Naval Construction Maintenance Unit 606

Historical Information

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

NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

ON BOARD

DATE	OFFICERS	MEN	AUTHORITY
30 Sep'44		260	Recap
31 Dec'44		264	Recap.
1 Mar'45	5	264	MoR
1 Apr'45	5	263	BNP625 & MoR
1 May'45	5	263	MoR
1 Jun'45	5	260	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	5	252	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	5	235	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45		230	BNP625
1 Oct'45	5	175	BNP625 & R
1 Nov'45	5	157	BNP625 & R

C.B.M.U. #606 (INACTIVATED)

CBMU 606

ICTC -(Formed at Parks)
ABD - Hueneme
READY DATE - 15 Aug'44
LEFT ABD - 18 Oct'44
LOCATION - ~~Milne Bay PTT~~ Clark Field LOG

5-23-44 - Lt. Sawyers assigned as OinC from Parks(Budocks ltr to Bupers dtd 15 May'44).
5-23-44 - Lt.(jg) Crane and Ens. Marsch assigned from 89th CB(Budocks ltr to Bupers dtd 15 May'44).
5-23-44 - Carp. David and O'Connor assigned from Parks(Budocks ltr to Bupers dtd 15 May'44).
8-2-44 - CBMU 606 arrived in Hueneme 30 Jul'44 from Camp Parks (Restr. Despatch from OinC Adv Base Hueneme to CNO 312036 1 Aug'44).
8-31-44- Casual Draft #2438 consisting 44 men ordered to CBMU 606 from Parks. (Std. Trans. Order NM24-CPks over P16-4/MN over Trf/jch)
9-29-44 - CBMU 606 ~~at~~ Gamadodo. (Sec. disp. 270016 NCR 9785 27 Sep'44 from DABOP to Comservpac)
10-25-44 - CBMU 606 scheduled to leave U.S. 20 Sep'44 for assignment to forward area in Sowespac.(Comserfor7flt mon. report for Aug'44 Secret Ser. SP001815 dtd 12 Sep'44).
10-25-44 - CBMU 606 departed Hueneme for Milne Bay 18 Oct'44(Hueneme restr. disp. 192207 to CNO NCR 33663 dtd 20 Oct'44).
10-27-44 - CBMU 606 gear loaded aboard KINGSPORT for NUDE. (Com 12 conf. disp. to Com7flt 200122 NCR 8900 dtd 20 Oct'44)
12-29-44 - CBMU 606 is entroute to Milne Bay.(Comserfor7flt Sec. report for Oct'44 dtd 20 Nov'1944).
1-12-45 -- CBMU 606 is located at Milne Bay.(Comser7flt Sec. disp to CNO 281053 dtd 5 Jan'45).

Location - Clark Field, Luzon CBMU 606

1-13-45 - CBMU 606 located at Milne Bay - alerted for a forward movement. (Comserfor7flt Sec report for Nov'44 dtd 15 Dec'44)

2- 1-45 - CBMU 606 located at Luzon. (Dirpacdocks SanFran 15 Jan'45 report)

2-15-45 - CBMU 606 enroute to Ml operation during Dec'44.(Comserfor7flt Sec. report for Dec'44 dtd 15 Jan'45).

2-15-45 - CBMU 606 is located at Luzon.(Comserv7flt Sec. disp to CNO 020659 dtd 9 Feb'45).

3-19-45 - CBMU 606 hereby detached from prev. assigned duties to report to CO Naval Section Base, Lingayen, P.I. for duty and to report to the 24th Reg. for admin. purposes only. (Comserfor7flt Conf Spdltr Ser 0408 to CO NABU 6 dtd 3 Mar'45)

4-10-45 -- CBMU 606 is located at Clark Field.(Com7flt Sec. disp to Cominch 250756 Mar'45).

4-11-45 - CBMU 606 hereby detached from duty at SecBase Lingayen. Report to CO Acorn 34, Clark Field, for operational duty. Report by ltr to OinC 24th Reg. for adm. purposes only. (Comserfor7flt Conf Spdltr P16-5 Ser BP-0740 toComNavSecBase Lingayen dtd 28 Mar'45)

4-21-45 - Comserfor7flt Sec Rep for Feb'45 shows CBMU 606 located at Clark Field, Manila.

4-26-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of CBMU 606 - Operated in 2 sectns during latter part of Feb'45. 2 offcrs & 65 men at Clark Field constructing 3000 man camp. Remainder of unit worked at Fleet Air Wing 17 camp at Mangaldan air strip. End. by CO Acorn 34.

5- 1-45 - CBMU 606 is located at Clark Field, Manila. (Comserfor7flt Sec Rep of 1 Apr'45)

5-21-45 - 1 May'45 report of CBMU 606 - Report shows personnel of CBMU 606 quartered at Clark Field, Luzon. Report end. by CdrNavBase Subic Bay.

6-9-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of CBMU 606 - located at Subic Bay. 4 offcrs & 228 men working at Clark Field & 1 offcr & 35 men located at Mangalden Air Strip. Report end. by 24th Reg.

7-29-45 - CBMU 606 is located at Clark Field, Luzon constructing Acorn 34 facilities. (CCT 7th Flt Sec Rep for June)

Location - Clark Field, Luzon CBMU 606

7-28-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of CBMU 606 - located at Subic Bay. 8 men were returned to the U.S. for discharge on 27 Jun'45 and 20 more are eligable for discharge within the next two months. Report via 24th Reg and 3rd Brig.

8-21-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of CBMU 606 - located at Clark Field, Luzon.

10-26-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of CBMU 606 - location not stated. Report via 24th Reg. 53 men transferred to U.S. for discharge under the point system.

11-16-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 24th Reg. states that CBMU 606 is to be inactivated by the middle of Nov.

11-20-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of CBMU 606 - location not stated. Report via 24th Reg. 66 men transferred to U.S. for discharge under the point system. 51 men rec'd from CBD 1092. Report states CBMU 606 was inactivated as of 27 Oct'45.

11-21-45 - Comservpac directs Comphilseafron to inactivate CBMU 606. (Comservpac 192201 Nov'45 TWX to Comphilseafron).

12-3-45 - CBMU 606 was inactivated(date not given). (Comservpac restr ltr ser-61 undtd to BuPers).

1-5-46 - CBMU 606 reported inactivated since 20 Dec'45. (Comservpac, Pearl disp 022103 Jan'46 to BuPers).

INACTIVATED

CBMT #606

DECLASSIFIED

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
6/13/44	–	Unassigned	C.B. report 1 June	
7/26	–	(EDHY (Milne Bay)	Cno Conf disp. 211301 July.	Ready 15 August
9/14	–	" FET	Bulloch memo 9/4 and 9/12	"
10/21	–	Edur	Kwajalein restr disp. 192207 oct.	departed Kwajalein for Edur oct 18.
1/9	–	Edur (Milne Bay)	Comservpac jet sec. Act disp. 231053 dec	added
2/12	–	Leyte	Comservpac jet sec. 020659 feb.	added - Leyte - deleted - Edur.
3/29	*Acorn 31	*Clark Field Luzon	Comservpac jet sec. 260558 Mar	* present location & assignment

CHAPTER I

CONSTRUCTION Battalion Maintenance Unit No. 606 came into being at Camp Parks, Shoemaker, California on 11 June 1944 with the assignment of Paul H. Sawyers, Lieutenant CEC, USNR, of Terre Haute, Indiana as Officer-in-Charge. Assisting him were the following officers: Lt. (jg) Randolph N. Crane, Ensign Nicolas Marsch, Jr., Carpenter James A. O'Connor, and Carpenter Robert David.

At this time numerous maintenance units were being formed from the enlisted personnel of construction battalions undergoing processes of decomissioning. The majority of the men transferred to CBMU 606 had served with the 32nd Construction Battalion in the Aleutian Islands. A few men joined the unit from the 1st, 22nd 51st, and 54th Construction Battalions, and several transfers were accepted from the Camp Parks station force personnel. The original group numbered approximately 265 enlisted men and all hands were quartered in one large two story type barracks. Edward Zach and Harry Kerness were appointed M. A. A.'s and the unit began the process of organization. Chief Megonigal assumed the duties of adjutant and the men were formed into platoons with various chiefs in charge.

Looking back on those days at Parks fills us with many memories not only of good times but also of the unit activities indulged in. Routine was never rigorous. Morning muster followed chow and then attendance at morning colors held on the "hill" facing the main administration building. On viewing the thousands of men assembled for colors each morning we used to wonder how the phrase "manpower shortage" came into being. After colors the remainder of the day was spent drilling mastering the commando courses, hiking in the nearby hills, or improving one's aim with the carbine. We attended lectures on the proper use of the gas mask, judo training, and jungle type warfare (which knowledge we sincerely hoped we would never be forced to put into use).

After working hours the many recreational facilities of the camp were at our disposal. For the athletically inclined the camp provided several bowling alleys, two fine gymnasiums, and each unit or battalion was furnished with an athletic kit containing softball, baseball, and boxing gear. The camp also boasted a huge swimming pool, but (with apologies to the California Chamber of Commerce) it was always somehow too cool for swimming. An adequate library was located in one wing of the theatre and the newly constructed Hostess House offered the men an opportunity of entertaining their wives or friends in the most luxurious surroundings. The Camp Parks Theatre usually presented the latest movies and offered two or more outstanding features a week such as the appearance of guest movie and radio stars or a production by a USO unit.

Ship's stores complete with soda fountains were located at several places in the camp, and each barracks contained Coca-Cola machines. Our dress blues were cleaned properly and at a nominal cost. The ship's barber shop, cobbler shop, and clothing stores were operated efficiently for our convenience.

Liberty nights and week-ends are what we like to most remember about our stay at Camp Parks. Who can forget a night at the Mark Hopkins or a tour of Chinatown in San Francisco, or the many happy evenings idly spent in night clubs and cafes in Oakland or the gay times in San Jose, Hayward, Vallejo, and Pleasanton? True the transportation facilities created a problem of getting to one's locality of entertainment, but nothing held back the Sea Bees hell-bent on liberty.

Towards the end of July, orders came through for the unit to transfer en masse to Port Hueneme, California, the Sea Bee embarkation point. After medical examination a number of men were declared physically unfit for oversea duty and were transferred from the unit to station force. At 1600 on 31 July the unit assembled in front of the barracks and soon thereafter were escorted to the nearby train by the Camp Parks band. It was a sober bunch of men marching behind the band that day. We were on the last lap of our training in the states, and for most of us another tour of overseas duty was staring us in the face. We had done a lot of beefing as every Sea Bee will do, but we realized at the last moment that Camp Parks had been a pretty nice place.

CHAPTER II

AFTER an all night trip in crowded day coaches we arrived at Advance Base Receiving Barracks (Camp Rousseau), Port Hueneme, California. Instead of being quartered in one large barracks as we had been at Camp Parks we were assigned quarters in small Homoja huts which were arranged in rows with large heads and showers spaced between. Approximately 20 men were assigned to each hut. One hut serving as a headquarters provided offices for the skipper and other officers working space for the yeoman and adjutant, and housed the O. O. D. Another hut provided facilities for the unit post office and armory. A third hut was used as a supply warehouse and a fourth hut served as a unit recreational hut.

Before beginning the final phase of our training here at Camp Rousseau it was necessary to be outfitted completely with all types of field and ordnance equipment and proper clothing. We were issued carbines, gas masks cartridge clips and pouches, first aid kits and pouches cartridge belts, field packs, canteens, mess gear, pup tents, mosquito head nets and bed nets, ponchos, steel helmets, green fatigue clothes, field shoes and seemingly a million other necessary items. Before elucidating on the training routine, however a description of Camp Rousseau seems in order.

Camp Rousseau is located approximately two miles from the town of Oxnard, California. Upon entering the main gate one sees a modern, well equipped hospital on the left and a large theatre (Theatre "A") on the right. A concrete statue depicting a sailor bidding a woman goodbye stands in front of the theatre and was erected in commemoration of the thousands of Sea Bees who have passed through the camp. Moving down the main street one encounters the Photo Lab, main post office, wet canteen, dry canteen, cobbler shop, ship's store, transportation office, and the main administration building. The Camp Rousseau mess hall was composed of one large galley with several large mess halls branching therefrom. The chow served there was in conformity with standard navy menus, and was to seem much more tasty after a few months of the future meals we were to consume overseas. Adjacent to the mess hall was a large ship's service building with a beer garden that never ran out of beer. Theatre "B" was located in this same area giving all hands a choice of two movies each night. For the athletically inclined, the camp offered the facilities of two swimming pools, a boxing arena where weekly smokers were held, and numerous softball and baseball diamonds. A large gymnasium housed indoor sports of all types and also served as a dance floor on Saturday nights.

While at Camp Rousseau, the men of CBMU 606 underwent their final training for oversea duty. Weeks were spent at the military training grounds. Carbine practice, lectures, gas mask drills, drilling and more drilling all became a daily routine as a part of the final phase of preparedness.

Carpenter James A. O'Connor was appointed Welfare Officer, and he immediately instituted a program of recreation and athletics. Uniforms were purchased for the unit softball team and games were scheduled with other teams on the base. Phonographs, amplifiers, radios, and athletic equipment was requisitioned and purchased for future use overseas.

Liberties in surrounding towns and cities were the highlight of our stay at Camp Rousseau. Oxnard, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Hollywood, and Los Angeles all played hosts to the 606 "liberty hounds," and many were the regrets when those hours of freedom and relaxation were terminated.

A group of seamen from various training centers joined the unit at Camp Rousseau to fill the depleted complement, and other transfers to and from the organization were affected. Ensign Nicolas Marsch was promoted to Lt. (jg) and, after the transfer of Lieut. Crane, assumed the responsibilities of Executive Officer.

Orders finally were received for the unit's departure and the men were hurriedly given tetanus and typhoid shots at the base dispensary. On Wednesday, October 18, 1944, Ensign John G. Hopkins reported to the unit for duty, and that same afternoon CMBU 606 and CBMU 605 boarded a train and watched with sad faces as Camp Rousseau faded slowly from sight.

The men spent a hot, crowded, sleepless night in the dirty coaches, arriving at San Diego the following morning. Box lunches were served for breakfast, after which the men marched to a nearby dock and boarded our destined transport, the U. S. S. Sarasota.

CHAPTER III

UPON boarding the U. S. S. Sarasota (APA 204) the unit was assigned quarters on the third deck amidship and began the tedious procedure of efficiently (?) stowing all gear in an unbelievably small space. The quarters were cramped, but clean. Each man was assigned one bunk which was to be his only spot of privacy on the whole ship for weeks to come. The bunks were arranged in tiers of five, and were suspended by chains from iron posts.

At 1430 hours on 21 October 1944, the ship weighed anchor and headed slowly to sea. For the majority of the men in CBMU 606 this was the second time during the war they had stood aboard a transport and watched the shore line of the United States gradually fade from sight. There was no gaiety or excitement reflected in the faces of these men, but only a sober stare that clearly indicated the heartache and despondency being felt at putting behind all that life in the United States represented. As the ship turned into open sea an announcement was transmitted over the public address system preceded by 3 words which were to pound ceaselessly on our eardrums for weeks to come. "NOW HEAR THIS! The first stop of this ship will be at Manus Harbor in the Admiralty Islands." Scuttlebutt had long ago made the rounds that our unit was headed for New Guinea, but here at last was official word of our immediate destination, and speculation as to whether or not we would disembark at Manus ran rampant.

Life aboard the Sarasota was both easy and monotonous. Messing facilities were favorable in comparison to the majority of troopships. The mess hall was located on the second deck and meals were served three times daily. The heads and showers on the main deck were always crowded but somehow managed to accomodate everyone. The ship possessed a compact, well equipped sick bay, manned by an efficient crew of doctors and pharmacist mates.

Recreation facilities aboard ship were necessarily meager. The ship possessed a small library, and movies were occasionally shown in the mess hall, which was always damp and stuffy at night due to the battened down hatches. Card games were in progress continually, and music was periodically played over the PA system.

Complete blackouts were in effect every night starting at sundown and most topside activity ceased then. Many a night was quietly passed on top deck listening to the guitar music of Nixon, Graves, and Mabry. Small groups too would gather around Szalony in the hold and listen to him play his accordion.

The U. S. S. Sarasota was making her maiden voyage, and the success of her initial trip was due in a large measure to the many installations and repairs affected by the men of CBMU 606. Several of the men received individual commendations for tasks performed aboard ship, and the unit as a whole was commended by the ship's captain, Lt. Comdr. J. I. MacPherson for the splendid assistance given his crew by the Sea Bees.

The voyage to Manus was singularly uneventful with the exception of the day we crossed the equator, at which time a days initiation ceremony was instituted for the benefit (or rather discomfort) of those who mere crossing the equator for the first time. The ceremony was preceded by numerous water fights with the fire hoses. Several types of discomforts and minor pains were inflicted on the unfortunate "pollywogs," but everyone accepted the traditional indignities in a sportsmanlike manner, and when the sun set that night every man of CBMU 606 had entered the sacred realm of the "Shellbacks".

The U. S. S. Sarasota dropped anchor in Manus Harbor on November 9th after a trip of almost 21 days. Gangplanks were secured to the ship's side and contingents of fellow passengers assigned duty on Manus were taken ashore in small craft. That first night at Manus a screen was set up on the deck and a movie was shown for all hands. Sailors and Sea Bees were perched on every conceivable spot to view the movie — on rails, winches, hatches, boxes, and in life boats.

The following morning an incident occurred which will long live in the memory of the men who were that day in Manus Harbor. An ammunition ship, the U. S. S. Mount Hood was standing at anchor in the bay when suddenly a gigantic explosion of an undetermined origin ripped her from stem to stern, practically disintegrating the ship. The force of the explosion and flying debris damaged several other ships at anchor near the Mount Hood and perceptively rocked the Sarasota. Dense, white and black smoke filled the bay and sky for hours, and when the air was finally clear again not a trace of the ship or men serving aboard her could be found. We had witnessed one of the most disastrous ship explosions of the war.

The U. S. S. Sarasota weighed anchor on 11 November and headed for Woende Island, a small island off the tip of New Guinea, arriving there on the 15th of November. At Woende, men of CBMU 605 disembarked to begin their assignment, and on the following day the Sarasota headed for Milne Bay, New Guinea — the assigned staging area for the future operations of CBMU 606.

CHAPTER IV

ON 19 NOVEMBER 1944, the U. S. S. Sarasota dropped anchor in Milne Bay. Boats were lowered over the sides of the ship and Lt. (jg) Marsch went ashore at Gamadodo to make necessary preparations for quartering the men. The unit was assigned quarters in a large two story receiving barracks appropriately named "Manila". The barracks were designed for service rather than comfort. The bunks were double-deck type made from rough lumber with no springs. To the rear of the barracks was a long concrete-decked combination shower, head, and laundry room.

Chief Bosher had preceeded us to Milne Bay by traveling on our equipment ship, and when we arrived he had almost a month's mail sorted. Upon our arrival he and Ed Cooper, our mailman, gathered up all the mail that had accumulated, giving each man an average of 30 letters from home which seemed a fitting welcome to our new temporary home.

The receiving barracks chow hall called "Hi-way Casino" served chow that was no better or no worse than the usual Navy fares. We did have an enormous turkey and ham dinner on Thanksgiving Day which, at the time, seemed our only reason for giving thanks on that day.

Our time at Gamadodo was spent in becoming completely outfitted for our coming venture. Additional shoes, clothes, and field equipment were issued and working parties were assigned to the segregation and inventory of all our rolling stock, heavy equipment, and material.

Operations plans called for all equipment and personnel of CBMU 606 and the 115th Construction Battalion (stationed at Gamadodo) to be loaded aboard five LSTs for a mission in the Philippines. Crews of both units were assigned to loading equipment on trucks and sleds, and all rolling stock was checked and placed in readiness for loading. On 26 November LSTs 585, 586, 629, 632 and 711 dropped their ramps ashore, and under the capable supervision of Carpenters James A. O'Connor and Robert David, all equipment and material of the two units was loaded in two days.

During our short sojurn at Gamadodo recreation was almost non-existent due to the heavy working schedules. However, when it was possible to take a few hours time off, such time was usually spent at a nearby swimming pool which had been constructed by daming up a mountain stream. Mountain climbing to the base of a small waterfall also proved a popular passtime and movies were shown nightly at the "Music Hall," a large outdoor theatre which utilized coconut logs for seats.

Men of CBMU 606 were assigned to the various LSTs in groups of approximately 50 men each. Lieutenant Sawyers and Lt. (jg) Marsch were in charge of our men on LST 585, Ens. Hopkins on LST 586, Carp. O'Connor on LST 629, Chief Megonigal on LST 632, and Carp. David on LST 711. On 1 December officers and men of CBMU 606, CB 115, and NABU 6 went aboard the various LSTs preparatory to shoving off.

The following day, sailing orders were cancelled, necessitating a stay of two weeks anchored in Milne Bay. This time was spent in constructing shelters and bunks on topside of all LSTs as below deck accomodations were insufficient for all hands. A few days after we boarded the LSTs the ships moved across the bay and dropped anchors near Ladava where all hands were granted liberty daily. A large number of Australian troops were stationed at Ladava, which fact gave vent to a sudden surge in trading United States currency and coins for Australian money. Liberty at Ladava consisted in having access to the facilities of a Red Cross Canteen where cold drinks and cookies were served. One issue of beer was made in the two weeks we were at Ladava.

On 14 December, the five LSTs moved out of Milne Bay and headed for Hollandia, New Guinea to await further orders. The next morning we were given our first taste of daily General Quarters as an obnoxious sounding horn turned us out of our bunks at the unearthly hour of 0430.

CHAPTER V

OUR FLEET of five LSTs moved sluggishly into Humbolt Bay at Hollandia and dropped anchors on 18 December 1944. The ships remained at anchor for a few days until another delay in orders was encountered, at which time all the LSTs were beached at "Pie" beach so that liberty might be granted to all hands. Due to the shallow beach and the large waves pounding the shore the ships were unable to get close enough to shore to drop their heavy ramps on dry land, so the ramps were lowered into the water, and bulldozers from each ship plowed into the water and thence to land where the shore anchors were secured. Suspension bridges were built from each ship to shore, and the following day liberty was granted to all hands not actually on duty.

The first liberty spot for most men was the native village erected on poles in the middle of a lagoon adjacent to the beach. To get to the village it was necessary to have a boat of some sort — and as no boats were available Sea Bee ingenuity again asserted itself. Numerous empty pontoon type airplane gas tanks were strewn along the beach and the men found that by connecting two such tanks with pieces of scrap lumber a formidable, if awkward, craft could be utilized for water transportation purposes. Any flat board served as a paddle and with such boats the men made excursions to the native village in quest of souvenirs.

Several Construction Battalions were assigned duty in the Hollandia area and many liberties were spent at these CB camps enjoying their recreational and mess facilities. The main spot of interest at Hollandia proved to be the army beach which served army male personnel and WACS. Navy men were not permitted at the beach but as even eagle eyed MPs could not distinguish the Sea Bee green fatigue uniform from the army fatigues it was a simple matter for the Sea Bees to crash the beach — and for the sight of lovely WACS capering in the waves clad only in the most brief bathing costumes, the hitch-hiking over the dusty roads from far away "Pie" beach to the army beach seemed little enough hardship for the pleasures assimilated

Hollandia was the largest, most active base we had seen to date. The many transports, tankers, hospital ships, and war ships of all types gave the harbor an air of intensified activity twenty-four hours a day. A large destroyer repair bast serviced and repaired ships that had been damaged in combat.

A few Sea Bees stationed on Hollandia had erected small stands on the beach near the Fleet Recreation Center where pictures, coins, currency, and G. I. souvenirs were sold, at enormous profit, to the souvenir crazy sailors of the Navy.

Christmas came to the men of CBMU while the LSTs were still beached. On Christmas morning everyone gathered on the beach squatting on empty gas drums, empty shell cases, and empty powder cans to listen to a solemn Christmas sermon delivered by the Chaplain of the 115th Construction Battalion. No Christmas packages had been received by the men. Because of our numerous moves our mail had evidently been delayed. Thousands of bags of mail and packages were stored in the mail warehouse in Hollandia, but if our Christmas packages were in those bags no one knew it. We had brought Red Cross packages with us for distribution on Christmas day but the packages were crammed into the holds of the LSTs under other gear so no presents were distributed. An attempt was made to show a movie on the beach that night but due to the age of the film and an inadequate amplifying system the movie was a dismal failure. The only bright spot of the day was a delicious chicken dinner served at noon. For some of the men this was the third war time Christmas spent away from home, and if no gaiety was exhibited on this traditionally most joyous of all days it was only because of the thoughts of our loved ones racing through our minds and a silent prayer on each man's lips "God grant us the privilege of spending next Christmas at home".

The remaining days at Hollandia were spent in checking all personal gear and equipment and being issued additional clothing and shoes. A pay day was held on the beach in anticipation of a probable period of activity which would prohibit another pay day for several months.

Finally the LSTs pulled away from the beach, took on water, and on 8 January 1945 our group of five LSTs moved out of the bay and joined a convoy of approximately 67 ships bound for Leyte. LST 632 had been selected as the flag ship of the convoy and the sturdy little ship proudly led the train of ships toward their destination.

The week's trip to Leyte was marked by various practice maneuvers, alerts, general quarters, and gunnery practice; and as no enemy ships or aircraft were encountered the convoy reached Leyte (Tacloban) on 15 January 1945. The five LSTs leading the convoy pulled through the nets into the gulf to pick up additional orders while the remainder of the convoy stood by. The orders were obtained and the next day, 16 January 1945, the LSTs again joined the convoy for the final lap of our journey.

Alerts and general quarters took on a more serious meaning now as we were in extremely dangerous enemy waters and territory. Calls to general quarters were too numerous to count and came mostly during the inconvenient hours of the night. We knew then we were to be an integral part of the Lingayen Gulf Operations on Luzon, and each day of our journey was spent in preparations and instructions for unloading our LSTs under any and all conditions.

With each man assigned a definite post and duty keyed up to just the right pitch to do his job well our convoy surged into Lingayen Gulf on 21 January 1945.

CHAPTER VI

WAR SHIPS were shelling the beaches and adjacent areas as the LSTs in our convoy dropped anchors to await orders from the Beach Master as to the place and time of landing. All bunks and shelters topside of the LSTs were dismantled, and personal gear and equipment was placed in readiness to land under any conditions. Scuttlebutt ran rampant among the Sea Bees waiting to go ashore. Some stories concerned working on railroads and PT bases while still other rumors gave the impression that our orders were cancelled and we were to return to Manus for reassignment.

Each night we remained aboard our LSTs we were treated to fine displays of bombardment by our warships. We could see our ships running up and down the shore lines blasting away at enemy installations. We saw explosions and fires raging on the beaches and yet aboard our LSTs we felt as safe as if we had been in the Gulf of Mexico instead of Lingayen Gulf.

Final landing instructions were given and late Saturday night, 26 January 1945, LSTs 632 and 586 hit the beach in a pouring down rain. In the early morning hours ramps were lowered, bulldozers surged ashore through the angry waves, and once more the shore anchors were secured. The beaches were completely in American hands when we went ashore and no casualties were suffered by our unit.

Lt. Sawyers and Lt. (jg) Marsch went ashore to stake out ground suitable for storage facilities and a temporary camp sight. Fourteen men headed by CBM Henry P. Harrelson were assigned to aid in the construction of a seaplane base at a nearby island. The remaining personnel of CBMU 606 and the 115th Construction Battalion started unloading operations. An area had been selected for a temporary camp sight and heavy equipment and supplies were stored near that area.

The first night of unloading operations found LST 585, with 53 men of CBMU 606 aboard, narrowly escaping destruction when a Japanese plane just missed crashing into it. As the plane flew low down the line of ships on the beach several ships opened fire on the plane and succeeded in downing the craft. LST 585, with several men of CBMU 606 manning the guns, was given partial credit for the plane's destruction.

The first few days ashore the men of CBMU 606 worked in shifts around the clock unloading LSTs and setting up the temporary camp. Hot meals were an impossibility but the cooks always saw to it that there were plenty of field rations and miscellaneous canned goods to keep the men well fed.

While unloading operations were still going on orders were received from Admiral Kincaid assigning CBMU 606 the task of building a temporary camp near the town of Mangaldan to accomodate and serve the personnel of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen. Preparations were made for the transporting of all hands and equipment to the prospective new camp site, and on Tuesday 30 January construction of the new camp was undertaken jointly by men of CBMU 606 and the 115th Construction Battalion. A crew of 32 men headed by CBM Clyde Walters remained at the equipment yard near the beach. Chief Harrelson and his crew reported back to the unit upon completion of their assignment at the seaplane base.

The Mangaldan camp took shape quickly with Carpenter Robert David supervising tent erection, shower, latrine, and galley construction while Carpenter O'Connor assumed responsibilities of transportation, heavy equipment, roads, and supply.

On 3 February Ensign John G. Hopkins and fifty-three men came ashore from LST 586 and immediately moved to the Mangaldan camp where Mr. Hopkins assumed duties of supply, security, personnel distribution, and housing. That same day our camp at the equipment yard on the beach was shelled by a twelve inch gun that the Japanese had placed on the hills overlooking the beach. The projectiles exploded approximately 200 yards from the camp but there were no Sea Bee casualties.

On 6 February the 115th Construction Battalion departed for an assignment at Subic Bay, and CBMU 606 became solely responsible for the erection of the 2000 man camp. Tents 16 feet by 16 feet were erected for living quarters, a large galley was built of lumber and tarpaulins, work was begun on road construction, and temporary shelters were erected for carpenter shop, garage, and welding shop. Pontoon showers provided bathing facilities. The communications crew headed by Chief E. M. Stevens installed telephones, 2½ miles of telephone lines, and wired a communications building at the adjacent air strip for Marine Air Group 24. Fifty Filipino laborers were hired to aid in camp construction and maintenance with civilian Paulino Cindana in charge of the group.

During the construction of the camp, air raids and alerts were a nightly occurrence. During one air raid a number of Marine personnel were killed by bombs at a sick bay near the air strip, but no serious Sea Bee casualties were incurred. Chief Megonigal did chalk up a near miss when a piece of shrapnel pierced the top of his tent and imbedded itself in the dirt not four inches from the spot where his head was lying. Then too, Lt. (jg) Marsch received a good sized lump when he hit his head on a tent stake as he, Mr. Hopkins, and Mr. O'Connor made a simultaneous dive for the same foxhole.

for a very reasonable fee. There was not much time for recreation but whenever a man did have a few hours spare time it was usually spent in visiting a nearby country barrio or the town of Dagupan which offered a few native shows and opportunities to purchase a somewhat scanty, but expensive, meal at civilian restaurants.

A freak accident occurred in the CBMU 606 administration office when George Morrow, CM3c was struck in the shoulder by a stray carbine bullet evidently fired from the gun of a sentry. The wound was slight, and in two days time Morrow was back on duty.

It soon became evident that with the advent of the rainy season it would be impossible to continue efficient plane operations from the Mangaldan strip so it was decided to move the entire camp to Clark Field near Fort Stotsenburg, Luzon. Lt. Sawyers and Carp. O'Connor spent one day choosing a suitable camp site at the new locations, and the following day Carpenter O'Connor and twenty-nine men left to begin laying out a new 2000 man camp at Clark Field. From that day forward a gradual flow of men and material was effected from Mangaldan Field. Two 2½ ton cargo trucks and seven 2½ ton dump trucks were utilized for transportation. Heavy equipment was moved on large trailers borrowed from the U. S. Army.

Our many operations and projects at the Mangaldan camp had served to segregate our men into the crews and jobs which most suited their particular talents and abilities, and as we started out for our new site at Clark Field the unit organization was at its maximum efficiency peak and we were prepared for any type job or emergencies that would confront us. On 11 February officers and men of Acorn 34 arrived at the camp, and on 15 February the camp was considered 100 percent completed. It had taken Sea Bees just sixteen days to complete their first assignment.

CHAPTER VII

TRANSPORTING men and materials over the 85 miles distance between Mangaldan and Clark Field was carried on 24 hours a day, and by the end of February the majority of personnel were residing at our new camp.

Captain C. B. Jones, USN, Commanding Officer of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen had issued orders to have Clark Field housing and facilities ready for start of operations by 28 February, and, far exceeding his expectations, CBMU 606 affected an eighty percent completion of the 2000 man temporary camp in the unbelievably short time of 12 days, thereby receiving a message of congratulation from Admiral Wagoner for a job well done.

Material continued to be moved to Clark Field during the month of March, and work progressed on the camp. Officers' tents were decked, framed and screened; latrines were built; and pontoon showers were erected. Work was started on two combination mess halls and galleys. The framed structures were to be built 30 feet by 164 feet with concrete decks, canvas roofs, and screened siding. Each mess hall and galley was to be capable of serving 1200 men at each meal. Work was also started on an officers' galley and mess hall similar in construction to the enlisted men's galleys but of a size 32 feet by 88 feet. Nine administration tents were specially erected, and framed work shops with canvas roofs were built to serve as garages, electric shop, carpenter shop, paint shop, refrigeration shop, rigging loft, and welding shop. Two wells had been drilled to supply water for the camp, and the erection of two 5000 gallon wood stave tanks augmented the water supply storage. Ten thousand feet of water mains were laid.

On 13 March E. J. Megonigal, CSF, the battalion adjutant, was notified that he had been promoted to Warrant Carpenter, the promotion dating from 15 December 1944. Warrant Megonigal was then transferred to the states for indoctrination.

Power for the many electrical installations at the camp and air strip was supplied by ten generators. Lighting and electrical installations had utilized a total of 77,000 feet of wire. In addition to construction duties, CBMU 606 was charged with the maintenance of all equipment of ACORN 34, CASU 9, CASU 39, CASU 57, FAW 17, VPB 104, and VPB 119.

While work on the camp and installations was progressing, a program of recreational activities was inaugurated. The CMBU 606 Welfare Department started functioning with the erection of a combination recreation and library tent. A well stocked library, a short wave radio, phonograph and records, games and athletic equipment all served in aiding the recreation of all hands during off hours. A unit softball team was formed and entered into a league with eight Navy teams from other units. The team enjoyed unusual success winning 31 games and losing but 7. At the war's end the CBMU 606 team was leading the league and had amassed a string of 15 straight victories. Movies were shown nightly, and work was started on an area to be graded for a new theatre. A regular liberty schedule was instituted and such towns as Tarlac, Bamban, Mabalacat, Dau, Angeles, and San Fernando became liberty towns. The city of Manila was only approximately 54 miles from Clark Field, and many were the liberties spent in the former "Pearl of the Orient".

During the latter part of March, orders were received to convert the temporary camp into a permanent base. Erection of 16 Stran Steel Huts was then started to serve as administration buildings, hospital wards, ordnance and ship's store huts.

The month of April saw the conversion of the temporary camp to a permanent one take place. Work was completed on twenty-one tropical type huts (size 20 feet by 56 feet) and one standard Stran Steel Hut to be used as a head and to contain flush type toilets. The erection of two 40 feet by 100 feet Stran Steel Huts was started. Two additional wells were drilled and our water storage capacity was increased by the erection of a 1000 barrel prefabricated steel tank. Work was also started on six huts and four heads. Plumbing for the heads was highlighted by the installation of two specially constructed 5000 gallon septic tanks devised by Lt. (jg) Nicolas Marsch, Jr. Five thousand feet of sewers were laid in conjunction with the heads. By this time our water storage capacity was 85,000 gallons, and as the estimated camp water consumption was 200,000 gallons per day, plans were made for the erection of a 15,000 gallon wood stave tank. I beams 30 feet in length were procurred from a nearby bombed hangar and a large steel tower was erected to hold the tank. Road maintenance and construction was proceeding as usual. Construction was started at the air strip on four 40 feet by 100 feet huts, six 20 feet by 56 feet huts, and two 50 feet by 78 feet hangars.

CBMU 606 soon found itself in the position of being required to full-fill duties normally required only of a full construction battalion, so in order to augment our lack of personnel it became necessary to employ a large number of Filipino civilian laborers. To keep up with our rigid construction schedule we were forced to employ 1300 Filipinos.

To speed up the erection of huts it was necessary to assign civilian crews to individual Sea Bee carpenters, and using this system, we were able to adhere to our schedules. Civilian laborers were used also in concrete and road gangs. At the end of April, Ensign Hopkins personally assumed charge of the Civilian Labor Office.

Due in part to the successful employment of civilian laborers and to the continued efficiency of the individual Sea Bees, the conversion to a permanent camp became a vivid reality during the month of May. Sixty-two huts and four heads were completed in addition to the erection of framed structures with concrete decks for the use of the welding shop and rigging loft. A large parachute loft was erected and completely outfitted with an air conditioning system.

While this work was going on, our communications crew had installed and maintained several teletype machines for the use of the operations office of FAW 17. The communications system was enhanced by the installation of 14 new phones and an average of 850 calls a day were handled by the switchboards. By now, seventeen generators were being operated and maintained, and the electrical crew had wired sixty-six Stran Steel Huts and had placed 6732 cubic feet of refrigeration space in operation. The garage was particularly busy this month servicing 708 vehicles in addition to repairing and maintaining our own rolling stock and heavy equipment. Our wells were now furnishing 200,000 gallons of water a day and 1760 additional feet of water mains were laid to handle the increased water storage facilities. Thus on 30 May the tremendous job of permanent camp conversion was estimated to be 65 percent completed.

The month of June saw the completion of seventy-eight additional huts and four heads. A 40 feet by 100 feet Stran Steel Hut was erected to serve as a laundry and by 30 June the laundry was capable of handling laundry for 2000 men. Work on the huts and hangars at the air strip was also completed in June. An increased demand for telephone service and additional hut wiring caused 26,430 feet of wire to be used by the electrical and communications crews. In June the garage serviced 751 vehicles. 410 feet of water mains were installed and 550 feet of sewage lines were laid. Three and one-half miles of road, in and adjacent to the camp, were maintained and grading was done at the air strip, on ball diamonds, and at the theatre. Culverts were installed and the ditches were rip-rapped to insure adequate drainage for waters caused by heavy rains.

CBMU 606 built a large outdoor theatre complete with dressing rooms and an adequate stage suitable for use by any traveling stage show that might appear. The CBMU 606 paint shop beautifully painted and decorated both the interior and exterior of the stage, and constructed several novel decorations to enhance the appearance of the theatre. The theatre was appropriately named "Sky Anchors".

The unit also built the base Navy Memorial Chapel which we believe to be the most beautiful chapel on Luzon. A 40 feet by 100 feet Stran Steel Hut was erected, and bamboo spires together with a specially designed bamboo entrance gave a distinctive Philippine effect to the edifice. The altar too was beautifully designed and constructed of various types of Philippine bamboo handiwork.

The month of June was highlighted by the release of men 42 years of age and over from the Naval service. Five chief petty officers and three other enlisted men were returned to the states for eventual discharge, and 20 other men were scheduled for release the following month. By the end of June, CBMU 606 with a total of only 252 enlisted men and 5 officers had completed 95 percent of the planned permanent naval base at Clark Field. More and more was emphasis being placed on maintenance rather than new construction, and the number of civilian laborers was reduced accordingly. The lack of lumber and cement prevented 100 percent completion of the camp, and an absence of suitable spare parts for vehicles hampered work at the garage. However, in spite of all obstacles, the unit had never once fallen behind the pre-arranged working schedules, and every officer and enlisted man felt both an individual and collective spirit of pride in the fact that a full battalion's work had been accomplished by our unit.

June 11, 1945 marked the first anniversary of commissioning of CBMU 606. Through the courtesy of the Welfare Department all hands were invited to attend a celebration in the camp area which consisted of an almost inexhaustible supply of beer and a huge quantity of sandwiches. The bakers baked a huge cake for the occasion, and everyone enjoyed the evening. In commemoration of the occasion Lt. Sawyers addressed the following congratulatory message to all hands: "The record of this unit during our first year has been both unique and enviable. The attributes of willingness, skill, and cooperation have been demonstrated time and time again by all hands. Aboard our transport, the Sarasota, a large percentage of you were called upon to complete unfinished work in communications, carpentry, electricity, ship-fitting, and boiler room installations. The manner in which you responded to this call was highly commendable, and your ability and ingenuity on those assignments aided immeasurably the successful maiden voyage of that ship. During our short sojurn at Gamadodo, New Guinea, it was because of your enthusiasm, organization, and willingness to work long, tedious hours that the tasks of setting up our heavy equipment, checking our rolling stock, and sorting and loading all cargo in preparation for quick and uncertain unloading were accomplished in record time. After leaving New Guinea, the monotony of the long trip aboard various LSTs was broken only by work details accomplishing many corrections to faulty installations, and several of you received individual commendations from LST skippers for various tasks performed. Our arrival at Lingayen Gulf during the invasion in January and the events immediately following will always remain a part of our memories. Lying out in the gulf watching the ships shell the beaches, waiting to go ashore ourselves, watching the night artillery fire, finally hitting the beach, and soon thereafter being subjected to Jap air raids and artillery, all blended together giving most of us our first taste of war in progress. Then came our move to Mangaldan where we erected a complete 2000 man camp in two weeks time only to find we had a higher priority job just ahead of us — the erection of a naval camp at Clark Field. Thus began the long overland move hampered by rough, muddy, bombed out roads, and the thought that we had been allowed only 12 days to place the new camp in operation. Together we turned what was nothing but a rugged, dusty, field of wrecked Jap planes, dugouts; and bomb craters into a 2500 man temporary camp in the alloted time. We were all justly proud of the congratulatory dispatch from Admiral Wagner for the job we had done so well. Now that temporary camp has completely disappeared and a permanent camp with all modern conveniences has taken its place — all because of your efforts and initiative under adverse conditions. It should be a satisfaction to each individual of this unit that the normal work of a full Construction Battalion has been accomplished because of your cooperation, skill, and "can do, will do" spirit. Congratulations on a year well done."

CBMU 606 played a substantial role in the Seventh War Loan drive. Each man was interviewed personally by Lt. (jg) Marsch in regard to the drive and the following results were obtained. With a complement of 265 officers and men 188 bonds were purchased by 65 percent of the personnel, representing a total of $14,062.50.

The month of July found most of the projects on the base completed. More time was being spent maintaining what we had already built and installed. In August came the good news of Japan's surrender and with that news an immense sense of relief and joy. We felt the time would not be too far distant when we would be back in the greatest country in the world with our loved ones.

In summing up the war diary of this activity, it is the general concensus of opinion by all hands that although a few unpleasantries crept into our experiences, the unit as a whole functioned smoothly, and we are all justly proud to have been a member of Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit 606.

DECLASSIFIED

PLAIN

ITINERARY OF CONSTRUCTION BATTALION MAINTENANCE UNIT 606

	Formed at Camp Parks, Calif.
30 July 1944	Arrived ABD Hueneme from Camp Parks.
18 Oct. 1944	Departed ABD Hueneme for overseas.
20 Nov. 1944	Enroute to Milne Bay.
5 Jan. 1945	Located at Milne Bay.
13 Jan. 1945	Enroute to Luzon.
9 Feb. 1945	Located at Luzon.
3 Mar. 1945	Detached from duty at Luzon and ordered to report to Naval Section Base, Lingaylu, P.I. for duty.
10 Apr. 1945	Located at Clark Field, Manila.
1 Aug. 1945	Still located at Clark Field, Manila.

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The above itinerary is based upon the records available in the C.B. Operations Section of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

5 Sept 1945

To Facilitate
Administrative Handling
Classification changed
from: CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

To: RESTRICTED

Irvin S. Rasmusson
Comdr. C
Signature

GLMU
606
MAINTAIN
DEFEND

SHIPS STORE
POST OFFICE
POST
OFFICE

Sky
Anchors