

# 85<sup>th</sup> Naval Construction Battalion

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*Historical  
Information*



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



Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
3/15	-	Hueneme	Beyschke memo 9 March.	Ready Hueneme 2/15 - asid
4/19	-	Es Santo	Comdau Base Santo Sec Ad disp April 06 2/18.	Es. Santo - probable March 8 1949.
9/19/45	-	-	Comdopac comd. 092258 Sept.	about 18 Sept detach from present duty. direct proceed water island of report Com
10/1/45	-	-	Es Santo re to disp. 230005 Sept.	Marillo area. destined water. 1 off + 284 ent. departed 22 Sept.

85th C.B.

NCTC - Norfolk - Davisville  
 ABD - Gulfport FFT Hueneme  
 Ready Date - 17 Apr'43  
 Left ABD - 22 May'43  
 Location - Sofa Dutch Harbor and Attu

85th Embarkation

NCTC - (Parks)  
 ABD - Hueneme  
 Ready Date - 15 Feb'45  
 Left ABD - 6 Mar'45  
 Location - Espiritu Santo

LOG

- 2-2-43 - Ordered transferred 8 Feb to Davisville for duty and FFT.
- 4-13-43 - Transferred from NCTC Davisville to Gulfport FFT Hueneme.
- 5-22-43 - Three quarters of 85th CB sailed for Sofa. (Dispatch)
- 7-1-43 - " " " is at Dutch Harbor. (Com 13 to ComAlSec dtd 21 Jun'43  
 Sec. Disp) Arrived Dutch Harbor 30 May'43 (1 Jul'43 report)
- 10-27-43 - CBMU 508 abolished and officers and men transferred to the 85th CB effective  
 1 Nov'43. (Op30K34-DM/(SC)P16-3/QR9 Doc. #97099 Ser 0777430 dtd 25 Oct'43)
- 2-25-44 - 85th CB is at Dutch Harbor with approx. 25 men at Otter Pt. (Alaskan Sector data  
 sheet dtd 1 Feb'44)
- 2-28-44 - 1 Feb'44 report of 85th CB - located at Dutch Harbor with 11 men at Otter Pt.
- 3-16-44 - 1 Mar'44 report of 1st Brig. - 85th CB is located at Dutch Harbor.
- 3-31-44 - 15 Mar'44 report of 1st Brig. - 85th CB is located at Dutch Harbor and Attu.  
 6 26 off. and 834 men at Dutch Harbor; 4 off. and 234 men at Attu.
- 5-6-44 - 1 Apr'44 report of 85th CB - operating at Dutch Harbor and Attu.
- 5-27-44 - 1 May'44 report of 2nd Det. of 85th CB - located at Attu.
- 5-27-44 - 1 May'44 report of 85th CB - operating at Dutch Harbor and Attu. The 2nd Det.  
 at Attu is expected to complete assignment about 15 May'44.

85th C.B.

- 6-29-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of 85th CB - operating at Dutch Harbor; 2nd Detachment at Attu consists of 4 off. and 230 men. 85th CB has been operating a year at Dutch Harbor 30 May'44.
- 7-27-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 85th CB - operating at Dutch Harbor and Attu. The detachment of 4 off. and 229 men at Attu expect to complete operations on or about 1 Aug'44.
- 8-22-44 - The 85th CB is scheduled to return from Alaska on or about 15 Aug'44 according to Ens. Slappey (Op-30)
- 9- 4-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 85th CB - operating at Attu, 4 off. and 229 men.
- 9-12-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 85th CB - located at Dutch Harbor with detachment at Attu. All construction work has been completed and entire batt. is now doing maintenance work.
- 9-15-44 - 1/2 of 85th CB (12 off. and 499 men) arrived Parks 9 Sep'44 from overseas via San Fran. (Parks 11TWX2355SEPT44 to Budocks)
- 10- 3-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 85th CB - located at Dutch Harbor. The detachment at Attu was secured 26 Aug when it sailed for the U.S.; joined 1/3 of the 85th batt at Dutch Harbor and sailed from there 31 Aug. with 12 off. and 500 men, altogether. The batt that is to relieve the balance of the 85th is expected to arrive at Dutch Harbor about 22 Sep; balance of 85th expects to leave for U.S. about 27 Sep
- 10-18-44 - 2nd Ech. 85th CB/14 off. and 544 men/ arrived Parks from overseas 11 Oct'44. (Parks 12TWX2041OCT44 to Budocks).
- 10-30-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 85th CB - 2nd Echelon of the 85th CB departed Dutch Harbor as of 1 Oct'44; was relieved by the 2nd Sect. of the 26th CB which arrived at D.H. 26 Sep'44.

85th C.B.

- 12-14-44 - From the Chronological History of 1st Brigade -  
30 May'43 - 85th & 86th CB's arrived Dutch Harbor from the States - 86th CB moved along to Adak.  
7 Mar'44 - 4 Off. & 234 men left Dutch Harbor for Attu.  
9 Sep'44 - One-half of 85th CB left for the States.  
(Com 17 Sec. ltr ND17/A12-1/L7 over 50/2b over Ser 0096 to Budocks dtd 6 Nov'44)
- 1-16-45 - Parks ordered to transfer the 85th CB about 20 Jan'45 to Hueneme and for temp duty with Acorn Tradet while awaiting overseas assignment. (CNO conf disp to Parks 121831 dtd 13 Jan'45)
- 1-20-45 -- The 85th CB will depart Parks for Hueneme 22 Jan'45. (Parks conf. disp to Bupers 160415 dtd 16 Jan'45).
- 1-30-45 -- The 85th CB will be ready for shipment to Cincpoa 15 Jan'45. (Cominch Sec. disp to Cincpoa 211829 dtd 21 Jan'45).
- 1-20-45 -- The 85th CB is assigned to BIVE. CNO suggests they stage at Saipan. (CNO Sec. disp to Cincpoa 181821 dtd 18 Jan'45.)
- 1-30-45 -- CNO Sec. disp to Cincpoa and ComWesSeaFron 252120 dtd 26 Jan'45 - will arrange to lift the 1st (Sp) and the 85th CB now ready for Sopac in lieu of the 36th (Sp) and the 86th CB which will not be ready until Mar'45.
- 1-30-45 -- CNO Sec. disp to ComWesSeaFron 262129 dtd 26 Jan'45 - ComWesSeaFron ordered to comply with CNO 252120.
- 2-7-45 -- The 1st Section of the 85th CB attached to AcornTraDet departed by train 27 Jan 1945 for duty at ATB Coronado, Calif. with 10 offs and 489 men. (Hueneme conf. disp to Bupers 292311 dtd 30 Jan'45).
- 2-7-45 -- The 85th CB is assigned to Espiritu S. with ready date at Hueneme 15 Feb'45. (CNO conf. disp to Cincpoa and other 301555 dtd 31 Jan'45).

Location - Espiritu Santo 85th C.B.

- 3- 1-45 - Early lifting required for 34th CB now ready at Hueneme. Propose substituting this batt for the 37th or 85th CB. (CNO Sec Disp to Cincpoa Pearl & Adv. Hdq. , Bupers & Budocks 261651 Feb'45)
- 3-3-45 -- Hueneme Sec. disp 011818 Mar'45 to CNO - Ref. CNO 261651 - Due to sailing date of 6 Mar'45 for the 85th CB it is considered impracticable to substitute the 34th CB on account of lack of time.
- 3-5-45 -- Cincpoa concurs with CNO to change the 34th CB for the 85th. (Cincpoa Sec. disp to Cominch 011903 Mar'45).
- 3- 5-45 - Hueneme Ser 011818 approved. Schedule 85th CB as planned. (CNO conf disp 031535 to Hueneme)
- 3-14-45 -- The 85th CB departed Hueneme for overseas 6 Mar'45 with 24 officers and 1063 men. (Hueneme conf. disp to Bupers 081919 Mar'45).
- 4-17-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of 85th CB - No information re location. Arrived at advanced Base on 19 Mar'45.
- 5- 8-45 - The 85th CB is located at Espiritu Santo. (Dirpadocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr'45)
- 5-25-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 85th CB - located at Espiritu Santo. 1 off. and 78 men are assigned to temp duty on a nearby island.
- 6-8-45 - 85th CB included in list of units earmarked and ready later but no destinations assigned. (Comsopac sec disp 290535 May'45 to Comservpac)
- 6-28-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 85th CB - located at Espiritu Santo. The 1 officer & 78 men are still located on a nearby island and are expected to return to the 85th CB hdqtrs during Jun'45.
- 7-18-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 85th CB - located at Espiritu Santo. Batt engaged in roll-up program. 11 men who were 42 yrs of age or over were transferred to U.S. for discharge.

Location - Espiritu Santo Wake Is. 85th CB

- 8-17-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 85th CB - located at Espiritu Santo. During June & Jul'45 22 men were transferred for discharge.
- 8-22-45 - The 85th CB ready date approx 15 Sep'45. (Comseronsopac sec report on Redeployment of Naval Personnel dtd 1 Aug'45)
- 9-11-45 - Detach 85th CB from present duty when transportation is available. Direct them to proceed Wake Island & report to Commargils. ((Comsopac conf disp 092258 Sept'45 to Comnavbases, Esp. Santo).
- 9-24-45 - 85th CB destined Wake departed Esp. Santos 2 Sept'45 with 4 officers & 161 men. 26 Sept'45, PRAY was previous port. (Comnavbases at Esp. Santos disp 220407 Sept'45 to PD Eniwetok).
- 9-24-45 - 85th CB departed IBON 23 Sept'45 destined Wake with 6 officers & 260 men. PRAY was previous port. (Comnavbases at Esp. Santos disp 230004 Sept'45 to PD, Eniwetok).
- 9-28-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 85th CB - located at Espiritu Santo. 94 men transferred for discharge under the point system. 13 men were transferred into the battalion.
- 10-19-45 - 85th CB at Espiritu Santo departed 23 Sept'45, destination is Wake. (ComserSqdPac Sec ltr ser 001076 dtd 1 Oct'45 to Comservpac).
- 10-30-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of 85th CB - ~~Location not stated~~. 123 men transferred to U.S. for discharge under the point system during Aug. & Sept. The first ship left Esp. Santo on 22 Sept'45 & the last ship arrived at Wake Is. on 12 Oct'45. The movement consisted of four ships.
- 11-28-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 85th CB - located at Wake Is.
- 12-29-45 - 1 Dec'45 report of 85th CB - located at Wake Is. 85th CB has not moved since its arrival on 12 Oct'45 from Espiritu Santo, N.H.

Location - Wake Is.

85th CB

- 1-10-46 - Comservpac rens NOB, Okinawa to inactivate 85th CB. (Comservpac disp 072145 Jan'46 to NOB, Okinawa).
- 1-31-46 - 1 Jan'46 report of 85th CB - located at Wake. 85th CB has been on Wake. Is. since 12 Oct'45.
- 2-20-46 - 1 Feb 46 report of 85th CB - located at Wake.
- 3-28-46 - 1 Mar 46 report of 85th CB - located at Wake. Report via 35th Reg. & 5th Brig.
- 4-16-46 - Comservpac orders 5th Brig. to inactivate 29th, 85th, 140th CB's and CBMU's 503, 597, 616, 620, but defer final inactivation until after establishment of CB Detachments. (Comservpac disp 140107 April to 5th Brig.)
- 5-15-46 - Comservpac directs Commarianas to proceed with inactivation of 85th CB and to activate CBDet 1154 at Wake. Personnel of CB to be trans. to CBDet. (Comservpac conf disp 012151 May to Commarianas).
- 6-3-46 - 85 Ncb inactivated 20 May (OinC disp 210020 to Commarianas conf)
- 7-8-46 - 85th NOB inactivated 20 May. (OinC conf. ltr to Ch. BuDocks Serial 751-46 dtd 20 Me

85 CB

Wake

From Espiritu Santo to Wake in a convoy of 4 ships, the first arriving 29 Sept. 45; the last, 12 Oct 45.

Unloaded & hauled to storage points, all their equipment  
 Handled cargo for 5 other ships  
 Cleared & graded camp sites & erected camps & messing facilities  
 Repaired old fuel oil dock,  
 Built roads  
 Maintained air strips  
 Water desalination units,  
 Constructed buildings for Navy & Army

By 1 June 46 - CB 85 had left and CB D 1154 was operating

<u>ON BOARD</u>			
<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>AUTHORITY</u>
1 Jul'44	27	822 + 229	BNP625
1 Aug'44	28	818 + 229	BNP625 & R & MoR
1 Sep'44	26	816 + 228	R & BNP625
1 Sep'44	14	544	MoR
1 Oct'44	12 + 14	+ 544	BNP625
30 Sep'44		544 + 499	Recap
1 Nov'44		1042	BNP625
1 Dec'44		938	BNP625
1 Jan'45	24	937	BNP625 & R
1 Feb'45		1083	BNP625
1 Apr'45	25	1047	MoR
1 May'45		1041	BNP625
1 Jun'45	25	1043	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	26	1037	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	27	1004	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45	27	878	BNP625 & R
1			
1 Nov'45	27	965	BNP625 & R
1 Dec'45	22	713	BNP625 & R
1 Jan'46	21	814	BNP625 & R
1 Feb'46	20	675	BNP 625 & R
1 Mar'46	16	549	BNP 625 & R

85th Construction Battalion (INACTIVATED)

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
6/3/44	-	✓ Dutch Harbor	-	Left U.S. May 1944 op. confirmed to be returned to U.S. 011744/30178
9/18	-	1/9 26 S. (Camp Banks)	July CNO sec disp 141942	1/2 returned from Alaska Sept
10/11	-	✓ 1/2 Camp Banks	Bur Dochs memo 10/2	Returned U.S. 9/9 Examined by Cincpac.
10/20	-	Camp Banks	Bur Dochs memo 10/14	1st ech. returned 9/9 2nd ech " 10/11 both reexamined Cincpac tentative ready date 1/15/45
12/30	-	"	Cominch sec 211730 dec.	request left from W. Coast to Alcatraz during January.
1/17	-	"	CNO COM disp 191831 Jan.	Bull (Bur Dochs memo 10/23) Banks transfer to Hueneme about 31 Jan. Send to Acorn Trade while awaiting direct assignment.

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Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
1/20	-	-	CNO sec disp 181821 Jan.	CNO planned schedule for Bull
1/20	-	-	Cincpac sec 130159 Jan.	Est. priority April
1/20	-	-	Hueneme COM disp. 992311 Jan.	one section added to Acorn Trade departed 1/27 for duty camp. In Base Coronado Cal.
1/31	-	-	CNO COM disp 301555 Jan.	Confirms assignment; EBO n. Ready 2/15
3/2	-	-	Bur Dochs memo 091552 Feb.	re-assignment; prob. mod. shp.
3/6	-	-	CNO sec disp. Feb 861651.	(Propose such 34th for this Batt as 37th - nearly lifting.)
3/6	-	-	Port Hueneme sec. 011918 Mar.	re. 261651. Considered impracticable such 34th for this Batt. (sailing date 3/6)
3/6	-	-	CNO COM 001535 Mar.	Schedule as planned.

# 85TH N. C. B. LOG

6 February, 1943. Following in the footsteps of 84 groups ahead of them, 27 officers and 1,079 enlisted men who had been through an initial three weeks' training period, paraded in ceremonial review, and also the thick mud of Virginia, with the group officially named the 85th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion and the battalion standard presented to the Officer-in-Charge, Comdr. Frederick C. Ray, by Comdr. A. G. Hillberg, CEC, USNR, who was the Military Training Officer at Camps Allen and Bradford.

8 February, 1943. Entrained for a six weeks' period of advance training at Camp Endicott, Davisville, R. I., after crossing the Chesapeake Bay from Little Creek to Cape Charles on the streamlined ferry, Princess Anne, with the cocktail bar secured for the trip.

9 February, 1943. Arrived at Camp Endicott on a clear, cold day and assigned to barracks. The succeeding two months were filled with specialized courses, including judo, commando tactics, chemical warfare, rifle marksmanship, machine gun, long hikes and the officers and chiefs had a week's training under Marine Lieut. Collins. A fire destroyed BOQ and most of the officers suffered the loss of their clothing and other personal effects. The worst weather in ten years was experienced, with the thermometer more than twenty degrees below zero. A personnel inspection by Capt. Rogers resulted in his comment to the effect that, "the 85th represented the neatest and cleanest battalion it has been my privilege to

review," and on April 5 our Battalion was part of the parade reviewed by Secretary of the Navy Knox. Many other experiences at this base, and last, but not least, the hospitality displayed by the people of Rhode Island and the high times at the Biltmore and Narragansett and Crown and the Chinese Clipper and Port Arthur.

13 April, 1943. In three sections the Battalion departed for Camp Holliday, Gulfport, Miss., with no extraordinary developments experienced on the trip.

16 April, 1943. Dirty and tired from two days and three nights in day coaches, two sections arrived at Camp Holliday just after dawn, and the character and initiative of the commissary was evidenced by their ability to furnish an excellent breakfast within an hour's time. Shortly before midnight, the third section of the Battalion arrived on the base.

17 April, 1943. Ninety per cent of the Battalion, officers included, stormed the little town of Gulfport with leave papers in hand and the determination to be the first aboard any train heading in the direction of home, causing the city fathers no little consternation and a call to the Camp for reserves to quell the near riot. Eventually sufficient trains, busses and taxis were called into service and the town receded to its customary quiet tempo, but not without a deep and lasting recollection of the 85th.

1 May, 1943. Again in three sections, the Battalion embarked on a five-day train trip to

Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, Calif., which proved uneventful, except for one man who debarked, leaving the train for parts unknown, and another who was taken off in New Mexico with an attack of appendicitis. One section arrived in camp nearly a full day ahead of the rest of the others and did much toward getting living conditions in hand for the balance of the Battalion which arrived after midnight.

6 May, 1943. At Camp Rousseau, the remaining 10 per cent of the Battalion took their embarkation leaves, while those staying aboard received an issue of carbines, foul weather gear, gas masks, etc. Company "B" was detached to form the separate 509th BMU under command of Lieut. Neidemann, and the last two days in camp found the men restricted to the battalion area.

20 May, 1943. Camp Rousseau was left with a degree of mixed feelings, for it represented the last permanent residence in this country, and what the future held in store was as yet a mystery. Again the train trip was without incident, with the exception of another man who decided the scenic beauties of Oregon were irresistible and decamped without thought of the consequences.

22 May, 1943. Early morning found the Battalion within the confines of the inner harbor of Seattle. Following a box lunch for breakfast, and before noon, all were safely quartered in the holds of the *U. S. S. Chaumont*. Space was utilized to the nth degree, and probably for the first time in their lives, those from Texas could sympathize with the steers they'd herded into cattle cars in years gone by. Even the officers were some-

what dismayed by the cramped space in their staterooms.

23 May, 1943. One-half the Battalion was granted liberty until midnight, with word to the shore patrol to pass men in undress blues and GI shoes—a sight which took Seattle slightly by surprise. Those involved enjoyed the release and were loud in their praise of the city's virtues and beauty, which did in no manner add to the pleasure of the rest of the men when informed that liberty for them had been cancelled.

25 May, 1943. At 0900 the *Chaumont* slipped from her dock and headed out through Puget Sound, with a short stop for lifeboat drill and then later in the day, target practice with the three-inchers, creating a wave of excitement for the men. The rest of the trip was without incident, except for the USO performances, the anti-aircraft practice with the ship's Oerlikons, and the sight of the first whale. Unforgettable was the almost continuous chow-line, eating below decks without benefit of seats, and the ship's MAA who so considerately kept his voice to only a bellow when calling mess detail in the early morning hours.

30 May, 1943. The afternoon found the ship at an increased tempo of rolling, pitching and bucking, much like a restive horse fighting the bit. As the hours passed an occasional glimpse of jagged rock, marking the coastline, was discerned through the deep fog, and about 1930 the quiet waters of Dutch Harbor were entered. By 2000 the ship had been docked, with the transfer of men and personal gear begun immediately. It must have been at this particular moment, that the

scuttlebutt of the Battalion's being home by Christmas, was started.

1 June, 1943. The big task of understanding the operations of the base and assigning the men to jobs was begun, and it was a week or more before the Battalion hit its full stride as a working unit. Meanwhile permanent quarters were established for the men and improvements in living conditions and sanitary facilities completed as fast as humanly possible.

13 June, 1943. The first casualty of the Battalion cast its sombre shadow over the men, with the death of John Q. Green, while in the line of duty. Emotions were released somewhat by the voluntary and generous contribution to a fund for the widow and three children.

15 June, 1943. Another disheartening blow was when the death of Donald C. Jolley, who had suffered a short illness, was reported. Again the men responded freely in contributing for the benefit of the widow and two children.

21 June, 1943. Our first practice alert began at 0430, with several hours spent in the wet, cold and muddy fox-holes. Realistic and impressive with the planes taking off the field to intercept enemy bombers, the chemical machines belching artificial fog and the light touch of tear gas which was sprayed about the fox-holes.

4 July, 1943. It was recalled that this day was being celebrated in the States, with surcease from work, picnics and other social gatherings. No such luck on Island X.

7 August, 1943. The first of a series of personnel inspections was held by the Base Com-

mandant, Captain C. W. Crawford, with half the Battalion participating.

20 August, 1943. Lt. Comdr. Frederick C. Ray was advised of his appointment to that of Commander, and Lieut. Thomas J. Lewis was informed of his appointment to Lieutenant Commander.

8 September, 1943. Experienced the first williwaw of the season, finding it not nearly as bad as pictured. Some slight damage to living quarters and other buildings.

25 October, 1943. Commander Ray was transferred from the Battalion, and Lt. Comdr. T. J. Lewis appointed Officer-in-Charge.

27 October, 1943. Reveille changed from 0500 to 0600 and chow from 0515 to 0615; heartily welcomed by all concerned.

1 November, 1943. Two hundred sixty men, under the direction of four officers, with Lieut Julian R. Fleischmann as Officer-in-Charge, were taken aboard and installed as Company "B" of the 85th.

11 November, 1943. A day of celebration in the States, but just another work-day in the Aleutians.

12 November, 1943. Lieut. W. E. Pantle was assigned the position of Executive Officer, and Ensign R. H. Kemter arrived to assume the duties of Lieutenant (jg) Hartje who was detached from the Battalion for return to the States.

18 November, 1943. An alert which lasted two hours, with all men in fox-holes.

25 November, 1943. Thanksgiving Day and the Navy furnished a bountiful dinner, supple-

mented by candy, cigarettes and cigars from the Welfare Fund. Work as usual.

7 December, 1943. Pearl Harbor Day with War Bonds purchased, exceeding the quota by 66 per cent.

22 December, 1943. A crew of 22 men direct from the States, was received aboard.

25 December, 1943. Christmas Day. For the majority, it being the first away from home. Work was secured and a special dinner furnished by the commissary, with smokes and candy from welfare. A theatre had been commandeered and a special program given the men, including presentation of War Bonds as prizes.

1 January, 1944. Work was secured for the day, with another special dinner and the distribution of Red Cross parcels, which had been scheduled for Christmas, but delayed en route.

1 March, 1944. Two hundred thirty-two men under Lt. J. R. Fleischmann and three junior officers were detached and embarked for completion of a job far to the west.

10 April, 1944. Ensign C. I. Coy was taken aboard to replace Lt. (jg) Fay who was detached for new duties in the States.

15 April, 1944. The third fatality of the Battalion occurred when James W. Munsey, Jr., was accidentally killed, while in the line of duty.

30 May, 1944. The anniversary of our first year on Island X was commemorated with work secured at 1130, a special dinner and a softball game in the afternoon.

21 June, 1944. Physical fitness program begun, with calisthenics, drill and hikes, which brought on many sore and aching muscles, following the softening process of the winter.

4 July, 1944. Work secured and drill teams participated in competitive exhibitions, with a field day of sports, and an eleven-card prize fight completing the day.

30 August, 1944. That long-awaited day finally arrived, and half the Battalion embarked for a nine-day cruise on the *Carl Schurz* to the States, leaving the "key" men in possession of the island. An uneventful trip, except for several days of exceptionally rough weather, which was soon forgotten. But the one moment that shall forever remain in the memory of the men, was the first view of the Golden Gate Bridge. Never has a scene made a more profound impression.

1 October, 1944. The more than 500 "key" men who'd been held over on Island X, finally had their desires fulfilled, when the *Schurz* docked and they were allowed to go aboard. Their nine-day cruise was also without incident, except that rougher water was encountered. They too have an indelible picture of the Golden Gate, which to many is as symbolic of home as the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor.

The cruise ended with a fitting commendation from the Commander of the Base, Lannie Conn, which is in part quoted:

"The officers and enlisted men of the 85th Naval Construction Battalion have established an outstanding record in the discharge of their many and varied assignments. The Battalion has displayed exceptional industry, initiative, and judgment at all times, evincing complete loyalty and cooperation.

"On the termination of the Battalion's tenure of duty, the Commander, NOB, commends each officer and man for a job well done."

# THE 85TH IN THE NEW HEBRIDES

On the morning of March 6, 1945, the 85th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion embarked for its second tour of duty from Port Huene, California, aboard the S. S. Seabass bound for a destination unknown but certainly highly speculated. The troopship, jammed with personnel ran into rough seas on the first night out. This carried with it the usual consequences. As the voyage progressed, however, the nauseated feeling subsides and the daily battle of the chow line began.

After nearly 14 days on the high seas, the Seabass arrived in the New Hebrides at the main Island of Espiritu Santo. Debarkation of the men was commenced as soon as possible. The cool drizzling rain that fell during the land operations seemed refreshing to all of the cramped and weary men who had spent days in the sweltering equatorial sun. Immediately after descending the gangplank, a truck convoy transported the new arrivals to the 85th camp area.

Before the men could stop to investigate the tropical island with all its, then, novel appearances, the battalion started on its assignment. At the first muster, the job assigned to the battalion was explained to the

men and the necessary plans that were formulated were put into operation. The personnel staff acted promptly by getting all records in order and selecting the right men for the right job.

The main job assigned to the battalion consisted of demobilization of existing facilities and minor base maintenance work. Tank farms, a drydock and several camp areas were razed and crated for use elsewhere.

The climate was mildest at the time of the battalion's tour of duty there. However, it was far from ideal at times and the work accomplished considering such conditions, was worthy of praise.

Many important events took place during the six months that elapsed while the 85th was on Espiritu Santo—notably the victory in Europe and then at last the momentous news of the capitulation of Japan. At the war's end, the work at Espiritu Santo was near enough completed to move on to another assignment. This new task turned out to be the construction of Naval Air Base Wake. So it was that the first of the four ships transferring the battalion personnel departed from the shores of Santo on 12 September, 1945.

# THE 85TH ARRIVES AT WAKE ISLAND

The 85th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion arrived at Wake Island in the early part of October to partake in the reconstruction of an Island whose bloody defense by a gallant band of Marines in December, 1941, will go down in the annals of history as one of the finest defensive battles of the recently ended war. The conditions encountered upon its arrival could hardly be considered enviable due to the evident neglect of the Island by the Japanese garrison that was stationed there. This garrison, cut off from all outside supply except possibly through submarine channels, were slowly but surely dying from starvation, malnutrition, dysentery, and many other diseases. It was apparent, therefore, that the battalion, already weakened by demobilization loss, found a task of tremendous proportions.

Shortly after its arrival here Commander Albert G. Hillberg, Civil Engineer Corps, U. S. Naval Reserve, replaced the battalions former skipper, Commander Thomas J. Lewis, Civil Engineer Corps, U. S. Naval Reserve,

and the immense job of reconstruction was begun. It would be impossible to name all of the jobs that were undertaken during the battalion's stay here but to those of you who worked on them week after week, rain or shine, it is certain they will not soon be forgotten. Whether you worked on the concrete crew or drove a vehicle for Transportation or whatever other job you were employed at each and every one of you played an important part in converting Wake Island from the shambles that it was to the functioning Air Base that it now is. Our Christmas holiday on Wake was but a sad reminder of the happier days we usually spent at home and although a fine Christmas dinner was prepared, to compensate at least partially for the inconveniences that were inevitable, there were certain things for which there could be no substitute.

Our job now completed, we can return home knowing we have done our utmost to live up to the true tradition of the Seabees . . . "Can Do", "Will Do", and "Have Done".

## 85<sup>th</sup> Naval Construction Battalion

### Chronology

09 Jan 1943 Battalion formed at NCTC, Norfolk, Va., 1083 men and 26 officers.  
06 Feb 1943 Battalion commissioned at NCTC, Norfolk, Va., 1083 men and 26 officers.  
08 Feb 1943 Transferred to NCTC, Davisville, R.I., 1083 men and 26 officers.  
09 Feb 1943 Arrived at NCTC, Davisville, R.I.  
13 Apr 1943 Departed NCTC, Davisville, R.I., 1068 men and 26 officers.  
16 Apr 1943 Arrived ABD, Gulfport, Miss.  
01 May 1943 Departed ABD, Gulfport, Miss. for ABD, Port Hueneme, California, 1062 men and 26 officers.  
06 May 1943 Arrived at ABD, Port Hueneme, California.  
16 May 1943 Company B detached, forming 509 CBMU, 250 men and 4 officers.  
20 May 1943 Departed ABD, Port Hueneme, California, for Seattle, Washington, 812 men and 22 officers.  
22 May 1943 Arrived, Seattle, Washington.  
25 May 1943 Departed Seattle, Washington, for overseas, 810 men and 22 officers.  
30 May 1943 Arrived Dutch Harbor, Alaska.  
01 Nov 1943 CBMU 508 attached to Battalion at Company B.  
07 Mar 1944 Detachment sent to Attu, Alaska, 234 men and 4 officers.  
31 Aug 1944 Detachment at Attu rejoined the Battalion at Dutch Harbor.  
31 Aug 1944 First Echelon sailed from U.S., 500 men and 11 officers.  
09 Sept 1944 First Echelon arrived CBRD, Camp Parks, California.  
01 Oct 1944 Second Echelon sailed for U.S., 544 men and 14 officers.  
11 Oct 1944 Second Echelon arrived CBRD, Camp Parks, California.

### Second Tour of Duty

22 Jan 1945 Departed CBRD, Camp Parks, California, 1083 men and 25 officers.  
23 Jan 1945 Arrived ABD, Port Hueneme, California.  
27 Jan 1945 Detachment sent to Coronado, California, 89 men and 10 officers.  
30 Jan 1945 Detachment sent to Thermal, California, 209 men and 4 officers.  
14 Feb 1945 Detachment returned from Thermal, California, joining Battalion at Port Hueneme, California.  
15 Feb 1945 Detachment returned from Coronado, California, joining Battalion at Port Hueneme, California.  
06 Mar 1945 Departed ABD, Port Hueneme, California, for overseas, 1063 men and 25 officers.

19 Mar 1945  
18 June 1945

Arrived Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides.  
Still located at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides.

**DECLASSIFIED I-A-L**

ITINERARY OF THE 85TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

9 Jan. 1943 Battalion formed at NCTC, Norfolk, Va., 1083 Men and 26 Officers.  
6 Feb. 1943 Battalion commissioned at NCTC, Norfolk, Va., 1083 Men and 26 Officers.  
8 Feb. 1943 Transferred to NCTC, Davisville, R. I., 1083 Men and 26 Officers.  
9 Feb. 1943 Arrived at NCTC, Davisville, R. I.  
13 Apr. 1943 Departed NCTC, Davisville, R. I., 1068 Men and 26 Officers.  
16 Apr. 1943 Arrived ABD, Gulfport, Miss.  
1 May 1943 Departed ABD, Gulfport, Miss. for ABD, Port Hueneme, Calif., 1062 Men and 25 Officers.  
6 May 1943 Arrived at ABD, Port Hueneme, Calif.  
16 May 1943 Company B detached, forming 509 CBMU., 250 Men and 4 Officers.  
20 May 1943 Departed ABD, Port Hueneme, Calif., for Seattle, Wash., 812 Men and 22 Officers.  
22 May 1943 Arrived, Seattle, Washington.  
25 May 1943 Departed Seattle, Wash., for overseas, 810 Men and 22 Officers.  
30 May 1943 Arrived Dutch Harbor, Alaska.  
1 Nov. 1943 CBMU 508 attached to Battalion at Company B.  
7 March 1944 Detachment sent to Attu, Alaska, 234 Men and 4 Officers.  
31 Aug. 1944 Detachment at Attu rejoined the Battalion at Dutch Harbor.  
31 Aug. 1944 First Echelon sailed from U. S., 500 Men and 11 Officers.  
9 Sept. 1944 First Echelon arrived CERD, Camp Parks, California.  
1 Oct. 1944 Second Echelon sailed for U. S., 544 Men and 14 Officers.  
11 Oct. 1944 Second Echelon arrived CERD, Camp Parks, California.

SECOND TOUR OF DUTY

22 Jan. 1945 Departed CERD, Camp Parks, California, 1083 Men and 25 Officers.  
23 Jan. 1945 Arrived ABD, Port Hueneme, California.  
27 Jan. 1945 Detachment sent to Coronado, Calif., 489 Men and 10 Officers.  
30 Jan. 1945 Detachment sent to Thermal, Calif., 209 Men and 4 Officers.  
14 Feb. 1945 Detachment returned from Thermal, Calif., joining Battalion at Port Hueneme, Calif.  
15 Feb. 1945 Detachment returned from Coronado, Calif., joining Battalion at Port Hueneme, Calif.  
6 March 1945 Departed ABD, Port Hueneme, Calif., for overseas, 1063 Men and 25 Officers.  
19 March 1945 Arrived Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides.  
18 June 1945 Still located at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides.

Enclosure 1.

Certified to be a true and correct copy  
[Signature]











