

# SEABEE NEWS SERVICE

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## PAYING DIVIDENDS

Iwo Jima already has begun paying dividends. Within the last week, 51 B-29s returning from incendiary raids on Japanese industrial centers landed at Iwo to refuel or for emergency repairs. Without the island, an Army Air Forces spokesman said, most of the 51 never would have reached their Marianas bases. The lives of approximately 560 men were at stake in the big bombers.

(Earlier eye-witness accounts had reported that Seabees were repairing Motoyama Airfield No. 1 even while Marines and Japs were still locked in a death struggle for another airstrip less than a thousand yards away.)

## LUCKY

A lucky man is Chief Carpenter George E. Hermansen, 44, CEC, USNR, of Chicago, Illinois. In charge of a Seabee mapping team which hit the beach at Iwo Jima a few hours after the initial Marine landings, Mr. Hermansen became separated from his detail in the confusion of the landing. Digging in on the beach, he remained there for two hours pinned down by the heavy enemy artillery barrage, then was called upon to attempt to locate the Seabee shore party commander.

"It got dark while I was searching, and I crawled into a shell hole with four Marine officers and three other men," he recalled. "Twenty minutes later we were hit by three shells at once. I was unconscious for almost an hour and when I came to, I saw that four of the others had been killed."

After recovering from the effects of the blast, the CEC officer dodged across the sulphuric sands to another shell hole.

"There were two men in it when I got there," he said, "but I never had a chance to ask their names. They were killed almost immediately by a direct hit. Once more I came through without a scratch."

Mr. Hermansen spent the remainder of the night in the same shell hole under almost continuous fire, located his mapping team the next morning, and went to work.

## MINE EXPLODES: SEABEE LOSES HELMET

As far as Clinton F. Trefethon, 23, MM3c, of Kerby, Oregon is concerned, from now on bulldozers have only one speed--forward.

Trefethon was cutting a road through on Iwo Jima. He had made one pass, but dissatisfied with the result, backed up and went over the same ground again.

"The second time did the trick," he said. "A mine exploded beneath me, blew my helmet off, and knocked a track loose from the dozer .

"It's a good thing I was running a big machine," the Seabee added. "There sure is a lot of steel between me and the ground."

Trefethon was back on the job the next morning with a new dozer-- "the biggest one I could find."

### THE FORTUNES OF WAR

Narrow escapes on Iwo Jima were as numerous as .30 caliber slugs, but three members of a Seabee shore party who lugged their machine gun ashore a few hours after the first Marine wave went in, have one to add to the list.

Olan E. Goodwin, CM2c, Frank Johnesse, MM1c, and Joseph Leese, Jr., F1c, "sweated out" the first night and at dawn started down the beach to locate the rest of their outfit. They came upon four Marines, paused for brief conversation and the seven of them started on. They had gone only a few yards when a shell struck where they had been standing, wounding all four Marines. The three Seabees were unhurt, save for the blast, which flattened them.

### HANDY TO HAVE AROUND

Seabees among the pioneer arrivals on Iwo Jima are urging widespread adoption of an idea instituted by the Coast Guard on the fifth day of the assault. Lt. Harold M. Mulvey, USCG, skipper of an LST, opened wide the doors at the beach-head and invited the tired, dirty and hungry Marines and Seabees aboard. They accepted--but fast, cleaned up, ate a hot meal and went back to their fox holes laden with canned turkey, fruit and juices.

### EX-AUCTIONEERS

It happened some months ago on Saipan:

A Seabee found a Samurai sword. More interested in collecting bank notes than souvenirs, he raffled it off. The winner, another Seabee, did the same thing. The proceeds, relatively, were still on a penny ante level.

The sword's third American owner was a little more cautious. He took it to island intelligence officials to have them look at it. The experts told him it was the finest specimen they had seen. It was, they testified, 500 years old; its approximate value, \$1,000.

### INVASION SPECIALISTS

The adventuresome history of the 14th Special Battalion, which has participated in 19 invasions in 18 months of overseas duty, was revealed in a feature story in the Honolulu "Star-Bulletin."

The Seabee stevedores, whose job has carried them to such hot spots as Makin, Tarawa, Kwajalien, Eniwetok, Saipan, Tinian, Guam, Peleliu and Leyte, have unloaded guns, tanks, ammunition and similar cargo right under Japanese shore batteries with Japanese planes bombing and strafing them from overhead. They have, the "Star-Bulletin" states, undergone some 500 air attacks but the only thing that ever caused them to stop work was a tropical typhoon.

While overseas, they have worked approximately 11,000 man hours and have handled nearly 1,000,000 tons of cargo.

#### MAIL CALL--"CROSBY, CROSBY," AD INFINITUM

The mail situation has Howard B Crosby well in hand. Crosby, SC2c, with a Marianas-based battalion, witnessed a stirring demonstration of community spirit in McKeesport, Pa. while passing through as the city said farewell to some of its servicemen. In fact, it stirred Crosby so that he wrote a letter to The McKeesport, Pa., "Daily News," saying so and adding, incidentally, that he seldom received much mail himself.

McKeesport rallied to the cause. At his Florida base, Crosby began receiving some 600 letters a day. He was eventually sent to the Marianas and the mail bridged the distance. He had 550 letters and two pouches of packages waiting when he arrived--which isn't bad for a La Mesa, California citizen.

He's four months behind in his letter-answering, but still trying.

#### CHICKEN A LA MARIANAS

Michael L. Koeber, SC2c, of Cleveland, Ohio, is still trying to decide whether a good tender chicken dinner is worth \$30 even in the Marianas.

A butcher with a Seabee battalion, Koeber loudly proclaimed to all cooks within hearing that they couldn't produce a tender chicken with the old hens furnished unless the Navy issue fowl was first subjected to parboiling. One particular bird looked so venerable, Mike even offered to wager \$30 that he was right.

The cooks covered the bet and, a few hours later, Mike sat down to his chicken dinner. He admitted the bird was tender, declared himself the loser, and paid the wager.

Later, however, his friends informed Mike that the cooks, men of their word, did not parboil the chicken--at least, not in the customary fashion.

Before roasting the bird, they suspended it for 40 minutes by one leg and sprayed it with live steam.

#### TOUCHY SUBJECT

Seabees of his battalion don't think it's possible for a catskiner to come any closer to disaster without actually being hurt than did B. H. Johnson, MM1c.

Johnson was grading an area near one of Peleliu's airfields. He happened to look back at his carryall-scraper. His eyes popped -- lodged between the gate and cutting edge of the blade was a thousand pound bomb!

"Keeping his presence of mind," said the Seabee's battalion newspaper, in a masterful understatement, "he kicked out the clutch and called for the bomb disposal officer, who took care of the situation."

#### EXPERIENCE TESTED

What's the fastest way to get into a foxhole -- head first or feet first? John T. Patterson, SF1c, was arguing the question with two Marines on Iwo Jima when the issue settled itself.

"I was standing on the edge of my foxhole," he said, "when a high explosive shell bounced off a sand bag a foot from my leg. It didn't explode, but I just about did."

"The fastest way to get into a foxhole is head first. I know."

#### A TOUCH OF TEXAS

Tinian is beginning to look more like Texas to Electrician's Mate Marshall Smith. It's all because of some flowers growing in front of his tent. They aren't just ordinary flowers. They're bluebonnets -- not a native flower in the Pacific -- but a sure sign of home to a Texan.

Smith wrote to his mother when he arrived on Tinian and she mailed him a small packet of seeds. In defiance of all predictions that the flowers wouldn't bloom, the Seabee planted the bluebonnets in a rock garden near his tent. If envious neighbors will leave the blossoms alone, he hopes there will be some left that will let others know a Texan has lived in the place.

#### DOS PASSOS HEARS ABOUT BEES

John Dos Passos, the American author ("State of a Nation," "The Ground We Stand On," "Forty-Second Parallel, USA") who does American documentaries, recently went atoll-touring in the war-passed Pacific islands and reported back to Life magazine on the souvenir business. Quoting a military government man at Majuro, the conversation went something like this:

"...the ladies make baskets and shellwork for the Americans," said one.

"We can dispose of all you can make," said a military government man. "Our servicemen are in the market for souvenirs in a big way."

"Tell him if they don't hurry and make us a lot of handicraft the Seabee'll take the market away from them." As we walked back to the landing he asked me if I'd heard about the Seabee who used to get himself up in a grass skirt and paddle an outrigger canoe out to the transports staging through and do a tremendous business in naive handicrafts he'd made himself.

"The Seabees can make anything."

### MUD-BOUND

The Air Operations Officer shook his head sadly when a B-24 overshot the air strip and wound up in a clay bank. "There isn't a piece of equipment on the island big enough to get that plane back on the strip," he lamented.

Nevertheless, a CBMU began salvage operations. Less than an hour later, the bomber, completely undamaged, taxied down the strip under its own power!

Bulldozer jockeys Winford E. Rash, CM1c, and Edwin R. McClure, MM2c, attached a cable from their D-8's to the landing gear of the bomber. A third cable was hooked from a 1 1/2 ton personnel truck to the tail assembly. Ten Seabees crawled into the tail to keep the plane on an even keel as the bulldozers tightened the cables and slowly pulled the plane back over the hump of the clay bank to the air strip. To speed operations, the unit's emergency strip repair crew laid sections of Marston Mat under the plane as it was towed, providing better traction.

### AWARDED BRONZE STAR

Comdr. Gustave G. Werner, Jr., CEC, USNR, has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his "exceptional ability" in handling the many detailed problems connected with the planning, construction and maintenance of advance bases. Comdr. Werner served as OinC of an advance naval base construction depot from Dec. 1942 to May 1943 and as assistant OinC of base construction on the staff of Commander Service Squadron, South Pacific Force, and later Commander South Pacific Area force from May 1943 to Dec. 1944.

### SHOW ME THE WAY TO GO HOME

Two Seabee bulldozer operators on Peleliu who tried clearing a road through a jungle and got themselves completely lost probably are thinking of adding a roll of white string to their equipment. Luckily for the mates, the officer in charge of the job missed them after a couple of hours and had Air Operations send up an observation plane. The pilot spotted the bees, who were getting nowhere fast, and dropped them a map directing them to their job site.

### CLEVELAND READS SEABEE PRAISES

Under a two-column head which observes, "Tropic Isle Not Bad if Seabees Help You," Gordon Cobbledick, war correspondent of the Cleveland "Plain Dealer,"

lauds the Guam accomplishments of the Seabees and says:

"They are the one military unit in the Pacific war of whom no one has ever uttered a disapproving word. Even the Marines speak well of the Seabees, and the Marines speak well of virtually no one else except the Marines."

### NOW -- WHEN'S RECESS??

The Seabees have turned one of Guam's bloody battlegrounds into a playground for 15,000 men, over-size beer hall and an aquarium included, to create the Western Pacific's largest recreation area.

Moving onto the churned mass of swampy sand, littered with burnt-out tanks, craters, shattered trees and houses, they set up a graded, leveled area which now contains a Quonset warehouse beer hall with 7,000 cubic feet of refrigeration space, a 40 x 100 athletic gear locker, foul weather shelters, a 20 x 192 bathhouse fronting on the best beach on the island, 10 softball diamonds and a hardball field, eight tennis courts, numerous basketball and volley ball courts, two boxing rings, an outdoor amphitheater and stage, and small boat docks.

They caught fish with bulldozers, legally cracked the vault of the considerably defunct Garapan-Japanese Bank (and didn't find a yen!) and lost a carryall when a land mine exploded under it. They unearthed the wreckage of battle--including dead Japanese, who they hurriedly buried again--and set some of the enemy field pieces up to lend further "park" atmosphere.

They had a generator installed and cold beer available one week before plans for the generator's concrete base arrived on the site, and sailors from nearby warships were playing softball on three diamonds four days after work started.

### SHELLS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT

E. D. Lyle, SF1c, who went ashore at Iwo Jima with the Fourth Marines on D-Day, had a blanket ripped from the top of his foxhole by a Jap projectile which landed only six feet from his head--and failed to explode, wrote Marine Combat Correspondent Sgt. Bill Dvorak.

"With five other Seabees I was dug in for the night in a shell hole, taking cover from a Jap barrage," Dvorak quoted Lyle. "My blanket was anchored over me with sandbags when several shells fell nearby. This one zoomed so close it ripped the blanket loose. The next morning we found the shell buried in the ground."

### MOST INTERESTING PARAGRAPH OF THE WEEK DEPARTMENT

They don't put baggage travel-stickers on copper wire spools, but if they did here's the route of some number 6 wire found on Tinian:

Made in Chicago, consigned to Guam before this war, captured by the Japs when Guam was taken; removed to Tinian; now transmitting power for a Seabee battalion.

### TAKE A LETTER

CY Francis J. Renaud, of Cohoes, N. Y., was amused when a group of English-educated natives insisted on attending a class in shorthand which he was conducting for his shipmates while stationed in the Samoan islands.

A few months later, however, the Chief's amusement turned to amazement when he learned that the Samoans, by a slight modification of the Gregg system, had applied shorthand to their native language and were using it quite serviceably among themselves.

### WRONG ADDRESS

Sometimes a habit can cause a man trouble even if it's not a bad habit, claims Aaron C. Johnson, MM1c, of Ovid, Mich.

During a Jap night raid on an island in the Russells, Johnson clad only in underwear, dived out of the side of his tent and into his foxhole. Too late he remembered that only that day he had completed excavation of a new and more spacious foxhole--and filled the old one with mud and rubbish.

The Japs did no damage but, recalls the Seabee: "It was a very messy raid."

### WINS BRONZE STAR

Seabee Chief Maynard Vannett of Long Beach, Calif., was awarded the Bronze Star Medal at Camp Parks recently for his outstanding work in helping to save a pontoon pier from destruction during the storm which hit the Normandy coast shortly after D-Day.

### CHIEF WINS COMMENDATION

For his work in constructing a fuel pipe line in Marseilles, France, shortly after its capture, R. E. Hamilton, CMM, has been commended by Vice Admiral H. K. Hewitt. Text of the commendation, which also authorized wearing of the commendation ribbon, said, in part:

"You displayed great professional skill and untiring energy in assisting in the rapid and efficient construction of the vital fuel pipe line system in the newly captured port of Marseilles."

## AS WE MOVE CLOSER TO TOKIO

One Seabee battalion is now offering a course in elementary Japanese.

### BEEES RECRUITED

CCM Carl R. Trappe, is going all out in this bee business. On duty with a battalion in the Pacific, Trappe inherited a hive of bees when another battalion moved on and applied his civilian-hobby knowledge of bee-keeping. The new "recruits" produced 10 pounds of honey in the first crop, but had trouble with a swarm of robber bees during the second. Part of Trappe's swarm was killed off and most of the honey eaten by the invaders, but the survivors are back at work.

The Trappe bees are "quite easy to get along with," he contends. "Some swarms will sting on slight provocation."

Trappe's difficulty has been convincing the other chiefs of that fact when he tries to keep the swarm on the back porch of a quonset hut.

### OIL TO WATER

Lt. Comdr. Newton Y. Alvis, CEC, USNR, executive officer of a Marianas-based battalion, wonders why the Japanese built a 13 x 12-foot reinforced concrete tunnel to run a 12-inch pipe from one oil tank to another.

"However," he concedes, "they did many strange things, including over-designing."

But whatever the point, the Seabees moved in, took over the whole oil storage system and converted one of the big steel tanks into a water-storage reservoir. The Jap system was composed of three tanks connected by a 12-inch line which extended down to piers where Jap warships refueled.

Two of the tanks, at either end of the tunnel, were approximately 160 feet in diameter and 32 feet deep. A third tank, smaller, was set back of the tunnel and connected with it by a small passageway. The large tunnel was wrecked by the Japs at two points, sealing off the smaller tank in the center. Through extensive salvage work by concrete men, welders and structural steel crews, the small tank was rebuilt for water storage.

Spraying and hosing of the tank's interior to remove the oil was one of the toughest jobs -- and most hazardous. Several of the men suffered blistered necks, arms and legs as a result of exposure to the chlorine.

The tank is protected by half-inch steel plate with an outside reinforcement of 12-inch concrete. Three feet of earth cover the concrete.

Special work necessitated by Jap demolitions included a steel patch, 32 feet by 15 feet, with concrete ceiling and backing wall.

### 'AW RATS'

When you say that to Lewis F. Pulliam, SF2c, you'd better smile, Pulliam has the full-time job of building, baiting and setting rat-traps for a battalion of Tinian-based Seabees. Since taking over, Pulliam has earned the title of "Pied Piper of Tinian", accounting for a total of 424 rats and 137 mice in little more than a month. His best haul was 35 rats in 31 traps during one night's "business."

### HOW S VENUS REALLY LOOK???

In spite of what they say about those South Pacific islands, men of one Seabee unit are studying heavenly bodies...but only through a telescope built by amateur astronomer Henry E. Comfort, WT2c.

A member-on-leave-but-still-active of the Amateur Astronomical Society of Pittsburgh, Comfort, pursuing his hobby-studies, built an effective telescope of plywood, a prism and six-inch reflector with a 46-inch focal length.

His interest has infected others of the battalion and Comfort finds himself in the role of an amateur astronomy teacher.

### LET 'EM EAT CAKE

Food is always an extra incentive, so Donald L. Waite, MM2c, of Fresno, California, had a good reason for volunteering to replace the worn out gears in a cake mixer which was part of his battalion's galley equipment.

The Seabee produced a cutter bar from a piece of steel picked up in an abandoned Jap sugar mill; a hob, with hand-notched teeth, of Jap axle steel; and other parts of abandoned brass. The worn gear, turned from a Jap airplane propeller, has proved lighter and stronger than the original gear. It has 30 teeth, and the worm is double-lead with 3/8" pitch.

### COMMENDATION TO CBMU 525's OINC

Lt. Comdr. Charles H. Moureau, CEC, USNR, OinC of CBMU 525, has been commended by the Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet "for meritorious achievement in performance of duties of great responsibility.

Text of the commendation lauded Commander Moureau's "specialized knowledge of engineering and construction problems, organizational experience and

splendid professional and military leadership. His noteworthy accomplishments, co-operative attitude and excellent performance of duty have been outstanding and well above the high standard normally expected...

The citation also authorized wearing of the commendation ribbon.

#### DRIVING LESSON

Seabees on Saipan are positive they have discovered the world's fastest way to teach a man to drive a jeep.

Their system was developed when William C. Bulger, Y1c, of Newark, New Jersey, said he'd like to learn. Friends took him to a lonely stretch of road in the hills, then told him to move over into the driver's seat.

Following directions, Bulger succeeded in starting the motor. Clumsily he shifted into low gear and the car crawled forward toward a spot where steep, tree-topped cliffs rose on both sides of the road.

"How'm I doin', fellas?" he grinned nervously.

As he spoke, a rifle cracked somewhere up in the cliffs. A bullet whined above the jeep and left a white blaze on the coral rock. Bulger shifted into second gear and the vehicle picked up speed.

There was a second shot, a third, finally a quick series of reports. The Seabee threw the motor into high, nearly kicked the accelerator through the floorboard, and raced away from the sniper.

"Bulger didn't need any advice after that first shot," his instructors maintained. "The quicker the bullets came, the better he drove. We never before saw a man learn how to handle a car so fast!"

#### ARMY SAYS THANKS

Recommendations for commendations to Lt. (jg) William A. Alexander, CEC, USNR, and 26 Seabees have been made by high Army officials and concurred in by Commander, Naval Forces, Northern Solomons, for "flawless" work with an Army port control unit.

"The unit has," the commendation text said, "by its outstanding contribution to the war effort at this base, reflected credit on the ---- Special Construction Battalion (of which Lt. Alexander's unit was a part.)"

### SAME IDEA

Although "Jap-fella he plane come!" is the customary air raid warning shouted by natives on Pacific islands, one group of Seabees were astounded by a Melanesian who sounded more like an Oxford man than an islander.

"Somehow we missed hearing one of the air raid alarms," recalled Charles L. Latimore, CM3c. "A black boy came racing in from the airfield. As he rolled frightened eyes toward the horizon, he exclaimed in British accents, 'Con-dition is RED!'"

### NO BED OF ROSES

Victor D. Cortez, 38, SF1c, USNR, of Dearborn, Michigan, is not a restless sleeper and is able to tell this only because he doesn't toss and tumble.

Cortez, a Navy Seabee and former foreman at the Ford Motor Company, landed on this shell-raked volcano island a few hours after the Marines moved in and spent the first night in an abandoned Jap dugout to escape mortar fire.

"It was dark when we crawled in," he said. "We were so tired, I promptly went to sleep.

"The next morning I decided to make that foxhole shelter a little deeper and as I took the first few scoops of sand, I uncovered a Jap land mine--my 'bed' of last night! If I had been a toss-and-tumble sleeper you wouldn't be hearing this--from me, at least."

### IMPROVISE PLUMBING EQUIPMENT

Tennis balls and Jap shell cases were good enough plumbing supplies for Navy Seabees on Saipan when they were asked to build water closets to replace temporary latrines.

A crew working under the supervision of Chief Shipfitter Lloyd B. Cross, USNR, of Mineral Wells, Texas, built a serviceable model using a tennis ball as a flush ball and a shell case worked into a float ball. Other materials used by the Seabee plumbers included plywood, metal, pipe and fittings, all rescued from the scrap heap.

The same crew also provided a mechanical mess-tray sterilized for the galley. A salvaged motor and pump were converted into a pressure pump by reducing the discharge fittings. Salvaged angle-iron came from an abandoned sugar mill. Sheet metal, pipe, and fittings were drawing from stock.

## SHORT SPORTS SHOTS

WARTIME BASEBALL got its most reassuring go-ahead from President Roosevelt since he flashed a greenlight for the game in 1942. .... FDR told press conference that he was all in favor of pro baseball carrying on during war; that he was in favor of continuing night ball as one means of recreation for war workers; and that he saw no reason why major leagues couldn't continue to operate. .... He reiterated, however, that he did not think baseball should use perfectly healthy men who could do something useful in war effort. .... The teams might be a little older, he said, but personally he would like to see a game--even if played by a sand-lot outfit. .... Despite President's statement, major leagues reflected tone of pessimism as it awaited player reaction to calls for spring training. .... Although 50 percent of players have agreed to terms, the number of men who actually would report was still the doubtful factor. .... Indians were heartened by reports that Ken Keltner, star third baseman and Jim Bagby, jr., pitcher, had quit war jobs to report at training camp. .... Last year Keltner left his war job to report to camp and was promptly reclassified 1-A and accepted for Navy after passing physical. .... He was not called, however, and several months later was given a 2-A, which presumably became a 2-B when he returned to his job at close of season. .... "Baseball is my business," said Ken. "If the Army wants me, it will find me working at it."

THERE ARE baseball fields all over the Marianas, thanks to the Seabees, reports Washington Post War Correspondent Shirley Povich, former sports columnist. .... "What was an impossible gulch replete with creek last week, is a nicely graded diamond this week," says Povich. .... The correspondent reports however, that former White Sox pitcher, Johnny Rigney, has one complaint: "There weren't any pitchers with those Seabees when they laid out the fields," Johnny said. "They must all have been hitters. The outfield distances are too short. What the Navy needs is some pitchers in their Seabee battalions to think of these things when they go to work on a ball field."

JACK SHARKEY, former world's heavyweight champ and only man to fight both Jack Dempsey and Joe Louis, asserts that Dempsey was the best man he ever met. .... Putting Louis seventh, Sharkey picked his 10 toughest opponents in this order: Dempsey, Harry Wills, Tommy Loughran, Young Stribling, Mike McTigue, Max Schmeling, Louis, Jim Maloney, Jack Delaney and George Godfrey.

ONE OF five basketball players expelled in Brooklyn College gambling case, Larry Pearlstein, ex-GI, never registered or matriculated as student. .... Bought books which he carried around campus, turned up daily for practice without any college official, teammate or coach suspecting that he wasn't regular student.

DISA AND DATA. .... George Sisler still holds the record for the highest batting average in American League since 1900. .... George batted 419.79 in 1922; next best was Ty Cobb's 419.63. .... Sisler also holds record for most hits in single season with 257 in 1920. .... Gunder Hagg lost his second mile race at Kot C meet; finished fifth behind Jimmy Rafferty, who won his seventh straight indoor mile victory. .... Montreal Canadians captured pro hockey league title for second year in row. .... Pvt. Frank Kovacs won world pro tennis title by beating Welby Van Horn at San Francisco.