

Naval Construction Maintenance Unit 621

Historical Information



“Construimus, Batuimus”
“We Build, We Fight”



ON BOARD

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFF.</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>AUTH.</u>
1 Nov'44		289	BNP625
30 Sep'44		256	Recap
1 Dec'44		293	BNP625
1 Jan'45		269	BNP625
1 Mar'45		268	BNP625
1 Apr'45	5	269	Mo R
1 May'45	5	265	BNP625 & R
1 Jun'45	5	267	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	5	242	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	5	237	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45	4	235	BNP625 & R
1 Oct'45		192	BNP625
1 Nov'45	4	156	BNP625 & R

C.B.M.U. 621 (ABCD DOTI) (INACTIVATED)

CBMU 621

NCTC - (Parks)
 ABD - Hueneme
 Ready Date - 1 Dec'44
 Left ABD - 27 Jan'45
 Location - Manus

LOG

- 9-9-44 - CBU 621 will be ready to leave Parks 1 Dec. (Sec. disp. 061917 CNO to ComServPac)
- 10-21-44 - CBU 621 was commissioned 18 Sep'44. (Recap Sheet 1 Oct'44)
- 12-8-44 - CNO orders the transfer of the 146th CB to Hueneme about 15 Dec'44. (CNO Conf. Disp. to Parks 041513 dtd 4 Dec'44)
- 12-12-44 - CBU 621 will be available for Manus. (CNO Sec. Disp. to Cincpoa and Com7flt 081915 dtd 9 Dec'44)
- 12-29-44 - CBU 612 arrived Hueneme from Parks 16 Dec'44. (Hueneme conf. disp to CNO 181731 dtd 19 Dec'44).
- 2-8-45 - CBU 621 is loaded and awaiting orders. (ComWesSeaFron Sec. disp to CNO 260124 dtd 26 Jan'45).
- 2-8-45 - CBU 621 departed Hueneme 27 Jan'45 for duty overseas with 4 officers and 269 men. (Hueneme conf. disp to Supers 292311 dtd 30 Jan'45).
- 2-9-45 - CBU 621 loaded for Manus with 4 officers and 269 men. (Com 12 Conf Disp to Comservfor7flt 012252 dtd 2 Feb'45)
- 1-21-45 - CBU 621 arrived 16 Feb'45 in Admiralties. (Comservfor7flt Sec Rep for Feb'45)
- 4-23-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of CBU 621 - location not given. End. by CO NB Manus.
- 5-1-45 - CBU 621 is located at Manus. (Comservfor7flt Sec Rep of 1 Apr'45)
- 5-24-45 - 1 May'45 report of CBU 621 - located at Manus.
- 6-19-45 - CBU 621 ordered to Palawan according to Comservfor7flt sec CB Loc Sched 7 Flt dtd 5 June.

Location - Manus

CBMU 6

- 6-21-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of CBMU 621 - located at Manus as of 1 June.
- 6-29-45 - Part my disp 300019 ordering CBMU 621 to Palawan cancelled and substitute following: CBMU 621 herdet predu. Prorep CNB Manus for duty with OinC ABCD Manus on arrival transp furnished by originator. 12 off. and 525 men ABCD Manus detached predu. Prorep CNB Subic for duty in connection sub ABCD. 3 off. and 150 men remain predu ABCD Manus. (Comserv7flt sec disp 251003 to CNB Manus)
- 7-18-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of CBMU 621 - located at Manus.
- 7-27-45 - CBMU 621 located at Manus operating ABCD. (CST 7th Flt Sec Rep for June)
- 8-1-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of ABCD DOTI - Comserv7flt has directed the transfer of 12 off. and 525 men to Sub ABCD Subic Bay for duty. The remaining 3 off. and 124 men together with CBMU 621 will operate this depot.
- 8-11-45 - You will regard your present duty terminated and will take charge of CBMU 621 under your command and report to CNB Manus for duty at the ABCD with addtl duty as Exec ABCD Manus. (CNB Manus conf orders ser 01462 dtd 21 July to Lt. H.G. Mariner, OinC CBMU 621)
- 8-20-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of CBMU 621 - located at Manus. CBMU 621 was relieved of all duties with PW Dept Manus on 19 Jul'45 and reported to ABCD DOTI for duty on 20 Jul'45. Hdqtrs and personnel were moved to the area occupied by the remaining detachment of ABCD DOTI.
- 8-31-45 - CBMU 621 - At Manus, ordered Palawan. (Dirpaddock, P. sec report of 10 Aug'45).
- 10-1-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of CBMU 621 - located at Manus.
- 11-2-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of CBMU 621 - located at Manus. 38 men transferred to U.S. for discharge under the point system.

Location - Manus

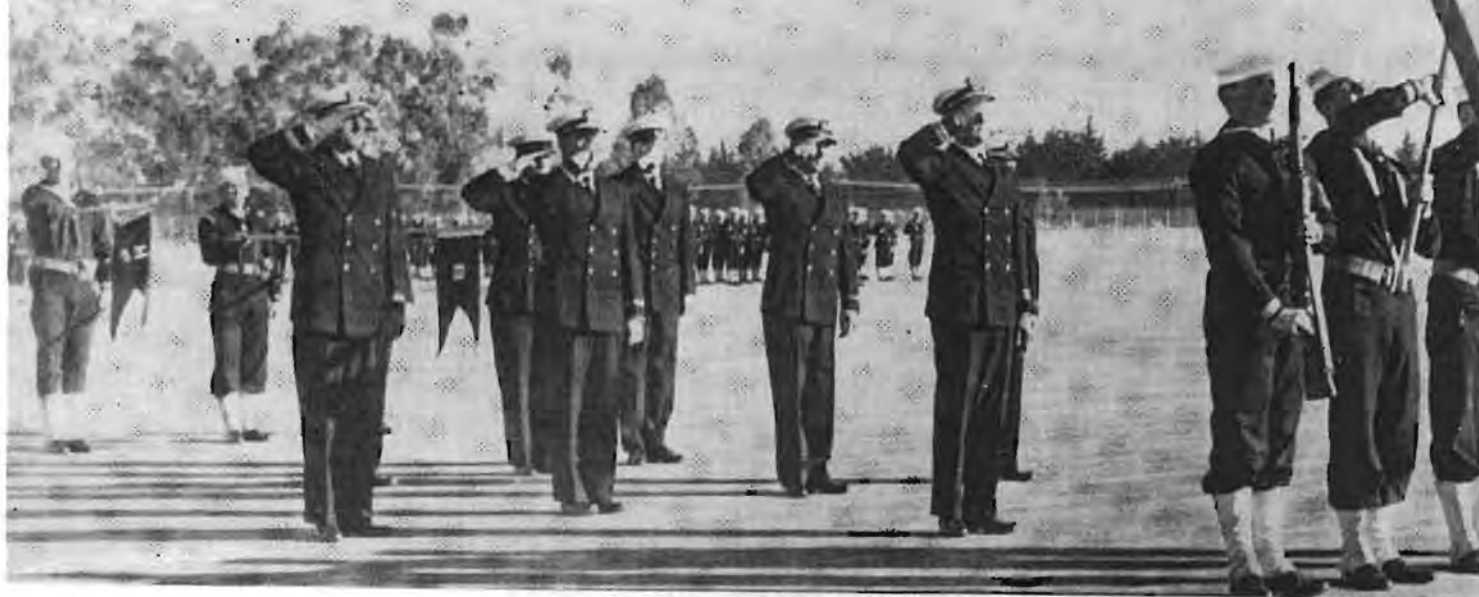
CBMU 621

- 11-23-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of CBMU 621 - located at Manus. 37 men rec'd from ABCD, Manus. 20 men transferred for discharge under the point system. Inactivation is to be completed by 15 Nov'45. Remaining pers to be transferred to 140th CB.
- 11-26-45 - Comservpac requests Guam to inactivate CBMU 621. (Comservpac TWX 242130 Nov'45 to RDO, Guam).
- 12-3-45 - CBMU 621 was inactivated(date not given). (Comservpac restr ltr ser-61 undtd to BuPers).
- 12-7-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of CBMU 621 - located at Manus. CBMU 621 was inactivated on 15 Nov'45. 60 men transferred to U.S. for discharge. 11 men to U.S. for leave & reassignment. 121 men sent to 140th CB.

INACTIVATED

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
9/9/44	Lion 8		Cno sec disp	Ready Camp Banks
11/11	(")	(Banks)	061917 Sept. Du Rocher memo 1942.	December 1. " Asid Lion 8.
12/4	"	(Huene) (Huene)	Cno conf disp 041513 Dec	Banks transfer to Huene about 15 Dec.
12/12	-	(DOT I)	Cno sec disp 081915 Dec	Asid DOT I. now ready Huene.
12/13	-		Cno sec serial 01413030 Dec.	Assignment to Lion 8 is Cancelled - (Substituted by 510)
12/15	-	Camp Banks	Du Rocher memo 12/9.	Ready 12/1 at Camp Banks, Asid com 7th flt
1/30	-	(DOT I)	Huene conf disp. 292311 Jan.	departed 27 Jan for overseas duty.
2/18	-	-	Cominch sec disp 122115 Feb.	Shipped to Roti on Sea Scamp. Asid priority 4731.7
3/29	* Manus Nav Base ARCO		Comsec 7th flt Sec 260558 Mar	" present location & assignment.

The Story



Our story begins at Camp Parks, Construction Battalion Replacement Depot, September 18, 1944 on the stroke of 1400 as Lieut. H. G. Mariner came aboard to assume command of C.B.M.U. 621, a new unit that was destined to receive recognition for her outstanding achievements. Pipe the watch came the order which marked the official commissioning, and thus the Goddess of War had a new baby.

Lieut. (jg) B. B. Sheridan, executive officer, Carp. C. E. Anderson, Carp. C. L. Aisthorpe, with 19 men were given the order to heave anchor, and set sails. Ensign J. T. Hendricks reported aboard September 26, and additional members of the crew arrived in small groups. By November 1, our complement consisted of five officers, and 289 men who hailed from every corner of the United States, representing 43 states.

It didn't take long for the scuttlebutt about this unit having a good bunch of officers and men to take root, which resulted in an almost continuous line each day of those who desired to join us.

By means of transfer we lost a few men, but gained a

greater number, and by December 1, 293 men were marching proudly to colors each morning. This procedure was a base order must, providing the weather permitted and it was interesting to note the various uniforms worn by some 5,000 men, many of whom were fresh from the South Pacific, and had to become acclimated to those briskly chilly mornings that most Californians refer to as balmy. It was not at all unusual to see one group of shivering mates half hidden in their peacoats, while along side them another group apparently quite comfortable in shirt sleeves.

This ceremony took place on what was commonly known as the black top, and the dread of every man who was expected to do a few flank movements. Much of this took place after the sun was well in the sky, and to those men unfamiliar with California's climate it was comical to see the liberty hounds filing out the gate with a peacoat under their arm, and the temperature hovering close to one hundred, but we soon learned that those cool nights demanded the use of a heavy coat, and red flannels if you could endure them until sun down.

Our unit was booked for overseas duty which made it



necessary for the greater portion of the men to start their embarkation leaves, and by November 4, about 90 per cent of the compliment had left for home to enjoy a soft bed, and mother's cooking maybe for the last time. The few remaining aboard had already experienced this privilege previous to their assignment to 621 which made events in our particular end of camp rather dull, and for them those few days seemed long, and tiresome. The calm was interrupted abruptly when news arrived that Scott Thomas Nelson, SK3c, had met a tragic death in an airplane accident near Hanford, Calif., while enroute home. This was indeed a shock to all those who knew young Nelson, and a great loss to our unit who shared the bereavement of his mother, Mrs. Paul Nelson, 107 14th St., Wheeling, W. Va. It seemed a pity after all his training, and preparation to fight, and die if necessary for his country, that he was taken before having a chance to demonstrate the ability and courage on the battlefield that we knew he possessed.

His record jacket bore a letter from a high-ranking officer in charge of officers' training at Camp Peary, Va.,

acclaiming him the best all around instructor in the Civil Engineering corp., and no doubt thousands of officers still remember the training they received by his efforts.

By November 20th, which was the dead line on embarkation leaves, all the men had returned with some kind of donation for the welfare and recreation department such as old phonograph records, books, magazines, fishing rods, and games of every description. All this, plus several boxes of plunder donated by the Red Cross, made up the bulk of our supplies to date.

Ensign J. T. Hendricks being a Georgia native, with a fresh vegetable appetite came up with a large box of every kind of garden seed imaginable, and to our certain knowledge this box has remained closed for the duration of our overseas duty. He retained the appetite, but lost the urge for gardening.

A public address system, complete with radio and record-playing device, was to be our pride and joy after we arrived on island X, but some oratorical expert got the idea this offered an excellent opportunity for barking orders to the men in the barracks, so it was put to use much to the disgust of all hands. "NOW HEAR THIS" was the favorite with our would-be announcer, and we heard that so often it wasn't safe for this guy to venture out alone after dark.

Shortly after the commissioning we were assigned to our first construction project, building a tool shed on the rifle range and make the necessary repairs on the existing buildings. This job required only a small crew while those remaining in camp had a turn at mess cooking, washing dishes, to you who are not familiar with navy slang.

The men of 621 were a mixed lot whose ages ranged from 17 to 50, some veterans from other units that had already seen action overseas, however the majority of them were what has been termed "homesteaders" having had several months' duty in the States. Fifty per cent of our complement were young seamen most of whom had never heard of the Seabees prior to their assignment to our unit. Being fresh out of boot training made them gullible subjects for some of the older heads who gained some pleasure by boasting of the Seabees' reputation for being a tough bunch of fighting men.

On one occasion while L. G. Fitzpatrick was acting as liberty yeoman, a young seaman—N. B. Chaney—just out of boot had become a firm believer in this, and was all set to live up to the standard of these tough guys as he came charging in the office with all the confidence of an old salt. "How about that three-day leave I'm supposed to get?" says he. "I hear some of the guys are getting it." A quick inspection of his record revealed that he wasn't entitled to



This bell stands in front of the administrative building at Camp Parks, Calif., and is used to give the time every 30 minutes. At 1230, it's one bell; at 1300, two bells; and so on until 1600 which is eight bells. Then the same procedure is repeated for eight more bells. We found a watch more convenient, however. On board ships the bell method is common practice.

any leave, and was so advised. He hesitated for a moment, looked him squarely in the eye, and inquired firmly, "Whata you gonna do about it just forget it?"

Our personnel was undergoing a whitewashing as transfers were coming in so fast it was almost possible to greet a mate and bid him goodbye at the same time. One officer, while commenting on this procedure, had the best explanation we know of, and got plenty of practice repeating, "That's the Navy way." We took 519 men through the transfer paces before completing our complement of 270, which is a pretty good average. This presented a difficult problem for the officer in charge of military training, yet a good percentage had completed the various courses before our final orders to shove off were received. The anticipation of leaving had most of us geared to the point of a nervous race horse, and after our orders had been changed from November 1, to December 1, with the possibility of another change to January, some of the boys were giving even money that the war would be over before we got a crack at the little sons of heaven.

Shortly after securing the rifle range project an order came to move to another area which was the barracks used

by all units prior to embarkation, even though the space allotted each man in a two-story building was about eight square feet, it was a change which caused plenty of excitement. Scarcely before our gear was squared away, we were assigned to the Homaja project, later referred to as the homicide project. Quonset huts with complete housing facilities large enough for two families were to be erected by the earliest possible date. Some of the huts were partially completed by two or three units who had gotten started then secured. It was evident their ideas about construction varied sharply from those of our chiefs. Perhaps one of the most outstanding features of the Seabees is their initiative and Can Do spirit to get a job done in a hurry. While trying to solve the jig saw puzzle, and the best possible procedure from there several hours' valuable time was lost, however our 11 days' work produced several new huts, and almost completion of the sewer system for the project. Orders to shove off had finally come, and 48-hour liberty parties went out in two sections with the understanding they must be aboard by 0700 December 7th. One week remained in which to pack, load supplies, issue clothing, sea bags, GI shoes, and two dog tags per man before leaving for Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, Calif. No doubt about it, the morale of that gang went up a couple hundred points, and every one was eager, and ready to lend a helping hand on any kind of work with one thought in mind, we knew at last when, and where our unit was bound. Had we known then what Port Hueneme had in store for us that enthusiasm would have melted down to our shoe tops as it did later.

During the course of packing some difficulty was encountered by the carpenters who were given the task of crating an old 1914 model piano, complete with nickel slot, and colored glass front. It still had the imprints of beer mugs on her roof. Ensign Hendricks had salvaged this antique from a second-hand store in Frisco, and later some one named her "Heneritta" after him. In spite of the many protests his determination to have a piano for Paul Bourque, the pianist of our unit, was unfaltered. Not only did she take up one end of a freight car, but her excess weight required at least six men and a crane to man her.

Two cars were allotted us for supplies and personal gear, and after the last piece was put aboard, it became necessary for a truck to ram the doors closed.

1700 was the time of mustering the men, and all hands except one were present. This fellow had formed a habit of bringing up the rear at every muster and when some one inquired why the delay, the chief in charge let it be known that Vincent Alessandro, SIC, had forgotten his guitar, and after holding up the war for more than ten minutes, he came walking nonchalantly across the drill field, and the only excuse he had to offer was "What's the hurry?"

We were honored with a band escort which marched in front of our Company to the train, and as we marched off the base a sense of pride and duty was exemplified by officers and men alike. It was only natural the train was made up of chair cars, and those combination seats and beds became pretty hard and uncomfortable before 0700 the following morning, December 16th. Midnight chow consisted of one sandwich, one cookie, and an orange. The officers shared space with those of C.B.M.U. 624 who came aboard with us, and for some unexplainable reason they were overlooked at chow time, however our skipper is a most considerate and understanding man whose horse trading ability made it possible for them to dine with those of 624, therefore no one went to the brig. This was to happen later to a few whose liberty privileges were too strong for them. This was especially true in the case of W. H. Baxter, SF2c, who would invariably show up from 12 to 75 hours late, each time promising faithfully never to let it happen again. His record was so full of court martials that the shore patrol threatened to charge him rent for space in the brig. How he managed to do it is known only to himself, but he never made the brig at all. He was later to prove one of our most capable men, and a hard worker, liked and respected by everyone.

As the men lined along side the train in Huenemo they looked like fugitives from an all night clam bake. It was not at all surprising to see many of our friends there to welcome us, and immediately volunteer the low down on the policy of the base, type of chow to expect, but the most important question in our minds was how long do units usually remain on the base before leaving for overseas. Scuttlebutt about all this got a head start before we had gotten to our barracks, and spread like a forest fire, each offering a brand new version on what to expect.

Most camps are equipped with different style bunks, but these sacks answered every detail for what the name "SACK" implied, and had all the class of a hotel. The first impression of these reminded us of a grape arbor with a piece of canvas stretched across the top for springs. They weren't bad, just a little baggy in the middle. The chow proved to be excellent, and some of the boys remarked, "They were fattening us for the kill," but their opinion changed after the rations boiled down to spam sandwiches every noon during our ten days of military training.

All supplies were stored in what was designated as the armory. We drew a complete issue of fighting gear consisting of full pack, steel helmet, carbine rifle, fighting knife, and such incidentals as mosquito netting and insecticide powder. These items gave us a good idea that where we were going was in a tropical climate with insects thrown in for company. All hands were requested to report for

military training, and three instructors used up all of one morning teaching us how to roll our pack, prepare pup tents for bivouacing, and the proper way to carry all our equipment after we were eventually harnessed up. The weight of our helmet alone made us afraid to bend over for fear our head would hit the ground. The first day was the toughest, and a tired bunch of men made use of every known remedy for burning feet after a ten-mile hike with full pack. Every day a different instructor appeared to put us through the grind of learning how to shoot, throw a hand grenade, use a bayonet, fighting knife, gas mask, and most every kind of small weapon known for killing. A course in judo taught us how to disarm, and kill a Jap with our



A small portion of the vast supplies in Port Huenemo.

bare hands. All this proved not only interesting, but necessary for what might be expected of us in the future and for ten days we soaked up enough knowledge to last for the duration. The last day of military training found us crawling on our bellies through the brush some 200 yards preparatory to establishing a beach head known as, deploying the enemy. Afterwards the instructor thought a good idea for cooling off would be a trip over the obstacle course, but men over 35 years old were not expected to go through unless they so desired. Several of them aged quickly, while others underestimated their age and emerged wet and muddy from a spill in the water while swinging Tarzan fashion across a 20-foot water hole. No complaints came from the men who were well aware that that was their last day of hoofing 10 miles that grew to seem like 20. By this time the manifest for our overseas supplies had been received, which gave the supply department a full time job for the balance of our stay on the base, however those who



This was our first ten-mile hike without a full pack. It came later.

had less to do had become restless again, but scuttlebutt that our shipping orders were expected soon served as an antidote for them. Shortly before we were to receive our colors, some more transferring took place, most of whom were hospital patients replaced by seamen, but the comparison to that of Camp Parks were very few.

A volleyball court was set up for those who were in need of exercise, and the first one to take advantage of this was the office force. It grew in popularity, and wasn't long before a waiting list became necessary. One fellow with a promising future in our unit, and plenty of enthusiasm for going overseas, fractured a leg on the court, and many of us regretted the fact A. E. Crow, S1c, could not be with us on the day we left the States.

It was the day before Christmas, and at this time of year there seemed to be an epidemic of home sickness in our unit, but two nights' liberty in Hollywood offered a sure cure for many ailments of this nature. California had gained a reputation for the courtesies shown all service men who preferred the thumb route to that of those ever-

crowded liberty buses. Those fortunate ones who had private cars on the base offered transportation to permanent customers, six and sometimes seven would sit all over each other for 75 miles in order to save an hour of their precious liberty time. One mate F. J. Horowitz, S1c, had his four-door sedan loaded to absolute capacity, going hell bent for election to Hollywood, and it became quite obvious the road was bending too fast to match his driving, but it wasn't until after we found ourselves parked in the middle of a field did we realize he had missed the last one entirely. We have never been able to understand what kept the blasted thing from turning over, but felt deeply relieved to be alive. Accidents of this nature were frequent, but the most deplorable one ever to happen in our unit, took place on New Year's Eve when Richard Duffy, SF1c, walked across Highway 101 near Ventura, Calif., and a fast moving car, driven by some highway maniac, struck him with such force his mangled body was picked up 50 feet from the spot where he was hit, and without bothering to stop, disappeared in the darkness. This was the second visit death had made to our unit, each time selecting the highest caliber of our personnel. Duffy's pleasing personality had won the respect of every man in the unit, and by his gracious manner, and willingness to be of assistance to all, he was jokingly referred to as the Chaplain. On the very hour of his death—8:40 p. m.—a prankster with a piece of chalk had scribbled a sign on the back of a checker board, "Richard Duffy, Chaplain," placing it in a conspicuous spot on his desk. By volunteer subscription his many friends mailed a check to his wife, Mrs. Margaret Duffy, 117-41 142nd Place, South Ozone Park, N. Y. Each man shared individually the sorrows of Mrs. Duffy, and their young son.

Happy New Year echoed lightly through the camp, but most of the men remained quiet with sad faces out of respect for our departed comrade. All of them knew the chances of seeing our families again before sailing was out of the question and as the bells of happiness, hope and

Now with full pack and rifle we go through battle maneuvers.



determination rang out the old year which had been one of uncertainty and sorrow for men, women and children all over the world, we wondered where we would be a year from then, if the war would be over, and what the folks at home were doing at that moment. It's difficult indeed to describe the true feelings of a service man who is making preparation to venture into a strange land of hardships, suffering, and death, but a mental picture of gay parties, the smile of those we love, and that constant reminder of the happy times we enjoyed before entering the service left many of us with a lump in our throats. The older men could appreciate the danger and seriousness of the task that awaited us and were expected to set an example for those youngsters who looked upon this as an exciting adventure, most of them discounting the possibility they might not come back. Most of the men managed to conceal their true feelings as the New Year staggered in with many of them returning from liberty in the same manner. Up to now our Skipper had been spared the ordeal of passing out court martials, with the exceptions of a few undesirables who were caught in the transfer net before leaving Camp Parks. Everyone had grown to respect and appreciate the personal interest he took in the men. When their welfare was at stake he could always be depended on to go to the bat for them if justified, but if the case called for a reprimand, he would also go to the man with a bat. He was a quiet mannered individual, just lucid enough to match his position, but if one of the men got out of line far enough to warrant disciplinary action, all hell would break loose. Scarcely before the New Year's glow had worn off the shore patrol had furnished the Skipper with an all-day job of passing sentence on several candidates. Among them was a young seaman who had made it his business to keep him busy at this indoor sport, and this event was no exception for Albert Paiz, S2c, as he stood rigidly at attention, the Skipper boomed, "So it's you again" and after using up the best part of his profane vocabulary, he tapered off by telling him, "I don't want to ever see you in here again for anything and the next time you appear before me, I'll put you under the brig and throw the key away. SUMMARY COURT MARTIAL!" This little scolding could easily indicate he was mad and those who could not help over-hearing it from the adjoining office, quietly, but quickly made their exit.

Saturday in the Navy has a different meaning for us than the usual run of the days, or the one designated for taking a bath. We dreaded this day for the most part of it meant inspection of the area, personal gear, and cleanliness of quarters, but there was always that anticipation of week-end liberty, providing the inspection was satisfactory and we made certain of that. Liberty schedules were divided in two sections, port and starboard watch, each rated every other week-end ashore. We were amused at the many Navy terms used such as, swabbing the deck, meant a few swings of a mop over the floor, or clear the bulkhead of personal gear, remove your things from the wall. The general idea for these expressions was to familiarize us with Navy talk aboard ship, however silly they

seemed in connection with our dry land surroundings. From the beginning of boot training, the importance of cleanliness is stressed, but there's always those few who try to fool the inspecting officers by turning their mattress cover wrong side out, or hide some unauthorized equipment under their bunks. The officers were always on the alert for such practice and without hesitation would slap a restriction on those who dared attempt it. There was the case of a young seaman, J. J. Matich, S2c, who had done a very complete job of camouflaging his bunk, and might have gotten by had the Skipper been troubled with a cold. How do you suppose he knew that sack cover needed soap and water? It looked clean enough. It was taken for granted the date of our embarkation was close at hand, as other units before us were shoving off one by one, it was about time some of the goslings (seamen to you), executed the bright idea of short hair cuts which they thought would establish them as some sort of a clown, or continue the popular sport of units preceding us, and it wasn't safe for a man sporting a wavy foretop to be on board when the clipping artist went into action. The victims caught in this dragnet suffered untold misery after a few days out to sea, plus a desire for a quick sun-tan, several skulls became a crimson red, and very tender.

December 30, 1945 was the day set for the formal presentation of our colors. The procession had been carefully rehearsed with chalk lines to designate the correct position of each officer and platoon leader, also markers to indicate the proper place for column and flank movements, and equally important were the various smaller details. The color guard was selected, two lady sponsors, Mrs. H. G. Mariner and Mrs. R. L. McDonald. Flowers for each was to add dignity to the occasion which gave promise of a colorful and impressive ceremony. The uniform of the day was dress blue baker with leggings, guard belt, and carbine rifle. The reviewing stand was all dolled up with banners and flowers ready to receive the officials which reminded us of a Fourth of July celebration. During the preparation one fellow was heard to say, "Why all this pomp and fuss just to give us those flags? Why don't they hand them to us, so we could get some sack duty beforechow?"

At 1000 the bugler sounded attention, the band struck a lively tune. As we marched on the drill field we presented a most colorful assembly. We proceeded down the center of the field, halting in front of the reviewing stand, 100 paces away. The command, Left Face, brought us to face the reviewing officers, and the command, Sound Off, was given by the adjutant who does an about-face, saluted the commanding officer to report, "The battalion is formed." The Skipper in turn gave the order to, Post the orders. The adjutant does another about-face to give the command, Officers Front and Center, and as the officers advanced forward they were immediately followed by the two color guards and two color bearers, who were halted six paces from the reviewing officers. The Captain's guard, consisting of 21 men, formed an arch with rifles as the Captain and his reviewing party walked beneath the rifle formation to mount the reviewing stand. At this



A part of our unit passing in review.

point our colors were formally presented to Mrs. H. G. Mariner by Captain H. E. Paddock, who in turn presented them to the color bearers. As the flags were unfurled to ripple majestically in the breeze, all hands came to, Present Arms, while the band played the National Anthem. The Skipper gave the command, Pass in Review, and during that portion of the ceremony we were preceded by the band, who lead us directly in front of the reviewing stand for the officials to view. A snappy, Eyes Right, was executed as we neared the stand, and the relief experienced later was like getting out of dress clothes after a formal function. While we were dressed in our ham lace pants, we had our picture made for the first time as a unit.

For the next two weeks we were given the assignment of Base Maintenance which utilized the greater part of the rated men, while those unassigned took turns at mess cooking and stevedore school. However, those two weeks went by quickly as everyone knew orders to leave the States were expected any day. The unit was secured on January 24th, 1945, with four days in which to put our affairs in order. During this short time the men used every method they knew for procuring liquor to take with us just in case of snake bite. This practice was strictly forbidden and rigidly enforced as each man entered the gate, a shake down could always be expected. We were given to understand this procedure was a Base order at all ports of embarkation, but the Seabees have a way of doing things in the face of obstacles and by a unique method our gang had enough giggle soup on the base to get the majority of us roaring drunk the night before we shoved off, with three or four cases to take with us overseas. We were advised to mail our heavy clothing home, but with inadequate facilities of the Express Company on the base, it became necessary for a work party to take about 80 packages to a nearby town for mailing. This offered an excellent opportunity for smuggling liquor through the gate as the guards seldom ever stop a truck to search it. Six or eight quarts wrapped neatly in a box would be sent back to the base by the driver with instructions to deliver them to our storage room for better address. After the first trip he got wise to our plan but a couple of shots

of our loot won his consent for two more hauls. The men left to address packages got their thinking powers so well oiled that it never has been determined whether our gear ever reached its destination. Four cases in that supply room made it look more like a package store, but we hurriedly packed part of it in boxes that were labeled, "OFFICE SUPPLIES," while the rest of it offered the means of a drunken brawl the night before we got aboard the ship, with all hands participating.

Several of the men managed somehow to get by the guards with a quart or so for the occasion, and now it can be told what a party that was. Dignity, rank and personal opinions were flushed down the sewer. Officers and men alike let their hair down giving vent to their feelings in an effort to drown any idea of future consequences.

The delegation was headed by Chief Harry Ryan, who had gotten an early start, in the event he was expected to make a speech it was only natural he be prepared. Everybody was looking for Elmer and the search continued all through the night with most of the delegates following the chief from one barracks to another half-dressed and that half consisted of something old, and something borrowed, whooping and raising hell, and acting like a bunch of Republicans at a national convention. Sleep was strictly verboten.

It was a chilly night and long handle underwear was in order and one member of the clan paraded up and down the street in his long handles, a helmet and carbine rifle searching for Bunker Hill, and after he stumbled over a pile of sand, that was it, so the chief ordered his gallant army to capture this important point, resulting in a dog pile with our chief on the bottom of the heap, half buried in the sand.

It would be better to skip the results of that melee, but for the sake of records our heads were greatly enlarged the next morning and the thoughts of a boat ride made some a little sea-sick even before we boarded the ship.

All bunks had to be thoroughly scrubbed, the grounds and barracks made ready for inspection, every man ready to shove off with gear, and full pack by 1300. At 1330 January 27th, 1945 transportation was made ready, and

after a short ride we were lined up on the docks giving the ship that was to carry us to Island X the once over. This was the first ship most of us had ever been aboard and of all thoughts in our minds, the most important was—would this baby get us there all in one piece. We were checked off as we went aboard in alphabetical order and the climb down the ladder in hold No. 1, wrestling with all our gear, would make one of Edgar Kennedy's movies look like a church wedding. Sardines were never packed so compact as we were in that hold, bunks were six tiers high, but reasonably comfortable for ship bunks, however a Pullman train is like a parlor suite in comparison. It was only a matter of minutes before everyone had unharnessed himself from his pack to go topside for some much-needed fresh air. W. J. Cassidy, Y2c, did all this in record time, but he had a better reason than any of us suspected, which could have caused him plenty of anxiety had he not taken immediate action. He expected to finish his mission before we found out that his carbine rifle was on its way back to camp in one of 30 trucks. His explanation, "I would have been in one hell of a fix trying to fight Japs bare-handed," was readily understood and accepted as reasonable, therefore the incident was closed.

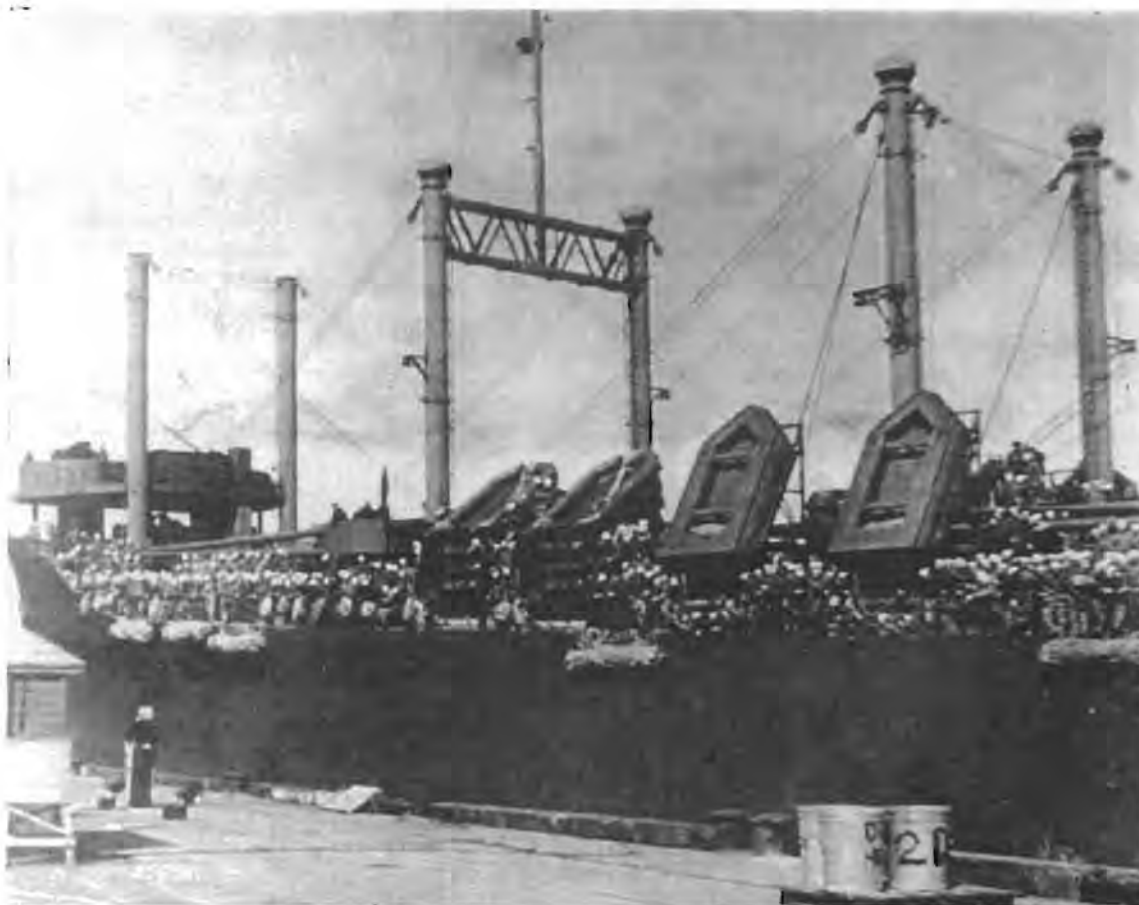
We strolled around the deck, engrossed in our last view

of God's country for maybe several months to come, but the grim realization of war, and our contribution toward it gave us a weak feeling in the stomach, allowing for the fact it could have been the remnants of our hangover.

Mothers, wives, and sweethearts had lined the docks to bid their loved ones good-bye. Tears were noticeably hidden behind stern, determined faces who dared not expose their true feelings they endeavored to avoid. There was no room for sentiment, this was it, or at least the beginning of it for us, and while the ship's crew made ready for the beginning of a 7,000-mile trip across the Pacific to deliver her cargo of some 3,000 fully equipped fighting men on Island X. They remained quiet with sad expressions, realizing their destination was unknown. It was 1600 when the water beneath us took on a decided muddy color and as the churning of the ship continued, we could feel her moving. Within a matter of minutes the California shore line faded completely and the sight of so much water was new and fascinating for most of us.

The ship was an Army Transport, her crew Merchant Marines, her guns manned by the Navy Armed Guard, and the passengers aboard consisted of Seabees, the common Navy, and Marines. One would think this combination would cause jealous rivalry among them, but each man had

Pictured here is the USAT Seascamp loaded to capacity with men and material as she waited for the command to shove off.



Reading from top to bottom: Our supplies consisted of everything from a mouse trap to bull-dozers. This auto and truck bridle made the loading of heavy equipment simple and easy. These drums of oil not only offered the blood stream for our machinery, but the empty cans were used to make water containers, sewer mains, and pontoons.



a specified job to do, irrespective of what branch of service he belonged, their duties were performed very harmoniously throughout the entire trip. Already this voyage had all the earmarks of danger, and uncomfortable as we were, the necessity of it was understood and appreciated.

Our daily routine did not vary from a set schedule that grew to be a monotonous ordeal, however, each unit had the privilege of choosing the desired forms of recreation. In our cozy little den, checkers and bingo became the most popular of them all, but when the so called musicians got their squawking instruments out of mothballs there wasn't a dull or peaceful moment and everyone thought himself capable of playing whatever instrument that happened to be handy.

During our sojourn there was one fellow, D. J. Finnie, EM2c, who could play a little on most any of them; yes, a very little, but he was a likeable devil who seemed to be everywhere at once with his gags and wisecracks, which served as a good tonic for those who paused to consider what was awaiting us. He got more kick out of his stuff than we did, but it's safe to say his efforts did more for our morale than all the other events.

A small bag of necessities, donated by the Red Cross, was issued each man, containing a pocket-size book, which played a major roll toward our enjoyment. They did a great deal of good in many respects, but there were occasions where the Red Cross failed to live up to its reputation and many service men have been heard to remark, "Never again will I contribute to them." However, with the tremendous responsibilities involved, they do enough good to more than off set their bad points.

Chow passes were issued and each hold had a set time in which to eat. We were the first in line and each week a change of schedule would be effected putting us last eventually. Each pass had to be punched, and by this system seconds were out of the question, yet everyone had sufficient food which we considered better than average. Night fall on the ocean is a beautiful sight, especially if a full moon is bathing the white caps with glamour and our fondest hopes could not have been excelled that night. The

Below, left to right: An inside view of the barracks where we made ready for a long sea voyage. The trucks that carried us to the docks were a welcome sight as we hadn't looked forward to walking a mile or more with all our gear.



setting of the sun over miles of blue-green water portrayed a picture many of us had never seen outside of a painting or the movies. The soft glow of the moon was so bright that small print was easily readable, but who wanted to read on a night like that. We remained on deck until a late hour, drinking in the beauty and grandeur of a gigantic masterpiece of nature. The poets have many different opinions and expressions on the effect and reaction of one's mind concerning the ocean, varying from a calm, restful state to that of impulsive despondency. Realizing her dangers with the thousands of outlaws of the sea, always on the alert, ready to devour any living creature who comes within reach, gives one the impression of her hungry greediness for anything that breathes. Constantly whispered death with the snarl of a lion, always restless and dissatisfied and poised to wrap her mountain of waves around man or material without warning. On that particular night we could only see the beauty of it, the constant rhythmic splashing of the white capped waves pushed aside by the bow of the ship, would rise angrily with a seeming effort of resentment. This was indeed the place and setting for romance, hard to resist for those with aspirations of love.

One by one the men made their way down two ladders to make ready for the sack, and for the first few nights it was reasonably cool sleeping. Each day thereafter it became hotter and hotter until finally it was almost unbearable. The ship's continuous rocking made walking rather difficult and some of the men became sea sick after the first night, making that part of the trip a hectic experience. Some thought was given the possibility of an extension on the hangover we came aboard with, as they hung their heads over the rail hoping they would die while feeding the fish some slightly used California chow.

One seaman got a novel idea, and to avoid rolling out of his narrow bunk, he literally laced himself in with clothes stops, and had the ship turned over N. H. Drews, S2c, had his worries in that respect tied up like a Christmas package. After chow each morning the men would make a wild scramble for the cool spots on the upper deck, most of which were out of bounds and no sooner would they get nice and comfy, a detail for swabbing down the deck would



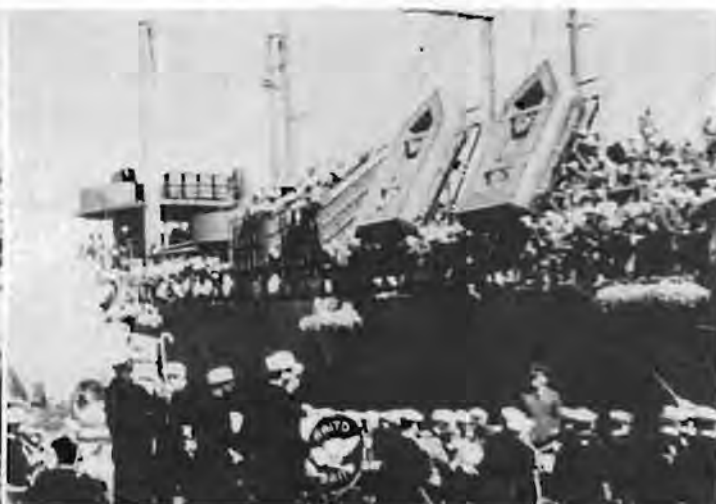
At last we were on our way to a strange land, each man with a silent prayer that he might return to these shores.

open fire with a water hose on all who came within range. An officer happened to be promenading along the deck one morning during that particular time when he should have been below. T. J. O'Leary, S1c, quickly took advantage of the situation and let him have a full nozzle of salt water, accidentally on purpose. The officer roared a protest which was undignified for a gold braid, but nothing was done about it because the offender was carrying out orders.

We had become accustomed to the motion of the ship after the third day and our sea legs would permit walking in a semi-horizontal position with less effort. The absence of sea gulls made us conscious of the distance we had covered and the extra precautions taken by the gun crew indicated we were nearing dangerous waters. They became more vigilant and the ship was blacked out from sun down to sun up. No smoking on the upper deck after dark, in the mess hall or the hold, and the only available place where we could hope for an after dinner smoke, was the head. This arrangement was definitely sour grapes without a place to sit other than one of the toilet seats, providing we were among the first 20 to arrive. However we were privileged to mix our cigar smoke with the ever present

The California sun was blistering hot the day we boarded the ship and the rains that morning didn't help matters at all.

A farewell presentation by the Official Navy Band could always be expected at such occasions which made us feel our efforts were appreciated.



aroma of an out house. Twenty minutes of this produced enough smoke to make a London fog look like a light mist.

The shower rooms looked inviting enough with tile floors resembling those of a Y.M.C.A., and until we tried them we thought at last here was the answer to the heat problem. Getting clean under a salt-water shower, a barrel of molasses would serve the purpose just as well. Some tried the salt water soap with little or no success, which lathered about the same as that much salt pork. Regardless of the time spent trying to get the dirt off, it could still be rolled up like bread crumbs, and after washing our hair it had the texture of an unraveled rope. The use of fresh water for bathing was strictly taboo, yet some of the violators of this rule managed very nicely with a canteen full, which was the means of some soapy lather, to be rinsed off with salt water.

By the time we were deep into enemy waters, we had been drilled on how to abandon ship, the correct position of holding a life preserver during the jump, and a fire drill took place three or four times each week. This would invariably happen when most of us were half undressed in an effort to keep cool. When the alarm, indicating air or submarine attack was sounded, we never knew whether it was the real thing or practice, but lost no time getting the necessary equipment on to dash hurriedly up the ladder to fall in line on the upper deck. The gun crew would be at their posts searching the horizon with field glasses, waiting for the order to start belching steel. It would have been most unhealthy for an enemy sub to display his telescope within range of that ship for she was armed to the teeth. Just before dusk each evening the gun crew would take their positions to be on the alert for a lurking Jap sub, and remain there until dark. This same procedure was followed during the early morning hours as well, which was the most likely hour for attack.

One of the other battalions had their band aboard and members from this group put on several shows, but the movies led in popularity, even though they were 10 years old. The men would select a spot two hours before show time, ignoring the out of bounds signs to swarm over every

inch of space in sight of the screen. There were only a few nights when this was possible on the upper deck, most of the shows took place below in the mess hall. We hit port at New Guinea for fuel and water, at which time movies were moved to topside where it was delightfully cool. The heat below deck had become so intense that all those who could, used up every inch of the deck for sleeping, and eventually some white lines had to be painted on the deck to enable the ship's crew to make their rounds after dark without stepping on the guest. No beach was ever so crowded, but in spite of a slab of steel for a bed, they managed to get some relief from the heat.

After about 15 days the monotony of the trip began to tell on the men, but most irksome of the total events was the theme song played several times daily over the public address system, and by the end of our journey there wasn't a man aboard who hadn't heard "Rum and Coca-Cola" at least 100 times.

All day long the rails would be lined with those who had never seen flying fish and the strange, fascinating sight of those highly colored creatures sailing through the air, never more than 12 inches out of water, like miniature airplanes, will long be remembered by all of us.

The most popular time for those seeking quiet solitude was in the cool of the evening, when the air was fresh and clean and the reflection of a bright moon paved a path of loveliness across the phosphate studded waters. There hasn't been near enough mention of the beautiful effects created by phosphate in the waves that sparkle like fountains of bubbling water in the sunlight. The splendor of their ever-changing color has the richness of a falling star that resembles a hand full of gems laid carelessly on a pad of blue velvet in a jeweler's show case. As far as the eye can reach the beauty of white caps melting into phosphate beneath white puff-balls of clouds, their crest snowy in the moon light, is a sight to behold.

The ship's store had rationed drinks, candy, cigars, and cigarettes which made it necessary to set up a sub-store in our hold, and by selling these at a small profit, we were able to offer bingo prizes, and while they lasted this was a nightly event. Some of the men found relaxation by singing and hardly a night passed without a few renditions from those crooners as they strained their voices on "Dear Old Girl" and "Sweet Adeline".

One evening during an intermission of our bar room choir, a seaman boasted the fact he had helped to build the ship we were on and later produced proof of his statement by his initials carved deep in her bulkhead. F. E. Stork, S2c, had worked in a Mississippi ship yard before entering the Navy, but he never dreamed that one day this ship would carry him across the Pacific. Fifteen days on the ocean without the sight of land or ships and the uneasy feeling of enemy subs prowling in those waters made the trip romantic, but dangerous. Fearing our position would be revealed and to avoid any chance of being torpedoed, our ship traveled a zig-zag course at intervals most all the way across. One night in particular there must have been evidence of an attack so we traveled in circles all night and about 2400 another ship appeared from out of





The first Seabees to land on the island lived in tents and truly their mission was a tough one.

the darkness, heading for our bow to miss us by inches. That incident caused considerable comment the next morning, but with all due respect to the crew, she did a good job.

Among the many traditions of the Navy is the initiation ceremony which takes place during the crossing of the equator. This formality had given most of us a secret reason to worry and the idea was weighing heavy on our minds as the time drew nearer. Each day our watches were set back one hour, and this served as a constant reminder of that forthcoming event, which offered the means of an enjoyable pastime for those who were already Shellbacks, but a dreaded ordeal for the polywogs. Getting information from a Shellback on what to expect was like extracting blood from a turnip. Several days before the occasion, shellback meetings were held daily, and after each session those in attendance would emerge with a smirky grin on their faces, like the cat that had eaten the canary.

Some of the younger men tried to laugh it off and could be heard to say, "That's a lot of hooy, those guys are just trying to scare us." They wanted to believe it themselves, but when the eventful day arrived, February 6th, 1945, it was most convincing to those chosen candidates.

At 1000 came a voice over the public address system announcing the arrival of Davey Jones, who had sneaked on board from underneath the ship, and Father Neptune refused to permit her to enter his private domain before a court of inquiry was conducted on the upper deck.

Since early that morning his Royal Guards had rounded up several victims who waited nervously in the improvised court room for trial. As each polywog was summoned before Neptune, who sported a long white beard and a gold crown perched high on his would-be white hair, he held a scroll with outstretched arms as he started to read off the charges. The first two men were ordered to climb the loftest rigging and with a pair of home-made field glasses, nothing more than two pieces of cardboard rolled to resemble 18-inch binoculars, to report each minute if they



Quonset huts soon replaced the tents and Manus took her place among the leading harbors of the Pacific.

had sighted the equator. The Royal barbers, armed with a huge wooden razor, three feet in length, were ordered to give them a shave and for lather a portion of red paint seemed to be what the better class barbers were using. The officers were guilty of every charge in the book, and then some, when asked if they were too warm under a boiling hot sun, and before they had time to answer, a crew of Royal servants would give them a Royal bath, clothes and all. The details had been carefully worked out with plenty of red and black paint adding color to the occasion and by the end of the trial, their own mother wouldn't have recognized them.

Our Skipper was ordered to lie flat on his stomach, deal cards with one hand and stir a plate of beans with the other, and to make sure he wouldn't fall asleep on the job, a five-gallon bucket of cold salt water was thrown forcibly over him at frequent intervals.

Chief J. E. Gard protested vigorously and demanded counsel when he was found guilty of indecent exposure, then ordered to sing "Take It Off, Take It Off" and strip at the same time. No sooner had he presented himself September morn style, the Royal servants bathed him with a generous portion of red paint. Yes, his face was red also.

Ordinarily it required two days to wash off this Royal nonsense, but the chief wasn't out to break any records, and asked for an extension of time. Some of the other victims had received more than their share of the Royal board and found eating chow in a standing position much more comfortable. It was good entertainment and during the entire show we laughed ourselves into a state of hysterics and a Royal lot of fun was had by all.

It's easy to understand why the Coral Sea has offered inspirations to writers and poets alike. The unbelievable calmness of the water is enough to distinguish it as the logical location for quiet meditation. The change from a reckless roar of leaping waves to that of a sea without a ripple, resembling a mammoth mirrow, was so sudden, it was like a division line had been constructed across the



This boom town was built after the Japs had been blasted out. The coconut trees in the right-hand corner happened to be in line of our shells.

ocean. Oil from sunken vessels had risen to the surface in numerous places, mixing with the smooth waters to create formations representing every color of the rainbow. The ship pushed along with all the ease and grace of a swan, and as the journey continued we were dedicated to avenge those who had lost their lives in these hallowed waters during one of the most victorious sea battles in the history of our Navy. Twenty days on a ship that was so crowded we found it difficult to take a deep breath, made the sight of land look like a piece of paradise, and our feet itched to feel it. The excitement on board was limited to our unit, but we could well appreciate the thoughts of those headed for the Philippines when they learned we were to get off at Manus, Admiralty Islands.

As we approached the island our ship stopped for a convoy of 25 ships to pass through the mine beds, this was our first opportunity for a good look at the island. It was the end of the line for us and there wasn't one of us who had any affection for that human incubator as she crawled at a snail's pace getting into the harbor. To make matters worse we learned she was not going to drop anchor in the stream until the next day. Ships of every description that dotted the harbor kept a continuous conversation going with their blinker lights most of the night. The few supplies we carried were to go ashore on barges and this operation lasted all the next day and most of that night. The heavy equipment aboard another ship required a week to unload, however we had enough material to build a small camp complete. The weather man had his reception party to greet us the first thing with a down pour of rain and some of the work party left on the ship took advantage of his hospitality by taking the first fresh-water bath since we left the States, on the top deck.

We took over an area formerly occupied by the 44th Construction Battalion, who had left a few pieces of old equipment that was past going, some tents with rotten canvas, and a fine crop of weeds had grown waist high. The location was in the center of the Salesia Coconut

Plantation and plenty of jungle undergrowth that had to be cleared away before it was livable. An ample number of tents made it possible for three men in a tent to have more privacy than they had been accustomed. The camp was situated on a hill, a short distance from the beach and within walking distance to the Base Hospital, where we had chow and attended their movies. With the help of some natives, who tore into those weeds with a machete, whooping and shouting like Texas cowboys, plus a few loads of coral sand, our boom town was transformed into what we considered an ideal location. The natives' shouting was for the purpose of frightening the snakes. They had learned to panhandle the men for cigarettes, flashlights or matches, and lost no time in taking advantage of our ignorance about the island. While we were new they



This downtown department store apparently has a sale in progress. Rarely ever can this large a group be found unless the occasion is special.

found plenty of suckers for trading shells that later proved to be worthless. There were some good ones that hadn't been put on the market but soon as we had learned the difference, cat eyes became the favorite with most of us. Their medium of exchange is cigarettes, flashlights, French harps, and any kind of drink that contains alcohol, but strangely enough, a gallon of kerosene is worth more than their wife. Money has no value for them and they act insulted when asked to accept U. S. currency for their wares.

One of our men made a deal with a native who wanted "moosicks," and after explaining in detail how to play a mouth organ, the native took a hitch in his lava lava and walked away playing "Pistol Packing Mama."

It was during this same trading expedition that Chief B. Cawfield used his best sign language in an effort to explain to the native what he wanted. "You meet me on road

who doesn't sport a set of jet black teeth isn't considered one of them, and they will go through an ordeal of nausea in order to achieve their purpose. This effect is accomplished by a paste of groundsel, and other herbs, applied to the teeth every day for five days. When questioned about the paste and its effects, they say, "Too bad, makes very sick, but give good black."

Their houses are built from bamboo stalks and palm leaves, regardless of its size there's never more than one room. The house has no windows and will shelter a family of 12 if necessary. Most all villages are located on the beach which necessitates building their houses on stilts three or four feet off the ground.

In some of the better homes can be found a bed built on the same order of an old-fashion wooden bed, and usually the head of a crocodile, or some queer looking animal will be carved on the head of it. This ornament is supposed to protect them from evil spirits, however they are lacking in their magic power when it comes to ants, spiders, lizards, and mosquitos.

Bamboo poles, split in half, woven closely together with the round side up is what constitutes a mattress, and for a pillow a nice soft slab of cocoanut log serves the purpose.

It's not at all uncommon to see their women walking along the road with a small cord of wood on her head, a baby on her back, preceded by the men who carry nothing but their little purse and a mouth full of betelnut. Coral sand is generally used to take the place of soap and they seem well pleased with the results, however Rinso White has a slight edge on it and we wouldn't endorse it as a good product for radio programs.

Just imagine turning your radio on for "Super Sands, Super Sands", or Does your wash look different lately?"

They all have different customs, even though the Japs used every crude method they could dream up in an effort to change them, they still respect and practice their primitive ways of living, but not until after the islands were de-Japed.

The black teeth idea on some islands is followed religiously while on others they are justly proud of perfectly white teeth that sparkle like pearls behind a permanent grin.

One of our men was demonstrating some coin tricks on a group of bewildered natives who considered them interesting enough and with such possibilities they invited him to their village to try some of his tricks on their sick. About all the recreation they know outside of fishing, hunting, and swimming is soccerball, introduced to them by some English sailors.

Most any Sunday they can be seen kicking the ball around and it's remarkable how proficient they have become at this sport.

An armed guard had been selected from the larger men, whose job was to guard the natives from colored service men attempting to disguise themselves with a lava lava to molest their women.

The one in charge of this Army will line his men up and give commands such as, "Me say, come along, right face." "Me say, come along, stop."

The cap to their uniform looks like a discarded one from the Salvation Army. Our men became cocoanut crazy until they went to the trouble getting into one, then they started mailing them home. They have a much better appearance while green and J. A. Mutascio, MoMM2c, spent \$4.92 to mail one home first-class mail. The outer covering is a two-inch layer of wood-like fiber, and tough enough that it's useless to try and open them without a heavy knife or a small hatchet. This fad died out almost overnight after several of the boys had cut their fingers during the opening process. The natives are experts when it comes to opening them with a machete and their menu is seldom without this delicacy prepared in many different forms. The only use we found for the meat is that it's excellent bait for rats, however the shells were put to several uses—making belts, ashtrays, mounting sea shells, and bracelets.

W. W. Epler, S1c, had a novel idea of shaping two ends, complete with shoulder straps, to take the place of a lady's brassiere. After polishing it to a glossy finish he maintained it would make the ladies personality outstanding.

The center of a young cocoanut is a favorite food for the giant bat whose wing-spread is from three to four feet, and has a head shaped like a fox's. It is often referred to as the flying fox. Wild animals on Manus Island are limited to honey bears, wild hogs, also the tree lizard whose appearance is similar to a crocodile, two or three feet in length, and a few snakes, some deadly poisonous.

A group of our so-called explorers, armed with carbine rifles, went wild boar hunting one Sunday and we had fresh pork from an 85 pounder. The natives eat honey bears, hair and all, and one whiff of this baby cooking is enough to make the most skeptical think they forgot to clean him before cooking.

A few beautifully colored birds grace the island, one in particular is a humming bird slightly larger than the State-side variety with a bright yellow breast, apparently a cross with the canary, as they attempt to sing a little. A small piece of clothes line, forming a swing, hung just outside the tent where W. P. Woods, MM3c, would strum on his guitar, in the evenings late would serve as a roost for four of these birds, until the boys became too inquisitive and frightened them away. It was the music that attracted them, and each time they would fight for the same position occupied the previous night, then just before dawn they would take off in the jungle.

Our lives on the island became a monotonous routine after the first month, however by that time we had been assigned enough work to keep our minds and bodies well occupied. We had already completed the renovation of our mess hall, ship's service store, sick bay, theater, laundry and lived happy and contented for the remainder of five months. A volley ball court was layed out which offered the means of many pleasant hours after a day's work. The movies were so old some of them creaked with age, yet we enjoyed seeing the pictures over again, even three times, always with rain gear in case of rain that came most every night. Every possible effort was made to keep our morale on a par, and the Navy did a good job of it, but



the most important morale builder for men in service is mail from home. Nothing will substitute for a letter which is the nearest thing to those we love and to know they are thinking of us, seems to shorten the distance across the ocean.

We had plenty of recreation playing softball, basketball, hardball, and volleyball with the officers participating in all of them. Our unit produced several good athletes but the best of the lot was our Skipper, who took all the boos and cheers alike in the manner of good sportsmanship. Fortunately there was plenty of beer and Coca-Cola on the island, rationed of course to one case per man a month, but arrangements could always be made for extra allowances on special occasions.

Our work projects covered the entire island, most of which were repair jobs and maintenance. Two construction assignments called for a 50'x100' warehouse, also another 60'x100' to be completed from the ground up.

Our biggest headache was the arrival of the Nurses on March 15, who never stopped wanting for something. We were given the job of renovating their quarters and to satisfy the demands of a group of females in a war zone was a larger order than we had anticipated.

They had to have private ventilated rooms, a vanity

table, pink and blue porcelain bath tubs and lavatories, easy chairs, and modern plumbing. Then to add insult to injury, and leave the impression we were a gang of heathens, they ordered a 12-foot barricade built on the order of a Daniel Boone fort, to isolate them from intruders. We acted as nurse maids to them and answered their many requests such as built-in closets, painting all rooms a pastel shade, and they even wanted a private swimming pool in order to make their living conditions as comfortable and convenient as a resort hotel. The war has certainly been tough on the nurses here and they gave us plenty of reason to remember them.

One of the most useful additions for the benefit of the hospital patients was a soda fountain installed by R. O. Pennington, SF1c, which established him as "top man" with them and he received just praise for what the officers considered a most worthy undertaking.

Our unit had gained a reputation for the efficiency demonstrated on each assignment and when the base Chapel was under construction, we naturally had a hand in it. This structure is one of the finest of its kind in the Southwest Pacific. It has a seating capacity of 800, 60'x100' on ample ground space, and is well deserving as the pride of Manus Island. Evidently we had been recognized by the base of-



"The dranks er on the ouse gentlemen."



The celebration wasn't hot enough until this fire was started.

ficials for the type of work our men put out, as a commendation from the Seventh Fleet was received to substantiate this fact.

The war went relentlessly on, but fortunately we were spared the ordeal of actual combat. Manus Island had already experienced her share of blood and destruction before we had arrived, although on two occasions the Japs came over during the night to drop a few bombs that resulted in little more than a continuation of blackouts. One of the boys received a clipping from a New York paper greatly exaggerating these raids as usual when they said, "Radio Tokyo claimed today a Jap submarine sank an American escort in the Admiralty Islands April 27, and Japanese planes heavily damaged one battle ship in the same attack." There was never any confirmation of these sinkings because it didn't happen.

There came an order for crushed rock so Carp, C. L. Aisthorpe selected a large mountain of it. His crew of men dug a tunnel 50 feet deep to plant six tons of dynamite in the cave, then sealed it with concrete and waited for the date set to blow it up. We turned out in force to witness a blast which was the best example of an earthquake that most of us had experienced. After moments of suspense, she belched out the fury of its power with a rumbling boom that shook the earth around us, hurling pieces of rock and concrete weighing from one to 40 tons into mid air. Smaller pieces were found as far away as 200 yards from the spot.

We had received tentative orders to move up to the Philippines when transportation could be arranged. The excitement ran through our camp like a disease and we immediately started packing all supplies not in use. The main topic of conversation was the nice, long boat ride and the various particulars concerning our new location.

Weeks went by but no orders came, then about the time we had given up hope, orders came to move to the area

formerly occupied by ABCD, which was no more than 200 yards from our present location. This was a bitter pill to swallow at first, but at least it was a change, and after getting settled in this new location we found it more comfortable than living in tents. Much to our surprise, we found the huts to be cooler and with space to spare. The only bad feature was the chow and the distance we had to walk getting to it, but the old Can-Do spirit was exemplified by all hands and we soon became normal once again.

ABCD is an advanced base construction depot that feeds supplies and equipment to all forward activities in the Pacific theater of war, under the direction of the Seventh Fleet. Skilled workers in construction who had no previous experience with supplies, took to their new duties like veteran storekeepers, and the officer in charge expressed his approval by saying, "I'm tickled at the way you men have taken over, and the results of your work is more than I had expected."

The first news that Japan had agreed to accept the Potsdam surrender terms reached us late in the evening after most of us had hit the sack on August 10, 1945. Without





Officers, chiefs, and enlisted men took advantage of this great celebration and these pictures prove they had a greater reason to be happy without 44 points.

The party wouldn't have been complete without a dice game, and this was no place for small change



taking the time to dress the men broke out some spirits they had been saving for this occasion and started on an all-night party. Wild shouts of joy echoed all over the island, men danced about the street in their shorts, while others were completely nude. The singing and shouting continued until the men were exhausted.

The officers' club was an open house to all chiefs and a few enlisted men who joined the officers for an all-night celebration of thanksgiving. Already we tingled with the excitement of going home. It seemed too good to be true, although the terms had not been accepted, we felt reasonably sure it was a matter of hours before they would be. The suddenness of the news left us with a numb feeling of joy.

August 15th, 1945 will long be remembered by people all over the world as the end of the greatest war in history.

The official news that Japan had accepted the terms, and that the end had come reached us at 0930. Sirens screamed, all ships in the harbor and the anti-aircraft batteries along the beach fired several salvos, and that night a huge pile of old window frames that had been in the sup-

ply yards for months offered a bonfire, lighting the sky for miles. The base fire department was called out in case it got out of control, photographers took pictures from every angle, and passing cars would stop for a look at what most of them thought was the hospital on fire. Before the smoke had cleared away the Navy announced a discharge point system releasing all men with 44 points except mail specialists, corpsmen and disbursing storekeepers. Then on September 15th 1/4 of a point for each month of overseas duty became effective. Several men in our unit were eligible but transportation wasn't made available until the points were dropped to 41 on November 1st. By this time our unit had shrunk to about half of its original complement, therefore we were inactivated on November 15th and assigned to the 140th Battalion, which was disappointing news to all of us, however the one year, one month, and 28 days we served under the colors of CBMU No. 621 constituted a period of close harmony among the best maintenance unit in the Seabees.

Each man made ready to return to his home with a fond recollection of his many new friends and their war-time association would never be forgotten.

As we come to the close of our story it is with a profound sense of respect to the Allied Nations, who joined together in one common cause that the world may live in peace. It is here that we pay tribute to those fighting Seabees who gave their lives that America may always be a Democratic Nation of God-fearing people, with a solemn resolution to never let it happen again.



DECLASSIFIED

ITINERARY OF CONSTRUCTION BATTALION MAINTENANCE UNIT #421

18 Sep 1944 - Commissioned at USND Camp Parks, Calif.
15 Dec 1944 - Arrived ASD Hueneke, Calif. from Camp Parks.
27 Jan 1945 - Departed ASD Hueneke for Manus.
16 Feb 1945 - Arrived Admiralty Islands .
20 Jul 1945 - Reported for duty with ABCD Manus.

NOTE: This information based on records available in the C.B. Operations
and Personnel Section, Bureau of Naval Personnel.

8 Sep 1945.

To Facilitate
Administrative Handling
Classification changed
from

CONFIDENTIAL

To: **RESTRICTED**

Irvin S. Rosenthal

Comdr.

Signature



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AVAILABLE**



**NO
PHOTOS
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