

95th Naval Construction Battalion

*Historical
Information*



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



95th C.B.

NCTC - Peary
ABD - Hueneme
Ready Date - 1 Sep'43
Left ABD - 27 Oct'43
Location - ~~Acorn-16 Apamama & Pearl Harbor, Roi, Marshalls~~
Iwo Jima

LOG

- 7-25-44 - Budocks requests that the 95th CB, consisting of approx. 26 off. and 1081 men, be transferred from NCTC Peary on 30 Jul'43 to Parks FFT ABD Hueneme. (Budocks ltr to CNO dtd 25 Jul'43)
- 8-20-43 - 95th CB detached from Parks to Hueneme 20 Aug'43. (OinC ~~25th CB~~ Parks ltr to OinC 95th CB dtd 20 Aug'43)
- 11- 3-43 - 95th CB departed ABD 27 Oct'43. (RHD)
- 12-23-43 - 95th CB is at Apamama as of 23 Nov'43. (ComAirPac 3 Dec'43)
- 1-11-44 - The personnel of Acorn 16 and attached unit (....., 95th CB) has been adjusted as follows: 95th CB arrived with 30 officers and 1054 men. 1 off. and 21 men were ordered to the 2nd Brig. for temp. duty. (Conf. Memo from U.S. PacFlt AirForPacFlt dtd 5 Nov'43) This entry precedes the one above.
- 4-11-44 - 1 Mar'44 report of 95th CB - operating at Apamama.
- 5-29-44 - 1/4 of the 95th CB arrived P.H. 1 Apr'44 and assigned to the 3rd Reg. (3rd Reg. Mar'44 report) Consisted of 240 men and 5 officers.
- 6- 1-44 #, 1 May'44 report of 95th CB - 13 off. and 483 men at Roi, Marshalls. 1/2 of the

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batt is at Hawaii.

- 6-16-44 - 1 Apr'44 report of 95th CB - 476 men and 13 off. left Apamama for Roi, Namur
1 Mar'44. 23 Mar'44, 5 off. and 250 men left Apamama for P.H. 30 Mar'44, 11 off. and 275 men left Apamama for P.H. CBMU 557 took over operations at Apamama.
- 6-27-44 - 1 May'44 report of P.H. contingent.- 250 men and 5 off. arrived P.H. from Apamama
2 Apr'44 and assigned to 16th CB at Waiawa Gulch. 275 men and 11 off. arrived P.H. from Apamama 10 Apr'44 and joined the 1st Echelon. On 28 Apr'44, this 1/2 batt was moved to Aiea Receiving Barracks.
- 6-27-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of Roi Batt. 12 off. and 480 men with this section. Operating at Roi-Namur.
- 7- 7-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of Det. #2 (P.H.). This detachment consists of 16 off. and 497 men.
- 7-24-44 - 2nd Sect. at P.H.
- 7-25-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 1st Sect. at Roi.
- 8-11-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 2nd Sect. 95th CB - operating at Ewa, Waikale Gulch, NAS Waiawa Gulch and Iwelei (Oahu)
- 8-30-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 2nd Sect. 95th CB - operating at Ewa Junct, Waikale Gulch, Iwelei. 1st Sect. reported at Roi.
- 10-7-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 95th CB - operating at NAS Honolulu, Ewa Junct., Waikale Gulch, Waiawa. Under 3rd Regiment.
- 10-12-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 3rd Reg. - One-half of the 95th CB returned from a forward area and joined the other half which was already assigned to the 3rd Reg.
- 11-2-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 95th CB - operating on Oahu (Ewa Junct. and Waikale Gulch). Report endorsed by 8th Reg.

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- 6- 1-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 8th Reg. - 95th CB was in transit from 20 Feb'45 to 13 Mar'45, debarking at Iwo Jima, 14 Mar'45. 26 men detached to V Amph Corps on 5 Jan'45 retd to the batt 19 Mar'45.
- 6-5-45 - The 95th CB has been assigned to advanced base ARTU by CNO for airfield const. (Comservpac sec ltr ser 002038 dtd 8 May'45 to CNO)
- 6-6-45 - The 95th CB is located at Iwo Jima. (IsCom Iwo Jima sec disp 031027Z Jun to CNO)
- 6-8-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 95th CB - Location not given. The 95th CB embarked on 20 Feb'45 enroute to Advance Base & was still on board transport on 1 Mar'45. Report end. by 8th Reg & 9th Brig.
- 6-12-45 - Expected availability date of the 95th CB at Iwo Jima is 15 Oct'45. (OinC 9th Brg sec ltr 00137 dtd 28 May'45 to Comservpac)
- 6-25-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 95th CB - located at Iwo Jima. Report via 8th Reg and 9th Brg.
- 7-10-45 - The 95th CB is located at Iwo Jima. (IsCom Iwo Jima sec disp 030753 July to CNO)
- 7-11-45 - Comservpac requests Cincpoa's approval to inactivate the 95th CB on 1 Oct'45. (Comservpac conf ltr ser 03590 dtd 30 June to Cincpoa)
- 7-20-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 95th CB - located at Iwo Jima. Report via 8th Reg and 9th Brg.
- 8- 2-45 - 9th Brg ltr to Comservpac ser 0187 dtd 12 June contained recommendations for consolidation and reoutfitting of 9th Brg units including the inactivation of the 62nd, 106th Sec 2, 95th CBs, and 8th Reg. Cincpoa 1st end ser 030878 dtd 8 July to Comservpac's ltr approved the inactivation of these units. In accordance with Cincpoa's ltr, inactivate these units on the dates recommended by the 9th Brg. Transfer enl personnel who have been out of U.S. cont for 2 mos to the nearest W.C. RecSta. Transfer other enl personnel to the 31st, 90th, and 133rd CBs. Dispose

95th CB

- 11-3-44 - The 95th CB is assigned to the 8th Reg. (CNO conf. ltr Op30-20K15-UOT over (SC)P16-5 over Ser. 01348230 to Bupers and Cincpoa dtd 27 Oct'44).
- 11-16-44 - The 95th CB is located at Pearl Hbr. (Com 14 Sec. disp to CNO 062243 NCR 15886 dtd 11 Nov'44).
- 11-28-44 - 95th CB will not be alerted until 15 Dec'44. (Dirpacdocks 128 Sec. Ser 00465 to Comservpacflt dtd 16 Nov'44)
- 12-13-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 95th CB - Report endorsed by 8th Reg. and H.A.B.
- 1-15-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 8th Reg. - On 7 Nov'44, Comdr. Johnson, OinC of the 95th CB, received citation, with Commendation Ribbon authorized, from Adm. Nimitz; this is in connection with construction of facilities at NAB Roi, Marshall Islands.
- 1-17-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 95th CB - Location not stated. Report endorsed by the 8th Reg., 7th Brg., and H.A.B.
- 2- 7-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 95th CB - located in Hawaiian Area. Report endorsed by the 8th Regiment.
- 2-17-45 - The 95th CB is located at Pearl Hbr. (Com 14 Sec. disp to CNO 081016 Feb'45).
- 3-22-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 95th CB - no info on location. Report end. by 8th Reg.
- 5- 8-45 - The 95th CB is shown located at Iwo Jima on the Dirpacdocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr)
- 5-17-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of 8th Reg states that the 95th CB embarked from P.H. on 20 Feb'45 headed for Iwo Jima.
- 5-18-45 - 1 May'45 report of 90th CB states that 8 men on TAD with 95th CB returned to the 90th CB on 30 Apr'45.
- 5-21-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 95th CB - location not given. Recd 15 men aboard who had been left at P.H. to follow on a later echelon. Report end by 8th Reg and 9th Brg.
- 6- 1-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 95th CB - Unit debarked at Iwo Jima on 14 Mar'45. Report routed via the 8th Reg and 9th Brg.

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- 8-2-45 - (Cont.)- of all records of the 62nd, 95th, 106th Sec 2 CBs and 8th Reg. Inform Comservpac and all info addressees when inactivation has been completed. (Comservpac conf ltr ser 04110 dtd 21 July to OinC 9th Brg)
- 8-21-45 - 1 Aug '45 report of the 95th CB - located at Iwo Jima. Report via 8th Reg and 9th Brg.
- 8-21-45 - The date of inactivation of the 8th Reg and 95th CB will remain at 1 Oct '45. (Comservpac conf ltr dtd 10 Aug '45 ser 04576 to OinC, 5th Brig).
- 9-17-45 - 1 sept '45 report of 95th CB. Report via 8th Reg & 9th Brig. No info as to location. 3 Sept '45, 95th CB will start inactivation, 61 men transferred to Iwo Jima. & further transfer 177 men with less than 21 months service to batts now staging for forward movement.
- 10-17-45 - 95th CB inactivated on 20 Sept '45. (OinC, 9th Brig. conf ltr ser 0302 dtd 22 Sept '45 to Comservpac).

INACTIVATED

Camp Peary

THE BEGINNING was on a spring day in April 1943. The 95th Naval Construction Battalion comprised men from hamlets, villages, towns and cities from all four corners of the United States. Some had never been away from home; others had done some traveling, but very few to the extent that they have done since entering Navy Service.

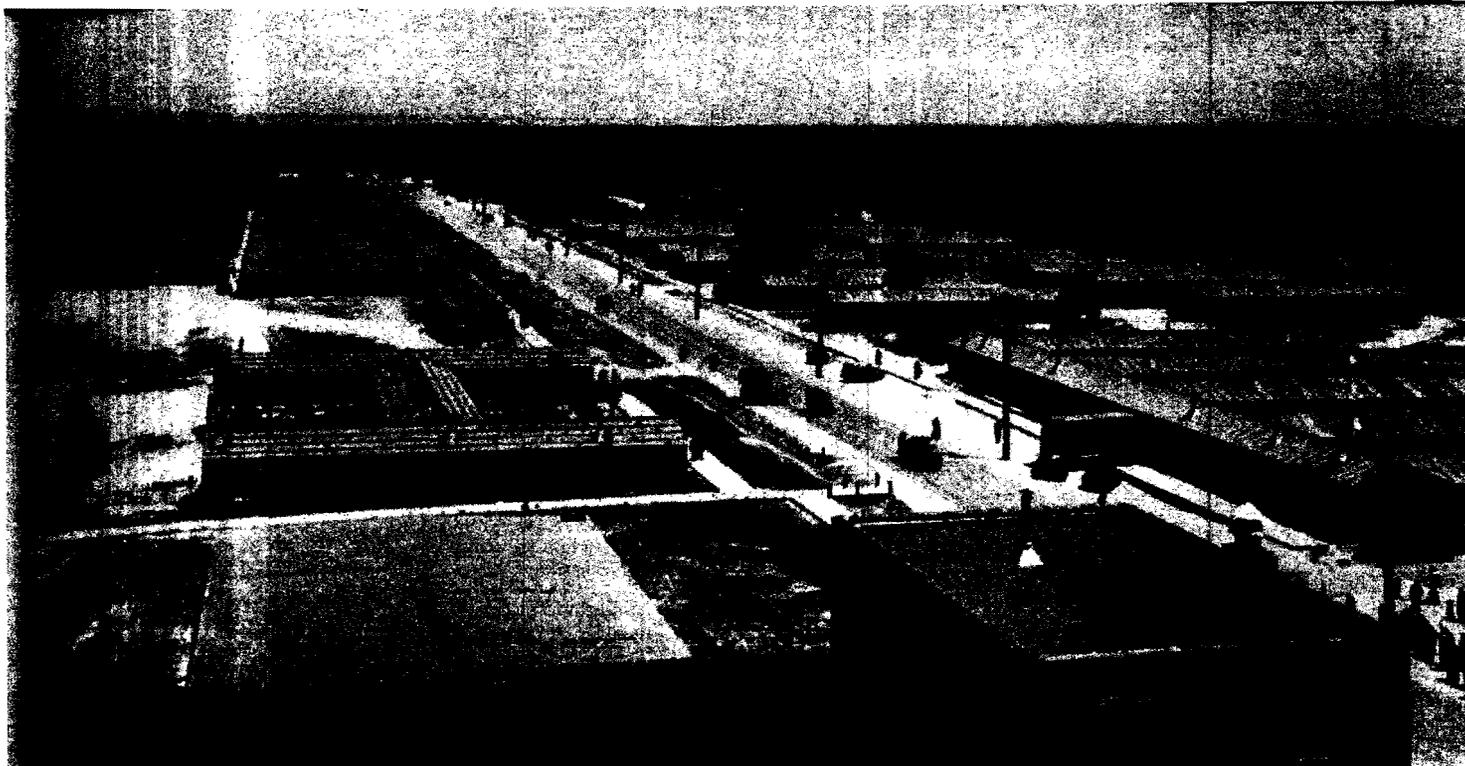
Military life began unfolding its mysteries from the moment that we were given that memorable first order, "Fall in!" to be marched to our respective railroad stations to board the trains that would whisk us out of circulation for a long time to come. When our train pulled into Williamsburg, we were told to de-train and form in columns of twos alongside where SPs herded us unceremoniously into waiting trucks, for a rough

ride to Camp Peary. "Fall out and form in columns of twos under the shed" was obeyed with alacrity, and we stood in as military manner as we knew how, awaiting whatever was to come; some of the more venturesome tried to talk with his neighbor but was quickly silenced by "Knock it off, you guys!" After strutting back and forth before us long enough to be properly impressive, the group leader rasped—"All right you guys; knock off the chatter and listen to this;—all dice, liquor and knives will be piled in front of you; there is no gambling in the Navy;—no liquor will be brought into Camp except what is already in your bellies; now remember that!"

We were marched to barracks that were cold and damp, with old-fashioned pot-bellied coal stoves

SEABEES MARCH TO DUTY—A group of 200 Seabees, many of whom later were assigned to the 95th Construction Battalion, paraded from the Federal Building to South Station in Boston, Mass., to entrain for Camp Peary, Virginia, April 15, 1943.





The Upper Road at Camp Peary, looking toward Area A-5.

waiting for firemen. After being assigned bunks we marched over to a huge warehouse for mattress, mattress cover, blanket, pillow and pillow case, just enough gear to make us comfortable for the night. It hardly seemed that our eyes were closed until the harsh notes of reveille tore into our unconscious minds to rudely announce that 0430 had come and a new day was ready.

Never to be forgotten are the memories of that first boot camp morning chow. The chow hall was about a mile and half from our area, or so it seemed, up a long hill and over several foot bridges and after we started the march in an orderly fashion, our leader or instructor suddenly called out,—“All right now, lets double time to the chow hall;—you guys have been doing nothing for so long it will be good for you; give you an appetite”, and so we double-timed to wait in line for our first chow—a breakfast of baked beans and pork chops; a peculiar breakfast to most of us, but all trays were well cleaned. Immediately after this meal, we were issued a complete seabag of clothing, all of which was stencilled with our names, while we waited.

Next we were introduced to a Navy style haircut where a barber (?) transformed curly-locks into “skin-heads.” Adding insult to injury, our next stop was marked “Photography Section” where we were mugged; no better word can be found to

describe what happened; when those pictures appeared on our ID cards we were almost glad that we would be hidden away from our folks for six weeks so that they need not share our humility.

The veterans of two or three weeks at the indoctrination center took keen delight in yelling “Hi, boot!” or “You’ll be sorry!” at every opportunity; it wasn’t long until we were doing the same thing to newcomers. As soon as we were outfitted with a complete clothing bag, we moved to our primary training, or boot training area. Boot Camp was rough and tough for the newly converted civilian, made doubly so because of the restrictions imposed for quarantine. Reveille at 0430 . . . make up your bunk to a prescribed pattern (but the pattern changed every day) . . . bathe and shave . . . sweep and scrub down the deck . . . police the grounds, pick up every cigarette butt and match stem and infinitesimal piece of foreign matter so that barracks and grounds would be ready for morning inspection . . . morning chow . . . and then the hours and hours of close order drilling . . . “Column left . . . Column Right . . . about face . . . to the rear march that became to dulled ears, rrrrippp harrrch! . . . one, two, three four . . . your left, your left, your left right left” hour after hour of it until you would drill in your sleep.

An interval for noon chow was a welcome rest

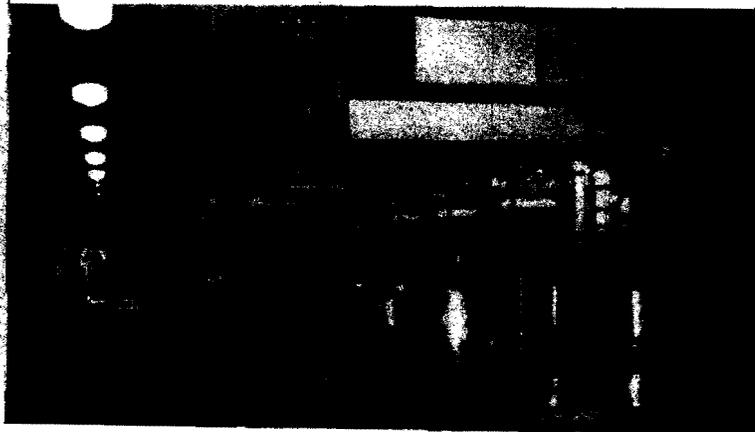




Stencilling new clothing issue to "boots".



*Theater in Area A-5.
Interior of a Camp Peary Galley.*



Camp Peary

period but promptly at 1300 (1:00 PM to the uninitiated) that despised yell would come, "Fall out for muster!" and for four long hours more the intricacies of close order drill were pounded into us. After evening chow we could usually count on the evening, until 2130, being all our own; our time to write to the folks at home, read, go to movies or just spend shooting the breeze. Our program was varied to include hikes . . . made through dust clouds so dense that often the leader was invisible, or else rain and mud ankle deep, and extended order drills that were soon dubbed "scouts and Indians" . . . running through dense woods in a crouching position flared out in a fighting formation, with only hand signals to furnish directions;—the order 'hit the deck' meant literally to fall flat on the ground at once, and hug the ground; it didn't matter if you found yourself in a briar bush or in a heap of dried holly leaves with every barb sticking to you . . . up hill and down dale, through creeks and mudholes and finally emerging on the other side of the woods, confident that you could outsmart any yellow so and so Jap that you would ever meet. Some afternoons were devoted to indoor lectures that were held in stifling hot rooms immediately after a heavy noon chow . . . when it would be cruel punishment to listen to a droning voice and keep awake; any who succumbed to drowsiness and closed their eyes 'just for a minute' were invariably caught and punished by standing at attention in front of the room for the duration of the lecture.

The days were hard and the nights short, yet there was a goal in the distance worth striving for; each man tightened his belt an extra notch, gave his courage an added boost, determined to reach that coveted sixty-two hour leave that marked the end of boot and would mean his first chance in weeks to put his feet under a restaurant table and have food served to him on plates, with tablecloths, napkins and the other accessories at-

Interior of a Camp Peary Mess Hall.



95th Battalion Dress Parade, June, 1943; Captain Ware inspecting Company D.

tendant to good eating . . . dreams of that first steak smothered in onions helped many a weary soul those last few days, not to mention the chance to quench a thirst of six weeks standing. The sixty-two hour leave started the 27th of May and meant a trip home to some and to them, excitement was at fever pitch; to others it meant a visit with their loved ones at Richmond or Washington or some nearby rendezvous.

At long last they had everything put ship-shape, themselves included; and deserted that camp to pile into busses, taxicabs, or any other vehicle going their way. Those taking the train out of Richmond surely must have reminded old timers of past battle scenes, and they climbed aboard already jammed trains with no other concern than to be on their way. The first leave for us was really a pass to freedom, the chance to do again the things that made up our lives before; to visit with our families and greet our friends and have a drink or two at the corner tavern, but it ended all

too soon and before we realized it we were back again at Camp Peary. After breaking boot, some of the restrictions were lifted and for one thing we were allowed liberty every fourth night; the boys would trek into Richmond or Williamsburg to catch a date or drink beer or simply wander aimlessly up and down the streets window shopping.

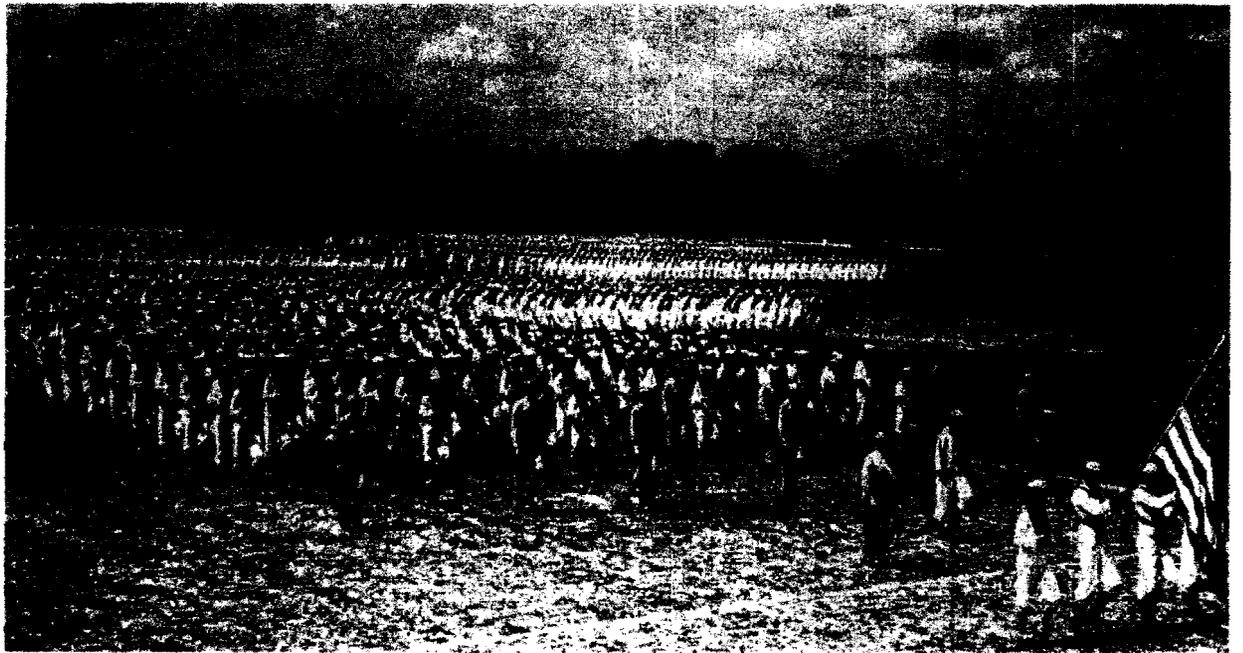
The 4th of June was another milestone;—on this date we were assembled and assigned to company and platoon organization;—the 95th was taking form, and we and our personal gear were trucked to Area A-5 in Camp Peary for Advanced Training, a period of six weeks of intensive physical, military and scholastic training. Each man was again interviewed and his qualifications checked for various classifications and assigned to various schools for a six week period. A total of 334 men attended Specialist Classes. Military training was in charge of seasoned Marine instructors many of whom had seen overseas combat service and were tough drill-masters. From early morn-





Regimental Review July 5, 1943.

95th Battalion Dress Parade, June, 1943; Capt. Ware, Comdr. Johnson inspect Company D.



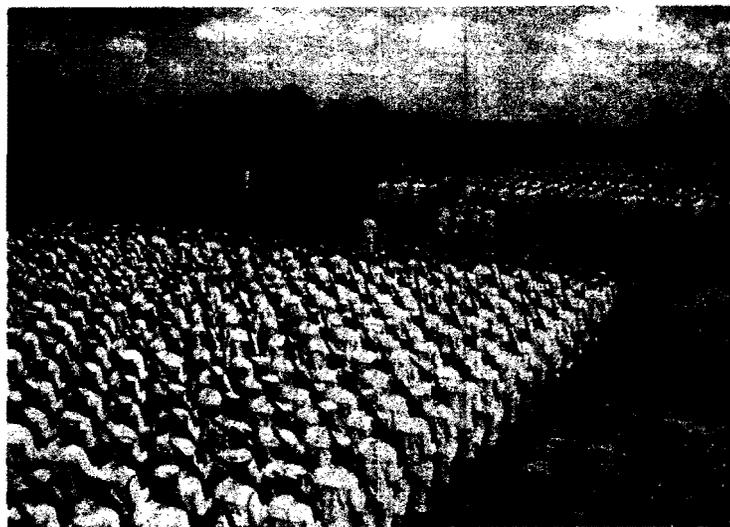
Presentation of Battalion Colors to Comdr. Johnson, Lt. Comdr. Lewis. Color Guard-J. J. Banks, Bool, J. E. Thompson, Kinnarney.



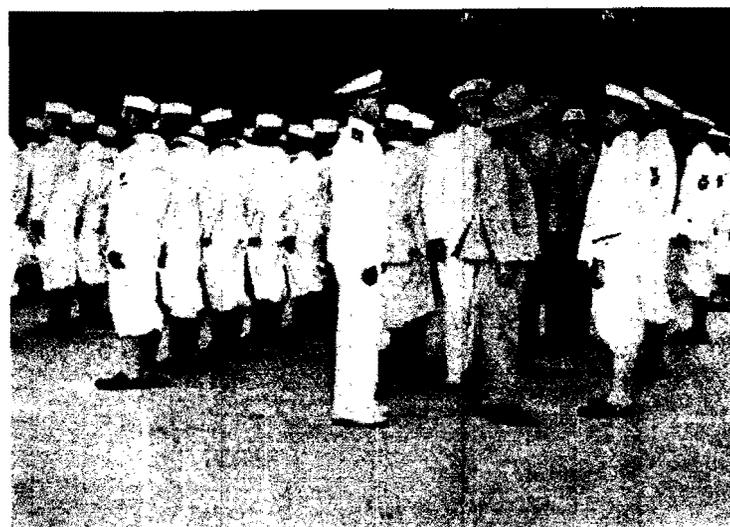
ing to late evening we would get close order drill; up and down and over that drill field through clouds of dust until we acted automatically and amidst a confusion of sounds, heard only the peculiar voice of our individual instructor. The memory of that hot drill field will always be with us and you can almost taste that Virginia dust and see the men rushing for a drink of water when the 'break' would come. For a change, these same instructors would take us on five or ten and even twenty mile hikes, with pieces and packs through swamps and thick underbrush and woods along dirt roads and paved roads until you wondered tiredly if you were a Marine or a Seabee and you staggered back to Camp hating Marines and regimented training. And in order to provide a little more variety, these same Marines would lead us through the Tidewater woods playing more games of 'scouts and Indians' with new arrangements; one group would be the 'enemy' today, to be advanced and hidden away to trap a second group who would be 'our men'. Woods tactics and infiltration were taught along with the art of concealment and digging of fox-holes, and along with this all were persistent rumors and scuttlebutt that we were being trained for use as combat troops, and we were sure that we would eventually be shipped out for a tour of duty in the Pacific.

Our physical training was not neglected for we had a continuance of that bugbear of early morning, PT . . . the deep knee bends . . . the jumping jack . . . the windmill, and the West Point breather. And our first acquaintance with the obstacle course, that fiendish invention to break men down instead of build men up, or so it seemed after a trip around the course. It was aptly named obstacle course, for from the beginning to the end it was a series of obstacles . . . the series of three log hurdles from an easy jump-over to a miniature wall;—it looked easy for a fellow to slip around the end of an obstacle and omit the work of climbing over it, but the Marines anticipated just that and were just around the corner to silently wave him back. Up and over the high board wall . . . double timing to the water hazard to grab a knotted rope and swing easily across a pool of water to the other side to discover quickly that you had miscalculated and into the water with a splash and to the jeers of your mates . . . climbing hand over hand over ropes suspended between trees . . . over swaying footbridges high in the air . . . crawling on

hands and knees and stomach through the board and dirt tunnels, and thru the barbed wire entanglements; it was a real feat to crawl and drag yourself through that last barrier and keep from snagging your clothes or skin;—if you did, it was at the expense of skin rubbed off knees and elbows. Then came the day when we made a trip down the York River in landing barges and returned, to jump overboard in about five feet of water with full pack and piece and wade ashore;



Regimental Review—Seven Construction Battalions participated.



Capt. Ware and his staff; Cmdr. Johnson and Lt. Hudson pause to talk with Chief Boatswain Jennings; Company A, Platoon 6 in background.

not an easy job;—and later the practice of climbing up and down cargo nets,—“scramble nets” . . . with full pack, gas mask and carbine, none of which would stay in its proper place but would become entangled and the carbine bang and bump you in the face and body until you decided it would just be better to jump and take your chances.

One of the most colorful of the Camp Peary days was the day we were reviewed by Captain Ware and the battalion colors were presented. Under a broiling summer sun we marched and turned in perfect formation; we had ceased to be boots and were now well trained Seabees. The July 5 review when seven battalions passed in review will be even longer remembered; we marched about five miles to the parade ground and after the hours of marching and standing at attention we were completely wilted and the immaculate white uniforms were a mess.

Life was not completely a round of work and training for we did have a few hours of leisure to ourselves each day to enjoy at the movies, or in letter writing, on liberty and in getting acquainted better with the men with whom we were living and to form friendships that were to endure long after these training days and the war itself were forgotten. Some of us found it necessary to change

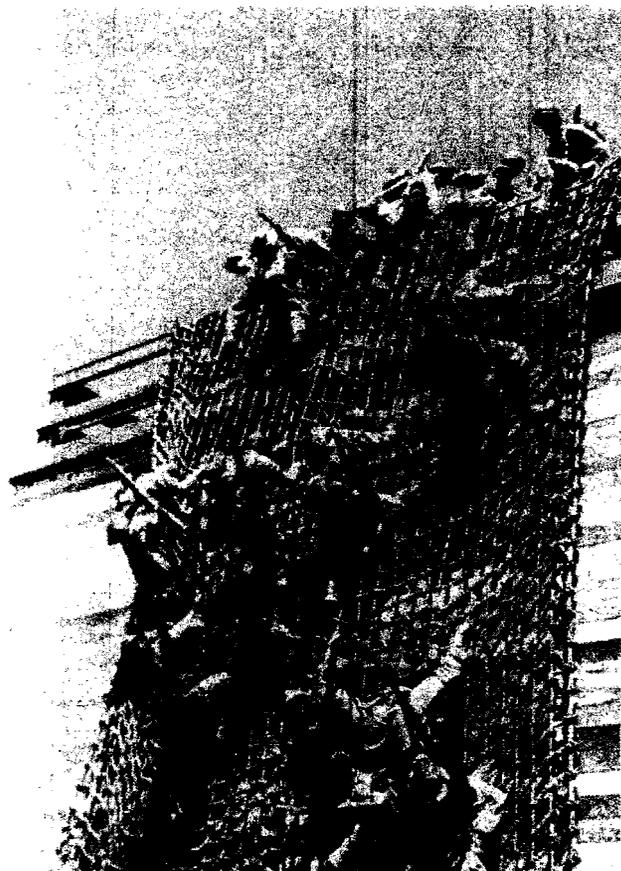
old habits and accustom ourselves to mass living; to learn the virtues of patience and adjust ourselves to regimented living; to learn to obey orders without argument or question; to accept the finality of “gold braid” decision. Most of us had come into service filled with an abiding love for our country and an abundance of patriotism with a strong desire to serve faithfully in the emergency of war; the coming months were to be a severe test of the depth of those principles. Time alone, or rather the duration of the war, would tell.

As the Advanced Training neared its end the prospect of a ten day leave loomed as a bright spot on the horizon. It was to be an embarkation leave with only ten short days to be spent with our families and friends. Many sleepless hours were spent in planning how to best spend that time and get the most out of it, for it could be that this would be our last visit at home for a year or possibly two years. Although we had few clothes to prepare and only necessities as personal gear, we still spent hours and hours pressing uniforms and scrubbing clothes; packing and re-packing ditty bags, until finally the long looked for day, July 18, arrived. We were up long before dawn, rolling mattresses to be stowed away in our absence, scrubbing down barracks decks and policing the grounds for all must be immaculate before we could leave.

Class for Disbursing Storekeepers.



Military Training—Down a scramble net with full equipment.



Camp Parks

The main exodus was by train but many left by taxi-cab, trucks, automobiles and some traveled home by plane. The train that was to take us to Washington via Richmond was over four hours late; who will ever forget those two hundred and forty-six minutes of waiting, anxiously peering down that length of track and cursing the fate that was stealing precious minutes from our leave. No one can estimate the amount of pure joy and happiness that was squeezed into those ten days, except each two people most concerned, knowing not what tomorrow might hold in store, and living each passing moment completely. Thoughts of those precious days must be re-lived countless times on Island X and by those left at home. Time sped on too quickly and the tenth day came and with it the sadness of parting. We were back at Peary on the 28th and the day was filled with chatter of adventures at home, but gradually the talk turned to our impending trip to an Advanced Base Depot. It meant that our training days were over and we were about to begin the big adventure. We left Camp Peary as a commissioned naval unit, the 95th Naval Construction Battalion.

On the 30th of July 1943, the newly formed 95th Naval Construction Battalion boarded its respective sections of the 95th Special Train, with the first section leaving at 0900 that day.

For five days state after state flashed by our Pullman windows until Virginia, West Virginia, Ken-

tucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Utah and Nevada had been left behind in our zig-zag course over back roads and by-passes, until the sixth day we arrived at Camp Parks, California.

Camp Parks will be remembered for its good chow, comfortable barracks, entertainment and recreational facilities and nearby Oakland and San Francisco. Here we received additional technical and military training. Every morning as we fell out for the inevitable PT and muster we expected to be told to prepare for another move; it just didn't seem possible that we would remain at this Seabee heaven for very long.



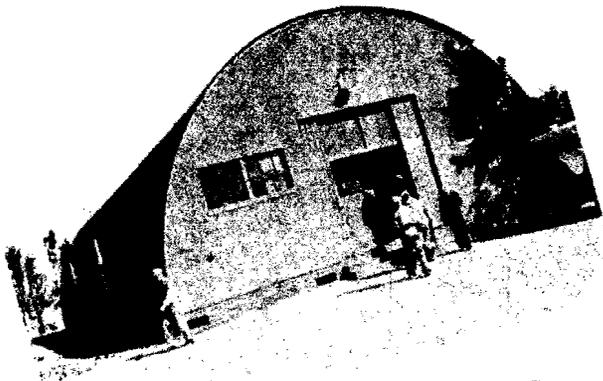
A Ship's Service Store.

The eighth mile of a ten mile hike - a snappy group of Seabees.





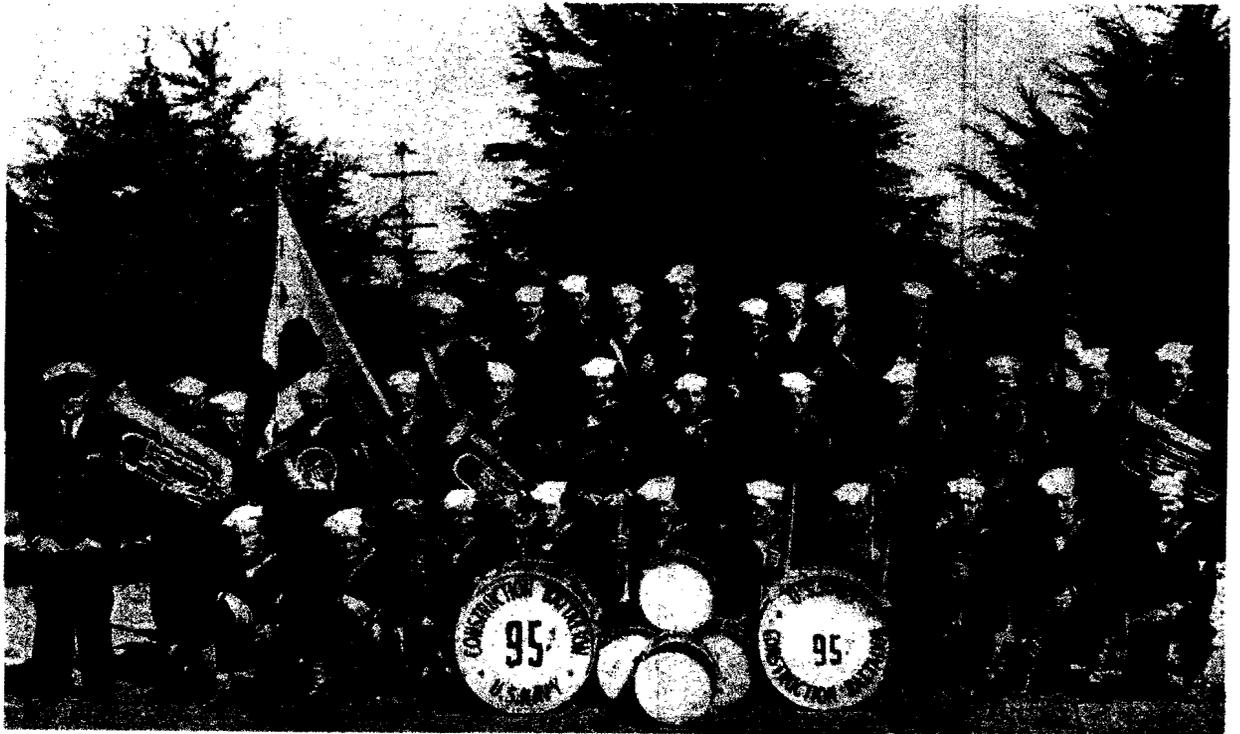
Extended order drill.



*Post Office at
Camp Rousseau.*

The sixteenth day after our arrival found us again loading aboard a train; this time a dusty, dirty, ancient day coach job and we were headed south to Camp Rousseau at Port Hueneme, and another short chapter in the 95th trail of adventures had ended. Our arrival at Camp Rousseau in the cold gray dawn of a California morning disclosed just another camp, the duplicate of those we had left behind, even to the inevitable crowds of welcoming Seabees, and their yells of "You'll be Sorry", "Where yah from, Mac" and "Hi-yah, Boot", but at least we were another step on our way to Island X. Here we were given our first taste of living in Quonset huts. After we were established in our respective quarters, we were immediately given a week-end liberty that meant Hollywood and Los Angeles to almost all of us, for very few elected to remain in camp. To most of us that first liberty in Hollywood was the realization of a dream, for we went to the Hollywood Canteen and saw many famous movie stars and danced with others; visited glamorous night clubs and ate at world famous restaurants, and saw and heard broadcasts of popular radio programs or had fun just walking the boulevards admiring Hollywood's beautiful women. When we heard that the liberty schedule at Hueneme was every fourth night and every fourth week-end we were

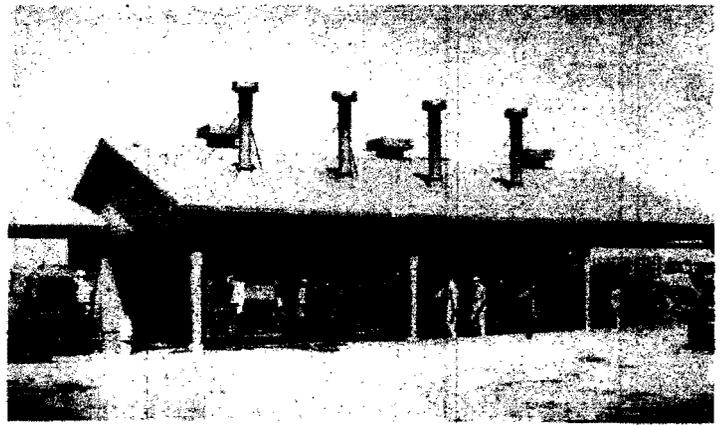
THE 95th BAND--Chief Cahill, D. Brown, Legge, Hoellworth, Saunders, Clay, Hinman, Richards, Giascha, R. O. Johnson, Hetu, Lt. Hudson; Deamon, Remert, Potter, Baldridge, Hehn, Greco, Saraceno, Di Ciocco, Shinn, Polanski, Hurdle; R. Bergeron, W. Foster, Updyke, Feather, Bruck, Linscott, Cloud, Krajewski, Malan.



convinced that this wasn't going to be such a bad war after all.

We soon settled down to our various duties which included lectures on military courtesy, chemical warfare, camouflage and sanitation; gas mask drills, field problems, rifle range practice and hikes. Our major work details consisted of the construction of a large tent city at nearby Point Magu, a hot dirty job, and building an obstacle course in the deep sand that was typical of that seaside camp.

And lest we forget, there was the midnight hike; we were routed out of bed by "gold braid" unceremoniously sticking their heads inside our huts yelling, "Hit the deck! Snap into it, now!" One kept repeating over and over,—"Get up; everyone's going!" As another officer opened a door to give the alarm, someone yelled,—"Shut that door and get the hell out of here!"; the officer, apparently too surprised to answer, shut the door and went his way. Another mate said,—"I'll be damned if I'll go; they can't make me." Overheard by an officer unobserved at the back door, he quickly changed his mind, dressed, and was ready to go ahead of the rest. We formed and marched in the starlit night to the edge of the sand dunes and then were divided into two groups, one for the offensive and the other for the defensive problem; the former crawled on hands and knees and slithered along on bellies through high salt grass dripping wet with dew to catch the defenders unawares; then an interminable wait

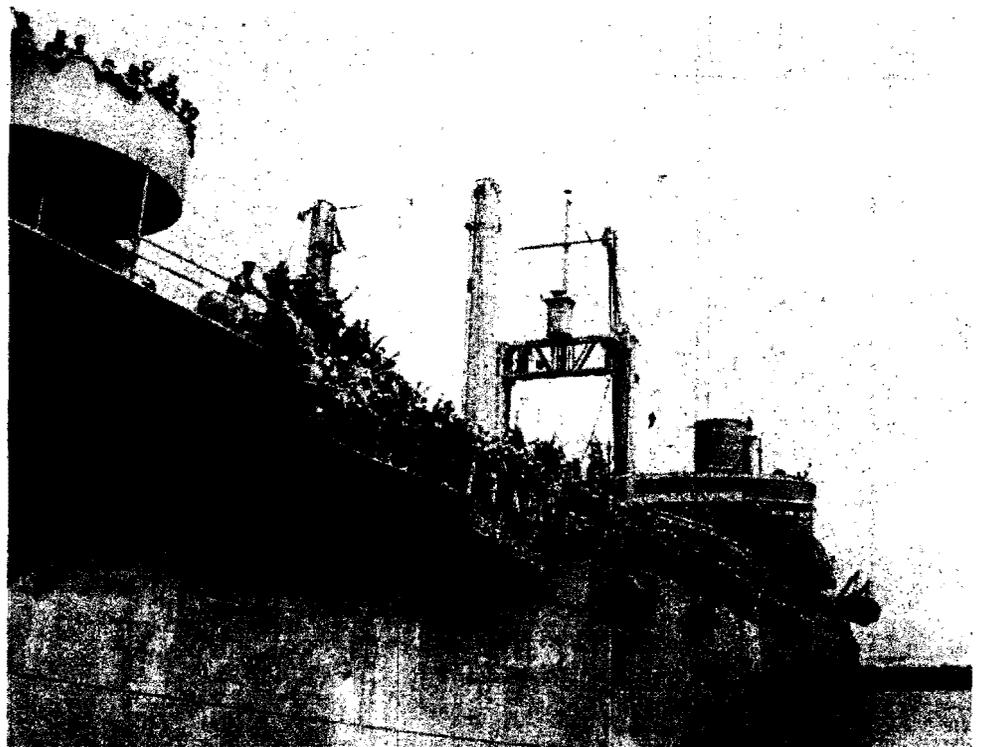


Water Purification School.

laying on very cold, wet ground, until apparently the problem was solved for we were ordered to march back to the camp area, then kept standing in the cold night air for another fifteen minutes and finally dismissed to return to the warm waiting bunks. The question was general as to just what it was that we had learned.

Later we moved to "Splinter City"; it was the quarantine area and all liberties were cancelled, but there were many ways of getting out, either by crawling under the high wire fence or simply walking thru the gate boldly. Our barracks were so situated that we could see ships as they arrived and departed from Hueneme harbor. At long last OUR ship arrived; the sailing orders were posted and eagerly read; the long list of do's and don'ts, and what we should put in our packs and what should go in the sea bags and what we should carry and the uniform of the day. The 27th of October was Departure Day and we were awakened by extra early reveille to fall in for muster in

S. S. WELTEVREDEN leaving Port Hueneme harbor.



The Sea



Trying to find a comfortable position to rest on the deck of the WELTEVREDEN.

a cold California rain, laden down with full gear. After endless waiting the order came to return to the barracks, which was a welcome respite and a chance to get warm and partially dried out. It seemed that we had only untangled ourselves from the mess of gear that weighed us down when the order came to fall in and this time they meant it. We formed in a column of twos and marched thru that dismal drenching rain to the dock, past straggling civilians on their way to work who waved and wished us luck. On reaching the dock we were marched through the pier shed where our duffle bags, containing our bedding, were added to our already overburdened bodies. Then one by one we filed up the steep slippery gangplank past sailors who called,—“Follow your bags, mates; step lively!” up on to the deck of the transport and then down narrow dark ladders and along companionways, winding around and about until we were utterly lost and bewildered. It seemed that we went down into the very bowels of the ship but we finally found our bunks in a hot crowded bunk hold, with the bunks in tiers of four or five, and after unloading and stowing our gear, waited for the signal to go up on deck and wait for sailing time.

At 1600 there was a slight trembling of the ship and we were underway, and the shores of California slowly receded in the distance.

The days were forty-eight hours long on the WELTEVREDEN.



Our training had been hard and rugged and we thought we were in the pink of condition, but as the watery miles slipped by, first one and then another fell victim to that demon of the deep, sea sickness, and a poor lot of sad sacks we were. It wasn't long though until most everybody was feeling normal again. The only work details that fell to our lot were guard duty, mess and "Sweepers man your brooms clean sweep down fore and aft". It seemed that everytime we settled down for a nap or game of cards or to read, the bos'n's mate would sound the call to "Clear the decks" or "Prepare for fire drill" or "Abandon Ship" or "General Quarters"; we were never comfortable long, and wherever we went we had to wear our 'Mae West' or life jackets. Chow was served twice a day, and three times daily to those on work details. The days usually began by using the rails for an hour or so, idly gazing at the endless expanse of deep blue water, then drifting off to find a shady spot, or perhaps to return to our sacks. The early evening, after chow usually found us again lined up along the rail when the order from the Dutch Master would come, "In feefteen minoots there will be a total blagoudt"; it was fascinating to watch for the first glow of phosphorous in the water that was visible with the coming darkness. The nights were quiet and peaceful, and because of the speed of our ship we traveled alone.

Kau-Kau Corner - the Crossroads of the Pacific - 2400 miles to Apamama.



Hawaii



Honolulu from Aloha Tower.





The beach at Waikiki, Honolulu, Oahu, T. H., Diamond Head in the background.



Waikiki Beach—The Royal Hawaiian and Moana Hotels.

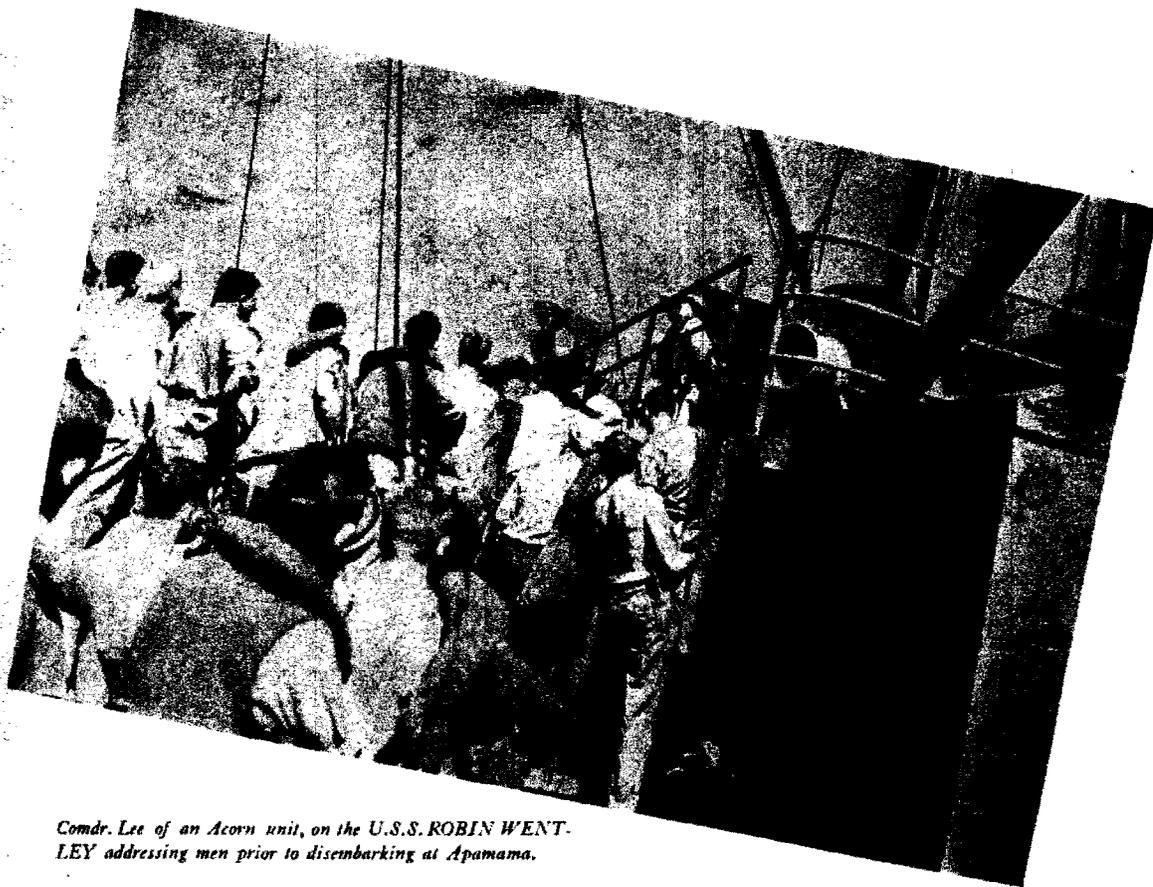
Our course was changed constantly, being altered approximately every six minutes, for, it is said, it takes a submarine seven minutes to line up a ship perfectly in its periscope sights.

Forgetting the seasickness our crossing was uneventful; sea life kept us amused with their antics; the small flying fish were especially interesting to

us landlubbers, and the larger fish, mostly sharks, seemed to want to race with the ship. As the days passed monotonously we began looking for land; presently, we were rewarded with our first sight of the Hawaiian Islands, the famous Diamond Head, on Oahu island. It wasn't long until the shore line became more distinct and we could see Waikiki Beach and the town of Honolulu and then the huge naval base of Pearl Harbor. Busy little rugs worried our ship alongside its dock, and on November 2, 1943, the WELTEVREDEN completed its voyage and brought the 95th battalion safely on the first lap of its journey. It wasn't long until those not on details were given shore liberty and groups departed for Honolulu; the very name had sound of adventure and allure to it, but the city was a disappointment to most of us for it was filled to overflowing with far too many service men milling about. It looked like a carnival town with the shops featuring tourist wares, but it was a liberty town and sailors the world over know how to find what they are looking for. The island of Oahu was strange and beautiful to our Western eyes; the climate was tropical, and we saw the strange sight of rain with sunshine and as many as four rainbows in the sky at once; the flowers were exotic and beautiful, but it was a foreign city and all its wonders couldn't make up for home. In a day or so after we docked we transferred to the ROBIN WENTLY and lived aboard this ship for several days and then moved out to Barbers Point, where we lived in fine two-storied barracks, that boasted good heads and reading rooms. This was a good place to live and our days were pleasant; we enjoyed several picnics and swimming parties at Nimitz Beach, and were introduced to real Hawaiian entertainments that featured the hula dances. The battalion was readied for the trip to Island "X" and provision was made for a small group to remain at Oahu to assemble and load additional supplies and equipment and follow us to our destination as the second wave. On the 19th of November the larger group boarded the ships PRESIDENT MONROE and ROBIN WENTLY, being about equally divided between those two ships. The balance of personnel were quartered on the CAPE ISABELLE and CAPE STEVENS. The sea voyage on these ships was, in many respects, a duplicate of the WELTEVREDEN trip, with the same hot stuffy bunk quarters, with the heat intensified as each day brought us closer to the equator; the same "general quarters" and "abandon ship" drills, the same

discomfort and lack of any facilities for the comfort of the enlisted men. We did have several false alerts that relieved the monotony somewhat. We spent Thanksgiving Day at sea and it proved to be just another day, with no special provision for holiday meals. On November 26 we had the unique and unusual experience of crossing both the equator and the international date line; in fact we crossed the equator twice for we went down under and then crossed back for a rear approach to our destination. It was significant and typically American that the traditional ceremony marking the crossing of the equator by U. S. Warships was still held despite that we were in enemy waters and there was constant danger of enemy air or submarine attack. Elaborate provisions for this ceremony were begun several days in advance; the crews of the ships only were to be initiated and converted from landlubbers, or "pollywogs" to "shellbacks"; as soon as Neptune Rex and his

Royal Court came aboard early that day, slapstick comedy and riotous fun were the order of the day; gun crews enjoyed the horse-play with one eye on the ceremonies and the other cocked aloft scanning the skies for possible trouble. As we neared Island "X", which we learned was to be the island of Apamama in the Gilbert Islands group, we rendezvoused with the balance of our convoy which totalled more than twenty ships, including LST's, DE's, Transports, Freighters, and the comforting sight of several Destroyers and Battleships in the distance, standing by to guard our safety. "Land Ho off the Port Bow", from an almost imperceptible line of distant land the formations of a low lying heavily wooded tropical island became more distinct, as we moved cautiously through shoal waters over beautiful jagged coral formations, the thought uppermost in our minds was what lay behind that silent barrier of tropical green.



Comdr. Lee of an Acorn unit, on the U.S.S. ROBIN WENTLEY addressing men prior to disembarking at Apamama.



A coconut grove at the west end of the strip later to become a part of the runway.

It was on the 28th day of November 1943 that our voyage ended and the engines of the ships idled and drifted lazily seeking the best point of entry to the lagoon. We were surprised to learn upon closer inspection that what we had supposed to be a large island developed into an atoll of eight separate islands connected only at low tide. Our beach-head was to be made on the largest of the islands.

As preparations for disembarking were announced over the ships' Public Address systems, the various previously assigned details for shore duty as well as the details assigned for stevedore duty,

were assembled at the rails of the ships to await further orders. The stevedore details would stay with the various ships until all gear and equipment was unloaded on the beach; the shore details would go ashore and after it was declared safe to do so, would immediately begin the work of laying out the fighter strip, set up temporary camp sites, establish security guards, and start the tremendous job of unloading the cargoes that would give us food, water, fuel, housing and the tools and materials with which to complete our mission. The shore details were laden with full packs, steel helmets, carbines and ammunition, gas masks, trench tools, duty belts and canteens; we managed to climb over the rail and feel anxiously with nervous toes for a foothold on the scramble net and then began the long climb down the swaying twisting nets that was made doubly hard with carbines swinging around in the wrong places and helmets tipping down over eyes, and the continual circling of the ship that left some of us marooned at the bottoms of the nets like spiders on a huge web, waiting for the landing craft to jockey into position again. We were taken ashore in either LCM (Landing Craft-Mechanized) or LCVP (Landing Craft-Vehicles and

View along the center line of the strip prior to the beginning of construction operations, December 5, 1943





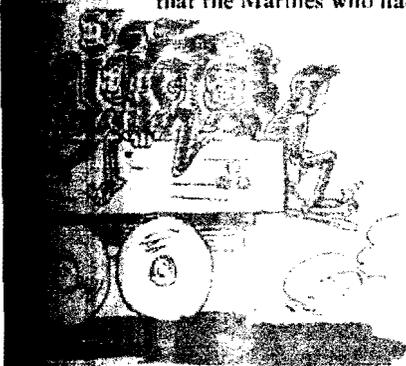
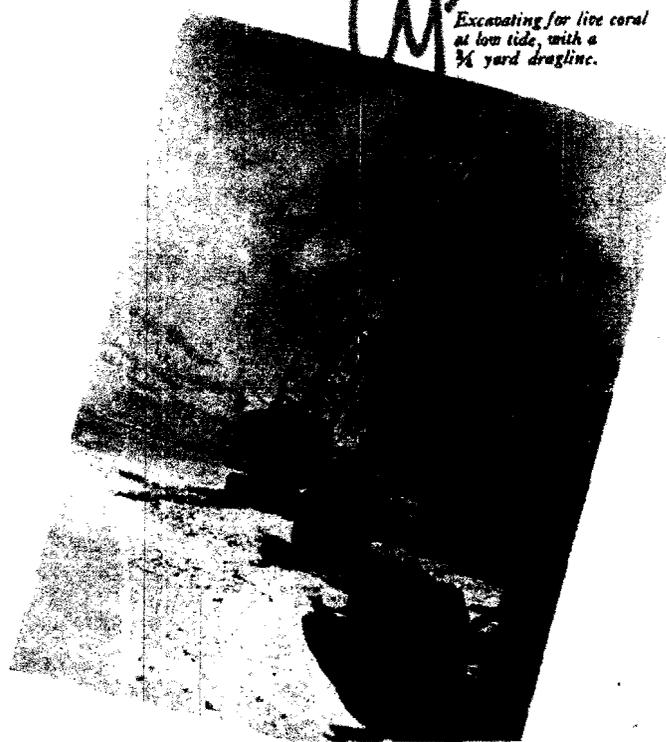
Preliminary clearing and grubbing operations at center of runway; December 5, 1943. Operator C. K. Jones.

Personnel), with thirty-five men jammed in each boat. These small craft, after loading, waited astern of the transport until all were loaded and the long trip to shore began over the jagged reefs that could be seen so plainly. The trip consumed almost two hours for the ships anchored about eight miles off shore. Some boats were able to land their passengers right on the beach, while others were hung up on reefs because of the change of tide, and those unfortunates must go overboard into water up to their arm pits and wade ashore. The first men ashore were pleasantly surprised to see one of our officers walking down the road followed by a group of natives bearing a transit and surveyors equipment. This officer had preceded the landing by a few days, coming from Hawaii by submarine, so that he could lay out the site of the strip roughly and establish points for his engineers to start from. He had a knowledge of Gilbertese and with the assistance of one of the natives who had been educated and had traveled considerably, he was able to get excellent cooperation from the Apamama natives. It had been reported that there were twenty-four Imperial Japanese Marines hidden on these islands, heavily armed with rifles, machine guns and hand grenades; it wasn't long though, that we learned that the Marines who had landed ahead of us had

combed the atoll thoroughly and discovered that the small band of the enemy had simplified our problem by committing Hari-Kari. Now that we could breath a little easier, we took note of our surroundings and marveled at the sight of lush tropical vegetation particularly the numerous coconut palm trees, and the friendly smiling natives, naked except for grass skirts or burlap wrap-arounds; they were fine looking, intelligent people, medium to dark brown in color, with luxuriant coal-black hair and the whitest and most perfect teeth imaginable; the women were pretty and the men well built and good natured.

Apamama

Excavating for live coral at low tide, with a 1/4 yard dragline.



Apamama



The second Corsair and its crew, Lt. B. W. Bohning, USMCR and Sgt. J. W. Eudaly, USMCR.

handsome. They were anxious to be friendly and made overtures of friendship with gifts of coconuts taking the lead; we watched with amazement youngsters climb a tall coconut palm almost as quickly as it takes to tell about it, twist off several nuts and hurl them to the ground and then come back down just as quickly and with only a sharp pointed stick to help, would shuck the hull off the coconut, break it open and hand it to you with a big smile. Until the day when we finally left their beautiful island, the natives of Apamama were consistently friendly and helpful and were faithful Allies. We took time for a quick meal of K rations and then prepared a bivouac area for the night, and we were ready for the work in hand. The Surveying Crew and the Engineers began to stake out the strip immediately, and it wasn't very long until the crash and roar of bull dozers push-grubbing their way through the tangled underbrush was heard and in their wake the swishing crash of falling coconut palms sent wild chickens and birds screeching out of the jungle.



Lt. F. C. Williams, USMCR, and Corp. Richardson, USMC-R, the crew of the Navy Corsair, first plane to land on the new strip at Apamama; Johnson, native interpreter at right.

Our living quarters and our personal comfort, even to the digging of fox-holes was sacrificed in favor of our mission; we had work to do and do quickly for in just eleven days this impenetrable tangle of tropical vegetation must be laid low and a smooth hard surfaced landing strip must be ready. While the work of unloading the ships in the lagoon went on and the various details started their work, the heavy equipment operators worked relentlessly, long hard hours of back breaking toil, twelve, sixteen and even eighteen hours at a stretch, with the result that in eight days we had a 4000 foot by 150 foot strip completed and ready for the first fighter plane to come in. Then on the 13th of December 1943, two tiny specks against the brilliant blue sky became two U. S. Navy Corsair Fighter planes, and we watched in fascination as they circled the island and then roared to a hovering halt over OUR strip and then settled gracefully to a stop to a group awaiting them. The planes were piloted by Marines and as they climbed out of the cockpits one yelled to the crowd,—“Anyone here from Texas?”



Honor to a hero.

This marked the first portion of the work finished, but really it was only the beginning for much additional footage had to be added to the strip in length and width and tons upon tons of live coral must be dug, transported and spread, rolled, watered and rolled again and again until the surface was hard and safe and ready for the big



Partially graded but not completely surfaced, the new O'Hare Field was ready December 10, 1943; the first plane is pictured, ready to land December 13, 1943.

bombers to land. The strip itself was increased to an area 7700 feet long by 200 feet wide, large enough to accommodate the largest bombers then built.

The first bomber landed the 21st of December, 1943. We also added a 1950 foot coral sand strip which brought the total cleared area to 10000 feet by 400 feet, with hard stands 150 feet by 125 feet and 21000 feet of taxiways included. At this same time 19.4 miles of roads were cleared, graded and surfaced with coral, for vehicular access to the air strip. The live coral was taken from the lagoon bed by enormous six wheeled

carry-alls, or 'pans' and this work must all be done at low tide. Water trucks were kept busy constantly, wetting down the freshly deposited coral while diesel operated rollers worked continuously backward and forward packing it solid. The 23rd of March, 1944 saw the completion in its entirety of the now vital O'Hare Field, named in memory of Lieutenant Comdr. "Butch" O'Hare, famous Navy flier missing in action who left behind a heroic record that will be long remembered. O'Hare Field . . . that Seabee brains and brawn and sweat had transformed from the taro pits, the snarled undergrowth of tropical jungle and the site of stately palm trees to (so the



pilots told us,) the finest fighter and bomber strip in the South Pacific.

Accommodations for housing the Base Force of 9600 Officers and Enlisted men and facilities for servicing and operating fighter planes, bombers and transports were provided. A 12000 barrel capacity Tank Farm for storing vital fuels and oils was constructed, with a submarine pipe line 4983 feet long making possible the quick unloading of tankers anchored outside the lagoon. This was extremely difficult and unpleasant work for here in the tropics metal would get so hot that it couldn't be handled without gloves; those men who worked on the tank erection detail, and especially those who worked inside the tanks, deserve special praise for it was brutal work and many fainted from the heat.

We erected 63 Quonset huts, each 20 x 48 feet to provide hospitals, office and work shops for the other twenty-three service units that occupied Apamama.

Six steel storage huts each 40 feet by 100 feet were constructed for storing Base equipment and

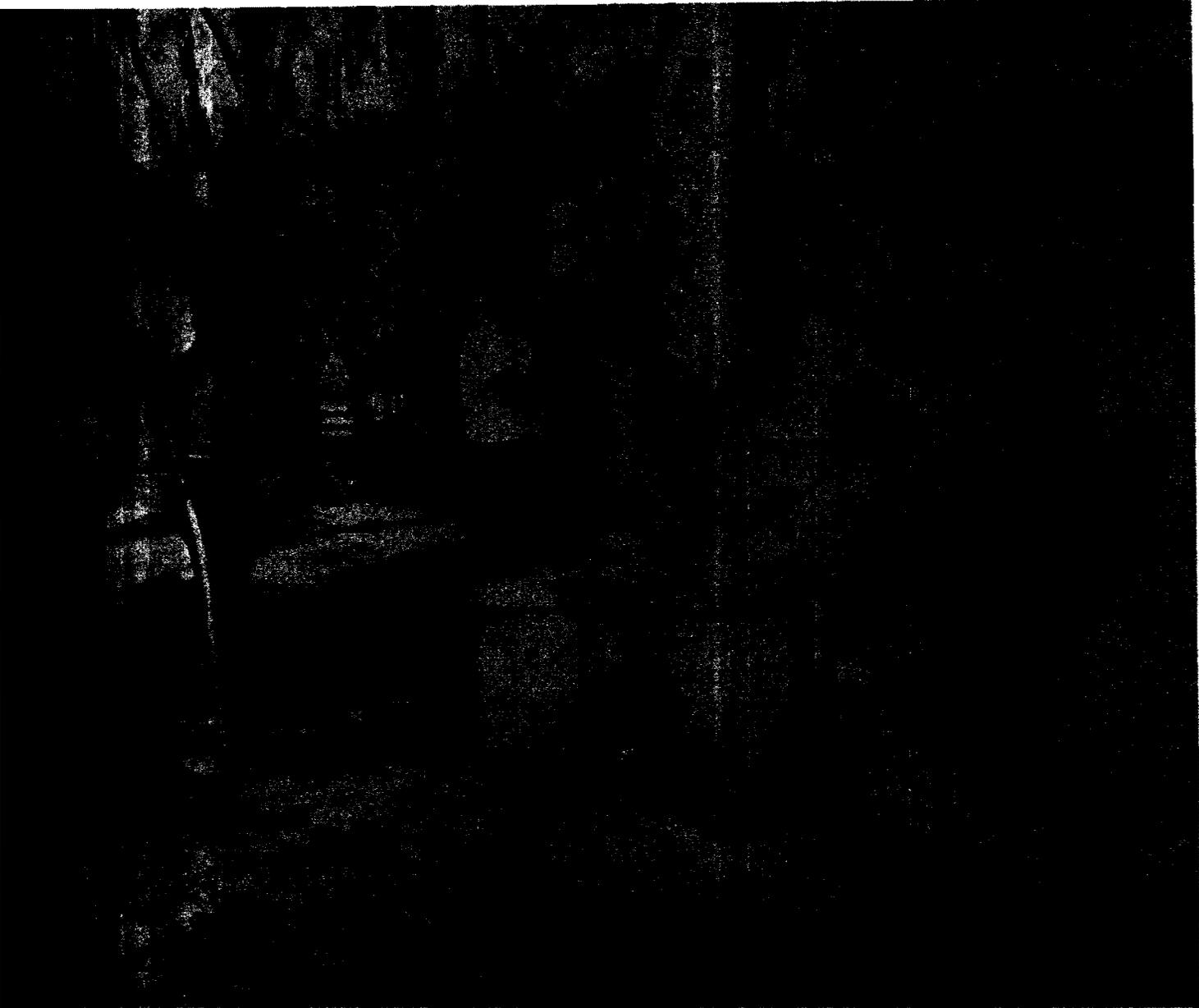
supplies. Eleven frame structures were built for Chow-halls; while three observation towers built of heavy timbers were erected at strategic points. Three steel radio masts were erected. On the 4th of December 1943, work was begun in two twelve hour shifts, constructing a pier that would permit easy docking of LSTs; the pier must also have a hard surfaced roadway for heavy truck traffic from ship to shore. By the time we left Apamama the pier extended 2428 linear feet out in to the lagoon with its coral surfaced roadway measuring 26 feet in width; its height from low tide was 8 feet. The first LST to be unloaded at the new pier was on the 25th of February, and it was then loaded with part of the supplies and equipment that would accompany that part of the battalion which would move on to the Marshall Islands soon after.

The greater part of the work on the pier was done by native labor. Each group of twenty-five native workers required one Seabee supervisor; during the peak of operation on this job 426 native laborers, men and boys, were employed daily.

The natives loved to ride trucks or jeeps and

The Air Strip, Runways and Taxi-ways as seen from the air.





The first cooked meal on Apamama, December 3, 1943; Fresh beef stew! Chief England, Marmilofski, Foley, Geida, Leirer, Lavenia, McDowell.

Our health was in the hands of two doctors and their staff of one Chief Pharmacist Mate and seven corpsmen. The Sick Bay the first days after landing was hardly more than a First Aid Station with a pup tent on poles to protect supplies. Three days after landing, a 16' x 16' tent had been erected and sick bay hours had been established for our personnel and the natives. Daily improvements were added until we moved to the permanent camp area; here our first aid station developed into a first class sick bay with three wards added for those needing regular attention and treatment.

We boasted an underground operating room

equipped with all modern surgery equipment. The hospital and accessory buildings had all been erected in a thick grove of coconut palms not only for good camouflage but for the welcome coolness of the shade. The Dental Office, an important division of our Medical Department, was opened December 12th. Our Dental Officer served men from Merchant Marine and LST ships in the lagoon as well as men from every outfit on the island except the Army.

Twenty-four hours after the first Water Purification and Distilling equipment had come ashore, sea water was rapidly being converted into fresh palatable water. Water stills were set up at





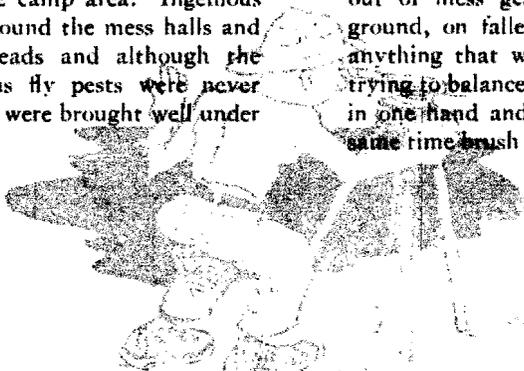
Water Still and Lister Bags at Beach 2, December 6, 1943.

intervals along the beach and lister bags and drums supplied drinking water for all. The other outfits on the island came to us for their water supplies, and later we set up stills for them and finally had nine 250 gallons per hour, seven 100 gallons per hour, and four 75 gallon per hour stills operating on the island that made enough water to total 55,000 gallons per day.

Our sanitation arrangements were comparatively simple and consisted principally of digging pit latrines and erecting simple country-style heads, screened with muslin; these were located at intervals throughout the camp area. Ingenious fly-traps were set out around the mess halls and galley and near the heads and although the annoying and dangerous fly pests were never entirely eliminated, they were brought well under control.

We ate K rations for several days after landing and never will forget our first cooked meal, a delicious beef stew (fresh beef 'procured' from one of the transports) with carrots, onions and a few potatoes, cooked in GI cans over fires of dried coconut husks, with freshly brewed coffee, and it really hit the spot! Our menu became very monotonous and consisted principally of Spam and other canned meats and dehydrated vegetables and eggs.

The chow hall those early days was crude, and was mainly a serving line under a roof; we ate out of mess gear, sitting cross-legged on the ground, on fallen tree trunks, on old boxes or anything that was handy, and were kept busy trying to balance the two-compartment mess gear in one hand and eat with the other and at the same time brush away the droves of flies. On the



Apamama

sixth day after landing a new aroma permeated the camp,—the deliciously tantalizing smell of freshly baked bread! It was a welcome addition to the menu and that first baked bread was the best our bakers have ever provided. The Commissary personnel deserve a lot of credit and their improvements kept pace with the rest of our work for on the 18th day of December we enjoyed the first meal in our newly constructed mess hall, a large roomy screened-in room. It was good to sit down at tables again and enjoy a meal comparatively free of the obnoxious flies.

Christmas came to the men of Apamama Island as more of a relief from the terrific round-the-clock work schedule, rather than a day of celebration of joy and merriment and 'Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men';—it was difficult to think of Christmas, living as we were practically astride of the equator in the technicolor atmosphere of a tropical island . . . Christmas means home and the association with loved ones and we were thousand of miles away from both. The various Chaplains made valiant attempts to help us, with Christmas Eve services . . . the age old

story of the birth of the Christ Child and the meaning of Christmas struck a nostalgic note in our hearts and for a brief interlude we went back through the years and were as little children again; it seemed we were still in that dream world when a real, live, flesh and blood Santa Claus, complete even to red costume and flowing white beard made his appearance and visited the tents and promised re-rates and discharges. Christmas Day was full holiday;—our first day free from work since we landed, with the highlight of the day a good dinner,—roast fresh (frozen) turkey with all the trimmings. The day was spent by most of us simply resting, while others explored the island, visited native villages or hunted for sea shells.

Communications . . . the nerve center of every outfit. The men assigned to this work broke all records in stringing their wires, reaching every main post along the beach and finally connecting every unit. A most welcome sound and strangely out of place in this place was the ringing of the first telephone. Amplifiers for the Public Address

A typical Seabee "lashup" (shelter); Greenslade, Chief Woehrle, Red Daniels.





APAMAMA CPO CLUB -Guilmette, Jennings, Duffy, Bundy, Woehrlc, Sherman, Hooper, Malan, Farris, Black, Phillips, Darr, Nelson, Smith, Bowers, Greco, Bryant, Beck, Mix, Shepard, Shelton, Burke.

95th CHOW HALL—side view (incomplete).





Field Welder at work.

few miles off shore. One of our B-24 bombers received a direct hit which quickly turned it in to a raging inferno, leaving hardly enough of the plane for souvenirs for the Seabees who swarmed over it after the raid.

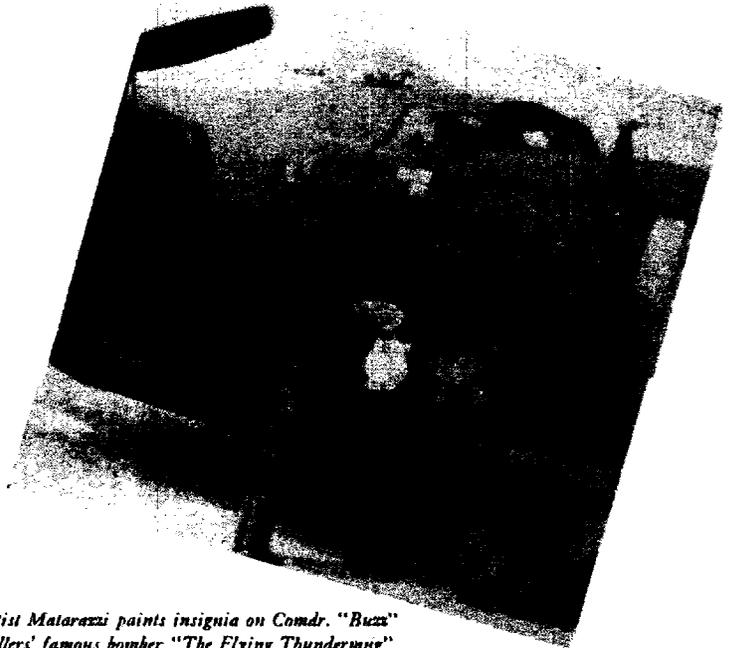
The fourth and final raid was of no consequence . . . as the enemy planes soared overhead they miscalculated and dropped their bomb loads on a nearby island that was un-inhabited and into the sea. Those that did land on our island were at the far end. We were lucky!

The casualties for the four raids were extremely light . . . two Marine gunners were killed by flying shrapnel, and one of our own men, Ralph A. Legge, of Company B, received stomach wounds from shrapnel; he was sent to the Hawaiian area for hospitalization, and later rejoined the battalion. Legge received the decoration of the Purple Heart.

The damage to O'Hare Field was relatively slight; the few bomb craters were soon filled and leveled until all trace of the raids had disappeared.

Many men were assigned to the Machine Shops; it was an endless task to keep motors perfectly tuned and the tons of heavy equipment kept in working order and repair. A department for lubricating motor equipment including tire repairs made the Machine Shop a complete and efficient unit. Machinery and equipment working constantly using primitive roads was a combination that kept these men continually busy.

Trying to live without the familiar necessity of electric light made the early days a hardship, but the electricians were on the ball almost immediately and as soon as the portable generators could be set up, they had power lines established and were busily engaged in wiring tents and



Artist Matarazzi paints insignia on Comdr. "Buzz" Miller's famous bomber "The Flying Thunderbug".

MACHINE SHOP - front row;--Lembo, Diaz, Simpson, Peters, Buckingham; Gordon, Spera, Crozier, Cherry, K. G. White, Giller, Hamm, Beretsky, Brusso.



WELDERS -Connelley, Cochran, Baker, Rudman, L. H. Cole, Lt. Hudson, Ropitsky, Graham, Gogal; Winterbauer, Shortis, Dougherty, Sanderson, Zackel, Palmer.



Spamanta



Chaplain Glynn of an Acorn unit, at Field Altar.

offices and the whole area was soon as brilliantly lighted as any small city back home. 95th electricians installed generators for every outfit on the island bringing electric light and power to all, until forty separate units had been put into operation, ranging in output from 75 K.W. per hour down to the small 5 K.W.s. The installation of these extra units was by no means easy, since we did not have sufficient new generator equipment; parts had to be either re-made or salvaged from discarded equipment. Even Jap generators were routed out from discarded junk to be overhauled, rewound and put back into operation.

As the major island projects neared completion, the Carpenter Detail and a large one it was, too, worked doggedly on; they were one of the first details to start to work and they worked right

up until the time to leave the island. They built everything from furniture to heavy timber towers, in a manner that was a credit to their ability. Although tents were used to house personnel and Quonset huts were erected to house supplies, many other buildings were built of wood. The main Field Operations tower was twenty-four feet high, with an observation room atop and a platform on all four sides; on top of this tower a large searchlight was mounted to flash signals to arriving and departing planes. The three guard towers built ranged in height from twenty to forty feet. In addition to the work for our own battalion, the carpenters built Mess Halls and other buildings and equipment for the other island units.

Under the direction of well trained plumbers and pipe fitters, a complete water system for the Galley, Scullery, Bakery and Dispensaries was installed and maintained, with extensions added for refrigeration and ice-making machines. While our construction progress added daily to our accomplishments and protection, a different type of work that meant much to our morale was underway. Our post office came into existence four days after we moved to the permanent area, and like most of the 'offices' it was a 16 x 16 tent. Mail call was from 1200 to 1300 and 1700 to 1800 daily; the day that brought the first mail to Apamama was a day filled with excitement for it had been a long time since we had received mail and it was doubly welcome. About the middle of January the Christmas packages started to arrive and continued to come through February. The first outgoing mail was censored and cleared early in December. The Censor Board at first was composed of four commissioned officers, two of

Catholic Mass Christmas Day, 1943.



whom were Officers of the Day, and their headquarters was the first OOD lash-up—a shelter of palm branches, with a packing case for a desk. It wasn't long until the regular battalion censor board took over this work. For the period of occupation of Apamama, an average of 1000 letters a day were censored and cleared through the 95th post-office.

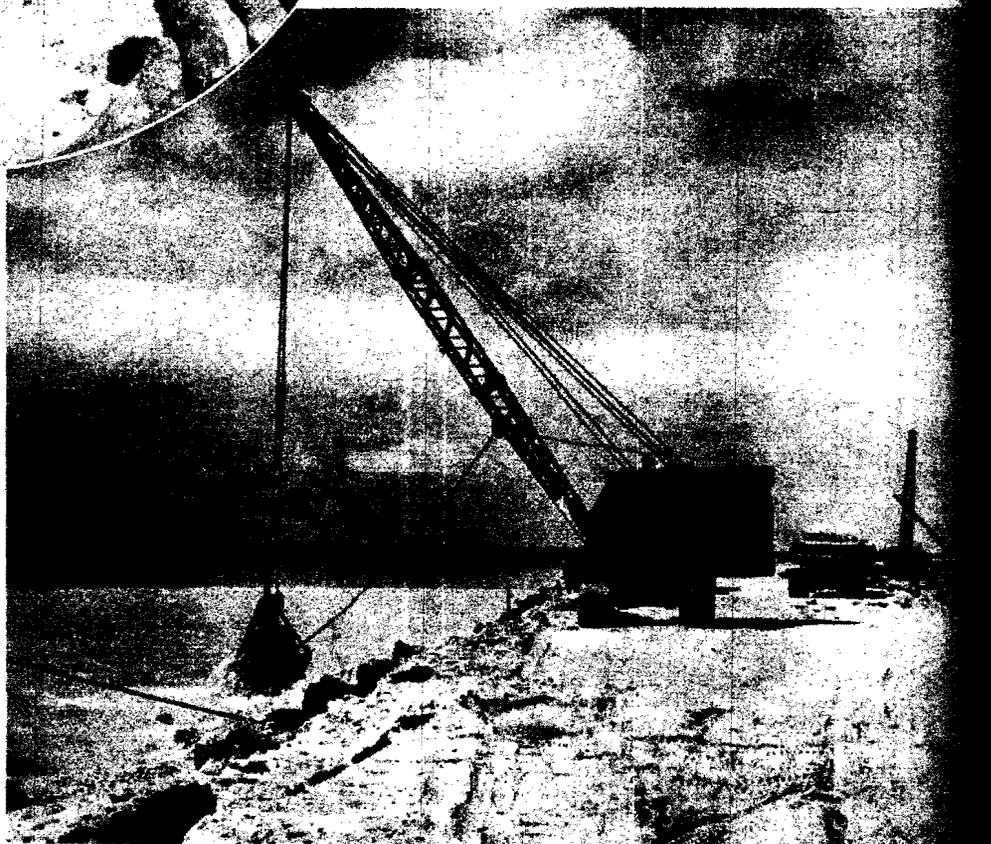
The first pay day was the 5th of January; our Disbursing Officer was a very busy man for in addition to paying the 95th he paid CASU, ARGUS, ACORN and the Bomber Squadrons, as well as the crews of commissioned ships that lay at anchor off Apamama and after part of the battalion personnel went to Roi, he flew there to make pay-day possible for those men.

One of the least popular but none the less important details was the Security Guard. It was necessary to post men on guard duty over all supplies or rations, fuel, supplies equipment and particularly tools, as well as our tents. The men chosen for this dreary task could be seen pacing endlessly back and forth at all strategic points. Our Armory was well stocked with extra ammunition for carbines and special weapons, with capable gun-smiths available for inspection and repairs. Under the supervision of this department machine gun crews stood watch, independent of other island defense units.

The monotonous bill of fare offered by the Chow Hall was supplemented by snacks prepared by the men themselves (and on the whole, much more enjoyed); some of the fishermen caught small fish and cooked them, but anything that could be

Landing craft tied up to the causeway.

Construction of the causeway.



Up

eaten was welcome . . . french fried potatoes, bacon, eggs, an occasional wild chicken . . . with any canned fruit you could wish for . . . canned fruit juices and canned meats. Many a 'Lash-up' or 'Folly' boasted a trapdoor in the floor with a good cache of procured canned goods.

Shorter working hours developed inactive minds and those with a craving for liquor began experimenting with the result that several stills were built and a moderate amount of 'kick-a-poo' juice was run off; a sort of wine was made of canned fruit and fruit juices, yeast and sugar, or raisins, water, yeast and sugar, and these fermented juices were run through a still producing a potent liquor that would knock the top off your head. This is not an exclusive Seabee practice for service men all over the world have satisfied their thirst for alcoholic beverages by making them.

As the work slacked off somewhat, trucks were available for a Sunday trip to the native villages to visit and trade for native manufactured goods. In the beginning we could secure anything for a trade of clothing, soap or cigarettes, but it wasn't long until the selfishness and greed of the white man anxious to get something before his mates, bribed the natives with money and soon money



Overhead Loader at low tide, loading live coral for surfacing runways and roads.



17 yard capacity carryalls hauling live coral.

HEAVY EQUIPMENT CREW—Chief Cheesman, Warbutton, D. D. Banks, Garlick, Hartness, Murie, Taraska, Chief Hamilton, N. C. Jones, Goss, Welch, Mensch, Ailan, Reardon, L. McKay, Le Beau, Risk, Mikusi, M. T. Johnson, Dudley, Pastillo, Funderburg, Kimbrell, R. Y. Johnson, Chandler, Wert, Chief Sherman, Peck, Yanchunis, Ensign Lewis, Bewzing, Chief Shelton, Glenn.





Lumber yard and Carpenter shop.

The "CAN-DO REVUE" presented by the 95th N.C.B., Sunday, February 20, 1944, produced and staged under the direction of John DiCiocco and Tony Saraceno.



Apamama

was the medium of exchange. Notices of prices for native wares were posted. Before the villages were posted as 'out of bounds' to troops, we were often invited inside a hut to be shown beautiful handicraft, finely woven baskets and sleeping mats in many lovely designs, patiently woven of bleached pandanus leaves, which were offered for trade. Their chickens and pigs were for sale, too, but it was more fun to try to capture one; both were so tough that we soon lost interest in them. A final sign of civilization was the advent of Shore Patrolmen; it was the SP's job to keep us away from the native villages and out of the huts that were the homes of the natives.

Perhaps the most colorful of all the days on Apamama was the day of celebration and the entertainment sponsored by the 95th. All of the Island units were invited to participate in the show, and the natives were also asked to contribute singers and dancers for the general entertainment. Soon after noon chow of a Sunday afternoon men from all over the island started to gather and choose choice vantage points; the natives were ahead of them for some came early in the morning and waited patiently for the show to begin. Natives came from all over the atoll dressed in their best grass skirts, bits of brightly colored cloth and wearing garlands of flowers or tiny seashells in their hair. The 95th Band supplied the background of instrumental music, ably assisted by a small swing orchestra, the "Marine Hep-Cats", that kept the crowd humming and swaying in rhythm. Vocal and instrumental solos as well as tricky tap dances kept the crowd



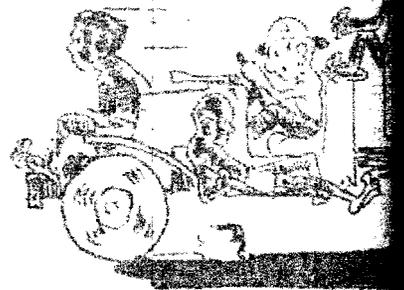
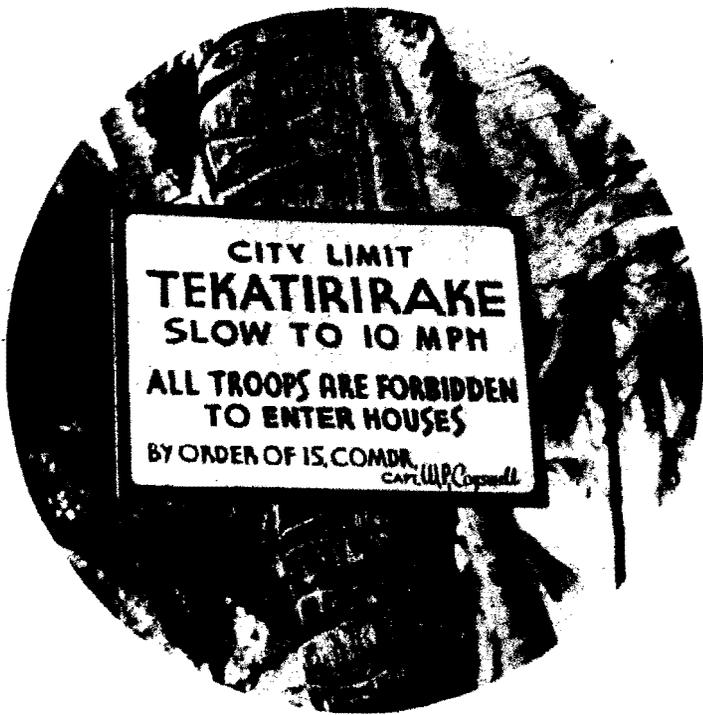
Launching Pipe Line from Tanker buoy to tank farm, January 18, 1944.



Storekeepers, Lawie, Carlile, LaFleche.

TANK FARM--A group of Tank Erectors at work on one of the twelve 1000 gallon tanks.





Apamama

Scenes on the Island of Apamama, particularly

A sign of the times.

A typical Gilbertese family.

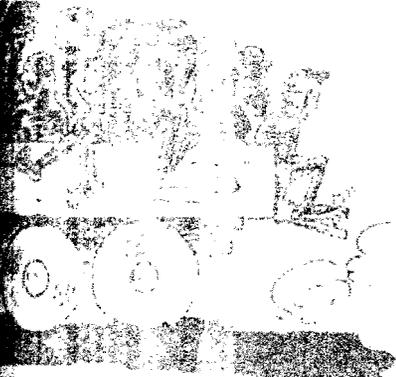


*Lindeman poses with an OLD friend—
a Gilbertese belle of the '90's.*



*The camera was more fascinating than the
chocolate bars.*





SCENES

around the native village of Tekatirake.

The home of the Island Priest, Father Mehl.



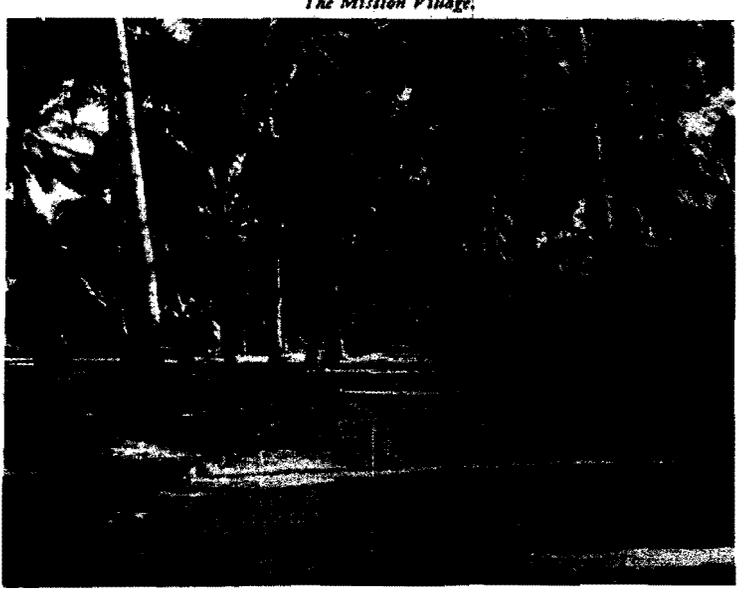
Native families.



The village of Tekatirake.



The Mission Village.





One of the early drum-showers.

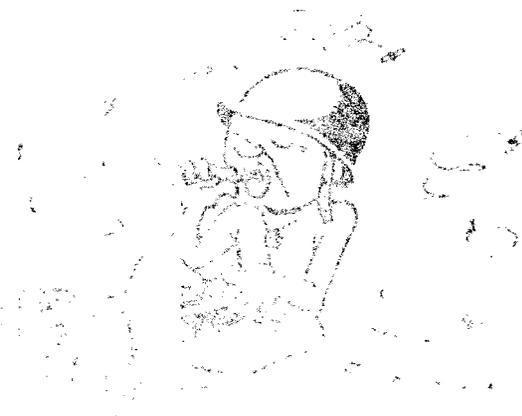
amused and entertained. The natives furnished several group dances, and one feature dancer . . . remember Maria? Her beautifully proportioned body, naked save for a grass skirt and the ceremonial leaf skirt over it, and the beads that are worn only during a dance, with her skin oiled with coconut oil to a sleek slipperiness that helped make her dance a thing of liquid rhythm, was a feature of the show; it's too bad she was so shy. A group of natives sang several native songs, but the publicity cramped their style and their songs lacked the freedom and beauty that accompanied their singing on the trucks and as they worked. We will always remember their plaintive half sad, half sweet songs.

As our mission neared completion, we sensed that we were due to move on or have a change of some sort; when a Seabee begins to get comfortable, it is a certain sign that he is due to pack up and move and undergo the hardships of setting up a new camp again. Sure enough, one morning disclosed pages of the battalion muster posted on the walls of the Mess Hall, with check marks after certain of the names; it was the notice that those men whose names were checked were to pack all gear and prepare to move on to another job; recent scuttlebutt had said that these men were to move to Roi island in the Marshall group, a current hot spot. For some of those who packed up and prepared to leave, it was a time of separation from close friends and buddies; for others it meant the excitement of a new strike . . . a new adventure and they were eager to be gone. The night was filled with gatherings . . . farewell parties and



Barbers Winslow and Richards.

Christmas Eve, 1943--Santa Claus (Popadinecz) surrounded by Jim Conner, Bowers, Morrison, Viserta, Parker, Shepard, Smallwood, Nelson, Wochrle, Verdon and Duffy.



Apamama

men helping each other gather together and pack their gear.

The sailing date had been set for 29th of February 1944, but although the convoy of three LSTs was loaded that day, it did not depart until the following day, the 1st of March. Trucks were loaded with men and their gear the morning of the 29th and the ride out to the end of the 95th built pier began . . . past the familiar places . . . and past the groups of natives who had gathered along the road to wave and yell "Tiakabo" (Chack-ar-bo) meaning, literally, "May we meet again"! The ships were loaded and anchored in the lagoon until the next morning and about nine o'clock the small convoy of LSTs and destroyer escorts was underway.

Back on Apamama a strange silence pervaded the camp area, particularly noticeable in the mess hall and the ease with which a fellow could get into the chow line.

There was routine work for those who were left behind to attend to regular duties to perform but we all knew we were just marking time waiting for the BMU to relieve us. We were not long in waiting for Base Maintenance Unit No. 557 soon arrived and we made preparations to board the ship that had brought them. The first day the BMU were ashore was spent in helping them get established. One of our mates discovered that his brother was with this BMU and they had a happy but brief reunion in the midst of the confusion and excitement of moving.

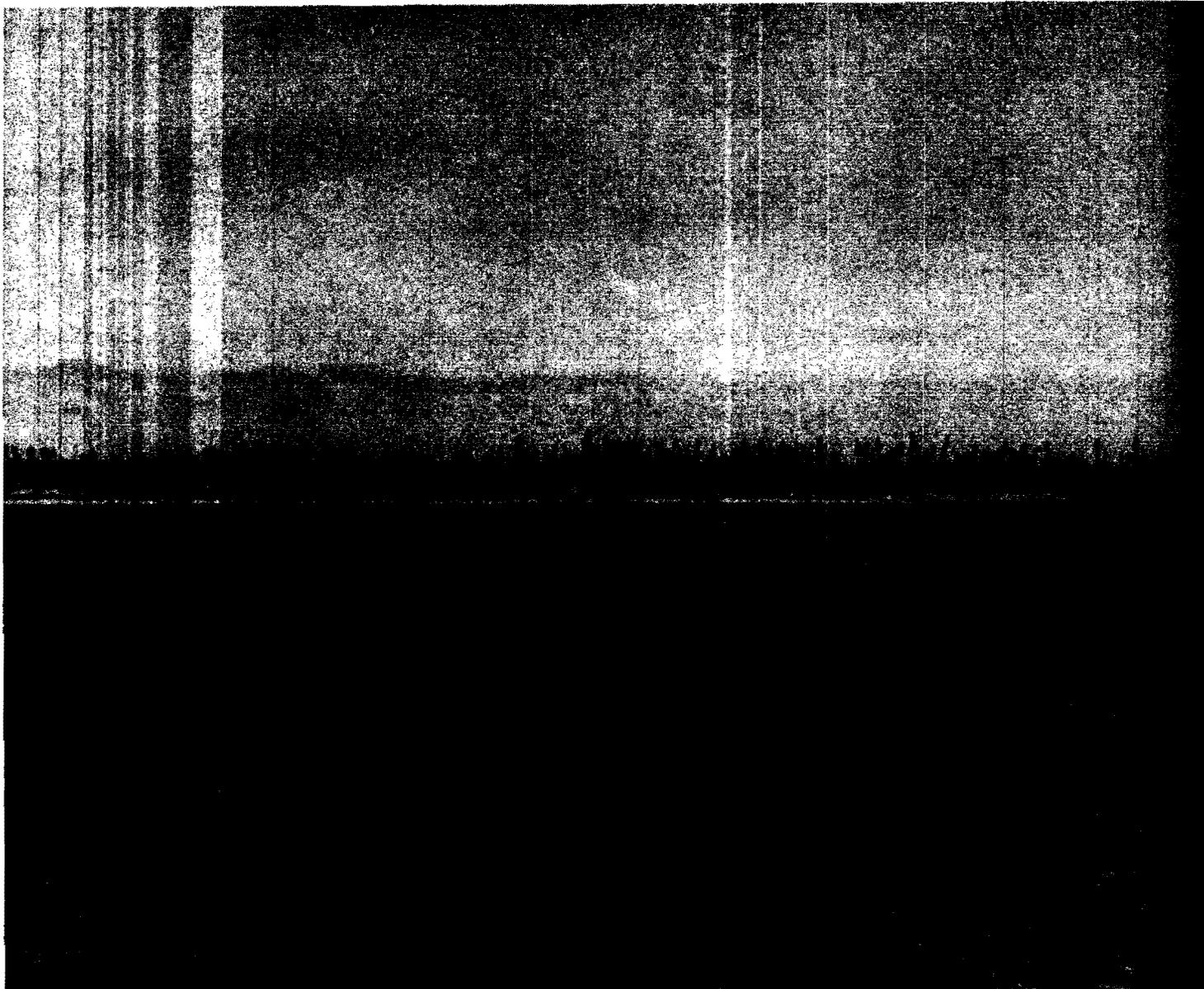
Finally on the morning of the 29th of March we boarded the trucks that were to take us out to the pier; as we rode along the familiar road we could not help but compare it with the road as we had first seen it . . . from a narrow smooth lane through thick groves of coconut palms it had become a wide, well surfaced highway; the stately trees that had lined the road had gone, cut down to allow more room. The natives were gathering to bid us farewell, dressed in holiday attire with their best grass shirts, brightly colored flowers in their hair and the strings of beads that were worn only on special occasions; some wore reminders of our stay . . . Navy scivvie shirts, an occasional pair of dungarees or a complete outfit of greens with sun helmet or white hats. One island beauty was outstanding in the crowd, clothed in a bright

yellow dress; as the wind whipped her skirt about, it revealed the traditional grass skirt underneath. As we boarded the small craft that would take us out to our transport they yelled and waved good-byes and good luck. We boarded our ship four weeks after our mates had left for Roi, and four months from the day we had landed. Just an hour or so before dusk we prepared to sail on the return voyage to Hawaii. As our ship moved slowly out to sea and the shores of Apamama receded from view, the happiness at leaving to return to civilization was tinged with sadness as we recalled the beauty and peacefulness of this island that Robert Louis Stevenson had labeled as the most beautiful of all of the South Pacific islands. We recalled the island as we had first seen it . . . the luxuriant extravagance of tropical nature . . . the clean coral beaches . . . the tall stately palm trees leaning toward the lagoon bent by the constant trade winds . . . the incomparable sunsets, blazes of glory reflected in the deep blue sea . . . the magic of the moonlight that transformed the island into a fairyland silvering the palm fronds and making the lagoon an unforgettable picture . . . the faint sweet sadness of a native song in the distance . . . it was the south sea island of the story books.

As we lined the ship's rails we had our last glimpse of Apamama, aglow with man-made light, and we wondered if our stay had destroyed all of the simplicity of native life, or had we contributed anything to better living for them?

Preparing a snack—probably procured.



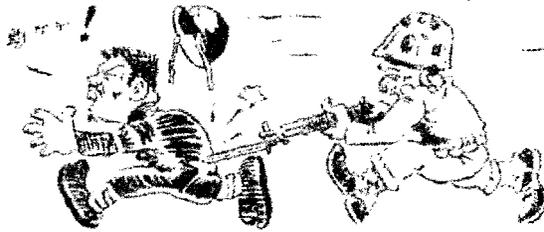


The low coast line of Roi and Namur as we first saw it March 5, 1944

Roi-Namur

Approximately one half of the battalion under the leadership of Commander W. L. Johnson and Lt. F. E. Hudson, as Executive Officer of this section, left Apamama March 1, 1944, and after an uneventful trip aboard LSTs arrived at Roi, Sunday, March 5, 1944. As we laid at anchor in the lagoon awaiting orders to make a beach landing we were all grimly impressed with the desolation and destruction of the tiny strip of land that was to be our future home. Days of continuous shell fire from the fleet and bombings for our Air Forces had reduced the enemy installations to a mass of rubble and with the assistance of Marine ground forces had annihilated the Jap garrison. The view from our LST deck left one with an

immense respect for the might and fire power of the U. S. Navy. Later, when we went ashore, we could see more clearly the full effects of the American victory;—as far as the eye could see was desolation; . . . piles of broken concrete enmeshed with twisted masses of steel . . . broken and splintered wood still smouldering and smoking and crumpled corrugated steel sheets. Piles of dirt everywhere . . . huge bomb craters filled with stagnant water and with pieces of wood and bits of cloth floating idly . . . discarded articles of clothing and fragments of tents and tarps . . . torn rags that might have been some Marine's scivvy shirt . . . empty beer and sake bottles, wooden boxes and empty sand bags



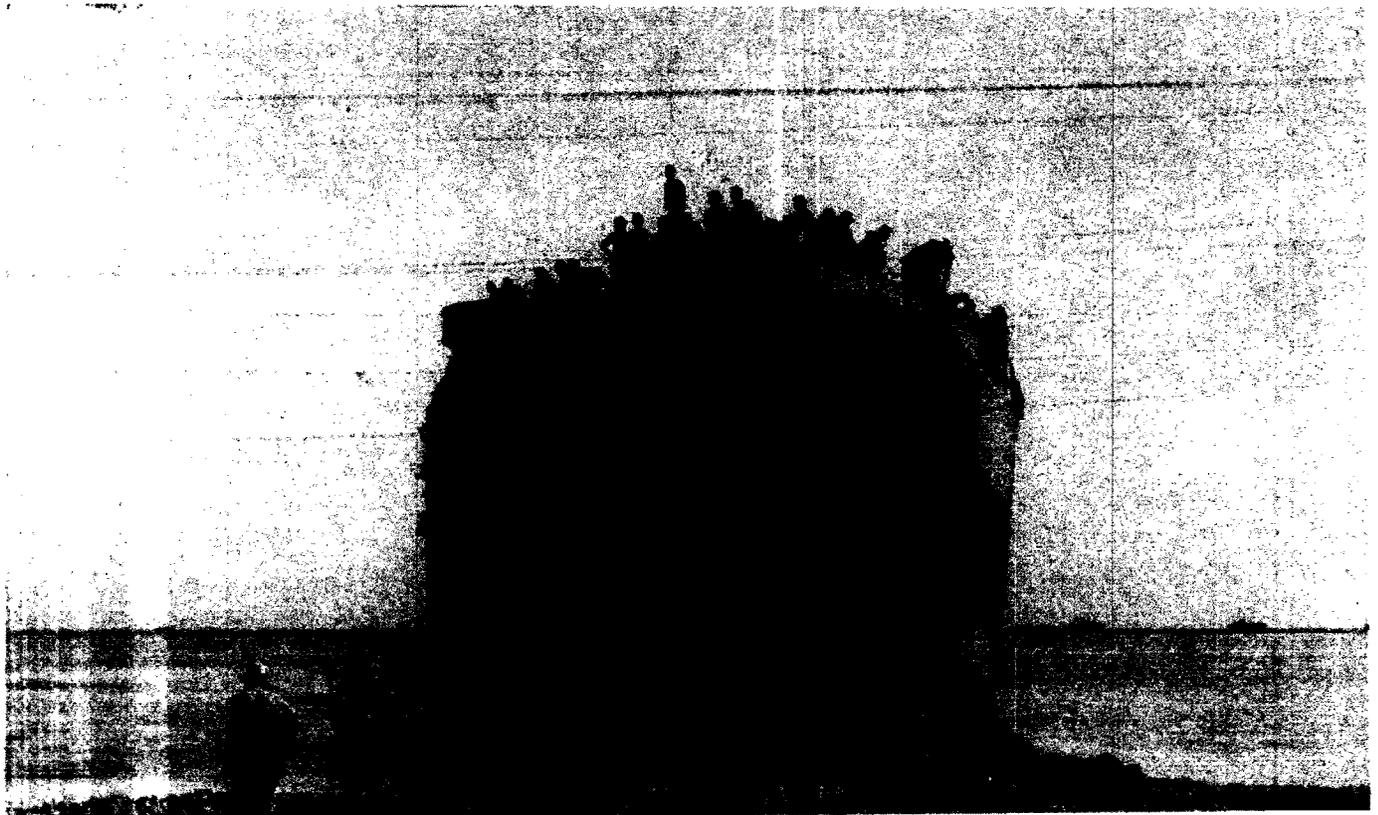
. . . blood soaked battle bandages . . . unexploded cartridges and belts of heavier calibre ammunition ground into the dust . . . overall hung the nauseating stench of death like an oppressive cloud. The wonder of it was that the sun still shone brightly in a sky of flawless blue. It was a devastating scene but not a quiet one. The roar of heavy equipment was deafening; bulldozers pushing and worrying piles of rubble trying to clear space for incoming supplies . . . trucks loaded to capacity with rubbish . . . jeeps loaded with "gold braid" running from here to there . . . a little in the distance the noisy coming and going of sleek fighter planes. Through clouds of dust "our flag was still there" as it could be seen flying proudly from the temporary base headquarters that had so recently housed a frustrated enemy, adding the only color to an otherwise drab scene.

By details we moved quickly to the adjoining island of Namur—over a Jap built causeway that connected the two islands, past an enclosure of white crosses that marked the resting place of those brave men who had made the supreme sacrifice that this miserable strip of land could be used as a base to help drive the Jap into oblivion. No time was lost in choosing temporary camp sites, getting personal gear together and ourselves squared away ready to do the job we came to do—



Comdr. Johnson waiting on the beach at Rai to welcome us.

LST 241 ready to discharge its cargo of 95th men and equipment March 5, 1944.





'Dozers starting to clear an area for the 95th camp.

the tremendous job of transforming this pile of ruin into an efficient and orderly Naval Air Base. The immediate problem of food was solved by our eating with a Marine defense battalion, but construction of our own mess hall, galley and bake-shop was started immediately; the engineers had already laid out a permanent camp site and their field corps were at work . . . heavy equipment operators were busily engaged in the huge task of clearing an area for our permanent camp;—all turned to for the preliminary, dirty, heavy work, and it wasn't long until the carpenters, electricians, welders and other details were at work in their own shops. Mail censorship was set up immedi-

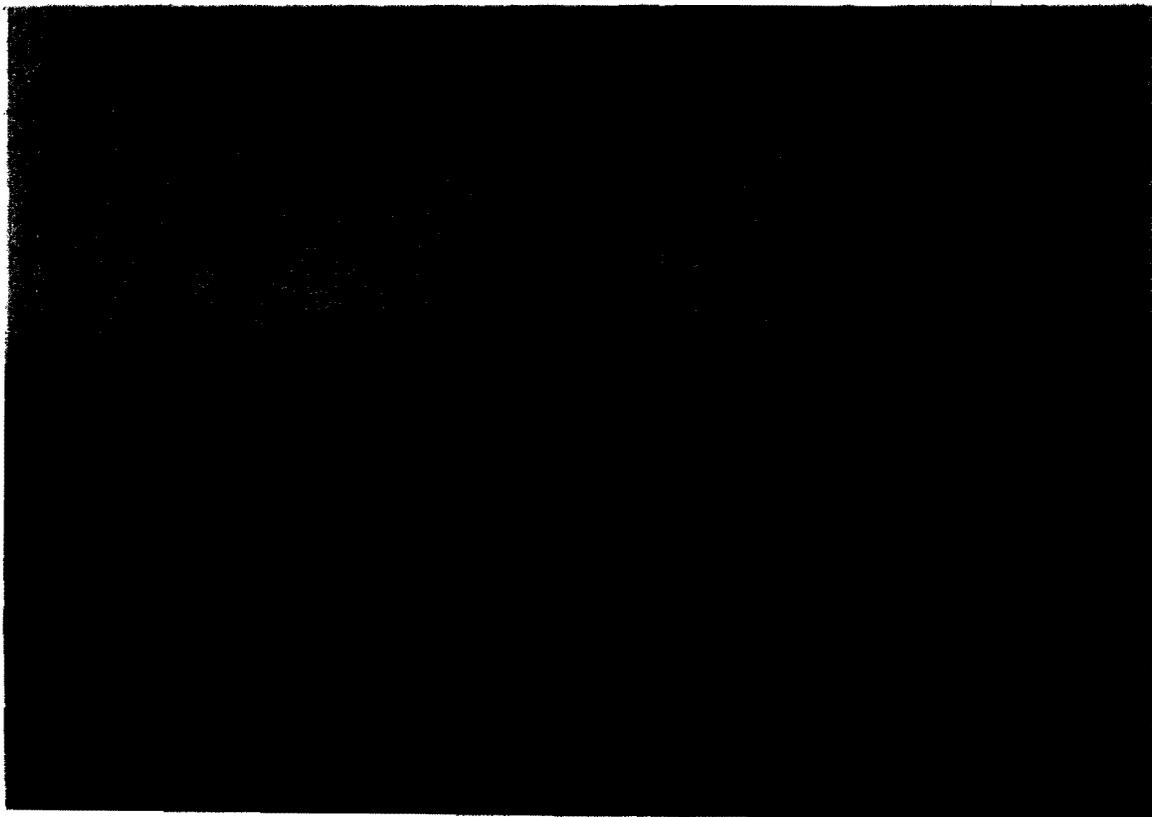
ately and the first outgoing mail, twenty-six letters, was cleared 6 March 1944.

A new design and layout for the mess hall was adopted and with concrete details, carpenters, Quonset hut erectors, plumbers, electricians, welders, etc., working day and night, the new mess hall was completed and the first meal, a delicious roast beef dinner, was served Sunday 12 March . . . just exactly one week from the day we landed. Four hundred and seventy-two men were served in twenty minutes!

A number of projects were assigned to this section of the 95th;—general cleanup of the Island of Namur, to remove the tremendous piles of rubbish and to prepare the ground for living and working areas; the tangled masses of steel reinforcing rods meshed in chunks of concrete were perhaps the most stubborn things to remove and defied the patience of the 'dozer operators. We designed and erected a large frame general headquarters building,—and an underground Command Post to house radio and code units.

A beautiful home was designed and built for the Island Commander, featuring native style architecture—equipped with comfortable furniture designed, built and painted by 95th craftsmen—complete even to a flush toilet which was a real luxury indeed on this island "X". A Club House and a separate Officers' Mess for Fleet Officers

The 95th Camp Area March 5, 1944.



Roi Namur

us and entertainment, were built; the club boasted a large bar beautifully painted and decorated with glamorous girls, the work of our own men. Complete furniture for these two buildings was also built by us.

Meanwhile a tank farm and piping system for aviation fuel was constructed and placed into operation and later an efficient system of roadways was laid out and graded and additional plane landing strip areas on Roi were furnished. Work went forward week after week; what most of us had hoped would be a short tour of duty was developing into months of steady work.

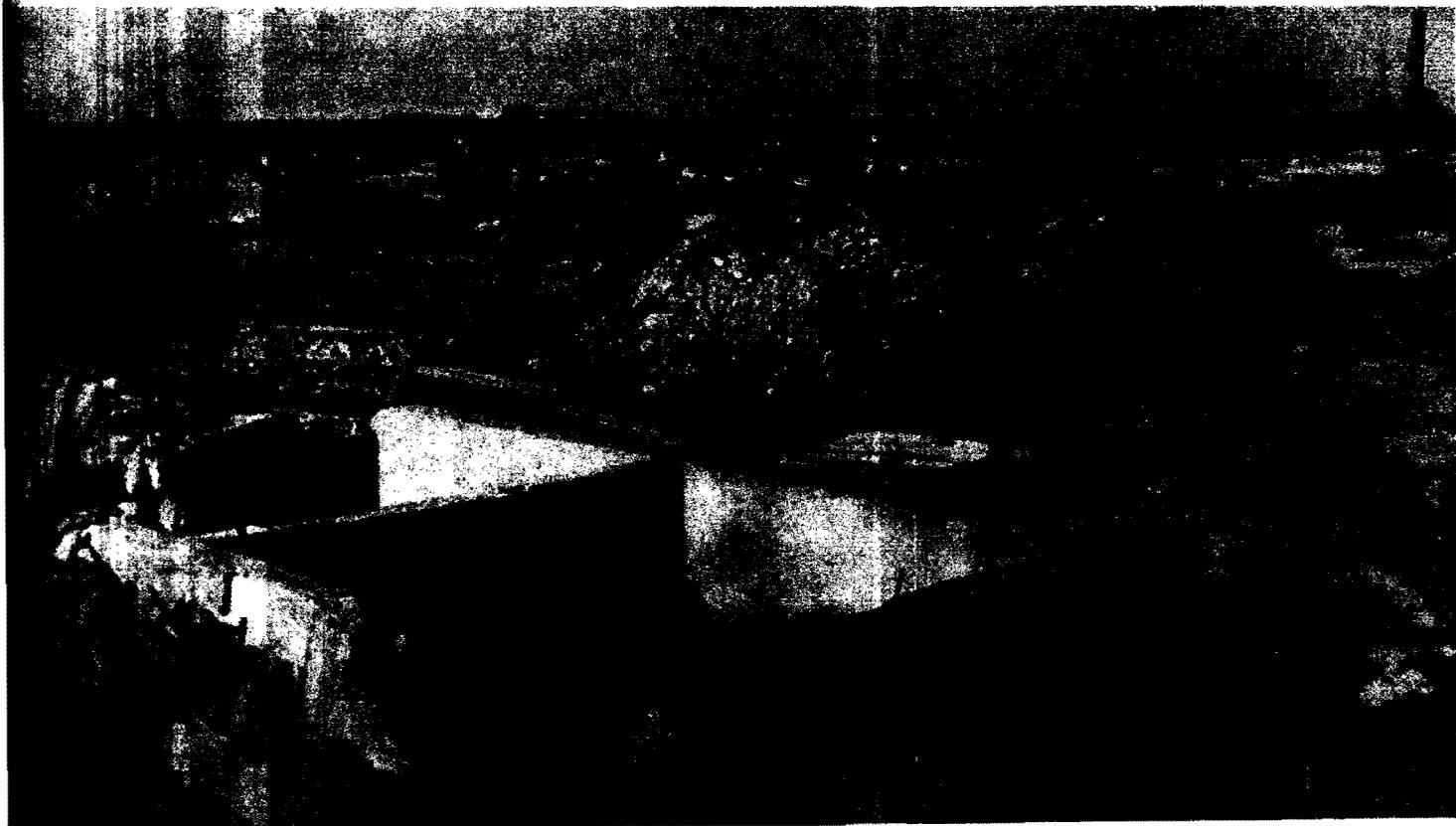
The demolition squads spent untold hours reducing the ruins of the well built Jap Headquarters building; it must have been discouraging work, for huge charges of dynamite failed to produce much more than a pulsating shudder to the shapeless heap of rubble, and left the area hidden under a dust cloud. A Parachute Loft was built for CASU and 19 large (40 x 200) Quonset type storage buildings were erected for ASD with the complete deck areas concreted, the areas between the buildings concreted and a 50 foot wide street in this area was also concreted. A 100 foot steel tower was erected for a new type of Radar equipment and one of the carpenter details built an 80 foot signal tower of heavy timbers and erected

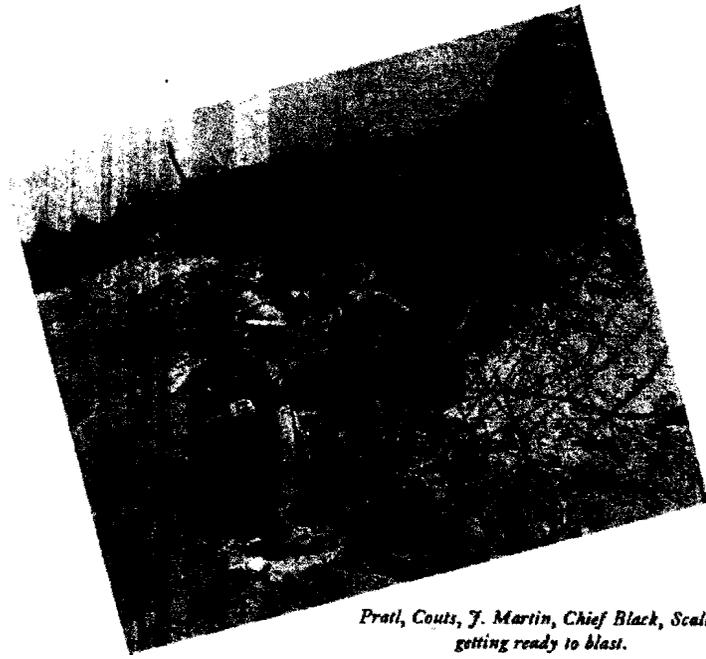
it on Ivan Island;—a coral pier was constructed on Anthony Island. We built an emergency hospital and then a larger, frame 300 bed hospital complete with operating rooms, diet kitchen and mess hall was built on Roi.

After this was disposed of the barber shop was built here.



This later became the Shop Area.





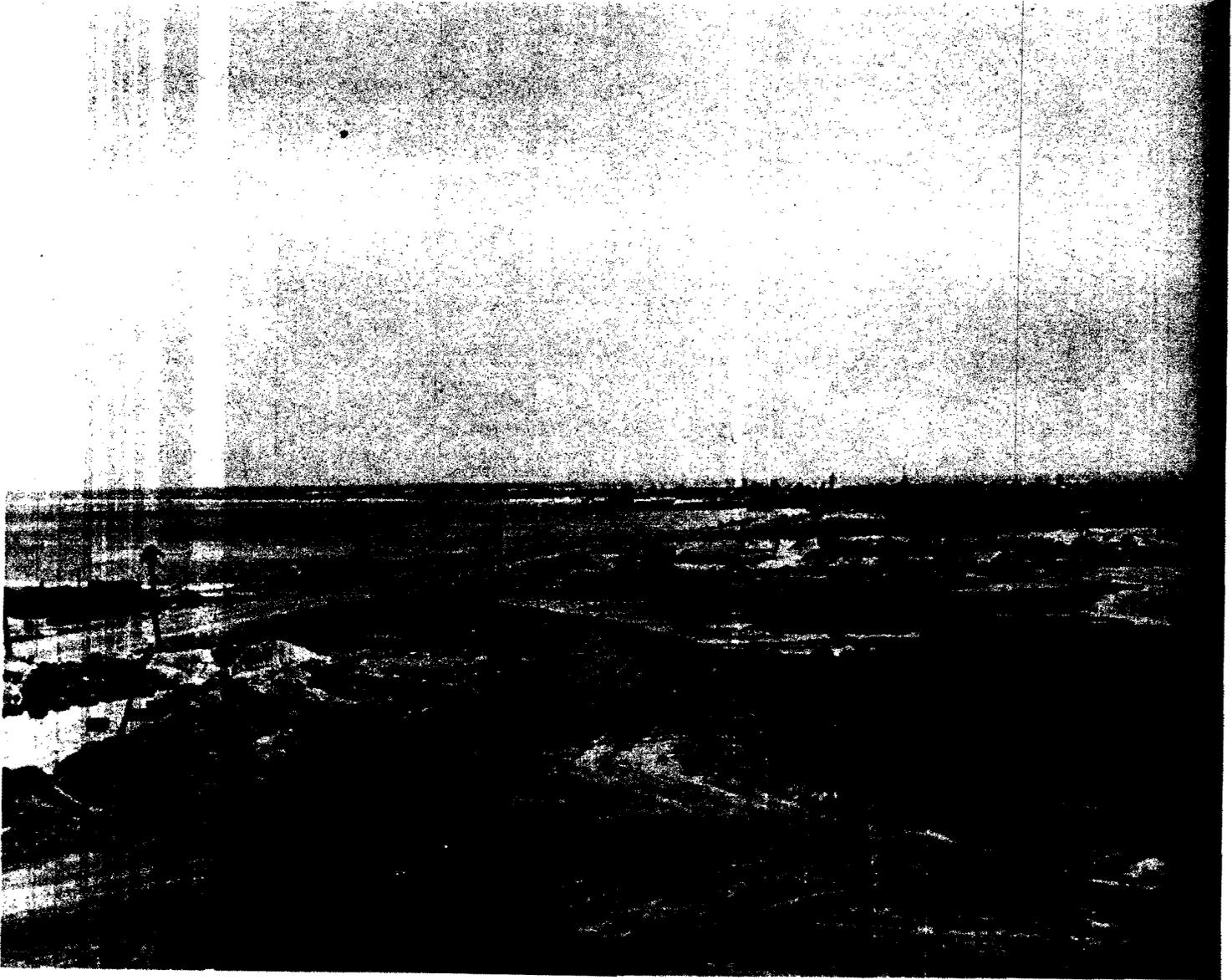
*Pratt, Coutts, J. Martin, Chief Black, Scally,
getting ready to blast.*

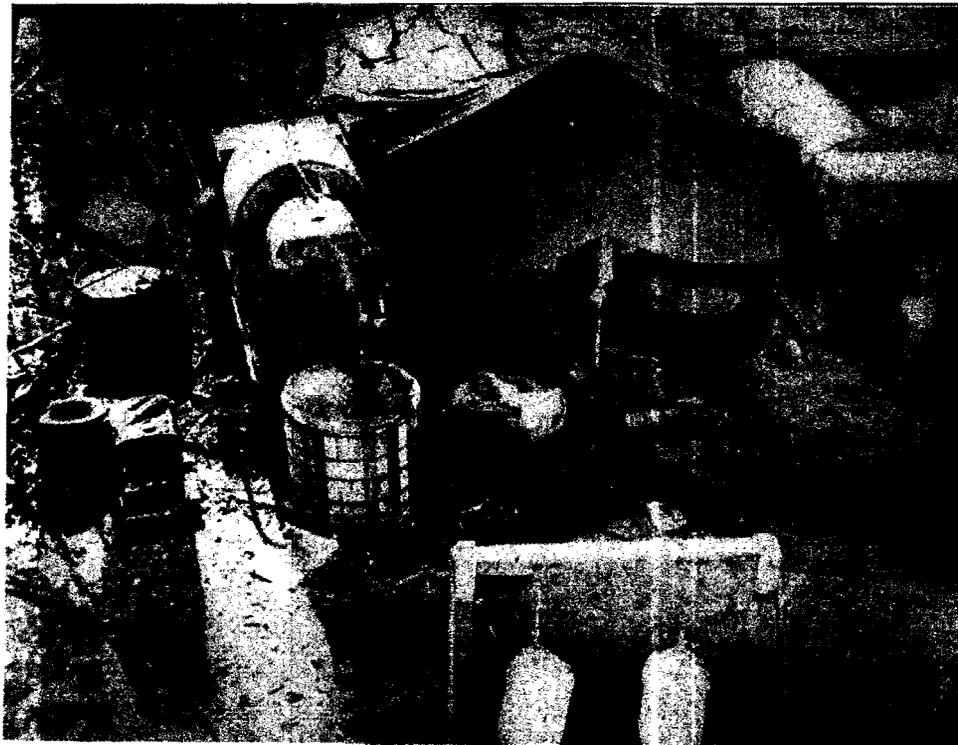
A large area was graded and prepared for the future for enlisted men of the Fleet as a shore recreation center with a fine baseball diamond, track, basketball court, etc., with an adjoining plot transformed into a large outdoor movie and entertainment amphitheater. A concrete pier that was originally built and used by the Japs was repaired and christened "*Yokohama Pier*" and the wreckage of a hammerhead crane was cut apart and removed; our divers cleared the pier area so that U. S. Harbor Craft could make use of the pier.

The two large Jap aircraft hangars that had been beaten and pounded into a twisted mass of steel junk by our guns and bombs were torn down and removed from the edge of Dyess Field.

Several Jap harbor craft and landing barges were

The island of Roi in the distance; Namur in the foreground, connected by the Jap built coral causeway.



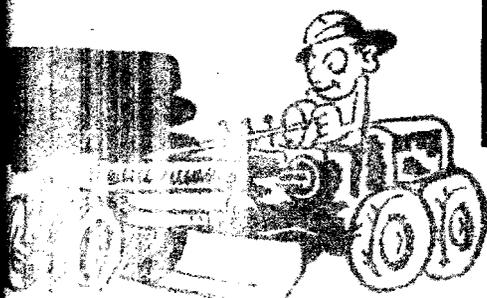


95th Water Stills and supply, March 9, 1944.



The Chow Hall almost completed March 9, 1944.

The Chow Hall completed, ready for the first meal, Sunday, March 12.





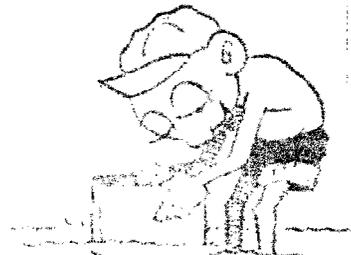
The Camp site March 7, three days after landing.



*Temporary Sick Bay March 8, 1944 -
Parker, Richards, Bykowski, H. Dawson
and Peterman.*

salvaged and repaired. Two huge Jap electric generators were found and put into use and eventually supplied most of the island power, and a large Jap switchboard was re-wired and converted to Base use. A battered enemy blockhouse was repaired and rebuilt as a Station Brig.

Eventually the Navy Department plans to move the bodies of all U. S. service dead temporarily interred on Roi, Namur and other islands of the upper Kwajalein Atoll to a National Cemetery to be established on Ivan Island. A large area on this island was cleared of undergrowth and prepared for the cemetery by the 95th men. This island had not suffered the severe shelling and





The completed 95th Area, March, 1944.

bombing that had made such a shambles of Roi and Namur, so the area selected was a picture of tranquil tropical beauty and will provide a peaceful haven to hold the remains of those Navy men and Marines who had died in the local battles. An enclosure, gate-ways and a memorial monument to commemorate these heroic dead were designed and the monument was built just before we left the islands.

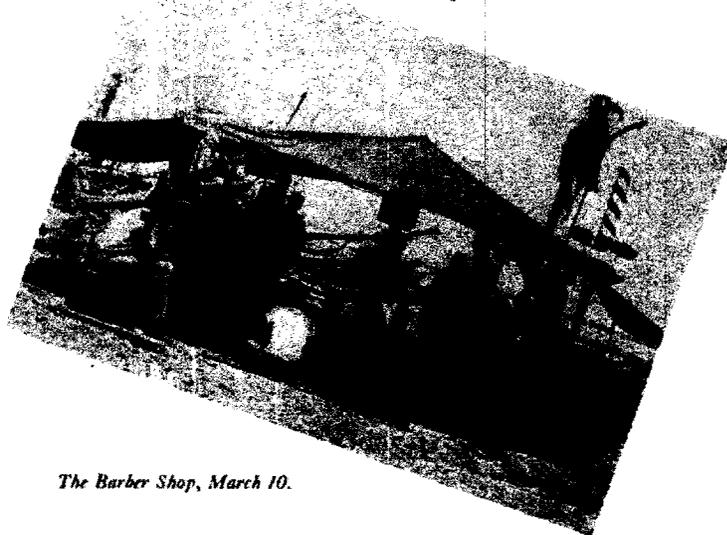
A familiar scene was the daily groups of shell hunters on the reef until at times we wondered if shell hunting was not the most important detail. This fascinating activity was not strictly confined to the enlisted men but indulged in by many of the officers including the Commander and the Doctor. Many of us used spare time to fashion beautiful necklaces and bracelets from the lovely shells found along the reefs of Namur Island. It was a tie as to whether necklace making exceeded the hobby of fashioning salvaged plexiglass handles for sheath knives;—later an epidemic of making paper knives or letter openers made its appearance and many beautiful knives were made of salvaged Jap Airplane aluminum.

As our stay on Namur lengthened into months, a universal gripe over the lack of fresh water was

Roi Namur



Mt. Texas.



The Barber Shop, March 10.



heard each day. Fresh water for showers was rationed to one half hour or even fifteen minutes use daily, and water for bathing and washing clothes was limited to a mixture of 65% salt water.

We will recall with pleasure the fish fries and French fried potato feeds held in many tents at night and the special occasions when even doughnuts were fried and very much enjoyed. The daily bottles of beer were a welcome diversion and would start the bull sessions going and soon the old subject of when we were going home would be up for consideration. Scuttlebutt was rife and varied;—how long we would be out from the mainland; how long the war would last; where we would go next and so on and on.

An effort was made to celebrate the 4th of July in true American fashion with a varied program of sports, and a holiday was declared by the Island Commander. A turkey dinner was ordered for all hands but enough fresh turkey could not be secured so the menu was changed to baked ham. For the majority of the 95th men this holiday was the first since Christmas, for a seven day work week was maintained. Field and track meets were held in the morning;—relay races, 100 yard dash, high and broad jumps, pole vault, etc. In the afternoon a soft-ball game between the All-Stars and a Marine Fighter Squadron was played to a 5 to 2 win by the All-Stars. The evening's entertainment offered several excellent boxing matches, a fine concert by the Marine Defense Battalion band and a good movie.



Captured Jap twin 5 inch rifles.



Remnants of Jap narrow-gage locomotive (powered with Chevrolet motor) note symbol of Japanese Imperial Marines.

Unearthing cache of Jap paint—Beamer, Gallagher, Coder, Stubbs, Lynch, Chief Farris, Chief Hamilton, Comdr. Johnson.



First headquarters of the Island Commander, Roi Island.



As soon as our area was graded and cleaned up and after the major projects had been completed, a soft-ball diamond was layed out and two teams organized to represent the 95th for the Island championship. The Cooks and Bakers team was eliminated early in the contest while the other, after defeating eight other island teams became the Namur Island Champions. Later they were defeated for the Roi-Namur Championship by the same Marine Fighters.

Several games between the 95th officers and enlisted men were played to the delight and entertainment of everyone; good natured horse-play and choice comments and yells were aimed at the officers who took it in good stride. Only American men know the true meaning of the word democracy and fair play and can lay aside



Surveyor Tenney on Alton Island.

Lt. Hudson and Comdr. Johnson beside riddled Jap gasoline tank-truck.



Roi-Namur

General Headquarters Building, NAS, Roi-Namur, constructed by the 95th.



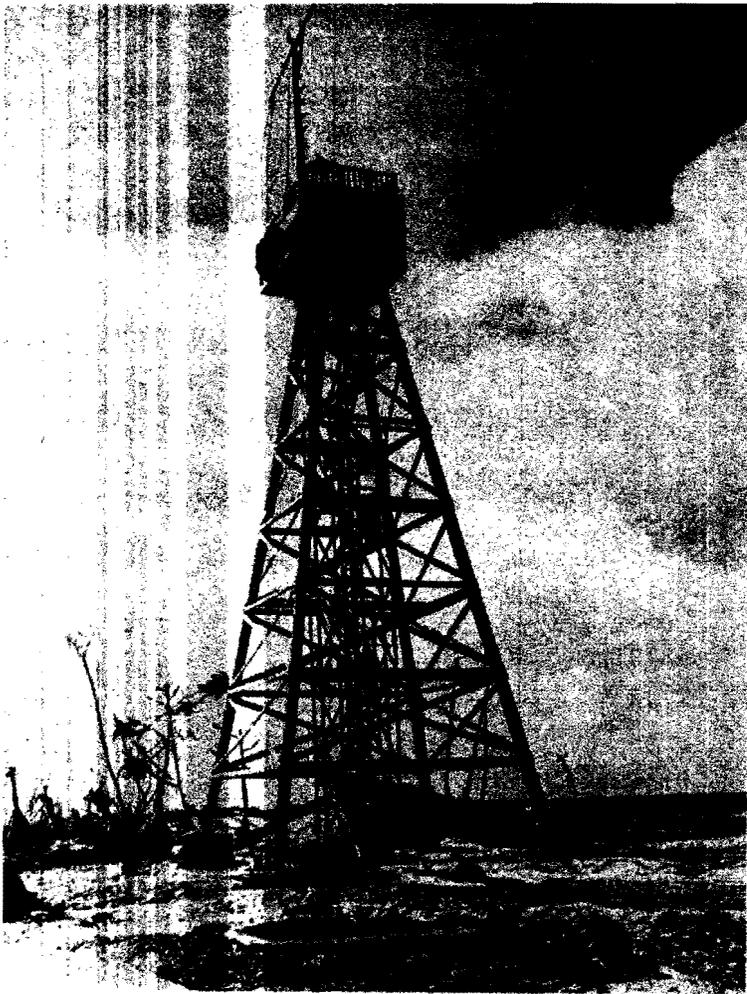
Roi Namur

next mission, when and how we would leave, when and where we would meet the rest of the battalion until you either believed it all or became a pronounced skeptic. We were to go to Saipan; we were to go to Guam; we were to be stateside by Christmas or we were to return to Pearl Harbor; it was all governed by wishful thinking, but eventually we did receive orders to pack our gear, load our seabags and prepare to leave. As we left the area that had been our home for six long months and rode to the boat landing, a far different sight met our eyes, for what had been endless acres of ruin and desolation and death had been magically transformed into an orderly, smoothly operating Naval Base teeming with life and activity. We were proud to have accomplished our mission.

We were ferried out to our transport, and boarded her the hard way, up scramble nets hand over hand to the deck. It was a surprise to discover that we were again on board the U. S. S. PRESIDENT MUNROE, one of the troop ships that had transported some of us to Apamama nine months before. We got under way 3 August 1944, and as our ship slowly sailed down the Kwajalein lagoon and the low shore line of Roi and Namur gradually passed from sight, there were no regrets at leaving. It hadn't been a bad assignment and most of the hardships were only vague memories, but yet we were all glad to leave another coral island behind us.

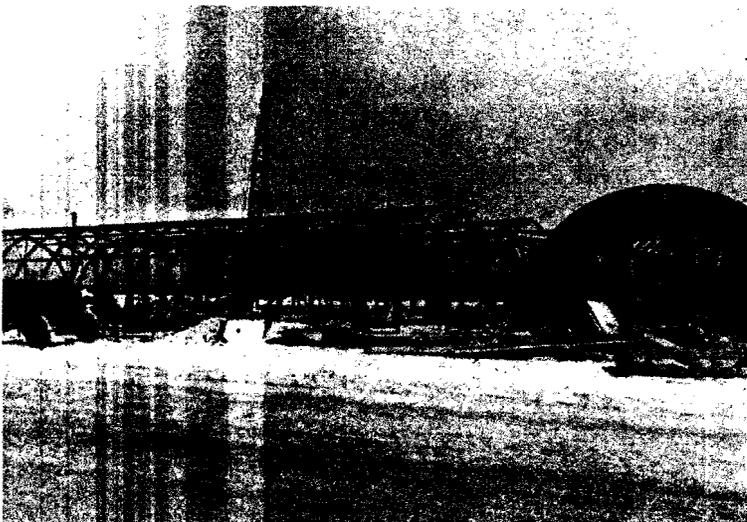
Life on a troop ship is just an interlude between two existences. We were fortunate on this trip

A typical wind-powered washing machine.



Timber signal tower, 80 feet high, Ivan Island.

Framework of Fleet Officers Mess.

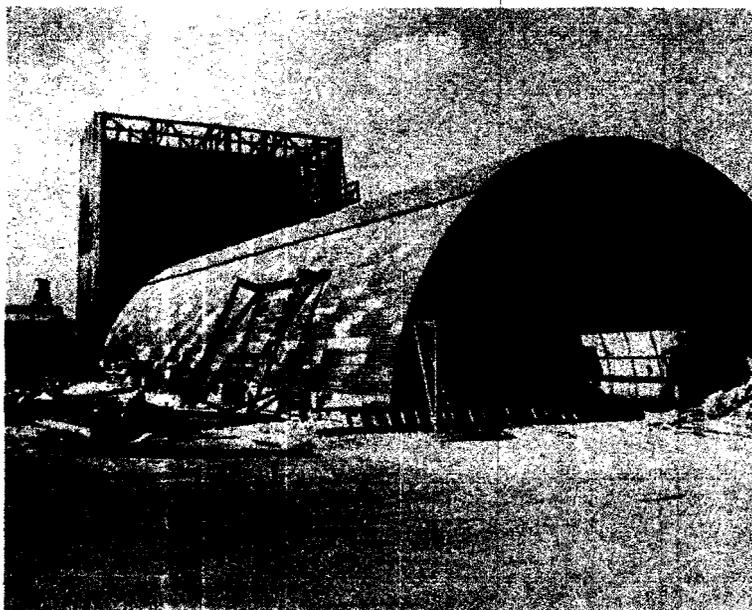




Grease rack at Mechanical Garage.



insofar as we had good food and three meals a day, but outside of that each day was just 24 hours to be lived through. It was impossible to find any comfort anywhere; you might find an unoccupied corner on the deck somewhere and get settled on the hard steel deck but invariably the Voice would bellow, "Sweepers man your brooms; sweep down fore and aft" and would have to move and wander aimlessly about hunting for another place. If you should happen to find an open spot large enough to sit down on, your fellow passengers would walk and crawl and step on you until you were black and blue. Sleeping below decks was an ordeal; the air was foul and so stuffy that you couldn't breathe, and hot as the hinges of hell. If you were fortunate enough to find space on deck large enough to stretch out you could get a night's sleep in good fresh air, provided it didn't rain; what a life! After nine days of this the welcome sight of land greeted our eyes and the indistinct mass gradually



Parachute Loft, Rai Island.

Interior of one of two wrecked Jap Hangars; note parts of destroyed Jap planes in wreckage.





Laying water pipe line.

emerged as the somewhat familiar island of Oahu in the Hawaiian group. The ship's railings and every available spot where a man could gain a toehold were jammed with tired Seabees eagerly scanning the approaching land and taking comfort from the sight of mountains. It was the 12th day of August when we returned. As our ship slowly edged into the dock and came to rest the stilled engines brought only momentary quiet—before the band on the dock burst into a blaring musical welcome,—not for us, but to honor the wounded men returning from Saipan who had been our fellow passengers. In our own individual ways we Seabees uttered silent prayers of thanksgiving to be back again in civilization, even though it wasn't "home" or the mainland, we were headed in the right direction. It was good to see people again and women with shoes on; and paved streets and sidewalks and grass and flowers and trees and homes . . . the city sounds of motor traffic and cop's whistles were music to our ears.

Re-union with the rest of our battalion was a noisy and excitable business . . . "Hi-ya, Red" . . . "Hello, Joe, you old so and so" . . . they really did give us a grand welcome and it was a day to remember; each one trying to out-talk the other and recount the experiences of six months in a single breath. The evening chow seemed like a banquet to us after those long months of canned and dehydrated foods;—a delicious dinner was served including plenty of fresh crisp lettuce and fresh tomatoes, and how we ate it up!

Theater area, Namur, June 15, 1944.

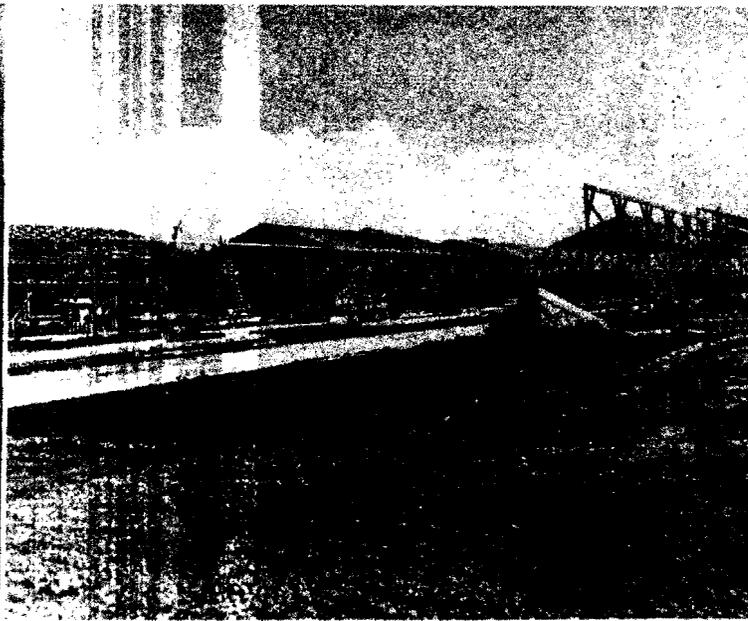


95th Softball Team—May 20, 1944—Cosentino, J. Holman, Main, Carlson, Bennett, Pizzorno, Martino, Beacom, F. Lane, Czarniak, J. Hamilton, Le Clair.



Hawaii

On the 15th of April 1944 while the second section of the battalion was just getting well established on Roi and Namur, the first section, under the leadership of Lt. Comdr. A. T. Lewis, Executive Officer, as Officer-in-Charge, arrived at Pearl Harbor after ten monotonous uneventful days at sea enroute from Apamama. We went ashore the next day to be taken by truck to Waiawa Gulch and was introduced to the fine red dust that is famous on the island of Oahu—the dust that absorbed you and got in your eyes and nose and throat and gave our white clothes a tinge of pink. At the Gulch we were barracked in Quonset huts and shared a mess-hall, galley, Ships-Service Store and outdoor movie area with another Construction Battalion. We were just nicely settled when orders came to move to another area near the Naval Receiving Station at Aiea and here we were quartered in large two-storied frame barracks. We were moved twice in this same area, the second move being a short one, to make room for the "Tunnel to Tokyo" battalion. While at this area we were entertained by several excellent stage shows sponsored by a neighbor battalion—all amateur talent of songs, jokes and entertainment but definitely good. We had assumed that we were returned to the Hawaiian area for rest and recuperation, but were soon disillusioned when the familiar Work Detail Office was set up and working parties organized. The 95th battalion was called upon to furnish a variety of skilled and semi-skilled labor to man the many huge work projects underway that were rapidly converting pineapple and sugar cane plantations into the worlds largest and strongest Naval Base. A very large gasoline dump was constructed utilizing all of our heavy equipment to grade and prepare this extensive area. Several large drumming plants were constructed that required practically all of



Part of huge Manana job -storage warehouses (750,000 square feet of covered storage).



Fire wall in one of the Manana Storage Warehouses.

Lounge in the Rodgers Field Officers Club.—95th built.



U-shaped bar in the Rodgers Field Officers club.





A few of the 95th boys and their friends from the 16th CB at the picnic at Nimitz Beach in June 1944.

our Carpenter, Welding, Pipe-Fitting and Electrical details. The never-ending concrete work went on with details assigned also to gunite work—dirty dusty work that everyone disliked. Later when the second section returned several huge frame warehouses were constructed and the 95th built a large luxurious Naval Officers Club, complete to finished painting and decorating that called for the utmost in skilled craftsmanship.

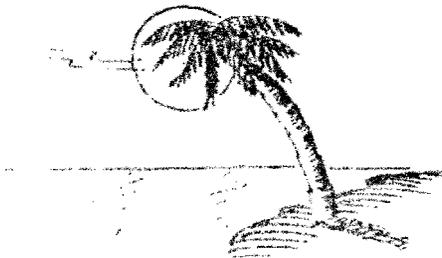
About the middle of July we moved again, this time nearer to Honolulu to Moanalua Ridge, adjoining a hospital area that furnished far away glimpses of Navy nurses, but the view was all we ever got. The theater at this area was a natural bowl and we enjoyed several good USO shows here including one by Commander Eddy Peabody, the "Banjo King". At the nearby Nimitz Bowl some really excellent USO entertainment was presented including Jack Benny and Bob Hope shows. It was customary and necessary to carry a poncho or a rain jacket to the movies or other shows for invariably it would rain, not once but many times during an evening so it was either a compliment to the show or a credit to our endurance that we sat through it all.



Null, Zimmerman, Gassaro, Tracy, Wetman at the 16th CB picnic at Nimitz Beach, June 1944.



"How about that re-rat, Commander Lewis!"





The beach beyond the Blow-Hole near Koko Head.



The Blow-Hole in action.



Downtown Honolulu at the intersection of Hotel and Fort Streets in December, 1944.



Hawaii

The 12th of August was a day of celebration for we were united with the second section of the battalion who returned this day from a six month tour of duty on Roi and Namur in the Marshall Islands. A special dinner featuring steak and plenty of green vegetables was served and it was a pleasure to see the travelers enjoy it. It was fun looking up old friends with each trying to out talk the other in a recital of real or fictitious adventures. It was good to be together again—to form again the strong 95th. Fifteen of the men of the second section did not return as they were transferred to another battalion in the Marshalls. The scuttlebutt on Namur was that the skipper had traded these fifteen men for a concrete mixer but this was never verified. The newly arrived members were given eight days of no duty as their "rest and recuperation" and promptly squandered them on liberty trips to Honolulu, Waikiki Beach and even to Hilo on the "Big" island of Hawaii. At the end of the eight days they were assigned to the various work details and absorbed into the numerous work projects of the 95th.

Although a steady work schedule of eight to ten hour days, six days a week was maintained for the six to ten month period we were assigned to Oahu it was not nearly so hard as life on Apamama or Roi and Namur. It was a relief to be out of the blistering consuming equatorial heat of the Gilberts and Marshalls and away from the desolation and devastation of the then forward areas. It was a relief to relax and be rid of the constant tension of air raid alerts and to be close to civilization. It was a period now where we could become better acquainted with each other and enjoy to-



An outdoor theater at Moanalua Ridge constructed by the 95th.



Harold Johnson and Harold Kittle crossing Hotel Street at the corner of Fort Street, Honolulu, December, 1944.

"Farewell to thee, O Paradise of the Pacific."



Sports



Wert running to first.

gether the typically American pleasures that bind us close together.

A number of athletic teams were formed to compete with other battalions in baseball, volley ball, soft ball, basketball, and golf. We had well organized teams in all these sports and they furnished much pleasure and satisfaction to the players and battalion personnel in general. We will always remember and give warm approval of the one young officer who played as a regular

member of the baseball team—he was a “good Joe”. Although the 95th did not have a football team, two enlisted men of the 95th represented the battalion well on the general Seabee team.

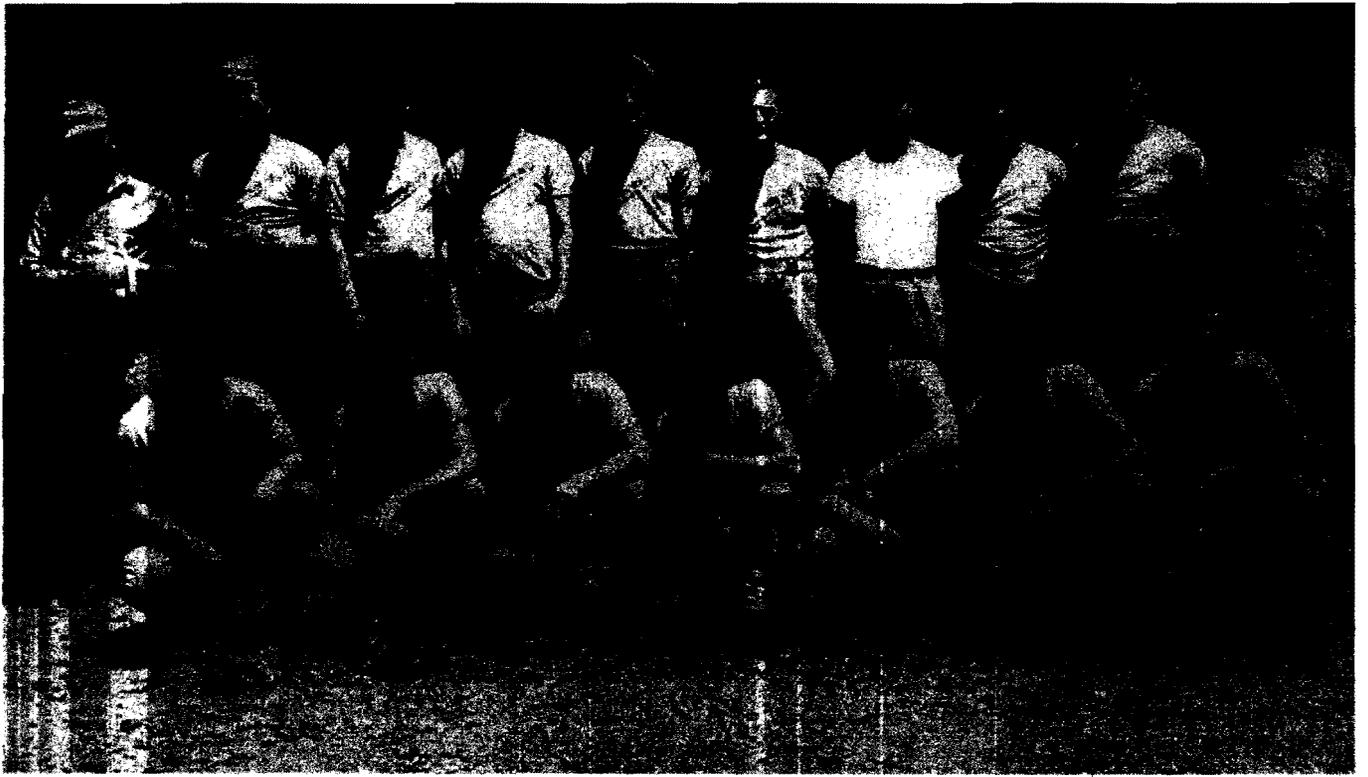
The Band was reorganized and played for colors each morning and marched and played for the Battalion Dress Review that was held at Moanua Ridge and again on Red Hill.

The 95th moved for the last time on Oahu, in October, again to the red dust area, this time to Red Hill; here again we shared a Galley, Ships Service and movie area with another battalion. While at Red Hill we celebrated our first anniversary overseas, 27 October 1944 with a special evening chow, two free bottles of beer (or coke) a Hawaiian USO show and movie. It was while we were billeted on Red Hill that the Cruise Record was conceived and the battalion newspaper, “News and Views” attained its highest peak of success. Most of the men took advantage of every opportunity for liberty and spent frequent days in Honolulu . . . to enjoy a different meal at a good restaurant or hotel with chosen companions in an atmosphere more nearly approaching the stateside influence . . . to shop for oriental wares for the home folks . . . to drink beer or liquor and be free for the moment of regimented and restricted living . . . or just to walk up and down the streets and look at people.

The battalion sponsored island tours and Sunday

BASEBALL TEAM—Egan, C. T. Lee, Blair, Drumheller, Mensch, Wiater, Kunkle, Martino, Chief Darr (Umpire), Wert, Lt. Backus, F. Lane, Rundle, Seale, Gephardt, Hergert, A. F. Johnson, (Manager).





SOFTBALL TEAM—Cosentino, Beacom, L. LaVoie, Gionet, Duke, Czarniak, C. Johns, McElhone, Murphy (Coach), Carlson, Keller, Creamer, (manager) L. Thomas, Ostrander, Brownell, Dubai.

picnics . . . a truck ride to one of the many beauty spots on the island, ending usually at a beach for a swim, with a lunch of sandwiches and beer or coke. The island of Oahu has many delightful places of interest and beauty; a favorite was the trip and breath-taking view over the Pali . . . the sharp ridged cliffs of the Keahiakahoe mountains near the Nuuanu Pali, where one could see for miles over the fields of sugar cane and on out to sea. The acres of pineapples . . . the magnificent homes and gardens beyond Waikiki . . . the drive along the coast to Diamond Head and Koko Head and the Blow-hole . . . where the waves come dashing into crevices and as the water recedes it is shot high in the air through a small hole in the lava rock.

The new year of 1945 found us restlessly waiting for the next move. We knew we were to have a third mission and that it would be into the thick of a hot strike. Scuttlebutt and surmises predicted our next assignment as either the China Coast, the Kuriles or the Volcano Islands. As preparations went forward and the medical department issued a generous amount of "shots" in the arm we viewed the future with some trepidation for it seemed assured that this next job was to be hard and tough and dangerous.



One of the football games.

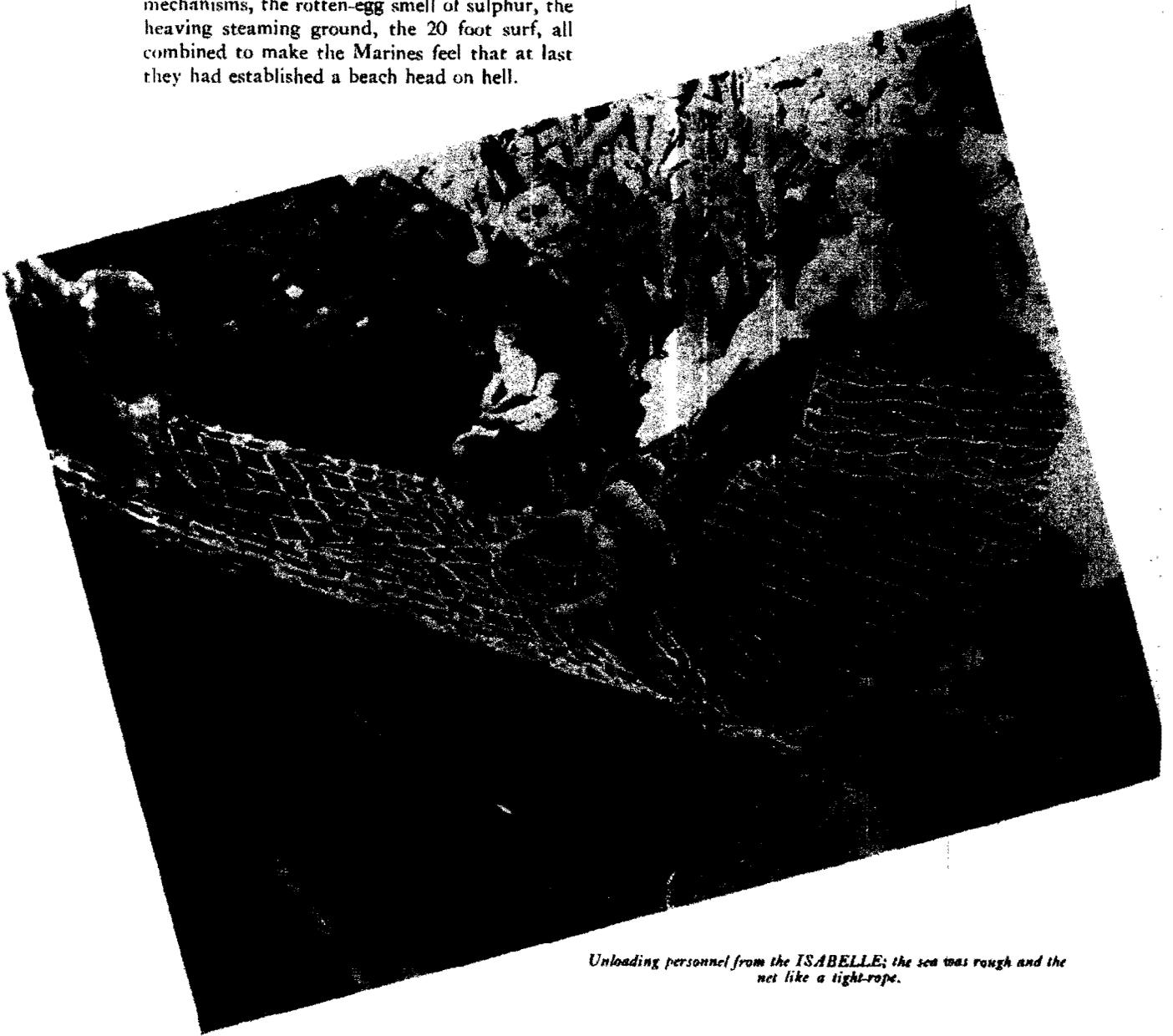


To the Shores of Iwo Jima

Iwo Jima, place of violence, was born in violence less than 10,000 years ago when it was blown up off the ocean floor. Japan took it over in 1891. Two nearby islands, north and south of it, blew up a little higher, but Iwo alone developed a flattish plateau, which lies to the north of Suribachi volcano. Still another island popped up nearby in 1904, sank out of sight in 1906. One of the world's youngest islands, Iwo was still growing, in rumbling and belches, when the Marines arrived in the early dawn of February 19.

Iwo Jima conveyed a sullen sense of evil to all Americans who saw it for the first time. The cold wet winds laden with fine volcanic dust, the blazing tropical sun, the shifting volcanic sand that slid back into foxholes and clogged firing mechanisms, the rotten-egg smell of sulphur, the heaving steaming ground, the 20 foot surf, all combined to make the Marines feel that at last they had established a beach head on hell.

After a 26 day campaign, the most bitter in all Marine Corps history, in which a total of 22,000 casualties were suffered, Iwo was declared secured on March 16, and the ugly, sulphurous, mean little island was ours. Frightful as was the price of Iwo Jima, it took the war a long way toward Japan. The Marines of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Divisions who bled here gave their country a strong sword against the enemy and saved the lives of many times their number of other Americans. On Iwo great bombers are re-fueling and taking off for the farthest reaches of the Japanese Empire; fleets of fighters rise to protect the bombers and support American fleet actions and amphibious landings in the East China Sea and to patrol and reconnoiter there. The capture of Iwo brought two immediate benefits; it wiped out



Unloading personnel from the ISABELLE; the sea was rough and the net like a tight-rope.

Iwojima

As we waited for orders to go ashore the thought was recurrent in our minds of what awaited us on this ugly battle scarred island; we tried to picture the ghastly horror of D Day and silently thanked God that we were in the third wave. One look at Green and Blue Beaches increased our respect and admiration for the Marines who landed there, and we marveled at their ability to get a foothold on those beaches let alone storm to the heights of Suribachi and the ridges to the north.

From our position several miles out at sea it seemed at times as if the island was deserted, an inanimate heap of smoking rubble finally helpless under the tremendous fire power of the U. S. Navy. As we looked closer we could see swirling clouds of dust that marked the course of trucks, amphibious tracks, jeeps and tanks making their own roads through the foot-deep dust with supplies and reinforcements to the front. Other and larger clouds of dust arose over what had been Motoyama Airfields No. 1 and No. 2, were gratifying to see for it meant increasing numbers of transport planes were arriving; the U. S. was putting to use what they had come to Iwo to get. Suddenly the silence would be shattered by the crashing roar of an artillery barrage and the sharper, perfectly timed smash of destroyer shells as they landed monotonously at the north end of the island. What we couldn't see was the tremendous force of Marines who were putting the finishing touches to one of the greatest battles in world history, and the hundreds of terrified Japs cowering in their cave hideouts, who would have to be ferreted out, one by one and sent to an inglorious death.

On the 14th of March we prepared to go ashore; the sea was rough and it was an exciting experience to go down a scramble net which at times was stretched out at a 45 degree angle to the ship. As we neared the shore we were able to see more



clearly the huge piles of wrecked equipment that littered the beaches and the tons upon tons of new equipment that was piled on shore and coming ashore to be used in building this newest of Uncle Sam's advance bases.

As we stepped ashore to the black sands of Iwo, we were greeted by our skipper, Commander W. L. Johnson, who had preceded us by several weeks, to arrange for our work assignments and living areas. There was a happy reunion also with the small band of 95th men who had volunteered as truck drivers and heavy equipment operators to go in with the Marines on D Day to assist in the vital work of moving supplies and preparing sites for advanced positions. We listened eagerly to their stories of exciting experiences and were glad that none had been among the thousands of casualties. The beach was a mad-house of confusion with gear piled everywhere and trucks grinding in and out with heavy loads. Clouds of dust obscured the sun but did nothing to lessen the damp heat that was to torture us as long as we remained on Iwo, and the obnoxious sulphur fumes, mingled with the stench from rotting dead bodies made a man's stomach twitch with nausea and his spirit weak. We rested on the beach until all had come ashore and then boarded trucks for the other side of the island, to White Beach where we were to bivouac until our permanent area could be cleared of the enemy and a thickly-sown sea of destructive land mines, and then prepared for our occupation. Although it was dark by then, no time was lost in digging temporary foxholes for the night and all hands, with the exception of a guard detail were glad to lay down in the sand. A strong guard was set to encircle the area and a long 12 hour nerve-racking vigil was kept by those guards; the front seemed to be just atop the ridge that bordered our area and as the night wore on it was made hideous with the roar and crash of shells hurtling through the air over our heads, and as light as day with the brilliance of star shells and vari-colored flares. We were face to face with battle and its attendant terror.

The next day we set up a more orderly bivouac camp, digging deeper foxholes and stretching pup tents overhead for protection against the rain and cold. For the first time in over two years we were experiencing cold weather for the nights here were bitterly cold and rainy and we were grateful for

All that remained of a key Japanese concrete pill box; one of the hundreds that dotted the ridges of Iwo.



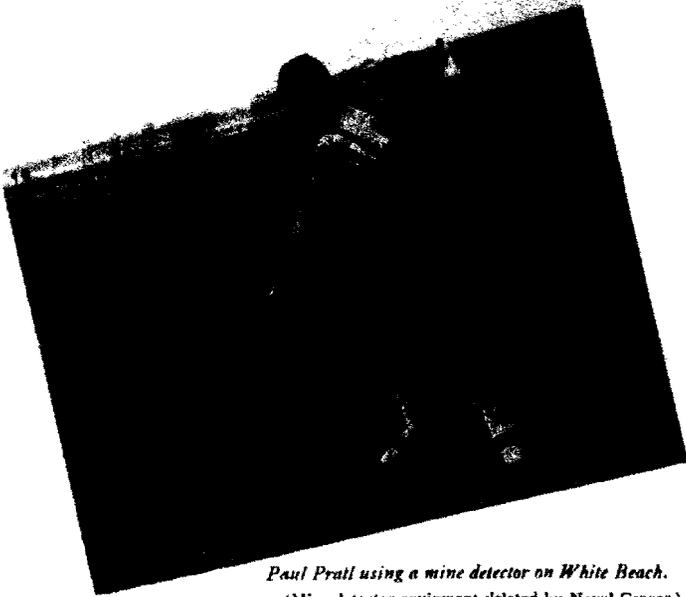
Entrance to one of the caves and tunnels that furnished hideouts for the last of the Japs.



A Jap rocket-launcher at the entrance to one of their caves.

the extra blankets and fur lined jackets issued back at Red Hill.

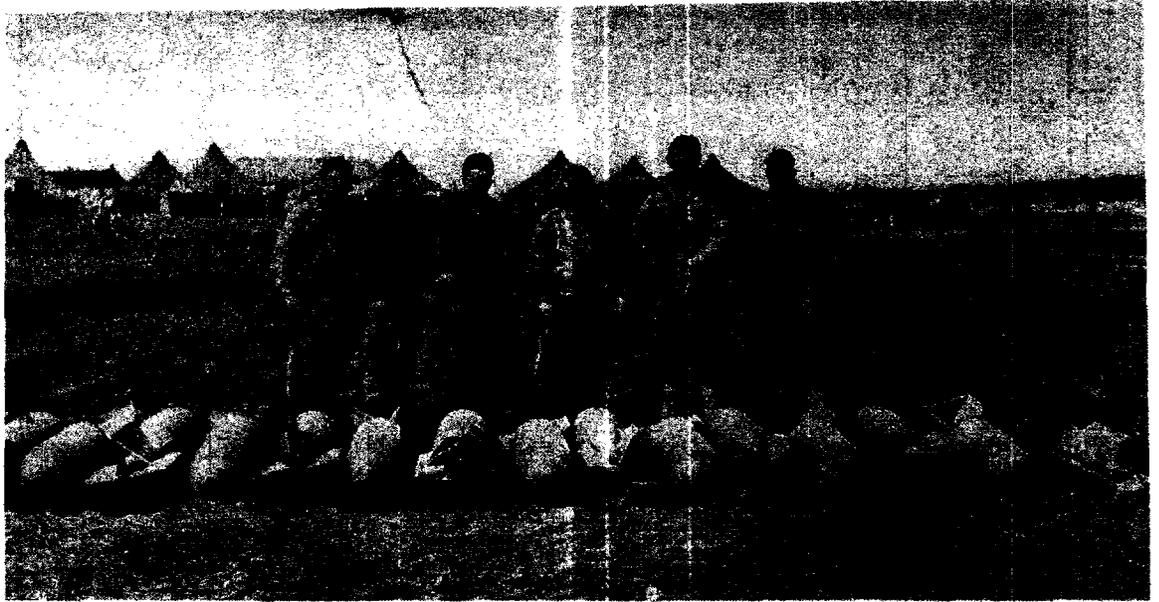
We ate K and C emergency rations, and that tiresome diet lasted for weeks. The real hardship those first rugged weeks was the lack of sufficient fresh water to keep clean. The bivouac area was in deep black sands; the unforgettable sand and dust that filled your eyes and nose and throat and crept into your mouth as you ate or slept; that seeped into every article of your gear. Much has been written of this and its dirt and filth but nothing can describe the sulphurous odors and the stench of unburied dead; our area had its quota of unburied dead Japs and the more real danger of buried land mines and booby traps. The fact that the battalion suffered no serious casualties in this bivouac area is due largely to the conscientious hard work of the Demolition crew. Although most organized fighting had ceased,



*Paul Prall using a mine detector on White Beach.
(Mine detector equipment deleted by Naval Censor.)*

Part of the 95th transportation Area on White Beach.





The Demolition Crew—Banks, Stepanian, Wiggins, Chief Black, Prall, J. Martin, Mose, guard. These bombs, some of them wired as land mines were located and dug up in our bivouac area. (Mine detection equipment deleted by Naval Censor.)

sporadic small battles were a daily occurrence, and we lived each day in the noise and excitement of nearby battle; for many days sniper fire was a menace. It was to be many a day before the island was entirely clear of Japs. The island was a network of intricate caves and tunnels, some of which were 1800 yards long, had 14 entrances, 2 to 5 levels.

In the early morning hours of March 26 a large band of Japs suddenly made an appearance and over-ran one of the airfields, infiltrating through U. S. lines and into Marine and Army Flight Officers bivouac camps. This was the last of the banzai-type attacks and the next day 250 dead Japs were counted on the scene of their suicidal attack. The Japs were armed with hand grenades, swords, pistols and some Marine M-1 rifles. We were awakened by the fury of the fighting and quite a number of the 95th entered the battle, and, it is said, accounted for some of the enemy dead.

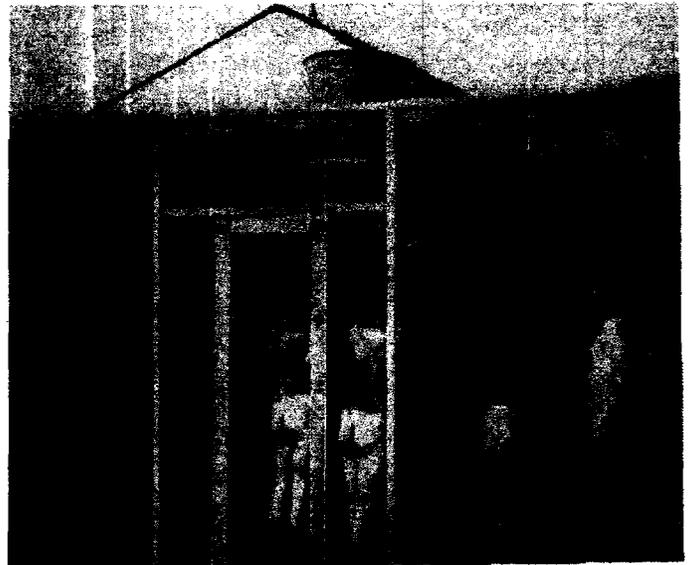
Many of our tents were riddled with bullet holes and flying shrapnel and it was altogether too close for comfort.

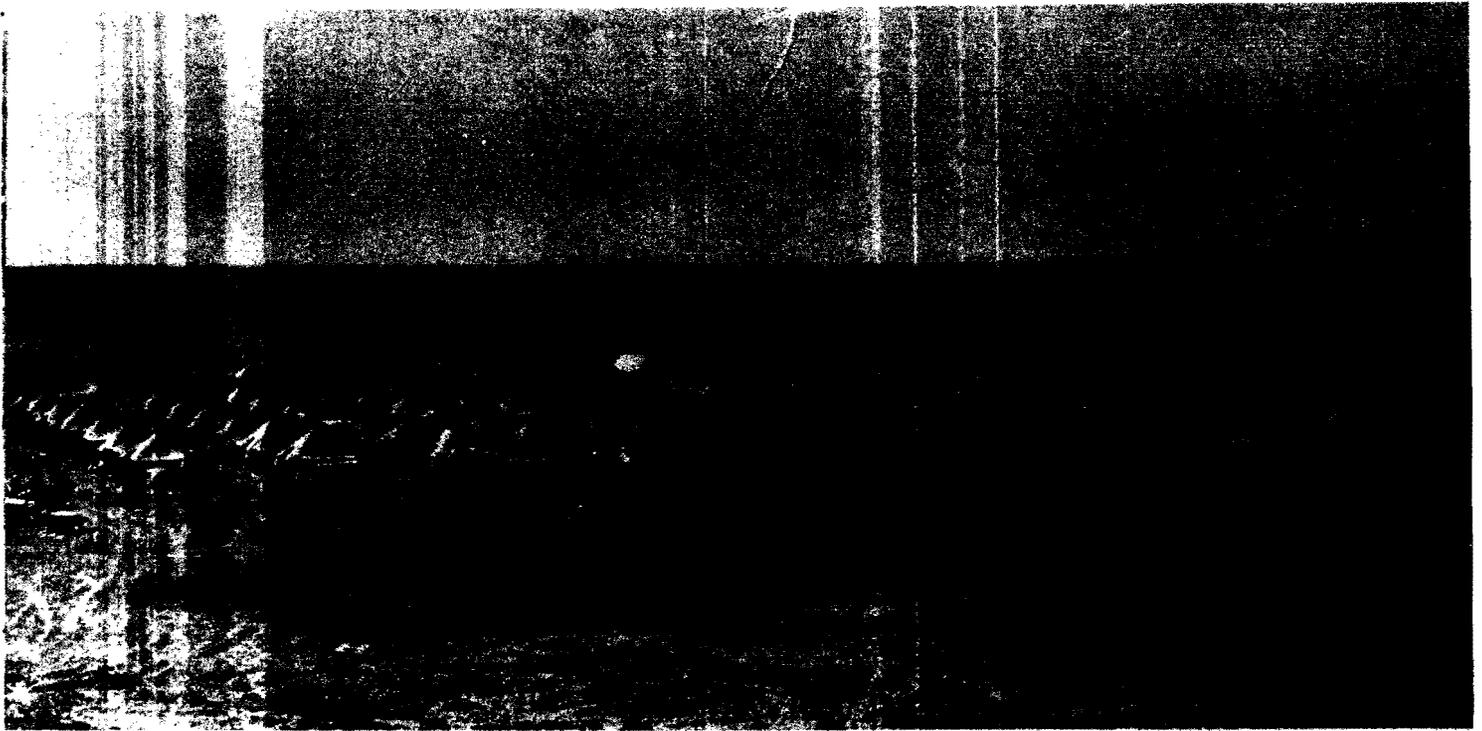
As soon as we came ashore large details of stevedores started the endless task of unloading supplies and equipment from the ships, and other work details went into operation. One of our first and most continuous jobs was the Engineering Salvage detail, a group assigned to comb the island for all salvageable materials; anything and everything that could be used to augment new supplies for building this base. It was while he was on duty with this detail that Lt. (jg) Hower suffered wounds when a jeep he was driving struck a land mine, hospitalizing him to a rear base. An important job was the grading and filling at Brown Beach and stabilization at Yellow, Brown and other beaches, to speed up the unloading of ships and movement of materials to the various compounds; a network of access roads to these

The scrub deck for washing clothes at White Beach.



The first showers on Iwo, using boiling hot sulphur water, one degree better than salt water, but still better, March 21, 1945.





The organized bivouac area on White Beach March 29, 1945.

beaches were built and maintained. These beach jobs required the use of many of our men, trucks and heavy equipment.

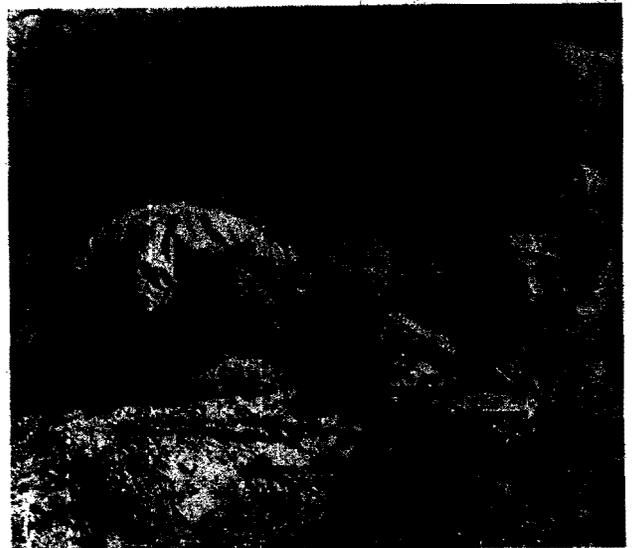
At the same time work was started on the permanent site for the 95th camp. We were assigned to an area at the northwestern end of the island in probably the roughest terrain of the island. It had presumably been an area of ridges, plateaus and deep ravines, rather densely covered with underbrush, but the prolonged bombing and naval gunfire had tossed the soft rock about so that it looked like a stone quarry after an earthquake. With all the disruption, the area had a

weird beauty for nature was asserting herself and the broken and torn trees and shrubbery were coming to life with a showing of feathery green. Commander Johnson ordered that the new camp be constructed with as little disturbance to the terrain as possible and no living tree or plant was to be harmed. The surveyors and dozer operators who were the first of the details to commence work there did so under extremely dangerous conditions, for the area was still infested with Jap snipers and one had to work with his carbine ready and keep a sharp lookout. Heavy equipment operators and truck drivers worked with armed guard escorts; a crew of expert demolition men under the direction of Chief Black preceded all work and combed the area thoroughly for land mines and booby traps; their work was extremely



A Jap dummy tank, constructed of sticks and grasses, that fooled no one.

Chief Black gingerly inspects a booby trap while Prall looks on.

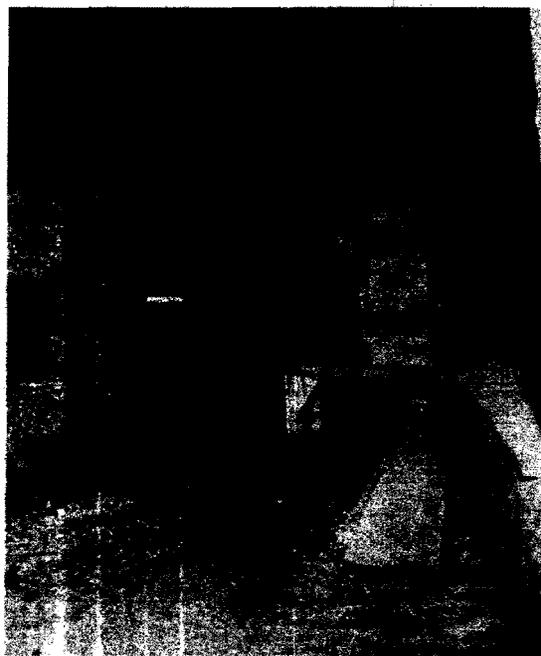
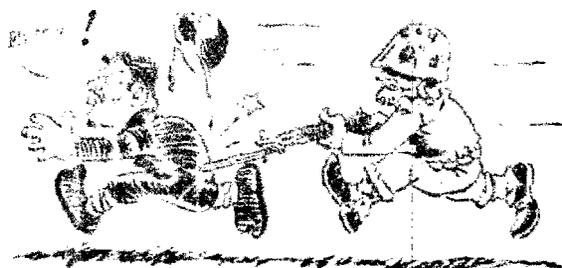




Panorama of Administration Area—OOD office at left; Construction Office; Detail Office and Personnel Office in Quonset hut; Engineering Office; Operations Office, with Photo-Lab directly to the rear; Office of the Officer in Charge and Executive Officer. Transportation Area in background, with grease rack and motor service at left; Welding, Forge, Machine and Electric Shops in the right rear.

important and dangerous for this area and all others where 95th men were at work were heavily mined and it is to their credit that our casualties were so low. Only a few of our bulldozers were damaged by striking buried enemy land mines, fortunately with only minor injuries to the operators. We were saddened by the death of F. R. Jaramillo, SF3C, who was killed 25 April 1945 when the dozer he was operating struck a land mine.

The tents for battalion personnel were located wherever the terrain permitted and the result was a well dispersed camp protected from heavy damage from possible air attacks. The rough surroundings made an attractive camp and many of the tents were made homey by transplanting native flowers and shrubs and other individual work of the men. We moved to this permanent area April 20th. After all camp facilities were completed we boasted the finest camp on the island and the finest camp the 95th ever had. We lived in comfortable 16 x 16 pyramid tents, with wood decks, screened sidewalls, screen doors and electric lights, five men to a tent. Ample shower facilities were provided with fresh water, and a laundry was operated for the convenience of the personnel. We enjoyed eating in a large, airy chow hall painted white inside with a galley fitted with every convenience; our meals were good, considering that we were far into a forward area. We enjoyed fresh meat and vegetables at frequent intervals and the cooking and baking were tops! Our outdoor theater area was the envy of the island with a fine projection screen and enough benches to seat the entire battalion



Interior of one of the larger caves (approximately five feet wide by five feet six inches high) numerous side rooms, tunnels, storage and sleeping shelves. Later used as an air raid shelter by U. S. Army unit.

Iwo Jima

in comfort. Divine services were held in this theater area on Sunday evenings with our own Chaplain James W. Paul officiating at Protestant services; these services were well attended and a tribute to the personal popularity of Chaplain Paul. Catholic Mass was read by Chaplain Francis C. Glynn, U. S. Army Reserve, of an Anti-Aircraft Battery, who generously gave of his time to serve our Catholic boys.

We had a fine Ship's Store with a Wet Canteen attached and an outdoor beer garden. Our Library was the largest and most complete of any on the island with a selection to please the most exacting readers. A large Recreation tent complete with ping-pong tables, pin ball machines, radio, record player, and writing tables was available for men off duty and for leisure hours; this department furnished exercising bars, punching bags and practice boxing ring for the men. Special features were free haircuts, free radio repair and free watch repair. It was all a far cry from home but our skipper, Commander Johnson, had the gratitude of the men for trying to make life on this desolate rock more liveable.

Each day brought new work assignments until we were busy on a seven day week with two ten-hour per day work schedules. A multitude of minor jobs were started and completed;—Clearing and Grading Areas, Access Roads, Road Maintenance, all types of Revetments for the storage of munitions, bombs and chemical warfare supplies.



The crater of Suribachi volcano.

Panorama of Iwo Jima taken from the top of Mt. Suribachi.

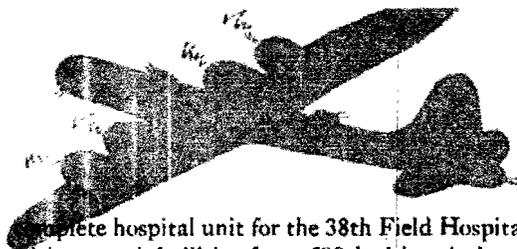




R. J. Miller, Chief Black with a group of Army Demolition men examining enemy mines, booby traps, etc.

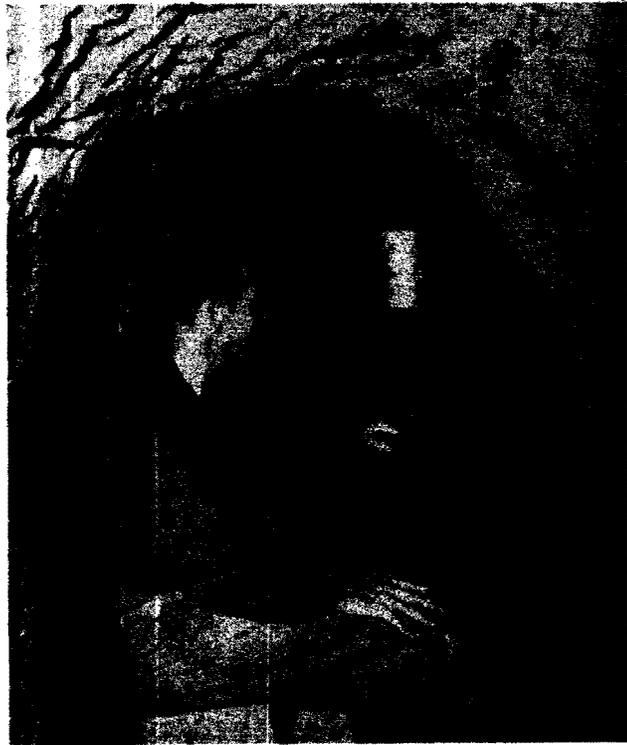
Work on our major projects went forward steadily under the general supervision of the Operations Officer and the Field Construction Officer. A complete plant for the 232nd General Hospital was constructed and included Administration and Receiving buildings, Surgical and Medical Wards, Air-conditioned Surgery, X-Ray Department, Laboratory, Pharmacy, Dental Clinic, buildings to house the miscellaneous clinics, Maintenance Shops, Laundry, Power and Light Units, Telephone System, Troop Mess, Patients Mess and Officers Mess, Nurses Quarters and Recreation facilities—a complete 1000 bed hospital. A similar project was the construction of a

Geraldi and Patmer finish the intricate wiring for the battalion switchboard.



complete hospital unit for the 38th Field Hospital with general facilities for a 500 bed hospital. A third hospital unit was constructed for the 41st Station Hospital with general facilities for a 250 bed hospital. One of the more extensive projects consisted of a large camp and operational facilities for the 21st Bomber Command—a 3000 man Mess Hall, living quarters, shops and warehouses. Another major job was the group of Ammunition Storage Igloos, built entirely by 95th men. All of these projects necessitated preliminary grading and preparation of sites involving moving thousands of yards of rock, volcanic ash and sand, and the continuous use of all of our heavy equipment and operators; hundreds of steel Quonset huts were erected, as well as many pre-fabricated wood buildings, keeping the men assigned to these details busy for many months. Thousands of yards of concrete were poured and many men labored on this back-breaking work. In all of the work done on Iwo Jima no one detail nor no one individual can receive any special mention. All hands turned to on assigned work and completed their work with quickness and dispatch; the 95th was a good battalion because the men in the 95th made it so; each mission and each job bore evidence of good teamwork and the cooperation of the men and is a credit to the leaders of the battalion. The men who served faithfully on mess duty deserve just as much credit as those who as skilled craftsmen produced fine work; we were all a part of the ensemble that made the 95th outstanding.

An emergency switchboard for use during air raids was established in a cave near the Communications headquarters; Geraldi at this switchboard.



Once Upon A Time

The Ninety-ninth U. S. Naval Construction Battalion was formed on 24 June 1943. Composed of men glad to be out of Replacement and Boot where they had been assigned duties not corresponding with their ratings, and hoping for a chance at duties for which they had enlisted.

Under the guidance of our Skipper, Commander R. R. Cook, the Battalion made its first move to Camp Endicott, Rhode Island. Everyone on edge, and for most, their first organized trip after completion of "Boot" training. All were wondering what type place Endicott would be; how they would live; quality of the eats; and, most important, how much Liberty. Realization came later that this was one of the best Seabee Camps in the States. Most of the time there, was taken on the drill field, a few of the more fortunate attended schooling in Naval courses which were to be turned to good advantage while overseas. Long to be remembered was the hike to Sun Valley. Hardly the vacationers' paradise everyone visualizes on hearing the name, but a roughly laid out Quonset Camp, where our week was spent on the rifle range getting accustomed to our carbines. Our first opportunity to show the "mates" our marksmanship and enviously eye the several expert scores later displayed.

Then came our first review as a Unit, the day the 99th was commissioned and received its colors. From that day we were officially known as the 99th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion. Upon survey of personnel, it was found that we boasted at least one man from every state in the Union, District of Columbia and Canada.

Embarkation leave began for those living in the East, South and Middle West on July 25th, 1943, to return August 4th, the last time home for over two years. Three days later the Battalion started for the West Coast and Camp Parks, to continue advance training. Men of the West Coast

received their embarkation leaves from this Camp. Memories here are mingled. Oakland, San Francisco, the "A" Train and Judo Hill where nothing was barred but loaded rifles, and of "A" Company who made the ascent and retrieved the flag in record time.

Our stay at Camp Parks was short and on September 3, 1943 we were off again. This time for an overnight trip to Camp Rousseau at Port Hueneme, California, just sixty miles from Hollywood and Los Angeles. Another training area and the same old story of drill, hikes, physical training and conditioning, night alerts with awakenings in the middle of a sound sleep to drag on clothes, packs, canteens, leggings, helmet and rifle, and so off for another pleasant (?) walk.

At Camp Rousseau, the Battalion was adopted by the Governor of Texas and became known as the "99th Lone Star Battalion." Each member from States other than Texas became honorary members and our Battalion plaque was constructed around the "Lone Star."

"The Fighting Seabees" was being produced at this time and Republic Pictures came to Camp Rousseau for training scenes. With them came Miss Susan Hayward, star of this movie. It was then that the 99th adopted Miss Hayward as the Battalion Sister and made her honorary citizen of the "Lone Star State."

Weeks went by and November 5th, 1943 found us heading back up the Coast to San Francisco to embark on the USS West Point. After three days of impatient waiting, we left the Continental limits of the United States and four days later docked at Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii.

Waiawa Gulch Hill was our home for many months. Detachment One, Company "C," consisting of 220 officers and men, left the day following

our arrival for Kauai, another of the Hawaiian Chain, on an important construction project. Two weeks later, Detachment Two, composed of 151 officers and men left for Hawaii, largest of the Islands. Further Detachments leaving Battalion Headquarters at Waiawa Gulch were: Three, 87 officers and men for Johnston Island; Four, 22 officers and men for French Frigate Island; Five, 73 officers and men for Canton in the Phoenix Islands.

We moved from our Gulch location in May 1944 to Aiea, a place one automatically associates with the Navy's worst chow and deep red dust. From this point, 59 officers and men left for Johnston as relief for men who had been on that tiny Island nearly six months.

Our next move took us to Moanalua Ridge where Detachment Six left for the Palau Group as a pontoon outfit, followed by Detachment Seven, who left for Angaur on July 29th, attached to a beach party. Thus it was that several Detachments were simultaneously under way above and below the Equator, encompassing six different Islands of the Pacific. Men remaining at Battalion Headquarters were working on such projects as John Rodgers Airport, Waiawa Gulch, Manana Camp and warehouses, and many other assignments on Oahu.

Commander D. S. Fuller reported aboard as our new Skipper on October 1944, and January of '45 found men returning from all outlying details to Battalion Headquarters. Military training began once more and demolition schools, rifle range practice and conditioning started scuttlebutt traveling from man to man.

On March 20, 1945, the first echelon of 778 officers and men left Oahu, arriving in the Philippines April 11, 1945. Echelon Two, consisting of 190 officers and men following close behind and joining the first group on April 19, 1945.

First job in Camp, a coconut grove alive with insects and snakes, was to clear the grounds and pitch tents to quarter all personnel. Immediately, with the start of operations, the Battalion personnel was divided into two groups. Eighty percent to start construction on our main project, a 3,000 bed Hospital, and the remaining twenty percent to continue making the camp area more livable. Day and night work, seven days a week, intense heat, stinging insects and rain, added irritations to homesickness and delayed mail. Equipment was never idle except when maintenance and repair demanded.

As Quonsets were completed, personnel moved from hastily erected tents to more adequate quarters. Then came Department Shops, a huge Galley and Mess Hall, Recreation Hall, then work began to slack to six days a week.

Before a modern stage and screen with a seating capacity of 1,500 and a reputation as "Best on the Island," came at long last, the almost incoherent words, "JAPAN HAS SURRENDERED." Reactions upon receiving this news we had so desperately waited for so long a period, were violent. Yells, screams, wet eyes and many quiet prayers from hearts full to overflowing.

As our History goes to the printers, visions of loved ones and home cease to be a dream and begin to assume vivid reality.

95th Naval Construction Battalion

Chronology

30 Jul 1943	Transferred from NCTC, Camp Peary to Camp Parks, FFT Port Hueneme.
20 Aug 1943	Left Camp Parks for Hueneme.
27 Oct 1943	Departed Port Hueneme.
03 Nov 1943	Arrived Pearl Harbor.
20 Nov 1943	Departed Pearl Harbor.
28 Nov 1943	Arrived Apamama.
01 Mar 1944	Thirteen Officers and four hundred seventy-six men left Apamama for Roi-Namur.
05 Mar 1944	Above section arrived Roi-Namur.
23 Mar 1944	Five Officers and two hundred fifty men left Apamama for Pearl Harbor.
30 Mar 1944	Eleven Officers and two hundred seventy-five men left Apamama for Pearl Harbor.
02 Apr 1944	First group arrived Pearl Harbor—assigned to 16 th CB at Waiawa Gulch.
10 Apr 1944	Second group arrived and joined first group; this section reported to OinC Third N.C. Regiment for duty.
04 Aug 1944	Roi-Namur section of battalion departed Roi-Namur.
12 Aug 1944	Roi-Namur section arrived Pearl Harbor and joined half battalion there.
20 Feb 1945	Battalion departed Pearl Harbor.
14 Mar 1943	Went ashore at Iwo Jima (arrived 13 Mar 1943).

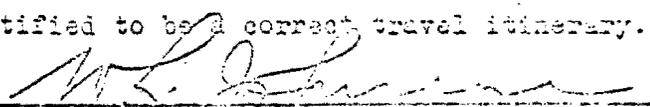
U. S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION NUMBER 95

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ITINERARY OF THE 95TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

30 Jul 1945 Transferred from NCTC, Camp Peary to Camp Parks, JET Port Hueneme.
20 Aug 1945 Left Camp Parks for Hueneme.
27 Oct 1945 Departed Port Hueneme.
3 Nov 1945 Arrived Pearl Harbor.
20 Nov 1945 Departed Pearl Harbor.
28 Nov 1945 Arrived Apamama.
1 Mar 1944 Thirteen Officers and four hundred seventy-six men left Apamama for Roi-Namur.
5 Mar 1944 Above section arrived Roi-Namur.
23 Mar 1944 Five Officers and two hundred fifty men left Apamama for Pearl Harbor.
30 Mar 1944 Eleven Officers and two hundred seventy-five men left Apamama for Pearl Harbor.
2 Apr 1944 First group arrived Pearl Harbor--assigned to 16th CB at Waikawa Gulch.
10 Apr 1944 Second group arrived and joined first group; this section reported to Cinc Third N.C. Regiment for duty.
4 Aug 1944 Roi-Namur section of battalion departed Roi-Namur.
12 Aug 1944 Roi-Namur section arrived Pearl Harbor and joined half battalion there.
20 Feb 1945 Battalion departed Pearl Harbor.
14 Mar 1945 Went ashore at Iwo Jima (arrived 13 Mar 1945).

Certified to be a correct travel itinerary.



Comdr. W. L. Johnson, CEC-USNA CINC 1945

NOTE:
100

95th
CONSTRUCTION
BATTALION







