

75th Naval Construction Battalion

*Historical
Information*



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



75th C. B.

NCTC - Davisville
ABD - Hueneme
Ready Date - 22 Apr'43
Left ABD - 11 Jun'43 (Left U.S. 9 Jun'43)
Location - Cub 9 Bougainville Russells- Milne Bay Leyte-Samar

LOG

- 3-18-43 - Transferred to Camp Parks FFT Hueneme.
- 4-18-43 - 75th Arrived Hueneme from Camp Parks.
- 6-11-43 - Departed Hueneme for assignment with Cub 9 about 11 Jun'43.
- 9- 1-43 - 1 Aug'43 report of 75th CB - Departed U.S. 9 Jun'43 and arrived New Caledonia 25 June'43.
- 11- 4-43 - 1 Oct'43 report of 75th CB - Arrived Guadalcanal 21 Sep'43 - forward movement expected.
- 12- 6-43 - 1 Nov'43 report of 75th CB - preparing to move forward in six echelons.
- 1-29-44 - 1 Dec'43 report of 75th CB - operating at Bougainville.
- 2-17-44 - 1 Jan'44 report of 75th CB - operating at Bougainville.
- 3-20-44 - 1 Feb'44 report of 75th CB - operating at Torokina.
- 4- 8-44 - 1 Mar'44 report of 75th CB - operating at Bougainville.
- 5- 5- 44 - 1 Apr'44 report of 75th CB - operating at Bougainville.
- 5-27-44 - 147 men of CD 2275 scheduled for the 16th CB assigned to the 75th CB. (16th Reg. Sec. ltr. dtd 6 May'44 to OinC 75th CB)

75th C.B.

- 5-31-44 - 1 May'44 report of 75th CB - operating at Bougainville.
- 6-14-44 - 75th CB arrived Russells 27 May'44. (CNB Russells to Comseronsopacfor 030025 Jun'44 (SC).
- 6-29-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of 75th CB - Operations at Torokina secured 20 May'44 for movement from island. Secured from military duties 24 May'44.
- 7-31-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 75th CB - operating at Russells. 75th CB shipped out of Torokina 25 May'44 and came ashore at Banika 27 May'44.
- 8- 9-44 - According to 3rd End. by Comserfor7flt on PAD #3 monthly report for 1 Jul'44, the 75th CB has been ordered to Gilli Gilli and is now awaiting transportation from the Russells.
- 8-25-44 - 75th CB operating at Russells - Following info from Data of SoPac as of 7/1/44:
 - Jun'43 - arrived Noumea
 - Sep'43 - " Guadalcanal
 - Nov'43 - " Bougainville
 - May'44 - " RussellsAwaiting shipment to SoWesPac.
- 8-29-44 - 75th CB departed from Russells 13 Aug'44. (CNB Russells Airmailgram 150147 NCR 14207 dtd 21 Aug'44 to Comseronsopac)
- 9-16-44 - 75th CB arrived Milne Bay 20 Aug'44. (Comseronsopacfor Sec. ltr. P16-1/A9 over Ser 001264 dtd 2 Sep'44 to Budocks)
- 10-24-44 - 75th CB arrived Milne Bay (18 Aug'44) from Russells. 200 men assigned temp. duty with PAD #3. (Comserfor7flt monthly report for Aug'44 to Budocks Ser. BFO01815 Secret dtd 12 Sep'44).

75th C.B.

0650

- 10-27-44 - 75th CB assigned to Cub IZ for operations at KING 2. (Comserfor7flt Sec. Ltr to Budocks S31 over Ser BP-001873 dtd 6 Oct'44. Call No. 13668)
- 11- 4-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 75th CB - Embarked 12 Aug'44 from Russells and landed 19 Aug'44 at Milne Bay, where it is now operating. Report endorsed by 12th Reg.
- 11-8-44 - 75th CB is in the 12th Reg. and is located at Gamadodo. Assigned to KING 2 operation. (Comserfor7flt Sec. ltr A9-4 over Ser BP-C01882 to Budocks dtd 12 Oct'44 monthly report for Sep'44)
- 11-29-44 - 75th CB located at Tacloban, Leyte. (Comserv7flt Sec. Disp. to CNO 150133 NCR 18921 dtd 24 Nov'44)
- 12-15-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 75th CB - All projects at Gamadodo secured 26 Sep'44. Report endorsed by 12th Regiment.
- 12-28-44 - The 75th CB left 12 Oct'44 with the 12th Reg. for Leyte. (Comserfor7flt Sec. report for Oct'44 dtd 20 Nov'44).
- 1-13-45 - 75th CB in the 12th Regiment and located at Samar. (Comserfor7flt Sec report for Nov'44 dtd 15 Dec'44)
- 1-26-45 - 1 Nov'44 report of the 12th Reg. - The 75th CB moved from Milne Bay to Leyte during Oct'44.
- 1-26-45 - 1 Nov'44 report of the 75th CB - located at Leyte. Report endorsed by 12th Reg.
- 2- 2-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 75th CB - located on Leyte. Report endorsed by 12th Reg.
- 2-14-45 - The 75th CB is located at Calicoan Is. near Samar. (Comserfor7flt Sec. report dtd 15 Jan'45 for Dec'44).
- 3- 2-45 - Historical Report by 12th Reg. on Naval Base Leyte - (Comserfor7flt Conf ltr A12 over BP-0172 dtd 7 Feb'45 to Budocks) -
24 Oct'44 - "Streamlined elements" of the 12th Reg. arr'd in Leyte Gulf. Debarked at Tacloban on same day. The first echelon of streamlined

75th C.B.

- 3- 2-45 - Historical Report by 12th Reg. on Naval Base Leyte (Cont.) -
24 Oct'44 - (cont.) - batts included about 830 off. and men of the 75th and 105th CBs, 120 off. and men of Det. 1024, and 36 off. and men of the 12th Reg. The Reg. was joined by the 61st CB with about 1100 off. and men on this day.
30 Oct'44 - Detachment of the 88th CB, 580 off. and men, joined the Regiment.
1 Nov'44 - The 75th and 105th CBs, and Det. 1024 began to move to the vicinity of San Antonio to develop facilities on Samar Is. The 6th and 19th Sps. arr'd at about this time.
12 Nov'44 - ~~Detachment of~~ the 93rd CB, 960 off. and men, joined the Regiment.
12-14 Nov'44 - Second echelons of the streamlined units arrived.
Because of the prohibitive ground conditions, const. of naval base facilities was delayed until further studies and reallocations could be made. During this time (about 1 wk) the 75th, 105th, and Det. 1024 developed camp areas, first in Tacloban, then on Anibong Point.
9 Dec'44 - Movement of all regimental and naval base units to Guiuan was begun. (Because of the expected compl. date of the Army airstrip could not be met due to poor soil conditions, an area in southern Samar Is. near Guiuan was scouted and found suitable for an airstrip and also preferable for other intended installations. Hence, on 9 Dec., it was finally decided to build all naval facilities at Guiuan)
- 3-15-45 -- Comserfor7flt conf. spdltr Ser. 067 dtd 2 Mar'45 to CNOB Leyte Gulf - The 75th CB is hereby detached from its presently assigned duties. Shall report to CNOB Leyte Gulf for duty with Commander Construction Forces Leyte-Samar.

Location - Leyte-Samar

75th CB

- 9-20-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 33rd Reg. 75th CB detached from 33rd Reg on 29 Aug'45.
- 10-1-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 34th Reg. 75th CB reported for duty to 34th Reg. on 30 Aug.45.
- 10-17-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of 75th CB - located in Samar area. Report via 34th Reg. & 7th Brig. 215 men transferred to U.S. for discharge under the point system. 354 men transferred to other units. 227 men transferred to U.S. for leave & reassignment. CBMUs 569, 582 & 586 reported aboard & were inactivated. 4 off. & 165 men arrived Jinamoc Is. on 15 Sept'45 for duty with NAB & to take over maintenance work.
- 11-20-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 75th CB - location not stated. Report via 34th Reg. & 7th Brig 44 men transferred to other units. 103 men transferred to U.S. for discharge under the point system. 78 men transferred for leave & reassignment. 154 men rec'd as replacements.
- 12-7-45 - Comservpac reqs Comphilseafron to inactivate 75th CB. (Comservpac restr disp 060115 Dec'45 to Comphilseafron).
- 3-5-46 - 75th CB inactivated between 31 January and 28 February 1946. Exact date not given. (Comservpac disp 022110 March)

INACTIVATED

HISTORY OF SEVENTY-FIFTH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

REJ:rh

17 July 1945

An informal history of the 75th Naval Construction Battalion is herewith presented for your approval.

It is realized that it is impossible to dwell on each small detail and instance in the history of the battalion. However, with the help of Lt. Charles W. Sunday, CEC, USNR, and Lt. Joseph D. Miot, Jr., CEC, USNR, I believe the most important things have been discussed in the following text and that information contained therein is accurate.

- CAMP ALLEN -

When 1942, with its heartbreaks, fears, setbacks and a too-nail hold on an unheard of dot in the Pacific called Guadalcanal was drawing to a close, the conception took place for that which was soon after to be born as the Seventy-Fifth Naval Construction Battalion.

Officers who had been on active service for a year or less received their "walking papers", while other officers-to-be received their calls to active duty - to report for training at a place near Norfolk called "Camp Allen". "Camp Allen" when first viewed by the confused neophyte had somewhat the appearance of an unfinished and highly temporary penitentiary.

Upon arrival, as is inevitably the case in the Navy, you were immediately informed that this was the "right place, all right, but first ya gotta go to NCB to git ya orders endorsed." NCB was a formidable looking compound of buildings, about 2 miles down the road, appearing to be of a considerably more substantial nature than Allen. By the process of elimination, the right building was located and after a reasonable amount of red tape, the endorsement on the orders was typed in. However, again, as it always the case in the Navy, "Commander _____ is out right now and he's the only one who can endorse your orders. Why doncha secure for show and report again on this desk about 1330." The clerk (we learned later was a "yeoman") was timidly requested to translate this strange jargon and with infinite

patience and a visible effort to control himself explained that we might go get our lunch and return to get the endorsement at 1:30 P.M.

This vital operation took sufficient time to assure our getting back to Allen after "1700" just after Commander Mansford, "the guy ya gotta see first", had "secured" for the day. However, his assistant, aide-de-camp and vice-president-in-charge-of-giving-you-the-glad-hand, Ensign Gillis, endorsed the orders in his stead, or "by direction". It has never been fully understood how this departure came about. It was clearly an upset of some sort, as such forethought was utterly unique.

We were then shown to the "Bachelor Officers' Quarters", or just "BQ", which fell just a mile short of its impressive name. Some loose talk was overheard pointing out its marked similarity to a fishhouse of the better class. No less than a hundred of the world's choicest snarers and seaglers were confined to a bull pen containing just as many double decker bunks as careful planning would allow. After ascertaining, to our horror, that there was no valet service, and after indulging in the unheard of practice of making up our bunks, we located the mess hall, performed the necessary functions there, returned and began to go to bed while gradually indulging in the guarded, self-conscious conversation people always employ while getting acquainted.

It should be pointed out here that the "We" as used up to the first official meeting of the officers who were to form the Seventy-fifth Command, pertains to any of the dejected groups of individuals drawn together by mutual bewilderment while undergoing this strange form of existence.

Two quick days of being made into officers; and, by the grace of an enthusiastic congress, gentlemen; followed. We were rudely awakened in the middle of the night and marched out to a veritable tundra and there put through a series of antics calculated to break down even the strongest of muscle and heart among us. It was known as "P.T." (physical teardown). This particular indignity was provided over by a fiend in human form. One of those objectionable people who just oozes with robust health and good fellowship. The type that runs boys' summer camps. Assuming this we had to run over to the mess hall for what purported to be breakfast. Even had it been one of the culinary masterpieces of a Baltimore and Ohio diner, few would have been able to handle it after that ordeal.

Several hours later, when the sun had risen and when normal human beings should be getting up, we had been through "muster". (That's when everybody stands up in lines, at what is supposed to be attention, and is browbeaten by Commander Hilburg who out-Frussians all the Vons of the Fatherland.) We had been inoculated for every bug in the book, had had both major apertures probed by the medical officer and "surgerymen". The latter are a special breed of enlisted sub-ocrats who probably possess the vastest stores of misinformation of all the strange categories of Naval Personnel. We had been alternately told what potential Dways we were, by Ensign Hirschfield, and informed by a frightening Marine Corporal that never in his five "hitches" had he seen such "dopes".

After this the day started. Classes were held in all possible subjects allowed by the necessarily short training period. We were instructed briefly in Naval law, explosives, handling of firearms, history and organization of the Navy. We were taught close order drill and how and when to salute. Sandwiched between these had to be the getting of uniforms and issue gear; and the attending to the thousand and one details that no one can foresee nor describe.

It wasn't apparent at first but in three or four days one realized that a change was taking place. It was intangible, to be sure, but it couldn't escape notice that the boys were walking a little more erect, gave snappier salutes, employed military terminology without a thought, looked better and, in spite of themselves, felt better. The P.T. didn't seem quite as diabolical, the marches not quite as fast or long, and the feet and rifle seemed to be in the right place at the right time of their own volition. I doubt if anybody ever admitted it to his fellow trainees but I'm damn sure he grudgingly admitted to himself he liked the thing!

About the eighth day the list of officers to be assigned to a battalion designated as the "Seventy-fifth" was posted. Lieutenant Commander John E. Sevelaine was skipper. He gathered the new "us" together, for our initial meeting and conference and we were immediately informed that we were to proceed to Camp Radicott, Rhode Island, where we would undergo a more special and comprehensive course of training as individuals for a period before we joined our enlisted personnel and began to train and function as a unit.

As all new outfits probably do, we unanimously decided to "get the war over with and get back home". At this point it amounted to depriving ourselves of our four days over and above travel time and arriving at Endicott before we were expected. We weren't sure, though, as will be brought out forcibly later on.

- CAMP ENDICOTT -

Endicott, although not completed, was far superior to Allen as far as comforts and conveniences were concerned. Throughout our entire training period before leaving the country the preparing of the personnel followed one complete cycle of the sine wave. We started out the rough way at Allen, lived for awhile as officers at Endicott and Parks and then began over again on the rough side readying for the relative hardships of overseas duty.

After getting "squared away" we began the fuller and more deliberate training which included courses in Sasee construction methods and handling of specialized Sasee equipment. Most outstanding of these was probably the assembly and varied uses of the porton cells and propulsion units. Military and physical training were carried on in a gradually increasing tempo and men found themselves taking hikes and running obstacle courses impossible a few short weeks before.

The enlisted men assigned to our battalion at Endicott were likewise being trained in similar fields.

About a month after the beginning of training at Endicott a date was set for the Battalion Review. In preparation for this the battalion began unofficially functioning as a unit: the officers and men drilling together and being coached for the review, by the station instructors.

The review represented the climax of the military phase of the training and as pacifistic as Americans claim they are, I don't think there was a man there that day who wasn't thrilled. The uniforms, the band, the flags and the precision movements just get you, and there's no denying it.

The Seventy-fifth was now a full-fledged battalion. Schooling in construction and close and extended order drill were conducted on this basis. Each man

in the battalion was interviewed by his company officers and a card index file was set up by rating and qualification. A sham infantry battle was held one day. The battalion was divided into two halves, marched 10 miles through the snow to a patch of woods suitable for simulated jungle warfare. One "army" took defensive positions and the other attacked. The outcome of the issue is still in question but casualties on both sides were admittedly very heavy. Prevailing conditions caused the training gained thereby to be more nearly suitable for an Alaskan assignment than one in the South Seas. Ganteaux had to be thawed by fire and frozen spam sandwiches were gawped for lunch.

In March we were alerted for transportation to the west coast. This gave rise to the second debacle brought about by the policy of getting the war over with right away. "Transportation" informed the Great Minds that Pullmans would be available on a certain date but that we could leave five days earlier by coach. This golden opportunity was snapped up and depart in coaches we did. It is to be noted, however, that the Great Minds, i.e., the officers, traveled in Pullmans - one being assigned to each of the three trains. The railroad functionaries made a vain attempt to keep hopes up by promising Pullmans "tomorrow for certain" for five consecutive days. The coach travel was an unjustified hardship on the men. The cars furnished were of a design intended for short suburban runs only and toilet and washing facilities were commensurate. The situation was helped none at all when at every major stopping point the boys (all volunteers) would see fat and complacent civilians passing by by the hundreds in deluxe sleepers and lounge cars. At Kansas City the medical officers refused to allow the men to ride another mile under those conditions; and after about thirty-six hours of wrangling with the railroad and Pullman people we departed in tourist sleepers.

- CAMP PARKS -

When we arrived at Camp Parks we learned our priceless services were not as much in demand as we had led ourselves to believe and that after all, the war wasn't going to be cut short by five days owing to our enthusiasm.

We had attempted to get leave for all hands in Madisett inasmuch as virtually all of us were Easterners. This would have saved us quite a few dollars and saved the railroads many a passenger-mile. "No, that isn't the way the set-up works,

you'll get leave from Parks." So we did. Within fifteen hours of arrival ninety-five percent of the battalion was headed back East. Things like that seem to be planned so as not to allow a single railroad car to rest for a minute from serving the war effort.

Leave over, we found Camp Parks not an unpleasant place, although it was also about half completed. Life here was similar to that of Endicott with the exception of the nice California weather.

We moved to Camp Rousseau at Port Huon in late April and began a much rougher life than that afforded by the two previous camps. This was resented at the time but we were very thankful for its conditioning effect when we later hit virgin land in New Caledonia.

CAMP ROUSSEAU

At Huon ("Rousseau" seemed to be restricted to paper use only) we had a chance to enter into small work projects and to have a look at the equipment we were to be furnished. Stiff physical conditioning was kept up and instruction in jungle life and conditions was conducted. Opportunities presented themselves to observe shiploading methods. This proved invaluable later on.

It was at Huon that we learned our immediate destination and that, together with another construction and a stevedoring battalion, we were to be absorbed by a Cub Unit.

Almost five months to the day from the battalion's inception at Allen, we sailed for New Caledonia with the Cub and stevedoring battalion personnel. The other construction battalion followed at a later date. Enroute, working parties were formed on paper and tentative plans for unloading and setting up camp were made.

There were no docking facilities whatever at the point we anchored in New Caledonia. Lighters and barges were necessary for all unloading and labor was furnished by our own green personnel.

Probably the loading plan for the ships was formulated with a view toward compactness and ballast, and was intended for outfits disembarking at an estab-

lished base. Certainly it was not for outfits who had to land cold and set up their own facilities. The location allocated us was a red clay mountainside. Practically everything seemed to have been loaded into the ships backwards. Bulldozers, fuel, tentage and housekeeping supplies all seemed to come off last.

Rain accompanied our unloading and setting up of camp; as later proved to be the case without exception in every move the battalion made.

What seemed on the surface to be just a period of waiting at New Caledonia was actually our most invaluable period of training. For the first time we could really examine our equipment and supplies and take stock, as it were. We were able to see Public Works and Naval Supply Depots in action in the field. We were also able to visit and observe older battalions in operation.

A rifle range was installed for practice and periodic jungle field conditions were simulated. Two officers and two enlisted men were sent to Guadalcanal for combat intelligence training. Two officers were sent to Vella Lavella for reconnaissance work and amphibious operations. They gained valuable experience in combat beachhead operations and problems.

Construction jobs were assigned to us which permitted the observation of officers and men at work and their abilities and suitability could be catalogued. A hundred acres of virgin beach front was developed into a suitable staging area for the Gub Unit. This included camp housing facilities for three thousand men, open storage areas for forty thousand tons of cargo, dock facilities for small craft and lighters, and miles of surfaced all-weather highways and access roads, and a "motor pool" with operating and maintenance facilities for all base construction and mobile equipment.

When the time came in September to load for Guadalcanal and final staging we loaded so that just as far as possible the things needed first could be taken off first. Although at the moment this seemed utter chaos to the individual, when reviewed in retrospect the departure came off with remarkably little confusion. The battalion effected its move as a unit which proved an advantage.

- GUADALCANAL -

Although officially secured, Guadalcanal was still subjected to frequent nuisance air raids. This made the ships' officers justifiably jittery. One of the two Navy vessels carrying us had been torpedoed there not many months back and had been saved

only by the narrowest margin. Beginning a day before arrival and continuing through discharging, both ships had an atmosphere of extreme apprehension. As in New Caledonia, the spot assigned to us in Guadalcanal was at Doma Cove near Cape Esperance, and we were the first troops to move in after the big Jay slaughter and it was virgin territory. We were unloaded by ships' companies and again lighters and barges were the sole means of getting material ashore. A combination of nervous crews and ones apparently totally inexperienced in stevedoring and intermittent rough water made this unloading the costliest in equipment that we have experienced in our tour overseas. In one case a three-quarter yard shovel plus the booms to several others slid overboard from a pontoon barge in rough water simply because they didn't have time to lash the cargo down. Loss of this equipment and parts was quite a handicap for for some essential equipment had been crippled by this loss and remained unusable until new parts could be made.

The ships had a practically impossible deadline set and to come anywhere near it were forced to literally dump us and our staff on the beach. We received it too fast for any sort of order to be followed and as a consequence most of our planning for unloading sequence came to naught.

I suppose the brass hats figure a Seabee set of equipment and material is more easily replaced than a ship, but from our own point of view it caused a sore spot.

After the high pressure ship unloading operation, considerable time was required to sort and stow our gear and set up a livable camp.

We were attached to the First Marine Amphibious Corps, and assigned the development of Guadalcanal, north of Yasafaranga, into a staging area for the many specialized battalions and regiments attached to the Corps for the forthcoming Northern Solomons Operations. Ten miles of highway was developed. Forty thousand board feet of native teak and mahogany were incorporated into the foundation and deck of a bridge crossing the Bonagi River. Finger piers and approach roads to facilitate loading and unloading of troop movements from APA's, APD's, AKA's and IST's were installed and maintained. Prefabricated heads, galleys and mess halls were prepared for distribution to the transient units along with innumerable smaller jobs that were less glamorous but still nonetheless important.

Just as all Lashers are equipped with supplies and equipment for a permanent location, our equipment was the standard Lasher allowance. Such things as generators, heavy anti-aircraft guns, sculleries, cooking ranges, etc., were not intended to be used as mobile equipment for a beachhead. In order to adapt these items to our use we procured some discarded rubber tired bomb carriers and with some ingenuity and the skill of the welders and men in the machine shop they mounted the 20mm guns, .50 cal. machine guns, large racks of field ranges, sculleries, radio, generators, and various other items on these carriers. Large racks were made of pierced plank to increase the capacity of trucks, scrapers, and utility buses for storing smaller crates and necessary items. Essentially, this program provided the battalion with at least two echelons of ready and mobile equipment loaded with the necessary supplies.

The motor pool set up their organization in such a manner as to provide all the loading - packing, manifests and loading plans of the equipment onto ships. Smaller crates and packages were picked up by the motor pool from the various departments and packed into the mobile equipment. They, in turn with the weights and cubical contents, formulated the loading plans.

- BOUGAINVILLE -

The presence of the 75th Lasher detachment of 100 men and officers in the Bougainville assault was rather peculiar. The main assault was to be made in four convoys. Task Force 1 provided the naval protection and also the marine assault troops which were to go ashore from APDs. Task Force 2 was the convey of APAs which were to land the reinforcement troops. Task Force 3 furnished the utility troops and the bare essential supplies for furthering the advancement on the beachhead. The last task force was broken up into various echelons of LST's and AKA's which furnished the main bulk of the supplies and equipment for construction purposes and this continued for months after initial landings. The marines, when making up their plan of maneuvers, discovered room on one APD for 100 men. This, they decided, should consist of Lashers, and the 75th Battalion was selected to furnish these men. The detachment was to be a part of the third task force. However, a few days before the first task force departed, our space in the third task force had been taken over by more essential troops. Not knowing what to do with the 75th Battalion detachment, or what their assignment was to be, another group of marine planning officers billeted the detachment on the first task force, thinking it was essential.

to get these particular 100 men ashore because their position in the third task force had been canceled. The 5 officers to command the detachment were appointed by the Officer in Charge of the battalion, while the 95 men were selected from volunteers from each company. This selection became rather difficult because of the vast number of men who volunteered.

After the men were selected, an inventory of their combat gear was made and it was discovered that practically all of it was old army equipment not at all practical for jungle warfare. The Seabees were not allotted marine jungle combat gear. Consequently, to supply these men we had to rely on the graciousness of the marine supply depot. The men and officers were provided with equipment identical to that of the marines, and complete with jungle hammock, jungle pack and camouflaged jungle suits.

The marines' sole problem was to secure the beachhead and advance far enough inland to provide sufficient area for the necessary construction that had been planned. Their construction plans were rather simple in that the first construction consisted of jeep and alligator trails and the necessary initial clearing for the Forekins fighter strip.

Lt. Comdr. Geyer was Public Works Officer for SUB 9, which was to form the nucleus of NABU 7 at Bougainville. He had rather elaborate plans and drawings for a temporary underground bomb-proof naval base. In addition to our eighty pounds of combat gear, he requested that we carry axes, shovels, baling wire, nails, etc. However, very little of this arrived on the beachhead, with the exception of shovels and axes, because of its excessive weight and the urgent need to get the ships away from the beachhead. The detachment was originally to embark at Dons Cove but later in the day it was discovered that the ship was anchored off Kali Point, Guadalcanal. There was a heavy sea rolling in that afternoon and a great many of the men, because of the mental strain and the sea action, became seasick in the short trip from the shore to the ship via Higgins boats. Upon arriving at the top of the gangplank we met marines who had for the past week been under intensive maneuvers and we were showered with remarks such as "My gosh! Seabee raiders! Don't that beat hell!" The ship was more than loaded to capacity and the appearance of the 75th Seabee

detachment was unbeknownst to the troop commander. Consequently, the only available space was that area on top of the No. 5 hatch. The cramped conditions are almost impossible to describe because the hatch cover had already been loaded to capacity with jeeps and half-tracks; but somehow the men found room to sleep inside and under trucks, boats, and around ammunition of all descriptions.

For the first two days of the trip everything was rather calm and passive, and there was considerable conversation - while it did not hit any stratosphere of wit, it indicated one thing anyhow - it did indicate the raiders were relaxed and in high spirits. Probably the facts of full stomachs, clear hot sunlight and a pleasant breeze contributed somewhat to the psychology of the situation. The day before the landing, October 31, was a day of planning. Orders for everyone involved in the operation, from Lt. Colonel and Major down to back private were drawn up. Everyone was briefed as to their assignment and the 75th detachment was assigned to man the machine guns aboard the landing craft and also to act as a shore party to handle supplies and aid the injured. The Colonel's talk was a typical pre-assault pep talk. He said, "This is a knockout and drag out fight. Things are going to go wrong on the beach and people are going to get hit, but you have had all the best of training and equipment and I feel sure will come out on top." And every Seabee of the 75th realized just how little combat experience and training we had had. In the afternoon a group of marines could be seen cleaning and setting up their mortar and light machine guns on the forward deck. The lads were taking almost motherly care of the weapons and you could see that the working parts were clean and oiled so that they worked like the conjunctive parts of a watch.

Some of the lads were sharpening bayonets, which indeed seemed to be a universal pastime all over the ship. One marine had a huge bolo knife which he was carefully preparing. Others worked at cleaning and oiling their rifles and sub-machine guns. Some of the boys had fashioned homemade blackjacks - canvas sacks containing lead balls - for in-fighting. Hand grenades were distributed and each marine was allotted three apiece. However, several carried many more than their allotment.

On D-day it was no trouble to get up at 0400 o'clock without benefit of an alarm clock for we had been awake most of the night while Jap snooper planes

dropped flares through the clouds in an effort to determine our location and direction of course. The landing was made and it was a typical marine raider beachhead. During the first twenty-four hours we had the second death in the battalion when Harry B. WEBB, EM2c, was shot and killed by a Jap sniper. After the front line defenses had advanced sufficiently, we were able to move about the beach with some feeling of security. Our first assignment was to construct LST ramps to provide landing facilities through a heavy surf for the second echelon, which was to consist of LST's. These ramps were made of native logs and what available materials we could salvage from the beaches. They were well built and the remains can still be seen strewn along the beach. Necessity required, because of incoming additional 75th detachments, that we bivouac deeper in the jungle and away from the exposed beaches. A reconnaissance party located a suitable site within a few hundred yards of the Jap lines.

At this time our skipper, Comdr. John H. Savolaine, was evacuated because of nervous fatigue. He was replaced by Lt. Comdr. David H. Gottwals, who had been Executive Officer of the 71st Naval Construction Battalion. Realizing the dangerous situation of bivouacing on the beach, Lt. Comdr. Gottwals ordered the battalion to bivouac at a new camp site immediately.

Company D was assigned to construct and commence preliminary clearing for facilities of NASU 7. Because of the thick, oozy jungle mud, we were forced to clear and construct a road from the beach up the Fiva River to our camp site. This road was later called "Marine Drive" and the 53rd Naval Construction Battalion was in charge of its construction. However, the majority of the equipment and operators were provided by the 75th Battalion. The clearing and moving of equipment in the hot, steaming stagnant air of the jungle was accomplished only by the expending of vast amounts of hard work, of perspiration, and, last but not least, sleep. The first few nights of living in the jungle so close to the Jap lines produced a terrific nervous strain upon everybody and, as the marines say, this was where the men were separated from the boys. It was shortly after this time that Richard A. BAILY, S1c, of Headquarters Company, developed leukemia and died two days later.

Company D was now established in its separate camp on Yellow Beach, and was rapidly clearing the area for the naval base. This company remained as a separate

detachment at this location for several months.

The marines were extending their line of defense and were confronted with small counterattacks of intense and accurate mortar fire which produced considerable casualties. It was of utmost importance that a passable trail be pushed through to our front line defenses so that casualties could be removed by jeep carriers rather than by hand. This road later became known as the "East-West" Trail. Work of clearing and draining swamps was commenced immediately and the working parties were provided with armed guards to protect them from Jap snipers. The plan of the road was to go the shortest way possible across swamps and heavy jungle growth to the defense lines. It was during this early construction that James William BRADY, Jr. met his death.

A small group of men from Company D hastily constructed a small but much needed dock where PT boats could be serviced. At the same time that the East-West Trail was under construction the battalion was also busy clearing and blasting the jungle and draining and leveling the area for the second fighter strip known as Piva Strip.

It was from these Bougainville strips that the first aerial pictures of Truk were taken. Also, these strips furnished the main attack base for neutralizing the large Jap-held base of Rabaul on New Britain.

The permanent installations for the naval base were quite extensive, consisting of large warehouses, fleet post office, bomb-proof communications center, enlisted men and officers mess halls, chapel, housing facilities, offices and harbor control facilities, drinking water installation, showers, heads, and sewerage system. The waterfront crew of Company D constructed a very practical small boat mooring for the ever expanding boat pool at Perusia Island. This company did a great many incidental jobs such as making hasty repairs to an LCI that had been crippled in enemy action. One of the largest and most important and yet non-glamorous jobs was the drainage and the installation of tide gates for what was known as the "Big Swamp". This swamp covered an area which when drained furnished a large space for bivouacs, roads and dispersal areas for fuel.

The main body of the battalion concentrated its efforts in constructing complete camps and operation facilities for AGCEN 15 and COMAIRBORNS, which units serviced and controlled the planes and aerial activity. Smaller jobs and yet

important ones were construction of bomb dumps and the operation of a saw mill.

The battalion was also assigned the task of constructing and operating a large tank farm and distribution lines for aviation gasoline. The tank farm was separated into three different groups of tanks and the location of each tank was individually selected for its particular camouflaged surroundings and its practical operational location. The tanks were prefabricated 1,000-bbl. tanks and provided with a berm sufficient to hold the contents of the tank in case of a bomb or shell hit or a fire. The main supply line was a 4-inch line approximately five miles long. Its hasty construction was facilitated by the use of electric arc welders and vietsulic quick couplings. After considerable hydrographic survey and water-front work, a tanker unloading mooring was built and after several attempts two 6-inch subterranean feeder lines were laid and connected. These lines emptied into a 10,000-bbl. prefabricated tank located on Tokakina Point. The splinter-proofing for this tank was provided by long columns of welded empty fuel drums filled with sand and erected vertically around the tank. The flow of fuel from the tanker to the various dispersed tanks was made possible by seven booster pumping stations. During subsequent months these tanks were exposed to enemy action consisting of small arms and bomb fragments. In none of these attacks were any tanks set afire. However, several tanks were punctured, allowing the gasoline in those tanks to escape. The main distribution line was bombed innumerable times but at no time was it out of operation longer than a period of a few minutes.

During the Japanese counterattack against our perimeter defenses on March 8, 1944, the two easternmost bomber and fighter strips were evacuated of all planes and troops. This was done in an effort to minimize the damage caused by the Japanese large caliber artillery which was constantly shelling this area. In fact, the strips were so close to the Jap gun emplacements that the enemy could look right down from the hills onto the strip. Our newly constructed tank farm was between this strip and the Jap positions. Strangely enough, it was either never discovered or it was ignored, at least it was not hit.

Because of the difficulty in locating enemy gun positions in the dense undergrowth of the jungle it was necessary that our artillery spotters keep their observation planes in the air at all times. There were some fifteen C-47 planes and

twenty-two artillery pilots, under the command of Capt. Witt, assigned to this spotter duty. At the beginning of the Jap counterattack, Capt. Witt accidentally landed one of his planes on a short straight stretch of road within the naval base. The naval base, although within range of the Jap field pieces, was never one of their targets. At the request of Capt. Kassing, commander of the naval base, the 75th Seabees shaped and surfaced this stretch of road and trimmed the surrounding underbrush and trees, making it more practical for Capt. Witt to use. A small hangar was constructed and this miniature airport was named "Halsey Field". It was from this "strip" that the artillery observers made constant patrols which resulted in the neutralizing of the enemy's artillery. During this Japanese counterattack of March 8 the battalion was also assigned a sector on the north side of the Piva River from the beach extending inland 2,000 yards. It was the purpose of this second line defense to protect the Torokina airstrip from an anticipated northward advance of the Japanese. The gun emplacements were dug, machine gun nests were properly located, and firing lines set to give the maximum fire protection. An observation tower was erected in the top of a large banyan tree not far from the battalion Command Post. Each company CP was connected by telephone with the battalion CP and the battalion CP was connected by two separate telephone lines and also radio communication with the main marine CP. The battalion was alerted and the condition was "black" for several weeks and on two separate occasions the battalion occupied its defense positions. Much to the sorrow of some, and to the joy of most of us, the Jap attack on this sector was broken up and their forces were concentrated on another sector of the perimeter several miles from our defense positions. Several weeks after the Japanese attack was broken up they retreated to the hills to spasmodically harass us with small field pieces and mortars.

In an effort to keep the battalion occupied and to brush up on military training and courtesies, because of the lack of construction problems, the battalion carried on extensive military programs and reviews on the hardstandings of the almost deserted bomber strip, which at the same time was still under constant scrutiny of the enemy. Toward the end of our stay on Bougainville the battalion's construction work consisted mostly of maintenance of the roads and Torokina fighter strip. It was the duty of the men working on the strip to fill any holes and repair any damage to the pierced plank runway by Jap artillery or crash landings of disabled

planes. The men were constantly picking up the metal clips that spilled out from the clip salvage containers attached to the machine guns of the planes. These clips were a constant source of damage to the tires on the planes.

Our Executive Officer, Lt. Walter Sweeney, was relieved of his duty by Lt. L. L. Langer of the 37th Naval Construction Battalion. However, Lt. Sweeney remained with the battalion until a later date.

Once again the battalion packed up and went through the process of crating, loading and arranging material in cargo ships for another move. Because of the vast amount of materials that the battalion expended on Bougainville, it was necessary that we go to a staging area where the battalion could receive new supplies and equipment. The battalion was completely loaded on one cargo ship and one APA. We made a rather short and pleasant trip from Bougainville down to Banika Island in the Russell Island group.

- BANIKA -

The Russell Islands contained the largest coconut plantation in the entire Solomons and our camp was located in a more or less recently planted coconut grove. This camp site had previously been occupied by several other units, which was to our advantage for a practical but not elaborate enlisted men's galley and mess hall was left to us in rather good condition. A water supply system was installed. However, because of its disuse it was badly in need of repairs.

In addition to re-outfitting the battalion, it was more or less understood that our stay on Banika Island was to be somewhat of a rest period; but strangely enough, and I quote from one of the enlisted men's letters, "we had two and a half months at a rest camp and we worked eight hours a day, six days a week, to prove it." The re-outfitting, marking and proper overhauling of the new materials and equipment required large crews to work "around the clock" to get them properly catalogued by the battalion. This, however, was a minor detail in the line of work assignments for we were assigned several work projects to be installed for the CUB 12 unit that was also staging at the same island. For their main camp a complete new water system was installed and several warehouses constructed to properly store their housekeeping

gear. At another location crews were busy at work expanding and surfacing vast areas for open storage, and large warehouses were constructed for sheltered storage. Several crews were detailed to erect warehouses for the Army Quartermaster Corps. The pipe line details were kept busy by construction of a fuel storage and unloading installation at Blue Beach. The secondary roads were widened and resurfaced by the earthmoving department. One of such roads ran past P.A.B. 2, where several hundred of our men were employed in shifts, working 24 hours per day, welding, constructing and assembling several thousand pontoons. These pontoons were used as barges and causeways on the Morotai and Peilieu invasions.

The Russell Island group is made up of hundreds of small islands which provide innumerable quiet tropical lagoons, one of which is called Sunlight Channel, down through which the "Tokyo" Express" made trips for the various battles of Savo Island. In order to occupy the spare time that the men and officers had available the battalion furnished materials and a great many men constructed sail boats. Intra- and inter-battalion regattas were held every Sunday afternoon and were looked forward to with great anticipation.

The battalion was again ordered to move to a forward base in New Guinea, and since two months had been occupied with the preparation of the equipment, the work of packing and loading the battalion was greatly minimized. The trip was rather uneventful with two exceptions; first, departing from the Russells the ships had to obtain their orders from Guadalcanal and since the channel ran very close to shore it was of great interest to everyone in the battalion to observe the vast changes and expansion work that had been accomplished on Guadalcanal since our departure from there almost a year before. Second, the transport was ordered to report to the naval base at Finckhafen, New Guinea, and when within a day of this port the ships made an abrupt 180 degree turn and proceeded southward to Milne Bay.

- NEW GUINEA -

The battalion was ordered to go ashore at the navy Seabee receiving and staging base at Camadeo on the south coast of the bay. It was the usual luck of the battalion that the day we disembarked a steady tropical rain poured down in torrents as it only can in New Guinea. The battalion was marched from the beach

to double deck, open air barracks. Because of the isolation, poor sanitary conditions and little or no recreation facilities, the battalion's stay at Gamadodo was not considered pleasant.

Again the battalion was assigned to various work projects in addition to clearing, surfacing and fencing in a large area of mud which was to be used as the battalion storage area. The motor pool furnished the necessary equipment for hauling gravel and surfacing material for the ever muddy roads from a river near Waga Waga, some ten miles east of the base.

Gamadodo, in addition to acting as a Seabee re-equipment depot, was also used as a fleet naval supply depot. Several storage huts, laundry facilities and other necessary structures were constructed to take care of the supplies for the anticipated liberation of the Philippines. The approximate strike of the Philippine invasion was set for around the first of the year, which gave the battalion some three and a half months of free time. This was to be taken up by sending various groups for rehabilitation leave to Australia, and while on their leave the balance of the battalion was to carry out the military training program until their turn came to take the much anticipated and needed leave to civilization. In view of this anticipated departure to Australia, men and officers alike procured all the necessary uniforms and personal gear which would be required of them in a civilized place. In the meantime the naval activities in the Philippines area had progressed so rapidly and such favorable results had been obtained that the D-day for the liberation of the Philippines was moved up to the latter part of October, and following true to form and the constant fate of ill luck that the battalion had experienced, the much hoped for leave was cancelled and we were informed by the officer in charge at battalion muster that such a cancellation of leave would mean the battalion would probably be going back to the States three months earlier. Just what that meant still remains to be seen. It was with heavy hearts that the battalion packed up to perform the backbreaking and monotonous task of another push. And during the last week of September, 1944, the battalion received orders to prepare for movement to the Central Philippines. Immediate steps were taken to assemble and designate personnel, equipment and materials for the first echelon.

Three LST's had been allocated to transport nine hundred officers and men and their equipment on the first echelon. A loading plan was prepared for each of the three ships. All equipment and rolling stock movable under its own or auxiliary power was proportioned into three sections so that if one section was sunk, each section remaining could function as a self-sustaining unit independent of the other two sections. All available cargo space in each piece of equipment and rolling stock was filled with a selected list of tentage, mess and galley gear, construction materials, small tools, repair and service facilities for heavy and light equipment, office records and equipment, communication, water and power facilities. A month's supply of rations, fuel and ammunition were carried as loose cargo. A list of three hundred men and officers that were to be assigned to each LST was prepared. In each group were representatives of every battalion department or functional duty. Whatever destiny might have in store for either of the three sections, they were equipped with personnel and gear to meet any emergency. The battalion was, or so to speak, our eggs were divided in three baskets. The remaining personnel, equipment and material of the battalion was further divided into two sections for movement in cargo ships at a later date.

The first LST departed for Hollandia during the first week in October. It was scheduled for repairs to its propulsion shafts. The remaining two LST's were loaded and departed for Hollandia a week later. The ships had been loaded in accordance with a prepared plan to accomplish unloading at the destination in the shortest possible time.

Before loading at Milne Bay, the seaworthiness of one LST had been in question. Rough water in the Huon Gulf, resulting in ship lists of thirty degrees, removed all doubts. Therefore, at Hollandia an unscheduled unloading and reloading onto another LST became necessary. Under pressure to meet the sailing date of the convoy, the men and officers of that ship turned to and in what we call record time, unloaded and loaded onto a new ship in approximately fourteen hours.

- LEYTE -

Our ships joined the second echelon of the Leyte Invasion Operation, scheduled to arrive at A plus 4. The voyage past the Palau Island Group and east coast of Mindanao was uneventful, with the exception of the excitement caused by a

- 19 -

a Destroyer escort which blew up floating mines with anti-aircraft fire. The day before our landing, late in the afternoon, masts and hulls of ships moving north passed on the eastern horizon. They were the "jeep" carriers and escorts that out-fought heavy Jap odds thirty-six hours later in the battle off Samar. Evening came without sign of Jap activity. Then during the dark early morning hours flashes of light showed on the western horizon. Some thought it was lightning, while others remarked, "Boy! We sure are giving the Japs hell!" Days later we learned that it was the Battle of Surigao Straits and that the Japs and our fleet both suffered damage. The morning arrived bright and clear and our convoy moved north into San Pedro Bay. Many ships were at anchor. TBF's and SB2U's were putting on quite a show of bombing and strafing a pocket of Japs a mile. Then all ships commenced to make an artificial fog smoke. Ack-ack commenced and it seemed like every Jap plane in the Pacific was over our heads. It was our first air attack in the Philippines, which we later learned was to continue for months. About all we could see was white artificial fog from the ships' smoke generators. The ships lay dead in the water. Occasionally we could hear the sound of planes and the firing of guns. Now and then a cheer would break out through the fog as a Jap plane burst into flames and crashed into the water. Upon several occasions we heard and saw the terrific explosions when a Jap bomb would contact one of our ships. At noontime we heard that our beach target was under mortar fire and we couldn't go ashore. Several hours later we got under way and headed north up a newly buoyed and mine swept channel and during late afternoon beached at Tacloban. At dusk Jap planes made several runs over our area but the ship gunners drove them off. By midnight we had completed unloading of all three ships and were bivouaced before the steps of the Provincial Capital Building at Leyte. The first of repeated Jap air attacks aroused everyone at dawn. The commissary department prepared hot coffee and broke out "J" (jungle) rations, at Philippine Valley Number One. Officers hit the road in search of a suitable bivouac area, for it was essential to disperse our equipment and personnel in order to avoid serious damage from the persistent Jap planes. We found that the small amount of available dry ground around the town of Tacloban was already occupied by individual Army units of company size.

Everything appeared to be empty or rice paddies, and not until late in the morning was permission obtained to occupy a strip of beach at Anahang Point (later known as "Strapnel Hill"), being evacuated by Army infantry on the move to forward positions.

In the afternoon the battalion started moving equipment and personnel to the new bivouac and from the new galley (this was the second galley that we set up in the Philippines) commenced the serving of hot food.

In the meantime the cleanup, repair and conversion of existing buildings and warehouses for a temporary naval operating base was under way. President Osmond of the Philippine Government welcomed the assistance and protection of our men in setting up his quarters in the Provincial Capitol Building. Some of our men found the sub-basement of the capital building to be a secure air raid shelter during the coming fortnight of daily and nightly air attacks.

At this time, to add to our misery and uncomfortable conditions, we experienced our first typhoon. The wind and rain is beyond description, and after blowing all our makeshift shelters over, the rain soaked our gear to a soggy mass. There was little that could be done to combat this abortion of the so-called wonderful tropical weather. So with a few exceptions, most of us felt that we had lost our last friends and lay down in the mud to wait until the storm blew over.

- SAN ANTONIO - SAMAR -

All hope of finding sufficient suitable dry ground for an HQ in the vicinity of Tacloban was abandoned. We were ordered to move across the strait to Samar and develop an area for HQ near the barrier of San Antonio. Earthmoving operations and construction of a pontoon liberty wharf commenced. Here our Galley Number Three was set up at the temporary equipment camp. Fair weather prevailed for several days and our hopes to get in productive work returned. A permanent camp site was located and we transferred the men and gear by LCM's and pontoon barges from Leyte to Samar. The permanent camp installations and facilities were begun and progress (under the prevailing conditions) on the dock facilities was exceptionally good, but persistent rains turned graded areas and roads into quagmires of soggy mud faster than sufficient durable surfacing material could be obtained. The dock was completed, but access roads could not be constructed through the mud. There was just too much clay disintegrating to mud to make progress during the rainy season.

- CALICOAN -

Late in November our battalion furnished a survey party to a higher echelon of command for reconnaissance of southern Samar in an effort to find a suitable location for a naval base. It was found, and during the second week of December we commenced moving the battalion and gear to a small island called Calicoan, which was just south of Samar. This move was completed during the latter part of February and utilized our fifth galley on the Philippines. Again we began construction of the badly needed MEB and dock facilities. While men at San Antonio were awaiting transportation, and as the rain let up, they converted our camp area into recreational grounds and buildings for fleet personnel and developed an all-weather net of roads in that area.

During our stay about Tacloban and San Antonio we witnessed innumerable air attacks, and suffered numerous casualties from falling flak in spite of fancy foxholes and our newly developed olympic track tactics. At one time a Jap plane made a strafing run on a searchlight position near our camp and an explosive 20mm shell penetrated a covered foxhole and shattered one man's back with a considerable amount of shrapnel. Fortunately, he recovered and has since returned safely to the States. It can now readily be seen from whence came the name "Shrapnel Hill". There were innumerable near misses and suicide attacks on ships in our area, and one Jap pilot crashed his plane into a liberty ship which was carrying some of our personnel and bulk cargo. It was a hair-raising and thrilling show for both veterans and replacements, and we are in unanimous agreement that none of us wish to see and experience such things again.

Our advent to Calicoan was most fortunate. The island had been unspoiled by man or war. There was considerable open area and the development and drainage proved to be no problem at all. We moved in as fast as transportation for our men and gear was provided. Immediately we began the task of developing waterfront and storage facilities which were needed to unload the many ships swinging on their hooks in the Leyte Gulf area. There were sixty acres on the Gulf Side and one hundred twenty acres on the Pacific side that were suitable for early construction development. The two areas were connected by a single native foot trail through a narrow pass in the rocky backbone ridge of the island. Powermen and the first available heavy equipment

were set to work immediately blasting and excavating a road right-of-way to connect the two areas. During this time the surveyors worked on the hydrographic study of the waterfront. On the completion of their study, work was started on the temporary waterfront facilities. Ten days after our initial landing on Calicoan we had completed sufficient installations to receive a group of LST's and stage two Army Aviation Engineer Battalions preparatory to the invasion of Luzon. The initial waterfront facilities consisted of a toe head pontoon dock that served loading and unloading of LCM's, LCT's, LST's and pontoon barges, and two pontoon liberty wharves that served deep draft cargo ships. These initial facilities immediately expedited the ship unloading activity in the area.

These temporary facilities are being replaced with a solid mile of permanent installations. These include a marginal wharf to berth eight deep water cargo ships, a six hundred foot pontoon wharf for average depth ships, beaching and mooring facilities for a group of LST's, mooring facilities for fuel supply ships, and small boat facilities.

Concurrently with the initial development of waterfront facilities, sixty acres of land on each side of the island were cleared and prepared for industrial gas plants, open storage and building construction. Five miles of pioneer road to the southern end of the island was developed, and a permanent four-lane highway to the mainland was constructed. Also constructed, adjacent to the waterfront area, on existing ground or fill, were supply offices, transit cargo sheds, sorting sheds, and refrigeration storage facilities to handle a monthly ship cargo volume of several hundred thousand tons.

Since a larger area for waterfront structures was needed, the battalion was moved through the pass onto the Pacific side of the island. This new and present camp developed into the most comfortable and practical living conditions the battalion has had since being overseas.

For the benefit of non-construction units, assistance in the preparation of sites and installation of housing facilities was furnished by the battalion to an Anti-Aircraft Training Center and Harbor Defense Unit.

The major portion of our work on Calicoan was and is "heavy" construction. Double the amount of trucks and heavy equipment allotted to a normal construction battalion are being operated around the clock on the marginal wharf, road construction, grading and development of open storage areas and building sites. Practically all excavation is in rock or coral in the roughest kind of terrain, yet three to five thousand cubic yards are moved daily. An estimated 423,300 cubic yards of coral and rock were moved and 1000 cases of dynamite were used during a period of ten weeks to construct the four and one-half miles of four-lane highway through hills and swamps to Samar, which connected Calicoan with the naval air station and the town of Guisan. Another four hundred thousand cubic yards of rock and coral excavation will be moved in hillside excavation to reclaim and develop usable ground for the waterfront area installations and causeway approaches to the dock facilities. Three 8-cu.yd. capacity power shovels, a dozen tractors and a fleet of forty trucks operate around the clock on this operation alone. To blast loose the material that the power shovels cannot handle requires sixty drillers and blasters, seven air compressors, four wagon drills and six or more jack hammers.

All through this period the Engineering Department was kept busy making plans and keeping the construction changes up to date. To further hamper the engineers with their meager equipment a complete survey party was detached to Gabu to do an essential job of reconnaissance on the island of Motan.

While all this work was being carried on on Calicoan, the pipeline and tank farm crews were extremely busy at Balusac, Samar. The urgent and imperative need for a ship's watering point for all forces afloat in the Leyte-Samar area resulted in the 75th Naval Construction Battalion being directed to proceed with construction of a suitable water system to remedy that need.

The plan, in brief, was to run a 6-inch pipe line from the Balusac River, which is fed by two waterfalls high in the hills, to the ocean. The proposed line would run some 3500 feet through the jungle and snake up and down twin hills 145 feet high. The installation consisted of a 6-inch force drain from two 350 GPM pumps located at the river 8000 feet from the mouth, to a manifold at the beach for smaller landing craft. It involved the erection of a bolted steel tank with a 1000-bbl. capacity, a 6-inch pipe line from the pump main to a dolphin mooring;

for LST's and average draft ships. A separate 6-inch pipe line connected the storage tank and the main pipe line to the mooring.

The pipe line was no easy job. Trails had to be cut foot by foot through dense jungle growth, tropical rains beat down mercilessly, making the trail a bog of sticky clay, and at times in the early construction swarms of insects harassed the Seabees.

With weather conditions as they were, it was impractical to attempt to use a bulldozer on the project for clearing. There was no road from the ocean shore to the pumping station, and practically everything was carried up the river by LCU and pontoon barge, the river being navigable at high tide up to 7000 feet from the mouth. From here all material and equipment was skidded or carried to the pumping station on an overhead cable conveyor with a truck winch furnishing the power. Caribae were utilized in dropping pipe sections to their desired location. Much of this work had to be carried on at night and in the cool of the day as the caribae refused to work when the temperature soared.

Because of the urgent need of mooring facilities for larger ships, in addition to the increased demand of the medium draft ships, the battalion was directed to expand the present system to a 2,500,000-gallon per day capacity, and to provide suitable berthing facilities with a minimum depth (outboard) of 35 feet.

This additional expansion was accomplished by running a 12-inch line parallel to the existing line from the pump house to the beach and from there a 18-inch welded jointed submerged line running 1,600 feet offshore to a deep draft ship mooring.

Compared with the first pipe line job this latter one was much easier. The dry season had commenced, permitting use of a bulldozer for right-of-way clearing, and a road was built from the beach to the pumping station. Both jobs were completed within their deadline dates and the battalion has received several letters of commendation for this work done at Balusac.

The battalion, in addition to all its other work, detached the saw mill and timber crews to work for several months constructing and operating a jungle saw mill at Balangiga, Samar.

At the present time the Battalion is continuing its work on Calicoan and at the same time is accepting as directed, new, long, laborious construction assignments.

Because of the extended service of 25 months overseas without being near civilization or having a rehabilitation leave, the remaining 850 enlisted men that were with the battalion when it was commissioned are gradually being relieved and returned to the States. The returning of the men is entirely dependent upon the availability of replacements, and to date the outlook for an early relief for the majority of them is not too favorable.

I thoroughly realize that in this short report it is impossible to go into the many details and phases of the vast number of jobs and activities that the battalion has participated in. It is my hope that this history, however brief, will serve as an overall picture of the battalion's activities.

H. E. JOHNSON
Sgt. (C) 1st Bn 1st Div

17 July 1945

ITINERARY OF THE 75TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

18 Mar 1943 Transferred to Camp Parks from Camp Endicott.
24 Mar 1943 Arrived Camp Parks.
18 Apr 1943 Arrived Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, from Camp Parks.
9 Jun 1943 Departed U.S.
25 Jun 1943 Arrived Noumea, New Caledonia.
16 Sep 1943 Departed Noumea in two sections on Sept 16th and 17th.
21 Sep 1943 Arrived Guadalcanal. Preparing for forward movement.
30 Oct 1943 First Echelon departed Guadalcanal for Bougainville (100 men).
1 Nov 1943 First Echelon arrived Bougainville.
2 Nov 1943 Second Echelon departed Guadalcanal for Bougainville (18 men).
4 Nov 1943 Second Echelon arrived Bougainville.
9 Nov 1943 Third Echelon departed Guadalcanal for Bougainville (566 men).
11 Nov 1943 Third Echelon arrived Bougainville.
13 Nov 1943 Fourth Echelon departed Guadalcanal for Bougainville (66 men).
16 Nov 1943 Fourth Echelon arrived Bougainville.
20 Nov 1943 Fifth Echelon departed Guadalcanal for Bougainville (200 men).
23 Nov 1943 Fifth Echelon arrived Bougainville.
6 May 1944 147 men of Casual Draft 2275 scheduled for the 16th Marine Administration assigned to the 75th. Classification changed
25 May 1944 75th CB departed Bougainville.
27 May 1944 Arrived Banika, Russell Islands.
13 Aug 1944 Departed Banika.
19 Aug 1944 Arrived Milne Bay, New Guinea.
12 Oct 1944 First Echelon departed Milne Bay for Philippines (781 men).
24 Oct 1944 First Echelon arrived Leyte Gulf - debarked at Tacloban same day.
1 Nov 1944 Second Echelon departed Milne Bay for Philippines (205 men).
5 Nov 1944 Third Echelon departed Milne Bay for Philippines (41 men).
12 Nov 1944 Second Echelon arrived Leyte, P.I.

To facilitate
Administration
Classification changed
from

To:

Irvin S. Rosenberg

CONFIDENTIAL

ENCLOSURE 1

ITINERARY OF THE 75TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION (Concluded)

- 15 Nov 1944 Third Echelon arrived Leyte, P.I.
- 12 Nov 1944 Battalion moved to San Antonio, Samar, P.I.
- 9 Dec 1944 Battalion began move to Calicoan Island, Samar Province, Philippine Islands.
- 2 Mar 1945 Battalion completed move to Calicoan Island.

CERTIFIED A TRUE COPY OF CORRECT
ITINERARY OF 75TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION
BATTALION.


Lt. Condr., D. H. Gottwals, CEC, USNR

To Facilitate
Administrative Handling
Classification changed
from:

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

RESTRICTED

To:

Irvia S. Rosenberg
Comdr. (CPLM-1), USNR

Signature

75th Naval Construction Battalion

<u>Date of Locator</u>	<u>Location of Battalion</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1 March 1945	Samar	
1 April 1945	Samar	Calicoan Island
1 May 1945	Samar	Calicoan Island
1 June 1945	Samar	Calicoan Island
10 July 1945	Samar	Calicoan Island
10 August 1945	Samar	Calicoan Island
10 September 1945	Samar	Calicoan Island
10 October 1945	Samar	Calicoan Island
10 November 1945	Samar	--(Calicoan Island, (Detachment at (Jinaseo Island.
20 December 1945		--(Leyte-Samar Area, (Detachment at (Jinaseo Island.
1 January 1946		Leyte-Samar Area
1 February 1946		Leyte-Samar Area

Enclosure (2)











