Naval Construction Maintenance Unit 565

Historical Information

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

NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

CBMU 565

NCTC - Peary
ABD - Hueneme
Ready Date - 5 Jan'44
Left ABD - 21 Feb'44
Location - ~~Milne Bay (Gamadodo)~~
Morotai

LOG

11-17-43 - CNO orders transfer of CBMU 565 from Peary to Camp Parks about 22 Nov. (CNO conf disp 171710 to Peary dtd 17 Nov'43)
2-26-44 - CBMU left for EDUR 21 Feb'44. (AES)
6- 3-44 - 1 Apr'44 report of CBMU 565 - operating at Gamadodo.
6-30-44 - CBMU 565 is located at Gamadodo as of 31 May'44. (Comserfor7flt Sec ltr A-9 over Ser BP-001407 to Dirpacdocks dtd 8 Jun'44)
7-14-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of CBMU 565 - operating at Gamadodo.
8-12-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of CBMU 565 - operating at Milne Bay.
9- 2-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of CBMU 565 - operating at Milne Bay. Rec'd 4 causuals (Delousing units) 27 Jul'44 from Hueneme - Draft #2392.
11- 4-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of CBMU 565 - operating at Milne Bay.
12-14-44 - CBMU 565 hereby detached to proceed and report to _____ for duty. This dissolves CB Maintenance Det. at Milne Bay. (Destination was garbled) (Comserv7flt Sec Disp to CNB Milne 060757 dtd 8 Dec'44)
1- 1-45 - 1 Oct'44 report of CBMU 565 - located at Milne Bay.
1-11-45 - 1 Nov'44 report of CBMU 565 - operating with CBMU 529 at Milne Bay.

Location - Morotai

CBMU 565

1-12-45 - CBMU 565 is located at Milne Bay.(Comser7flt Sec. disp to CNO 231053 dtd 5 Jan'45).
1-13-45 - CBMU 565 at Gamadodo - to go to Morotai. (Comserfor7flt Sec report for Nov'44 dtd 15 Dec'44)
-26-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of CBMU 565 - Draft of 30 men was rec'd in Nov. ComSerfor7Flt states that CBMU's 529 and 565 were combined into a Maintenance Detachment. This detachment has recently been dissolved and CBMU 565 has been ordered to Morotai, N.E.I.
-15-45 -- CBMU 565 is located at Gamadodo, Milne Bay - to go to Morotai.(Comserfor7flt Sec. report dtd 15 Jan'45).
3-30-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of CBMU 565 - located at Milne Bay awaiting forward movement.
4-21-45 - Comserfor7flt Sec Rep for Feb'45 shows CBMU 565 located at Morotai.
4-23-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of CBMU 565 - location not given. End. by CO NB Moratai.
4-26-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of CBMU 565 - location not given. End. by CO NB Moratai. Most of month of Feb'45 spent in transit to another base and commenced operations 15 Feb'45.
5- 1-45 - CBMU 565 is located at Morotai. (Comserfor7flt Sec Rep of 1 Apr'45)
5-4-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of 84th CB - CBMU 565 arrived Morotai on 14 Feb'45 and relieved 84th CB on 24 Feb'45.
5-14-45 - 1 May'45 report of CBMU 565 - located at Morotai. 1 offcr & 35 men on temp detached duty at OBOE One.
6-13-45 - 1 off. and 35 men of CBMU 565 are on duty at Tarakan. (Comserv7flt sec CB loc sched dtd 25 May'45)
7-27-45 - CBMU 565 located at Morotai Is., Halmahara Is. (CCT 7th Flt Sec rep for June)

Location - Morotai CBMU 565

9-18-45 - 51st Reg established 6 July'45. Includes following CB units:-54, 84, 113, 118 CBs, CBMUs 546, 565, 609. Under 3rd Brig. (CCT, PhilSeaFron conf spdltr ser 0334 dtd 6 Sept'45 to Cominch & others).

10-25-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of CBMU 565 - location not stated. Report via 51st Reg. 26 men returned to U.S. for discharge under the point system.

11-16-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of CBMU 565 - location not stated. Report via 51st Reg. 39 men rec'd as replacements. 16 men transferred for discharge.

11-27-45 - Comservpac reqs CCT, Philseafron to inactivate CBMU 565. Inform Comservpac when inactivation is completed. (Comservpac spdltr ser-80-HMF/vg, 57-42 dtd 19 Nov'45 to CCT, Philseafron).

3-11-46 - Comservpac states CBMU 565 inactivated during period 31 January to 1 March 1946 - exact date not given. (Comservpac Disp 022110/March to BuPers).

INACTIVATED

ON BOARD

DATE	OFFICERS	MEN	AUTHORITY
30 Jun'44	5	239	Recap.
1 Aug'44	5	243	MoR
1 Sep'44	5	244	MoR
1 Oct'44	7	239	MoR
1 Nov'44	5	237	Mor
1 Dec'44	5	265	MoR
1 Jan'45	4	262	MoR - CBMU 529
1 Feb'45	4	261	MoR
1 Mar'45	4	258	BNP625 & MoR
1 Apr'45	4	258	MoR
1 May'45	4	252	MoR
1 Jun'45	4	250	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	4		R
1 Sept'45		208	BNP625
1 Oct'45		178	BNP625
1 Nov'45	2	188	BNP625 & R

C.B.M.U. 565 (INACTIVATED)

ON BOARD

DATE	OFFICERS	MEN	AUTHORITY
1 Aug'44	19	494	R & BNP625

7th Construction Battalion (2nd Sect.)

CBMU #565

DECLASSIFIED

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
6/13/44	–	Milne Bay	C.B. report 1 June	Left U.S. Feb. 1944
12/11	–	—	Comservch jet [illegible] 260757 dated [illegible] Rec.	(place not clear on dispatch)
1/9	–	Edcu	Comservch jet sec act disp. dec. 231053	added
3/29	–	Morotai nr Bevac	Comservch jet sec. 260558 Mar.	* present location and assignment.
4/23	–	From Fr. chapter	Comservch jet [illegible]	

A NARRATIVE HISTORY OF C.B.M.U. 565

William Bradford Huie stated in his "Roads to Victory", which is being used as the preface to this history, that "The Navy simply absorbed much of the cream of the construction industry.", and therein lies the beginning of C.B.M.U. 565. Not all of its members fell into Huie's category of "cream" since, in addition to those expert tradesmen that enlisted "En Masse", there were many unskilled recruits of various ages ranging from 17 years of age (if you stretch a point) up to whatever would be accepted. These recruits, or "boots", for 565 descended on Camp Peary, Virginia, from 43 of the 48 states, arriving at various times but generally around late summer or early fall in 1943.

This base, in itself, had an interesting background. By August of 1942 it had become obvious that Camp Allen, Camp Bradford, and Camp Endicott could not handle the number of men that the increased authorized strength would provide. It was decided to build a new camp on the York River, near Williamsburg, Virginia. This camp would house 50,000 men. It was established officially on November 4, 1942, and was named in honor of Rear Admiral Robert E. Peary, a Civil Engineering officer who gained fame for polar exploration.

The camp covered about 11,000 acres, was divided into an administrative area and four regimental areas, each capable of housing ten battalions, and an officers training area. The camp, while 565 was in attendance, had a very interesting nickname which referred to the Base Commander and a certain type of agricultural endeavor. "C.W.H.F."

Williamsburg was the closest liberty town to the base and was an extremely picturesque area for short stay recreation. The town was especially appealing during the period of time that the unit was in training in Virginia, since the Colonial influence prevailed in all of the historic area holiday decorations. Most will remember the beauty of the buildings, such as the Capitol and the Governor's Mansion, that were opened to the service personnel at no charge. It is to be remembered, however, that the natives were not particularly friendly - especially the coeds from William and Mary College. They needed permission from home, on file in the administration building, to speak to a sailor that they might meet. It was even difficult to find out if the college football team was having a home game. "Dogs and Sailors".

Richmond was the "big town" liberty for the base, but was a bit difficult to get to. The city, naturally, was deeply endowed with Civil War history since it was the capital of the Confederacy.

During the training period at Peary, a detachment from the unit was sent to Dam Neck, Virginia, for Anti-Aircraft Artillery training. There were a few extremely talented gunners in the group, including one who severed the tow line between the plane and the target.

After basic training at Peary, Seabees, generally speaking, were shipped to another base for further training and assignment to a unit. This generality did not apply to the men of the 565th C.B.M.U. . This unit was commissioned at Camp Peary during the month of November in 1943 after undergoing advanced military training at Peary. 565 was formed, along with three other C.B.M.U.s from the 14th Super Battalion.

Camp Peary was abandoned as a Seabee training base on June 10, 1944, and all Seabee training was transferred to Camp Endicott, Rhode Island. Some late replacement members of 565 trained at Endicott.

Those members of the 565th whose home was located in the eastern United States were granted an Embarkation Leave from Peary. This leave extended from November 9th to the 19th, 1943. This was granted just prior to the unit being shipped to the west coast.

The unit left Camp Peary by rail, leaving at 5:30 P.M. on Wednesday, November 24, 1943. The train passed through Richmond, Hilton and Lynchburg, Virginia, before lights out. It was unusual for a troop train to be composed of mostly Pullman cars and for the troops to be fed from the railroad dining car, but the troops managed to survive the comforts. The second day (Thanksgiving) took us through Montgomery, Charleston, and Huntington, West Virginia. The train paused at Huntington and windows were cleaned. The unit then crossed the state line into Ashland, Kentucky. Dinner was served and, appropriately enough, the troops were fed turkey. Vanceburg and Maysville were visited before crossing the state line into Ohio. First stop for exercise was Cincinnati where we displayed the unit's skill and agility at P.T. and close order drill while in the railroad station. The natives loved it. After about 90 minutes of this we boarded the train, recrossed the Kentucky line through Covington, Kentucky, and over the time line. We lost an hour. The line passed through Louisville prior to lights out.

On Friday, November 26, the men awoke in Tennessee, or so we believed. There apparently was some minor difficulty with the train. Was this a sign of things to come? The troops were served breakfast in the dining car prior to a short stop in Paris, Tennessee. We traveled on through Camp Tyson, Tennessee, and observed a number of barrage balloons over the camp,then went on through Humbold heading for Memphis. Again enjoyed a dining car meal - baked ham. We had a very long stop in the yard at Memphis where the troops were entertained by a group of young Memphis natives. You might say that this was our first "entertainment for the boys", and all for pennies and candy. At this point in the trip, the laughs were sorely needed. The train pulled out, left Memphis, headed for Little Rock, Arkansas and crossed the Mississippi River at 1745. We then had another superb dining car meal of roast beef, filling - the works, even had ice cream as dessert. We crossed the river and entered Arkansas prior to sleep.

We were routed out of the berths in Oklahoma, Saturday morning, 27 November, 1943. Some of us were forcibly reminded that this was not entirely a pleasure trip in that certain specific duties were distributed, such as serving as a runner for the dining car services. The scenery was changing. The first sign of the "western" influence was seen in Shawnee, Oklahoma. In addition to the western architecture of the station, western hospitality was evidenced by the local post of the American Legion who were busy distributing magazines to the unit. Next, the train passed through Oklahoma City with its impressive size, beauty, and oil wells pumping on the grounds of the state capitol. To the Easterners, the next area was exciting. The Old West, no man's land, that many had seen only in "Cowboy" movies, was now all around us. Yes, there really were real-life Indians. Another great dining car meal - chicken. At this point we have almost forgotten Navy Mess Hall menus. An area of long, flat, uninteresting plains was crossed. The river beds were dry. The next stop was in El Reno, Oklahoma, where the local unit of the Red Cross distributed cookies, coffee, and cigarettes to the troops. The troops reciprocated by performing close order drill. Our exercise, their entertainment, and we all benefited. We enjoyed our evening meal in the heart of the cattle country. More of the movie scenery was seen, such as buttes, mesas, and ghost towns.

We awoke in Clovis, New Mexico, on Sunday, November 28, with the startling realization that we had just slept through Texas. "How is this possible?", we asked, after hearing so much from Texans about the wondrous size of their home state. We knew, of course, that we had passed through the Panhandle but it made for a lively conversation. Another hour was lost in that we had crossed another time line. After

a stop in Clovis, the train proceeded across more broad plains. As someone said,"This area consists of miles and miles of miles and miles". What a philosopher! The city of Vaughn, New Mexico, was the next stop - stretch time. The value of this stop was that we were told at this time how much pay that we had coming in California. "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus". New Mexico was an attractive area but, to the easterner, very sparsely populated. The route took us through only two good-sized towns. The dining car was in action again as we passed through the scenic area of the southern Rockies. Magnificent scenery - just like the travel pictures, only better when seen "for real". Belem, New Mexico, was observed with a short stop. Evening meal (again) and so to bed.

Monday, November 29, 1943. We were awakened sometime after passing through Gallup, New Mexico, and a large part of Arizona during the night. The route also took us over the Continental Divide. The first breakfast off of the train was served at a Fred Harvey restaurant in Ashfork, Arizona. This turned into a real "shopping spree" for post cards, maps, folders; also circular masses of sailors were spotted, surrounding some of the local females. After the spree ended, the troops boarded the train for the next leg of the trip. A very winding track-bed took us up, up, into an area where the first wild cactus was spotted on flat plains, with rolling hills observed in the background. The next stop was in Seligman, Arizona. The Colorado River was crossed at 1230 hours. The entry into California required another adjustment to the watches. The first palm trees were observed at the Arizona - California border. We were served dinner at Needles, California. The beauty of this area is very impressive to an Eastern small-town boy who had only seen scenery like this in the movies. Many things were awesome: migrant workers, enroute home after processing the sugar beet crop in Sacramento, the high temperature for November, the military maneuvers taking place on the desert, and the Mojave desert itself. The train stopped on the desert for us to enjoy P.T. and to watch the army at work. Camp Peary didn't look too bad at this point. With that thought - time for bed. We expected to arrive at Camp Parks the following day.

We awoke, in one way or another, on Tuesday, November 30, somewhere in California, were served breakfast in Bakersfield, box lunches in Fresno, and were ordered into dress blues for arrival. We passed through orange groves, vineyards, and more thickly populated areas; stopped for a short while in Stockton but were restricted to the train. We arrived at Camp Parks, Shoemaker, California, at about 2230, were fed (again) and assigned to barracks. Back to the Navy life style.

Camp Parks was established at the close of 1942. This new Seabee activity was announced for the West Coast as a replacement and recuperation center for battalions returning from overseas. The base was named for Rear Admiral Charles W. Parks who served as chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks (the division of the Navy which is the home of the Seabees) in World War I. The official date for the establishment of this base is November 26, 1942. It was located near Livermore, California, southeast of San Francisco on the Oakland side of the bay. Although Parks was conceived as a station to be devoted primarily to the handling of personnel returning from overseas, in practice the major service rendered there was the tactical training of organized Seabee units transferred there from the East Coast and awaiting embarkation. As a matter of fact, Camp Parks was called upon from time to time to provide all phases of primary military and technical training for Seabee units. Many members of 565 first touched upon their eventual job assignments while at Camp Parks. Some called

it practical training, others called it Mess Cook.

While at Parks, those members of the unit that had not received their embarkation leave were to be granted leave. This would include the "western" members of the unit. Reports exist that not all were so blessed.

There are many events or activities at Parks that are worthy of mention. Few of us will ever forget the formation for "Colors" that took place each morning. The mystery band played, the Seabees were in rank assembled, "Colors" sounded as the troops stood at attention, the flag was raised, and the formalities ended -- all without our unit seeing anything due to the constant early morning fog. We believed that the event took place because we had faith. Immediately following Colors we hiked to the obstacle course and the first challenge was the "V" shaped wooden trough with the wet sides - also a result of the early morning fog. The challenge was to run it, side to side, through the trough without falling into the "V". Few did it since field shoes were not built for such tricky operations.

The liberties granted from Camp Parks enabled the members of the unit to get to rather fantastic cities. The beauty of the Bay area was beyond reproach. The cities of Berkeley, Oakland, and especially San Francisco were large, cosmopolitan, and filled with every joy that a Seabee could imagine. The only problem was that the transportation from the base to these areas was practically non-existant. The most dependable method of getting from here to there was hitching a ride with a civilian worker at the base. For those who accomplished this, the liberties were great.

Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit 565 was transferred from Camp Parks to Port Hueneme at Oxnard, California, during the month of December, 1943. Port Hueneme, as we knew it, also was named Camp Rousseau. In May, 1942, an Advance Base Depot was established at Port Hueneme, which was about 55 miles north of Los Angeles, California. Part of the depot was an advance base receiving barracks for transient Seabee personnel. This was authorized on October 23, 1942, and the barracks area was named Camp Rousseau, in honor of an outstanding Civil Engineering Corps officer who was deceased. Camp Rousseau was still on active status as a Seabee training center on V-J Day, and by the end of 1945, all Seabee activities had been transferred to Port Hueneme, with the exception of the Officers' Training School at Endicott, Rhode Island. This activity was likewise transferred to Port Hueneme during the summer of 1946. The Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, consisting of the Advance Base Depot and the Training and Distribution Center (formerly Advance Base Receiving Barracks), was established in December 1945 as a center for Seabee activity in the post-war Navy. It is also the location of the Seabee Museum.

During the war, Port Hueneme functioned as the largest of the Advance Base Depots. During 1944, this facility alone shipped out 1,500,000 long tons of materials and supplies.

Port Hueneme, or Camp Rousseau, was considered to be the Port of Embarkation for 565. While there (December to February) the unit underwent its final stateside training. This was done under the leadership of the kindest and most helpful drill instructors of our Navy career. For some of the members, this was the last chance to "get out" before the granting of the all-expense paid cruise to the South Pacific. Some turned away from the unit for what they thought would be a greater opportunity elsewhere. A number of the members sharpened their skills in the classification of their ratings, others prepared for whatever would be coming their way - but how long must you practice being a Mess Cook before you get it right?

Liberties from Hueneme were fair. Oxnard had a movie theater,

several pubs (check your I.D., sailor), some very good restaurants featuring "California Burgers" and, above all else, excellent public transportation to get us out of Oxnard and into L.A., Hollywood, and, who could forget, the Hollywood Canteen - That is, if you could stand in line long enough to get into the place. Many other smaller and very desirable cities were well within reach and travel was relatively inexpensive. The idea of getting out of Oxnard for a quality liberty celebration was especially important since we spent both the Christmas liberty time and the New Year's Eve celebration time at Hueneme. Many stories can be told about those periods, but we will let them rest.

The period of time after completion of the official training schedule and the quarantine inflicted as a result of being secured for embarkation was a nervous time. Many tricky little ploys were used to keep the unit alert, such as falling out in full gear at night so that we could lie in a ditch and observe nature; but "cheer up, things could get worse," and they did.

Who among the members of 565 can forget the night of the 20th of February and the very, very, early morning of the 21st? Historically, it went something like this: The unit retired in their regularly assigned barracks, but that was all that was "regular". All gear necessary for embarkation had been stowed prior to "sack time". The men slept on bare springs while dressed in the same fatigues that they would wear to board the ship sometime the next day. Since all bedding had been packed, the assortment of substitutes for pillows was wondrous to behold. Field packs, ditty bags, rolls of anything which was available were used. Even some helmets or liners were spotted. Very early the next morning, and a guess was about 0400 hours, those who managed to sleep were rudely and crudely awakened for morning chow. The next activity filled no one's heart with joy because few got a thrill out of walking to breakfast in the rain, definitely at this unearthly hour of the morning. The breakfast may have been excellent, but who cares. After chow, 565 returned to the barracks to await further orders. They were not long in coming. To our surprise, the men of 565 were going for a hike in full field gear and carrying their seabags to a destination later to be announced. There were mumbles about a train being out there somewhere waiting to be loaded. The obvious question from the group was, "Why in the Hell are we walking all of this long distance in this worse-than-miserable-weather and where are the trucks?". The less than obvious answer that the men received was, "It is too early in the morning to get out the trucks and drivers". This episode was jestingly compared to the Bataan March, but the difference was that we were all on the same side.

The unit finally boarded the train after losing a few members on the march. Comments such as, "If they want me, they had better come and get me because I'm not swimming another step", were heard, and that was the cleanest or least profane. The language heard on this hike was an introductory course in basic Naval terminology, and most of the hikers were instructors. Those who fell out during the march did make the train, but no one knows how.

The train was loaded and the men had a chance to relax and, for the first time in many hours, enjoy their life style. The train headed for San Pedro, California, which was the fleet operating base and port city for the Port of Los Angeles.

The train trip marked another first for the men of 565. The situation was very unusual in that the train's window blinds had to be drawn each time that the train passed through a populated area. The Navy, by doing this, maintained military security, while the men were secure in the knowledge that they had no idea where they were. They again, as at "colors" in Camp Parks, had faith. The trip ended on the

usual (for 565) high note. Just as the unit began this day, February 21, with a walk that most felt was "cruel and unusual punishment" and therefore unconstitutional, they ended in the same fashion. The train broke down prior to its destination, and again the men picked up their gear and walked. Some of the men were even called upon to "volunteer" to transport the property of the Commissioned Officers. It is difficult for anyone to remember the length of this stroll in the sunshine, but you can be sure that it was too long. When one remembers that this day, with all of the memorable events and situations, began for the unit long before dawn - the hike was too long. The only advantage to this series of foul-ups was that the unit was mentally prepared for and really expected the worst from this time on.

The next great adventure of the day was about to begin. The fighting 565th, in file with chalk markings on their helmets and loaded down like beasts of burden, proceeded through a long and unimpressive warehouse, headed for an opening at the far end. Upon arriving at this doorway the men saw the gangway going up to their immediate future. An officer, armed with a clipboard, questioned each man as they approached. After checking the helmet markings he simply called out the sailor's last name. The expected reply was the man's first name, middle initial, and serial number. There is no doubt that this individual heard many others comments as the column proceeded past him and up the gangway to board the U.S.S. West Point.

After climbing the gangway and going down to the assigned "stateroom", the men settled into what was to be home for the next seventeen days. Twelve thousand men were sharing this all-expense paid cruise on a vessel which had been the pride of an American mercantile pleasure cruise lines. This ship had sailed, prior to the war, as the S.S. America. The West Point is a two stacker which has eight decks above the waterline, has a gross tonnage of 33,532 tons, is 732 feet long with a breadth of 93 feet. The dull gray of its Navy coat was a stark contrast to its civilian colors of red, silver, and blue on the funnels, dull white on the upper decks, black lower decks, and the waterline marked with a thin white line with red below this line.

Very shortly after bunking down, 565 became acquainted with meal service on board a transport which was hauling about 12,000 troops. The troops enjoyed stand-up service, a very hot mess hall, the rolling motion of the ship, and a main meal of greasy pork chops. Most of the guests would recall the results. Many went away from the table hungry and really didn't care if they never saw food again. Fortunately, this was a short-lived reaction in most cases.

After the Seabees became used to the nearness of their mates, the confinement in a rack bunk, the motion of the vessel (some never adapted to this), the rigidly scheduled shower times, and the passages around this monster that was called "home", most of the passengers found life to be quite acceptable. There was unquestionably a definite need to get out on the deck as often as possible and to stay there as long as possible. That is, if one does not suffer from seasickness. Just do not stand downwind from a victim.

Following a number of days of zigzag maneuvering, test firing by the ship's weapons, complete boredom which was often relieved by absolutely insane festivities, and after crossing the equator, the ship arrived at Noumea, New Caledonia.

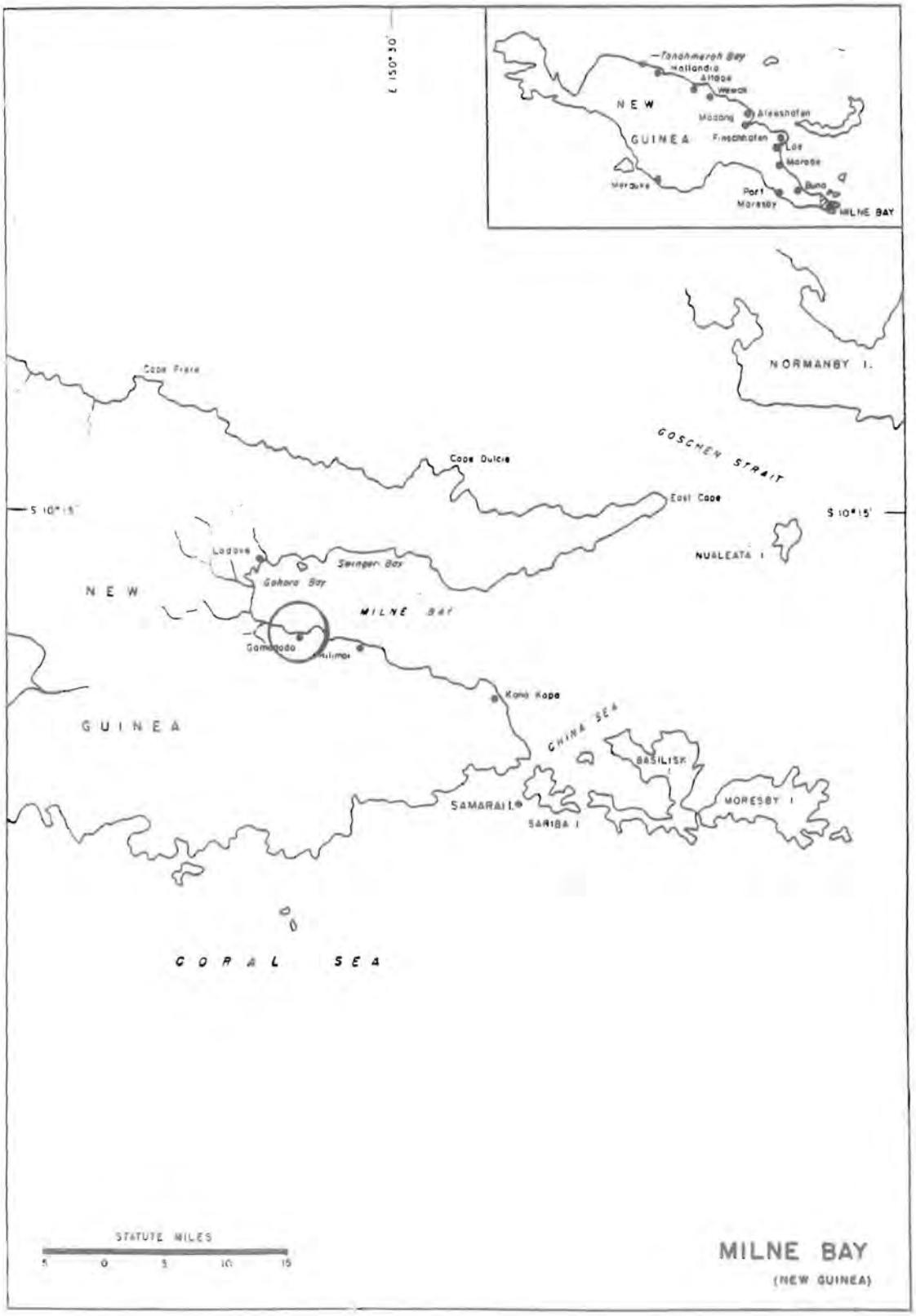
The ship was greeted, upon arrival, by two Marine pilots who buzzed the ship in their Corsairs, one plane on each side. This was the first time that many of the men looked down into the cockpit of a flying plane. C.B.M.U. 565 observed the island from the ship and saw other military personnel going ashore for further duty. At that time the men did not draw a comparison between what they were viewing and

what they were about to receive later. Noumea appeared to be civilized at least, with civilian type homes visible on the hillside.

The West Point sailed from Noumea with most of the original passengers still on board. It later arrived at Milne Bay, New Guinea. C.B.M.U. 565 was home! This was it! They never had it so good! The veteran members of the resident 84th Battalion greeted the unit with warmth and enthusiasm as they arrived. Later the 565th knew why this friendly reaction occurred. The 84th Seabees could now leave Milne Bay and proceed to their next assignment, but the 565th and the 84th would meet again.

Milne Bay, on the southeastern extremity of New Guinea, is 20 miles in length, with an average width of 7 miles, thus affording an extensive, well-protected harbor. A dense, swampy, jungle plain extends inland from the narrow coral and mud beaches to the Owen Stanley Mountains. The climate is tropical, with high humidity and heavy rainfall. Population is extremely sparse in this, one of the most malaria-ridden areas in the world. In spite of a rigorous preventative campaign which included oil sprays over all water puddles, large or small, and daily doses of Atabrine (the yellow peril), from 23 to 39 percent of the personnel were incapacitated from this disease alone. This, combined with the tropical skin diseases (jungle rot) which were also prevalent, had a pronounced and detrimental effect on the speed of project completions such as the massive incinerator project, which may or may not have been successful, depending upon how you looked at it. The unit will also remember the severe sun-burns attained due to the late arrival of our unit's shipment of sun helmets, and who will ever forget the dysentery brought on by improperly cleaned mess gear. Each time that the area was struck with a heavy rain, which was very frequently, the base water supply would be shut down because of the mud in the water. As a result of this lack of an abundant water supply, the mess hall would conserve by filling G.I. cans with hot soapy water and clear hot water in sequence. The recommended cleaning procedure was: soapy, clear, clear. Before too long the alignment was: hot, very soapy water; hot, soapy water; and hot, not quite as soapy water. This led to multiple cases of the Tropical Trots. The question asked at sick bay was, "How far from a Head do you work?". Too close - and you were on duty regardless. They forgot to consider the length of the lines of waiting G.I.s. (This statement could have more than one interpretation). These water shut-downs would have other effects as well. Many a Seabee, while joyfully soaping-up in the shower room, would suddenly be coated in lather with no possibility of a dependable rinse - no water. Many finished the procedure by rinsing off while standing under the barracks eaves in the sudden downpour.

While at Gamadodo, Milne Bay, the unit shared a large, open-sided barrack with the 15th Special Battalion. This group of hard-working stevedores was quartered on the second floor, while 565 was on the ground level. The 15th, since they were classified as battalion strength, had a small movie theater next to the barracks, and the 565th was able to view films without going to the large base theater. This area assignment also was the site for the founding of the unit's Ship's Store. Because the 565th was not battalion strength, it was not granted an allocation to open its own store. A few deep-thinking individuals proposed the sale of stock to raise funds to provide an inventory. It was done. Cooperation was great, as it always was in this unit, and a store was established. In a reasonably short period of time, all of the stock was redeemed and the unit store was a unit operation, debt free. This was but one of many incidents which demonstrated the ingenuity of the members of this unit. Other examples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MILNE BAY
(NEW GUINEA)

will be cited as this narrative history unfolds.

By the middle of 1944, the original plans for Gamadodo had been expanded, and before the base became unimportant, the following developments had been constructed and were in use: an ammo magazine, a staging area with facilities for 10,000 men, a supply depot, a pontoon assembly depot which was assembling pontoon cells as well as barges, and a large advance base construction depot which included a spare-parts warehouse which was housed in what was probably the largest building in New Guinea - 120,000 square feet in area.

By July 1945, the advance base construction depot had been torn down, crated, and was waiting shipment to a forward area. At Gamadodo, as soon as a building was vacated, crews went to work salvaging material which was needed in the Phillipines and Okinawa.

It is difficult to remember many specifics regarding the work of 565 at Gamadodo. This was the first experience or opportunity for the men of the unit to work closely together under the leadership of the officers, both commissioned and non-commissioned, and to realize the value or necessity of complete inter-dependence. Training was one thing, but this was different. It was also a time, if memory serves, of having the men of the unit rather widely dispersed in their activities. Progress was made, however, and the unit, with very rare exceptions, appeared to take this "Baptism by Mud" in their stride. The combination of the leaders and the followers welded the unit into what most of the men felt was a closely-knit family which became even closer later. The men could not predict the future however.

While the 565th was billeted in Gamadodo, a number of small detachments were assigned to various other locations for "short stay" tasks. There is no file available to itemize these duty stations. They are in the minds of the participants, but the one enviable detached-duty assignment that remains in the memory of all was the one opportunity afforded to a number of the men to travel to Australia for a short stay. The major task for the unit in Australia was to dismantle Mobile Hospital # 9. This facility was located on the outskirts of Brisbane.

The men who were selected for the trip boarded the U.S.S. Crux, a Liberty Ship type vessel in the harbor at Gamadodo, not at the dock. The "not at the dock" is very import to this narrative. Most who made the trip will remember boarding this ship prior to sailing. They recall climbing a cargo net which was suspended from the main deck of the Crux. In itself, this was not too demanding because of the "superior" physical condition of the Seabees. However, climbing a free hanging cargo net from a bobbing landing craft to the main deck and over the rail while using both hands is one set of conditions, yet to do it while carrying a seabag and a ditty bag is something else. All parties made it, probably thinking that they would rather die from a fall than miss a trip to Australia and away from Milne Bay.

The cruise time is unknown, probably about 6 days, but the ride was rough. The screws had a very disturbing sound when the bow dipped and the stern cleared the water. This ship was considerably smaller than the West Point and really "rode the waves". The Crux entered into the Australian waters at Moreton Bay and sailed down the Brisbane river about 14 miles to its dock. The trip down river was of great interest to the men since friendly female native Australians were, at times, within shouting distance. The editor of this narrative was on Mess Cook duty at this point of the journey but that did not dampen the thrill since one could still gaze out of the galley hatch toward the river bank and observe what was happening with hopes and dreams.

Brisbane, the capitol of Queensland, had a population of about 370,460. U.S. Naval activities began on April 14, 1942, when a

sub-tender and its collection of submarines tied up at the New Farm Wharf, a collection of wharves and wool storage sheds. From that time on, the facilities in this area grew until it became the largest U.S. Naval base in continental Australia.

The Seabees played no part in this development until March 24, 1943, at which time the 55th Battalion arrived and established a base for themselves at Eagle Farm, 5 miles northeast of Brisbane . This base was later used as a staging camp for the Seabees in the Southwest Pacific and was known as Camp Seabee. The base was located in a suburb of Brisbane which is called Pinkenba and was situated at the apex of Progress Road and Eagle Farm Road (now Kingsford Smith Drive). During the time that 565 was at the camp, this area was dominated by the U.S. Army Air Force who were stationed at an air base in the immediate area. This became the site of the Brisbane International Airport. The name Ascot was also applied to this general location and was the location of the Ascot Race Track. The men of 565 arrived at Camp Seabee either late in October or early November (the exact time is not recorded) and upon arrival were fed a magnificent meal with unlimited supplies of fresh fruit, fresh milk, steak, and pint-sized containers of ice cream.

While temporarily based at Camp Seabee and shortly after its arrival there, the 565th detachment was granted a ten day Rest and Recuperation leave. The majority of the group selected the bright lights of Australia's largest and most exciting city, Sydney. This area, the men were told, was considered to be "The Paris of the Pacific". After the jungles of Gamadodo, Sydney definitely had a very strong appeal. Other persons selected the seaside resort town of Coolangata which was located on the Queensland - New South Wales border about 65 miles south of Brisbane. The United States Navy operated what some would call a "tourist court" at Coolangata. This was a perfect R. and R. center for those who preferred a sea shore atmosphere. The center consisted of a number of cottages and a main dining area. These facilities were conveniently located near to the beach as well as close to the restaurants, stores, etc. that usually are found in a resort. The cost was very reasonable, in fact, low.

Sydney, the capital of New South Wales, was a very modern city, with a population of 1,250,000. By the time that the Seabees from 565 arrived, the city was primarily a port of call for the U.S. Forces. Prior to July, 1944, when plans were made to eliminate or reduce all naval facilities except the ammunition depot, the Sydney area facilities included a supply depot, an ammunition depot, and Base Hospital 10. Naturally, a receiving station was maintained for the Navy transients such as the R. and R. Seabees from 565. Details of other Sydney facilities will be referred to later, but as a preview, who will ever forget the beautiful Sydney harbor and bridge, Luna Park, the Hyde Park display, Bondi Beach, Taronga Park Zoo, King's Cross, Mark Foy's store with the broad steps which were the "bus stop" for the club bus, and, of course, "The Club".

Those who chose Sydney were first delivered to the Naval Receiving Station located in the city. Upon arrival, the customary lectures on morality and personal hygiene were delivered. These appeared to make the troops more eager to see the city and meet the inhabitants. The leadership then recommended that, since it was very late, the Seabees may want to check in at the Red Cross R. and R. center for the night and, if they so desire, search for other accommodations the next day. This center was the Kensington Golf Club prior to it being utilized by the Red Cross. Most of the 565 personnel stayed at the club for the duration of their leave and enjoyed (if they so choose) the golf course, available horse back riding, movies, stage shows, dances (with

partners provided by the bus load), outstanding meals, and it was reported that one group even found an oversized bath tub and thoroughly enjoyed luxurious long soaks. For those who wanted, a bus left the club at regular intervals and delivered the troops to downtown Sydney, as well as making the return run to the club.

The drop-off point in Sydney was at the Mark Foy Department Store, which in itself is not that important. The main point was that this was just across the street from Hyde Park and that was crucial. No details will be given in this narrative, but if you are curious - ask anyone who visited the park, particularly on a Sunday afternoon. Public transportation was excellent in Sydney, thus enabling the men to get to Bondi Beach, Manley, Luna Park, the Botanical Gardens, King's Cross, the Rocks area, and all of the other cultural spots needed to broaden their education. It was difficult for the men to depart from Sydney, but the leave was a failure in that there is no record of any of the 565th resting or recuperating on this particular Rest and Recuperation leave.

Many stories could be added to this narrative about the very warm hospitality received in Sydney, but those who were there remember the warmth and those who were not there "don't want to hear it".

The trip from Camp Seabee to Sydney and return was an interesting experience for most of the travelers. The train passenger cars were divided into compartments with bench type seats (2) facing each other in the compartment. Space was very generous and the assignments were made so that we could curl up on a bench and sleep if we so desired. The Australian rail line also had the custom of stopping at most of the "way stations". This became a very challenging game for the Seabees who had never seen anything like this before. Very simply, the game entailed getting off at the stop, going into the station tea shoppe, getting a cup of tea and a pastry of some sort, and getting back on the train before departure. This was not really as difficult as it sounds because the tea cup was taken with us, deposited at the next stop where we repeated the process. The cups traveled from one station to the next on the entire run back and forth.

The work done in the Brisbane area and while at Camp Seabee was completed after returning from the leave. This major project for the unit was the dismantling of Mobile Hospital 9. This dismantled unit was shipped to the Phillipines for use in that campaign. Not all of 565 worked on this task. Many were assigned to Camp Seabee base operations with duties that varied greatly. As the unit in Brisbane proceeded with their task, enjoying a rather generous liberty schedule, the rumors came in that the men who remained in Milne Bay were in the process of preparing for a move. The Brisbane delegation were not at all surprised to be leaving this area rather promptly. The disheartening result of all of this was that the segment of 565 who missed this first draft would not be able to participate in a second draft.

As the military has a remarkable ability to mess up (that's the clean way to express it) even the most logical operation, the unit at Camp Seabee was ordered to board the Attack Transport U.S.S. General Mann and leave Australia to return to Gamadodo on CHRISTMAS EVE 1944. "No, Virginia, there is <u>no</u> Santa Claus." The trip on the Mann was not very memorable. It would take a great cruise to push out all of the Australian memories that "danced in our heads".

Upon returning to Gamadodo, the detachment learned that all of the "scuttlebutt" that they had heard in the Land Down Under was true, and the unit was preparing for the trip to Morotai. After a short period of time the unit moved out. It can be safely stated that the unit that walked down that company street in Gamadodo, Milne Bay, New Guinea, on

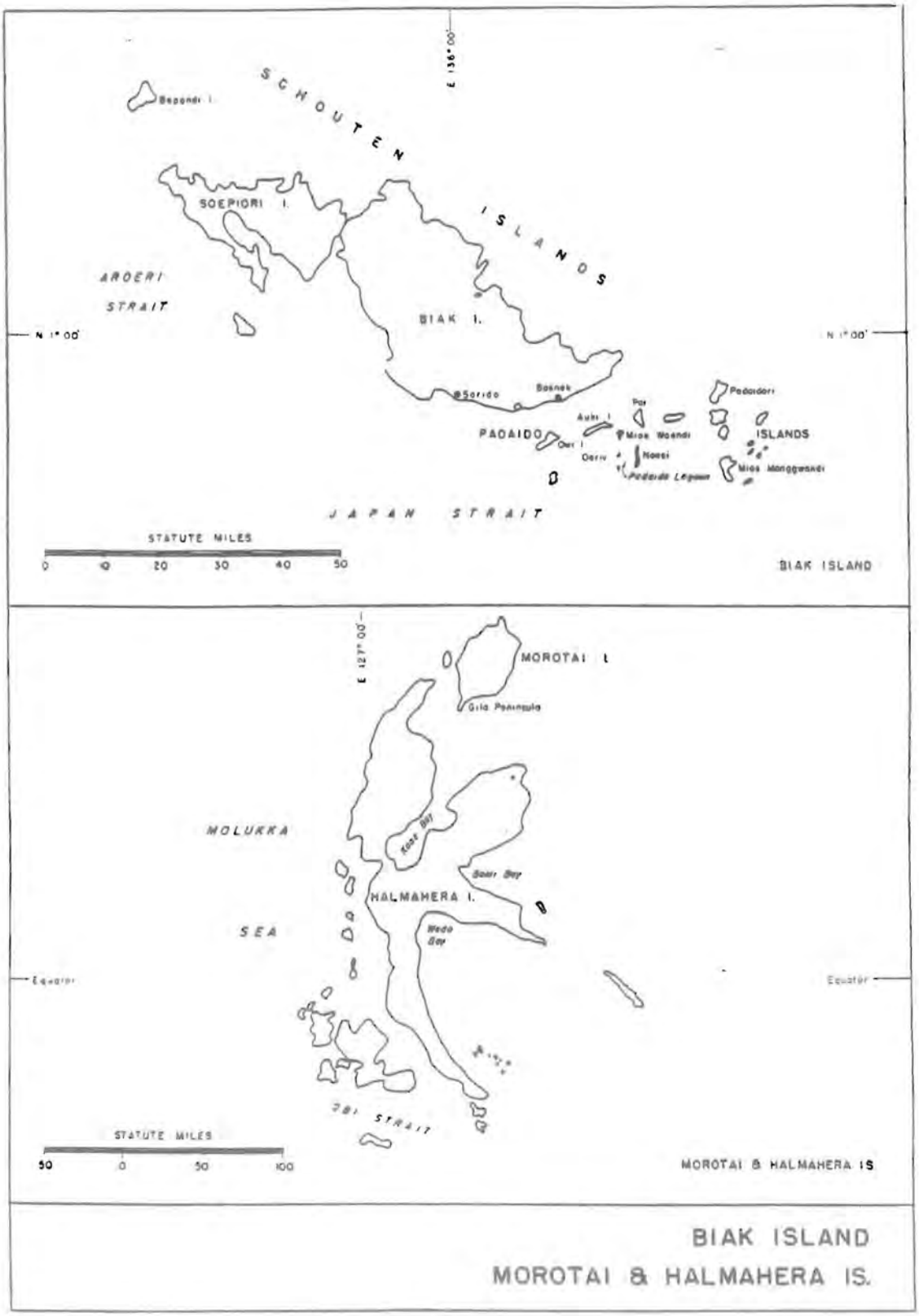
February 2, 1945, heading for the dock area and the awaiting LCI's did not in any way resemble the unit that landed there on March 10, 1944. Well, the names were the same and both units were wearing green, but that is about it, the men were not the same. They were now veterans.

The unit was divided and boarded two LCI's (the craft numbers are unknown) at Gamadodo, with approximately 125 troops assigned to each. The quarters were very cozy but congested. The regulations on board prohibited smoking in the quarters so all of this was done on the deck. Meal service was different from what we had been exposed to in the past. One hot meal per day was prepared on a field kitchen set up on the deck. Another of the daily meals was a K-Ration, and the third was a diet supplement of two cans per person of a chocolate type drink called "Toddy". This supplement was not found to be desirable by those suffering from sea-sickness. Most of the troops spent as much time on the deck as possible. This deck time was used in all types of sailing conditions and anytime, day or night. The LCI was the first of our methods of transport that actually went over two waves and under the third. This normally occurred frequently, but was constant as we proceeded up through the straits between Finschhafen, New Guinea, and New Britain. After sailing for several days, sometimes as part of a convoy, we landed at Hollandia, New Guinea. While at Hollandia the 565th was given an opportunity to have several mess hall meals, to shower, and to visit other units stationed at this base, even possibly finding friends and/or relatives.

The unit reboarded their respective LCI's and sailed out of Hollandia toward our destination of Morotai. En route, the vessels visited the very small island named Mios Woendi or, as it was referred to by the naval personnel on duty there, simply Woendi. Woendi is a tiny island located in the Padaido Island Group, just south of Biak (which was an island containing an air strip that many of us visited on our flight from Morotai to Manus after leaving 565). This island (Woendi) is only important to 565 in that, during our cruise from Milne Bay to Morotai, the LCI's stopped there for a break and a swim. Possibly the Craft needed refueling, but that was of very little concern to the passengers. This very small island, the home of several PT squadrons, was thought to be one of the most beautiful areas that we had visited up to that time. This was exclusive of Australia since not all had seen Australia and could only compare this to New Guinea.

The LCI's finally arrived at Morotai on February 15, 1945, and upon landing, the men of the 565th were surprised to find that their old friends from the 84th were there to greet them, just as they had almost a year ago in Milne Bay. Again, the 565th relieved the 84th Battalion, which left Morotai on February 28 for Palawan Island in the Phillipines. This battalion had constructed an advance-base on Morotai which included tents for 1,000 men, 24 quonset huts for the base, 2 steel towers for the radio station, 4 6,800 cubic foot refrigerators, a boat-repair pier, a personnel pier, and a pontoon drydock.

The island of Morotai, which lies about 10 miles east of the northern tip of Halmahera, in the Netherlands East Indies, is 28 miles wide by 48 miles long, with the Gila peninsula at its southern end. This peninsula, which is 6 miles long and a mile wide and with three additional square miles at the main island end, was occupied and developed by the American Forces. Pitoe Strip, an American Army Air Force base occupied an area inland from the naval portion of the peninsula. This base was occupied by the Fifth Air Force under the command of General Kenney. Planes were constantly heard over Morotai and rides were available if the correct approach was used. The Royal Australian Air Force also flew off of Pitoe Strip. In addition to the air strip, there was a base for three PT-boat squadrons on nearby



BIAK ISLAND
MOROTAI & HALMAHERA IS.

Soemsoem Island.

The peninsula terrain is flat, coral sand, covered by fine top soil and planted with coconut groves. Remember the Base Hospital area? The remainder of Morotai is mountainous and heavily covered with forests which provided suitable timber. At the northeast corner of the peninsula there is about 1,500 feet of shoreline which is ideal for LST landings.

The climate of this area is tropical, and the annual rainfall, which is moderately heavy, is evenly distributed throughout the year.

Morotai is remembered with pride by most of the unit members in that this was the place where the 565th seemed to really put it all together. Up until this island, the unit did well but did not appear to develop the sense of identity, accomplishment, or over-all unity that came out of the men during their service at Morotai. This may have been due to the far superior environment, or perhaps to a closer kinship man-to-man, or maybe to the monthly beer issue which had not been available as easily or consistently at Gamadodo. Whatever the forces were that brought this on - it was great.

The unit had many new and novel facilities which could be credited to the talents, desires, and initiatives of various members of the unit. No names will be mentioned in this narrative for fear of forgetting someone and, after all these years, that is quite likely. These facilities included, not in any order of importance or value, the following partial list. Think about these items existing under the prevailing circumstances: HOT WATER showers, A Laundry for the unit use, A magnificently-furnished Enlisted Men's Club equipped with a long, rubber-topped bar and a "brass" foot rail. In addition, this club had a coin-operated pin-ball machine which was designed and completely constructed by men from the unit. The club had 5 band stands for dances and a large "C.B.M.U.565" plaque on the wall. Bunting was used as multicolored draperies, and "indirect" lighting was provided by ornate metal shields which were designed and constructed by the sheet metal crew and decorated with art work and mottoes by the sign-painting department, The floor was wooden pontoon segments, and the walls and roof were tent material. These materials were acquired and the club was constructed by volunteers, in after hour activities. The club was used for dances, with the Australian Sisters (nurses), as guests and the music supplied by an Air Force combo. In addition, an occasional U.S.O. group could be prevailed upon to do a special show for the unit. Regular features were the evening snacks prepared by members of the unit Cooks and Bakers staff and the menu might include fresh doughnuts which had been prepared in a field kitchen set up on the beach, or a fabulous fish fry prepared in the same manner. The latter, after a successful grenade run in the unit LCM, resulted in a decent "catch". The club frequently featured "jiffy burgers" which were easily digested if consumed with a "cold one". Ice Cream also was available in the club from time to time.

The club was a great spot for the men to relax, and was the hub of the unit recreation. Thanks be to the guys who designed it and saw it through to completion. There is no record of any other unit of 565's size having any thing to compare with this. Now, back to the other facilities which included many ping-pong tables scattered around the club, horse-shoe pitching courts, a record library at the club, available paperback books, a sound system which was operated out of the armorers' tent and which told us, by the playing of a certain record, when the Mess Hall was serving fresh eggs thereby causing many to eat breakfast who normally skipped the chance to indulge, a wooden basketball court which used the same base material as the Enlisted Men's Club and was equipped with lights for night ball, two

coral based tennis courts, a tailor shop, shoe repair shop, photo shop, a "unit only" ship's store (see Gamadodo reference), and an available walk-in refrigerator which was used in conjunction with the club and ship's store. Another set of facilities that brought joy to many members was the availability of various types of boats. These were used for either recreation or fishing. There were frequent, but impromptu, country and western concerts presented in the tents by talented members of the unit - one number heard frequently was the "Freight Train Blues", but other western or country classics were heard as well. The unit also had a group of "popular" music entertainers, and it was this group, or a member thereof, that arranged for obtaining a piano in California before departure. This item was crated, labeled in some way, and shipped out as a part of the unit's equipment. Instrumental musicians, singers, story tellers, all provided entertainment for the 565th. A story is told, undocumented, that one of these talented musicians, a piano man, was called upon to play for a religious service while enjoying his leave in Australia. Being slightly intoxicated, and during a musical portion of the service, he lapsed into an inappropriate Boogie Woogie theme. He was forcibly evicted from the service. A couple of his 565 mates found him and assisted him to his feet. Talent was present in the unit, in more ways than one can imagine. As mentioned, athletic programs were there for whomever wanted to participate. The soft ball team, that was captained by the Executive Officer, Lt. Young, was able to hold its own very nicely in the league. Possibly the bonus case of beer given to the team after each win encouraged the maximum output.

Exciting things happened while at Morotai. The members would remember the day that the Japanese Hospital Ship, Tachibana Maru, was brought into the dock. This ship was stopped by an American destroyer, boarded, and found to be carrying troops, weapons, ammunition, but not patients. A prize crew went on board and brought the enemy vessel into Morotai. The crowd, assembled to observe General Johnson's 93rd Infantry Division remove the troops and take them to the stockade facilities, was probably the largest number of international observers and amateur photographers ever collected for an event of this type. The 565th entertained several members of the prize crew in the Enlisted Men's Club.

Even though the date of the Tachibana Maru incident is not on readily available records, it is probable that around this period of time the flag in the central administrative area was observed to be at half-mast. There was no public announcement made immediately, but on inquiry we learned that our Commander-in-Chief, President Roosevelt, had died of a cerebral hemorrhage and that the new Commander was Harry S. Truman. This took place on April 12, 1945.

During the time that 565 was maintaining the base at Morotai, a very important operation was being staged. The harbor was very busy , as was the Japanese Air Force. Vessels of all types were maneuvering, being serviced, and in general were in various stages of preparation for an up-coming joint Australia - American invasion of Borneo. The operational area in which a detachment from 565 actively participated was the landing on Tarakan Island which was located on the northeast coast of Borneo. Other landings were made to the south at Balikpapan, and to the northwest at Brunei Bay. The group from 565 boarded LST 697 at Morotai and proceeded to the site of the landing which occurred in May 1945, and historic records indicate that "all landings were made under fire". The detachment returned with no casualties that were obvious at the time.

It has been reported that a number of amusing stories could have come out of this operation, but the editor has nothing specific. There

have been rumors of a unit member wearing a Japanese cap, asking a question in dialect and scaring the hell out of a letter writer; of men saluting at improper times and bringing on sniper fire; of enemy fire that caused men to leap from a truck to find cover, but in so doing, one landed full-bodied on one of his mates who had already cleared the vehicle. Nothing but rumors!

The men of 565 had a wonderful opportunity, after the Borneo operation and prior to leaving this island, to serve as hosts to a great group of Dutch refugees who had been detained in Japanese internment camps during the war in the area of the Dutch East Indies. The highlight event, one in which most of the unit participated, was a party held at the base in Morotai for the repatriated children. The joy of seeing Disney Cartoons, eating ice cream and all sorts of goodies was almost more than these kids could express. In no time at all Seabees could be seen holding, hugging, feeding children just as though they were Stateside with their own kids or other relatives. Tears were shed, and no one cared. Kids are kids the world over.

This was indeed a period of time that was joyful because on August 14, 1945, following the dropping of the big bombs at Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9), the Japanese Government decided that they have had enough and unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Forces.

While at Morotai, and very close to the time of decommissioning of the unit, a very special draft of men was assigned to the unit. These men came in during late 1945 and remained to finish the work that needed to be done as members of the original unit prepared to go back to the states and, consequently, "Home For Christmas". These newer members of the unit were also good men, but unfortunately, neither the veteran 565ers nor the newer arrivals got to know the other group very well. The shortage of "mutual time" created the problem. The latter group trained at Camp Endicott, Rhode Island, and thus were deprived of the Camp Peary Hog Farm experience. After the replacement personnel finally completed their task on Morotai, they were assigned to Manus and joined the 140th Battalion.

Although most of the members of the unit who were on board when the unit was commissioned in November of 1943 at Camp Peary had been transferred out by November of 1945, the unit remained a commissioned C.B.M.U. until February, 1946.

The base at Morotai was decommissioned in January, 1946, one month prior to the official ending of the history of C.B.M.U. 565. Part of the equipment, materials, and installations were turned over to the Royal Australian Navy under Lend-Lease agreements. The rest was sold to the Netherlands East Indies Government.

A mass exodus of the original complement of C.B.M.U. 565 took place in November, 1945. Several plane loads per day were evacuated from the Pitoe Strip on Morotai and proceeded to Manus by way of Biak, where the Naval Air Transport planes stopped for refueling before proceeding onward. Most of these men were original members of the 14th Super Battalion at Camp Peary and were assigned to this unit from the beginning. The copy of the original roster that was distributed at Morotai to those remaining with the unit until near the time to fly out, showed that there were 294 enlisted men, 3 Commissioned Officers, and 1 Warrant Officer still on board . Fifty five men had transferred out by this time for a number of different reasons.

The 565th, as most remembered, no longer existed. Many of the original roster remained together as transients during the time spent on Manus. Another division of the unit occurred when the time came to leave Manus. The first detachment to leave Manus were assigned to the Aircraft Carrier U.S.S. Hancock (CV 6) for transportation to the United States. This ship sailed to San Diego, where the troops in

transit were unloaded for further transfer. The rest of the unit left Manus on board the Attack Transport U.S.S. General Frederick Funston. The Funston sailed from Manus to San Francisco and arrived there on December 9, 1945. These men were stationed for awhile at Treasure Island and could renew their relationship with that beautiful city until time to go home. Due to the extreme congestion in all of the West Coast ports, there was difficulty in getting out of this area and enroute home. Most made it for Christmas, bringing to an end an "era of good feeling", and an end to the 565 experience. As someone said,"I wouldn't sell it for a million dollars, nor would I buy it for ten." Most would agree.

Credits:

For a report of this magnitude there is a need for many sources of information in order to come to a relatively complete conclusion.

The major source of information regarding the technical data such as dates, areas, geographical information, facilities and other unit achievement were two volumes of Building the Navy's Bases in World War II, published by the Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks, and released by The United States Government Printing Office in 1947. These publications were supplied by Bill Miles.

The preface to this journal was found in Seabee Roads to Victory with the text by William Bradford Huie. This publication also was supplied by Bill Miles.

Others who have supplied individual data relating to the more personal aspect of this report were Stan Kelly, Ralph Nelson, and Carl Rockhill (the data on the Endicott draft that arrived in '45). The major contributors were the rest of the unit. Without you there would be no events or situations that are memorable enough to recall.

A very special thanks to Lieutenant Commander Leonard Maleson, Commanding Officer; Lieutenant George A. Young, Executive Officer; Ensign William Schmitt, Personnel Officer; and Warrant Officer Grady O. Roger, Heavy Equipment Officer. These men made it all work. At times the events or situations were difficult for all parties, both commissioned and enlisted, but the spirit of the unit was such that "The Difficult We Did Immediately, The Impossible Took A Little Longer". Without this spirit, nothing in our history would be valuable.

Credit must be given to several people from Brisbane, Australia, who gave freely of their time and their resources in a sincere effort to help us gain information about Camp Seabee, the Eagle Farm area, and the American invasion of Brisbane during those critical years. They graciously met with my son, his Trish, my wife, and me during our visit in September, 1991. During our meeting we discussed all that we could about the area, questions were answered, historic reprints were given, and all parties enjoyed the exchange. Those Australian friends were Ted Tremayne and his wife Jean, Merv Merritt and his wife Clair, and a lovely lady who has spent her entire life in the Eagle Farm area. Her name is Althea Lucas and she is over 80 years of age. Ms. Lucas has recently written an article on the history of this area for the Nundah and Districts Historical Society Bulletin.

Merv is Vice- President of this Society, Ted is the President of the local Returned Servicemen's League and, coincidentally, was with us on Morotai as a member of the Australian Forces preparing for the Borneo operation. He, too, went to see "Meet Me in St. Louis" three times before the Japanese permitted its completion.

Thank you, Australian friends. It really seemed like old times to work together. May it always be thus. B.H.

Our son John, who is a resident of Australia, contributed greatly to the Eagle Farm research by serving as the chauffeur for all of the Brisbane travel. He was very encouraging and seemed to be as excited about it as I was. Thanks, John.

The proof reading of this document was done by my wife, Sara, and our daughter, Betts, designed the cover. For this help, I am deeply grateful.

Personally, I am delighted to have had the opportunity to edit this Narrative History of CBMU 565, but you, the members, wrote it. I'm glad I could share this time, but it is only recently that I've come to appreciate the experience and the comradeship. Thanks to all of you. Bob Hoffman, ex SK3c, CBMU 565

***** Excerpts from individual recollections - a supplement to the unit history of C.B.M.U. 565, and not to be taken too seriously:

One of the fascinating aspects of compiling this information was the receipt of many very humorous stories that did not quite fit into the history, but nevertheless, must be included as part of the story. Rarely will a name be mentioned since that was the approach used in the preceding work, but occasionally one may be found. This is used only to give authenticity to the story. There is no chronological sequence to these anecdotes.

1. "The mechanical marvel" from the unit rebuilt a water heater to make it work and had parts left over. By the way, it worked.

2. The same individual built a jeep out of salvaged jeeps. Officers confiscated it as soon as it was finished. "Since it was built out of government parts, it was government property." He also built a scooter, likewise from spare parts.

3. The very conscientious unit member who, while on guard duty in the Officer's Country, discovered a game of hide and seek being enacted by a group of officers and show girls. Both groups incidentally were nude. The guard, fulfilling his responsibility since the members of the group were carrying no identification, arrested them and took them to the brig - **as they were**. Needless to say, this guard and his partner were removed from the guard duty roster. In all fairness, it must be pointed out that there is no evidence that even remotely indicates Seabee officers were involved.

4. There was, in the unit, a number of pets. This abundance of wild life made life very interesting at times. The monkeys, like Tojo, were far more effective than the average guard dog since a dog will bark a warning. Tojo, like his Japanese counterpart, believed in sneak attacks. Snakes could be found, but the real excitement usually occurred when a lizard found its way into a Seabee's shoe and the Seabee tried to put on the shoe. One often wonders, how did it really get into Mosier's shoe?

5. Kindness and sharing were a way of life, as long as you didn't have to share with more than the commodity would supply. That is why whispers would be coming from drawn mosquito netting in broad day light. The shipment of Southern Comfort had arrived from New England!

6. Sharing in the mess hall was a very hazardous pastime. This was especially true if the sharer was not interested in sharing with the sharee. Apple pie and fork wounds were an unforeseen combination.

7. At times, when casually observing the company street, one had the feeling that he was watching an updated version of the Roman Gladiator games. This was reinforced when watching a fighting 565th gladiator running down the company street, clad in a towel for a toga, with shower clog sandals, being hotly pursued, but leading his bayonet wielding pursuer by about half a step.

8. The kindness of a mate once again illustrated the sharing principle when he loaned a partially finished sailboat, constructed of "belly" tanks to a fellow Seabee. The problem with the unfinished boat was that it was not sink-proof, since the plywood bulkheads had not as yet been installed. The other problem was that the borrower could not swim and the lender was not aware of that condition.

9. Most enlisted men realize that at times duty assignments are made, not from wisdom, but rather for expediency.
That is the main idea in the following true story. The names, mostly, will not be used but read it carefully for a clue.

One of 565's Seabees was given an assignment by an officer of the Port at Milne Bay which directed this Seabee to run the tugs taking the empty barges out to the anchored ships, return with the loaded barges, and tie them up for unloading and preparation for the next day. Sometimes 2 or 3 men were assigned to this project since there were 4 tugs, with the largest marine engine turning what may have been a 24 inch propeller.

Here is his story:

On the day in question, I worked from 1500 hours until 2400 hours, or "as needed". When I reported for duty, I noticed a lot of LSTs beached just next to the area where we had been instructed to place the loaded barges. The bow doors of the ships were open onto the beach. It was an extremely busy afternoon and the last run was made to pick up the largest barge of the group. This barge was so heavily loaded with bulldozers and other equipment that it was barely afloat.

Since, by this time, it was completely dark, I took a seaman with a flashlight along on this trip to guide me in to the beach. The loaded barge was so high that I couldn't see over the load from my spot on the tug and therefore could not see where I was going. As we approached the dock at about 0200 hours, with my range of vision about zero, I called for the seaman to turn on his light and guide me past the piling and alongside the LST. There was no light - there was no seaman. I was pooped since it had been a long night and I had had nothing to eat, but I tried to ease this loaded barge in and around the piling. I bumped the piling and also bumped the LST. I got the barge onto the beach and tied it up. The missing seaman was asleep in the cab of the bulldozer. I went to my bunk.

At 0700 hours the next morning I heard the Lieutenant's (the Boat Division Commander) voice, "Where in the Hell are you, Kelly?" He told me to get up for a Captain's Mast, with a possible Court Martial. The penalty may be 5 to 10 years at Mare Island. I had sunk a ship !! The LST that I bumped had a slice 6 feet long at the water line and had sunk !! The only thing that saved the ship at all was the fact that its bow was on the land.

The Captain's Mast took place. The officer read the charges as above and my reply was a description of what occurred as described above. The Captain then broke in and asked where I had taken my training in tug and small boat handling. I replied that I didn't know what he was talking about. The officer in charge then requested my records, and upon checking these stated, "You owned and operated your own ice boat. What the hell is an ice boat?" I replied that it was like a sail boat, but on runners, and it is operated in the winter, and strictly for recreation. The Captain, at this point, became very upset and asked the Lieutenant, "What in the hell are you doing down there with that bunch of misfits?". The Captain then asked the Lieutenant if I had ever been in any other trouble since being assigned there. The Lieutenant replied, "No, best man that I have since no one is assigned to tug jobs regularly". At this point the Captain really blew up, recessed the Mast, and later called it back

into session. The Captain then expressed the feeling that he thought that things like this could only happen in the army. He stated that his decision on the Mast was that the event never occurred and that the papers would be destroyed. But to me he said,"If I ever see you in here again, you are going to the brig.", and to the Lieutenant, "Get some equipment over, get that LST patched, get it pumped out - **NOW**!". The last thing that he asked me was, "What did you do when they assigned you to this job?". I stated that when I joined up, they told me, "Don't ask questions,just do the best that you can do." At this point the Captain really lost it and I was told that I would be assigned elsewhere upon reporting back to my unit.

My "assignment elsewhere" was the garbage incinerator which wouldn't work - couldn't work, since it wasn't completed. It was still necessary, however, to burn some every day. This was accomplished by spreading diesel fuel and gasoline over the garbage, lighting it, and watching the top crust burn. This took care of the bugs, but it didn't do too much for the garbage.

The Incinerator was a "hard luck" project any way, starting with a 17 day rain (Noah, where are you?) which washed the drag-line down stream in a wall of water. The concrete box contained discards from the kitchen which were populated by maggots and the rain created disposal problems.

10. A report has been issued that, during the stay on the islands, and taking into consideration the difficulty in obtaining quality products, a new and different blend of pipe tobacco was created. This creation came about when a friend decided that the tin of tobacco received by a mate, from the girl back home, was not of the superior blend deserved by the recipient. The "friend" therefore improved the mix by adding chopped up rubber bands and gunpowder to the original tobacco. The mate used it. The smoke, the odor of burning rubber, and of course the flare-ups brought on by the explosive didn't seem to phase the smoker. No one ever accused a Seabee of being sane. A very recent report states that the recipient is, to this day, still a pipe smoker.

11. Stories have come to light, and incidentally have been verified, relating to the benefits that can be gained by being completely honest. They both occurred in California and are as follows:

First- New Years Eve, 1943- An industrious and ingenious Seabee from 565 decided that the way to get booze into Hueneme was to place a bottle in **each** of his socks, under his uniform trousers, and when the guard found one, our mate would yield that one and continue into the base with the other. The idea almost worked. The guard, however, was very concerned about the Seabee registering the bottle in order to retrieve it when he next went on liberty. Our mate kept telling the guard,"You keep it, Happy New Year", and edging further away. The guard kept insisting, the mate kept edging. After awhile, the obvious happened. The other bottle kept slipping and slipping until the mate, to prevent a broken bottle and embarrassment, removed the slipping bottle from his sock and turned it in as well. The benefit of honesty - an absence of tension and two bottles on the next liberty.

Also California, The scene - a special mast to award extra liberty passes. The judge, one of the unit's Warrant Officers. The W.O., after listening to a great number of sob stories composed by the men of 565, was approached by another of those who needed relaxation. When asked why he wanted a special pass, this Seabee replied, "Mr. Rodger, I'm thirsty." The Warrant's reply stated something about the first honest S.of a B. that had applied that evening and the pass was granted. The benefit of honesty - a relief from that DRY feeling.

ITINERARY OF CONSTRUCTION BATTALION MAINTENANCE UNIT 565

Formed at Camp Peary, Virginia

22 Nov 1943 - Transferred from Camp Peary to Camp Parks, Calif.

21 Feb 1944 - Departed ABD Hueneme for Gamadodo.

1 Apr 1944 - Operating at Gamadodo, Milne Bay.

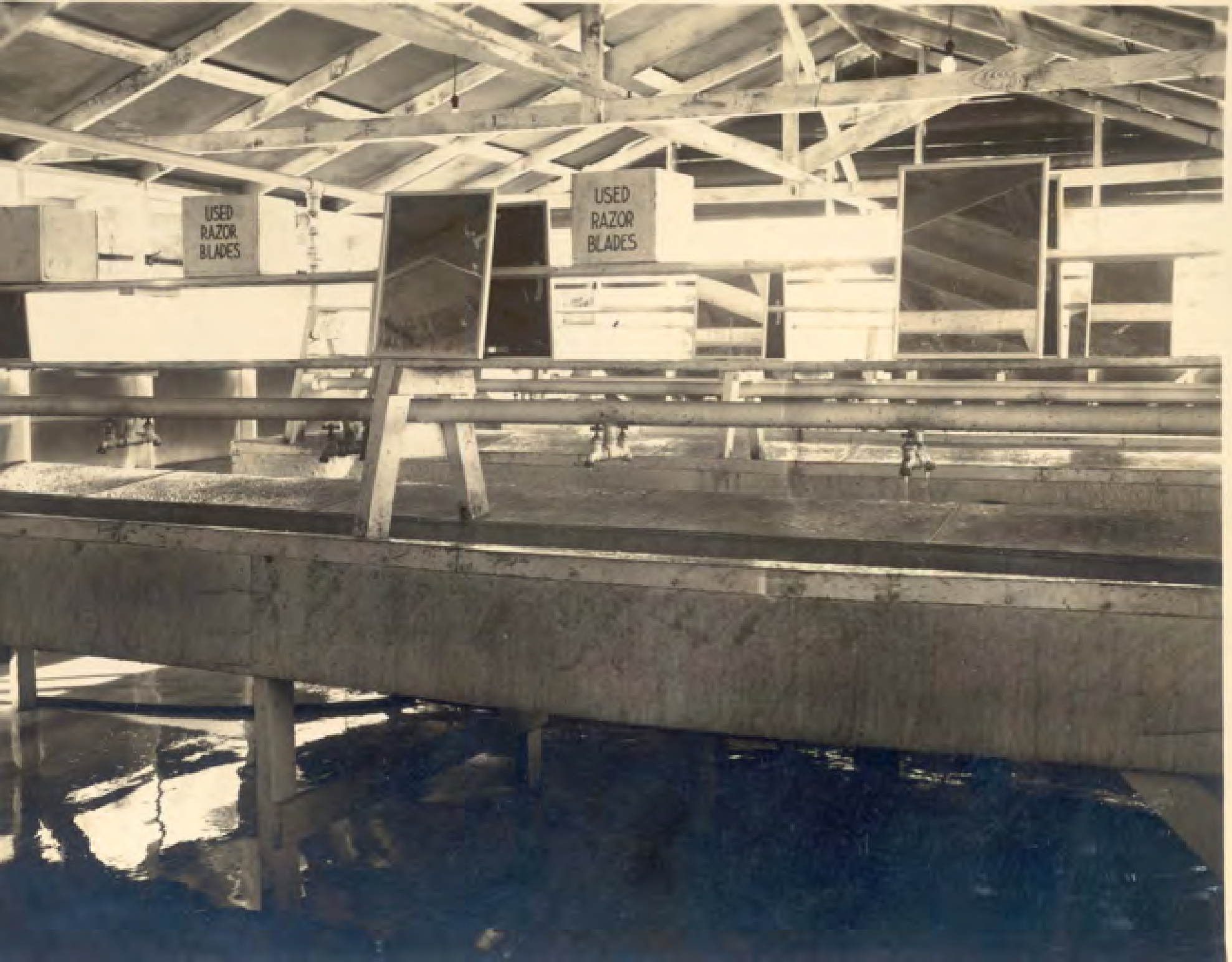
15 Feb 1945 - Arrived Morotai and relie ved the 84th CB of duty.

May 1945 - One officer and 35 men were on temporary duty at Tarakan.

27 Jul 1945 - Still located at Morotai.

NO LOGO AVAILABLE

NOTICE
BE CAREFULL OF
THE HOT WATER
Turn cold on first
NOTICE
Conserve Water
GET WET • SOAP UP • RINSE OFF


USED
RAZOR
BLADES
USED
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