10th SPECIAL

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U.S.

NAVAL CONSTRUCTION

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& Moreland are .

Lexington Mass. Dedicated to
5/4/18
THE OFFICERS & MEN

OF

THE 10TH SPECIAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

and in memory of

JOHN J POPPIN

WHO LOST HIS LIFE "IN THE LINE OF DUTY"

FALMOUTH - ENGLAND

DECEMBER 1st 1943

Mickey OWEN 3/18/89 636W. INVERGARRY ST. GLENDORA, CA 9/740

1

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Thomas R Palmer 5540 co. 5THST #66 0XNARD. CA. 93030. 10 TO SpeciAL

U.S. NAVAL AMPHIBIOUS SUPPLY BASE, EXETER 1428.64

LIFELINE OF INVASION

HE story of Exeter is in four parts. Fitted together, these parts combine to make a naval epic of how a great amphibious supply base came to be the lifeline of history's greatest amphibious operation. In each of these parts there were moments of greatness and moments of disappointment. But, now that the invasion of Europe is successful history, it seems just to say that the moments of greatness were definitely ascendant. In brief, Exeter's story encompasses the Days of Planning, the Days of Mud, the Days of Growth, and the Days of Fruition.

From its beginning, it was planned that Exeter should be the supply heart for an amphibious fleet which would someday take to the narrow channel sea that leads to France in numbers and in strength which even a few years ago would have seemed fantastic. But it is doubtful if anyone, in the beginning, realised to what proportions Exeter must grow before she could do her job as she was ultimately called upon to do it.

Exeter really began in September of 1943, and her beginning was the assembly of eight officers and 121 men at Lido Beach, Long Island. Of these eight officers, five are still at Exeter, and they have seen their number added until, at its peak, Exeter carried on her rolls 200 officers and 2,600 men, whose efforts were spread throughout 32 departments.

Early in 1943 plans were laid for the establishment of a group of United States Naval amphibious bases in Southern England. Later it was decided that Exeter should be the central lifeline of supply for these bases, and a map of Southern England will show how well her geographical location made her able to be that. To Falmouth, Fowey, Plymouth, and Dartmouth, and to all the other bases which ultimately comprised the operating backbone of the United States Naval Forces in Europe, Exeter's position made it possible for her to move materials in less than a day by road, overnight by rail. Her geographical position thereby gave her the first requisite of an amphibious supply base: an ability to move urgently needed materials.

To function and to grow, Exeter needed access to rail connections, and she needed room in which to rear her 85 warehouses and 198 huts and four auxiliary buildings. When finally completed, the base at Exeter covered 95 acres, with an additional 75 acres acquired as open-storage areas in Hawkerland Valley and at Winslade Park.

The land upon which Exeter was built was partly farmland and partly nine holes of an 18-hole golf course. This land was acquired by the British Government for the United States Navy. Actual construction began on 12th October, 1943.

October, like most Octobers in England, was a period of rain. So were the winter months which followed it. Rain came down in endless sheets for endless days, and the soft farmland and the green turf of the golf course gave way and sprouted mud.

The mud became Exeter's greatest enemy. It mired down her trucks day after day, and held them fast until the tractors came to pull them out. It made walking across the areas of construction a painful and laborious task. It swallowed up the first attempts at roads until, finally, a total of 100,000 loads of rock and sand had to be poured into the area before the roads were sound. It made the building of Exeter's warehouses on schedule a task which sometimes seemed impossible of accomplishment. It gave every man who worked at Exeter in those days "mudphobia." He walked through it by day, and washed himself free of it at night; his clothes were caked with it, and its pungent odour was with him while he slept. It caught at his vehicles and his machines, clogged equipment, choked radiators, sunk foundations. It was his greatest enemy, and

continued to be his greatest enemy all through the winter months when the construction fever was at its height. Neither he nor Exeter was free of the mud until the Spring of 1944.

By Spring, however, most of the headaches of construction were over. But during those long months of construction, the delivery of supplies from the States could not wait. Often at the rate of 200 freight cars per day the materials of war poured into Exeter, and there was no place for them except in the open, or under the cover of hastily erected tents. So with the coming of Spring, and the near-end of construction, there was the big job of moving these great piles of material into the new warehouses, of segregating it by classes, of inventorying it, of ordering still more and more material. And throughout this period of organisation and growth into a functioning base—as the needs of the amphibious bases, which also had been growing, began to multiply—Exeter found it necessary to function as a source of supply even while she was still in need of time to put her own house into order. By late February, 300 trucks a day were moving out of Exeter to the amphibious bases around her, and long lines of freight wagons were being loaded at the railway sidings for those same bases. Not yet in commission, Exeter was already the lifeline of invasion preparations, and her trucks thundered out that message to the bases she was supplying by night and by day.

Exeter went into commission on 3rd February, 1944. On that day, the task which lay before her was clear: invasion could not be many months away; on every side the need for urgent speed was evident; there was a tremendous supply job to be done, and not much time in which to do it. But there was no man at Exeter who did not feel that the job could be done with even greater success than the mud of the previous winter had been licked, and the problems of organisation had been overcome. There was reason for such confidence. As Exeter went into commission, the departments under her command were marshalled for the tasks which lay ahead.

TENTH SPECIAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

The Tenth Special Construction Battalion has been the muscle of Exeter. And the impact of its ability to handle material has been felt likewise at Falmouth and Dartmouth and Plymouth—at every United States Naval Base in England where the stevedoring talents of this battalion have been needed to handle the materials of war.

Upon the men and officers of this outfit has been thrust the tremendous job of loading and unloading the millions of tons of material which have fed through the Exeter mill. This battalion has been at Exeter since Exeter's beginning, and it had more than its share of the mud and the growing pains, and of the pressing responsibilities of the days of invasion.

Nineteen thousand six hundred freight cars have been unloaded by this battalion at the railroad sidings in Exeter. But this has been only one phase of its work. It has had to handle those loads many times. As the material has poured from the freight wagons, Tenth Battalion men have put it into the trucks of Exeter, and have unloaded it again from those trucks on Receiving Section platforms, at Hawkerland Valley, at Winslade Park, at every Exeter warehouse.

This battalion has taken 200 freight cars in its stride as one day's work. And it has yet found time to give its help to many another Exeter problem. It has run the shore patrol at Exeter, staffed the galley at the Officers Mess, completely built in its own shop six 25-ton trailers and converted 15 dump trucks into cargo trucks. It has erected huts and operated a typewriter repair shop; its influence has been felt in every phase of Exeter's operation.

And when it has been called upon to help elsewhere, it has done so with a spirit and an ability which have established performance records seldom equalled by similar organisations. At Plymouth it has unloaded in three days a ship which the Army has required eight days to unload. From midstream, in a lighterage operation, it has licked the unloading of a 4,000-ton ship in $3\frac{1}{2}$ days of concentrated effort. Few phases of United States Naval activity in Europe have been left untouched by the productive punch which the 17 officers and 527 men of this battalion have packed into their months of operation in England.

10th Special

U.S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

2nd SECTION

STEVEDORES

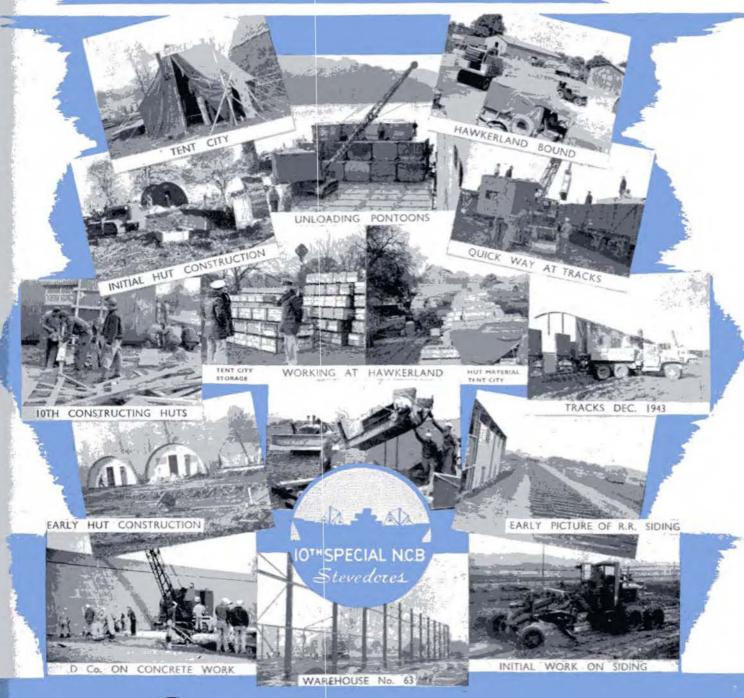


Sept. 15th 1943-1944-1945
EUROPEAN THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

10th Special

U.S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

STEVEDORES



Sept. 15th 1943-1944-1945
EUROPEAN THEATRE OF OPERATIONS



Commanding Officer LT. COMDR. MURRELL



In the name of the President of the United States it gives me great pleasure to award this Bronze Star Medal to:—

Lieutenant-Commander

DRUE L. MURRELL

United States Naval Reserve. CITATION

"For meritorious services in a position of responsibility as Officer-in-Charge of the Tenth United States Naval Construction Battalion Special. He exercised outstanding administrative ability and resourcefulness in directing the handling of large quantities of material at the bases under this command.

quantities of material at the bases under this command.

This organisation was responsible for the unloading and handling of large quantities of material required for the establishment of the bases under this command and the support of United States Naval Forces which prepared and engaged in the successful assault upon the Continent of Europe on June 6th, 1944. By his untiring efforts, through long hours with little thought of self, and by his resource-fulness and executive ability directing this activity, Lieutenant-Commander Murrell made a material contribution to the successful accomplishment of the mission of this command.

The devotion to duty of Lieutenant-Commander Murrell was at all times in keeping with the best traditions of the United States Naval Service."

DRUE L. MURRELL

Lt.-Commander, CEC(S), Officer-in-Charge

Born February 18th, 1900 at Winnsboro, Texas. Entered the Navy January 27th, 1943.

Engineer, Builder Contractor.

Harolo R Stark

Admiral, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe.

Executive C TICET LT. MINTON

TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE TENTH SPECIAL CONSTRUC-TION BATTALION

TION BATTALION

The Commanding Officer of the United States Naval Amphibious Supply Base, Exeter, England, wishes to express his appreciation of the splendid performance of duty of the Officers and men of the Tenth Special Construction Battalion during the entire time they operated under his command. Without the efficient performance of this highly Specialised group which operated without regard to time, health or weather with great skill preparations for the invasion of Europe could not have been carried forward. The Commanding Officer is indeed indebted to every man of the Tenth which has never failed to respond to the call of duty, the performance of which has been of the highest excellence. He wishes each of you God Speed and Good Luck and is very proud to have been associated with you during our Country's hour of need.

Vieta William



GEORGE E. MINTON Lieutenant, CEC(S) Executive Officer

Born September 2nd, 1901 at Tarrytown, New York. Entered the Navy February 4th, 1943. Architect and Engineer.

Battalion officers



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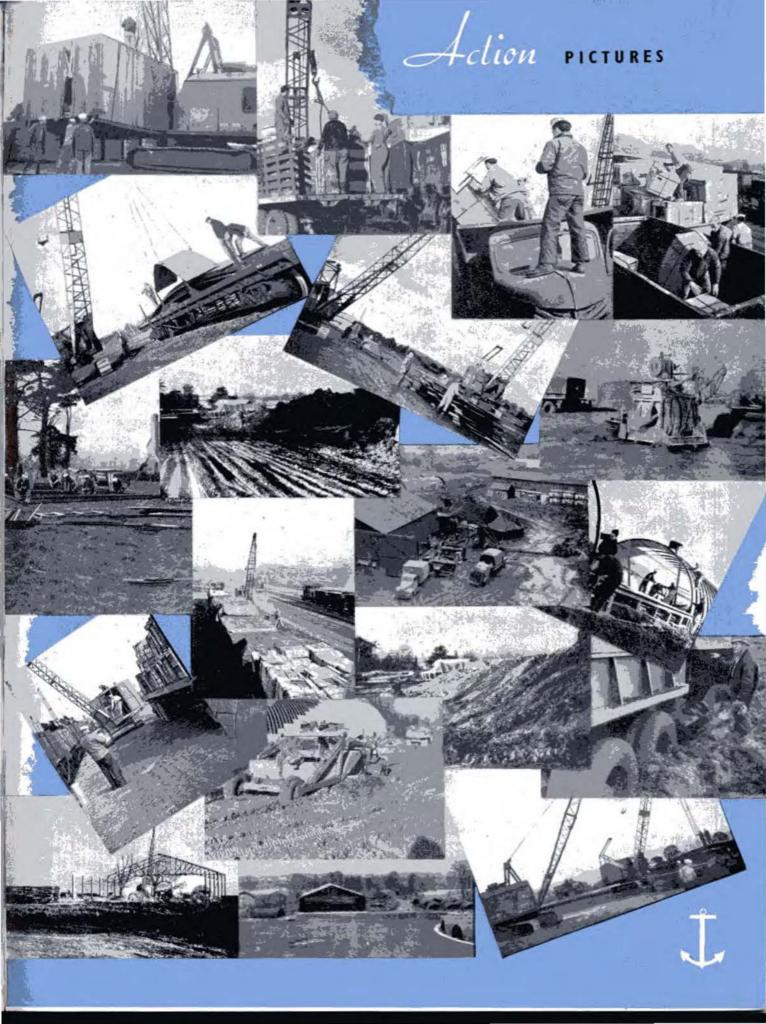
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DISBURSING OFFICE

O. O. D. OFFICE

COOKS AND BAKERS MEDICAL STAFF



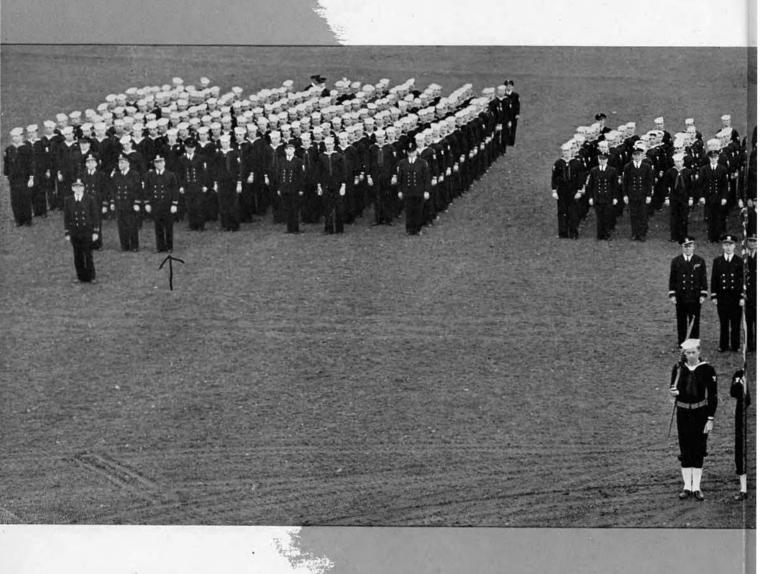






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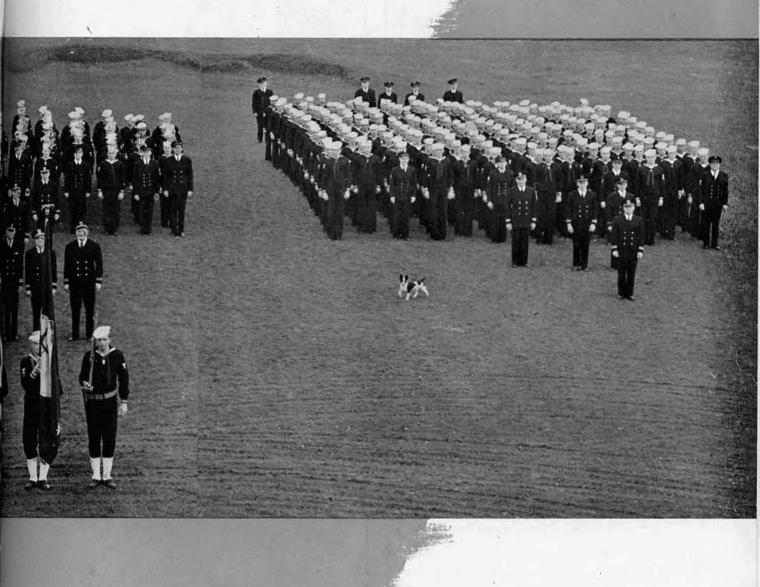


Steve

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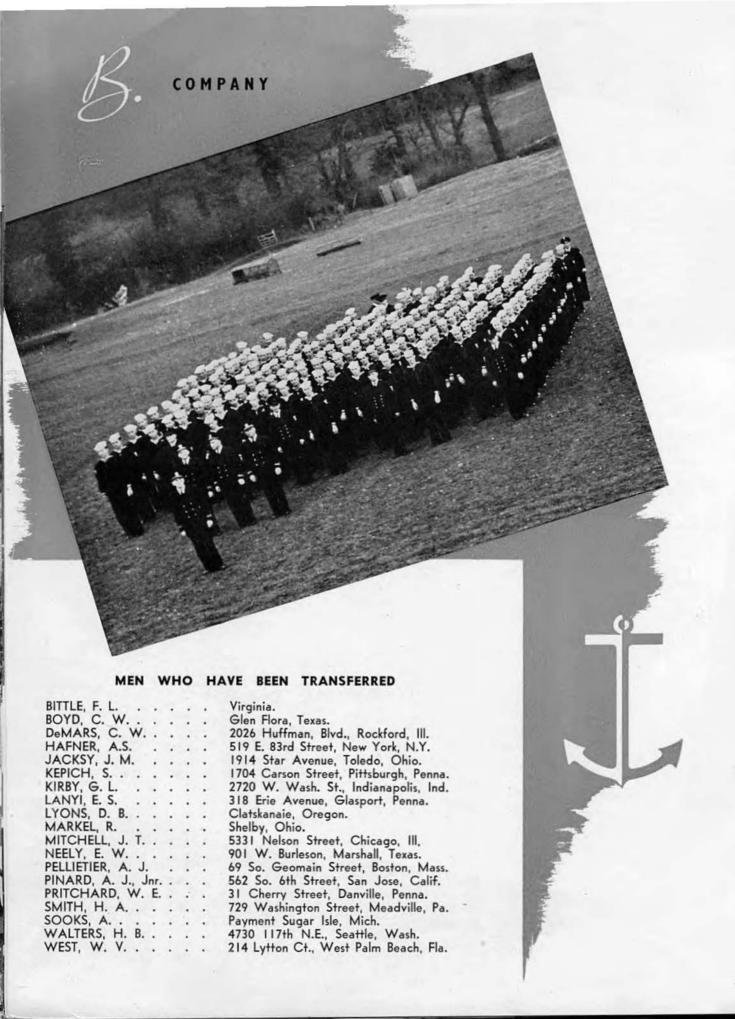
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