74th Naval Construction Battalion

Historical Information

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

NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

further orders in connection with the movement of the 74th CB. (Hdqtrs Kwajalein ltr P16-4/00/J-2/MWS over Ser 1244 to OinC 74th CB dtd 16 Jun'44)

7-18-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of 74th CB - still operating at Marshalls.

8- 2-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 2nd Brig. - 1st Section of 74th CB were transferred to 2nd Brig during Jun'44.

8-16-44 - Officers and men of 74th CB who were with 2nd Brig. on temp duty ordered to return to 74th CB and resume regular duties. (OinC 2nd Brig ltr 2NCBr-06-HCB/lk over P16-4 dtd 3 Aug'44 to Lt. Parry)

8-28-44 - 200 men from the 74th CB transported from K-9 to Moanalua about 13 Jul'44 by the 20th Reg. (20th Reg. report of 1 Aug'44)

8-30-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 7th Reg. - Approximately 60% of the 74th CB with 7th Reg.; the remainder still on Kwajalein some of whom awaiting transportation to Oahu. 60 men from 74th transferred to the 107th CB.

8-30-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 74th CB - Detachment of 3 off. and 125 men assigned to Marshall Is. to assist in construction of a fleet fuel tank farm; estimated completion date of which is 15 Aug'44. Detachment of 8 off. and 299 men assigned to act as a maintenance unit in the Marshall Is. pending the arrival of CBMUs. 8 off. and 224 men returned to P.H. prior to 1 Jul. 9 officers and 269 men returned to P.H. during the month.

9- 9-44 - Detachment of 5 officers and 253 men from the 74th CB assigned to the 112th CB for temp. duty. (OinC 74th CB ltr 74NCBr/PFA:dc p16-3(2) Ser 60 dtd 1 Sep'44 to Lt. Parry)

10-18-44 — The 74th CB is no longer located at Kwajalein.(Com Marshall-Gilbert Area Sec. disp 012036 NCR 17940 to CNO dtd 9 Oct'44).

10-21-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 74th CB - Located at Pearl Harbor. The two detachments of men in the Marshall Is. completed their work early in Aug'44, but have not been assigned shipping to return to Pearl. Report endorsed by 7th Reg. 43% of the 74th CB still at an advance base.

11-15-44 -- The 74th CB assigned to the 31st Regiment.(Comserforpacflt Sec. ltr 55-CKW/apk over Ser. 001008 to CNO dtd 4 Nov'44).

11-16-44 -- The 74th CB is located at Pearl Hbr.(Com 14 Sec. disp to CNO 062243 NCR 15886 dtd 11 Nov'44).

11-21-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 31st Reg. - All but 100 men of the 74th CB have returned from the forward area; these 100 men were enroute to the Reg. as of 1 Oct. One Co. is presently assigned to and working with the 112th CB on the Kaneohe Air Station The balance of the personnel has been distributed over various misc. cleanup jobs

11-21-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 74th CB - located on Oahu. 250 men temp. assigned to the 112th at Kaneohe.

12-28-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 74th CB - operating at Kaneohe Bay. Report endorsed by the 31st Regiment.

1-10-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 31st Reg. - the 74th CB has been transferred to Kaneohe in order to expedite construction activities in that area.

1-11-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 74th CB - Approximately 650 men moved to NAS Kaneohe on or about 21 Nov'44. On 1 Sep, 250 men had previously moved to the same station, so that the entire battalion is stationed together.

2- 2-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 74th CB - no info on location. Report endorsed by 31st Reg

2-13-45 — 2nd Brg. Sec. ltr Ser. 089 dtd 27 Jan'45 to OinC 74th CB - ordered to proceed on ships to a verbally designated place in the Pacific Area. Upon arrival to report to the 2nd Brg. for duty.

Location - ~~Oahu~~ Okinawa. 74th CB

2-13-45 - The 74th CB is available from Pearl for assignment to Samar.(CNO Sec. ltr to distribution list Ser. 0039230 dtd 3 Feb'45).
2-13-45 - Comserv7flt desires that the 74th CB be lifted from Pearl in Feb'45.(Comserv7flt Sec. disp 061001 to Com7flt dtd 8 Feb'45).
2-17-45 - The 74th CB is located at Pearl Hbr.(Com 14 Sec. disp to CNO 081016 Feb'45).
2-26-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 74th CB - located with H.A.B. Report endorsed by 31st Reg.
4-13-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 74th CB - location not given.
4-16-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 31st Reg. - 74th CB located at Kaneohe. Made arrangements to turn the work over to NOY contractors on departing this area.
4-30-45 - Comserfor7flt Sec Rep of 1 Apr'45 shows the 74th CB ordered from P.H. to Leyte-Samar
5-8-45 - The 74th CB is shown as enroute to Samar on the Dirpacdocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr).
5-11-45 - The 74th CB hereby detached from the 2nd Brg. To report to Comdr Const Troops APO 331. (Comservpac Sec spdltr ser 002008 dtd 4 May'45 to OinCs 74th CB)
5-12-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 74th CB - no info on location. Batt was secured from work on 31 Mar'45.
5-17-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of 74th CB - no info on location. Report end by 31st Reg & 2nd Brig.
7-23-45 - The 74th CB is assigned to the 8th Brg and 37th Reg. (CCT APO 331 sec report on assignment of CB units ser 897 dtd 10 July)
8-18-45 - 1 Aug '45 report of 74th CB - Located at Okinawa. Report via 37th Reg and 8th Brig. 19 off. and 768 men arrived Okinawa on 24 June; 5 off. and 86 men arrived 26 June. 11 men still enroute
8-20-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 74th CB - Batt was stationed at NAS Kaneohe from 1 May to 19 May. On 20 May, 24 off. and 865 men boarded ship and were enroute on 31 May.

Location - Okinawa 74th CB

9-11-45 - Inactivation of following CB units approved Comservpac disps 291935, 290051 & 290007 all Aug:-4,6,7,17,20,66,74,78 & 87 CBs - Okinawa. (Cincpoa conf spdltr ser 032559 dtd 4 Sept'45 to Comservpac).
9-14-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 74th CB. Report via 37th Reg & 8th Brig. No info as to location.
9-29-45 - Comservpac directs to inactivate the following CBs 4, 6, 7, 17, 20, 66, 74, 78 & 87 Inform Comservpac when inactivations are completed. (Comservpac conf spdltr ser0517 dtd 11 Sept'45 to Comdt., NOB, Okinawa).
10-17-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of 74th CB - location not stated. Report via 37th Reg. & 8th Brg.
11-7-45 - 74th CB to be inactivated. (8th Brig. conf ltr ser 0292 dtd 17 Oct'45 to OinC, 74th CB).
12-5-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 8th Brig. states that the 74th CB was inactivated on 31 Oct'45.
1-5-46 - 74th CB reported inactivated since 20 Dec'45. (Comservpac, Pearl disp 022103 Jan '46 to BuPers).

INACTIVATED

HISTORY OF THE SEVENTY-FOURTH U.S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

The 74th U.S. Naval Construction Battalion was formed and commissioned on May 4, 1943 at Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Virginia. The battalion departed Camp Peary on the same day and arrived at Camp Endicott, Davisville, Rhode Island on May 5, 1943. The 74th received their colors at Camp Endicott, and during that ceremony a review and inspection was held for the visiting British Ambassador and his party.

Technical training continued at Camp Endicott and military training at the nearby Sun Valley Rifle Range used by Seabees training at Davisville. The training included the commando course, packing a regulation field pack, judo, machete handling, rapid construction of field fortifications, and instruction in first aid.

On July 1, 1943, the first section of the battalion boarded trains for Camp Parks, California. The move was completed by July 7. During the stay at Camp Parks, the battalion resumed its military training.

The 74th began preparations for its third move after spending a few weeks at Camp Parks. The men boarded trains for this move on July 31, and arrived at Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, California on August 1, 1943. The battalion marched, drilled, and were assigned their first construction equipment. The 74th was also assigned to a unit known as ACORN. ACORN was the designation given to a pre-planned air base. Construction on this type of base had been standardized to such a degree that equipment and materials needed to construct the complete base could be ordered and shipped with any battalion trained to construct such a facility. This type of planning enabled the unit to construct this base on any given island and eliminated a lot of guess work normally encountered.

At Camp Rousseau, the 74th resumed military training which included hikes, overnight bivouac, rifle range practice, and training on a new commando course under Marine Corps supervision.

On August 28, 1943, a review was ordered and ACORN 14 was commissioned. The battalion moved from Camp Rousseau to the adjoining ACORN training area at Splinter City, California. The 74th began to receive and set aside equipment and supplies for its regular use and also for ACORN.

The move to Splinter City marked a great change for the 74th. Training for the battalion was almost over, and the battalion was assigned minor construction projects. Items being packed for the 74th deployment overseas were stored in LST (landing ship, tank) warehouses, each in the shape and size of an LST tank deck.

Many of the men learned about the invasion vessel that they would be using overseas ... a practice craft many battalions of the 74th vintage had used for training. The battalion participated in a practice exercise which included an assault and invasion on nearby Point Mugu, California (on the California coast). In spite of the inexperience of many of the men of the battalion, records were broken and the 74th earned the praise of the military commanders who had observed the exercise.

On September 24, 1943, with equipment loaded aboard LST's, the first wave of men from the battalion embarked and headed out into the Pacific to the 74th's first construction site overseas. The remainder of the battalion sailed in groups during the next two weeks.

During the ten days at sea men of the 74th stood gun watch and K.P. The LST's arrived at Pearl Harbor on October 4, 1943. The hull of the battleship Oklahoma was being raised from the harbor when the unit arrived.

The battalion was assigned to a relatively underdeveloped area. They were quartered with the staion force at a rifle range.

The 74th unloaded their supplies and equipment and stacked them in a dump on land cleared by the battalion's bulldozer operators. The unit built roads, blasted trenches in solid rock for water lines, and started the first barracks and warehouses of what was to become a far-flung military complex.

By October 29, 1943, the LST assigned to the battalion for transportation had been loaded with priority material and the advance party was aboard. On the morning of October 30, 1943, this first echelon put out to sea in the company of a large invasion force containing vessels of every size and description.

Two weeks later a second group embarked on cargo ships, taking with them additional quantities of equipment and supplies.

On November 2, 1943, the remaining men of the battalion boarded a freighter and sailed the following day. Thus, the entire battalion, in three waves, headed for the 74th's second construction site, and this time they would be in the thick of the action.

The convoy stopped over at the island of Funafuti in the Ellice Islands for several days. On the night of November 12, 1943, Japanese bombers made a raid on the island, dropping a number of bombs near the air strip.

Tarawa, a triangular-shaped atoll, is composed of a series of islands in a reef, covering 22 miles in length. The enclosed lagoon, about 17 miles long and tapering from 9 miles to less than a mile in width, is open west, though partially barred by a section of the submerged reef.

Betio, lying at the southwest corner of the Tarawa atoll, measures roughly 2-1/4 miles in length by less than a half mile in width. The reefs of Tarawa average 500 yards in width, the outer reef is about 2 feet higher than the lagoon reef. The beach is from 30 to 50 yards wide, rising only 5 to 6 feet.

Two LST's carrying the 74th entered the lagoon the afternoon of November 20, 1943 to discharge their deck-loaded LCT's. It was not until three days later that the island was declared secured; Tuesday afternoon the 23rd, men of the 74th began unloading the LST's at the edge of the reef, and some stood guard duty ashore that night.

Meanwhile the cargo ships carrying the second wave had circled with a convoy many miles to the southeast, near the carriers whose planes had been bombing the atoll. These cargo vessels entered the lagoon on the morning of the 24th and anchored off Betio.

The assault troops of the Marines were evacuated and their places taken by a defense battalion of the Marines. Marines and Seabees ate in each other's mess halls, wore each other's clothing, and existed on the friendliest basis. Besides operating the anti-aircraft batteries, the Marines set up aircraft detection units and their own communications, providing an effective military defense of Betio while the Seabees' work went forward.

During the remainder of 1943, Army and Navy planes based at Tarawa carried out repeated attacks on enemy holdings in the Marshall Islands and at Nauru, inflicting considerable damage on ships and shore installations.

The assault on Tarawa on November 20, 1943 was bitterly contested by Japanese forces based there. Heavily fortified, and garrisoned by several thousand Japanese troops on Betio, the principal island of the atoll. Tarawa had been attacked repeatedly from the air for weeks preceding the assault, and on the previous day had been heavily bombarded

by surface craft. Although these attacks silenced the Japanese heavy guns, wrecked everything above ground, and killed approximately half the enemy troops, many dugouts, pillboxes, and bomb-proof shelters were still intact or useable.

The enemy was able to concentrate his forces beside the only beach where a landing was possible and in spite of air and surface fire support, American casualties were heavy. The assault lasted nearly four days, at the end of which time the island was considered secure, although subjected to air raids by the Japanese and isolated sniper action.

Unforeseen wind and tide conditions uncovered the inner reef to such an extent that it became impassable to assault craft after the landing of the first wave. Ensuing waves were then forced to wait under heavy fire or disembark their troops at a distance from the beach, in water so deep that wading ashore was extremely difficult. Heavy casualties and the loss of invaluable time resulted.

Ships carrying the first echelons of the construction battalions scheduled for Tarawa, the 74th and 98th, anchored in the lagoon November 24, 1943, D-day-plus 4, and advance reconnaissance parties went ashore as soon as the islands were declared secure. The 74th immediately began unloading LST's (Tank landing Ships) on Betio.

At this point it is appropriate to relate some of the difficulties that faced the battalion personnel. It must be kept in mind that Betio, an island of only 285 acres, was littered with ruined equipment and strewn with unburied dead. Not a single tree remained undamaged and most of the palms were beheaded. Huge piles of partly burned and decaying food lay where the Japanese had maintained supply dumps. Japanese soldiers, uncaptured, remained in hiding for some days after the island was declared secured, and constituted, especially at night, a menace to security. Tarawa had been the curtain raiser of the

Central Pacific campaign and was within easy flying distance of such enemy held bastions as Nauru, Kusaie, and the Marshall Islands field of Jaluit, Mille, and Maloelap.

Most of the American and enemy dead were properly buried by the end of the second week, and sufficient land area cleared of debris to speed the construction of an air base.

On December 3, 1943 at dusk, a group of enemy bombers flew over Betio and dropped their bombs squarely on the runway area. From that date through January 17, 1944, raids occurred every two or three nights and sometimes on successive nights. The intensive phase of the battalion's work lasted until after this period of bombings. During this time all men of the battalion worked twelve hours a day, seven days a week.

Surveying and mapping parties preceded the construction gangs in every phase of the battalion's construction operations. They laid out the work to be done and mapped the progress of the jobs. Often these parties worked under the most trying conditions, especially at the start where hazards remaining from the battle lay in the path of the landing strip extension.

When the airfield and taxiways had been surveyed, a party went on to map the nearby islands and locate installations on them. Other groups located and set markers for camp areas, gun positions, warehouses, and every type of construction to be undertaken. Detailed maps were made of Betio, Bairiki, and Eita.

On November 26, 1943, while clearing ground for the first permanent Seabee galley, a tractor operator flushed a Japanese soldier from beneath fallen palms and other debris. The Japanese fled and was attended to by Marines. In mid-December one of the men was shot at and narrowly missed. A dozer operator working nearby was commandeered to level the dugout from which the shot had apparently been fired. When he completed his pass, fresh blood was found on the blade of his dozer.

Coral placed on the air strips taxiways, hardstands, and roads averaged a 12-inch depth, and over three and a half million square feet of ground was covered with coral. Three-fourths of this job was done on a 24-hour work basis.

The number one priority job for the men of the 74th Battalion was the completion of the projected landing strip. All other work was subordinate. It took men of the battalion operating bulldozers fifteen hours to fill and grade the holes in this strip so fighter planes could land. The work of extending the length on the strip began immediately thereafter. In 24 days this job was completed sufficiently for B-24 Liberators to land. This was 18 days ahead of schedule.

The Corpsmen who were among the first ashore after the assault took part in the preliminary work of cleaning up the island of Tarawa and making it safe for men to live there.

Three days after landing, the first major surgery, a successful appendectomy, was performed in only 17 minutes. The battalion's sick bay handled on an average of two thousand men a week at sick call.

One of the largest and busiest divisions of the battalion work was camp construction. From a makeshift beginning of tents located around a shell-torn chapel, camps for each of the battalions' four companies were constructed with all necessary facilities.

Another complete camp with a galley, mess hall, water tower and tent platforms, was built and turned over to an Army Bombardment Squadron.

A command post made of several inter-connected steel magazines placed underground and covered with logs and sand was completed in Feb. 1944. Other construction

included: water towers, warehouses, machine ships, a fleet post office and miscellaneous structures of many kinds and sizes completed on all parts of the island.

On Buota Island two mess halls with galleys, an office building, sanitation facilities and a large tent were set up for units of a bombardment group stationed there. On Bairiki Island 100 prefabricated buildings, 28 quonset huts, a hospital, and ammo magazines were built for the 7th Air Force and Defense Marines.

On Betio a total of 28 wells were drilled, six for supplying the stills with salt water, 18 to furnish water for sprinkling the landing strips, and four for fire pretection at the tank farm. These wells were all about 125 feet deep and the casings were six inches in diameter, with five notable exceptions: in the absence of regular casing, Japanese oxygen bottles seven inches in diameter were utilized by burning off the ends with a torch and welding the sections together; these were sunk in the ground and made an effective casing.

Storage facilities for aviation gasoline were placed high on the list of priority jobs. The tank farm crews distinguished themselves for speed and earned the reputation of being the "tank-a-day" men.

Excavations for the tanks were dug in one of the bloodiest areas of the battlefield of Tarawa. Tanks were assembled and tested as fast as the material was brought ashore. Four and a half miles of connecting pipeline was laid underground and a sea line was extended beyond the reef. While hauling out this sea line a tractor was destroyed by an enemy land mine remaining from the battle.

In the battle of Betio, the old Japanese docks took a severe mauling from bullets and grenades used to dislodge snipers concealed beneath it. Intended originally for foot traffic and small wheeled carts, it was inadequate and dangerous for heavier

vehicles. The seaward end, battered by Japanese defensive fire, was so treacherous that a visiting Admiral fell flat on his face negotiating it.

Steel rails for the narrow-guage railway used by the Japanese were driven upright at intervals with a pile driver; the method was devised on the spot. For stability these rails were joined by reinforcing rods welded horizontally left by the Japanese. The side walls of the jetty were fashioned of pierced plank, wire-tied to the rails and laid facing inboard. Behind these, to keep the coral fill from washing through the holes, a sheathing of galvanized iron left by the Japanese was used. Coral was tightly packed between these walls, the fill was estimated at better than 14,000 cubic yards.

At the outer end an artificial coral island was piled up so LST's and smaller craft could be nosed in to discharge there cargoes directly to the trucks. This facility terminated the old method of driving over the reef at low tide, with its unavoidable destructive action of salt water and coral on the engine and moving parts of the trucks.

THE DIVING AND DEMOLITION CREW - one of the smallest units of the battalion was kept busy and spent most of their time on the ocean floor, salvaging equipment, removing debris and obstacles to navigation, and assisting with the installation of underwater cables and pipelines. There were called upon to retrieve lost articles and to examine the hulls of ships. On one occasion they were sent down after the bodies of men in a bomber crew. The plane had been lost after it crashed in the lagoon, and they were singularly successful in this task.

In the course of salvage operations ships of various sizes and types were either destroyed where they lay or floated to deep water and there sunk. The demolition crew cooperated with the divers in this work. These crews also drilled and blasted coral

along the shore and in deep water to clear channels for navigation and for the construction of marginal wharves.

All major repairs to the battalion's equipment as well as those of nearly every other outfit on Betio were made in the 74th portable machine ship. Special wrenches and other tools were made to carry on with certain jobs. Rubber tracks from a damaged tank were fitted to a tractor. Crane booms were straightened and rebuilt. One large crane, wrecked in unloading, was restored to service by rebuilding its main turnable bushings. The intricate teeth on a portable chain saw were duplicated and fire control positions were armor plated to protect the men from flying shrapnel. These were but a few of the many odd jobs carried out by the 74th's machinists.

Two weeks before the battalion was secured from work on Tarawa, a surveying party flew to Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. These men undertook several jobs including the layout of a large steel tower on the island of Enubuj and the mapping of Kwajalein, Ebeye, Enubuj, and Gugegwe Islands.

Groups began leaving Betio on February 28, 1944 on LST's (tank landing ships). By the end of the following week the entire battalion was on their way to Kwajalein.

A group of men from the 74th Battalion on one of the vessels heading for Kwajalein Atoll, anchored overnight off Enubuj, then put a few days in at Gugegwe, and finally moving on to Rio where a grounded LST (tank landing ship) required assistance in getting off. The men on this ship had ample time to visit the recent battlefield on Rio and Namur and observe the ruined Japanese installations on the two islets.

Soon after the middle of March 1944, the battalion personnel had been detailed to the various islands near Kwajalein where they constructed quarters and other facilities for subsistence.

facilities for subsistence.

Kwajalein differed from Tarawa in many respects. Here the 74th's work was to supplement that of the Army Aeronautical Engineers. The Army had already converted the air strip on Kwajalein Island for the uses of the 7th Air Force and were laying out the site of the Air Depot.

Other Naval units were at work on Kwajalein also. There was no dominating assignment with the many contributing subordinate projects such as those the 74th had recently completed on Tarawa.

The battalion however, was staffed with men who were equipped to do many specific, vital jobs needed on the many islands around the atoll. Relieved of the strain under which they had become used to working, and given much more favorable living conditions, the men outdid themselves. Camps and buildings were erected on six islands. Nearly every type of military building was constructed by men of the 74th.

A detail was sent to Ewadack to set up a highly technical installation and a camp to go with it. The work went ahead as scheduled. A large area was cleared and the men were entirely on their own, acting as cooks, corpsmen, guards, mechanics and builders. Three small quonset huts and nine tents were erected, a water tower, a lookout tower, a galley, and a complete water supply system. The men even laid out a baseball diamond. In nine days they turned this camp over to a Gropac unit.

Captured Japanese material was utilized on Kwajalein as it had been on Betio. A good deal of stored cement was found and used on construction, as were tons of reinforcing steel, though much of the latter was unfit and had to be discarded.

Electricians from the 74th installed and maintained branch plants on five different islands. An average of 75 men were employed with a total of 28 diesel fueled

generators on the lines. Camps and buildings were wired by electrical crews from the 74th.

The refrigeration crew provided equipment on several islands. On Gugegwe they turned out an 8-gallon ice cream freezer, mostly of scrapped Japanese material.

Dock work around Kwajalein Atoll comprised five large projects. The most impressive of these was the 250-foot wide dock built for the boat pool in Kwajalein Island. This extended 150-feet out into the water and was fifteen feet high. It was built without interference to the Boat pool operations. 60,000 lineal feet of cocoanut logs were used in this project.

An officers' mess 20 by 40 feet had to be moved at one stage of the work. This was done with tables fully set for luncheon. Skids were run under it, a bulldozer hitched up, and the structure moved 200 yards without disturbing a dish or spilling a glass of water.

Two docks were undertaken on Gugegwe. The first of these was to repair and make serviceable a small ship ways. This was found in good condition and the breakwalls running into the lagoon were intact and most of the ramp and railway undamaged. However, heaps of debris had to be cleared from around the structure and a sunken ship removed from the foot of the railway, which stretched far out under water. A new dock to handle the unloading of small craft was built of concrete blocks cast in place. Considerable difficulty was encountered in setting these blocks due to the undercutting action of the sea, but the work was accomplished.

The main Japanese dock on Kwajalein Island was an impressive and useful facility. Partly demolished by shell fire during the battle for the island, rebuilding at the lagoon end and patching throughout the length became necessary in order to obtain full use of it.

To take this dock the Army had had to knock out pillboxes set along it at regular intervals and had used heavy concentrations of artillery. There was considerable damage at these point, as well as along the lagoon face. They were repaired entirely with reinforced concrete.

The fifth project on another island, called for a wharf to accommodate small boats. Again concrete was used and the blocks were cast ashore, which necessitated skillful riggings to place them accurately.

The diving and demolition crew raised and towed out to sea and disposed of more than thirty hulks while at Kwajalein.

Pontoon men built many large tank and cargo barges while at Kwajalein. They also constructed a floating drydock. These were put into service for other organizations. All told, some 2,800 pontoon cells were assembled.

Ironworkers were assigned a job on Enubuj. Here there had been two skeleton steel towers 227 feet high, erected by the Japanese. During the battle for the island one of them had been destroyed, while the other still stood -- on three legs. The first fifty feet of the fourth leg had been shot away. The crew from the 74th was assigned to save this damaged tower, which they did by using repair sections cut from parts of its demolished mate.

On another island a complicated 15-ton signal tower was erected to carry a large searchlight and serve as a lookout and signal station. This tower was designed and built in the 74th's machine shop on Kwajalein Island, transported in sections, and re-assembled in place. The ironworkers built and maintained their own camps on both islands.

The tank-a-day set at Tarawa maintained their reputation on Kwajalein. Two large tank farms were erected. Assisting the crew from the 74th were 17 Army sergeants.

Miles of coral surfacing for roads was placed by the heavy equipment and transportation details on several islands. The highways were also straightened and leveled. These drivers and operators also paved many areas with coral around buildings and through camp sites.

The 74th Battalion was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for the time the unit served in the Gilbert Islands helping to build and maintain American bases. The award was for the period of November 23, 1943 to February 1, 1944.

While this construction was in progress on Kwajalein, the battalion began redeploying to Oahu. The first echelon of the 74th departed Kwajalein Island on June 4, 1944 and the last group from the battalion departed on June 11, 1944.

The 74th was assigned to Moanalua Ridge, Oahu. They worked on small construction tasks there until November 4, 1944. At this time they moved to Kaneohe Naval Air Station. They remained at this location working on small construction projects and preparing for their next assignement. On May 20, 1945 the 74th sailed aboard the USS Bengham via Eniwetok Atoll and ~~Saigon~~ Saipan, they reached Okinawa on 24-26 June 1945. The invasion of Okinawa began on April 1, 1945. The 74th assigned to various construction and maintenance projects. The battalion worked extensively on the Yonabaru airfield which was operationally complete as of August 15, 1945. The battalion was serving on Okinawa when Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945.

The 74th U.S. Naval Construction Battalion was inactivated in December 1945.

United States

Itinerary of Naval Construction Battalion 74

28 Apr 43	Naval Construction Battalion 74 activated at Naval Construction Training Center, Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Virginia.
4 May 43	Battalion departed Camp Peary, transferred to Naval Construction Training Center, Camp Endicott, Davisville, Rhode Island, for advanced training.
30 Jun 43	Battalion departed Camp Endicott for Camp Parks, California.
7 Jul 43	Battalion arrived CBRD, Camp Parks, Pleasanton, California.
31 Jul 43	Battalion departed Camp Parks.
1 Aug 43	Battalion arrived advance Base Depot, Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, California.
24 Sep 43 to 18 Oct 43	Battalion departed Port Hueneme in three echelons, 30 officers and 1042 enlisted men, and arrived at Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii.
30 Oct 43 to 17 Dec 43	Battalion sailed in three echelons and arrived at Tarawa Atoll in the Gilbert Islands.
20 Nov 43	D-day at Tarawa. Marines landed at Betio and other islands. Seabees of Naval Construction Battalion 74 began unloading equipment and supplies D-day + 3. Battalion restored Japanese airstrip in 15 hours. Constructed facilities of Acorn.
29 Feb 44 to 12 Mar 44	Battalion departed Tarawa in two echelons and arrived at Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Construction work on airfield. Built Piers, tank farm, and camp facilities.
4 Jun 44 to 11 Oct 44	Battalion departed Kwajalein in six echelons and arrived at Moanalua Ridge, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii. Various construction work. Under Second Naval Construction Brigade and Thirty-first Naval Construction Regiment

1 Nov 44	Battalion transferred to Kaneohe Naval Air Station, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii. Constructed fighter strip, fuel tanks, and camp facilities.
20 May 45 to 24 Jun 45	Battalion sailed in increments from Oahu on USS Bingham via Eniwetok and Ulithi, and arrived Okinawa. (Main Body)
24 May 45 to 26 Jun 45	Rear echelons of battalion sailed from Oahu on seven LSTs Eniwetok and Saipan and arrived Okinawa.
24 Jun 45	Battalion attached to ~~Nx~~ Eighth Naval Construction Brigade and Thirty-seventh Naval Construction Regiment on Okinawa. Helped construct Yonabaru airstrip. Built tide-gates and seawall.
31 Oct 45	Battalion inactivated on Okinawa.

OFFICERS-IN-CHARGE

Date assumed command	
28 May 43	LCDR Fremont G. Elliott, CEC, USNR
17 Jun 44	LCDR Herbert N. Jones, CEC, USNR
14 Jul 44	LCDR Philip F. Auer, CEC, USNR
16 Jul 45	LCDR Herbert N. Jones, CEC, USNR
7 Aug 45	LCDR Louis J. Kern, CEC, USNR
Oct 45	LT David B. Parry, CEC, USNR

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