145th Naval Construction Battalion

Historical Information

"Construimus, Batuimus"
"We Build, We Fight"

NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

145th C.B.

NCTC - Peary - Davisville
ABD - Hueneme
Ready Date - 1 Mar and 15 Mar'44
Left ABD - 6 Apr'44
Location - ~~1st Ech. with Cub 12~~
~~2nd and 3rd Ech. with Cub 12~~
~~4th Echelon - Russells~~
Okinawa

LOG

11-12-44 - CNO orders transfer of the 145th CB about 20 Nov to NCTC Davisville. (Conf. Disp. 121315 NCR 1241 from CNO to Peary dtd 12 Nov'43)
1- 9-44 - CNO orders transfer of the 145th CB about 16 Jan to Camp Parks. (Conf. Disp. 081731 NCR 486 from CNO to Endicott dtd 9 Jan'44)
2-25-44 - 145th CB ordered transferred to Hueneme on 25 Feb'44. (Parks ltr NM24-CPks over NM24/145CB over P16-4/00/MM over Er:mm dtd 25 Feb to OinC 145th CB)
4-27-44 - 145th CB left ABD 6 Apr'44. (WEK)
5-19-44 - 145th CB located at Russells 27 Apr'44. (AES 5/12/44)
7-10-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of 145th CB - Arrived at Russell Is. 27 Apr'44)
8- 3-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 145th CB - operating at Russells.
8-21-44 - The 24th CB is to be detached 15 Oct'44 from duty at Russells and to be returned to U.S. when transportation is available. Operation of the ABCD Annex to be turned Over to the 145th CB. (Comseconsopac Sec. Disp. 180856 NCR 9324 to CNB Russells dtd 19 Aug'44)

Location - Okinawa

145th C.B.

8-25-44 - 145th CB located at Russells - Following info from Data of SoPac as of 7/1/44:
Arrived Russells Apr'44
Staging at Cub 12 1 Jul'44 as 4 CBMU's
9- 9-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 145th CB - located at Russells.
10- 7-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 20th CB - On 15 Sep'44, the 145th CB is to take over operation of ABCD Annex, Russells, relieving the 20th CB.
10-17-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 145th CB - operating at Russells.
11-18-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 145th CB - Batt was assigned to the ABCD Annex on Russells.
12-6-44 - 145th CB directed to report to ComGen 1st MarDiv for temp. addt'l duty. 145th to be detached from duty at ABCD Annex when relieved by CBMU 501 prior to 30 Dec'44 to stage for a forward movement. (Comsopac Sec. Disp. to CNB Russells 022232 dtd 3 Dec'44)
12-8-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 145th CB - Assumed operation of ABDD Annex, Russell Islands, on 15 Sep'44.
12-12-44 - The following CB's requested to receive instructions in the use of Bailey and Treadway Bridges: 27th, 58th, 71st, 130th, and 145th. (Cincpoa Sec. Disp. to CNO, Comsopac and Comservpac 072356 dtd 8 Dec'44)
1-3-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of 145th CB - operating ABCD Annex, Russells.
1-3-45 - Regiment "C" is comprised of the 58th, 71st, 130th and 145th CB's assigned temp duty with MarCorps.(Cincpoa Sec. disp to Comsopac 240131 dtd 24 Dec'44).
1-17-45 - CBMU 501 ordered to proceed and report to CNB Russells as relief for 145th CB. Assigned add. duty as OinC of the ABCD Annex, Russells.(CNB Russells Sec. ltr P16-4/00/MM over Sec. 00364 to OinC CBMU 501 dtd 30 Dec'44).
5-24-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 44th Reg. - As of 30 Apr'45 the 58th, 130th, and 145th CBs were on duty with the 44th Reg at Okinawa.

Location - Russells Okinawa 145th C.B.

1-31-45 - The 44th Reg. activated 6 ~~Dec~~ JAN'45 consisting of the 58th, 71st, 130th, and the 145th CB's. (CG 3rd Phib Corps to Cincpoa, CNO and 10th Army 090556Z dtd 18 Jan'45)

2-16-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 145th CB - operated ABCD Russells during Dec'44.

3- 5-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 145th CB - located at Russells.

4-7-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 145th CB - Preparing for forward movement during Feb'45.

4-16-45 - The 145th CB has been ordered to the Cenpac area. (Comseronsopac Sec Rep dtd 1 Apr)

5- 1-45 - Dirpacdocks P Sec Rep of 1 Apr'45 shows the 145th CB at Okinawa. Reserved for MarBrig Cub 12.

5- 8-45 - The 145th CB is shown on TAD with 1st MarDiv, assigned Okinawa, on the Dirpacdocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr'45.

5-21-45 - 1 May'45 report of 145th CB - located at Okinawa. Disembarked on 3 Apr'45 & participated in the invasion of Okinawa. 50 men were assigned to the 1st MarDiv with Malaria control group. Forward echelon: 874 men & 26 offcrs embarked from Russells for Okinawa during last two weeks in Feb & 1st week in Mar'45. (427 men & 22 offcrs embarked at Russells on 3 Mar'45 headed for Okinawa) Rear echelon: composed of 205 men & 3 offcrs was left on Russells FFT. 187 men & 2 offcrs embarked at Russells on 1 Apr'45 & arrvd Okinawa 2 May'45 leaving 16 men at Russells awaiting transportation. Report routed via 44th Reg & 10th Brig.

-24-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 44th Reg. - Temp duty with the III Amph Corps of the 58th, 145th CBs and the staff of the 44th Reg was terminated on 14 Apr'45 and these units reported to the Comdr Const Troops, APO 331 and were further assigned to the 10th Brg for duty.

6- 3-45 - 1 May'45 Sec Rep of Dirpacdocks P shows the 145th CB located at Okinawa. Reserved for Mar Brg Cub 12.

Location - Okinawa **145th CB**

6-8-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 145th CB - ~~located at Russells~~. 1st Echelon of the 145th CB comprising 28 offcrs & 874 men embarked on 3 Mar'45 from the Russell Islands headed for Okinawa. While in transit the 1st echelon was attached to the 1st MarDiv. 50 men from this Echelon were assigned to the 1st MarDiv Malaria Control Section, & embarked with the 1st MarDiv. Rear Echelon comprising 3 offcrs & 205 men were left at the Russells & will follow the 1st Echelon in Approx. one month.

6-19-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 145th CB - (Sec routing) 1 off. and 4 men arrived approx 5 May. 187 men and 2 off. arrived Okinawa 2 May. 17 men embarked from Russells 20 Apr'45 and arrived Okinawa 22 May. 30 men and 1019 men with the batt and 49 men with the 1st MarDiv.

7-10-45 - 145th CB detached this date (26 June) from the 44th Reg and 10th Brg. Ordered to proceed immediately and report to the OinC 8th Brg. (10th Brg sec orders ser 00115 dtd 26 June to OinC 145th CB)

7-11-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 145th CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 37th Reg & 8th Brg 31 men transfd to U.S. for discharge; 48 men on temp duty with 1st MarDiv.

7-23-45 - The 145th CB assigned to the 8th Brg and 37th Reg effective 10 July. (COT APO 331 sec report on assignment of CB units ser 897 dtd 10 July)

8- 2-45 - The 145th CB reported to the 37th Reg on 28 June for duty. (37th Reg sec end ser 002-A dtd 28 June to OinC 145th CB)

8-14-45 - **1 Aug'45 report of the 145th CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 37th Reg & 8th Brig.**

0-18-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of 145th CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 37th Reg. & 8th Brg. Comments re personnel are classified as Secret & forwarded under separate cover.

Location - Okinawa

145th CB

11- 1-45 - CNOB, Okinawa requests authority to inactivate 145th CB. (CNOB, Okinawa conf disp 261516 Oct'45 to Comservpac).

11-19-45 - Comservpac approves inactivation of 145th CB. Advise Comservpac when inactivation is completed. (Comservpac ltr ser 5722 dtd 5 Nov'45 to CNOB, Okinawa).

11-23-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 145th CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 37th Reg. & 8th Brg. 511 men transferred for discharge under the point system. 18 men rec'd from the 74th CB. 170 men assigned tempdu with 74th CB returned to 145th CB.

1-15-46 - Inactivation of the 145th CB was completed on 26 November 1945. (CinC 8th Brig. ltr ser 3015 dated 11-28-45)

INACTIVATED.

145th CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

20 Nov. 43	From Peary to NCTC, Davisville.
16 Jan. 44	To Camp Parks.
25 Feb. 44	To Hueneme.
6 Apr. 44	Left ABD, Hueneme.
27 Apr. 44	Russells.

1 May 45 Okinawa

DATE	ON BOARD OFFICERS	ON BOARD MEN	AUTHORITY
1 Jul'44	29	1041	MoR
1 Aug'44	29	1039	MoR
1 Sep'44	29	1032	MoR
1 Oct'44	29	1031	MoR
1 Nov'44	28	1029	MoR
1 Dec'44	29	1030	MoR
1 Jan'45	29	1023	MoR
1 Feb'45	32	1016	MoR
1 Mar'45		1078	MoR
1 Apr'45		1082	BNP625
1 May'45		1071	BNP625
1 Jun'45	30	1066	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	28	1019	Roster & BNP625
1 Aug'45	31	997	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45	29	973	BNP625 & R
1 Oct'45	26	1109	BNP625 & R
1 Nov'45	21	607	BNP625 & R

145th Construction Battalion (INACTIVATED)

145th C.B.

DECLASSIFIED

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
6/3/44	Cub 12	Russell Is.	—	Left U.S. April 1944
9/11/44	—	" DIRK	Russell Is sec act. disp. 012143 Sept.	
11/30	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	
12/9	—	Com Gen, 1st Mar Div.	Comlopac sec 022232 dec.	Detached duty ABCD Annex - report Com Gen, 1st Mar Div.
1/26	—	—	Comlopac sec 240131 dec.	with new combat regt "C", report Tender Mar Corps - Later report to Com Tank Unit 993.5
1/8	—	—	CG III Phib Corps Sec 090556 2 Jan.	assd HH/Ch regt. to 1st Mar Div.
2/2	(miss Shipping record - Rice)		Comlobac sec 012142 Feb.	Modify 022232 dec — Report orig 4th Regt.
2/23	- Cdr Beachhead - [illegible]			

145th C.B. Page 2

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
3/14 -	Aug reports show Rice			

A BATT IS BORN

As the sunrise dispersed the chill early morning mists from over Camp Peary, Virginia, on the morning of 15 November, 1943, a momentous event was in the making. Old Doc Stork circled thru B-10 area, hopped into Replacement, dipped thru Ship's Company area, and laboriously dumped his mountainous load with a resounding thud into Area A-7. The 145th Naval Construction Battalion was born.

Little did the infant suspect the experiences on the long rough road ahead of it . . . a journey that would occupy two years and would take it to Japan's front door and back.

And so it was with a naive and strictly GI "Here Sir" that we answered our first muster at Camp Peary. It was with the enthusiasm of the uninitiated that we marched to the trains in tempo with a band, and set out on November 20, 1943.

Camp Peary, Va., where was born the 145th Naval Construction Battalion in November 1943.

From Peary to Camp Endicott, R. I., where the 145th was whipped into a functioning unit and on the final day of 1943 was commissioned.

From Camp Endicott the 145th went to Camp Parks, Calif., for further training, thence to Port Hueneme, Calif., for the finishing touches, and then the waiting ships on April 6, 1944.

On the following morning, after sitting up in day coaches all night, we arrived at Camp Endicott, Rhode Island. As we marched thru the cold early dawn to a large drill hall, we had an experience that was to follow many times—that of coming into something new and unknown. There is an apprehension in such an experience that defies description. That same experience was with us in each move that we made throughout the battalion's career.

At Camp Endicott we studied in special schools, drilled, worked, had military training and on December 3, moved to unforgettable Sun Valley to practice on the firing range. The December cold numbed trigger

fingers, but even so, 48 men made "experts" by firing over 175. Executive Officer Lt. Cmdr. (then lieutenant) R. E. Harrison led the field of experts with a score of 185. Nestor P. Robinson was a close second with 184.

BATTALION IS COMMISSIONED

On December 17th the first issue of the battalion's official newspaper

Head Hunting in Solomons

was published. With our future definitely marked with an "Island X" destination, what was more appropriate for the paper's name than "THE ISLAND X-TRA"? Battered by the fortunes of war and circumstance, "THE ISLAND X-TRA" was to know a stormy and irregular career, but it served its purpose well.

After what seemed ages of Navy life, December 19 brought ten-day embarkation leaves for all personnel whose homes were east of the Mississippi—meaning about four-fifths of the battalion. Those lucky enough to be home for Christmas were back again before New Years, for on December 30, the 145th battalion was commissioned. In a colorful and

"Discouraging, isn't it? I always thought Seabees looked like they pictured them in the movies."

very military ceremony on Camp Endicott's parade field, Rear Admiral Gaylord Church presented the battalion's colors to Commander John H. Cain.

GO WEST, YOUNG MEN

On January 16, 1944, the battalion shipped out of Camp Endicott in three special trains, and five days later we unloaded at Camp Parks, California, near San Francisco. We were moved into a new and unimproved area, and as a "sideline" to drilling, working, and studies, workmen of the battalion put the area into strictly "Seabee" shape. The day

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

They slept in a tent together,
Big Tex and Tiny Tat.
To some, one seemed a runt
And the other big and fat.

But the one was a mighty atom,
A dynamic force of fire,
If he just weren't short on one end,
He'd been a darned sight higher.

The other, a good natured fellow
Was one who was firm and staunch.
A tower of powerful muscle and strength
Though slightly large in the paunch.

But do you think Tatulinski's kidded
About his size and all that?
No, his treatment was opposite,
He was always called "Big Tat".

And you'd think they called Pearce "Heavy"
To taunt and bother and vex,
But no, he was dubbed quite different,
His cognomen was "Tiny Tex".

after our arrival, men whose homes were west of the Mississippi, were given embarkation leaves. After a great deal of working and drilling, and a few San Francisco-Oakland liberties (discouraged by the lengthy hike from the gate to our area) we were ready to move again. This time it was to Camp Rousseau at Port Hueneme, California. And when we boarded trains (day coaches again) for southern California, we knew we were outward bound, for Port Hueneme was a noted "jumping off" place

"Mascot Hell! This is today's chow rations."

1

2

3

4

5

HABA! HABA!

7

8

for the Seabees. We made the move on Februray 25, arriving at Hueneme the following day. Upon arrival, we straddled our seabags and paddled thru streams of liquid California "sunshine" to our area—another quonset village in need of much improvement.

THE FINAL PHASE

At Camp Rousseau we fired, drilled, worked, Hollywooded, and prepared for shipping out. Shipping the battalion overseas was no small item for it required three ships. The first two, supply ships, left in March. With the first ship on March 13, went a vanguard of the battalion headed by Chief Carp. W. C. Maynard. With him were Chief R. E. Bossell, N. A. LaDow, A. D. Farren, J. P. Zyczkowski, G. M. Contois, J. P. Meyers, J. M. May, W. D. Mullenaux, J. E. DeMar, and E. H. Godfrey. On March 21, the second supply ship followed with Chief Carp. J. A. Roberts and Lt. (jg) O. P. Pope and a group of nine men aboard. The men were W. E. Haskin, A. S. Huser, H. G. Mercer, E. M. Harrington, C. I. Chester, B. D.

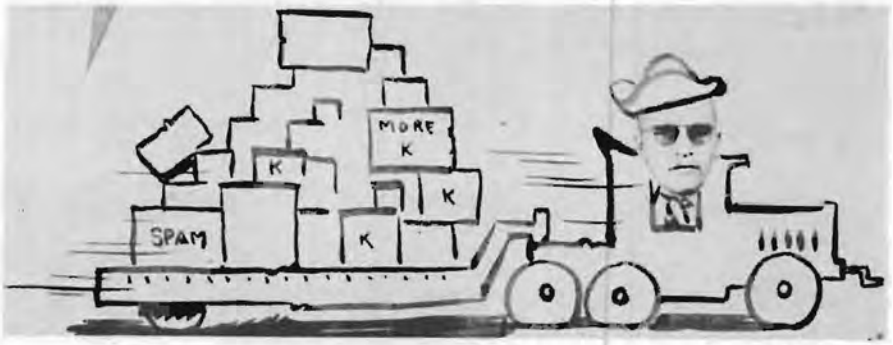
Jolly, D. G. Phillips, R. L. Vaughn, and M. G. Engstrom. It was April 6, when the remainder of the battalion said "goodbye" to the California coast and headed west into the Pacific on the troop transport Howell Lykes.

TO "ISLAND X"

The three weeks spent aboard the Howell Lykes was a never-to-be-forgotten experience, and quite painful in more ways than one. First, that old feeling of dropping off into the unknown again, second the knowledge that as land slipped out of sight we were saying "goodbye" to home and the U. S. for many long months, perhaps years; and then the physical discomforts of being crowded many men deep into a dark stuffy hold, of following a long slow chowline along the side of the pitching ship, of eating food so unappetizing and unpalatable, and then leaning

out over the rail to heave it up again, and finally the undignified initiation into the Royal Order of the Deep. We crossed the equator on April 14, and continuing in a southwesterly direction crossed the international dateline on April 19—a day that lasted but two hours in our lives. On April 22, we anchored at Espiritu Santo for refueling. Four days later we arrived at Guadalcanal and on the 27th of April reached Banika in the Russell Islands.

Banika is a picturesque little dot of palm-thatched coral looking just like a thousand other of the Solomon Islands. We were transported in trucks to an area that was to become our camp. We had been glad to get off the ship, but on arrival at our camp site, most of us would gladly have clambered back onto the ship. We came in on the end of the rainy season and arrived at our camp site about dusk. The area was a muddy mess of abandoned huts and foxholes. Fresh water was rationed out by the canteenful, and each man was handed a box of K rations.



Most of us bedded down on the ground that night, but not many slept, for the jungle, which crept into the cocoanut plantation on two sides, held unknown terrors for us, though we knew there were no Japs on the island. In fact we later learned that falling cocoanuts were far more dangerous on Banika than Japs.

LIFE ON "ISLAND X"

For the first ten days on Banika our chow consisted of K rations and coffee, or anything else the cooks were able to prepare with their meagre supplies and utter lack of facilities. Out of the muck and mire there soon began to rise the outline of a camp, but it was many long, weary weeks before we rose from the ooze of tropical undergrowth and mud to the comparative luxury of mosquito netted tents with doors, and beds made from two-by-fours and strips of rubber inner-tubes.

But working on our own camp was secondary to the regular jobs assigned us on the island. One of our first projects was the construction of three giant quonset warehouses with concrete loading docks for the Naval Advance Base on the island. During May and June a large crew of men under Lt. W. H. Strong constructed thirteen giant wood warehouses for the Marines. During the same period, men of the 145th con-

structed officers' mess, quarters and facilities for STAG ONE on Reynard Sound.

During June our road men rebuilt and improved two miles of Mississippi Boulevard, one of the main roadways of the island. During July they relocated one and one-half miles of the Reynard Sound road, another main artery, and shortened it a great deal by ingeniously bridging the sound with a giant culvert system of cut-out pontoons, and filling with coral.

In August and September, one and one half miles of another road were relocated. This was Kentucky road that led thru a dense plantation of cocoanut trees near the island's main airfield. In August the 145th built two more giant Marine PX warehouses and in September built similar structures to house Marine workshops. And during this time the boys with the earth-moving equipment found time to construct an almost stateside ball field, known as the "Yankee Stadium of the South Pacific". For all the road projects coral pit men and truck drivers moved mountains of coral, one of the principal construction materials of the Pacific war. Of course, along with all this work, there were smaller assignments too numerous to list. Constant improvement was made on our own camp until facilities included a complete laundry and other ship's service activi-

"Load it up again Seabees—wrong island."

ties, new chow halls, a large theatre, a recreation hall, and showers with running water. Park Avenue, the main thoroughfare thru camp, was converted from a one-way rut of mud to a broad, smooth, gleaming street, one of the finest on the island.

WE GET A NEW JOB

On September 9, we were given a new assignment, that of operating ABCD. ABCD stands for Advance Base Construction Depot—and that's just what it was: great warehouses full and a vast supply yard full of

equipment and supplies for construction battalions operating in the South Pacific. When the 145th took over, the entire establishment was in bad need of general overhauling. The 145th went to work at once and during the following three months completely re-crated, re-stacked, and inventoried the entire stock of the depot, surveying goods beyond the salvage stage, and salvaging and repairing damaged equipment and supplies. In addition to this monstrous storekeeping job the 145th sorted, cleaned up, and moved another supply yard on the island known as Cub 12.

And again the inevitable job of camp building, for in order to be near the new job, a camp move was necessary. We took over an old area abandoned by the 20th Seabees and completely rebuilt it. We moved in in October.

By this time we had become overseas veterans. We spoke of the U. S. as the "old country" or "Uncle Sugar"; we had learned how not to be so overenthusiastic as to knock ourselves out in the tropical heat made

almost unbearably oppressive by the excessive humidity. And we had become disillusioned about our Hollywood-born concept of a "tropical paradise". The palm trees, the beaches, the azure skies, the rolling surf made a beautiful picture, in reality a hell-hole somewhat trying to a white man's constitution. Weather was somewhat different from the way Dottie Lamour movies depicted it. In the rainy season one sloshed about ankle-deep in mud. If he wore a raincoat he perspired so much he was as wet with as without one. In the "dry" season he sweltered in the stifling humidity. The lovely lagoons that looked so inviting for swimming were full of fungus to grow between your toes, in your ears and any-

FOXHOLING ON OKINAWA

where else it could dig in. One of the biggest surprises for tenderfeet from the States came when they set out to trade with the natives. The natives refused to accept dime store trinkets for their war clubs and grass skirts. They wanted good old American cash. Their prices were high and they stuck to them.

A NEW ERA

January 6, 1945 brought a new era in activities of the 145th battalion. It was on that date that we turned ABCD over to another unit and took up our guns, our packs, and everything else but the galley stoves, loaded them on our backs and set out on a hike. This was military training. Preparation for the invasion which "scuttlebutt" had long since foretold. For weary, hot weeks, we hiked and drilled, rolled packs, unrolled them, rolled them up again; we pitched pup tents, then broke camp. We fired

mortars, machine guns, and carbines, M-1's, O-3's, and BAR's. We ate C rations and marked targets with bullets flying inches above our heads. We listened to lectures, and tried our masks in the gas chamber. And again we faced that horrible long-nosed monster that had plagued us since the day we entered "boot" camp. The hypodermic needle. Over and over we ran the gauntlet of corpsmen stabbing at our arms with the vicious little needle. Until we were immune to disease, C rations, hikes, and even invasions. We were ready.

WE SCATTER

First to leave the battalion were Chief R. W. Quicksall and a group of 49 men who were assigned to the First Marine Division for malaria and disease control. They were detached from the 145th on February 6, moved over with the Marines on nearby Pavuvu island, and were with the Marines thru the entire invasion campaign. They did not return to the battalion until July 1, 1945.

On February 17, 120 men under Lt. W. H. Strong and Lt. (jg) W. M. Redd boarded APA 95, as a stevedore crew. They were followed on February 18, by another 120 men under Lt. I. C. Bentz and Chief Carp. L. G. Johnson, who embarked on APA 200.

On February 20, A. L. Krueger and H. C. Rogers went on board APA 226 as water purification operators; on February 21, 120 more men boarded APA 215 as stevedore crew. They were under Lt. George Low and Ens. H. J. Palazeti.

R. R. Komenda, J. A. MacLeod, A. J. Perry, and T. A. Scally on February 22, boarded LST 341 as water purification operators. On February 23, R. A. Cavanagh, R. C. Earle, D. Johns, and R. S. Kaplan went on LST 939 as water purification operators. During the invasion, Cavanagh, manning a gun, was shot with a 20-mm. shell and was evacuated. On the 23rd another group of water men boarded LST 651. They were C. T. Eads, W. E. Norton, F. W. Schween, and D. C. West.

On the 24th of February F. J. Harvey, R. J. Hurdle, J. G. Pearce, and C. F. Porter boarded LST 762 as water men; J. W. Johnson, R. R. Wicklund, D. V. Council, C. R. Kendall, I. G. Meek, and J. P. O'Hara went aboard LST 834, in the same capacity. That day A. F. Bonacker, J. R. Gay, C. E. Herring, and H. J. Kubowitz boarded LST 728; and L. L. Long, R. I. Means, J. E. Newton, and D. O. Smith boarded LST 759, all as water men.

February 25th, G. W. Johnson, C. F. Kuemmel, F. A. Mazzrillo, and K. H. Russ boarded LST 562. On the 27th J. E. Bush, E. N. Lyon, and H. E. Mill boarded LST 687.

The final days of February were spent in loading equipment and supplies for the invasion on two LST's. On Friday, March 2, personnel were loaded onto LST 581, and on Saturday morning men were loaded onto LST 672. Both were beached at White Beach. On that day, Saturday, March 3, 1945, we started on our big adventure.

Remaining behind to bring up the rear and the bulk of supplies and equipment was a 200-man rear echelon under Lt. (jg) Robert Hewett and Chief Carp. Paul Miller.

The two LST's headed at first for Guadalcanal where we engaged for several days in maneuvers in the Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Florida Islands area. Then in convoy with other landing ships we headed out for Ulithi, a large naval base taken only a few months before from the Japs.

We hit plenty of rough water and we on the LSTs learned a heretofore closely-guarded secret of warfare in the Pacific. We learned first hand of America's secret weapon of assault on Jap-held islands. It was quite simple. LSTs were loaded with all the men, supplies, and equipment they would hold. The men sought shelter under trucks, in tanks or wherever they found it and were tossed about on the high seas for a month; then no matter where the ship beached, when the ramp was let down the men came out so fighting mad they could whip anything.

Life on the LSTs was a routine of bugs in the bread and salt water showers in bed on the deck. One of the highlights of the trip of LST 672 was the transfer of Dr. A. L. Ewald to another LST loaded with Marines. The transfer was made the afternoon of March 31, as the ships plowed thru the waters of the China Sea. Dr. Ewald was swung across by a "Bo'sun's chair", and was instrumental in saving the life of an ill Marine aboard the other LST.

On Easter morning there was a strange sight for the rising sun. The

ball of fire of the solar system saw a harbor filled with more than a thousand American ships and a program of floating and aerial fireworks, the Japs never dreamed of. The questionably human counterparts of the solar symbol apparently didn't linger long over the aforementioned scene but cast their eyes to the hills to which they traveled. But fast. And Okinawa was invaded.

Many of our men got in on the very beginning of the landings. We on the LSTs had ringside seats, but we didn't get in until L plus two. But we did get our share of action for our camp was situated on farmland between two airstrips and a harbor full of ships. And the Jap fliers that came over lived up to their reputation of being nearsighted, for although there were a number of nearby targets more important than we, the flying sons of heaven dropped "hot stuff" too close to us for comfort.

The evening of D plus two when we pitched camp we joked and grinned in levity over the adventure, but after a few experiences of zooming, bombing Jap planes, flak-filled skies, and moaning sirens our interest in abodes centered on safety. Comfort ran a poor second.

WE WORK

Into the few and far between "spare" moments of the Okinawa campaign we managed to jam fox hole building and improvement, the "pro-

curement" of chow to supplement our rations, and even a little souvenir hunting, but most of the time was occupied with work, and for many weeks after the landings there was no minute of the day that some crew of the 145th was not working. Biggest jobs in April were construction of two roadways, Route No. 1 and Route No. 3, which included access roads; the improvement of Yellow Beach No. 3, one of the main man and supply landings, and access roads to it. One of the most important jobs was the construction of a 150 foot double-double Bailey bridge over the Bishi Gawa at Hiza. This was on Route 1, the main artery feeding supplies south to the battlefront. A crew of 80 men of the 145th built the bridge in two days and a night. The Japs didn't want the bridge built, and signified their feelings in futile, but dangerous air raids on the bridge site throughout the night. For their rapid and successful completion of the project, the workers were commended by Commander White of the 44th Regiment.

Also during April the 145th constructed a camp for the Island Command, operated the DDT mixing station at Yontan airfield, constructed the 3rd Amphibious Corps hospital, operated a water station at Hiza, furnished a bomb and mine disposal crew for all our own projects, numerous others, and for the policing of a large area for unexploded ordnance.

The 145th road crews maintained and improved a section of Route No. 6 from Tokeshi to Yamada. Our survey parties did reconnaissance work on airfield sites, and another crew operated coral pits on around-the-clock schedules.

During April the 145th suffered two casualties: Robert M. Tinnes, S1c, of Chicago. Attached to the First Marine division, he was killed on April 29 by an accidental discharge of a Jap rifle. On April 13, John E. Martin, MM3c of Hudson New Hampshire, was killed when his truck rolled off the Okinawa bridge over the Bishi Gawa at Hiza.

In May, men of the 145th constructed a camp and facilities for the commander of construction troops. They salvaged materials from a wrecked ship; worked on the First Marine cemetery; constructed a large number of facilities for Yontan airfield; helped the 146th battalion establish an advance base construction depot; built the giant Machinato causeway and pontoon dock for unloading ships; salvaged materials and supplies at Naha; constructed many miles of new roads and improved many more miles of existing roads.

All of this time other work was being done on our own camp. Our electric shop salvaged and put into operation Jap equipment such as transformers; our sign shop painted signs that posted almost the whole

island; messing facilities and showers were built, and almost from the start we had movies projected on a plywood screen while we sat on coral blocks, boxes, and the ground. Throughout this entire period we experienced at least one air raid every night; some nights, an almost continuous succession of them. When an air raid stopped the movies—and they often did—we'd run for our foxholes and then return the next night to see more of the same movies from where we left off. It got to be like Saturday serials broken into nightly episodes.

It was toward the end of May that the Japs tried one of their most daring attacks in our vicinity. With suicidal plans of wrecking grounded planes with grenades and scattering to the hills, they tried an airborne landing of troops on Yontan airfield, just above our camp. Only one plane made a successful landing on the field. Good quality and quantity of our anti-aircraft fire accounted for the others. The Japs, who did land, damaged a number of our planes, but they never got off the field alive. The following morning presented a bloody scene in the vicinity of Yontan field.

During the next two months our road crews continued their endless job of networking the island with wide, smooth, coral-topped highways to replace the one-way cart trails that composed most of Okinawa's road-

ways. And the coral diggers and haulers continued to move out coral for these and other jobs, such as the construction of taxiways and hardstands built by the 145th at Yonabaru airfield. Workers built a fleet post office at Naval Operations Base to handle the Navy's mail on the island. They constructed a huge port director's and signal tower at Naha to overlook the harbor there. They built another port director's tower at Machinato. The 145th also furnished a crew of men and a fleet of trucks in the operation of the island's provisional trucking company.

And during this time, work and materials were poured into the construction of a new 145th camp—a real camp—on Highway 13 between Kubi-Saki and Yonabaru. In July we moved to the new camp and were back on the Pacific ocean again. It was at least a help to look out over the ocean and know you were looking toward home and not China.

The battle for Okinawa ended officially on June 22 when the American flag was raised over the island. Lt. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., commander of the Tenth Army on Okinawa was killed Monday, June 18th. The Okinawa campaign occupied 82 days of fighting. A total of 100,000 Japs were killed, paid for in American dead at a one to 13 ratio. It was on June 22 that the 145th was detached from the First Marine Division to which we had belonged since December 3, 1944.

Our rear echelon under command of Lt. (jg) R. W. Hewett arrived on Okinawa on April 31. Our final supply ship came in May. It was on May 25 that this ship was torpedoed by a Jap plane and Ray Cleo Skinner, S1c, of Salt Lake City, Utah, was killed.

On the night of August 10th, announcement was made of Japan's offer to surrender. All hell broke loose on the island and it rocked like a drunken boat. Most of the 145th personnel not on duty were at the movies, and first impression received from distant ack-ack tracers was that an air raid was in progress, for although the Japs had lost Okinawa, they had not stopped raiding it. Just before everyone bolted from the scene it was announced that Japan's offer was heard.

For a stifled, silent moment there was utter stillness as everyone was at first stunned at the announcement. They could not comprehend. Then suddenly and spontaneously a cheer, as if from a single mighty throat rent the air.

The sky was a lacework of anti-aircraft fire. Searchlights stabbed their white needles into the clouds in a crazy erratic fashion. Guards cut loose with their tommies and a hundred 145thers ran for their shacks to grab their carbines and add to the victory din. Even the ships in the harbor threw ack-ack at the stars.

The island went mad. Until an island-wide red alert stilled the celebration.

It was a memorable night.

On August 31, the first contingent of the 145th left Okinawa for discharge under the demobilization plan.

But war or no war, work continued, and a 145th crew operated rock crushers at Yonabaru, and others constructed an aviation gas tank farm at Yonabaru with spillways and loading stands. Biggest job was the construction of NATS and TAGS facilities at Yonabaru air field. This included housing and messing facilities for fliers and enlisted men at the field, administration buildings, air terminal buildings and other facilities. Construction was of lumber, tents, and quonset huts. Another big job was the construction of the Acorn 29 water supply system with purification and pumping plants and storage tanks. A water system was also constructed at Yonabaru. Our men worked on the construction of a new camp and facilities for the commander of construction troops. Our men surveyed and graded on Route No. 5 from Yonabaru to Shuri, and the 145th built and operated a concrete pipe casting plant.

In September a number of men were sent home for discharge, and we received a large number of new men from the 66th and 74th Naval Construction Battalions.

On Saturday, October 6, the 145th marked 18 months overseas.

The following Tuesday, October 9th, the elements gave the Yanks on Okinawa a worse drubbing than the Japs ever dreamed up. A typhoon hit the island that day, and all day and throughout the night it ripped Okinawa apart with winds that reached a velocity of 150 knots.

The wind's disintegration of the island's facilities marked the wholesale beginning of the disintegration of American forces on Okinawa. Thereafter in increasingly larger groups, men left the island for home.

Here ends the story of the 145th in words on this printed page, but the 145th continues in spirit and with it the story continues in a thousand different channels as each man returns home to live his part of this story.

It's your story . . . you take it from here.

★

★

★

★

ITINERARY OF 145TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

30 Nov 1943	Transferred from Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Va., to Camp Endicott, Davisville, R. I.
16 Jan 1944	Transferred to Camp Parks, Shoemaker, California.
25 Feb 1944	Transferred to Port Hueneme, California.
6 Apr 1944	Left U. S.
27 Apr 1944	Arrived Russell Islands
3 Mar 1945	First echelon left for Okinawa.
1 Apr 1945	Rear echelon left for Okinawa, leaving 16 men at Russells awaiting transportation.
	Date of arrival unknown, but Monthly Report for 1 May 1945 shows location Okinawa.

26 Nov. 1945-Inactivated

DECLASSIFIED

ITINERARY OF 148TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

20 Nov 1944	Transferred from Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Va., to Camp Endicott, Davisville, R. I.
16 Jan 1945	Transferred to Camp Parks, Shoemaker, California.
25 Feb 1945	Transferred to Port Hueneme, California.
6 Apr 1945	Left U. S.
27 Apr 1945	Arrived Russell Is.
3 Mar 1945	First echelon left for Okinawa.
1 Apr 1945	Rear echelon left for Okinawa, leaving 16 men at Russells awaiting transportation.
	Date of arrival unknown, but Monthly Report for 1 May 1945 shows location Okinawa.

* *

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

22 September 1945.

Inactivated 26 November 1945

BERLIN
FABEC

NO PHOTOS AVAILABLE