

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

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*Historical  
Information*



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



111th C.B.

NCTC	- Peary	NCTC	- Davisville
ABD	- Davisville	ABD	- (Davisville)
Ready Date	- 25 Jan'44	Ready Date	- 1 Feb'45
Left ABD	- 29 Jan'44	Left ABD	- 16 Jan'45 (left Boston
Location	United Kingdom - <del>Plymouth</del>	Location	- Leyte 16 Jan'45).

LOG

- 7-27-43 - Budocks requests transfer from Peary to Endicott on 1 Aug'43. (Budocks ltr to CNO dtd 27 Jul'43)
- 9- 5-43 - CNO orders 111th CB transferred to ABD Davisville on 10 Sep'43. (Donf. Disp. 042041 NCR 9423 from VCNO to Endicott dtd 5 Sep'43)
- 2- 4-44 - 111th CB left ABD 29 Jan'44. (WRK)
- 4- 8-44 - 1 Mar'44 report of 111th CB - located in United Kingdom area.
- 4-27-44 - 5 off. and 268 men of Det. 1048 attached to the 111th CB - disbanding the 1048. (Rest. Disp. from Comlan crab 11th Phib 232224 NCR 31653 24 Apr'44 to CinC CEBD 1048) From this dispatch the 111th CB is at Plymouth.
- 6- 8-44 - The 111th CB is distributed as follows: Plymouth (hdqtrs), Falmouth, Dartmouth, and Swansea. (25th Reg. Daily Report dtd 31 Apr'44)
- 7- 4-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of 111th CB - no info as to location.
- 8-15-44 - 111th CB operated Rhino Ferries and pontoon tugs at OMAHA beginning on D-day. Will continue on this assignment plus taking over the duties of 81st CB at UTAH upon their arrival from that location. This assignment also includes the maintenance and operation of pontoon causeways. (ComNavBu Sec. Memo to Adm. H. A. Stark dtd 25 Jul'44)

111th C.B.

- 8-30-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 111th CB - operating and maintaining Rhino Ferries, also construction Camp and Operational Hdqtrs for NOIC Omaha Beach.
- 9-25-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 25th Reg. - During August, the 111th CB operated Rhino Ferries, Causeway and Beach Camp at Omaha Beach which has been redesignated U.S. Naval Advanced Base No. 11.
- 10- 3-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 111th CB - This batt continues to operated and maintain Rhino Ferries, Causeways and tugs at OMAHA Beach. All construction requirements ashore, as well as maintenance duties in connection with Navy and SeaBee camps are serviced by this Batt.
- 10-18-44 -- The 111th CB with 35 off and 1000 men are scheduled to return to the U.S. about 30 Oct'44. (Comnavbu Sec. disp. 071413 NCR 7672 to CNO Dtd 7 Oct'44).
- 10-20-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 25th Reg. - The 111th CB operated Rhino Ferries, Causeways and the beach camp at USNAB Eleven.
- 10-27-44 - The 111th CB, with 14 officers and 551 men, departed on MT. VERNON for Davisville. (Comnavbu Conf. Disp. to PD N.Y. 181646 NCR 7522 dtd 18 Oct'44)
- 10-28-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 111th CB - operated Rhino Ferries, Causeways, and Tugs at Omaha Beach during Sep'44. Report endorsed by 25th Regiment.
- 10-30-44 - Cdr. Jardine detached from the 2nd Ech of the 111th CB and assigned as CinC of the 3rd Echelon of the 111th CB with a Strength of approx 500 men for a special inland waterway project on the continent. Will retain the designation of the 111th CB. (Comnavbu Sec. disp to Comphibukay 241449 NCR 1656 dtd 24 Oct'44).
- 11-3-44 -- 2nd Ech. of the 111th CB with 6 officers and 177 men embarked on USS General Squires for Davisville (Comnavbu conf. disp to PD N.Y. 311812 NCR 8541 dtd 1 Nov'44)
- 12-6-44 -- 111th CB 1st Sec. (14 off. & 550 men report Davisv. from overseas 28 Oct'44. 111th CB 2nd Sec. (8 off. 176 men reported Davisv. from overseas 10 Nov'44. (EWL's from Davisville to Bupers 271422 Oct'44 & 112125 Nov'44, respectively.)

111th C.B.

- 11-8-44 - The 3rd Echelon of the 111th CB is to be returned to the U.S. (Comnaven Sec. Disp. to Comphibukay 031554 NCR 784 dtd 3 Nov'44)
  - 11-15-44 - The 3rd Ech. of the 111th CB consisting of approx. 514 men ordered to proceed to the U.S. when directed. (Comphibuk conf. disp airrail-ran 041611A NCF 15130 to the 13th Reg. and the 111th CB).
  - 11-21-44 -- The 111th CB left for U.S. 13 Nov'44. (Comnaven conf. disp to CNO 161346 NCR 4120 # dtd 16 Nov'44).
  - 11-25-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 69th CB - The 69th relieved the 111th of operation of Rhino Ferries at Omaha Beach on 17 Oct'44.
  - 11-27-44 - 18 officers and 517 men of the 3rd Ech. of the 111th CB departed U.K. for U.S. 14 Nov'44. (Comnaven conf. disp to CNO 211722 NCR 9769 dtd 22 Nov'44).
  - 12-1-44 - 3rd Echelon of 111th CB reported NCTC Davisville on 26 Nov'44 from overseas with 17 officers and 514 men. (TWX 281757 from Davisville to Bupers dtd 28 Nov'44)
  - 12-6-44 -- The 111th CB arrived U.K. from France 10 and 17 Oct'44. First two echelons departed UK the 16th and 27th Oct'44. (13th Reg. monthly report for Oct'44).
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- 1-12-45 -- CNO proposes to assign the 111th CB to Com7flt which is supposed to arrive at Leyte 15 Feb'45. (CNO Sec. disp to Cincpoa 051736 dtd 6 Jan'45).
  - 1-13-45 -- CNO Sec. disp to Cinclant, Com 1 and NCTC Davisville 091800 dtd 10 Jan'45 - Transfer the 111th CB to Boston with orders to report to the Is. Com OSSO. Ship should be ready to sail 16 Jan'45. Cincpac requires 111th CB at OSSO by 20 Feb'45.
  - 1-17-45 -- 111th CB departed Davisville 15 Jan'45 in two sections. 1st Sec. 25 off. 611 men, 2nd Sec. 24 offs and 553 men. (NCTC Davisville TWX 152058 Jan'44 to Bupers).

111thCB

- 1-17-45 - The 111th CB reassigned to Com7flt instead of Cincpoa. 28th CB will replace the 111th CB assignment to Cincpoa. (CNO Sec. ltr Op30-2CK12-UOT over (SC)P16-5 over Ser. 0016830 to Bupers & other dtd 12 Jan'45).
- 1-17-45 - The 111th CB must be ready to sail 16 Jan'45 and earlier if possible. (Comservlant Sec. disp to NCTC Davisville and Com 1 102049 dtd 21 Jan'45).
- 1-24-45 - The 111th CB with 49 officers and 1146 men boarded USS Samuel Chase (16 Jan'45). (Port Director Boston conf. disp to Comsopac 161824Z dtd 17 Jan'45).
- 2-17-45 - The 111th CB left Davisville 15 Jan'45. Embarked from Boston 16 Jan'45. (1 Feb'45 monthly report of the 111th CB).
- 3-23-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 111th CB - Left NCTC Davisville on 15 Jan'45 and embarked from Boston 16 Jan'45. No info on present location.
- 4-10-45 - The 111th CB is located at Samar. (Com7flt Sec. disp to Cominch 250756 Mar'45).
- 4-13-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of 111th CB - No location given. Disembarked from U.S.S. Samuel Chase on 7 Mar'45. 4 officers & 80 men departed this station on 29 Mar'45 & 2 officers & 30 men departed on 23 Mar'45.
- 4-21-45 - The 111th CB setting up camp facilities at Calicoan. (Comserfor7flt Sec Report for Feb'45)
- 4-30-45 - Comserfor7flt Sec Rep of 1 Apr'45 shows the 111th CB Amph Detach at Calicoan, Samar. Det of 2 off and 30 men at V-5; 4 off and 80 men at O-1.
- 5-8-45 - The 111th CB is located at Samar. (Dirpaddock's S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr'45)
- 5-14-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 111th CB - located at Leyte-Samar. 16 off. and 310 men on forw operations. The adm and operational control of the 111th CB was assigned to Cinc Constr Bn Service Units to which command over 400 men are assigned on work details on yard operations of the Constr Materials Depot, Navy Base Samar. The bal of approx 300 men are used for batt adm., camp const, and maint.

Location - Samar

111th C.B.

- 5-22-45 - CD 2633 departed for the 111th CB on 17 May'45 with 10 Men. (Hueneme conf disp 182241 May'45 to Bupers)
- 5-28-45 - The 111th CB arrived Calicoan, Samar on 8 Mar'45 according to Comserv7thflt Sec Rep for Mar'45)
- 6-13-45 - Dirpacdocks SF sec rep of 15 May shows the 111th CB at Samar with 3 detachments on forwd operations.
- 6-14-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 111th CB - located at Leyte-Samar with 25 off. and 451 men on combat operations. Batt has assigned to the CinC CB Service Units 200 enl men for work details on Yard Operations of the Constr Mater Dept, Navy Base Guiuan. One detachment was assigned to Mindanao operation--the convoy departed Morotai on 19 April and reached Mindanao on 22 April. One detachment on OCEC 1 operation (Tarakan).
- 7-10-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 111th CB - located at Leyte-Samar. 200 men assigned to CinC CB Service Units for work details on yard operations of the Const Mater Depot, Navy Base Guiuan. Batt has assigned personnel to 4 amph operations as follows:
- Operation #1 - 2 off. 30 men
  - Operation #2 - 7 off. 140 men
  - Operation #3 - 7 off. 140 men
  - Operation #4 - 14 off. 280 men
- Personnel assigned to Operations #3 and #4 have not retd to this base as yet.
- 7-27-45 - The 111th CB is located at Samar. (COT 7th Flt Sec Rep for June)
- 7-30-45 - Operational control 111th CB transferred 25 Jul'45 to Comphibspac. Administrative control remains with Comserv7thflt. (Comserv7thflt conf dispatch 270041 Jul'45 to CNOB Leyte.)

Location - Leyte-Samar

111th C.B.

- 8-6-45 - The 111th CB reported to Comphibspac for operation temp duty. (111th CB conf disp 310538 July to Comphibspac)
- 8-11-45 - Request you direct CinC 111th CB to report for adm control by disp to CinC 36th Reg. (Comservpac sec disp 310211 July to Com7flth)
- 8-13-45 - The 111th CB was transfd to the control of Comphibspac on 25 Jul'45. (Com7flth conf report on CB organization in Leyte-Samar area ser 04296 dtd 26 July to CNO)
- 8-13-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 111th CB - located at Leyte-Samar. 14 off. and 281 men on forwd operations with Task Force #5. The 111th CB has had assigned to the CinC CB Service Units 200 men as work details on yard operations of the Const Materials Depot, Navy Base Guiuan. This work assignment was completed 30 July and the men have been placed on pontoon training. It is expected that personnel who participated in Operation #4 will be retd to the batt by 7 Aug.
- 9-11-45 - 1 Sep'45 report of the 111th CB - location not given. 2 off. and 66 men on forward operations with Task Force #6. Report via the 36th Reg and 5th Brg.
- 9-14-45 - Adcomphibspac is authorized to release the 111th - 1 Oct'45. (Comphibspac conf disp 110400 Sept'45 to Adcomphibspac).
- 9-18-45 - 111th located at Samar. (1 Sept'45 report of 36th Reg).
- 9-29-45 - Ens. Giardina & 22 men are directed to proceed & board USS LST 913 for TAD in connection with causeway operations & such other TAD as may be assigned. Upon completion will report back to CinC, 111th CB. (CinC, 36th Reg conf orders for TAD dtd 4 Sept'45 to Ens. Giardina via 111th CB).
- 10-2-45 - 9 officers of 111th CB are directed to proceed immediately & board USS LST 970 for TAD in connection with causeway operations. (CinC, 36th Reg. conf TAD orders dtd 7 Sept'45 to 9 officers of 111th CB).

Location - Leyte-Samar

111th CB

- 10-9-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of 111th CB. Location not stated. Report via 36th Reg. & 5th Brg. 34 men were transferred for discharge under the point system.
- 10-10-45 - 111th CB to be inactivated. Advise Comservpac when inactivation is completed. (Comservpac conf spltr ser 05511 dtd 5 Oct'45 to Philseafron).
- 3-1-46 - 111th CB inactivated 12 Nov 45 at Samar. (OinCC Navy 3149 to 111CB ser 01687 of 12 November) - per Dirwestpacdocks conf. report of 10 February 1946.

INACTIVATED

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ON BOARD</u>		<u>AUTHORITY</u>
	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>MEN</u>	
1 Jun'44	66	1271	MoR
1 Jul'44	48	1257	BNP625 & MoR
1 Sep'44	39	1253	MoR
1 Oct'44	39	1251	MoR
1 Feb'45	49	1143	BNP625 & R
1 Mar'45	50	1136	MoR
1 Apr'45	50	1026	MoR
1 May'45	50	1138	MoR
1 Jun'45		681	BNP625
1 Jul'45	25	750	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45		876	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45		1076	BNP625
1 Oct'45	35	634	BNP625 & R

111th Construction Battalion (Pontoon)

(INACTIVATED)

6/3/44 - United Kingdom - left L.S. 2/1/44

7/68 - Cherbourg C. O. report  
1 September.

10/9 - " (U.S.) ComNav Ew Sec Return U.S.  
disp. 071413 about 30 Oct.

10/17 - " (U.S.) act. 4091911 from Cno. Report Davin, 110.

Comphibaz Xray 1/2 (1st echelon proceed  
Cmf 111715A Oct U.S. when directed by  
proper authority.

ComNav Ew 811449 3rd ech will remain UK  
Oct (Sec) ad 11/20 C O.

Comphibaz Xray 2nd ech proceed U.S. when  
Cmf disp 831703A directed by proper  
Oct. authority.

U.S. ComNav Ew Sec 3rd echelon to be  
disp. 031554 Nov. ret'd 4 5

111 CB. page 2

1/7 - U.S. Beaflocks memo (1/2) returned US 10/26.  
11/4/44. Earmarked Cni p oa.

11/13 - U.S. Comphibaz Xray 3rd echelon return  
Cmf 041611A Nov. US - proceed Davinville.

11/23 - U.S. ComNav Ew Cmf disp. departed for US  
211722 Nov. (2nd echelon)

2/13 - Camp Endicott Beaflocks memo ready 7/1/45  
9 Dec. asid 2/1/45

1/2/45 - Cno sec disp. dec for Bial -  
011625. ready 18 Jan.

1/6 - Cno sec 051736 Jan. propose to assign  
C O 111 to 7 ch 724, with  
substitute 28 for lifting on  
April priority.

1/8 - Cni p oa sec. disp 080238 Jan. affirmative 051736.

1/12 - Davinville Cmf 082081 departed Boston 15 Jan for  
F.L.O. 0550.

Det. 1048 left AED Davisville 5 Apr'44. Was combined into the 111th CB at Plymouth latter part of Apr'44.

111th C.B. (pontoon) page 3

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
2/17	-	(OSSO)	Pac. Sub. Area Rec. disp. 080136	now at Fray destined OSSO.
3/29	-	* Leyte Gulf (Causeway oper.)	Comdes 0704 JET sec. 260558 Mar.	* present Location assigned.
5/22	-	OSSO-4200	Comdes 0704 JET sec act disp 100031 May.	added.
9/3	-		Comdes 0704 JET \$ 110150 Sep 10	

**T**HE story of the 111th began in July 1943 at Camp Peary near Williamsburg, Va. The Battalion was soon organized into Headquarters Company and four regular companies: A, B, C and D. Following the tentative assignment of officers and chiefs, preparations were begun for the first move—to Camp Endicott. Personnel were checked along with their I.D. cards, “dog tags,” gear, and the historical significance of their last “shots.” There was the general confusion always attendant to shoving off, regulations about personal appearance, stowing gear, and a multitude of other things. After a last minute check-up of everybody and everything, we stood train muster. As a matter of fact, we stood train muster no less than four times with a view to making matters foolproof; for every man had to be in his proper place when the time came to go aboard the troop trains. Just when things seemed squared away some CPO would stick his head into the barracks, shouting: “All hands fall in for train muster!” This procedure began on Saturday, July 31 and continued until Sunday when our “Three Aces” Battalion finally moved out of Peary to Camp Endicott, at Davisville, Rhode Island.

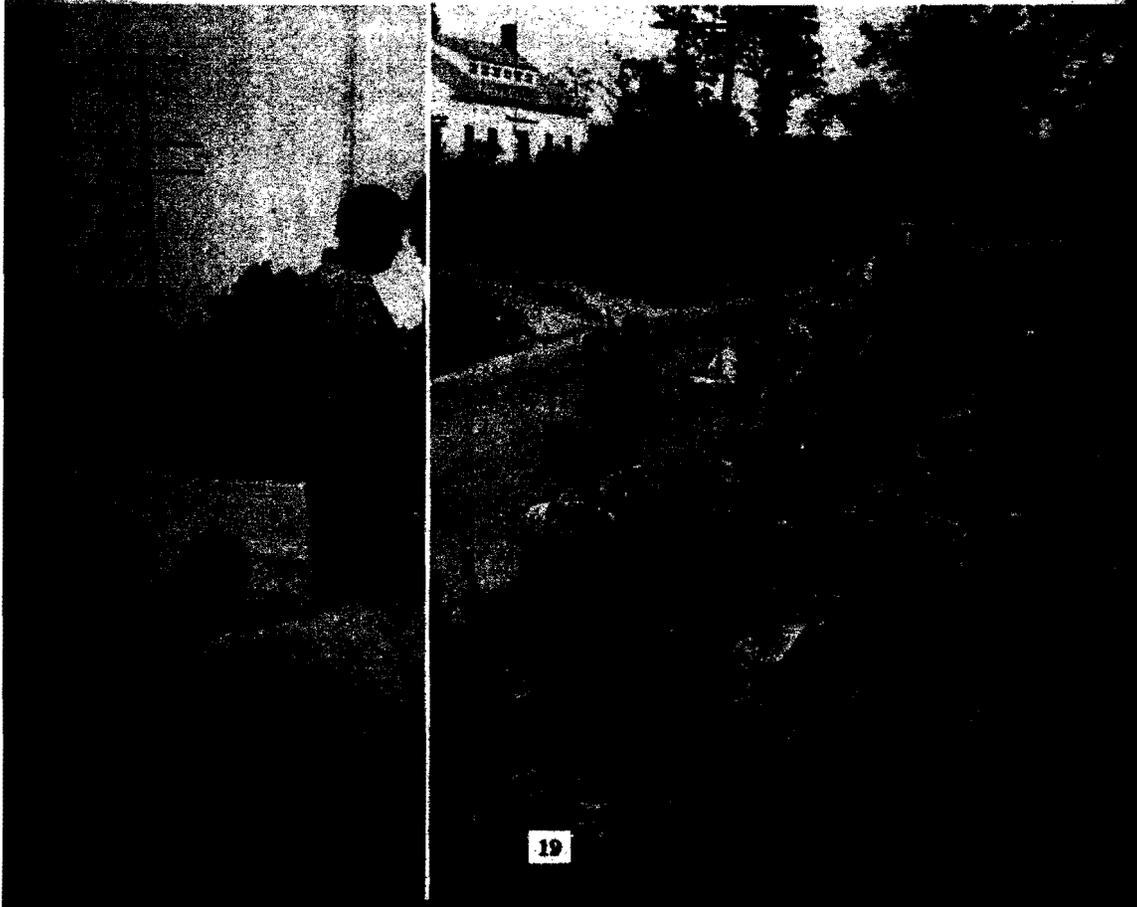
Here we were re-introduced to the art of close order drills. Rifle practice, commando tactics, classwork and long marches under full pack also became a part of daily routine. We learned to use 0-3's, became adept with bayonets, mortars and machine guns, and toughened up on rough-and-tumble fighting. During liberty it was a familiar sight to see closely-cropped heads (the “old man” was rabid on the idea!) bent over a barbecue pit. Workouts of our faststepping championship basketball team provided real entertainment. Boxing, for which we won three cups, and soft ball were also popular. Our boxers took bouts from the 129th Battalion, the 130th twice, and the Quonset Air Station team. Hedron 9 took their bout with us. From reveille to taps—we worked hard, played hard to toughen ourselves for the big push ahead.

One Friday night the loud speaker system warned that reveille would be at 4:30 a.m. and that everything was to be in readiness for our hike to Sun Valley. Saturday morning it rained—not just ordinary rain—but

solid sheets of water deluged the camp for hours. "Foul weather gear" of oilskin coats, pants and sou'westers had been recommended for Sun Valley, but the bright days at Endicott plus the misleading name of our destination, led many of us astray. Amid gentle cursing, the unfortunates frantically unpacked their duffelbags, diving for rain clothes which invariably were down at the bottom of the pack.

At the cost of aching bodies and sweat-drenched clothes, we wound our way through wooded areas, over stony trails and rutted roads of so-called quaint New England. Out in front was Lt. Comdr. Jardine, Officer-in-Charge of the 111th and Captain of the "Three Aces," leaping from crag to crag like an Alpine veteran, always signalling for more speed. We saw then what we were to witness later again and again. Whatever the danger, Jardine's men will never be ordered anywhere that he won't lead them. By this time we had become accustomed to his unexpected appearances about our area at ungodly hours; his mania

*Resting was the best part of the march*



for brightly-shined shoes and smooth shaves; his uncanny knack of knowing hundreds of men by name. We came to know him for the real leader that he is.

After a week-end of relative leisure at Sun Valley, a 5 o'clock reveille on Monday morning was followed by rigorous physical training exercises and slow fire practice. Despite the crowded schedule we found time somehow for sports. Basketball and soft ball games were scheduled between the units. Horseshoe enthusiasts and "grudge fights" held forth. Our band, which later gave us much pride as well as enjoyment, began to function. So ended our first conditioning excursion to Sun Valley.

Soon we were back at Endicott and routine training was resumed. While these activities proceeded, the Transportation office was completing arrangements for 930 men to take their 10-day embarkation leave.

*One of the several barbecues we enjoyed at Sun Valley*

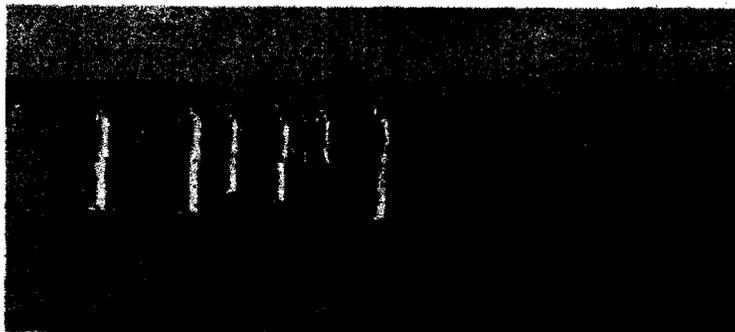


Everything worked out smoothly and on Sunday, August 29th, they left for New York by special "Liberty Train" and from that point scattered toward their homes in 30 different states. By Sept. 8 all had returned to the fold. The next day the 111th was commissioned and received its colors at a dress parade ceremony. It was a gala occasion. Even the NCTC band, somewhat "fed up" from playing for similar events, outdid itself when the men observed the professional marching of Jardine's "shoe shine" battalion.

Construction work was added to the program at the Advanced Base Depot along with field practice, lectures, movies and day and night tactical maneuvers. Quonset huts and permanent buildings were constructed. By the time the second trip to Sun Valley passed into the 111th's history, the Battalion newspaper "HERE NOW!" had been organized and many social activities were developed. However, additional training exercises were thrown in just to keep our minds on the job ahead.

At last we were given a chance to prove our worth. A run to "No-Man's-Land Island" off the coast of Maine was the objective. The Atlantic Naval Air Corps was in need of grounds and special targets for testing a new rocket weapon then in the high-secret stage. Complete facilities for use by aircraft units in the Fleet Air Detachment were needed. Since the Air Corps had no means for expeditiously making these installations, the 111th was assigned the job, and with it, the honor of being the first "Acorn" battalion of the Seabees—the first to be assigned as a unit to the Naval Air Corps. It consisted of building an air strip, targets for testing rocket firing by aircraft, and control towers for air operations. Preparations started immediately while supplies and heavy equipment, including bulldozers, trucks, tractors and graders were brought in. Company "D", augmented by specialists from our other companies, was chosen for the job. Two LCT's shuttled between the assigned sector, called Island "X," and Davisville. Loading and unloading was carried on as rapidly as weather permitted. We landed on a cold December day and the crew immediately established a temporary camp. Chow consisting of beef stew, bread, coffee and liberally seasoned with sand was served on the beach. In short order a permanent mess was set up and we gathered together what were to be our comforts of home inside quickly pitched pyramidal tents. Some men found what they termed "greater comfort" in the old sheep barns and chicken houses that adorned the site upon arrival. A few found much desired warmth in small caves dug into the ground. But soon our newly constructed Quonset huts provided more comfortable living quarters for everyone. Rain, snow and cold sharp winds made working conditions difficult. Often we were wet to the waist during an entire shift. Scuttlebutt had it that this tiny island was a haven for herds of deer, flocks of ducks and

*We received our colors at a formal dress parade review*



*111th Battalion at commissioning ceremonies  
8 September 1943*



*(Above left) Unloading LCT's at  
"No Man's Land Island"*

*Despite unfavorable conditions  
we feasted on turkey*

geese, and hundreds of rabbits. However, the followers of Isaac Walton were doomed to disappointment for it was soon discovered that this sports haven existed only in the mind of the Battalion jokester. The deer turned out to be three old sheep, the ducks were mud hens, and the rabbits—just large belgian hare that could be caught by hand after a short chase over the bush covered terrain.

Midnight of December 10 brought near disaster. A fifty mile per hour wind developed which carried away many tents in its fury. It also played havoc with the steel pontoon pier which, powered by the wind, cast off and floated away. The really sad result of this storm which touched the heart of everyone, was the death of "Scuttlebutt" the company mascot—a lovable little puppy. He died of pneumonia.

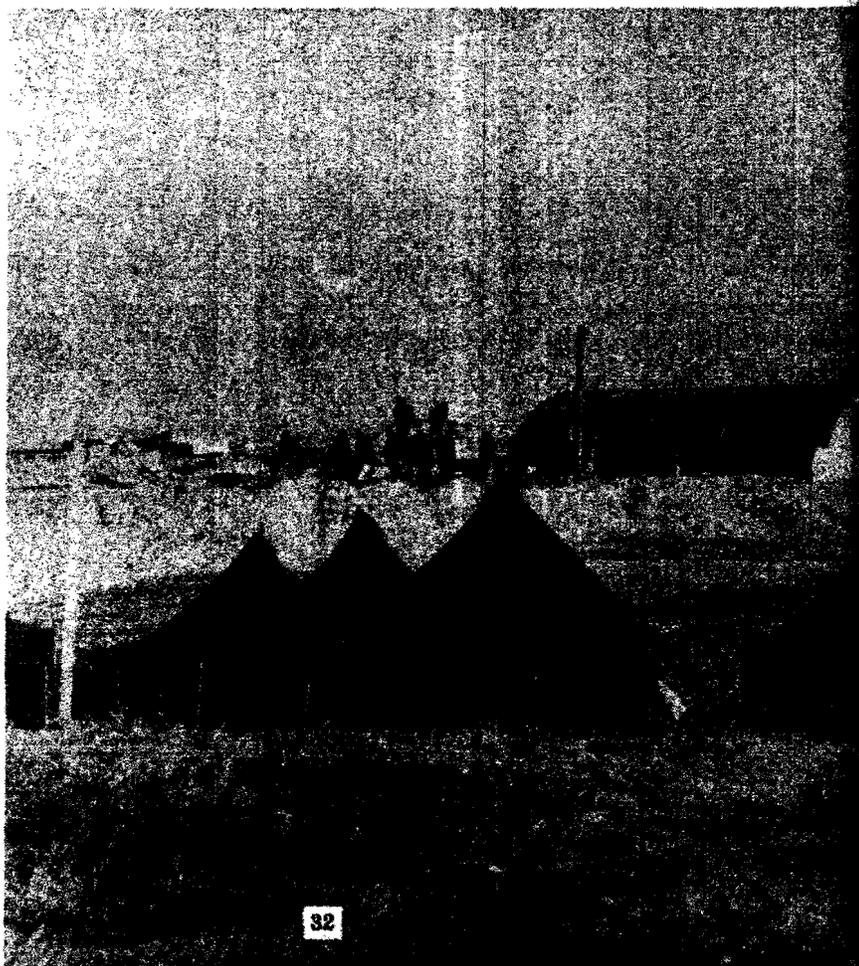
By the middle of January the camp—complete with air strip, roads, pier, and targets—was given its final inspection by the Naval Air Corps, pronounced satisfactory, and turned over to its permanent occupants.

*Heads bowed in prayer on Christmas Day 1943*

It was a job well done with the usual Seabee speed and finesse. An official commendation was ours!

Upon our return to Davisville it began to look as if we were to "hold" Rhode Island for the duration. With the long stay in A.B.D., morale threatened to nosedive. Then suddenly, everyone was restricted. This could mean but one thing—imminent duty on some foreign shore. The embarkation date was set, personal gear secured, and hasty letters (saying so little and yet so much) were mailed. Two train sections pulled out for New York City on 30 January 1944. Within a few hours we were going aboard the Cunard Line's converted luxury liner "Mauretania," now the large British Army transport which was to carry us across the Atlantic. Our ship was filled to capacity when she shoved off early the next morning. The Army had embarked first, thus the "luxury spaces" must have been claimed by the Doughboys. It soon

*Permanent camp in the background with the Seabee tents in front*





*Battalion assembled for reading of commendation*

became evident that we were not to experience the luxurious accommodations described so vividly by the Cunard Lines pre-war travel folders. Huddled together in deep holds, living revolved around two meals a day amid unavoidable congestion, emergency drills, nausea and finally the rough Irish Sea. If the trip was "highlighted" by anything, it was seasickness! With the end of this memorable cruise within sight the old adage "time and tide wait for no man" was witnessed in reverse, while we spent three restless days at anchor awaiting the calm weather and a high tide which finally allowed the ship to dock at Liverpool on 11 February. We were in England!



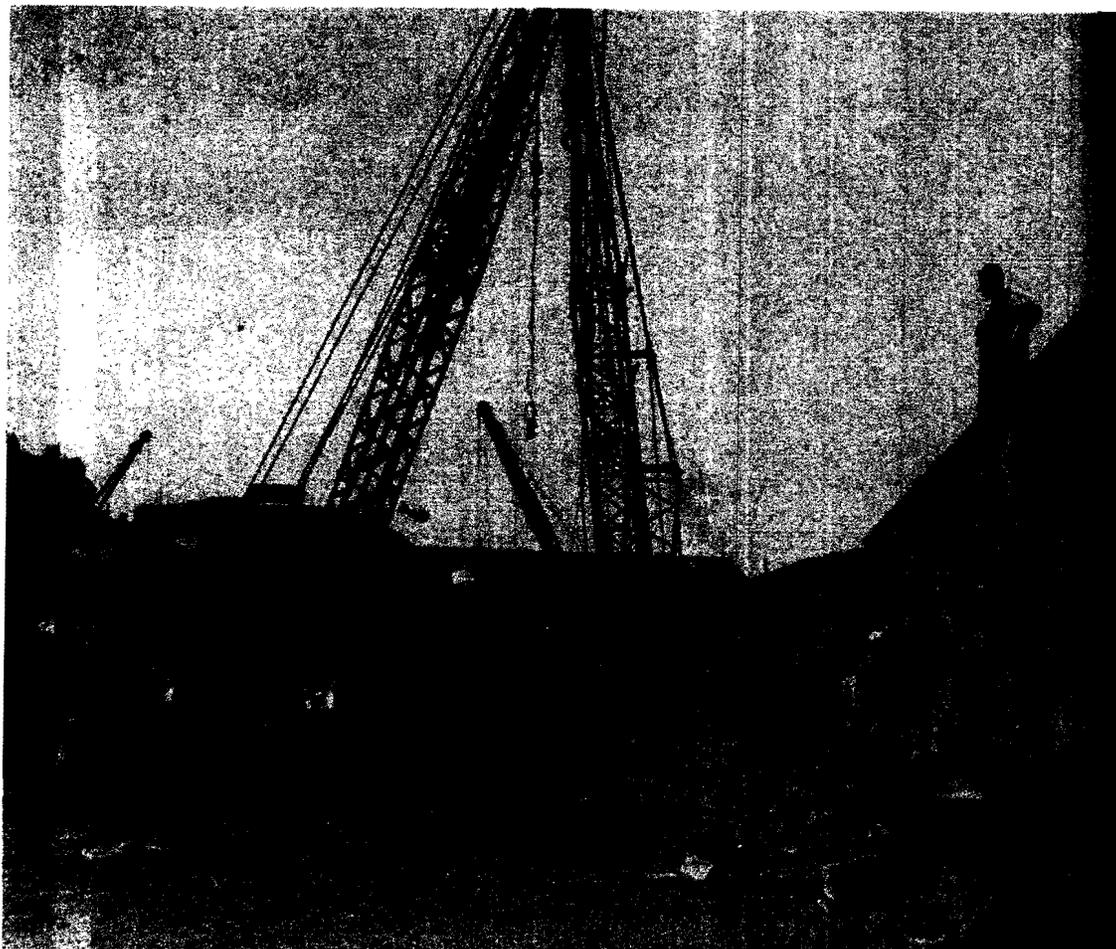
**U**PON arrival in England we found ourselves assigned to the Thirteenth Regiment. The 111th Battalion was literally torn apart. Groups of our men were dispatched all over Scotland and England. We were not assembled together again in one group until D-Day. Company A was attached to Headquarters, Company B sent to Falmouth, Company C to Dartmouth and Company D was ordered to Roseneath, Scotland until 28 February when it, too, joined Headquarters in Plymouth.

At first the various detachments were assigned preliminary construction work—nothing especially new, just jobs that had to be done. Then came the important news! The 111th was designated a Pontoon Battalion—to build its own craft, train its own crews, invade the continent. Had the impossible been asked? Could we build and outfit innumerable Rhino ferries and tugs, repair barges and warping tugs? Could we adequately train signalmen, coxswains, deck hands, first-aid men? Were we prepared to run the necessary experiments, master the difficult maneuvers involved, and meet the scheduled deadline? This job had to be done—it was done! From dawn to dark the 111th Seabees in Plymouth, Falmouth and Dartmouth really bore down. Night shifts were thrown in whenever security would permit. We built our own craft plus six for the British and 13 for the 81st Battalion. Even the lack of material and a shortage of equipment didn't slow us down.

We set up a training school at Falmouth with accelerated courses in seamanship, signals, and other technical subjects. Every man eligible for crew duty, including cooks, bakers, storekeepers and yeomen, was rotated through the school to gain practical experience in handling our invasion craft—Rhino ferries, and tugs, and the repair barges.

Real seamanship was necessary to operate these bulky barges. The Rhino ferry is a big, awkward barge assembled out of sheet-steel pontoons. It requires expert handling. Six pontoons wide and 30 long, and powered by two large outboard motors, it carries 500 tons at a speed of between two and three knots per hour under full power if ideal weather conditions prevail.

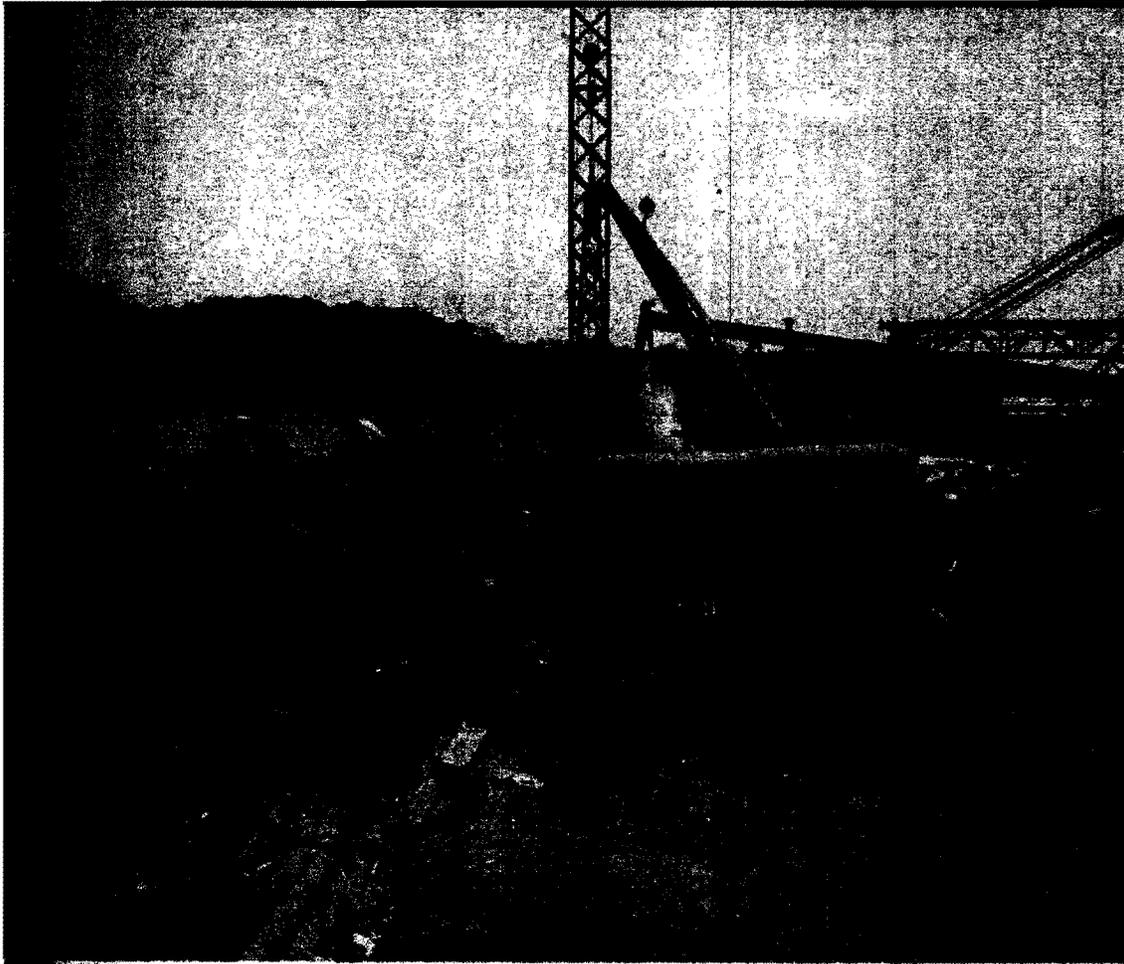
The tugs are smaller—three pontoons wide and six long. Powered by two inboard motors, they are easier to maneuver, having been designed to aid the flat-topped Rhino in "marrying," beaching and retracting from the shore.



*Dartmouth's pontoon assembly yard*

Entirely designed and built by the 111th Battalion, the repair barge was of immeasurable assistance to the Rhinos and other small craft in need of help. It was six pontoons wide and 30 long, and a Quonset hut was secured amidships. These repair barges paid immense dividends in the action that was to follow.

For all operations we were under the 25th Regiment. During our training and building program, we took part in three maneuvers: "Beaver" on 29 March, "Tiger" on 23 April and "Fabius" on 3 May. One of these practice sessions turned out to be a small sample of the real thing. A convoy, of which the 111th was a part, was attacked by German "E" boats off Dartmouth. Though the LST's at the head of the convoy bore the brunt of this attack, this experience left a clear impression of what was ahead. These tasks gave us practical experience in working with the craft—soon to shove off for the Normandy coastline.



*Falmouth yard*

We learned how the Rhino ferry, first towed by an LST to the transport area, is then cast off under its own power, and aided by a tug, "marries" the LST. This is accomplished by maneuvering the Rhino's stern around to the bow of the LST, remaining secure in this position until the LST has discharged her load of men and equipment (300 to 500 tons). The Rhino then heads for the beach, preferably at high tide, unloads, and then while still at high tide retracts from the beach to prevent grounding. Although "marrying" was thought to be best accomplished in water no rougher than a 4-foot sea, on D-Day when the chips were down, the Rhinos proved it could be done in six feet of surf!

The zero-hour was approaching, the men were ready, and the last pre-invasion week was quickly consumed in the final outfitting at our assembly point near Portland, England. The curtain was about to rise on our first scene of real action!



**O**UR motto—"Construimus Batuimus" (we build, we fight!) was much in evidence on D-Day. Even the cover sheet on the "top secret" orders symbolized our will to win. "OPERATION NEPTUNE" it was called, and although crudely drawn, key officers were impressed by an illustration of Father Neptune, trident in hand, rising from the waves, smiting down a sea wall with his left fist and brandishing his three-pronged weapon ashore. The Naval Amphibious Force was, in effect to do just that—rise above the waves, land its supply-laden craft, crash through the mighty Wermacht defenses, and establish a beachhead. It was our responsibility to put ashore the tanks, jeeps and guns to do this job.

The operation of the 111th called for departure from Portland on 5 June. The 20 Rhino ferries, Rhino Tugs, repair barges and warping tugs were manned, ready at the appointed time. Our CO, D. C. Jardine, by now promoted to Commander, was in command of all Seabees during the invasion—those on "Utah" beach as well as our own men at the now famous "Omaha" beach. Our fleet moved out in two convoys, the first leaving early in the morning, the second a few hours later. Preceded by minesweepers which marked a broad path with "Dan" buoys, 20 LST's each towing a Rhino barge and tug set out across the English Channel. The "Dan" buoys are luminous at night and with the assistance of a compass oriented with cross-channel traffic, probably saved one tug when it was cut loose about half-way across.

The high seas caused many tugs to break away from their Rhinos; cables and hawsers snapped time after time and many crewmen were injured by the tow lines. We were on the alert constantly during the

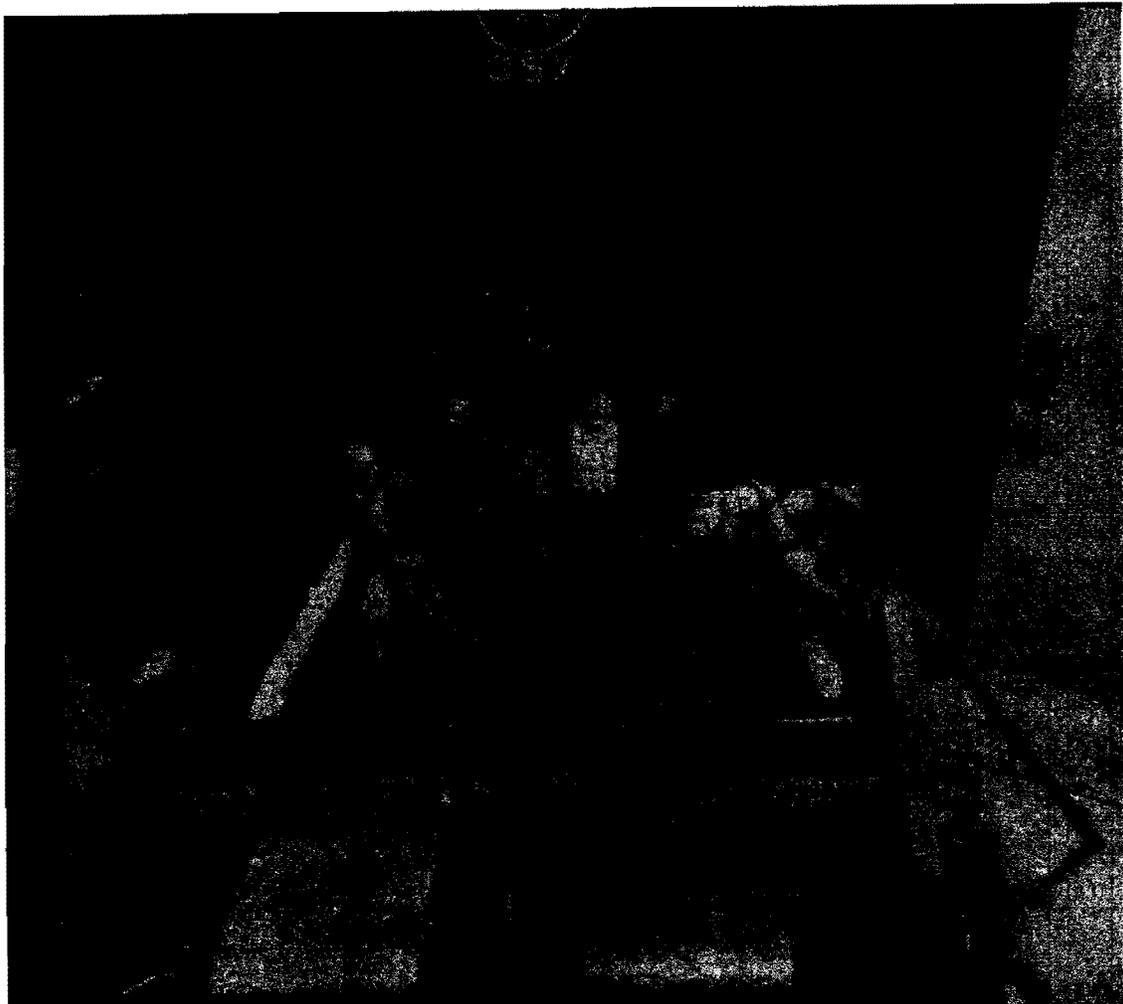
### *Pre-invasion dinner in Plymouth, England*

night and few found or took any opportunity to sleep. One tug broke loose five times, another became fouled in channel buoys. Still another tug that broke away early in the night miraculously navigated to France on its own, reporting for duty the next morning. Our 111th Battalion, as a vital unit of Task Force 122, reached the zenith of its history on D-Day and the tumultuous days that followed the initial landing on Beach "Omaha."

Our orders called for rendezvous in the transport area about 15 miles off the coast of Normandy. The first convoy arrived there at H minus 3 hours; the second finally took its place about H plus 8 hours, the delay owing to mechanical difficulties during the trip.

The entire Rhino fleet constituted an assault wave which was to unload the LST's as soon as the transport area was reached. At H-hour each was to proceed shoreward to the line of departure, roughly about 2000 to 3000 yards off the coast. There they would be met by control ships (mostly PT's) and directed to their respective beach sectors. It was assumed that the first wave of assault troops, after hitting the beach from small landing craft, would have penetrated sufficiently to clear the beach for our landing of equipment and supplies. Things just did not work out that way. The confusion resulting from the enemy's withering fire upon the first assault wave forced the Rhino's to play catch-as-catch-can with conditions as they found them. The usual response from a control officer when asked by a Rhino officer where to go was: "God Knows!" or "Use your own judgment!" When nearing the shore, Rhino crews often spotted an individual who might or might not have been the beachmaster. In any event, no matter who it was, they would hear him yell above the deafening blast: "Two damned hot! Get the hell out of here!"

Admittedly the toughest beachhead of the invasion, "Omaha" was about  $4\frac{1}{8}$  miles long. Viewed from the sea, its left flank was marked by the villages of Port-en-Bessin and St. Honorine des Pertes, and its right flank by Pointe de la Percee and Point du Hoc. Between these two sectors we could see valleys leading down from a plateau reaching the sea in a bold chalk cliff and topped by a rugged 200-foot bluff. Since the beach area was dominated by the bluff, there was no effective cover, except for a scattering of houses. This was the sort of terrain our landing craft approached in a heavy, choppy sea, near the high point

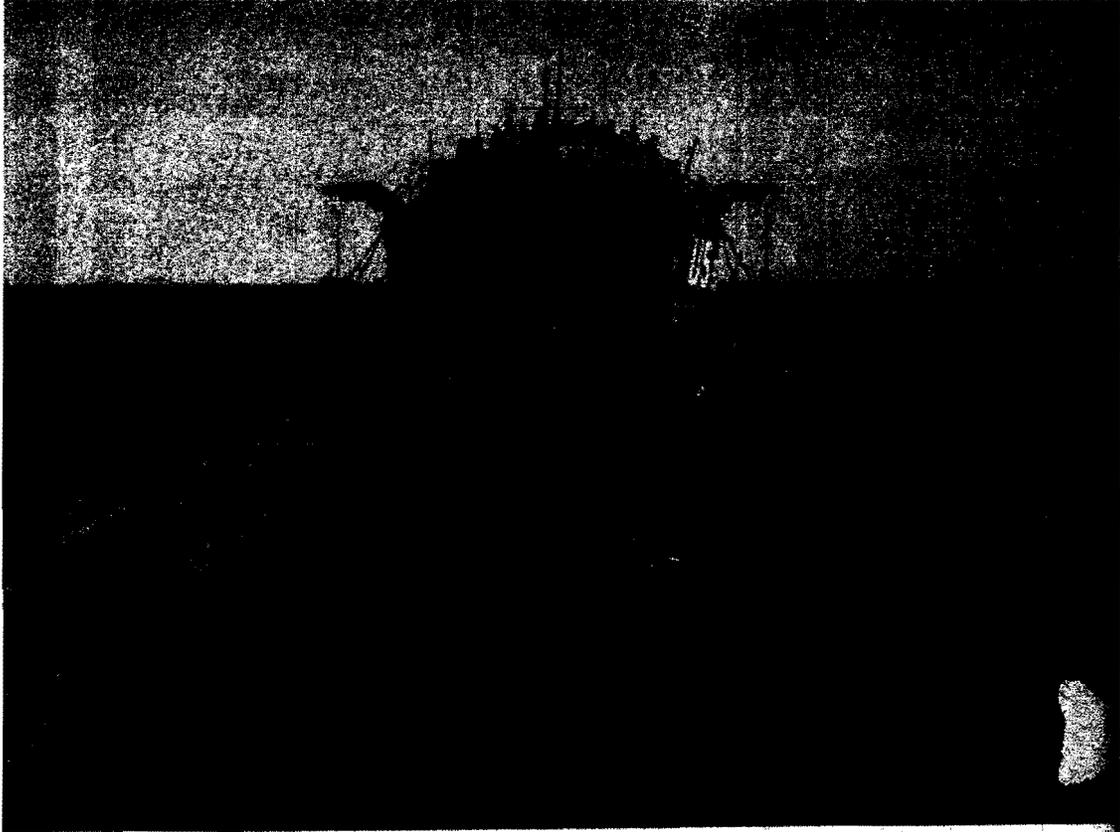


*Marriage was made with great difficulty: Notice the port knee torn off*

of a tide estimated at 19 to 23 feet. Our Rhino crews spent hours cruising up and down the beach in dangerous waters, constantly on the lookout for a spot where they could dump their loads. All "D"-day long only nine Rhinos and five tugs managed to get equipment ashore, some after dark. The others had to return to their LST's or pass the night elsewhere at sea. It was not until the morning of D-Day plus 1 that supplies commenced going ashore with any regularity, and even then the beach was a death-laden hell that made every maneuver hazardous.

In the meantime, Army Rangers, demolition units and beach battalions of both the Army and Navy, the infantry and shock troops hit the beach. The only protection they had from the shells that whizzed around them were the weapons they could carry, a low parapet of shale at the water's edge, and their own "guts" to see them through.

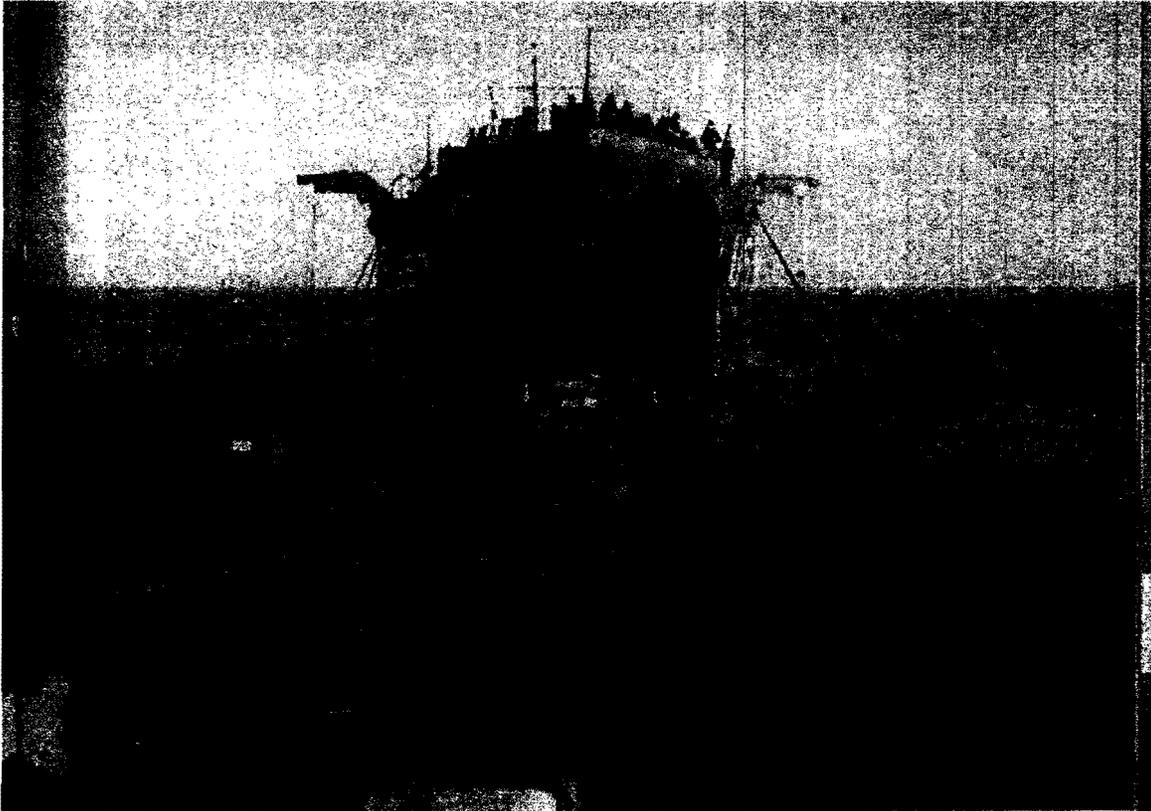
*no backing in for "Marriage" with LST*



*Loading begins*

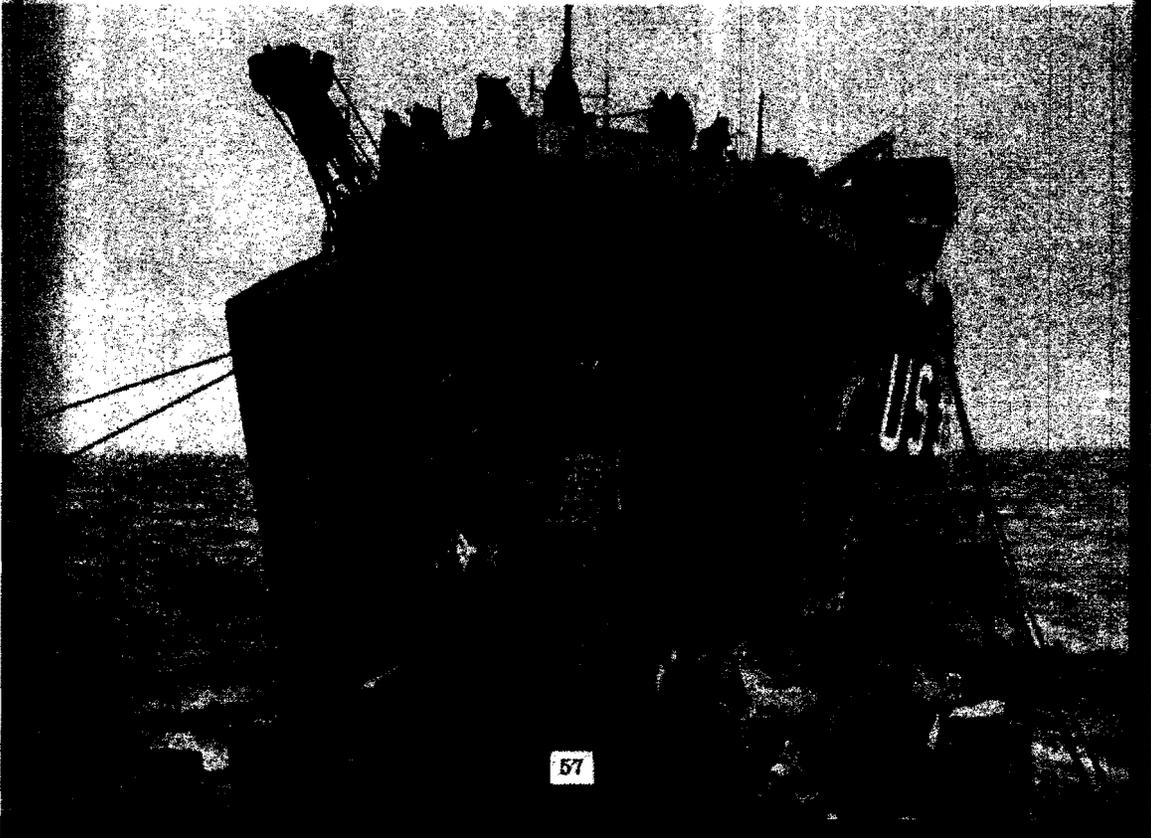
*Cargo rolls aboard the Rhino's back from the LST*

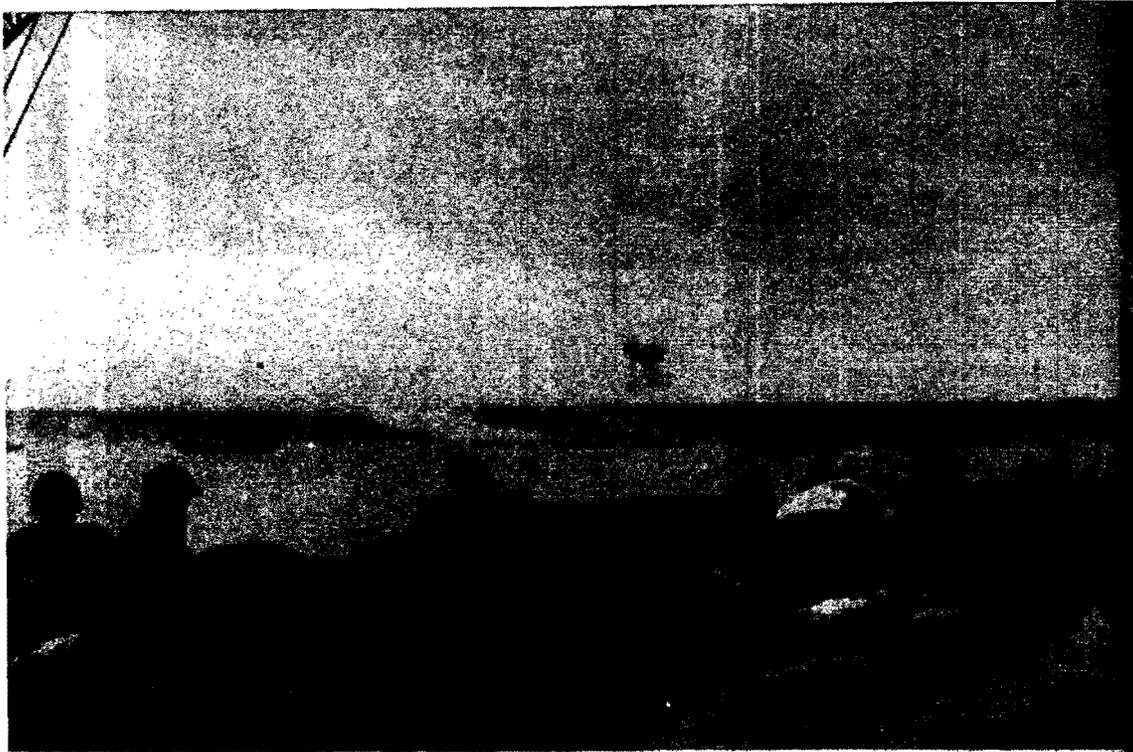




*Every available space on the Rhino was filled with supplies.*

*Loading nears completion and Rhino prepares to cast off.*





*Ferry on D-Morning*

Right on their heels—for they were pinned down behind their barrier of shale by withering fire—came our slow, clumsy Rhino barges with the light artillery and other equipment that would be needed by the Army vanguard. Time and again the Rhinos and their attendant tugs were waved away from the shore by frantic beachmasters. We could not unload until the battling doughboys made a little headway from the water's edge. Our big pontoon ferries tangled with "hedge-hogs" (underwater obstacles of steel rails), "ramps," logs, with mines attached, and other enemy contrivances so placed to make our landings difficult. All types of craft were being blown to bits, battered by German eighty-eights, by captured French seventy-fives, and by machine gun and rifle fire from the cliffs. But the Rhinos and tugs of the 111th kept coming on in, bearing the tanks and "cats" and light artillery so sorely needed during those first critical hours.

**F**ROM D-Day until the Army had driven several miles inland, our 111th Battalion made history.

In a stiff wind, over sand bars and runnels, despite mines and obstacles everywhere, we landed and unloaded our Rhinos. "Jerry" threw everything he had—and that was plenty! There were pill boxes and gun emplacements, and mortars coughed along the cliffs. Each ravine was commanded by enfilading guns in practically impregnable underground emplacements, and from further back the dreaded eighty-eights spewed their powerful loads of death our way. Machine guns clattered, snipers picked off choice targets in our midst, and rifle fire was constant from the deep trenches all along the seaward slopes of the bluff.

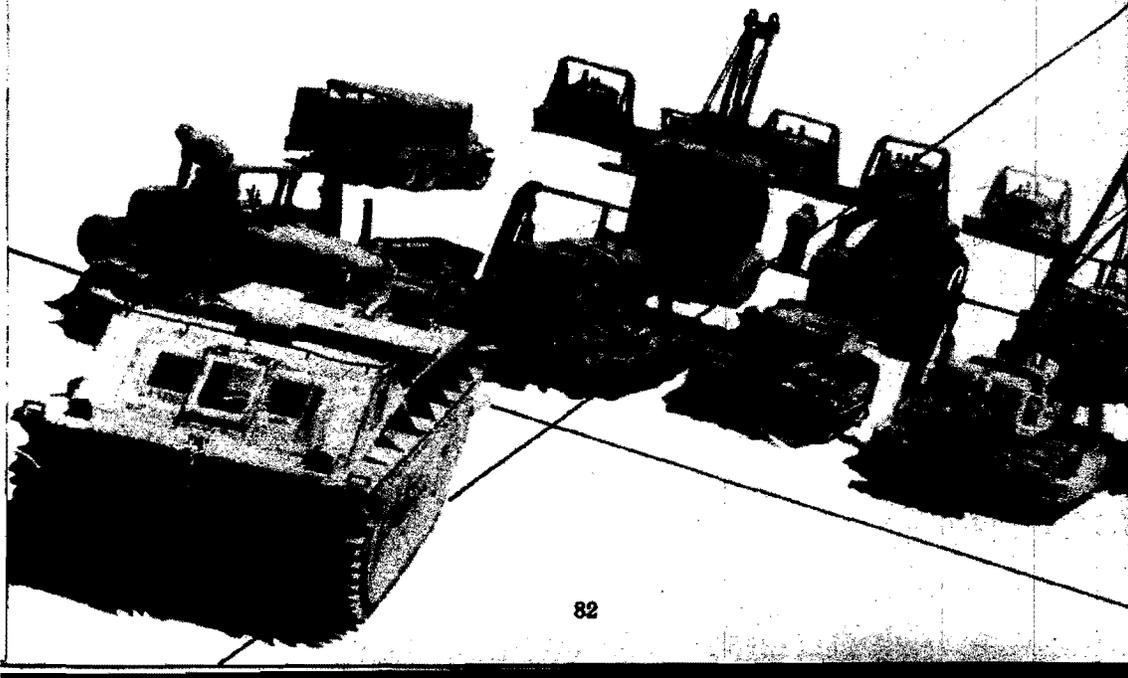
Our deeds less spectacular than our Army comrades, and suffering fewer casualties (due more to the grace of God than anything!) again, again, and again, we grimly forced our way to shore, beached, unloaded, retracted, and fought back to the supply ships through mine-infested waters, to return with other loads. To meet the acute need for supplies on the beach, the Rhinos worked incessantly, our crews remaining on duty for as long as 90 hours without relief! The single fact that every tank, gun, bulldozer, and other equipment that got ashore during the first days of the invasion rode in on the back of a Rhino bespeaks the importance of our role in Operation "NEPTUNE."

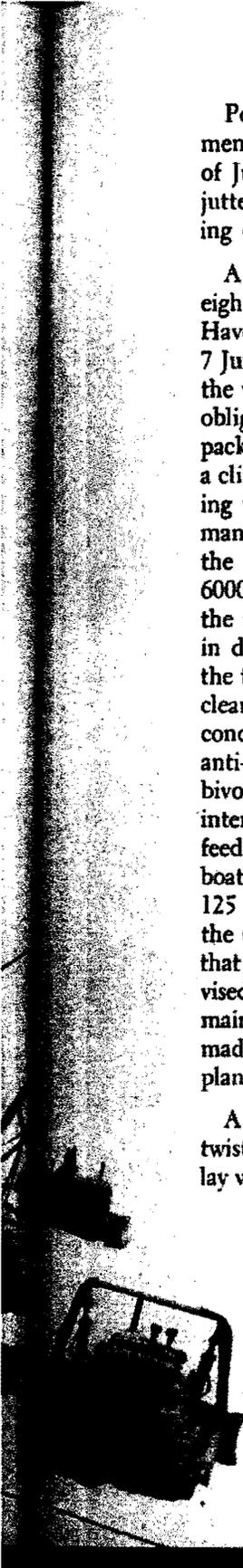
About the only peril we didn't encounter was the much-expected Luftwaffe. There was, to be sure, considerable strafing from Nazi planes for the first few days and nights, but "Jerry" never came over in formidable numbers. Since the fire from shore emplacements was so great, the occasional bombs, dropped mines, and machine gunning from the planes failed to make much impression upon our embattled sailors.

Against all this, we fought on. The few light tanks that got ashore with the first assault wave gallantly tried to storm the pillboxes, but were instead blasted to bits. Then the Navy battlewagons, cruisers, destroyers and gunboats threw caution to wind, and the Army was given its slim chance. Ignoring all factors of tide and sand bars and current, these sublimely reckless fighting ships moved far inshore to ranges reckoned at hundreds of yards and slugged it out point blank with cliff fortifications. All the while, the Army's pitably thinned ranks of soldiers were on their toes, charging up the valleys, scaling the very bluff and taking Nazi gun emplacements by hand-to-hand encounter. It was suicidal, it was magnificent, it was impossible—but it succeeded.

## we renovate

*N*OT many assault troops were left, but the survivors won the beach and grimly hung on until our Rhinos brought ordnance and reinforcements. With the initial landing of the Rhinos, bulldozers were put ashore for anchoring the boats and assisting in the retraction operation. In addition to this, we assisted the Army in clearing the beach of obstructions, building road outlets and pulling vehicles ashore. During the 10 days following D-Day, our Rhinos and tugs had brought 16,000 vehicles, 25,000 tons of ammunition and supplies, and 32,000 troops ashore. The task was endless, conditions under which we worked were hazardous.





Pontoon Causeways were built and operated by the 1006th Detachment, veterans of Sicily and Salerno, who were relieved the first part of July by our 111th Seabees. The Causeway, a sunken pontoon pier, jutted finger-like out into the artificial harbor, thus assisting in the landing of ever-increasing supplies.

A camp detail detachment of 82 men from the 28th battalion and eight men from our own Headquarters Company coming from Milford Haven, Wales on the Bernard Carter arrived off "Omaha" Beach on 7 June. Through some mix-up, the Headquarters contingent landed on the wrong beach. After a difficult wading trip from LCVP's, they were obliged to make a long march along a mine infested beach with heavy packs before they reached the site selected for their bivouac. Atop a cliff they found the Milford Haven detachment well dug in and pitching their "pup" tents. Though spending a restless first night in Normandy, during which they experienced a mild sample of German strafing, the next day (D-4) saw preliminary steps taken for establishing a 6000-man bivouac. Zig-zag slit trenches were dug as a protection against the nightly air raids, and all hands not busy at this work were engaged in digging individual holes, erecting orderly rows of "pup" tents near the trenches, or laboring with other details. Mine fields, too, had to be cleared. It soon became apparent that some misunderstanding existed concerning the extent to which the fields had been cleared, for numerous anti-personnel and a few anti-tank mines were encountered both in the bivouac area and at the camp site, which, to say the least, made life interesting! Shelters were built, and soon the camp was equipped to feed and clothe the men. Accommodations were furnished for 850 small boat crews, 650 British survivors, 120 men from the 1006th Detachment, 125 of the 146th Battalion and 400 miscellaneous survivors. Although the 6000-man capacity of the camp was never reached, even more than that number could have been handled by the flexible organization devised by those in charge. Battalion Headquarters and our officers were maintained in the B.O.Q. area adjacent to the main camp. Full use was made of elaborate underground installations that had been so carefully planned and developed by our German predecessors.

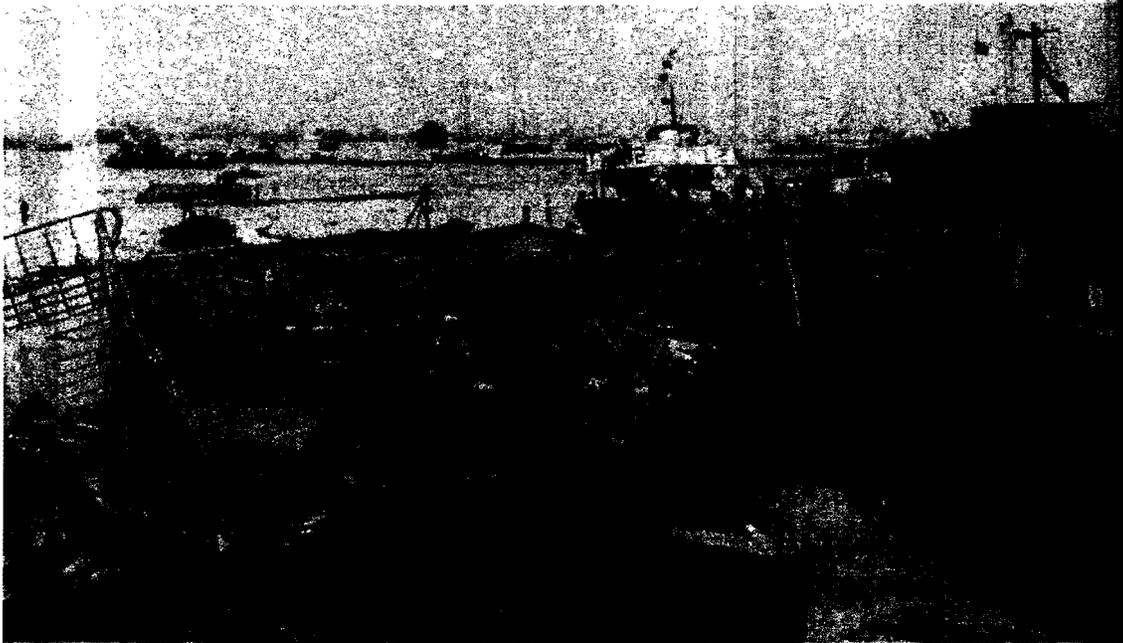
A severe storm interrupted our work on 20 June. It left the beach a twisted shamble of steel. More than 270 ships, landing craft and barges lay wrecked along the four-mile shore. Again, the 111th was called upon

to perform a task little short of a miracle. Again we met the challenge. Within a few days our repair barges and shore salvage crews had all of the Rhinos and many other craft in smooth running order carrying on their routine operations.

In August we moved into our new camp site, living in comparative luxury. The Germans had been blasted from our doorstep, artillery fire could no longer be heard, and night enemy activity had practically ceased. We were now far removed from the combat area, dealing solely in supplies. Our Rhinos had long since turned to unloading liberty ships because the LST's could now beach without difficulty.

Until 15 September 1944 we worked hard and long. On that day we were relieved by members of the 69th Construction Battalion and received orders to return to England. Our small part in the biggest of all war shows was at an end.

*The storm on June 20 played havoc with all types of boats and left the beach a nest of twisted shambles*



## a final word

**T**HUS the curtain fell on the first act. Since the Normandy invasion, these gun-totin' Rhino-ridin' Miracle Men of the 111th Battalion have again been called upon to display their ability to give and take in another theater of operation. Although they are a part of the youngest branch of the Navy's forces, they are in a service that requires more special skills than all others. A tough outfit noted for artistic cussing and tall-story telling, the Seabees cocky claim that they are the "first to land and the last to leave" can't be disputed even by the Marines. They're a rough-and-ready crew with a job to do—and they do it!

1943  
July 23—11th USNCB COMMISSION

January 31 — Bats  
June 6 — D-D  
France.  
October-November  
States in sections;  
December — Per  
Endicott, Davi

January 15  
cold,  
onto C  
USS S  
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Fr

January 17  
gini  
Jan

January 22 — Passed  
age between Cuba and  
ng much warmer . . . in fa  
January 24 — Docked at Cr  
0100 . . . First close up  
energy . . . Started throug  
trailing

calm and blue . . . rarely we sight a  
occasionally a spouting whale or a predatory  
possibly beautiful, flying fish abund  
observed traveling in  
for tetanus and  
stiff arms . . .  
session . . . pay  
we sail on  
water hours

rt beam this  
diamond Head.  
bor. Passed  
Docks at  
and other  
base.  
ca



# of the 111th U. S. Troop

February 20-22 — Liberty for all... Parry Island, officers... fishing, sports, beer and... stretch the legs.

February 23 — Ship anchor. En route... with large... and... escort.

February 24 — March 2 — Believed... random... target... on... started.

March 3 — sub contact... 150 miles from...

March 4 — Big... pass between... into...

March 5 — March 6 — dark... Deck, Calicoan Island...

March 7 — March 8 —... early...

March 9 — March 10 —... early...

March 11 — March 12 —... early...

March 13 — March 14 —... early...

March 15 — March 16 —... early...

March 17 — March 18 —... early...

March 19 — March 20 —... early...

March 21 — March 22 —... early...

March 23 — First... leave camp. Size of ABCD yard.

April 1 — Jap scare... scout... raid on Guiuan... carb... doubled.

April 7 — Brig complete... (in fact, the only one...)

April 12 — Laundry... April 17 — FDR... half-mast.

April 22 — The... the Pacific... Colloc... U.S.

April 23 — April 24 —... May... Desc...

covered... the 111th combat... with... 9th Division in... Labuan... entrance to Brunei Bay, Borneo.

Commander Jardine returns to the... after serving as O-in-C of the 111th since... 1943... Commander Brook takes over

First 10 men over 42 years leave for... Fourth Pacific assault... Balik Papan, another Borneo oil center. Aussie 7th Division put this one over (with 111th help).

July 4 — War Bond Drive over the top... \$30,825.

July 5 — We get paid in Filipino coins for first time... 1 dollar.

July 14 — "G... the Navy" — 111th variety show... at the Battalion theatre.

July 15 — New chapel dedicated; sermon by Captain F. L. Albert, 7th Fleet Chaplain.

July 25 — Lt. Commander Brook officially designated as permanent O-in-C.

August 4 — Co. B Invaders win Co... softball league.

August 6 — First atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

August 8 — Soviet Union joins... August 10 — Tokyo radio broadcast...

August 18 — President Truman... years, 250 days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Immediate operations ordered... Causeway... of Japan... C.B. Mea... ing pro...

August 28 — August 30 —

September 1 — September 2 —

September 3 — September 4 —

September 5 — September 6 —

September 7 — September 8 —

September 9 — September 10 —

September 11 — September 12 —

September 13 — September 14 —

September 15 — September 16 —

September 17 — September 18 —

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~  
**DECLASSIFIED**

ITINERARY OF THE 111TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

FIRST TOUR OF DUTY

- 10 Sep 1943 - Transferred from Camp Peary to ABD, Camp Endicott, Davisville, R. I.
- 29 Jan 1944 - Left ABD for United Kingdom area.
- 5 Apr 1944 - C.B. Detachment 1048 left ABD, Davisville, R. I., and joined the 111th C.B. on 27 April 1944. Det. 1048 was disbanded at this time and personnel transferred to 111th C.B.
- 31 Apr 1944 - The 111th C.B. distributed as follows:  
Plymouth (hdqtrs), Falmouth, Dartmouth and Swansea.
- 25 Jul 1944 - Operated Rhine Ferries and pontoon tugs at OMAHA beginning D-Day.
- 18 Oct 1944 - First Echelon departed for Davisville, R. I.
- 25 Oct 1944 - Arrived Davisville, R. I.
- 24 Oct 1944 - Cdr. Jardine detached from 2nd Echelon and assigned as Officer-in-Charge of the 3rd Echelon with a strength of approximately 500 men for a special inland waterway project on the Continent.
- 1 Nov 1944 - 2nd Echelon departed for Davisville, R. I.
- 10 Nov 1944 - Arrived Davisville, R. I.
- 14 Nov 1944 - 3rd Echelon departed for Davisville, R. I.
- 26 Nov 1944 - Arrived Davisville, R. I.

SECOND TOUR OF DUTY

- 15 Jan 1945 - 111th C.B. departed Davisville in two sections.
- 16 Jan 1945 - Embarked from Boston. Assigned Com7thFlt.
- 8 Mar 1945 - Arrived Calicoan, Samar.
- 1 May 1945 - Located Leyte-Samar. 15 officers and 310 men on forward operations.
- 1 Jun 1945 - Monthly Report of this date shows located at Leyte-Samar, with 25 officers and 451 men on combat operations. 200 men assigned to the Cinc C.B. Service Units for work details on Yard Operations of the Construction Material Dept., Navy Base, Guiuan. One detachment assigned to Mindanao operation. One detachment on Tarakan operation.

ITINERARY OF THE 111TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION (CON'T.)

1 Jul 1945 - Monthly Report shows 4 amphibious operations as follows:

- Opr. #1 - 2 officers and 30 men
- Opr. #2 - 7 officers and 140 men
- Opr. #3 - 7 officers and 140 men
- Opr. #4 - 14 officers and 280 men

1 Aug 1945 - Located Leyte-Samar. 14 officers and 281 men on forward operations with Task Force #5.

1 Sep 1945 - 2 officers and 66 men on forward operations with Task Force #6.

4 Sep 1945 - 1 officer and 22 men assigned USS LST 913 for TAD in connection with causeway operations.

7 Sep 1945 - 9 officers ordered aboard USS LST 970 for TAD in connection with causeway operations.

5 Oct 1945 - 111th CB ordered to be inactivated.

NOTE: This itinerary based on information available in C.B. Operations and Personnel Section of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

Date: 15 October 1945









