

49th Naval Construction Battalion

*Historical
Information*



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



49th C.B.1st Embarkation

NCTC - Norfolk, Magruder
 ABD - Davisville
 Ready Date - 14 Feb'43
 Left ABD - 25 Feb'43
 Location - Bermuda

2nd Embarkation

NCTC - Davisville
 ABD - Hueneme
 Ready Date - 25 Aug'44
 Left ABD - 12 Sep'44
 Location - Guam

LOG

- 1-14-43 - Enroute ABD.
- 2-21-43 - 8 Officers and 165 men left ABD Davisville for N.Y.
- 2-24-43 - Embarkation Staten Island.
- 2-25-43 - 19 officers and 915 men departed from ABD Davisville.
- 2-27-43 - Arrived NOB Bermuda - sailed from Staten Island - 27 off. , 1067 men.
- 1-22-44 - 49th CB arrived Davisville from overseas 18 Jan'44. (WRK)

2nd Embarkation

- 6-17-44 - 49th CB ordered from NCTC Davisville to ABRB Davisville 5 Jun'44. (CO NCTC Davisv. ltr NM24-4/P16-4(7) over Ser 3998 over JTH:fr dtd 1 Jun'44 to CinC 49th CB)
- 8-23-44 - 49th CB ordered from ABD Davisville to CBRD Parks for transfer outside U.S.. (CinC NABD Davisville NT4-55/P16/epw over Ser 135 dtd 10 Aug'44 to CinC 49th CB)
- 9-12-44 - 49th CB, consisting of 31 officers and 1063 men, departed Parks for Hueneme 5 Sep. (Conf. disp. NCL24 080005 NCR 4056 GR89 from Parks to Bupers)
- 9-15-44 - 49th CB left Hueneme 12 Sep'44 for DUVA. (ABD Hueneme Sec. disp. 131700 NCR 8030 to CNO dtd 14 Sep'44)
- 1-11-44 - The 49th CB is located at Guam. (Is. Com. Secret airmailgram to CNO 011201 NCR 14731 dtd 6 Nov'44).

Location - Guam

49th CB

- 11-30-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 49th CB - arrived at destination about 24 Oct'44. Enroute 47 days from the U.S. Operating under the 40th Reg.
- 12-1-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 5th Brig. - 49th CB arrived 25 Oct'44.
- 12-29-44 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 40th Reg. - 49th CB left U.S. 12 Sep'44 and arrived Guam 24 Oct'44. Began work on 10 Nov'44. Unit has been overseas 1 month this cruise, 11 mos. previous cruise.
- 12-29-44 - 1 Dec'44 report of 49th CB - located at Guam. Report endorsed by 40th Regiment.
- 1-26-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of 49th CB - no info on location. Report endorsed by 40th Reg.
- 1-30-45 - The 49th CB is located SouthWest of Agana on Guam. (5th Brg. War Diary 1 Dec thru 31 Dec'44).
- 1-26-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 49th CB - location not given. Report endorsed by 40th Reg.
- 1-3-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 49th CB - no info on location.
- 4-10-45 -- The 49th CB is located SW of Agana(Guam)(5th Brg. War Diary 1 Feb to 28 Feb'45).
- 4-12-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 49th CB - located at Guam.
- 4-16-45 - The 49th CB is located S.W. of Agana on Guam and is attached to the 40th Reg. Batt is constructing Cincpac and Cincpoa Hdqtrs. (5th Brg War Diary of 1 Apr'45)
- 5-16-45 - 1 May'45 report of 49th CB - location not given. Report routed via 40th Reg. & 5th Brig.
- 6-5-45 - The 49th CB has been assigned to adv base ARTU by CNO. (Comservpac sec ltr ser 002038 dtd 8 May'45 to CNO) 1 off. and 25 men for each of the 2 Garrison Beach parties to be furnished by the 49th CB.
- 6-15-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 49th CB - located at Guam. Batt arrived Guam 24 Oct'44. Report via 40th Reg and 5th Brg.

Location - Guam

49th C.B.

- 7-13-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 49th CB - located at Guam. 13 men trfd to 134th CB. Report via 40th Reg and 5th Brg.
- 7-19-45 - Request you direct 5th Brg to inactivate 49th CB. Transfer all off. temp duty 5th Brg pending orders by Comservpac. Transfer enl men to 134th CB. (Comservpac conf disp 142127 July to ComMariannas)
- 7-25-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 40th Reg states that the 49th CB arrived at Guam on 24 Oct'44
- 8-1-45 - The 49th CB is hereby declared inactivated effective 25 July. All enl personnel shall be transfd to other units under the 5th Brg and to the 134th CB. (5th Brg conf ltr ser 08428 dtd 24 July to OinC 49th CB)
- 8-11-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 49th CB - Unit decommissioned on 25 July. All personnel transfd to other activities on the island. Report via 40th Reg and 5th Brg.

INACTIVATED

Historians usually have an easy time of it, writing of events that happened in the long dead past. When criticized as to historical accuracy they can reply, in effect, "Was you dere Charley?" It is quite a different matter to write of happenings only a few months old, and to write about them for a reading public composed entirely of men who lived and made the events is a task that would spell ruin for the most reputable greybeard of the lot.

This Log will walk all over the ground "where Angels fear to tread"; it will contain inaccuracies; and events, names, and places will occasionally be slighted. As you know, we are not allowed to keep diaries, and official records are not much help in recalling such delightful episodes as the day all hands froze at Davisville! Historically, and for the purpose of Naval strategy, the Log will be a flop. If however, it gives you a chuckle now, and helps you to recall your part in some of the incidents when you re-read it twenty years from now, it will have served its purpose. Please address all complaints to your Company Commanding Officer who will doubtless say, "What are you beefing about—you weren't drafted!"

BOOTS!

It was an ill-assorted, raw-looking crew of civvies who boarded the train at Penn Station in New York City on the night of November 19, 1942. The boys from Boston who were already on the train had at least been fed but we had had nothing to eat since noon. In answer to our inquiries we were told not to worry—that "the Navy will fix everything." They did, too, and at 0900 the next morning at Camp Allen we had a fine big breakfast of delicious—beans! By that time we would have eaten the beans raw, so we were properly grateful to the Navy for cooking them for us. Thus it will be seen that we started off on the right foot by realizing that "The Navy" were really "swell guys!"

The next ten years (or was it days?) were spent in "breaking in." We were given two sea bags and 4,384 items to be packed into them. We were up, breakfasted, and had half a day's work done before it was light enough to see the cigarette butts we were picking up off the "deck" (we were assured it was a "deck" even though it did have grass on it). In groups of fifty we were

mutilated by the barber past any semblance of recognition. We were punched so full of "shots" that we leaked at the joints! On an imaginary battlefield we slaughtered imaginary Japs with imaginary guns while crawling on our bellies through very realistic mud! We marched and counter-marched and rip-marched and, to vary the monotony, we double-time-marched! Whenever we passed a group of sailors they yelled, "You'll be sorry!" and we answered, "Are you kidding?" Then there was the night when we were turned out at 0300 to police the grounds because the O.O.D. had discovered some papers lying around. Nice guy, the O.O.D.—we told him so—to ourselves! Then there was guard duty and the eleven General Orders which we were all supposed to memorize, and of course we all did . . . well, one or two of us did, anyway. We were supposed to be put up against a wall and shot if we didn't know them. There was the case of the guy who wouldn't let the Admiral through the gate because he didn't have a Liberty Pass and the sentry who yelled, "Halt! Look who's here!"

CAMP MUDHOLE

Miraculously, boot training ended and we were handed our I.D. Cards—emblem of freedom, at least within camp, and promise of liberties to come. We were now "old Salts!" Then on December 18, 1942, we met our officers, received our colors, and became the 49th Battalion.

A few days later we moved to Camp Peary. Have you ever played that psychological game where a leader calls a word and

you answer whatever word comes into your mind, like—boy-girl, salt-pepper, Betty Grable-legs, etc. Say "Camp Peary," to the 49'ers and they will answer, "Mud!" It was a brand new camp—our barracks had been finished the morning of the day that we arrived, and the whole area was a sea of mud. We swept out the shavings, stoked up the stoves and turned in to dream of the beautiful "home" we had left at Camp Allen. The morning showed us in grim detail just what were were up against. Here was work enough for a dozen Seabee Battalions! Quickly the call went out for men in a hundred trades; boardwalks had to be laid, and roads made passable; barracks had to be tightened up and properly wired, and oh those heads! They were behind the barracks and none of them were completed when we arrived. It was a hectic week for the plumbers. There were details for this and details for that at all hours of the day and night. One night after a full day's work, our Chiefs appeared at the barracks and pointing us out singly said, "You, you, you, and you have volunteered to do a couple of hours of emergency ditch digging!" About forty public-spirited



men "volunteered" in this fashion and were marched a mile up the road to do the job. At 0900 the next morning, someone remembered them and a truck was sent out in the middle of a howling snowstorm to pick them up.

Somewhere along the line there was a course of military training that was a "must." How they squeezed it into our average day is a mystery but squeeze it they did, and when we weren't swinging a hammer we were hauling a rifle around an immense drill field. Remember "squad tactics" and the day two hundred men went diving and crashing through the forest trying to surround the "enemy"—a very frightened doe? There was also the great sham battle in the woods when nobody could tell the difference between "friend" or "foe" and gaily "slaughtered" anything that moved. Most of us were "killed" at least twenty times that day. I don't think that any of us will ever forget the lecture we had on military courtesy, when a "hardboiled" Marine started off something like this, "Youse guys have been getting us Marines in trouble because youse don't know no military coitesy and I yam going to loin you right now." He then proceeded for forty-five minutes to give us the inside details of his love-life in Chicago!

It was a hectic month and, looking back, it's hard to see how we could have learned anything, but learn we did—our drilling and tactics began to look military, we found out what it means to take orders, we put up a 100-foot barracks in eight hours, and we came to realize that we had an outfit that could do anything! About this time we received a draft of men from the 65th Battalion—mid-Westerners and Southerners for the most part, and with this addition our heretofore "Northeastern" Battalion took on a sort of inter-sectional flavoring. The tough times at Peary drew up together and turned a thousand individuals into a closely-knit military unit. We spent a lonely Christmas at Peary, but in our loneliness we became a family sufficient unto ourselves. The crowning disappointment was the cancellation of our leave after we had waited for eight hours in liberty blues with bags packed. We looked forward to our next camp at Davisville, knowing that it would have to be better.

WE FIND A HOME?

Davisville was better! Sure the weather would freeze the ears off a brass monkey, the chemical heads smelled like nothing else in this world, and the mess hall (if it could be called that) was atrocious, but the camp had been lived in—the Quonset huts were snug and warm and the ground was hard—no mud! We had regular liberties in the best liberty town in the East—Providence—and we were veterans, we had survived Camp Peary!

For some reason it always seems more fun to talk about the uncomfortable experiences that we have had than to recall the pleasant memories. Davisville wasn't a bad camp at all, but the

things that we talk most about are the worst features. Take that mess hall for instance—that was a beautiful set-up! There were a dozen Quonset huts, galley, storeroom, butcher shop, scullery, and several eating halls. The last-named were so cold that eating with your pea coats buttoned up tightly was not only advisable, it was necessary! At meal times, lines of freezing men extended



all over the area; there was the line for trays; then another line for food during which time any water that was on the trays froze solid; with meals on the tray we rushed for an eating hut and wolfed our food to keep it from freezing then stood in line to scrape and pile our trays. Ah, that ice cold gravy!

Military training continued, with the accent on drilling. We thanked our lucky stars that the weather was too bad to permit more of this.

Like a gift from the Gods came leave—nine full days instead of the five we had expected! If this was war, then heaven could wait!

Back to camp on January 29, and for days we wandered around in a rosy fog of dreams about the freedom that had been ours. Now came the first great "Scuttlebutt Barrage." We were going to Africa, the South Seas, South America, Alaska. The name Bermuda was heard more and more frequently—"somebody knows somebody who saw our supplies being labeled." By departure day most of us were fairly certain that Bermuda was to be our destiny—our Island X!

The train trip to New York was like a kid's field day but we all sobered up when we boarded the ship and saw our accommodations. We were jammed in like sardines in the dimly lit holds. We sailed on February 25 in a fresh northeast breeze and while still within sight of Sandy Hook, seasickness took its toll. The next two days are better forgotten. To put it mildly, they were unpleasant.

BEAUTIFUL ISLE OF BERMUDA!

Bermuda is a lovely spot. One's first and strongest impression is of color, the blue sea, the green cedars, the white and pink of the houses. As we sailed up the narrow channel which parallels the coast, even the sickest Seabees regained an interest in life. It was late afternoon when we landed from our ship in the harbor and we made a properly impressive sight as we marched up the causeway with our rifles and full packs. Our barracks were stamped "O.K." by the boys on sight and we have had no reason to change our opinion. They were, for the most part, two-story, frame buildings in the form of a squared "U," the sleeping accommodations forming the sides while the heads occupied the far ends. The men had comfortable double-decker bunks while the chiefs doubled up in small rooms at the end of the barracks. The mess hall was, to us, a fine restaurant. There was real china and we could sit and smoke at the tables after eating! The food was by far the best we had had.

On hand to welcome us were the men of the 31st who preceded us by three months. From the night we arrived until they left, the 31st, composed mostly of boys from the South Central states, were our friends. The two battalions worked side by side with no friction other than friendly ribbing, and nobody was ever heard to say that they weren't good workers.

Our arrival found the base well on its way to completion. A private contracting company had been working for two years and had most of the buildings finished. That doesn't mean, however, that there wasn't plenty for us to do. As a starter, we were told to finish off the igloos (ammunition storehouses) and some of us were stuck there for months building forms, pouring concrete, etc. Gradually, though, most of us found our trades and it was incredible to discover the number of different skills that we had in our midst. From watch repairing to bulldozer nursing, and from ditch digging to roofing, there was always a skilled group on hand to do a perfect job. On the whole, our jobs were done quickly and well—most of them were hard and some of them were unbelievably intricate. Situations were met as they arose and when the tools and materials were not available, we improvised. Thus, in building a dock, when no forms were available for pouring concrete piers, empty oil drums were cut in half and fitted

with welded lugs so they could be bolted together for the pour, then easily stripped from the One of our machine-hardened concrete, chinists with an inventive turn of mind developed, for the gunnery school, a machine which simulates the loading and ejecting mechanism of a big gun. It is used for training gun crews and was built from a choice collection of scrap and an old electric motor.



At all times on the base, the ships afloat held a number one priority and

work on them was our own most valuable contribution to the actual war effort. Some day the whole story of this work may be told including the jobs that we did for the African invasion fleet. It must suffice for now to say that our contribution was important.

THE LIGHTER SIDE

We did a lot of work in Bermuda but it wasn't all work. Especially during the first half of our stay, we had a fair amount of liberty, and an eight-hour day left us some time to ourselves. Bermuda has always been a playground and we made the most of it. We had teams in every sport; swimming was a number one attraction, and the fishing was excellent. The U.S.O. has done a splendid job on the island and its English equivalents also went "all out" for the boys. There were a dozen recreational rooms; dances and outings were frequent, and we had some splendid shows from the States. We found, too, that we had talent in our midst and the band that got started in Davisville improved amazingly. Half a dozen "hillbilly" groups were started at various times and what they lacked in ability they made up for in spirits. Our "home talent" shows may have been "corny" but they were fun!

Eventually we got our own recreation hall started where, between certain hours, by appearing in correct dress, and by fighting one's way into line and waiting patiently for a couple of hours, one could get a beer. Here, too, we had pool tables, a juke box, and even pin-ball machines.

A word should be said about hobbies. The natives have for years been making tourist souvenirs out of the beautiful Bermuda cedar but our boys really opened their eyes. Our company tool rooms became hobby shops after hours and the output of boxes, lamps, picture frames, ashtrays, and book-ends was enormous. Metalwork and weaving were also very popular.

YOUR LEFT, TWO, THREE, FOUR—

While it was true that we are primarily a construction outfit, we were not allowed to forget that we were also a military organization. Saturday mornings we dropped our tools and shouldered our guns for a march down to the seaplane hangars. There we drilled for several hours, usually winding up with a Battalion review past the Commander. After chow we hustled back to the barracks to stuff our week's accumulation of junk under the mattress in preparation for inspection. We attended anti-aircraft gunnery school for a week and finally "got to" shoot the rifles we had been carrying for months. The base had a couple of alerts and we participated. No one got shot!

OUR OFFICERS

We have been fortunate in our officers—they are good men. From Commander to C.P.O.'s, most of them are very popular. It is natural for us to blame our superiors for everything that goes wrong and we have "beefed" plenty on occasions. This "beefing" is our time-honored and most jealously guarded privilege, but it has been evenly spread and of short duration. The officers who have left our Battalion for new assignments have been unanimously missed. If it could be put to a vote, it is doubtful if the boys would want to change a man. Some we like better than others, but the whole effect is a very good one and we realize that we are well led.

WE FACE THE FUTURE

We have been together now for more than a year. We've had good times and bad times, and the bad have done more to bring us together than the good. We are a closely knit military family, knowing our good points and aware of our faults. We face the future confident that we can and will do whatever job is assigned to us. We are a very happy ship for which we are deeply grateful.

49th Naval Construction Battalion

Chronology

18 Dec 1942	Commissioned at NCTC, Camp Allen, Norfolk, VA. Transferred to NCTC, Camp Peary, Williamsburg, VA.
16 Jan 1943	Departed NCTC, Camp Peary.
17 Jan 1943	Arrived ABD, Davisville, R.I.
21 Feb 1943	8 officers and 165 men departed ABD, Davisville for New York.
24 Feb 1943	19 officers and 915 men departed ABD, Davisville for embarkation at New York.
25 Feb 1943	Departed Staten island, New York.
27 Feb 1943	Arrived Bermuda.
16 Jan 1944	Departed Bermuda.
18 Jan 1944	Arrived at NCTC, Davisville, R.I.

Second Tour of Duty

05 Jun 1944	Transferred from NCTC, Davisville to ABDRB, Davisville, R.I.
13 Aug 1944	Departed ABDRB, Davisville, R.I.
17 - 18 Aug 1944	Arrived CBRD, Camp Parks, Shoemaker, California.
05 Sept 1944	Departed CBRD, Camp parks, Shoemaker, California.
06 Sept 1944	Arrived ABD, Port Hueneme, California.
12 Sept 1944	Departed Abd, Port Hueneme for overseas.
24 Oct 1944	Arrived at Guam.
25 Jul 1945	The 49 th Naval Construction Battalion was inactivated.



49 T.H.



CONSTRUCTION
BATTALION



49th

WAR BOND DRIVE

LET'S SHOW
THAT
"CAN DO"
SPIRIT



10%
MONTHLY
WILL HELP
LICK
THE AXIS

◆ **SIGN-UP NOW!** ◆
WITH YOUR BOND REPRESENTATIVE

Lt. Comdr.
Marshall D. Barnett

Lieut.
Wallace M. Brown

028499





building

