

73rd Naval Construction Battalion

*Historical
Information*



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



1200

FORM 100

NCTC - Magruder
 ABD - Hueneme
 Ready Date - 31 Apr'43
 Left ABD - 13 May'43
 Location - ~~Epic Munda New-Georgia Russells~~ Peleliu

LOG

- 3-17-43 - Transferred to Camp Parks FFT to Hueneme.
- 4-11-43 - Moving from Parks to Hueneme.
- 5-12-43 - 72nd CB embarked for Destination Epic.
- 9- 9-43 - 1 Aug'43 report of 73rd CB - Batt left U.S. 13 May'43 and arrived Noumea 29 May'43; Left Epic 9 July, arrived Mainyard 13 July. In a stand-by status as of 1 Aug'43.
- 11-11-43 - 1 Oct'43 report of 73rd CB - operating at Munda.
- 3- 2-44 - 1 Feb'44 report of 73rd CB - operating at New Georgia.
- 4- 1-44 - 1 Mar'44 report of 73rd CB - operating at New Georgia.
- 5- 5-44 - 1 Apr'44 report of 73rd CB - operating at New Georgia.
- 6- 7-44 - 1 May'44 report of 73rd CB - operating at New Georgia. Estimated completion date is 15 May'44.
- 7- 4-44 - 1 Jun'44 report of 73rd CB - operating at Russells.
- 8-15-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 73rd CB - operating at New Georgia. Preparing for forward move.
- 8-25-44 - 73rd operating at Munda (Data of SoPac as of 7/1/44)

May'43 - arrived Noumea	Staging at Cub 12 under orders
Jul'43 - " Russells	to move to Russells 15 Jul'44
Aug'43 - " Munda	

73rd C.B.

- 9- 8-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 73rd CB - All projects at Munda were completed and this batt has moved to Russells. Preparations for moving were started 20 Jul'44.
- 10- 3-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 73rd CB - on board ships for forward move. No report on personnel as the men were broken up into many groups on several ships and a portion has remained behind to form the rear echelon. Staged for 3 weeks at Russells.
- 11-21-44 -- The 73rd CB is located at Peleliu. (Is. Com Peleliu Sec. disp to CNO 050300 NCR 17368 dtd 17 Nov'44).
- 12-8-44 - 1 Nov'44 report of 73rd CB - operating at Peleliu. Report endorsed by 38th Reg.
- 12-13-44 - 73rd CB located at Peleliu. (IsComPeleliu Sec. Disp. to CNO 011016 dtd 9 Dec'44)
- 1-1-45 - 1 Oct'44 report of 73rd CB - located at Peleliu. Participated in the landing of assault wave on 15 Sep'44.
- 1-3-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of 73rd CB - no info on location. Report endorsed by 38th Reg.
- 1-13-45 - 73rd CB located at Peleliu. (IsCom Peleliu Sec Disp to CNO 030037 dtd 11 Jan'45)
- 1-15-45 - 1 Nov'44 report of the 38th Regiment - Letter (Copy of) from Co. General, US Marine Corps, commends the OinC of the 73rd CB (which was attached to the First MarDiv) for his work in commanding the employment of the battalion in preparing beaches, causeways, inland roads, and assisting in the activation of the Peleliu airdrome during the landing, seizure, and occupation of Peleliu Island, Falsu Is. from 15 Sep to 28 Sep'44.
- 2-12-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 38th Reg. - The rear echelons of the 33rd and 73rd CB's, consisting of 4 off. and 347 men, rejoined the main body of the batts at Peleliu on 10 Dec'44. Arrival was 86 days after "D" day.
- 2-15-45 -- The 73rd CB is located at Peleliu. (IsComPeleliu Sec. disp to CNO 020415 dtd 8 Feb'45).

Location - Peleliu

73rd C.B.

- 1-25-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 73rd CB - location not given. Report endorsed by 38th Reg.
- 3-16-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 73rd CB - location not stated. Report endorsed by 38th Reg. Batt has been out of the States since 12 May'43.
- 21-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 38th Reg. - 73rd CB located at Peleliu. Est. date of compl of base development about 1 Apr depending upon arrival of material.
- 4-20-45 - Personnel of ACEPD VAWS now attached to the 73rd CB (2 off. and 55 men). Comservpac requests that a CBD no. be assigned this unit. (Comservpac Conf ltr Ser 01564 7 Apr to CNO)
- 5- 8-45 - The 73rd CB is located at Peleliu. (Dirpacdocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr'45)
- 5-10-45 - 1 May'45 report of 73rd CB - located at Peleliu. 45 men transferred to 73rd CB for service with ACESPD.
- 5-23-45 - 1 May'45 report of ACEPD VAWS - Unit has operating force of 2 off. and 45 men. All personnel are still attached to the 73rd CB and personnel reports are included with the batt report. Report end. by 73rd CB.
- 6-15-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 73rd CB - located at Peleliu. If present orders are followed the Batt will leave here about 1 Jul'45.
- 7- 9-45 - Inactivate 73rd CB when available for release approx 20 July. Transfer all enl personnel who will have been out of the U.S. cont 21 mos by 21 Aug fagtrans to nearest W.C. RecSta. Transfer other enl personnel to 5th Brg. Inform Comservpac when inactivation completed. (Comservpac conf spdltr ser 03312 dtd 21 June to IsCom Peleliu)
- 7-14-45 - Upon inactivation of the 73rd CB you are authorized to transfer the ACEPD Peleliu with CBD 1086 to Naval Base Peleliu for adm control. (Comservpac sec ltr ser 002934 dtd 7 July to Co Gen IsCom Peleliu)
- 7-14-45 - Inactivation 73rd CB completed 11 Jul'45. (IsCom Peleliu Conf disp 120035 July to Comservpac)

73rd C.B.

- 7-20-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 73rd CB - Of the ACEPD group of 44 men, 36 have been detached to CBD 1086 and the remaining 8 transfd to the Naval Base.
- 8- 2-45 - The 73rd CB was inactivated 11 July and all personnel have been detached and transfd as directed. (73rd CB conf ltr ser 0806-45 dtd 11 July to Comservpac)

INACTIVATED

ON BOARD

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>AUTHORITY</u>
1 Jul'44	30	955	BNP625
1 Aug'44	30	963	R & BNP625
1 Sep'44	31	1067	R & BNP625
1 Nov'44	31	1052	MoR
1 Oct'44	31	1052	BNP625 & MoR
1 Nov'44		1058	BNP625
1 Dec'44	31	1052	MoR
1 Jan'45	31	1042	MoR
1 Feb'45	29	1039	MoR
1 May'45	27	999	MoR
1 Jun'45	27	985	MoR
1 Jul'45	20	711	BNP625 & R

73rd Construction Battalion (INACTIVATED)



Oh, that never-to-be-forgotten night of December 23, 1942. No doors on the barracks and cracks in the walls large enough to drive a cat through—and I mean a D-8—no heat in the stove as the wood was wet and green. Every man with wet feet and many with more than their feet wet. Two medical officers, one dental officer and 1200 men all cold, wet and disgusted. That was the start of the 73rd Naval Construction Battalion. The nucleus of the Battalion had arrived from the South in clothing not designed for a winter day in Virginia and far from being what one would select to wear in the mud of Camp Peary. What a relief to get some G.I. clothing and heavy shoes!

After the outfitting was completed—boot training—Hup—two—three—four—close order drill—those Victory rifles—cat fever—shots, shots and more shots until we were human pin cushions. But everything must come to an end and the mud dried up slightly by the time boot training was completed. January 17th and the officers arrived to start forming a battalion. February 2nd—all dressed in blues with black shoes and again the mud of the training field for the commissioning ceremonies. Commander K. P. Doane (then Lieutenant Commander), formerly with the Turner Construction Company and White Construction Company, of New York City, accepted the colors and the Battalion was launched on its career. During the two previous months, men from 43 states, predominantly from the South with Texas most heavily represented, had gathered at Camp Peary to join the Battalion.

Three months of drill and training in mud and sleet and finally we were a Seabee Battalion. After the completion of boot training, decked out in new Navy blues, we enjoyed our first liberties in historic Williamsburg and Richmond, Virginia.

St. Patrick's Day, 1943, saw us leave Peary in three trains for the West Coast. We all pulled for Gulfport; we arrived in Camp Parks, California.

Moonlight through the Royal Gorge was long to be

remembered, but the Padre's sight seeing tour of famed Mormon Temple proved to be a flop. Reason: too much feminine competition. Salt Lake City is noted for its beautiful women and bald-headed men.

Thanks to the Oakland Red Cross, within two days all men available for leave were on their way home. Orchids to Admiral Smith and Parks' staff for their fine cooperation. They treated us like we were one of them.

"Requests for leave extensions to recruit for Seabees"—10 requests.

"Wife having a baby"—50 requests.

Back to Parks and sham battles taking the old barn. ??? Left Parks on April 15th—arrived at Hueneme on the 16th. There we received our first taste of Quonset Huts. Little did we reck we would soon be erecting them.

More drill and first practice on LST landings. The work was relieved by liberty to Oxnard, Ventura, Hollywood and Los Angeles. Last night in Camp Rousseau with Deacon Welch's raid on the Canteen. Remember the battle cry, "Just give us the word, sir, we'll tear the door down!" Remember the finale after several beers? "When the war is over, we will all enlist again" on the way back to camp.

May 12, 1943: 1300 we boarded the U.S.S. President Polk. The "Sea Bass" with most of the equipment was to accompany us.

At 1500 we cast off to the tune of Anchors Aweigh by Our Band which was made possible by scavenger hunts through the pawn shops of San Francisco and Los Angeles.

We were attached to Acorn 8 which natted us two trombone players and a drummer. "Beware of foreign entanglements!"

Where were the escort ships? The Polk needed no escort as she was fast and with the submarine following, headed out to sea, destination unknown. Engine trouble returned the submarine to San Pedro and for days the Polk was alone on the sea.

A whale caused a mild panic and submarine alerts kept us on our toes. The weather with the exception of the first few days was tranquil and by the fourth day most of the men had their sea legs. Nightly serenades by the band, magazines and popular games helped to pass the time away.

Davey Jones came aboard and when we passed the equator, heads were shaved and buttocks became tender but it was an experience never to be forgotten. Sailors all now, no longer landlubbers.

May 26: 1500. This day brought on a real scare. General Quarters sounded but it was only our destroyer escort—WHAT A RELIEF!

Without ceremony or fanfare we were notified that

Monday of that week and automatically becoming Golden Dragons.

May 29: We dropped the hook at Noumea, New Caledonia. A week aboard and we moved to Magenta Bay where we unloaded both the Polk and the Sea Bass and set up camp.

The smoke from men boiling clothes dotted the hills. Thank God for the Nianonli or paper bark tree. It staved off malaria if not the mosquitoes which were as vicious as P-38s.

Liberty at Noumea was a disappointment despite the quaint streets and picturesque houses. French, red-headed Melanesians and Javanese proved to be poor conversationalists. We gave it the once over and stayed in camp. We went to the Marine outdoor theatre each night. What a contrast between blacked-out California and lit-up New Caledonia. Catalogued library of over 3000 volumes, built an addition to the airstrip and erected quonset huts at Ile Nue and Mob No. 7 Hospital.

Returning from a reconnaissance trip to the Middle Solomons, Commander Doane briefed the unit on the assignment at Munda Point, New Georgia. The briefing pulled no punches and promised plenty of action. At this time, New Georgia was still flying the flag of Nippon.

The main task at Caledonia was preparing for the next hop and July 1st loading began of the Kota Agoeng at the Nickle Docks. July 9th we left, escorted by destroyers for Guadalcanal.

The weather was hot. A Dutch ship and crew and we were packed like sardines. July 13th we sighted the Solomons and by evening we anchored off Guadalcanal at Kokumbona Beach. The next day under full equipment we disembarked. How it rained and only pup tents the first night!

Our camp area was the site of the last battle for the 'Canal. The stream running through camp proved a God-send. Our first air raids. What innocent spectators we were until falling flak taught us to dig foxholes. Washing Machine Charlie became a nightly visitor. During staging preparations we found time to erect our first outdoor theatre and softball field—"Buddy Barnes Park." Our first serious accident resulted in the loss of Ensign Barnes permanently and Lt. Cook temporarily. Another first—the souvenir craze hit the camp. Jap shells and sea shells, grass skirts and jungle parrots were all over our camp. During our three week stay at the 'Canal, we worked on such projects as road construction, malaria control and construction for beach landings.

Advance Echelon to Munda:

The skipper and Lt. McBurney had already gone to Rendova. There they met real mud but saw a grand show while ducking bombs. "Long Toms" shelling Munda and the Japs striking back with dive bombers. W. O. Olson and fifty men at the same time were at Ro-

dispersal area to facilitate unloading. August 5th the Munda strip was taken and the next day these men and officers moved to Munda and started reconstruction of the field.

The bivouac area of the advance echelon was set up August 6th in Death Valley about a half mile from Kengkolo and Bibolo Hills. It had been shot over considerably. Shell craters, mud, dead Japs and flies were all over the place. It stunk to high heaven. For several days cleaning up the camp was an undesirable job that required strong bellies. In fact as one put it, "It's enough to gag a maggot."

Munda:

The first echelon left the 'Canal August 8th and arrived at Sassavele, five miles from Munda, early on the morning of August 9th. All our carefully planned loading was shot to hell. From LST's to LCT's on a 2x4 beach and not room enough to swing a "Cat." Lord, what a mess! Succeeding waves arrived and no place to unload.

W. O. Bense (now Lieutenant) and the Padre took off on the first LCT for Munda. "Where is it? Who the hell knows? The skipper doesn't and neither do we." After being hung up on the reefs due to shallow water and two false landings, we arrived at Lambetti Beach and spied Paul Scafe. "Where's the camp site?" "Up the road a piece" says he and Lt. Bense took off with most of the men and equipment. The Padre became Beachmaster and lost thirty pounds the first week.

One of the first jobs was helping the Army get through the thick jungle and rocky terrain. Supplies and ammo had been brought up to the front lines by foot and the wounded had to be brought out the same way. A road up to the front lines was badly needed. Two of our dozer operators accomplished the job aided by riflemen who accompanied them. The men were Hank Taveggia and Grady Tyler. Although under fire by snipers, no one was wounded. Before they knew it, they were through to the front lines and beyond it. Jap mortar fire started dropping around and a much perturbed sergeant, while thanking them for their cooperation, remarked, "Would they please get the hell out as they were drawing the Japs' fire and things were getting too damn hot!" The next day these same operators were again on the job blazing trails to enable the artillery to get their big guns on Turkey Hill so they could blast away at Jap-held Baroko Harbor.

The job of unloading at Sassavele was given to Lt. Morgan, who did his best to swamp those at Lambetti. He would have succeeded, as trucks were at a premium, were it not for a bottle of brandy. What price brandy! It was the beginning of a fast friendship between the Army and Navy and the bottle of brandy provided the required trucks. Later Lt. Powers took over Sassavele and Ens. Burrell (now Lt. j.g), the beach at Lambetti and

strip.

Munda Airfield Construction:

The original Jap air strip here was small and poorly constructed. It had been built through a coconut grove with as much camouflage retained as possible. Constructed during the long battle for the 'Canal, it had been used for sneak raids on Henderson Field. During construction, the trees on the field were retained as long as possible. The construction was poor throughout. The sub grade was soft and the holes left by the coconut trees, having been hurriedly filled and improperly packed with coarse coral, caused weak spots on the strips.

Commander Doane, knowing the field would be used for heavy bombers eventually, immediately ordered the removal of the old Jap sub grade and an entirely new foundation laid on solid ground. Even with this additional work, the fighter strip was in condition to receive American fighter planes 52 hours after construction work had started. Excellent coral was accessible close to the strip and men and equipment worked around the clock on a 24 hour a day schedule. This was maintained despite shelling and bombing raids. Good weather and moonlight helped though the latter brought over Japs in droves. Both fighter and bomber strips were finished days ahead of schedule.

The bomber strip originally was planned for 6000 feet; then it was extended to 8000 feet to accommodate the B-24's with their heavy bomb loads. A hill at one end of the strip was cut down to provide a proper glide angle for the heavy bombers.

Because of the tremendous rainfalls, drainage became a problem. A system of culverts formed from gasoline drums was installed throughout the field, taxi-ways and runways and the result proved to be one of the best-drained airfields in the Pacific. The completed strip received commendations from all.

Hats off to the men working on automotive and maintenance repair under direction of W. O. Deens (now Lt. jg.). While everyone in the Battalion did his part, these fellows performed miracles keeping the rolling stock running. Often lacking parts, they were forced to improvise. The hills were combed for Jap equipment and a good deal was put to use. Joe Crowder's repair truck built from Jap equipment was the answer to a mechanic's prayer. A typical example: Installing a rock crusher motor in an Austin-Western Roller. Take three inches off the motor. It now fits the motor bed to a T and works beautifully. Shrapnel had ruined a T9 tractor radiator. Fill a gas drum with water, mount it on the front of the tractor and connect it to the circulating system and what could be sweeter? Rube Goldberg? Sure but it was still running when we left it at Munda.

The airfield was the big outstanding job. We're proud of it. We quote no figures, for though figures don't lie, liars can figure. You men know the size of it. The Lord

named.

Trying to get a permanent camp at Munda was a pain in the neck. The original spot picked out in "Death Valley" got too hot. The Japs from Banga Island started shelling us with 3-inch guns. Smoke from our galley drew their fire. August 15th they cut loose. Their aim wasn't so hot; they missed the galley and hit the sick bay. The first shell killed three men; the second wounded several others. By the time the third hit everyone except those evacuating the wounded were in foxholes. The injured were immediately taken to Acorn 8 sick bay and orders were given to abandon camp. No one else was injured although the area throughout, as well as the strip, was under constant fire for the next two days. Banga was invaded and the Nips were soon silenced. A permanent camp was decided upon in the hills. This was named Camp Williams in honor of the first man killed during the shelling. The road to Camp Williams became impassible and as no equipment could be diverted from the strip, construction of a permanent camp proved almost an impossible task. The majority of men preferred to live where they worked rather than struggle through the mud, night and morning. Mud clung like gumbo. A short-legged man had to struggle through it up to his buttocks.

Some incidents were humorous. There were few foxholes during the first days and their locations was known mostly by the Army and Marines. During an early raid, a marine came tearing along and one of the mates tore after him. About a hundred yards later, he caught up and yelled, "Where's the foxhole you're headed for, mate?" "Foxhole, hell," says the gyrene, "I'm headed over the hill!"

Chief Armstrong with some of his crew dove for a foxhole during a raid; down came a string. There was a tremendous explosion which lit up the foxhole. Something had landed directly in front of the opening. They all crowded to the rear expecting all hell to break loose. There was the huge bomb blocking the exit. They sweated out what seemed to be an eternity and finally Armstrong could stand it no longer. "I'm getting the hell out of here," said he and made a break for the entrance. It was only a coconut log.

Some weren't so humorous and many of the men were badly cut by coral. Old Pop Aldrich dove into a hole with Sloss, Brown and Gonzales behind him. He came out of it with his head bound up like a turban, making him look like a Maharajah. He still claims that Brown tripped him in order to get in first.

While we were still living in the original bivouac area, Tojo commenced his nightly visits. He came in low and frequent and though the island threw up everything they had at him, he kept on coming. His aim was lousy however, and he never did any real damage to the strip nor to the taxiways. Everyone had dug a foxhole and every-

one watched the fireworks until falling branches sent them down below. While Lt. Commander Valentine, the executive officer, and Lt. Bensei, with what men could be spared, were trying to construct Camp Williams.

The bombing raids on the living areas were becoming so numerous that the Battalion was dispersed and two temporary camps were constructed, one at Lambetti Beach and the other in a former Jap supply dump. Company D was established at Lambetti Beach and Companies A and C were moved to what was named Camp Roseck for the second 73d man to lose his life. Galleys, libraries, and sick bays were built and life began to be more pleasant until Tojo again located us and paid his nightly visits to our camps. What was the matter with those crazy Nips? Why couldn't they leave us alone? Everytime we picked a spot for our camp, down would rain the bombs. It got so bad, the Island Commander's first question after a raid was, "Did they hit the 73rd again?"

We got the hell out of Lambetti and Roseck and went back up to Camp Williams. Camp Williams, when we left it for the temporary camps, was a mess. The area was covered with dense jungle undergrowth and the sun never broke through the heavy foliage. It rained constantly. Trucks hauling into camp had gouged huge ruts which the rain soon turned into gullies. Before long, trails into the camp were impassible. The detail in the camp, after erecting a chow hall, had been able to accomplish little because of the lack of equipment. A new galley was erected because fire had destroyed the old one during a bombing raid. The old galley was repaired and turned into a recreational hall for the men. The camp was covered with large mahogany and banyan trees, which, shorn of interlocking vines and creepers, commenced to fall during the storms, endangering the lives of the personnel. By this time the bombing raids had become less frequent and were to be preferred to the falling trees. Snatch blocks and drag lines soon had these jungle giants toppling to the ground. One of them, however, hit the old chow hall and the recently opened recreation hut was closed for repairs. Well constructed foxholes had been constructed throughout the camp. Let the bombs fall now; we weren't greatly worried.

A well constructed foxhole is a work of art. There are several types of architecture. The Army goes in for the slit trench method, a sort of dual purpose affair. It is easy to construct; covered with light branches and a tarp it will keep off some of the rain and except for falling flak, is safe. No one ever gets hurt by having a few leaves fall on his head.

We had our own type of architecture. Beneath each

On top of this we piled layers of logs. The entire mass was capped with coral and a trap door leading from the tent made things very convenient. We soon learned that drainage was necessary, the heavy rains causing some to become temporary indoor swimming pools. It took a little time to iron out the bugs but before long they became excellent cocktail lounges. Statistics are wonderful things. According to statistics, one is safer in a foxhole during an air raid than crossing a busy intersection in the States. That's really a comforting thought, especially when you are trying to beat the bomb to the foxhole. Of course, there are skeptics who regard statistics as does Belloc, "There are liars, damn liars and statistics." While you are wondering whether the next one that falls has your address you nonchalantly reach for a fag and after using half the box of matches, you finally get it lit. The earth stops rocking and you cautiously peer out only to be driven back by the falling flak. You light another fag off the last butt and nervously puff greedily. The thought is constantly running through your mind, "Did I put enough logs on top of this thing?" The man next to you is getting itchy. Somebody screams. Don't get excited, it's only one of the boys getting bit by a centipede. After repeated in's and out's of your foxhole during the night, morning finds you hale and hearty except for several cuts and bruises picked up during the traffic jam in trying to be in first.

You have no worries; you are completely safe in your foxhole; you are a believer in statistics.

CONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

Water Purification:

Air, food and water have always been first requisites. They were all problems here. Our whole reason for being on Munda was to provide facilities for air coverage and future attacks on the Nips at Vella Lavella and Bougainville. Of water there was abundance—on land, in the air and on the sea and we never ran short of "C" rations. The air problem was rapidly being solved. One of our biggest jobs was providing drinking water, not only for ourselves, but for the whole personnel at Munda. Lt. (jg) "Jitters" Schwarz and his gang inherited this headache. Munda had three wells. A large one near the Zieta Trail, one near the strip and one between the strip and Lambetti Beach. A 500,000 gallon per day supply was needed. A 350 foot hill had to be scaled and a 375 foot head had to be maintained. Our chlorinating units were too small. Over twelve miles of pipe was needed. Where they found the supplies, how they

for all camps is still one of the big secrets of the war. Maintaining this department was a constant nightmare. Dozer operators seemed to take fiendish delight in ripping up mains. Pipe laid on top of ground was constantly being punctured by flying bomb fragments. Pumps were constantly blowing up and yet with the exception of short intervals, water was available at all times.

Food:

Napoleon is credited with saying "An army moves on its stomach." Seabees may work with equipment but they still need to be fed and no one blames the man who invented "C" rations. Mulligan stew in a hobo jungle in the States might seem romantic but outdoor cooking in the tropics soon brings on dysentery due to flies and vermin. We had scarcely landed when not only were we running our own galley but "Revetment Inn," known to all who hit Munda in the early days, was operating in full swing. Chief Miesel did a grand job. With limited equipment and working under tremendous difficulties he fed everyone that came along. At one time over 9000 meals a day were being served. The original inn was no larger than a trailer. Later the Inn was moved to the side of Kokongolo Hill, near the tower, and a screened-in messhall was provided. The chowlines were something to see. Uniform of the day was whatever a man happened to have on. Beards were plentiful. Men were garbed in everything from zoot suits (GI version) to supporters. Revetment Inn was a God-send to the weary dog-face and gyrenes returning from the front after days without a hot meal.

Lumber Production:

New Georgia was a heavily timbered island. Huge mahogany and banyan trees grew everywhere. We brought out from the States a small portable sawmill which was soon running at full capacity. The mill was situated at the end of the camp and the source of supply was no problem. One difficulty presented itself. All the trees were loaded with shrapnel from bombs and shells and sawteeth were rapidly being ruined. Pop Merrill, our mill boss, hit on a happy solution. Using a mine detector, as one would an old fashioned carpet sweeper, the fragments were soon located in the logs and removed. Total output of this mill was slightly over a million and a half board feet. It provided a constant supply for all construction work on the island and saved the government over \$300,000 in cost of material alone.

Munda Bar:

Most of the Pacific islands are encircled by reefs. New Georgia was no exception. Munda Bar prevented ships of any draft from being directly at the scene of activities. Food supplies and materials, bombs, ammo as well as gasoline, had to be unloaded at Sassevale and had to be transported by means of shallow draft craft

given the job. Two dredges operated over the bar. The heavy seas kept filling the cut with coral. Sharks and barracuda made diving a hazardous job. One seven and half foot shark played around with Ralph Robinson for 20 minutes while he was down. It would slide up behind him and sniff over his shoulder like a trained horse trying to nibble your ear and finally it took off after a small fish. In the meantime, poor "Robby" was in a cold sweat.

Despite all these difficulties, a channel 800 feet long, 300 feet wide and 18 feet deep was cut through the bar enabling much of the shipping and all of the tankers carrying aviation gas to dock directly at the scene of operations.

Tank Farm:

Munda airstrip had soon become the largest in the Pacific. Not only were fighters and light bombers constantly hitting Bougainville and Rabaul, but B-24's were frequently hitting Truk and other strategic points. The amount of gas and motor fuel used was tremendous. Tank farms were constructed under the supervision of Lt. Mealer and the tankers were rapidly unloading.

Maudie's Mansion:

Airplanes need men to fly them; consequently one of our first jobs was the housing of aviation personnel. A sheltered and camouflaged location removed from the field, was chosen. Quonset hut erection was commenced under Lt. Riu. Every convenience was provided in order that the men might relax comfortably when not on duty. Maudie's Mansion became famous as a pilot's camp. Camp Sparks, named for another of our men killed during the bombing raid, also housed aviation enlisted personnel. It is needless to mention all of the camps built. You fellows built them; you know what they were. Before we left Munda you were fed up on building camp sites and had begun to wonder whether a Seabee was the only person who knew how to use a hammer and saw.

CAMP LIFE

Camping out is a wonderful thing. When we were kids, to pitch a tent in the back yard and sleep out at night, was a thrill. Some may, when this war is over, go on camping trips. Personally we doubt it. After life in the tropics, we are convinced that a Seabee has lost all urge for the great outdoors. In a word, he's "house-broke" and wants nothing but to get back home and stay there. Despite this, camp life proved interesting. Camp Williams by late November had not only become livable, but was beginning to be luxurious. The mess hall had been enlarged to twice its size so as to facilitate serving. Trays took the place of mess kits and were sterilized by running them through a steam bath procured from our unused distillation units—thanks to the brilliant idea of "Slough Foot" Tallman. Real food be-

first orange did not appear until May of '44, beer—chilled—had already made its appearance.

Soon our tents began to undergo transformations and though every mate had his own idea of furniture, not all being Chippendale or Queen Anne, all was comfortable. Cots were abandoned and rubber-springed bunks made from surveyed inner tubes made sleep doubly enjoyable now that nightly air raids were no more. A chapel and library were erected. Both satisfied a long felt need. The largest outdoor theatre on Munda was built from lumber cut at our own camp area and sawed by our own mill.

An athletic program was inaugurated and as nearly as possible, due to working conditions, we shot the works from soup to nuts. Chief W. F. Patterson was the winner in the checker tournament, defeating W. C. Anderson, B. R. Scafe, J. W. Morris, Richard Gehring were the top runners in barnyard golf competition. All boxing was done in our area and Runyon won the 135 lb. crown for Munda, though losing the Southern Pacific title. A basketball court was constructed and nightly contests took place. Our softball season got under way with all companies, chiefs and officers entering a team. Company D ended the half-way mark far in the lead.

Boot camp had impressed upon us that the chiefs run the Navy but when it came to baseball they were hopeless. Despite the fact that old age had handicapped the officers team to the extent of having to appear on the field on crutches and conveyed by ambulances, they defeated the chiefs. The chiefs ended midseason winning but one game and dropping eleven and then decided that they were construction workers and not baseball players and retired from further competition. A battalion baseball team (hard ball) under W. O. Venditti was organized and won its first game from the Naval Base by the score of 1-0. Cotton Hill, our pitcher, defeated Chuck McCollough. Both these men were former pitchers in the Southern Association. We really had a team and despite stiff opposition, finished our play at Munda by winning 10 and losing 2.

Our basketball team, under the direction of Chuck Overfield of B Company won their first game and went through the season with only one loss in 15 games. Malone, Newman, Robinson, Arnold and McDonald were the starting five. Our boxing team trained by Happy Corcoran, former welterweight champ of the South, produced runners-up in J. K. "Cotton" Phillips, Ray Wilkinson and Roy Leonard. C Company softball team, ably managed by Chief J. F. Zeigler, with Potter as star pitcher, won the finals.

While at Camp Williams, we went through all the agonies of reorganizing a band. Fortunately, replacements filled the gaps left by men who had been evacuated. A few casualties in our instruments had resulted during the rigorous campaign. C. M. Norton of C Company had done an excellent job on re-gluing wood

center our band was ready for commencing. Several stage shows were put on and Lt. Joe Powers proved to be an excellent master of ceremonies. We had thought Joe was too old to soft-shoe but he proved us wrong. USO shows began to appear and it wasn't long before the OinC and the Padre forcibly introduced the first white women to land on Munda—Army nurses. Then our troubles began. For immediately the cry arose, "Aint they sweet. We want to go home!"

Movies were limited to three nights a week because we had failed to receive our 35 mm. projectors and were running on our 16 mm. Ampro and the supply of 16 mm. film was limited although the pictures were more recent than the 35 mm. Early in 1944, a staff, headed by Chief M. B. Bibee, set to work to produce a battalion paper. On February 15, 1944, the first issue of the now familiar Chatterbox was hailed by all the men. It was continued as a semi-monthly publication except for skips during re-staging between jobs and has taken its place among the better of the mimeographed service publications.

The time was rapidly drawing to a close for our stay on Munda. For the last two months everyone had been griping. "When are we going to leave this damn place?" Munda at one time had been front page headlines; now it was decidedly rear area. All were disgusted at constructing projects which we knew would not be utilized. July 4th had been set aside as not only a rest day but as a fitting day to honor the men of our Battalion who had made the supreme sacrifice for their country. Accordingly the entire Battalion with colors flying and band playing assembled at the Munda Cemetery, New Georgia, to pay final tribute to the men who had died there. These were:

Bernice Bradley, Donald Porter Gerwich, John A. Rosek, Garfield Crawford, Jr., Louie Elton Metcalf, James William Sparks, Hilton Herman Ferguson, Charles Hart Orin, and Thomas Charles Williams.

Vollies were fired, taps sounded. May their souls rest in peace.

In the preceding paragraphs we have described our work on Munda. We feel that we have said enough about ourselves and will close with quoting an article from the Beachcomber, the weekly magazine for all branches of the service on New Georgia:

"The 73rd N. C. B. arrived here August 6, 1943 and under bombing, shellings and strafings, immediately started to repair a bomb-torn enemy fighter strip which had been taken only a few hours before. The top soil was removed and coral hauled in and laid. In only 52 hours, the field was ready for our fighter planes. Under the command of Commander K. P. Doane, the job of constructing one of the finest advanced fighter-bomber bases of the war got under way. . . . During the height of construction, more than 13,000 cubic yards of coral were loaded, transported and placed on the field by the 73rd N. C. B. in one day. . . . In addition, other major

tasks included the construction of a SCAI depot, headquarters for strike command, night fighters; SBD operations; Navy supply offices and warehouses; compass rose for bombers; naval field hospital; naval base theatre; base sawmill; torpedo circus headquarters and storage revetments; underground ordnance magazine; bomb dispersal areas; base electric and power systems; telegraph installations and maintenance; telephone installations and maintenance; maintenance and installation of base reefers; installation of marine railways and docks at the boat pool; underground operations center; and blasting of Munda Bar channel. The 73rd Seabees have always found time to help other outfits. . . . Several commendations and letters of appreciation have been received for their cooperative spirit, including a commendation from Admiral Halsey to their "skipper" K. P. Doane.

"Expressing the respect that all outfits here have for the work done by these Seabees and for their faithfulness and cooperation, the Beachcomber salutes with pride the 73rd Naval Construction Battalion."

Leaving Munda for Staging:

We had been nearly a year on Munda when orders came to move to the Russell Islands in order to stage for our next operation. While still here we received a number of replacements. Others were to join us at Banika while staging for our second Island X. The final group joined us at Peleliu. All contributed greatly to the success of our task.

We left accordingly July 31st and arrived at Banika the next day, traveling aboard the U.S.S. Mantika, ably operated by the U.S. Coast Guard. The First Marine Division to which we were attached was on the neighboring island of Pavuvu. Banika possessed the world's largest coconut grove. Our camp was situated at one end of the island among the coconuts near the end of a small inlet. Our stay here was short but pleasant. A group of men had left Munda before the rest to prepare the camp for our coming. These men were from A Company with Lt. Bensel in charge. We were fortunate in having a prepared camp to enter as some other outfits had to unload and set up camp in the rain. Banika proved a welcome change after our long stay on Munda. Things of interest were the native village at the north end of the island, cool breezes, good roads, beautiful country, flowers, a swimming hole near camp, Wimpy's Cafe, Red Cross Canteen and above all—WOMEN! Several USO shows were on the island, among these being Bob Hope, Jack Benny, the Royal New Zealand Band and Patty Thomas. It was unnecessary to set up our own movie area as we found a ready welcome extended to us from other outfits. Our old friends, the 24th, were located here and soon old friendships were renewed. Our entire work here consisted of preparing our equipment for our next job.

From Banika to Peleliu:

August 28, 1944 we went aboard three LST's to join our convoy comprising the First Marine Division which

was being formed off Guadalcanal. We kept the rendezvous with the convoy off Lunga Point, Guadalcanal and Purvis Bay, Tulagi. For most of us this was the first close-up view of famous and historic Tulagi.

September 3rd the convoy got under way for Peleliu. The first few days seas were extremely rough. We soon rigged up, from planks and tarps, an overhead deck for living quarters extending from port to starboard. This deck not only provided more comfortable sleeping accommodations but also protected us during the day from the hot sun and driving rain as the case might be.

With each change in condition that modified our modes of living new adoptive lessons had to be learned. Fresh water was an extremely scarce item—sufficient for drinking, cooking and very infrequent showers. Use of that precious commodity for laundry was unthinkable so clothes were rendered free of dirt and grime by dragging them at the end of a line in the sea from the fantails. The chow served on the LST's during this trip was enough better than that to which we were accustomed to rate special mention in any account of our travels. So also was the fine spirit of cooperation shown us by the officers and men of their crews.

The convoy was immense and made us realize the greatness of the task before us. As far as the eye could see, spaced just far enough apart to permit safety of movement, were ships, ships and still more ships. Aside from the large landing craft were the auxiliaries for ship repair, fuel, mine-sweeping and the like, and our protective escort. We were mothered during the whole trip by files of LCI's on either flank, an outer ring of destroyers and destroyer escorts. A number of flat tops hovered just over the horizon most of the time.

Very early in the morning of September 15th, we could hear the sound of guns in the distance and we knew we had reached our destination. We had travelled from seven degrees south of the equator to seven degrees north of the equator and several degrees west of our point of embarkation.

Peleliu D Day:

At dawn, battle wagons, cruisers and destroyers opened up, pouring everything they had on the island of Peleliu. Soon it was covered with black clouds of smoke and dust. Carrier planes hit it in droves. The barrage started on the beach to soften up the Japs for the landing. At 0800 the sea became alive with smallcraft and amphib tanks. The First Marine Division commenced their drive for a beachhead. The battle for the beach was really terrific. Jap machine gun and mortar fire rained down on the marines but they succeeded in advancing despite stiff opposition. We had box seats for the greatest show on earth—one of the most stupendous amphibious operations yet mounted in the Pacific. Sea, air and land attack were unfolded before our eyes as we waited the order to disembark and set to work.

Our first shore party went in on the 16th wave. Lt.

posed of crane operators and riggers, while Lt. Mealer was assigned the duty of dispersing supplies and ammo. Were it not for the assistance rendered by our men in packing ammo, the artillery would have been less effective. Several men had near accidents in packing ammo from beach to front lines and it was while doing this task that Casper O'Neal was killed. Our men also assisted in sandbagging gun positions. Two details engaged in this work at two o'clock of D plus one and worked until eleven o'clock the next night without respite. One of the most hazardous tasks was getting water to the front lines as the heat was terrific and the original supply was rapidly becoming exhausted. Small boats were under constant mortar fire.

Many of the men and some equipment had been landed on D Day at Orange Beach, but the difficulty of removing the immense amount of supplies from this one beach made necessary the development of other landing areas. The morning of September 21st saw all three ships beached at Purple Beach with our heavily loaded vehicles and equipment being dragged through two to three feet of water with everything being soaked from the surf which prevented unloading at high tide. By the morning of the 22nd, pontoon finger piers had been hauled into place and unloading was progressing rapidly.

Investigation of the Jap strip at Ngesebus, after that island just north of Peleliu was captured, showed that construction of an airfield on this island was impractical and therefore instructions were issued for us to assist other Seabees in the construction of the Peleliu field and to develop the beaches and road systems.

For many days the heat continued to be terrific with little relief from rainfall. Experience gained at Munda had taught us the necessity of digging foxholes but alas, the coral rock was so hard they couldn't be dug with any degree of speed by hand and equipment was not available. Bulldozers pushed the fallen trees and other debris up in piles to make revetments around the tents and tent-area and afforded some protection. Again our luck was with us and the Japs never dropped a bomb on the island. A few Jap float planes did come over but went after the shipping and caused no trouble to the forces on the shore.

When the rains did start, the tent revetments provided excellent swimming pools and water was several inches deep in many tents. The struggle then started to rebuild camp so that drainage could be obtained and continued along with all construction work. About the time the camp was nearly completed and we began to feel that we were now ready to settle down to a fairly comfortable living, the hurricane of late October struck and blew down many of our tents.

The chapel which the padre and a few of his stalwart assistants had worked so hard to build, collapsed into a total wreck and all this work had to be done over.

that they could serve as a windbreak and anchorages for tents. Everyone weathered the storm although few had anything dry left after it was all over. One of the many humorous incidents of the storm which will not be forgotten was the sight of many struggling with tent lines or canvas in a 70-mile wind with a tremendous downpour of water, clad in their birthday suits and a pair of shoes.

The first morning of the storm, C Company officers, all of whom were living in the same tent, found the water level in their tent nearly up to the canvas of their cots, with everything in the tent practically under water.

The rolling galley built at Munda came in very handy during the early days and we were able to have hot coffee and hot food before the camp was fully set up, thus eliminating the danger of dysentery and other inconveniences experienced on other moves.

Snipers and stray bullets from both Jap and United States weapons were a continual annoyance for nearly two months. All of those who had occasion to travel to the north end of the island during the early days will never forget the wild dashes up the west beach road with sniper bullets whistling overhead or perforating the jeep or truck. Orris Strand was the only unfortunate one who made the supreme sacrifice during one of these dashes along the west road.

These snipers were responsible too for the awarding of several Purple Hearts, as Robert Stelter and Otto Gavenda, among others, can well testify.

Little publicity has ever been given to the feat of constructing an airfield in six hours but Lt. Lammiman with Chiefs Tassin, Johnson and Ted Martin and a crew of about twelve men can claim that distinction when they journeyed to Ngesebus by "duck" and rebuilt a portion of the Jap strip (entirely of sand) for use of the Cub planes for observation purposes. It was during this trip that all members of the party were pinned down by Jap sniper and marine machine gun fire for several hours, finally leaving their vehicles on the West road and traveling along the beach to reach camp.

Construction of roads, water-front facilities, etc., proceeded on an around-the-clock schedule and all men that could be spared from these projects struggled valiantly with the small amount of material available to build a camp for the Sub Area Commander and his staff. Construction materials were almost non-existent and the scramble for material to build even a hut was continuous.

As the marines chased the Japs into the hills and confined them there, life began to settle down and our camp started taking on shape and became a decent place in which to live. We had been fortunate in obtaining one of the best sites on the island for the camp and when our main galley was completed, it proved to be the coolest place on the island. Oh, for a similar site near any one of the more thickly populated areas in the States for a summer camp or beach resort. Many

When the plans for the invasion were made, it was known the obtaining of fresh water would be a serious difficulty and a great deal of it was brought along in 50 gallon drums with distillation units being planned for use when the camp was set up. Some fresh water was obtained but most of the water on the island proved to be brackish and a very little was usable for anything except bathing. Our water system however proved to be one of the most satisfactory on Peleliu and our hats are off to the boys in the Plumbing Shop who made this possible. Many other units on the island also expressed their appreciation of the efforts put forth by the boys in the plumbing shop to supply them with drinking and bathing water when it was such a scarcity.

Much of the construction on the island was the same old story as that on Munda. Construction of galleys, quonset hut camps, warehousing, roads, taxi-ways and tank farms and all other facilities needed by a group of military organizations. Those of us who inherited the quonset hut construction can never forget those endless piles of curved metal, curved ribs and the piles of plywood, masonite and hardware. If we were told before coming in the service we would spend so many months hammering on metal huts, we might well have chosen some other branch of the service.

Medals and commendations are seldom given to those who perform the routine jobs in the service units but all those who spent their time in the tropics, struggling with the quonset huts deserve much more recognition than they have or ever will receive. No camp construction operation could be complete without the assistance of the men of the electrical shop, the paint shop, the sheet metal shop, the carpenter shop and the plumbing shop—all of whom played their part in making the island of Peleliu one of the best developed islands among all those on which U. S. forces fought during the Pacific war.

The history of the Palau Islands dates back some 400 years and shows all of the shipping to and from the Palaus being handled through the islands of Koror and Babelthuap in the central part of the group. This was done since the Palaus in general and Peleliu in particular are surrounded by drying coral reefs. This is composed of sharp coral projecting heads which would quickly destroy a ship. We inherited the job to which so many of the battalion devoted their time on the island, that job being the construction and development of harbor and dock facilities whereby small boats and landing craft could reach Peleliu without being endangered by shell fire from the Jap-held central Palau Islands. Those of us who were assigned to the Orange Beach development will always remember how we dragged pontoons over the reefs, hauling them to place only to have a hurricane or windstorm break them from their moorings and distribute them back on the reef, high and dry, where only super-human effort could pry them loose. The hurricane in

all eyes the morning after the storm was one of the most discouraging of any of the campaign. When the seas quieted down sufficiently to permit work to start, it progressed at an unheard-of pace and within 24 hours the pontoon causeway was back in place so that much-needed supplies could be hauled in from the ships.

A great deal of credit for the success of the Peleliu campaign during the days immediately after the hurricane goes to those who struggled in the seas and with the sand and pontoons to make this record-breaking repair job possible. To some of us it seemed that we would never see the end of pontoons driven on the beaches or piled high upon the sand. However, the channel and boat basin were finally dredged, pontoons, causeways and docks placed and the protective rock riprap dumped in place so that cargo unloading operations could continue satisfactorily.

The Seabees have always been noted for their ability to improvise and make something out of any pile of scrap. The marine railway which was part of the Orange Beach development will long be remembered as one of those ingenious improvisations. Two I-beams salvaged from an Army project at Angaur and the arms of a Jap railway with the trucks from the Jap locomotive, a burning torch and welding equipment made the turntable possible which is one of the few of its kind in the Pacific. To Lt. Powers, Lt. Burrell, Chief Loveless and many of the men of D Company goes much of the credit for this most successful piece of construction.

The underwater demolition crew, blasting crew and divers were continually on call by the Naval base to rescue LCT's and LCM's, fuel barges, etc. from the reefs whenever they missed the channel and piled up on the reef. The skipper of one LCT which went on the reef at White Beach nearly had heart failure when Chief Bourland loaded the rocks around his ship with TNT and then proceeded to set off the charges. Congratulations to Chief Bourland and his crew who were able to free the LCT even though many of the large coral heads were against the sides of the ship, so that the ship could be hauled off the reef with practically no damage.

The rock blasting crews that worked so diligently in Bloody Nose Ridge, blasting out coral limestone for use as protective riprap at Orange Beach, finally breathed a sigh of relief when the last of the many thousands of tons of rock had been blasted loose and loaded on the low-boy for delivery to the beach. It had seemed like one of those projects that would never end.

Most of us have yet to visit a typical and unmolested Pacific island native village. The only group that can claim that distinction is that which spent about a month at Kayangle with Lt. McCuiston building recreational facilities for the fleet. The island of Kayangle is one of the very few which had been unmolested by either the

customs with the residents living as they have lived for many centuries. As pressure of immediate construction began to lighten, recreational facilities of all kinds became more prominent.

The boxing team led by Al Delmonte, with Runyon, Wilkinson, Leonard, Franks, Foster and Drakalokous and Raw went all out to give us the best boxing team on the island. At nearly every tournament we had men in almost every weight and won more than 50 percent of the bouts. To Runyon went the credit of winning the championship of the island and of the Forward Area in the 133 pound class, and to Wilkinson, the credit for winning the island championship in the 118 pound class. To most of us boxing is a rugged game in any climate but boxing in the tropics is many times more rugged. Our hats are off to these boys who worked so hard to give us an A-1 boxing team.

Softball was included very shortly after boxing was started and our small diamond in the center of the camp was a very popular spot for some time. After about two months of competition, C Company finally won the undisputed championship of the battalion.

Basketball, which had always been popular at Munda, came into being at Peleliu and was a very popular afternoon and evening sport for many months. Basketball, like softball did not attract island-wide interest, however, and we did not join in the island league.

Finally two baseball fields were completed on the island and the baseball team went to work in real earnest. The first of the league games was lost to a marine unit but after that our team went on to win the island championship. After winning that title, the team entered in the Forward Area championship and was just nosed out in the finals by the 56th Seabees by a 3-0 score. Congratulations from the entire battalion go to Lt. Nick Amrhein and the members of the team: J. P. Sweeney, G. F. Kelley, C. I. Reeves, F. Cavallo, J. R. Jackson, W. D. Miller, J. C. Smith, D. H. Frost, R. A. McDonald, L. E. Shambley, D. A. Schrader, E. O. Hill, R. A. Mauer, G. H. Self and W. O. Pretre, for a very fine showing and a lot of hard work.

Our movie machines proved a God-send for passing the evening hours even in the early days when the 16 mm. machine was operated in the galley. Everybody welcomed the two 35 mm. projectors which were set up in the outdoor theatre and really produced a good show. The USO and other traveling shows which occasionally drifted into the area furnished some added entertainment as they did give everybody an opportunity to view a few of the fair sex. We all wonder why we should have the misfortune to be on an island where nurses, Red Cross girls and all other women have been excluded. In Munda even the native women had been removed from the island and here at Peleliu again not even a native woman remained.

the latest events and furnished music which was always welcome.

Our little boat, the SeaBee, built by the carpenter shop at Munda, had been brought to Peleliu and proved a great source of recreation for a few of those who cared to chase the ever elusive fish. The tropical waters of the Pacific abounded in fish of all sizes and many a tall fish story will be told of those that got away during this expedition. Barracuda, pompano, mackerel, tuna and even the blue marlin were among those which were brought ashore or which were claimed to have got away from the fisherman. The friendly CASU outfit finally loaned us two larger boats and then the fishing was carried on on a much larger scale. Fishing tackle was of too light a weight, however, and the big ones were continually breaking the gear and not being brought to shore.

A few became very ambitious and built small sailing boats which were very popular and added greatly to the atmosphere of the camp, making it appear more like a sea-side recreational playground.

When Decoration Day arrived, the Island Command ordered a two hour shut down of operations and invited all hands to attend Memorial Day services in our recently completed chapel at the cemetery. All those who attended the services listened intently to the addresses by General Schilt, Chaplain Freegard and Chaplain Denham and thought back to those days when we first landed on that beach and said a silent prayer for those who were unable to leave the island with us.

As time had dragged along, rumors had been rampant about our going home. We had been overseas two years and knew that the time was not far distant when we would get aboard ship and start back across the Pacific. The one drawback was that we still must complete our job and build a quonset hut camp for the air personnel. Through an error these huts did not arrive with other materials and all aviation personnel were still living in tents or improvised housing.

On June 9th when the huts finally arrived, the island again became a beehive and within three weeks we had erected over 200 quonset huts and then could look the world in the face and say our job was done.

News that the ship would arrive on a certain date spread through the camp and preparations were started for that much-looked for trip home. Finally on July 11 we embarked on the new A.P.A. Edgecombe, leaving all our gear, equipment and possessions except our clothing to others in Peleliu. That trip back across the Pacific was so far different from the one coming west. Everyone was happy and looking forward to being again with their families and loved ones. What a gorgeous sight as we approached the Golden Gate Bridge and realized that all our dreams of the past two years had finally come true.

CHRONOLOGY OF U. S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION 73

- 23 Dec. 1942 Formed at Naval Construction Training Center, Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- 2 Feb. 1943 Commissioned with LCDR K. P. Doane, CEC, USNR, as commanding officer.'
- 17 Mar. 1943 Departed in three sections from NCTC, Camp Peary.
- 22 Mar. 1943 Arrived at Camp Parks, Pleasanton, California.
- 15 Apr. 1943 Departed Camp Parks and arrived at Port Hueneme, Calif.
- 12 May 1943 Departed Advance Base Depot, Port Hueneme, aboard the U.S.S. President Polk, with equipment aboard the Sea Bass.
- 29 May 1943 Arrived at Noumea, New Caledonia. Remained aboard vessels.
- 5 June 1943 Ships transferred to Magenta Bay, New Caledonia, where battalion unloaded and set up camp. Performed construction with an addition to an airstrip, and erection of quonset huts at Ile Nue and MOB7 hospital.
- 9 July 1943 Battalion departed New Caledonia aboard the Kota Agoeng.
- 13 July 1943 Arrived at Guadalcanal, B. S. I. For three weeks they worked on road and beach landing construction and malaria control.
- 1 Aug. 1943 A detail of 56 men and one officer left Guadalcanal for Roviana Island to survey for temporary dispersal areas for cargo en route to Munda, Solomon Islands.
- 6 Aug. 1943 Detail departed from Roviana, arrived Munda to set up bivouac area for the battalion at Death Valley.
- 8 Aug. 1943 First section (25 officers and 850 enlisted men) departed Guadalcanal.
- 9 Aug. 1943 First section arrived at Sassavele, near Munda.
- 15 Aug. to 20 Sep. 1943 Rear echelon of 3 officers and 170 enlisted men departed Guadalcanal in a number of sections.

The battalion, while on Munda, pioneered a road for the Army to the front lines, built an 8,000 foot long bomber strip from an old Japanese fighter strip in just 52 hours from start to finish while under periodic fire. Field required cutting down a hill at one end, quarrying coral for surfacing and providing a drainage system. They also built and maintained a 500,000 gallon-per-day water system to supply all forces on the island. Camp construction included Camp Williams, named to honor their first casualty, for their own use; a quonset camp for pilots; and Camp Sparks for enlisted air personnel. They built a tank

farm for aviation gas. Elsewhere they erected and operated a saw mill that produced a total of 1.5 million board feet of construction grade lumber. Offshore they performed the Munda Bar dredging project, cutting a channel 800 feet long, 300 feet wide and 18 feet deep to permit direct docking for most ships.

- 10 July 1944 First echelon of 3 officers and 200 enlisted men departed from Munda and arrived at Banika, Russell Islands on the same day.
- 31 July 1944 Rear echelon departed from Munda aboard U.S.S. Mantika.
- 1 Aug. 1944 Rear echelon arrived at Banika, Russell Islands.
- 21 Aug. 1944 One officer and 27 enlisted men were detailed to duty with the first Marine Division at Pavuvu. To serve as riggers, crane operators, and shore party on Peleliu invasion.
- 27 Aug. 1944 Advance echelon of 27 officers and 893 enlisted men embarked aboard three LSTs to join with the first Marine Division convoy off Guadalcanal.
- 3 Sep. 1944 Convoy departed from the Guadalcanal area.
- 15 Sep. 1944 The battalion arrived with the convoy at Peleliu, Palau Island to participate in the beach invasion. The first shore party went ashore on Orange Beach with the 16th wave to assist unloading operations with cranes, dispersion of supplies and ammunition, sandbagging gun positions and delivery of water to front positions.
- 21 Sep. 1944 All three LSTs with the remainder of the battalion were beached at Purple Beach and heavily loaded vehicles were disembarked through the water to reach shore. By next morning, pontoon finger piers were constructed and unloading was accelerated. During early stages, the battalion assisted other Seabee units in construction of Peleliu airfield, developing beach landing areas and pioneering road systems.
- As the battle shifted inland the battalion turned to building a camp for the Sub - area Commander and his staff, then one for themselves. From there they set about erecting galleys, quonset hut camps, warehousing, roads, taxiways, and tank farms for other units.
- At Orange Beach, they worked on construction and development of harbor and dock facilities for small craft, including design and construction of a marine railway.
- 26 Nov. 1944 Rear echelon, consisting of 3 officers and 15 enlisted men, departed Banika, Russell Islands.
- 10 Dec. 1944 Rear echelon arrived at Peleliu.
- 11 July 1945 The 73rd NCB was inactivated at Peleliu.



73rd

★ UNITED STATES NAVAL ★
CONSTRUCTION BATTALION









