

# SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

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## LESSON IN CONVERSION

The 61st Battalion, working with Army Engineers, converted a crude and inadequate Japanese light plane landing strip into a 8,000-foot heavy bomber airfield in less than 30 days, undergoing air attacks and sniper fire to do it.

The project was directed by Lt. Rex M. McCann, CEC, USNR, who helped build two fields on Guadalcanal and in the Bismark archipelago.

Work went forward on a 24-hour basis, four six-hour shifts. The first four days the men lived on field rations, slept in foxholes and had only moonlight for illumination. Heavy artillery roared less than 100 yards away until infantry advances made possible the advance of the big guns. Bombing and strafing attacks were frequent, but work was never suspended until the planes were actually sighted.

The original strip built by the Japanese was surfaced only by a thin layer of hard loam, which had to be stripped off. Deep swampy holes were filled with small river boulders and a gravel base and surface applied and rolled.

A thousand feet of pierced-plank matting was placed at each end of the 8,000-foot strip to absorb the shock of landings by the heavy planes. Artillery spotting "grasshopper" planes were using the strip shortly after work started; two-engined planes were using it within two weeks and less than 10 days later the field was opened for business.

## EXCITEMENT APLENTY'

Is operating a bulldozer a combat job? George H. Dougherty, MM3c, doesn't try to answer that one but he can testify that the assignment sometimes has more than its share of thrills.

Dougherty's battalion landed on Saipan and set to work while Marines were still clearing Japs from the construction area. One of his first jobs was to cut a mile-long road up a jungle-covered hill. It took his 21-ton bulldozer just three hours to complete the strip although carbines were blazing about him as he worked. Engineers estimate the same assignment, under favorable conditions, would have taken Japanese road builders several days.

After three weeks of constant use by heavy equipment, without maintenance or additional work, the Dougherty-built road was still in good condition.

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Another of the Seabee's jobs required him to clear an area on which an enemy ammunition dump had stood. With the edge of his bulldozer blade he broke up concrete gun emplacements and shoved the rubble into holes which needed filling. He didn't have time to pick up individually the hundreds of live Jap artillery shells scattered about, so, with his bulldozer, he shovelled them into heaps for the bomb disposal crew to remove later.

Although ticklish enough, Dougherty said, playing hockey with live ammunition wasn't as bad as one of his more-or-less "regular" jobs.

"I work my 'dozer on a high ledge over our battalion's coral quarry, pushing down the loose rock," he explained. "The other day the blasting crew left a projecting shelf of rock. Trying to knock it down I ran my "cat" part way out on the ledge and pushed with the blade. The whole shelf split away and fell to the bottom. The bulldozer's treads were left hanging out over the rim. The machine began rocking back and forth and I figured I was a goner!"

Needless to say, the Seabee managed to work the 'dozer safely back to solid ground. He wouldn't be around to tell the story otherwise.

#### WHAT, NEVER?

Crocodiles in the Marianas? Naturalists sneer, zoologists mutter "Never!"

Harry C. Walker, Sr., SK1c, isn't one to dispute the experts. He simply smiles quietly and looks in the direction of the tacked up and drying hide a few yards away.

A one-time Florida alligator hunter, Walker said that before he'd finally picked off the trespasser with a carbine, there had been a lot of controversy among the Seabees about the crocodile. Some swore it was a monster; others, a nightmare. One stepped across a small drainage canal -- onto the crocodile's back. The reptile rushed off in one direction, the yelling Seabee in the opposite.

"It was like meeting a big, galloping pocketbook!" he explained to guards who rushed to his rescue.

#### MAIL IN A MILK CAN

If the folks at home got salty letters from Seabees attached to a detachment in Unalaska, it wasn't solely because the writers were in the Navy, according to Rob Corley and Sherman G. Gerke, both of whom were with the detachment.

The Seabees were based at Makushin Valley, separated from Dutch Harbor by eight miles of treacherous water. All that tied the men to civilization, said Corley, was a thirty-foot barge he and Gerke operated between the island and the mainland.

In treacherous weather, which was frequent, fifteen-foot waves would beat the valley shore line. The closest the barge could get would be 200 feet off the beach. On such occasions, Corley, a former rodeo hand, would heave a weighted line ashore. The line supported a five-gallon milk can stuffed with mail and supplies. On its return to the teetering barge, the can carried outgoing mail.

"Folks back home got bleary letters which started all kinds of speculation about sinking ships and that sort of thing," Corley recalled, "but we couldn't help that. The Seabees of Makushin Valley didn't mind a little salt water in their mail. They knew they were lucky to have any mail service at all."

### **MORE THAN HE EXPECTED**

"When I came to, I remember hollering 'I'm alive!' -- and being surprised I was," said Frederick L. Banttinen, CM1c, as he told what it was like to be on a barge blown up by a floating mine.

Now recovering from shrapnel wounds at a Navy hospital, Banttinen said he had been aboard a Seabee pontoon barge, ferrying supplies to Marines on the beaches of Peleliu Island during the early hours of the invasion.

"We were just preparing to go ashore," he said, "when the barge suddenly swung around and the stern hit a submerged mine. One of the crew was blown fifty feet into the water. Two of us, on the stern, were blown straight up into the air and landed back on the barge. Fortunately, some of the Marines were able to get out quickly enough to rescue all three of us.

"We learned later that the motor had been blown completely free of the barge. A Marine brought me the fan belt pulley, still warm. He'd picked it up, he told me, after it had come through his tent on the beach, 300 yards away!"

### **'PUPPET' MAYOR TRICKED JAPS**

A Filipino civil engineer, now working with the Seabees in the construction of the Samar Island base, recounted how he was elected mayor of a Japanese-held village while he was in prison for guerilla activities.

Arrested for anti-Japanese activities, Dominador T. Colinares was in jail when the invaders, in an effort to win cooperation from the restive Filipinos, held a popular election for mayor. Colinares was elected by the scattering of citizens who had not fled to the hills.

"The Japanese let me out and started being very good to me," Colinares recalled. "They let me go to other towns and I was the only Filipino who could visit imperial headquarters."

The guerilla command in the hills instructed Colinares to continue as mayor as

his official duties allowed him to obtain vital military information, but his term of office expired abruptly in September when American air attacks on the Philippines presaged invasion.

"I was ordered to join my guerilla unit," he said. "We knew the hour had come to fight."

#### MARKED MAN

Two elderly Australians eyed the CB emblem on the sleeve of Richard G. Edwards, SK3c, with frank suspicion as the Seabee relaxed in a Melbourne-bound train.

"Aren't you supposed to be back in camp?" one finally blurted out.

"No, I've got a pass," Edwards answered. "I'm an American Seabee," he added as an afterthought.

"Beg pardon," said the Australian. "Down here, old man, 'CB' means 'confined to barracks!'"

#### FIRST HUNDRED RAIDS THE HARDEST

A detail of 25 Seabee Specialists assigned to unloading operations aboard a cargo vessel during the early phases of the Leyte invasion, underwent aerial bombing, strafing and torpedo attacks for 17 days while their ship lay off the assault beaches.

During this period the Seabees experienced 101 air raid alerts totaling 106 hours -- approximately one-quarter of the time spent there -- but worked continually unless under direct attack.

Enemy planes sneaked through American air cover to bomb shipping in the gulf and the Seabees' closest call came during an attack by 15 dive bombers. The Armed Guard crew aboard the vessel, however, knocked down four of the enemy raiders. American fighter planes and anti-aircraft gunners ashore and on other vessels accounted for the remainder.

#### OFFICERS DECORATED FOR NORMANDY ACTION

Admiral Harold R. Stark, USN, Commander of the 12th Fleet, has commended five CEC officers for "professional ability, outstanding devotion to duty, courage and leadership" during assault operations on the Normandy beachheads.

The commendations, which authorize wearing of the commendation ribbon, were awarded to Lt. Dean Johnston; Lt. (jg) James A. Rives; and Carpenters Lewis H. McClain, Ralph T. Peck, and Philip P. Hartigan, all CEC, USNR.

## HOT SPOT -- COOL HEAD -- STEADY HAND!

John D. Carter, SF2c, Detachment 1054, knew what he was asking for when he volunteered to use a welding torch within three inches of a full gasoline tank aboard a crippled, ammunition-laden barge. He repaired three broken engine supports and had the barge running supplies to the beach before the gasoline tank had cooled off.

"That tank," said a mate, "was so hot you couldn't even hold your hand on it-- I'll never forget those minutes if I live to be a hundred--and I certainly didn't think I would!"

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Inquiries have been received asking why the Seabee News Service refers to activities of some battalions by number and omits identification of others. The reason is that security regulations prohibit giving battalion numbers and locations in the same story, unless proper authorities previously have released the information. In the editor's opinion, if the location of the action is more important to the story than the battalion's identity, the location is used and the identity omitted, and vice versa.

### DIVERS BEAT SCHEDULE ON RUGGED JOB

Six Seabees don't think there's anything unusual about the underwater blasting job they did off Saipan. But three of them nearly drowned and all suffered severe contusions from being battered against razor-sharp coral reefs as, instead of underseas divers' suits and helmets, they used only improvised gas masks while they dynamited a forty-foot wide submarine corridor through solid coral rock.

CBM Louis E. Dann; Jerry B. Reed, BM2c; Billy B. Lee, Cox.; Robert N. Mullins, S1c; Charles F. Brookbank, BM2c; and Herbert J. McNeill, SF3c, were the Seabees who made up the diving crew.

The men worked from an unwieldy pontoon barge, in depths of 30 to 50 feet. They were periled constantly by sudden crops in the ocean floor and by the jagged, saw-toothed edges of the reefs on which they were working. The holes had to be filled in; the reefs blasted out.

The only diving apparatus they had was a makeshift. A hundred-foot length of welding hose was attached to a gas mask and oxygen was supplied by an improvised air pump.

First job for the men each morning was to make up a number of explosive "bundle-bombs." Each of these contained 20 to 30 sticks of dynamite, with a fuse stick in the center. Then a diver would drop over the side, carrying as many bundles as he could manage. The bundles were wired to a detonator in the barge.

Reaching the bottom, the diver would estimate the area to be blasted, stuff his charges into caves or holes, and cover them with rocks so that they would blow in the right direction. As soon as he finished, he would signal to be hauled back into the barge. His mates would start up the barge's motor, maneuver out of danger, and explode the charge.

"When the barge stopped rocking," said one of the divers, "we would go back and take down some more dynamite."

The gruelling nature of the work took its toll. Three times exhausted men were pulled from the sea barely in time to save them from drowning.

Despite the handicaps under which they worked, however, the Seabees completed the job ahead of schedule.

### TOOK 6,000 MILES TO FIND IT!

Lt. Francis W. Kriney, CEC, USNR, was aboard a westbound transport when he discovered he'd lost a small screw from the firing mechanism of his expensive cigarette lighter.

The ship's machine shop couldn't provide a replacement, nor could radio and typewriter shops in Honolulu. Nor Army and Navy depots. Nor an Air Force repair shop.

A few days before shoving off for a forward zone, the lieutenant tried to buy a new lighter. "Don't you know there's a war on?" shopkeepers asked disgustedly.

Eventually he arrived on Saipan -- still looking for that screw. Seabee Harry Wilson, CM1c, volunteered to help in the search, examined hundreds of small screws in machine shops of various battalions of the island. After weeks of fruitless finger-ing, however, Wilson gave up in disgust and returned to his hobby -- collecting souvenirs.

Dismantling the intricate timing mechanism of a Jap artillery shell, he picked up a minute screw, let habit get the better of him, tried it in the lighter. It fit perfectly!

Said the awe-stricken lieutenant: "Since I've gotten here, I've seen these guys salvage Jap steel, Jap cement, Jap piping, Jap trucks, even Jap tanks. But I certainly never expected to have them fix my cigarette lighter with part of a Jap shell!"

### A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Seabee Richard P. Forde, CM2c, is going to be a very cautious man from now on out because, he says, he used up all his good luck for the next 20 years in one night at Peleliu.

Washed overboard from the deck of his grounded pontoon barge, Forde spent most of the night swimming along the reef which surrounds the island, the target for Jap snipers, as well as for Marines and his Seabee mates.

The wave which swept Forde into the sea also refloated the barge and the Seabee was forced to make his way to a pontoon causeway which had been set up about a mile distant. Divesting himself of all his clothes except his shorts and socks-- "I wished later that I had kept my shoes," he said, "because live coral is as sharp as a razor and I cut my feet pretty badly" -- he struck for the causeway.

"About halfway there, swimming over the deep spots and sort of hopping along where it was shallow," Forde recalled, "I passed a small island on the reef. The Marines on Peleliu proper were throwing up flare shells about every ten seconds and I was fired upon every time a flare hit the water. I still don't know whether it was the Japs or Marines, but I have a hunch it was the Japs, because they never hit me.

"For the next half mile," he continued, "I had to go very slowly, ducking under water at each flare, then making progress when it was dark. Just as I was getting used to being a target, something happened that really scared me: I stepped on an eel."

After working his way around two Marine amphibious tanks, placed on the reef to protect the causeways from infiltrating Japs, Forde crouched behind an abandoned Jap barge and proceeded to make his identity known to Seabees and Marines guarding the causeway less than 100 yards away. It took him 15 minutes, Forde said, to convince his shipmates that he really was a Seabee and not a Jap with a Boston accent.

"When I reached the causeway, I learned that the guards had fired more than 70 rounds at me but there was so much noise from the firing ashore and the trucks on the causeway that I never noticed it," concluded the Seabee.

#### SOUVENIRS PAY OFF

A new and complete kit of very fine Jap tools looked like a dandy souvenir to Ensign P. S. Mills, SC, USNR, when he landed with a Seabee battalion in the Philippines. He lugged the heavy box back to camp -- only to discover every wrench was in metric measurement and not one would fit American machines.

For the next two or three days the chagrined officer said nothing about his trophies.

Meanwhile, the Army captured an enemy airfield nearby. Air Force mechanics started to dismantle a Jap plane for shipment to a rear base. They ran into difficulty when the metric-measurement nuts and bolts refused to yield to American wrenches.

The Seabees heard of the jam-up; remembered Ensign Mills' tools. A hurry call brought the Jap wrenches to the airfield. They did the job, almost as quickly as a mechanic could say, "Open Sesame!"

## SOUTHERN COOKING

It's a far cry from the immaculate kitchens of the famous Homestead Hotel in Hot Springs, Virginia, to the assault beaches of the Philippines but Rene B. Crouzet, SC1c, doesn't mind. He likes his present patrons considerably more than he did those he served more than three years ago.

Crouzet was chef at the resort when it was chosen by military officials to provide a concentration point for Japanese diplomats and representatives rounded up in the United States and parts of South America immediately after Pearl Harbor. Since they were "guests" at the hotel for several months, it was Crouzet's unwilling lot to cook for them.

Attached to a battalion of Seabees since December, 1942, Crouzet's cuisine has kept the boys happy and healthy on Guadalcanal, Emirau, the Russels, New Zealand and now the Philippines where, in the face of multiple hardships, including day and night bombing and strafing, and storms of typhoon proportions, Rene was serving hot food within four days of the initial landing and three days later was turning out freshly-baked bread and pastry desserts.

### AND THEY CALL IT PIONEERING!

"Twenty-four hour wet wash service -- and all the laundry you can send -- free!"

That's the boast of a Seabee battalion on Saipan, but the laundrymen have had to draw one line. "No pick-up or delivery service," cautions Hanford Hoyt, S2c, "at our prices we can't afford it!"

The battalion laundrymen are handling about 3200 pounds of washing each week, plus uniform pressing for officers and CPO's. They aren't finicky. They accept rubberized ponchos and dog-tent shelter halves for laundering. Their first serious objection came when one Seabee showed up with two pairs of silk pajamas. "After all," the laundrymen contended, "this isn't a hand laundry!"

Occasionally, admits Harry E. Jernigan, SSML3c, a piece of clothing is lost. On the other hand, sometimes a customer gets more than he bargained for. One young ensign attached to the battalion, Jernigan relates, called for his laundry one day and observed something irregular in the bundle. Pulling it out, he held up a lady's pink slip.

"He blushed all the harder," the Seabee relates, "when he found his name stencilled on it!"

Some of his fellow officers, it developed, were responsible for the practical joke.

### MAROONED BY TIDE, SEABEES ARE RESCUED

Two Seabees of Pontoon Assembly Detachment No. 4 are alive today only because three shipmates and a CEC officer staked their lives in an hour-long battle



against the sea to rescue them from drowning.

The two men, W. G. Smith, SF3c, and H. F. Rudiger, MM1c, found themselves marooned by the incoming tide on a reef about three-quarters of a mile offshore. Because neither could swim well enough to make it to shore, they called upon their three buddies for help. While John L. Nicasastro, Y1c, and Arthur R. Werner, SK3c, supported the two poor swimmers, Joseph J. Orlando, S1c, swam on in alone to summon aid.

Meanwhile Lt. (jg) James J. Doody, CEC, USNR, and Ensign Joseph B. Witty, CEC, USNR, saw the situation. Doody swam to their aid, and Witty set out to find a boat. Eventually, a small and rickety boat and a paddle-board arrived on the scene, and the men were rescued.

Lt. T. A. Wetlesen, CEC, USNR, acting OinC of the detachment, commended Lt. Doody, Nicasastro, Werner and Orlando for "courage over and above the line of duty."

### CHANGEABLE

The weather on Saipan, according to Joel Douglas, Y2c, is not what it might be. Says Douglas: "One minute the sun is blazing down and all visible clouds are clinging to the highest mountain peak. Five seconds later, after a warning of three or four rain drops the size of baseballs, the sluice gates of heaven are opened and we're deluged by 50,000 fire hydrants!"

### THE SHOW MUST GO ON

"We've been rained on, often; but rained out, never!" is the boast of members of the 31st Special's swing band.

The swingsters include in their repertoire not only the latest song hits--arranged by Ben Longtin, MM3c, who listens to the radio and then makes the band arrangements by ear--but also musical skits and pantomime sketches. But their fame rises from the fact that they keep on playing--come air raids, high water, windstorms or torrential rains.

The sudden gusts of wind that blow music off the stands and stands off the platform are the musicians most persistent problem.

"Sometimes we've finished a number with our feet up on the stands to keep the music from blowing away," said Charlie Gross, S1/c, leader and master of ceremonies when the music-makers perform at Army, Navy, Marine and Air Corps camps. "Usually the guys think it's all part of the show."

A quintet of Negro sailors serving with another activity on the island often sing with the band, offering spirituals and "jump" tunes.

An interesting fact, especially in view of the numerous official commendations.

received by the bandsters, is that every Seabee in the band has his regular work detail and plays and rehearses mainly after working hours. Furthermore none of the Seabees except Gross, ever performed professionally before entering service.

### FAITH AND COURAGE

The 110th Battalion has a Chaplain who really knows what trouble is -- and knows the gratification that comes of conquering adversity.

Lt. George Kermit Berg, ChC, USNR, literally studied himself blind while working on his theological degree, gave it up for five years of total blindness, then returned and completed his education by listening to lectures and having his wife read to him.

He received his degree in 1940 and began to regain his sight. From that time on his vision improved steadily until 1943, when he was able to pass a Navy physical examination with a waiver. Before entering service, he had a parish at Hawkins, Wisconsin and enrolled at the University of Minnesota to work on his doctor's degree.

### SOUVENIR BUSINESS DECLINES

Four fanatical souvenir-hunters of the 17th Battalion winked skeptically when warned that bands of Japs were still hidden in the hills, plunged into the hill regions on a trophy-hunt.

Entering burned-out Jap pillboxes and caves, they quickly accumulated a large store of Jap bayonets, helmets, rifles and mess gear, gloated over their good fortune. Then came the crack of a rifle and whine of a bullet over their heads. Confident a Marine roving patrol was trying to frighten them away from their treasure-trove, they went on with their collecting, only to be interrupted by a burst of fire that sent coral dust jumping up at their feet.

Then it became too clear--Japs were firing on them! They beat a hasty retreat, left the souvenirs where they found them. A few days later the entire hill area was placed out of bounds.

### ROMANTIC PLUS

Contrary to popular belief, the average American is no prosaic, unglamorous creature, but a man of romantic dash and passion report the 117th Battalion's mail censors, Les Conklin, SM1c, and Eugene M. Mather, S1c.

As an example, the self-styled authorities on "billet-douxes" cite the case of one prolific Seabee on KP who took 85 pages to tell his girl-friend how much he loved

her. The letter was so large that he had it wrapped as a parcel-post package.

That was all right the first time but when he continued to turn in daily messages almost as long, the censors balked and insisted that he cut out some of his repetitious phrases and express his love in fewer words. So the Seabee, awakening at 0430 and writing in every spare moment until lights out, cut down his missive to ten pages -- but turned out six to eight a day!

Again the censors complained that he was slowing down the entire battalion mail department, so the KPer reluctantly agreed to limit his letters to 20 pages daily.

But now he's writing smaller and cutting down the spaces between the lines.

Wail the censors: "He's still driving us crazy!"

### CONSCIENTIOUS

CCM John McCluckie was an unhappy man when his unit landed in the Philippines.

He didn't mind the typhoons. He took the bombings in stride. Strafing was an old story. Sniper fire held no terrors. But still the Chief went about with a long face.

It was the first time, he confided, his men had had to go seven whole days after they hit the beach without fresh-baked bread and a daily pastry dessert!

"We've been in many tough spots before," he said, "Guadalcanal, Emirau, and the Russells -- and we've always been able to get our ovens set up almost immediately. I've got to square this with the boys somehow.

He did. A week later McCluckie was feasting his men with ice cream every other day!

### TIMELY SHELLING!

The Japs had just scored a straddle on the ammunition-loaded barge operated by John A. Mayo, MM1c, and were lining up for the final blast when a U. S. cruiser "eased the situation.

Mayo's barge, propeller fouled, had drifted in close to shore while the screw was being cleared. The enemy mortars had dropped one shell a little short; the second slightly over. The next one was "it," Mayo thought.

The cruiser's gun opened up, wiped out the mortar position.

"We soon got away from there," Mayo added unnecessarily.

### MONEY ON THE LINE

The 57th Battalion, close enough to war to know that money talks, over-subscribed its Pearl Harbor Day bond quota by more than \$29,000 and received a certificate of commendation from the commanding officer of the base to which it is attached. Sales amounted to \$46,112.50--245 percent of the battalion's \$18,750 quota.

## SHORT SPORT SHOTS

After the recent Army-Navy game, football writers jammed Navy's dressing room trying to get "low-down" on tackle Don Whitmire's injured leg--his first injury all season. . . . Whitmire, bulwark of Navy's forward wall and considered the outstanding lineman of the year, realized reporters were trying to get him to say that the Army players "got" him. . . . "If you guys want me to say that the Army "got" me," he told them, "you're asking the wrong fellow." Then he smiled and added, "But you can say, I guess, that they 'got' me before I 'got' them" . . . .

Dean of Southern Association umpires, Steamboat Johnson, has headed south to get in shape for his 35th "pop-bottle" season. . . . Steamboat who has worked 5500 games and umpired 10 of the 12 Dixie league's series, has been mobbed, kicked, beaten, bitten, hit with various objects and shot at. . . . Several thousand bottles have whistled through the air at him with 20 making direct hits. . . . he once had an escort of 2000 soldiers to take him to his hotel. . . . His most vivid memory is a fracas with Ty Cobb who hired him to ump an exhibition game and then was thrown out by the steaming Johnson. . . . Cy Pfirmán, the other umpire in the exhibitions between Cobb's Tigers and Hornsby's Cardinals, called Cobb out attempting to steal. . . . Cobb kicked up a fuss, was ordered from the game but refused to go, threatening "if Johnson throws me out, I'll fire him and besides he'll get killed by this crowd 'cause this Augusta is my home town" . . . . Johnson told Cobb that if he didn't leave the field he'd forfeit the game; and did just that when Ty persisted in remaining. . . . "The crowd went wild," reminisced Steamboat, "kicking the hell out of both Pfirmán and me, and it took me 40 minutes to get to the dressing room" . . . . But, he says, he still loves baseball. . . .

Cpl. Hal Raskin of Chicago probably has the toughest noncombat job in the Army. . . . His job is to fight Billy Conn at least three times a week in GI camps overseas. . . . Raskin was picked for the job when it was learned that he was a former amateur champion and 8th AAF heavyweight champ. . . . Says Raskin, "It's no soft touch. You travel all day by truck, fighting almost every night and eating and sleeping where you can. And," he said, pointing to a newly blackened eye and one ear sprouting a cauliflower, "you don't get any Purple Hearts for these" . . . .

Undefeated Kentucky, Muhlenberg (Allentown, Pa.), and Iowa top basketball teams of nation. . . . Kentucky has run up streak of nine straight, making basketball history with a 75 to 6 victory over Arkansas, previously called the dream team of the Southwest Conference. . . .

Fact is that baseball is still pretty much on the spot in the offices of War Mobilization Director James Byrnes. . . . Said Byrnes: "I'm no reformer, and I like baseball, but if cutting out baseball is going to help the war effort. . . . we'll cut baseball out" . . . .

When Branch Rickey was a catcher for the Yankees in 1907, he caught only 11 games during the season, but made nine errors, and on one afternoon the Washington club stole 13 bases against him. . . .

Owner George Preston Marshall of Washington Redskins threatened to withdraw his franchise from National Pro Football league after abrupt adjournment of league's annual meeting. . . . League postponed drafting of players from collegiate ranks, drawing up '45 schedule, and voting on franchise applications from Los Angeles, San Francisco and Baltimore. . . .

Navy teams won both Poi Bowl and Lily Bowl games. . . . defeated 7th AAF 14 to 0 at Pearl Harbor and trounced GIs, 39 to 6, in Bermuda's third annual Lily Bowl. . . . Stan Musial, Cards slugging outfielder, inducted in Navy. . . . Ex-Navy Sam Snead won Los Angeles Open. . . . George Varoff, who held world's pole vault record, missing in flight over China. . . . Ann Curtis, 18-year-old San Francisco swimmer, won trophy as outstanding amateur of '44. . . . Willie Pep, world featherweight champ, who served 9 months with Navy before being discharged, ordered to report for pre-induction physical. . . . Clyde Shoun, Reds left-hander who pitched no-hitter last season, sworn into Navy.