

86th Naval Construction Battalion

*Historical
Information*



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



6/3/44	-	Adak		Left U.S. May 1943.
12/14	-	Camp Parks	Budocks memo 12/9.	ret'd US 11/30/44
10/29	-	(Davisville)	CNO cond disp 281601 dec.	ready March 1, 45 - rearmarked Cinepoa
4/3/45	-		CNO cond disp 012015 dec.	Transfer to Davisville About 10 Jan.
1/23	-		CNO cond disp 012015 dec.	modify 281601. portion retained at Parks.
2/8	-	(Bine)	Cinepoa Rec. 220111 Jan. CNO cond serial 0484309 2 Feb.	Request assignment to Comloop. (already rearmarked Cinepoa). Ready Parks 3/1/45 Asid Bine. Probable April Shp9.
5/12	-	(Bine) Adak	Budocks memo 3/9. CNO rec disp 071935 May.	Probable May shp9. Asid priority - being shp'd Bine May or early June

86th C.B.

1st Embarkation

NOTC - Magruder - Davisville
 ABD - Hueneme
 Ready Date - 13 May '43
 Left ABD - 22 May '43
 Location - Dutch Harbor Adak

2nd Embarkation

NOTC -
 ABD - (CBRD Parks)
 Ready Date - 1 Mar '45
 Left ABD - 24 May '45
 Location - Okinawa

LOG

- 2-20-43 - 86th CB, consisting of 26 off. and 1081 men, to be transferred from Peary to Davisville on 24 Feb'44. (Budocks ltr to CNO)
- 4-30-43 - Opnav orders 86th CB from Parks to Hueneme on 3 May. (TWX301027-4-43 to Parks)
- 5-22-43 - 3/4 86th CB sailed for Dutch Harbor.
- 7- 1-43 - 86th is at Adak. (Com 13 to BomALSec dtd 6-21-43 - Secret Disp)
- 3-16-44 - 1 Mar'44 report of 1st Brig. - 86th CB located at NOB Adak.
- 7-14-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of 6th Reg. - 86th CB is at Adak.
- 7-31-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 86th CB - operating at Adak.
- 8-26-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 86th CB - In latter part of July, this CB absorbed the Public Works functions at Amchitka, Tanaga and Andrews Lagoon, Adak, and thereby relieving CBMUs 509 and 510. This CB also absorbed the operation and maintenance of heavy equipment for NOB Adak, thereby relieving Det. 1022.
- 9-30-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 86th CB - located at Adak. Functioning at Sand Bay, Andrews Lagoon, Tanaga, Amchitka. A detachment of 30 men was organized as a construction crew to relieve a detachment of the 79th CB which was making improvements at Tanaga.

86th C.B.

- 10-27-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 86th CB - operating at Adak with detachments at Andrews Lagoon, Tanaga, and Amchitka. Report endorsed by 6th Reg.
- 11-17-44 -- All personnel of ABD Dutch Hbr. ordered transferred to the 86th CB for return to the U.S. (Com 17 conf. disp to NOB Dutch Hbr. 150254 NCR 3075 dtd 15 Nov'44).
- 11-24-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 86th CB - located at Adak. Men were given instructions on the necessary preparations for embarkation. Report endorsed by 6th Regiment.
- 12- 6-44 - 86th CB with 25 officers and 1068 men arrived Parks from overseas 30 Nov'44. (Parks 012125 TWX Dec'44)
- 12-14-44 - From the Chronological History of the 1st Brigade -
30 May'43 - 85th & 86th CB arrived Dutch Harbor from U.S. - 86th moved along to Adak.
(Com 17 Sec. ltr ND17/A12-1/L7 over 50/2b over Ser 0096 to Budocks dtd 6 Nov'44)
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- 1-4-45 - Parks ordered to transfer the 86th CB approx 31 off, and 458 men to Davisville about 10 Jan'45. (CNO conf. disp to Parks and Davisville 281601 dtd 28 Dec'44).
- 1-5-45 - Portions of the 68th and 86th CBs at Parks should be retained there - modified 281601. (CNO Conf. Disp. to Parks 012015 dtd 2 Jan'44)
- 1-30-45 - The 86th CB to be ready for shipment to Cincpoa 1 Mar'45. (Cominch Sec. disp to Cincpoa 211829 dtd 21 Jan'45.)
- 1-30-45 - Cincpoa Sec. disp to CNO 220111 dtd 22 Jan'45 - requests assignment of the 86th CB to Comsopac ready 1 Mar'44.
- 1-30-45 - CNO will arrange to lift the 86th CB now ready for Sopac in lieu of the 86th which will not be ready until Mar'45. (CNO Sec. disp to Cincpoa and ComWesSeaFron 252120 dtd 26 Jan'45).

Location - Okinawa

86th C.B.

- 2- 2-45 - The 86th CB to be assigned to Espiritu Santo. (Comsopac Sec disp to CNO & Cincpoa 260032 dtd 26 Jan'45)
- 2-26-45 - The 86th CB will be ready for SINGAPORE 1 Mar'45. (Cominch Sec. disp to Cincpoa 222134 Feb'45).
- 3-8-45 - The 86th CB is destined for BIVE. (Cincpoa P.H. Sec. disp to Cominch 040400 Mar'45.
- 5-26-45 - The 86th CB, consisting of 25 off. and 1070 men, departed Parks for overseas on 24 May'45. (Parks Sec disp 252235 May'45 to Bupers)
- 7-20-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 86th CB - Batt in transit to Okinawa. Departed SanFran on 24 May'45.
- 7-23-45 - The 86th CB is assigned to the 8th Brg and 37th Reg effective 10 July. (CCT APO 331 sec report on assignment of CB units ser 897 dtd 10 July)
- 7-27-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 86th CB - the 86th CB is in Transit to Okinawa. Departed U.S. on 24 May'45 and should arrive at Okinawa on or about 5 Jul'45.
- 7-27-45 - The 86th CB reported to CCT APO331 on 7 Jul'45 and further reported to the CinC 8th Brg for duty with the 37th Reg. (CCT Conf. endorsement Ser 0223 dated 13 Jul'45 to CinC 86th CB).
- 7-27-45 - The 86th CB reported to IsCom331 on 7 Jul'45. (IsCom APO331 Conf. end. dtd 11 July 1945 to CCT APO331.)
- 8-14-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 86th CB - The 86th CB unloaded from on bd ship on 6 Jul'45 at Okinawa. Report vfa the 17th Reg and 8th Brig.
- 8-23-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 17th Reg - The 86th CB reported to the 17th Reg for duty on 8 Jul'45.

- 8-31-45 - Officers & men of the 86th CB reported to the 8th Brig on 7 July '45 & further reported to the OinC, 37th Reg. (8th Brig conf end ser 0239 dtd 15 Aug'45 to OinC, 86th CB).
- 9-11-45 - 86th CB reported to the 8th Brig on 7 July'45 & further reported to the 8th Brig on 7 July'45 & further reported to the 17th Reg for duty. (8th Brig conf end ser 0239 dtd 15 Aug'45 to OinC, 86th CB).
- 9-19-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 86th CB. Report via 17th Reg & 8th Brig. No info as to location.
- 10-24-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of 86th CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 17th Reg. & 8th Brig
- 11-20-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 86th CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 17th Reg. & 8th Brig
- 12-13-45 - Officers & men under the command of 17th Reg. are reassigned to 37th Reg. (8th Brg. conf ltr ser 0321 dtd 20 Nov'45 to 9th, 86th, 135th CBs & CBMU 521).
- 1-2-46 - CNOB, Okinawa directs Comservpac to release 86th CB on 1 Feb'46. (CNOB, Okinawa diap 302320 Dec'45 to Comservpac).
- 1-14-46 - 86th CB reported to 37th Reg. on 23 Nov'45. (OinC, 37th Reg. 2nd end. ser 1837 dtd 23 Nov'45 to 9th, 86th, 135th CBS & CBMU 521).
- 1-14-46 - Off. & men directed to report to CNCT, Okinawa. (OinC, 8th Brig ltr ser 3158 (1st end.) dtd 8 Dec'45 to 86th, 125th CBs & CBMU 521 & CBMU 533).
- 1-29-46 - 1 Dec'45 report of 86th CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 37th Reg. & 8th Brg.
- 1-31-46 - 1 Jan'46 report of 86th CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 48th Reg.
- 3-1-46 - 1 Feb 46 report of 86th CB - location not stated. Report via 48th Reg.
- 3-25-46 - 86th CB inactivated on 14 February at Okinawa. (Comdt NOB Navy 3256 spdltr ser 42-46-48th NCR dtd 26 February 1946.

INACTIVATED

ON BOARD

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>AUTHORITY</u>
1 Jul'44	26	1046	BNP625
1 Aug'44	26	1046	R & BNP625
1 Sep'44	26	1044	R & BNP625
1 Oct'44	26	1040	MoR
1 Nov'44	25	1040	BNP625 & MoR
1 Dec'44	25	1068	BNP625 & R
1 Jan'45	22	315	BNP625 & R
1 Feb'45		962	BNP625
1 Mar'45		835	BNP625
1 Apr'45		876	BNP625
1 May'45	25	1106	BNP625 & R
1 Jun'45	25	1070	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	25	1069	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	25	1063	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45		1038	BNP625
1 Oct'45	22	696	BNP625 & R
1 Nov'45	17	739	BNP625 & R
1 Dec'45	20	1150	BNP625 & R
1 Jan'46	29	1062	BNP625 & R
1 Feb 46	21	600	BNP 625 & R

86th Construction Battalion (INACTIVATED)

BATTALION HISTORY

A history is a story written about past events for future readers. The following story of our battalion from the time of its inception to the present is being written so that your wives, children, relatives and friends will be able to gain a broader picture of our activities, and your particular life while you have served with this battalion. You, yourself, in years to come, may want to reread this resumé of our experiences, and perhaps you will smile and recall more vividly these events that are so important to us now.

Entrance into military life for most of our men began either in December 1942, or January 1943 when first reporting to Camp Peary, Camp Bradford, or Camp Allen. Shortly after arrival, GI clothing was issued, the men billeted, and soon organized into groups for the training that was to follow. "Boot" camp consisted of segregation in a detention area for the full period. Drills, technical classes, and work details were the order of the day, and the intensiveness of this life seemed at first beyond human endurance. Before too long, however, everyone became hardened to the routine and managed to survive. The lack of liberties during this period was hard to take, but this matter came second to the mud of Camp Peary, which sometimes seemed to reach knee depth. Construction Battalions and Battalion training courses were still in the experimental stage, and the guinea-pig role into which we were cast was sometimes confusing, sometimes fun.

It is fitting to relate here the story of boot camp, and the reason it will always leave pleasant memories in our minds, no matter what we thought of it at the time. Many of us detained at Williamsburg, Va., upon arrival and were met at the station by a receiving party who sternly told us to dispose of anything in alcoholic liquid form. We were then taken by bus to Camp Peary. The salty, sea-going chatter of the bus skipper forecast the things to come. It was from him that we received the words that have echoed to all corners of the earth—"You'll be Sorry." When we first heard these words, they gave us a twitch in the stomach, but they have since become the humorous, merry greeting of hard-boiled fighting men. From a receiving barracks we went to an issue warehouse and were given our bedding issue. For a week, life was just one nightmare of musters, issue, chow and details. Station-force men took advantage of our innocence by selling penny post cards for ten cents each, five-cent candy bars for ten cents, chewing gum at ten cents per package, and mailing our first letters home at five cents per letter. There was one incident which at the time riled us, but which later on rebounded a thousand-fold, much to the pleasure of the poor boot. There was a certain instructor, shaped like Tony Galento, with a Chaplin mus-

good stride, but the constant repetition became humorous, and from then on, the sight of him was a signal for a roar of laughter. We will recall in a later chapter our vengeance on this particular chap.

At the end of the first week, we were told that on the following morning we would be given our final physical and that it would be best for all hands to rest up as it was quite an ordeal. Never truer words were spoken. Saturday morning dawned cold, wet, and muddy, but all hands were on deck. We were taken to the main dispensary and given exactly two minutes to strip and pack our clothes into a box about 12"x12"x18"; the packing process was helped now and then by the heavy foot of the attendant. We were thoroughly examined in every part of our body; some fell by the wayside, particularly during the blood test and inoculations. Clothing issue was next, and soon we were outfitted in GI gear.

Our auto manufacturers would do well to visit the barber shop and see a real assembly line in action, or should it be called a disassembly line? We finally completed this phase of our indoctrination, then over the hill to detention barracks and our first real taste and feel of Boot. Here, we were turned over to an instructor, given a lecture by the chief instructor and then assigned to permanent barracks. Next came a study of soap and swab, learning that a floor was a deck, a wall a bulkhead, stairs a ladder and a ceiling an overhead. Here were formed friendships that will last till the sands of the desert grow cold.

The barracks were hastily-constructed, wooden affairs with openings between the siding through which one could pass a book. Each had two wood-burning stoves that fried you on one side while you froze on the other. During this period, we received the remainder of our shots. Some would go in scared, and come out laughing, others would be boasting how they could take it, move two steps from the administrator, and hit the deck. The mess hall proved to be a problem, too, but not for long to the more ingenious. One method of eating first was the early chow pass, another, the friendship of the MAA, another was via the galley door, but the most ingenious of all was the small note book with a few fictitious names and the information advanced that the holder was checking on his men.

At this time, we were learning, and learning fast. The left foot and the right foot, left face and right face was accomplished in due time, but the command, "to the rear—March," produced various gyrations that could have been easily mistaken for a "to the winds—March."

Machette and gas mask drill and various warfare schools were interesting. I wonder how many of us will forget that first tear gas test with the real product. The

instructor. He was the leader of the hiking party that day and led us through the worst brush and bramble in Virginia. Just as we were returning to camp, we came to a swamp, and into it he went, shouting "Follow Me." We saw what we were in for and decided to pick our way gingerly, which we did, although most of us were waist-deep in muck at times. The instructor, however, plunged on and in due time was in to his arm pits; he then began shouting for assistance, which no one felt in the mood to give. Finally the stragglers came along and word was passed to lend a hand. From that time on, he proved to be quite an amiable fellow.

Then came the night of nights. Liberty—and 12 hours of it—in a town with lights, people, steaks, beer and girls. It is needless to say that, despite the SP's, a fine time was had by all.

During our boot, our chiefs were receiving similar training, and when the time came for them to take over their platoons, many amusing incidents occurred. We were marched into ditches, fences, and buildings. We were rip-marched till we thought we were on a merry-go-round, but the following is the classic of them all. A certain chief was drilling a platoon in a large drill field, in the center of which stood a power pole. The platoon, marching down the field, headed straight for the pole, and as we neared the pole, the chief, in all his dignity, commanded "Split pole, Split."

The officers, for the most part, reported to Camp Allen during the latter weeks of January, 1943, and, after a short but intensive indoctrination training, they were assigned to the battalion and transferred to Camp Peary, just as the men were released from boot.

Soon afterwards, following a period of adjustment to our new status as trained Seabees, the Battalion made preparations for the review and commissioning ceremonies. On 22 February, 1943, the Battalion colors were presented, and we were officially designated the 86th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion. The review was held on Bolles Field, before Captain James B. Ware, USN, and party. The day was extremely warm, tending to make it difficult to hold the position of attention for any great length of time. The colors were presented by Mrs. R. H. Meade, wife of Captain R. H. Meade, who has been Officer in Charge of the 1st Naval Construction Brigade during our tour of duty here on Island "X." After the completion of the ceremonies, many complimentary remarks were heard in regard to the military bearing of the various companies.

We had no sooner returned to our billets than preparations were under way for the entraining of the Battalion for Camp Endicott, Davisville, R. I. We left Williamsburg on the afternoon of 24 February, 1943, and traveled in two sections of day coaches to our new camp. (Anyone remember the box lunches?) We arrived

situated nearby. The program of the training period proved to be rigid, yet enjoyable. The Battalion, broken into groups to attend classes on technical subjects, and to maintain our area, was subjected to a military training program under the Marines, who left nothing to be desired. Meanwhile, the various Battalion administrative offices were set up. The specialty groups, such as cooks, bakers, yeomen, storekeepers, and others were soon hard at work, performing the duties for which they enlisted. The liberties at Endicott were enjoyable. Providence and surrounding communities proved to be among the best of towns. In addition to the liberties, the shows and other amusements provided at camp were entertaining and tended to relieve the strain of training. The Battalion put on a show of their own that gave opportunity for our erstwhile artists to "strut their stuff."

As stated above, Endicott, to us, seemed heavenly after Peary. Immediately after detraining, we were marched to a large, dark, barn-like building, and as the last of the men entered the building, the main light switch was thrown on, revealing the Recreation Hall. It was beautiful, with cement floors, benches, ten basketball courts, projection machines and a stage suitable for our finest movie palaces, with building-height drapes that would pale a rainbow. We were then taken to our barracks, large, well-constructed, two story, steam-heated, ventilated buildings. As soon as we were assigned to barracks, we were taken to a large, clean mess hall and heartily fed. This put all hands in an excellent mood. We were shown the heads, large, clean, modern buildings with showers, clothes washrooms, and dry-rooms, too; classrooms, armories, library, writing and study rooms, bowling alleys, billiard rooms, ship's service, where one could purchase anything from wedding rings to safety pins, ice cream, fresh milk and sandwiches. The next surprise came in the liberty schedule, 12 hours every fourth night with liberty busses waiting at the gate and visitors admitted, too. Who will ever forget that familiar "So and so's mother, wife or friend to see him at gate No. 5." Liberty nights took us to Greenwich, Providence, Pawtucket, Woonsocket and sometimes as far as Boston, and our treatment in these wonderful New England towns was the exact opposite of Richmond and Williamsburg. We were treated kindly, politely, courteously, and oft times invited to the homes of these very cordial people. Our stay proved altogether too short.

Proficient in providing for recreation, so Endicott also provided classes and drill. Classes in the morning and drill in the afternoon was the schedule. The drill consisted of extended order and combat maneuvers. This was practiced in the rolling, sweet-smelling New England farm land, on the shores of beautiful Narragansett Bay.

One event of note that occurred at Endicott was the

included the late Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, Vice Admiral Ben Moreell, Vice Admiral Randall Jacobs and Captain F. F. Rogers, USN, Commanding Officer of Camp Endicott. Last but not least of all the events that occurred at Endicott, was the nine day leave for all Eastern men.

Our leave commenced the morning of the 6th of April and ended on the 16th of April. The exodus from camp utilized all available transportation, including auto, air, and even a special train to New York City. We were all sorry to leave Camp Endicott, and all of us remember it as one of the best camps at which we have been stationed. On the 21st of April, led by the Battalion Band playing the familiar air "California, Here We Come," we marched to the station, just inside Gate No. 2. We traveled in three sections of Pullmans, each containing an average of 18 cars and all three trains traveling by different routes. Our trip West was both exciting and monotonous, filled with new sights and different scenes, not the least being the number of girls who were attracted to nearly every station at which we stopped. The food left little to be desired, but it tended to vary, and the quality and quantity depended on the railroad serving it. Traveling in three sections added to the excitement of anticipation of meeting one of the other sections enroute. At various stop-overs, there was time allotted for exercise and impromptu parades that were well-received by all the local residents. Easter Sunday was spent enroute, and short services were held by all sections.

The Rockies were a new and inspiring sight to all. Then and there more than one of the Easterners decided that they were worth a vacation trip after the war. Crossing the Pacific Coastal Plain, we entered California, and all were very glad, yet a little homesick.

The Battalion arrived in Camp Parks, near Oakland, California, in the late afternoon, Monday, 26 April, 1943. The first thing we did after unloading our gear was to chow, and was it good! Within two days of our arrival, the Western men went out on leave. The country in which Camp Parks is located is very beautiful and was especially colorful and lush at that time of the year. We remained at Parks just long enough to visit San Francisco, and this was a treat to the Easterners. The hospitality of the San Franciscans will ever be a pleasant memory.

Although our stay at Camp Parks was very brief, we were rushed throughout. The Marines took us in hand, and put the finishing touches to a tough training grind. The obstacle course, at first sight, seemed like a Sunday School picnic, but a lot of minds were suddenly changed when quite a few of us came off dripping wet and muddy, and a lot wiser, too. The hand grenade practice was very interesting. Here is an incident to cause a few smiles. One afternoon we were taken to a beautiful, grass-covered, rolling meadow that was abundant

his tricks of which to beware. At the edge of the group was a fellow whose love of the beautiful overcame the horror of war, so he proceeded to pick a bouquet of violets. The instructor noticed this and made the helpless mate stand at his side, bouquet in hand while he finished his period of instruction.

Before the Westerners reported back from leave, the rest of the Battalion was ordered to our Port of Embarkation, and left by day coach on 3 May, 1943. The men on leave reported back to Camp Parks and then came down to rejoin the Battalion. This camp proved to be the opposite of Parks. The grounds were barren and flat, and all the quarters were Quonset huts which seemed to collect all the sand and dust of California.

Most of this period was spent in feverish preparation for embarkation. CBMU No. 508 was formed by the detachment of men from the Battalion. Our overseas clothing and gunnery issue were distributed, scuttlebutt was flying thick and fast in regard to our ultimate destination and date of sailing. No two men ever carried the same story in regards to these subjects, but that caused no alarm as everyone was ready to believe anything.

Finally, on Monday, 17 May, liberties were cancelled and this was the first hint of our sailing. There followed three days of hectic activity. The various administration officers of the Battalion were involved in last minute reports, packing of records, and preparations for shipping out while the battalion as a whole squared away and packed.

In the early morning of Thursday, 20 May, we began boarding ship, each man being checked aboard at the gangway. Late in the afternoon, we felt the vibration of the engines and saw the dock dip slowly astern. We were on our way and the mixed emotions everyone felt at this moment cannot be fully described.

The less said about our sea voyage the better. Not much of an attempt will be made to recount our adventures because those of us who experienced it remember it, oh, too well, and the folks back home can let their imaginations provide the story. Seasickness and food were the main points of dissension; our cooks struggled valiantly in the galleys, but were limited both in quality and quantity of the raw materials of their trade. But with characteristic Seabee courage, the men made the most of it, scrambled eggs and all.

Fifteen days at sea brought us to our destination and since that time, we have put in busy days and nights.

With our arrival on Island X, the duty for which we were enlisted and trained began almost the day of our disembarking. The Battalion was assigned to the Naval Air Station, the activity that was at that time in control of all Naval Operations ashore. The first work performed was to provide living quarters for the Battalion. The carpenters erected tent floors and frames over which

hours had passed, the Battalion was fairly well settled. With the first few meals it became apparent that the food would be good and that there was plenty of it, thus removing a source of future gripes. Our billet area became known as "Mud Valley," appropriately named because of the basin-like area forever covered with mud. We were now ready to do our part.

It soon became apparent that the duties of the Battalion would concern four main parts—maintenance, operations, watches and construction. Departments to handle the various functions were organized and men were assigned in accordance with their previous experience. A listing of these departments is indicative of the diversity of our activities at this stage: Battalion Administration—Executive, Personnel, Disbursing & Supply, Censor Board, Security, Post Office, and Company offices; Engineering Department—Drafting, design, field survey, and layout; Transportation—Operation of all vehicles, and mechanical repairs; Plumbing, Heating & Water Works—Maintenance, watches, new installations, and refrigeration; Roads & Streets—Upkeep and new construction; Electrical Department—Power and lights, telephones and radio; Carpentry—Outdoor construction, repair, and shop; Oil Distribution—Garbage and rubbish collections; Watches—Generators, boilers, pumps, and refrigeration. Additional men were detailed to the Commissary—mess halls and bakery, Medical, Ship's Service Operation, Fire Department, Base Supply, Base Welfare—movie theatre operation. There was also maintained a labor pool for stevedoring and all kinds of emergency work requiring a number of men for labor primarily.

This work was all being carried out against a background of military operations underway at two nearby islands. There was a great deal of activity at this base and many combat units stopped here enroute to the fighting zone. With the final occupation of these two islands and the withdrawal of the enemy far to the westward, the battalion settled down to normal operation of the Public Works Department for the Naval Air Station, relieving men for combat duty elsewhere.

The foregoing account of our activity and particular service in this area covers what might be termed phase one of our life here on Island X. Phase two commences with the designation of this base as a Naval Operating Base and the consequent conversion of the heterogeneous units into NOB. Our function was still Public Works, but in addition to regular maintenance duties, we became involved in several large construction jobs as the tempo of the building program increased.

The winter of 43-44 was moving time for the Naval activities here at the base from their original location to the new shops, warehouses, and quarters. The job of moving, dismantling of the old buildings in old Navytown was done by the transportation and construction

town quarters were also built during this period in a location near the new Village. The Battalion was more fortunate this time as their quarters were Quonset huts instead of tents. Catwalks were constructed, Battalion offices and officers' quarters established near the area and as each unit of structures was completed, the men moved to their new billet. A Rec Hall and a Library Hut completed the 86th Area.

Our duties have settled down to routine Public Works functions with the addition of a small amount of new construction. The older construction battalions are gradually being released for return to the States and leave. We now look forward to a few more months of duty here, and then that happy day when we shall receive our orders to secure and board a transport for our return to the States, leave, and home.

The strength of our battalion has varied considerably since our tour of duty began here on Island X. Many transfers have taken place, and a great many men have been received aboard to replace these men who have left. The greatest number of transfers have been due to medical reasons. These men have been returned to the States either to be treated at a Naval Hospital or to be surveyed from the service if their condition so warrants. At the time of the writing of this article, there have been 52 medical transfers, thereby averaging approximately 5 men per month.

This command was assigned a quota of ten men in the Navy College Training Program (V-12 Class). Those finally selected are now in attendance at various institutions in the States where the V-12 Units have been established. They will receive training for an average of two years, at the termination of which they will be commissioned ensigns in the Naval Reserve.

To replace these transfers, two casual drafts were received aboard in December. On Christmas Day, Casual Draft No. 2144 reported aboard, and on 29 December, Casual Draft No. 2112 reported with a large number of men and five officers. These additional men brought our Battalion up to full complement. These men were soon assigned to the various details and departments, and before many weeks had passed, they firmly established themselves as an integral part of the 86th Battalion. Casual Draft No. 2112 became a new Company "D," and Casual Draft No. 2144, consisting of fewer men, was inserted into the existing four companies.

Social life has been one of our greatest problems during our long stay overseas. The area in which we are serving, previous to our arrival here, had been uninhabited. Our entertainment has therefore been that which we provided for ourselves, which took the form of company and departmental parties. A recreation hall was built and also a library. A Battalion newspaper, the *Battalioneer*, was inaugurated, with the first edition published on December 1, 1943.

are sometimes old, sometimes new. The weather and playing facilities have defeated any attempt at organized outdoor sports. With the completion of the New Athletic Arena here at the base, a basketball league has been organized and has functioned to the advantage of all interested. The gym has also encouraged more physical conditioning programs than were possible previously during the abundantly unfavorable weather.

During our brief life as members of this battalion, we have griped, we have complained, but we have had fun and it really hasn't been bad. We have worked together through all conditions of weather, of physical discomfort and of imaginary mental anguish. As we look to the future, let us drink a toast to the quick conclusion of this war, to success and prosperity in our future life wherever we may be. In other years we will look back, with fond memories of our battalion, and of the brotherhood that existed among us. We of the 86th Battalion, can feel that we have given our time, our energy and our abilities to help win the victory that will be ours at the conclusion of this war.

We have maintained the traditions of the Seabees and have often fulfilled our motto, "Can Do—Will Do—Did."

Our Island X is about as far north as (censored), and almost half way around the world from it. This island, like others nearby, is of volcanic origin. Its hills and mountains are strung along in ridges, separated by deep canyons, long bays, and many lakes. The whole enormous mass was apparently poured out at one time, or in flows following each other so quickly that there was no time for the older flows to decay before they were buried, and the peaks have been left by patient streams cutting canyons in the hardened lava. This formation strings out into a chain of small, rugged islands, connected by drowned causeways to the active volcano.

The aft section of Island X is a beautiful country. In summer it is a wilderness of towering brown cliffs, against which the green tundra rises high. Its swift, clear streams throng with trout and salmon; clouds of eagles drift through the valleys or perch on the crags. Blue foxes, ptarmigan and ravens are abundant and unafraid.

But it is impenetrable to vehicles, and the soft tundra bog and steep rock makes walking difficult, and clouds often obscure all landmarks. In winter, walking is easy on the wind-packed snow, but the cold and sudden storms make it unsafe to venture far.

The forward area of our island was built fairly recently by individual volcanoes, partly over old land and partly out into the sea. There are at least three of these, the big mountain, the saddle-top mountain, and the smaller one that has been half destroyed by the sea. All of these are dead and cold. Water and ice have torn away the larger volcano's crater walls, leaving the lava hardened in its throat projecting at its highest peak. Blueberries grow through the moss in the last tiny crater formed by Saddletop. The walls of its older, larger craters are breached mounds of rubble.

The volcanic sand is gray and of poor quality because the lava cooled so rapidly the hard, white quartz did not separate entirely from the weaker minerals; and in every grain of sand there are tiny crystals of black mica, which darken it and provide weak spots along which it breaks easily. The local tundra is a mixture of grass, flowers, ferns, moss and other plants. The mass forms a resilient carpet up to eighteen inches in depth; the other plants may be six feet high in sheltered spots, but are more often three. This luxuriance of growth begins to diminish at an altitude of five hundred feet, and at twelve hundred to two thousand feet thins out into scattered plants separated by bare gravel, soil or rock. Moss and blue-bells are found sparingly, even on the highest peak.

As this is written, few of us love Island X. We love it so little because of the weary time away from home and loved ones; because of its barren isolation, its low, soft clouds, its howling gales of lashing snow and rain, its deep and sticky mud. But with passing time, perhaps we will remember more the splendor of its wild scenery; its flowered peaks above the sea, Great (censored) steaming against the sunrise, long summer days of fog and sun, bright stars shining through the falling snow, white thunder of surf on dark beaches, and at last, the whole island dim on the horizon as our ship carries us homeward.

86th Naval Construction Battalion

Chronology

Feb 1943	Formed at NCTC, Norfolk, Va.
24 Feb 1943	Transferred to NCTC, Davisville, R.I.
21 Apr 1943	Transferred to CBRD, Camp Parks, Shoemaker, California, arriving at Camp Parks 26 April 1943.
03 May 1943	Transferred to ABD, Port Hueneme, California, arriving ABD, Port Hueneme, California 4 May 1943.
20 May 1943	Departed ABD, Port Hueneme for overseas.
30 May 1943	Arrived Dutch harbor – preceded to Adak.
04 Jun 1943	Arrived Adak.
Sept 1943	Detachment of approximately 80 men to Great Sitkin Island (NFD, Navy #65). Personnel of CBMU 510 gradually replaced this detachment, all 86 th personnel having returned to Adak by 1 December 1943.
30 Apr 1944	6 November 1944 a detachment of men, which varied in number from 35 to 91, men and 1 officer comprised the detachment operating at Great Sitkin Island (NFD, Navy #65) for this period.
31 Jul 1944	Small detachments detached from Adak to operate at Amchitka, Tanaga and Andrews lagoon. 70 men to Amchitka and 1 officer 35 men to Tananga and 1 officer 100 men to Andrews Lagoon and 1 officer.
14 Nov 1944	Complete battalion reassembled at Adak.
15 Nov 1944	Embarked from Adak.
30 Nov 1944	Arrived CBRD, Camp Parks.
12 May 1945	Still located at CBRD, Camp Parks, Shoemaker, California.
24 May 1945	Departed U.S.
06 Jul 1945	Arrived Okinawa.

Encl. 1.

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ITINERARY OF THE 86TH CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

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24 May '45 Departed U.S.
6 July '45 Arriving Okinawa

Administrative handling
 Classification changed
 from

CONFIDENTIAL

Certified to be a correct itinerary
 of the 86th NCB to present date.

H. Roy Whitaker
 H. ROY WHITAKER, Comdr., CEC, USNR.

For
 Irvin S. [unclear]
 Comdr. [unclear]



86TH

BATTALION



CAN DO









