Naval Construction Battalion

1943 * 1944 * 1945
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This Review of our Tour of Duty We Dedicate to

THE FOUR FREEDOMS
"Z" Area, Davisville, Rhode Island
The Seabees, the Navy’s “Engineers,” were born of the necessities of the Second World War—in the tale of the heroic construction men of Wake—in the island-hopping campaign of the Pacific where bases had to be carved from jungle or laid on coral atolls—in the vast installations of North Africa and the United Kingdom, jumping-off spots for the assault of Hitler’s “Festung Europa.”

Like many another Construction Battalion, ours is not a story of pill-box destroying bulldozers, of D-minus landings or similar exploits. For us was the battle of mud, mosquitoes, jungle rot, “island-happiness” and homesickness, work, work and more work. We built the bases of supply for the forces up front—at Milne Bay for the New Guinea and Philippines campaigns—at Lingayen Gulf for the battle of Luzon then in progress—at Subic Bay for the assault on Japan. With few exceptions, ours was a “safe” war.

For this we can make no apology; such was our lot and we did our best on the tasks assigned us. We are proud of the 115th with the pride of men who learned to live together, to work together and who against adversity accomplished much-needed things.

Long years ago—on 13 August 1943—the men who formed the 115th Naval Construction Battalion were gathered in Camp Peary’s area A-8. Behind them lay the weeks of “boot” camp—drills, obstacle courses, rifle practice, training films. The first days of July saw the end of civilian days, sharp changes, new experiences, a more varied and colorful vocabulary.

On 10 September came the ten-day interlude called “Embarkation Leave.” Shortly after our return the unit moved to Davisville, Rhode Island, expecting to be alerted at any time. However, several months passed during which we experienced more training, built the “Sock” in Narragansett Bay, marched with blaring band to Sun Valley and back again, made the most of liberty in Providence and surrounding towns. At last, on 10 December, we boarded the ALCOA PATRIOT in undress blues and full field gear—confident that either England or North Africa was our destination.

This book hits the high spots of our tour of duty. To have told it in its entirety, to have done justice to all of the projects and activities, would have required some hundreds more of pages. As it goes to press, V-J Day has come and gone. Men who short months ago wondered when we could hope for rehabilitation leave are finding themselves returning to civilian life and the post-war world. The day approaches when the 115th, its work done, will live on only in the hearts and memories of its men.
Two Years Before the Mast
PANAMA
Five days in convoy took us from frigid New England to Cuba's tropical Guantanamo Bay. A few days more and we entered the "Big Ditch" at Cristobal. By this time it was possible to face food without changing color. In Gatun Lake fire hoses were broken out and we showered on deck. This considerably improved the atmosphere aboard.

We lay in dock in Balboa for repairs, gazing at the shore with liberty-longing eyes. Two days before Christmas we got the "word" and half the complement landed in the first wave. The balance followed next day. The "undress-blue sailors" made their first beachhead successfully, though some local opposition was reported. Later, in New Guinea, rumors reached us we'd left our mark on Panama; other outfits following us were denied liberty there. Unconcerned, we turned to a new diversion and the decks rang to the blows of amateur silversmiths beating Panamanian coins into rings. Thus came the New Year as, unescorted, we weaved through Pacific waters toward "Island X."
On 29 December, longitude 87°07', latitude 0°, King Neptune and his court boarded us and took command. Peppercakes, ducking, diesel oil, paint, and enthusiastic paddling changed Polliwogs into Shellbacks in one uneasy lesson. Those sorely earned certificates will be forever treasured against any future crossing of that famous line.
The Australian Navy picked us up outside the China Straits, guiding us into Milne Bay. After numberless blacked-out nights in an endless and empty sea, we were amazed to find the base lit up like a pre-war port and the harbor choked with shipping. Initial anchorage was at Ladava. Following a move to the Gamadodo side, work parties going ashore afforded us our first relief from a voyage of 69 days. By the end of the 83rd day all hands were on land and had begun the work of building one of the largest depots in the Southwest Pacific.
Our camp site in February 1944
A CAMP RISES

A jungle in a sea of mud, this was our “Island X.” The jungle was forced to a reluctant retreat, the mud, never. Roads were built, shops erected, stockpiles accumulated. Native trees, felled by our loggers and ripped at our sawmill, became galley, chowhall, and living quarters. Projects were assigned and work begun, while the camp was still building. Temporary quarters pitched among stockpiles gave way to the more comfortable five-man tents. Some of these, possessed by the industrious, became veritable honeymoon cottages in appearance. In time, we added a theater, library, rec. hall and ship’s service store. Beer began to flow. Chief Welsh and crew successfully created a “coke” machine. We had built our “home.”

Occasional pythons straggling across the area, wheeling bats at nightfall, the birds, lizards, and animals we captured, and the ever-present clouds of insects remained, however—a constant reminder of that green and steaming jungle about us, awaiting its chance to retake all that we had forced from it.
First Project — GAMADODO JETTY

WE CARVED A HILL AND MOVED IT INTO THE SEA
BARRACKS

Clearing and Filling

The Barracks Go Up
Housing was one of the Gamadodo Base's main needs, since it was to be one of the principal staging areas for personnel on the "road to Tokyo." We drew the greater part of this assignment. Seven days a week, from 0001 to 2400, dozers and carry-alls cleared and graded ... trucks brought lumber, cement and fill ... form carpenters and cement workers laid down pads hard on the heels of engineers who had surveyed their placement. Carpenters raised the framework and finished the job. With double-deck bunks from the shops, the barracks were ready. In the end, the base could house 40,000 men.
CONCRETE

Work at the concrete plant never let up. Coral rock, crushed volcanic rock, cement and water went into the ever-turning mixers to be poured into trucks and sped to the projects. The total amount of concrete used here could have covered two square miles, eight inches deep.
Before the onslaught of ax and crosscut saw, better than a million board feet of lumber—mahogany, mangrove, casa-casa, cheese-wood, and nameless others—fell and was milled for use. Our far-ranging loggers came to know the Milne Bay area with a thoroughness surpassed only by the natives. No growth less than two feet in diameter was touched. An average tree four feet in diameter provided a log thirty or more feet in length.
From overcast skies it poured, even as the sun shone through. Water, water everywhere from late February until September. In May and June there might be more or there might be less, but for 37 days the skies drained themselves of as much as 3 inches a day without ceasing. With the deluge came the floods.

When the dam broke, directly in the path of the water and boulders lay the rock quarry. Only a few minutes after Dick Czerwinski guarding our equipment by night was relieved his post crumbled and washed away. Then began the heart-breaking task of salvaging buried equipment.

Head—created by Sepke
The flood roared through the quarry...

...and down to the bay
MORALE

Jack Benny's show topped all in New Guinea, over-packing the Music Hall's 5,000 capacity. Actress Carol Landis, singer Martha Tilton, harmonica wizard Larry Adler, pianist Jane Brunner, and Army Captain Lanny Ross presented fast, easy-moving entertainment with maestro Benny. Just imagine, girls who didn't wear grass skirts.
Entertainment was a must; most of it we made ourselves. Besides sports, ping pong, the P.A.'s music and news programs, there was always the theater with shows old and new, good, bad, and indifferent. That gadget pictured at the right isn't a block-buster; it's the invaluable "coke" machine.

Sandy and the boys gave out with sweet and hot, not only for us, but for other activities at Ladava, Waga-Waga, Samarai, and the U.S.S. Boise, until the instruments disintegrated from dampness, jungle rot and lack of repairs.
The 300 x 400 foot warehouse we built for ASPD was, we believe, the largest Quonset structure in the SWPA. Thirty 40 x 100 "Stran Steel" warehouses combined to form one great depot, resting on 120,000 square feet of four-inch concrete slab. Half of the area was built into bin storage; 17 miles of moulding were required on those bins. Remainder of the area, with a mezzanine, was used for bulk storage.

The Advance Spare Parts Depot stored electrical, marine, and heavy equipment parts for field repairs. It served a large area, including Hollandia, the New Hebrides and—until the base there was completed—the Admiralties.
DIVINE SERVICES

At sea, services for the worship of Almighty God were held on the after-deck hatch cover. The vastness of the empty sea slipping swiftly by and the great, not always blue, sky gave a special impressiveness to these services.

Once ashore, we were able to make better provision. Catholic mass, first celebrated in the chow hall, later was held in the theater. Chaplain Smith’s Protestant services were carried on in the library, quick-changed into a chapel. Jewish worship was conducted at the base chapel, in the organization of which Chief Abrams was one of the leaders. Not until Luzon did we build a chapel.
Barracks and warehouses alone do not a staging area make. Chowhalls, showers, sickbays, row on row of Quonsets are needed, as well as a solid chunk of the alphabet—ABCD, NSD, ASPD, MOB. Our last large project in New Guinea was the MOB area—a heavy equipment salvage and repair unit serving the forward positions.
NSD Mess Hall

Oxygen and Acetylene Plant

NSD Warehouses

Receiving Barracks Site

Mobile Operations Base
The battalion was to have thirty days of rest in Australia, going in three waves. Lots were drawn and the first echelon embarked for the joys of Brisbane, Sydney and Camp Seabee's ice cream, milk and other delicacies. Unfortunately, the fortunes of war knocked the plan in the head. Another group was able to go later on assignment. Something over half the unit made this side excursion. For the rest, they had to wait the return of the more fortunate to hear of the wonders of Coolangatta, Toowoomba, King's Cross and pub-call.
IN A MILITARY MANNER

While some were in Australia, others underwent the "Kana-Kopa Campaign." Jungle patrols, assault landings, overnight marches and bivouacs, plus the inevitable gas-mask drill, rifle-range practice and films filled the 14-day training program. Added features: "live fire" and New Guinea's incessant rains, flooded streams, endless mud.
Before the war, the plantations in the Milne Bay area had imported workers from all the various tribes of New Guinea and the South West Pacific area as well. Predominating, however, was the Papuan “fuzzy-wuzzy,” whose home is the jungle. Friendly and obliging, he was more than willing to make a run up the handiest coconut tree to drop its fruit for any soldier, sailor, marine or Seabee who still liked the things.

Missions and the Australian administration have taught some the English language but most get along with pidgin. A few, chosen for leadership, have been college-educated in Australia. Christianity’s influence is widespread among these people, who not long ago were head hunters. Even today natives of the area fear to go more than a few miles inland, where the ancient rite still flourishes. Aussies and Yanks seem to be exempt, however, for many a lost aviator and wounded jungle fighter was rescued and carried over tortuous trails to safety while in that same hinterland grass shacks commonly sported the heads of the Japanese.

Trading was brisk, the natives offering carvings, paddles, spears, bows and arrows in exchange for cigarettes, pipes, tobacco, cloth, food and ribbons, colored cellophane, Christmas tree decorations—anything useful for adornment.

Clothing consists of a grass skirt or a brightly colored loin-cloth and various ornaments. Papuans are ancients at 40 years of age; yaws, malaria and other tropical diseases make life a poor gamble at best. Jungle fruits, vegetables and roots are staples of diet. Delicacies include fish, wild pig, occasional crocodiles and huge lizards.
Preparing coiffures such as these requires lots of time, lots of combing and plenty of fresh coconut oil for "hair-set."
might be the loneliest night of the week for the Seabees but to the Papuan it meant the Saturday night dance, known locally as "sing-sing." This was a shindig of proportions. Preparations began about 1600—dressing, putting on ornaments and paint, doing up the hair. When all were ready, the dance began. The women, dancing apart from the men, were provided with a band—strictly "barrel"—of coconut-log drums. Each of the men furnished his own rhythm, usually a canteen cup, which he beat with a rock, stick or spoon. Only refreshments were cigarettes and that old favorite, betel nut with unslaked lime. Though it turns the teeth black, this is preferred either to tobacco or chewing gum. In such fashion, Papuans make merry until as late as 0800 of a Sunday morning.
On a rainy first of December we climbed the cargo nets from LCM to LST and looked without regret at our deserted camp ashore. Two weeks later we weighed anchor and put out to sea. Destination: Hollandia, to join convoy. Our five-ship flotilla trailed up New Guinea’s coast past Finschhafen, Madang, Lae, and Jap-held Wewak to reach Humboldt Bay on 18 December. Again Christmas and New Year’s found us aboard ship. We were able to attend the base’s Yuletide services, however, and we celebrated New Year’s Day amid Pie Beach’s wrecked tanks, amphibics and shell cases. Until 8 January, when we at last passed out through the DE “picket line,” it had begun to look as if ours was a “waiting war.”
At sea in convoy we learned our beachhead would be on Luzon. Scepticism vanished—this was really it! Soon we were over the Mindanao Deep, within easy reach of the enemy. But our luck was good; even Tacloban, Leyte, was quiet the night we spent there.

Next morning we prepared to run the gauntlet between Mindanao and Bohol, Negros and Panay. In passing, we watched our ships and planes raising havoc with Mindoro's shore. Beating up the China Sea along Luzon's coast, air alerts became almost continuous. But 21 January found us, unscathed, entering Lingayen Gulf.

Here, at last, we found our war. Battlewagons and cruisers lay off shore blasting the hills. Vehicles ashore dashed about, then made off inland while behind us transports debarked troops into amphibious moving beachward. With dusk and the smoke screens came the nuisance raiders, bombing and strafing, then running away low over the water. For us there was work. Surveyors found themselves sighting transits practically in the front lines. One of our work parties, building a Marine air base, was paid a visit one night by a dozen Jap coastal artillery shells. Step by step they approached our camp, to stop just short of the perimeter. Then, while things were still interesting, orders came to "Move!" and move we did.
Filipinos were astonished at the ships with the barn doors...

...that swept right up on the beach to unload.
For Fleet Air Wing 17 we built quarters, heads and showers, a galley and mess-hall, installed water supply and electricity, built roads—a complete home. The Port Director’s requirements—radio shack, signal tower and galley with mess-hall—were provided.

At Cabalatian Island our earth-moving equipment got a work-out preparing an area on which we laid landing strip mat for the Navy’s seaplane base. Ninety men, a third of them guards, built in a week’s time the 120’ x 50’ ramp and a 400’ apron which varied in width from 80’ to 120’. A small boat dock was run out for the use of the base personnel who at the time were quartered on the seaplane tender U. S. S. Orca. Though the strip was used before it was completed, the landing of the first plane was used by our Filipino friends and “Brother Rat’s Orchestra” as an occasion for celebration.

When off duty we often went out to some Filipino’s house with gifts of clothing. In return we were fed royally: fried chicken, eggs, roast pig. Japanese Philippines currency was abundant and other souvenirs could be obtained in trade for desperately needed clothing.
A night and a day brought us into Subic Bay. The date: 8 February 1945. With DE’s probing the shoreline we moved on in and swept up on the beach in the very dooryards of the town. After New Guinea it all seemed very strange—roads, towns, concrete bridges, comparative civilization. Subic was half-deserted; the population had gone into the hills in obedience to instruction leaflets dropped by our planes before the invasion. Working without let-up, we got our equipment ashore and off up the road through the hills to Olongapo Naval Base, hearing on all sides the shout "Victory, Joe!"
We beached in Subic’s dooryard.
Olongapo showed all the ravages of war. Much of the town had been bombed or burned; roofless shells that had been buildings stood everywhere. Those homes still standing wore plainly in their peeling paint and patchwork repairs the effect of the Japanese occupation. The once beautiful Naval Base was pockmarked with enemy pill-boxes. Standing among the great trees were 105 mm. howitzers, "Long Toms" and tanks. Down at the waterfront two bandsaws were all that remained of a sawmill. Lathes, milling machines and other shop tools lay about—sabotaged by hammer and cutting-torch. For the rest, nothing but scrap and rubble, burned and blasted ruins.
OLONGAPO CAMP

What a place to sleep! Scattered around the field where we pitched our pup tents, field artillery rocked the ground and shattered the night as it shelled Zig Zag Pass. From across the road 155's lumbered overhead. Machine gun and rifle fire punctuated the occasional silences. Nevertheless, sleep we did—fully clothed, loaded rifles beside us.

Fire hydrants provided temporary showers. Strangely, neither we nor the laundresses seemed embarrassed at our state of undress. Chow from our field kitchen was eaten anywhere; on boxes, the ground or standing. Hungry civilian children, cans in hand, eagerly accepted any leavings. Our movie screen, set up next after the tents and kitchen, brought unexpected practice at hitting the deck when our first-night audience was swept by machine-gun fire. Intrepid Seabees went hunting up at the front—for souvenirs.
The Old Repair Shop  . . . Our Camp . . . 3 March 1945
While the battle of Zig Zag Pass continued our work got under way. The old coaling station received repairs, pipe was laid and the dam fixed to provide ship’s water supply. Since we were the first battalion on Luzon and for some time the only one at Olongapo, stevedoring was added to our construction assignments. The base water supply was set in operation once more and the NABU’s quarters begun. As soon as conditions near the pass permitted a sawmill was set up. The signal tower at Kalaklan Point and a galley with chowhall for our own use were started, as well as the work of road repair.
MEN MUST LIVE  MEN MUST EAT

The site of our first big project was the area in which we were camped. Thirty-two barracks, each 187 by 20 feet in size and housing 200 men, were to be built here for NABU 6. By V-J Day fourteen had been completed, personnel moving in as each was done. With them were two large heads. The administration buildings, galley and chowhall we'd completed for our use served them temporarily. The new galley and chowhall we built later seated 2500 men at one time, in addition to the CPO mess.

Meanwhile, we had built our new camp at Santa Rita on the road to Manila. Little by little, as personnel could be spared for the work, it grew from the five-man platform tents to a comfortable camp.
NABU 6 Barracks Under Construction

View of NABU 6 Barracks

Our Old Chowhall: NABU 6

2500-man Mess Hall: NABU 6
The shops did everything from repairing glasses to rebuilding large cranes. Heavy Equipment Repair alone did some 5,000 jobs on equipment for the whole Subic area. The parts supply was added to through salvage, remodelling and new parts made in the Foundry, Welding and Machine Shops. Other units were the Blacksmith, Tire Repair, Sheet Metal and Plumbing shops.

Shop equipment was largely obtained by salvage and invention. To the Machine Shop's original equipment of a bench lathe and bench drill press were added a shaper and drill press in New Guinea. From the wreckage at Olongapo Naval Base two larger lathes were salvaged. A power hack saw, made from Jap materials, reduced the labor of cutting rough stock.

Among the many original creations were... a powered "can-opener" for oil drums... a set of motor-driven rolls capable of turning 3/8" plate into pipe as big as 36" in diameter... the Welding Shop's 1500°F annealing furnace... the 2200°F crude-oil-heated furnace for pouring castings, heat-treating, and heating stock for forging.
Navy 3002 Radio Shack

Switchboard: Olongapo Navy Base
The roads had taken a beating from shell and mortar fire, trucks, tanks, half-tracks, cats and heavy tractors. The "highway" to Manila was a series of pot-holes. From Subic halfway through Zig Zag Pass graders and rollers worked constantly. In the pass about a dozen booby traps had to be cleared out daily. Across Kalaklan Bridge from Olongapo we cut and filled a way along the hillside to the CBMU 543 camp. Bridges were repaired and in some places foot-bridges added.

Beach at Seventh Fleet Officers' Club . . . Nacabao, Bataan
Across the bay on Bataan peninsula lay the Seventh Fleet Officers’ Club. About 20 of our men engaged in and directed its building by Filipino craftsmen. Work began in the middle of March to continue indefinitely. Native materials were used throughout. Sawale siding and nipa roofing came from the adjoining provinces, Zambales and Pampanga. The woodwork of the Senior Officers’ Wing was all of mahogany. Furniture designed by the project officer Chief Carpenter Mitchell was made on the spot. These furnishings adorned not only the club but in response to requests were shipped to Manila.
Once a coastal artillery emplacement, Grande Island became a Fleet Recreation Area for some 3000 daily of the men who served on cruisers, battleships, DD's and DE's. Under the direction of R. R. Kauffman, CMic, our sole representative there, native workers and ship's work parties built seven baseball diamonds, five basketball, three volleyball and seventeen horseshoe pitching courts. Striking-bag platforms were erected, liberty boat piers run out and a diving platform complete with high and low boards floated in the bay.

Before this could be accomplished it was necessary to fill several dozen shell-holes, blast unsafe ruins, dump honey-barge after honey-barge of rubble in the bay. Old buildings had to be de-booby-trapped room by room before they could be repaired, refloored and reroofed. The island's installations had been thoroughly beaten by saturation bombing and shelling by our planes and ships. Only a half-dozen laps survived amid the ruins.
Signal Tower ... Grande Island

ATC Signal Tower

Kalaklan Point
The Naval Supply Depot's five great warehouses were another example of combined Quonset building. Made up of six 40 x 100's each warehouse rested on 650 yards of concrete—an area 200 x 164 feet. Much grading and tens of thousands of yards of fill were required to prepare Rifle Beach—midway between Subic and Olongapo—for their installation. In addition to the large structures six 20' x 56' Quonsets were erected for office buildings and a temporary camp for 500 men.
A force of twenty-five Seabees and 150 Filipino workers completed each of the huge structures in an average time of 8 days.
The hills above Rifle Beach afforded an excellent view of the NSD Warehouses, Subic Bay, Grande Island and ... beyond ... the way to the China Sea.
The Navy’s versatile “building-blocks” — pontoon units — are constantly taking on new and interesting uses. One of the more fragrant versions is the “honey- barge.” Several of these were assembled and saw service in carrying the base’s waste out to sea where it could be dumped.

At Rifle Beach the pontoon workers assembled and floated their strings from which were made barges of numerous sizes for various needs. The main job was assembly of a 450 by 42-foot pontoon dock, requiring 4 barges and 6 bridges totalling 792 units, to serve NSD.
...AND MORE PONTOONS

Stacked Pontoons . . . some from New Guinea, others new

Approach strip . . . Pontoon Dock
On 10 May began a rush job that took top priority over all other construction in Subic Bay area. Three and one-half weeks later the major and most essential part of the ATC area was completed. Our "Skipper" gave us a Sunday off and declared it a holiday of sports events and free beer.

We were proud of our accomplishment for in less than a month we had built a small town. Added to this was the knowledge that there would be no delay occasioned by us in training troops for the coming invasion of Japan.

Over 200 buildings provided barracks, officers' quarters, messhalls, instructors' quarters, heads, classrooms, shops and other needs. Of these 65 were small Quonsets, 9½ large Quonset warehouses, and the balance frame buildings. Trees were left standing wherever possible, roads and drainage provided, walks laid down and the area cleared. Result: a neat, self-contained community. ATC was intended to house and train key personnel for three divisions at a time. After the Japanese surrender it became a 5000-man capacity receiving station.
FURNITURE FACTORY

Chairs, desk, arm, lounge, camp and school . . . tables, mess, serving, tailor's, map . . . desks, ordinary, typing and radio . . . cabinets, filing, linen, storage and supply, kitchen, mess . . . everything in wood from surveyor's stakes to rowboats and truckbodies is to be found in the catalog of products from the 115th's furniture shop. Twenty-two Seabee and Filipino cabinet-makers, on an average, produced the furnishings for ATC, NSD, NABU, 24th Regiment, base BOQ and all the other activities of the entire Subic area. For all large orders—and few there were of any other kind—patterns were made, pieces cut in mass production, and assembly undertaken wholesale. The shop's only power equipment, two DeWalt saws, a jointer and lathe were utilized in every way ingenuity could devise to increase production.

For our own area the shop produced items including wardrobe bunks and the BOQ bar; chairs, card tables, ping pong tables and paddles for the Rec. Hall; the comfortable pews, beautiful altar and other furnishings that made our chapel one of our proudest accomplishments. Two other shops—one at the sawmill, the other at the Seventh Fleet Officers' Club—kept Filipino workers busy turning out native furniture to fill requests from various places in the Philippines.
Between ATC and Olongapo lay Half-Moon Beach, the shore lined with LCM’s and other small landing-craft. For the unit working there on small-boat repair we built shop buildings made up of five and a half 40 x 100 Quonsets. Another 40 x 100 was fitted out as a galley with seven of the smaller 20 x 112 Quonsets serving as quarters for 300 officers and men. Other work included several frame structures—office, heads and showers—and the installation of a water system and sewage system.
COMMANDER SERVICE FORCE, Seventh Fleet

Serial: CF-703  18 June 1945
From: Commander Construction Forces, Seventh Fleet.
To: Officer-in-Charge, 115th Naval Construction Battalion.
Subject: Commendation.

1. The Commander Construction Forces, Seventh Fleet, commends the officers and men of the 115th Naval Construction Battalion on their performance in New Guinea and in the Philippines.
2. Ability to meet target dates in constructing important facilities under adverse conditions and a wholehearted spirit of cooperation have distinguished this unit.
3. When operations under enemy fire have been necessary they were conducted with the traditional "Seabee" fortitude.
4. It is with a firm conviction that the 115th Naval Construction Battalion will continue to merit commendation that the Commander Construction Forces, Seventh Fleet signals "Well Done."

AMPHIBIOUS TRAINING CENTER, Navy 3002

Serial: 099  4 July 1945
From: Commanding Officer.
To: Lieutenant Commander Thomas W. ANDERSON, CEC, U.S.N., Officer-in-Charge, 115th Construction Battalion.
Via: Officer-in-Charge, 24th Construction Regiment.
Subject: Letter of Appreciation.

1. The original project for the construction of the facilities at the Amphibious Training Center and the Naval Beach Parties Camp located at Navy 3002 was pronounced by the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, to be of the utmost importance for the accomplishment of our primary mission, the final defeat of the Japanese Empire. In view of that fact the project was assigned number one priority in this area by the Commander SEVENTH Fleet.
2. You and your battalion, without prior information or advance preparation, were assigned the task of designing and completing the necessary facilities. A completion date was established and the facilities which were required to be completed on that date were determined. This work was extensive. In a period of approximately three and one-half weeks from the inauguration of this project, the vitally necessary facilities were completed and the Amphibious Training Center was able to function and to take its important position in the accomplishment of our mission.
3. Your cooperative spirit, personal interest, perfect organization of your battalion and supplemental native labor, careful planning and direction of construction were largely instrumental in the completion of this project.
4. The individual loyalty, cooperative spirit, energy and enthusiasm of the officers and men of your battalion all contributed to the successful completion of this important project.
5. The Commanding Officer of the Amphibious Training Center is highly pleased to have this opportunity to express his appreciation to you, the officers and men of the 115th Construction Battalion and other Civil Engineer Corps units which performed under your direction on this project for a task "Well Done." It is my desire to congratulate the individual persons and individual units on this major contribution to the war effort.

Copy to: ComSer, 7th Flt
DirPacDivBuDocks(FPO,S.F.)
CNB, SUBIC

24th U.S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION REGIMENT

Serial: X-O 737  6 July 1945
FIRST ENDORSEMENT to:
CO, Amphibious Training Center,
Navy 3002 Ltr., ATC/P15.00,
Serial 099 to Lt. Comdr., T. W. Anderson,

From: Officer-in-Charge, 24th U. S. Naval Construction Regiment.
To: Officer-in-Charge, 115th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion.
Subject: Letter of Appreciation.

1. Forwarded with added congratulations for a job "Well Done."

Copy to: ComServ, 7th Flt
DirPacDiv, BuY&D, SanFran
CNB Subic
ALAVA DOCK

The prewar Alava Dock was just large enough to handle the S. S. President Harding. When Army Engineers, concurrent with landing operations, built a 360' x 31' dock there they had to clear away the ruins before proceeding. The project provided for 1250' of new piers 60' and 40' in width with two approach piers about 165' long. Begun 23 July 1945, it was one of our larger projects and work continued still in October. When completed it could tie up three Victory ships with ease. Over 2000 piles averaging 80' in length, one and a half million board feet of heavy timber, 1790 kegs of boat spikes, went into its construction.
OLONGAPO

During the years of enemy occupation Olongapo degenerated from a neat provincial town to a clutter of decrepit buildings whose peeling paint and patchwork repairs showed the "benefits" of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." The water supply was out of order; all electric wiring and telephones had been seized. A few days before the invasion the Japanese systematically burned churches, homes, buildings and broke holes through the dike system which controlled the waterflow on the lowlands.

In the face of limited facilities and supplies, some rehabilitation was begun. The water supply was repaired, wreckage cleared away and roads improved. But the rebuilding of Olongapo and its surrounding barrios—Kalalake, Kababae, Asinan, Tapinac, Bajac Bajac, Santa Rita—obviously was a task for the coming years. Meantime, Olongapo became a "boom town." Civilian workers in hundreds flocked in for jobs on Navy projects. Shacks rose on the ruins of burned homes. Restaurants and night clubs sprang up and with them laundries.
On the road from Subic, across Kalaklan bridge . . .

. . . is Olongapo
Refugee shacks at edge of town

Water . . . debris . . . the ruin of war everywhere

at high tide, water flooded most of these places

The cemetery at Kalakan Point on the road from Subic
The Catholic church ... bombed out

A chicken dinner could be had here ... price, 10 pesos

California Restaurant ... famous in pre-war days for Chinese food

One of the numerous enterprises of this kind
Negritos ... a primitive people of the hills, they served as guides in the Battle for Zig Zag Pass. They are expert in the use of the bow and arrow.

Workers floating material down Kalaklan river to build a house.

A pair of "Can-Do" bancas.
One of the busiest places in town, it issued I.D. Cards to civilian workers, rations, handled claims.

Until the Navy Civilian Hospital was established it also housed the dispensary.
On our first day at Olongapo boys, girls and women came among our tents seeking laundry to do. From that time on one of our greatest chores was forgotten. After we moved to Santa Rita the laundry girls gathered along the fence in their prettiest dresses to deliver finished work and to drum up business. On our side, one of the favorite evening pastimes was to sit and observe the proceedings, now and then yelling "magandang dalaga" or other choice Tagalog expression.

Some laundries boasted oil drums of hot water. The common practice was to gather at a stream or fire plug, beat the soap into the clothing, then beat the soap and dirt out. Drying was done either on lines or on the grass. In rainy weather the clothing shortage sometimes became acute. Early in September our own laundry opened but the older system still remained popular.
Camotes, mangos, papaya, bananas, chickens, shoes—all manner of things usable and edible were to be found in the village markets and roadside stands. The government posted ceiling prices but they had no real meaning. American cigarettes brought two pesos a pack; a ganta of rice (7 cubic inches) cost 3 pesos. The black market flourished, causing prices to skyrocket and creating real hardship. Only plentiful supply could ever solve this problem.
Public schools were opened with the assistance of Navy Civilian Affairs officers. Before the war education had achieved a high level. Manila boasted a number of universities—among them Santo Tomas, the University of the Philippines and the American College. We were astonished at their thorough knowledge of American history. From the youngest to the oldest the students were eager to return to their long-interrupted studies, to them a prized possession.
TRANSPORTATION

Beast of all burdens is the carabao or water-buffalo. He pulls the plow in the rice paddy and the "kariton"—a two-wheeled cart—on the road. The "karetela," drawn by a small horse or, occasionally, a Brahma steer provides more stylish transportation. The "banca," a small outrigger canoe, has its sailing counterpart in the "parao." In Bataan fingers of water stretching inland from Manila Bay are used to carry produce by parao to Manila's markets. The railroad, connecting to San Fernando with the Manila-Baguio line, had been torn up by the Japanese. "Try-Tran" and other trucks and busses carried passengers and possessions between Manila and Santa Cruz in northern Zambales.
Here, as everywhere, the young girls care for the children.

Plants are as necessary as books at the school.

Young bamboo workers repairing Kalalake schoolhouse.
Filipinos are a friendly, laughing people. They like and admire Americans. In this the girls are no exception, though some of our mates found provincial customs difficult. Even the simple act of helping a lady in or out of a conveyance might be met with alarm and the cry "Not the custom!" They prefer bright-colored dresses in the American style. On formal occasions, however, the older and more ornate Filipina costume is worn. A flower in the hair is one of the more attractive customs. Like American girls, most "Filipina dalaga" are excellent dressmakers.
The daughters of Philippines Supreme Court Justice Pablo: Glorio, Rosario, Victoria, Mini, Lena... in formal dress.
The Japanese invasion of Luzon in late 1941 resulted in the burning of Olongapo—a blow from which the town had only partially recovered when it suffered it again on the oppressor’s withdrawal. The resulting housing shortage was aggravated by the influx of workers needed for the expansion of the Naval Base. In an effort to provide some temporary relief the Navy’s Civilian Affairs Office sponsored the Asinan and Bajac Bajac housing projects.

At Asinan thirty-seven houses 16’ x 18’ in size, each with an 8’ x 12’ “galley,” were constructed. Nipa shingles, bamboo and rattan contributed by the citizens of Palauig were carried in Navy trucks to the project site on Olongapo’s outskirts, just off Manila road. Piling, flooring and GI sheets were all salvage materials.

While part of the 75 Filipinos working on the project placed pilings, laid foundations and raised framing, the balance went about the business—to them no novel idea—of prefabricating the outer and inner walls. With the framework ready and the nipa shingle roof laid, whole walls went into place and were secured. The workers, beginning on 23 April 1945, ran up an average of one house every 1 ½ days. By 15 June the job was completed and surplus materials carted off for the beginning of the Bajac Bajac project.
In February 1945 the Eighth Army's XI Corps, Major-general Charles P. Hall commanding, faced the task of taking Zig Zag Pass—six miles of twisting, winding road, hairpin turns and blind-angle approaches. 5000 of the enemy were dug in throughout the area. Two years of jungle growth had rendered their emplacements all but invisible.

Only after crossing the Santa Rita river did the force meet heavy opposition. From then on it was a job of knocking out the enemy pillbox by pillbox, cave by cave. With air-directed artillery support, tanks, P-47's and P-51's, the main force pushed forward yard by costly yard. From their side the Japs threw down a constant rain of mountain gun and mortar fire. Night infiltrations and sniper fire took their toll.

Meanwhile, the 149th Regiment Kentucky Reserves went off through the forests on the north flank to cut around the Japs, reach Dinalupihan on the plain and then strike. They were led by pigmy Negrito scouts armed with bows and arrows and were supplied by food trains of Filipinos. After they crossed the pass it became necessary to drop supplies to
them by B-25's and C-47's. Beating their way back they met with light opposition until they ran into a Jap tank force. Field artillery on the Olongapo side of the pass knocked them out under direction from Cub observation planes.

As the infantry advanced, using flame throwers, satchel charges and automatic fire, engineers followed blasting every hole, cave and pillbox. On the 14th day a patrol from the west met a patrol from the east. By afternoon the Americans held the entire length of Zig Zag Pass—ending one of the toughest battles of the Philippines.
THE PEARL OF THE ORIENT
On the left the Philippine Commonwealth Legislature... completed just before Pearl Harbor; it had to be shelled when retreating Japs used it as a fortress. Below is a typical Manila street scene.
Santo Tomas as a prison

Bonifacio Monument, Manila

The Manila Methodist Church
IN MEMORIAM

Milo Wilson Nielson
Horace Rutter Collins
John Francis O'Sullivan
Charles Chester Ryan
John Alfred Burgess
Frank Charles Hubbard
David Thomas Radase
Closing feature of the Jurgens show was autographing of the drum by our Skipper. Dick and the Gyrenes formed the only outfit of its kind in the Marine Corps. Wherever they went, and they had been on 23 islands from Hawaii to Okinawa, they got the signatures and insignia of outfits they had entertained. One such signature was General "Hap" Arnold’s. Witnessing the Skipper’s "John Henry" are Dick and our Exec.

As Executive Officer in the team that led our battalion through the last rush-job months of the war, LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER ARTHUR WEISBERG, USNR, assumed his duties on 1 June 1945. Like our Skipper, he came from an assignment with the Commander, Service Force, Seventh Fleet, on the staff of the Base Planning and Construction Division where he had served since coming overseas in December 1944.

Three years before, he had begun active duty at San Diego, leaving the Pacific Bridge Company in February 1942. As Resident Officer in Charge of Construction at San Diego he supervised some $40,000,000 of construction work.

Following his graduation from the University of California in 1935 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering, Mr. Weisberg was associated as Assistant General Superintendent and Chief Engineer with various Pacific Coast contractors building bridges, highways, canals, piers, floating and graving drydocks.

With his wife and 2½-year old daughter Stefanie Ann he makes his home in Sacramento, California. After his discharge from the Navy he plans to return to civilian construction work and his hobbies—horses and fishing.
LIEUTENANT - COMMANDER THOMAS W. ANDERSON, USN, became our Skipper on 15 April 1945, relieving Commander W. W. Hammon. Behind him lay almost four years of active duty, three of them spent as Assistant Public Works Officer at the Alameda, California, Naval Air Station. Following this he reported to the Third Naval Construction Brigade in the SWPA to assume the duties of Operations Officer. After three months he was attached to the staff of the Commander, Service Force, Seventh Fleet and a few months later came aboard the 115th. In 1943 he transferred to the Regular Navy after having held a commission in the Naval Reserve since 1935.

Our Skipper received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering at the University of Washington and in 1937 completed his Master's studies at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1938 and 1939 he travelled in Europe with his bride—a honeymoon that was also something of a "postman's holiday" as about nine months of it were taken up in bridge design for the Norwegian government. In the years following his return to the States he engaged in construction work in connection with a number of federal contracts. Although—like all construction men—his home is where the job is, with his wife Kathryn and five-year old son Thomas Raymond, he considers Seattle, Washington, his "home port."
115th Battalion Officer's Country

Officer's Mess

Entrance ... Officer's Club

Lounge ... 115th Officer's Club ... native furniture, sawale walls, shell lights


Front
Sharp
Olsen
Warwick
Crosby
Steinemeyer

Second
Wineblad
Gillman
Abrams
Van Hoorebeke
Piper
Manley
Wahtola
Wemple
Sczawinski

Third
Donaldson
Farber
Huffaker
Wilkes
Black
Crawford
Winters
Warren
Carter

Back
Mc Donough
Belknap
Poppe
Massey
Hobbs
Hettinger
Foat
L. W. Sutton
L. L. Bailey
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OUR CHAPEL

At Santa Rita Camp we at last had our chapel, dedicating it on 16 September 1945. Seating 200 people, it is a beautiful building made of native lumber, sawale and nipa. The Furniture Shop outdid itself in the matter of the altar, shell lights, pews and other appointments. Here sang the Olongapo Methodist Church choir and another choir was formed for the Catholic services.
Kneeling . . Wiener, Wanielista, Stefek.

Standing front . . Warner, Atkinson, Sutter, D. L. Perry, Towns

Back . . . E. H. Brown, Fregeau, Tarver, Macek, H. Lewis, Gillette, W. E. Rogers, Ruane,
R. W. Roy, R. C. Walker
Front ... Allen, Kovach, J. R. Fischer, Eubanks, Vinci

Middle ... P. T. Falotico, Saletin, Shapiro, Rutter, Liebes

Back ... Harley, W. W. Stevens, Iosua, W. L. Parker, Lescsisin, Specht, Sattler, Schaeffer
Front ... Funk, Getty, Stephenson

Middle ... Riggins, Shoemaker, Twohy, Ulrich, Walsh

Back ... Eaves, J. D. Lewis, Hayes, Stinson, Seamon, Herbst
Front . . . Zimmerman, Gravatt, Landgraff

Middle . . . R. E. Richardson, Lilly, Di Virgilio

Back . . . Rank, Winegar, N. I. Lewis, Croxton, Franks, Fehr, E. W. Schmidt, Manchester, Gustafson
Front . . . Hawk, Green, J. G. Simmons, Mac Neil

Middle . . . Grier, T. Gallagher, Hutchons, Gregory, Bellfield, Jackson

Back . . . Graham, Dunston, R. Smith, Grady
Front . . . Tidwell, W. F. Wright, Laird, Balsitis, Cocke

Middle . . . Stielau, Bridges, Laktzian, Voto, Whalen, Mendoza, Maggio, Swiecichowski, J. H. Walker

Our Theatre . . . Pride of the Outfit

Buster Raye—once of Barnum & Bailey's—plays with fire

The girls give on the sweet but modern in Cesar Velasco
"This Is The Army," Irving Berlin's hit show played in an improvised theater on the site of the future ATC area. On the open field around which signal flags flattered on slender staffs gathered sailors, soldiers, Seabees and the local citizenry to enjoy the first big show in the locality since the liberation.

After our own theater was completed more shows came our way. Sponsored by Army Special Services the first of these were Cesar Velasco's and the Skyroom shows. Acrobats, comedians, singers and good bands were their features. Getting our first taste of Philippines entertainment, we found it good.
Front
Cooper
Curren
Flaherty
Wicklander
Shrum
O’Connell
Bonvicino
Guterman

Middle
Doetsch
Dunn
Dougherty
R. A. Walters
Hossom
Thom
Conner

Back
Fitz
Sall
Staples
Kirk
Goodman
R. S. Ennis
Front
Griffith
Bocanegra
Kemper
G. A. Nelson
Costello
Burns
Contessa
Mitchell

Middle
Da Ros
Plummer
J. F. Murphy
Peplowski
Driscoll
Pine

Back
Cubick
Bobko
R. W. Dickinson
Steinbrecher
Hersey
Front
Orzechowski
R. R. Reid
Cammarota
Czerwinski
Dates
Scheiman
Sackett
Markins

Middle
Barnes
Ham
C. R. Evans
Ketel
Mc Kee
W. P. Fleming

Back
Pusch
Schultz
G. P. Billingsley
Kirtland
Fee
H. O. Hubbard
A couple of USO shows came our way. Singers, dancers, hypnotists, Russian dancers, accordionists—New Guinea was never like this!

Standing Room Only... neither rain nor near-floods could dampen our enjoyment of good shows... and we had them
Seabees prefer Marines... and that goes both ways we're told. With the best in singers and musicians, Dick and the rest of the Gyrenes had our all-star rating. And not a "skirt" in sight!

Gizmo, the lad with the medal railroad-track, and his Lady-Marine friend, Gertie, aired their love troubles, gave the goldbraid a thorough drubbing, and kept us in the aisles. The man with the capering doghouse was Zeke Zimmer, peacetime grumbler in the Boston "Pops."

Mike Zolik gets a new assignment—he wouldn't sing, though
Gentlemen prefer blondes but Seabees love them all.
That man is Kay Kyser

Our boy Potts in a skirt—some hula girl
Aboard that stuffy Patriot,  
I yearned and yearned for land;  
Didn’t care just what I got,  
Even wanted sand.  
Then we landed in New Guinea,  
Tropic isle of charm,  
But now that I am here  
It won’t do any harm  
To tell the truth, so help me,  
Believe it’s gospel, bud,  
This here place ain’t no island . . .  
It’s a sea of liquid mud!  

J. W. Buffington

"But Chief! What makes you think
I’ve been goldbricking?"

The Officer in His Jeep

When you hear that horn go “peep,”
It’s the officer in his jeep.
He drives and drives and drives all day
Just to pass the time away.
When all of this I have to see
An officer’s life appeals to me;
Not that I’d trade my seaman’s stripes
But it would stop my petty gripes
So when you hear that horn go “peep . . .”
Make way for the officer in his jeep.

E. Schwam

Voyage of a Seabee

It was the tenth of December
And all through the day
There was utter confusion . . .
About normal, I’d say.
The Battalion was moving;
“This is it!” we all cried.
We were leaving at last
And our joy couldn’t hide.
We boarded the ship
That sailed at X-twenty;
The same time next day
We were seasick, but plenty!

We pulled into Cuba,
A most dazzling sight;
Lay there for four days
Then pulled out at night.
Then down to Balboa
We zigged and we zagged,
And while some of us gagged,
We just zigged and just zagged.
The "ditch" was a beauty
Seen all through the night.
We also saw Panama —
Wide open, alright.
We hauled anchor again
To explore the Pacific;
Found it quite peaceful
But sometimes terrific.

Crossed the Equator;
Saw Neptune and Davy
Who paddled our fannies
In style a la Navy.
Then crossed the I.D. Line
Where Time took a beating;
Our days were going fast enough
But never quite fleeting.
Now we’ve sailed this vast ocean
Wide as the skies above it.
The only comment I can make is,
"There was just too damn much of it!"

L. Neebe
Front
Dailey
Latale
J. M. Farrell
Mroz
E. J. Nowak
Perrier
A. M. Ayres
Wygonik
Brower
L. K. Dickinson
Wagner
Baird
R. D. Banks
Bradley

Middle
R. N. Carroll
Monahan
Schiffler
Stover
R. C. Welsh
Smothers

Back
Cerasi
Derosier
Dornhecker
Crony
C. W. Schmidt
E. M. Norton
Russell
Erlandson

Front
W. Carroll
L. C. Chapman
Cole
La Terra
Burcar
Talucci
Teeters
E. Riley
W. J. Young
Chciuk
Gandy

Middle
Van Dyke
Berry
Cram
C. Rowe
Haig
Morse
P. P. Nowak
Cuccarese
Beddow
Marmarou
J. H. McIntyre
Braendle
Hinton

Back
Braatz
Sileo
E. L. Myers
Waugh
H. Evans
Phipps
Schellhase
Arden
Front
Estes
Precopio
Stoltz
Perillo
A. A. Amore
S. S. Schmidt
Poland
Draper
Eichelman

Middle
Swanberg
Dennard
Matthews
Freeman
Moreau
Diemert

Back
Monroe
C. S. Martin
A. J. Myers
De Vito
Di Caro
Magnusson
Mac Kay
The Battalion's Basketball Team—
Front: Buffington, Shope, Stefek, Slagie, Kravik;
Back: Manchester, Hoffman, Art Stahl, Scarnato,
Hickson, Bill Carroll

At V-J Day Celebration:
Yeoman Manchester vaults over the bar as Chief Van Hoorebeke comes up for the pole

Tug-Of-War.
The Tire Shop gang—on the near side—pulls Kochan and mates into the mud-hole at the ATC-completion holiday events
Top thriller of sports activity was the game at Manila's Rizal Stadium. The Bears, billed by local papers as "the New Guinea Champs," played the 38th Division All-Stars, newspapered as "the New Guinea Army Champs." Both teams earned such titles in that Sunday afternoon game that was finally called after 13 scoreless innings!

Our own ball field at Santa Rita Camp, formerly a rice paddy, was the scene of many a pitcher's and slugger's battle in the Intra-Battalion and Topside Leagues. It was the locale, too, of such celebrations as the ATC completion and V-J Day.

The Bears: kneeling . . . Slagle, Dates, Pratt, J. Stahl, Suminski, Da Ros; standing . . . H. Robinson, Buffington, Lanser, Croxton, Macek, Pulliam, Art Stahl, Frei, Kravik
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Graczyk
Plogar
Lovell
De Mattia

Glavin
Hickman
R. K. Palo
Rein
R. E. Pratt
Cook
Barnett
Cumming
Aho

Marini
Franson
Makowsky
Tietge
C. A. Pratt
Hartman
R. J. Rogers
Wheelock
Sorrells

Erickson
Virta
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O'Malley, Edwards, Ricci, Huzarsky, Sisson


Araneo, Dufour, Roessner, Briggs, Brush, Berkhart, Couillard, Caruso, Zaugg, J. Murphy, Fling

Barker, Towry, Boothe, Sandridge, Nemesnyik, Hart
Scoggins, E. R. Powell, Reisinger, M. W. Reese, Dunford, H. A. Robinson, E. A. Thompson,
Fasano, Saul, Navarro, T. J. Morris, Minerva, K. V. Harris, R. H. Riley, Faria, Simeone
Gallant, T. J. Gauvin, Heffernan, Pavia, Smock, Pazgan, Shafer, Peters, Dexter, Schaaf
Durnil, J. P. Roberts, Cupples, Scimeca, Kaupanger, Wicks, Schachtner
Falke, Heard, L. G. Wilson, Rosick, Waddell, Radase, Tuttle, Odiorne, Kouba, Wagoner

Stamko, Sinopoli, Yeager, R. W. Wolfe, Plue, Petrella, Calandro

Henson, Prendergast, H. R. Johnson, Treadwell, Kubulak, Rodenberg, Mink, Portis, Wittmer

E. J. Robinson, Paradiso, R. J. Regal, Resnick, M. Rothstein, Konopelko, F. L. Cornell, Casessa

Nally, Opatrny, G. T. Lowe, Pregmon, Brissette, Baughman, Wise
Tackett, Moss, Swan, Seacord, Mull, Zielinski, M. E. Shaffer, Kaufman, Markowitz, Randazzo, Glover, Zilko

Ransdell, Rimmell, Probst, Bartnett, Muller, Pogge, Parsons, De Roche, Neebe, Harlop

Baty, Mc Lean, Nigra, Shipilaro, Kurkowski, M. B. Morris, Slagle
H. L. Murphy, Williams, Carver, C. Butler


Oetzel, Patak, Underwood, Grafton

C. A. Phillips, Kravik, Shumock, Blake, Summers, Ward
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Many significant events have come to pass during your 22 months overseas as a part of Uncle Sam’s fighting, building Seabees. Most important of all, of course, has been final victory in Europe, and more closely associated with your primary mission in this war, the defeat of the Japanese Empire. The Seabees have played a major role in the defeat of the Japs in building bases step by step, from island to island, as our forces were able to advance toward Tokyo. Naval Bases, including docks, roads, housing and administration buildings, hospitals, airfields, electrical, water and sanitation systems, tank farms, repair shops, pontoons, stevedoring, and numerous other installations required to furnish support to the armed forces in its advance into the heart of the enemy, have been the lot of the Seabees. Your efforts and accomplishments from New Guinea to Lingayen Gulf to Subic Bay in the Philippines have played an important role in events leading to final victory. The task has not been an easy one and the hardship has not been light from the rain-soaked, steaming jungles of New Guinea, with its heat, mud and tropical diseases, to the Philippines, where conditions frequently have been equally trying. You carried on your duties in the Lingayen operation when under enemy fire in keeping with the highest tradition of the Seabees.

During my five months as your Skipper you have demonstrated your ability as a “Can Do,” “Will Do,” outfit. You have responded without hesitation to every call for the performance of high priority work and have met deadline dates which at the time appeared impossible to meet.

You officers and men of the 115th Naval Construction Battalion can review your war records and accomplishments with a full measure of pride for a worthy contribution in the winning of the war.

It is with a great deal of pride and sincerity that I give the signal “Well Done.”

[Signature]
Thomas W. Anderson
