70th Naval Construction Battalion

Historical Information

"Construimus, Batuimus"
"We Build, We Fight"

NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

70th C.B.

NCTC - Davisville
ABD - Davisville
Ready Date - 16 Apr'43
Left ABD - 27 Apr'43
Location - Arzew

2nd Embarkation

NCTC - Davisville
ABD - (Parks)
Ready Date - 15 Sep'44
Left ABD - 18 Oct'44
Location - ~~Pearl Harbor~~ Guam

LOG

3- 3-43 - ½ Hdqtrs. Co. and 1 Co. detached to make up Det. 1005. ½ Hdqtrs Co. and 1 Co. detached to make up Det. 1006. Replacements for above from NCTC Camp Peary to bring back 70th To full strength.

4-~~14~~-43 - 70th CB entrained for N. Y. for embarkation.

6-10-43 - 70th CB is at Arzew. (ComNavNaw Conf. Disp. 081358)

6-17-43 - 1 Jun'43 report of 70th CB - Embarked New York 27 Apr'43 and arrived Oran Harbor 27-28 May'43; transferred to Arzew.

8-13-43 - Hdqtrs at Arzew; one company at Bizerte. (Ltr 29 Jun T. L. Davy Lancrahnaw to Capt. Manning)

9-16-43 - 1 Aug'43 report of 70th CB - Co. "D" plus ½ hdqtrs Co. ordered to advance base. Another company detached for Naval Supply Depot at another base.

11-17-43 - CBMU 579 is being set up in Bizerte with 316 men from the 54th and 70th CB. CBMU 578 is being set up in Arzew with 100 men from the 54th and 70th CB. (ComNavNaw to Budocks No. 160839 NCR 5224)

12-6-43 - 1 Nov'43 report of 70th CB - located at Oran, Beni-Saf, Tenes and Bizerte.

12-29-43 - 70th CB arrived U.S. about 25 Dec'43. (WHK)

70th C.B.

6-17-44 - 70th CB ordered to ABDRB Davisville from NCTC Davisville on 19 May'44. (CO NCTC Davisville ltr NM24-4/P16-4(7) over Ser 3900 over JTH:fr to OinC 70th CB dtd 16 May'44)

10-18-44 - The 70th CB is scheduled to depart for overseas 21 Oct'44.(Com 12 Sec. Disp. 072354 NCR 8144 to CNO dtd 8 Oct'44).

10-20-44 - The 70th CB with 66 officers and 1137 men departed Parks 18 Oct'44 for overseas. (Parks conf. disp to Bupers 182345 NCR 7687 dtd 19 Oct'44).

11- 9-44 - 70th CB at Pearl Harbor. (Conf. Disp. 070030 NCR 4497 from Com 12 to Com 14 dtd 7 Nov'44)

11-15-44 -- The 70th CB is assigned to the 36th Reg.(Comserforpac flt Sec. ltr 55-CKW/apk over Ser. 001008 to CNO dtd 4 Nov'44).

11-16-44 -- The 70th CB is located at Pearl Har.(Com 14 Sec. disp to CNO 062243 NCR 15886 dtd 11 Nov'44).

12-7-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 36th Reg. - 70th CB reported to the 36th Reg. for duty on 27 Oct'44.

1-22-45 - 9 officers and 310 men ordered to proceed immediately and report to the Comdr. Administrative Command, Amph. Force, US PacFlt for temporary duty as a unit of the 70th CB Pontoon Detachment. Upon completion of this temporary duty and when directed by proper authority to report to the OinC 70th CB for resumption of regular duties. (OinC 36th Reg. ltrs 36NCR-01-ATD/egw over P16-4 dtd 3 Jan'45 to the officers in charge of the enlisted men)

1-26-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 70th CB - no info on location. Report endorsed by 8th Brg. and H.A.B.

2- 7-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 70th CB - located in Hawaiian area. Report endorsed by the 36th Regiment.

70th CB

2-13-45 - 70th CB is located at Guam(Part??).(IsComGuam Sec. disp to CNO 030621 dtd 8 Feb'45).

2-27-45 - 36th Reg. conf. ltr to Ens. P. W. Cameron dtd 9 Feb'45 - orders subject officer to proceed and report to the OinC 70th CB Detachment "C".

3- 3-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 36th Reg. - All off. and personnel of the 70th CB are assigne to Comdr, Adm. Command, Amph. Forces, US PacFlt for tempdu and are operating in forward areas.

3-10-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 5th Brg. - Advanced detachment of the 70th CB (approx 250 men) reported to the 5th Brg. in Jan. This detachment has been placed under the 5th Brg. for adm. control only--for operational control to report to Adm Command Amph Forces US PacFlt.

3-22-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 70th CB - no info on location.

3-23-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 70th CB (Pontoon) - no info on location.

4-10-45 -- The 70th CB is located SE of Piti(Guam).(5th Brg. War Diary 1 Feb to 28 Feb'45).

4-16-45 - The 70th CB is located S.E. of Piti, Guam. (5th Brg War Diary of 1 Apr'45)

4-18-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 70th CB - 1 off. and 22 men ret'd 10 Mar'45 and 11 off. and 204 men ret'd 11 Mar from Iwo Jima. These were the bal of a Pontoon Barge and Causeway Detachment of 14 off. and 275 men who were on temp duty on Iwo Jima. 3 off. and 35 men not used on operation have been retained on temp detached duty for further operations. 70th CB has 514 men and 28 off attached to AdComFhibsPac on assault operations as of 1 Apr. There is also a small detach of 29 men and 2 off. on detached duty at Saipan. Following report of 70th CB Pontoon Det Activities on Iwo Jima submitted with 1 Apr report:

8 Jan'45 - Approx embarkation date of all platoons of the detachment. (15 off. and 283 men)
27 Jan'45 - Departed.
5 Feb'45 - Arrived Eniwetok.
7 Feb'45 - Departed Eniwetok. (Cont. on following card)

Location - Guam, Okinawa

70th C.B.

4-18-45 - 70th CB Pontoon Det Activities on Iwo Jima (cont) -
11 Feb'45 - Arrived Saipan (Another 70th CB Det staging there).
15 Feb'45 - Departed for Target.
19 Feb'45 - Arrived Iwo Jima.
21 Feb'45 - Started launching pontoon assemblies.
23 Feb'45 - All personnel put ashore.
4 Mar'45 - Departed from Iwo with 11 off. and 204 men.
7 Mar'45 - Arrived Saipan.
10 Mar'45 - Departed Saipan.
11 Mar'45 - Arrived Guam to 70th CB Hdqtrs.

4-18-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 36th Reg. are participating in forward operations under command of the Amph Forces.

4-26-45 - Barges at Okinawa being operated by 70th CB. (Comphibspac Conf Disp 062325 dtd 19 Apr'45 to Budocks)

5- 8-45 - The 70th CB is shown located at Guam on temp duty with Comdr Amph Forces on the Dirpacdocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr'45)

5-18-45 - 1 May'45 report of 70th CB - location not given. 26 offcrs & 506 men are out on a current assault operation. 1 offcr & 21 men returned from detached duty at Saipan on 23 Apr'45. Report routed via 36th Reg & 5th Brig.

5-21-45 - 1 May'45 report of 36th Reg - 70th & 128th CBs are jointly operating assembly yard in Marianas. 46 men assigned to the 70th CB during Apr'45, by the 36th Reg.

6-21-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 36th Reg. - Elements of the 70th and 128th CBs retd from operations in the Ryukyu Islands with the Amph Forces.

6-28-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 70th CB - location not given. 1 officr & 7 men are still on TAD at Saipan. 16 offcrs & 465 men returned from Okinawa assault operation on 23 May'45. 2 offcrs & 16 men are still on TAD on current operation & 5 offcrs & 15 men departed from Okinawa on 27 May & are still enroute. Report routed via 36th Reg &
(Continued)

Location - Guam, Okinawa 70th C.B.

(Cont'd) 1 Jun'45 report of the 70th CB - routed via 5th Brig.

7-18-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 36th Reg - The Amph Forces Pont Assembly Yd, Mariannas, is operated jointly by the 70th and 128th CBs.

7-18-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 70th CB - location not given. This batt is assigned to Comdr Amph Forces U.S. PacFlt for oper functions but is subject to adm control of the Brg, IsCom, ServFor. 16 men transfd for overage. 5 off. and 15 men retd from Okinawa 5 June. 2 off. and 16 men retd from Okinawa on 8 June--these were the only personnel of the batt left at that location. 6 men left for Saipan on 7 June as relief for the men on temp duty at that station. Report via 36th Reg and 5 Brg.

7-27-45 - Dirpacdocks P Sec Report of 10 July shows the 70th CB at Guam, scheduled Okinawa.

8-17-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 70th CB - located at Guam. 15 men were detached and ordered to the U.S. for discharge on 2 Jul'45. 30 men were transferred to the 134th CB on 25 Jul'45 for duty. In the last week of Jul'45 160 men and 8 offcrs were temp - detached and boarded ship in preparation for anticipated amphibious operation. Report via 36th Reg and 5th Brig.

8-18-45 - Present hdqtrs of 36th Reg on Guam are the 70th & 128th CBs & 805 men of the 81st CB. (36th Reg conf monthly report of 1 Sept'45).

9-19-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 70th CB. No info as to location. Report via 36th Reg & 5th Brig. 33 officers & 619 men are on tempdu & away from batt hdqtrs.

10-10-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of 70th CB. No info as to location. Report via 36th Reg. & 5th Brig. This is the final report of 70th CB as it is scheduled for inactivation on 10 Oct'45. 80 men transferred to U.S. for discharge under the point system. 6 off. & 102 men returned from operations at various port in Japan, Korea & China. 520 men still on tempdu.

Location - Guam 70th CB

10-10-45 - 70th CB is to be inactivated on approx. 10 Oct.'45. Inform Comservpac when inactivation is completed. (Comservpac conf spdltr ser 05466 dtd 1 Oct'45 to OinC, 5th Brig.).

12-4-45 - 70th CB was inactivated on 17 Oct'45. (70th CB conf ltr ser 195 dtd 21 Oct'45 to BuDocks).

INACTIVATED

ON BOARD

DATE	OFFICERS	MEN	AUTHORITY
30 Jun'44		1033	Recap.
1 Aug'44	31		R
30 Sep'44		1117	Recap
1 Dec'44	66	1129	MoR
1 Jan'45	66	1124	MoR
1 Feb'45	65	1119	MoR
1 Mar'45	65	1113	MoR
1 Apr'45	65	1112	MoR
1 May'45	65	1155	MoR
1 Jun'45	65	1145	BNP625& R
1 Jul'45	65	1123	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	63	1090	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45		1058	BNP625
1 Oct'45	54	956	BNP625 & R

70th Construction Battalion (Pontoon) (INACTIVATED)

70TH U. S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

4 October 1945.

As we reverse the procedure of three years ago and begin the transition from Seabee to civilian life, officers and men of the 70th Seabees can look with pride upon the record of service of our battalion. We can accept, with due modesty, our share of the praise and tributes paid the Armed Forces by the President and other distinguished leaders. Our Chief, Admiral Ben Moreell, has seen fit to commend us, as have other ranking officers of the Navy from the Mediterranean to the China Sea. They have honored us with their "Well Done!"

Because the Battalion was decommissioned while so many of its officers and men were still engaged in the occupation operations in Japan, Korea and China, it was impossible to assemble all hands for the traditional Navy ceremony. It is with regret that our association during these critical, exciting and dangerous years is terminated I shall always recall with satisfaction and pleasure, my service with you. I take this opportunity to extend to all hands my sincere wish for a happy return home and for successful and prosperous careers, secure in the knowledge that they have served their country faithfully.

The 70th Battalion can rightfully be proud of the part it played in bringing about final victory over our enemies. Its long record of being "First" is enhanced by such further distinctions as being the first Pontoon Battalion, the first Seabee unit to be deployed from the European-African to the Asiatic-Pacific theatre, the first Construction Battalion to participate in assault landings. Both on the European continent and on Japanese territory. These are but a few of the many events pioneered by the 70th and carried out in the best traditions of the Seabees and the Navy.

Our first overseas service was as a component of the command of Vice Admiral John L. Hall, Jr., in Northwest African waters. It was our privilege to serve again under this great naval leader in the Okinawa operation, thus engaging in the first and last assaults on the Axis on their own soil.

Additional Purple Hearts were awarded for injuries incurred at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, but we were indeed fortunate that no fatalities occurred in these latter operations. In the name of the Battalion, I extend our deepest sympathy to those of our mates who were seriously injured, with the wish that they will successfully overcome their handicaps.

It is once again fitting to remember those mates who lost their lives, with the hope that their families have derived some measure of comfort from the fact that they made the supreme sacrifice for the greatest cause of all.

Arthur J. Gallina

HISTORY OF THE 70TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

The 70th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion began its Pacific tour of duty when it left Camp Parks, California, on the morning of October 19, 1944. Returning from North Africa and the Mediterranean early in the year, the veterans of that campaign and the replacements had carried on the many months of stateside duty with increasing impatience, eager to get away from the station force experts and anxious to get back to practical, useful work in the combat areas. Early that morning the entire battalion personnel and all its gear were transported in busses and trucks to Treasure Island in San Francisco bay. After two days the 70th boarded the U.S.S. General E. T. Collins and found that they had the 42nd Battalion as shipmates. It was late afternoon when the ship passed through the Golden Gate but a heavy fog obscured our last look at the City of San Francisco and the great bridge.

The Pacific was quite calm and there was no seasickness among the seasoned veterans of rough Atlantic crossings but a few of the newer men were initiated. The crowded Navy transport kept the various details busy with the frequent calls for all hands to "turn to for clean sweepdown fore and aft." One change from our LST and Liberty ship routine was the restriction to two meals a day and officers quarters were as crowded as those of the men. Our commander's detail as senior troop officer aboard gave him no special quarters and he had a top bunk with twenty others in a small cabin.

As the General Collins approached Oahu on the morning of October 27, general quarters sounded and every gun spurted anti-aircraft fire but fortunately, only at the targets towed by the fighter planes which welcomed us to Honolulu. Sailing by Diamond Head and Koko and into Pearl Harbor, the ship docked at Iroquois Point, which became the Battalion's home for the next two months.

Within a week a dilapidated camp was taken over and made ship-shape. Company B turned to the camp maintenance and construction work at Iroquois, Company C relieved the 302nd Battalion at the Intrepid Point Pontoon Assembly Yard better known as AFPAY and Companies A and D were assigned the construction of a complete camp layout. Later, the entire 70th Battalion shared this camp with its fine barracks and facilities with the 302nd.

Liberty was granted almost every Sunday and trips arranged to all points of interest on the island of Oahu, such as the Nuuanu Pali Pass, the Mormon Temple and Waikiki beach. The Royal Hawaiian and Moana Hotels, the byways of Honolulu, the great Navy and Army installations, the Royal Hawaiian Band in Kapiolani Park, the statue and palace of King Kamemhamea all came in for their share of attention. Chief Hanlon's North African All-Stars took the measure of other service baseball teams and began another winning streak that lasted throughout the Pacific campaign. There were not many hula girls but the pineapple and sugarcane fields, especially when being burnt over for harvest, were never-to-be-forgotten sights.

In the meanwhile, top-secret orders, which we later learned concerned the plans for the invasion of Iwo Jima, Okinawa and Ie Shima, began to reflect themselves in the stepping up of production in the pontoon assembly yard. Platoons were organized and assigned aboard various ships, Company A being the first to leave, as is later recounted in these pages. Units of Companies C and D left for Banika in the Russel Islands while other units proceeded to Saipan and Tinian. Before the end of January 1945 Company B moved on to Guam to prepare and build the Battalion Headquarters and the Amphibious Forces Pontoon Assembly Yard there. Lt. Pellett and his surveyors and engineers had the camp layout well under way while the Japs were still in the nearby boondocks. The echelons of Headquarters and Company B who had been completing final details on Oahu soon were at work and their efforts were much appreciated by the platoons which returned from the invasions.

In January also, our Commander and Executive Officer were given additional duty as civil engineer officers on the staffs of the respective Amphibious Forces, with still other assignments as commander of LCTs and other landing craft. By this time, the 70th was truly a seagoing outfit.

From here on, the companies, platoons, repair crews, headquarters divisions and other units became so widely separated that there were times when their whereabouts was known only to the Amphibious Force with which they served. Even our always reliable Post Office was unable to account for each man but eventually managed to emulate the famed Herodotus and get the mail through. A general description of the activities of these scattered units must necessarily suffice; in fact, no record at all has been received of the travels of some of the platoons which were literally "at sea" at the time of the Battalion's inactivation. It is said that they rivaled those of Marco Polo.

Let us start with **Company A.** In passing it may be noted that Lt. Chester Lewis "shipped over" to the U. S. Navy as a regular Civil Engineer Corps officer.

This company was assigned to the Pontoon Assembly Yard soon after arrival at Oahu. Here they assembled thirty-eight barges of the "three by twelve" type and ten sets of causeways. These they loaded on LSTs for the coming invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

The entire company left Oahu early in January and spent nearly a month on practice maneuvers with the Marines off Maui and Kahoolawe. These rehearsals were very realistic and preceded the movement toward the target, Iwo Jima. The various groups sailed late that month for Eniwetok and Saipan. Final preparations were made at these points for the landings in February.

Company A men were aboard the first and only LST to beach on D-Day plus one which was loaded with urgently needed ammunition for the Marines. This unloading was performed under a devastating fire from the Jap mortars and Admiral Hill commended the LST crew and the Seabees for this action.

All hands took an active part in one of the toughest landings of the Pacific War. In all they operated twenty-two 3x12 pontoon barges and four causeways for the landing of personnel, supplies and equipment. The outfit worked twenty-four hours a day under the heaviest machine-gun, mortar and sniper fire, plus aircraft strafing and bombing. Eight casualties were suffered during this operation. They operated side by side with the assault echelons.

All but two of the platoons returned to Guam in March. Most of the Company were assigned to the PAY yard where they built and loaded structures for the coming invasion of Okinawa and Japan. The carpenters, plumbers, electricians and other mechanics helped in camp construction and maintenance during this period. One A Company platoon had the distinction of engaging in both the Iwo Jima and Okinawa invasions. As the camp neared completion many of the

Company's mechanics and specialists were assigned to various types of work on the island. Company A had charge of the erection and building of Ad-Com-Phibs-Pac permanent camp. They also devised a fire-engine, a centrifugal wringer and other necessary equipment for the Battalion and continued work in the PAY yard during May, June, July and part of August.

Late August found the greater part of the Company again headed for an invasion. This time it was Japan. When the war ended, Company A was on the high seas and aided in the occupation of Japan, Korea and other territories held by the Japs.

Company B. The job of constructing and maintaining the Battalion's camps in the Pacific area again fell to Company B. Their fine record for building excellent camps in the African theatre was surpassed by their work on Guam.

Upon landing on Oahu, B Company started in to repair and improve the barracks area assigned to the 70th. Their first work consisted of

CHARLES BROADBENT
Lieutenant Commander
Executive Officer, 1943-1945
(shown on the beach at Iwo Jima)

repairing the Quonset huts which entailed replacing flooring, making the shower baths work, rehanging doors and much painting. In addition to the above, roads had to be repaired and resurfaced; a post office, administration building, library, various shops and a chaplain's office had to be constructed. Company B was in charge of the guard details and the operation of all boilers, generators, transportation and general camp services.

The majority of the Company moved on to Guam in January to build and prepare a semi-permanent advance camp for the Battalion. Several specialized and trained groups were engaged in the invasion of Iwo Jima at this time. The trip to Guam was uneventful and the force arrived there in fine shape. They at once unloaded their equipment and went to work building up the new camp site. It rained continuously but this did not deter the outfit from working in the rain all day and sleeping in muddy gumbo at night. K rations were their only food during this period.

They had the camp fairly well completed when Headquarters and the administrative force arrived in the late part of February. Each day saw an improvement—such as lights, surfaced roads, mess and galley facilities, sick bays, showers and all those things that are necessary to the men's needs and comfort. The camp was in excellent shape when the force returned from the invasion of Iwo Jima. There were no K rations served, everyone had a place to sleep and a temporary movie theatre had been set up. There was adequate lighting, most of the roads had been surfaced with coral and the various shops were operating.

Improvements were made right along and soon the 70th had as shipshape a camp as any outfit in the Pacific area, thanks to the hard work of Company B. While the main portion of the Company was working on Guam, two causeway platoons and a ship repair unit took part in the invasion of Iwo Jima. In the Okinawa invasion, a causeway platoon, a ship repair unit and some crane operators represented the Company. In addition to taking care of the camp maintenance and the carpenter, plumbing, machine, paint and electrical shops, B made all the road improvements, built culverts and ditches for the drainage and did some stevedoring. Moreover this company did most of the construction on the AFPAY pontoon yard. B Company was relieved of camp duties by the other companies early in July. Th[illegible] [illegible]oared for their part in the invasion of Japan and left for th[illegible]ging areas late in the month. Someone has made the remark, "The Japs must have heard that Company B was coming and that is why they folded up."

The platoons which started out for the invasion of Japan took part in the occupation of China, Korea and Japan.

Company C. On Oahu the members of C Company unloaded the gear, built pontoon strings, assembled the barges and causeways and towed them to Pearl Harbor where they loaded them aboard LSTs. In addition to this work they maintained the shops at Intrepid Point and developed reinforcements to support the motors in the launching of the barges.

The first detachment of six barge platoons left for Banika, in the Russel Islands, on December 6 to make up barges and causeways to be used in the invasion of Okinawa. This trip was the first leg of a very extensive tour of the Pacific. The first stop was Funafuti in the Ellice Islands and then on the Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides. The detachment's Christmas was a merry one spent ashore at Noumea, New Caledonia. New Years was celebrated afloat and the group arrived at Banika on the sixth of January. It was necessary to beg, borrow and "procure" the materials and equipment to build a camp for themselves, with no assistance from P.A.D. No. 2.

The remainder of C Company and six platoons from Company D arrived at Banika on January 20, 1945. This detachment made stops at Espiritu Santo and Tulagi. Trading calls were made at Nui in the Ellice Islands and Ulawa, port of the Solomons. At Banika, Company C built sixty-eight barges, loaded them aboard LSTs and then sailed on to the target, Okinawa.

The first platoon of Company C embarked for operations on February 28, 1944. They proceeded to Tulagi for ammunition and then to Pavuvu in the Russels and on to Guadalcanal to pick up Marines and amtracks.

A five-day rehearsal was held at Guadalcanal and then off for Ulithi, the rendezvous area, [illegible]

1945. The final leg of the trip to Okinawa began on the morning of March 25. This was a rough trip and it was thought that the barges might be lost. Turnbuckles would snap, U-Bolts pop, and chains would break but, for every one that broke, two more would be put on. Then these would break. Company C finally arrived off Okinawa on April 1, Easter Sunday and L-Day.

It was found that a few of the barges had been so hard hit by the sea that an entire string of pontoons was crushed and flooded. Nevertheless, these badly damaged barges served well for the transfer cranes and lighters. Most of the barges were launched between H-hour and noon on L-Day and proceeded to their assigned jobs of lightering cargo and as floating platforms for the cranes.

A coral reef formation off Okinawa formed an effective barrier against landings by small craft. It was necessary to unload the supplies and equipment from the ships, carry them by barges to the reef and then unload them by crane into amtracks. On April 16, a group of ten barges proceeded to Ie Shima under their own power and took part in the landings there. These platoons worked on a twenty-four-hour basis for nearly two weeks before returning to the main force at Okinawa.

Pontoon operations at Okinawa and Ie Shima were generally considered the most successful in the Pacific Theatre. The 70th Seabee received commendations from Admirals Hall, Turner and Reifsneider for both Okinawa and Ie Shima for their handling of the lighterage.

The main force remained at Okinawa and continued to operate off the Hagushi beaches until the latter part of May, when they were relieved by the 81st Battalion.

Company C arrived at Guam on May 22 and immediately went to work in the AFPAY pontoon yard, outfitting barges and causeways for the invasion of Japan, and loading aboard ship for the operation. About half the Company was aboard ship on V-J Day and took part in the occupation of Korea, Hokkaido, Honshu and China.

Company D. After getting squared away in their quarters at Iroquois Point were assigned to building barracks, shops and the pontoon yard at Intrepid Point. Two groups were sent to the Navy Yard at Pearl Harbor to assist in ship repair. One crew was assigned to welding and the other to riveting and carpentry. These groups received a commendation from Admiral William R. Furlong, Commandant of the Navy Yard at Pearl Harbor, for their valuable assistance in repairing ships. The majority of Company D went to work at the AFPAY yard upon the completion of the camp at Intrepid Point. They assisted in the assembling and loading of pontoon structures and materials used in the Iwo Jima and Okinawa operations. Members of this company developed an armored bulldozer during their stay on Oahu which was later used to great advantage.

The first detachment of D Company left Oahu about the middle of December for Saipan and Tinian. This was the first step toward their invasion of Okinawa. The second detachment left around the first of the year aboard LSM's to join Company C in the Russels. At Banika they built and loaded pontoon structures and prepared for the coming invasion of Okinawa.

D and C Companies made the rough voyage to Okinawa together. Company D underwent the same bad weather, rough seas and other hardships mentioned in the Company C record, and on Easter Sunday, April 1, engaged in the Okinawa landing. They remained at Okinawa for forty-five days with the invasion forces, operating barges and lightering cargo.

Two LSTs were assigned for the servicing of the barge crews and to serve as headquarters for the respective task units operating north and south of the Bishi Gawa. While the crews of some barges were able to make use of the facilities for a bath and a hot meal, others had to stick with their own "ship" for weeks at a time, living in improvised shelters on the barge deck and getting their own chow from the rations being lightered. It was soon found that foxholes could not be dug into the steel deck and although ingenuity was used to devise protection, each of the hundred or more kamikaze raids during this period had to be sweated out. General quarters alarms and smoke making were a nightly occurrence; storms were frequent, making crossing of the reef hazardous, several barges being swamped and at least one overturned during this time. Suicide boats, infiltration by enemy forces from Machinado, anti-aircraft flak were all encountered. A number of men were wounded during this period and earned the Purple Heart but fortunately no fatalities occurred. The barges which served the hospital LSTs proved to be of great worth in the evacuation of casualties and in fact, much of the classification of wounded and emergency treatment was done on the barges, some by our own pharmacist mates.

Most of D Company boarded the S.S. Seaflasher at Okinawa on May 15 and arrived at Guam on May 23. Several groups remained at Okinawa to build 4x12 barges which were used in the repair of seaplanes at Kerama Retto, while another platoon operated a group of warping tugs.

Upon returning to Guam, Company D was again assigned to the Amphibious Forces Pontoon Assembly Yard and lost no time in building and [illegible]ing the pontoon barges and causeways needed for the assaults on Kyushu and Honshu. The experiences and lessons learned in battling the reef and the storms off Okinawa and at sea en route to that target were drawn upon for still further improvements in the outfitting and construction of the pontoon assemblies. During the few slack periods of waiting for materials Company D men were utilized in the construction of the new Amphibious Forces camp and operations base. Other platoons were detailed to the Harmon and Northwest air bases where they built warehouses, hangars, parachute lofts and other Quonset structures for the Army and Navy air commands. Unlike other strictly Pontoon units, the 70th CBs never lost their skill in general construction work. Every possible assistance was rendered to the B-29 wings of the 20th Air Force which was then engaged in intensive bombing of Japan and preparing for the use of the atomic bomb. Stevedoring details expedited the loading and unloading of shipping which was tied up in Apra harbor. Our barges soon solved that bottleneck.

Headquarters Company consists of the various departments and sections that provide the wide variety of services and control necessary for the operation of the battalion. To best outline the functions of this company, a brief resumé of the work of each section, follows:

Armory—stores and issues ordnance gear and ammunition and tries to keep up with the voluminous directions and instructions of the Bureau of Ordnance. In charge of the firing ranges and the training of personnel in the use and care of all weapons. Our armories organized and directed the heavy weapons platoons, and supervised such other activities as our fire department in connection with which they developed pumps and other fire fighting equipment from such material as was available.

Medical—doctors, dentists, pharmacists and corpsmen joined forces to maintain an excellent health record for the 70th. Supervision of the sanitation of the Camp generally, the water supply, the galley; mosquito, insect and rodent control and inspection and control of the food preparation in cooperation with the Supply Department to insure a balanced diet, all contributed. A corpsman was assigned to each and every platoon engaged in the assaults on Iwo Jima, Okinawa and Ie Shima and also those which participated in the occupation operations in Japan, China and Korea.

Personnel—keeps the service record, or jacket, of every man from the time of his assignment to the outfit until his separation. These individual [illegible] complete [illegible] movements, [illegible] nce and [illegible]

Most of this section not only keep these records but prepare the weekly reports, muster lists, process the recommendations for promotions and cooperate with all other sections in providing records. As we were attached to a Regiment, it was necessary to provide the Regiment with such service also. Awards and commendations are likewise recorded in the personnel jacket but many recommendations for such awards were disapproved by the Regiment despite the fact the officers of the 70th strongly felt that the men were entitled to them.

Post Office—It is well recognized that much of the morale of any military outfit centers around the mail clerks and the 70th was no exception. It has been reported that the Seabees receive more mail than any service organization and we were fortunate in having competent and conscientious mail clerks. Under the direction of the security officer the Post Office staff controlled the censoring of all outgoing mail. Over 25,000 pieces of first class mail were handled each month; more than $50,000 in money orders were sent from our post office in one typical month. In contrast to our experiences in stateside camps, our own post office provided much better service overseas. Mail Call was indeed a popular and welcome summons.

Master-At-Arms—the Navy's police force, even though the appelation "Jimmylegs" has fallen into disuse, may not be popular with all hands, but like all policemen, it is comforting to have them available. This group must enforce the rules and regulations of the Navy, carry out the general orders of the command, and maintain order. They are responsible for the cleanliness of the camp, especially the galley and mess halls. In a compact organization they have, at times, doubled up with the sergeant of the guard and the buglers.

Pubinfo—is short for Public Information and in its wider field on the mainland also directed public relations. Stories were prepared and pictures selected for release to hometown newspapers and the service publications, of the activities of the 70th and its men. The battalion paper "The Sea Beaver" was always welcomed not only by the men but by their families until some efficient command decided that the doings and day-by-day experiences were too secret for release to the folks back home. Well, perhaps we were on the wrong island at the time. Besides, scuttlebutt played its own role and the inside stories always could be verified by any S2/c.

Recreation, Welfare, Education—were a few of the activities that the Chaplain and his co-workers endeavored to conduct for the benefit and morale of all hands. The 70th morale was never a difficult problem what with frequent movies, stage shows, boxing and wrestling, bingo parties, baseball games and the less frequent dances. The battalion library was always popular and well patronized; the educational services including the Armed Forces correspondence courses helped many who wished to help themselves. Radios and record-players kept us abreast of the latest juke box favorites.

Photography—Practically all the pictures in this book are the product of our own lens-lads and this is an appropriate place to give credit to our camera twins, Kelman and Kendall; perhaps a few were left over from Ed Callahan's collection. All official Navy photographs were promptly forwarded to the various Bureaus in Washington and some then released to the public through the medium of papers, magazines and other publications. Our photographers covered all phases of the Battalions' work, including the invasion.

Supply—covers a wide range of activities, not only within the Supply Department itself but in its related and collateral functions. Procurement being the foremost, each other division depending on it, including general-storekeeping, tools, transportation and other parts, pontoon assembly materials, small stores, ship's store, ship's services, the very important commissary and last but not least the beer garden or "Hop Shop."

GSK—profiting by our experience in North Africa, adequate supplies of clothing, bedding, tools, maintenance materials, cleaning gear, galley and mess equipment and the thousands of other items listed in our Allowance List were carefully accumulated, stored and issued. Seldom did we go without anything essential to our work and well-being except when the supply echelons at a higher level did not provide them.

Commissary—Feeding 1,200 men three times a day was not a simple proposition when the Battalion was together at one place, especially when extra meals had to be ready for the extra shifts when we were working around the clock. Our chow was always the envy of other outfits and marines, army and other naval personnel joined the chow line on the slightest pretext. In fact, it was difficult to keep Guamanians and Japs from the boondocks off it. In an average month 36,000 pounds of meat, 8,000 pounds of potatoes, 4,000 pounds of butter and 8,000 loaves of bread were used. The Seabees were seldom, if ever, outeaten. Sixty cooks, butchers, bakers, stewards and jacks-of-dust operated the galley with the usual kitchen police and messmen; they also went forward with the echelons on the invasions. And whenever the mix was available, ice cream machines worked at capacity.

Ship's Service—Just as on Main Street at home, the laundry, tailor, barber, cobbler set up business shops, the services being free where possible.

Ship's Store—Combining the general store and the 5 and 10, it had everything but the stove and cracker barrel. Cigarettes at 4½ cents per pack will probably always be remembered; cigars, candy, magazines, toilet articles, souvenirs and other items essential to comfort were always well stocked. The store did $15,000 worth of business in September, 1945, and the profits paid for the free issue of beer and the major cost of this souvenir book.

Hop Shop—or beer garden was open every night except Sunday. Next to the movies, this was the favorite spot to relax and "shoot the breeze." Even the juke box records fell behind the harmony stirred up by a couple of cans of beer and all the old and new barber shop chords including "Sweet Adeline," "Roll Out the Barrel," "I Had a Dream" were heard. Here too the scuttlebutt brought forth amazing bits of information about the war. Fifty-eight thousand cans of beer were emptied during September 1945, besides the coke.

Disbursing—handled all pay accounts, allotments and allowances in addition to claims for lost gear, clothing, family travel and moving. Pay Call was probably second to mail call in interest even though money was not as essential a commodity on the Rock as it was in the stateside campus. The average monthly payroll for the 70th was around $120,000.

Engineering and surveying, general drafting, refrigerator servicemen and other specialists were furnished by Headquarters but to repeat the observation made earlier, this book can but cover the high spots. Some overlapping of services became necessary when the Battalion was scattered and each Company at times, had to provide its own headquarters facilities as required. Likewise pay accounts and health records had to go along with the widely separated platoons, which ranged from Australia to Japan.

* * *

V-J Day came at a time when the 70th Battalion was reunited on Guam and all efforts were being given to the preparations for the assault landing on and the invasion of the Japanese home islands. In contrast to the hysteria of newer units, the 70th took V-J Day in its stride and the celebrations were quiet, ranging from prayers in the chapel to an extra issue of beer in the "Hop Shop." Seasoned veterans compared experiences at Salerno with Okinawa, North Africa with the Philippines, the Casbah off Algiers with Tacloban in Leyte or for that matter, Arzew with Oahu and Bizerte with Guam or Saipan. The plans for the invasion were converted to plans for the support of occupation forces, so that the actual cessation of hostilities did not change the overall program. While many computed their points and awaited passage home, others volunteered to carry on for as long as they were needed. By October 15, 1945, a considerable number of men were aboard ship, heading for San Francisco.

Pursuant to orders, the 70th Battalion was officially inactivated and decommissioned on October 17, 1945, on Guam. Appropriate ceremonies were held by the relatively small complement remaining, after which the deeds of the 70th became history. These lines are recognized as repetitious and as being totally inadequate to record the many experiences, the hardships and tribulations, the comradeship and satisfaction of being Seabees of the Navy in our greatest war. It must be left to each Seabee to better recount his individual and joint experiences, which doubtless will improve [illegible], as time [illegible]

70th Naval Construction Battalion

Chronology

Dec 1942	Organized at Camp Endicott, Davisville, R.I. Officers assigned at Camp Allen, Norfolk, Va.
Jan 1943	Commissioned at Camp Endicott.
Mar 1943	Moved to ABD, Camp Thomas. Companies A and C detached to form Potoon Detachments 1005 and 1006 officers and men were then relaced, from Camp Peary.
06 Apr 1943	Reviewed by Sec Navy Frank Knox and Admiral B. Moreell.
26 Apr 1943	Departed, via New York, for Mediterranean.
27 May 1943	Arrived Oran, Algeria; based at Arzew and operated at Advanced Amphibious Bases from Casablanca to Bizerte, including Mostaganem, Nemours, Beni-Saf, Cherchel, Delys, Algiers, Karuba and participated in Salerno, Italy landing. CMBU 578 formed prior to leaving North Africa, to maintain base at Arzew.
25 Dec 1943	Arrived Davisville, R.I. Detachments installed equipment at various NAS, including several in R.I., Jacksonville, Florida. Moved to Camp Parks, California.
19 Oct 1944	Departed, via San Francisco, for Pacific.
27 Oct 1944	Arrived Oahu, companies A, C, and D, and HQ Det. boarded ships of amphibious forces to stage for Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Company B moved to Guam. Staging and rehearsals at Saipan, Banika, Rushel Island, Tulagi, Leyte, Samar.
Feb 1945 (L Day)	Co A and Attached HQ and Co B platoons engaged in Iwo Jima assault.
01 Apr 1945 (L Day)	Cos C and D, with attached Co. A, B and HQ Platoons engaged in Okinawa assault.
16 Apr 1945	Ie Shima assault.
May and Jun 1945	All echelons of 70th Battalion returned to Guan to restage for operations against Japan. War ended while almost all detachments were at sea with amphibious forces; they engaged in occupation of Tokyo, Yokahama, Nagasaki, Hakodate and Otarno, Japan; Keijo, Korea; and Tsinghao and Tientsin, China.
17 Oct 1945	Decommissioned on Guam. Fifty-four Purple Hearts (12 killed) in Mediterranean; 24 Purple Hearts at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. 70th was first Seabee Battalion re-deployed from the European-African Theatre to the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre, and was thus the first eligible for all three area campaign ribbons, and the Philippine Liberation decoration.

70th USN Construction Battalion

Commander Arthur J. Benline CEC USNR was officer-in-charge of 70th throughout. He had additional duty as Civil Engineer on Staff Commander Amphibious Group 12, and as Commander Task-Group-LCTs, Bargos and Boat Pools, Amphibious Forces.

December 1942	Organized at Camp Endicott, Davisville, R.I. Officers assigned at Camp Allen, Norfolk, Va.
January 1943	Commissioned at Camp Endicott.
March 1943	Moved to ABD, Camp Thomas. Companies A. and C detached to form Pontoon Detachments 1005 and 1006 officers and men were then replaced, from Camp Peary.
6 April 1943	Reviewed by Sec Navy Frank Knox and Adm. B. Moreell.
26 April 1943	Departed, via New York, for Mediterranean.
27 May 1943	Arrived Oran, Algeria; based at Arzew and operated at Advanced Amphibious Bases from Casablanca to Bizerte, including Mostaganem, Nemours, Beni-Saf, Cherchel, Delys, Algiers, Karuba and participated in Salerno, Italy landing. CMBU 578 formed prior to leaving North Africa, to maintain base at Arzew.
25 December 1943	Arrived Davisville, R.I. Detachments installed equipment at various NAS, including several in R.I., Jacksonville, Flordia. Moved to Camp Parks, California
19 October 1944	Departed, via San Francisco, for Pacific.
27 October 1944	Arrived Oahu, companies A, C, and D, and HQ Det. boarded ships of amphibious forces to stage for Iwo Jima and Okinawa; Co B moved to Guam. Staging and rehearsals at Saipan, Banika, Russel Island, Tulagi, Leyte, Samar.
February 1945 (L Day)	Co A and Attached HQ and Co B platoons engaged in Iwo Jima assault.
1 April 1945 (L Day)	Cos C and D, with attached Co. A, B and HQ platoons engaged in Okinawa assault.
16 April 1945 (L Day)	Ie Shima assault.
May and June 1945	All echelons of 70th Battalion returned to Guan to restage for operations against Japan. War ended while almost all detachments were at sea with amphibious forces; they engaged in occupation of Tokyo, Yokahama, Nagasaki, Hakodate and Otarno, Japan; Keijo, Korea; and Tsingtao and Tientsin, China.
17 October 1945	Decommissioned on Guam.
	Fifty-four Purple Hearts (12 killed) in Mediterranean; 24 Purple Hearts at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. 70th was first Seabee Battalion re-deployed from the European-African Theatre to the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre, and was thus the first eligible for all three area campaign ribbons, and the Philippine Liberation decoration.

(more)

70th USN Construction Battalion

Comdr Arthur J. Benline CEC USNR was officer-in-charge of 70th throughout. He had additional duty as Civil Engineer on Staff Commander Amphibious Group 12, and as Commander Task-Group-LCTs, Barges and Boat Pools, Amphibious Forces.

U S N
70th.
CONSTRUCTION
BATTALION

70 CB