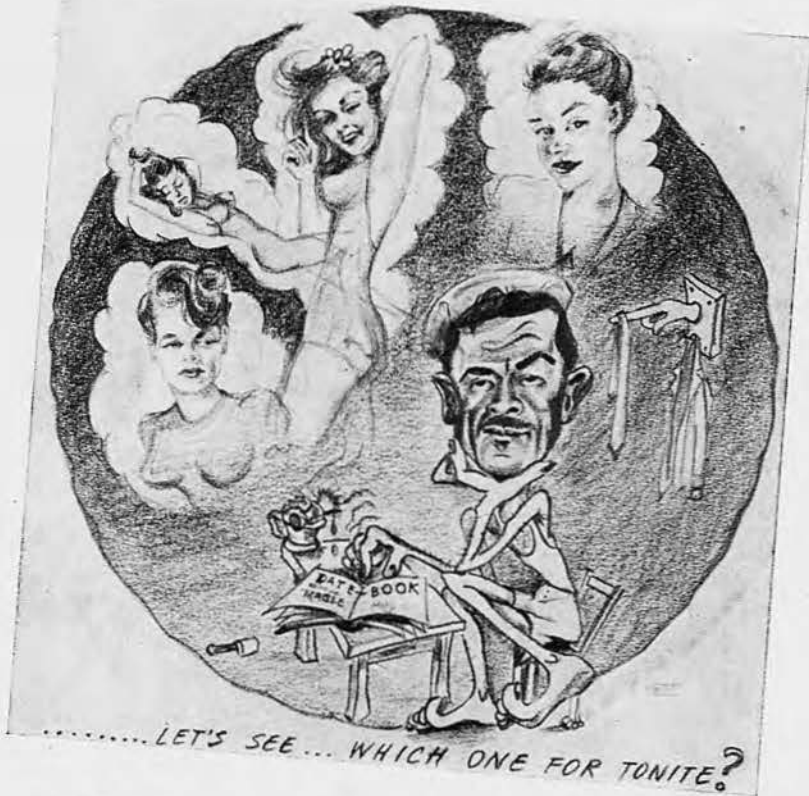


SNAPSHOTS



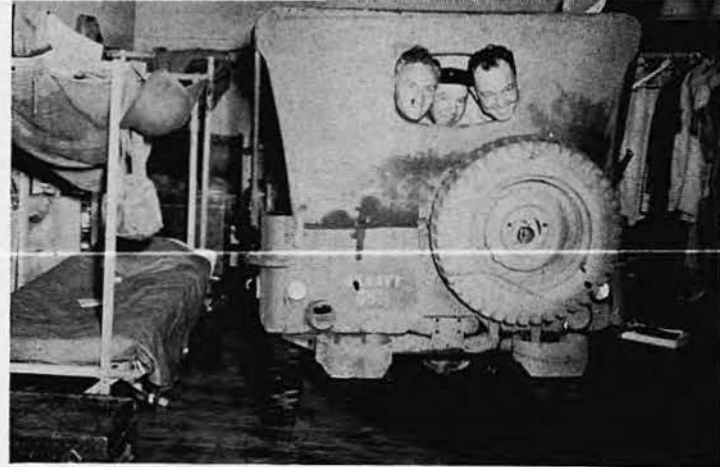
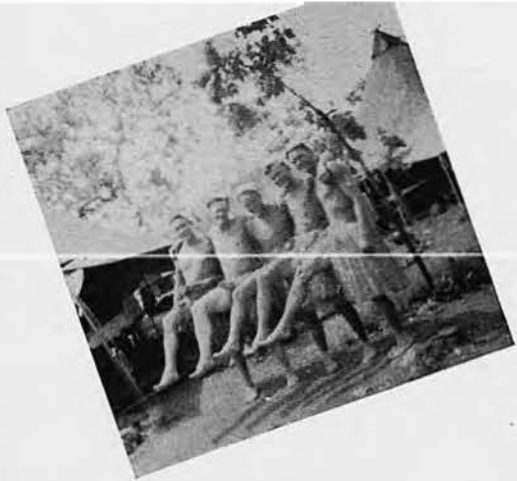
HE SURE HAS TAKING 'WAYS'











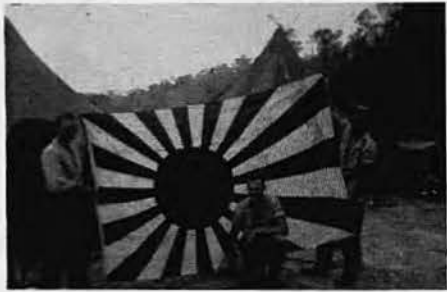


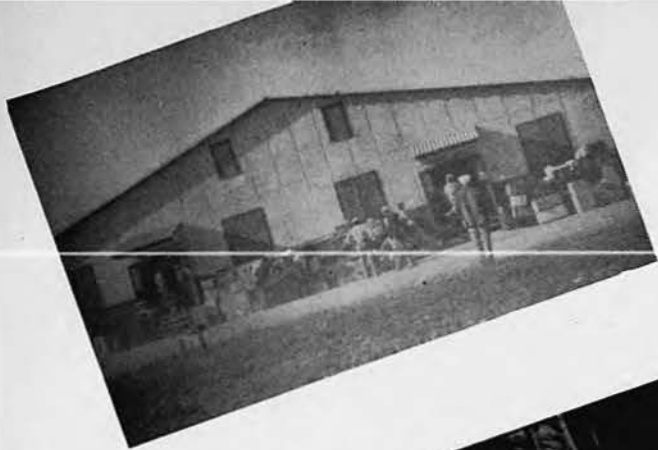
"DO YOU FIND THINGS DIFFERENT IN THIS COUNTRY. JOE?"













Liberty Whites

SNAFU THE SEABEE



LETTERS OF COMMENDATION

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES AND AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS
MERSUKE

25 July 1943

SUBJECT: Commendation
TO: Commanding Officer, Company "A", 65th Naval
Construction Battalion

1. This office is in receipt of a communication from Brigadier General Hugh J. Canby, Chief Engineer, General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, dated 15 June 1943, commending the engineering units in Mersuke upon the excellence of their work in this area.

2. Officers and enlisted men of Company "A", 55th Naval Construction Battalion, are commended for their enterprise and cooperation and for the general excellence of their work particularly in wharf construction at Mersuke, which has earned the well deserved recognition of the highest engineering command authority in this Theatre.

(Signed) John W. Thomas
Major, C. E.
C.R.E.

G-4, HOSPITAL FACILITY
Navy #3505
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.

3 October 1944

From: Medical Officer in Command
To: Commanding Officer, 65th Navy Construction Battalion,
Navy 3505

Subject: Excellent performance of duty, commendation for.

1. The writer of this letter wishes to express the sincere gratitude of the entire staff of this activity, to the officer and enlisted personnel of the fifty-fifth Navy Construction Battalion, for their splendid co-operation and effort expended in the construction of this hospital and installation of it's equipment.

2. It is worthy of note that this hospital was completed in an almost unbelievably short period of time.

/s/ P. A. GRAY

PLB/ND/11-94.
Serial 01F

AIRCRAFT, SEVENTH FLEET
10 January 1944

From: The Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET.
The Commander Naval Base Division, Service
Force, SEVENTH FLEET.

To: Advance Bases at Palm Island and Samarai Is-
land - completion of.

1. Commander Aircraft, Seventh Fleet wishes to
express his appreciation of the work of
the "Seabee" in establishing the advance bases of this com-
mand at Palm Island and Samarai Island.

2. These bases are now in full operation, and
their success is due in great measure to the efficiency, re-
sourcefulness and diligence of your organization and its of-
ficers and men.

(Signed) W. A. Schoech
Chief Staff Officer

Copy to:
ComSeventhFt
ComServSeventhFt
55th CB
64th CB

AK102/PLB/121

From:

To:

Subject:

23 October 1944

The Commanding Officer,
The Commanding Officer, 55th Naval
Construction Battalion

Commendation on Stevedoring.

1. Wish to express my admiration for the
co-operation and hard work shown by the men under your
command.

2. Although this was the first ship they
have unloaded, they did a much better job than organized
stevedore battalions we have run into at other ports of
call.

3. Allowed 90 hours to unload at Moendi,
the 55th and our own ship's company unloaded the ship
in 46 hours. Such spirit is very commendable.

/s/ C. K. LATUS

19TH U. S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

September 9, 1944

From:

From:

To:

Subject:

The Officer-in-Charge,
The Officer-in-Charge, 55th U. S. Naval Con-
struction Battalion

Commendation

1. The Officer-in-Charge wishes to take this op-
portunity to commend the Officer-in-Charge, Officers, and men
of the 55th Naval Construction Battalion for their outstand-
ing performance in the construction of Naval Base Facilities
at Navy 3505. The speed and efficiency with which these fa-
cilities were constructed and turned over to "Operations" has
established an all time record for such construction in the
Southwest Pacific area. This fine record cannot but reflect
the true spirit of cooperation and the willingness "to do"
that has prevailed among officers and men of the Battalion
throughout this operation.

Signed/ CHARLES M. HERD

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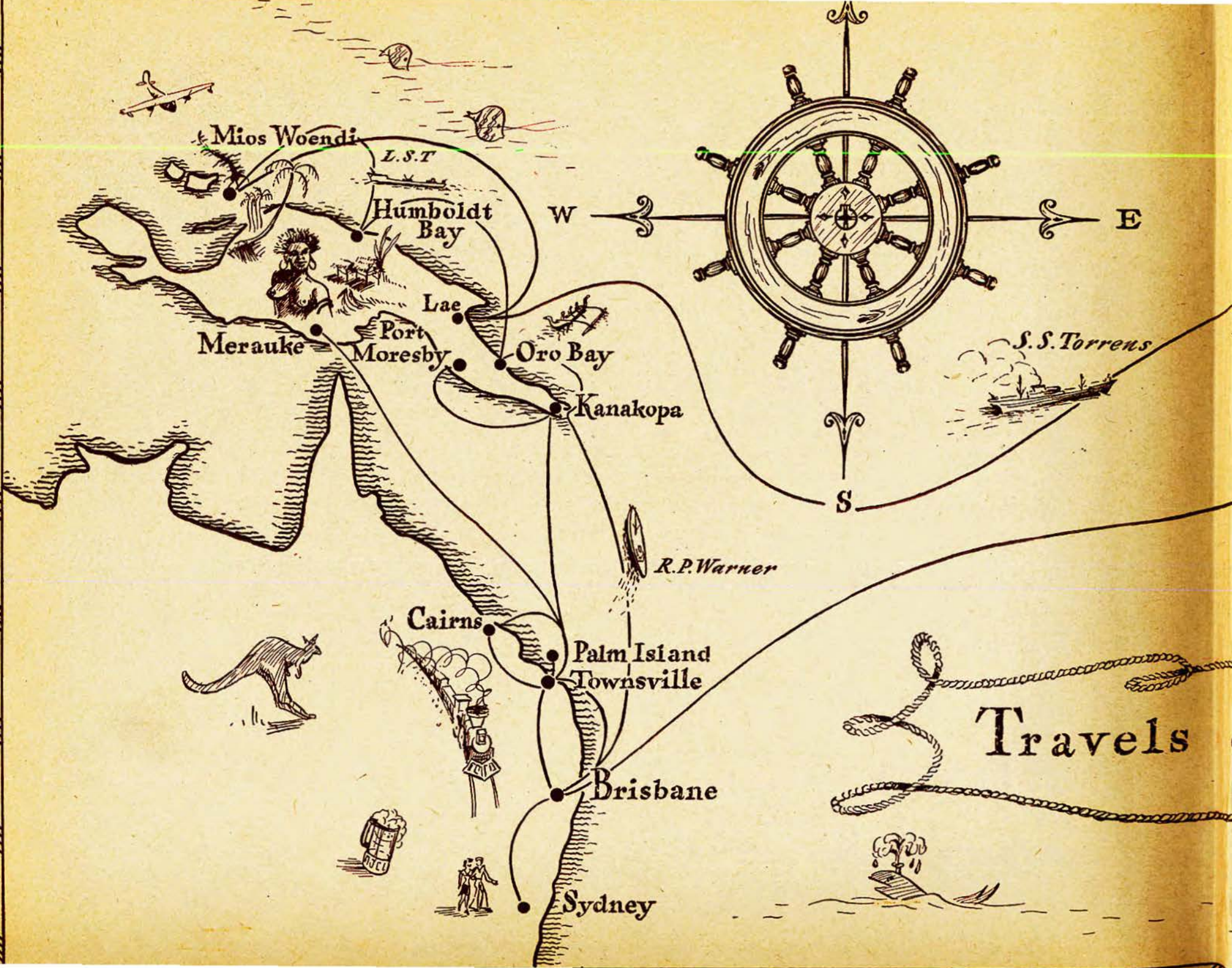
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Paso, Cal 95836

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Torrance, Cal. 90505



Mios Woendi

L.S.T

Humboldt Bay

W

E

Lae

Merauke

Port Moresby

Oro Bay

Kanakopa

S.S. Torrens

S

R.P. Warner

Cairns

Palm Island
Townsville

Brisbane

Sydney

Travels



San Francisco

Rhode Island

Hueneme

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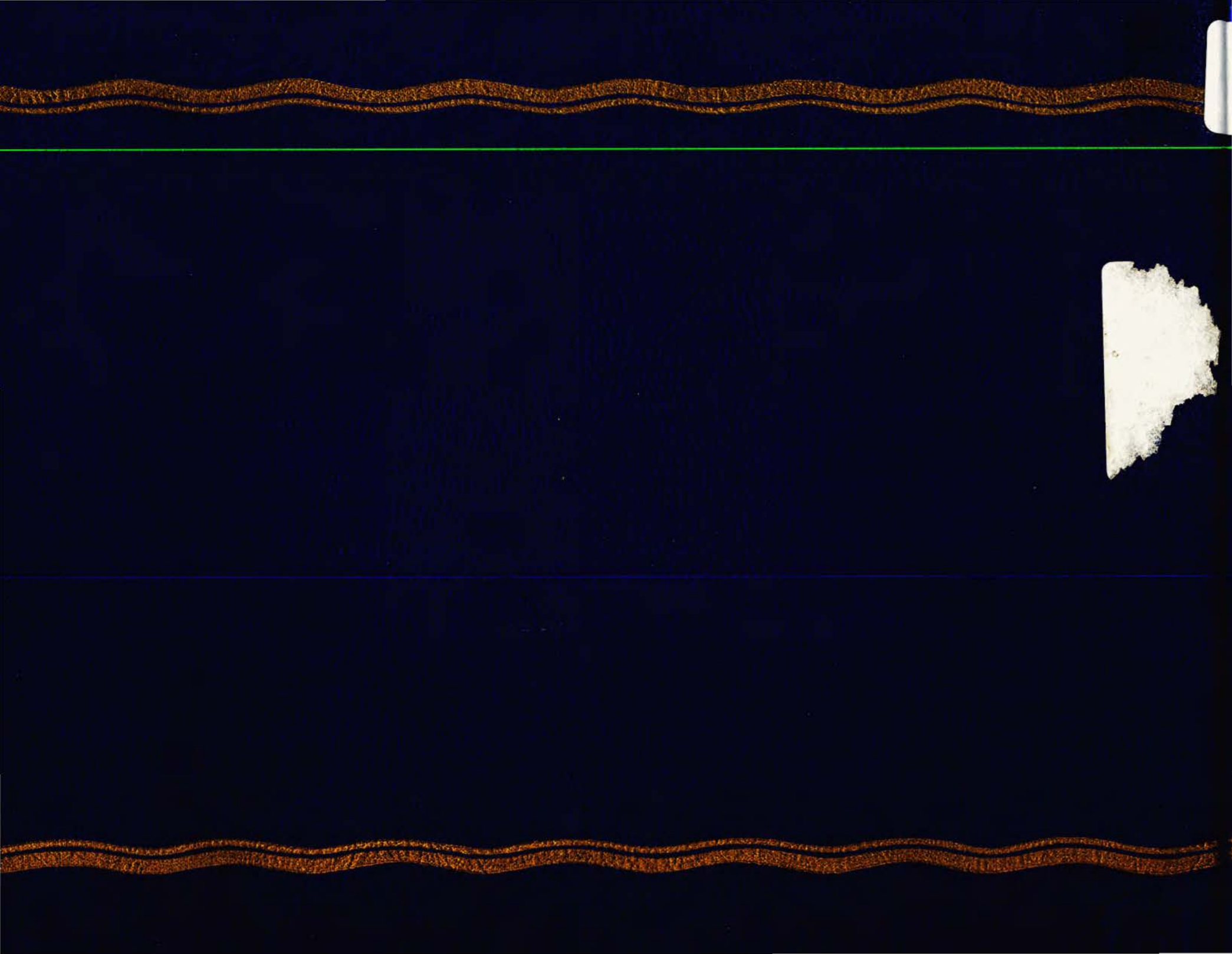
Gulf Port

NY

M.S. Sommelsdyk

f the 55th Seabees

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55th U.S. Naval Con. Batt.
Motor Torpedo Boat Ron. 25
U.S.S. Knox (A.P.A.) -1944
Humboldt Bay, Dutch New Guinea



55th U.S. Naval Con. Batt.
Motor Torpedo Boat Ron. 25
U.S.S. Knox (A.P.A.) -1944
Humboldt Bay, Dutch New Guinea



55
REUNIO
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55TH NCB REUNION

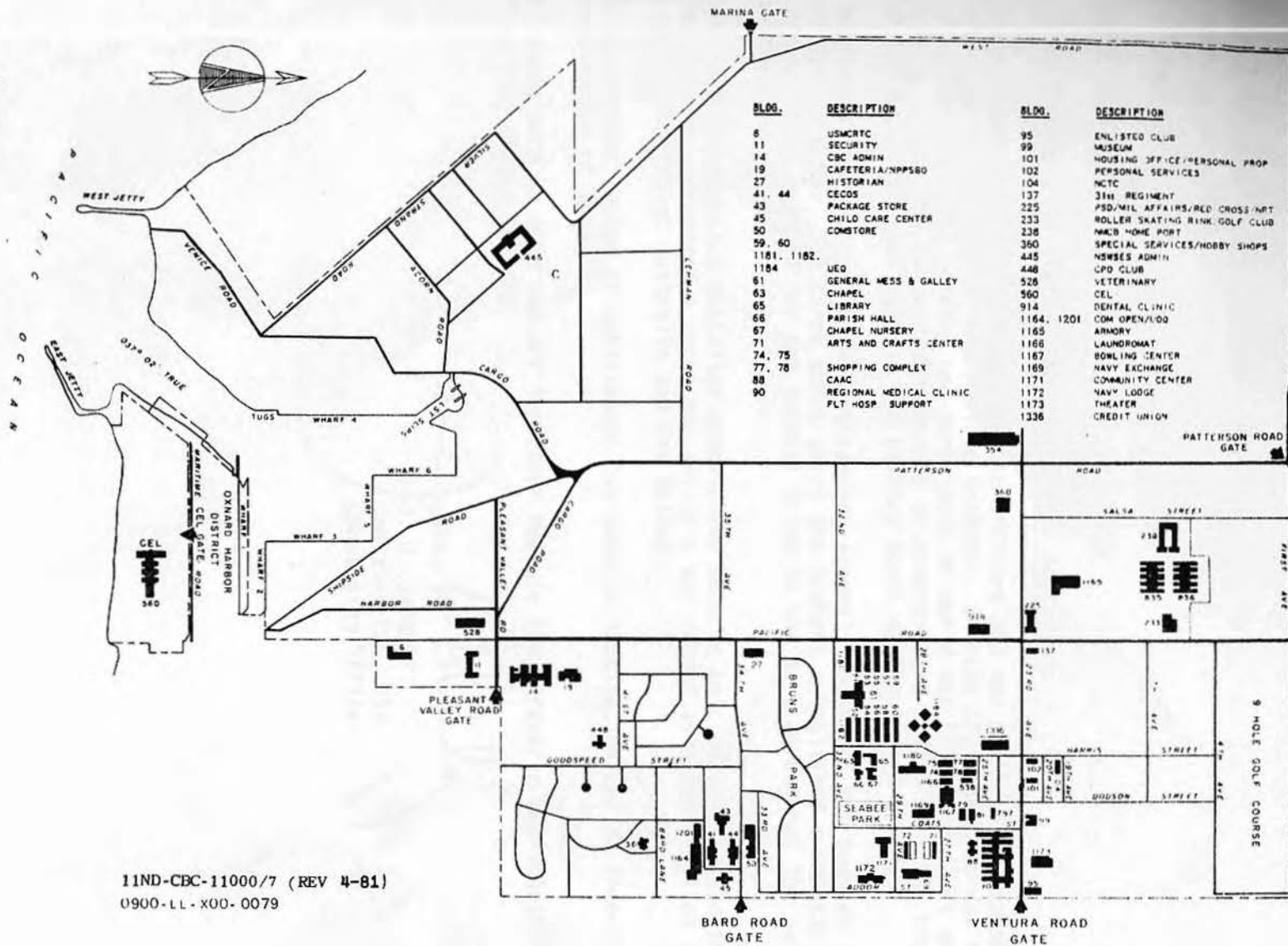
JULY 30 - AUGUST 2, 1981



PORT HUENEME, CALIFORNIA

**NAVAL CONSTRUCTION
BATTALION CENTER
PORT HUENEME, CALIFORNIA**

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RECREATIONAL AND
NON-INDUSTRIAL TYPE
BUILDINGS ONLY.



11ND-CBC-11000/7 (REV 4-81)
0900-LL-X00-0079

JULY 30, 1981

WELCOME

To the Officers and Men of the 55th Seabee Battalion:

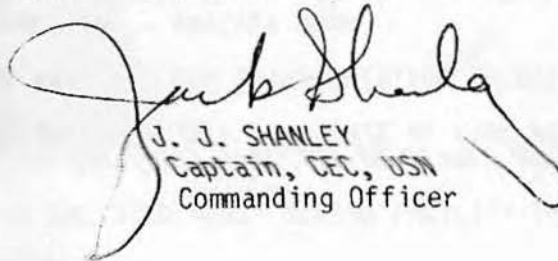
It is indeed a pleasure to welcome the officers and men of the 55th Seabee Battalion to the home of the Pacific Seabees. I noted that the 55th was formed on 12 December 1942, during the early days of World War II. Your deeds and actions during the big war have earned an honored part in not only the history of the U.S. Navy, but also in the history books of the United States.

The Navy is very proud of the outstanding accomplishments of the Seabees in the Second World War. In three short years the Seabees established a reputation that has been a cause for the deepest pride to the Navy throughout the past thirty-nine years.

The 55th Construction Battalion contributed much to this notable reputation of the Seabees and earned a proud and enviable war record as a construction and fighting outfit at Australia and New Guinea.

Your glorious record of achievement has been an inspiration and an incentive to our Seabees of today.

Reunions such as this one are important because they preserve the spirit and tradition of the Seabees.



J. J. SHANLEY
Captain, CEC, USN
Commanding Officer

SCHEDULE **** REUNION 55TH SEABEE BATTALION
JULY 30TH----AUG. 2, 1981 PORT HUENEME, CA.

THURSDAY--JULY 30, 1981

9:00 - 4:30 PM REGISTRATION AT CASA SIRENA
6:00 PM NAVY BUS TO PICKUP FOR TRANSPORTATION TO CONSTRUCTION
BATTALION CENTER FOR DINNER AT OFFICERS' CLUB.
6:00 -- 7:00 PM NO HOST COCKTAIL PARTY
7:00 -- 9:00 PM DINNER
9:00 PM RETURN TO HOTEL BY NAVY BUS

FRIDAY--JULY 31, 1981

9:00 -- 4:00 PM REGISTRATION AT CASA SIRENA. GOLF, FISHING, SHOPPING,
SIGHTSEEING, AND POSSIBLE TOUR OF NORTON SOUND.
6:00 -- 7:00 PM HAPPY HOUR - SANTA ROSA CRUZ ROOM
7:00 -- ?? JOHNNY NICKELS WARM-UP DINNER

SATURDAY--AUGUST 1, 1981

8:00 AM REGISTRATION DESK OPEN
8:30 -- 10:15 AM BUSINESS MEETING - ANACAPA ROOM
10:30 AM PICKUP BY NAVY BUS FOR TRANSPORTATION TO BASE FOR TOUR
11:00 AM ARRIVE AT BASE FOR TALK AND MOVIE BY HARK KETELS,
LCDR, CEC, USN (RET) DIRECTOR OF SEABEE MUSEUM
12:15 PM LUNCH AT ENLISTED MENS' DINING FACILITY (MESS HALL)
1:15 PM GROUP PHOTO
1:45 PM START TOUR OF BASE
2:30 -- 3:30 PM TOUR OF SEABEE MUSEUM
3:30 PM RETURN TO HOTEL BY NAVY BUS
6:00 -- 7:00 PM HAPPY HOUR - ANACAPA CRUZ ROOM
7:00 PM BANQUET
9:30 -- 12:30 PM DANCE TO FRANK UMBERTO'S MUSIC

SUNDAY--AUGUST 1, 1981

8:00 -- 9:00 AM BREAKFAST AT HOTEL-SANTA ROSA CRUZ ROOM
9:00 -- 10:30 AM BUSINESS MEETING
11:00 AM MEMORIAL SERVICE AT MUSEUM CHAPEL

FROM RHODE ISLAND SNOW TO EQUATORIAL SUNSHINE

The 55th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion was commissioned on December 12, 1942. On this date the battalion broke boot in a cold New England camp in the midst of a reclaimed swamp surrounded by thickets of pale birches and hardy maples. A thousand men, sore of muscle from extended order and close order, weary from cat fever and coughing, aching from a half dozen shots in the arm, were everywhere across a frozen field carrying two cumbersome seabags filled with GI wardrobe. Then there was the casting off of boots, the picking up of the first liberty cards and the waiting in line for crowded busses to East Greenwich and Providence, to the first dances, liquor, and women in over a month. The cocoon of boot camp had opened, and the 55th Battalion was beginning to strengthen its wings for its maiden flight into the unknown. We were at last a distinct unit with a whole month of history behind us. Now we could yell, "You'll be sorry, Mac," to fresh batches of recruits. We were oldtimers educated by boot chiefs and scuttlebutt.

Then came days of organization, officers meeting men, men meeting officers, chiefs feeling important with actual responsibility, seamen feeling unimportant but hopeful, a hurried whipping together before the most important event of our short career - five-day leave. Westerners toured and drank their way through the East while Easterners went home. There were willingness and cooperation. Every man was trying to find his niche. There were nights of shivering beneath piles of pea coats, sweaters, coveralls, and seabags piled on top of two blankets that seemed gauze-thin.

There were long scuttlebutt bull sessions about where we would go for advanced training. Then, suddenly, the five-day leave was over, our gear was packed, we were marching in rain and the night to three trains that were to take us to the sunny south to Gulfport, Mississippi. There were rhythm and determination, expectancy and pride, in the beat and scrape of our unified feet on the dirt of a Camp Endicott back alley. We were an army advancing.

At last we were on our way, sweeping the New England countryside, tunneling through New York, climbing through the mountains of Pennsylvania, down to the fertile Ohio Valley and out into the Indiana plains. Then we were hungry and soot-covered. We had failed to meet with our dining car. Some of us got ice cream and sandwiches at momentary stops at strange stations until finally our diner was hooked on and we began to file into it to eat as we crossed the mouth of the Ohio River, glimpsed the Mississippi, and headed straight south across a cottonfield and swamp tip of Kentucky. We were entertained by Negro children dancing alongside the train for pennies at Fulton; then we were in Tennessee, down toward Memphis in the dark. We slept; then we awoke to sunshine and acres of pine trees tapped for turpentine.

It was not long until we were on a siding moving into our advance base depot at Gulfport. The cold snow of New England was gone, and we were saying they could blow it out their bugle. We were delighted with the South despite a brisk breeze that cut into us as we left the train. We were pleased with sunshine and the freshness of green grass and sand. And already we were ready for more scuttlebutt as to where we would be going next. Would we shove off here, or would we go west? You could have had money on either.

Then again there were liberty, women, and liquor, more organization, more shifting of personnel, a pleasant holiday trip to a rifle range in a pine forest. The enjoyment of this trip was overshadowed by the knowledge that it could not last. We knew we must move on. But in the meantime we smelled the salt air of the Gulf of Mexico, heard the soft, easy drawl of the South, saw tall-columned homes, and experienced southern hospitality.

Again it came time to move, once more in the rain and the night, but this time everybody had a pullman berth in cars that had no resemblance to the "cattle cars" that brought us from Davisville.


During the night we rushed through New Orleans and across the Mississippi and awoke next morning amid bayous and swamps deep with jungle mystery. We saw palmettos. We saw hundreds of live-oaks, bearded and gray with Spanish moss. Then we were out of the swamps and climbing northwest toward Texas. At Shreveport a young girl gave some of the boys her address when the train stopped. She wanted letters from overseas.

Texas was monotonous and vast, olive tan and gray with sagebrush, cactus, and dry earth. Texas was cotton country, English walnut and pecan country, oil country with derricks mushrooming out of acre after acre of land. Texas was wild and civilized with wide thoroughfares cities seemingly hewn from sunbaked earth and stone. Dallas, Fort Worth, and El Paso; then a nighttime trip of New Mexico, and on into Arizona; glorious sunshine, palm trees, and stucco at Tucson, huge yellow oranges at Phoenix; then Yuma and a glimpse into Mexico. At last for the Californians there was home soil, desert and barren though it was. There was disappointment for men of the East expecting a Chamber of Commerce California. Then came daylight and breakfast in Los Angeles. We were in California. We were in the semi-tropical paradise of the West, the artificial front gardens of a coastline. Easterners were no longer disappointed. Oranges were growing, yellow and beautiful. Trees were green. Orchards stretched for miles across irrigated valley after irrigated valley. Snow-capped mountains rose up in the east, and we were reminded of the magnificent sunsets and sunrises in the barren hills of Texas and Arizona.

At last we were at that unprouncable place, Port Hueneme, and we were ready for life in those glorified culverts, the Quonset huts, surrounded by stately rows of eucalyptus trees foreboding our next destination. Eucalyptus trees are indigenous to Australia.

Then came a mad rush for liberty, for leave so the Californians could visit their families. Californians argued that they should have leave because they were close to home. Easterners and Mid-westerners argued just as logically that if Californians got it, they, too, should have it because they had never seen California. All of us got it for thirty-eight hours. We saw Hollywood and the movie stars, the Pacific, the orchards and valleys of California, the stuccoed cities and sandy beaches.

Back in camp again we waited. We took sneak trips down to the docks to look at Liberty ships and wonder which would take us across the Pacific to some undisclosed island, Island X. We lost one officer and gained another. We received fifty-one new men from Camp Peary, Virginia, and lost two who were AOL and missed the boat. We acquired new gear and gussed what direction we would take. There were no sheepskins; so we knew we were not going to Alaska, and we were glad.



Finally, we boarded a Dutch cargo ship manned by a Dutch and Javanese crew. It was early in March, 1943. Our tour of overseas duty had begun. Amid fears of seasickness, submarines, sharks, and the first awesome mystery of the deep blue Pacific, we headed westward. In broad daylight we watched the tanned shore of California pull away from us, and gradually we knew we were on our way. Advance training was over. We had our assignment.

The ship plowed along, and some few stomachs became unsettled. Men were crowded into the holds to get settled in folding bunks, five high. There was adjustment to life belts and two meals a day. There was waiting for the Dutch voice to say, "The cluck vill be set beck tonight twelf minutes." There was the grunting and snorting of "Susanna's a Funny Old Man" over the loud speaker. There were long hours of sitting in the blistering sun at the rails watching flying fish sail into the whitecaps of bluing blue waves, royal blue waves. There was wonder at the constant squirm of the sea, the mystery and vastness of it, the inky blackness of it at night, the soul-stirring sunsets, the loneliness of windbeaten nights, the smell of salt air, and the peacefulness stretching to the circle of horizon.

There was excitement when the first whales spouted and the schools of porpoise bobbed like finned sea serpents. There was excitement with anti-aircraft practice and the deafening roar of the guns. There were homesickness and desire for companionship at night sessions with the battalion band. Remembering our families, we wrote letters that would not be mailed for days.

There was much commotion when ribald ceremony changed hundreds of pollywogs to shellbacks, following the ancient tradition of the sea as we crossed the equator. There was hanging from every vantage point when the first palm-studded tropical islands, were sighted and passed. There were excitement and expectancy when our ship circled for a day; there was scuttlebutt of prowling submarines.

THE COAST OF AUSTRALIA WAS SIGHTED

And finally the greatest excitement of all came when the coast of Australia was sighted. All of us were topside peering toward land, beautiful land, welcome land. A long journey was over. At last we were nearing Brisbane, our first stopping place.

After lying all night just outside the mouth of the Brisbane River, we were topside again as we sailed up the river and to port. Land never looked more beautiful. Trees were green and blossoming with their roots deep in solid earth. The strangeness and newness of Australia were inviting us to explore them and make them a part of our knowing of the world.

At the dock, American cigarettes were tossed to wharfmen in exchange for Australian pennies, big as half dollars.

Packs did not seem too heavy when we landed and marched to Doomben Race Track for our first staging, our first experience in tents, our first experience with Queensland monsoons, our first experience with army chow.

NEW GUINEA BOUND

Again we were aboard ship watching the flying fish, blistering in the sun, wondering where we were going. Finally, we knew we were supposed to be going to Jautefa Bay at Humboldt Bay. We knew fighting and danger were there, at Hollandia, Cyclops, and Sentani Lake. We were excited. We were eager to get there.

But plans go awry, and journeys lengthen. We passed through the China Straits, passed Milne Bay and got a distant view of Company D's job of Kana Kopa. We went on to Oro Bay where we thought we were joining our convoy; then there were nineteen long and monotonous days of lying at anchor. Clothes got dirty, beards grew long, trousers lost their legs, skins tanned or turned yellow with atabrine, dispositions soured, reading material became exhausted. What the hell had happened? Why did we not move?

Then the Army sent a fleet of ducks out to take us ashore. We got away from the monotony of watching amateur fishermen catch sharks, barracuda, sea bass, catfish. We got away from our own staled thoughts, away to the beach and the coconut trees. We saw Yankee women, Red Cross women, who fed us punch, crackers, and donuts. We saw Fuzzy Wuzzies with ear rings and armbands. We saw their women with visible and droopy assets. We took truck rides through fog-thick dust to Buna, out the Kokoda and Santananta Trails. We saw great fields of tall kunai grass and jungle laced together with clinging vines. We saw bomb craters, deserted foxholes, and pillboxes. We saw the waste of Maggot Beach. We saw beheaded plan trees and found the lacework of jungle trails where fighting and death had been. We saw rows of white wooden crosses marking American graves. We were following in the wake of war.

At last we moved forward again. We circled out from Wewak, alert to danger. Humboldt we saw as a bay full of ships, a bay walled in by mountains. Shortly, we learned that our job had been changed. We were to unload our Liberty ships onto four LSTs and go on to the Schouten Islands, the foremost front of the Southwest Pacific war. We knew that stiff fighting was going on at Biak. We were given a deadline for unloading, and every man was assigned to long hours of duty, emptying the holds, barging materials and supplies to the shore. Then we were given a day ashore.

We hitch-hiked or just plain hiked over to Hollandia or the airstrip. We saw piles of abandoned Japanese supplies. We smelled the musty odor of decaying rice and dried fish. We saw hillsides pockmarked with foxholes and ravaged by gunfire. We saw Seabees already at work while fighting was still going on just

ARRIVAL AT HUMBOLDT BAY

Continued

ON TO HUMBOLDT BAY

over the hills. We knew our first red alert of the journey. We saw the small and friendly natives among the ruins of Hollandia.

When our LSTs came we made our deadline loading them; then Companies A and B with sections of Headquarters went on to the Schoutens. While the other companies sat in the bay, Noah's record of forty days and forty nights on water was exceeded. We watched eagerly and avidly for news bulletins which told the story of progress in the Schoutens.

ARRIVAL AT MIOS WOENDI

Finally, after forty-six days on the way, we were all on Mios Woendi in the Paidido Group of the Schoutens. Our island was a mere flyspeck on the Pacific, well protected by coral reef. First impressions were the typical romantic ones developed in the Dorothy Lamour movies. But ashore, romance was lost among centipedes, land crabs, spiders, lizards, hermit crabs, and skin diseases, among rain and mud, long chow lines in the rain while we fed what seemed to be the whole Navy.

There were days when rain stopped and the sun came out making us wish it would rain again to smother the heat. We searched the jungle for personal belongings piled hurriedly everywhere because boats had to meet a deadline of eight hours and get out of port. We found materials and supplies scattered and broken but mostly usable. Tents were hurriedly set up in sand, under coconut trees.

Bulldozers began scraping up roads on a seashell base. Wells were dug, a sick bay was set up. Offices lined Inland Road at the corner of Back Bay Drive. BQs went up along the beach of Back Bay Drive. Foxholes were dug and used occasionally during nightly alerts. The sounds of fighting on Biak mingled with the sounds of construction on Mios Woendi.

Gradually, as the jobs assigned to each company were in progress, our own conveniences began to appear, showers, screened-in-heads, tent decks, scrub decks, a screened-in galley and mess trays, ice water, movies, occasionally beer and coca colas.

Civilization came to the island with us. We built the evidences of it ourselves: great thoroughfares crossing the island, rows of tents, warehouses, stores, offices, living quarters, docks, ramps, parking areas for planes, towers, radio stations, a hospital, a jetty, PT finger docks, all naval base facilities. Development of the island was our job, and we worked hurriedly because we expected to go home when the job was finished.

At nights we could see ack-ack bursting around Japanese planes caught in searchlights on Owi and Biak. Twice we saw the planes fall. Several times we heard enemy planes over our own island and waited for the bombs which never fell. We went out with PT patrols and knew excitement of hunting for trouble, the shelling of enemy shores, the actual killing of Japs. We got dysentery, dengue, and stubborn skin rashes. We knew occupational fatigue. And all the time our work went on, keeping ahead of schedule.

There were days when we had time off to visit Pia, Auki, Biak, and Owi and see battlegrounds, and barter with the natives. We waded out to the rim of the reef and found seashells and cateyes and made jewelry. We bathed in the salt water and sat along the beach in the moonlight at nights. We came to know the beauty of the island despite our reason for inhabiting it. We visited the thatched-hut villages of the natives and brought back drums, carvings, stirring paddles, woven mats, coconut ladles, Japanese invasion money, and we often left the natives better dressed in GI issue than we were. We saw our own men appering about the base in g-strings until an order came limiting the amount of nakedness a Seabee could expose. We wondered what would happen if Waves were sent to our base. Would they be told to leave off brassieres lest they offend the native women?

Chronology

United States Naval Construction Battalion 55

- 12 Dec 42 Naval Construction Battalion 55 was officially established at the Naval Construction Training Center, Davisville, Rhode Island.
- 16 Jan 43 NCB 55 departed from Davisville, Rhode Island for Gulfport, Mississippi.
- 19 Jan 43 The battalion arrived at Gulfport, Mississippi.
- 06 Feb 43 The battalion departed from Gulfport, Mississippi for Port Hueneme, California.
- 09 Feb 43 NCB 55 arrived at Port Hueneme, California.
- 05 Mar 43 The battalion departed from Port Hueneme aboard the SS Sommelsdyke for overseas destination.
- 25 Mar 43 The battalion arrived at Brisbane, Australia with 26 officers and 1019 men.
- 01 May 43 Company A departed Brisbane, Australia for Merauke, Dutch New Guinea.
- 08 May 43 Company A arrived in Merauke with 4 officers and 233 men.
- 11 May 43 Company D departed Brisbane, Australia for Kanakopa, New Guinea.
- 23 May 43 Company D arrived in Kanakopa with 4 officers and 219 men.
- 10 Jun 43 Company B departed Brisbane, Australia for Port Moresby, New Guinea.
- 20 Jun 43 Company B arrived in Port Moresby with 1 officer and 70 men.
- 02 Jul 43 Company C departed Brisbane for Palm Island (near Townsville).
- 06 Jul 43 Company C arrived at Palm Island with 4 officers and 235 men.
- 24 Sep 43 Company D departed Kanakopa, New Guinea for Port Moresby, New Guinea.
- 26 Sep 43 Company D arrived at Port Moresby with one officer and 45 men.
- 02 Oct 43 Company A departed Merauke for Cairns, Australia.
- 06 Oct 43 Company A arrived at Cairns, Australia.
- 28 Oct 43 Company D departed Kanakopa, New Guinea.
- 02 Nov 43 Company D arrived at Brisbane, Australia.

11 Dec 43 1 officer, 65 men departed from Port Moresby, New Guinea.

16 Dec 43 The men arrived at Brisbane, Australia.

17 Dec 43 Company C departed from Townsville, Australia.

19 Dec 43 Company C arrived at Brisbane, Australia.

27 Dec 43 Company B departed from Brisbane, Australia.

30 Dec 43 Company B arrived at Cairns, Australia with 2 officers and 49 men.

03 Feb 44 Company A departed from Cairns, Australia.

06 Feb 44 Company A arrived at Brisbane, Australia.

19 Mar 44 1 officer and 49 men, Company B, departed from Cairns.

23 Mar 44 The men arrived in Brisbane, Australia.

05 Apr 44 40 men departed from Port Moresby, New Guinea.

07 Apr 44 The men arrived in Brisbane, Australia.

28 Apr 44 The 55th Battalion with 989 men and 26 officers departed from Brisbane, Australia for forward area.

01 Jun 44 The battalion arrived at Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea.

08 Jun 44 Companies A and B with part of headquarters left from Hollandia for Mios Woendi Island with 485 men and 16 officers.

12 Jun 44 Arrived in Mios Woendi.

11 Jun 44 Companies C and D with the remainder of headquarters left Hollandia for Mios Woendi with 500 men and 11 officers.

14 Jun 44 Arrived in Mios Woendi.

25 Sep 44 Company C with 175 men and 3 officers left Mios Woendi.

27 Sep 44 Company C arrived at Hollandia.

30 Dec 44 Company C with 160 men and 2 officers departed from Hollandia.

31 Dec 44 Arrived Mios Woendi, rejoining the battalion.

01 Jan 45 55th Battalion with 794 men and 22 officers departed Mios Woendi for the United States.

21 Jan 45 Arrived Camp Parks, California.

14 Apr 45 NCB 55 was inactivated at Camp Parks, Shoemaker, California.

THE TRAVELS OF THE 55TH

by
Dick Gossman

Why, where, when, how did all this start? It all started back in 1942 when Uncle Sam needed some good men who could build just about anything, anywhere. Construction men, catskinners, carpenters, concrete men, iron workers, plumbers, bookkeepers, clerks, cooks, medics, you name it.

The call was answered; a trainful from San Francisco-Oakland area, one from Portland-Seattle and another from the Los Angeles area, set out across country and all met in Davisville, Rhode Island. That was our first taste of many, many travels.

Davisville - first stop and the birthplace of the 55th. It wasn't an easy birth. The drifting snow and unheated mess halls were hard to take after the mild weather and sunshine we were accustomed to.

Here we learned the strange ways of the military. The Navy taught us "This is not a floor, it's the deck. This is not a wall, it's the bulkhead. Stairs are ladders. Ropes are lines." Say "Yes Sir", and salute anything with a hat.

We learned to fall in, all about guard duty, chow lines, and mess duty. Also, Left, Right, Left. You had a good home and you left. That kind of travel wasn't much appreciated by blistered feet and aching legs.

But we survived all this. Even Liberty in Davisville and our boot camp leave in New York and points surrounding. We adjusted to the Military and our guess is that the Military also sadly shook their head and adjusted a little also to us.

Then one day the call "Pack your bags, Boys, we're travelling." "Do they expect us to get all our worldly possessions including a mattress and bedding into those two bags?" They did and we did, but why, oh why was it that whatever we needed first and most was always at the bottom of the bag?

Our train trip ended in Gulfport, Mississippi. More training, rifle range practice, more tramp, tramp, tramp. Who could ever forget the travelling we did running the obstacle course. "Gollée! I'm forty years old, 5'9" tall, 208 pounds and they expect me to climb over that eight foot wall and shimmy up that 20 foot rope to swing like Tarzan across the creek? No way." But again, they did and we did.

The 55th was becoming a unit. We had progressed a little in learning which foot was right and left and which came first. Sometimes even a whole platoon could keep in step for a ways and even wind up on the right time and tempo in rifle drill. Some even learned the proper and most appealing tilt to the white hat while on Liberty in Gulfport or New Orleans.

"Hey, Sailor, pack your bags. We are shoving off at 0600 in the morning." Put your bags on your shoulders and march to the train again. Scuttlebutt, those rampant rumors that had us going everywhere, flew thick and fast.

Our train ride across America ended in Port Hueneme. Couldn't spell it, couldn't even pronounce it but it was home for a while. Hueneme was close to home for some and that meant Liberty in Los Angeles. That trip back up the coast in the wee hours of the morning, in the fog, with only parking lights allowed on account of the Blackout, was a scary and dangerous as any of our travels. More training, more marching. The Bull Pen, group pictures.

Scuttlebutt had us on the move again. "They just unloaded a shipment of cold weather gear; we must be headed for Alaska or Russia." Or, "I heard two Officers talking about sand storms and tanks; we must be heading for North Africa." It wasn't long before we heard that tune again "Pack your bags, Mate."

Only this time we didn't march into a railroad car, but up the gang plank of the good ship *Sommelsdyk*. Everything was not yet completed below decks, so some spent the first night on the top deck; all wet, all cold, and half scared, like poor homeless pup lost on a cold windy rainy night. We threatened to quit right there, but couldn't find a dry spot to write out the resignation papers.

In the morning, after the sun came up, breakfast was served, and we found a bunk below, it seemed maybe a good idea to stick around to see what might happen.

Remember those hot stuffy, smelly holds, with guys sleeping in bunks stacked six high? Those long, long chow lines, snaking from one end of the ship to the other. The old Dutch Captain with his nightly ritual "The clock will be set back tonight, eighteen minoots." The never ending dice and poker games, our zig-zag course to confuse any stalking subs, the smoking lamp is lit or out, the fun?? we had at our initiation into King Neptune's realm when we crossed the equator, the Officer up in the Crow's Nest with his two milkbottle binoculars. It wasn't a bad trip but solid ground sure looked good when we steamed into Brisbane Harbor.

Pack 'em up again and over the side down the landing nets was the order. In Brisbane the first business was to build our base camp. We met the friendly Aussies, then wondered why they didn't speak English, and used such a crazy money system. We started working on many projects in the vicinity. Hospitals, Ammo dumps, Sawmills, Road Building, and Naval Bases.

We adjusted to living in tents and the differing life styles Down Under. Driving on the left side of the road didn't come easy; the beer halls opened and closed at odd hours, and served warm beer. Soon the Aussies started to speak more clearly, pounds, florins, and hapenny got simpler and we learned where and when to catch the last tram to travel back to camp after Liberty.

For most, Brisbane didn't last long. "Stuff your seabags. We're heading north." Help was needed in many places, Townsville, Cairns, Palm Island, Kanakoupee, Port Moresby, Milne Bay. What did we do? What didn't we do? Bases for Army and Navy, roads, docks, air fields, radio stations, unloading and loading supply ships, power plants, water plants, and water systems.

When the work was completed it was pack your bags and back to Brisbane again. Some by ship, some by train, some by plane. One group nearly froze flying over the Equator in a leaky, drafty, beat up old supply transport plane. For some it was the first taste of Civilization in nearly a year. One trip no one minded was the ride on the narrow gauge Toonerville Trolley for a ten day leave in Sydney.

Now hear this, "Pack it up, boys. We are heading north again." Aboard ship we went, with several stops along the way at Oro Bay, anchored for 30 days and Hollandia where we saw the terrible ravages of war first hand. We transferred all our gear and equipment to LSTs and finally found our own little island, Mios Woendi. Our ship put their noses right on the sandy beach, opened the big front doors and we waded out to shore. For the first several weeks our home was a hammock stretched between two Palm trees.

Soon we had our own tent city and started building about anything and everything needed by the Army and Navy to carry on operations. Some swear the island sank two feet from the weight of all we put on it.

When there was no room left they said "Good job, men; pack your bags you are homeward bound." Sea travel was an old story to us by this time. We were Veterans.

One of the most beautiful and thrilling sights in all our travels was the Golden Gate Bridge looming up out of the fog that morning coming into San Francisco Bay. Then on to Camp Parks and Liberty in the good old USA. How sweet it was.

But duty called again. Back to Camp Parks we travelled. Someone had decided that the skills of the 55th were needed again in many places. We were split up into small groups and you guessed it, "Pack your sacks for another trip." Alaska, Okinawa, Aleutians, Hawaii, Guam, Philippines, Manus, and Europe. From the Equator to the North Pole, we were scattered.

When the enemy found out that the 55th had them surrounded, they decided they might as well give up, and the war gradually wound down.

Everyone started thinking about and hoping for the journey home. How the days did drag; one month, one point, to reach that magic figure for discharge. It didn't help at all that we kept hearing two songs very popular at the time, "Sentimental Journey" and "San Fernando Valley."

It seemed long, but it really wasn't, till everyone was home again, and mostly settled into the routine. Going to work every day, buying homes, raising families.

The 55th and the travels of the 55th are over, fins, kaput. But wait a bloody minute as our Aussie friends would have said. Scratch that last line.

It seems that in the Oakland area, two Ex-Seabees met another and decided it would be a good idea to call up all the local brethren and have a get together. It went so well it seemed a good idea to do it again, and again, and again.

San Francisco, Long Beach, Portland, Bakersfield. Up and down, back and forth, in the three Western States, you name it, we've travelled there. The travels of the 55th had only started, when it seemed they were over. Every Year, this is the 36th, we look forward to new trips, new places, new experiences.

We will always treasure the memory of our train ride through the gold and old time lumbering and cattle country near Sonora. How about the boat trip on the Columbia River and to the off-shore islands in Seattle?

We have travelled together under all kinds of circumstances, for many months and man, many miles, and made a million memories.

We are still together, still travelling and still making memories.

ITINERARY OF THE 55TH U.S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION,
DECEMBER 1942 - APRIL 1945

- 12 December 1942 -- The 55th U.S. Naval Construction Battalion was commissioned at the Naval Construction Training Center (Camp Endicott), Davisville, Rhode Island. Commander Jay S. Leland, CEC, USNR, was officer in charge.
- 16 January 1943 -- The battalion departed from Davisville by train.
- 19 January 1943 -- The 55th NCB arrived at the Advance Base Depot (ABD), Gulfport, Mississippi. At Gulfport the unit underwent advanced military training.
- 6 February 1943 -- The battalion entrained for California.
- 9 February 1943 -- The 55th NCB arrived at the ABD, Port Hueneme, California. At Hueneme the battalion underwent further training and was outfitted for its overseas assignment.
- 5 March 1943 -- The 55th NCB, consisting of 26 officers and 1019 enlisted men, boarded the Dutch cargo ship S.S. Sommelsdyk in Hueneme harbor and set sail for the Pacific Theater of Operations.
- 24 March 1943 -- The battalion arrived at Brisbane, Australia. Almost immediately after debarking, it moved to Eagle Farm, about 5 miles northeast of Brisbane, and began to build its camp, appropriately named "Camp Seabee." This camp was later used as a staging area for other construction battalions in the Southwest Pacific.

- 1 May 1943 -- Company A, consisting of 4 officers and 233 enlisted men, left Brisbane for Merauke, Dutch New Guinea.
- 8 May 1943 -- Company A arrived at Merauke. Its principal duty there was to construct a PT-boat base.
- 11 May 1943 -- Company D, consisting of 4 officers and 219 enlisted men, left Brisbane for Milne Bay, British New Guinea.
- 23 May 1943 -- Company D arrived at Kana Kopa on the south side of Milne Bay to construct PT Advance Base Six.
- 10 June 1943 -- A detachment of Company B, consisting of one officer and 70 enlisted men, departed from Brisbane for Port Moresby, British New Guinea.
- 20 June 1943 -- The detachment of Company B arrived at Port Moresby to build a radio station and port director's facilities.
- 2 July 1943 -- Company C, consisting of 4 officers and 235 enlisted men, departed from Brisbane for Townsville, Australia, and nearby Palm Island. About half the company stopped at Townsville to unload, store, and then transship the company's construction supplies.
- 6 July 1943 -- A detachment of 2 officers and 122 enlisted men from Company C arrived at Palm Island to construct a seaplane base.
- March 1943 - April 1944 -- Battalion headquarters remained at Brisbane. Most of Company B also remained in the Brisbane area, where these Seabees constructed a mine depot, a naval hospital, additional barracks at Camp Seabee, and an advance-base construction depot, along with smaller projects.
- 24 September 1943 -- A detachment of Company D, consisting of one officer and 45 enlisted men, left Kana Kopa, New Guinea, for Port Moresby.

- 26 September 1943 -- The detachment of Company D arrived at Port Moresby to assist the detachment of Company B with the projects under construction there.
- 2 October 1943 -- Company A left Merauke, Dutch New Guinea, for Cairns, Australia.
- 6 October 1943 -- Company A arrived at Cairns to build Escort Base One.
- 25 October 1943 -- The detachment of Company C at Palm Island began rejoining shipmates at Townsville, where Company C was initiating construction of two naval hospitals.
- 28 October 1943 -- The main body of Company D departed from Kana Kopa, New Guinea, for Australia.
- 2 November 1943 -- Company D arrived back at Brisbane for rest and recuperation.
- 11 December 1943 -- The detachment of Company D sent to Port Moresby in September departed, taking 20 men from Company B with it.
- 16 December 1943 -- This group arrived back at Brisbane.
- 17 December 1943 -- Company C, having finished construction of two naval hospitals, departed from Townsville, Australia.
- 19 December 1943 -- Company C arrived back at Brisbane for rest leave.
- 27 December 1943 -- A detachment of Company B, consisting of 2 officers and 49 enlisted men, left Brisbane for Cairns, Australia, where it was assigned to build ammunition storage facilities.
- 3 February 1944 -- Company A departed from Cairns.
- 6 February 1944 -- Company A arrived back at Brisbane for rest leave.
- 19 March 1944 -- The detachment of Company B at Cairns, having completed its assignment, departed for Brisbane.

- 23 March 1944 -- The detachment of Company B arrived back at Brisbane for rest leave.
- 5 April 1944 -- The 40 men from Company B at Port Moresby, New Guinea, set sail for Australia.
- 7 April 1944 -- The detachment of Company B arrived back in Brisbane for rest leave.
- 28 April 1944 -- The 55th NCB, consisting of 26 officers and 989 enlisted men, boarded several liberty ships and set sail from Brisbane, Australia, for a forward area of Dutch New Guinea.
- 31 May 1944 -- The battalion arrived at Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea.
- 8 June 1944 -- Companies A and B with part of Headquarters Company, consisting of 16 officers and 485 enlisted men, left Hollandia on LST's for Mios Woendi Island, near Biak in the Schouten Islands.
- 11 June 1944 -- Companies C and D with the remainder of Headquarters Company, consisting of 11 officers and 500 enlisted men, left Hollandia on LST's for Mios Woendi.
- 12 June 1944 -- The battalion's first echelon arrived at Mios Woendi.
- 14 June 1944 -- The second echelon arrived at Mios Woendi.
- June - December 1944 -- Most of the battalion remained at Mios Woendi, constructing operating and repair bases for PT boats, repair facilities for landing craft, a seaplane base, and a naval hospital.
- 25 September 1944 -- Company C, consisting of 3 officers and 175 enlisted men, departed from Mios Woendi.
- 27 September 1944 -- Company C arrived at Hollandia to assist construction battalions stationed there with projects.

- 30 December 1944 -- Company C left Hollandia.
- 31 December 1944 -- Company C arrived back at Mios Woendi and rejoined the battalion's main body.
- 1 January 1945 -- The 55th NCB, consisting of 22 officers and 794 enlisted men, boarded the Norwegian transport S.S. Torrens for return to the continental United States.
- 21 January 1945 -- The battalion arrived at the Construction Battalion Replacement Depot (Camp Parks), Pleasanton, California.
- 14 April 1945 -- The 55th Naval Construction Battalion was decommissioned at Camp Parks.

Prepared by

NAVFAC Historian's Office

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NCB 55 - REUNION HELD SEPTEMBER 12, 13 & 14, 1991

REUNION HELD AT NCBC, PORT HUENEME, CALIFORNIA

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