12th Special Naval Construction Battalion

Historical Information

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

NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

12th CB Special

DECLASSIFIED

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
6/19/44	—	Russell Is.	C.B. report 1 June.	Left U.S. Dec. 1943
9/11	—	" HOWL	Russells sec disp 012143 Sept (act)	
12/2			Comservonbase sec disp. 270552 Nov	
2/3	—	"	Comservonbase sec 260522 Jan.	direct to report 117th regt for duty.
5/10	—	—	Russells sec act disp. 01021 May	deleted HOWL
5/24	—	—	Russells sec. act disp. 160342 may	Correction - clear echelon still there.

Acq report shows Russ

12th C.B. (Special)

NCTC - Peary
ABD - Hueneme
Ready Date - 14 Sep'43
Left ABD - 12 Dec'43
Location - ~~SoPac - Russell Is.~~ Okinawa

LOG

8-10-43 - Budocks requests transfer of the 12th (Sp) from Peary to Hueneme on 14 Aug'43. (Budocks ltr to CNO dtd 10 Aug'43)
12-19-43 - 12th (Sp) left ABD 12 Dec'43. (WRK)
2-14-44 - 40th CB monthly report for Oct & Nov'43 states that work has been started on a camp for the 12th (Sp) at Espiritu Santo.
3- 8-44 - 12th (Sp) sailed 12 Dec'43 and arrived at Efon 3 Jan'44; ordered on to Russell Is. where they arrived 7 Jan'44. (1 Feb'44 report)
5-12-44 - 1 Apr'44 report of 12th (Sp) - operating at Russell Is.
6-10-44 - 1 May'44 report of 12th (Sp) - operating at Russells.
7-10-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of 12th (Sp) - operating at Russells.
8- 7-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 12th (Sp) - operating at Russells.
8-25-44 - 12th (Sp) located at Russells where they arrived Jan'44. (Data from SoPac as of 7/1/44)
9- 7-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 12th (Sp) - located at Russells.
10- 9-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 12th (Sp) - stevedoring at Russells.
10-12-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 23rd Reg. - A replacement detachment of colored personnel reported to the 12th (Sp) for duty on 29 Aug'44, having been detached from the 34th CB, making a total of 1066 men in this unit.

12th C.B. (S

10-20-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 34th CB - 128 colored seamen were transferred to the 12th (Sp) at Russells in Aug'44.

11-27-44 -- CNO 292011 May'44 included authority to dissolve the 23rd Reg. but action was withheld pending withdrawal of the 11th and 12th (Sp) from the Russells. It is now planned to withdraw these batts to Noumea for staging early in Dec'44. Comsopac requests Cincpoa's concurrance in effecting the inactivation of the 23rd Reg.(Comsopac Sec. disp to Cincpoa 160528 NCR 8263 dtd 20 Nov'44).

11-29-44 -- The 11th and 12th (Sp) ordered detached from the 23rd Reg. when transportation is available about 1 Dec'44 for movement to Noumea, reporting to the 17th Reg. for staging and outfitting.(Comseronsopac Sec. disp to CNB Russells 270552 dtd 27 Nov'44).

11-29-44 -- Upon detachment of the 11th and 12th (Sp) inactivate the 23rd Reg. The enlisted personnel to be transferred to the 11th or 12th (Sp).(Comsopac Sec. disp to CNB Russells 280008 NCR 6333 dtd 28 Nov'44).

11-30-44 -- 1 Oct'44 report of 12th (Sp) - operating at Russells.

12- 1-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 12th (Sp) - operating at Russells.

2- 9-45 - The 47th Reg. to report to CNB Russells for duty pending further assignment. Direct the 12th (Sp) to report to the 47th Reg. for duty. (Comseronsopac Sec Disp to CNB Russells 260522 dtd 3 Feb'45)

2-12-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of th e 23rd Reg. - The 12th (Sp) preparing to move to rear area during Nov'44.

2-13-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 12th (Sp) - located at Russells. Report endorsed by the 23rd Reg.

2-16-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 23rd Reg. - Orders for the 12th (Sp) to move from Russells were countermanded. All equip. that was packed or stored has again been broken out and placed in use.

Location - ~~Russells~~ (part) Okinawa 12th CB (Sp)

2-16-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 12th (Sp) - located at Russells during Dec'44. Report endorsed by the 23rd Reg.

3-1-45 -- The 12th (Sp) upon receipt of orders is ordered to report to the 47th Reg. for duty. (CNB Russells Sec. ltr Ser. 00124 dtd 1 Feb'45 to OinC 12th (Sp)).

3-5-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 12th (Sp)-located at Russells. End. by 23rd Reg.

4- 2-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 12th (Sp) - operating at Russells. Report end. by 47th Reg.

4-30-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of 12th (Sp) - operating at Russells. Report end. by 47th Reg.

5- 8-45 - The 12th (Sp) is located at Russells, assigned Okinawa. (Dirpacdocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr'45)

5-24-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 47th Reg. - The 12th (Sp) departed from Russells in April.

5-29-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 12th (Sp) - locatted at Russells. Preparing for forward movement. Report end. by 47th Reg.

5-31-45 - The 1st echelon of the 12th (Sp), consisting of 964 men and 22 off. embarked on 23 Apr'45 and departed from Russells on 24 Apr'45. 2nd echelon of 3 off. and 80 men remained at Russells and has not yet departed. (12th (Sp) Item 4 of No Rep dtd 30 Apr'45 (sec routing)

7-18-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 12th(Sp) - located at Okinawa. The 1st Echelon consisting of 964 men and 21 officers departed the Russell Islands on 23 Apr'45 and disembarked at Okinawa on 21 May'45. The rear Echelon is scheduled to arrive on aproximately 15 Jun'45. Report via 47th Reg.

7-25-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 12th(Sp) - located at Okinawa. 12 men were transferred to U.S. for discharge during Jun'45 and 50 more will be discharged in the near future. The rear echelon consisting of approx 75 men which was scheduled to arrive about 15 Jun'45 has not yet arrived. Logistig Support Companys #26 and 32 have been attached to this unit for operational control. Report via 47th Reg.

Location - Okinawa 12th (Special)

8- 1-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 47th Reg - The Logistic Support Cos are attached to the 12th (Sp) for oper control only. Adm procedure of these Cos to be handled by the unit commander.

8-21-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 12th(Sp) - located at Okinawa. The rear echelon consisting of 82 men and 4 offcrs embarked from the Russell Islands on May 24'45 & arrived at Okinawa on 12 Jul'45. 24 men were transferred to the U.S. for leave and reassignment during Jul'45 & 13 men were transferred to the U.S. for discharge. Logistic Support Co #63 consisting of 240 men and 5 offcrs was assigned to this unit on 24 Jul'45.Report via the 47th Reg.

9-10-45 - 12th Brig, 53rd Reg & 54th Reg all activated 1 Sept'45. Regs & Batts in [illegible] as follows:-47th Reg-3,4,11,12,27,37, 36 (? disp jumbled) Sp Batts. [illegible] 28 & 148 CBs. 54th Reg-137 & 139 CBs. (CNOB, Okinawa conf disp [illegible] Sept'45 to Cincpoa, P.).

9-28-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 12th(Sp)- located at Okinawa. Report via 47th Reg. [illegible] transferred to U.S. for over-age discharges.

11-2-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of 12th(Sp) - located at Okinawa. Report via 47th Reg. & 12th Brg. 12 men transferred to U.S. for leave & reassignment. 11 men rec'd from 34th CB. 11 men rec'd from Comservpac Replacement Pool.

11-14-45- Req Cincpoa's approval to inactivate 12th(Sp), etc. (Comservpac TWX 112035 Nov'45 to Cincpoa).

11-14-45 - C/C HedPearl approved inactivation of 12th(Sp). (C/C HedPearl TWX 132120 Nov'45 to Comservpac).

11-23-45 - Comservpac reqs NOB, Okinawa to inactivate 12th(Sp). (Comservpac 220022 Nov'45 TWX to NOB, Okinawa).

Location - Okinawa 12th (Special)

11-26-45 - 12th(Sp) was inactivated on 23 Nov'45. (Comdr of Comdespac Rep Marianas Area 230637 TWX Nov'45 to Comservpac).

12-19-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 12th(Sp) - located at Okinawa. Report via 47th Reg. & 12th Brg.

INACTIVATED

ON BOARD

DATE	OFFICERS	MEN	AUTHORITY
30 Jun'44	34	948	Recap.
1 Aug'44	30	952	MoR
1 Sep'44	34	1066	MoR
1 Oct'44	30	1071	(Sopac report - 1 Nov'44)
1 Nov'44	34	1068	MoR
1 Dec'44	28	1067	BNP625 & MoR
1 Jan'45	31	1060	MoR
1 Feb'45	29	1056	MoR
1 Mar'45	29	1054	MoR
1 Apr'45	29	1056	BNP625 & MoR
1 May'45	29	1053	BNP625 & R
1 Jun'45	28	1051	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	28	1029	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	30	996	BNP625 & R
1 Sept '45	36	922	BNP625 & R
1 Oct'45	35	695	BNP625 & R
1 Nov'45	26		R

12th Construction Battalion (Special) (INACTIVATED)

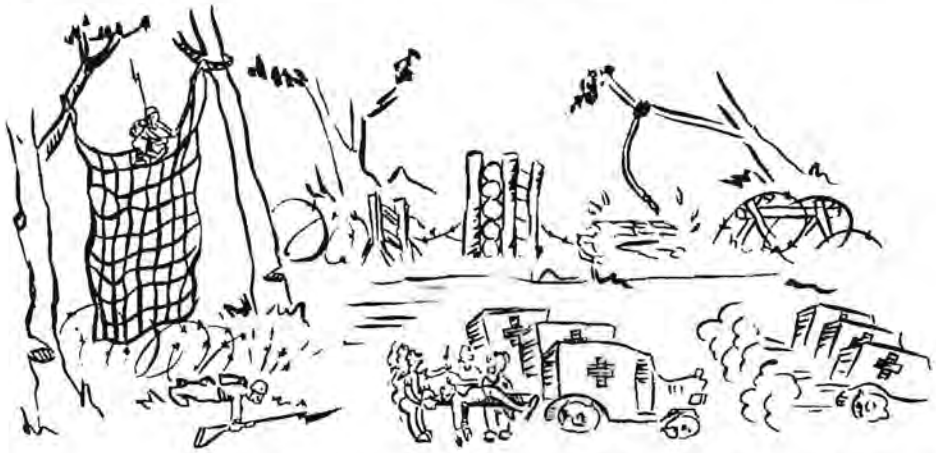
THE HISTORY OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL

R. N. Carner, PhoM 2/c

With a bit of liberty relaxation under our belts, following six rugged weeks of boot camp, there was a general settling down at the Stevedore Pool, and what a time: Wainwright detail, and anything to keep us busy. How we envied our mates who were being called into the Battalions. How long would it be? The scuttlebutt was soon making the rounds that the Twelfth Special was forming — and of course the fellows took the old sneak up to the office to find out if their names were on the list. Then finally it happened. Yes, sir—one by one they called our names, and we were told to gather our gear for reporting to A-7, the Twelfth Special Battalion.

The assignment of barracks and companies made us fully realize our coined names for CB's. New acquaintances, old friends, muster, fall out, and some more. Company officers were quick to make their acquaintance with the men. Speeches were made along with the resolution that this was going to be the best battalion. Yes, June 19, 1943, was a day well to be remembered.

Drill, drill, drill! We had our introduction to the "tough Marines" who were to take us for the next six weeks to see just what our endurance could be. Remember those drills? Mush-mouthed Marines, and how they could shout: "Squad umf!" "By the umph flank!" "Your lip, your lip!" Boy, was it hot! What became of those rest periods we were supposed to have had? "Platoon, halt! Fall out for a ten minute rest," and "The smoking lamp is lit." But by the time you got a sweat-dampened fag out, lit and relaxing, came the order of "Fall in." How many of the boys remember the duck walk? It was endurance at stake!



Ah, but the worst was to come. The obstacle course. How well will the days be remembered — those torturing days of the paces the Marines demanded as they put us through the ropes. That diabolical thing that was designed to pull you down to hard muscles. It was tough. No one over thirty-five years of age was required to take it. It would kill them. How well we remember the ropes, the belly crawl, the hurdles, the fences, the walks, the WATER OBSTACLE. The first days on the water obstacle — many wished that they had brought their water wings. I think that one was for a dual purpose — to toughen us up, and also to teach us how to swim.

Then we had the skirmishes. "Hit the deck!" "You there, get those heels flat!" Then over the side. Remember that swaying net to the Higgins boat, and the practices of hitting the beach. Combat training, yes Sir! Then came the day. We were actually to board a real honest-to-goodness boat to go well out into the York river, and make a beachhead. Armed with our Victory rifles (pieces to the Marines), and battledress, we dropped to the bottom of our landing craft, heads down and out of sight, and shoved off. After some time, the boats turned, and in formation made for the shore. Some fifty yards off, the boats were stopped and we were ordered over the side. That water was neck deep, and

the ones who were a bit short literally had to swim. How well we dashed up that river bank, simulating fire with Comanche yells, sogging wet, shoes sloshing, but spirits high! Our legs were a bit weary from the drag of the water in the dash to the shore, but the beachhead was ours. To cheer us someone started the scuttlebutt that we were to go over the obstacle course once more before we returned to the area. There we were, and it was a bit tough, but we were through. Then came the report that the obstacle course was finished.

One of the highlights of the Battalion was the dress parade with all the "Gold Braid" in attendance. Immaculate in our whites, with leggings and pieces, we were to march in the Battalion review on Camp Peary's main parade grounds. Everybody will remember that day. It was a hot Fourth of July, and the glare from the whites was terrific. However, we came through with flying colors, pleased with a day well done — but oh, the march back to Area A-7!

How they did put us through the parade ground drill for the Battalion commissioning. "Right turn, March!" "Left turn, March!" "Eyes, right!" "Eyes, left!" "Keep that middle up — dammit, don't sag." Around and around we went — the Marines giving us a merry pace. Then came the day — polishing our shoes 'til they shone with a brilliance that was never displayed before; the whites spotless and "nary a wrinkle"; gleaming white hats "squared away"; and that neckerchief just right in the best of Navy style.

"Attention! Forward, March!" Many feet stamped out cadence on the hard packed ground of the field. "Halt!" "Open ranks, March!" Captain Ware and his staff were here for the inspection and review. Friends and relatives were on the sidelines to witness this momentous occasion. Through the ranks he came — a remark here — a nod there — through the battalion — and the inspection was over. The band played martial airs, and next came the marching in review. The practices we had made came into the real thing, and there we were in battalion front. "Officers, front and center!" and with precision and perfect cadence they stepped out and were soon standing in exact formation. The Commission was read, and then Mrs. Raymond Eisenberg and Mrs. Moses E. Berry presented the Colors to the battalion. How proud those Colors were, riding on the breeze. "Officers, Post!" With the fulfillment of the command, the next order came through, "Pass in Review!" The band struck off with a lively march, and with shoulders squared and chests thrown out we went through the formation of review. The music stopped, a hush fell, Captain Ware and his staff climbed into their car and were gone. We were now officially commissioned as the TWELFTH UNITED STATES CONSTRUCTION BATTALION (SPECIAL).

Liberty

The subject of liberty brings many memories of the times had in Williamsburg and Richmond.

Williamsburg, the town that was restored to the quaint village of early colonial days by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Brick paved streets, and the buildings on Gloucester street returned to the colonial era. The home of William and Mary College, attended by Thomas Jefferson and other prominent Americans; the old buildings, the sunken garden, and the statuary. There were many points of historical interest there. The church with the unique gravestones in the churchyard. The museum in the old Court House, the old Virginia capital. Remember those restoration tours? Yes, it was historical enough — but I think that many remember those steins of beer served by pretty waitresses in Chowning's House, or the pitchers of beer at the Williamsburg Lodge — and of course the last chance places of the Powhatan or Tony's Place. Those who weren't interested in beer had the USO to lounge in; to sing at the piano, drink coffee and eat sandwiches at the snack bar. On Friday nights there were the Public Square dances that proved interesting. What a relief it was to go into the Colonial Restaurant or the Williamsburg Lodge for a bit of chow that wasn't Navy style.

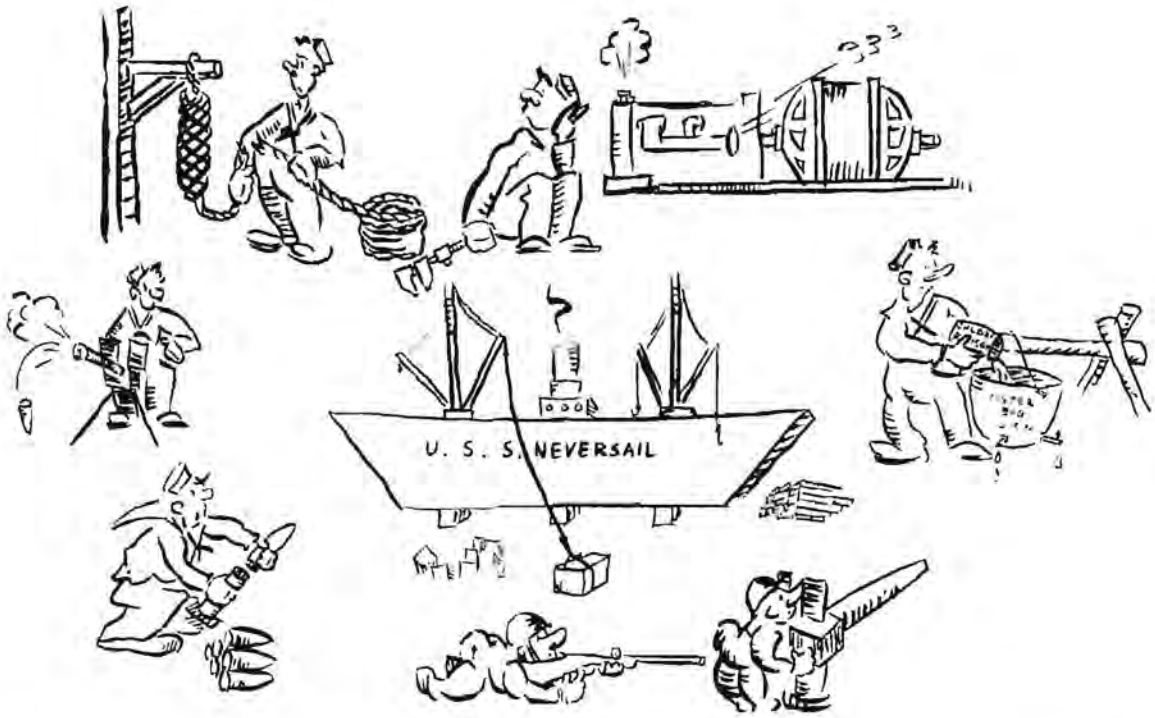
Richmond, Virginia, was a bit of contrast with the village of Williamsburg. Here you saw the industries of the south. Where a person may see his favorite brand of smoking being manufactured. A city deep in the traditions of the south. A Seabee on liberty doesn't remember so much of the industries, however. It was the pretty southern girls with their accent, Broad, Gray and Main streets, and those recreation points of interest. How about the Florentine Gardens, the Eagles' Hall, or the Dixie Dance Hall? One of the nice places to appreciate was the Navy Mothers' Club.

Training

The torture chamber of the A-5 Drill Hall! We surely learned the ins and outs of the Springfield '03 rifle. Dry firing until we thought we could hit Tojo in Tokyo if we had live ammunition, we had that "Six o'clock picture" framed before we were through. Load and lock, commence firing. Well, at least we were certainly getting it drilled into us for the day that we would go on the range for actual firing. We all put up with that extensive training merely by looking forward to the day we would fire on the targets. After the A-5 drill hall, they sort of broke us in easy. They gave us .22 rifles, similar to the '03, and a bunch of dime size targets to hit. That was fun, but oh the scores. Then came the day we were to march out to the rifle range. Group three was in the butts, while Groups one and two were on the firing line. We got our share of bloody noses and puffed lips, but our scores were good. The red flag, however, gave us the wave on many shots. We had been trained with the '03s and they gave us the carbine to fire with. It was plenty hot out under that Virginia sun.

Schools

With our military training over, the battalion turned to the special training that would be put into use overseas. There seemed innumerable things to learn: the stevedore training on the good ship "Neversail"; the rigging, dock work, and winch driving; the gunnery schools on the 20 mm. Orlicon and 50 cal. Browning machine guns for anti-aircraft, the 30 cal. machine gun, the mortars, the Browning automatic rifles, sub-machine guns; the pontoon assembly, Diesel engines, water purification, and many other things to help make us an efficient, self-sustaining organization. The gunnery was of interest — the disassembly of each weapon, the lectures on the parts and the operation. Ultimately working toward the day that the weapons they were learning in detail would be fired on the range. The anti-aircraft was possibly the most interesting of the gunnery schools. After the tour of instruction on the 20 mm., twenty-six men from Headquarters were taken by truck to the anti-aircraft range at Dam Neck, Virginia, just a few miles south of the Virginia seaside resort of Virginia Beach. Again they went through the rudimentary instruction of the automatic gun and aircraft identification, and the interesting experiment of simulating the firing of a 50 cal. machine gun in the Solonoid chamber. A man fired the gun at a screen on which was projected a motion picture of airplanes flying at him, and from all directions. The solonoid



glasses worn by the men gave the impression of depth and realism, and the whole show was complete with sound effects. The most amazing part of the whole training was the fact that you could see your tracer fire on the screen, which was realistic. On the range, after a bit of drill in tracking the sleeve, every man was a bit tense with the anticipation of strapping himself into the gun for action. After greasing the shells and loading the magazines they were ready to fire. From the tower came the words in a droning monotone: "Load and lock," then "Track the sleeve," and with a jolt the large calibre guns commenced firing, and when they had released their barrage the word came for the 40s and the 20s to "Commence firing." With a staccato roar the whole firing line opened up and a bright red hail of fire arched up to meet the sleeve being towed into the range. It was a sort of exultation to the men firing to see their tracer fire arch up and toward the target, and each man was eager to show his bit.

Recreation was interspersed in the training that was good. When the range was secured, the men were allowed to go swimming in the surf. It was like being at a summer resort, basking in the sun and spending time chasing crabs in the water, or digging in the sand. Those who had uniforms were allowed one night's liberty in Virginia Beach, where men and women went around in bathing suits on the streets. They reported a very good time. It was with reluctance that they returned to Camp Peary, where the men of the other schools were winding up their training. The men of the gunnery schools had gone to the range and fired to give them efficiency in their weapons. The schools were out, and then men's eyes turned toward the bulletin boards for their next event. The big moment had arrived — Embarkation Leave — and then what — East coast or West coast?

Before and After Ten-Day Leave

Uppermost in everyone's mind were thoughts of the forthcoming ten-day embarkation leave. Speculation and scuttlebutt were terrific. Who would have their leaves first — west coast or east coast men? A notice on the bulletin board about the Advance Base Depot was a considerable help; it was assumed that we would go to Hueneme, California. Then came THE day. The notification of the procedure of the first group to depart for their leave was made. The dividing line for those entitled to go first was posted. All the fellows living east of the line started working on their transportation problems. A special train to St. Louis, by auto, bus, rail, and plane, the men were to scatter to see their families, perhaps for the last time for some time to come.

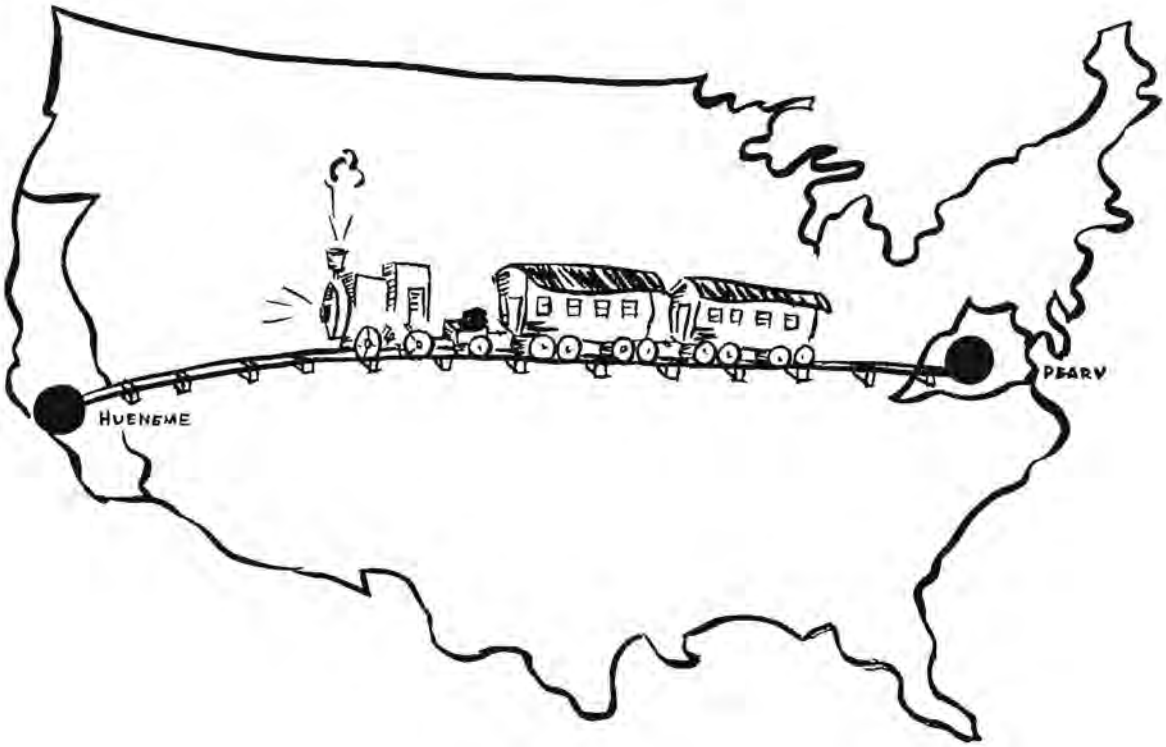
Finally the day arrived; all the rush and feeling of expectancy was on in full force. Final inspections, instructions, and with the west coast men looking on with envy, yet knowing that they too would soon be doing the same thing, the fellows moved off.

An unusual peace settled down over Area A-7, and then we found out the next day that we were scheduled for detail. Cleaning up the evacuated barracks and the area, policing the grounds, and of all things to keep us busy, we were digging grass and weeds out from under the barracks, and doing guard duty. Aside from the details it was a rather quiet ten days.

Then came the morning the men were to return. How well they remember entering the area, feeling fine with their leave behind them — but sad because it was all over; receiving their sea bags out of storage and setting up bunks in their assigned barracks again. Groups were here and there discussing the events that occurred during their leave.

Another move occurred amongst the barracks, but this time it was for train assignment. This group was assigned for Train Section No. One; this one for Train Section No. Two; and the one for the last Train Section No. Three. Numbers and places were ascertained from the bulletin boards, and rehearsals were made towards the day that trucks would appear and take us to the station. By this time we were sure we were bound for the California ABD.

On the morning of the 14th of August, dress blues was the order of the day. The sea bags had been sent up to the station for loading in the baggage cars, and Group One was standing by to embark on the train. All the men for the group were lined up in rotation by train and car number. then in this order they moved to the trucks and were off. As they arrived at Magruder Station, the Ship's Company band struck up martial music, and before long they were all settled in the car that was to be their home for the next several days. The cars were hot and the uniforms were uncomfortable — but no one seemed to mind because they were off to a new destination. Groups Two and Three stood by, back in the area, impatiently awaiting their turn — but soon they were off in succession — and everyone had taken their last look at Camp Peary, as their train slowly left the camp area, California bound.



Across the Continent

"California, here we come!" By now everyone knew that Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, was our destination. The dress uniforms gave way to dungarees for travel comfort. The coal dust and smoke were disastrous to our uniforms. After the first day, everything settled down to the routine of train travel and everyone to their own form of amusement — magazines, books, card games, shootin' the breeze, or just quietly watching the country roll by. Some were fortunate enough to get regular Pullman cars; others were placed in regular troop cars; and what a luxury it was with nothing to worry about — no bunks to make up, no decks to swab. A life of Riley! Those berths did feel good, too, after the bunks of Peary. All three trains were en route, but by different routes. There was a lot of country to roll beneath the battalion before it reached the coast.

Sections One and Two ran just about parallel with each other; even getting together at Chicago and Hastings, Nebraska. Train Section One got a break at McCook, Nebraska, the famous USO service center, where they were allowed to go into the station and to get free drinks, sandwiches, cake and magazines. Section Two was not so fortunate, but the generosity of the people of McCook was boundless, and they brought everything to the train, except the soft drinks. Train Section Three was routed through the south, touching Kansas City; through the plains of Kansas, before turning to the north to follow the other sections. For all three sections of the troop train there were several things that were carried in common. The dining car service was one thing. Train Two was without diner at Chicago, and the men were marched up town to restaurants for their chow. The same thing happened to Train Three at Marian, Kansas, and at Pueblo, Colorado. Among the things noticed by the men en route across the continent were the many women working in the service of the railroads. Desert sunsets attracted the attention of many. Features at the various stops were P.T. exercises and the gathering up of letters for mailing.

The arrivals in California were in most cases at night, but with the coming of daylight, the men received their first glimpse of the state — the orange groves — then Los Angeles. The last leg of the jonrney carried them through the lush valleys of Southern California, toward the coast to Camp Rousseau at Port Hueneme.

As the train slowly pulled into camp, the fellows who were watching at the windows to see what our new camp was going to be like saw that we were to live in Quonset huts, and the overall view gave a favorable impression. At the point of disembarkation the train was quickly emptied, and the men eagerly looked forward to their new quarters and a good hot shower. The men who hadn't as yet taken their embarkation leave were looking forward to the time when they would be released to scatter to the four winds.

The afternoon the Train Section Three arrived, the men going on leave received word that they could pick up their leave papers and shove off. Many of the California fellows rushed to the phones to call their wives and families. It was a happy day when those going were released and they shoved off for home.

Those left in camp looked forward to their shore liberties, to see what opportunities California had to offer, and many of them sent for their wives to be with them until embarkation time. In their exploration of the camp, many fellows went down to the docks to get their first glimpse of the Pacific Ocean.

Camp Rousseau was pretty nice. Our area was near the Ship's Store and the theatres; also the main gate, where the guest house was situated. The Ship's Store had two facilities, a wet and a dry canteen. Ah, the wet canteen, where cold draft beer was on tap, and without standing for hours just for one beer.

While the last group was out on embarkation leave, the rest of the battalion turned to camp routine. Work details, guard duty, and military drill were contained in the plan of the day.

Upon the return of the men from leave, the battalion settled down to the work and training on hand

in preparation for overseas duty. Not disregarding the fact that we were being trained for combat, our stay at Camp Rousseau was interspersed with a lot of detailed training. We were issued our Springfields, B.A.R.s, and carbines for rifle range practice. The days of dry firing and tearing down and assembling our pieces until every part was known to every detail, was the policy in order to obtain the best in military training. At the range the marksmanship was high, and despite scratched noses and bruised shoulders, we were convinced of the superiority of our weapons. A few of the anti-aircraft unit were sent down to San Diego for more training on the 20 mm. Gas masks were issued, and we were sent out to give them the practical test in the gas chamber — and we all had a weeping good time! The overnight marches on simulated battle conditions was the final leg of our military training. The battalion marched out through the back roads of the California coast with our newly issued packs and rifles, ending the day with setting up a field camp, suffering from the cold at night, and returning to the camp the next day.

Aside from the drilling and preparations for embarkation, our companies were set up as an operational unit, as we would function overseas. Stevedore gangs were made up and operated the ships in port, giving them actual training with the equipment and machinery they were to be using. Heretofore, it had been with a dummy ship with all the necessary rigging, now we were really in the war effort.

Some events came up that added spice to our stay in Rousseau. Competitive drilling was inaugurated, and after practice, the elimination came, with Company "C" carrying off the honors. At another time a pall of smoke rose into the sky to the south of the camp, and volunteers were recruited to lend their aid to combat the fire. A detachment was sent out, while other groups stood by in case they were needed. Many movie stars' homes were in danger, and it was a tough, hard and hot fire to fight — but the volunteers returned, dirty and sweaty, but light-hearted with a job well done.

Life in camp was a nice one, with everything immediately available. The movies were showing first-run features, and the wet canteen was open every evening for beer. Entertainment for those who awaited their turn for liberty, and the guest house offered the opportunity for visiting with wives and relatives. USO shows were occasionally at the theatres with stars of screen and stage. One event was the Bob Hope show that appeared in Theatre "A" for one of the national broadcasts. A lot of men from our battalion were fortunate in drawing tickets for the broadcast and the second show.

The most outstanding memory of Camp Rousseau was the availability of liberty. The men who were fortunate enough to have their wives in nearby towns, and those who lived in nearby Los Angeles were given every opportunity of spending their liberty with them. There were busses available to Oxnard, and the busses to Los Angeles and Hollywood were always jammed. There were many glowing accounts from men returning from liberty about the opportunities afforded from Ventura and Oxnard, through to Los Angeles, Hollywood and the surrounding communities. The generosities of the Hollywood Canteen, the Hollywood Guild Canteen, and the people as a whole were very heartening. Earl Carrol Vanities, the Palladium and Radio City were some of the highlights of liberty. Also there were many places where the men obtained their own entertainment.

Scuttlebutt was ever present in any group — and always as to when we would embark and what our destination would be. Would it be Alaska, the South Pacific, or perhaps the Caribbean? Every time we took week-end liberty we thought it would be the last one. Our supply ship arrived in port and the stevedore gangs were instrumental in loading it — destination unknown. An advance group was selected, given their last shore liberty, and amid our military band's music, the ship pulled out into the stream and left. How soon would it be before we followed them?

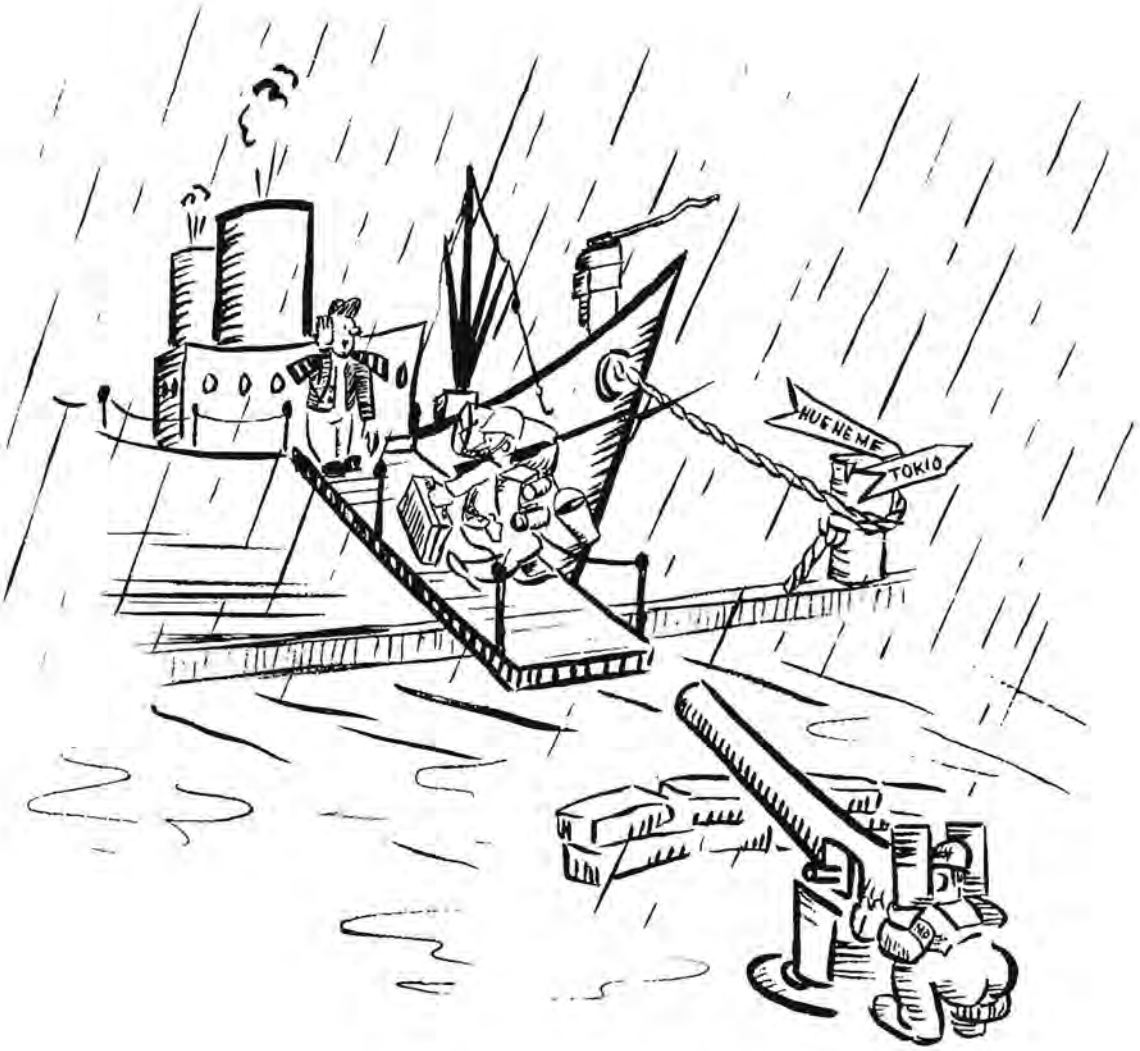
We were given our last shots, and gear issue, and as a crowning point, Red Cross bags containing many things of use, were issued.

It was no real surprise when it was announced that the battalion was secured. Time was set aside for special purchases at the Small Stores and the Ship's Store for items that would be needed on board ship — or would be difficult to obtain overseas; and the sea bags were packed, ready for delivery to our ship. We were only awaiting its arrival in port so we could go aboard.

On the afternoon of the tenth of December, 1943, we were given instructions on the procedure of going aboard, and early the next morning, loaded down with packs on our backs, rifles, barracks bags, and personal gear, we were loaded into trucks and transported through a light rain to the dock, where our ship waited.

After all the "hurry up and wait," the time came for us to be called on board by name, to go up the ramp, down the hatch and into the hold and to be assigned a bunk in the five-bunk-high tiers, and cramped troop quarters of the ship. After everyone was assigned, the next thought was food. We hadn't eaten anything since the early breakfast. Then we found out for the duration of our stay on board, we would have only two meals a day. That afternoon we had our first experience at chow aboard ship, where it was served hot, and you ate standing up. That was also the last day that we were to receive any mail for a long time, and it was a happy group of men who received those letters. Time was whiled away on deck and down in the quarters until 2100, and then lights went out, for our first night's sleep on board ship. We fully expected to be way out at sea by morning. At reveille, however, we found ourselves still tied up at the dock. We had finished chow, and were around about the decks of the ship in various forms of comfort, when a new burst of activity appeared on the part of the ship's crew, and the ship's siren blew, the lines were cast off, and we pulled out into the stream.

The event of our leaving was something to go down in the annals of one of Robert Ripley's books. The Twelfth Special was leaving the States at 1200 noon, on the twelfth day of the twelfth month. After the port was cleared, the men stood by and watched the coastline of California slowly fade away into the haze, and became accustomed to the rolling motion of the deck. The thought uppermost in everyone's mind was: "When shall we see the States again?"



On Board Ship

Suddenly the general quarters alarm was sounded, and everyone was alert — but we came to find out that "General Quarters" was a procedure that was going to be repeated frequently during our voyage. We returned to the deck after the "All Clear," but there wasn't a bit of land visible from horizon to horizon. Walking about the decks to get our sea legs, we began our exploration of the ship for forms of amusement. An occasional card game with the usual kibitzing group around, magazine reading — sprawled or squatting in the most comfortable places — watching the sea, and passing along the scuttlebutt were the daily diversions. Scuttlebutt on all troop ships runs about the same. "I just heard from the Bos'n's Mate that three ships were sunk by submarines just about where we are now." Some of the fellows must have gone up to the bow, started some choice scuttlebutt, then ran back to the fantail, and when they heard it, it was so good that they believed it themselves. This type of "breeze" was the main topic of conversation throughout the trip.

There were a lot of "don'ts" on board for "our own protection": no smoking on deck after dark, blackout regulations were strict, you can't sit here and "keep off" of there, ration of water, and keep your life belt on at all times. (That darn belt thing that became our constant companion for the trip.)

We came to be pretty good balancing artists when it came to eating chow — keeping our mess gear before us as we ate, wiping the perspiration out of our eyes, and guiding the chow to our mouth as we stood on the deck before the chow table, swaying with the motion of the ship. Even while sleeping we had to continually brace ourselves to keep from falling out of the bunk. Once we attained our sea legs, things came natural. The rolling of the ship, with the pitch, in rough seas, however, brought somewhat of a problem and on a couple of occasions, sea sickness was the order of the day, with men going about green-faced, ever on the lookout for the nearest rail and quickly learning the difference between "lee" and "windward."

There were some oddities of the seas that were very interesting. The brilliant blue of the ocean, the birds following us — miles from land, and as we moved into warm waters, the flying fish breaking water and sailing off in a glistening tangent from the ship, almost in formation. At night the wonders were centered around the phosphorescent gleaming of the wake of the ship, and glowing bubbles playing along the hull. It was spectral in its beauty. Some of the mates went so far to as drop a bucket over the side in the hopes of catching some of them — but they were always elusive.

After three days at sea, the notice of our destination was placed on the bulletin boards. It was Espiritu Santos in the New Hebrides, and maps were taken out and examined for the location — a few dots down in the South Pacific. Here was the scene of one of Martin Johnson's exploration movies some time ago.

The monotony of the trip was broken in many ways, all the way across. "Whales" being sighted but never materializing, and one day a ship was noticed hull down on the horizon. Was it friend or enemy? Speculation as to its identity grew as it came closer to our group, and made it everything from a submarine to a huge liner. As it passed to the rear it was noted to be a Navy ship, but we never learned for sure what type it was. Land was sighted on numerous occasions, but so far down on the horizon that it could have been a cloud. G.Q. sometimes spoiled the complete view of some beautiful sunsets, when we were ordered below. Some of them were really beautiful as noted by the guards who remained on deck.

After being at sea for a considerable length of time, land WAS sighted — and it gave us a pretty warm feeling, but also it brought brief excitement when a plane was sighted, bearing down on us. G.Q. was sounded and the Armed Guard quickly reached their posts. However, when it came close enough, the American star gleamed from its side very reassuringly. It was a welcome sight to be "buzzed" by these planes. Shortly after they appeared we were joined by destroyer escorts, and they added to our security, running alongside and out in front like bloodhounds on a scent. They were more assuring one day when we passed a place in the sea that gave evidence of a ship having gone down there. Before the escort showed up, and even while they were with us, the scuttlebutt persisted that there was a submarine following us. One day one of the little escorts about-faced and raced rearward. Presently booming sounds were heard, and before long it rejoined us. On another occasion a fire was noted just over the horizon with flashes of gunfire. Excitement arose on board one day when a small ship came alongside to take off a man who had become ill. A near-collision was another added attraction. After we crossed the equator, the men who had been in these waters before quickly pointed out the Southern Cross to those who had not seen it. Looking overhead at these stars presented an entirely different view of the ones we were accustomed to seeing "at home." The moods of the sea were ever-changing. From gently flowing billows to rough white-capped waves; to a glassy sea that was as calm as a lake on a summer evening. Roughness didn't matter now, but rain added to the discomfiture of those who desired to stay on deck. Below in the quarters it was stuffy hot despite the air-conditioning system. Many preferred sleeping on deck, regardless of the rain.

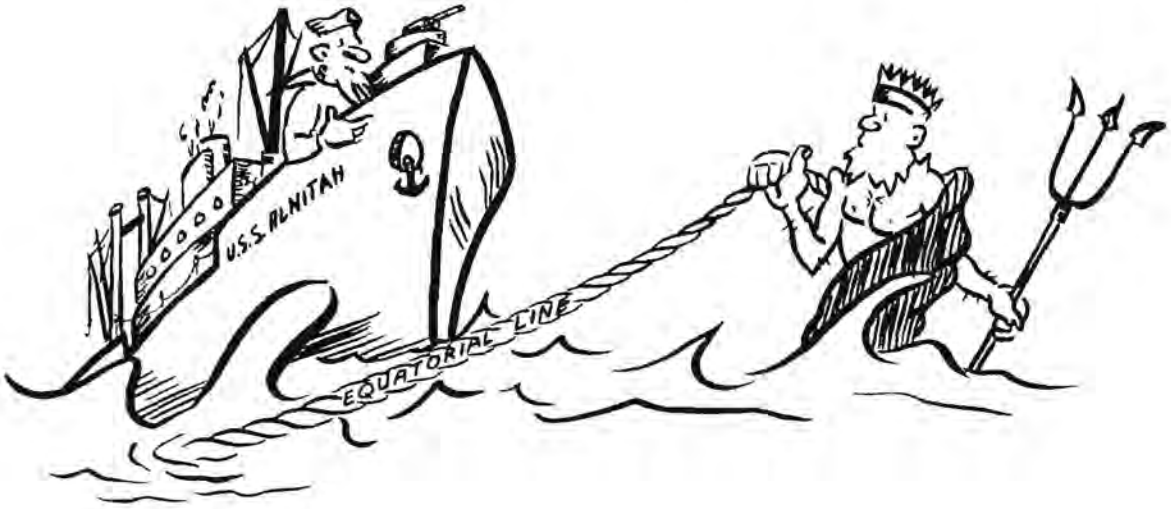
Beards were the pride of some of the fellows, and the fancy designs and trimming were really something to see. Shaving was a rather uncomfortable procedure anyhow, with the salt water. The showers seemed uncomfortable, too — leaving a sticky deposit of salt on you after it was taken. The ship's store men consented to break out supplies of cigarettes and candy, so we were able to purchase these items. The ship also made up a news bulletin that enabled us to read the latest war news. The

"Abandon Ship Drill" provided a break in the monotony, and when we gathered before our appointed rafts, we surely wondered how we would all crowd into one of those things.

The problem among the cooks in the ship's galley was amusing — but serious. Rough weather presented quite a problem to those preparing food, and one day we had to miss one meal due to the fact that they couldn't keep anything in the stoves. No one cared, however, it was hard enough to keep our stomachs down, let alone food. But they did a good job with what they had, under the circumstances.

The performance of guard duty on water-tight doors and the hatches was one of the military duties performed on board. Then there were a few of the battalion anti-aircraft crew who stood watch on the 20 mm. guns with the Armed Guard. When we neared the area of possible enemy action, all the B.A.R. men were posted in strategic places about the ship. We were being ready for the event of an attack from enemy planes.

The observation of Christmas at sea was marked by church services on deck. The Christmas carols were being sung with a rather nostalgic air, out underneath the brilliant sun in the heat of the tropical sea. A far cry from the familiar Christmases observed before. Cigarettes and chewing gum were presented as Christmas gifts to the men of the battalion. We crossed the equator on Christmas day.



The age-old custom of crossing the equator was fully observed, and the "Shellbacks" organized with full ceremony to initiate the lowly "Pollywogs." Preparation of the costumes and the day of the initiation was a day of foreboding to the Pollywogs. King Neptune, with his Queen and Royal Baby, and his many followers — the Devil, Davy Jones, Peg Leg, the Royal Barber, the Royal Doctor, Royal Judge and Jury, and policemen, plus many other characters — were on hand to see that the lowly Pollywogs were properly initiated into the mighty realm of Neptunus Rex. Throughout the day of the impending crossing of the equator, scenes of initiation were in evidence. Salaaming Pollywogs were seen about the decks, shouting that they were Pollywogs, and when the time came for the initiation, fun(?) was had by all. Sentences by the Judge were mighty. Hair was cut, smeared with grease, and they were shaved by the Royal Barber, using grease as lather. The stockades were filled with the offenders, the Royal Doctor gave out with his torture, the Devil had his due with a tail charged with electricity, and after a beating through the gauntlet, and a drenching with the salt water hose (no pool being available to toss them into) they were declared Shellbacks. They were certainly a messy bunch of men, but it was all in fun, and they were happy to be Shellbacks. It was a problem to wash off that sticky, gooey grease with salt water.

A faint, blue line low on the horizon was sighted by the men one morning when daylight came, and as the day wore on it slowly materialized into a group of tropical islands. All interest and eyes were centered on the beaches and the green of the cloud-capped islands. Slowly we steamed into the channel of the port of Espiritu Santo, lifting our heads to the smell of land for the first time in many days. Men lined the ship's rails to see what this tropical island looked like. Cocoanut trees stood row on row, much like a cornfield. A copra plantation was sighted, and the harbor was full of war activities. After the anchor was dropped, a boat brought out the men who had left Hueneme two months ahead of us. and as soon as they were on board, groups quickly gathered around them asking a multitude of questions. "What is the island like?" "What about the camp?" "Are there natives?" On and on. However, it was soon disclosed that we were to go on farther, up into the Solomon Islands group.

Cheers greeted the coming of the mail on board. Here we were, receiving the first mail overseas. All those who could crowded around over Hatch No. Three while the mail was being sorted. Then the moment came when the company clerks stood up on top of the hatch and called the names. It was surely with eagerness that the recipients answered "HERE!" Letters were written in answer, and letters that had been written previous to our arrival were censored and the mail was then sent off, so the people back home would receive their first letters from us.

After a day at Espiritu Santo, leaving some more men behind to pack up and load out our supplies, we heaved anchor and once more put to sea. Five days passed, and at the dawning of the sixth day, we found ourselves approaching land again. We had passed through the Coral Sea, and were now going through the area known to ships as "Torpedo Junction." The island slowly unfolded before us, then the word passed around that we were at Guadalcanal, with Tulagi on our port. Moving close in to off-shore, we dropped anchor. Again everyone crowded the rails to view the site where fighting history had been made. Torn cocoanut trees and rusting hulks of enemy ships gave evidenoe of the mighty struggle that had taken place here. Henderson Field could be seen in the distance, with the contested hills in the background. To the northwest of our anchorage we could see Cape Esperance, and out to sea, Savo Island.

Slowly we approached the "gate" to go down through the channel to our anchorage at our Island "X." Here we were, at that tiny dot that was to be our scene of activity — Island "X" in the British Solomon Islands.

Life belts were thrown in a pile, shouldering our bags, packs on our backs, and gripping rifles, most of us went over the side onto a barge to hit the beach in a drizzling rain. The others stayed aboard to begin discharging the ship. Ashore we moved inland and up onto a hill not far from the beach, and made camp among the cocoanuts — greeted only by the rain and falling cocoanuts in the darkness. After twenty-seven days on board ship, we had finally set foot on ground again. This was Island "X"!

First Days on Island "X"

When daylight came, everyone was up and about to take stock of our surroundings. We were on the side of a hill in a grove of cocoanut trees, with lush green grass underfoot. Parrots were screeching in the trees, and "cocoanut birds" were hopping about in flocks, with their peculiar rattle-chirp. At least it wasn't raining continuously now.

Pyramidal tents were quickly secured, and before long our tent city grew into being. Tents were put up over the bare ground, by companies. At least we were now able to get out of the tropical downpours. The second night we slept on the ground inside the tents, but later on we drew cots. For chow, we had our introduction to "C" rations. Meat and beans, corned beef hash, and meat and vegetable stew, with the accompanying can of biscuits and soluble coffee — supplemented by the fellows opening cocoanuts, which were plentiful. Helmets were used over fires to heat our meals. They were also used for bathing and washing clothes. Our bathing consisted of merely standing in the rain and taking a shower.

The almost continuous rain and the many tramping feet soon changed the grass covered hill into a mess of sloshy, gooey, liquid mud. There was mud everywhere. The roads were just rivers of the liquid mud. Coral was hauled in in an endeavor to secure a more solid footing, but it was almost futile. Most of the men learned that the coral could not be trusted. A step on, to all appearances, good solid footing — and down one would go, sometimes clear to the knees.

During the process of building the camp, our work was still cut out for us. Ships had to be loaded and unloaded. Gangs were formed, and the stevedoring operations went on night and day.

Headquarters men who had previously pounded typewriters or pushed a pencil, were pressed into jobs as carpenters and construction men, to throw up the necessary temporary buildings for a galley, etc., so that we would no longer have to eat the "C" and "K" rations, or use the straddle trenches.

On Sundays the natives of the island would come around through the camp with their war clubs, mats and shells to "trade" with the men. Mattress covers and clothing were the mediums of barter. The men soon learned the use of pidgin English. These little Melanesian natives, whose forefathers had been cannibals, were quite friendly. They liked 'Mericans. "No like Jap — Jap no good." From the talk of the little men, the cruelties of the Japanese who had been among them were clearly apparent. Some claimed the honor of the death of some of the Nipponese warriors. They had little chance, though, with their war clubs against the Japanese guns! They soon deserted their villages to enter the jungle during the Japanese occupancy. The natives' honesty was beyond reproach. Their own language was rather intriguing to hear. To the natives and men alike, the greeting was "Hello, Joe." Some men were quick to pick up words of the native language, which was greeted by the natives very shyly, with lots of giggling. The native adroitness at climbing cocoanut trees was quickly demonstrated, when they climbed for the sum of twenty-five cents to knock down some cocoanuts. They were clad briefly in a cloth around their middle called Lavalala. From these quaint little fellows we learned of the life in these islands before the war and before our occupancy, which presented an interesting picture.

During time off from their jobs, the men spent it in the exploration of the island whenever possible. The beaches were scoured for shells, and trips into the jungles were made. Down on the beach, made up of broken coral thrown up by the waves, which gave off a clinking sound when you walked, many colorful tropical fish were observed playing around the undersea coral. There were needle fish, with long, slender bodies and snouts as long as the body; blue and gold fish with faces not unlike a horse; tiny brilliant blue ones; fish with long, flowing fins; some striped like zebras; fish that walk on land; and many others — not excluding the coral snake — all presenting beautiful colors in the water. On the beach many shells were interesting, but the real center of interest was the finding of "cat-eyes," a hard, jewel-like rock formed by a shell fish as a door to his shell, considered as a lucky piece by the finders. Perfect ones were supplied by the natives, who were quick to realize their value. The natives in obtaining them would go out onto reefs and dive deeply to bring up the live shells, containing the "cat-eye." Back in the jungles, interest soon waned because of the terrific humid heat and the denseness of the growth. Jungle life was interesting, but not interesting enough to fight your way through the stuff. There were huge spiders back there as big as a man's hand, with bodies as large as a humming bird, also snakes, birds, parrots and lizards. In the jungles, too, were lime trees, orange trees, banana plants, pineapple and papaya plants. But to obtain the best fruits was to trade with the natives, because of their cultivation of these plants. Much of the tropical growth was fascinating to see — trees hundreds of feet high, clinging vines, thorny bushes, and many other tropical plants and trees, firebrand type of flowers and other tropical blossoms. There were many types of tropical flowering bushes and trees presenting a very pretty sight, with hibiscus identified as one of the common ones. Sometimes in the evening a heady smell of gardenias would fill the tropical air, but none has been discovered. Most of the tropical flowers do not have a scent. There were stories of man-eating plants back in the jungles, but that was probably the figment of someone's imagination. However, there is a plant that quickly curls its leaves around insects. A touch of a stick on the leaf causes the leaf to curl shut. Two other annoying inhabitants of the island were the rats and the land crabs, the rats being the most numerous.

The arrival of our supply ship from Espiritu Santos was looked upon as a relief. Now we would have the essentials that we needed, equipment that would provide us with better facilities. It was amusing to note the exclamations of the men arriving on the ship, when they stepped down from the truck into ankle deep mud and had to slosh about in search of a place to bunk. They weren't quite prepared for that type of reception. Dry ground was virtually unknown in camp.

Dampness and mold presented quite a problem with belongings and clothing. Overnight shoes would become moldy. Rapidly things deteriorated under those conditions. Everything quickly rotted if it wasn't kept dry.

Our temporary galley was finished and we no longer had to prepare our own meals from the rations. Hot and cold food was served on the line, but we still had to eat in the rain, squatting down wherever we could, eating fast so the food wouldn't soak up too much water. Our mess hall was under construction and soon we would be eating under cover, which was nice to contemplate.

Interest of the men centered on the building of platforms for the erection of tents, so that we would be off the ground. The construction had to be done after working hours, so it took quite a while to finish the job. When the tents rose on the platforms and the men moved into their respective "palaces," it was with pride — "Our tent's the best!"

The next three months saw the camp slowly whipping into shape. Our mess hall was completed, and we were eating chow in out of the rain. Showers were constructed, and we no longer had to rely on the rain. In succession came the Quonset huts housing the Ship's Store, the post office, Disbursing and Supply offices. A movie theatre was constructed and a recreation hall built, to furnish entertainment for the men. Slowly the roads emerged out of the mud, by pouring coral on them until they became packed and hard. Let it rain, we wouldn't have to bother about sloshing around in that liquid mud any more. Looking back now, with all the hard packed coral roads and walks, it is hard to realize that we were up to our knees in the mud and water at the beginning.

The docks were presenting their share of work. The battalion was working in shifts, twenty-four hours a day, and seven days a week. Material for war had to move. Ships were loaded and discharged on time. Tonnage, tonnage, tonnage — it really mounted. Task forces, combat troops, supplies of all kinds came and went. We worked rain or shine, night and day, and amidst the humid heat of the tropics, where even the mild exercise of walking brought out beads of perspiration. It was a hard, steady pace.

Despite the hard work, it is American to relax with sports. A baseball field was levelled, and recreation was provided for the men off duty. A basketball court was set up; baseball and basketball teams were quickly organized for competition within the battalion and against other island organizations. A new recreation hall was built, cool and airy, where one could play ping-pong or use the facilities of the various games. The ship's library provided books for all types of reading and on Sundays the room was used as a chapel.

Tragedy and destruction reared its ugly head in August. During evening chow the mess hall caught fire and was quickly consumed. Everyone miraculously escaped injury, except one of our cooks, a fine fellow, and missed deeply by all those who knew him. A temporary mess hall was quickly put up at the old recreation hall, and we ate there until our new mess hall was completed. The ruins of the old mess hall were levelled and removed even before they quit smoking. Several days later, the gasoline tank at Transportation accidentally caught fire, but by many daring dashes into the inferno, the equipment endangered was saved. The fire was confined mostly to the burning tank.

About this time, scuttlebutt was flowing rapidly through the camp — at chow, at work, in the heads, any place where a group of men were gathered. We were going to the China Coast, to Formosa, the Philippines, New Caledonia, and home. We were surely getting around the country with the talk. The Palau Islands were hit, the Mariana Islands were taken. Rapid thrusts were being made in reconquering the Pacific from the Japs. We had emerged from a combat area to a rear area base. Our purpose on Island "X" was slowly passing. However, there was still plenty of work to be done.

Our new mess hall was completed, and we moved in. Out here it provided almost a luxury. We even had music with our noon chow. Cement floors, and a Quonset type building, over the same site of the old mess hall made a nice set-up. The only evidence of the recent fire were the burned cocoanut trees surrounding the building. There was still the same fine view of the sound and out through the "gate," where we could see the ships come and go.

Improvements on the island were rapid. By this time, a person wouldn't know the island as the same one on which we had landed last January. Excellent coral roads were all about the island. Improved dock facilities and many new buildings seemed to have mushroomed up overnight. The nurses and Red Cross girls created quite a stir when they arrived on the island. These were the first women with shoes on that we had seen since we left the States. Island "X" was becoming civilized.

The carpenter shop quickly started a stir, when they received orders to construct boxes and crates in preparation for our leaving Island "X." Just about as rapidly as the boxes were made, things were packed, and soon we were awaiting the orders for our departure. New Caledonia seemed to be our destination. An advance officer left here to look over our new location for camp. But while he was still there, the orders were changed, and we were to remain on duty where we were. The other half of our island regiment, a battalion similar to ours, embarked on their new assignment, and we were left here to handle the cargo for the entire island. Our camp was more or less in a turmoil, everything had to be unpacked and tents that had been torn down had to be rebuilt. The battalion again settled down to the routine of our duty and to normal activities.

The cancellation of our move killed the scuttlebutt. Not a word was spoken of what was going to happen next. However, the scuttlebutt artists soon recovered and new rumors started to flow.

Meanwhile, we had thoroughly enjoyed a Thanksgiving dinner with turkey and all the trimmings, and we fully expected to be eating "K" rations for our Christmas dinner. But the cancellation of evacuation orders provided us with another turkey dinner for Christmas. The coming of Christmas presented

quite a scene. Packages were arriving from the States in volume, containing all kinds of things to eat and use. The holiday brought about quite a bit of nostalgia, the men remembering their Christmases before, among their loved ones. It seemed futile to celebrate anything except American christianity and the hope that we would observe the next one at home. Our Officer-in-Charge, Lt.-Comdr. R. Eisenberg, just about expressed everyone's feelings in his Christmas message to the battalion when he said, in part: "It is realized 'A Merry Christmas' and 'A Happy New Year' may sound like empty phrases to many of you, but it is hoped that in all of you the spirit behind these occasions may prevail. Far from home and those we love, a merry Christmas and a happy New Year may be hard to realize. In these troublesome times, however, it is a real goal to shoot at. All of you have my sincere wishes in that achievement."

The old year rapidly closed, and we observed duty on our Island "X" for one complete year. The coming of January 7th, 1945, brought the determination of every man to fulfill his duty by doing his part in this war to beat the Japs. We are on the road home, via Tokyo. Our eyes turn toward that assignment.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

DECLASSIFIED

ITINERARY OF THE 12TH CONSTRUCTION BATTALION (SPECIAL)

14 Aug 1943 - Transferred from Camp Peary to ABD, Port Hueneme, California.

12 Dec 1943 - Left ABD, Port Hueneme, for overseas destination.

7 Jan 1944 - Arrived Russell Islands.

29 Aug 1944 - A replacement detachment of colored personnel (128 men) reported to battalion for duty, having been detached from the 34th CB (Sp).

24 Apr 1945 - First echelon of battalion, 964 men and 22 officers, departed Russells.

21 May 1945 - Arrived Okinawa.

24 May 1945 - Rear echelon, 82 men and 4 officers, departed Russells.

12 Jul 1945 - Arrived Okinawa.

1 Jul 1945 - Logistic Support Cos. 26 and 32 attached to battalion for operational control - administrative procedure handled by unit commander.

24 Jul 1945 - Logistic support Company 63 consisting 240 men and 5 officers assigned to battalion.

1 Aug 1945 - Located Okinawa.

NOTE: The above itinerary is based on information available in the C.B. Operations Section of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

4 September 1945

To Facilitate
Administrative Handling
Classification changed
from: [redacted]

To: [redacted]

Irvin S. Bromwell
Comdr. CEC-V.) USNR
Signature

U.S.NAVY
th
"BOXCAR BATTALION"
SPECIAL BATTALION

U.S. NAVY
5th
"WILL NEVER CRAP OUT"
SPECIAL BATTALION
"CAN DO"

NO PHOTOS AVAILABLE