

SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

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BARREL OF THE RIFLE

"The courage to withstand monotony is fully as vital to winning the war as willingness to work in the face of bombs and snipers' bullets."

With these words, Rear Admiral Lewis B. Combs, CEC, USN, Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, paid tribute to the Seabees who are manning rear bases. These as well as forward bases were inspected by Admiral Combs last month on a 30,000-mile air tour of South, Southwest and Central Pacific.

"The men of our maintenance units and battalions working at rear bases can not be given too much credit for digging in on jobs involving a lot of sweat and practically no excitement," said the Admiral.

"However, they can take satisfaction in knowing that while the smoke and noise is at the muzzle of the gun, the bullet has got to travel the barrel of the piece first. The rear bases they are manning constitute the barrel."

Admiral Combs said he had been particularly impressed with the work of battalions and special detachments in maintaining and rebuilding equipment. He cited examples of this activity in a recent address before equipment manufacturing employees in Philadelphia, urging them to greater production.

"No matter how hard our men try to keep their equipment in operation," he told this audience, "they will fail unless you here at home see to it that new parts, new equipment and new supplies come to them."

Admiral Combs likewise was impressed with some of the ingenious contraptions built by men of the battalions, particularly their Rube Goldberg ice cream machines and windmill washing machines.

Asked what he thought about the morale of the battalions, the Assistant Chief paused, then said with a smile: "I observed that morale is highest when the men are on the move--forward toward Japan or backward toward home. And that's why men at bases in between, particularly the CBMUs, deserve all the more credit for keeping up their good work."

HELPS UNIT ESCAPE GERMAN AMBUSH

When a Navy reconnaissance party of 40 officers and men were ambushed outside of Cherbourg by German infantry and tanks, a lone Seabee covering their flank kept open a path which enabled the party to escape.

An account of the episode given by Lt. C. E. Stockdale, CEC, USNR, Executive Officer of a construction battalion in France, made clear that the heroism of the Seabee, Carl E. Smithson, SF1c, of Doyline, Louisiana, played a large part in preventing the party's complete extermination.

The Navy convoy, said Lt. Stockdale, was made up of the 40 officers and men and fifteen vehicles. It was about six miles in advance of American lines, travelling east on a highway leading to the town of Dol, when it was attacked by the Germans. A member of the French Army of Resistance who made contact with the Americans said the enemy had between 500 and 900 heavily-armed men as well as tanks.

The Navy men deployed and returned fire. Parties were sent to protect the north and south flanks. Smithson occupied the most southernly position on the south flank -- a spot drawing heavy enemy fire. Unable to eliminate the Seabee, the Germans could not turn his flank, a maneuver that would have enabled them to cut off the line of retreat which later permitted the survivors to reach safety.

Smithson held his ground until U. S. light tanks and combat engineers came to the rescue. Continuing to cover the withdrawal of other members of the party he was among the last to make his retreat.

He has been recommended for an appropriate award.

THE MEN ARE THE NAVY

"Ships and planes are only the bare bones of the Navy. Its heart and brain are men. Without the flaming spirit of the Americans who fought with Admiral Gatch on the South Dakota and Admiral Gallagher, who now fight under Admirals Halsey and Nimitz and Spruance, who landed at Guadalcanal and Tarawa, who have won command of the Pacific sky --- all our material would truly be sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

---SecNav James Forrestal

SEABEE HONEYMOON

Two Navy Shore Patrol wagons pulled to a stop in front of San Francisco's St. Francis Hotel with their sirens wide open. Six burly SP's tumbled out and formed a protective guard to the hotel's entrance. Then, from the rear of one of the vans, stepped William P. Beck, CM1c, and Mrs. Beck, so newly-married the rice was still in their hair.

The SP's waved a friendly salute, shouted, "Goodbye! Good luck!", and took off, leaving the newlyweds to explain to the baffled hotel manager what the uproar was all about.

The whole thing had started an hour earlier, the Seabee explained, when a tough looking member of the Shore Patrol had come to the door of a friend's

apartment in which Beck had just been married. Someone, said the SP, had called and complained about a wild party, and he was going to put a stop to it.

Invited in, he was quickly convinced the call had been a practical joke dreamed up by one of the bridegroom's "fun loving" mates. As he was leaving, he offered his congratulations and said to Beck, "We're going back downtown. Can we drop you anywhere?"

So, instead of taking the street car to the hotel as they had planned, the bride and bridegroom left the party, got into the back of the patrol wagon and started for the hotel. Somewhere along the line, a second Shore Patrol wagon joined the procession. And that, the Seabee explained, was how he had acquired the most unusual guard of honor San Francisco had seen in many months.

NOVEL SHIP REPAIR JOB BY 75th

How, when an LCI was badly damaged by enemy bombers, the 75th Battalion improvised repairs which enabled the ship to travel 2,500 miles to a drydock, was told by Lt. Cmdr. D. N. Gottwals, CEC, USNR, the battalion's OinC.

The LCI had been beached after two near misses had flooded her forward compartments. Examination showed the ship not only had suffered many holes in her hull, but had been bent up in the middle along a beam axis.

The bow proved to be roughly 18 inches lower than its normal relative position and the midsection was dangerously weakened. A bending of the ship was noticeable even in the mild waters of the sheltered side of the island. The swells of the open seas, said Cmdr. Gottwals, very probably would have broken her in two.

Although the job obviously was one for a drydock, temporary measures had to be taken to enable the ship to proceed to a repair base. The LCI first had to be made watertight, then strengthened sufficiently to be able to make the voyage.

The only materials available to the Seabees were timber, a small quantity of salvaged 1/4" plate, some reinforcing rods and steel cable.

The ship was run as far aground as possible so that most of its support was shifted to the bow. This tended to force the bow upward to a more nearly normal position.

All holes and ruptures were closed by welding plates over them. Stiffening was effected by welding additional plates and reinforcing rods in appropriate places. Where buckling occurred, reinforcing rods also were welded to the plates on the outside of the hull.

Buckled stanchions were removed from the most badly damaged compartment and timber shoring, running fore and aft with a timber sill top and bottom, substituted. The deformed deck and bottom plates also necessitated the use of short timber pads with wedging for the entire length of the sills.

The ship was floated for observation. By stretching two #16 wires taut along the deck and a few inches above, the Seabees were able to see that the gentle

swells of the water still caused a bending up and down of the bow which indicated the LCI was not ready for the open sea.

The forward anchor winch and three-inch gun were removed, lightening the section of the vessel forward of the buckle by roughly six tons.

Two one-inch steel cables were run from the bow to a point aft of the buckle. They were fastened at the forward hawse pipes after these had been strengthened; run across a gun platform approximately over the buckle, and directly over the interior shoring; and anchored aft at deck level to two large timbers wedged athwartships across the outside of the after bulkhead of the superstructure.

Steel bearing plates were, of course, used between the cables and timbers. Turnbuckles were employed in the cables.

The gun platform was covered by heavy timbers and steel bearing plates. The top of these plates was noted to be 13 feet above the deck.

The turnbuckles were taken up while the bow of the ship was resting on the beach and again the ship was refloated.

The vessel was then taken to sea on a test run and the bending was again checked by the taut wire system. In relatively high swells and at top speed the bending was so slight the ship was considered seaworthy.

The LCI was able to travel the 2,500 miles to a drydock without further repairs.

SEABEES TO WEAR SHOULDER PATCH

Enlisted men in the Naval Construction Battalions soon will be privileged to wear a special Seabee shoulder patch, distinguishing the Fighter Builders in the same way the Amphibious Corps recently has been honored.

The new emblems will be similar to the well known Seabee insignia: the battling bee on a blue background, with the word "Seabees" lettered underneath. The word will be lettered in solid white instead of the present manner, however, and the patch will be surrounded by a solid white circle in place of a gold rope. The white speed lines will be omitted. The diameter of the patch will be 2 3/4 inches.

The shoulder patch will be worn by all enlisted personnel attached to Seabee units. Information about where and how it may be obtained will be made available in the near future.

PRAISED FOR NORMANDY COMBAT ACTION

.... "Their courage, devotion to duty, and personal efficiency ... makes the accomplishment of difficult tasks seem easy," said Cmdr. Q. R. Walsh, USCG, of Seabees who served under his command. The Coast Guard officer led a Naval reconnaissance party which was the first naval unit to enter Cherbourg, bagging 394 prisoners enroute.

Robert Garside, MM3c; William Black, MM3c; and Clifford Meadows, CM3c, were the Seabees and Lt. Frank Lauer, CEC, USNR, the Civil Engineer Corps officer in the party. Wrote Cmdr. Walsh to their battalion O-in-C: "It is my pleasure to commend to you the actions and conduct of the personnel noted. Their devotion to duty and the exemplary manner in which they carried out the mission to which they were assigned should not pass without comment.

"Lt. Lauer was one of the first U.S. Naval officers to enter the Naval Arsenal at Cherbourg and was one of two officers who entered Fort DuHomet under a white flag and advised the German Commander to surrender. His entrance to the Fort was instrumental in its early surrender and the release of 52 U.S. paratroopers held prisoner since D-Day.

"The Construction Battalion personnel have done a fine job again. They performed their duties in a manner worthy of the highest traditions of the Navy.

GOOD NEIGHBORS

Lt. William E. Johnson, CEC, USNR, OinC of a CBMU in Nicaragua, has received the following letter from the Mayor of the City of Corinto:

"As Mayor of the City of Corinto, I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and the appreciation of the people residing here for the excellent cooperation and help that has been given us by men under your command.

"I wish to especially commend J. J. Kelder, Chief Electrician's Mate, and his crew for the very good advice and assistance rendered in repairing and modernizing our local electric generating plant. Without the able and very valuable aid given by these men of your unit the work would have been very difficult to complete.

"On numerous other occasions we have called on your organization for help and we have as yet to be refused any assistance. In my opinion such willing and excellent cooperation is deserving of the highest praise because through such action our two nations are more closely united for the final victory for which we are working."

MARINES TELL IT TO THE SEABEES

The Marine Corps publication, "The Leatherneck", in its September 25 issue, again paid tribute to the "men of the Construction Battalions (who) have worked and fought side by side with Marines in every action from Guadalcanal to Saipan."

In an article entitled "Roadbuilders to Tokyo", 'Leatherneck' devoted four pages to the Seabees. Accompanying three full pages of photographs was a highly laudatory story of the cooperation between Marines and Seabees from "Boot" camp to front line combat positions.

A stateside story making the rounds is "that when the Japs retreat in combat they're able to shove off along roads built by the Seabees, so fast and so close to the front lines do the Navy Construction Battalions operate."

"That story is but a slight exaggeration," 'Leatherneck' said.

"As Marines advance along the road to Tokyo," the article concluded, "they're glad to know that the Seabees will go buzzin' along, stinging the Japs at every chance that is offered to them."

AND NO TRAFFIC LIGHTS

A "scrap pile on wheels" is helping five Seabees of the 125th Battalion solve the problem of private transportation on their "Island X".

Contrived of parts from junked trucks which included a '33 frame, '41 block, '39 pistons, and a '38 radiator, the "vehicle" is capable of making up to 80 miles an hour.

WINNING COMBINATION

The men flying the planes know teamwork is what wins wars. A recent "Island Notice" posted on Eniwetok told how B-25's operating from the island had shot up an enemy base. The report ended with this sentence:

"These planes took off and landed on a field which wasn't here until the Seabees, Marines and Army got here."

CITED FOR INVASION ROLE

For supervising the construction and maintenance of fueling and watering facilities on the invasion coast under particularly difficult circumstances, Lt. Cmdr. Edward J. Brook, CEC, USNR, has been commended by Rear Admiral John Wilkes, USN, Commander, U.S. Ports and Bases, France.

Rear Admiral Wilkes' commendation read:

"You were in charge of a detachment of the --th U.S. Naval Construction Battalion which constructed and maintained fueling and watering facilities at one of the assault beaches used in the invasion of the continent of Europe. The detailed plan made prior to the assault landing had to be considerably revised to meet field conditions.

In spite of these changes, and the unforeseen difficulties which developed because of the severe storm which commenced on 19 June, you successfully installed the facilities required. Throughout the course of the installation, your good judgment, energy and leadership were major factors in its accomplishment. For your ability and devotion to duty you are hereby commended. Your performance is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Navy."

TWENTY FOUR TO ONE

For every person in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard in September, 1939, over 24 are serving today, and this figure will be increased when authorized strength is reached the middle of next year, according to a recent Navy Department announcement.

The ratio of personnel increase has outstripped even the phenomenal increase in fleet tonnage, the Navy said. On September 1, 1939, the combined strength of the three services totalled 152,086 officers and enlisted personnel. Today the Navy has 3,717,000 officers and men under arms.

FLEETING FAME

Reclining in his bunk at a South Pacific Island, CBM Homer L. Wright thumbed idly through an issue of "Life". Suddenly, the chief sat erect.

There in the magazine was an article which showed divers engaged in salvage operations at Pearl Harbor using gas masks as improvised diving masks.

The chief had reason to be excited. For, when his battalion had reached their "Island X" months earlier, there was much underwater work to be done and no diving equipment.

The chief had made a few changes in his gas mask and, with a small compressor from a spray gun supplying air, had made a successful experimental dive. Using the improvised diving gear, the Seabees of his battalion were able to lay concrete slabs on seaplane approaches; free a freighter which had fouled its screw in a heavy manila line; salvage a large Navy transport plane which had crashed during its take-off; and raise a 40-foot motor launch.

CHARTER MEMBER

Human nature is the same the world over, avers CCM Jack G. Jennings, formerly with the Second Construction Battalion. Whether it is excavating the foundation for an office building in mid-town Chicago, or building a bridge over a creek in the Samoans; you can always find a "sidewalk superintendent."

"Sidewalk Superintendent No. 1" at the bridge-building project in the Samoans was an enormous native chief who made it his business to make daily visits to view the progress being made. It wasn't long before the Seabees had nicknamed him "Inspector" .. a title which pleased him even more than his own.

But, unlike most "inspectors," this one proved to be of much value to the bridge-building detail, recalled Jennings,

"That was the day we were painting the I-beams." he said, "A bucket of red lead was accidentally knocked into the stream below and the swift current soon carried it downstream to a pool where a group of Samoan maidens were washing their hair.

"If the "Inspector" hadn't been there to stop it, the rock bombardment which followed would have seriously hindered the progress of work that day," Jennings said.

CAUSE AND CURE

"Whatcha got there, mate?"

"A gallon of gook juice," the Seabee replied.

"How come?"

"Goin' on a hike in the jungle ... Protection for snake bite."

"Well, what's in the box?" his questioner persisted.

"Snakes," grinned the Seabee.

SAVE DOCK TORN LOOSE BY TIDES

Credited with repairing a dock torn loose by the tides and saving a 60-foot motor launch, men of CBMU 555 have been commended by the OinC of an advanced naval base.

"Unusual tides tore loose our dock and would have demolished the entire boat facilities had it not been for the willingness and endurance of the C.B. unit to work far beyond working hours," the commendation said. "With limited equipment available, the men improvised various mechanical substitutes to repair the dock. Also their additional help to save a 60-foot motor launch that was washed on the rocks during the same storm makes the launch now available again for duty."

NAVY HAS ADDED 65,000 SHIPS SINCE SEPT . 1939

Almost 65,000 vessels of all types, with a total displacement of more than 9,000,000 tons, have been built by the Navy since the European war began, and the Fleet's air force has been multiplied twenty times, Secretary James V. Forrestal announced. He said the "Navy had on hand more than five times the tonnage of all types that was on hand on Sept. 1, 1939," making it the world's greatest fleet.

The Secretary said that one of the great advantages of the Navy today was its "mobile quality" which means that it can fight thousands of miles from its bases.

We also have, he added, what Admiral Ernest J. King refers to as a "balanced fleet," in other words, battleships and carriers, backed up by the proper number of supporting warships and auxiliaries.

THE END OF A LOVELY EVENING

The Seabee driver appeared a little puzzled by the arrangement of the brake and gear handles but, after explaining that he never operated that particular truck before, he managed to get off to a somewhat uncertain start.

The night was dark and CCStd Carl E. Gosler and his friends in the back didn't notice that while the truck was sharply tilted going downhill, they were riding on an even keel. That is, they didn't notice until, one by one, they began sliding along the smooth steel bottom and out onto the dusty highway.

Not knowing he was driving a dump truck, the driver had inadvertently tripped the release in starting. The three chiefs who weren't poured onto the road found themselves hanging to the uptilted edge of the truck body, ducking the swish of overhanging branches, and yelling for the truck to stop.

Finally the unconcerned driver put his head out of the cab window. "Does someone want to get off?" he asked.

HARD TO PERSUADE

The whole trouble with this war, says a leading Japanese, is that "The Americans do not realize they have been defeated but continue to attack persistently." The speaker, president of the Imperial Japanese Industrial Patriotic Service Association, continued, "However, even if houses are burned and machinery destroyed, the Japanese are unperturbed. If they don't have houses, they can camp outside."

SORRY

In SNS Issue #26, dated 27 June 1944, we quoted a dispatch from a front line war correspondent that Seabees were repairing and rebuilding the Japanese airfields on Biak Island.

We have recently been informed by the OinC of a Seabee battalion, now at work constructing airstrips on an island near Biak, that the "splendid work of repairing and enlarging the Japanese airstrips (at Biak) were performed entirely by U. S. Army Engineers."

RATE HIGH

Working at one of the Navy's most advanced bases, the 15th Special Battalion has distinguished itself both by its spirit and its ability.

"The excellent manner in which they have performed their duties..under adverse and arduous circumstances" and their "deep loyalty and high sense of duty" merited the commendation of the Base Commander. To which the Chief Staff Officer added, "You have established for all time a record of achievement in the discharge of vessels based on tonnage and man hours...the job has been 'well done' by all hands."

A third officer, thanking the Seabees for "splendid cooperation in the unloading of ammunition," summed up: "I know that the units afloat that will shoot this stuff will join me in thanks and appreciation for a job well done."

THE MEMORY LINGERED ON

If the Eskimos could eat it, so could they.

That line of reasoning was convincing enough for cooks of the 43rd Battalion, recalls Nathan Abrams, SClc, when, with the stoves out of order, they contemplated a supply of frozen halibut and salmon.

As they ate, they were surprised to find the fish had no particular taste. "Anyway," says Abrams, "it went down easily enough. The taste came later. But, boy, when it came, it stayed!"

JAPAN TO BE HIT BY 1000-PLANE RAIDS

The mass bombing of Japan with 1,000 planes and the eventual occupation of the enemy's homeland is predicted by Lt. Gen. Millard F. Harmon, newly appointed commander of Army Air Forces in the Pacific area.

Aerial blows equal to those given Germany will be meted out to Japan "if she holds out that long," General Harmon was quoted by United Press. He pointed out that the Allies will need new bases to carry out the mass bombings and suggested such places as the southern Kuriles, the Okinawas, just south of Kyushu, Formosa, and the China coast.

The new commander thought it was possible that "Japan would see her doom clearly enough to ask for peace" after an intense aerial offensive, but added that "if Japan fights on her homeland as she has in the Pacific islands, we will have to land on Japan itself."

ALL THREE

Seabee pontoon units participated in all three landing operations in the Marianas. They went in with the early waves at Saipan, Tinian, and Guam.

A CREDIT TO HIS OUTFIT

S. L. Randall, CMM, of the 110th Battalion is the sort of man who has helped the Seabees earn their reputation, in the opinion of Lt. C. T. Hammons, USNR.

Commending Randall for the improvised manufacture of immediately needed equipment, Lt. Hammons said of the Chief: "His ability to utilize the limited material and equipment at hand to produce tools exhibiting excellent workmanship reflects highly the CB's famed motto, 'Can Do'."

CARRY 'EM AS SPARES

When an LST docked with its pontoons torn and ripped in an accident, a rush order for help was sent to CBMU 571. The LST had a schedule to keep.

Six hours later the skipper of the ship viewed the neat patches and tight sealing job done by four CBMUers.

"I wish I had Seabees with me all the time," was the comment of the skipper as his craft and equipment, as good as new, cast off on time.

LIGHT SNACK

"K ration? Spam? Hell, the candles I used to eat back home tasted better!" says T/Sgt. Henry Kablum, Alaskan-born Army sergeant who prides himself on being the only GI Eskimo in Italy

PIPE-THREADER FROM SCRAP PARTS

Faced with a shortage of threaded pipe and fittings, the 15th Battalion rounded up an assortment of scrap and salvaged parts and improvised its own pipe-threading machine.

Parts used by the Seabees to construct the machine included the transmission of a wrecked jeep, the reduction gears from a surveyed winch from a flat-bottom truck, the chuck from a set of worn-out dies, miscellaneous scrap and an oil pump from a discarded evaporator. As babbit was unobtainable, the bearings were poured with a mixture of lead and solder.

A drive shaft of 1 1/2" pipe and two jeep universal joints, one on each end, supply power to a reduction gear, making it possible to use Beaver dies from 2 1/2" to 8"

Oil is filtered and used over, the only loss being that on the threads.

The home-made equipment threads pipe from 1/2" to 8" in diameter. Its production rate, the 15th claims, is equal to that of a standard unit manufactured in the States.

SHORT SPORT SHOTS

BASEBALL:..American League pennant race hotter than mid-August on the equator ..Yankees fought way into second spot, two games behind staggering Brownies..Latter showing strain of setting pace, dropped 11 of their last 13 games..Browns' No 1 hurler, Bob Muncrief, under treatment for strained elbow..Dizzy Trout boosted Tigers into third-place tie with Red Sox, notched his ninth straight and 23rd victory of season..Red Sox lost Hal Wagner, first string catcher, to Army..With National League flag practically sewed up, Cardinals now shooting for three NL records; 116 games won by '06 Cubs; 27 1/2 game margin by '02 Pirates; earliest clinching date, Sept. 16, by '31 Cards..Representatives of Cardinals and AL first division teams met with Judge Landis to formulate World Series plans..Series will open in St. Louis, October 4, with Cardinals as home-team..Mort Cooper won his 100th game of major league career, helped Cards establish new NL record for winning 90 games on earliest date ..George Stirnweiss, Yankees' speedster, has pilfered 43 bases in 49 attempts..Ted Wilks, Cards' rookie hurler, became NL's leading hurler, winning his 11th consecutive game and 14th of year..Dodgers asked for waivers on veteran Paul Waner; said good-bye to pitcher Calvin McLish, inducted into Navy..Managers Joe Cronin of Red Sox, and Bob Coleman of Braves, renewed contracts..Senators' George Case and Ed Butka; Browns' Nelson Potter, fined \$100 each for engaging in fist fight.

FOOTBALL:..Chicago Bears, National Football League champs, maintained their unbeaten record in five tilts in the 11-game series by ekeing out 24-21 victory over College All-Stars..Game was passing duel between Sid Luckman and Glenn Dodds of Tulsa U, until closing moments when Pete Gudauskas kicked field goal for Bears' victory..Dodds, now AAF looey, voted most valuable player for All-Stars..SecNav Forrestal announced Army-Navy game will be played in Annapolis under same restrictions that prevailed for last two years..Steve Van Buren, LSU halfback, signed contract with Philly Eagles..Boston Yanks purchased Augie Lio, former star Georgetown guard, from Detroit Lions and Walter Dubzinski, ex-Boston College center, from New York Giants; signed Sam Goldman, one-time All-Southern end at Howard College.

SIDELINES:..Byron Nelson won Tam O' Shanter tournament..collected first prize of \$13,462.50 in war bonds..By Jimmy won American Derby at Chicago..Francisco Segura, Ecuador, beat Lt. Don McNeill in finals at Southampton..Hawaiian Keo Nakama, Ohio State, made grand slam in AAU swim championships at Great Lakes, won 1500-800-400 meters free style..Willie Pep, world featherweight champ, scored 10-round victory over Joe Peralta..Cleo Shans, lightweight, received 10-round nod over Vic Creelman..Bobby Permane lost apprenticeship "bug" ..rode 228 winners in year.

SERVICEMEN'S SPORTS:..Joe DiMaggio, back in states, refused to comment on reports of discharge..Lt. Lawson Little, former national open and amateur champion, barred from All-American golf tourney by Navy directive forbidding personnel from competing against pros..Angelo Faenza, CM2c, of Camp Endicott, copped Essex County (N.J.) amateur golf title..Great Lakes baseball team wound up record '44 season with 48 wins in 50 starts..Bobby Ruffin, top contender for lightweight title, honorably discharged from Army..On "Island X", 117th Batts' Bulldogs took first place in second half of Seabee American League season; 129th's Red Men cinched top honors in Seabee National League..Bob Rustay and R. W. French captured tennis doubles title at CBMU's 554 "Island X".