

# 18<sup>th</sup> Special Naval Construction Battalion

---

*Historical  
Information*



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



Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
6/19/44	-	Oahu	C. B. report 1 June	Left 2. S. April 1944
7/22/44	-	FRAY-P.H.	Com 14 Sec. Act disp. 060609. July	
11/22	-	Kwajalein	C B report 1 Nov'44	
12/14	-	1/2 FRAY	Com 14 sec act 072103 Dec.	2nd Brigade Co A 12/14 18-44

Review report December shown at HQS

Aug report shown at Peleliu

### 18th C.B. (Sp)

NCTC - Peary  
 ABD - Davisville  
 Ready Date - 1 Jan'44  
 Left ABD - 4 Apr'44  
 Location - Puna-Pata Ulithi San Pedro Bay, Peleliu

### LOG

- 1-27-44 - CNO orders transfer of the 18th (Sp) about 4 Dec'43 to ABD Davisville. (CNO conf. disp. 271309 NCR 3643 from CNO to Peary dtd 27 Nov'43)
- 4-15-44 - 18th (Sp) 1st Sect. left ABD 4 Apr'44. (WKK)
- 8-1-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 18th (Sp) - no info as to location.
- 8-29-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 18th (Sp) - no info as to location.
- 9-26-44 - Officers and men detached to Service Squadron 10 for duty as relief to Sections #1 - #1A of the 14th (Sp). (Conf. ltr from Comserforpac Ser 55-HOB/fnf over F16-4/00/MM over Ser 9813-P dtd 13 Sep to CinC 18th (Sp))
- 0-10-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 18th (Sp) - no info as to location.
- 1-15-44 - The 18th Sp. is on TAD in a forward move and is assigned to HANCB. (Comserforpac-flt Sec. ltr 55-CWK/apk over Ser 001008 to CNO dtd 4 Nov'44)
- 1-21-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 18th (Sp) - Batt was secured from work at P.H. docks on 12 Sep and was in transit until 1 Oct'44.
- 2-28-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 18th (Sp) - Batt in transit 8 days in Oct'44. Report endorsed by 20th Regiment.
- 2-7-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 18th (Sp) - No info on location. Report endorsed by the 20th Regiment.

Location - Ulithi San Pedro Bay

18th CB (Special)

- 2-13-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 18th (Sp) - located at Ulithi Atoll and is connected with COMSERVRON TEN.
- 3- 5-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 18th (Sp) - location not given. Report endorsed by 30th Reg.
- 5-4-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 18th (Sp) - location not given. Report routed via 20th Reg & 2nd Brig.
- 5- 8-45 - The 18th (Sp) is located at Ulithi. (Dirpacdocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr'45)
- 5-14-45 - 1 May'45 report of 18th(Sp) - location not given. Report routed via 20th Reg.
- 5-19-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of 18th (Sp) Sect.1-located at Ulithi. Received 25 men from Comseron 10 during Feb'45. Report end by 20th Reg & 2nd Brig.
- 5-23-45 - The 18th (Sp) Sec 1 is hereby detached from the 30th Reg and 2nd Brdg. The CinC 18th (Sp) Sec 1 will report by ltr to ComservonTen. The unit will continue its present assignment under the operational and admin control of ComservonTen. (Comservpac conf ltr ser 02136 dtd 5 May'45 to OinC 18th (Sp) Sec. 1)
- 6-6-45 - Comservpac desires transfer of 1/2 18th (Sp) to Peleliu to relieve Sec 1 of the 17th (Sp) and to return entire 17th (Sp) to P.H. where the batt will stage. It is requested that 6 Logistic Support Cos be made available to Comservpac, 2 to be ordered to report to Comservon 10 as relief for the 18th (Sp), 2 to be ordered to Comservon 10 as relief for the 17th (Sp) Sec 3, and 2 to be ordered to Comservon 10. (Comservpac 4th end dtd 18 May'45 to 18th (Sp) ltr ser 55-45 dtd 3 Mar'45)
- 6-15-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 18th (Sp) - Batt moved from Ulithi on 35 May and arrived at its present advance base, San Pedro Bay, Philippine Is. on 28 May'45.

Location - San Pedro Bay, Peleliu

18th (Sp)

- 7-18-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 18th(Sp) - location not given. One advance Echelon of 1 offcr & 6 men was sent to Peleliu on 28 Jun'45 on TAD guarding and maintaining equipment formerly belonging to the 17th (Sp) being held in custody by Navy Base for the 18th (Sp) pending arrival of remainder of the Batt at that base.
- 1-21-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 18th(Sp)- located aboard APL 14 at Tacloban. Logistics units #507 & 509, which are to relieve the 18th(Sp) of its duty with the Ammo Sec of ComSerDiv 101 on completion of their training, arrived 25 Jul'45. The 2nd advance echelon consisting of 1 offcr and 6 men departed for Peleliu on TAD orders on 9 July arriving at Peleliu on 12 Jul'45, to supplement 1st echelon for duty in guarding and maintaining gear and eqpt consigned to this batt by the 17th(Sp).
- 10-3-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 18th(Sp) - located at Peleliu.
- 0-18-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of 18th(Sp) - located at Peleliu. Report via 5th Brig. 18th(Sp) reported for duty at Peleliu on 3 Sept'45. 14 Sept'45, 18th(Sp), Detach."A" was detached from 18th(Sp) for duty at Ulithi, Caroline Is. Consisted of 5 officers & 168 men. 56 men transferred to U.S. for discharge under the point system.
- 1-21-45 - Comservpac is requesting Commarianas to deactivate the 18th(Sp). (Comservpac 210026 Nov'45 TWX to Commarianas).
- 1-28-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 18th(Sp) - located at Peleliu. Report via 5th Brig. 18th(Sp) continued to be divided in two sections, the parent organization consisting of Hdqtrs. Co. & one stevedore company serving at Peleliu & a detachment consisting of one stevedore co. serving at Ulithi. 36 men transferred to U.S. for discharge. Inactivation is expected to take place on 1 Dec.'45. Plans call for the removal of the detachment at Ulithi to Peleliu during the early part of Nov.

Location - San Pedro Bay, Peleliu

18th (Sp)

- 12-7-45 - Comservpac reqs Commarianas to inactivate 18th(Sp). (Comservpac dis 293148 Nov'45 to Commarianas).
- 12-14-45 - 1 Dec'45 report of 18th(Sp) - located at Peleliu. Report via 5th Brig. The 2 detachments of 18th(Sp) combined at Peleliu when detachment "A" returned from Ulithi. 52 men returned to Peleliu on 5 Nov'45 & the remaining 106 men arrived on 10 Nov'45. 117 men transferred to U.S. for discharge. On 23 Nov'45 the 507th Logistic Support Co. arrived to relieve this batt.
- 1-31-46 - IsCom Peleliu to ComMarianas 3000056 Nov'45 disp states that the 18th(Sp) was inactivated on 1 Dec'45. (Dirwespacdock conf rpt dtd 10 Jan'46).

INACTIVATED

DinC - Lt. Hugh J. Carpenter  
Exec - Lt. (jg) James W. Iyall  
Lt. (jg) Lewis W. Hallenbeck  
Lt. (jg) Joseph P. O'Mara *Det*  
Lt. (jg) Coyie L. Williams *Det*  
Ens. Ben J. Johnsen *Det*  
Boon, Luther C. Stacy *Det*  
Boon, Victor Zemanek *Det*  
Lt. (jg) Edward Anstil *Det*  
Ens. Thomas C. Hayes  
Carp. Van Buren Peebles  
Carp. Lon A. Morris *Det*  
Lt. George M. Smith  
Ens. Elbert E. Souders

	<u>On Board</u>	<u>Off.</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Auth.</u>
CEC USNR <i>Det 1st Sec</i>					
CEC USNR <i>Det 1st Sec</i>					
CEC USNR <i>Det 1st Sec</i>					
CEC USNR <i>Det 1036 (4p)</i>					
USN <i>Det 1036 (4p)</i>					
CEC USNR <i>Det 1036 (4p)</i>					
USN <i>Det 1036 (4p)</i>					
USN <i>Det 1036 (4p)</i>					
CEC USNR <i>Det 1036 (4p)</i>					
CEC USNR <i>Det 1036 (4p)</i>					
CEC USNR <i>Det 1036 (4p)</i>					
DC USNR					
SC USNR					

*Cut*

18(Sp) 2nd Sec.

18th(Spec) 2nd Sec.

NCTC - Peary  
 ABD -  
 Ready Date -  
 Left ABD -  
 Location -

## LOG

This Section of the 18th (Special) disbanded. Majority of officers ordered to CB Det. 1036(Sp) and the rest going into the 1st Section of the 18th CB(Sp).

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ON BOARD</u>		<u>AUTHORITY</u>
	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>MEN</u>	
30 Jun '44	15	499	Recap.
1 Aug '44	16	481	R & MoR
1 Sep '44	16	475	MoR
30 Sep '44		407	Recap
1 Oct '44	16	407	MoR
1 Nov '44	19	403	MoR
1 Jan '45	19	500	MoR
1 Feb '45	20	496	R & MoR
1 Mar '45	19	514	R & MoR
1 Apr '45	17	511	MoR
1 May '45	17	514	MoR
1 Jun '45	17	513	BNP625 & R
1 Jul '45	17	490	BNP625 & R
1 Aug '45	19	476	BNP625 & R
1 Sept '45	19	287	BNP625 & R
1 Oct '45	19	411	BNP625 & R
1 Nov '45	17	371	BNP625 & R

18th Construction Battalion (Special) - 1st-Sect. (INACTIVATED)



It was July, 1943. The war had been in progress almost four years. America was in. The Seabees had already distinguished themselves on many fronts. More were needed. From all over the country they were converging upon Camp Peary, Virginia. The 18th Special was being born in recruiting stations from Washington to Florida, from Vermont to Mexico. By the end of August our men were hitting the deck or marching in every area under Captain Ware's command. Their hair was gone; serum ran where once had trickled civilian blood; Articles for the Government of the Navy pounded in their heads. Confusion was the only thing they could be sure of. "Everything will be okay when you get into a battalion" was the only slogan that gave them any hope.

Four weeks of Boot. Now the battalion! They had spoken too soon, for after their names in the final muster was a neat "Special Assignment" or "Replacement". A-2, B-1 B-2, 3, 4: code letters that meant Wainwright, K.P., Guard Duty, School, - waiting. So this was working at your own trade! Swamps, wood-cutting, road-building, pots and pans --all received the attention of the future stevedores. -- They learned all about Masters at Arms there, too.

Then at last it came. After watching the bulletin board for weeks there it was: Assigned to the 18th Special Battalion. On Monday, September 29, 1943 over a thousand potential Seabee heroes moved into the Quonset huts of A-9 to begin advanced training. On Tuesday a handful of Marines took over the heroes and pointed out how much civilian they still had in them. But in three weeks they were slowly beaten into something resembling military shape. Close order drill, hikes, extended order, problems, company front (Will you ever forget that dust?), and whenever the opportunity offered, a brisk run



over the obstacle course. And let's not overlook that pleasant day in the James River when we played commando.

When ordered to represent the Seabees in the October 27th Navy Day parade in Williamsburg, the 18th Special proved it could present a military appearance. That company front never looked better.

During most of November the military was set aside and every morning at 0700 the men of the battalion mustered for many types of technical training schools: gunnery, refrigeration, Diesel, wire, and rope splicing, tanks and masts, mosquito control, camouflage, communications, etc. Even stodore CB's must have men familiar with many abilities. -- But it was the stevedore training ship that had the most students. There, night and day, our men practised the trade that would be theirs for the duration. And when the course was over the instructors agreed and so reported that the 18th Special was the best stevedore battalion they had trained to date.

On the morning of November 20th came the moment toward which we had been working. Reviewed by Commandor Ransford and his aides, the 18th Special Naval Construction Battalion received its colors and standard. We were commissioned and ready.

But first --Oh Happy Day!-- that ten days embarkation leave. The return to B 5-6 Drill Hall was not a particularly happy one, but when we arrived the excitement change everything. Companies B and D had been formed into Detachments 1034 and 1036. Companies A, C and Headquarters had become the 18th Special N.C.B., and next day very happily entrained for ABD, Camp Thomas, Davisville, Rhode Island. In that first change we lost well-respected officers and many friends. Detachments 1034 and 1036 were to perform meritorious cargo-handling jobs in advance areas. Two



officers we remember particularly are Commander Arthur, our first OinC, who went to the 19th Special, and Chaplain Herman Ihley, who in our short six weeks in A-9 had endeared himself to us all. Commander Arthur's executive officer, Lieutenant H.J. Carpenter, had become our new Officer in Charge and Lieut. (jg) G.L. Lytle his executive officer.

We arrived in Davisville at 0400, December 4th. For many of the boys it was the first experience with New England winter. They were destined to spend five months learning about it. The bus drivers were soon calling us 18th Station Force, --when they knew where to drop us, for during those five months we moved around the camp six times. One of these moves was into the Sun Valley military training area. It looked like the real thing that week: rifle range to get used to the new carbines, conditioning hikes, field maneuvers, and at the end of the week, --Restriction. But it was another false alarm and back we went to Camp Thomas to work.

Again commendation. A crew of our welders did such excellent work on a large base project that the officer in charge wanted to keep the men. A crew of our heavy equipment men were operating trucks, cranes, and bull-dozers on jobs throughout the station. We had been found dependable. But our chief contribution during those five months was stevedoring on the ABD dock. Putting into operation under actual conditions the lessons learned on the Peary training ship our gangs worked around the clock for several months to keep the cargo moving. Dock Superintendent Ferrol made a formal report of highest commendation and regretted that we could not be assigned as his permanent Seabee stevedore gang.

A basketball team had been  
able showing against base teams. A Wolfe, Gonzales and Sculliero was  
job. Wolfe and Gonzales fought on  
bearing bases. The 18th Special  
Biederman's direction was braving  
our company streets to ringing  
battalion newspaper HATCH CHATTER  
iter's chair and with a competent  
Chaplain Herbert Boardman had  
by him and the newspaper, the  
by Chief Cardinal and Harry Bory,  
tion Hall on the night of March  
music by Bob Biederman's dance



organized and was making a creditable  
team of boxers with such names as  
making appearances and doing a good  
the Camp Thomas team against neighbor  
augmented military band under Bob  
the morning blasts of winter to set  
with martial music. In February the  
was born with Art Johnson in the ad  
staff to keep the processes rolling.  
joined the battalion and, sponsored  
battalion's second smoker, directed  
was given in the Camp Thomas Recrea  
27th. Emceed by Johnny King and with  
band, the smoker played to a packed

house and was a tremendous success. -- The Smoker occasioned the introduction of Lieut. Otto H. Johnson as Executive Officer, replacing Mr. Lytle.

The announcement by the Master of Ceremonies that the next band number "I'll Be Around" was the theme song of the 18th Special got a laugh but proved very untrue, however, for it was only a few days later that the battalion was really on its way.

While most of us left Camp Thomas with regret, thinking of weekend passes, Providence liberty and wives living in East Greenwich, we all knew it was time we were going out, doing our job and getting it over with. So at 1100, April 4th, loaded down with peacoats, packs, rifles, travelling bags, diddy bags, etc., and fortified by doughnuts and Red Cross coffee we rolled down the New Haven tracks on the first lap to Island X.



It was a cold, tired crew that boarded AP-46, the USS Knox, next morning in Norfolk, Va. Life on board ship was simple: sleeping, eating, reading, and sleeping (if you could find a place on deck to do it). Of course during the passage through the Caribbean Sea much of the eating and reading were given over to rail-leaning and sleeping it off. The day spent in the Panama Canal was undoubtedly the highlight of the trip. It must also be said that the 18th Special added another letter of commendation to an increasing file. During the trip many hours were put in by our shipfitters and splicers who did a typically Seabee job of showing Ship's Company how emergency repairs should be done.

On April 23rd land was sighted after much compass-watching and speculation as to destination. It was the Hawaiian Islands. No amount of eye-popping produced hula girls and grass shacks on the shore, but Diamond Head was unmistakeable and across the unbelievably green water was the pink luxury of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. The smell of land and the sight of these long hoard-of places was thrilling. As we docked there was the hula girl, too, only she was dressed in slacks and a very becoming sweater and was driving a dock jitney. During the subsequent months we were to add much to any previous ideas we had had about this Paradise of the Pacific.

Malihinis quickly became haoles as our men explored the city of Honolulu and surrounding areas, took innumerable pictures, became more or less acquainted with the native and white residents, went on many battalion picnics with swimming, sunburn and free beer. We moved only three times during these five months and at last settled in the best area we'd ever had: Navy Hospital No. 128. We enjoyed our own beer garden, movies every night, a dance (in cooperation with our old friends the Y.W.C.A.) with music by our own dance band now ably directed by Norm Campbell. For many of these privileges we were grateful to Chaplain John ("Father John") Przeznik who had replaced Mr. Beardman soon after we arrived.

But first and foremost these five months were to be filled by the job we had come to do. Beginning on Debarkation Day plus 1 our stevedore gangs and crew of checkers worked night and day on every dock around Pearl Harbor. From the Navy Supply Depot Cargo Officer and from Lt. Medlin, officer in charge of Merry's Point, came letters attesting to the excellent work the 18th Special had done. And then as the day for moving on approached came the proudest commendation of all: a letter from Vice-Admiral Ghormley on the emergency job two of our gangs had done discharging and restowing a cargo of tangled telegraph cable.

Our reputation as a crack stevedore battalion, carried with us from Peary, had been upheld. We went to our next Island X confident that we could handle any job offered us.

The climax of the war in the Pacific was approaching: the drive on the Philippines. And although we were not then aware of it, we were to have a part in maintaining the successful march of Halsey's and MacArthur's forces on that objective.

"Without ceremony and with the ease that comes with practice we packed and vacated Pearl Harbor on September 19, 20, and 21st. It was a crowded convoy; we had to divide up into three units. Each of us has his memory of life on the S.S. Cushman K. Davis and the M.S. Sonmolsdijk. We won't

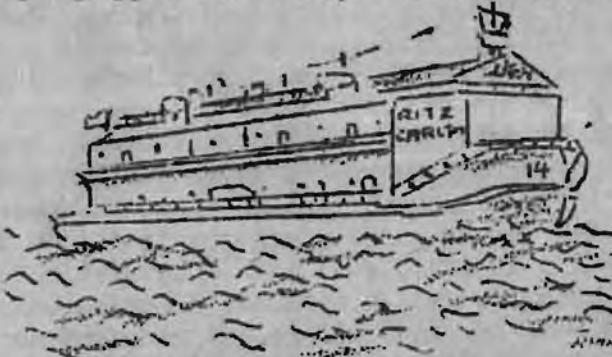


attempt to describe it here.

It was two weeks before land was sighted. Or was it land? Palm trees on a few grains of sand. It was our first sight of a battle area: Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands. A tremendous anchorage busy with war shipping! But Engebi, guardian island of the lagoon, bore mute testimony what a fierce battle had been fought to make that harbor safe for logistical use by the American fleets. Here was our job.

As we looked across the water at Eniwetok and the adjoining islands, we had visions of the rugged Island X life we'd been told about. Then all of a sudden scuttlebutt began to circulate. "No place to stay." They don't want us here." "Orders changed." It was true: the 18th was not just confused again; only reassigned: duty with Service Squadron Ten further west.--- But first the best surprise of all: the most palatial living quarters in the Pacific were to be ours: the APL-14, one of the Navy's new line of hotel barges, and we were the first Seabees to be borned thus afloat. She was promptly named the Ritz Carlton. The Ritz was completely new and magnificently equipped with every convenience: laundry, ice cream dispenser, operating room, barber shop, library, plenty of fresh water, sleeping quarter that looked like a good deal to us.

We stayed aboard a gear and recuperate before our gangs were not idle. got their introduction to climbing Jacob's Ladders, landing craft instead of



few days to secure the next trip. Meanwhile, Around the clock they going to work in an ICM, Transferring cargo to decks.

By October the fourth the 18th was on its way once more, this time more hopelessly separated than ever. Aboard LCI's, tankers, Liberty's, transports, in units of anywhere from ten to one hundred and twenty eight, the battalion set sail for its unknown destination. Again two slow weeks of uneventful sailing. How we longed for our Ritz Carlton as we tried furiously to snap up in salt water showers, or perspired in steaming compartments.

On Saturday, the 14th, land again! Another atoll and with an anchorage bigger than Eniwetok's. It was Ulithi, unknown to us till now. We were amazed to find it had been evacuated by the Japanese only a few days before. Already it was organized into a complete Naval depot, - equipped to perform any kind of servicing. The enemy was no more than seventy five miles off, but the service squadron was ready to work around the clock to keep the Fleets in operation. Our stovederos proceeded to their job as soon as they arrived. And this was the real thing. We were actually passing the shells for our big' ting men. Day and night into the magazinos of our mightiest warships went ammunition loaded by gangs of the 18th Special.

In the performance of this hazardous duty the battalion lost its second man. To the name of Michael J. Casola, lost in a Davisville accident, we added that of Chief Leo J. Leubach who was drowned when he fell from a lighter into a rough sea. We remember, also, Charley Mahig, a good friend since the organization of the battalion, who was seriously hurt in the hatch and returned to the States.

On November 20th the 18th Special marked the first anniversary of its commissioning by a toast between shifts with free beer. It was to be a long pull in Ulithi Atoll. The Fleets returned regularly for us to load up the shells and powder. From Victory ship and Navy ammo ship to LCT and carrier or warship. Remember some of the names that appeared on the assignment list everyday: Bucyrus, Manderson, Elmira, Cape Trinity, Plymouth, Iran, Mount Baker, Nitro? Can you forget the LST's in the South Anchorage? Official consensus was that the LST's couldn't be loaded with ammo in the time or manner planned. We introduced the greased chute--the old Can Do did it. And it soon became obvious what part we were playing in the drive to Tokyo. We had filled the magazinos of the Essex class carriers, of the Iowa class BB's that mopped up the Japanese Navy in the Philippine Sea. We were behind the salvos that prepared the way for the Marinos on Iwo Jima. Our hands and sweat had been on the shells that softened Okinawa and sent hundreds of Nip fliers into the home waters of Hirohito. To put it bluntly we were doing two twelve hour shifts of dull, back-breaking work. When April 6th came we celebrated the anniversary we really cared about: one year overseas, and silently prayed for the prompt receipt from Uncle Sam of our return ticket when we hit that 18th month.

Concrete evidence of our job in Ulithi came not only in the news from the front but in commendations from Squadron Supply Officer, Captain W.J. Newinski, from Commodore W.R. Carter and from Vice-Admiral Halsey, Commandant of the Third Fleet, himself. Then, too, Correspondent

E.G. Valens of the Associated Press in a syndicated article that appeared all over the country spared no adjectives in describing the fleet servicing of ServRon 10, calling it "Nimitz's Secret Weapon", and throwing in a special bouquet to the Seabees of the Ritz Carlton. Lowell Thomas, in his Blue Network news program, expanded on the article and gave figures on the amount of cargoes we had handled. Our own figures showed 300,000 tons for ten months of our first year overseas.

Life on the barge had kept step. The receipt at year's end of 98 Firemen First Class (MoMM) and (EM) raised our number to a normal 527. They soon stowed away their designations and became Seabee stevedores. All our ingenuity was mustered to make Christmas at least different from other days. A home-made tree, special chow and beer, 69 sacks of mail, festival divine services had the desired effect. When the schedule permitted there was liberty on Hog Mog, where five cans of beer, swimming, shell-hunting and fights with the Common Navy were featured. On New Year's Eve "The Eighteenth Specialties of 1945", our touring variety show was born. At the end of March the scuttlebutt about moving forward got as far as bulletin board orders. But we stayed to celebrate Easter. On April 16th were held the first of a series of examinations working toward the awarding of all the open rates, an objective which came closest to fulfillment during the last two months of the battalion. By now, also, YF 246, anchored close by, had been set up as the 18th Special Warehouse. In it were not only our supplies, but the Cobbler Shop, Issue Room, Carpenter Shop, Print Shop, Hobby Lobby and Rigging Loft.

Then came Embarkation Day again. On May 25th we headed west from Ulithi Atoll on the PA 192, the USS Rutland. The destination was Leyte Gulf in the Philippines, the newly opened advance base for the Seventh Fleet. Most of ComServRon Ten had preceded us; repair ships, tankers, etc., and the Seabee units necessary to construct shoreline installations. We arrived to take our place in the fleet servicing already begun.

We were not to see much of the Philippines, for the assignment was to be a short one. The scenery from the Ritz Carlton was much like that of Hawaii: undulating green hills. But there the similarity stopped. That green was dense tropical jungle. The climate was hot, humid and un-



healthy. The natives were friendly but pathetically low in living standards after years of Japanese domination. They had become shrewd traders, recognizing in the souvenir-minded American serviceman a source of clothing and other necessities of life. Their towns, as for example Tacloban, were a discordant mixture of Grecian-style state building and mud-surrounded shack.

Pelolu, in the Palau Islands, was to be the next stop, we learned, with a section of the outfit returning to Asor Island, Ulithi. But we didn't leave as soon as we had expected. ComservRon 10 needed us to assist in the final preparations for the Naval push on Japan itself. The Third and Seventh Fleets were being serviced to move into the home waters.

On the API-14 the war was affecting us in a somewhat different manner. Bacillary dysentery had infiltrated among us and was striking down men on every deck. Lt. Comdr. Walter B. Vercoe, who had replaced Lieut. Carpenter as OinC in June, gave the command to Dr. Hawken who organized the ship to battle. The painstaking process of treating the sick, of sterilizing and disinfecting the sick, of trying to segregate the infected in close quarters. At its peak in July dysentery had over 200 men aboard. The yellow jack of quarantine heads besides ours. All of the vital battle cargo moving Support Units had arrived to Special and us and our stevedores had been transferred to the handling of



Then came the day when that magnificent fleet moved slowly past us where we lay at the entrance to San Pedro Bay. We knew that the end for Japan was near: V-J Day was in sight. B-29's had pounded the home islands from the air. The fleet would pound them from the home waters in preparation for the landing of the Army. Suddenly this well-schemed pattern was made unnecessary by the atomic bomb, and the war was over. On Friday evening, August 14th came the momentous announcement that surrender had been offered by the Japs.

The tension of months was relaxed and the spontaneous celebration in the bay will always be a joyful memory for us. Every ship broke out pyrotechnics. The sky was alive with red, green and white rockets and flares and weaving searchlights. Free beer made us even happier. Now, we said, it was only a question of time before we'd be homeward bound. Next day the Navy's first point system was published in AlNav 196: 44 points. No one had enough. But the outfit's 42 year olds were on the way anyway. Now the Navy must give points for overseas duty. All kinds of speculation and arguments were heard.

The most pertinent question, however, was whether we'd have to go to Peleliu and Asor. It was soon answered. By heroic measures the Medical Department had conquered the epidemic and the yellow jack came down the last week in August. Sailing orders arrived almost simultaneously. On August 31st the LST's 616 and 354 carried the 18th Special and its gear to Pololiu where we landed on D-Day plus 354 in a torrential downpour which continued for three days.

A small detachment of Headquarters men had been ashore for several weeks before our arrival working against great odds to prepare the old 17th Special camp for our accommodation. We had arrived at last on Island X as proper Seabees. Life on the barge had been getting cramped. This was more like downtown: quonset huts with natural ventilation, a movie area with plenty of seats, roads and transportation, space to move around. In a short time we were maintaining the camp and working the ships and the beach as if the war hadn't been terminated. C Company and 60 Headquarters men went on to Asor Island shortly as Detachment "A" under the command of Lieutenant Johnson. Mr. Vorcee had gotten his orders for home and had given the battalion into the hands of Lieut. Commander John R. Gehrig, former Exec of the 22nd Special. Under Mr. Gehrig's direction the battalion moved forward to finish its last mission with colors flying as proudly as they had in October 1943.

The island of Pololiu became of vast interest to us in our spare moments. We looked with respect and emotion at the places we had read and heard about: Bloody Nose Ridge, its caves, the reef beside our ~~area~~ <sup>area</sup> where 700 Marines had died, the amazingly strong Jap emplacements and buildings, the white-crossed cemetery. This was a battleground for history.

But our most constant thoughts were not of history. They were at home. On September 13th



came AlNav 252 giving  $\frac{1}{4}$  point for every month of Overseas Duty. This was the beginning of the end of the 18th Special. On September 16th forty five men embarked for discharge under the provisions of this AlNav. More left from time to time. The outfit carried on. October brought the news we had been waiting for for two years: AlNav 345 which lowered the basic point score to 41 points and gradual further lowering month by month was the first, but more stupendous was the dispatch announcing the inactivation of the battalion on December 1st. All of the old 18th Specialists would go home.

On November 10th C Company returned to finish the time with the outfit. Lt. Commander Gehrige, satisfied that all was in readiness for the inactivation, left for home, weeks later. Lieutenant Hallonbeck took up the task of being the last Officer in Charge of the 18th Special U. S. Naval Construction Battalion and the one who would take it home after an active existence of just two years.

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ITINERARY OF THE 18TH (SP) CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

4 Dec 1943 - Transferred from Camp Peary to ABD, Davisville, R. I.

4 Apr 1944 - Left ABD, Davisville.

1 May 1944 - Arrived Oahu, T. H. on or about this date.

12 Sep 1944 - Secured from work on Pearl Harbor docks.

1 Oct 1944 - On or about this date arrived Ulithi.

25 May 1945 - Moved from Ulithi.

28 May 1945 - Arrived San Pedro Bay, Philippine Is.

28 Jun 1945 - Advance echelon of one officer and six men sent to Peleliu on TAD guarding and maintaining equipment formerly belonging to the 17th(Sp) being held in custody by Navy Base for the 18th (Sp) pending arrival of remainder of the 18th (Sp) battalion at that base.

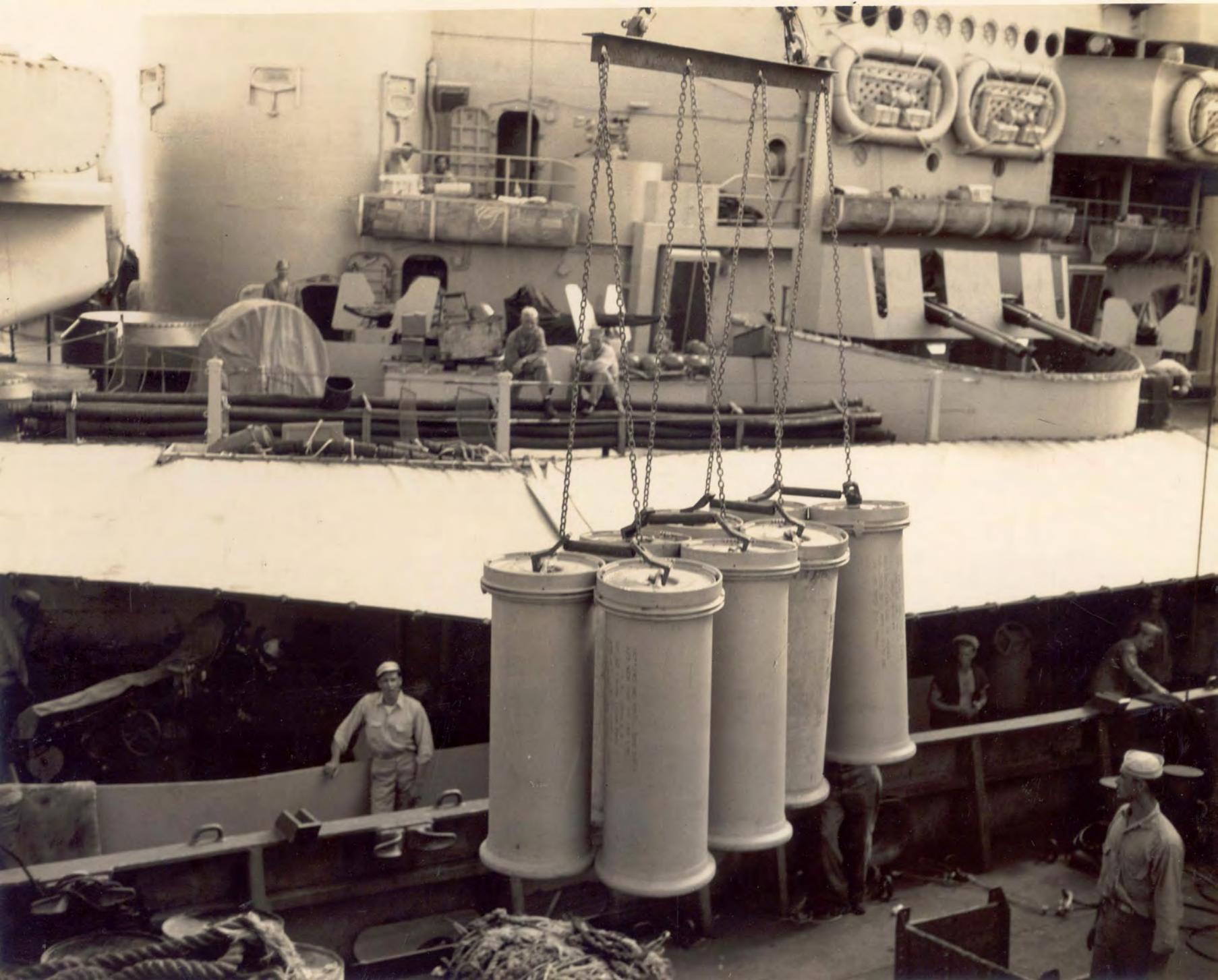
9 Jul 1945 - Second advance echelon departed for Peleliu on TAD orders to supplement first echelon for duty in guarding and maintaining gear and equipment.

1 Aug 1945 - Located aboard APL 14 at Tacloban.

Note: This itinerary is based upon the records available in the C. B. Operations Section of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

6 September 1945.







MR. COMPTON

BOMB BODY PATER

ASSEMBLED IN U.S.A.

REDUCED TO

LOW DENSITY

FOR AIR CRAFT

REMOVED

ON ORIGIN

BY THE MANUFACTURER

OR BY THE

ARMED FORCES

OF THE UNITED STATES

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