Naval Construction Maintenance Unit 512

Historical Information

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

NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

CBMU 512

1st Embarkation		2nd Embarkation	
NCTC	- Peary	NCTC	- (Parks)
ABD	- ABD Hueneme	ABD	- Parks
Ready Date	- 10 Jul'43	Ready Date	- 15 Nov'44
Left ABD	- 8 Jul'43	Left ABD	- 17 Nov'44
Location	- Sitka	Location	- ~~SeWesPac~~ Leyte -Samar

LOG

6- 1-43 - Original officers detached from 90th CB and formed this unit.
6- 7-43 - CBMU 512 to ABD Hueneme 13 Jun'43.
7- 1-43 - CBMU 512 is at Sitka. (Com 1 to ComAlSec dtd 6-21-43 Sec. Disp)
7-15-43 - CBMU 512 departed Hueneme 8 Jul'43 - destination Sitka.
3-17-44 - CBMU 512 located at Sitka. (1st Brig. report dtd 1 Mar'44)
5-10-44 - 1 May'44 report of CBMU 512 - operating at Sitka.
8- 3-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of CBMU 512 - operating at Sitka.
8- 5-44 - CBMU 512 scheduled to return to U.S. 1st week in Aug'44. (Alaskan Sector report dtd 24 Jul'44)
8-29-44 - CBMU 512 arrived Parks via San Fran 22 Aug'44 with 7 officers and 235 men. (24TWX2019 Aug'44 from Parks to Budocks)
9- 2-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of CBMU 512 - then operating at Sitka.

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10-27-44 - CBMU 512 assigned to Cub 12 for operations at KING 2. (Comserfor7flt Sec. ltr to Budocks S31 over Ser BP-001873 dtd 6 Oct'44 - Call No. 13668)
10-27-44 - CBMU 512 assigned to AVID, ready by 15 Nov'44. (Cominch Sec. Disp. 181649 NCR 47435 to Com 12 to Budocks, Parks dtd 19 Oct'44)

CBMU 512

11-22-44 - CBMU 512 departed Parks for overseas 17 Nov'44 with 5 off. and 272 men. (Parks conf. disp. to Bupers 182240 NCR 7066 dtd 19 Nov'44)
11-29-44 - CBMU 512 is located at Tacloban, Leyte. (Comserv7flt Sec. Disp. to CNO 150133 NCR 18921 dtd 24 Nov'44)
2-15-45 -- CBMU 512 arrived Leyte approx. 27 Dec'44.(Comserfor7flt Sec. report for Dec'44 dtd 15 Jan'45).
3-16-45 -- Comserfor7flt conf. spdltr Ser. 0386 dtd 2 Mar'45 to CNOB Leyte Gulf - CBMU 512 is hereby detached from its presently assigned duties. Shall report to CNOB Leyte Gulf for duty with CNS Samar.
3-22-45 - Comdt NOB, Tacloban, Leyte orders CBMU 512 to further report to CO, NavSta, ~~Tac~~ Guiuan, Samar for duty. (Comdt ltr P16-3(1) over Ser 997 dtd 11 Mar'45 to OinC)
4- 7-45 - CBMU 512 reported to the CO NavSta, Guiuan, Samar on 14 Mar'45--ordered to further report to the Comdr Const. Forces for duty. (1st end. on CNOB Leyte orders NS/P16-3(1) over Ser 1338 dtd 14 Mar'45)
4-10-45 - CBMU 512 is located at Samar.(Com7flt Sec. disp to Cominch 250756 Mar'45).
4-30-45 - CBMU 512 is located at Guiuan, Samar. (Comserfor7flt Sec Rep of 1 Apr'45)
5-8-45 - 1 ~~Feb~~ Apr'45 report of CBMU 512 - located at Guiuan. 25 men of CBMU 512 are on temp duty at different location. Unit arrived Parks on 22 Aug'44 and embarked on present tour of duty 17 Nov'44.
5-24-45 - 1 May'45 report of CBMU 512- located in Leyte-Samar area. Report end by 3rd Brg Sec 2.
5-29-45 - CBMU 512 is under the adm control of the 3rd Brg and under oper control of the CO, US NavSta, Samar. (1st end to CBMU 512 conf ltr ser 177 to Dirpacdocks SF dtd 8 May'45)

Location - Leyte-Samar CBMU 512

5-29-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of CBMU 512 - located in Samar area. The 25 men on Temp. detached duty have returned to the Unit. Report endorsed by 3rd Brig, Sec.2.

6-29-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of CBMU 512 - located in Samar area. Engaged in maintenance of Nvl Station Samar. Report routed via 12th Reg & 2nd Brig.

7-11-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of CBMU 512 - located in Samar. area. Engaged in maintenance of Nvl Station Samar. Report via 12th Reg and 2nd Brig.

7-19-45 - Desire to use CBMU 512, 544, 568, 569, and 582 in lieu of 75th CB. These units will not be inactivated. 75th CB will not be inactivated and will be left in your area. (Comservpac sec disp 150137 July to Comserv7flt)

7-29-45 - CBMU 512 is located at Guiuan, Samar maintaining Naval fac for U.S. NavSta Guiuan. (CCT 7th Flt Sec Rep for June)

8-13-45 - The CBMU 512 is assigned to the Olympic Operation. (Com7flt conf report on CB organization in Leyte-Samar area ser 04296 dtd 26 July to CNO)

8-14-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of CBMU 512 - located in Samar area. Engaged in maintenance of Nvl Station Samar. Report via 12th Reg and 2nd Brig.

8-31-45 - Remove from alerted status my 192321 July of higher classification following CB units:-CBMUs 512, 568, 569 & 582. Cincpoa approval is requested to inactivate these CBMUs. (Comservpac sec spdltr ser 272049 Aug'45 to Com7thFlt).

9-14-45 - Inactivation of following unit at Samar approved:-CBMU 512. (Cincpoa conf spdltr ser 32474 dtd 7 Sept'45 to Comservpac).

9-18-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of CBMU 512. Located at Samar area. Report via 12th Reg & 2nd Brig.

10-1-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 34th Reg. - Officers & men of CBMU 512 were transferred into the 61st CB.

Location - Samar CBMU 512

10-3-45 - Comservpac is requesting Comphilseafron to inactivate the following units:- CBMUs 512, 568, 569 & 582, 88th CB. Inform Comservpac when inactivations are completed. (Comservpac conf spdltr ser 05194 dtd 12 Sept'45 to Comphilseafron).

10-24-45 - CBMU 512 was inactivated on 11 Sept'45. (Comphilseafron restr spdltr ser 1962 dtd 7 Oct'45 to Comservpac).

INACTIVATED

DATE	ON BOARD OFFICERS	ON BOARD MEN	AUTHORITY
30 Jun'44	7	240	Recap.
1 Aug'44	7	240	MoR
1 Oct'44		237	BNP625
1 Nov'44		277	BNP625
19 Nov'44	5	272	Disp. 182240 NCR 7066
31 Dec'44		270	Recap
1 Feb'45	5	270	MoR
1 Mar'45	6	265	BNP625 - M.R
1 Apr'45	6	261	BNP625 , M.R
1 May'45	6		R
1 Jun'45	5	262	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	5		Roster
1 Aug'45	5	245	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45	5	227	BNP625 & R

C.B.M.U. #512 (INACTIVATED)

HISTORY OF C.B.M.U. 512

It was a hot Virginia sun that cast its piercing rays into the flesh and bones of 275 officers and men of C.B.M.U. 512. We had been assembled at the railroad station at 1300, 13 June 1943, to board a train that would take us from Camp Peary to the West Coast. The train was late, and Captain J. G. Ware, who always made the final inspection of outgoing units, was also late. Camp Peary's band played lively music including the song, "Carry Me Back To Old Virginia," which brought cat-call from many perspiring men. This waiting period gave us time for memories.

We remembered those days some six months previous when we doffed our civilian clothes to step into dungarees and G.I. shoes. We recalled each phase of the transformation. Nothing was ever accomplished in the Navy without first having to stand in line, and it made no difference whether the line was in the sleet or snow, rain or sun, indoors or outdoors—but invariably it was outdoors. This continuous line of confused men began with the clothing issue, then to the barber shop where we lost most of our hair, then to the photograph laboratory for identification card pictures, then to a warehouse to draw mattresses and blankets, and finally to tents where we were to spend our first night sleeping on a hard canvas cot. We were awakened the following morning at 0530 by the unpleasant sound of the bugle—an instrument that has broken our dreams for more than two and one-half years. We knew that our boot training had begun. The long, weary days that followed found us marching, drilling, listening to lectures, and learning the lessons of how to kill and how to survive. We were moulded into a machine, the brains of which existed only in our instructor's head. Doctors were forever sticking needles in our arms, inoculating us against practically every known disease. It was an unpleasant business and far from the conception of the peace-loving men we had been a short time ago. We were "prisoners" for six long weeks confined within the areas of Camp Bradford, Camp Allen, and Camp Peary, and it was a feeling of relief when the gates were thrown open and we were granted our first liberty.

THAT BOOT HAIRCUT.

We remembered those days spent in replacement. We were subjected to new instructors, more drilling, and more marching, but we had learned our lesson well in boot camp and knew that we were good. We took pride in our military appearance. Some of us were placed in scarlet fever quarantine, necessitating weeks of segregation from our mates, yet our military training continued. The more fortunate of us were immediately put in battalions, while others waited weeks. Vacancies in rates of battalions' complement determined the rapidity with which we were assigned. The assignment sheets were posted, and each day everyone sought his name, and sooner or later it appeared.

We remembered those days when we were assigned to Supernumerary Number II, which was later changed to the 90th Construction Battalion. It was a good thing that we had absorbed as much military training in boot camp and in replacement as we had, for we were to receive our ad-

vance training under the ever watchful eyes of the Marines who became our instructors. We thought that we had learned everything of a military nature, yet that was a

THE MARINES TAUGHT US THE HARD BITTER FACTS OF KILLING

mere drop in the bucket as compared to what the Marines pounded into us. There were forced twenty mile marches under full pack; there were the precarious obstacle courses; there were continuous days of monotonous drills. Finally we knew the value of team work; we knew how to take orders and how to execute them; we knew how to get the job done with the least amount of effort. We were taught that there are three ways of doing a job—the right way, the wrong way, and the Navy way. Some of us were fortunate in having been assigned to service schools to learn the Navy way of doing the same trades that we had learned and practiced many years in civilian life. Eight weeks closed our advance training, and although we had thought we were good before, we were much nearer to perfection after having been impregnated with the best training the Navy could administer. Much to our surprise the 90th Construction Battalion was divided into three sections. One-half of the battalion was made into the 1009th C.B. Detachment, one-quarter of the battalion went to the Fleet Marine Force at New River, North Carolina, and Company D and a portion of Headquarters Company comprised Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit Number 512.

We remembered those liberties spent in Williamsburg, Richmond, and other nearby communities. The town of Williamsburg was, and still is, one of the most interesting places on the East Coast, having been reconstructed by the Rockefeller Foundation to appear as it had during the time of the English rule. Service men were invited on conducted tours through those 18th century mansions, palaces, capitol, armory, and taverns. We felt somewhat out of place among the pewter, heavy chests, and antiques. Although hard liquor was not for sale openly, it could be had for a price, yet most of us stayed within the bounds of the old taverns to enjoy quart mugs of beer and ale. The girls,

THE GIRLS IN WILLIAMSBURG WERE PRACTICALLY UNTOUCHABLE

students of William and Mary College, were under age and practically untouchable. Richmond was a sightseer's paradise and far removed from the sedate Williamsburg. One could find there what he wanted—be it church services or the proverbial wine, women, and song.

And so it was on that hot June day after six months of training, we were leaving Camp Peary to take our place among the millions of men who were dedicated to the cause of freedom, equality and justice. We were snapped to attention as Captain Ware's black sedan came into view. He and Admiral Morales rode by, looked us over, and went

on their way with the feeling that at least 275 officers and men had graduated with honors from that military college.

It was not long before the train rounded the curve; and, while we were engulfed in its compartments and coaches, the band played "California Here I Come." Traveling on a troop train can be perhaps the most monotonous experience a person can have. We were invariably standing in line for chow as there was only one diner, and chow at its best on one of those trains was none too good. We managed to while away the hours reading, sleeping, and watching the landscape fade into the East. Occasionally the train would stop giving us a chance for exercise. It took five days and six nights to zigzag across the continent, and finally we arrived in Port Hueneme, California, 18 June 1943.

Those men who had not taken their leave from Camp Peary were given leave from Hueneme. That was the last chance of visiting loved ones before shoving off to parts unknown. To many it was the first time they had been to the sunny shores of Southern California; to many it was a disappointment; but everyone made liberty in the fabulous Hollywood. Those more fortunate were taken on conducted tours through the studios, while the less fortunate stood on the outside wondering what was going on within the sound stages.

The men who were not on leave were again thrown into military training and service schools. Days passed into weeks, and it was three weeks after our arrival when we had our first indication of what part of the world we were to be sent. We were issued fleece lined coats, woolen underwear, arctics, and everything essential for living in the cold north. We entrained 7 July 1943 at Port Hueneme and for two days rode through the beautiful redwood forests of California and Oregon, under the shadows of snow capped Mount Shasta and Mount Rainier and over the rivers and valleys to Seattle, Washington.

The S.S. MORMACHAWK, the ship that was destined to transport us to "Island X," was docked at her berth, awaiting our arrival. We immediately boarded ship. Liberty was granted to a few men who lived in Seattle, but the remainder of us were permitted only to walk around the Naval premises. The following morning, 11 July 1943, the MORMACHAWK dropped her lines, and, as she got under way, the stern of the ship hit the end of the pier, but went slowly on her course. It was a comforting sight to see small Coast Guard boats encircle us. Those boats were to be our escorts for two days, together with a Navy blimp that hovered over us, searching for marauding submarines. With a feeling of security we settled down to enjoy the beautiful scenery of Puget Sound. At the mouth of the Sound, the Skipper pointed the bow to the West. The ship

rolled and tossed, and it was not very long until the rails were lined with heaving, seasick, dry land sailors. Some of the men, among whom was H. J. Miller, continued to be sick throughout the entire voyage. After a westward course

of approximately seventy-five miles, the MORMACHAWK turned due North. Bets were flying high, and scuttlebutt outdid itself. We were going to Attu, Kiska, Dutch Harbor, and Seward. No one knew, but everyone passed on each bit of information to his mates, and each time a little more was added. The farther North we traveled, the longer the evenings grew. It was 2130 the 13th of July that land was first sighted. Little did we know that this island was to be the future home for some of us.

In the distance the mainland became clearer and clearer with beautiful, snow capped Harbor Mountain blocking our course. Cross Mountain, to the starboard, reflected its snow crested cross into the green waters of the bay. At 2330 the MORMACHAWK turned into Sitka Channel, and a sight, long to be remembered, was old Baranoff Castle overlooking the channel. From its windows dozens of fe-

males waved flags and bunting with large lettering—WELCOME, U.S.O. That was the first indication that "Island X" was not to be as dismal as our instructors had painted it back in dear old Virginia. The ship tied up to the dock on Japonski Island, an island that had formerly been used as a Japanese prison camp during the Russian regime and which was now to be used as our base of operations.

We spent the remainder of the night aboard ship, and each of us, eager to get a better view of his new home, awakened early the next morning to watch the fishing boats at anchor and to view the beautiful northern scenery. After

Fishing Fleet.

chow we disembarked, loaded our gear on trucks, and marched in a military manner to our quarters. It was a feeling of disbelief when we walked into a three story, steam heated barracks complete with tile heads and showers, lounge, double decked steel bunks, eight inch thick mattresses, steel lockers, and a magnificent view from every

Lt. Mattice, Lt. Hill, and Chief Warrant Officer Strehlau.

window. The officers fared even better. They occupied one-half of a two-story duplex furnished with an over-stuffed living room set, a Chippendale dining room set, an all electric kitchen, and private bed rooms with twin beds. After we had squared away our gear, we took a tour of the base. The dispensary was near our barracks and was staffed with the best medical personnel, including two nurses, that the Navy could obtain. We were amazed when we walked into the mess hall. The interior was in white, stainless steel steam tables and coffee urns, tile deck, clean linoleum topped tables, and a radio-victrola combination. The library possessed practically everything one would want to read, and it afforded a quiet place in which to study or read current newspapers, magazines, and books. The recreation building housed the theater, canteen, basketball court, bowling alleys, billiard tables, exercise rooms, heads and showers. The channel was jammed with small Navy boats to be used for fishing. All in all it was a far cry from the training camps that we had experienced, and we considered ourselves lucky to have fallen into the lap of luxury.

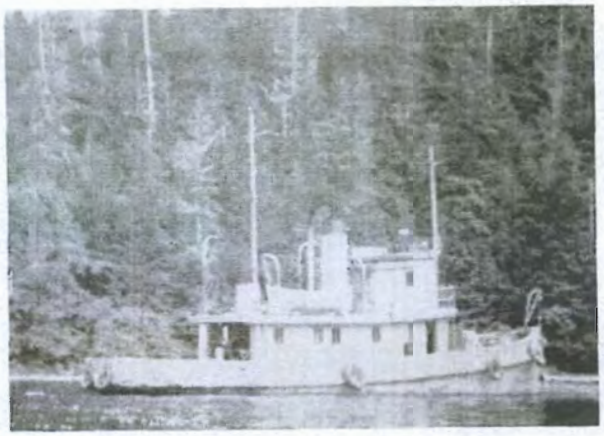
We did not have long to tarry before our work was cut out for us. No sooner had Lt. Hill paid his respects to Captain R. S. Taylor, Skipper of the base, and to Lt. L. L. Willard, Public Works Officer, than work assignments began to take form. Two major construction projects with supporting activities had to be started immediately. This was the organization set-up: Lt. Hill, Officer in Charge of C.B.M.U. 512; Lt. Mattice, Engineer in charge of construction; Ensign Wolaver, Superintendent of construction at Makhnati; Warrant Officer Bell, Superintendent of construction at Biorka; and Warrant Officer Strehlau, Superintendent of garage and heavy equipment.

Surf beating against volcanic rocks.

The first job to get underway was the completion of an Army installation on Biorka, the island that we had first sighted on our way to Japonski. Biorka covered an area of approximately eighteen square miles. A natural bay guarded the entrance to the island and was supported by a newly constructed "T" dock. There were two small sandy beaches, but the majority of the coast line was a mass of rocks and cliffs with the surf rising at times from 50 to 100 feet. The island was hilly. Fir, spruce and pine trees towered 90 feet in the sky at the beach while on top of the hills only scrawny scrubs would grow due to the high velocity of the winds that whipped across the island. The island, in its beginning, was nothing more than a volcanic rock, but as time progressed enough soil accumulated to support trees and vegetation. Gradually the island was covered with muskeg, a substance composed of volcanic ash, hair roots, and rotting vegetation. This muskeg was a continual hazard which acted like quicksand, ranging from two feet to thirty feet deep. Rainfall constituted the only source of water, but there was always an abundance. Although it did not taste bad, it was the color of vinegar from seepage through the muskeg. The island as a whole was very bleak and dreary.

On the 15th of July Chief Whalen and a detail of sixteen men left for Biorka to prepare the campsite for approximately sixty permanent personnel. Immediately upon

their arrival, they began the job of cleaning barracks, mess hall, sickbay, showers and heads, all of which had been previously occupied by employees of a private contracting firm. The following day Mr. Bell and the remainder of the crew arrived on the Nile, a 75 foot tug that was to play an important role in our construction program. An organization was set up under the very capable direction of Mr. Bell. William Campbell acted as Mr. Bell's assistant engineer, and it was partly through his efforts and leadership that the work progressed so rapidly. It was 512's loss when he received his commission as Ensign a few months later and returned to the states for further assignment. Supporting activities were set up to facilitate the construction of the major project. F. F. Hatfield was in charge of the sickbay, and as a result of his untiring efforts and long hours of duty, we were kept in the best of physical condition, and man hours lost due to illness were far below the minimum. George White presided over the galley which was staffed with such excellent cooks as W. F. McNew and R. F. Keefe. These three men did much to keep the morale of the men high with their palatable chow. Chief Duncan had charge of the garage and heavy equipment, a major assignment in itself in view of the fact that only broken-down trucks, bulldozers, and a shovel were available for use.



The Nile.

Chief P. M. Edwards worked with Chief Duncan in keeping the equipment in working order. The electrical crew was headed by Chief Krumenaker; J. R. Marquis supervised plumbing and pipe fitting; V. A. Cusanello was labor boss. Chief Whalen was in charge of construction crews, while Chief Sheridan handled camp maintenance and waterfront activities.

The Army installation was located on the highest point of the island, approximately three and one-half miles from the beach. A rough, corduroy road had long been used, and the steady hauling of materials to the project soon put this road in a useless condition. It would have been impossible to surface the road due to the quicksand-like muskeg and the lack of gravel. The only other solution was to build a wooden road. The material was close at hand because a few days after our arrival, a violent storm had torn away our new dock and had tossed the lumber and piling high on the beach. Although it was a catastrophe insofar as our supply lines from the base were concerned, it was a boon to our wooden road. All hands turned to the construction of the road, and it was not long before it was completed. A covering of rock and sand protected it from the grinding treads of the caterpillar. A maintenance crew kept the road in usable condition throughout our stay.

Work on the major installation was continually hampered by rain. During the first three months of operation only three days were free from rain. Each man wore rain gear, but after several hours of working outside, the rain gear would be soaked. Everyone had to change his clothes at noon and again at night. When he ran out of clean, dry clothes, he was confined to his barracks as a prevention against colds. Service from Japonski was very irregular, and it was a job to keep us supplied with the bare necessities.

ONCE IN A WHILE THE SUN WOULD TRY TO BREAK THROUGH.

The installation required tons and tons of concrete, and to obtain it required untold ingeunity. Cement in bags was transported from Japonski to Biorka on barges or rafts, usually pulled by the Nile, which entailed working with the tides. The rafts and barges were beached at medium,

Barge being pulled by the Nile.

out-going tides, and all hands had to turn-to to unload the cement. The time of day or night made no difference—the material had to be unloaded. It was hauled on trucks from the beach to the project and stowed in a waterproof shed. Procurement of aggregate and sand was another problem. Chief Edwards operated the shovel at the beach to dig out all the stone and sand possible without changing the coast line. This material was then hauled to the job where a stone crusher had been assembled. Rock was put through the machine and crushed to the required size, washed and screened. Water used for washing aggregate and sand was pumped from a muskeg hole 900 feet away through forty-five length of two inch pipe. This water supply was inexhaustable as it rained each day, replenishing that which had been previously used.

Transportation of supplies hampered progress on the job. Storms frequently disrupted the under water telephone communications. Vitally needed supplies could not be ordered from the base, and at times those that were ordered could not be procured at Japonski; consequently weeks and sometimes months passed before replacement parts arrived from the states. The Army maintained a regular boat schedule to Biorka, and we had the Nile and several smaller crafts that made the trip ladened with material and equipment. During extremely rough weather, all boats were held at anchor leaving Biorka isolated.

To add to the many troubles confronting these toiling Seabees, the garage burnt down. A truck was on the grease rack, and someone was burning off a tie bolt when sparks from the cutting torch ignited gasoline fumes arising from the deck. The garage and all its contents were consumed in a blazing inferno in a few minutes. A broken-down truck in front of the garage was snaked away to safety, and all that could be done was to spray water on gasoline drums near the garage to keep them from exploding. The loss of the truck, a new International motor, and tools was a serious blow, but it did not take long to erect another garage and to procure tools and equipment from the base.

Not all of our time was spent in working. There were

limited recreational facilities. One of the buildings was converted into a theater and canteen. We had movies three times a week with Stanley Narog acting as projectionist. There were tables in the canteen where we sipped

our beer and cokes. Chief Whalen presided over ship service, selling those necessities that were obtainable from the base. Saturday night was always the big night at Biorka. Almost all of the crew would assemble in the canteen for hours of mass bingo. Cartons of cigarettes or perhaps cans of beer were the prizes. It was necessary that one-quarter of the crew be aboard at all times, and at the beginning of our duty three-quarters of us went to Sitka for liberty over the weekends. We soon learned that the trip over the rough water was not worth the trouble of going because invariably most of us would get seasick. So, we were contented to spend the long weekends on the island searching for whatever meager diversions we could find. We enjoyed fishing from skiffs, and the small halibut that we caught supplemented our diet. There was an abundance of deer on the island; and when our meat supply ran low, a nice, tender buck was killed. Approximately forty mink were caught during our stay. Mallard ducks were plentiful, and bald headed eagles were forever keeping a watchful eye on us. A natural cove afforded us a perfect target range. We set up our targets on one side and fired from the other. Cartons of cigarettes constituted prizes for the best marksmanship. When the weather was too bad for anything out doors, we stayed in the barracks, listening to the radio, reading, writing, or just lying in the sack dreaming of our loved ones back home and wishing that the war would end.

Fishing from a skiff.

Work on the project continued as rapidly as possible, then one day, ten months after we had first set foot on Biorka, orders came for us to pack up our gear and return to the base. Those were busy days because we had accumulated quite a bit of material and supplies during the time we had been there. The faithful old Nile, together with Army boats and barges, carried us and our equipment back to the base. As Biorka faded in the distance there was a feeling of happiness for some of us to leave the island, while for others there was a feeling of reluctance because we had enjoyed the peace and quietude of the island and the many friendships we had made that only an isolation can bring.

Makhnati crew.

Our barracks and Millersville.

Immediately after the selection of men for the Biorka job, another crew of approximately sixty men was picked for our Makhnati project. Mr. Wolaver was appointed superintendent of construction and was very capably assisted by Chiefs Braden, Weimer, Taylor, and Johnson.

Makhnati was originally an island, one of a chain of small islands jutting off Japonski into the open sea. Makhnati was the farthermost, and all of these islands were connected by a three mile causeway with Japonski. Incoming tides and strong currents continually undermined the causeway, necessitating a constant patrol to keep it in repair. Gigantic waves often broke over the causeway, throwing huge boulders on the runway; and many mornings on our way to work we had to bulldoze these rocks over the side before we could proceed. Since our Makhnati project was only three miles away, we lived in our steam heated barracks and commuted back and forth to chow, thus we enjoyed all the recreational facilities and entertainment available at the base. We were granted liberty every fourth night, and as a whole our work on Makhnati was much more pleasant than at island projects.

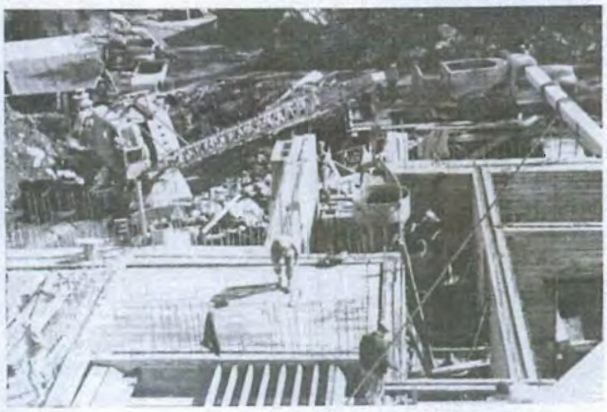
Japonski and island chain before the war.

Construction on military installations had already been started and abandoned when we arrived. For the first three weeks we tore down old forms, policed the area, and brought in material and supplies. Chief Weimer, Brinker, Holland, Edwards and their crews of carpenters then began erecting forms. Shorty McConnell had charge of laying the reinforcing steel, and each piece of steel was welded into place. Chief Johnson laid his maze of electrical conduits that were to be embedded in concrete. At last when everything was in readiness for the pour, the crews were divided into two groups of twelve hour shifts with Chief Weimer and Brinker in charge of one and Chief Braden and Chief Taylor in charge of the other. Each pour required from twenty-four to thirty-six hours of continuous work; and almost invariably when a pour was scheduled, the sky would open, and we would be deluged with rain for days. Inclement weather never stopped a Seabee. We worked in the rain unprotected by watersoaked rain gear.

Unlike other island projects, concrete was not mixed at

Concrete plant.

the job. Since the gravel bunkers were located on the other side of Sitka, sand and aggregate were hauled by truck to the dock where they were dumped onto a barge. The barge was then towed across the channel and unloaded by means of a stiff-leg which deposited the material on a conveyor belt. This belt carried the sand and gravel into the concrete mixer that was operated by Charlie Nutt and his crew. After the concrete was mixed, it was hauled in trucks over the causeway to the job. The trucks backed onto a ramp and dumped the concrete into a bucket which was pulled with a winch to the top of our specially designed tower. At the top the bucket tripped, spilling the concrete into a hopper, and then from the hopper the concrete was poured into a metal chute and directed to awaiting forms. It was a rather long, drawn out process to get concrete, but with everyone working as a team, each pour was successful and not a single section had to be repoured.



Top: Makhnati construction.
Bottom: Bay City at work.

As soon as the deck, bulkheads, and overhead had been poured, interior construction began. Chief Johnson directed his crew in the installation of one of the most intricate electrical systems ever designed. To have said it was a good job would have been a masterpiece of understatement—it was perfect; it had to be perfect. Chief Irvin and his metalsmiths prefabricated all ventilating and heating ducts in the sheet metal shop, then installed them throughout the projects. The buildings were air conditioned with air coming from the outside into a machine where it was either cooled or heated, gasproofed, and humidified. Havlicek and Hincks handled the plumbing and pipefitting.

There was a considerable amount of grading to be done. Tura did the surveying, and H. C. Cook operated the bulldozer, pushing down trees and leveling the ground. It was necessary that a rocky hill be removed, so Cochran and Sanders were called to do the blasting. In a short time there was no hill. Buck Junell, Pottruff, and Oswald operated the Bay City crane. This piece of machinery was the most used equipment on the entire job and required skill in operating it. Gagnon administered first aid to our cuts and bruises.

Morale of the men was always high. We had a lot of practical jokers who were forever playing jokes on someone, and newcomers seemed to suffer the worst. One day one

of our men who had not had much outside construction experience came to work with us. We were stripping forms at the time, and this man was instructed to remove a steel dowel that was embedded about twelve inches in concrete. He got a wrench and did his best to unscrew it, but it would not budge. He got a larger wrench and set to work with more vigor; but after much tugging and twisting and stuttering, he decided it was a pretty bad joke and gave it up. Another time he was sent from one person to another in quest of a sawdust blower to remove some sawdust that had collected between forms. On one of Lt. Willard's inspection tours he brought one of the Civil Service secretaries with him. McConnell was busy welding and did not see them come in the building. Something went wrong, and Mac went into a routine of cursing that would have put the saltiest of old time sailors to shame; whereupon the secretary made a nonchalant exit as fast as possible.

McCONNELL'S MOST EMBARASSING MOMENT

As the work progressed and only the interior remained to be completed, most of our men were sent to various island projects. During the course of our construction, we were honored with frequent inspections by high dignitaries, among whom were Admiral Whiting, General Buckner, and the Truman Committee. Mr. Wolaver usually played the part of a guide and after he had shown General Buckner and his staff through the installations, General Buckner complimented our efforts, and said, "Everywhere I go, I always find the Seabees doing a swell job."

Our project was completed eight months after it was started, and immediately upon our departure, the Army moved in to occupy the fortification.

Japonski, our operational base, was the focal point from which flowed material, supplies, and leadership. Enormous warehouses contained practically everything that was needed, and that which was not available was prefabricated in our many service shops. Much of the credit for our successful construction program was due to the untiring efforts of the men who operated these shops.

The nerve center of both military installations and supporting activities was, of course, our office where Lt. Hill and Lt. Mattice directed all operations. Mr. Hill took care of the men of the Unit, playing the roll of father, Chaplain, and advisor. Every man in the Unit felt free to bring his troubles to him, knowing that Mr. Hill would do his utmost to solve his problems. Mr. Mattice was engineer in charge of all construction projects which kept him busy straightening out the many engineering problems that constantly arose. He and Mr. Hill made periodic inspections of our work, keeping us on the straight and narrow path. Wylie, McDonough, Bowen, and Van Wyk handled the personnel records and voluminous reports.

Mr. Mattice also supervised the drafting department which was the most complete and competent drafting department in Alaska. Plans and specifications of every job

Drafting department.

in that sector were turned out on the drafting tables with clocklike precision. Larson, Jennings, Knorr, and A. L. Poulin worked long hours preparing the ground work for our projects.

The electrical department was headed by Chief Johnson. From Japonski he supervised the intricate electrical and telephone installations at each one of our island projects. His electrical assistants were Chief Krumenaker, Gresham, Cooper, Moores, Herene, and Zych. O'Leary, Maiers, Nowak, Tonella, and Kline handled telephone and communication maintenance.

Mr. Strehlau was in charge of the garage, and it was a tremendous task to keep hundreds of trucks, jeeps, and heavy equipment rolling. Slippery roads and continuous hauling of material required constant repair work. Unfortunately our garage caught fire and burned to the ground one Sunday, leaving nothing but charred skeletons of trucks and equipment. Although it was a serious blow to our program, the damage was repaired, and garage work was carried on the next day.

Garage crew.

The maintenance shop was under the watchful eyes of Mr. Sheridan, who had subsequently been promoted from Chief Petty Officer to Warrant Officer. This department was the trouble-shooting unit. If anything went wrong on the base, the maintenance shop was called. Chief Hetherington was in charge of the carpenter shop which prefabricated cabinets, doors, and other installations for our projects. Bordelon, Kurcab, and Tombari turned out machine tools and equipment that could not be drawn from stock. The gravel bunkers, located on the Sitka side, were also under the supervision of Mr. Sheridan. From these bunkers most of the aggregate and sand used in the Army projects was obtained.

The sheet metal and welding shop was always a beehive of activity. Chief Irvin and his metalsmiths prefabricated all ventilating and heating ducts in the shop and then installed them in the projects. Fred Lawton, our blacksmith, wielded the hammer and manipulated the forge without the aid of the proverbial shade of the chestnut tree. At the close of a day's business the shop became the number one hobby shop where we turned out gifts for our friends back home.

The supply department was operated by Commander R. G. Culbertson who was assisted by Chief Manning, George Cloud, Lanier, and Keith. It was a tremendous task of ordering and distributing supplies, and it was a problem to anticipate future needs because one never knew whether an order would be received for a safety pin

or a bulldozer. George Colvin took care of our disbursing needs.

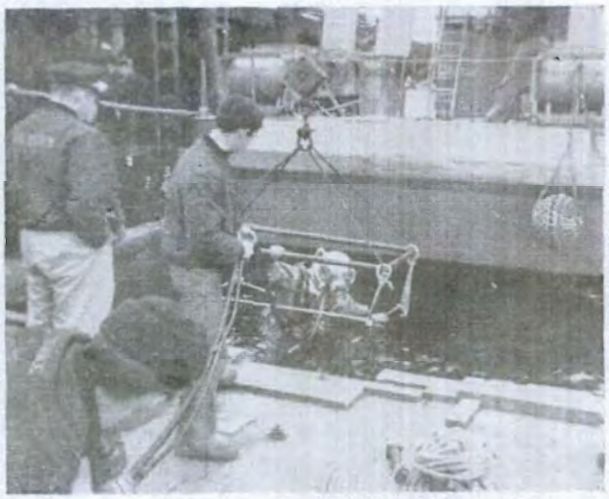
Chief Ashdown and Chief Hines controlled waterfront and shipping which was, perhaps, our most vital supporting activity. Without the services of the boats and their crews, our work in Alaska could not even have started. Except for our project on Makhnati every ounce of supplies and material depended on transportation by boat and barge. Sevigny was skipper of the Nile and was competently supported by Simpson, Saker, Potoniec, Revella, Townson, and Shoffler. The Nile continually plowed its way back and forth

Crew of the Nile.

through storms and heavy seas and was constantly in danger of being thrown onto rocks that seemed to pop out of the sea in every direction; however, Sevigny knew his navigation and each member of the crew knew his job, and the Nile always returned safely to its berth. R. A. Turner and R. A. Paquin piloted the Henry and the Dorothy, while Louie Poulin and Jensen operated the CB-6. These were the smaller boats that hauled tons of material yet got in and out of the most treacherous places.

On the 27th of March the Nile was towing a 120 ton barge through gigantic waves in the middle channel of Sitka Harbor when a three inch tow line snapped, leaving the barge overturned and awash. The tossing barge was a menace to navigation and on the verge of breaking up in the heavy surf of Passage Island Rock. Chief Ashdown asked for three volunteers to save the barge, and immediately Turner, Potoniec and Saker eagerly stepped forward. Turner's outstanding skill in navigating a small boat enabled him to deposit Potoniec and Saker on the barge. There was nothing with which to brace themselves, so they laid flat on their stomachs and drove out a drain plug, secured a hawser to a crowbar, and inserted the bar into the hole. Turner reapproached the barge, took aboard his two passengers, and manuvered to safety. The bravery of these three men saved the Navy a $50,000.00 barge as well as removed the danger to many other crafts in the Channel.

There was a considerable amount of underwater work to be done which was handled by our diving crew consisting of Jensen, diver; Louie Poulin, tender, and Merry, radio-



Jensen on the diving platform.

man, together with the services of various members of the boat crews. This smooth functioning unit repaired the bottoms of ships, salvaged material that had been accidentally dropped overboard, surveyed the floor of the channel, and shored up holes in the water tight bulkhead of a destroyer that had had its stern blown off by a floating mine. A job of cutting samples of pilings on the gravel bunkers was given to them, so Poulin dressed Jensen in his heavy diving

suit, and Jensen made the dive. As he was working on the pilings, for some reason never determined, carbon monoxide accumulated in the suit, and Jensen gradually lost consciousness; however, before he passed out, he radioed his condition to Merry. He was quickly raised, but his heavy iron shoes caught on the ladder, and he could not be brought to the surface. Merry dived into the water to extricate him, but it took three dives in the icy water before Jensen was brought to the surface. His suit was cut off, and both he and Merry were rushed to the hospital—luckily neither of them suffered ill effects from the ordeal.

Boat repair and dock building was under the supervision of Chief Di Matteo. The bottoms of barges were continually knocked out by heavy surfs throwing the barges onto beaches against protruding rocks. Teredos, long saltwater worms, ate the bottoms out of barges, boats and pilings; therefore Di Matteo and his crew were always busy working with heavy timbers repairing the damage. Docks had to be constructed and kept in repair. Storms had a habit of tearing away in a few moments that which had taken weeks to build.

The water supply for both Sitka and Japonski came from a small stream located outside Sitka. Walter Lang and C. E. Smith did an excellent job of operating the water system, cleaning screens, chlorinating the water, and repairing broken water lines. Their job was hazardous and kept them outdoors in bitter, cold weather most of the time. The cabin at the dam was called "Cascade Castle."

Approximately two weeks after we arrived at Japonski, Hetherington and Marino received temporary orders to do some work at Annette, an island off the coast of Canada. One morning before they had gone to work, a seaplane circled overhead preparing to land in the bay. The plane hit a windfall and pancaked into the water. Marino and two regular Navy men, Butler and Flynn, jumped into a boat and sped to the scene of the accident. They saved the lives of three of the passengers, and for their bravery they were awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal.

Mr. Wolaver was placed in charge of construction of three projects on Kayak, an island guarding the entrance to Sitka Channel. Kayak in reality was a group of small islands separated only by canyon-like gullies that had been cut through the volcanic rock by the endless, turbulent surf. During rough weather, enormous waves rushed through these depressions with the force of a freight train sending mountainous walls of water high into the air. There were no

Cascade dam.

Gullies at low tide.

beaches, but instead, sheer rocky cliffs dropped horizontally into the sea. The islands were covered with trees and, of course, the ever present, soggy muskeg. Continuous rains never permitted the islands to dry, and during our occupation, there was scarcely a day that it did not rain.

It was a cold, rainy day, 3 February 1944, when R. E. Edwards, Holland, Gibson, and Hasson shoved off in the Henry for Kayak to get the jobs started. A few Army men were living on the island, so our four men moved in with them. A quonset hut constituted the living quarters, and a mess hall, similar to a stateside corner lunch stand, was soon in operation. These four men immediately cleared away the sites for the projects and actual construction began to take form. Additional men were sent to the islands from time to time to speed up the work, and about one-quarter of the projects had been completed when Mr. Bell and a portion of his Biorka crew arrived to complete the jobs. Chief Whalen took over the duties of construction superintendent. In addition to this semi-permanent crew, approximately twelve men commuted from Japonski each day to further speed the construction.

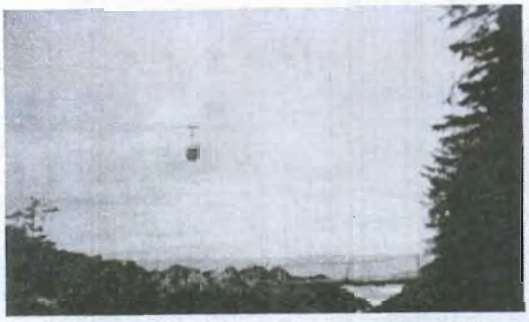
There was absolutely nothing on Kayak that could be used for construction material; consequently every kind of material and supplies had to be transported from our operational base to the islands. There was a small dock, but it was inadequate inasmuch as pilings could not be driven into the volcanic rock, and it was continually being washed away by the pounding waves. A temporary unloading platform was built at the water's edge which made the handling of sand, gravel, cement and other material much easier. Only small boats and rafts could get close to the platform, and even on the calmest days, it was a treacherous business and more than one Seabee received an icy bath. Aggregate and sand were transported and hand-handled in fifty pound sacks. On the days that this material arrived all hands would be pulled off the jobs to unload it, then the following day would be spent carrying it by hand to the concrete mixer. The water problem was solved by the procurement of a 275 gallon tank and twenty-five oil drums. A pipe line was run from the dock to the tank, and an Army water barge periodically pumped our tank and drums full of water.

Lighter loaded with sacks of aggregate.

Unloading material.

The mixer was placed on the highest point, and the three structures were poured from there. One building right over this location was poured by erecting a derrick boom on a tree just higher than the building itself. The load lines were sheaved and the leads hooked onto a winch. This eliminated a great deal of manual labor and speeded the pouring of the job. The second job, located on a separate island, about three hundred feet away, was poured by the use of a two-way high line which was secured to a spot higher than the building. A working platform was built and the whole job was poured by the use of chutes from the platform. The third structure was poured by means of a one-way high

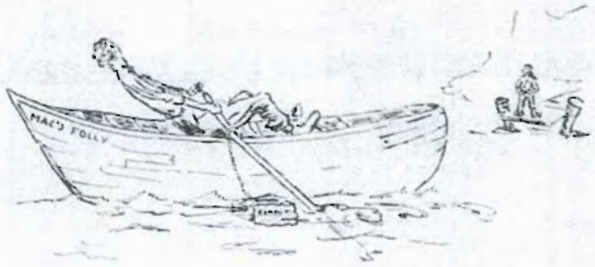
line, and the material was pulled uphill by power and returned to the mixer by gravity. It required ingenuity to overcome the many problems of this type of construction,



Reading from Top to Bottom: Unloading material. Pouring concrete in shute. Highline between islands. Concrete shute. Concrete crew at work.

and we were continually hampered by ice, snow, sleet, and rain. The elements seemed always to be against us.

The islands were so small that there was practically no recreational facilities. After working all day, most of us were content to return to the hut to read, write, or listen to the radio. Fishing was the most enjoyed sport. We



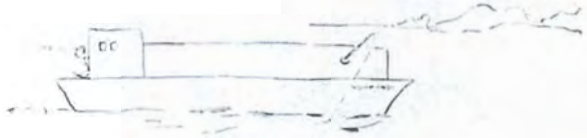
would hand-line fish from the rocks or use a small skiff. This row boat was brought from Japonski, and McDuffee and Gibson spent three days caulking and painting it. They decided to name it "Helen" in honor of Mac's wife, but one of our humorists beat them to the punch and painted on its bow, "Mac's Folly." One day Gibson decided to fish from the skiff, which was moored to the dock, and took a big hunk of Keefe's best sirloin steaks to use as bait. He climbed into the skiff, shoved away from the dock, and put all of his weight on the oars. The skiff rowed hard; he gave a heavier pull; the oar locks came out; he fell flat of his back on the deck. Upon investigation he found a sack of cement under his boat tied with wire to the oar locks. On the dock Edwards was "busting a gut" laughing at him. Sea lions made their home on an adjoining island and were always swimming around Kayak. Eagles and ravens made their nests in the trees. Life on the islands was not very interesting, and we always returned to the base each Saturday afternoon to enjoy liberty in Sitka.

An almost near fatal accident happened one evening to a member of the crew that commuted to Kayak each day.

Lafferty was sitting on the bow of the Henry when a sudden wave caused him to fall overboard. He fell directly under the boat, and as it passed over him, he pushed himself downward. Each time he came up, the boat would be overhead. He miraculously missed being hit by the screw, and when he had passed that, he found himself under the bottom of an Army lighter that was being towed by the Henry. After both vessels had passed over him and after he finally came up to the fresh air, he was hauled aboard. He resolved never to sit on the bow of a boat again.

The construction jobs on Kayak were completed the 27th of July. Securing was celebrated by Keefe's cooking one of his best turkey dinners with all the "fixins," topped off with four cases of free beer. All excess material and supplies were loaded onto barges for transfer back to the base. It was a feeling of satisfaction of a job well done when we cast off the Henry's lines and left Kayak—never to return.

The morning of 4th of February found Chief Weimer and his crew of nine men boarding the Normandie that was to carry us to Lisianski Point for the purpose of constructing additional Army installations under the supervision of Mr. Wolaver. The Normandie, perhaps the most un-



orthodox craft in the Alaskan waters, had been reconstructed from a liberty boat into a nightmare resembling nothing pertaining to a boat, a barge, or a seagoing lighter; but it was durable, dependable, and a work-horse of the first water. Lisianski Point was located on an island about one and a half hours by boat from Japonski, guarding the inland route to Old Sitka and to Sitka Channel. A small, shallow bay afforded a haven for small crafts that tied up to a floating dock. High, treacherous, tree-covered mountains rose directly from the water's edge; and except for a delta where the campsite was situated, there was no other possible landing. A miniature stream, seemingly innocent during the short dry season and a raging torrent at a moment's notice after a heavy rain, separated the galley and the quonset hut that was occupied by three Army men.

Our first job was to give the hut and galley, as well as the entire campsite, a thorough cleaning. This done, we set to work erecting a substantial bridge over the stream, and then all hands turned to for the construction job which we had been sent to do. The Army always seemed to pick out a site for its installations in the most inaccessible places, and in picking out this site, it outdid itself. The foundations for the first job had to be laid at 208 feet straight up the face of the mountain. Naturally, material could not be carried to the top by hand, so a three-quarter inch steel cable was secured to a tree at the base of the mountain, and all of us strained, swore, and said unkind things about the Japanese while we tugged the other end of the cable up the mountain. As soon as the cable was in operation, our labors became easier because we no longer had to crawl up and down the slick, muskeg mountainside. The cable carried both men and material. Pottruff operated the winch. Concrete was mixed at the bottom and was hoisted via the high line to the installation. We finally finished this project, and then, much to our surprise, the Army decided it wanted steps built to the top. Material was transported at varying heights, yet it was a precarious task laying these steps. We were hampered by ice and snow which made footing very difficult, and the wind blew so hard at times

we could not work. There were 189 steps from the base to the first landing, then 111 more steps to the top. A two-by-four railing encased the steps. After weeks of climbing up and down the steps, the muscles in our legs became like iron. Gresham and Waters completed the task of stringing a power line to the top. It was the first of June when this installation was finally completed.

The second project did not require as much back-breaking work as had the first one because it was located near the beach on a slight rise. We beached our material barge at three quarter tide, and a high line was suspended from the barge to the project. A concrete mixer was placed on the barge near spots of sand and aggregate and bags of cement. We ran a water line from the stream behind the galley to the barge; however, occasionally this pipe would freeze solid. To overcome this handicap we wrapped the pipe in gasoline soaked burlap and ignited it. It was a simple matter to mix the concrete and send it over the high line to the project.

The third installation was to be erected on a plot of ground overlooking a rocky cove. We moved our barge around to the cove and secured it to an overhanging rock. Concrete was mixed on the barge and wheeled to the installation in wheelbarrows. Both the second and third projects were completed about the 20th of July.

THE SALMON LEAPED SO HIGH IN THE AIR YOU'D THINK THEY WERE JET-PROPELLED

Channel near Lisianski Point.

Lisianski Point was surrounded by the best fishing banks in that part of the country. Salmon would jam the bays and inlets, searching for a fresh water stream in which to spawn. It was a beautiful sight to see a fifteen pound salmon jump into the air. In view of the fact that we were in such a wonderful fishing area, we were constantly bothered with fishing parties coming to our galley for chow. We kept a live box attached to our floating dock in which there were always halibut and salmon awaiting their turn to appear on our menu. Mr. Wolaver, our most ardent fisherman, caught the largest halibut—a 125 pounder. Deer were plentiful, and during the extremely cold weather, we would get in the Normandie and cruise along the shores until we spotted a buck. After it had been killed and dressed, we would bring it to camp and hang it outside on a tree to freeze. A week later we would cut thick, juicy steaks, entirely void of that wild taste, from its haunches. One afternoon eight of us were idling along in the Normandie in search of a deer—each of us boasting what a crack shot he was—and as we rounded a bend, there, big

as life, stood an enormous buck watching us. We fired in unison; the deer looked at us contemptuously, then walked nonchalantly into the woods. That was the exception rather than the rule, for we nearly always returned to camp with either one or two deer. From the first of June to the first of August was the prettiest time of the year. That was the time for new life to begin its battle for survival. Our bay was a parade ground for ducks. As the small skiffs plowed through the water, mother ducks would guide their young to safety. Does would bring their fawns to the mountain stream to drink. During our stay, we made pets out of a fawn and two eaglets. Story, Waters, and Wuethrich caught five mink and several foxes, but all of them were eventually given their freedom.

Since Sitka was so near, about half of us returned to the base each weekend to enjoy a few hours of civilization. The other half liked to stay at camp to fish, hunt, or just rest after a week's hard labor. Chief Weimer received his promotion to Warrant Officer, and, of course, that called for a big party. We could usually depend on Herb Stuck to entertain us with his hillbilly stories and his everlastingly playing "Great Speckled Bird" on the victrola. We sat on the porch in the evenings watching the NORTHLAND or the NORTH SEA plowing its way via the inland route to Seattle. Everytime one of them passed, each of us knew what the others were wishing.

After five months of hard work in snow, sleet, and rain, we finished our projects in record time to the satisfaction of our own officers and to the praise of the Army officers. We packed all of our belongings in the Normandie and headed back to the base for another assignment.

Chief Braden and his crew of about twelve men set out in the Dorothy for Clam Island, an island about three quarters of an hour's boat ride from Japonski. Since there was no dock, Paquin and Turner anchored the Dorothy in the bay, and we rowed to shore in a skiff. The only entrance to the rock bound island was a "V" shaped inlet from which sharp, volcanic rock protruded. These rocks together with crashing waves made landing hazardous and almost proved fatal to some of us. The island was a dismal sight when we made our first inspection tour, for it was waterlogged from continuous rains, and the muskeg oozed with dark brown seepage.

Island near Clam.

Clam Island and crew.

We moved into a quonset hut that was also used by a few Army personnel. The galley was nearby where Jack Hayman prepared his delicious meatballs and spaghetti. Some unkind person nicknamed him "Meatball," a name that has stuck with him until this day. Our first job was to get the island ship-shape, for we did not like to live in the haphazard manner to which the Army was accustomed.

Our next job, before construction on the installations could begin, was the erection of an unloading platform at the shore. When it was completed, a high line was strung from this platform to the middle of the island where a concrete mixing platform was built. As on other island projects, sand, aggregate and cement were unloaded from

Army barge.

barges and hoisted to the concrete mixer. An Army barge brought water once a week, but this was inadequate and had to be supplemented with rain water. From the mixing platform, concrete was hoisted via high lines to the projects. Lenk had two narrow escapes—once a bucket of cement hit him in the back, then another time he fell from a platform built in a tree to steps below. Cussanello also narrowly escaped being crushed to death when he slipped from the rocks into the water where a barge was docked. He managed to swim from between the rocks and the tossing barge just in time.

When our work on Biorka was finished, Mr. Bell took over the supervision of the work on Clam. To speed up the construction program, approximately fifteen men commuted each day from Japonski. With this additional crew, work progressed rapidly.

There were many inconveniences to be borne. Due to the lack of water, we were allowed only one bath a week, and somtimes when the supply of water was exceptionally low, we did not take any. Rough weather often put our telephone out of order, and supplies and material could not be requested from the base. Recreation was practically nonexistent; however since we were so close to Sitka, most of us spent the weekends there. It was fun digging for clams for there was an abundance of them ranging from tiny button clams to enormous plate sized clams with long necks. Clam Island was a haven for bird life which provided us with target practice.

Chief Krumenaker with long neck clams.

One weekend when almost everyone had gone to the base, Cochran and Randall were hunting some form of diversion. A barge had washed upon the rocks, and we had been unable to float it away. Cochran decided that the barge might be dynamited back into the ocean, so he and Randall set their charges. The blast knocked the barge into the water, but the heavy surf deposited it in the same location that it had been for so long a time. They were satisfied, though, that it could be done.

Five months after our arrival at Clam, we finished our projects. Our work had not been pleasant, yet there was an inward pleasure in knowing that we had done a swell job. The old Nile made its last trip to the island, and with

the remaining material, equipment, and human cargo aboard slowly made its way back to the base.

Mr. Wolaver's next assignment was the construction of more Army installations at Sound Island, an island, about thirty miles from Japonski, that guarded the inland passage to Sitka. He picked his crew of about sixteen men, and with gear and supplies aboard the CB-6, we set out to spend the next six months in the wilderness. The passage

Water cascading down the mountainside.

to Sound was one of the prettiest waterways in that sector. Tree clad mountains, with rippling waterfalls and streams, towered high above the channel, while bald-headed eagles perched silently on the highest trees watched our craft plow through the emerald water.

Since there was no place for living quarters on Sound, we established our campsite on Kirby Point, approximately

Alaskan Eagle.

two miles away and separated by very rough water. The Army had previously set up several quonset huts and kept some of its personnel there; so we moved in with the Army. A log cabin, at one time used as a hunting and fishing lodge, served as a mess hall and galley with sleeping quar-

Sound Island crew.

ters in the loft for the cooks. The large front room with its massive stone fireplace provided us with a recreation room where we played poker, drank beer, and wrote letters.

Inasmuch as we had to commute back and forth to our job each day, we kept the Henry and Louie Poulin to operate it. This one boat soon proved inadequate when additional personnel arrived, so we procured a small whaleboat. These two boats, together with several row boats,

CBMU 512

From Camp Peary to Port Hueneme in June 1943 to Sitka, Alaska, on July 29 is

the story of the first tour of duty of CBMU 512. For its second tour, 512 left for overseas Nov. 17, 1944, and reached Leyte the last of December. The unit was ordered to Guiuan, Samar, March 11, 1945, and on Aug. 1 was on duty on Leyte and Samar.

ITINERARY OF CONSTRUCTION BATTALION MAINTENANCE UNIT #512

1st Tour of Duty

13 Jun 1943 - Transferred from NCTC Camp Peary to ABD Hueneme.

8 Jul 1943 - Departed ABD Hueneme for overseas.

29 Jul 1943 - Arrived Sitka, Alaska.

22 Aug. 1943 - Arrived CBRD Parks via San Francisco, Calif.

2nd Tour of Duty

17 Nov 1944 - Departed CBRD Parks for overseas.

27 Dec 1944 - Arrived Leyte approx this date.

11 Mar 1945 - Ordered to Guiuan , Samar, for duty.

1 Aug 1945 - Located at Leyte-Samar.

Commissioned in June 1943 at Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Inactivated on 11 September 1945 at Leyte-Samar, Philippine Islands.

C.B.M.U.
512
ALASKA & the PHILIPPINES

NO PHOTOS AVAILABLE