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SEABEES FOLLOW SPEARHEAD OF MARIANAS DRIVE

Again the Seabees are in the thick of an invasion.

Headlines streamed across the country's newspapers announcing the attack on the Jap-held Marianas, and prominent in the latest reports was the news that not only had the Seabees landed but that already they had repaired the main runway of Aslito airdrome, called the most valuable in the Marianas.

"The Aslito airdrome on Saipan, only 1,500 miles from Japan and the Philippines," said the Associated Press, "was ready for operation today (June 21) after Seabees had repaired and extended its 3,600-foot main runway."

In exactly one week of fighting American assault forces had effected a landing across reefs in the face of extremely heavy fire and had captured the southern third of the island, including two airfields. Marines were continuing to drive eastward across Saipan to the shore of Magicienne Bay and fierce fighting was continuing as our forces moved north.

While the Seabees were repairing damage to the Aslito airstrip, planes of the Fifth fleet, supporting the invasion, struck a heavy blow at the Jap fleet. According to a communique issued by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, one Jap carrier was sunk, another damaged badly and left in flames, and a third carrier, a battleship, a cruiser and three destroyers were damaged. Three tankers were sunk and two others badly damaged.

According to the "New York Times", successful seizure of the Marianas would complete the nullification of all Japan's military activities on a score of islands in the Central Pacific. It will cut off bases on which millions of yen have been expended over many years and eliminate or isolate garrisons, including those in the Marianas, conservatively estimated to number 55,000 men.

ARMY NAVY ENGINEERS WILL REOPEN CHERBOURG S PORT

The task of rebuilding port facilities at Cherbourg, France's third largest port and main objective of the Allied drive in Normandy, will be undertaken by Army and Navy Engineers, Secretary of War Stimson revealed at a recent press conference.

After noting that three German divisions, trapped within the city and its environs, were engaging in the demolition of port facilities, Mr. Stimson stated confidentially:

"However, Army and Navy Engineers have been confronted before now with

problems of extraordinary wreckage and have brought order out of ruin in comparatively short periods of time.

(Editors Note: Civil Engineer Corps Officers and Seabees participated in the rehabilitation and clearing of ports and harbors in the African and Mediterranean theaters.)

CB s REPORTED REBUILDING BIAK AIRFIELDS

Seabees began repair work on the Boroku and Sorido airfields on Biak Island the same day they were captured, according to Frank L. Kluckhohn, New York "Times" correspondent writing from Allied Headquarters in New Guinea.

"Airdromes were captured at 11 A. M. yesterday," Kluckhohn wired on June 21, "and by nightfall, after many more Japanese had been killed, we were far enough beyond the airdromes to make it possible for the Seabees to start work repairing and putting the strips in a serviceable condition."

THE HARD WAY

So impressed was an English lieutenant with a stove the Seabees had welded out of a G. I. can and some empty tin cans that he gave orders to a detail of his own men to make a similar one.

How well the Englishmen succeeded is related by Harry E. Teare, GM2c, who wrote: "After working all day on a job that took us an hour, the lieutenant came over and said:

"I say, old fellow, will you tell us how you glued the tin cans together. They simply won't stick for us."

HAND MADE AIRSTRIP

Sixty-five Seabees of the 21st Battalion, literally carved an airstrip with their bare hands out of the volcanic ash surface of a strategic island in the Western Aleutians less than 200 miles from a major Jap base, reported a recent issue of the "Camp Parks Log".

After battling high seas to land heavy equipment, the Seabees found it useless since the island's surface could not support its weight.

"From then on it was weeks of hard, manual labor," said the "Log". "Hand shovels replaced the crane; wheel barrows, the dump trucks. Instead of the motor grader, a homemade affair of heavy timbers dragged by a team of brawny Seabees graded the surface. Matting was then laid and the field was ready.

"Even before completion the strip paid off dividends, when a stricken bomber returning from a mission, made a safe emergency landing. A half-dozen other planes made similar emergency use of the field within a short time."

According to the "Log", the Seabees received a Group Citation for meritorious service from the Commander of the North Pacific Forces.

FIRST AID MEN WAR'S REAL HEROES SAYS SEABEE

"The bravest guys I know? The Marines, certainly had guts, but the fellows I take my hat off to are those Navy pharmacists' mates."

The speaker, a Seabee who had participated in two island invasions, was emphatic. "Nobody can give them enough credit," he went on, "I saw them creep out time and time again to help wounded men even though they knew Jap snipers intentionally were holding their fire to bait them on. Lugging blood plasma right into shell holes, they saved more lives than I could count. They may hand out pills in "boot" camp, but when the chips are down, mate, I'll put my money on them every-time!"

STRANGE DAYBREAK GREET'S SEABEE DETACHMENT

Daylight greeted men of Seabee Detachment 1045 when their LST arrived in the battle zone, but it was 0400 and the daylight came from magnesium flares overhead not from the sun.

All hands scrambled up on deck to their battle stations as German planes commenced dropping their bombs from the darkness above the flares. "The night was filled with the sound of exploding bombs and AA fire," writes Lt. Cmdr. C. B. Taylor, CEC, USNR, the O-in-C, "For most men...it was their baptism of fire."

As each plane dove in for the attack, all the ships' guns concentrated their fire upon it. One plane, mortally hit and out of control, struck the mast of the LST and then fell blazing into the sea. The tip of the plane's wing was sheared off when it struck the mast and fell on to the deck.

When the attack was over and at least two planes had been shot down, the radio equipment on the mast was repaired using metal taken from the wing tip of the German plane.

WASN'T THERE YESTERDAY

The speed of construction and durability of equipment despite the adverse climate and terrain of the Aleutians even amazed the Seabees themselves, recalled James M. Hagans, MM1c, veteran of the northern Pacific island bases.

"One could pass a spot and observe a 'Bee' with a power shovel pushing the tundra from a very irregular terrain," Hagans said. "You'd probably hear someone remark 'Wonder what that so-and-so is doing there!'"

"Passing that way a few days later, that question would be answered--a large building would be occupying the area."

Quality and workmanship were not sacrificed for speed in construction, according to the forty-three-year old Seabee, since "the finished building would pass the inspection of the most discriminating inspector."

A SEABEE DEFINES THE MARINES

Back from more than 29 months in the South Pacific, Seabee Chief Painter Dee Harden gave this definition of the Marines to which his outfit was attached during the invasion of the Marshalls:

"They're squealin', but they're always goin', and God knows I wouldn't want to face any of 'em in a fight."

Harden said his experience with the Marines revealed them as usually "squealing" about long hours, chow and forced marches until they get fighting mad. Then, he said, they work it off by whipping hell out of the Japs.

THE GANG S ALL HERE

Veterans are no novelty in the 146th Battalion.

According to the battalion's publication, "The Invader", CCM Fred Z. Darden and Ernie Dupuis, MM1c, not only are veterans of World War I but also saw service in the Mexican War of 1914.

Another World War I veteran, Herbert E. Cummings, served thirteen months in an Army tank-destroyer unit in this war before enlisting in the Seabees.

The battalion's muster roll also lists three men who were members of foreign armies before becoming Seabees. Irving Kosowitz, M1c, served two years in the Polish Army; Stephen L. Vinski, SF2c, was in the Yugoslav Army; and Johnny A. Johnson, CM2c, was a soldier in the Norwegian Army.

BUILD LANDING BEACHES FOR LST S

To facilitate the beaching and unloading of large landing craft, Seabees stationed at a recently-won South Pacific base, constructed three beaches by placing approximately 48,000 cubic yards of coral fill on top of a coral reef surrounding the island.

The Seabee-made landings have 400 to 600 feet frontage and vary in depth from ninety to 270 feet. The reef, which extended outward seventy-five to 100 feet

from the shoreline, lay under an average of one and one-half foot of water at low tide and required an average fill of four and one-half feet to reach the necessary height above high tide.

Land bollards were required to hold the landing craft on the beaches but the density of the coral, which resisted up to 300 pounds of hydraulic pressure, made it impossible to drive the piles needed for moorings. The Seabees, employing an Army rotary well-drilling rig, drilled through the coral and placed ten-foot pieces of eight-inch pipe in the holes. The pipe then was cemented into place under pressure from the inside of the pipe.

Bollards were placed thirty feet from the edge of the filled reef to accommodate all types of landing craft.

BLACK MARKET

False teeth (particularly someone else's) will never stand between a thirsty Seabee and "gook juice," a CPO on Bora Bora learned by painful experience.

After recovering his denture from a native who had been displaying them happily, relates Charles F. Garcia, CY, the irate Chief discovered that two of his mates had traded the molars for a year's supply of the islanders' potent concoction.

The natives had placed a high valuation on the Chief's teeth. His field shoes, which his good friends had traded for "gook juice" a few days earlier, had brought only five gallons in exchange.

SAID SEABEE REPAIR JOB COULDN'T BE DONE

A wrecked engine, considered completely "shot" by the ship's crew, threatened to delay the 22nd Special on a transport en route to "Island X" until the Seabees volunteered to do the repair work themselves.

Only a few days out of Port Hueneme, the transports main blower steam engine, which furnished air to the front end of the double scotch boilers, broke a cross head bolt, wrecking the engine. The failure of the blower caused an uneven distribution of heat in the boilers and drew the crown sheets to the point where from eight to nine hundred tubes were leaking.

After the ship's engine men had pronounced the wreckage "beyond repair," the Seabees volunteered to repair both the engine and the boilers. The calibre of their work, the transport's Chief Engineer later reported, was of the highest.

When the ship reached Honolulu, the Seabee repair men, with the assistance of

the crew and six civilian Navy Yard employees, removed, rebuilt, and reinstalled the engine. They continued to assist in the boiler room during the remainder of the trip and later were thanked by the ship's master, who said, "I wish to express pride and appreciation for the service rendered..."

The men named in the captain's commendatory letter were Frank A. Rossel, CEM; James M. Jordan, CMM; Tom D. Compani, MM2c; Lloyd Wertz, EM2c; Don E. Chandler, MM2c; David I. Grand, M1c; Frank J. Schwendeman, M2c; Bert Perry, M2c; Gerald A. Booth, QM2c; Wilmer E. Haines, SF1c; and Robert W. Davis, MM1c.

UPS THE POT \$4

A new claimant for the honor of being the best paid of the Navy's approximately 240,000 Seabees is Holsey Charles McCain, CM2c, of Maintenance Unit 543, who is now drawing a monthly check of \$393.

Previous high man was Chief John J. Toner of the 33rd battalion who drew a mere \$389.

Although Toner has a higher rating, two of his twelve children are beyond the age of eligibility for dependency allotments; whereas McCain's even dozen all come in under the line.

COINCIDENCE

When the First Detachment moved into the Marshalls, they were carried by the same transport which had taken them to their first "Island X", Bora Bora, two and a half years ago.

INVITATION TO THE MOVIES

At breakfast, Seabees invited guests to movies that night.

"What movies?" scoffed the officers of Base Cargo Operations at the southwest Pacific atoll.

"We'll have a theater built where that palm grove is. Show starts at 1930, so be on time," replied the Seabees.

As the visiting officers walked away shaking their heads and muttering about the effect of the sun on the human mind, a score of CBMU 571 men went to work. It was 0730.

A tangle of palm trees confronted them. They had no lumber. They had no electric cable of the right size. But they had their hands and their tools and their tradition of "Can Do."

One crew tackled the palm trees, another scoured the island in search of planking. One man was detailed to find the wire. Eight hours later what had been a

shambles of down timber was a neat open-air show with its platform, screen, rows of seats, projector room and a covered section for officers and chiefs.

Nor was it a haphazard creation. The slope of the ground had been utilized to "step" the seats for better vision, and all equipment was installed and ready for use -- the projector, the sound equipment, the mike and loudspeaker system.

At 1930, 360 men, 18 chiefs, and 22 officers sat down for a program beginning with news broadcasts and ending with Bing Crosby in "Going My Way."

BRONZE STAR TO 25th BATTALION OFFICER

For "meritorious service in action against the enemy," Lieutenant Joseph H. Gehring, CEC, USNR, of the 25th Battalion has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal by Admiral William F. Halsey.

Lt. Gehring was in command of an engineering party which, his citation states, "was assigned to accompany a rifle battalion across the front of the division beach-head line, and establish a supply road through almost impenetrable swamp and jungle terrain.

"Although frequently subjected to Japanese artillery and rifle fire which killed or wounded several of his men," the citation continued, "he carried out his mission with outstanding determination, initiative, and professional skill, completing the route in minimum time.

"His unselfish devotion to duty contributed materially to the decisive defeat of the enemy in this area (Bougainville), and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

ADDED ATTRACTION

All movie-goers are familiar with the antics of "Mickey Mouse" and "Donald Duck" but the men of the Second Construction Battalion had their own animal performer, "Rudy the Rat".

According to Joe F. Ruscigno, Y2c, Rudy would emerge at the same time each night from the palm fronds and place his paw on a power line which was thirty feet high and ran between two coconut trees on either side of the open-air movie.

Scores of flashlights would spotlight the "star" and, after pausing momentarily to acknowledge the thunderous applause of his audience, Rudy would confidentially make his "death-defying" jaunt high over the heads of his open-mouthed admirers. Reaching opposite tree, he would promptly disappear into the "wings" -- of the palm.

For a full month, Rudy made his appearance while the Seabees speculated on the reason for the impromptu acrobatics. Final consensus was -- "Romance".

PENNED-UP GIRL

The never too cordial relations between the Seabees and the Shore Patrol have been strained anew.

It seems the boys in Tent 10 of CBMU 571 selected the sister of one of their mates, Al Hawkinson, as their favorite pin-up girl, and Al notified her of the honor. In her letter of thanks, Pearl Hawkinson (who is a lady Marine) confessed to being mad as a hornet -- not at having been chosen a pin-up girl but at having been nailed by the Shore Patrol on an AOL rap and sent to the brig.

"They can't do that to our Marine," wails "The Maintainer," publication of CBMU 571.

JUNIOR SEABEES

A new organization, the "Junior Seabees", has been sponsored by the 112th Battalion. Any youngster under 16 who is related to a member of the battalion is eligible for membership. Each "Junior Seabee" received a certificate of membership signed by the battalion's O-in-C, Cmdr. D. Y. Taylor, CEC, USNR.

WILLING

Asked where he would like his next assignment, forty-year-old Seabee Luther T. Downing, SF1c, who has just returned from seventeen months in the Aleutians, said:

"Any place the Navy thinks a man of my experience and line of work is most needed to help get this war over whether it be in Washington, D. C. as Secretary of Navy, modernizing the Tokyo Water Company, or doing the plumbing in permanent quarters in Berlin."

DOESN'T FLUSTER EASILY

Because he doesn't tell any stories of bombs, shells, or flaming Nazi planes, it might seem that John Palsa, SF1c, found his salvage assignment in Palermo a bit on the monotonous side.

However, he can tell you about the underground oil storage plant he helped repair after it had been partially wrecked by the Germans.

"The first time I went underground to work on the tanks and pipe line the Nazis blew up," Palsa says, "I was trimming a twelve-inch pipe with an acetylene cutting torch while standing on a hundred-pound charge of TNT that hadn't been exploded because the Jerries had messed up the wiring."

SHADES OF POMPEII

Not Germans but ancient Mt. Vesuvius gave Lieut. Charles G. Day, CEC, USNR, his hottest experience during the early days of the Italian campaign.

"I was driving in a jeep," he relates, "when I came to a road intersection and didn't know which way to go to escape from the eruption of the volcano. A British MP directed me down a little-traveled road that almost led to the end of my days.

"Volcanic dust was so thick and hot, it was hard to breathe, and the hot ashes would sting your face. The sky was shot through with lightning, and the ground shook. The dust settled so thick on the road, it was impossible to keep the jeep going. We had to stop, even though we knew a wall of lava was coming our way.

"Morning came just in time for us to find another road where the layer of volcanic dust was thin enough for us to get through and out of danger. But I'll never forget that night."

BOTTOMLESS CRATER

The Tyrrhenian Sea still washes the shores of Palermo in Sicily, but it's no fault of W. H. Miller, SF1c.

An enemy bomb had blasted a crater near an installation the Seabees were building at Palermo, and Miller undertook the job of pumping it dry.

"The pump did all right," he wrote, "But the crater wouldn't empty. Finally, I discover the trouble. High tide was seeping into the crater, and I was trying to pump the Tyrrhenian dry."

THEY LL NEVER BELIEVE IT

Of interest to Seabees in the cold country is this news item from Juneau, Alaska:

"A week-long heat wave brought an unusual warning to Juneau residents from physicians today -- to remain out of the direct rays of the sun as much as possible. Several cases of heat prostration were reported over the week end. Scores of residents were painfully sun-burned."

(Editor's note: The weather report from Attu and Kiska residents has not yet been received.)

FIRE (?) FIGHTERS

Anything can happen in the Aleutians -- the land of the "williwaw" -- and

usually does says Roy C. Orsum, SF2c.

"I was working on top of a seventy-foot cliff when a mate told me there was a small fire a couple of hundred feet away and that I'd better take a shovel and put it out," recalled the Seabee.

"When I crossed through the path of smoke, I found that I had been drenched to the skin. I couldn't figure it out so I started to investigate.

"I found that there was a stream of water coming out of the cliff just under the tundra about six feet from the top and instead of it dropping down, the wind was whipping it back over the cliff," he continued.

"Another mate came along and I told him what was happening. He didn't believe it and said that if I couldn't put the fire out, he could. He took the shovel and in a few moments he was just as wet as I was. By that time, we had a group of spectators who gave us the razzberry for trying to put out a stream of water with a shovel," Orsum concluded.

INVASION JITTERS

When the radio blared forth the news of the European invasion, nobody was more excited than C. J. (Joe) Whelton, SK3c, of the 65th battalion. He was running around in circles and mislaying everything he owned.

"Take it easy, Mac," said one of his mates, "no need to get so excited about the invasion."

"What invasion?" asked Whelton.

"You mean to say you haven't heard that radio?"

No, Joe hadn't heard anything but the news that he had just become a father of a baby boy -- six pound, eleven ounces.

SEABEE BATTALIONS GANG UP TO BEAT DEADLINE

When Seabees of the 104th battalion were given May 6 as a deadline for completing an extension to a bomber taxiway, it appeared that "Can Do" was up against a fatal test. However, the boys ganged up on the job, with the 40th, 46th and 78th battalions loaning heavy equipment, operators and supervisory personnel. The result was the taxiway was operationally usable two days ahead of schedule.

In a letter to the O-in-C of the 104th, Colonel William N. Leaf wrote: "This achievement is all the more laudable for, in addition, you undertook other jobs ... and made favorable progress on them. Be assured that your cheerful cooperation and earnest efforts promptly to complete job assignments are extremely helpful

in readying this project for important operational requirements."

HIS MASTER S VOICE

No one was paying much attention to the program which was booming from the loudspeaker of the barrack's radio until one of the Seabees suddenly exclaimed, "Say, I know that voice."

With that, the voice said, "Yes, I have a son in the Seabees."

"Gosh, it's my father! ejaculated L. S. Rendano, MM3c, of Camp Endicott.

Rendano's father, Rocco, was one of the guests on "We, The People's I Am An American Day" program.

FISHING NOTE

Shovels might well be part of the recreational equipment on an Aleutian "Island X", according to James Carsello, SF2c.

Carsello said men of his battalion did most of their fishing, not with the conventional rod and reel, but with spades.

"During the salmon run, I stood on the bank and watched the men, standing in the stream, fishing with shovels. They caught enough fish to feed the whole battalion.

WOUNDED IN ER ANZIO

Chief Carpenter's Mate Alex Chisholm, who is 52 years old, wears the Purple Heart ribbon today, but when he earned it during a strafing attack at the Anzio beachhead, he didn't realize he had been hit.

The Chief was driving a jeep along one of the Seabee manned pontoon causeways when he heard one of the mates shout that the jeep was on fire. He turned around and saw that it was. He scrambled out of it just as another Nazi plane dived down on a strafing attack.

When the attack was over, the first thing he heard was a cry for help coming from the water. "A sailor was floundering around making quite a racket," said Chief Chisholm, "so I reached down and hauled him out. His foot had been shot off. We did the best we could for him.

"A little later somebody pointed to me and said I'd been hit. I looked, and sure enough, I was full of holes. I passed out."

Back in this country and with the "holes" well patched, the Chief told his story to newspaper reporters at a press conference. All went well until one of the reporters, a girl, insisted on knowing where he was wounded. The Chief hemmed and

hewed for a minute, then answered:

"I was wounded in -- er -- in Anzio."

SHORT SPORT SHOTS

BASEBALL:..Knuckle-baller Jim Tobin of Braves turned in his second no-hitter of season, a 7-0 affair against Phillies which was called after the fifth inning because of darkness..Mel Ott, Giants' manager and outfielder, leading both leagues with 18 home runs, scored his 1,741st run to set new NL record..Survey based on first ten weeks of play showed that Indians and Cardinals had most effective pitching staffs in respective leagues..Red Bird hurlers held opposing batters to .219 batting average while Indians choked off rivals with .240..Cardinals really have Indian sign on Cubs..Red Birds won 11 of 11 games played this season and 19 out of 21 in streak dating back to June '43..Released by Dodgers, veteran outfielders, Lloyd Waner signed with Pirates; Johnny Conney, with Yankees..Yankees also sent outfielder Ed Levy and cash to Milwaukee for veteran outfielder Herschel Martin..While average number of baseballs used in 9-inning major league game is about 36, only 9 were used by Senators and Athletics in 10-inning 2 to 1 game..Screwiest ball game of all time will see Giants, Yankees and Dodgers in "triple-header"..played for benefit of 5th War Bond Drive, each team will have six turns at bat, six in field and six on bench..team with highest run-total at end of 18 half-innings will be winner.. Cardinals, with 39 wins, 16 losses for an average of .709, making runaway of NL race..Browns' holding AL lead despite record of 34 wins, 27 losses for .557 average.

TRACK:..Claude Young and Bob Kelley, U of Illinois 2-man entry; Charley Parker, Texas schoolboy star; Elmore Harris, Morgan State College, and Lt. Cornelius Warmerdam were outstanding performers at 56th AAU track-and-field championships at New York..Young won 100-meter spring; Parker won 51st consecutive spring, taking 200-meter run; Kelley took first in 800-meter run; Harris, meet's only double winner, took 400-meter and low hurdles; Warmerdam topped 15 feet one inch to win pole vault.

RACING:..Ocean Swell, owned by Lord Rosebery, won English Derby..10,000 spectators at Newmarket saw the 28 to 1 shot win by a head over Aga Khan's Tehran..Hycilla won Oaks day previous, giving New Yorker William Woodward his fourth victory in English Classic..Jockey Ted Atkinson rode 15 winners in one week at Aqueduct..Shortage of jockeys caused Charles Town stewards to change 10-day suspension of Frank Sheaffer to \$100 fine.

SIDELINES:..Andy Farkas, Redskins' backfield star, underwent knee operation.. Sgt. Harold Hursh, "Hurling Hal" of Indiana U's noted forward pass combination in '39 and '40, killed in action in SoPac..Henry Armstrong hung up another victory, scoring 10-round decision over Cpl. Nick Latsios..Lt. Cmdr. Jack Meagher, former coach at Alabama Poly, to coach Iowa Navy Pre-Flight eleven..Navy athletic stars can take part in sports only as members of naval teams within limited areas, Sec-Nav Forrestal warns..Byron Nelson won 72-hole Red Cross Open at NY with 275, 13 under par, picked up \$2,666.65 in war bonds..Sgt. Vic Ghezzi finished second with 279.