

69th Naval Construction Battalion

*Historical
Information*



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



Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
6/3/44	-	(Camp Erdicott) 12-43	-	
6/19/44	-	NA RO-28 Plymouth England.	Cns Sec. chief 311615 May	Transfer to NA RO to report for duty.
5/12	-	-	-	
<p>Comp Phils 26 May det comp Phils 26 May Sec 0521250 May Term duty, 1st ech completed. directed report Ctl 126 for duty.</p> <p>Aug report shows Bremen Bremmerhausen Frankfort</p>				

69th C.B.

NCTC - Magruder
ABD - Davisville
Ready Date - 15 Apr'43
Left ABD - Jun'43
Location - Argentina

NCTC - Davisville
ABD - Davisville
Ready Date -
Left ABD - 12 Jun'44 (16 Jun-N.Y.)
Location - ~~Plymouth~~
Germany

LOG

- 3-23-43 - Ordered to NCTC Davisville FFT to ABD Davisville.
- 12-13-43 - Batt reported at NCTC Davisville 9 Dec'43.
- 7-27-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 69th CB - Left ABD Davisville 12 Jun'44. Sailed from New York City on 16 Jun'44. Reached its intermediate destination near Plymouth 30 Jun'44.
- 8-15-44 - 69th CB arrived United Kingdom on 27 Jun'44. Now assembling pontoon structures at Plymouth and Falmouth. Will install Pontoon assemblies at CHASTITY and be divided for maintenance duties among WATSON, CHATSWORTH and DRUMMOND. (ComNavEu Sec. Memo to Adm. H. R. Stark dtd 25 Jul'44)
- 8-24-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 69th CB - operating at Plymouth.
- 9-25-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 25th Reg. - The 69th CB continues on temporary duty with the 13th Reg. A detachment of 4 off. and 33 men arrived in Cherbourg on the 14th of Aug. and established temporary camp. On the 19th, this party reported to the CHASTITY reconnaissance party for duty in connection with reconstruction of captured Port No. 6.
- 10- 3-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 69th CB - located at Plymouth; detachment of 4 off. and 33 men

69th CB

- in France; detachment of 1 off. and 31 men at Falmouth.
- 10-20-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 25th Reg. - The 69th CB continues on temporary duty with the 13th Reg. Temporary duty of the reconnaissance party with DREW 6 was completed, and the party, having completed its assignment in France, returned to Plymouth, Devon, England, to resume regular duties.
- 10-28-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 69th CB - Assembling Army and Pontoon structures at Plymouth, England. The detachment at Dunkeswell completed its assignment 14 Sep'44 and returned to Plymouth 15 Sep. Has detachment at Falmouth. Report endorsed by the 13th Reg.
- 11-25-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 69th CB - Main body of Batt, consisting of 465 men and 14 off. left Plymouth on 14 Oct'44 and arrived in France 15 Oct'44. A detachment of 11 men and 1 officer remained in England to close misc. matters. The 69th relieved the 111th CB of operation of Rhino Ferries at Omaha Beach on 17 Oct'44. 2 off. and 100 men of the 114th CB were attached to the 69th for temporary duty on 15 Oct'44. Report endorsed by 25th Regiment.
- 12- 1-44 - 69th CB is located at USNAB-Eleven, France and is in 25th Reg. (OinC 25th Reg. Conf. ltr A9-10(GJF:pr) over Ser 0694 dtd 10 Nov'44 to Dirlantdocks)
- 1-5-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 69th CB - All officers and personnel of the 69th CB were ordered from the USNAB 11 to report to the CO Amph Bases, U.K. in accordance with orders contained in secret dispatch from CTF 125. The Batt left OMAHA at 0200 12 Nov and arrived at Plymouth, Eng. at approx. 1900 on 13 Nov'44. Upon arrival at Plymouth, Hdqtrs Co. and Co. "A" were quartered at Edinburgh Camp, Devon. Co. "B" was temporarily assigned qtrs at Vicarage Barracks, Plymouth, Devon. On 16 Nov., all personnel of Co. "B", with the exception of 1 off. and 25 men were transferred to quarters at Saltash, Plymouth. The 1 off. and 25 men reported to the US Naval Amphibious Receiving Base, Vicarage, Plymouth.

69th CB

- 1-5-45 - (Cont.) - on 15 Nov'44 for temp. addtl duty. 1 off. and 33 men reported to the US Naval Amph. Base, Southampton on 23 Nov'44 for temp. duty on salvage of pontoon materials. 1 off. and 50 men reported to the CO U.S. Nav. Amph. Base at Exeter, on 30 Nov'44 for temp. duty in connection with motor repair and maint. operations of that Base. A detachment of 1 off. and 75 men are scheduled to leave for Base 2, at Roseneath, Scotland on 2 Dec'44 for temp. duty. The 2 off. and 100 men of the 114th CB who were assigned to the 69th CB for duty at USNAB 11 were returned to the 114th CB on 11 Nov'44.
- 2- 7-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 69th CB - located at Plymouth, England with a detachment in Scotland.
- 3- 3-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 69th CB - The basic complement of the Batt was changed from that of a full Batt to a CB comprising 20 off. and 628 men in accord. with the approved comp. established by COMNAVJEU effective 1 Jan'45. 69th CB has 5 detachments in the U.K. - 3 of which are as follows:
- Roseneath, Scotland - (Base 2)
- Upottery Air Field - 181 personnel were trf'd from Plymouth to Upottery Air Field for tempdu in connection with const. operations. All batt personnel were withdrawn from the Saltash camp on 5 Jan and transferred to this airfield.
- Southampton - - - - - 1 off. & 24 men.
- 3-23-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 69th CB - located as follows:
- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----|-----|
| Edinburgh - - - - - | 10 off. 242 men | Dunkeswell-Upottery (USNAF) | 5 | 249 |
| Vicarage (USNAAB) - - - - - | 1 15 | Portland-Weymouth (USNAAB) | 1 | 23 |
| Exeter (USNASB) - - - - - | 1 33 | Dartmouth, Devon (USNAAB) | 1 | 0 |
| Rosneath, Scotland (Base 2) | 2 48 | Total - | 31 | 610 |

69th CB

- 3-23-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 69th CB (Cont.) - 20 men reported on 27 Feb from CB Depot, Heathfield; 68 men reported on 28 Feb from CBMU 627, Cherbourg.
- 4-19-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of the 69th CB - One half of batt. alerted on 30 Mar'45 for forward movement. During month rec'd 25 men from other activities. On 27 Mar'45 detach of men on temp duty at Southampton & Portland-Weymouth retrnd to 69th hqtrs. On 31 Mar'45 detach on temp duty at Exeter were ordered to return to Batt hqtrs. 1 new detachment of 11 off & 9 men ord'd on temp duty to Falmouth.

As of 31 March the 69th CB was located at the following places:

Location	Off.	Men	Location (cont.)	Off.	Men
Edinburgh	8	255	Recon. Parties 1 & 2	2	8
Vicarage	1	16	1st Ech. Far Shore		
Scotland (Base 2)	1	44	Movement	4	82
Dunkeswell-Upottery	2	216	Total	21	632
Falmouth	1	11			
Dartmouth	1	0			
Salcombe	1	0			

Batt has been ordered on another tour on the continent.

- 5-10-45 - 1 May'45 report of 69th CB - located at Plymouth. On 5 Apr'45 the 1st Echelon of the 69th CB was made up to proceed to OTF126 at London WFA. This Echelon moved in 3 sectors

DETACHED

- 3 Apr'45 - 1 officer & 5 men.
 4 Apr'45 - 1 officer & 68 men.
 5 Apr'45 - 4 officers & 276 men.

2nd Echelon consisting of 11 officers & 267 men was assembled for movement during Apr'45.

69th CB

- 5-10-45 - 1 May'45 report of 69th CB (Cont'd) -

7 Apr'45 - Detachment on temp duty at Falmouth & Det. at Rosneath returned to hqtrs.
 23 Apr'45 - Detachment at NAB Plymouth & Det. at the Upottery Airport returned to headquarters. As of the end of the month, there were no detachments of the 69th CB on temp duty in England.

- 5-16-45 - 69th CB herdet Comphibukay. Lt. Comdr Blout directed to take charge of 10 off. and bal enl personnel, approx 345 men, comprising 2nd ech. Prorep OTF 126 via transp provided for duty with 69th CB. Temp duty 1st ech 69th CB completed. Directed to prorep OTF 126 for duty. (Comphibukay sec amgrm 052125B dtd 11 May to CinC 69th CB Edinburgh)

- 6-12-45 - Comnavforger requests CBMU consisting of 4 off. and 150 men, for maint duties at Bremen and Bremerhaven. Personnel to be furnished by the 69th CB. (Comnav restr TWX 091718 Jun'45 to CNO)

- 6-18-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 69th CB - Located as follows: 16 off. and 575 men at BREMEN; 5 off. and 125 men at BREMERHAVEN; 1 off. and 5 men at FRANKFURT.

Movement of 1st Echelon from Plymouth, Eng. to Bremen:

- 2 April - Orders were rec'd for the 1st echelon, consisting of 7 off. and 349 men, to join OTF 126 for movement to Germany.
 4 April - 1st party, consisting of 1 off. and 68 men, left Plymouth for London.
 5 April - The remainder of echelon left by train, arriving Tilbury, Eng. 6 April.
 6 April - Sailed for Ostende together with another Naval detachment from NAB 2, Rosneath.
 7 April - On arrival of 2nd party at Ostende, it was joined by the 1st party of this echelon and the Telephone Unit of CBMU 629 consisting of 1 off. and 26 men.

Location - Bremen, Bremerhaven, Frankfurt 69th C.B.

6-18-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 69th CB (cont.)-

Movement of 1st echelon from Plymouth to Bremen (cont.)

8 April - Departed from Ostende via Antwerp and Venlo, arriving at Kavelaer, Germany that night.

9 April - Departed from Kavelaer and arrived Hengelo(o), Holland.

24 April - The convoy departed from Hengelo(o) for Verden via Lingen and Hoya.

29 April - Movement of personnel into Bremen started on 29 April and was completed on 3 May.

Movement of 2nd Echelon:

2nd Echelon, consisting of 11 off. and 345 men, was ordered to proceed from Plymouth and report to CTF 126 Bremen for duty.

6 May - A vehicle party, consisting of 67 men, left Plymouth for Tilbury where the party embarked for the continent.

7 May - The main body of the 2nd echelon, consisting of 275 men and 10 off., entrained from Plymouth for Tilbury.

8 May - 2nd echelon was joined with 3 other Naval parties from Base 2, Rosneath. Embarked for Ostende, Belgium and landed at that port the following day.

9 May - All sections of the 2nd echelon, 69th CB, rejoined the main body at Ostende.

11 May - The convoy left Ostende for Bremerhaven. On the morning of the 3rd day orders were rec'd for the entire 2nd echelon of the 69th CB to be detached from the main convoy and proceed as an independent unit to Bremen. The echelon proceeded and arrived at Naval Barracks, Bremen on 13 May and reported to the OinC 69th CB.

Location - Bremen, Bremerhaven, Frankfurt 69th C.B.

6-18-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of 69th CB (cont.) -

14 May'45 - A detachment of 5 off. and 103 men were ordered to Bremerhaven on constr and maint of that base. (By the end of the month this force had been increased to a total of 125 men)

81 men were rec'd from Nav Amph Base, Falmouth on 3 May. These men had prev been on duty with CBMUS 627 and 628.

"In a complete reversal of normal military procedure, and for the first time in history, the U.S. Navy was carried overland by Army units to occupy an enemy port from the rear" "The entry of American blue-jackets into the Weser River ports was the climax to a unique 400-mile cross-country trek through Belgium, Holland, and Germany"

6-30-45 - The 69th CB has on board as of 15 Jun'45, 22 off. and 709 men. Except for 4 off. and 150 men which have been formed into CBMU 636 for duty at Bremen and Bremerhaven, the personnel of the 69th CB is staged at Germany for return to U.K. to relieve the 97th CB on maint. of southern Bases. This personnel is being ret'd to U.K. by air. Schedule calls for the last of the group to reach U.K. about 6 July. Personnel of the 97th CB who have been in the U.K. 12 mos. or less will be transferred to the 69th CB during the next 6 wks or prior to 1 Aug. Personnel required to bring CBD 1049 to full strength is being obtained from the 97th CB (men who have been in the ETO less than 1 yr), from the 69th CB, and CBMUs 627 and 629. A portion of the 69th CB is not required for the maint and operations of the southern bases will leave for the States as transp becomes available.

(DirLantdocks conf memo ADYD-00431 dtd 23 June to NavInsp Gen--Copy of Conf Memo for Adm Stark dtd 15 June "Distribution of CB Personnel in the ETO as of 15 June")

69th C.B.

- 7- 5-45 - My disp 011155B and my spdltr ser 6112 of 38 June cancelled. When directed by proper authority on or about 6 July, Lt (jg) R.W. Mason will take charge of Ch Capt W.E. Higginfill and approx 100 enl personnel of the 69th CB (1st ech) and proceed to a port in the U.S. via transp designated by Comnavu. Upon arrival in U.S. you will further proceed with the off. and men of the 1st ech 69th CB to NCTC Davisville and report to OinC 69th CB. Comnavu will coordinate move to port in U.K. and advise time of departure. (Comphibukay TWX 041633B to OinC 69th CB Detachment Heathfield)
- 7- 6-45 - My spdltr 6242 of 3 July cancelled. When directed by proper authority on or about 11 July, 2 off. and approx 31 men, of the 69th CB will proceed to a port in the U.S. via transp designated by Comnavu. Upon arrival in the U.S. you will further proceed with the off. and men of the 2nd echelon 69th CB to NCTC Davisville and report to OinC 69th CB. Comnavu will coordinate move to a port in U.K. and advise time of departure. (Comphibukay restr TWX 041725B to OinC 69th CB Detach Heathfield)
- 7- 9-45 - 2 off. and 31 men (2nd echelon) of the 69th CB ordered to proceed to U.S. (Comphibukay conf disp 052207B July to Comnaab Vicarage)
- 7- 9-45- Comphibukay restr dispatches 041633B and 041752B advises of the early return to the U.S. of the 1st and 2nd echelons of the 69th CB consisting of 2 off. and 100 men and 2 off. and 31 men resp. Upon arrival of the enl personnel (above) at Camp Endicott, it is directed that they be treated as casuals for rehab leave and reassignment, and upon complete return of the 69th CB, it is directed that this unit be inactivated. (Bupers ltr dtd 5 Jul'45 to CO NCTC Davisville)
- 7-14-45 - In view of accelerated rate base roll up believe to best interests Navy to retain elements of 97th CB in present assignment rather than replacing by 69th CB. (cont'd on following card)

Location - Germany

69th C.B.

- 7-14-45 - (cont. from prev card) Propose return 69th CB to U.S. Continue to return elements of the 97th CB as available. Request concurrence. Propose return 1st draft 69th CB consisting of 2 off. and 100 men about 5 July. (Comphibukay conf disp 271601B dtd 9 July to Comnavu)
- 7-14-45 - Order 2 off. and 100 men referred to urdis 271601B and my disp 271611 to report to OinC 69th CB at USNCTC Davisville as 1st echelon 69th CB. Remaining personnel of the 69th CB also to be ordered to Davisville when available. (Comnavu restr TWX 041252 to Comphibukay)
- 7-19-45 - 1st echelon, 2 off. and 100 men, of the 69th CB included in list of passengers in convoy NR9 (Comnavu conf disp 111458 July to CNO)
- 7-19-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 69th CB - located on 30 June as follows:
- | <u>Location</u> | <u>Off.</u> | <u>Men</u> |
|-----------------|-------------|------------|
| Bremen | 12 | 632 |
| Bremerhaven | 2 | 79 |
| Frankfurt | 2 | 109 |
| England | 6 | 144 |
| Total - | 22 | 694 |
- 8- 2-45 - 3rd echelon, 2 off. and 79 men, of the 69th CB included in list of passengers on SS QUEEN MARY. (Comnavu conf disp 301301 July to CNO).
- 8-31-45 - When directed 2 off and approx 98 enl proceed U.S. via transportation to be designated by Comvaforger. Arrival U.S. proceed Davisville and report OinC, 69th CB continue present duties. (Comvaeu TWX 201201 Aug '45 to Comvaforger, Germany).
- 8-29-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of 69th CB. On 5 July '45 10 men were transferred to CBD 1049 & 7 July '45 16 men were transferred to CBD 1049. The end of the month, 10 officers & 370 enlisted men had been returned to Heathfield, leaving 6 officers & 67

Location - Germany / ~~Heathfield~~ 69th CB

(contd. from prev card)

8-29-45 - men in Bremen & 1 off & 108 men in Frankfurt. Sailings of batt. officers & men from Heathfield, Eng. to NCTC, Davisville, R.I. were started on 6 July. During the month, the following groups of officers & men left Heathfield for ports of embarkation in the United Kingdom:--

6 July '45 - 2 officers & 100 men

11 July '45 - 2 officers & 31 men

24 July '45 - 2 officers & 179 men

At the end of the month 2 officers & 60 men were staged at Heathfield awaiting return to the U.S.

A summary of the disposition of 69th CB personnel as of the end of the month is given in the following tabulation:--

<u>Location</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Men</u>
On transfer to U.S.	7	310
Heathfield, England	3	60
4310 Hospital Plant, Antwerp, Belgium		1
Bremen, Germany	6	67
Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany	1	108
TAD, ComNavTechMisEn	1	
	18	546

9-28-45 - Last ech. 69th CB reported 14 Sept '45. Total enlisted pers returned 529, & 16 off. 1 off on detached duty ETO. Inactivation completed 24 Sept '45. (Davisville, R.I. 372123 TWX Sept '45 to BuPers.).

INACTIVATED

ON BOARD

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>AUTHORITY</u>
1 Jul '44	21		MoR
1 Aug '44	21	537	BNP625 & MoR
1 Sep '44	20	536	BNP625 & MoR
1 Oct '44	20	531	BNP625 & MoR
1 Nov '44	19	524	MoR
1 Dec '44	20	527	MoR
31 Dec '44		527	Recap.
1 Feb '45	20	525	MoR
1 Mar '45	21	610	R & BNP625
1 Apr '45		632	BNP625
1 May '45		627	BNP 625
1 Jun '45	22	705	BNP625 & R
1 Jul '45	22	694	BNP625 & R
1 Aug '45	18	546	BNP625 & R
1 Sept '45	17	388	BNP625 & R

INTRODUCTION

The origin of the 69th Naval Construction Battalion dates back to those boom-camp and pioneer days that were Camp Peary of late 1942 and early 1943. On the 15th of December 1942, the first of the raw material that was to go into the makeup of the battalion structure arrived at Induction Center, Camp Peary and was immediately submitted to the primary processing of indoctrination and detention. The recruits of this first contingent were enlistees from practically every State of the Union with the majority boasting allegiance to the Pacific Coast belt of California, Oregon and Washington.

Their proving ground was Area B-7 of Camp Peary's Primary Training Section where for six weeks the process of sorting, fitting, and welding the individual elements into a coordinated military construction battalion was carried on under the experienced direction of officers and instructors of the station. By the end of the detention period the basic structure of the battalion had been formed and the battalion was ready to receive its officers who had in the meantime been undergoing indoctrination and preliminary training separately in the officers' training school. Accordingly, on January 11, 1943, Commander Joseph B. Rigo was introduced to the assembled battalion as the Officer-in-Charge. Commander Rigo then introduced each of the officers in turn after which he read his orders, ordered the Executive Officer to commence the log and post the watch, and the battalion was in commission. A formal review of the new battalion was held at Bolles Field on January 22nd at which

time the 69th standard and national colors were presented to the battalion. On the following Monday the battalion moved from Area B-7 to A-7 in the advanced training section and immediately started trimming ship in readiness for shoving off, which at that time was scheduled for just six weeks hence.

Then fell the first misfortune to befoul the 69th Battalion. On February 4th two companies were detached for immediate overseas duty. A few days later another company was detached to provide personnel urgently needed elsewhere, and on February 15th the remainder of what had been a battalion was transferred to the replacement pool in Area B-3. Thus dissolved what might be considered the first or original 69th Construction Battalion. The officer group was left intact and thereby saved the name from complete extinguishment.

During the next month and a half the battalionless officers moved about Camp Peary from area to area drilling new recruits, assisting in the medical and supply departments and playing softball to the edification and chagrin of the enlisted men. (The officers were good in those days.) Finally, on March 23rd authority was issued to re-form the battalion, so the I.B.M. machines in the Personnel office were warmed up; and, presto, on March 25th the battalion was reformed and on its way to N.C.T.C., Camp Endicott, Davisville, Rhode Island for advanced training — and to become acquainted. This second group to bear the distinction of the 69th Battalion had quite a different character from the first. The average age of the new battalion had dropped five years; and, whereas the original group had predominately represented the western sections of the country, approximately 80 percent of the new men were from the vicinity of New York City with about one-third of this percentage from Brooklyn. Only a very few of the original group of enlisted men were on deck with the battalion when it shoved off from Camp Peary. Of these no more than a dozen are still aboard after more than two years of campaigning. At Davisville the battalion was scheduled for eight weeks of advanced

military training, but it was to be the first training for the outfit as a military unit. Who has forgotten that first practice as skirmishers on the rock-bound New England coast during the blizzard under the stern discipline of that imperious Marine sergeant, or how he routed out the detachments who had surrendered to the refuge of convenient shelters? After several weeks of hard work and the outfit had shaken down into a smooth running military machine, the national colors and the 69th standard were again presented to the battalion. The review was held on April 24, 1943 on the parkway before Gate 2 of A.B.D. The battalion's new drum and bugle corps provided the pomp and military airs for the occasion.

Everything now pointed to embarkation, and on May 9, 1943 nine day leaves were granted to all men whose homes were in the eastern half of the country. On May 21, 1943, the battalion transferred from N.C.T.C. to A.B.D., Davisville, and immediately those whose homes were in the western part of the country took their nine days leave. Meanwhile, the rest of the battalion continued with preparations and more training — Sun Valley — the maneuvers at night — the lost patrol (when the compass was wrong).

Suddenly the battalion was ordered to Boston for embarkation and on June 14, 1943, the outfit entrained at A.B.D. siding. Later that same day the outfit was secure aboard the transport S. S. Santa Elena that was to carry it overseas. (The S. S. Santa Elena was afterward torpedoed and sunk off Bizerte, Tunisia, during the African Campaign). On the morning of the 15th the ship sailed out of Boston Harbor, and for the majority of us it was our first experience at sea and our first time away from home. However, the sea was kind this trip, and there were few who did not believe that they were equal to any in the regular seagoing Navy. Dawn of the third day at sea, June 16th, revealed the first dim sight of the land we were approaching — Newfoundland. That afternoon we reached Argentia, which was to be our home for the next five months.

Argentia originally was the name of a little Newfoundland village on the east coast of the Avalon Peninsula at the neck of a pear-shaped appendage of land thrusting out into Placentia Bay, but the name commonly was used with reference to the general area. It was one of the Atlantic base sites acquired from Great Britain under 99 year lease in exchange for fifty U. S. World War I Destroyers. Here too, off Isaac Head in Little Placentia Harbor, the President of the United States and Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, had held their memorable meeting on August 9, 1941, which culminated in the drafting of the Atlantic Charter.

From the first, Argentia was a shock. Most of us thought we were going all the way across. Now it turned out we had not gone so far after all — hardly out to deep water — we could even telephone home! Then there was that first night in the old "Newfie" barracks on the Army side with the bedbugs marching — marching — marching —. Later there were the Marines of the gates to the Navy side — there is still some doubt as to who were the victors when we finally moved over to the Naval barracks. Placentia across the gut was out of bounds for Navy so we had to go in and see why. St. Johns was the sainted city of liberty with its capital attractions and the bazaars of High and Water Streets.

But perhaps the profoundest shock of all was the order under which we were to work ten hours a day, seven days a week — at first — then six and one half days a week until near the very end when the work was near completion and the days had grown too short. And Commander Victor W. Buhr came to haunt us even in our dreams.

However, all these were incidentals, the job was the thing and here we had a job to do — a real job. This battalion with the 17th and the 64th formed the 10th Naval Construction Regiment which took over from contractor Merritt, Chapman and Scott, all construction, maintenance and operation of the Naval Base. A large amount of construction remained to be done to complete the base and the 69th Battalion was given an

equitable share of the work. Projects and operations assigned to the 69th included construction of a gymnasium with a clear floor space 100'X300' with additional shower, locker, and training rooms, moving 50 existing structures to new locations and rehabilitating them, paving extensions to existing airplane runways and 11 miles of roads on the Naval and Army Base, and clearing and landscaping approximately 74 acres of the base area. In addition, men of the 69th assisted on construction of a pile-supported, concrete-decked, marginal wharf; construction and installation of mechanical and electrical services; operation and maintenance of transportation and heavy equipment; and in the various maintenance departments. Between construction operations, the battalion unloaded ships, and carried on military training as part of the strategic reserve of the base. Two reviews highlighted the military phase of the program. The first was a battalion review before Captain H. J. Nelson, the Commandant of the Naval Base. The second was a regimental review of all battalions of the 10th Construction Regiment in honor of Rear Admiral Oldendorff.

Near the end of the cruise the battalion gradually took on another job, which for several reasons had best remain unmentioned here; but there are many of us yet who secretly remember the pebbles "like millions of little fishes snapping at the raindrops".

By the end of November the battalion had gained its objective of "mission completed", and on December 6, 1943 — Oh happy day — all hands boarded the U.S.S. *Antaeus* for the return to the States. Home for Christmas it was, for after the arrival back at N.C.T.C., Davisville, the entire battalion was given twenty days' leave. What better Christmas present could we have?

Again it was a period of fundamentals at N.C.T.C. under station instructors. More military and technical training and three campaigns in Sun Valley, during one of which the 69th broke all records on the rifle range. In one official qualifying shoot, 91.03 percent of the battalion personnel qualified as marksmen, 109 men qualified as expert riflemen, and one man fired

the high score of 195 out of a possible 200. Until the battalion left N.C.T.C. for its second cruise overseas, the last two records still stood.

The academic routine continued apace until construction again absorbed the attention of the battalion. One detachment was sent out to Glenview Naval Air Facilities near Chicago. Another group was detached to Charleston on a satellite air field of the Quonset Air Station. Another group was flown to Nantucket Island, and a fourth group was detailed on construction of a pile pier at A.B.D. Other personnel were assigned to automotive and heavy equipment repair. All proved their ability as diversified construction men and established records to the credit of the battalion.

Reorganization was not to be avoided, and on February 23, 1944, 193 of our able bodied seamen were transferred to enrich the complements of two other battalions — 76 to the 49th Battalion and 117 to the 70th Battalion. Prior to this, on February 3rd, Commander Joseph B. Rigo, who had been the battalion's skipper from the beginning, was detached to take charge of Construction Battalion 127. Lieut. Commander Evan E. Ashlock was our next Officer-in-Charge, but he was with the battalion only a short time — from March 3rd to April 7th. The third Officer-in-Charge to join the battalion is our present skipper, Commander Frank N. Walsh, who took over on April 26th after just returning from duty with the 1st Construction Battalion in the South Pacific.

On May 5, 1944 the battalion moved over to A.B.D., Davisville, to prepare for its second tour of duty overseas and here begins the cruise on which this book is written.

CRUISE CALENDAR

- 15 May 1944 Embarkation leaves began.
- 28 May 1944 Battalion split into three units.
- 10 June 1944 Battalion review at A.B.D., Davisville.
- 16 June 1944 Sailed from 35th Street Pier, Brooklyn.
- 29 June 1944 Landed in Liverpool, England
- 30 June 1944 Arrived Teignmouth, England.
- 1 July 1944 Arrived Plymouth, England.
- 11 August 1944 . . . Reconnaissance party sent to France.
- 12 August 1944 . . . Detachment sent to Falmouth, England.
- 26 August 1944 . . . Detachment sent to Dunkeswell, England.
- 14 October 1944 . . . Embarked for Omaha Beach.
- 11 November 1944 . Left Cherbourg for England.
- 15 November 1944 . Detachment sent to Vicarage.
- 23 November 1944 . Detachment sent to Southampton, England.
- 24 November 1944 . Detachment sent to Falmouth, England.
- 30 November 1944 . Detachment sent to Exeter, England.
- 2 December 1944 . Detachment sent to Rosneath, Scotland.
- 29 December 1944 . Detachment sent to Upottery, England.
- 19 March 1945 . . . Detachment sent to Falmouth, England.
- 1 April 1945 Reconnaissance parties sent to Germany.
- 6 April 1945 First Echelon left for Germany.
- 7 May 1945 Second Echelon left for Germany.
- 13 May 1945 Battalion united in Bremen, Germany.
- 15 May 1945 Detachment sent to Bremerhaven, Germany.
- 4 June 1945 Detachment sent to Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.
- 22 June 1945 Detachment sent to England for transport to U.S.A.
- 6 July 1945 First draft left England for States.

THE LOG

The early days of May 1944 were tense with expectancy. The fact that we were once again at A.B.D. was proof enough that our stay in the States was to be short-lived. A.B.D. and foreign duty were synonomous. Many other reasons, too numerous to mention, presented themselves. For one thing we had been built up to full complement once again; and, based purely on past experience we knew it was time to "move out" again. Wasn't it spring-time in Rhode Island? Wasn't the chill leaving the air of New England nights? Didn't the sun feel nice and warm and full of promise; and weren't the flowers blooming and the birds singing again? They were, and the 69th had always uprooted itself and moved on at this time of the year. Again the Gods of Fate decreed that we were still not to witness this awakening and pulsation of nature in "Little Rhoddy". We were strictly a winter outfit in-so-far as stateside duty was concerned. However, all things have their compensations and shipping out meant an embarkation leave ten whole days to spend with our loved ones, playing and having fun, dancing and swimming, and collecting a few last minute hangovers before the inevitably sad job of saying "good-bye" arrived.

Beginning on 15 May 1944, groups of 69'ers began leaving A.B.D. on their embarkation leaves. Groups left over a period of three days depending on the location of their homes and the amount of travel time required.

On 28 May 1944 leaves expired and the men returned to camp, except those who missed the plane.

Then the bomb-shell fell. We were to be split up. What worse news could come fresh on the heels of a pleasant leave? It meant that old friends were to be separated; men with whom we had worked for over a year and men who learned to place a value on their friendships would no longer work together. We were to be split into three units; a half battalion and two CBMU units which would ship out for separate destinations as such.

Then the process of deciding upon the roster which would compose each unit began. A mad scramble ensued with the resultant confusion of trying to accomplish several week's work in the space of a few days. Our skipper and Executive Officer became gray headed over-night. The Personnel and Disbursing Officers were leading their yeoman and store-keepers around on leashes for fear they would bite the leg of some more fortunate Seabee who did not have to worry his head over this detail work. The "lists" changed back and forth; swaps were negotiated; and, there was standing room only in the line of men who wanted to ship out with the 69th again.

Finally the die was cast. On 3 June 1944, 5 officers and 263 enlisted men left „Y" area for an adjacent area to be known in the future as CBMU 611. The following day 4 officers and 270 enlisted men became designated as CBMU 612. The remainder of the battalion which was to continue to be known as the 69th Battalion then settled down to a period of sweating out the scuttle-butl as to where our new Island X was to be, when we would leave, and what kind of a job we would have.

The consensus of opinion was that we were headed for the European Theatre of Operations where things were pretty hot at that time. Even

money bets were being made as to our exact location including our port of debarkation. All of this sounded attractive for it spelled action with lots of promise for worthwhile endeavor; and, after five months of training camp inactivity the boys were ready for this work.

Preparations went forward for a battalion review which was to be held under arms and with packs. This event came off on 10 June 1944 and was the first of its kind held at A.B.D. Favorable comments were received from the other activities who saw it. Four days later, "we had had it". Marching to the snappy music of the A.B.D. Station Force Band we arrived at the train shed that is the jumping-off place for Seabee outfits. It seemed as if everyone at Endicott was there to wish us "bon-voyage". The Red Cross was on hand as usual with hot coffee and doughnuts. The band played, last minute handshakes were exchanged, and then the engineer pulled the whistle and we were off to our second Island X. If we had not been loaded down with gear it could easily have been another week-end liberty in New York for that was the direction in which we were headed. After several hours on the train and numerous "security" detours which took us practically to Texas, we arrived at the 35th Street pier in Brooklyn from which we were to embark.

Our ship was the SS General William Mitchell, a huge transport, new and sleek and clean. It had just been commissioned a few months previously. We found that we were to have ample company on our voyage. Soldiers marched aboard for hours until we finally had a cargo of 4500 of them and our own small band of Seabees. All equipment was loaded and we secured until 0300, 16 June, at which time we sailed. Because of darkness we were deprived of waving a farewell greeting to the "Lady of the Harbor". However, we all left our hearts in her keeping.

Daylight found us in open water, a part of a convoy of 42 ships. Most of

the trip we were blessed with reasonably smooth water. However, at times we wondered if the tankers off our starboard beam would ever come back out of the troughs. We settled down to life aboard ship with its attendant discomforts and monotony. This monotony, however, was short-lived for the 69th "got on the beam". Twice daily our military band and dance orchestra gave concerts for the entertainments of the troops. Shows were given and a "sea-going" edition of the battalion paper was published. The daily paper of the ship had this to say: "Of all the entertainment groups that this ship has carried on it's many crossings of the Atlantic, this Seabee group is the finest."

No enemy action was encountered, thanks to the watchful eye of our DE escorts.

After ten days of nothing but water we saw our first "dry-land" 26 June 1944. The battalion log for the next few days best describes our activities

"26 June 1944 At sea aboard the SS General William Mitchell. Sighted land for first time since leaving N. Y. at about 2230 . . . the North Irish coast. Entered North Channel and picked up Scottish coast about 0300."

"27 June 1944 At sea aboard the SS General William Mitchell. Proceeding through Irish Sea to anchorage off Liverpool. Anchored in bay off Liverpool. Rode at anchor. No unusual incidents."

"28 June 1944 Remained aboard the SS General William Mitchell at anchor off Liverpool."

"29 June 1944 SS General William Mitchell weighed anchor and began moving into Liverpool. SS General William Mitchell tied up to dock in Liverpool."

From there the story goes on — — —

We had landed in Limey-Land."

The Red Cross was there, of course, to refresh us physically and mentally. Even "Little Rhoddy" was represented among the girls who passed through our train dispensing eats and smokes and, of all things, our first taste of English tea with which we were later to become very familiar.

As we left Liverpool we had a first-hand sight of the actual results of a country that had been at war for over four years. Bombed out buildings, Anderson shelters, and debris were to be seen from our train window as we pulled out of the city.

Later as our train moved out into the country-side, all that we had read of rural England came true. The picturesque little farms with their patch-work quilt effect made one think of a story-book. The sheaves of grain were stacked in the fields like an army at attention and white dots of sheep on the hillsides were like snow that had fallen on the earth.

Our first destination proved to be Newton-Abbott where we were met and welcomed by officers of the 29th Battalion. From there we were taken by trucks to Teignmouth where we were billeted in hotels that during peace time were holiday spots for the British elite. It was there that we became introduced to English pubs and their stocks of mild and bitters. We found that to the middle class Englishman, the pub was the center of social life much as our corner coke stand in the States a place to discuss their politics, the war, their family life and the lives of their neighbors.

Our stay in Teignmouth was brief. On 1 July we began the movement of personnel to Edinburgh Road Camp and Shapter's Field in Plymouth, noted historically as the place from which the Pilgrims sailed to America. Plymouth, once a proud and picturesque city, had suffered one of the worst beatings of any city in England during the blitz. The only thing

which had not suffered was the peoples' courage and good nature. Some the men soon found "homes" and six of them married English girls.

Work of course, started at once. Various jobs were undertaken, the principal one being pontoon assembly at Cattedown Wharf. Although not a pontoon battalion and never having had any previous experience along this line, we soon set some kind of a record for speed and efficiency. Between 3 July and 12 August, the battalion had assembled over 900 strings, using more than 6000 pontoons with a weight of over 10,000 tons for a total deck area of 254,000 square feet. These were assembled for both the Army and Navy.

It was on this work that the outfit suffered its first casualty in the accidental death of "Mike" Tsavlopoulos. No one had more friends and the men of the battalion felt his death keenly. A guard of honor was selected to escort his body to Cambridge Military Cemetery where he was interred. In addition to pontoon work done, various jobs of camp construction and maintenance were done in Plymouth and other towns in Southern England. We all felt that this work was incidental to the big job ahead that of going to France and becoming a part of the war where it was actually happening.

The first step in this direction came on 11 August when 5 officers and 33 enlisted men formed our first reconnaissance party and left for the Quiberon Peninsula of France. The plan at that time was to survey for the possible construction of naval bases in that section which the 69th would operate. This plan, however, was abandoned and the reconnaissance party returned to Plymouth.

During August the men of the battalion were granted their first leave in England. This gave them the opportunity of seeing London for the first time and getting their baptism of fire from the buzz-bombs which were



ravaging London at that time. Places that had only been names in books and newspapers became realities; the House of Parliament, Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Covent Gardens, Trafalgar Square, Rainbow Corner and the famous "commando run" of Piccadilly Circus. Some of the men chose Scotland or Ireland with all of their scenic beauty for their leaves.

Work went on as usual with scuttle-butt flying thick and fast about our embarking for France. Finally on 14 October we boarded 3 LCI's at Saltash Passage and were on our way. The next day found us off Omaha Beach from which the invasion of the continent took place on D Day.

Within 24 hours of our arrival at Omaha, the 69th took over the operation of the Rhino barges used in lightering cargo and troops from ship to shore. The harbor was a veritable bee-hive of activity with as many as 50 ships anchored off the break-water at a time. 19 Rhinos were in operation and this called for around-the-clock work from all hands. Seamanship had to be learned both afloat and ashore since our camp was a sea of knee-deep mud. Troops and cargo were unloaded at an unbelievable rate. Supplies were hardly allowed to hit the shore before they were loaded on trucks and started for the front over the Red Ball Highway. The troops were sent to staging areas and thence to the front which at that time had not gotten out of France. Every man in the outfit was busy and the work was hard but each felt that he was doing something vital towards winning the war, and was therefore happy and content.

The decommissioning of Omaha came in November at which time the battalion embarked from Cherbourg for England. Back in Plymouth again, detachments began to ship out for jobs at various places in the United Kingdom. One was sent to Rosneath, Scotland, to do base maintenance and construction work. All reports were that the boys "had never had it

better". They saw Loch Lomond for the first time; Glasgow was a great liberty town with plenty of "spirits" and the usual "commando runs". Another detachment was in Exeter where they did maintenance work on all naval equipment in the United Kingdom.

Then the largest detachment left for Upottery Air Field near Taunton. This job involved the widening and paving of 8 miles of highway, construction of hangers and huts, and the maintenance of existing structures. Living conditions were rather rugged when the men first arrived, but soon, through their Seabee "know how" they had fixed things to their liking. Recreation facilities and liberty were both good at this base and the men's morale was never better.

The balance of the battalion remained in Plymouth, except for small detachments which went to Southampton, Falmouth and Weymouth. The ones remaining in Plymouth had varied jobs. One group was stationed at Vicarage Receiving Barracks for base maintenance while the other did remodeling and maintenance work at other camps and activities near and around Plymouth.

The 69th dance band made quite a name for itself in England. Upon our first arrival in Plymouth, weekly open air dances were held on The Hoe. The English people got a real sample of good old American sweet and swing and the band was very much in demand. Dances were played for all branches of the Allied forces and concerts were given aboard ships and at the children's orphanage.

The peak of their success came, however, in the early days of spring when they were auditioned for a broadcast over the BBC. This proved to be a success and the boys of the band were invited to London to broadcast. The great day came and they loaded into trucks and proceeded to the studios. Their music was broadcast over the BBC and transcriptions

were made which were flown to the States and there re-broadcast over the Mutual network. Later they played for the forces in the famous Dunker's Den at the Rainbow Corner Red Cross.

Work went on as usual during early spring with scuttle-butt working overtime as to our future. Some said we were to go home while others took a more pessimistic view-point that we were destined again for the continent. The latter proved to be the better prophets.

In early April, reconnaissance parties departed. Destination . . . Germany, where the war was very much alive at that time. On 6 April, 360 men and officers entrained for London for shipment across the channel to an unknown destination. It seemed as if half of England was on hand to wish us well the night we left Plymouth. Our shipmates who were left behind had mixed emotions. They knew of the ever present danger that existed in the war zone.

Arriving in London, the first Echelon proceeded to Tilbury Docks on the Thames River where they were joined by a large group of regular navy men. There they boarded the Duke of York, an English ship, and sailed at 1600. At 0900 the following day they docked at Ostend, Belgium from which city their travels were to begin. Ostend had been liberated for some time but the scourges of war were visible everywhere. The night was spent in an old barracks, which was formerly used by the Germans during their occupation of that part of Belgium.

On 8 April our convoy of 103 trucks of men and equipment left Ostend. During the day we crossed Belgium and part of Holland. Our first geographical big moment came when we crossed the Maas River near Venlo, Holland, thus becoming the first Seabee battalion in Hitler's Germany.

Now came the evidence of how well the Germans had been repaid for their destruction of other countries. Cities were leveled and even the

trees along the highways were splinters of wood. Our first realization of just how close we were to the front came that night as we bivouaced on the ground near Kevelaer, Germany. Artillery fire lighted the sky and the earth trembled.

At 1300 the next day we crossed the Rhine River at Rees over a Bailey bridge constructed by the British Engineers and very appropriately named "London Bridge". The famed "Watch on the Rhine" was conspicuous by his absence. Following closely on the heels of the British 2nd and Canadian 1st Armies we cut back into Holland over a circuitous route and passed through little Dutch towns that had been liberated for only a few days. As we passed through these places it seemed as if the entire population was on hand to welcome us. Happiness and relief from strain were written on everyone's face. As the convoy passed through Enschede, which had been liberated for only two days, the civilians' joy and enthusiasm was contagious. K ration cigarettes, gum, chocolate and biscuits were thrown from our trucks and it seemed at times as if our convoy would have to stop to avoid injuring someone.

We arrived that night in Hengelo. Hengelo, which had been liberated five days prior to our arrival, was to acquaint us with the Dutch, their customs, homes, and way of living. The cleanliness and beauty of the homes which had not been damaged by bombs and artillery fire was commendable. Our stay here lasted two weeks. This delay was due to the fact that Bremen, which was our ultimate destination, had not yet been taken by the British.

On 24 April the word came to proceed. Leaving Hengelo, we soon crossed the Dutch-German frontier. Road signs at the border proclaimed, "This is the end of the civilized world" and "You are entering Germany. Behave as conquerors". Later that day we crossed the Weser River and set up

camp at the Nempcel Kazarne on the Brunneweg Strasse in Verden, Germany. This was formerly a large German Cavalry school which had recently been vacated. In clearing the buildings many grenades, mines, and booby traps were exploded; however, none of the battalion personnel suffered injury.

We were to stay in Verden for a week since Bremen, 22 miles distant, had not yet fallen. Street fighting was in progress and our buildings shook from the heavy artillery fire. We learned that near our base was one of the infamous concentration camps where the Germans had practiced their atrocities. The camp at one time had a capacity of over 50,000 and the death rate was as high as 700 daily. A prisoner-of-war cage across the road from our camp was kept full as the British brought in their prisoners.

On 27 April the city of Bremen fell and the First Echelon proceeded there. As we entered the city, smoke from the ruins was still rising. Any section of the city that had offered resistance had been completely destroyed. Very few of the civilians who had been evacuated had returned; but those that had were going through the piles of rubble trying to salvage something from homes newly destroyed by the siege.

Our camp again was a number of German barracks from which the Germans had been ejected only a few hours previously, the Lettow-Vorbeck Kazarene some few miles outside Bremen. This was to be our primary job in Bremen. Re-roofing the buildings where artillery fire had made huge gaps, installation of plumbing and lighting, setting up shops and offices were necessary to make the place a first class base. German homes were taken over for officers' quarters and these had to be made liveable. Flag headquarters had to be set up in the city and this project required a great amount of varied work. There was work to be done at the docks.

High lines to furnish power had to be repaired and strung into the city. The 69th dug in and got busy.

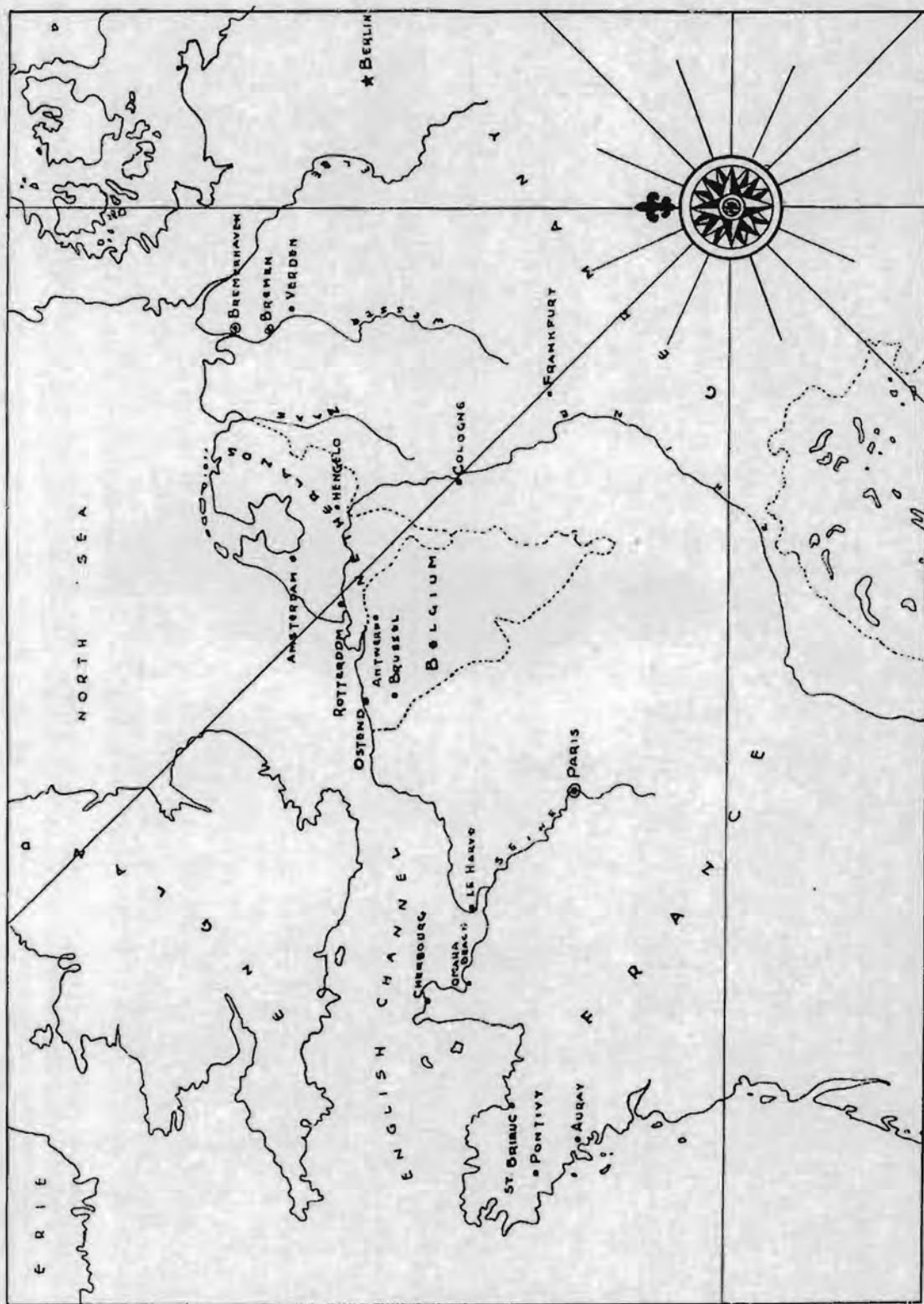
After several false alarms, V-E day came on 8 May. The news was taken very soberly by the men of the outfit. While it was an occasion for celebration the men knew that there was still an enormous amount of work to do.

We learned that the Second Echelon or remainder of the battalion had left England and was somewhere on the continent and we expected their arrival daily. On 13 May the balance of the battalion arrived, a tired and very dirty bunch of Seabees, but all happy to be with the rest of their shipmates again. While possibly not having quite as an exciting time as the first group they none-the-less had stories to tell.

After an 0300 breakfast they had entrained for London on 7 May. That night was spent in the staging areas at Tilbury. On 8 May the Second Echelon, and regular navy personnel who had joined them at Tilbury, boarded the Duke of York for the crossing to the continent. The night was spent anchored just off the east coast of England at the mouth of the Thames. V-E celebrations ashore were visible and audible to the group aboard who could only wish to join in the fun.

9 May saw the group in Ostend. The first continental liberty was had here since they stayed until the morning of 11 May. For the first time since leaving the States strawberry sundaes were available. Music halls were full and it was with regret that the stay was terminated.

11 May saw the second group wending its way through Ghent and Antwerp and finally encamping for the night near Eindhoven, Holland. It was the first taste of washing in a helmet and going on cold rations that the group had had. The weather was balmy and sleeping on the



ground proved to be a delightful experience after the slow, hot travel during the day.

The following day the group entered Germany and proceeded as far as Lingen where the overnight stop was made. Again sleeping on the ground and cold rations were in order. Sunday, 13 May found the objective near. After winding over circuitous side roads the convoy was finally met outside Syke by members of the First Echelon. With expert directions the convoy quickly rejoined the first group in Bremen.

It is believed that the journey from Plymouth, England, to Bremen, Germany, is the longest overland convoy trip made by any Seabee battalion outside the continental limits of the United States, the total mileage covered being in the neighborhood of slightly more than 800 miles. In Bremen the battalion adopted the title of "Victory Battalion" for the reason that it was the only one which operated in the forward combat area in Germany and participated in the final surrender of that country.

The 69th's participation with other U. S. Naval forces in the campaign which culminated in the occupation of the Weser River ports of Bremen and Bremerhaven was mentioned in a front page article carried in the London "News of the World", Sunday, 20 May 1945, edition. The article in part is as follows:

"Vice-Admiral Robert Lee Ghormley is now serving as Commander of the U. S. Naval Forces in Germany, it was announced yesterday, and Rear-Admiral Arthur Granville Robinson as Commander U. S. Ports and Bases there.

As such the latter will direct port activities at Bremen and Bremerhaven in the recently established American Enclave to maintain the U. S. Army of Occupation.

Advance reconnaissance, disarmament, salvage, patrol, and construction battalion units of the U. S. Navy, under Rear-Admiral Robinson followed British Second Army troops into the dock areas of Bremen on the day of the city's fall in order to put the first captured German port into operation as soon as possible.

The entry of American blue-jackets into the Weser River ports was the climax to a unique cross country trek through Belgium, Holland and Germany.

In a complete reversal of normal military procedure, and for the first time in history, the U. S. Navy was carried overland by Army units to occupy an enemy port from the rear."

Thus the 69th had set another precedent; another to add to the growing list of "firsts".

Work continued at a rapid pace in Bremen, and, as visible signs of progress were apparent, detachments began leaving for Bremerhaven and Frankfurt-am-Main. Bremerhaven was to be set up as the main port of entry into Germany for the occupation army. Quarters for the officers and men had to be made liveable as they had in Bremen. Dock installations, power lines, and other facilities were to be repaired. Frankfurt-am-Main was designated as Headquarters for the U. S. Navy for the occupation of Germany. Living quarters for personnel and office facilities for Admiral Ghormley and his staff had to be made available.

In the meantime, employment of German civilian labor was begun at Bremen. The men were investigated thoroughly by the Allied Military Government as to their activities before and during the war to make certain they were not dangerous Nazi sympathizers. These men were to be trained in the shops, transportation, and the operations of the base

so that eventually only a skeleton crew of Seabees would remain in Germany in supervisory capacities.

As work neared its completion, scuttle-butt, the Navy's grape-vine, came into operation again. We were going back to England; we were going straight home from Germany; we were going to replace another outfit in United Kingdom so that they could go home.

The bud of possibility burst into full bloom of actuality on 22 June 1945, as thirty men left by plane for England. Followed thereafter two lifts daily of men and cargo, with a skip of a few days now and then for cargo alone.

Another "first" had been born for the 69th. For the first time in history of the ETO a Seabee battalion was being moved entirely by air over a distance of approximately 600 miles. Various routes were taken. Some of the men were favored with a northern route which took them from Bremen across the Zuider Zee and over the shell which was once the gay and care-free city of Amsterdam, Holland. From the air the canals and streams looked as if they were huge snakes or caterpillars twisting their way across the land. Then further on, over the Hague and out over the Channel where we approached the English coast, sunken skips were seen resting on the bottom the relics of the earlier days of the great conflict. The huge activity on the Thames up to London and the vastness of that city as seen from the air left the men spell-bound. Places that they had visited on leave such as London Bridge, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, and the House of Parliament all looked like toy houses that one used to make as children. From London they flew out over the midlands and the moors with their patch work quilt farms and tiny thatched roof farm houses.

The destination of the outfit was Harrowbeer Air Field near Plymouth.

From there we were taken to Heathfield Naval Base to await further orders.

On 27 June 1945 the news that the whole outfit had been awaiting came. As men continued to arrive from Germany daily, a shipping list was being prepared for the first one hundred men who were to begin the long journey. On 6 July 1945 the first group left for the States with the expectation that the remainder of the 69th would soon follow on the way to the United States and home!

69th Naval Construction Battalion

Chronology

08 Feb 1943	69 th U.S. Naval Construction Battalion commissioned.
25 Mar 1943	Left NCTC, Camp Peary for NCTC, Camp Endicott.
26 Mar 1943	Arrived at NCTC, Camp Endicott, Davisville, R.I.
21 May 1943	Left NCTC, Camp Endicott, for, and arrived, at, NABD, Davisville, R.I.
14 Jun 1943	Left NABD, Davisville, Rhode Island.
14 Jun 1943	Arrived at Port Director's Office, Boston, Mass. For further transportation outside the continental limits of the U.S.
17 Jun 1943	Reported aboard the NOB, Argentia, Newfoundland.
06 Dec 1943	Left NOB, Argentia, Newfoundland for return to the U.S.
09 Dec 1943	Arrived at NCTC, Camp Endicott, Davisville, R.I.
05 May 1944	Left NCTC, Camp Endicott, for and arrived at NABD, Davisville, R.I.
14 Jun 1944	Left NABD, Davisville, Rhode Island. Arrived at Port Director's Office, Third Naval District New York, New York, for further transportation outside the continental limits of the U.S.
16 Jun 1944	Sailed from New York harbor.
27 Jun 1944	Arrived United Kingdom.
01 Jul 1944	Arrived at Plymouth, Devon, England for duty with the 25 th Naval Construction Regiment and temporary duty with the 13 th Naval Construction Regiment.
11 Aug 1944	A detachment of 4 officers and 33 enlisted men reported to COMUSBASFRANCE for duty.
12 Aug 1944	A detachment of 1 officer and 31 enlisted men reported to COUSNAAB, Falmouth, for duty.
26 Aug 1944	A detachment of 1 officer and 71 enlisted men reported to USNAF, Dunkeswell, for duty.
09 Oct 1944	First Echelon, 69 th CB, consisting of 5 officers and 56 enlisted personnel reported to USNAB ELEVEN, Omaha Beach, France, for duty.
14 Oct 1944	Main body of battalion, consisting of 14 officers and 456 enlisted men left for France. Completed temporary duty with 13 th Naval Construction Regiment for duty. Eleven men left at Plymouth.
04 Nov 1944	69 th CBD, consisting of eleven men who remained at Plymouth, rejoined the battalion at Omaha, Beach, France.
12 Nov 1944	69 th Construction Battalion left Omaha Beach and arrived at Plymouth, Devon, England, 13 November 1944.
15 Nov 1944	A detachment of 1 officer and 25 enlisted men reported to USNARB, Vicarage, Plymouth, Devon, for duty.

c/o Fleet Post Office
New York, New York

ENCLOSURE 1.

Itinerary of 69th USNCB

8 February 1943	69th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion commissioned. (Lt. Comdr. J. B. RIGO received orders as Officer in Charge)
25 March 1943	Left NCTC, Camp Peary for NCTC, Camp Endicott.
26 March 1943	Arrived at NCTC, Camp Endicott, Davisville, R. I.
21 May 1943	Left NCTC, Camp Endicott, for, and arrived, at, NABD, Davisville, R. I.
14 June 1943	Left NABD, Davisville, Rhode Island.
14 June 1943	Arrived at Port Director's Office, Boston, Mass. for further transportation outside the continental limits of the U. S.
17 June 1943	Reported aboard the NOB, Argentinia, Newfoundland.
6 December 1943	Left NOB, Argentinia, Newfoundland for return to the U. S.
9 December 1943	Arrived at NCTC, Camp Endicott, Davisville, R. I.
5 May 1944	Left NCTC, Camp Endicott, for and arrived at NABD, Davisville, R. I.
14 June 1944	Left NABD, Davisville, Rhode Island.
14 June 1944	Arrived at Port Director's Office, Third Naval District, New York, New York, for further transportation outside the continental limits of the U. S.
16 June 1944	Sailed from New York harbor.
27 June 1944	Arrived United Kingdom.
1 July 1944	Arrived at Plymouth, Devon, England for duty with the 25th Naval Construction Regiment and temporary duty with the 13th Naval Construction Regiment.
11 August 1944	A detachment of 4 officers and 33 enlisted men reported to COMUSBAFRANCE for duty.
	<u>10 September 1944</u> Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.
12 August 1944	A detachment of 1 officer and 31 enlisted men reported to COMUSNAAB, Falmouth, for duty.
	<u>5 October 1944</u> Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

To Facility:
Administrative
Classification
from:

CONFIDENTIAL

RESTRICTED
Irvin S. Rasmussen
Comdr. CEC-VISI. 17

Signature

26 August 1944 A detachment of 1 officer and 71 enlisted men reported to USNAF, Dunkeswell, for duty.
15 September 1944 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

9 October 1944 First Echelon, 69th CB, consisting of 5 officers and 56 enlisted personnel reported to USNAB ELEVEN, Omaha Beach, France, for duty.

14 October 1944 Main body of battalion, consisting of 14 officers and 456 enlisted men left for France. Completed temporary duty with 13th Naval Construction Regiment and reported to 25th Naval Construction Regiment for duty. Eleven men left at Plymouth.

4 November 1944 69th CBD, consisting of eleven men who remained at Plymouth, rejoined the battalion at Omaha, Beach, France.

12 November 1944 69th Construction Battalion left Omaha Beach and arrived at Plymouth, Devon, England, 13 November 1944.

15 November 1944 A detachment of 1 officer and 25 enlisted men reported to USNARB, Vicarage, Plymouth, Devon, for duty.
23 April 1945 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Battalion Hdqrs., Plymouth.

23 November 1944 A detachment of 1 officer and 33 enlisted men reported to USNAAB, Southampton, for duty.
6 January 1945 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

24 November 1944 A detachment of 1 officer and 6 enlisted men reported to COUSNAAB, Falmouth, for duty.
1 December 1944 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

24 November 1944 A detachment of 1 officer and 6 enlisted men reported to COUSNASB, Exeter, for duty.
25 November 1944 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

30 November 1944 A detachment of 1 officer and 50 enlisted men reported to COUSNASB, Exeter, for duty.
31 March 1945 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

2 December 1944 A detachment of 1 officer and 75 enlisted men reported to Naval Base TWO, Rosneath, Scotland, for duty.
8 April 1945 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

RESTRICTED
 Irvin S. Adams
 Comdr. CEC-VIS. USN

29 December 1944 A construction detachment of 5 officers and 245 enlisted men reported to USNAF, Dunkeswell, for duty.
31 March 1945 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

29 January 1945 A detachment of 1 officer and 25 enlisted men reported to COUSNAAB, Southampton, for duty.
27 March 1945 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

19 March 1945 A detachment of 1 officer and 9 enlisted men reported to COUSNAAB, Falmouth, for duty.
7 April 1945 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

1 April 1945 A detachment of 2 officers and 125 enlisted men replaced the construction forces at Upottery Airport, previously reported as being assigned to USNAF, Dunkeswell, under date of 29 December 1944.
23 April 1945 Assignment completed, CBD returned to Plymouth.

1 April 1945 Two detachments, each of 1 officer and 5 enlisted men, assigned as recon parties, logged out for CTF 126.

2 April 1945 A detachment of 1 officer and 5 enlisted men, comprising a special detail of the 1st Echelon of the 69th CB, logged out for CTF 126.

4 April 1945 Convoy, consisting of 1 officer and 68 enlisted men, of the 1st Echelon, 69th CB, logged out for CTF 126.

5 April 1945 The first Echelon of the 69th CB, consisting of 5 officers and 276 enlisted men, logged out for CTF 126.

To Facilitate
 Administrative Handling
 Classification changes
 from:

For:

Irvin S. Rosenbaum
 Commanding Officer
 Signature











