

45th Naval Construction Battalion

*Historical
Information*



“Construimus, Batuimus”
“We Build, We Fight”



Training ScheduleEquipment

NCTC Norfolk

ABD Hueneme

Ready Date: 26 Jan '43

Left ABD 20 Jan '43 --(Alsec report for 15 Dec '43)

Destination: Lion # 1 Tanaga, Sitka, and Adak.

LOG

28 Dec '42 Transferred to Hueneme

21 Jan '43 Departed from Hueneme 20 Jan '43

22 Jan '43 Entrained Com 13

1 Feb '43

14 May '43 Lt. Cmdr. Smallwood assigned as OinC of 4th Regiment. (Due to formation of the 1st Brigade of 8 May by VCNO)

14 May '43 Lt. J. W. Jones replaces Lt. Cmdr. Smallwood as OinC coming from 43rd C.B.

4-30-43 - 1st Const. Brigade reports that 45th is at Kodiak NOB.

6-9-43 --- Lt. Jones(OinC), spot promoted to Lt. Comdr. on May 16, '43. Hayden given spot to Lt. Comdr. on May 17 '43. (IKS) called STAFF detail 8-12-43 ON DATES AND JUN 25

7-1-43 --- 45th C.B. is at Kodiak (Com 13 to ComAlSec dated 6-21-43 - Secret Dis)

45th CB

- 7-20-43 - From 1 June roster of 38th CB - Lt. J. S. Gillespie is exec of that batt.
- 8-12-43 - Officer roster checked and corrected from 2 July '43 roster.
- 8-12-43 - Carp. O'Malley, Shultz and Lang assigned from 12th C.B. (Budocks ltr to Bopers dated 30 July 1943)
- 8-12-43 - Lt. Comdr. J. P. Roulett is OinC of 45th C.B. (Conf. dispatch 310023 NCR 14356 July from Comalsec to Bopers)
- 8-19-43 - Officer roster checked from 1st Brigade report dated 1 August 1943.
- 8-25-43 - Lt. Comdr. Hayden detached to Peary (Budocks ltr to Bopers dated 7 Aug. 1943)
- 10-14-43 - Carp. Nooe and O'Connor (Promoted to Lt. (jg's)) detached to Peary (Budocks ltr to Bopers dated 12 October 1943).
- 10-23-43 - Officer roster checked with 1 Sept '43 roster. Carp. O'Malley has not reported.
- 10-31-43 - Disp. from Comalsec to Bopers 232146 29 Oct '43 - request orders be issued to return Carp. O'Malley to U.S.
- 11-8-43 -- Carp. O'Malley detached to Parks (Budocks ltr to Bopers dated 3 Nov '43).
- 11-9-43 -- Officer roster checked with Sept '43 roster of 6th Regiment and OK except for late changes.
- 12-4-43 -- Officer roster checked with 10 October 1943 roster and OK.
- 12-9-43 -- Carp. Lang detached to 65th C.B. (Budocks ltr to Bopers dated 4 December 1943).
- 12-10-43 - Carp. Schultz has been recommended by ComAlSec that he be returned to U.S. after having been in Alaska sector 15 Mo. (Comalsec conf. disp. 302052 6 Dec '43 to Buper)
- 12-10-43 -- Officer roster checked with 1 Nov '43 roster and OK.
- 12-11-43 -- Carp. Shultz detached to Peary (Budocks ltr to Bopers dated 8 Dec '43).
- 1-25-44 -- 45th CB scheduled to return to US 15 April '44 (Alsec conf. report dated 15 Jan '44).
- 2-18-44 -- Officer roster checked with 31 Dec '43 report - OK except for late assignments detachments. Present assignment on Tanaga Is. will be completed approx. 31 Jan '44).

45th C.B.

- 2-29-44 - Ens. Keeler, SC, replaces Lt.(jg) Klein, SC.(Bopers ltr #141796 over Pers-318-Waa-
to Lt.(jg) Klein dated 1 Jan'44).
- 3-6-44 - Officer roster checked with 1 Feb'44 roster and OK except for recent changes.
- 3-10-44 - Jan'44 monthly report - distribution of personnel - Parent organization at
Tanaga Is. 460 men, 1st Detachment at Sitka with 201 men and 2nd Detachment at
Adak with 351 men.
- 3-16-44 -- 45th CB located at Adak, Sitka and Tanaga and scheduled to return to U.S. in
March-June'44.(1st Brigade batt report dated 1 Mar'44).
- 4-4-44 -- Officer roster checked with 1 Mar'44 roster - added Carp. Box and Taheny.
- 4-11-44 -- Feb'44 monthly report - distribution of personnel - 596 men at Adak, 210 at Tanaga
and 199 men at Sitka.
- 4-19-44 -- 45th CB scheduled to return to U.S. 5 May'44.(1st Brigade Alsec report dated 15 Apr'44).
- 5-10-44 -- Officer roster checked with 1 Apr'44 report - Lt.(jg) Wood, SC, detached. Added
Carp. Lawson and Ens. Ahearn, SC. Operating at Tanaga, Sitka and Adak.
- 5-17-44 -- 45th CB arrived with 5 officers and 194 men at Parks 7 May'44.(WRK)
- 6-17-44 -- Lt. Comdr. Jones, Lt. Mettle, Lt.(jg) Rising, Carp. Taheny detached to Parks(Budock
ltr to Bopers).
- 6-17-44 -- Lt. Carpenter detached to Parks(Budocks ltr to Bopers dtd 9 Jun'44).
- 6-17-44 -- Lt. Gillespie detached to ABCD Davisville(Budocks ltr to Bopers dtd 30 May'44).
- 7-3-44 -- Carp. Box and Lawson detached to Parks(Budocks ltr to Bopers dtd 17 Jun'44).
- 7-3-44 -- Lt. Golden detached to Brooklyn Navy Y.(Budocks ltr to Bopers dtd 15 Jun'44).
- 7-3-44 -- Lt.(jg) Martin detached to Hueneme(Budocks ltr to Bopers dtd 30 Jun'44).
- 7-3-44 -- Ens. Olson detached to Det. 1059(Budocks ltr to Bopers dtd 24 Jun'44).
- 7-27-44 -- The second echelon of 45th CB arrived at Parks 22 May'44.(WRK)

45th CB

- 7-6-44 - Comdr Roulett detached to 80th CB (BuDocks ltr to Bopers dtd 7/1/44)
- 7-15-44 - Ch Carp. Cook detached and assigned to 80th CB. (BuDocks ltr to BuPers dtd 7/10/44)
- 7-22-44 - Lt.(jg) Simon detached to ABCD FRAY(Budocks ltr to Bopers dtd 14 Jul'44).
- 8-1-44 - Officer roster checked with 30 Jun'44 roster. Detached Comdr. Stuck, MC, Lt. Hutton
MC, Lt. Allen, DC, Lt. Shumaker, CHC, Lt. Meeker, MC. Added Lt. Fisher, MC, Lt (jg)
Reynolds, DC, Lt. Siegel, MC.
- 8-4-44 - Lt. Caviezel detached to 26th CB, 1st Sect (BuDocks ltr to BuPers dtd 2 Aug'44).

INACTIVATED

- 7-3-44 - Camp Parks has been requested to disband the 45th CB effective 19 Jun'44 in order to
provide personnel as required for special detachments and drafts.(A-2D memo to
A-4, A-8 & A-10 dtd 12 Jun'44).

45th C.R.

From the Chronological History of the 1st Brigade -

12 Feb'43 - Arrived Kodiak from U.S.

13 Sep'43 - Left Kodiak - 1st Unit (6 Off. & 210 men)

2nd Unit at Adak (5 Off. & 309 men)

Remainder at Tanaga.

1 May'44 - 24 Off. & 995 men left for the U.S.

(Com 17 Sec. ltr NDI7/A12-1/L7 over 50/2b over Ser 0096
to Budocks dtd 6 Nov'44)

IN THE BEGINNING



We Look Over Camp Allen



"You'll Be Sorry!"



The "Physical"



There She Goes!



"Bubble Dancer"



Finished Product



The Square Needle



"Rip, MARCH!"



IMMEDIATELY AFTER our commissioning we raised the colors at our battalion headquarters and dedicated the flag pole. It was our first act as a battalion.



OUR COLOR GUARD, flags whipped out almost straight by the cold wind, demonstrated the military precision which marked the end of our intensive basic training.

A BATTALION IS BORN

OUR BASIC TRAINING had knocked the rough edges off and given us a bit of polish but, officially, we were still "boots" and not a commissioned battalion.

The great day of our "graduation" came shortly after we had moved to Camp Peary for advanced training, much of it under the soft-spoken and gentle Marines. Peary was still in the growing stage, so we arrived in time to be the first construction battalion commissioned there.

We received our colors on the new drill field during a dress

parade and review held on what we still think of as "the coldest day in our lives." Even winter-hardened Northerners fear their feet would freeze before it came time to step out behind the band and pass before the reviewing stand.

When the ceremonies were over, we had our own colors, were commissioned as the 45th United States Naval Construction Battalion, and we had won the privilege of shedding our khaki leggings.

We were no longer "boots" but instead, Seabees.



BEHIND THE BAND, Headquarters company (left) prepares to leave the massed formation for a swing around the drill field and the reviewing

officers. Companies "A," "B," "C," and "D" stand at attention awaiting the command that will send them, at spaced intervals, into the same maneuver.

WE GO WEST

WHEN WE TOOK OFF our leggings we also discarded our "boot restrictions. Now we were entitled to "liberty"—a chance to get out of camp for a while and see how much the civilian world had changed during our incarceration. We discovered the civilian world was filled mainly with guys in uniform like us.

At this time, too, the pre-embarkation leave we had talked so much about began to have the reality of dates on a calendar. Ten per cent of us took "early leave," and went by train and plane to spend a few fleeting hours at home. The rest of us made plans.

Our plans were shattered with a jolting suddenness. Leaves were cancelled. Instead of going home, we were herded aboard troop trains and we left the miserable mud of Camp Peary behind.

Three trains started off in three different directions, but hardly had the Peary mud dried on our shoes when we sensed that we were headed west.

After a week-long trek across the United States, through prairies and over mountains, we climbed off in the sunshin of California at Camp Rousseau.



-AND NORTH

OUR STAY at Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, was short for most of us. We promptly did an about face. After a week on a train going west, we brushed the grime off our clothes and got on a train again, heading east—going home at last on that postponed leave.

Some of us who lived in the east spent our leave in California, rather than make another round trip across the country. We basked in the light of movie stars in glamorous Hollywood, enjoying to the full the last civilization we might see for a long while.

After days which flew past faster than time ever did before, we returned to camp—a camp all astir with excitement. Our quonset warehouses were stocked with sheepskin-lined coats, long-handled underwear, green rain suits and a strange garment like a ski suit. It looked as though we were going north.

We did. After another train ride and a long march through endless waterfront warehouses, we struggled up a slippery gangplank, loaded down with all our gear. Without fanfare, we silently shoved off, our ship's prow headed toward the Northern Lights.





CHECHAKHOS IN “THE GREAT LAND”

OUR INTRODUCTION TO ALASKA was stormy—and typical. As we plowed northward through the sea, the wind grew sharper and colder. We stayed most of the time down in the dingy hold, foul though the air was, rather than brave the stinging of the howling wind.

Then one afternoon one of the more hardy among us, who had been topside, came clambering down the ladder, and shouted: “Hey! There’s land up there! I can see a mountain top!” One of the less seaworthy among us lifted a sea-green face to mutter, “Land ho!”

Soon a steady stream of us climbed the ladder and went topside “to see.” A few minutes later the steady stream reversed itself. We went below again, to dig into our pack of foul weather clothing. Wind, rain, sleet and snow had hit us on the deck—all at the same time. We bundled up and tried it again. This time the sun was dimly shining.

We learned early the veracity of the time-worn remark: “If you don’t like the weather, wait a minute.”

We lined the rail as that first mountain peak grew large and gradually the white land around it was revealed to our wondering eyes.

A small snow-covered island slid by us, then another, another. Soon we found our ship swallowed in a great bay almost surrounded by white land. A little village seemed to cling to the shore. We tied up at the dock. We lay there over night, wondering about this new country—anxious to go ashore, and yet a little awestruck at its strangeness.

In the dim light of the next morning we saw a long line of trucks creep along a road which seemed to be carved right into a mountainside. Soon we had slid down the gangplank and were aboard those trucks. With sleet and snow biting into our faces, we were carried to our new homes on icy, snowy roads.

For some of us that meant a hulking, unfinished barrack; for others of us, cold and empty shacks on the bank of a frozen stream. For all of us it meant a home surrounded by a vastness of snow and ice and cold. “Alaska,” in a native tongue, means “The Great Land.” And we knew we were chechakhos indeed.



BASE BUILDERS

ROUGHLY, THE WAY TO BUILD A BASE would be to start from scratch with miles of hills and volcanic rock for a plot and use plans designed for a good-sized, average American town; this would include waterworks, light and power plants, roads and communications, administration and recreation centers, housing for countless men, places to feed them and, of course, "industrial centers."

But this would still give us only a peace-time city; in times of war, our "city" must be expanded to include every need of the military. To arrive at what that need must be, you can but guess and then multiply your guess by ten, twenty or fifty. Maybe more.

Such was the work cut out for us. We were to help build a military base.

The honor of receiving the first work assignment went to the stevedore gang so that our flow of supplies, materials, food, mail and equipment kept coming along in an endless wave from ship to warehouse.

Early days were wet and cold days, the tail end of what some doughs told us was "the meanest winter in years." With some

of the kinks and wrinkles straightened out, a nine-hour work day set the pace.

Then it went to ten hours; we left our beds at the Russian River camp at 4:30 in the morning so that we could be hauled by trucks to a breakfast table miles away. Residents in "T. Flats," lucky boys, didn't have so far to go; they could sleep until 5:00. It was dark when we were aroused by reveille but then it was still dark at 9:00 o'clock anyway. It was dark most of the day.

Gradually the hours of daylight increased, the weather moderated. Each man began to find himself working at his particular trade or one closely allied to it. We moved in nearer or farther to work; the less time spent in traveling, the more sleep we could get. Reveille was boosted up to a later hour.

There was no lack of work. We jumped from one job to another as quickly as we could finish them. Week by week we could see little but integral jobs being fitted together to make our base more complete.

Somehow every move we made counted toward building and maintaining our first base.



PERSISTENT RAINS, as well as surface drainage, sometimes kept our ditches filled with water. It couldn't be stopped, so we pumped it out instead.



SECTIONS OF PIPE were fitted tightly by forcing a tapered end into the section directly behind it. A four-man battering ram furnished push needed.

IT'S A PIPE

TRUE ENOUGH, it was a pipe line, this job. But it distinctly was not a "pipe" of a job. We found the going a bit rocky most of the way.

We were surrounded by water and it rained most of the time, but that still didn't give us enough water in the right places. To guide this flowing necessity to locations where it was needed, we dug a long ditch and laid length after length of pipe in it.

No matter how much mechanical equipment we had, there always was plenty of room for a man with a muscle-operated shovel or a jarring jack-hammer. Shovelful after shovelful did the trick. Then we laid down the sections of wire-bound, wood-stave pipe, fitted them tightly and covered the ditch.

The line was not only important for drinking, washing and other everyday uses of water but it added greatly to our security from another potential enemy, fire.



SOLID ROCK meant so much work with explosives and jack-hammers that the resulting ditch for a two-way parallel line assumed the proportions

of a canal in some spots. Here the men are ready to join two sections of pipe by pounding the last laid pipe into place with a piece of timber.

45th Naval Construction Battalion

Chronology

- 05 Nov 1942 The 45th Naval Construction Battalion assembled at Camp Allen, Norfolk, VA and some were sent to Camp Peary near Williamsburg, VA where the Battalion was commissioned during the month. Later some of the personnel were stationed at Camp Bradford, Norfolk.
- 01 Jan 1943 The Battalion moved to Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, California.
- 24 Jan 1943 They boarded the SS WHARTON at Seattle, Washington.
- 28 Jan 1943 Arrived at St Paul's Harbor, Kodiak I. Alaska. The Battalion P.O. was located on Bells Flats near the village of St. Paul, A Quonset hut served as a PO and Censors office, chief mail clerk was U.S. Tillman with H.L. Hamilton as assistant clerk. Personnel of Co's. A-B-C & D were assigned as mail orderlies for their units. During this period, one detachment was sent to Sitka for a highway construction job. Weather conditions caused delays of incoming airmail, newspapers and parcel post was mainly received via surface ships. While some Seabee Battalions restricted the outgoing mail to three letters per week, per man, the 45th personnel had no such instructions, but were asked to keep their outgoing mail at a minimum.
- 01 Sept 1943 The 45th boarded the USS YALE, bound westward to Tanaga I. The ship was bought by the Navy from private contractors who had construction contracts on Kodiak I.
- 04 Sept 1943 The USS YALE put in at Dutch Harbor, Unalaska I. For engine repairs, and while anchored there, it was blown ashore during a storm, the ship was then abondoned. The 45th being held at Amaknak I. about 1 ½ miles from the Naval Air Station.
- 17 Sept 1943 They boarded the USS MONROE, debarked at Adak I. Sept 20th.
- 24 Sept 1943 Liberty ship, Wm. Loyd Garrison took the first units to Tanaga I. While the LST 451 followed with the balance of the Battalion.
- 25 Sept 1943 The LST 451 entered Lash Bay, Tanaga I. Late in the day, the last of the Battalion went ashore Sept. 29th and until they completed the airstrip, all mail was brought over from Adak I. Which was the postal collection point for the Aleutians b surface ships.
- 03 Mar 1944 About 60 45ers were sent to Adak I, and the detachment left at Kodiak was ordered to Adak. During this month, the Fleet Po. was built -Navy 230-.
- 08 May 1944 The entire Battalion left Adak I. On the SS MARLIN C. AINSWORTH.

16 May 1944 Arrived at Seattle.
23 May 1944 Landed at San Francisco, and three days after arriving at Camp Parks, They took-off on a 30 day leave.
15 June 1944 45th C.B. ordered inactivated at Camp Parks.









KEEP YOUR
AREA CLEAN

THE 45TH. SEABEES WILL DO!
Here's Our PROGRESS Let's push it!

CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS
RUNWAY GRADING
SURFACE DRAINAGE
EDDING SURFACING

TOKYO
Surf Harbor

