

1946

# The earthmover: a chronicle of the 87th Seabee Battalion in World War II

United States Navy

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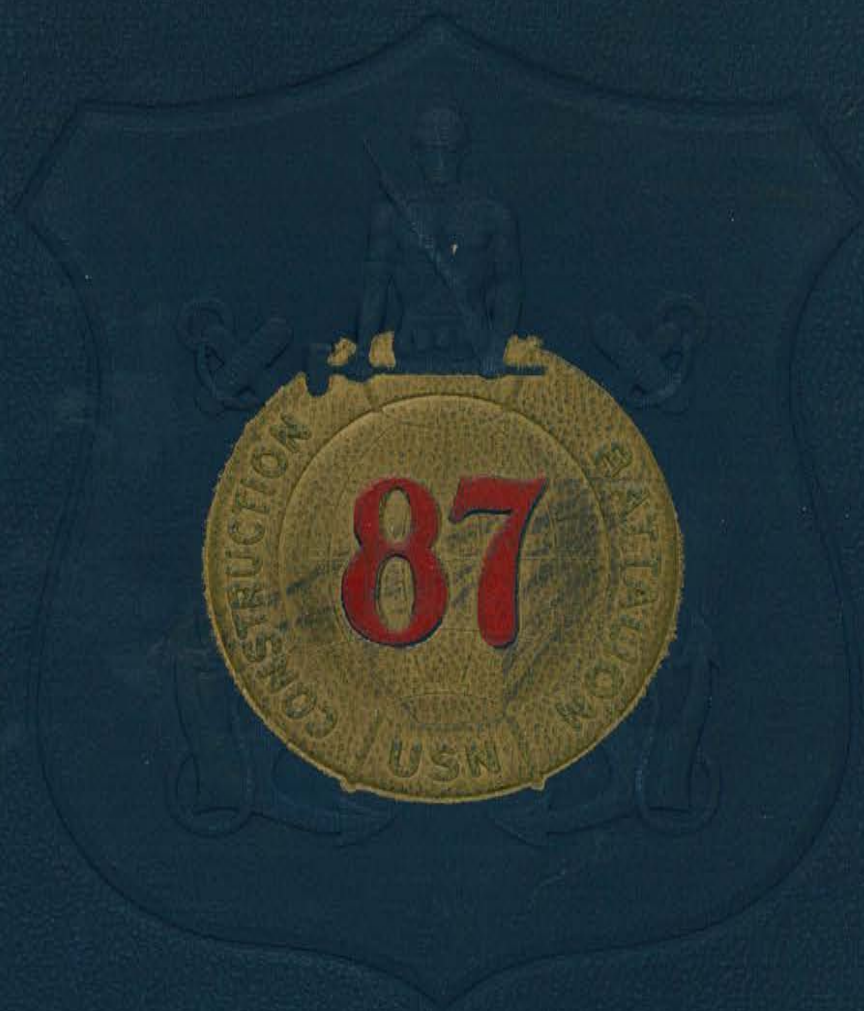
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*The*  
EARTHMOVER  
1943~1945



# CROSS PAC OF EIGHTY-SEVEN

N O R T H

T R O P I C O F

WAKE IS.

ENIWETOK

MARSHALL

GILBERT

SOLOMON ISLANDS

ELLICE IS.

SANTA CRUZ IS.

NEW HEBRIDES

Fiji IS.

LOYALTY IS.

NEW ZEALAND

SEA OF JAPAN

TOKYO

CHINA

YELLOW SEA

EAST CHINA SEA

RYUKYO RETTO OKINAWA

FORMOSA

BONIN IS.  
IWO JIMA  
VALCANO IS.

LUZON

MANILA

PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

SOUTH CHINA SEA

YAP

PALAU

MINDANAO

CELEBES SEA

NETHERLANDS INDIES

NEW GUINEA

RABAU

TREASURY STIRLING

BOUGAINVILLE

TULAGI

GUADALCANAL

ARAFURA SEA

CORAL SEA

INDIAN OCEAN

A U S T R A L I A

TASMAN SEA

SOUTHERN OCEAN

120°E  
8AM

140°E  
9AM

160°E  
11AM

180°E  
12 NOON





**PACIFIC OCEAN**

**SOUTH PACIFIC**

**OCEAN**

**THE PACIFIC OCEAN**

**MONDAY SUNDAY**

**160°W 140°W 120°W**

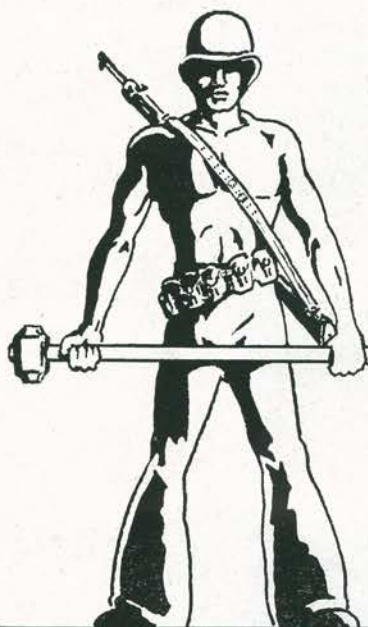
**1 PM 2 PM 3 PM 4 PM**

**AA. COMPETIELLO CCM. USNR**

A.A. COMPETIELLO  
C.C.M. USNR.



WE ARE THE AIRFIELD MAKERS,  
WE KNOW WHAT SWEATING MEANS;  
WE ARE THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS  
OF THE EARTH—FOREVER, IT SEEMS.

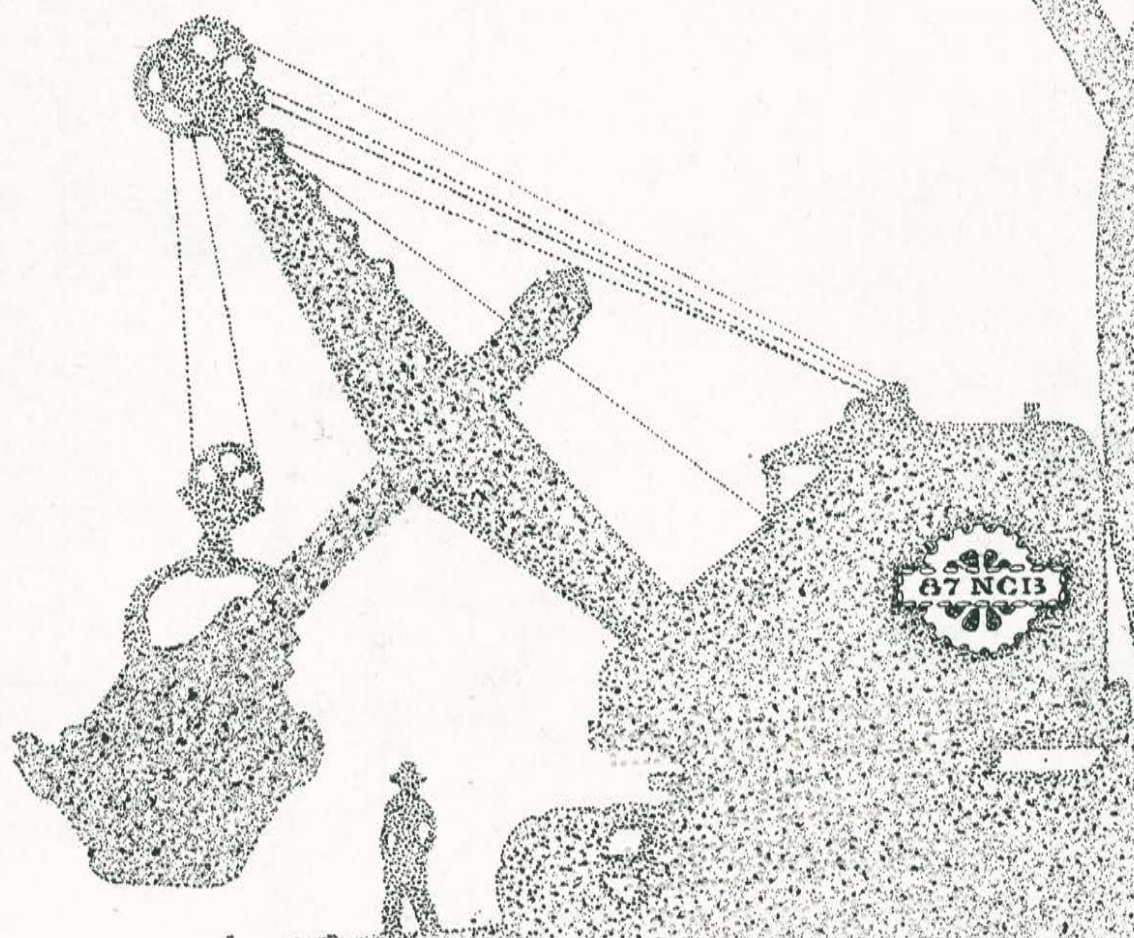


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EIGHTY-SEVENTH U. S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION



# *The EARTHMOVER*



A CHRONICLE OF THE 87TH SEABEE BATTALION  
IN WORLD WAR II



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# FOREWORD



This volume is essentially the overall story, in log form, of the 87th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion—a hard-working Seabee outfit, which did everything asked and expected of it from the Solomons through war's sudden end on Okinawa. It is, of course, no better or worse than the approximately 1,300 officers and men who carved out its multiple achievements with their sweat, blood and, at times, even tears.

This trip book has been designed to cover the period between 20 February 1943 and 9 October 1945—a span of approximately 31½ months. Unfortunately, no pictures were taken between 9 October and 7 November when the remaining 361 men finally embarked for the States in their twenty-seventh month overseas. The photographer and assistants had all gone home. The story of the tour has been purposely kept vague or general so that each man might be free to relate his version of the sequence of events as he saw them.

This publication has been prepared for the men of the 87th, their families and friends and is not intended for general publication or circulation. Moreover, the opinions expressed in this volume are those of the editors and their staff and are not intended to reflect those of the Navy Department or the service at large.

Every reasonable effort has been made to keep the written portions of this trip book as objective as possible. And an honest effort has been exerted throughout to make the book as factually accurate as existing facilities for assembling and checking information would permit.

However, conceived and launched just prior to leaving New Caledonia and finished in foxholes and amid post-war confusion on Okinawa, the job, a spare-time project until 12 August 1945, was accomplished under just about the worst circumstances imaginable.

At its best, THE EARTHMOVER could never hope to depict the overall impact inflicted on each man during the several years spent on these far-flung Pacific islands, but the editors herewith submit it as a fair resume of the 87th's role in World War II.



# *In Memoriam*



## JOHN SHORT HURLEY

Carpenter's Mate, First Class  
Camp Endicott  
22 May 1943

## BLAKE DEARL MUSSELMAN

Seaman, First Class  
Stirling Island  
12 January 1944

## EDWIN "E" OSTMAN

Seaman, Second Class  
Mono Island  
29 October 1943

## ARTHUR FRANKLIN NAPPEN

Seaman, First Class  
Stirling Island  
12 January 1944

## FRIEND HAROLDBYRNE SMITH

Carpenter's Mate, First Class  
Stirling Island  
17 December 1943

## ROY "A" GOLDBERG

Seaman, Second Class  
Stirling Island  
14 January 1944

## EDWARD JOHN BURNS

Seaman, First Class  
Stirling Island  
12 January 1944

## LYLE ORESTUS MARTS

Carpenter's Mate, First Class  
Stirling Island  
27 February 1944

## DONALD FRANCIS FITZGERALD

Seaman, First Class  
Stirling Island  
12 January 1944

## JOHN FRANCIS PHILLIPS

Carpenter's Mate, First Class  
New Caledonia  
10 September 1944

## DALE STREIT ANDERSON

Carpenter's Mate, Third Class  
Okinawa  
24 August 1945

# DEDICATION

This history of one deeply grateful Seabee battalion is dedicated to the inspired American, British and Canadian laboratory heroes who won for the Allies the fearful International race for Doomsday with their timely invention of THE ATOMIC BOMB—thereby enabling us to climb out of our Okinawa foxholes; changing the impending invasion of Japan from a potentially gory blueprint to a bloodless occupation; saving countless thousands of lives; ending the greatest and most terrible of all wars; and hastening our return to normal life many months ahead of general expectations.

This volume is further dedicated to these unsung scientists with the hope and prayer that this new dimension of military and political power will somehow free all peoples of the burden of war in The Atomic Age, and that the cataclysmic explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaka may have closed the era of man's inhumanity to man.





## RICHARD RAY COOK

COMMANDER, CEC, USNR  
Second Officer in Charge

Commander Richard R. Cook relieved Comdr. Robert Easterly as Officer in Charge of the 87th Naval Construction Battalion at Saipan on 29 March 1945. He continued in command until 9 September 1945, when he received orders to return to the States for release to inactive duty.

Comdr. Cook was awarded the Legion of Merit by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz for meritoriously leading the construction forces under his command to the early completion of airfields and installations during the Okinawa campaign.

Comdr. Cook reported for active duty on 20 January 1943. He received indoctrination training at Camp Allen and was eventually transferred to Camp Peary. Here, he served as Officer in Charge of D-8 Area until ordered as Officer in Charge of the 99th Battalion.

He embarked for the Pacific with the 99th in October, 1943, and served at Johnson, Kawai, Hawaii, and the Palau Islands. In December, 1944, he was returned to the States for medical treatment at Duke University Hospital.

Prior to entering World War II, Comdr. Cook had completed 22 highly successful years in the competitive construction game. He owned and su-

pervised two private construction companies, specializing in all types of heavy building and earthmoving.

Born 6 March 1893, in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, Comdr. Cook's first full-time employment, at the age of 10, was as a messenger boy for Westinghouse Air Brake Co. He later worked for Westinghouse Electric Company on heavy electric railway construction for four years. For the ensuing six years, he was employed as electrical supervisor with the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railway Co.

In May, 1917, he enlisted in the Navy and saw a year of service in France as Electrician's Mate, Second Class in Naval Aviation. Discharged in January, 1919, he returned to his former position for another year. He then moved to Huntington, West Virginia, where he worked as a general highway superintendent for a year before entering the construction field for himself.

Comdr. Cook was originally married in 1921 and is the father of two daughters, both now in college. He entered into a second marriage with Miss Lois Champion on 18 January 1945, only a short time before sailing for his second Pacific tour.





## JAMES DOUGLAS

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER, CEC, USN

Second Executive Officer—Third Officer in Charge

Lieutenant Commander James Douglas reported to the 87th Naval Construction Battalion on 12 July 1945, relieving Lt. Comdr. Edward A. Flynn as Executive Officer. He assumed command as Officer in Charge when Comdr. Cook was returned to the States in September. In October, when the battalion received orders to inactivate, Lt. Comdr. Douglas was assigned temporary duty as OinC of the 112th Seabees.

He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz for his meritorious services during the Okinawa campaign.

Born in Uvalde, Texas, on 1 October 1914, Lt. Comdr. Douglas received his elementary education in the public schools of Texas. His Naval career started when he was appointed to the U. S. Naval Academy, from the state at large, in 1934. He graduated "with distinction" in 1938, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree and a commission as an ensign in the line.

He first reported for duty aboard the U. S. S. SALT LAKE CITY in June, 1938, and in December of that year, he was transferred to the U. S. S. WICHITA.

In 1940, Lt. Comdr. Douglas was selected for the Navy post-graduate course in Civil Engineering and sent to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute,

Troy, New York. Here, he received his Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree in May, 1942, and his Master of Civil Engineering degree in April, 1943.

After graduation from Rensselaer, Lt. Comdr. Douglas reported to Camp Bradford, Little Creek, Virginia, as OinC, Battalion "X," and was later transferred to Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Virginia, as head of the CPO School.

In December, 1943, he left the States and reported to the 9th Naval Construction Regiment at Attu in the Aleutians. In February, 1944, he was transferred to Adak with the 6th Regiment and in May, 1944, he was appointed Assistant District Public Works Officer there.

Lt. Comdr. Douglas returned to the States in December, 1944, and after the usual leave, was assigned as Survey Officer on the staff of Commander Construction Troops for the Okinawa operation. He served in this capacity until transferred to the 87th Seabees.

Lt. Comdr. Douglas married Miss Sarah Bisset in July, 1941. They have one daughter. He is a member of Chi Phi social fraternity and Tau Beta Pi, Sigma Xi and Chi Epsilon, honorary fraternities.





## ROBERT EASTERLY

COMMANDER, CEC, USNR

First Officer in Charge

Commander Robert Easterly was ordered as Officer in Charge of the 87th Naval Construction Battalion on 23 February 1943, at Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Virginia. He remained with the battalion through 19 months of overseas duty and was relieved as Officer in Charge by Comdr. Cook at Saipan on 29 March 1945.

Upon return to the States, Comdr. Easterly was designated head of the Administrative Department of the Civil Engineer Corps Officers School at Camp Endicott, Davisville, Rhode Island, where he served until release from active duty in September, 1945.

On 18 July 1945, the King of the British Empire, on behalf of the New Zealand Government, made Comdr. Easterly an Honorary Officer of the Military Division of the British Empire for his services as Officer in Charge of the 87th Seabees when the unit was operating with New Zealand forces in the Treasuries in 1943-44.

Comdr. Easterly reported to the Bureau of Yards and Docks for active duty in the U. S. Naval Reserve on 11 November 1940. On 23 November 1940, he was transferred to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he served on the staff of the Resident Inspector of Naval Materials as Officer in Charge of Construction, supervising building facilities at the Northern Pump Company.

Comdr. Easterly was born in Rochester, New York, on 21 September 1905. He graduated from East High School, Rochester, New York, in 1923. He then entered Union College, Schenectady, New York, and for three years took Civil Engineering.

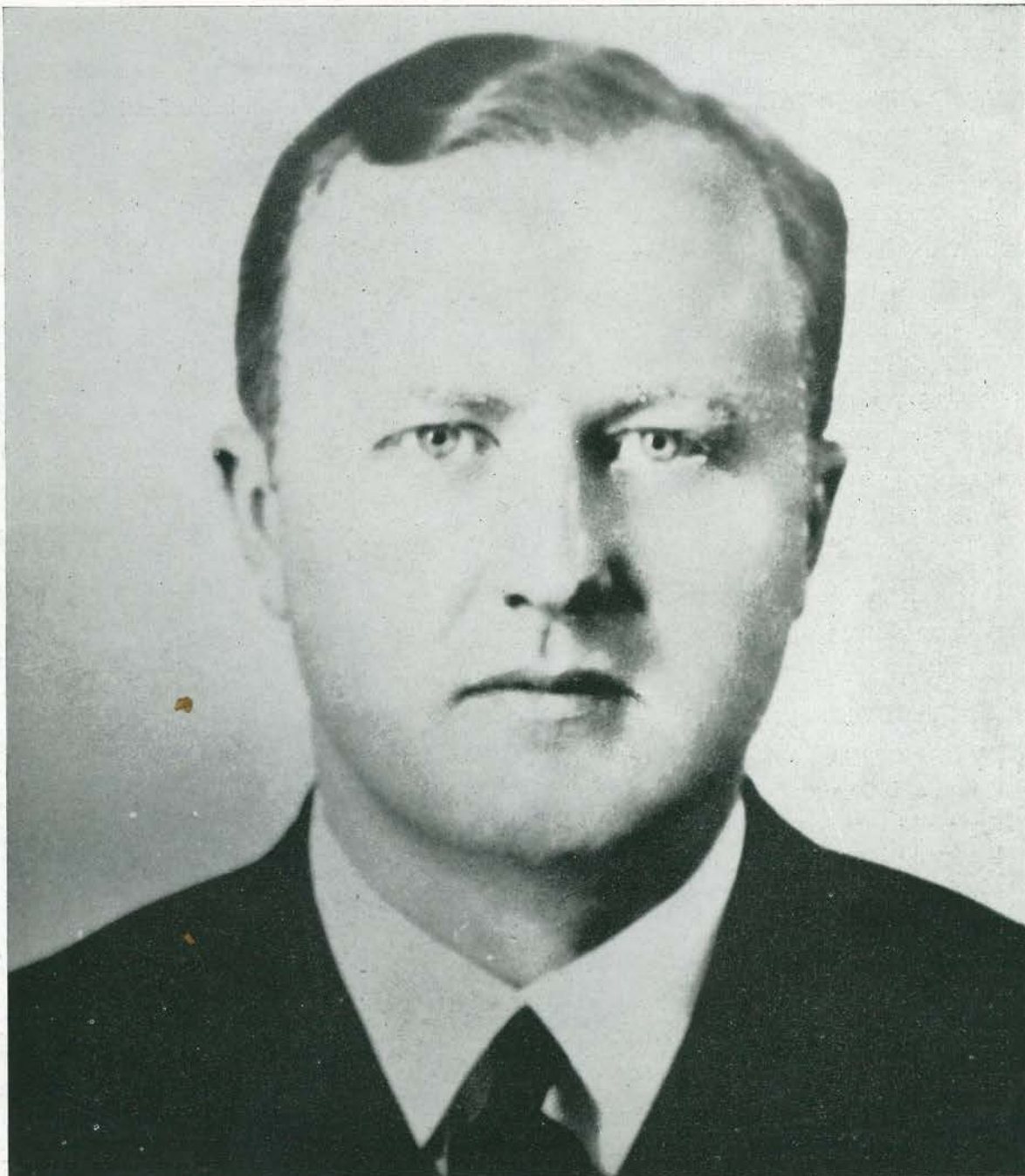
In 1927, he transferred to the College of Civil Engineering, University of Michigan, and graduated in 1929 with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering.

While in college, he was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta social fraternity, as well as the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Webb and Flange Society, both honorary senior civil engineer societies. Comdr. Easterly married in 1930.

From graduation in 1929 until 1938, Comdr. Easterly was employed by the Detroit Edison Company and assigned to checking and designing structural steel for power plants, boiler houses and other types of construction.

He then accepted a position with the Strand Steel Corporation in 1938 and worked there as Assistant Chief Engineer until he was called to active duty in the Naval Reserve.





## EDWARD ALBERT FLYNN

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER, CEC, USNR

First Executive Officer

Lieutenant Commander Edward A. Flynn reported to the 87th Naval Construction Battalion as Executive Officer on 23 February 1943 at Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Virginia. He served with the battalion for 23 months overseas and was relieved by Lt. Comdr. Douglas at Okinawa on 12 July 1945.

Lt. Comdr. Flynn was commended by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, and authorized to wear the Commendation Ribbon, for meritorious conduct in the performance of his duties as Executive Officer of the battalion during the Okinawa campaign.

Upon his return to the States, Lt. Comdr. Flynn was assigned duty in Chicago on the staff of the Superintending Civil Engineer, Area V.

In December, 1941, Lt. Comdr. Flynn, while still a civilian, was called to the Bureau of Yards and Docks, in Washington, and assigned as an assistant in the Priorities and Expediting Division.

He was soon commissioned a lieutenant (junior grade) and transferred to Chicago as Officer in Charge of the Bureau of Yards and Docks Field Expediting Office there. In this capacity, he was responsible for expediting materials and equipment being manufactured in the 9th Naval District for Navy contracts.

In June, 1943, his office was absorbed by the Superintending Civil Engi-

neer, Area V, but his duties remained the same until he was ordered to Camp Allen, Norfolk, Virginia, for duty with the Seabees.

Lt. Comdr. Flynn was born in Xenia, Ohio, on 17 February 1910. He graduated from Xenia High School in 1926, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, in 1927, and then attended Dartmouth College, graduating in 1931.

For the next three years, he attended Yale University, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1934. After graduation, he spent a year traveling and studying architecture in 14 European countries. He is unmarried.

Upon returning to the States in 1936, he accepted a position with the architectural firm of Rapp and Meacham, Cincinnati, Ohio, and in July, 1935, went to Cleveland for a position with Edward G. Read, Architect.

In November, 1937, he joined the architectural firm of Garfield, Harris, Robinson and Schafer in Cleveland as a designer and associate architect on various projects, including state institutions, housing projects and commercial buildings.

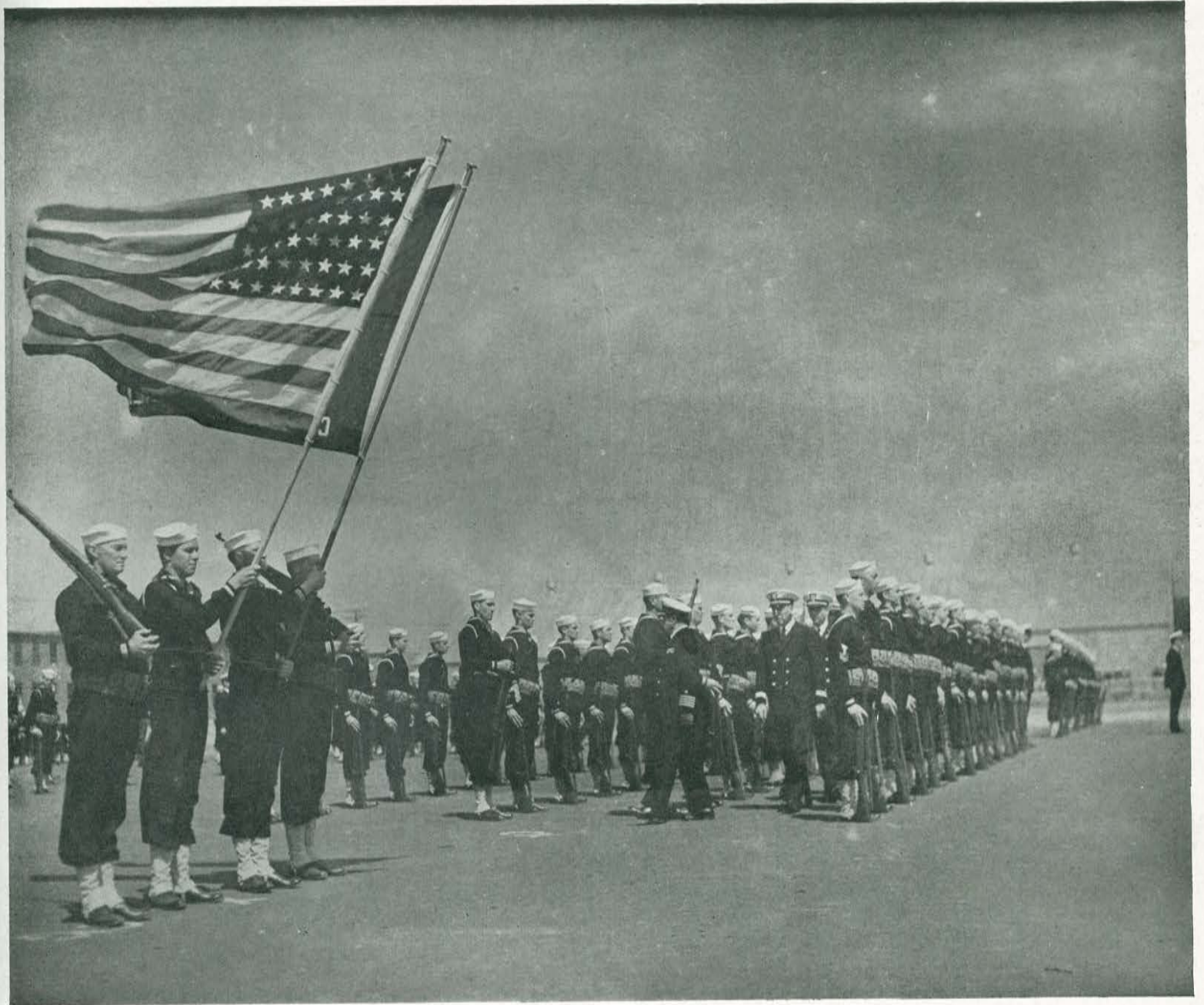
He continued with this firm until called to Washington for assignment with the Bureau of Yards and Docks.



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# CAMP S—U.S.A.



PEARY-ENDICOTT-ROUSSEAU



# CAMP PEARY WAS ACID TEST FOR BOOTS



THAT DAY it all started found Civilian Fred Roberts, who was soon doing boot with the 87th at Camp Peary, being interviewed by a yeoman in the recruiting station at Memphis, Tenn. This day became a milestone in Fred's life.



"YOU'LL BE SORRY!!" Fred Roberts and contingent of fellow sufferers from the Mid-West, arrive at Williamsburg for "delivery" to Capt. J. G. Ware at Peary. Soon they'll be hearing the familiar razz greeting every Seabee remembers.



SIX MORE WEEKS of this and the raw civilians reporting to Peary (above) will be ready for still more of same at Endicott and Rousseau. This was a familiar scene around Magruder about the second day of boot.



MUD ALL THE WAY UP was a depressingly familiar scene around Peary throughout boot days. They were building the sprawling camp when the boots arrived in February and it was still mushrooming when the 87th left in April.





LIBERTY, discussed and dreamed of for past six weeks, becomes an exciting reality for these future 87th warriors entraining at tiny Williamsburg station for Richmond and other points in early April, 1943. This fabulous 60-hour week-end liberty was first time off for

these boot "graduates" since they first encountered Peary's mud on or about 20 February. The 87th had not yet been formed. Easily recognized are: Ben Saeger, Nick Volpe, Dale Riggins, Jim Ferron and "Barney" Greenwood.

## BOOTS READY FOR ANYTHING AFTER PEARY MUD

Toward the end of February, 1943, octopus-like Camp Peary, situated in the heart of Virginia's swamplands, was the sole remaining boot camp for all incoming Seabees.

To the green ex-civilians who first entered "Swamp Peary," the induction area was a nightmare of knee-deep mud, confusing orders, shouts and the incessant cry—YOU'LL BE SORRY!!!—from every dungaree-clad, would-be old timer. A hectic day of processing was the unhappy lot of all fledgling Seabees. Everything was strictly "on the double" from daybreak to "Taps."

The first item was the issuance of gear—a sack full of clothes, bedding and miscellaneous items, which had to be stenciled before leaving Small Stores. A haircut—right to the bone—was followed by a gruesome ID photo. A final physical check-up and the cutting of the last link with home—cramping civvies into a cardboard box for mailing.

The business of allowances, allotments and government insurance was then taken care of with almost alarming dispatch, along with an interview regarding qualifications and experience. This roughly comprised the first day in service.

The now official boots were moved into a new area where the mud was even deeper. Each platoon of 25 men was assigned an instructor—their guide and mentor for the six-week boot period.

Two platoons were crowded into each wood-and-tarpaper barracks, which was heated by two pot-bellied stoves. Those having bunks near the stoves sweltered from the almost unbearable heat; all others froze, notwithstanding the pea-coats, watch caps and two sets of heavy woolies they wore to bed.

The first item of military training was close-order drill, carrying dummy rifles made of gas-pipe. The initial efforts in these maneuvers were largely comical, many learning for the first time the difference between their left and right foot.

Extended-order drills through the snowy woods of Virginia was another grueling test. After the first few mud-baths, the men learned the trick of choosing a soft, dry spot when the command—HIT THE DECK!!!—was given.

Technical training courses and lectures on first-aid, hygiene and special weapons afforded many a tired boot an opportunity to catch up on sleep lost on guard duty or fire-watch.

The men were slowly picking up new nautical expressions to be used for years to come: mates, decks, bulkheads, chow-down, gear, secure the detail, etc. Slowly, but surely, they were growing salty!

Sick Bay did a land-office business handing out arm-paralyzing shots of various descriptions. These only added to the already perilously low physical condition of the frequently fever-ridden mates. Eventually, long rows of barracks were quarantined when cases of scarlet fever and smallpox began cropping up.

There was a duty day every fourth day when men took over various camp details. Irrespective of age or rating, they were assigned to such sundry tasks as KP, guard duty, head-cleaning, hauling coal for the barracks stoves, or the most dreaded detail of all—swamp-clearing "Captain's Party!"

It wasn't long before the boots began to sense the full importance of mail in their daily lives. Letters were read hungrily for news of the outside world, which only so recently had been HOME.

Soon, the forthcoming 60-hour week-end liberty became the main topic of conversation. When the "Great Day" finally arrived and the fed-up boots were privileged to flee the stifling confines of Captain Ware's "university," the majority took a special train to historical Richmond.

Others roamed around beautiful Colonial Williamsburg or excursioned to nearby shrines like Jamestown or Yorktown. A few of the more daring made flying visits home, going as far north as New York and Connecticut.

Back at Peary, the "refreshed" men awaited assignment. On 13 April, the 87th Battalion was formed in B-8 area. The station paper, BEELINES, announced the news.

After three of the most tumultuous days in any man's experience, during which orders, bulletins and scuttlebutt raced with equal confusion through the hectic area, the men found themselves at the railway station of the brand-new spur-track leading out of camp. Station Force band turned out in full strength to give the first outfit to use the spur an official send-off.

Once aboard the rickety day coaches, with still no definite clue as to their destination, the men, at least, knew they were no longer "boots." They were now the 87th U. S. Naval Construction Battalion—and on their way!









A BATTALION IS LAUNCHED at Camp Endicott on 14 May 1943 when Capt. Fred Rogers, commanding officer of NCTC, Davisville, presents 87th Seabees with their colors at a full dress review. Here, the ranking official and reviewing party (including

Skipper Robert Easterly—third in file) march between opened ranks as bolts are smartly opened and closed. Although formed at Camp Peary, the 87th left Virginia before this formal ceremony could be arranged. This was another important milestone.

## CAMP ENDICOTT INTERLUDE HIGHLIGHTED BY COMMISSIONING

The exhausted men rubbed their sleepy eyes as the crummy day coaches pulled into Davisville, Rhode Island. Tired and hungry from their 18-hour trip from Virginia, the travelers showed only meager interest in Camp Endicott. It was 17 April 1943.

The most noticeable change from Camp Peary were the huge two-story barracks. These warm buildings, plus the asphalt roads and grassy plots, made the camp seem like a paradise compared to mud-packed "Swamp-Peary."

Assigned barracks in FG area, the men were immediately turned over for advanced military training. Long hikes over the rolling countryside, extended order, bayonet and weapons were topped off by the commando course, reputedly the toughest anywhere.

Newly issued '03s were zeroed in at Sun Valley Range. Many returned with titles of marksman, sharpshooter and expert. Others sported puffed lips and bruised shoulders.

Technical training men took up advanced courses. Groups of 20-mm. AA trainees shot hell out of the sleeves at Newport, returning with tall tales of their exploits.

On 14 May, the battalion was reviewed and officially commissioned by Captain Fred F. Rogers, Commanding Officer of Camp Endicott.

Liberty every fourth day and a 36-hour pass every other week-end found the men prowling far and wide. Nearby cities like East Greenwich, Providence and Pawtucket attracted most sightseers.

Excellent stage presentations such as "Junior Miss" and Ada Leonard's Girl Revue and performers like Akim Tamiroff vied with a wide choice of movies as entertainment.

Ship's Stores offered anything from beer to a fancy pair of earrings. These large buildings also housed bowling alleys, pool and ping-pong tables, canteens, gymnasiums and libraries.

THE BULLDOZER announced the first 87th death. John Hurley, CMLc, died 22 May of scarlet fever. THE PEEPSIGHT, first and only 87th newssheet, was born, survived several issues and collapsed.

The long-awaited nine-day embarkation leave began 27 May and found everyone east of the Mississippi scurrying for home. Everyone welcomed the brief respite from Camp Endicott's grating public address system. The 87th never had another one.

Westerners took the long chance and held their fire, hoping the scuttlebutt concerning North Africa was wrong. It was! All hands returned from leave 6 June.

On 13 June, the battalion was marched through the crowded camp streets to the waiting Pullmans.

Now, California and the Pacific war didn't seem nearly so far away!



THE MOMENT. Lt. Comdr. Robert Easterly hands Albert Printz the battalion colors, which have just been passed to him by Mrs. Easterly. She received them from Capt. Rogers. The battalion stands at "Present, Arms!" as history is made.





EMBARKATION PARTY at Hueneme featured elaborate cake baked by Chief Ted Plantz (center, between Chief "Jack" Smeltzer and Lt.(jg) W. E. Mannix). Book-shaped colored lettering told 87th story in log form through 23 August.



CHOW HALL SERENADE. Resplendent in natty dress blues, 87th military band plays for Embarkation Party as "secured" mates stick around after an all-out chow. Band is directed by Chief Norman Grier, former member of prominent name bands.



THE STAFF. Battalion staff officers group around Comdr. Easterly (promoted 26 July) for a last formal shot before donning tropical togs they will wear in the Pacific. Lt. Comdrs. Flynn (CEC) and Osgood (MC) flank the Skipper.



"LAST ONE, BOYS—until you start taking the really big ones overseas." Mates file through the 87th's Sick Bay for last shot before shoving off for "Island X." Both ships are in and it's now or never.



GEAR. Seated on his empty foot locker at Port Hueneme, Carpenter A. L. Davis lays out a few miscellaneous articles he feels he may need overseas. Fan (left) should prove invaluable if "Island X" is some tropical paradise.



GUEST HOUSE. Men, unable to leave camp since unit is secured for shipping out, meet loved ones for last time night of 27 August. Lonesome wife (left foreground) sits and wonders when her Seabee hero will show up.





CALIFORNIA, HERE WE COME! The crowded GREYHOUND bus marked LOS ANGELES is loaded with 87th Seabees primed for their final Stateside fling prior to embarking on their 27-month tour of the Pacific. Other than buying and packing for the voy-

age, the main concern of all hands during the gay Hueneme period was LIBERTY. Nothing else really mattered and the men—partially guessing the future—tore out for L. A., Hollywood and other equally outlandish fun centers at every opportunity.

## HUENEME IS SPRINGBOARD FOR FINAL STATESIDE FLING

"Sunny" California greeted the rail-weary 87th a bit soberly as the long trains from the East slid into Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, 19 June 1943. It was, in fact, one of those days filled with what the local chamber of commerce excuses as "heavy precipitation!" The weather, however, was incidental.

As the men filed stiffly into their area, they were momentarily cheered by the presence of snug quonset huts, which were to house only ten men each, thus affording comparative privacy after the teeming barracks of Peary and Endicott.

The trans-continental ride from Rhode Island to California was managed in smooth style. It seemed more like a cross-country, sight-seeing tour than a troop movement as the three sections wandered through 14 states. At St. Louis and Kansas City, the men had seen the awesome effect of raging flood waters. The Rockies and the Great Salt Lake, the colorful deserts, huge cities and tiny hamlets—all the vast, sweeping panorama of America—had kept the men rubbernecking between endless card and crap games.

To relieve the cramping monotony, the men were periodically allowed to leave the trains and stretch their limbs at odd water-stops. However, due to close guarding by battalion chiefs and SPs, the mates were often mistaken for German prisoners of war!

In some cities, magazines, books and newspapers were hoisted aboard by sympathetic townspeople. Many publications were inscribed with the names and addresses of the donors and pen-pals were thereby acquired.

Food served in dining cars was of excellent quality, but nowhere near the quantity to which Seabees are accustomed. Despite the life of ease, the men were bored and eager to reach California. Six days in a Pullman are too much.

The California summer climate proved a revelation to most who expected a semi-tropical atmosphere. Nights were cool and everyone slept under blankets.

A rapid re-introduction to military training was given by Marine instructors. The hard-baked clay of Ventura County proved unyielding when the men were on field problems. A new firing range provided a variety of targets for all weapons from pistols to mortars. AA men traveled to San Diego to fire at moving targets.

"The Battle of Mugu" found the attacking 87th shooting hell out of the imaginary enemy—and themselves, too!—with blank ammunition. The pseudo-beachhead ended in a hilarious fiasco, necessitating a repeat performance a few days later.

A test invasion alert and blackout routed the men out of the warm bunks at 0300 one morning to take up defensive positions in their assigned sector. Next noon found some "defenders" still sleeping soundly in the fields!

When the battalion's equipment was drawn and set up in a motor pool, a nucleus of transportation men was formed to maintain the machines.

The palletizing detail hammered for a month, crating the supplies in warehouses for shipment overseas.

The liberty-hounds were, at last, in their element. Los Angeles and Hollywood were only a short ride by bus. The famous Hollywood Canteen and night clubs and dance halls—like the Palladium, Florentine Gardens and Earl Carroll's—provided just about everything.

Santa Monica, Long Beach and Ocean Park afforded bathing facilities and amusement parks. Name bands like Kay Kyser and Alvino Ray gave sparkling performances right on the base.

Nature lovers even journeyed to distant Sequoia National Park to view California's famed giant redwood trees. Hitch-hiking was easy. There were ample cars and gas in California despite stringent rationing elsewhere!

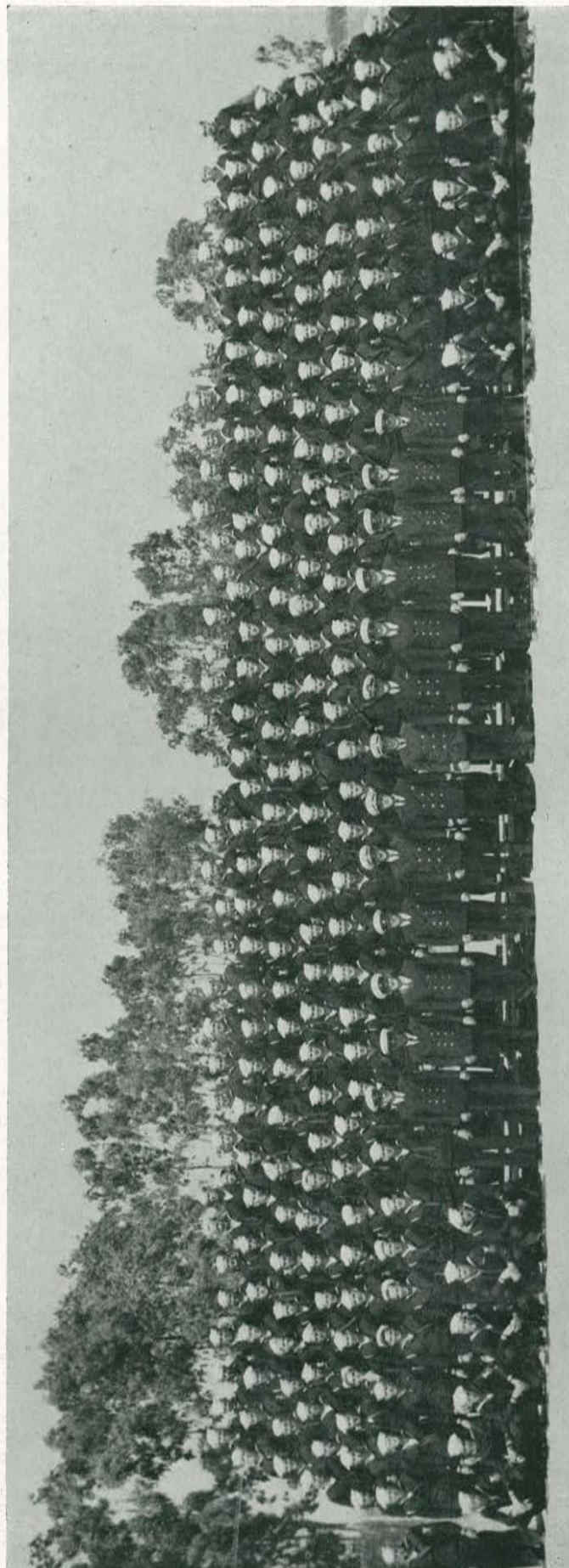
The first increase in ratings were announced effective 1 July. Eighteen new chiefs were created. The battalion was "wedded" to ACORN 12 on 3 July. The "happy" occasion was celebrated at a barn party and toasted with beer.

Units were continually moving in and out of Hueneme while the 87th restlessly marked time. Finally, on 23 August, the battalion was secured. The men, at last, were shocked out of their Stateside lethargy when it became known that the S.S. ROBIN WENTLEY and the S.S. COMET were at the dock and being loaded around the clock. (None of this news made the Camp Rousseau newspaper, SEABEE COVER-ALL!)

All hands knew the 10-week California lark was suddenly at an end. Soon, they would be leaving "The Land of Make-Believe" for the realistic Pacific world where no quarter was asked and none was given.



# BATTALION COMPANIES

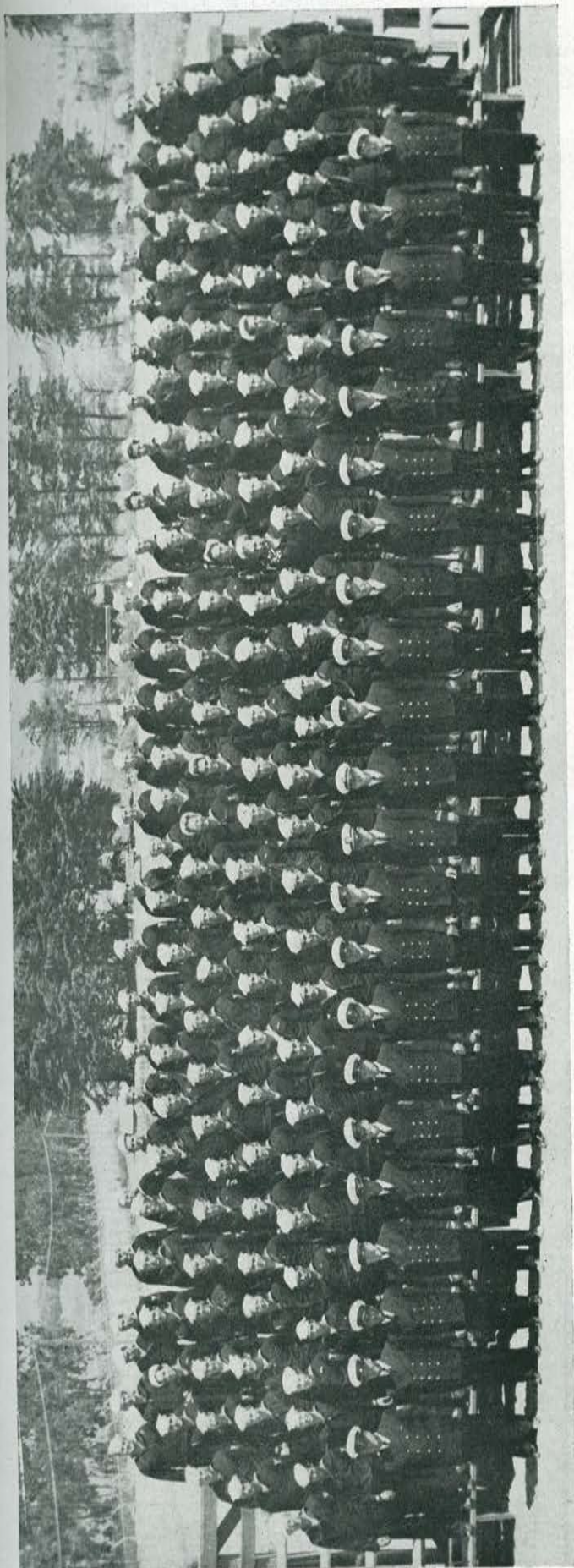


COMPANY A gets a full page in this volume because these men, along with an engineering unit from Headquarters, carried the ball for the 87th in the Treasury Islands invasion in October, 1943. Commanded by Lieut. Charles E. ("Pete") Turn-

bull (fifteenth from left, first row, standing), Co. A eventually had one winner of the Silver Star and three wearers of the Commendation Ribbon. Aurelio Tassone, Flc (thirteenth from right, fourth row) was only battalion member to win the Sil-

ver Star. Two members gave their lives in the Treasury Islands, Edwin Ostman, S2c (ninth from right, second row) became missing in action during the invasion and Roy Goldberg, S2c (eighth from left, third row) died by strating on 14 January 1944.

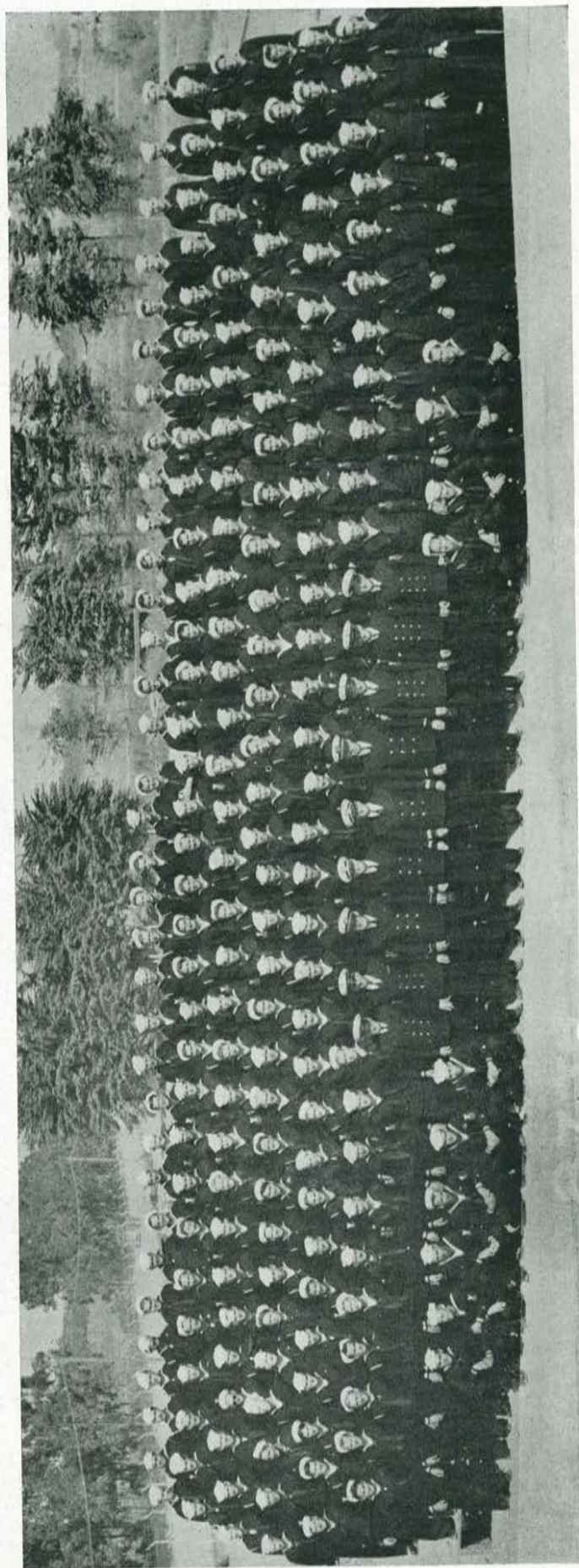




HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, with its two officers (dead center) and a potent array of 20 CPOs, was naturally the most maligned unit of the battalion, but it could be exceedingly useful, at times, to the other companies. The engineering contingent of Headquarters accompa-

nied Co. A on the Treasury invasion in the fall of '43 and laid out Stirling Field in the jungles. Commanded by Lieut. Louis D. Spaw, Jr., "Big City Hall" harbored such groups as: yeomen, storekeepers, photographers, barbers, tailors, cooks, bakers, laundrymen, pharmacist

mates, engineers (surveyors and draftsmen), MAAs, arm- orers, mailmen, censors and malaria control. When the battalion was realigned into divisions at Benika, Head- quarters Company became Headquarters Division.

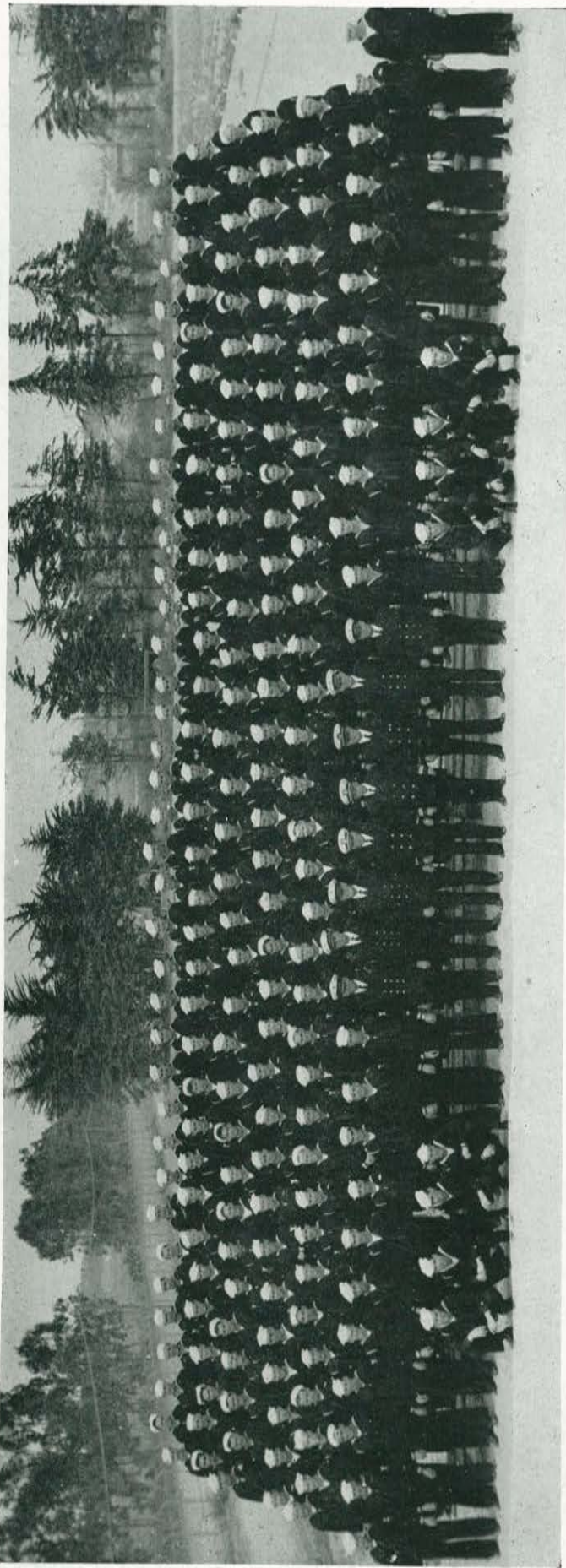


COMPANY B was the battalion unit where there was never a dull moment. Commanded by Lieut. Oscar N. Kulberg (fifteenth from left, first row, standing), Co. B compiled quite a colorful history, especially at Hue- nerre. In fact, it was such an unusual history that about

eight of the boys were unable to break away in time to catch the S. S. ROBIN WENTLEY. This company lost four men overseas. Two, Eddie Burns, Sic (tenth left, fourth row), and Blake Musselman, Sic (thir-teenth from left, third row), were bomb victims on Stirl-

ing. John Phillips, CM1c (ninth from right, top row), did aboard the U. S. S. NAOS at New Caledonia, while Dale Anderson, CM3c (third from right, top row), was killed in a quarry accident on Okinawa.

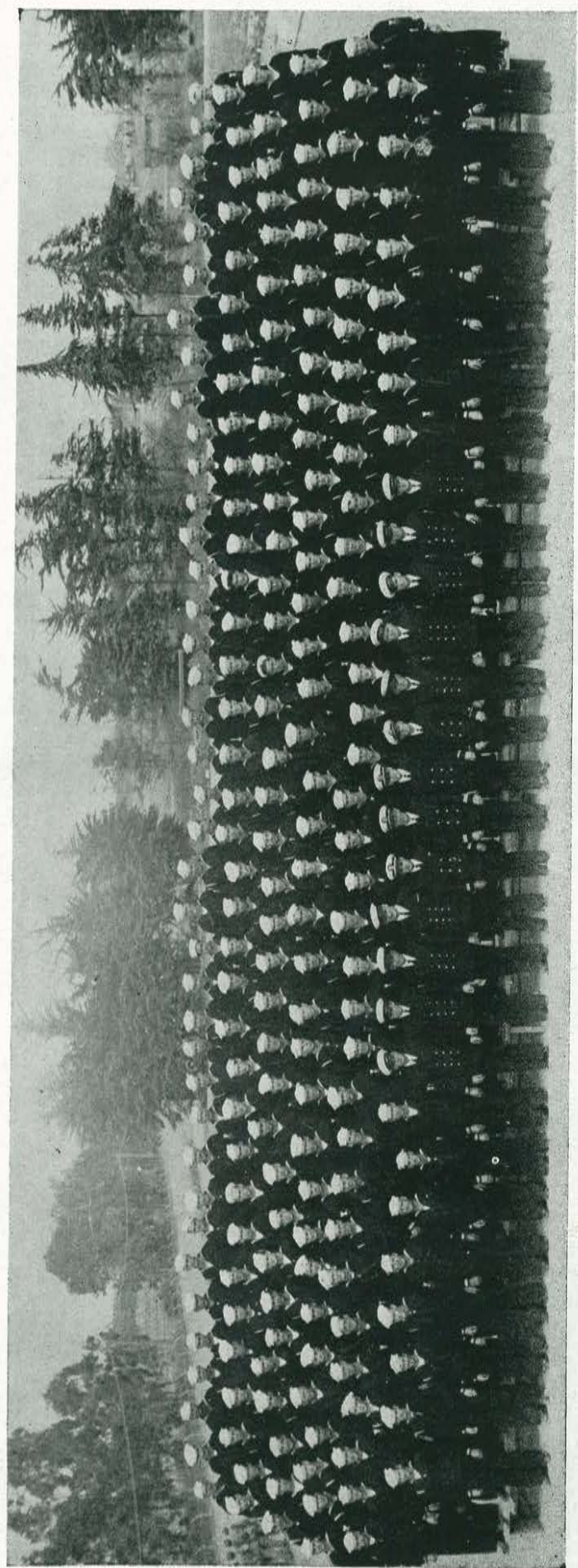




COMPANY C, under the command of Lieut. Estill E. Sparks (sixteenth from left, first row, standing), was known as a good liberty outfit and Stateside liberty was just about the choicest morsel to dangle before a mate's eye. Company C lost two men overseas, both

deaths occurring in line of duty on Stirling. The first, Friend H. Smith, CM1c (fourth from left, top row), was killed in an accident at the tool-sharpening shop, while Lyle Maris, CM1c (ninth from right, third row), died of pneumonia. A notable absentee from above

picture is Chief Charlie ("Uncle Charlie") Moers, then Company CPO and later the colorful "Protector of S Division" on Stirling. It was Chief Moers' second overseas tour.



COMPANY D, composed primarily of chiefs and seamen, was under the command of Lieut. William L. Whyte, Jr. (fourteenth from left, front row). Company D was kept on its toes by Company Chief Emil ("Uncle Slug") Schoente (twelfth from left, front row), who had an

endless series of tales to relate relative to his first overseas tour with the Second Battalion in early '42. Company D also lost two men overseas, both killed by the same bomb on Stirling. These mates were: Arthur Nappen, S1c (fourth from left, top row), and Donald

Fitzgerald, S1c (seventh from right, second row). Two company chiefs, Claude Brown and Jack Ormiston (tenth and eleventh from left, front row), were appointed to warrant rank overseas.





OUTWARD BOUND  
(A Port Hueneme Water Color)



# S. S. ROBIN WENTLEY



28 AUGUST 1943

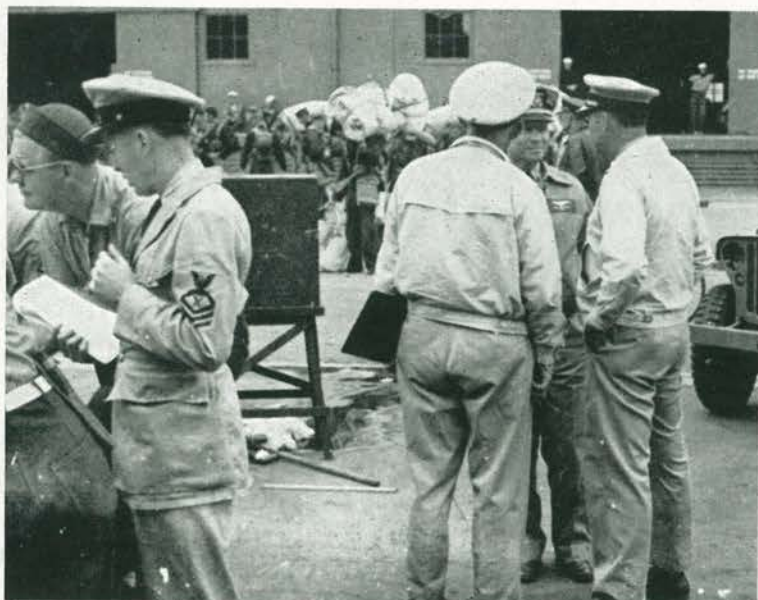




**THE BAND PLAYED ON.** Not even the 87th's rollicking military band could dispell the somber gloom that memorable August morning. The battalion is shown marching from Camp Rousseau to Dock No. 4. Headquarters Company follows the band.



**NO BAG INSPECTION.** California's celebrated sun wilted even the sturdiest, barrel-chested Seabee as the long, tedious morning of waiting slowly spent itself. Mates have grounded bulging duffelbags containing bedding and are awaiting loading orders in nearby shade.



**FINAL CONFERENCE.** Comdr. Robert Easterly, original 87th skipper, and Lt. Comdr. Herbert Nash, ACORN 12 executive officer, confer near gangway with Comdr. Roy Darron, ACORN OinC, as embarking continues. Left, Chief Lauren Merriam and Yeoman "Bill" Hemp help check musters.



**NOTHING LEFT BEHIND.** Two sturdy 87th Seabees, Paul ("Sarge") Tompkins and Harold Waldron, literally groan from bow to stern as they grimly hoist duffelbags, plus full field-packs and complete combat gear, and head for the WENTLEY's challenging gangway.



**THE LAST MILE.** Members of Company B, loaded to maximum capacity, ascend tricky knee-buckling gangway to board transport after being mustered at Personnel table. Left to right: "Russian" Daytner, Eugene Goldie, Artie Hansford, F. K. Jones and Wilbur Lake.



**DOWN THE HATCH!** Having surmounted the "obstacle course" of the ship's gangway (only with a helping hand in many instances!), mates are shown entering hatchway to go below in search of bunks they are to occupy for next 33 days.





"THAT FREEDOM SHALL NOT PERISH . . ." There was no turning back at this stage of embarkation. Figuratively, the fabulous South Pacific lay just over the horizon. The long-dreaded twenty per cent (overseas "bonus" pay) was no further away than the mouth of Port Hueneme's harbor. Loaded in pack-mule fashion,

mates determinedly stumble toward cheerless S. S. ROBIN WENTLEY as zero hour for departure nears. Well over two eventful years were to elapse before these men would re-enter "The Land of Plenty."

## 28 AUGUST 1943—A DAY TO REMEMBER!

Eyes, heavy with sleep, and in many cases looking grotesquely misplaced under shaved skulls, focused with extreme difficulty on timepieces, which read in the general vicinity of 0400.

Scattered shouts went ripping through the area to the effect that someone should kill the blankety-blank bugler, and most heads were hastily withdrawn into the delicious warmth of well-tustled sacks. Came depressing realization! The bugle was proclaiming the arrival of EMBARKATION DAY—28 August 1943!

The day anticipated with mingled dread and excitement for the past six months had finally materialized. Then, the flurry of last minute packing. No matter how carefully a fellow's field-pack had been put together the night before, it still had to be repacked; otherwise, the confusion would have been incomplete!

The still-warm beds had to be rolled and coaxed into duffelbags that apparently were designed for carrying handkerchiefs, and then rushed to various loading points in the camp area where they were soon picked up by Station Force trucks and hauled to the Port Hueneme dock.

Hurriedly-gulped breakfasts! The inevitable and eternal hut-policing! Detachment of eight men who the night before had been involved in a regrettable rumpus in the 87th area. And through it all raced the staff of all military life—SCUTTLEBUTT!

Then, loaded beyond human belief, the men were formed by companies to await the battalion's own well-rehearsed band, which escorted them by units to the dock—"The Last Mile"!!!!

The day had begun gray and somber, but before arriving dockside all hands were completely miserable beneath the scorching California sun. The mates were truly dragging bottom.

At the dock, more confusion presented itself in the form of a Naval dispatch, which ordered five battalion officers detached. It took more than a bit of Seabee ingenuity to have that order rescinded. The old "Can Do" spirit really buzzed across the country to Washington via telephone before the order was finally cancelled.

With groans—and before the amused, lucky few who were to sail the following day on the S. S. COMET—duffelbags were heaped upon

already overburdened backs to be carried up the WENTLEY's gangway. Sympathy radiated from the ACORN 12 and Casual Draft personnel who stood by awaiting their turns to go aboard.

Camp Rousseau Station Force personnel added their sadistic bit to the situation by holding up the line while they checked each man off the muster. They apparently wanted to make certain that no one would be inadvertently—or otherwise—left behind to possibly crowd them out of their comfortable Stateside billets.

The famed "obstacle course" at Camp Endicott was mild compared to the WENTLEY's gangway. Many required helping hands before reaching the top. Just how diminutive chaps like Zane Raudibaugh and Joe Beaver ever made it will remain a mystery for all time.

NOW HEAR THIS! NOW HEAR THIS!! was the preliminary greeting offered as weary bodies were urged across the unfamiliar decks and down ladders into the depressing bowels of the ship. GO BELOW AND STAY BELOW!!!

The rest of the time before sailing was spent in stretching aching muscles, trading for the best bunks, unpacking bedrolls, acknowledging the presence of the pangs of hungry, cursing the fact that the ship's heads were not to be used in port, rehashing last night's telephone conversation with the little lady across the nation, and indulging in a bit of secret speculation—Where?—Why?—How long?

Bewildered dogs were furtively released from ingenious hiding places—Archie ("Red") Reynolds' "Devil" and her squirming family of three from a ventilated handbag—Jack Alexander's frisky fox terrier, "Whiskey," made it aboard somehow—"Tippy," who had succeeded "Shadow" as official battalion mascot for foreign duty, was left behind to sail next day on the COMET. The first casualty of the embarkation occurred when one of "Devil's" puppies lost its life in the titanic struggle of being smuggled aboard ship.

At approximately 1630, the word was excitedly passed that the gangway had finally been secured and some of the more venturesome mates sneaked topside for a farewell, nostalgic glimpse of the "Land of the Free" before the great ship was given to the sea.





**ON HER OWN.** The jam-packed ROBIN WENTLEY begins to nose out of Port Hueneme's snug little harbor under its own throbbing power as tug casts off lines and snorts back to port. The familiar Hueneme shoreline may still be seen at fairly close range. Few en-

listed men witnessed this scene as they were kept below until harbor was cleared. Lack of chow since pre-dawn breakfast prompts spud-peelers (left) to ignore this historic moment in favor of an early supper.

## ANCHORS AWEIGH

### EIGHTY-SEVENTH GETS LAST LOOK AT THE STATES FOR WELL OVER TWO YEARS AS ROBIN WENTLEY HEADS TO SEA

The majority guessed "Somewhere in the South Pacific" and some correctly forecast the seething Solomons, but on 28 August 1943 the 87th's legendary "Island X" may well have been any one of a thousand landspecks in the far-flung Pacific.

Amid the spirited playing of "Anchors Aweigh" by the battalion band, the big ship cast its moorings. The few wives, sweethearts and friends at the receding dock waved their last fond farewell as the S. S. ROBIN WENTLEY nosed out of the Port Hueneme harbor on her maiden voyage as a transport.

The Stars and Stripes were almost immediately struck from the ship's towering mast. Enemy submarines had been reported lurking not too far off the California shore. The waters off the West Coast, even then, were most certainly no "Shangri-La."

The unescorted WENTLEY adopted a zig-zag course as the tiny Coast Guard cutter turned back five miles out and the inevitable seasickness swept the ship. Soon men and their GI pails became inseparable.

All hands knew the long voyage away from home had, at last, begun when a voice—long to be remembered—blared: THIS SHIP IS NOW PROCEEDING TO SEA! YOUR BASE PAY HAS BEEN INCREASED BY TWENTY PER CENT!! I CONGRATULATE YOU!!!

**GOODBYE, AMERICA!** Last view of Port Hueneme harbor as the outward bound transport gathers ever-increasing speed. Shown are a 20-mm. anti-aircraft gun, a stack of liferafts and, incidentally, a number of the battalion's budding "characters."



**ESCORT HEADS BACK.** Sleek Coast Guard cutter blasts farewell at five-mile limit and the WENTLEY is strictly on its own. Land has disappeared entirely. Ravenous hunger inspires spud-peelers to heroic efforts.





# “ NOW HEAR THIS! NOW HEAR THIS! ! ”

Still manned by its Merchant Marine crew and carrying approximately 1,700 crowded passengers, the ex-cargo liner, S. S. ROBIN WENTLEY, had its hands full on its first voyage as a troopship.

As further proof of its recent reconversion, it boasted a "regular" Navy armed guard and two antagonistic Marines as a police force. With all this as a starter, the ex-banana boat was hardly "a happy ship."

Down in the gloomy holds, landlubber mates went through all the known tortures of embryonic sailors. For the most part too exhausted to leave their bunks for fresh air, they lay fully-clothed, cursing the Navy, the Japs, the Pacific and the mate in the next bunk who always seemed to have his feet in their face.

The next morning found the men in an even more dejected state with headaches, nausea and a complete distaste for food. Ship's rail was almost solidly lined with men—some to see for the first time the lonely sight of an empty, limitless ocean; others for a more practical, but a far more unpleasant purpose.

Details were immediately assigned—KP in all its repulsive phases, guard duty, gun and sentry watches, head-cleaning and deck-swabbing. It was alleged the WENTLEY had more guards and sentries than the U. S. Treasury Building!

The most coveted assignment was the break-out crew. This group had to break out all fresh and canned foods for the troop mess. This gang always found willing help—especially when canned peaches and pineapple were scheduled for the menu!

Passengers were served meals twice a day. The chow-line was exhausting. The troop mess was the hottest spot aboard ship. Four chiefs were stationed there, apparently to make sure no one enjoyed the meals. They pushed the mates in, and after a few mouthfuls, they pushed them right out again.

Men began sleeping on deck in the most ingeniously hidden spots to find relief from the oppressively airless holds. These hideouts had to be well concealed for the Marine "Gestapo" took fiendish delight in herding passengers below deck on the stuffiest nights.

The able troop commander, Lieut. B. A. Feiber, made full use of the powerful PA system. At all hours day and night, the monotonous dullness was shattered by his strident: "NOW HEAR THIS! NOW

HEAR THIS! ALL PASSENGERS GO TO YOUR BUNKS, GET IN YOUR BUNKS AND STAY IN YOUR BUNKS!!

The monotony of the journey finally produced in the men a dreary physical inertia. Sleeping and trying to forage some food or juice became favorite pastimes. Any seat in the shade was a priceless possession. A pair of shorts became standard uniform as men found laundering with salt water an arduous task.

Entertainment was organized. Some men had energy enough left to box. Chief Norman Grier got the mike away from the troop commander long enough to play some popular requests on a record-player every day. Unsuspected 87th talent put on a variety show, featuring singing and instrument-playing over the air. Impromptu jam sessions held on deck by a few musicians each night were a highlight.

Most anticipated feature of the day was the news broadcast given at 1100 by ACORN 12 Chaplain Cyril R. Kavanagh. Italy surrendered during the voyage and all Italian-Americans aboard were welcomed by their buddies as Allies! Each passenger was invited to write certain letters and thus the fledgling 87th met overseas censorship.

Meanwhile, the WENTLEY zig-zagged on her tiresome journey. Only once did she stop—to repair her boilers. After an uneasy hour of waiting, a feeling of relief swept over the men when the familiar throbbing was once more detected. She had presented an easy target on the calm sea.

The owners of watches were kept busy turning their timepieces back as the ship forged westward. As it crossed the International Date Line—completely skipping 11 September—the now salty Shellbacks saw their first land since leaving the States. It was Tonga-Tabu. A British float-plane dipped low over the WENTLEY, and apparently satisfied by the signals, flew casually away.

Two days from the initial destination, an inquisitive American destroyer pulled close for a "pow-wow" in code around midnight, but it slunk away after a brief exchange of blinkers.

As New Caledonia appeared out of the sea, the mates took a new lease on life. It has been a tedious 6,080-mile trip from Hueneme, but not without certain merits. As their first voyage on a troopship, it had really made each man appreciate his forfeited civilian status.

**HAIL, THE GANG!** Their ravenous hunger temporarily satisfied by first meal aboard ship, sweat-drenched mates escape the WENTLEY's stifling galley to topside (Hatch 5) for reviving breath of sea-breeze and initial session of scuttlebutt. Men seated and

reclining on full vegetable crates wear bulky, kapok life-jackets and filled canteens in accordance with ship's rigid orders. One game has been resumed. "Whiskey," one of a half dozen dogs smuggled aboard, is held by his master, Jack Alexander.





# "A CLEAN SHIP IS A HAPPY SHIP"



**STUD OR DRAW!** Perpetual card games of every imaginable type dominated the recreational scene topside. When not playing, men read, talked or slept in meager shade, or marveled at flying fish, leap-frogging porpoises or spouting whales along ship's rail.



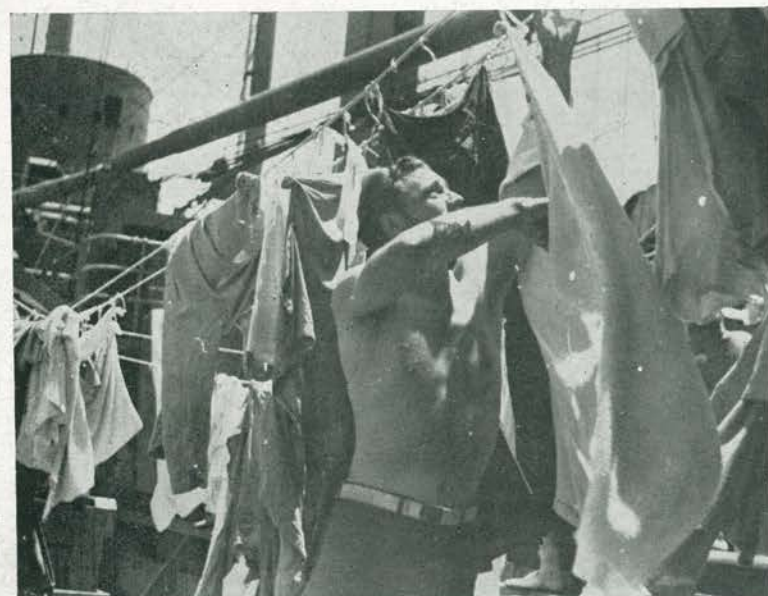
**SEABEE COWBOY.** The long, monotonous voyage unearthed much unknown and unsuspected talent in the battalion's own ranks. Chief Vic Cedarstaff, Cripple Creek, Colorado, entertains fellow passengers with intricate rope tricks he learned as a boy from western cowpunchers.



**GRUDGE FIGHT.** Extremely crowded quarters aboard the transport resulted in inevitable disputes between shipmates. Here, two feuding Seabees settle their quarrel in the approved manly manner to the delight of their buddies. Such bouts were, of course, rigidly supervised.



**IN THE EVENING.** John J. Arbolino, Brooklyn, entertains an audience aboard ship with the ever-popular "squeeze box." Requests, as usual, were for the old favorites men had known as civilians. Disinterested mate (right) continues his reading.



**"PIPE 'EM DOWN!"** Every day was crew wash-day at sea. Intense equatorial heat throughout journey made frequent laundering essential. Here, Charlie Johnson, Comer, Georgia, "pipes down all scrub and wash clothes" at sweltering day's end.



**SWEAT BOX.** Battalion galley personnel stood regular watches throughout the cruise despite the galley's unbearable heat. Chow, as always, was of prime concern to all hands. "Freddy" Vachon (left) and Arnold Shoup are preparing hot dogs and soup.





**PACIFIC SUNSET.** Typical of all sunset scenes aboard the armed transport were solitary mates leaning thoughtfully against the ship's rail, most likely contrasting in their unsettled minds those last fleeting months in sunny California with the perils looming ahead

at journey's end. Usually, the lonely men talked in pairs or in larger groups, but sooner or later almost every man found himself alone with his thoughts. (See story below).

## ALONG THE RAIL

LONELY, UNCERTAIN MATES  
CONSIDER THE FUTURE AS  
ANOTHER LONG DAY ENDS

Of the thousand and one ways the men passed the 33 days and the 7,180 miles between California and their initial staging destination, none compared with the wistful dreaming done along the ship's rail.

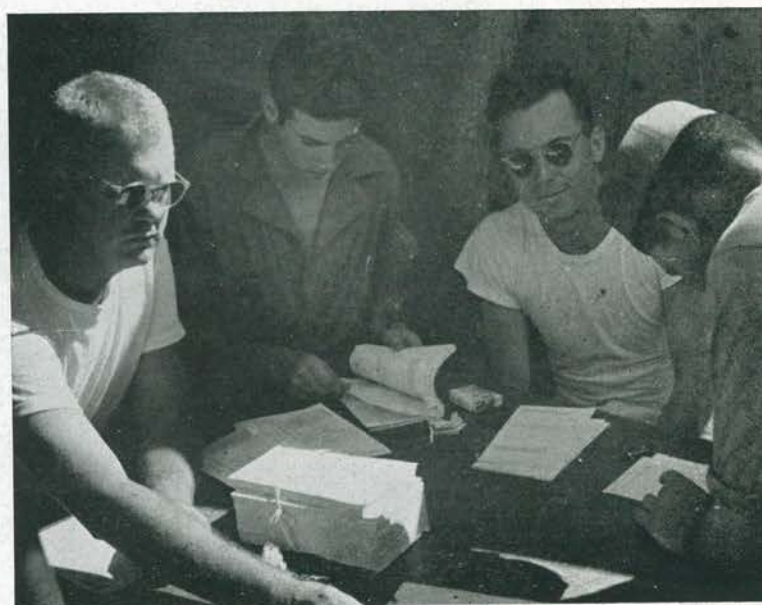
In daytime, staring out into the vast panorama of sea and sky, and at night, viewing the rhinestone sky and ebony sea, studded with millions of tiny, phosphorescent jewels, men would pause and think.

They would see themselves, caught up in the maelstrom of a global war, being whisked away from family, wife or sweetheart, plunged into the Indefinite, unable to turn back and powerless to foresee what the future held.

Only the rushing swish of the somber ocean made reply.



"HAIRCUT, MISTER?" "Weary Willie" Williams, Hazlehurst, Georgia, one of three battalion tonsorial artists, gives Lt. Comdr. Edward A. Flynn, Cleveland, original 87th "exec", a spine-tingling hair-trim at sea. Open-air shop did land-office business.



**BUSINESS AS USUAL.** Battalion administrative units continued to function aboard ship. Here, a semi-annual MAQ renewal is being executed by one of the 87th crew as Yeomen Bill Hemp, Tom Peiffer and Jack Knowles see the job well done.





HEAR YE! HEAR YE! Neptuneus Rex, Ruler of the Raging Main, and his Royal Bride preside over hilarious, tail-warming session of Royal Court as the WENTLEY crosses the Equator on 5 September. Most unworthy "Pollywog" (left) bends to kiss Royal Baby's hairy belly as a Royal Paddler begins to lay the wood on the victim's already scarlet posterior. Royal Barbers (right, in white jackets) await hapless Pollywog to administer free equatorial scalping.

## 87TH BECOMES SHELLBACK BATTALION AT EQUATOR

An ominous tenseness swept over the bored men as Davy Jones and his rollicking pirates boarded the S.S. ROBIN WENTLEY at sunset the day before the 87th Seabees crossed the Equator in the fall of 1943.

The WENTLEY's captain surrendered unconditionally to this most worthy emissary of Father Neptune, and Davy immediately piped the attention of all hands over the PA system.

Landlubbers aboard quaked in their boots as the booming voice of Davy (Chief Emil Schoenke) was wafted throughout this clean—but definitely unhappy—ship! Even to the lower 'tween decks, the deep, guttural tones of Davy's voice penetrated, rousing the mates with his blood-curdling message of fire and brimstone.

The distinguished emissary declared in no uncertain terms that the ship was now entering the hallowed domain of Neptuneus Rex, Sovereign Ruler, King of Kings, Undisputed Master of Sky, Wind and Water, Flesh, Fish or Fowl, Both East and West, in Latitude 00000 Degrees.

He then summoned all "Shellbacks" to report at once to his quarters amidships, and instructed all others in the lay of the land. "Pollywogs," former landlubbers of the butcher, baker and candlestick-maker variety, were to appear before His Majesty's Court the following day and explain their blasphemous trespassing of his sacred sea.

All Shellbacks were immediately pressed into service after they had furnished irrefutable proof of having previously crossed "The Line."

During the long evening, mates who offended by rude remarks or improper actions in the presence of Neptune's emissaries were hauled into the Inner Sanctum of the midshiphouse and given a short induction ceremony to teach them the proper attitude in the presence of royalty.

Marcelino ("Bobo") Escobedo, among many, returned therefrom a chastened man—minus hair and in its place a liberal coating of potassium permanganate. The mates were tremendously impressed by what they saw.

The timid Pollywogs squirmed in their canvas hide-outs and made themselves as inconspicuous as possible. They also felt longingly of their profuse locks and tried to get some sleep before tomorrow's looming ordeal.

Before the night was over, however, a number of officers and chiefs were given a thorough processing to see if they were fit to serve

on the "Misery Line" next day. The well known deputy from Emporia, Kansas, Chief Gomer Ralph, ("Hopalong Cassidy") Jones, and his Oklahoma sidekick, Chief Owen ("Awful") Lawson, were given some really special treatment. However, this pair more than made up for it the following day as many an unsuspecting mate learned to his sorrow.

Such sights the 87th had never seen before or since. Heading the all-star cast in "The Pollywog Parade" were Ensign Cal. Winters and Chief Paul ("Lister-Bag") Vater, both attired in infant apparel and wearing the cutest baby caps. The mates rolled in the aisles!

Next day, 5 September, Davy and his swashbuckling pirates escorted Father Neptune and his train to the throne room atop Hatch No. 4.

The uniform of the day was skivvy shorts as the Royal Sheriff and his motley deputies broke out all Pollywogs under hatches and the long, hilarious court session began. Neptune's police, were like all police since time immemorial—they used their clubs with the greatest enthusiasm.

Each manjack was tried individually—and fairly!! From Comdr. Robert Easterly to Seaman George Filomio, their offenses were loudly proclaimed by the Royal Scribes. After an examination by the Royal Doctor, the "just" sentence of "Guilty!!" was invariably pronounced by the Royal Judge. Then, the cringing Pollywog was taken in tow by the Royal Bodyguard, Bos'n's Mate Frank Rychlak, and led past numerous attendants and flunkies where the imposed sentence was carried out in full measure.

The Royal Paddlers then took the sweating Pollywogs in hand and laid-to with the venomous ambition to beat all traces of the landlubber from their smarting posteriors.

The wails had little effect on the activities of the Royal Barber, Chief William J. ("Sully") Sullivan, as he dispensed "free" haircuts in full, clean swipes of the clippers.

Some of the mates were privileged to kiss the Royal Baby's hairy belly before being tossed into the canvas tank to the Royal Bears—a playful group whose main interest was to handle the mates in such a manner that they would be thoroughly cleansed with sea-water, both inside and out.

Fire hoses, squirting powerful streams of salt water, completed the rinsing process and the bewildered initiate, now cleansed of all sins of a landlubber, found himself a fit subject of Neptuneus Rex—a thorough, sea-going Salt, at last!!





WHAT PRICE GLORY? Final stage of the boisterous Shellback initiation was the free-for-all dunking of the bewildered Pollywog into the salt-water tank by the rough-and-tumble Royal Bears. Dunking continued until the confused victim yelled "Shellback!" three times in

rapid succession. Only then would the initiate be freed and pronounced a qualified Shellback. The new "veteran" (if able) began immediately to assist with indoctrinating his shipmates still running the gauntlet for their baptism of fire.

ANYTHING ELSE, FELLOWS??? Slightly bewildered, John W. Gottschall (both arms extended) emerges from the salty "drink" a full-fledged Shellback, but unwisely asks his erstwhile "tormentors" if perchance they have overlooked any form of medieval torture. Mean-

while, the relentless Royal Bears continue to dunk protesting Pollywogs like mad (right). Chiefs Gomer Ralph Jones and Ted Marienthal (lower left) are on verge of turning ship's high-pressure hose on Shellback Gottschall by way of a very salty retort.





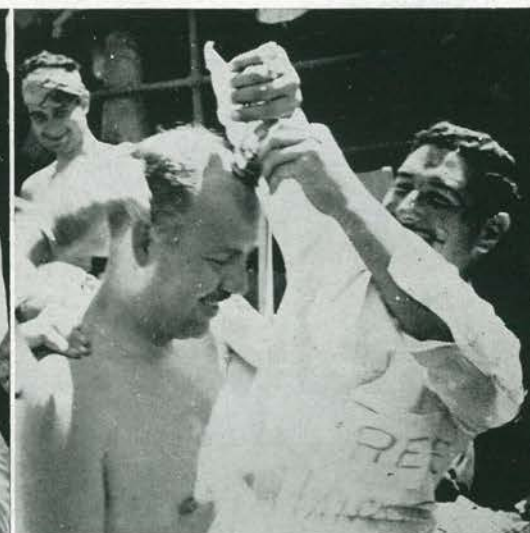
# SHELLBACKS SHOW "GOLD BRAID" POLLYWOGS NO MERCY



**ROYAL SHERIFF.** Flaunting huge star of authority and acting on secret orders direct from Neptunus Rex, Royal Sheriff and motley deputies depart from Royal Court in search of "Gold Braid" Pollywogs. The long-deferred hour of reckoning is at hand.



**"GUILTY OR GUILTY?"** First officer apprehended by the search party is Pollywog Edward A. Flynn, 87th's second in command, who prematurely smiles as gleeful Royal Scribes extoll formidable list of outlandish charges against the "exec" before the fireworks commence.



**"THE OLD MAN."** Not even the Skipper escapes the Shellback dragnet as veterans comb the WENTLEY from bow to stern for high-ranking victims as the initiation reaches its zenith. Here, Pollywog Robert Easterly, original 87th OinC, takes the hurdles as: (left) he prepares to kiss the

Royal Bride's "undimpled" knee; (center) bends to osculate the beaming Royal Baby's uninviting belly; (right) parts company with hair he can ill afford to lose at hands of vengeful Royal Barbers.



**A HOUSE DIVIDED.** Eager Royal Bears attempt to snatch Lt.(jg) Louis D. Spaw, Jr., Houston, Texas, from Royal Barbers even before scissor-happy tonsorial artists can finish dispoiling young 87th officer's neatly-groomed locks.



**AT THE VORTEX.** Hilarious enlisted Shellbacks turn powerful ship's hose (more salt water) on group of battalion officers as "The Braid" flee dunking tank at end of initiation ceremony. Mates roar unanimous approval along sidelines.





DESIGNED FOR FRAMING. Arriving at the initial staging destination, all hands were presented with ornate, tropical-colored Shellback certificates. Reproduced above is the certificate of "Sam Salt", Seaman, Second Class, a fictitious mate, who is the proto-

type of all worthy Shellbacks in the Pacific. These attractively lettered documents, duly signed by Neptunus Rex, Ruler of the Raging Main, and Davy Jones, His Majesty's Scribe, became bona fide proof of having crossed "The Line" with all appropriate ceremonies.

## "CROSSING THE LINE" OLD AS THE SEA

The uproarish ceremonies of "Crossing the Line" are of such ancient vintage that their source is—for all practical purposes—lost. Therefore, the ritual may well be as old as the Seven Seas.

According to history, vessels of all nations—whether sailing in the warm Mediterranean or in the frosty North Atlantic—held certain ceremonies when they sailed over a particular latitude. And even to this day, ships of all nations still have one ritual in common when crossing the Equator, Latitude 00000, the mythical home of Father Neptune, Sovereign Ruler of All Seas.

No one has presented concrete evidence, as yet, but savants consider it logical to assume that these ancient rituals on salt water were, at first, religious rites, then medieval testing of human courage or initiation into hardy seamanship, and finally, as today, an uproarish party to break the unrelieved monotony of a long voyage.

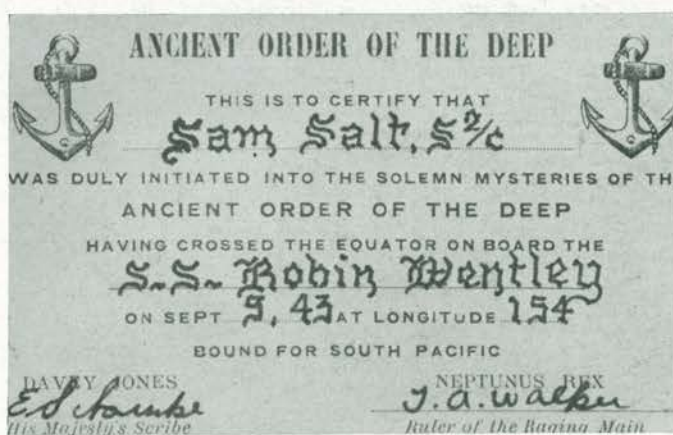
One thing is certain: the anticipation, the terrible punishments imagined, the wholesome fun experienced and the memories stored away make this day an outstanding one forever.

And the certificates received as proof of having crossed the Equator become documents of priceless sentimental value.

They not only prove the owners have sailed "deep water,"

but it also distinguishes them from their less fortunate "shallow water" fellowmen who have not had the opportunity of "Crossing the Line."

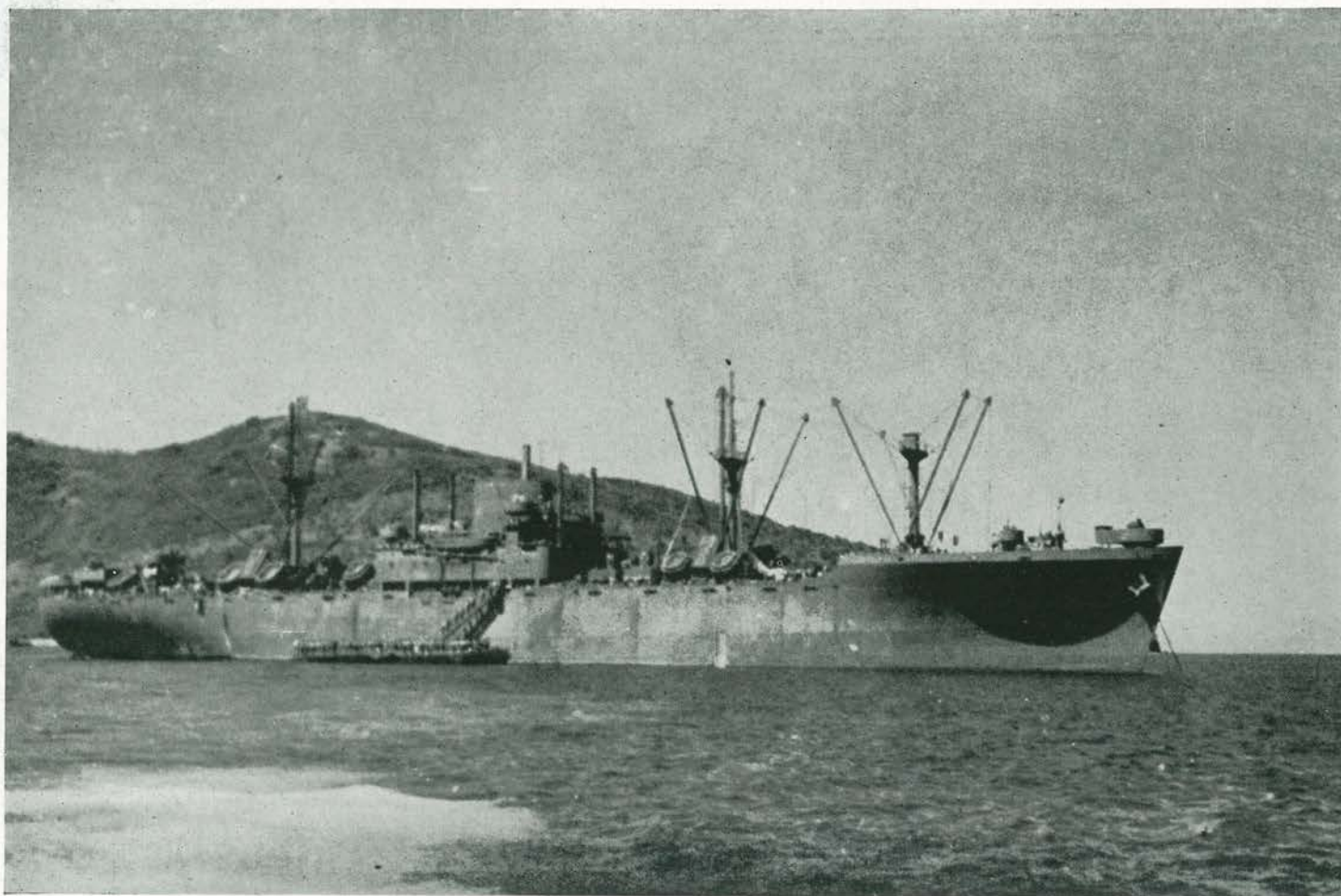
And thus it was with the 87th.



PROOF. Reproduced above (again in favor of "Sam Salt") is the official Shellback membership card. Carried by all worthy Shellbacks, this card is especially valuable in recrossing the Equator. Lacking this proof, a second initiation would be inevitable.



# 87TH REACHES NOUMEA IN 17 DAYS

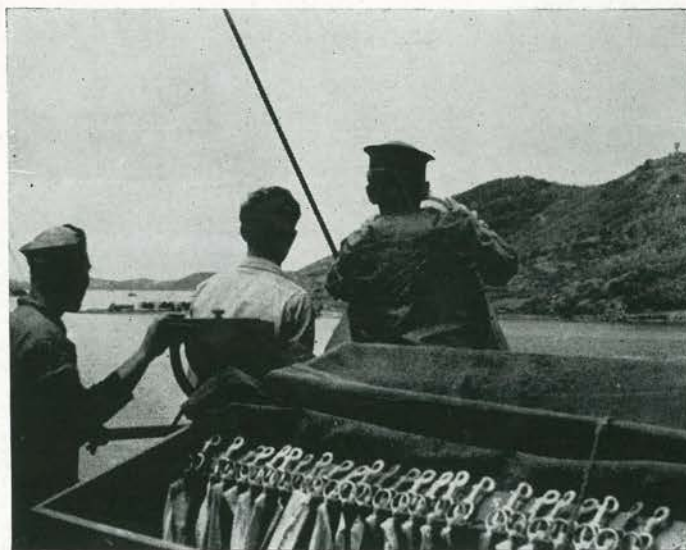


"DON'T FENCE ME IN." New Caledonia was a most welcome sight on 14 September after 17 routine days at sea. Ocean-weary mates are shown unloading from the WENTLEY onto huge pontoon barges for a shore party at SHANGRI-LA TERRACE. Here, the

sturdy transport rested from its maiden voyage as a troopship for 12 days in the well-protected Noumea harbor before the 87th finally received its staging orders.



FIRST LAP COMPLETED. The WENTLEY slowly noses into Noumea's calm outer harbor before anchoring. All hands crowd ship's rail for eager first glimpse of New Caledonia's picturesque capital. This panoramic view was taken from the midshiphouse.



SHIP TO SHORE. Battalion signalmen are shown sending a blinker message to a shore installation as the WENTLEY lays over. Signalman Third Class Ralph M. Ormsby (right) controls blinker. Ship's signal flags are in open gear locker behind group.





"OH, GIVE ME LAND, LOTS OF LAND..." First 87th group to pay visit to legendary SHANGRI-LA TERRACE crosses Seabee-built footbridge across ocean inlet en route to popular Navy Playground. Chief Commissary Steward "Jack" Smeltzer, Des Moines,

Iowa, examines sign pointing toward recreation area as shipmates hurry past. Black native shepherds, attending grazing flocks along slope of nearby hills, are first foreigners most mates have seen outside the States.

## NEW CALEDONIA IS BATTALION'S FIRST FOREIGN LAND

Noumea, the lazy, colorful capital of Free French New Caledonia, was the first port of call for the war-bound 87th Seabees.

Rail space, more so than ever, was at a premium as the sea-weary 87th struggled for a better view of bustling Noumea harbor with its intricate military installations. The anchor was scarcely taut before Skipper Easterly and aides were en route ashore to learn the destiny of the outfit. It was 14 September 1943.

Meanwhile, there was nothing for the men to do aboard ship except repeat the monotonous pattern of the previous 17 days at sea. The blistering heat from the semi-tropical sun immediately became a major problem. All hands sweltered from a lack of sea-breeze and the near-blinding reflections of the sun from the iron decks.

The first day was singularly uneventful. The monotony, however, was momentarily relieved by the arrival of Noumea's port director, who welcomed the WENTLEY and her perspiring human cargo to New Caledonia.

The first shore party for Shangri-la Terrace, the Navy's famed Coral Sea playground, was hurriedly formed the next day and shoved off amid record confusion.

Accumulated mail was taken ashore and battalion mailmen eventually returned with the first letters received overseas. Jubilant one moment, the men were equally crestfallen the next when it was learned there was no mail from home—only a few inter-island letters from GI friends in the South Pacific.

Suddenly, the battalion became souvenir-conscious. Everyone went all-out for any kind of memento to mail home. An urgent call swept the ship for those with a speaking knowledge of French. Soon Chief Ona J. Deroche and Rosaire ("Frenchy") Terroux were en route to Noumea as official souvenir "procurers."

This team returned loaded with such items as French coins, post cards, picture folders, silk handkerchiefs, etc. The "cache" was rationed through Ship's Store, but demand so exceeded supply that additional excursions were promptly ordered.

The battalion's cargo ship, the COMET, carrying four officers, twelve enlisted men and "Tippy," arrived. Meanwhile, all hands were paid a flat \$5.00 to boost morale. It was a great sub-scare tale the COMET gang related when they taxied over for pay.

With the officers and chiefs going ashore virtually every day, the mates began to clamor for a visit to "The Enchanted City." Eventually, inspection parties were arranged that took sizeable groups into Noumea and out among the various Seabee battalions encamped near the city.

Others saw the sights as members of the touring 87th military band, which played three well-received engagements. The Malaria Control group got ashore by attending a specialty school. Finally, in sheer desperation, all hands who had otherwise missed, began seeking a berth on Ensign R. J. Seugling's daily garbage-disposal detail which passed through the fabulous city twice each day. Never before or since had this odorous job been held in such esteem!

Those who got into Noumea found an amazing melting pot of all nationalities, dirty and almost unbelievably crowded with the servicemen of all Allied nations, native Kanakas, immigrant Javanese and assorted Orientals. One trip, as a rule, was sufficient!

Soon, unrelieved monotony set in aboard ship as Shangri-la Terrace became less appealing and the inspection trips were permanently cancelled due to one man's questionable conduct in town. The bored, restless men fished and watched passing ships from the rail by day and gazed in starry-eyed disbelief at Noumea's brilliantly-lighted skyline far into the night. This all-out illumination was in stark contrast to West Coast regulations. Not even passing battlewagons or carriers jam-packed with warplanes stirred the men to any noticeable extent. The harbor was literally a maze of all types of warships, all awaiting convoy orders for the raging Solomons.

Suddenly, without warning, everything seemed to happen. Comdrs. Easterly and Darron, the unit skippers, left Noumea by plane for the initial destination. The ditch-digger, "Old Faithful," was hoisted aboard and the otherwise indifferent men correctly envisioned slit trenches and foxholes just ahead. All hands were ordered to commence taking the repulsive, yellow atabrine tablets after their meals. And when the Malaria Control boys began lecturing in each hold, everyone knew it was to be the Solomons!

On the twelfth day in harbor, 26 September, just as many were beginning to suspect the outfit might spend most of the war in New Caledonia, the anchor was weighed, the great engines quickened their tempo and the S.S. ROBIN WENTLEY joined up with a convoy bristling with armed might and headed for trouble.



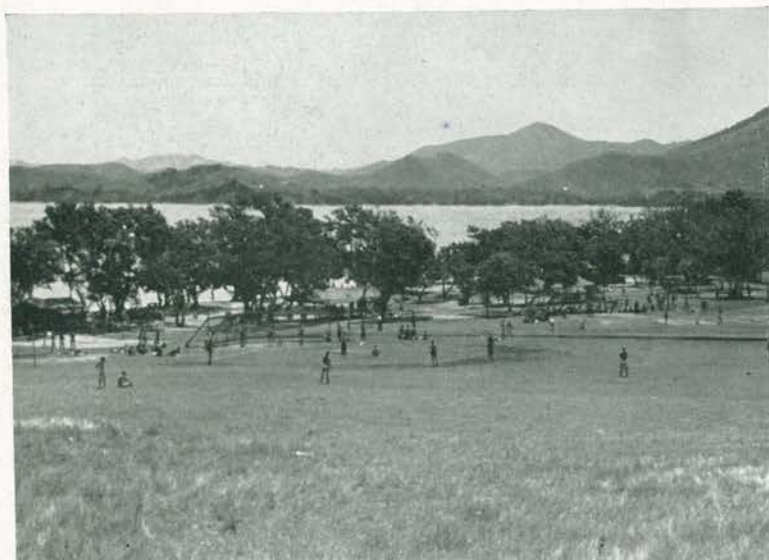
# MATES FROLIC AT SHANGRI-LA TERRACE



**SCENIC PAUSE.** The men found walking over hilly terrain an exhausting ordeal after 17 days of inactivity at sea. Here, advance group catches quick breath to marvel at eye-filling scenery after long climb before proceeding to the playground proper.



**THE OLD SHELL GAME.** Lt.(jg) L. D. Spaw, Jr. and Lieut. W. C. Reilly (left) and two unidentified mates search for seashells washed ashore along SHANGRI-LA's interesting Coral Sea beaches. Here, the men first learned of tropical cateyes.



**INTERNATIONAL PASTIME.** Quickly tiring of battling ocean breakers, swimmers switch to the inevitable baseball games played on diamonds laid out by Noumea-based Seabees. The outcome of these impromptu contests was of little significance. The exercise was the thing.



**WHALE BONE.** Everett Covey (left) and Eugene Brown obligingly display a mammoth whalebone they have found along a hidden beach. Covey points out a most unusual colored line near center of trophy as Brown gropes for an explanation.



**RED HOTS!** Battalion cooks exhibit armfuls of king-size hot dogs they are preparing to serve hungry shore party following several hours of intensified recreation. Left to right: Johnny Miller, John ("Boston") Lane and Frank Goodrich, Jr.



**CHOW DOWN!** General view of special mess area at well-planned Navy playground shows starved mates wolfing picnic chow brought ashore from transport. The usual chow-line automatically forms (left) beneath shade of eucalyptus trees near thatched huts.





HERE, AMERICA BLED. Passengers gaze in awe upon the shores of legendary Guadalcanal just off once-bloody Lunga Point as the WENTLEY drops anchor overnight on 29 September. The harbor swarms with every conceivable type of small warcraft. Storied

Henderson Field is just beyond shoreline with its irrefutable proof of mushrooming Pacific air power. Ship's rail was crowded until the transport shoved off the following morning. Rugged mountain ranges are obscured by haze.

# G U A D A L C A N A L !

## MAKES LASTING IMPRESSION ON RAW, UNTRIED 87TH

Every manjack crowded the ship's rail or stood atop any handy steel structure. Some ascended the rigging for a better view. GUADALCANAL! This was IT!! The 1,000-mile trip from Noumea to the Canal had been completed without incident.

The men gazed in wonderment at the hundreds of landing barges, riding at moorings like grim sentinels, each rust-covered, battered and suggestively empty; at leafless coconut palm trees everywhere, naked as telephone poles set into the ground for no obvious reason; at masts, funnels and hulls of sunken ships protruding awkwardly from beneath the bay's surface; at countless warplanes swooping by and dropping down upon HENDERSON FIELD just beyond the palm-studded shoreline of LUNGA POINT.

Men stood along the ship's rail far into the night. An uncanny silence prevailed about the blacked-out decks.

This was THE CANAL—the blood-soaked symbol of American courage—the standard by which all future accomplishments would be measured! And now, the raw, untried 87th was going on up "The Slot" to continue the job that had been started here in 1942.

Was the outfit capable of such an assignment?? The mere thought was overwhelming, even frightening!! Hardly anyone conversed much below decks or slept soundly that night. Something sinister and intangible prevented normal

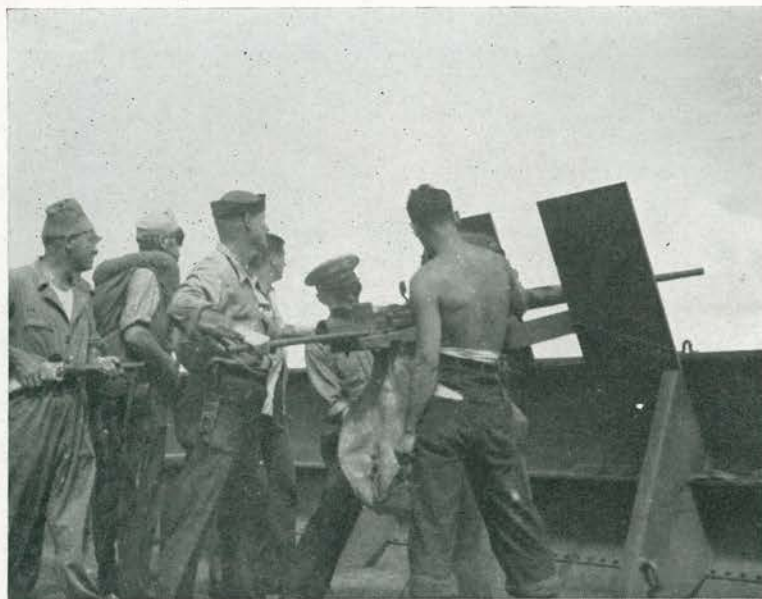
meditation and relaxation.

Tomorrow was inevitable with its enormous potentialities. The battalion eventually turned in, but didn't sleep. They merely waited.

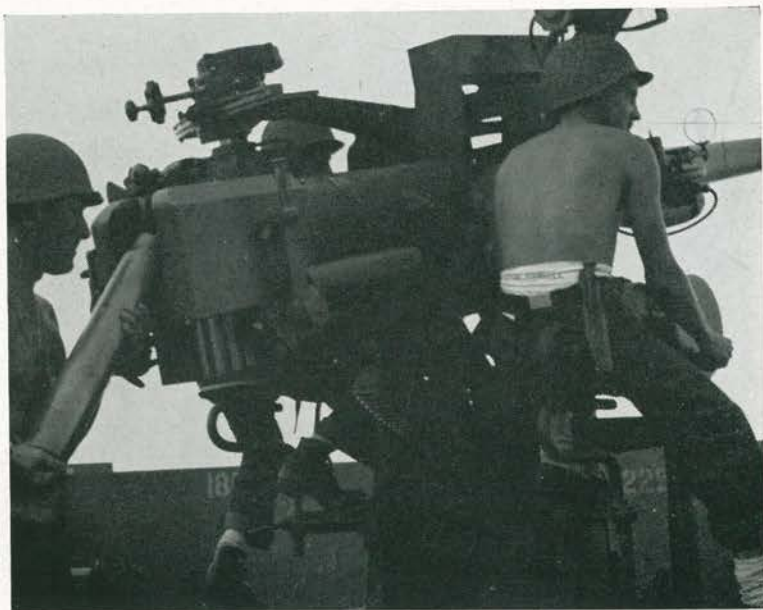


MOUNTAIN BATTLEFIELDS. As the transport weighed anchor the morning of 30 September for trip's end, the heavy haze finally lifted, revealing the ominous Guadalcanal mountain ranges. Here, the backbone of Jap power was first broken the year before.



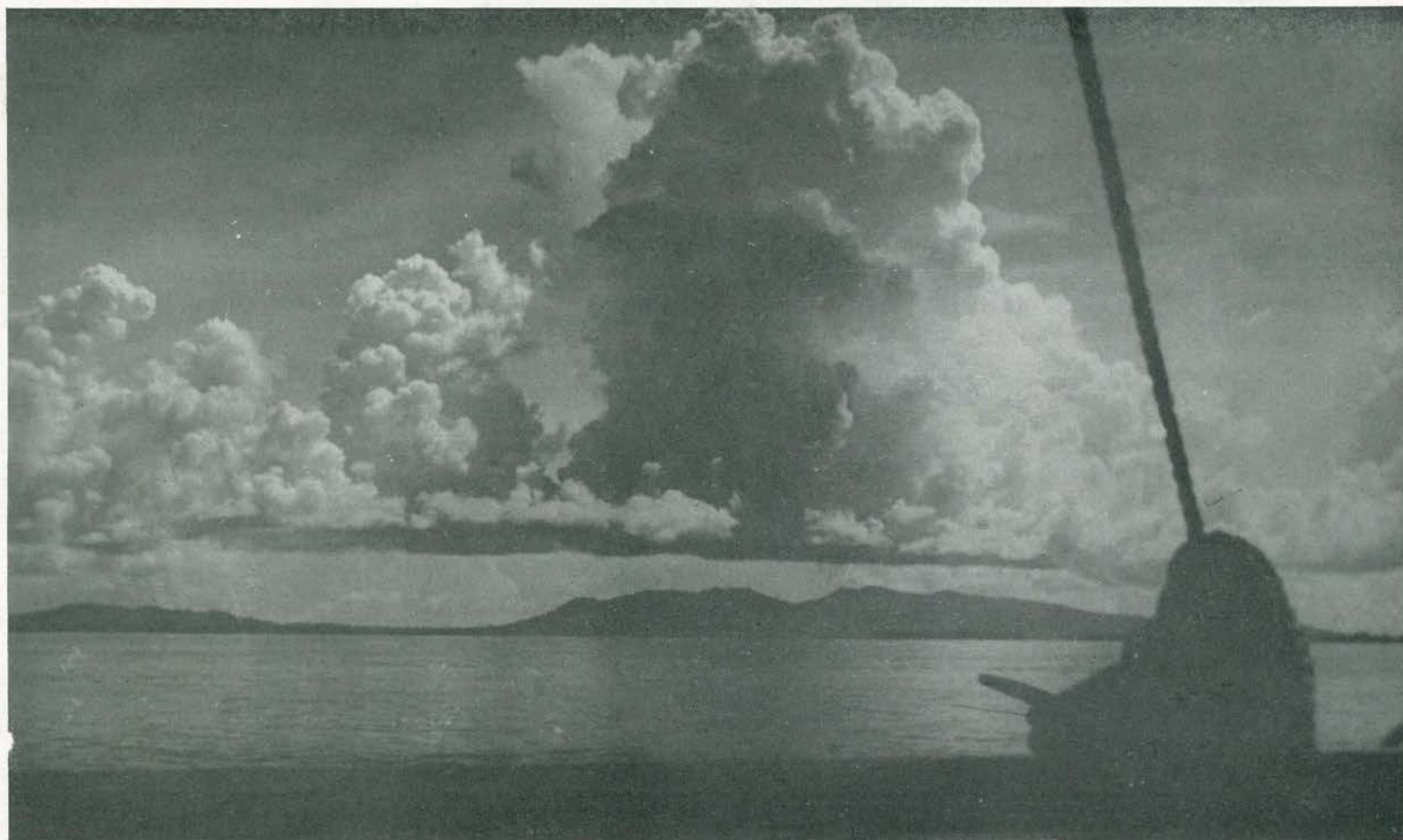


"PREPARE FOR ACTION!" Bulging with irreplaceable cargo and highly-skilled personnel, the WENTLEY is well protected by warships through the Coral Sea upon heading for final destination. A regular 87th gun crew unlimbers a 20-mm. weapon—"just in case!"



JAP MENACE. Members of still another battalion gun crew tune up for possible brushes with a crafty enemy as the transport penetrates deeper into the Jap-infested Solomons. John ("Dutch") Dietz (left) and Lister Harrell (right) take battle stations.

## 33 - DAY VOYAGE ENDS AT BANIKA



THE DESTINATION! More than a month after leaving Port Hueneme, the weary, land-hungry 87th finally gaze with mixed emotions upon their initial destination—recently Jap-blasted Banika Island of the Russells group (British Southern Solomons). The apparently endless journey suddenly termi-

nated on a quiet Thursday afternoon (30 September). Battalion engineers estimated the height of the low-lying mountain range at 1,000 feet and the towering cloud-bank at between 6,000 and 7,000 feet. The 100-mile sea voyage from Guadalcanal to Banika had been made in a few hours.





SOUTHERN SOLOMONS  
(A Banika Water Color)





# BANIK A, RUSSELL ISLANDS





**CAPITOL HILL.** The 87th Administration area, complete with post office (extreme right), reposes peacefully in this shady coconut grove. From these tents all orders and directives were issued during the hectic days of the battalion's first staging operation.



**SCRUB DOWN, FORE AND AFT.** Chief Yeoman Herman Pack, Lauren Merriam and Bill Getz take advantage of a tropical downpour to wash up and cool off. GI buckets placed strategically around the tent catch the precious fluid for future use.



**STUDY IN BROWN.** The interesting natives of Pavuvu Island, just across from Banika, would seldom pose for the camera without some form of remuneration. Besides a love of "folding money" and trinkets, they were noted for an extremely high birthrate.



**"WET CANTEEN."** James B. Austin, Jr. smiles approvingly as his pet parakeet, "Shorty," knocks off for "the pause that refreshes." This colorful bird became quite tame, accompanying the battalion to Stirling, and was later killed.



**SUNDAY.** Chaplain Ernest T. Marble, original 87th "padre," conducts services in the shade of the palms. Tarps stretched between trees form flimsy shelter for chapel. Worshippers use coconut logs for seats. Lieut. Estill Sparks (left background) meditates.



**ALL CLEAR.** Pharmacist Mates Fred Colby and Gaylord Hold remove a "patient," Archie ("Red") Reynolds, from roomy Sick Bay dugout after a simulated air alert. This sturdy shelter, built to accommodate 16 beds, was reinforced by heavy timbers and sandbags.





**CLEAN 'EM UP!** One of the many problems confronting the fledgling 87th during its early staging period on Banika was the necessity of keeping mess gear clean. Lack of proper sterilization caused many unnecessary cases of dysentery. To offset this condition,

blacksmiths and welders displayed typical ingenuity in converting 55-gallon drums into hot water washing tubs. Later battalion mess halls had built-in sculleries. Above, men stand in the long line to wash gear for next meal.

## BATTALION STAGES AT BANIKA FOR INVASION

As the setting sun slid behind the wooded mountains of Pavuvu, the men aboard the WENTLEY were confident there would be no beachhead on Banika that night. To their chagrin, however, a fleet of LCMs chugged alongside and all hands were ordered to clamber aboard—gear and all. The loaded WENTLEY apparently offered too good a target for roving Jap bombers.

Ashore, at last, the men felt their way gingerly along the pitch-black road. A heavy scent of lush tropical vegetation surrounded them. They were finally in the heart of the fabled Solomons!

The long line of burdened men were led off the main road into a huge coconut plantation. This was the bivouac area. Coconuts strewn over the grassy plot provided supper that night and dysentery in the morning. Wild cows wandered through the area all night, parakeets screeched and toads hopped from body to body. Consequently, no one slept.

The first morning ashore featured K rations for breakfast. This was the beginning of a long series of rations—some hot, some cold—all equally unpalatable.

Unloading of the WENTLEY began immediately and continued around the clock. As the lone dock was occupied, the transport remained in mid-stream and was laboriously unloaded with pontoon barges. The first night ashore had emphasized the previously unsuspected virtues of life aboard ship and all who could slept and ate there.

The COMET arrived on schedule with the bulk of the equipment and the remainder of the men. Fortunately, she was able to tie up at the pier where the rolling stock was unloaded, serviced and put to work immediately.

Ten days after landing, the main camp area was completed. The site was near the end of the bomber strip and overlooked picturesque Renard Sound. The set-up was strictly a temporary one—installations as makeshift as practical. Sand provided a deck for the chow hall; the men's tents were set on bare grass.

For a month tropical downpours provided the only bathing facilities. The climate was most oppressive—hot, damp and still. All hands suffered from heat-rash. Flies infested the camp by day; mosquitoes took over at night. The mosquito bar became every man's best friend.

The ditching machine picked up at New Caledonia speedily dug fox-

holes all over the new camp area. Although alerts were frequent and long, action was so light that the men soon disregarded the siren entirely and acquired the highly-dangerous habit of sleeping through everything.

The battalion set to work building a badly-needed highway around Renard Sound, thereby gaining first-hand knowledge of the two main features of Pacific construction—mud and coral.

Then, 18 October brought news that aroused the entire camp. Company A and the engineering unit of Headquarters Company had been suddenly alerted, issued Marine combat gear and were being moved back to Guadalcanal. The camp was agog with rumors and speculation for weeks.

The task of whipping the remaining bulk of the battalion into shape continued unabated. To make for a more flexible working unit in forward areas, the old company system was junked and the battalion was reorganized into divisions according to job specialties.

Soon the men began searching the island for amusement. The 35th Seabees operated a movie; the Marines would trade anything for coveralls; the natives wanted only United States cash for their cheap grass-skirts and trinkets. The nearby airstrip from which MAG 21 was sending its Ventura bombers to soften up Vella LaVella, Munda and Bougainville for invasion was a constant source of diversion.

The newsworthy invasion report from Lieut. C. E. Turnbull, OinC of Company A, to Comdr. Easterly had a sobering effect, yet it gave the men a new feeling of pride in their outfit. Tassone had buried a pillbox and a dozen Japs, Ostman was missing in action. Bodine had been severely wounded, food was scarce and wearing apparel was badly needed. The 87th, at least, in part, was finally in the thick of the fight.

When word came to secure, the men were ready. Three LSTs were quickly loaded to capacity. A Thanksgiving dinner of turkey provided a most welcome respite from the tasteless rations.

A rear echelon of 50 men and four officers—slated to shove off along with the ACORN 12 days later—was dockside to see the bulk of the 87th depart.

At sunset, on 26 November, the heavy LST ramps went up, the "box-cars" backed slowly out into the stream and the convoy headed north from OUCH (operation code name for Banika) into the gathering darkness.



# STAGING AREA WAS CONSTANTLY CHANGING SCENE



**SWAMP WATER.** The 87th water point was built on the edge of a dismal, overgrown swamp, which contrasted strangely with the orderly rows of trees on the rest of the island. Many nearby trees were being strangled by cannibal vines.



**CALL OF THE WILD.** Geno Federico, "The Mighty Atom," imitating legendary Tarzan, abandons his truck for a more thrilling ride. Using a stout jungle vine, he gets an unusual view of the gorge—and the thrill of a lifetime.



**A PUBLIC HEAD.** This picturesque edifice, built by native labor, serves an elementary purpose in the South Seas. Palms grow right to the water's edge in this scenic gem, which would suffice as a backdrop for a Dorothy Lamour opus.



**"OPEN WIDE, PLEASE."** Lieut. Lawrence Pearlman, original 87th dentist, works over Lewey Lands, who braces both feet against gear locker in anticipation of a jab in a sensitive spot. ACORN 12 pharmacist mate, D. H. Blanchard, assists.





**LOG ROLLING.** Chief Vic Cedarstaff supervises construction of one of the many blockhouses built around the island for ammunition and dynamite storage. Heavy coconut logs were plentiful, of course, but their pulpy texture made them heavy and difficult to saw.



**PONTOON BARGES.** Anchored at Yellow Beach are five of the pontoon barges assembled by Chief Norman Grier and crew, which were originally intended for the Vella LaVella invasion. However, plans were changed and they remained at Banika for ship unloading.



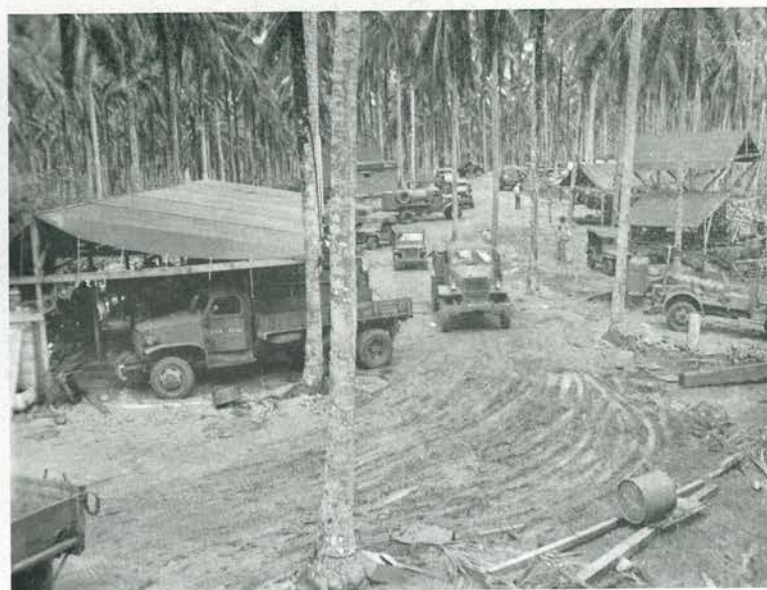
**ON TARGET.** Vernon Jacobson welds on a section of pontoon. Seabees had put pontoons to many ingenious uses, but none more unusual than this unit. Upon completion, this one will serve as an oven for the bakers.



**OUTDOOR OVEN.** The finished oven is well insulated with sandbags to maintain the high temperature necessary in good baking. Despite its unusual appearance, the oven successfully provided the always hungry 87th with all-essential bread and cake.



**MUD.** Even giant bulldozers sometimes bog down in tropical mire. Here, Tom Hutson rescues "Chet" Wlostoski and his stuck 'dozer from the muck. Huge fills in swamp made this road project a stiff proving ground for both men and equipment.



**KEEP 'EM ROLLING.** The 87th Motor Pool kept stock rolling day and night. Light-duty machine shop (left) reveals all stalls full. Center, parked trucks and jeeps await attention. Equipment had to be thoroughly serviced after 33-day ocean voyage.





**HOMEMADE SHOWER.** Daily rains caused many individual showers to be erected. These consisted of tarps stretched between the trees and drums for the storage of water. Lt.(jg) "Bill" Hart makes use of shower set in hollow tree trunk.



**"QUICK HENRY, THE FLIT!"** Barrett Sumrell, SK2c, makes the rounds with insect killers. Inside CPO Mess, "Freddy" Vachon, SC3c, has just received his weapon. As usual, flies quickly became a nuisance, but constant use of insecticide made life bearable.

## MAN VERSUS NATURE AMID TROPICAL SPLENDOR



**BREATHTAKING.** Taken from a spot high above Banika's orderly plantations, this sweeping panorama of land, sea and sky shows Sunlight Channel and Pavuvu Island. The distant mountains (background) are those of Guadalcanal, 60 miles away. (Taken with infra-red film.)



**THE LURE.** From the 87th's camp, looking across quiet Renard Sound, was often seen this incomparable view of nightfall. Boat-landing (center) was beehive of activity during daylight hours. Beauty such as this, however, was usually lost on homesick mates.





**TEAR IT DOWN.** Mates are shown in the final stages of packing for Treasury push. The tent city has disappeared and only clotheslines and washstands remain. Final clean-up of staging area was accomplished by rear echelon of 50 men.



**PAPER-EATER.** "Ginny," owned by Archie ("Red") Reynolds, does her part in the camp clean-up. This goat was one of three captured and taken to Stirling. "Ginny" later ate map in Comdr. Easterly's office and was deported to Mono.



**SHOVEL OPERATORS.** To leave camp perfectly clean, "shovel operators" level off tent decks constructed of logs and coral. Left to right: Charlie Suojanen, Carl Knudsen, Lee Oakley, Robert Bowman, Alexander Cudney and Chaplain Ernest Marble.



**STANDING BY.** Mates wait for trucks designated to transport them dockside. Packed bags and oiled pieces may be seen everywhere. Realizing the going "Up Front" would be tough, the men were nevertheless anxious to leave Banika behind.



**CATSKINNER.** J. B. McLelland backs his loaded carryall through the yawning doors of LST 343. Heavy equipment went on the well deck, while trucks and jeeps were parked topside. Frank Keker (left foreground) calmly reads "Superman."



**TIME OUT.** A lull in the loading occurs and men flop wearily. Lockers, their own bags and even fuel drums serve as temporary seats. GI buckets seen in many of these shots are strictly a trademark of Seabees moving up to forward areas.





THREE OF A KIND. LSTs with doors open, wait for their load of men and materials. Truck in center is fitted with chains in case of muddy beachhead. LST 399 (center) became known as scrappiest ship of its class in the South Pacific.



FINAL PLANS. Comdr. Easterly and Lieut. Bertell Henning (bareheaded, right of jeep) confer with LST officers. Quonset warehouses and broad highways are evidence of Banika's amazing growth as an advanced base during battalion's two-month stay.

## SHOVING OFF FOR "ISLAND X"





# RUSSELLS TO TREASURIES



**DAMN THE TORPEDOES, FULL SPEED AHEAD!** The three convoyed LSTs, under full speed, continue north through the Coral Sea toward the Treasury Islands. Morning of the second day, men are beginning to stir in anticipation of chow. Comdr. Easterly

(bareheaded, extreme left) makes hurried inspection of vessel, checking condition of men and equipment after first night of voyage. Open area in front of trucks is platform elevator used on early LSTs. Later models featured ramp direct from top deck.

## RUGGED LST TRIP PREPARES OUTFIT FOR HARDSHIPS

The late afternoon of 26 November 1943 found the main body of the 87th Seabees aboard three LSTs in Banika harbor awaiting darkness before shoving off for "Island X."

The mates made themselves comfortable on deck. The hustle and bustle of the past few days made the men content to lounge anywhere. Speculation as to the ultimate destination dominated the conversation.

Like a windowshade being pulled down, darkness came suddenly across the bay. While members of the rear echelon waved fond farewells, the LSTs began moving northward behind their tiny escorts.

At last, the battalion was on its way, but no one could be positive of the objective. Either Jap-crowded Bougainville or the seething Treasury Islands was the popular choice. The latter was favored because a sizeable part of the 87th was already there. The lights of the Russells faded and talk became low and scattered.

These LSTs were dirty and their crews knew it. The heads were clogged up, bunks were black and the bulkheads crusty with rust. The men slept on deck under trucks, on vehicles, in the cabs, anywhere. Rain squalls blew over the convoy both nights at sea. Mates simply pulled ponchos over their heads and went back to sleep.

Two of these LSTs had been in on the initial landings at Mono a month earlier. They had also been in on the fireworks at Munda, Rendova and Vella LaVella. The war was becoming increasingly hard to follow.

A gang of battalion welders worked on an addition to a LST elevator and also built a ramp to facilitate the loading and unloading of trucks. When both innovations worked to perfection, the ship's crew smiled admiringly.

An alert as the convoy lumbered past Vella LaVella had both crew and troops on edge. However, no action developed. The alert ended in 10 minutes and the men crawled topside for a personal inventory of the situation.

Slightly before dawn on 28 November, the convoy suddenly ceased its forward motion. Mates, aroused by the unusual quiet, could barely make out headlands looming high and mysterious out of the dark waters ahead. The unnatural quietness was disconcerting!

Caught in the trough of an offshore swell, the clumsy ships rocked from side to side with a nauseating motion. Two trucks loaded higher than the others were obviously top-heavy on the open deck. Each sway threatened to throw them overboard or cause them to lose their loads.

The alarmed troops scrambled for safer positions. Equipment creaked and strained against its bindings. Battalion riggers scurried about the deck checking chains and lashings and tightening wherever necessary. Fortunately, the swells gradually subsided and stomachs and nerves returned to normal.

Gray dawn broke and still the mute silence of land and water persisted. The men checked packs, gear and pieces for, at least, the tenth time. Then the LSTs began moving slowly toward land.

There were two main islands now clearly visible. One had a huge gash cut in the jungle, pointing like an arrow at the heart of Jap-held Bougainville. It was the fighter direction control that Lieut. "Pete" Turnbull had written about in his detailed letter to the Skipper.

The mystery of the battalion's "Island X" was, at last, solved—these were the Treasury Islands. One box-car turned left and headed for Mono; the others steered for Stirling. The LSTs had covered the 270 miles from Banika to the Treasuries in creditable time.

By now it was 0700. The ships were moving in for a close-up view. There wasn't much beach and the jungle was growing right down to the water's edge. Vehicle operators cranked up their machines, riggers relaxed turnbuckles securing the equipment to the deck and all hands stood at the ready.

Without warning, there was a great thud and a bump. The clumsy ships had again made creditable landings despite limited beach-space.

Suddenly, the new arrivals spotted their Company A buddies ashore. The quiet was shattered by joyous shouts of reunion. Most of the "invaders" looked slightly peaked.

Three hours after landing, the LSTs were again empty and some of the adventurers, still sweating in coveralls, were gathered at a New Zealand field canteen for a spot of tea with friendly New Zealand invasion forces.

Again the battalion was together and ready for the inevitable fire-works.





LOOKING FORWARD. Escorts are lost on horizon as LSTs plod on. The ditchdigger, "Old Faithful" (right), which dug many seldom used fox-holes at Banika, stands by for more important duty. Tarpaulin rigged upon bow provides shelter from rain and sun.



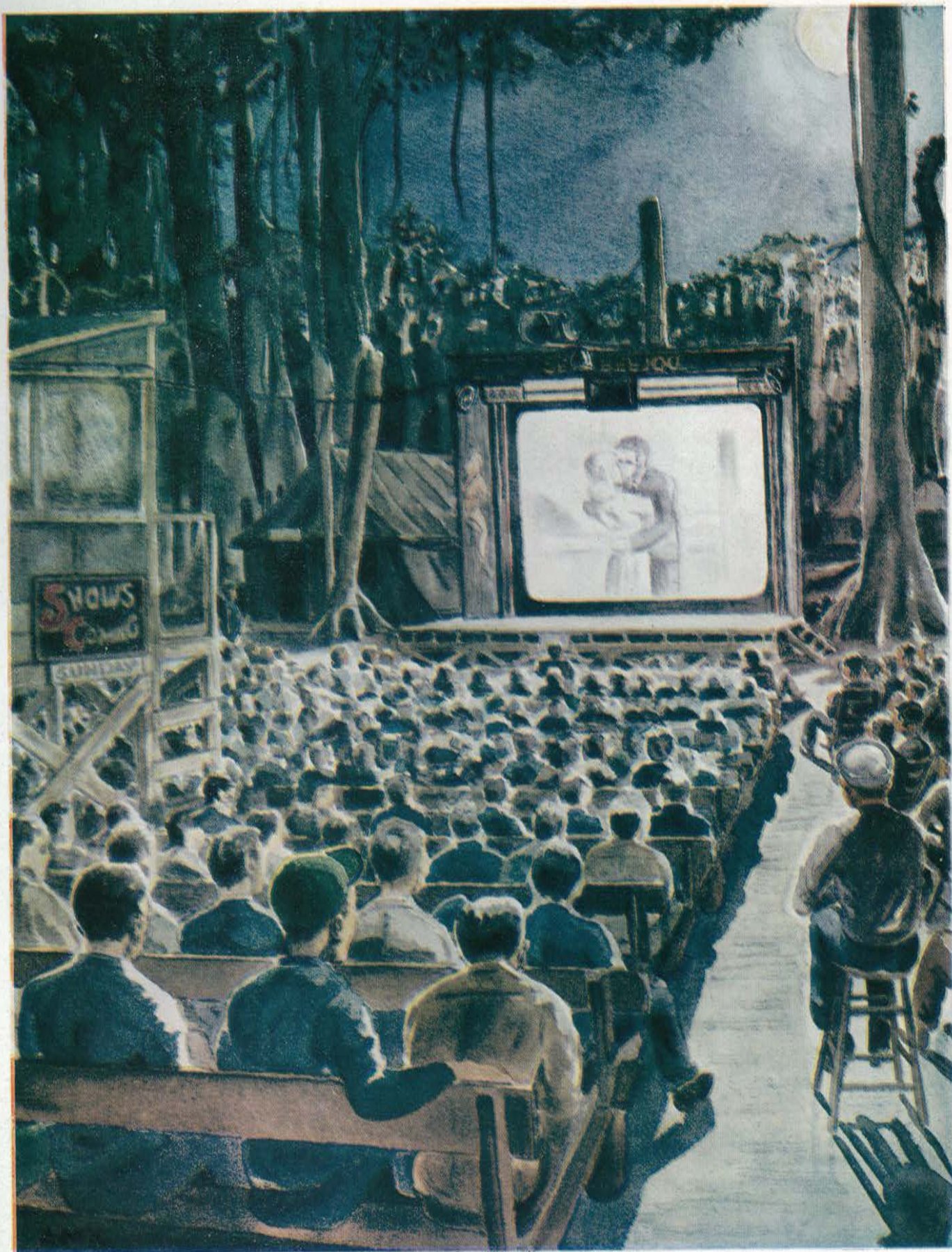
FINAL SKULL SESSION. In a LST wardroom, Lieut. William L. Whyte, Jr., (standing center), in charge of camp construction, checks final details with officers and CPOs. Lt.(jg) Harold Hart (standing, left) assigned details for unloading at destination.



LANDING DAY. Jungled Mono Island looms dark and ominously quiet at the break-of-day landing on Stirling across Blanche Harbor. Armed and helmeted men make final adjustments of pack and gear as they crowd every inch of top deck in readiness for quick landing and unloading once

the flat belly of the LST scrapes the beach. Myriads of 20-mm. anti-aircraft guns, loaded and manned, are ready for instant action. All hands have survived rough sea trip.





JUNGLE THEATRE  
(A Stirling Water Color)



# TREASURY ISLANDS



T H E I N V A S I O N



# BATTLE STATIONS AT FALAMAI BEACH, 27 OCTOBER 1943



"OLD 399" is shown beached at Falamai Village during invasion of the Treasuries on 27 October 1943. In trees (left of village) pillbox episode occurred. Mobile 40s on deck of LST, manned by part of New Zealand landing force, augment crew's anti-aircraft defense. Jap mortars, located on

twin hills (left background), resulted in many Allied casualties. This village sheltered numerous Jap snipers. After their extermination, 'dozers moved in and leveled rickety shacks.

STIRLING LANDING. A sizeable group of Company A men under Carpenter Carl J. Mitchell landed on Stirling on D-day without incident. Equipment comes off at Purple Two Beach while mates, wearing steel helmets, stand by to unload fuel and rations. Two 40-mm. guns (in bow of

LST) are fully manned and pointing skyward as "welcoming committee" for any wandering "Meatballers." Crane (right) has just come off ramp, followed closely by 10-wheel cargo truck loaded with water distillation unit.







"BUSHWHACK." Company A bivouac area was set up a half-mile from the unloading beaches. Weary mates changed name to "Bushwhack" after they had hacked at underbrush and vines to clear space for living quarters. Most paired off in two-man pup-

tents, but some constructed lean-tos (left) by lashing shelter halves and ponchos together. Mud, damp clothing and towering trees that shut out sunlight made this most depressing, cheerless camp. Company A lived here over a month.

## 87TH BLOODED IN TREASURY ISLANDS INVASION

The electrifying news raced through the 87th's staging camp on Banika. It was 18 October 1943. Company A and a part of Headquarters Company were being detached from the battalion and moved back to the Canal.

The detached unit consisted of 224 men and six officers with Lieut. Charles E. Turnbull as OinC. Arriving at Guadalcanal, they joined several assault companies of the 8th New Zealand Brigade.

On 26 October, the combined forces departed from Guadalcanal for the Northern Solomons. The objective was to neutralize the Treasury Islands group, 30 miles below Bougainville.

The attacking force embarked in a fleet of eleven warships. They approached Blanche Harbor between Stirling and Mono before dawn on 27 October. The first indication many had of this being the real thing was the murderous barrage from the cruisers and destroyers of Task Force 31 as they blasted the Falamai beachhead vicinity.

Heavy aerial bombardment preceded the landing craft. The warships poured more tons of steel into mountain-gun emplacements while small craft headed shoreward. The retorting flashes ashore gradually diminished one by one. Soon only Jap mortars and machine-guns remained to spray the beach.

As soon as the small boats hit the invasion sector, New Zealand landing parties dispersed into the jungle. Pillboxes were quickly encircled. Bayonets flashed. Cries and screams intermingled with hand-grenade blasts. Enemy machine-gun chatter soon ceased altogether.

However, the Jap's specialty—his deadly mortar—made more and more trouble. Projectiles patterned the beach with uncanny precision. More New Zealand squads disappeared into the jungle. The remaining mountain-guns were finally put out of action by the incessant shelling from offshore ships. The Japs were soon forced to retreat.

Enemy mortar fire, however, continued to be deadly accurate. One shell landed directly on a pile of ammunition just unloaded. It was here the 87th suffered its first casualty. Herbert Bodine, one of the battalion armorers, was seriously wounded and burned by a nearby explosion. Hospital corpsmen removed him, still unconscious, to an unloaded LST ready to return to the Canal.

Another Jap mortar shell struck the food supplies being stacked ashore. Several more exploded on the deck of another LST. The beached LSTs could not depress their guns enough to bear on pill-

boxes ashore, so New Zealand assault troops attacked whenever a hidden gun opened fire. The fury of the pitched battle moved deeper into the jungle. It was at this point that Aurelio Tassone, 87th bulldozer operator, very effectively silenced an annoying pillbox that was hampering unloading operations.

Meanwhile, equipment continued pouring out of the LSTs. Rolling stock began carrying supplies off the unprotected beach area. Everyone seemed to be carrying something ashore or moving something further up the narrow strip of sand.

One 'dozer began knocking a road out of the thick undergrowth. Others started clearing space for parking equipment. A pit was gashed in the solid coral for a direction finder. This trench was 90 feet long, 9 feet deep and 14 feet wide. For some unknown reason, the gears on the 'dozers operated by Sam Rajala and Dewey White refused to function. With only hand tools and a world of guts, Leonard Friedman rode unprotected on the hoods and kept the big machines on the job.

A LCM was sent around Mono with a bulldozer aboard. This carried Ensign John R. Bovyer and crew. His special detail had been aboard the last ship in the attacking force. They had left the convoy at dawn and struck on the opposite side of Mono. Their assignment was to set up vital radar equipment atop a high precipice at Soanatalu. Joe Canada and Grady Thompson performed a masterful job on their 'dozers as they cut a road through solid jungle on a sharp 45-degree slope.

Edwin ("Swede") Ostman was reported missing in action the night of 29 October and was never found. Clair Charles and Odell Bob Hayes, Jr. were both slightly wounded by shrapnel from Jap grenades.

By sunset of the initial day, Mono and Stirling were definitely in Allied hands. Remnants of the Jap garrison scattered in the jungle were being hunted down by New Zealand patrols. Enemy air activity continued throughout the night, but it was not too effective.

The tired mates dug hasty slit trenches, set up pup-tents, placed a guard at every foxhole and attempted to catch a bit of sleep. Ten days later organized resistance was declared at an end. The Treasuries had been wrested from the enemy, but Tokyo still seemed in another world.



# AN 87TH SEABEE AND HIS BEST FRIEND



**PALS.** A shy, smiling Italian-American lad who was cast so suddenly into the world spotlight, Aurelio ("Ray") Tassone, of Milford, Mass., rests in the Treasury jungle with his beloved canine. The dog, a coalblack cocker spaniel, was left behind by Japs on Mono. Picked up by Tassone and christened "Dozer,"

the two became inseparable. Just prior to Tassone's de'achment on 9 March 1944 for recall to the States, "Dozer" was reported as "missing in line of duty." A neighboring Seabee outfit was alleged to have "acquired" him. (This picture appears on page L of the Seabee book, CAN DO.)

**THE PRINCIPALS.** Two leading actors in the stirring invasion drama at Falamai Beach spruce up and have their picture taken on the famed D-8 'dozer. Aurelio Tassone is at the controls while Lieut. Charles E. Turnbull (holding carbine) rides side-saddle.

**BIG MOMENT.** Aurelio Tassone, "The Bulldozer Man," receives Silver Star Medal from Comdr. Easterly, 87th OinC. The Skipper smiles as he proudly pins coveted decoration on his charge's chest. (This picture received wide circulation in the States.)





# "EARTHMOVER" ARTIST DEPICTS FAMED PILLBOX EPISODE



THE DEED. Keeping blade high so as not to scoop dirt ahead of pillbox and perhaps stall bulldozer, and also as a shield in deflecting enemy fire, Tassone is depicted riding high over enemy fortification just prior to dropping blade and smashing choice

target. The Japs found this a new angle in jungle warfare, but not one they could admire too much. The "work-horse" of the Pacific had been converted into a "war horse"—at least, for a day.

## TASSONE WIPES OUT JAP PILLBOX WITH BULLDOZER

From the Treasury Islands attack have come many stories of Seabee workmanship. One, above all, has become a South Pacific legend—a lone bulldozer operator had wiped out a formidable Jap gun emplacement!

Falamai was the principal native village on Mono Island, largest of the tiny Treasury group. Its thatched huts had been Jap headquarters since 1942.

As Allied invasion forces worked feverishly to consolidate their precarious positions immediately after the initial landings on 27 October, crackling rifle fire came from pillboxes along the shore.

The Japs had the beach "taped." Mortars from the jungled hills overlooking Orange Beach laid a deadly pattern on and around the unloading LSTs. Potent Jap mountain pieces added their quota of death and confusion to the crowded and confused beach scene.

Falamai peninsula was the main initial objective of the Allied invasion. Here, Lieut. Charles E. Turnbull and his hardy band of 87th Seabees went to work with two D-8 bulldozers.

Sam Rajala, Dewey White and Aurelio Tassone kept the 'dozers going continuously. Leonard Friedman was there, too, when anything went wrong mechanically.

Emplacements were quickly dug for strategic pieces being unloaded. However, one 90-mm. gun had been in position only a few minutes when Jap artillery completely demolished it.

The main body of New Zealand infantry had immediately pressed inland to silence the enemy's heavier weapons. The inexperienced 87th builders surprisingly found themselves in the hottest spot of the entire beach and right there they were forced to remain and work while the battle raged.

An hour after the landings, a previously undetected Jap pillbox, approximately 75 feet from the LST bow doors, became alarmingly active. Fire from this point became stronger and stronger, inflicting casualties on the invading forces and seriously hampering operations.

Aurelio Tassone, Flc, cutting a road through the jungle to the rear of Falamai village, spotted the enemy strongpoint and quickly sized up the situation. It was apparent that the unloading party was defenseless as the LST guns could not be depressed enough to bring the pillbox under fire.

Turning from his prosaic road-building, Tassone threw his machine in low gear and bore down on the coconut-logged bunker from the rear. Snipers from nearby huts concentrated on the lonesome figure

atop the snorting 20-ton steel monster. Blade raised as a shield, the clanking tractor roared on like its armored offspring, the tank.

Lieut. Turnbull and a few mates covered Tassone's wild charge as best they could, pinning down the most active snipers. At the precise moment, the 87th operator expertly dropped his blade and the pillbox collapsed.

Methodically, as if he were smoothing a rough spot in a road, Tassone bladed earth over the wreckage. His mission was accomplished.

Some time later, after the roar of battle had moved further inland, the mass grave was shoveled open. Twelve bodies and a large new gun were exhumed.



THE PILLBOX. New Zealand and American assault troops inspect wrecked Jap pillbox on Falamai Beach after Aurelio Tassone had buried 12 Nips with 20-ton 'dozer. Size of heavy coconut logs and other timbers attest to strength of enemy fortification.



# WAR ENDS PREMATURELY FOR THESE SONS OF HEAVEN

**TRAPPED RATS.** Two Jap rats, caught in wilderness of Mono, are brought to Stirling by New Zealand MPs. "Meatballer" with bandaged head and neck is well over 6-foot tall—an unusual height for his race. These Japs avoided patrols for five weeks after invasion, but were finally surprised and overpowered by natives as they dug in latter's gardens for food. After

being grilled at Stirling, they were shipped back to Guadalcanal and New Caledonia for further questioning and internment. The arrival of captured Japs in Stirling stockade was a highlight for all hands. The Jap's fanatical resistance to capture awakened a corresponding interest in watching their reactions as prisoners.





# **T H E S T R I P**



**S T I R L I N G F I E L D**





**UNSUNG HEROES.** The battalion gets the credit and the plummy rods get the blame. Above, Kenneth Hansing, Chief F. L. LeBaron, Sammy Carlino, and "Swede" Palmquist strike a pose on the centerline of proposed Stirling Strip the first day—28 November 1943.



**LET THERE BE LIGHT!** This isn't a night clearing scene. It was just this dark when the first bulldozer arrived on the centerline of Stirling Strip the first morning of clearing operations. Lights were soon installed in the virgin jungle.



**AND THERE WAS LIGHT.** The jungle begins to recede from the onslaughts of the big 'dozers. Things are looking better as the boys break into their theme song, "Move It Over." (This picture appears on Page LX of CAN DO, "The Story of the Seabees.")



**AND DAY IS DONE.** The end of the first day. An area of 300 feet in width and 600 feet in length has been roughed clear. A good, fast start on a good fast job—on the road to Tokyo! However, the 87th was to build many more strips before V-J Day.



**BLOWING IT OUT.** Stalwarts like this required a little extra persuasion. This 48-incher, which is held up by large buttressing roots, proved too difficult for the 'dozers. A little "Can Do" and a shot of dynamite finally did the trick.



**AFTER THE STORM.** 'Dozers, timber-cutters and blasting crews create a real tangle. Chief Bos'n's Mate Frank Rychlak and gang are busy loading logs, using cant-hooks and a stirrup puller. 'Dozers then pushed remaining branches, stumps and foliage to sidelines.



# JUNGLE YIELDS STIRLING FIELD

As the 87th Seabees and New Zealand assault troops hit the Treasury Islands beach that memorable 27 October, the prospects for an airfield on Mono or Stirling Islands seemed quite remote.

The battalion's engineer reconnaissance group, attached to Company A, was not scheduled to arrive for another 10 days, at which time possible sites for a fighter strip were to be investigated. Apparently, Treasury was an alternate site for a field planned in the Treasury-Bougainville operation.

Soon after the initial landings, however, it became increasingly evident that tiny Stirling had good possibilities as an air base such as flat terrain, workable coral, excellent water supply and good landing beaches.

Therefore, the reconnaissance crew was ordered forward ahead of schedule, arriving from Guadalcanal the morning of 1 November (D-day on Bougainville), and on 5 November this group submitted a favorable report on the location of a proposed fighter strip.

A few days later, orders were received to make additional surveys and report location and size of a bomber field that could be built on Stirling. On the basis of this report, Bougainville bomber strip "W" was moved to Stirling.

At 0800, 29 November, the first bulldozer was put to work clearing for the runway, and by nightfall the following day, a heavily-timbered area—300 by 2,000 feet—had been cleared. Most of the heavy clearing was done by dozers. Hand-clearing and logging crews cut out much of the small growth, trimmed and sawed the larger trees, and hauled them to the nearby sawmill.

After the clearing came the stripping. Over the coral formation that was the island, there was a blanket of about a foot of dark, humus soil, composed largely of vegetable matter in various stages of decay. Since this material was very unstable when wet, it had to be completely removed and wasted before the grading of the underlying coral could commence.

Not much of the coral required blasting. Most of it was soft enough to be broken up by rooters and the bulk of it could be moved by the pans without rooting. The cuts and fills were relatively light. Therefore, the rough-grading stages of the work proceeded rapidly.

As the graders and rollers brought the surface to smooth finish, salt water was applied by sprinklers, causing the surface to set up like concrete.

The tactical plan called for a usable 4,000-foot strip by 10 January 1944. It was made ready the preceding Christmas Day. A 6,000-foot bomber strip had to be ready for operation by 1 February. It was in use 2 January.

Taxiways, hardstands, warm-up aprons, repair areas, operations tower, camps for aviation personnel and other field facilities assigned to the 87th were all completed well within the time allotted.

And after more urgent facilities had been provided, the original strip was extended to a length of 7,000 feet. The jungle had been licked. The Jap was next!



**HITCH-HIKERS.** A "snatch-cat" tows a huge stump and carries a couple of passengers. The small tractors had been used previously to drag logs out of the rough and up to the loading pits. It has been raining again!



**AND THEY CARRIED THEM AWAY TO THE MILL.** Lumber for pilot housing was sawed from timber cleared from the Strip. Here, Bos'n's Mate Meredith Walls and crew load out a few. A 'dozer ditch accommodates the trucks and eliminates uphill pull.



**COME HELL OR HIGH WATER,** the gang was in there pitching. Frequent cloudbursts were a considerable inconvenience, but work continued just the same. That glum look on Clyde Pemberton's face is probably the result of a very damp "drift."





**SKIMMING OFF THE MUD.** Before grading the runway to shape, it was necessary to clear off the black humus overburden. Here, two HD-10s struggle to load an eight-yard pan with the sticky muck shortly after a terrific downpour.



**EASY DOES IT, BOYS.** The big rock is tottering, but Clyde Pemberton and his D-8 are precariously close to the crumbling edge of a 70-foot cliff. Lieut. L. D. Spaw, Jr., with his little stick, is delivering the necessary push.



**EARTHMOVERS EXTRAORDINARY.** In foreground, bulldozers have pushed waste humus material into large piles from which three-quarter shovels are loading trucks. Further back (left), pans are engaged in final stripping. A group of pans (background) are cutting and filling coral, bringing the

section to shape, and motor graders and rollers are working the surface to a smooth finish. (This 87th photo appears on Page LXI of CAN DO, [Dutton], by Lt.(jg) William Bradford Huie.)



**GETTING RID OF IT FOR KEEPS.** Gushion E. Bolt supervises from the shade of a convenient tree as trucks dump loads of strippings into the sea some 80 feet below. Most stumps and roots were disposed of in this manner—once and forever.



**PROGRESS.** The dense Solomons jungle stubbornly yields to the furious onslaught of the Seabees. Things are looking better as the Strip begins to take shape. In foreground (left), a dozer prepares site for a twin .50-mm. ack-ack gun.



#### SUPPLIES FROM HEAVEN.

Marine transports are shown dropping vital supplies by parachutes on unfinished Stirling Strip in order that strategic airfield may be completed on schedule. Strip builders have cleared field to watch colorful 'chute landings. It took an entire flight of these planes to transport huge consignment. Unescorted round trip from Guadalcanal to the Treasuries was, in fact, a trial run for newly-arrived Marine pilots, who apparently were eager for their first flight over a real forward area.



## SUPPLIES DROPPED BY 'CHUTES

Jungle so thick not even the sun's rays could penetrate it. Its stale dampness from constant torrential rains caused clothing and shoes to rot on one's body. Such jungle not even Hollywood had imagined. It was in the midst of this setting that the 87th Seabees were assigned to build a bomber strip.

Logs bulldozed back to form the original runway were so large and numerous that the estimated number of axes and saws proved insufficient. More tools had to be obtained before this jungle logjam could be broken. All this prompted Lt.(jg) W. E. Mannix, original battalion supply officer, and Chief Storekeeper John T. Ahaesy to leave the Treasuries in December in search of these supplies.

Leaving GOODTIME by PT boat—the only fast transportation out of Stirling at the time—the officer and chief parted company at Vella LaVella. Ahaesy was to fly on to Guadalcanal while Lt. Mannix was to try Munda. The chief bummed a ride to the Canal aboard a SCAT plane loaded with casualties and mail from Bougainville.

Upon arrival, Ahaesy first tried the Naval Supply Depot, but with no success. Undaunted, he started out the following morning for the Army Supply Depot. After much persuasion, Ahaesy convinced a grizzled supply sergeant that his hoarded axes and saws would be doing more for the war effort in the hands of the 87th building a vital airfield on Stirling than rusting in a warehouse.

Finally convinced, the sergeant parted with 200 axes, 25 cross-cut saws, 500 pair of shoes and 2,000 coveralls.

The toughest problem was transportation. The trip would take two weeks by LST. Unarmed SCAT planes would not fly that near Shortlands and Bougainville. By enlisting the aid of a Marine Parachute Service Command unit and successfully propositioning the OinC of a newly arrived group of transport planes, the case was finally cracked wide open—and by an ENLISTED man!

At 1000, on the fourth day of the mission, the supplies were



**SOUVENIRS.** Mates surround one of the many colored parachutes and commence repacking it for return trip to Guadalcanal by LST. A pack containing heavy-duty shoes was attached to this 'chute. Some chutes were "procured" for their intrinsic or souvenir value.

dropped on the unfinished strip. A total of 90 multi-colored parachutes were involved. Once again, the 87th's luck held and the merchandise was delivered—thanks to the teamwork of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. Such was Solomons warfare in 1943.





DAY AND NIGHT. The equipment didn't shut down until it broke down unless Jap bombers came over. This was a quiet night with everything running smoothly as the stripping operation progressed. There were four spreads like this clearing at the edge of the

strip area, removing the top-soil muck and cleaning down to good coral. The muck was hauled to convenient spoil areas along the strip's edge. Here, Carpenter Edward ("Butch") O'Meara (left) is standing by—"just in case."

## AROUND THE CLOCK

87TH DEFIES ENEMY ATTACKS

TO PUSH STRIP WORK

24 HOURS A DAY

When construction began on Stirling Strip, the island dim-out regulations were rigorously enforced because of the constant threat of surprise bombing attacks.

However, when confronted with the fact that deadlines could not otherwise be met, the Island Commander granted permission for floodlights to be set up and for strip-building to proceed 24 hours a day.

Light towers were built on skids and a system of red and green flares and telephone communications were provided to insure prompt pulling of the switches when red alerts came on.

The entire Transportation department, including the repair shops and grade organization, was reorganized into three eight-hour shifts.

Except for half-hour periods at midshift when chow was served on the job, everything was kept rolling around the clock—seven days a week!



YOU ROUGH IT OUT, then finish it off! It's all in the day's work. The fine-grading equipment follows right along behind the heavy units. Those men at the light towers aren't mere spectators. Alert goes on, lights go off!



CASUALTIES. The welding shop was part of the equipment "sick bay." The going was tough and it wasn't always the coral that moved. A pan pulled out of shape and a rooster hitch pulled apart are being "treated" by welders.





**WALKING OUT.** All fills were considered properly compacted when the sheepfoot roller "walked out." The sheepfoot also proved itself invaluable with its ability to spread large chunks of soft coral into smaller ones, thereby speeding up the operations immeasurably. Here, R. F. Johns is operating the sheepfoot rig. Surveyors Tom Campagna and Byron Chronic (with transit and levels) are setting blue tops. Grade Foreman Jim Bailey, (staff in hand, right) is supervising operations. Grader operator is C. J. Rominger.

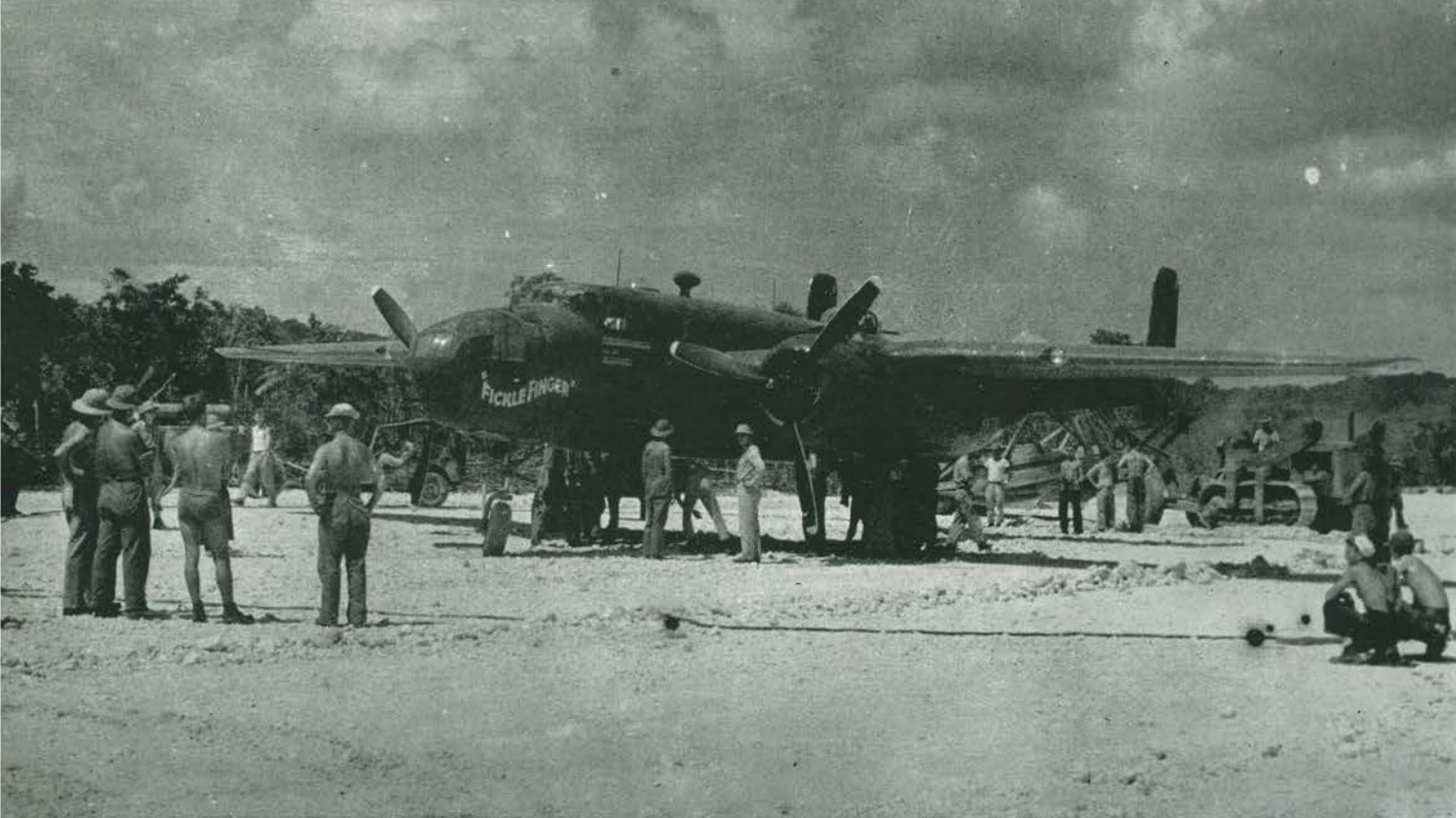


**STRIPPING DOWN.** This area is almost cleaned up. Soon the shovels can be moved to a borrow pit and the pan spread can come on through to perform its phase of the work. Excavations were former 90-mm. gun pits.



**TAKING SHAPE.** While pans are bringing the section to close rough grade (left), the grader is working the finish (right). Up ahead can be seen the demolition and donicker removal crew. (See page LXIII of CAN DO.)





**FIRST PLANE—19TH DAY.** The finishing spread was furiously working the first 2,000-foot section that eventful 17th day of December when FICKLEFINGER, spewing gasoline and obviously in trouble, came hovering over. 'Dozers, pans, graders, rollers and trucks were

hustled off the Strip and long stakes kicked down as the plane circled. Once on the field, FICKLEFINGER quickly became the paramount island attraction. Equipment operators found it difficult to resist the temptation to ride over and take a quick look.

## “FICKLEFINGER” LIMPS IN

It was late morning of 17 December 1943. The bristling B-25 (Mitchell) was roaming the east coast of jungled Bougainville—far from her home base in the Russells.

Suddenly they spotted what they were looking for. Bomb bays opened and FICKLEFINGER dropped her nose as clusters of bombs spilled out upon the harried enemy.

The attack was quick, but so were the Japs. The em-

battled bomber took slugs—lots of them—right in the belly. The plane was immediately threatened with 100-octane flames. Her crew expected her to explode any minute.

Lieut. Schwartzwalder nosed his ailing ship toward the southeast and tensely watched the gasoline gauge drop steadily. He could only hope that he could reach friendly waters before they had to bail out.

Then, the Treasury Islands came into view. Stirling Field, begun only 19 days earlier, stuck out like a gashed sore thumb, but from the air it looked smooth.

The pilot started his glide, but when he overshot the short section of finished runway, he pulled back up again and prayed that his gas would hold out and the explosion hold off. He circled and came in from the opposite end.

This time he mushed her beautifully right at the edge of the smooth section and jammed on all brakes. Even before the plane stopped sliding, doors opened on all sides, disgorging six fast-moving crew members.

Old FICKLEFINGER, veteran of 39 successful missions, just sat there, dripping gasoline and settling on one side as a tire went flat.

Repaired, she was soon giving the Japs a bad time again, coming in to her new roost on Stirling Field after every mission.

**GRATEFUL.** Lieut. Schwartzwalder (fourth from left) and crew exhibit relieved expressions as they realize they are on terra firma again—and all in one piece! They were preparing to “ditch” when Stirling was sighted.







**SECOND PLANE.** Forty-five minutes after the first emergency landing, a second plane showed up. Seabees and AA gunners (shown here) immediately raised plane off ground just enough to remove the dazed pilot—all within the space of minutes.



**A SUCCESSFUL LANDING** is generally considered to be one from which the pilot can walk away. However, the skipper of this Navy Corsair fighter left in an ambulance. Suffering only from shock and bruises, he was soon back in action.

## CORSAIR CRACKS UP

LOST FIGHTER GUESSES WRONG,  
OVERSHOOTS FINISHED PART OF  
STRIP AND TURNS TURTLE

During the early afternoon while the 87th was slamming its way through the nineteenth day of strip construction, a F4U dove out of the clouds and buzzed the strip from north to south.

A carrier-based Corsair fighter returning from a strike at Rabaul, he was far off course and running low on gas when he spotted the clearing in Stirling jungle.

Unfortunately, he made a wrong guess and flew over the paved area, landed on the rough grade and hit a boulder with one wheel. The skittery fighter flipped over and skidded to a stop on its back.

The wrecked plane had barely stopped before excited workers picked up the plane while others extracted the dazed, but only slightly injured, pilot from the shattered cockpit.

Still spitting coral, he was rushed to Sick Bay and treated for shock. Here, he was detained overnight, much to the delight of the Seabees, who bombarded him with questions of the war in the air.

**PALLBEARERS.** The Corsair is a dead duck. The 87th loads it aboard a long service trailer, which will carry it to the dock area. There, it may be loaded on a ship and carried to the nearest aviation repair shop, or

again it may lie for months, deserted and exposed to the forages of souvenir fiends and gadget-makers. Finally, it may be condemned to a forgotten corner of the island junk heap. Such accidents delayed the Strip.







**CENTER OF OPERATIONS.** Not only did the Earthmovers build a strip on Stirling, but they constructed aviation facilities to go with it like this 60-foot control tower and the communications and weather huts shown here. Equipped with sizeable bolts and timbers,

structure crews spiked together a luminated tower of two-inch material, guyed it securely and added bolts later. Battalion communications men set up and operated the field communications system until an Army Signal Corps unit arrived weeks later.



**MAKE ROOM FOR BOMBERS!** Fighters were already hitting Rabaul from the 5,000-foot completed strip. To make room for bombers, the men turned to taxiways and hardstands. (This 87th photo—one of eight—appears on Page LXII of CAN DO.)



**ROOM FOR BOMBERS.** And board, too! Here, a Navy PV is being gassed, serviced and loaded with bombs. Battalion transportation, equipment repair and service shops encircle this completed hardstand. A 40-mm. anti-aircraft gun stands by in ready position.





**THE BOSS.** Appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, Lieut. Ray Pape is not actually preparing to tackle that coral cut barehanded. However, if Chief Jim Hurley and 12-yard pan are not equal to task, he will surely take over.



**"A" BATTERY** of the 198th Coast Artillery 90-mm. crew. They didn't shoot many down, but they must have scared the Nips to death. These boys undoubtedly hold the record for tons of steel per minute hurled into the air.



**CHOW DOWN, FORE AND AFT.** Chief Paul Vater looks on as Chief "Jack" Smeltzer and Ship's Cook Merlin Monroe dish out noon chow on the spot to the clearing and logging crews. It is safe to assume that the apparent casualty at extreme right is not necessarily a result of overfeeding.

Chief "Ted" Wills (seated, center) seems happy over something. Could it be over this 30-minute chow period—the only break in the dawn-to-dark working day?



**WHEREVER HE WANDERS.** Here is the likeness of a truly domesticated man. After almost a year overseas, Lt.(jg) Louis D. Spaw, Jr. still shows evidence of being under the nostalgic spell of his wife's magic wand. (Wife's name: Wanda.)



**LESS DOMESTICATED.** Lieut. Ray Pape and Lieut. Bill Luce take time out from the pressing demands of their jobs to view the Strip scenery. What they see is entirely in keeping with the highest mental conceptions of marooned Pacific Seabees.





COMBINED OPERATIONS. Roller operators, forced off section of the Strip they were working on, watch as CASU 8 torpedo bomber takes off. Pans, working side sections, roll on undisturbed. Landings presented a somewhat greater hazard as the noise of diesels often prevented operators

from hearing returning planes as they approached for landings. However, grade foremen kept on the alert and whenever necessary, extra men whose sole duty was to watch and warn of approaching planes, were posted at strategic points.



CUTTING A WIDE SWATH. The Earthmovers always tried to observe a basic rule: "Never spread yourselves thin." The attempt was made to tackle every phase of the job with sufficient men and equipment, well grouped for close supervision and balanced operation. Here, the finishing spread illustrates the 87th's favorite method of concentrated attack. Not plainly visible are the salt-water spray trucks and rollers following the graders. The

entire 300 foot by 7,000 foot runway was double-bladed, sprayed with salt water and rolled between the take-off and return of bomber strikes against Rabaul. This was the last and final finishing touch to the Strip by the battalion as the field was now completed and in continuous full operation.





**THE MILK RUN.** A squadron of B-25s is shown leaving for the daily pounding of Rabaul. Stirling Field served as a base for four of these squadrons whose job was to pulverize the Jap fortress and keep it that way. Daily reconnaissance photographs showed new ships in Rabaul harbor, airfields

repaired after being bombed, and gun positions shifted to new locations. And daily the planes left Stirling to make sure this great enemy base stayed out of the fight.

**JAP POISON.** Although only a couple miles long and hardly a mile wide anywhere, tiny Stirling Island was just barely large enough to provide space for one good air strip. This revealing aerial shows Stirling Field from a direction exactly opposite that indicated in frontispiece photo, page 61. Plane was almost directly over Stirling Dock area as camera clicked. With the completion of this job, the battalion was ready to move on to more fertile territory closer to Japan proper.







**CLEAR THE FIELD!** A P-38 buzzes the field preparatory to coming in for a landing and alert 87th equipment operators make for the edge of the Strip. There is no doubt here as to who has the right-of-way.



**HOLD YOUR FIRE!** This one is friendly. A B-25 caught zooming over a bristling gun position is glad to sight the place called home. With flaps down, he will soon make the traffic pattern and come in for a landing.



**HISTORY IN THE MAKING.** B-24 Liberators, stripped of all armament, and carrying heavy photographic equipment and all the extra gasoline that can be put aboard, are poised for the take-off on a highly important and dangerous mission. If even one gets back, it will bring the first

aerial photographs that Intelligence has been able to get of the mighty Jap base at Truk, the main Pacific home of the elusive enemy fleet. Good luck and good shooting!



**VISITORS DROP IN.** Stirling Strip was frequently used as a staging field for fighter squadrons of other nations. Often flying American planes and operating in the Solomons area of the South Pacific, pilots from "Down Under" always created a stir.



**LAST ONE IS IN!** The end of a mission is buttoned up. The trip to Rabaul took about seven hours, and a flight over that target was a day's work in any language. POWERHOUSE just makes it home before dark, but the field was well lighted for night operations.





**GASSED UP AND LOADED.** A typical daily version of a familiar scene at Stirling Strip. Ground crews are waiting for the arrival of pilots and flight personnel, who will soon arrive from the briefing room. Then, the motors will roar, the big planes will wheel out on

the runway, and after a flash of green from the tower, this group of Mitchells (B-25s) will slide into the air. Each pilot will open his throttle as the plane ahead becomes airborne.

**HEAVIES.** Although Stirling Strip was constructed for the use of medium bombers, the Heavies (Liberators and Fortresses) frequently set down to replenish their fuel, emergencies, etc. The Strip accommodated these monsters—the largest planes in early 1944—with

plenty of mat to spare. The take-off of these big boys under full load was easily accomplished. Said one visiting Liberator pilot: "Stirling Field is the fastest and smoothest strip in the Solomons." However, the larger visitors seldom stayed long.





# JAP BOMBERS HIT AND MISS STRIP TARGETS



**THE MORNING AFTER.** Despite radar aircraft warning systems and defense anti-aircraft and night-fighter protection, several Jap bombers had slipped in here the night before. A direct hit caught this B-25, setting off its gasoline and ammunition, and causing it to burn intensely for a few minutes

before becoming a pile of debris. Soon, however, battalion bulldozers had shoved the wreckage aside, a replacement plane was ordered from the Russells and the field reverted to business as usual.



**A CLOSE CALL.** The boys in operations tower had something to write home about. The plane that dropped this bomb had joined up with a B-25 squadron landing after dark. Anti-aircraft fire was held for fear of hitting friendly planes and the nifty Jap laid one right down the middle.

The only damage was a small hole in the hard strip surface and an extra "field day" for the tower boys. Planes took off the same morning as usual.



**REPEAT PERFORMANCE.** The Japs really had tiny Stirling and its crowded airfield under the gun throughout January, 1944. Seldom a night passed without one or more raids. Always, the frustrated enemy headed for the gleaming Strip. He usually succeeded in dropping his eggs. With

planes parked almost wing to wing, it was hard to miss. Above is further proof of his ability to score direct hits. The mates, generally speaking, could hardly wait until morning to see the damage.





**DISASTER.** On 25 January 1944, a bomb-laden Mitchell crashed in the takeoff, blocking one-third of the Strip. The 87th was in the process of removing this plane when an unheralded Liberator, with one motor out and a prop that wouldn't feather, attempted to land. The big bomber

crashed at the edge of the runway and burst into flame. Battalion men assisted in rescuing the crew, most of whom, fortunately, had been thrown clear of the twisted wreckage.



**TRAGEDY.** At dawn, 14 January, a lone Jap dive bomber, flying at tree-top level, slipped in over Stirling undetected. The holes in the can and the 87th grease-truck are only the visible parts of the damage wrought by the plane's lightning strafing and bombing attack. Roy Goldberg met

his death near the spot where Azzario Capuano is standing. Several other 87th workers, including Raymond Langlois and Harold Johnston, were injured by the bomb. The enemy had scored again.





FROM HOME! Willing hands unloaded first load of air mail for Stirling Islanders from SCAT (C-47) transport. When news of incoming mail reached strip builders, a flat-bed truck used by 87th welders for field work was pressed into service to pick up the priceless cargo. This plane

was unloaded alongside of the Strip near the control tower. Within a brief period, SCAT had its own facilities in two sturdy quonset huts at the south end of B taxiway.

## SCATS ARRIVE

C-47s WERE MAROONED

MEN'S MOST RELIABLE

CONTACT WITH THE

WORLD LEFT BEHIND

The first SCAT plane to use recently completed Stirling Strip settled down on the glazed coral runway on 30 December 1943. The name SCAT is derived from the initials of Service Command Air Transport.

This condensation would have been more appropriate for a fighter plane rather than the twin-motored Douglas C-47s, whose strongpoint was capacity rather than speed.

The introduction of Air Mail delivery to the Treasuries greatly improved the men's sagging morale. Previously, mail had been brought in by LSTs or LCTs from Guadalcanal or by PT boats from Munda.

With the coming of SCAT, Stirling Field became a station on the local air freight lines, which branched out from Henderson Field and covered the entire Solomons.

Cargo, mail or passengers—SCAT ferried them all. Islanders with week-end passes often obtained reservations aboard C-47s and escaped the drabness of Stirling's limited existence by visiting friends on neighboring islands.

The unescorted "Flying Box-Cars" completed their appointed rounds despite tropical storms, enemy ack-ack and, at times, roving enemy fighter planes.

This small link of the globe-girdling Air Transport Command helped make life bearable for men stationed on remote jungle islands.

The sight of these lumbering ships hovering over the island was, at least, always encouraging to the marooned mates.



FLIGHT of four cargo planes approaches Stirling Field from the South. Battalion surveyors (right) cease operations as traffic approaches. ACORN 12 fire-truck stands by in case of trouble during landing. These SCAT transports flew unarmed—even in forward areas.



LONE SCAT transport flies over the Strip from the North. Mono may be seen in background. Tents of AA batteries still line the runway. Guns and tents were later removed. (This 87th photo appears on Page LXV of the widely read Seabee book, CAN DO.)



# PLANE ART SHOCKED PURITANS

To the Puritanical element of the Treasury personnel, a visit to the Strip was a shocking experience. Here, they were confronted with the widest and wildest variety of leg-art ever gathered in one small area. Gaudy, life-size pin-ups frequently startled even the most hardy sightseers with their free use of varied hunks of feminine anatomy.

As more squadrons of planes arrived at Stirling for the final all-out air push against Rabaul, Truk and Kavieng, the sightseers daily increased in number. Men began making private snapshot collections for their photo albums of the galaxy of cheese-cake displayed on the nose of the planes.

Experienced pin-up enthusiasts could quickly determine the length of time the squadron had spent in the war zone by the liveliness of its insignia.

Planes fresh from the States had neither art work nor inscriptions on their noses. At most, they sported a Walt Disney cartoon of the Donald Duck variety or a self-conscious, half-hidden pet name of the wife or sweetheart. These were the green planes. Their pilots still had fresh recollections of home.

After a few months of rough and tumble duty and their first taste of the kill, these same planes would usually blossom out with some murderous, blood-and-guts inscription such as "Educated Death," "Murder, Inc." "Powerhouse" or "We're Buzzin' Cuzzin."

But it wasn't long before they abandoned their cops and robbers attitude and went in for the really solid stuff that was more in keeping with the fine traditions laid down by the long-bearded, rock-happy old-timers. These crusty, battle-scarred individuals went all-out in their free-handed decorations.

Giving their imagination a free hand, the planes resembled burlesque show posters with their terrific expanse of legs, arms and buxom torsos. Appropriate titles added still more interest to the emblazoned heroines, many of them revealing tasteful delicacies and descriptive qualities of the highest order. Among the titles were such gems as "Virgin's Retreat," "Passion Flower" and "Hot Pants."

It was this latter group that attracted the most admiring sightseers. For it was largely through their efforts that the blazing torch of fair womanhood was kept burning!

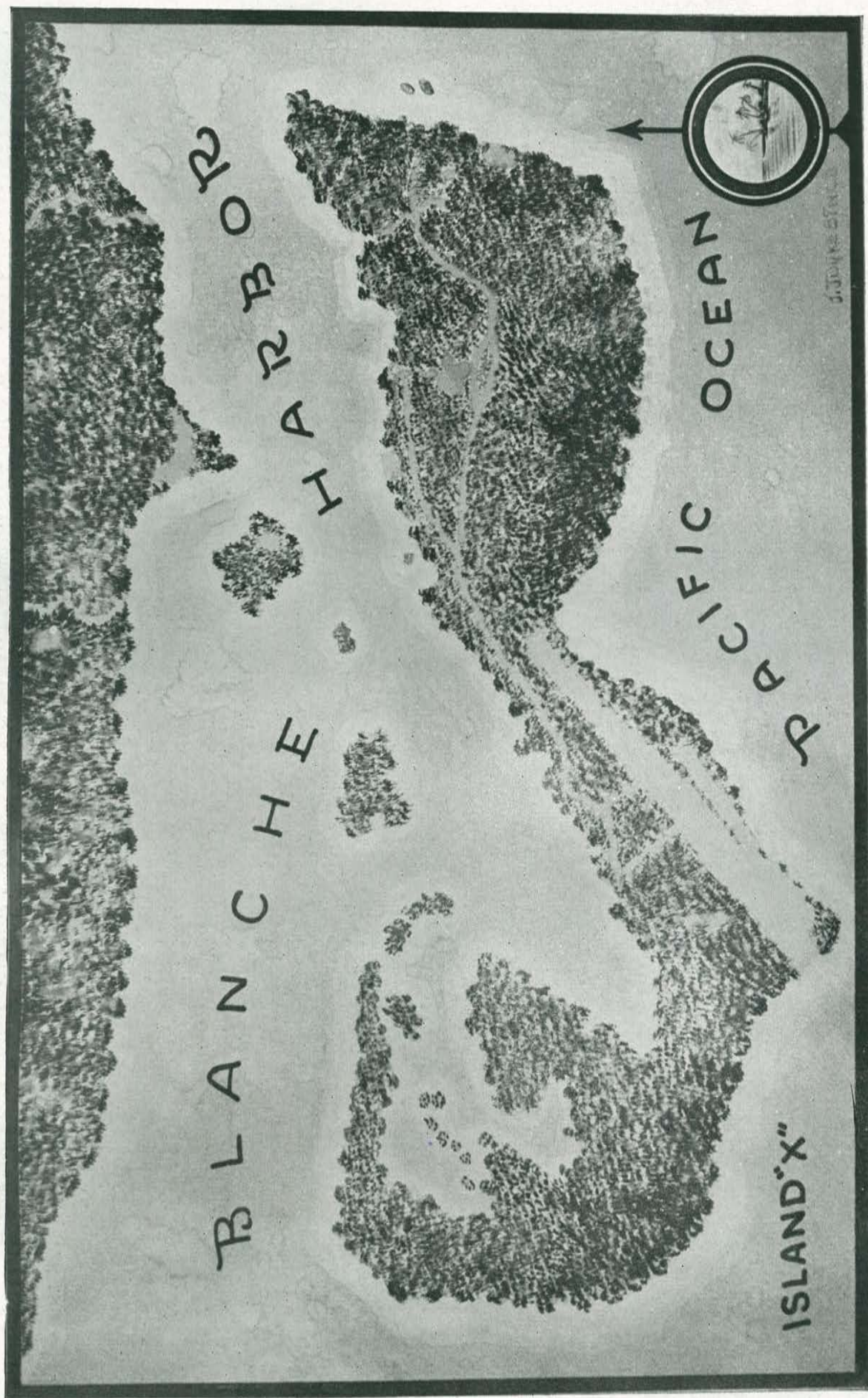


**PRECAUTION.** Crew members of the B-25 bomber, POWERHOUSE, cover up strafing guns on the flanks of their ship while a visiting Seabee snaps picture. Taken under the watchful eye of Intelligence, this precaution was taken before picture-taking was permitted.

Reading from top to bottom: FLYING "PADRE." Typical of a B-25's ability to get there and back was the ALPINE MILKMAN, still going strong after 165 successful missions. Pilot, co-pilot and navigator are shown with Lieut. Cyril R. Kavanagh (hand on gun), 87th chaplain. WIND-BLOWN. Example of more extreme taste in plane pin-ups was MILLIE. News of the arrival of a plane with such a painting was quickly passed around the island and eager sightseers flocked to admire, but only for art's sake, of course! JIVE-TALK ENTHUSIASTS were also numbered among crews of Mitchells judging by slang names like above. When these twin-motored bombers started warming up, the noise was incredible. This Stirling veteran was familiar sight to Seabees working on the airfield.



# AERIAL VIEW OF STIRLING STRIP REVEALS AMAZING PROGRESS IN 24 DAYS



THE SHAPE OF THINGS. This painting of Island "X" was done by the 87th's Julian J. Dyke from an aerial reconnaissance photo taken 22 December 1943. Reproduction is notable in that it shows remarkable headway the battalion had made on Stirling Field in slightly

over three weeks of work. Except for the initial runway, a portion of "A" taxiway and the Blanche Channel highway, Stirling was still virtually as invasion forces found it on D-day. The 87th's permanent camp was located at far end of winding channel road in cleared

space near eastern end of island. Rugged Mono Island, including the cleared triangular perimeter at Falamai where initial landings took place, lies opposite word "Ha boi" across channel. Original photo was secret document for many months.



# P R O J E C T S



**S T I R L I N G — m o n o**



# STIRLING BECOMES COMPLETE BASE WITH 87TH - BUILT DOCK



**POWER.** Initial clearing for Stirling Dock area begins. Jack Kenning (on D-8) pushes over sizeable tree—roots and all, thereby providing more fodder for the battalion sawmill. A stubby LCM plys its route between Stirling and Mono.



**HILL DISAPPEARS.** Grading of the cleared dock area is now progressing by leaps and bounds. The hill, which formerly was here, has been carved away and used as fill on shore access road. Plane tender is anchored offshore with PBVs.



**THE DETAIL.** Heavy ramps from pier to shore are put into place. Timbers for the ramps were made of heavy native lumber cut to order by battalion sawmill. Four ramps of this type connected the pontoon pier to the land. Such work had to be right.



**PILE-DRIVER** rig is poised to sink one of many piles used for dolphins and clusters. Piles were sharpened and steel-tipped to secure them in coral bottom. Net tender and barge (right) are laying submarine net across harbor entrance.

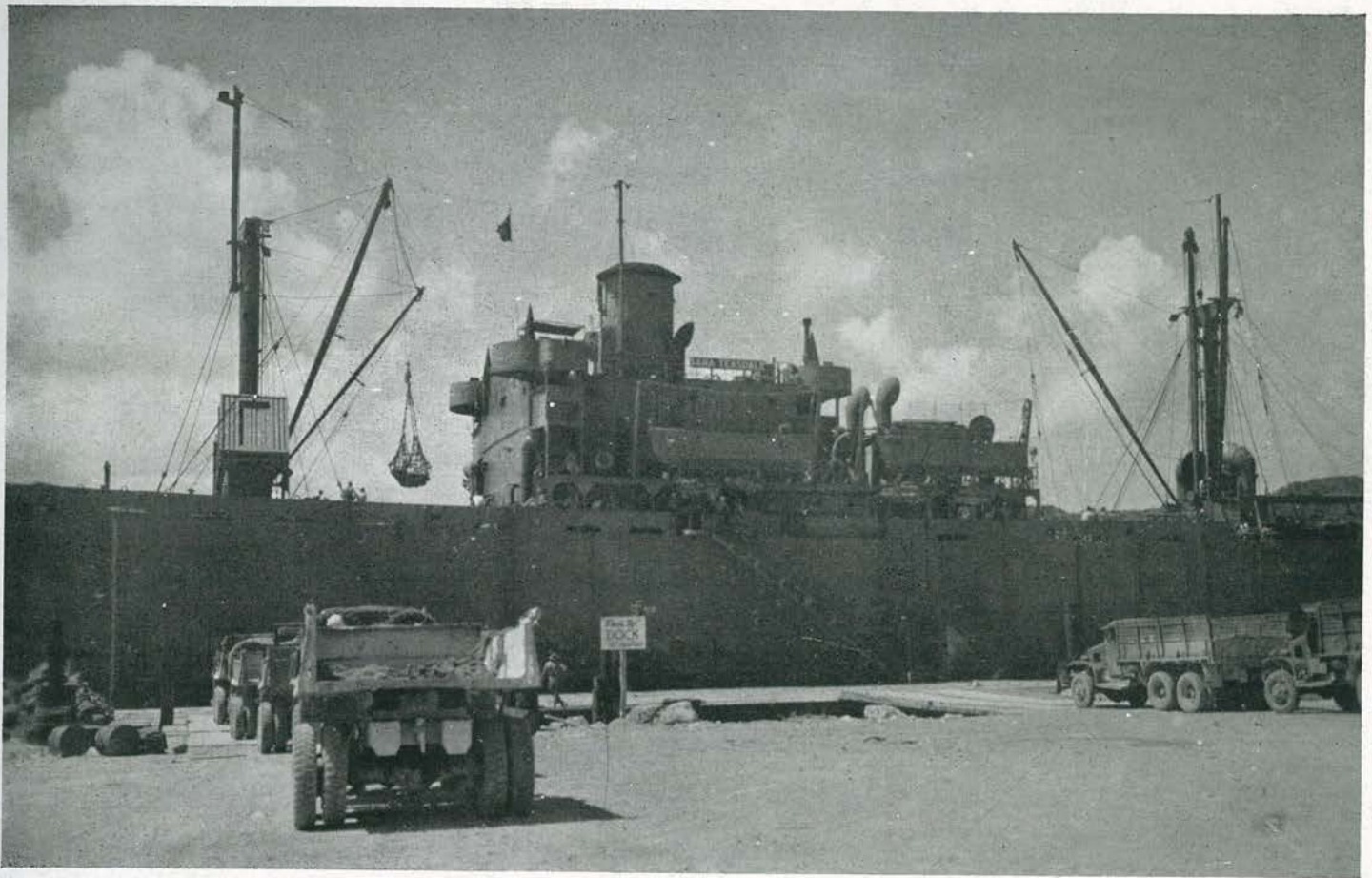


**FIRST LIBERTY SHIP** unloads at Stirling Dock on 30 January 1944. Pier was 428 feet long and 43 feet wide, so all holds of ships could be worked simultaneously. Seabees furnished winchmen and the signalmen while Kiwis unloaded cargo into trucks.



**SUPPLY DEPOT**, built in dock area, consisted of five 40x100 quonset warehouses and a compound surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. Office of Port Director was the 20x48 quonset (foreground). Area was once a Seabee baseball diamond





**SETBACK.** Stirling's completed dock was named from the Bugs Bunny expression of "What's Up, Dock?" (center sign). The clearing, grading, approach roads, warehouses, offices, stockade and pier, as shown on Page 81, called for diversified craftsmanship. But the Seabees never rest for ships come and must be unloaded.

Trucks were always waiting for cargo. Seabee humor was officially snubbed and the once cherished name became just plain Stirling Dock. But to the 87th it would always be "What's Up, Dock?"

## STRIP BUILDERS PROVE VERSATILITY ON OTHER JOBS

The amazing conversion of the Treasury Islands from virgin jungle to a completely implemented base of operations was accomplished—for all practical purposes—in three months.

Never before in the Pacific had such a small contingent of Seabees labored so prodigiously and accomplished so much in such a short period.

By 1 March 1944, Stirling was at its operational peak. In addition to Stirling Field and its manifold installations of hardstands, taxiways, hangar, shops, control tower, bomb dumps and tank farms, other essential projects already completed by the 87th included the PT Base, all primary highways and the dock.

All major assignments were completed on or ahead of schedule, but there was no apparent slackening of the overall work program.

More and more flight groups continued to arrive as the trip-hammer tempo against Jap bastions was constantly stepped up. The Stirling miracle virtually sealed the doom of the Japs in the Solomons.

The newly-arrived air units had to be housed, fed and furnished recreational facilities. This led to an enlargement of the island ration dump and the installation of additional reefers.

By virtue of their early arrival, the 87th Seabees logically spearheaded this vast island development program. They did the bulk of the work—and finally got the credit.

The battalion's crack logging detail roamed the islands, selecting felled trees 'dozed aside. Trimmed and cut to the proper length, these mammoth timbers were sawed into usable lumber for island structures.

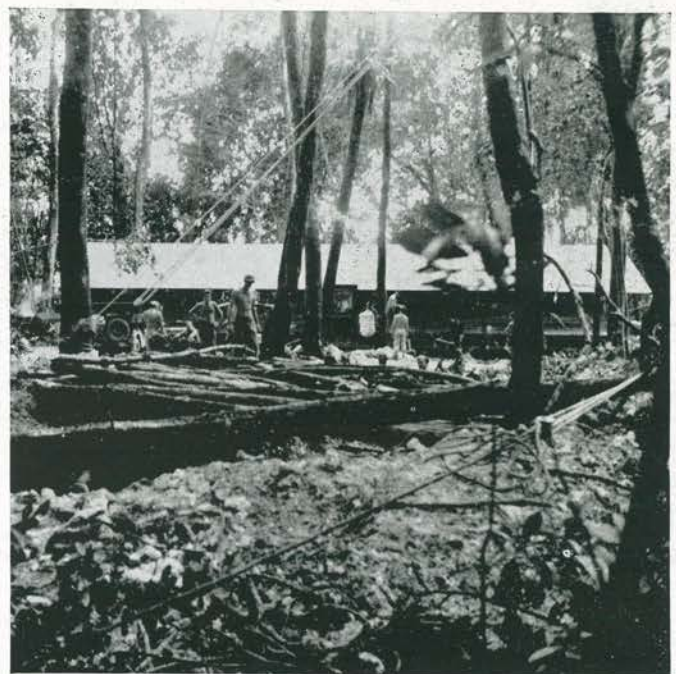
Headquarters were built for such strategic operational units as Island Command, 198th Coast Artillery, ACORN 12, Naval Air Command, etc.

Hospitals were set up at ACORN and Naval Base 811. Movie theatres, recreation areas, motor pools and shops were built all over. Soon every inch of "The Rock" was "homesteaded." There were no longer any vacancies in the Treasuries and the Stirling jungle had all but disappeared.

Other 87th assignments included the endless ship-unloading details, building of a tortuous mountain road on Mono, maintenance of the primary highway system and the almost perpetual upkeep of the

Strip and installations until the CBMUs took over in July.

Public works for the 87th ended as of 1 July and the battalion again entered a staging period for the long road ahead.



**SICK BAY FOXHOLE.** Chief William Martin and crew work hard constructing huge foxhole for 87th Sick Bay. The shelter accommodated 30 patients and was equipped with an emergency generator for use during alerts or when main power was not available.

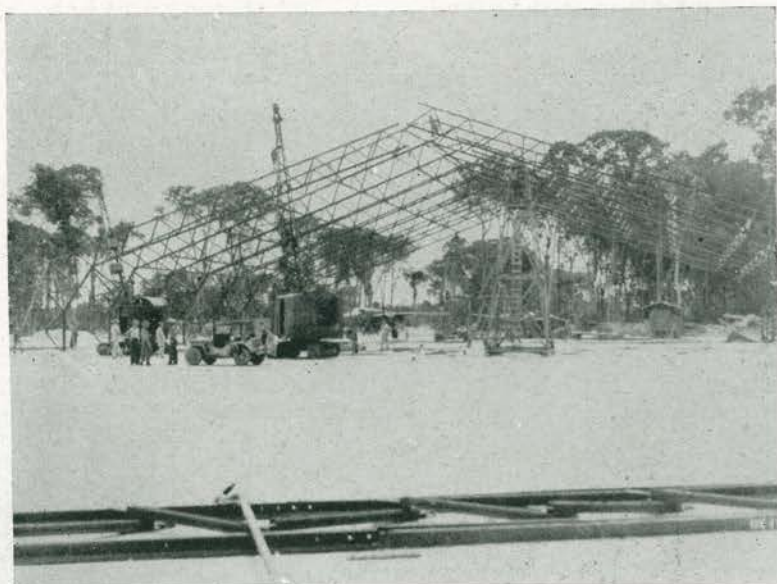


# RIGGERS ERECT HUGE HANGAR FOR AIR GROUPS



ERECTION OF A HANGAR gave Stirling Field a big-time flavor. Built on a sweeping coral apron just off "C" taxiway, this job introduced another skilled part of the 87th construction team—riggers and ironworkers. Chief "Hank" Ahrens' R Division gang handled the steel. Emerson Turner and

Eli Pifer took care of the delicate crane work. Chief Hugh MacDonald's carpenter crew provided the essential scaffolding and bracing. Structure was 120 feet wide, 160 feet long and 43 feet in height.



CAPACITY. Needing only the joining of the end section to be ready for tarpaulin cover, completed hangar will soon house four B-25s undergoing repairs. Structure was completed in 10 days. Crews worked from "know-how" as plans had been lost.



SICK CALL. Wounded aircraft are crowding completed hangar for "treatment." Structure had been erected on three other islands and 87th riggers were able to use only 11 of 13 main trusses. This plane "hospital" was constructed for the 25th Fighter Squadron.





THE PORT DIRECTOR, the busy young man who took care of the comings and goings of ships in the Treasuries—from LSTs to Liberty ships—had his office in his jeep or a tent until he was furnished more appropriate quarters dockside. Here, 87th carpenters, paced by George Bieger and Alten

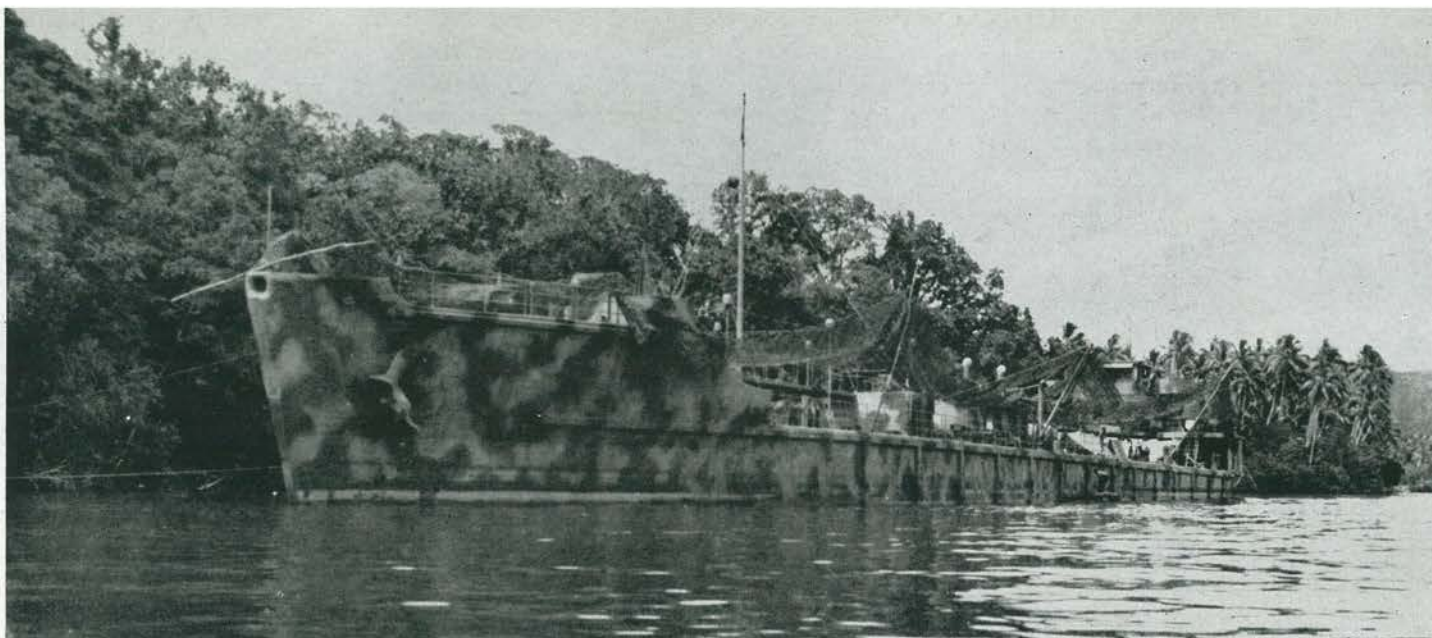
Storts (center), are putting a prefabricated section of roofing into place. Cargo ships unloaded a steady stream of war supplies at the 87th-built Stirling Dock.



ACORN 12 OFFICERS WINE MESS was built in T-shape fashion out of quonsets by Chief Hugh MacDonald's crack carpenter crew. Shown at work (standing, left to right) are: Richard Bogdanski, James Bilyard, James Gordon, Edward Allman, Walter Edwards, Ralph Smith, Clarence Nielsen,

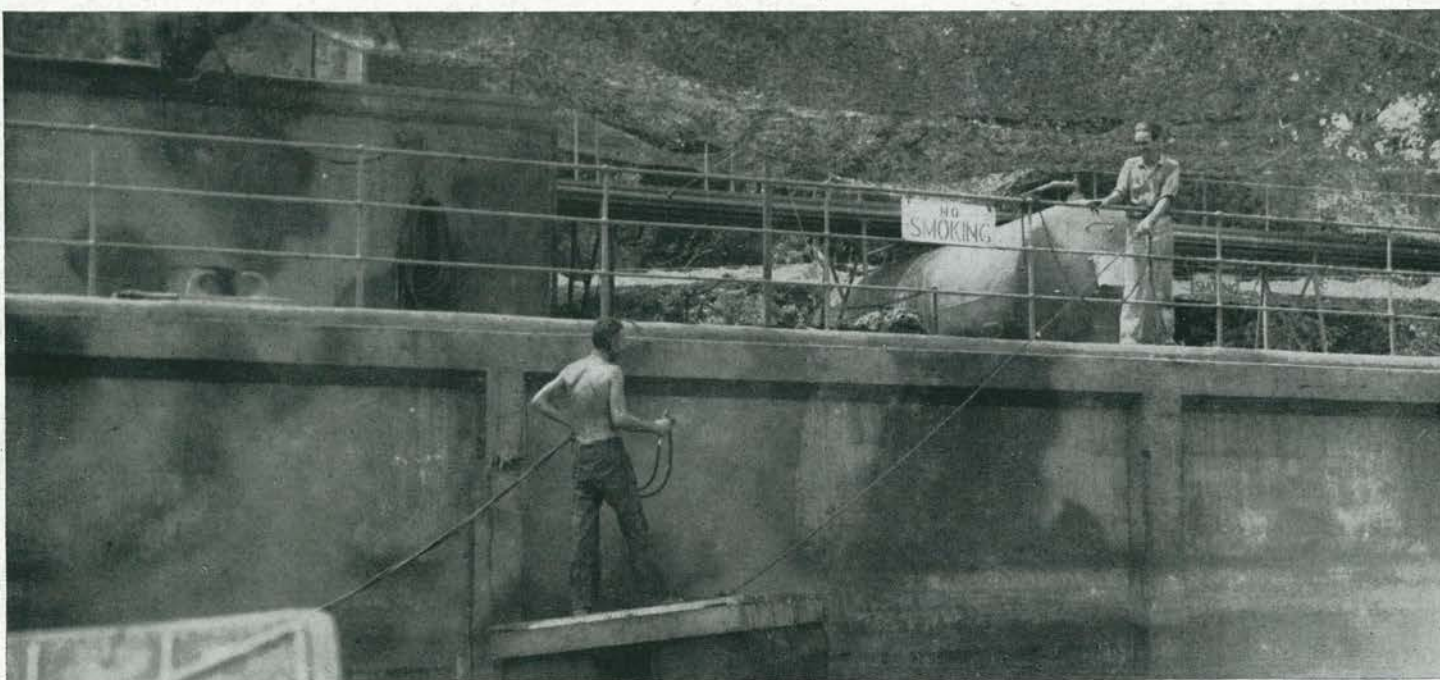
Robert Stone, Ralph Hastings, Andrew Byrne and Richard Evans. (Kneeling): Chief MacDonald, Charley Danford and Lloyd Aubert. The ACORN club eventually became a show-place of the Treasuries and virtually all visiting celebrities paid it a call.





YOGL gets camouflage job from Chief Vic Cedarstaff's paint crew and riggers. Two of these huge aviation gasoline storage barges were stationed in Blanche Channel and they needed to be disguised. Chicken-wire netting with strips of green fabric interwoven was suspended over vessels in uneven

pattern to break up contours. Dressed in green war-paint against jungle background, these barges were fairly safe from enemy observation and strikes. A bomb hit on such a ship would leave only memories.



SPRAYING IT ON. Sheldon McCaleb (with spray gun) stands on small raft while painting sides of gasoline barge. Albert Mundy gives him a tow from the rail. These craft had crews of 15 with a CPO in charge. Lacking motive power of their own, they were towed to destination by sea-

going tugs. NO SMOKING signs were hung all over these barges as warning to any small craft personnel coming alongside or aboard. Seabee painters used spray guns almost exclusively.



FIRST CARPENTER SHOP, set up in rough clearing, consisted of tarps to cover saws. Half sections of tent decking were assembled here and trucked to jobs where other carpenter crews put them together. This assembly line system speeded operations immeasurably.



PILOTS CAMP is well under construction. Carpenters (center) are completing tent decks. Replete with screening and framework, these tents provided cool, comfortable living quarters for combat-weary P-38 pilots at Stirling. A mess hall and shower rounded out camp.



# PT BASE IS BATTALION'S FIRST STIRLING PROJECT



PT BASE. Torpedo dock for the cocky little night raiders was built by Chief Bill Inness and his Company A carpenter crew. Working long days with only hand-axes, this group completed the first Stirling project assigned the 87th in jig-time. Made of lashed coconut logs, the above crude struc-

ture nevertheless filled the bill. The PT Base later developed into a huge installation with warehouses, cranes, machine shops, etc., for housing several squadrons of these feared craft.



WIDE CLEARING, made for a main highway on Stirling Island, has been brushed out below airfield. Odd-shaped New Zealand truck was used by a Kiwi field bakery in delivering bread to various outlying units. Early roads weren't too good.



A MAIN DRAG on Stirling Island—a section of beach highway approaching the entrance road to ACORN 12 and the Pilots Camp area. This super-speedway, originally a trail 'dozed out' by invasion forces, was 40 feet in overall width.



# RE-BLADING STRIP 87TH'S FINAL TREASURY JOB



**PERFECT FORMATION.** Tandem lines of graders and rollers are shown during "face-lifting" operation performed on Stirling Field runway early in June. Harvil Nolin and George Sembrat, equipment operators, are leading grader parade. Work was continuous for two days and nights.



**CROWDED OPERATIONS.** A huge SCAT transport, loaded with top priority passengers and freight, prepares to take off as re-blading of runway continues at furious pace. Weather station's theodolite, used for making wind observations, is inside picket fence enclosure.



**RAIDERS AND GRADERS.** A B-25 takes off as part of a strike against last remaining Japs in the Solomons without interfering with a grading spread. It was usually necessary to clear runway when a mission was taking off or returning. It was this constant handicap that made it necessary

for the 87th to spend 48 hours in completing this re-blading task—the battalion's last public works assignment on Stirling. Rollers and water trucks worked right along with the graders.



# NATIVES *and* SCENIC



TREASURY ISLANDS

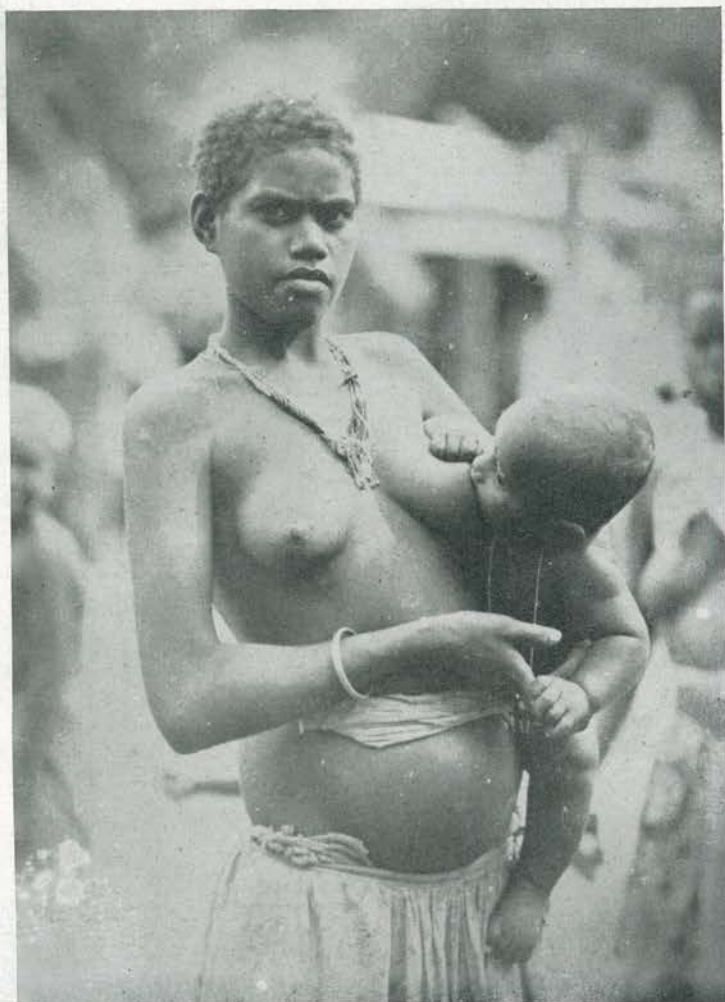




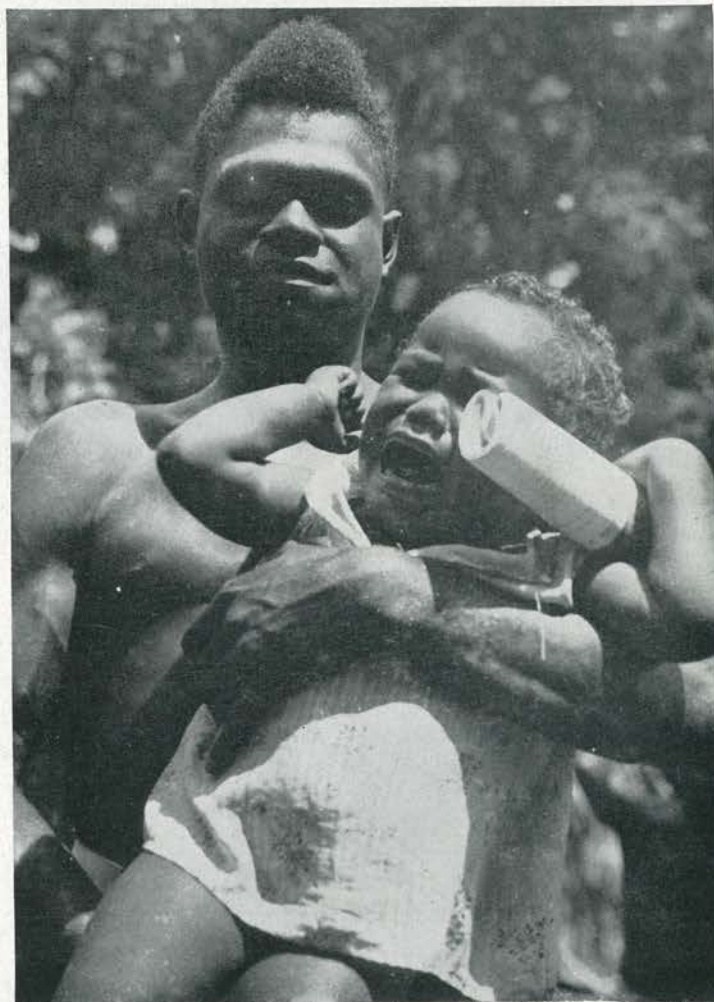
**PHOTOGENIC.** Two strapping specimens of young, native manhood are Phillip (left, shouldering New Zealand rifle) and John, perhaps, the most intelligent male on Mono Island. Single, both were widely sought after as husbands by village damsels.



**HOLY FAMILY.** Backbone of both the social and religious life on Mono was the Reverend Timothy Piani and family. Educated in the New Georgia Islands by New Zealand missionaries, this Man-of-God eventually returned to work among his own people.

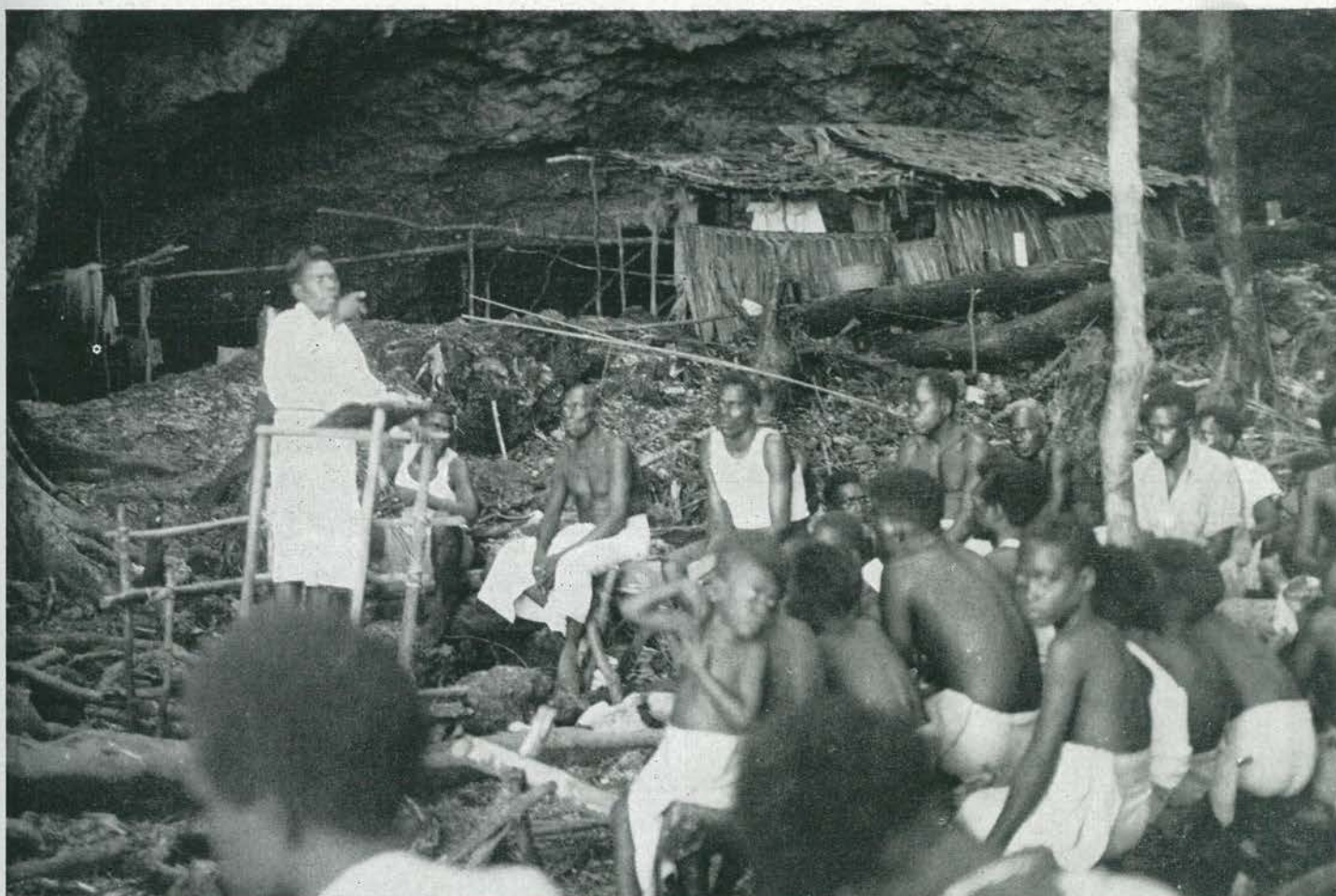


**HUNGER.** This handsome Mono mother feels no qualms in calmly facing the camera as her lusty offspring helps himself to breakfast despite Seabee visitors from Stirling. Baby wisely uses both hands as insurance against losing favored position.



**OLD BAWL GAME.** John's amazing versatility as a man-of-all-work about the native village suffers a serious reverse as he undertakes to demonstrate his talent with the infant set. Baby, clutching an issue of LIFE magazine, screams helplessly.





**THE WORD.** Mono natives are shown attending Sunday morning services. Then, they were still living in caves along the waterfront. Barefooted and standing in a primitive pulpit, the Reverend Timothy Piani raises hand and points to Heavens as he exhorts his

audience to live better lives. Many Americans and New Zealanders attended these services every Sunday morning, primarily to enjoy the group's fine choral singing. The text was invariably given in English, but the sermon was in the native tongue.

## TREASURY NATIVES PROVE IT'S "ONE WORLD"

The inhabitants of the Treasury Islands represented "Nature in the Raw"—Exhibit A!

Souvenir-hunting or curiosity-seeking Seabees were deeply impressed by their hardy existence on rugged Mono Island where they had long ago retreated in superstitious fear of Stirling's less favorable health conditions.

Greed was almost totally foreign to these Melanesian citizens of the British Northern Solomons. They turned to the soil or to the sea for necessities—not to their neighbor.

They tolerated civilization's advances only when these strange customs did not harm them. Probably this was the explanation behind their acceptance of a loincloth and Christianity from well-meaning missionaries.

Left alone, they discarded everything and continued living amid their ancient traditions. Visitors were welcomed with quiet respect, but a certain reserve seemed to temper their association with most GIs.

The 87th found a deserted native compound and huts in weather-beaten ruins upon helping to rid the Treasuries of the Japs in late '43. Apparently the residents could not adjust themselves to the Jap's "co-prosperity" propaganda.

Soon after the invasion, American and New Zealand troops discovered these simple people living deep in the jungle or holed up in large caves along the ocean's edge.

Eventually a few men were persuaded to return to their native habitat. Others followed gradually. For a considerable period, only the very young or very old women were to be seen at the cave dwellings. The most desirable females had been whisked away to secret hideaways in the jungles at the first sign of danger.

In time, the thatched villages were completely rebuilt, and the day finally dawned when visiting servicemen were surrounded by candy-seeking youngsters—just like back home!

Such visiting groups were, at first, largely ignored by the female population, but slowly fear evolved into studied friendliness.

The white man's way may not have appealed to these kindly natives, but neither did it disturb them.

The 87th, leaving the Treasuries in September, 1944, after a grueling year in the tropics, knew in their hearts that the late great Wendell Willkie's doctrine of "One World" was indeed an actuality.



**KNOW-HOW.** Perhaps, the most coy "model" on Mono was Alyce, who made and modeled native grass skirts to sell visiting Seabees. This buxom lassie was never known to exhibit her "wares" until it had been made worth her while.





**STUDY IN EBONY.** Attired in their Sabbath best, this interesting group poses for the 87th cameraman before leaving for morning church service. This was the only time her two urchins weren't completely nude. Woman is wife of native wearing pants.



**GETTING HIS GOAT.** Gideon, one of several highly-respected patriarchs in the Mono village, requested visiting photographer to snap him with his beloved goat. Obviously, the animal is not nearly as enthusiastic about the matter as his master.



**JUNGLE VILLAGE.** An excellent cross-section view of the picturesque native village, this shot catches a typical group of carefree youngsters taking time out from their games. The nearness of the encroaching jungle is emphasized by this contrast in tones.



**JIVE SESSION.** Attired in their immaculate Sunday-best, the natives' reed band plays for visiting friends from American and New Zealand camps on Stirling and Mono. Their instrumental renditions compared quite favorably with their haunting group singing.



**HIGH LLAMA.** Old, Old, Old Man was alleged to be oldest citizen of the Treasures, Kinkola (second from left), 70, said "The Old One" was an old man when he was a boy. Relatives thought oldster was perhaps 130, but records were lacking.



**HOSPITALITY.** Perhaps, the most hospitable native group was Paul and his intelligent family, whom 87th friends usually visited after Sunday services. Church over until next week, the "Mrs." has already shed her blouse and the youngsters have returned to Nature.





**CHARACTER.** The striking facial resemblance between this buxom Mono mother and her child attracted the attention of THE EARTHMOVER's photographer. Except for the more obvious differences, it was often difficult for visitors to distinguish between native men and women.



**HABIT.** Many native women were strongly addicted to the habitual use of tobacco. Always willing to accept an American cigarette, such women as "Candy" were definitely partial to their pipes. Seabees frequently took tobacco to the villages for trading purposes.



**GOODWILL.** Now and again Mono natives repaid visits to their Seabee friends on Stirling, bringing along special items of native craft such as grass skirts, canoe paddles, miniature canoes, war clubs, etc. Here, Comdr. Easterly exchanges views with a couple

of visitors near the 87th camp and incidentally treats them to cigarettes and a light. Natives were never awed by military rank. However, CPOs rated a special reception as the native leader, Roy, was also a chief.





THE JUNGLE is a place: where one doesn't sink to his knees to pray because he's already knee-deep in mud; where there are no horizons to scan; where men, with their tan drained by jungle suction, file along like a column of ghosts; where men die cursing the thing they couldn't see;

where there are no boys—just men who became of age during their first combat; where sweat of fingers drowns a cigarette; WHERE PATRIOTISM IS NEVER DISCUSSED!

MALSI BEACH was on far side of primeval Mono Island. Reached from Stirling by a ferry (landing craft), it was a popular stop for Seabee "tourists" from other side. New Zealand troops stationed here manned AA batteries in rugged hills. "Kiwis," as they term themselves, are shown bath-

ing (right background), while others are working on home-made outrigger craft. Near here were located the caves where natives existed during Japanese occupation and previous to construction of their new inland village.







**BLANCHE HARBOR.** Looking northward from the general vicinity of Island Command, sightseers had a perfect view of the "business district" of the narrow channel that separates Mono (left) from Stirling. This placid combination of sky, water and landscape looks anything but warlike. Yet

the destroyers and destroyer escorts shown nestling in harbor are awaiting orders before resuming the prowl for enemy shipping. There were comparatively few coconut palm trees in the Treasuries. These were, perhaps, the most picturesque on "Island X."

**JUNGLE HOSPITAL.** The first quonset hut erected on GOODTIME nears completion as a few carpenters work aloft while others finish inside trim. A group of these huts—eventually manned by medical officers and corpsmen—served as an emergency hospital for all air strip personnel. Airfield

construction had been pushed so rapidly that barely enough clearing had been done to allow space for this hospital. Here, lush jungle is obviously seeking to envelop the structure before it is even finished.







THE NATURALISTS stop en route to Mono village to marvel at giant banyan tree. Measuring 40 feet in diameter, 120 in circumference and over 100 in height, this eye-arresting monstrosity is largest tree of record in Treasures. Actually, the awesome mass is hundreds of cannibalistic vines choking

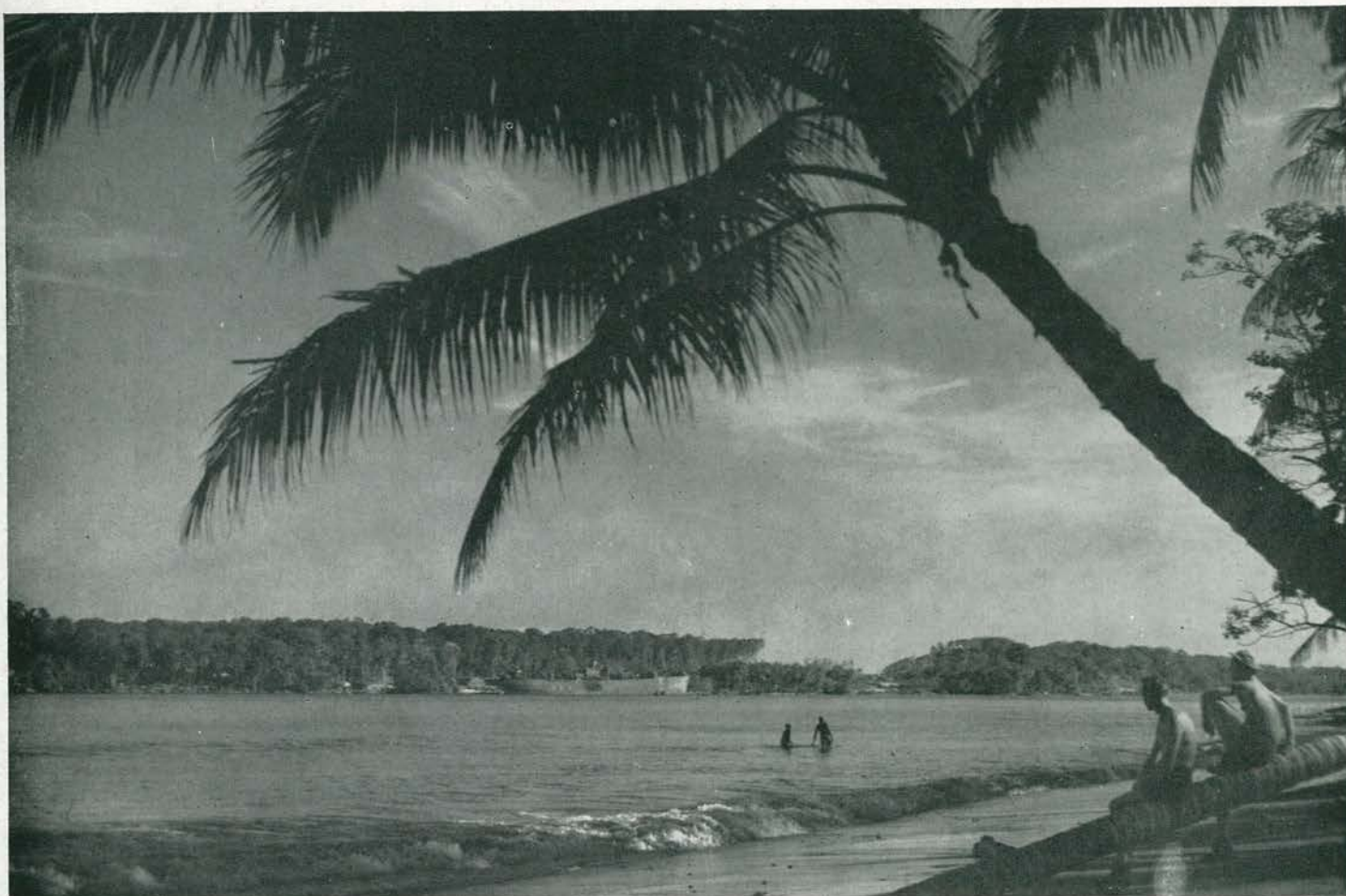
a primeval monarch to death. Natives frequently mentioned a much larger tree further inland, but no white man reported seeing it. "Explorers" are: Jim Wierengo (seated), Chief Carl Ruble and "Barney" Nelson.



DAWN STRIKE. As the faint pink fingers of a tropical sunrise probe the somber Solomons sky, a lone B-25 takes off on a special mission to Bougainville. This plane has two incendiary bombs tucked away under each wing. For months, the mates were awakened each morning by the sound of these

Mitchells warming up and taking off. Seared pile of brush (left) reveals all that's left of the once flourishing jungle. It's lying where 'dozers pushed it off the runway.





THE ROMANTIC ILLUSION of the South Seas is captured in this panoramic shot of Stirling taken from Falamai Peninsula on Mono. A large cargo ship is unloading at Stirling Dock across the channel. Break in tree skyline (right of ship) marks end of Stirling Field runway. Two mates cool off in

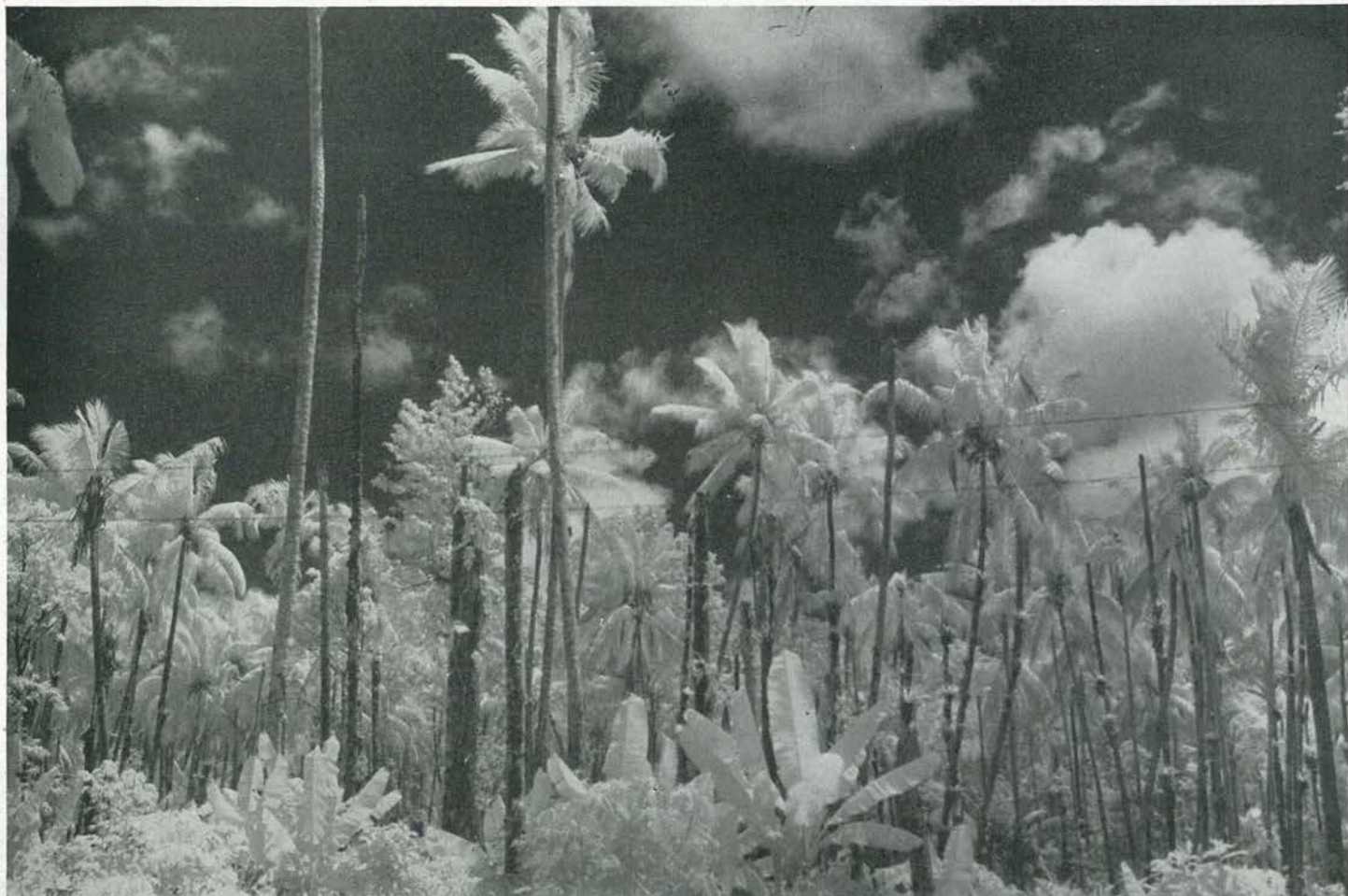
comparatively cool waters, while another pair of roving Bees relax under a palm tree (right). This picturesque shot could easily be mistaken for Tahiti instead of the Northern Solomons.



TOPPING IT OFF. Richard Bogdanski and Charley Danford consult on the finished product while Clarence Nielson nails last section of quonset roof in place. While working in the open, sun helmets were a necessary item of apparel. Tender, young palm at right (one of a few growing any dis-

tance from shore) struggles against lack of soil on coral-based island. Quonset huts never became commonplace on Stirling. They usually housed administrative units where records had to be protected against elements.





**FAIRYLAND.** Infra-red film depicts (as none other can) the delicate tracery of lush tropical vegetation. This special film (tropically packed) creates the illusion of piercing the jungle itself, portraying in depth and detail, which would appear as a solid front in ordinary film. Clouds stand out

billowing full, yet filmy and light against perfect blueness of Pacific sky. Many trees without tops reveal devastating effect of heavy Naval gunfire when U. S. Task Force 31 shelled Mono during Treasury invasion.



**CHANNEL SUNSET.** Resting in the placid harbor waters with Mono (right) and Stirling (left), perfectly silhouetted destroyer (center) noses up to fuel barge whose blunt outline is barely discernable against the darkening shoreline. Landing craft (used as ferry) is making last run from Malsi back to

Navy boat pool. The sunset lights up upper sky brilliantly while darkness has settled over earth and water. From daylight to complete darkness in five minutes is a typical sunset in the South Pacific.



# C A M P O S T M A N



‘ ‘ I S L A N D X ’ ’





**LAND-GOING SUBMARINE.** A battalion truck "ferries" men of the 87th across the awesome "moat," which practically surrounded early Camp Ostman area for much too long. Almost daily torrential downpours for weeks made situations similar to this a common sight.



**MORE PROVISIONS ARRIVE.** A monstrous carryall, jampacked with vitally-needed supplies and provisions for early occupation forces on Stirling, rumbles cautiously down a tortuous road, blazed only a few hours earlier by a sweating Seabee and his bulldozer.



**HIDEAWAY.** Surrounded entirely by tangled vegetation, cleverly camouflaged by Nature, a back-saving crane assists battalion storekeepers and riggers laboriously unloading pallets of invaluable supplies from ships to be hidden in this secret supply dump.



**QUICK LUNCH.** Between truckloads of supplies steadily pouring into the new camp, work-hungry Seabees hastily grab a bite of impromptu chow. Any time was chow-time at this stage when the cry was work, work, and then more work. The days were never long enough.



**NERVE CENTER.** It was first things first in constructing the new camp. Here, axe-swinging carpenters build bomb-resisting underground communications dugout, using watersoaked mahogany and teakwood logs from surrounding forest. Structure was eventually sandbagged.



**WATER POINT.** In the midst of this God-made jungle, a Seabee-built (87th) water plant is operating. Trucks haul the precious fluid continuously so sweat-soaked men—to whom a bath was only a memory—may again feel human. Water rated a top priority.





AND DAMN THE TORPEDOES! Typical of the several early "super-highways" leading into unshod Camp Ostman was this obstacle course, which tested the mettle of even the stoutest truckdrivers throughout the memorable months following the invasion. "Pilots" of heavy-duty trucks approached such dilemmas with considerable

misgiving as the depth of such uncharted "lakes" naturally varied with the amount of rainfall. However, "T" Division was "on the ball" and kept 'em rolling day and night. It was Man vs. Nature.

## LIFE AT CAMP OSTMAN WAS STERILE EXISTENCE

To an isolated few, "Island X" was "Home, Sweet Home." To all others, however, it was the 87th's "Devil's Island." To one and all, "The Rock" represented an 11-month interlude spent like degraded castaways on a 1x3 coral landspeck in the lonely Pacific. Why Stirling's operational code name was GOODTIME was never learned.

From the first days of the mud-drenched bivouac in October and November, 1943 until the day of departure in September, 1944, the men lived in the crudest and most primitive manner imaginable. Propriety and customs were soon all but discarded.

Sleep was virtually impossible in the bivouac area. It was, in fact, a hellish nightmare of jagged coral, swarms of persistent insects and hordes of such monsters as giant iguanas, scorpions, land-crabs, centipedes and the deadly coral snake.

Pup-tents were small protection against the incessant rains. Throughout the long, restless nights, the eerie wailing of air-raid sirens and the deep barking of AA guns were interspersed with weird jungle noises. Attacks of dysentery added to the general misery. It was invariably a hollow-eyed, water-soaked crew reporting for early duty.

Once the top-priority air strip was begun, each division commenced clearing its own area in the main camp. Armed with axes and machetes, crews first hacked out clearings for tents. Then, 'dozers cleared narrow roads between rows of tents and the camp began to shape up.

Soil removed in 'dozing weakened the foundation of the towering trees by further exposing the already shallow roots. During the worst windstorms, the wary men usually evacuated their tents in favor of cleared areas like the rifle range. Inevitably, tents were destroyed by crashing jungle monarchs until eventually this menace superseded the Jap threat.

As the vast island-development program expanded, chigger bites caused the most lost man-hours. Other prevalent afflictions were jungle rot, fungus, ulcers and heat rash. Lacerations became infected overnight. The men gulped daily doses of atabrine, salt tablets and vitamin pills to stay on their feet.

Throughout those early, trying months, money, as such, had absolutely no value. Cigarettes, candy and toilet articles were free. The Solomons medium of exchange was barter, but there was little to bargain for.

The 87th quickly cultivated neighboring New Zealanders. The con-

nection was usually good for tea or beer. However, the Kiwis generally contrived to get back more than they gave.

Early island chow consisted largely of warmed-over field rations. When fresh meat made its infrequent appearance on holidays like Christmas and New Year's, the mates were unable to do it justice.

Procuring food from visiting merchant ships became the most highly developed of many cutthroat arts in the forward area. It was every outfit for itself with no holds barred!

Liquor could be had at \$35 to \$50 a fifth. Crude stills, hidden under trunks of trees, produced potent "Jungle Juice" from handy items like raisins, fruit bars, canned corn or apricots. Only after many had become violently ill did Island Command clamp down.

Most men experienced their first real earthquake on 24 December 1943. Many in breakfast chow-line were hurled to the ground. Lesser quakes and tremors occurred periodically. Other than air-mailed clippings, the men depended upon THE MITCHELL and THE DAILY MAIL (two-page mimeographed newsheets) for current news.

Scuttlebutt became rife that once the Strip was completed the battalion would get a 30-day leave in New Zealand. The abortive Kavieng push collapsed, but it was in the making just long enough to blast the visit "Down Under."

Stirling was strictly a womanless world. Except for an occasional flight nurse, the only white women the men saw were those with Bob Hope and Jack Benny.

The mates resorted to almost every pastime to speed the dragging days. Hunting catayes solved the problem for many. Souvenir-making turned the trick for some. Others resorted to fishing trips in the MISSEABEE, swimming at Falamai or hikes to the native villages. The planned recreation program included basketball, volleyball, softball, boxing, wrestling, horseshoe pitching and, finally, ping pong! Five battalion officers were lucky in a restricted lottery and flew to Australia for a leave. They rejoined the outfit at New Cal.

Morale was tremendously improved when the battalion was awarded its first battle star for the Treasury-Bougainville operation.

But all wasn't work and boredom on Stirling. Twice the bug-eyed men watched a mighty task force shelling nearby Shortland Islands. Black alerts were not infrequent.

When the jungle-battered outfit left Stirling in September, 1944, the men had absorbed their fill of the tropics. The next destination—no matter where—would certainly be an improvement!



# NEW CHOW HALL BUILT IN VIRGIN JUNGLE



**JUNGLE SUFFERS SET-BACK.** Not even this almost impenetrable jungle can withstand the Seabees' assault as they labor tirelessly to push back the thick, green mass for the new 87th chow hall. Here, in a neatly bulldozed central clearing, concrete foundations are laid. A hastily-pitched tent

(right) provides a haven where workers exhausted from intense equatorial heat and stifling humidity may recuperate. Note unusual buttressing roots of larger trees (extreme left and right) characteristically spreading out in all directions.



**WHEN DO WE EAT?** Eventually, the budding chow hall commences to shape up as skilled carpenters, assisted by muscular apprentices and laborers, hasten to complete the building so their shipmates might eat without undue exposure to the unpredictable tropical elements.



**FLYLESS!** The essential project completed, the end of the initial chow-line may be seen slowly disappearing between the mess hall wings. Completely screened out, Stirling's pesky flies were, at last, deprived of the "privilege" of dining with the 87th.





**NO VACANCIES.** Their once bountiful energy slowly drained away by the suction of torrid heat, Seabees recuperate from multiple tropical illnesses in Sick Bay. Steel helmets hang in readiness in case of a surprise air raid

by the enemy. Another battalion picture of this ward appears on page LVI of CAN DO. Contrary to the author's deft implication, the 87th had only one case of bona fide malaria during twelve months in the Solomons.



**AFTER SICK CALL.** Pharmacist Mates, First Class John Baker (left) and Fred Colby run laboratory tests and post entries to men's health records, following busy sick call. The 87th dispensary included a complete operating set-up and a dental office that was a going concern.



**CHIGOS.** Just about everyone eventually acquired a case of "jiggers." Caused by a microscopic red mite, usually found on tropical vegetation, resultant infections were almost invariably made worse by uncontrollable scratching. Chief Art Collins exhibits his infected legs.



**TROPICAL HOSPITAL.** In this rain-drenched jungle rendezvous, safe from the probing eyes of enemy bombers, the Sick Bay was constructed none too soon. Here, near a high cliff overlooking the gleaming Coral Sea, top-flight medical and surgical attention was accorded casualties from early

bombings, strafings and construction accidents. One of the earliest buildings finished, this hospital proved invaluable, not only to the 87th, but to many other nearby outfits without proper medical facilities.





**HOUSE OF DAVID.** Full-faced beards, as well as bushy mustaches, seemed to flourish on Stirling as nowhere else on the 87th's trans-Pacific saga. Just about everyone—both officers and men—either sprouted—or attempted to sprout—the most formidable facial adornment possible, but finally the pride-smashing order was handed

down. **ALL HANDS—SHAVE OFF FACE BEARDS!** (Reason: too unsanitary!) Left to right: Lister ("Monty Wooley") Harrell, Charlie Barker, Jim Moore, King Norton, Byron Chronic and Charlie Johnson.

## JUNGLE "BRUSH"

SHAVING TAKES A HOLIDAY  
AS ALMOST EVERYONE LETS  
HIS WHISKERS GROW WILD

In the lush, green Treasury jungles, the urge to express one's personality became a dreamer's reality, at last. Perhaps, the tangled and matted natural growth had something to do with this gusty camouflage epidemic.

At first, the morning's routine shave was, of necessity, postponed. Then, it was simply forgotten.

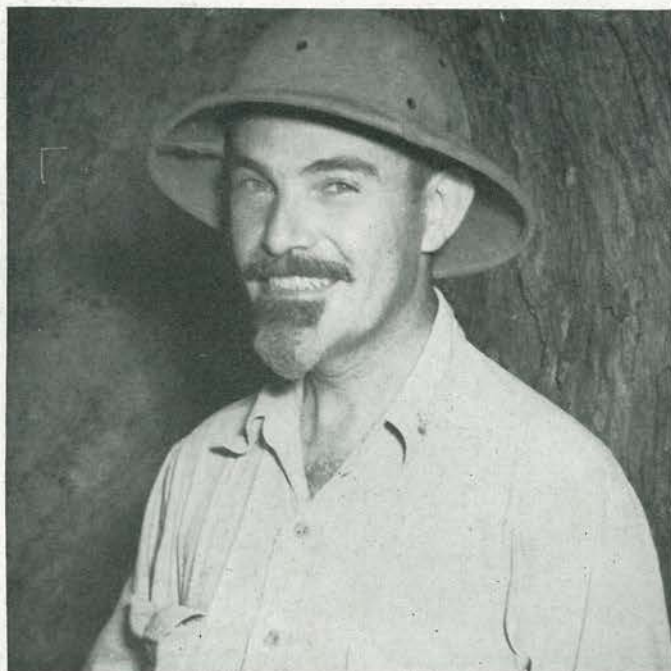
Soon hair hedges sprouted from ear to ear via the chin. Impressive handlebars were trained to stand erect or point—frequently with the aid of sail-maker's beeswax.

Youthful faces hopefully cultivated a crop of peach-fuzz, while others proudly displayed handfuls of manly "spinach."

Bushes of black, brown or flaming red became badges of distinction. Competition became increasingly keener. A shipmate's social standing was determined by the hair on his face—not on his chest!

This vogue slowly evolved into artistic landscape gardening until one day—"the boom was dropped!!!"

The order had two immediate effects: it enabled Nature to resume her course with many hopefuls and allowed the be-whiskered element to shed an extra blanket!



**THE DOC.** Lt. Comdr. Frederick P. Osgood of Toledo, original Senior Medical Officer, seems to have also caught the trend of beard-sprouting as he proudly exhibits his own neatly-trimmed "Van Dyke" for future South Pacific warriors.



**THE BEARD.** Not to be outdone by lesser spirits, Lieut. Ray Pape, St. Louis, gives a prime example of how a forward-area beard should really look. Never without his inseparable cigar, Lieut. "Crusty" seldom missed a trick "Up Front!"





**TIMBER!** Huge water-soaked logs, an invaluable by-product of the clearing for nearby Stirling Strip, await processing at the 87th's portable sawmill (partially shown in background). This mill furnished lumber for all the most important projects in the Treasuries.



**ALL WET.** A hastily-constructed shed provides inadequate shelter for men and machinery against Stirling's puzzling elements. The hearty sawmillers, "bossed" by Chief Carpenter W. C. Gladish and Chief Leo McDonald, were always either sweat-soaked or shower-drenched.



**SWEATING IT OUT.** Shirtless, bearded sawmill hands prepare a large native log for sawing into finished lumber for the innumerable top-priority jobs all over Mono and Stirling. Projects, it seemed to these men, could never be supplied with enough lumber to meet the ever-increasing

demands. Lumber for their own camp needs always seemed to be the bottom order. Interwoven surrounding jungle insured a bountiful supply of huge teakwood and mahogany logs. Daily average output was 6,500 board feet.





**KNOCKING OUT POCKETS.** Spraying water-filled pockets in the volcanic-ash cliffs adjacent Camp Ostman with lethal diesel oil, the Malaria Control group succeeded in conquering an enemy rated eight times more

dangerous than the deadliest Jap in the Northern Solomons. Left to right: Shelah Kern, Ernest Lommatsch, Jr., George Beote, August Kafer, Raymond Austin and Oren Ammerman.



**CLOSING IN FOR THE KILL.** Like modern Paul Bunyans, the legendary American timberman, four husky, axe-swinging Malaria Controllers literally hack their way through almost impenetrable undergrowth to "splash"

malaria-carrying mosquitoes. These pests operated against the 87th from the battalion's water-point base—Soola Lake. Left to right: Sam Janka, Edward O'Con, Ralph ("Mush") Masciarelli and Angelo Insalaco.



**EXTERMINATION.** Reaching the lake, Malaria Control "puts to sea" to ferret out and destroy the mosquitoes' secret breeding dens. Every nook and cove is "bombarde" with deadly diesel oil and a thin film of

the smothering agent is spread over the lake's surface each week. Left to right: Ernest Lommatsch, Jr., Oren Ammerman, Lorre Andre, Raymond David and Shelah Kern.





**A MOSQUITO'S NIGHTMARE.** The 17 original members of the 87th Malaria Control group are shown at their Camp Ostman operational base, complete with a toolshed full of anti-mosquito gear and drums of the indispensable diesel oil. Left to right (seated):

Rollins and David; (kneeling): Insalaco, Lommatsch, Beote, Hussey, O'Con (with pipe), Mohr and Ammerman; (standing): Kafer, Masciarelli, Haitom, Janka and Andre; (top of shed): Kern and Boehm; (on top of barrel): Raymond Austin.

## SOLOMONS: 12 MONTHS— MALARIA: NIL

A tiny island so infested by insects of every description that it fairly crawled. Jungle so thick it was well-nigh impenetrable. Cliffs so sheer, one slip would have meant not only breaking every bone in one's body, but also being lacerated beyond recognition by the razor-edge volcanic ash.

All that and much more was the problem that confronted the 87th Malarial Control unit when it arrived on Stirling Island in late 1943. Half of the island was assigned to the battalion to debug and maintain.

As the undergrowth was cleared and the thousands of breeding places of the dangerous malaria-carrier were sprayed with a special diesel oil and kerosene solution (DDT was not then available), a gradual lessening of mosquitoes became apparent.

Breeding places were found not only in the puddles, coconut shells, swamps and rotting logs, but also along cliffs, 150 to 200 feet above the ocean.

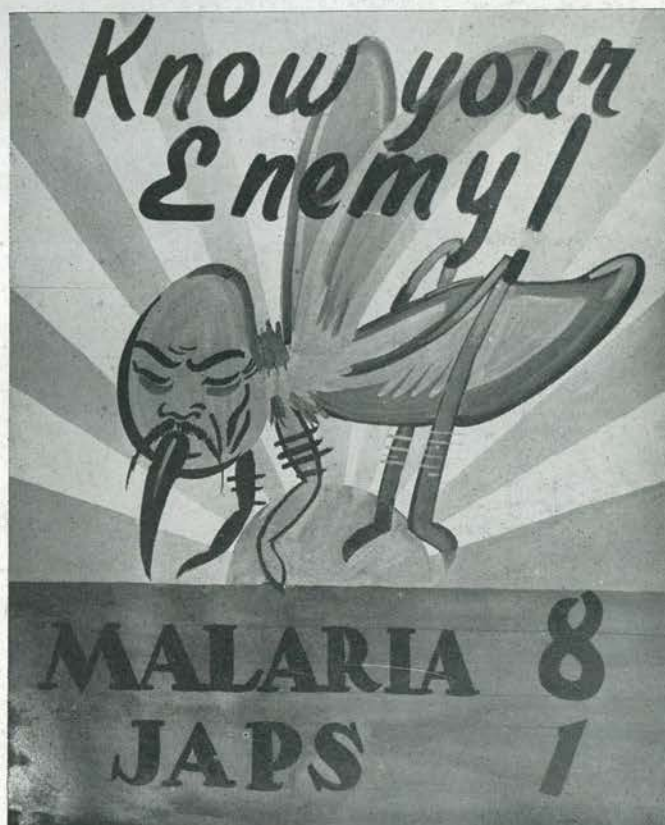
The volcanic ash of these bluffs was similar in appearance to a petrified sponge-cake, and, consequently, provided innumerable pockets, which acted as catch-basins for the tides and the rains. These pockets also made comfortable dwellings for many malaria-carrying mosquitoes and their teeming offspring.

Tides and torrential rains conspired to make the task of the hardy Malaria group one of endless spraying. They also had the job of spraying Soola Lake, the main fresh-water reservoir of the island.

Then, there was the problem of preventing sea-water from seeping into a fresh-water lake on nearby Mono Island just across the channel. The lake was at a lower level than the nearby ocean; consequently, salt water ran into the lake during high tides.

This was overcome by a dam built by the unit. As a result of this laborious work, the level of the fresh water was soon raised to a point above sea-level.

Because of the fine work of these persistent "microbe hunters," the 87th had only one case of malaria (questionable) during its long residence in one of the worst infested areas on Earth.



**BEWARE!** Reproduced above by John Schaefer is a replica of the first malaria educational poster displayed on Stirling. Battalion members were alarmed to learn that malaria was claiming eight victims to the Japs' one throughout the fever-ridden Solomons.



# SHOPS KEEP PROJECTS ROLLING AROUND CLOCK



**CARPENTER SHOP.** Chief Carpenter's Mate "Bob" Parrott and Carpenter Karl Jchannessen (left center) study detailed blueprint at an improvised table while machine-hand assistants turn out all types of furniture from native lumber for the 87th and other units.



**BLACKSMITHS AND WELDERS.** By continuously making new machine parts and welding others that couldn't be immediately replaced, the blacksmith and welding shop operated day and night to keep strip equipment in tip-top operating condition right around the clock.



**BIG STUFF.** Vital to the sustained construction progress of Stirling Field was the essential work done by the highly skilled crew of the Heavy-Duty Machine Shop on such monstrous earthmoving equipment as power shovels, carryalls, bulldozers and motor graders.



**LIGHTWEIGHTS.** No motor problem proved too difficult for the crack mechanics of the Light-Duty Machine Shop, who specialized in trucks, jeeps, etc. Left to right: Sylvester Savage, Chief Carpenter Edward ("Butch") O'Meara, Chief Robert ("Pappy") Holt and Americo Brizzi.



# 87TH SUPPLIED STIRLING WATER

In the plans of attack on enemy-held sectors, little is left to chance. A supply of water is of prime importance among the many objectives.

Immediately upon landing in the Treasury Islands, New Zealand engineers, with the aid of aerial reconnaissance photos, located fresh-water Soola Lake in the midst of the matted jungle on Stirling Island. A road was pushed through at once by 87th bulldozers and on the third day pumps were erected and service to the invasion troops commenced.

Mike Yanosick, Bob Scanlon and Ed Joe Mulhern, all of the 87th's trail-blazing Company A, were detailed to aid in the operation. An output of 3,000 gallons per day was sufficient for a while.

When the main body of the 87th arrived, however, the Kiwis relinquished control and the development of the water point became a battalion project.

Pump after pump was installed and under the supervision of Chief Shipfitter "Jack" Ormiston, new methods for treating the impure water were producing gratifying results.

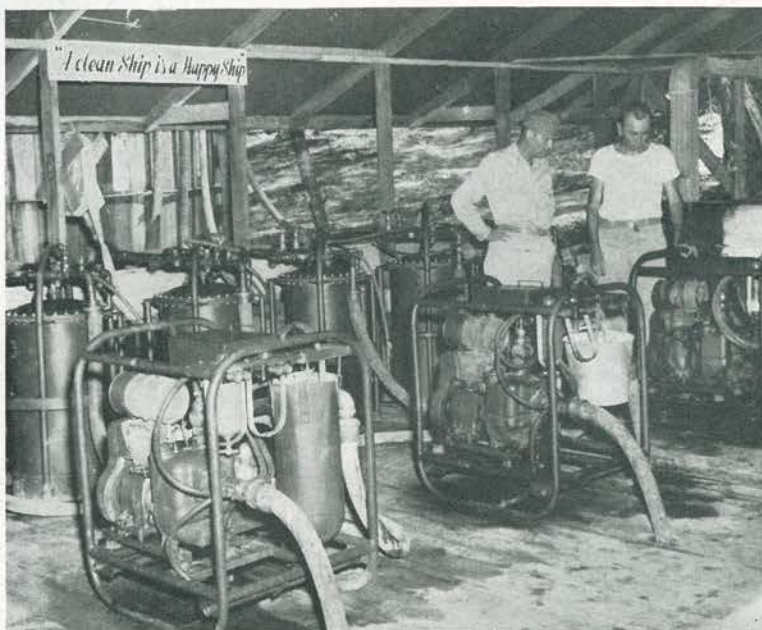
Lieut. William C. Reilly, in charge of the design of the water system, soon evolved an efficient method of supply. Water was pumped up through pipes to huge reservoir towers from which all major units were able to draw. Smaller units, however, still carted their water by tank, truck or trailer.

A 15,000-gallon tank was set up beside the pumps. The water was forced into troughs located at the top. Through holes in the sides of these troughs, it cascaded ten feet, thereby aerating itself thoroughly before being distributed.

Every half-hour the water was checked and tested to see that it conformed to the required standards. The test established the hypochloride of lime content at one part in one million parts of water. Daily output eventually reached 120,000 gallons.

With the help of the Malaria Control group, the swampy jungle pond, with its shoreline of tangled trees and brush, was transformed into a coral-banked modern reservoir.

By constant hard work and by continually devising new ways and means of increasing the efficiency of operation, the 87th Water Department was able to provide all units on Stirling with an ample supply of pure, potable water, thus contributing greatly to the health and comfort of the entire island.



**WATER TOWER.** Towering virtually as high as the tallest surrounding jungle monarch, this imposing water tower supplies the pressure for the entire Camp Osman water system. Perched high on the supporting platform, Lieut. William C. Reilly looks his project over.

**TOP TO BOTTOM:** TEST CASE. Lieut. Reilly, 87th water supply officer, observes Hubert Rieck, Jr., running a periodical test for chlorine content in purified water at Soola Lake. The island name on sign is correctly and officially spelled STIRLING—not STERLING. LAKE VIEW. This shot of the rear of the battalion's water-purifying plant, taken from a rowboat adrift on crystal-clear Soola Lake, reveals the 87th-built and operated plant against a majestic jungle background. Sizeable crocodiles infested the lake. CHECK-UP. Comdr. Easterly confers with Chief Shipfitter "Jack" Ormiston about water-purifying equipment recently installed. The sign—"A Clean Ship is a Happy Ship"—recalls shades of Lieut. Feiber's cherry "propaganda" aboard the S. S. ROBIN WENTLEY.





"HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING." Though the prospects for the first Yuletide overseas were none too bright, many spirits were lifted early Christmas morning by the above group of carol-singing New Zealanders

from the adjacent camp. Even cooks and bakers (right), overhearing the old familiar songs, temporarily left their stoves and ovens for a few moments to listen.



ATTENTION! The Christmas spirit and carol-singing cease momentarily while "The Military" takes over. While all stand at attention, Mike Corrado, battalion bugler, blows "Colors" as "Old Glory" is hoisted sky-

ward. This scene is particularly significant inasmuch as this was the second flag-raising ceremony at newly-built Camp Ostman. Camp was named for Seaman Edwin Ostman, missing in action.



DINNER IN THE MAKING. In order that Christmas might be as joyful an occasion as possible, the cooks and bakers worked untiringly, preparing the feast long anticipated. Turkeys, being prepared above, formed but

a part of the complete menu served at Christmas dinner. Working (left to right): Chief John Duarte, Lundquist, Rogers, Chief "Jack" Smeltzer, Short, Shoup, Kaczowski and Goodrich.





**JINGLE BELLS.** Perhaps, the most gala 1943 Christmas Eve party in the Camp Ostman area was held in the 87th disbursing office. Bridging the traditional gulf existing between officers and enlisted personnel, "Gold Braid" and the mates pay homage to their priceless heritage of Yuletide.

Chief Carl W. Ruble, Lexington, Virginia (Santa Claus), leads all hands in a rafter-shaking chorus of JINGLE BELLS as Jack Jones, Cleveland, opens another package. Refreshments featured iced beer and "The Real McCoy!"

## MATES CELEBRATE FIRST OVERSEAS CHRISTMAS IN JUNGLE

"'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house . . ." dirty water crawled over sloppy, foot-churned, black mud, then passed on into the next tent.

Rain dripped constantly from the canvas overhead, splattering upon shelter-half or poncho-covered cots and forming miniature pools. Oil-filled bottles emitted smoky and jerky flames from their twisted rag wicks. Clothing was wet, the bedding damp. It had been damp for weeks and was now beginning to smell.

Such was the battalion's first overseas Christmas Eve in the heart of the dreary, cheerless Stirling jungle.

For most, it was the first Christmas Eve away from home. The night held only one consolation—enemy bombers might not come over in the soupy weather. A few pre-arranged get-togethers were held in the more weatherproof tents. Several mates had even fashioned small Christmas trees from handy jungle growth, trimming them

with wrapping paper and tinsel string off packages from home.

Now and then, an old, familiar Christmas carol would begin somewhere. It faltered and broke after one or two verses. Something was lacking.

The parties didn't last long. A 12-hour work schedule left little time for parties, and Christmas Day was just another day of hard labor from dawn until dusk on unfinished Stirling Strip for most of the gang.

Still, a good many may not have fallen asleep at once. Perhaps, visions of past Christmas Eves appeared before them in the dismal night—visions of helping the wife with the tree and arranging presents for the family; of attending a gala Yuletide party with the girlfriend; of the many things a guy could be doing if he were home on Christmas Eve instead of in the depressing Solomons.

Luckily, no air alert sounded that night. The Japs did not come over. It was truly peaceful.



**MERRY CHRISTMAS!** Posed before a hastily improvised Christmas tree, appropriately decorated with tinsel and leaves from nearby eucalyptus trees, Comdr. Easterly and Lt. Comdr. Flynn receive a MERRY CHRIST-

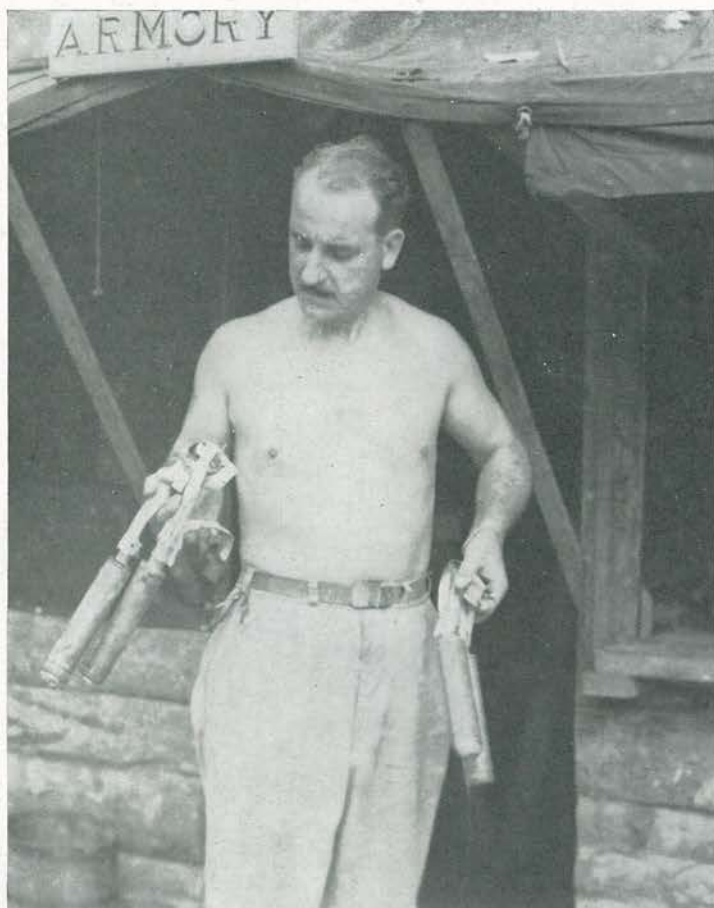
**MAS TO ALL** from "celebrating" cooks and bakers. Representing the galley staff in rear are (left to right): Arnold Shoup, Emmett June, Chief John Duarte and Matt Caffrey.





**AFTERMATH.** Torn and twisted cots on which men were sleeping, scattered seabags, mess gear, buckets, foot lockers, letters, etc., are all that remain of camp site in S Division where four men were killed during the all-night bombing raid of 12 January 1944. Chief Bos'n's Mate Ted Marienthal,

New York City, searches debris for items of personal effects to be sent to deceased men's "next of kin." Note shrapnel from bombs embedded in tree (left) and condition of tent.



**DUDS!** Chief John Porter exhibits four Jap two-pound anti-personnel bombs. Dropped from tree-level height, most enemy "eggs" had arming fins damaged by jungle branches during descent. Thirty-two were found in the camp area following morning.



**SKYLIGHT.** Serving as a grim reminder of the previous night's bombing, this jagged hole in the chow hall roof convinced all "doubters" that the enemy was playing for keeps. Russell Kanter peers through "skylight" created by Jap anti-personnel bomb.





**THE MORNING AFTER.** These sizeable mahogany and teakwood trees lay broken and splintered by a single Jap bomb. Having withstood the onslaught of many a tropical hurricane and typhoon, they were snapped like matchsticks by a 140-pounder. This was the

scene that greeted the eyes of the dazed 87th the morning following the all-out raid. The thought foremost in all minds was to thank God that this one had landed here, rather than on some mate's tent.

## J A P B O M B S K I L L 5, W O U N D 3 4

From 27 October until several weeks following D-day of the Treasury-Bougainville campaign, Stirling absorbed a plastering equal to that received by any island in the South Pacific. Once the 90s were in place, the enemy was forced to keep at a high altitude, making their bombing generally inaccurate.

One night, 12 January, around 2030, Tojo's "Freight Train" came in again under an ideal full moon. All hands hit the dirt and the routine performance began all over again.

Radars picked up another flight when the first formation lumbered past, high above a withering flak curtain. Then, several more flights. Every searchlight on Mono and Stirling began sweeping overhead. It was unlike anything in the past. Previously, they would circle a bit, drop their "eggs" and depart. This was different.

At times, five or six twin-motored bombers remained in the light beams while other flights moved in. Radar-guided 90s, 40s and 20s criss-crossed the sky with tracers until it looked like a tangled mass of silvery spider-webs.

The grinding sound of power-dives and exploding bombs became deafening. Enemy fighters darted in at tree-top level, strafed, vanished—then tore in again.

Invasion rumors spread like wildfire. It was suspected that perhaps planes from Rabaul, Bougainville and possibly Truk were being supported by a large carrier force offshore somewhere. Without doubt, the Japs were staging what appeared to be an all-out effort.

There was no denying their reckless or fantastic courage that night. They sowed fields of thin metal slivers attached to tiny parachutes. These kites engaged the radar beams while other planes dove in to bomb and strafe. One Jap tailed a returning Mitchell. Rattling off fluent English over his radio, he switched on his lights and coasted in as if to land. At the strip's edge, his plane suddenly roared, spewed its bombs and sped away.

Another plane sneaked in during a lull in the firing. A string of explosions followed his glide over the 87th's part of Stirling before gun crews were even aware of his presence. Mob hysteria resulted. Frantic mates milled around in the darkness, yelling for missing buddies. Wounded men and shock cases stumbled along the roads. In S Division, officers and men tried desperately to restore order.

One or two bombs had struck the tents in which Eddie Burns, Blake Musselman, Art Nappen and Don Fitzgerald lived. All were killed instantly. The nearby New Zealand supply dump received a direct hit. Another bomb landed within three feet of the 87th Supply Office. One personnel bomb went through the battalion chow hall.

Several trucks carrying AA ammunition were knocked out by dive-bombers. Searchlights were out of action all over the island. Bombs caused damage in all conceivable places, since both Mono and Stirling were jam-packed with men and equipment.

The 87th Sick Bay was overcrowded. Casualties were admitted from the 11th Airdrome, CASU 8 and the 198th Field Artillery. Doctors and corpsmen worked unceasingly over the wounded.

Unexploded two-pound anti-personnel bombs were found scattered all over camp that night and the next morning. The densely interwoven branches and vines overhead were responsible for most of the duds.

Due to the exhaustive work program, the men had had little time for digging foxholes out of the solid coral, despite directives to that end on bulletin boards. Reveille at 0445 and remaining on the job until 1800 gave little time even for supper—to say nothing of washing, laundry and an occasional letter home.

The next morning, however, all but the most essential work parties were cancelled and the men were ordered to take time off for digging foxholes. The ditch-digger appeared and dug deep trenches between tents in some divisions. Logs were laid over the top of the excavations and sandbags piled on as further protection.

These precautions came none too soon as the "Bogies" were back in considerable force again that night, but these raids were comparatively short-lived.

However, the fanatical Nips pulled the first of a series of early-morning daylight sneaks on 14 January, and Roy Goldberg, working on a grease truck at the Strip, was killed by a hedge-hopping Jap, who bombed and strafed everything in his line of flight.

This was the fifth 87th death from enemy action within two days. And in addition to the fatalities, a total of 34 had been wounded as a result of the assaults. These, in time, received Purple Hearts.





**BUDDIES.** The brief boat trip from Stirling completed, truck containing flag-shrouded bodies finally reaches peaceful American-New Zealand cemetery, set back from the once blood-soaked sands of Falamai Beach, on Mono. Here, bodies are being carefully low-

ered to helmeted pallbearers, patiently waiting to carry their deceased buddies to hastily-dug graves. Battalion members would always remember this occasion as a most solemn one. For the first time, the war, which had once seemed so distant, had struck tragically home.

## BOMB VICTIMS BURIED WITH FULL HONORS ON MONO

The hushed crowd moved outside and only four persons remained in the Recreation Hall. Each lay upon a cot, wrapped in a gray blanket—silent. It was 13 January 1944.

Twenty-four men entered, dressed in green coveralls and wearing steel helmets. They were the pallbearers, the dead men's closest friends.

A low command was given. Shipmates carried their friends outside to waiting trucks. Eight honor guards boarded the lead vehicle with the bodies and the others followed.

The line of trucks slowly weaved through an endless series of mud-wallows and holes in the bomb-pocked road. At Purple Beach, the trucks boarded LCMs and were ferried to the American and New Zealand burial grounds at Falamia on Mono Island.

Protestant Chaplain Ernest T. Marble and Catholic Chaplain Cyril R. Kavanagh delivered the last rites of each man's faith. The services were short and simple, but there could not have been a more solemn or dignified occasion. Even the men's worn and faded clothing seemed to add dignity to the scene.

War's grim reality surrounded the onlookers. They seemed to grasp that life itself was somehow insignificant—that it was only the work ahead that mattered—and that only they who remained to finish the job could best appreciate the enormous contribution the fallen had made.

Intense tropical heat necessitated prompt interment. Coffins are not found in front-line battlezones. Times does not permit their construction.

The four shipmates were lowered into their graves as all hands stood at attention. Three sharp volleys broke the silence. Colors rose from half-mast to full staff. The sound of "Taps" and it was over. The funeral party thoughtfully turned back.

Suddenly, an air alert siren shrilly warned of approaching Jap planes, even before the LCMs could be loaded for the return trip. Instinctively, everyone scattered into nearby New Zealand foxholes.

The beach was deserted and the brooding jungle behind the rows and rows of white crosses continued watching in silence.



**TAPS.** No military funeral, even in the distant Treasury Islands, would have been complete without the peaceful sounding of "Taps." Two other servicemen were buried at the same time Burns, Fitzgerald, Musselman and Nappen were laid to rest.





**"WITH FULL MILITARY HONORS."** While the Honor Guard stands at "Present Arms," and officers and men salute, pallbearers carry flag-covered bodies to graveside for burial with full military honors. Due to

intense jungle heat, it was imperative that funerals be held at the earliest possible moment. Ambulance accompanied procession as additional air raids were expected momentarily.



**LAST RITES.** Men stand with bowed heads as Lt.(jg) Ernest T. Marble, original battalion chaplain, solemnly conducts burial services for the 87th's first war casualties. This picture appears on page LI of the Seabee book, CAN DO.



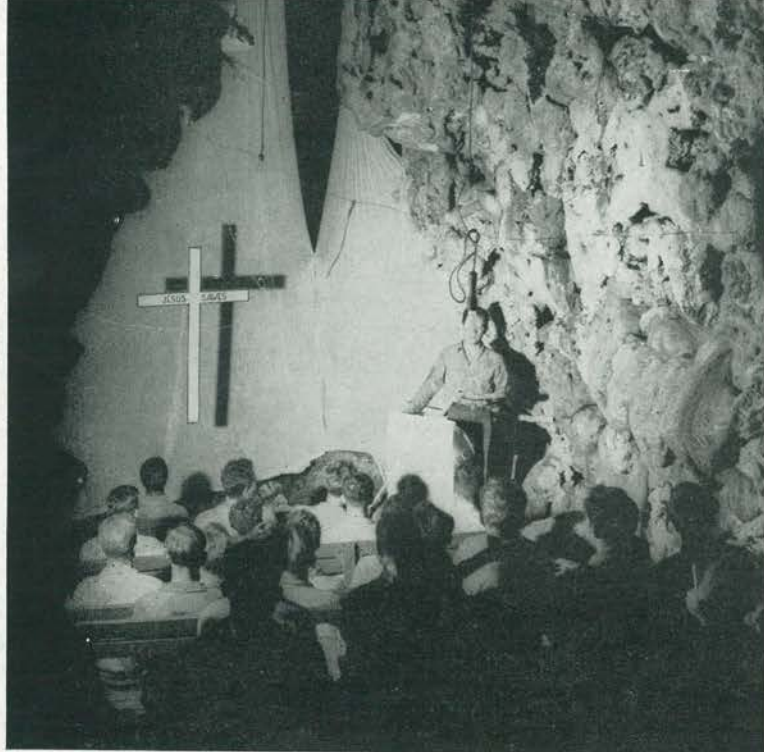
**SALUTE.** The funeral ceremonies nearly over, all stand at attention as rifle squad fires resounding salute—a last tribute to the departed. American and New Zealand flags fly at half-mast and remained so until burial entourage had left Mono.



**MAY THEY REST IN PEACE.** This cemetery, with its thick, green jungle background, was constructed by American and New Zealand troops. White crosses mark graves of men who paid "the supreme price" during and

after the invasion. Here, battalion casualties are carefully lowered to their final resting places as flags are folded for return to camp and almost certain further use.





**CORAL CHURCH.** War's reality brought to many an increased devotion to their faith, whether Protestant, Catholic or Jewish. Chaplain's services were fairly well attended. Above, men have assembled in the Coral Church to hear the Gospel preached by a shipmate.



**DIVINE SERVICES.** In the incomplete benchless chapel, Chaplain Ernest T. Marble leads Protestant worshippers in hymn-singing. Chaplain's assistant, Norman Hill, accompanies on a GI organ. Battalion and ACORN men built chapel during off-duty hours.

## CRUDE CHURCHES FOSTERED RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS

Thousands of miles from their native land, living under adverse conditions and faced with the grimer aspects of war, men in such forward areas as the Treasury Islands groped for some reminder of home with which to carry on and finish the job ahead. This sustenance was often found as many men turned with renewed faith and belief to their religion.

With the Japanese dug in on Shortland Islands—less than 14 miles from Stirling—a seven-day, around-the-clock work schedule was in effect for months as men worked feverishly to keep a step ahead of the Nips.

Nevertheless, Divine Services were conducted twice each Sunday in the battalion chow hall and armory for those men able to attend. Men of the Hebrew faith traveled each Saturday to a neighboring outfit to attend Jewish services, where, in the absence of a chaplain, they conducted their own services.

The necessity of completing Stirling Strip precluded a regular work

detail, so men rallied to build a chapel during off-duty hours. Under the guidance of Chaplain Cyril R. Kavanagh, then attached to ACORN 12, native lumber and other essential construction materials were procured and assembled. After five weeks of self-sacrificing effort, the mates viewed with pride the completed edifice.

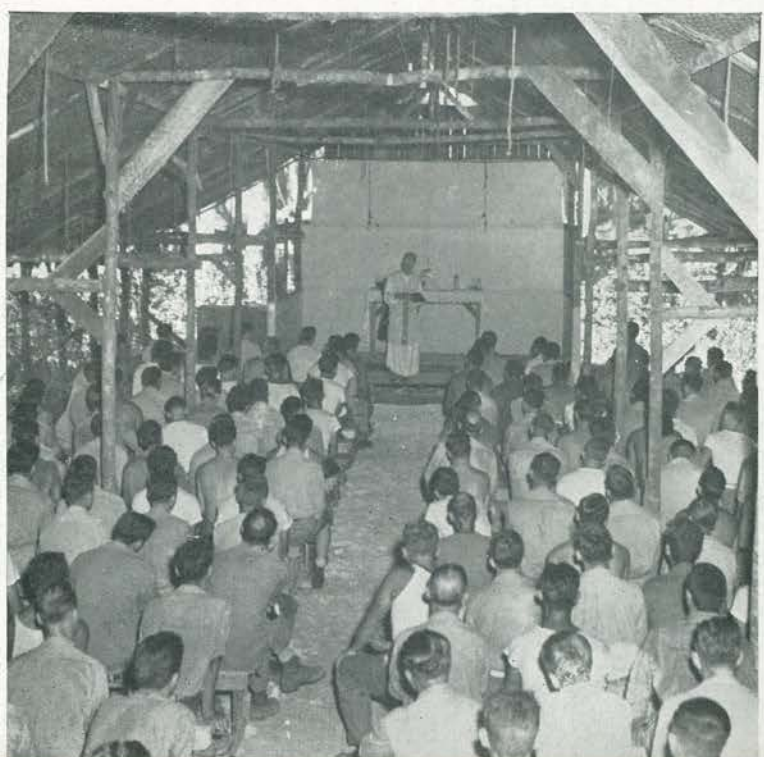
Although the battalion's construction program eventually slackened, some men—due to their working hours—were still unable to attend Divine Services. Therefore, a church near the still unfinished strip was begun. Built in a natural coral cave, it was appropriately named Coral Church. Here, services were conducted by the enlisted personnel.

Chaplains of all faiths, whose primary responsibility was the welfare of the crew—especially keeping the mates spiritually "on the ball"—were perhaps, after all, mostly responsible for the serviceman's classic rejoinder: "Ah, take your troubles to the chaplain, mate!!"

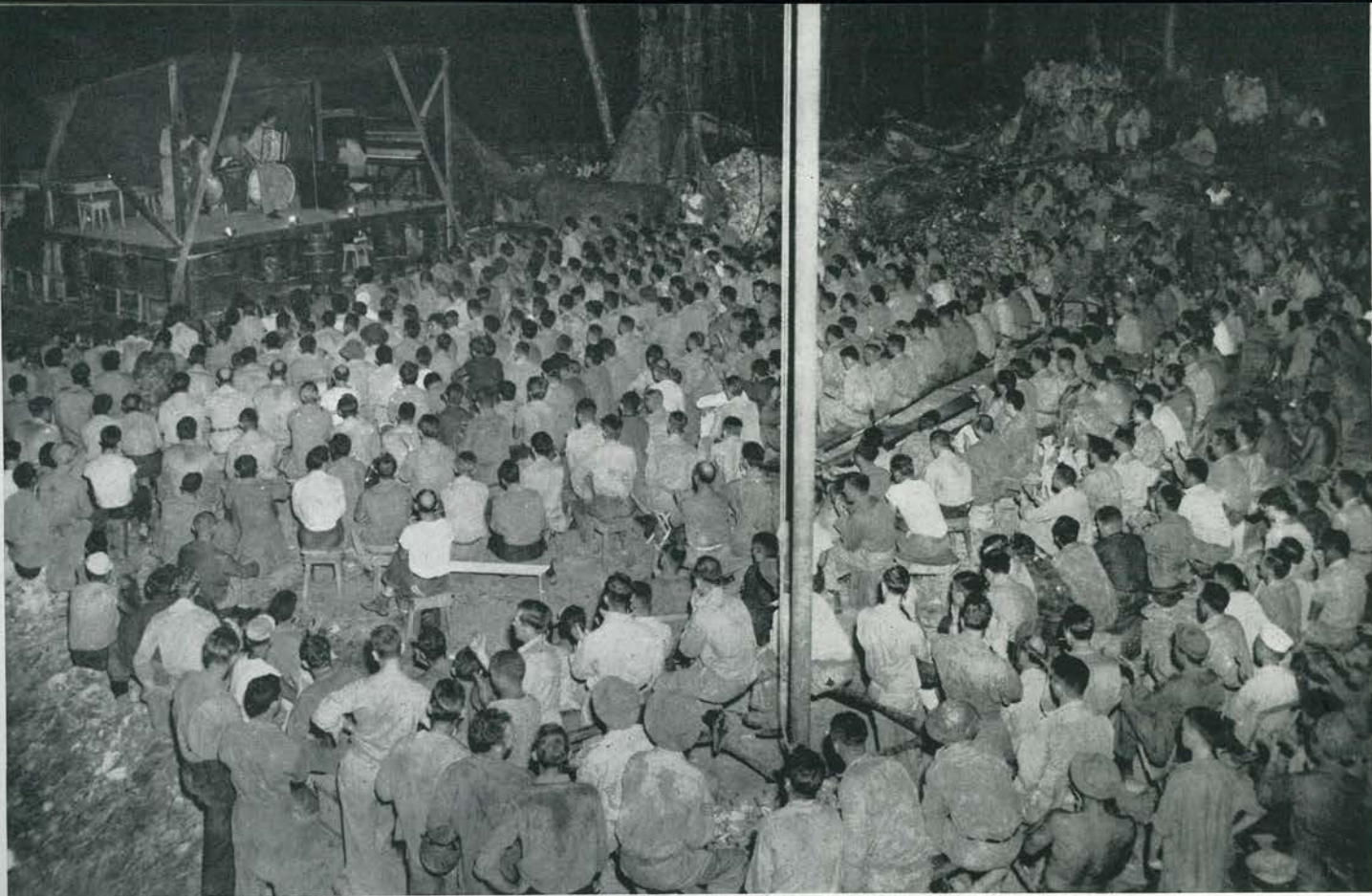
**CHURCH IN THE WILDWOOD.** Chaplain Cyril R. Kavanagh, detached from ACORN 12 to the 87th, stands proudly in front of the completed chapel. Now equipped with benches, chapel's bulkheads are screened with camouflage netting. The roof is made of tarps.



**FIRST EASTER OVERSEAS.** With the coming of Easter, 1944, the unfamiliar absence of femininity in the strictly masculine congregation didn't detract from the significance of Eastertide at the front. At Easter Mass, Father Kavanagh again tells the beloved Easter story.







**THE FIRST SHOW.** A hastily-constructed platform, built on oil drums and covered with tarps, provided ample stage for the unit's first entertainment on Stirling. Men arrived from neighboring units carrying helmets and improvised chairs, packing this small clearing to hear the traveling New Zealand show. To right of stage, a tent serves as a dressing room for the performers' quick changes. Presentation consisted of comedy skits, impersonations and vocals backed up by the five-piece band.

## NEW ZEALAND PRESENTS:

When the touring Kiwi Concert Party played at the 87th early in February, 1944, it was apparent that the tea-drinking forces from "Down Under" were also concerned about the morale of all Allied troops in the South Pacific. This group consisted of professionals from the New Zealand Army who entertained wherever such troops were stationed. It was a sort of USO arrangement.

The best performance of the Kiwi Concert—best described as a variety show—was not on the program. As the MC cleared his throat to launch the show with a little of the "Cherio, Chappies," the air-raid siren began its doleful tune.

Before the lad could say, "God Save the King!", he found himself gazing at a few hundred of his fellow countrymen and many empty home-made chairs, which Seabees had abandoned in their wild flight. The 87th had done it again! It had set a new island record for clearing a theatre area!!

Fortunately, the all-clear soon sounded and the men reappeared above ground to be further entertained.

No New Zealand show is complete without female impersonators. This show had two and they walked off with the evening's top laurels. If they weren't the real thing, the mates thought, they were certainly the best that could be had at the front.

The comedians were in fine form and assured themselves of a good hand by ribbing the officers unmercifully. A small, well-rehearsed band, competent vocalists and several sleight-of-hand artists completed the show. Although a bit different from the usual stage entertainment in the States, the Kiwi show had life and dash. And when the curtain went down, the crowd endorsed the performance by yelling for more.

Another popular New Zealand presentation was the All-Brass Military Band of the 8th Brigade. Providing a mixture of martial music, semi-classical and popular selections, it was quite well received.

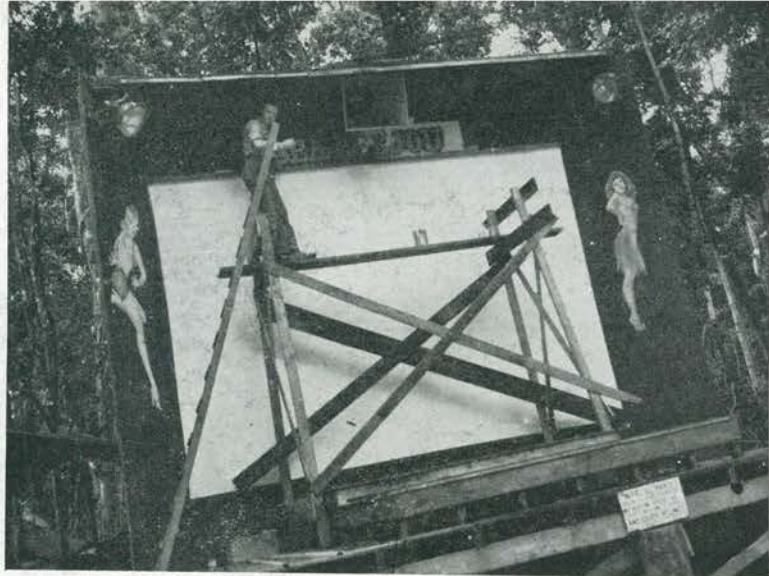
Treasure-based Kiwis often took part in the boxing and wrestling shows at the SEA BEEJOU theatre. Good sports, they time and again proved themselves rugged antagonists.

The Seabees owed many pleasant hours of relaxation and entertainment to these men of New Zealand—not to overlook a few cups of tea when they did the most good!



**READING FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:** "MISS NEW ZEALAND." Lack of feminine talent proved no obstacle for the ingenious New Zealanders. Here, an impersonator of females performs convincingly before a whistling Seabee audience. Orchestra (in rear) is providing background syncopation for the hilarious song, "Oh, Walter!" **STUDY IN BRASS.** Upon another occasion the battalion was vigorously entertained by the Eighth New Zealand Brigade's All-Brass Band. For those of the 87th who appreciate good martial music, this was a night long to be remembered. This unit was quite versatile.





**ARTIST.** John W. Schaefer, Sunbury, Pennsylvania, talented battalion artist, pauses momentarily to pose with a pair of his "Schaefer Girls" painted on wings of cinema stage. The theatre's name, SEA BEEJOU, was selected in contest won by Chief John Porter.



**THE HUB.** The overall theatre area was easily the most used place of assembly in Camp Osman. The mates often braved torrential downpours to see favorite Hollywood stars, many of whom they had fraternized with in faraway California. Camp life revolved about this spot.

## SEA BEEJOU THEATER WAS CIVIC CENTER

The theatre area in any jungle encampment is always a civic center of sorts. All important activities were held here: movies, lectures, concerts, occasional USO shows and the proud nights when the battalion's citations and Purple Hearts were awarded.

Here, many spirited boxing and wrestling matches also took place, featuring Army, PT Base, New Zealand and Seabee athletic talent virtually every Saturday night. Few, if any, are likely to forget the wild, free-swinging "Battle of the Century" that uproarious night when "Zeke" Amato and Mike Kocian slugged it out for three hilarious rounds with the fracas ending in true story-book fashion.

The battalion's swing band often entertained here with their groovy renditions, frequently exciting audience members to impromptu jive exhibitions on stage.

Downpours rarely discouraged anyone. It rained all the time anyway. At least, one's time was his own at the movies. He could either sing to the bouncing ball, watch the cinema or go to sleep as he pleased.

And if perchance the evening's flicker was too odorous, one could usually pass time by gazing at target planes circling overhead, caught in the converging beams of powerful searchlights.

Far more important, however, was the daily short-wave newscast from San Francisco after evening chow. All hands would sit quietly—

sometimes a bit tensely when the Japs were jamming the air with static—and listen to some Stateside announcer beaming the happenings of the other world.

When newscasting ended, the mates would often remain, talking things over until showtime. And here, late at night, long after the show, men would congregate and listen to hot swing sessions radioed from Japan by that silken-voiced propagandist, "Tokyo Rose," on her "Zero Hour" program.

At that time, crude as it was and despite frequent sour additions of propaganda, her program was generally considered superior to most American broadcasts being beamed to the South Pacific.

Eventually, most work details fell into the habit of assembling here as it offered a resting place to those awaiting outbound trucks.

Second only to the sturdy back-rests on each SEA BEEJOU bench was John Schaefer's widely-discussed art work, which adorned all sides of the screen. Almost overnight, his artistic efforts were responsible for the pleasing appearance of three fetching female figures.

These enhancing additions seemed to stimulate mental entertainment and secretive speculation whenever mates arrived early and weren't in a scuttlebutting mood.

The ladies were a blonde, a brunette and a redhead—presumably to satisfy every man's imaginary preference!

**JUMP TIME.** The 87th Swing Band was responsible for a generous portion of the unit's entertainment, playing before movies and upon special occasions. Here, the orchestra hits a few hot licks as Bandleader Norman ("Bird-Legs") Grier listens (offstage) with a critical ear.



**FIGHT NIGHT.** No event drew larger crowds than "Fight Night," held virtually every Saturday evening. Directed by Ray Pursley, former Golden Gloves performer, battalion fighters and guests put on top-notch slugging matches to the delight of island enthusiasts.





# OFFICERS COUNTRY ATTRACTED MANY ISLAND GUESTS



SET 'EM UP! The officers bar and lounge was the scene of many a pleasant festivity. In this cool, screened section of the wardroom, Baird ("Pop") Okey, Dayton, Iowa, regular bartender, "sets 'em up." Decorative "pin-up" girls add a refreshing touch as does the battalion plaque

OFFICERS COUNTRY. In the midst of these huge trees and on the edge of a coral-ash cliff, the Officers Mess was built. From the dining room, a magnificent view of the beautiful and historic Coral Sea could always be had. To the rear, a boardwalk, running left and right, connected of-

(top of radio), carved by Tom Davis and Armond Kirschbaum. Scenes over bar are shots from the battalion's various Stateside camps and overseas projects.

ficier tents, located at very edge of cliff, where they received full benefit of the sea-breeze. To right of picture, officers whiled away many off hours at volleyball.





# SEABEE OFFICERS AND MEN PROVE KIPLING WRONG!



"EAST IS EAST, WEST IS WEST—and never the twain shall meet!" Again the traditional barrier between officers and enlisted men was relaxed after both "Gold Braid" and mates had received individual citations signed by Admiral William F. ("Bull") Halsey for heroic action during the Treas-

ury-Bougainville operation. Such unusual fraternization proved Rudyard Kipling wrong—at least, in this instance! Left to right: Chief Shipfitter Tom Bailey, Lieut. Charles Turnbull, Comdr. Easterly, Ensign John Boyver and Aurelio Tassone, MM2c.

**CITATION NIGHT.** The outfit turned out in strength to pay homage to its cited officers and men the night of 1 March 1944. Battalion officers and guests are shown seated on stage, flanked by the three "Schaefer Girls" and the traditional American and Division flags. The unit's military band

provided appropriate martial music for the ceremonies. The program was opened with prayer by ACORN Chaplain Cyril R. Kavanagh. Below, Comdr. Easterly reads a citation as audience listens intently.







LIEUT. CHARLES E. TURNBULL, Raleigh, North Carolina, Company A commander and cool OinC of the 87th's invasion forces, was the first of four to receive his citation. For conspicuous leadership under fire, Lieut. "Pete" was awarded a Commendation Ribbon.



ENSIGN JOHN R. BOYER, San Fernando Valley, California, OinC of the Soanataiu group, was other officer cited. For directing operations under fire, thereby assuring completion of vital radar installations, Ensign "Bo" was also awarded Commendation Ribbon.

## "BULL" HALSEY CITES FOUR FOR INVASION BRAVERY

On the night of 1 March 1944—over four months after the successful Treasury-Bougainville operation of late October, 1943—public recognition was finally accorded by Admiral William F. ("Bull") Halsey, then Commander, South Pacific Area, to two officers and two enlisted men of the 87th Seabees, whose exemplary conduct under heavy enemy fire had brought much credit to their unit.

Fortunately, it was a perfect tropical night for such an auspicious occasion. It was safe to predict the Jap would not be over as he was much too occupied making his final Solomons stand in the Bougainville jungles to pay further heed to tiny Stirling.

As this was a new experience in the battalion's brief overseas life, it was only natural that a feeling of subdued excitement should pervade the packed theatre area that night long before the principals appeared. A sense of pride in mutual achievement resulted in an overflow crowd.

The stage of the SEA BEEJOU theatre was jammed with battalion officers and visiting dignitaries from the 21st Naval Construction Regiment and NOB.

From time to time during the waiting, high-ranking "Gold Braid" glanced somewhat self-consciously at the three shapely "Schaefer

Girls" forming an alluring backdrop for the 87th first night of recognition.

Finally, a fanfare heralded the arrival of Comdr. Easterly, accompanied by the officers and men to be honored.

The four battalion stalwarts were seated on the port side of the stage. As Skipper Easterly proudly read out the name of each individual cited, the recipient advanced to the center of the platform where he remained at rigid attention until the OinC had finished reading the special citation, verbatim.

Following a snappy exchange of salutes and a warm handclasp, the recipient received the cherished Halsey citation, and returned to his seat amid almost deafening applause.

Certainly, it was a most memorable occasion for Lieut. Charles E. Turnbull, Ens. John R. Boyer, Chief Shipfitter Thomas J. Bailey and Machinist Mate, Second Class Aurelio Tassone. Tassone's award, the Silver Star, was destined to remain the highest award won by an enlisted member of the 87th through Okinawa.

Thus ended a glamorous night in the battalion's eventful life overseas—an occasion that was never equaled or duplicated.



THOMAS J. BAILEY, CSF, Chicago, was one of two enlisted men to receive individual citations. For skillfully reorganizing unloading details disrupted by enemy fire—thereby assuring availability of indispensable cargo—Chief Bailey won Citation Ribbon.



AURELIO TASSONE, MM2c, Milford, Mass., became the command's ranking hero when he was awarded the coveted Silver Star. This recognition stemmed from his destruction of an active enemy pillbox and burying its twelve occupants with a bulldozer on D-day.



# WOLVES HOWL AS PATTY STEALS SHOW



**THE ANSWER.** The Bob Hope USO show, which played Stirling three performances on 4 August 1944, featured, in addition to the celebrated comedian, such topflight cinema and radio stars as Frances Langford, Jerry Colonna and Tony Romano. However, many eventful months after these headliners were all but forgotten, the mates still "drooled" whenever the name of a little, unknown tap-dancer, Patty Thomas, was mentioned. It was her twinkling toes and shapely legs that etched her obscure act into

their receptive minds for the duration—plus! Hope cracked wisely, Langford sang ever so fetchingly and Colonna "screeched" as previously advertised, but it was Patty's refreshing charms that made the men realize what they were really fighting and building for in the Pacific. Attired in a scant, black dance costume of postage-stamp proportions—excitedly trimmed in red—the little "heart thief" was inspiringly supported by the crack 93rd Division swing band.



# ISLAND-HAPPY SEABEES APPLAUD HOPE TROUPE



**STANDING ROOM ONLY.** Typical of the huge crowds that gathered to attend USO camp shows is shown above where this immense open-air amphitheatre is packed to overflowing. This mammoth throng is witnessing the long-awaited Bob Hope show that played the Stirling circuit. Even the

movie booth is invaded as mates scramble to get the best seats. The 87th is well represented in the lower left corner by Lopez, Milman, Steadley, Caffrey and Van Hoozer.



**SONGBIRD.** Lovely Frances Langford, glamorous Hollywood star, gives out with the latest song hits, accompanied by Tony Romano on the guitar. She was first white woman the mates had seen in almost a year overseas. Her snood attracted attention.



**A COUPLE OF MUGGS.** Jerry Colonna and Bob Hope strike a special pose for THE EARTHMOVER cameraman. Dressed in plain khaki uniforms, this pair would be taken for ordinary GIs if it were not for their cinema-wise facial expressions.





**THE SHOW GOES ON.** Come rain or shine, this group of durable troupers carry on in the highest traditions of the show game. Although it's pouring rain, barefooted Frances Langford continues singing as Tony

Romano provides guitar accompaniment. The 93rd Division swing band has retreated to meager shelter of stage. Throughout torrential downpour, the entertainment-starved men held their seats to last performance.



**THE SCREECH!** Funnyman Jerry Colonna appeared to be in rare form the evening he entertained the Treasury Seabees. To make the show complete, Jerry gives out with one of the celebrated screeching introductions to a Colonna-styled song.



**WITHOUT SCRIPT.** Frances Langford and Bob Hope go into an unrehearsed gag routine with the songstress emerging the winner. Miss Langford's costume was a definite violation of Malaria Control regulations, but there are exceptions to all man-made rules!

**AND THE RAINS CAME.** Undaunted by the sudden rainstorm that threatened to wash out the afternoon performance, Jerry Colonna proceeds to take a showerbath under stream of water leaking through canvas tarp.

Such improvising causes even Tony Romano, his accompanist, to admire star's ingenuity. Officer behind Colonna appears to have been "sent," but is actually trying to solve the drainage problem.





# JACK BENNY PRESENTS BEST U.S.O. SHOW OF TRIP



**STARS.** The Jack Benny cast poses and smiles for THE EARTHMOVER after providing best entertainment of battalion's long overseas tour. Left to right: June Brunner, accompanist; Martha Tilton, vocalist; Mastro Benny; Carole Landis, screen queen; and Larry Adler, harmonica wizard.



**SKIPPERS.** Comdr. Easterly, skipper of the 87th, poses none too reluctantly with lovely, buxom Carole Landis, well-endowed "skipper" of the Jack Benny show. Glamorous Carole measured up to all expectations, appearing fully as magnetic off the screen as on.

**DINNER GUESTS.** The sure-fire performance completed, Jack Benny's troupe are wined and dined by the 198th Coast Artillery officers. Commanding General of the 93rd Division is at Miss Landis' left while Col. Donald Herron, 198th CO, is to her right. Two seats away, Mastro Benny

turns familiar profile to camera. Comdr. Easterly seems more than pleased just beyond June Brunner (left) as Larry Adler looks anything but happy as he leans on table. Martha Tilton, erstwhile Benny Goodman vocalist, also beams (right).





# FINAL TRIBUTE PAID TO NAVY SECRETARY FRANK KNOX



IN MEMORIAM. May Day, 1944, brought shocking news of the sudden death of Secretary of Navy Frank Knox. The 87th takes a brief respite from its varied work program to assemble in the general administration area for a short memorial service for the fallen leader, Comdr.

Easterly (on platform at right with Lt. Comdr. Flynn and Chaplain Kavanagh) reads official death message from Acting Secretary James Forrestal. Note weird conglomeration of uniforms worn by mates after eight months in tropics.

# "MISSEABEE" LAUNCHED AT ISLAND PT BASE



LOWER AWAY! The battalion's newly-acquired small boat, MISSEABEE, is launched at 87th-built PT Base. Boat was trucked to dockside where adequate launching facilities were available. This "life-saver" was "procured" from YOGL-42 in deal for a six-cylinder engine. In recondition-

ing ill-used craft, its keel had to be replaced as Teredo worms had eaten it badly. Ship's crew, composed of Chief Cedarstaff, "Jerry" Kadenbach and Rayden Hamilton, took mates on fishing trips and island tours.



# UNIT WORKS AND PLAYS TO STAVE OFF BOREDOM



**CHAMPS.** Winners of the battalion's Inter-Division basketball tournament was S Division's "Murder, Inc." Standing between Captain Irving Milman (third from left, standing) and Coach Charlie Stauss, Skipper Easterly presents trophy.



**"CATEYE, YANK?"** Busy boats take on GI passengers for the short trip to Mono. Boats were used continuously and expedited traffic between Stirling and Mono. Noted for its fine cateyes, Mono proved a Mecca for souvenir-hunting Seabees.



**THE DARING YOUNG MAN.** Chief Ted Marienthal inspects flagpole he and crew erected in front of the mess hall. Having followed this work as a civilian, Marienthal was equally at ease aloft or on the ground. "Nothing to it, Mates!"



**YE OLDE SWIMMING HOLE.** During their few leisure hours, men raced to the dock area, seeking relief from the heat in the cool, crystal water. This spot was ideal for swimming as sharks and barracuda seldom came close to the shore.



**KPs??** These CPOs haven't been assigned to KP duty; they are guests of Chief Owen Lawson (third from left). All chiefs had been invited to his french-fry in lieu of supper. Rendezvous for this gathering was the plumbing shop.



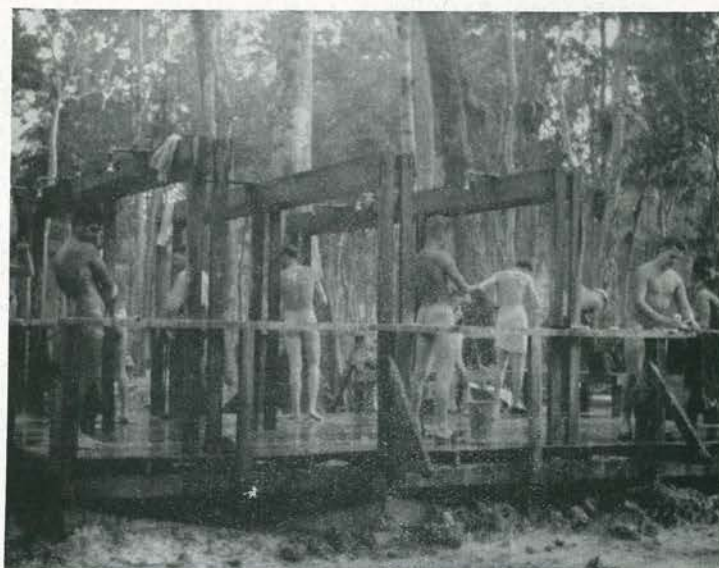
**ARSENAL.** Weapons in the well-appointed Armory were kept in tip-top condition by (left to right): James Kellar, Charles Welsey, Chief John Porter, Chief Carpenter Hugo Olsen and Edward Simons. Kellar inspects a machine-gun and Welsey a mortar.



# JUNGLE LIFE EMBRACES A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING



**HIGH COMMAND.** Beyond movie area is an overall view of battalion administration offices. First long structure housed Post Office, Personnel and Disbursing. Tents further along accommodated: Labor Pool and MAA Offices; OinC and Exec headquarters; and the Supply Office.



**"CLEANLINESS NEXT TO . . ."** Through the courtesy of P Division, home-made showers were installed throughout the camp. Hot water wasn't altogether necessary as the torrid climate usually kept the water at a comfortable temperature. Good showers made for good morale.



**SOAPFLAKES.** The first Stirling laundry was unsuitably adjacent the main galley. The laundry was later moved to a more logical spot. Equipment, consisting of only several washing-machines, was supervised by Chief Ona Deroche, affectionately known as "Chief Rinso."



**CITY HALL.** Chief Yeomen John Knowles, Lauren Merriam and Herman ("P. A.") Pack (left to right) and Bill ("Esquire") Getz (not present) were unofficially known as "City Hall." "MichFlaOk" over foxhole represents Michigan, Florida, Ohio and Kentucky, their home states.



**HOBBY.** Lt. Comdr. Edward A. Flynn, art enthusiast and architect, takes time off from his multiple duties as executive officer to pursue hobby of painting and sketching. From a jagged cliff overlooking the sea, he finds many inspiring subjects.



**TRADING POST.** Vital to morale in the forward area was Ship's Store, which kept men supplied with toiletries, cigarettes, etc. "Mickey" Britvich (background) and Russ Evenson do business with their bosses, Chief John Ahaesy (left) and Lt.(jg) W. E. Mannix.





**REPARATION.** With peace eventually restored in the Treasuries, New Zealanders and Americans—as reparation for destroying the native church in exterminating the enemy—began building another church for their island friends. New edifice was erected on a beach in vicinity of former church site. Structure featured ornate windows

over the altar, a choir section, pulpit and a plush-covered chair for the pastor. The natives contributed their inherent skill in fashioning the thatched roof. Various other features were added later.

## ALLIED-BUILT CHURCH FOR MONO NATIVES DEDICATED

Upon landing in the Treasury Islands in late October, 1943, Allied forces, including the formidable 87th Contingent, were somewhat surprised not to find a pagan and barbarous people.

Many years before, the earlier natives had embraced the Christian faith, and much later one of their number, Timothy Piani, had been educated by New Zealand Methodist missionaries in the New Georgia Islands. He, in time, returned to his people and was still their spiritual leader at invasion time.

In the last phases of their desperate, losing battle, the Japanese had completely destroyed the ancient native church at Falamai Beach. The simple edifice disappeared when Jap ammunition stored under the church was touched off by the cornered Sons of Nippon.

Undaunted by the widespread chaos and loss of their entire village, the natives took up temporary residence in well-hidden caves and worshipped under open skies.

In appreciation of their efforts in aiding against the Jap, the Americans and New Zealanders partially expressed their gratitude by rebuilding the native church. The new structure was much larger than the original, with comfortable pews replacing the crude rows of logs.

The dedication was a colorful event. Conducting the services were two New Zealand ministers and the islanders' own Timothy Piani. The latter also led the native choir, which outdid itself in its beautiful, many-voiced choral renditions. In the congregation, staid, high-ranking Allied officers rubbed gold-crested shoulders with the shining ebony skin of the natives.

Each Sunday, thereafter, hundreds of servicemen gathered in this church to give thanks to the Almighty and spend a few minutes in quiet meditation.

The natives' inherent faith in God was thereby perhaps strengthened by an enhanced faith in the basic goodness of their white friends who had driven a ruthless invader from their peaceful jungle sanctuary.



**DEDICATION.** At initial service conducted jointly by two New Zealand chaplains and Timothy Piani, the native missionary, the new church was significantly dedicated to God's Glory and to New Zealanders and Americans who died securing the once Jap-held islands.



**COMPETITORS.** Attired in immaculate white apparel, Mono native choir, led by Missionary Timothy Piani, who was educated in the New Georgia Islands, sings inspiringly at dedication of new church. Their renditions were often compared to those of "Wings Over Jordan."





**PASS IN REVIEW!** On this 87th-built baseball diamond, the entire battalion lines up in impromptu company formation prior to passing in review before visiting Rear Admirals L. B. Combs and C. H. Cotter, Pacific representatives of the Bureau of Yards and Docks. The outfit's mili-

tary band (extreme right) is ready to step out at this point to pace the companies past the reviewers. Both dignitaries were obviously well pleased by what they saw and congratulated the unit through its OinC.

## ADMIRALS REVIEW

BATTALION STEPS OUT OF  
CHARACTER TO PUT ON A  
SHOW FOR TOP "SEADOGS"

In the steaming tropics where the temperature seldom drops below 100 degrees, shirtsleeves were promptly cut off when they became a nuisance. Later, shirts were discarded altogether—then underwear. Dungarees were cut off at the knee; then, replaced with bathing trunks.

Tight-fitting white hats, which had been dyed blue or green before leaving California, afforded little protection against the glaring sunshine. Sun helmets, vizored caps or floppy New Zealand hats became the jungle vogue.

Work clothes soon wore out or fell apart from damp-rot. The mates had to wear what they had left or what could be procured. This included coveralls, undress whites, legless blues, plain drawers or New Zealand or Army uniforms.

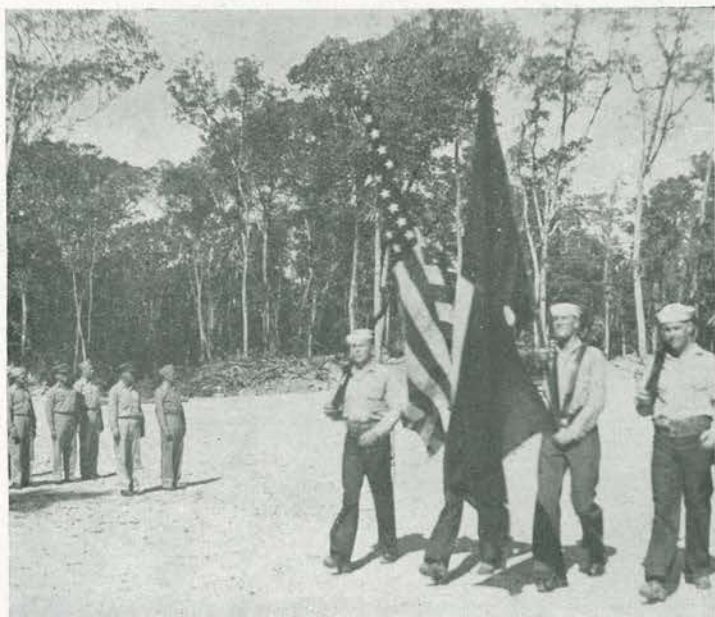
Of course, the apparel was trimmed for comfort while working—job-comfort always came first! One day, bulletin boards informed all hands that the 87th would be reviewed by Rear Admirals L. B. Combs and C. H. Cotter from the Bureau of Yards and Docks. Uniform for the inspection would be dungarees, chambray shirts and white hats.

This order naturally resulted in quite serious complications. Dungarees were scarce; white hats almost non-existent on Stirling.

However, the prospect of seeing so much "gold" spurred everyone to scout neighboring Seabee camps, the PT base and even ships in the harbor for proper apparel. By and large, these scouting parties eventually reported success.

The battalion marched to the reviewing grounds, formed unit fronts and were thoroughly inspected. Upon returning to Camp Ostman, everyone, as expected, again donned their work duds and returned to their jobs.

Most cut the sleeves or trouser-legs off the new clothing, but others stowed theirs away—just in case another admiral showed up!



**COLORS.** Immediately preceding the first unit to march past the reviewing group were the color bearers and guards, proudly displaying the American and battalion flags. Left to right: John Schaefer, Ernest Lomatsch, Jr. (face hidden), Albert Printz and Vernon Woodcock.



**AT EASE!** The sweltering review over, anxious officers group around Rear Admiral Lewis B. Combs, Assistant Chief of BuDocks, for his opinion of the battalion, now 11 months overseas. Apparently officers dress was service cap and side arms.



# "BULL" HALSEY INSPECTS TREASURIES ON LAST SOLOMONS TOUR



**THE MAN.** 26 May 1944 was a day to remember. It was on this occasion that Admiral William F. ("Bull") Halsey, then Commander of South Pacific Forces, made an inspection tour of the Treasuries. The Admiral confers with high-ranking Seabee officers prior to examining island in-

stallations and projects. This was his first and last visit to Stirling and Mono. Judging from his upturned trouser cuffs, the Admiral is obviously wearing untailored khaki. Comdr. Easterly rubs his jaw.



**FOUR STARS.** This informal study was snapped immediately after Admiral Halsey landed on Stirling. His private plane, a huge PBV, was heavily escorted throughout Northern Solomons tour. Highest ranking officer to visit islands, many Seabees never knew he was there.



**"OKAY, BOYS."** The inspection of Mono and Stirling completed, Admiral Halsey compliments officers and men on their accomplishments of the past seven months. Upon returning to Noumea from this flying trip, the Admiral assumed command of the famed Third Fleet.



# BATTALION BRUSHES UP ON TACTICS WHILE AWAITING DELIVERANCE

The war in the Northern Solomons was over. Rabaul, Bougainville, Shortlands, Kavieng and Truk had been neutralized. The Treasury Islands had served their purpose. The few remaining work projects were cancelled.

For the first time in months, the mates had time on their hands. To forestall possible crack-ups from this enforced idleness, the Administration instituted a full program of military training in early July, 1944.

The schedule was as complete as climate, terrain and existing limited facilities would permit. It consisted of hikes, close-order drill and military lectures.

The program collapsed in late August when news filtered through that the 87th was being secured and would, at last, be delivered from the straight-jacket confines of microscopic Stirling where the battalion had been fenced in for ten months.

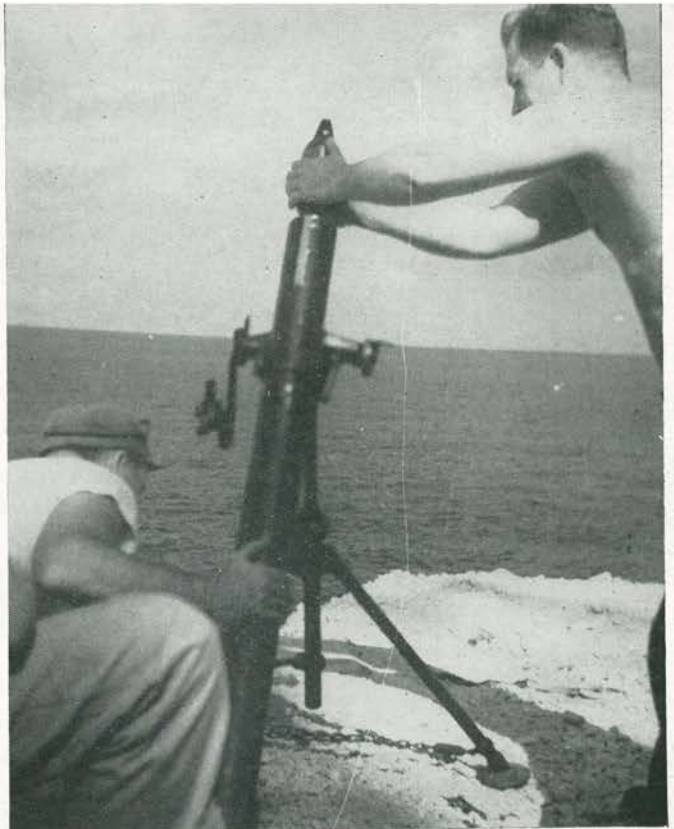
During the interim, however, close-order drill under arms was executed early each morning to avoid the intense tropical heat that never seemed to let up once the day got under way.

The hikes soon convinced the mates that they were sadly out of shape as fighting men, despite the hard labor they had put in on Stirling Field since the previous November.

Firing on the new battalion range, cleared out of the jungle behind S Division, usually comprised the afternoon program. The mates hauled out their trusty '03s and soon had the Armory busy keeping them supplied with targets.

Meanwhile, selected groups of special weapon men brushed up on mortar, machine-gun and anti-aircraft firing. The battalion medical officers covered Field Sanitation and First Aid in a few interesting lectures.

Proper positions and sling adjustments for rifle firing were reviewed for the mates by various 87th experts. Gas drills, including a testing of masks in the gas chamber, continued until all faulty equipment had been weeded out and all hands could don masks in the required time. An ordnance expert from NOB acquainted the crew



**DOWN SHE GOES!** Great emphasis was placed on mortar firing during July-August military training period. Here, Chief John Porter sets mortar as Norman Barnum prepares to drop deadly charge. Target is an oil drum floating well out to sea.

with the latest in Jap grenades, land-mines and booby-traps.

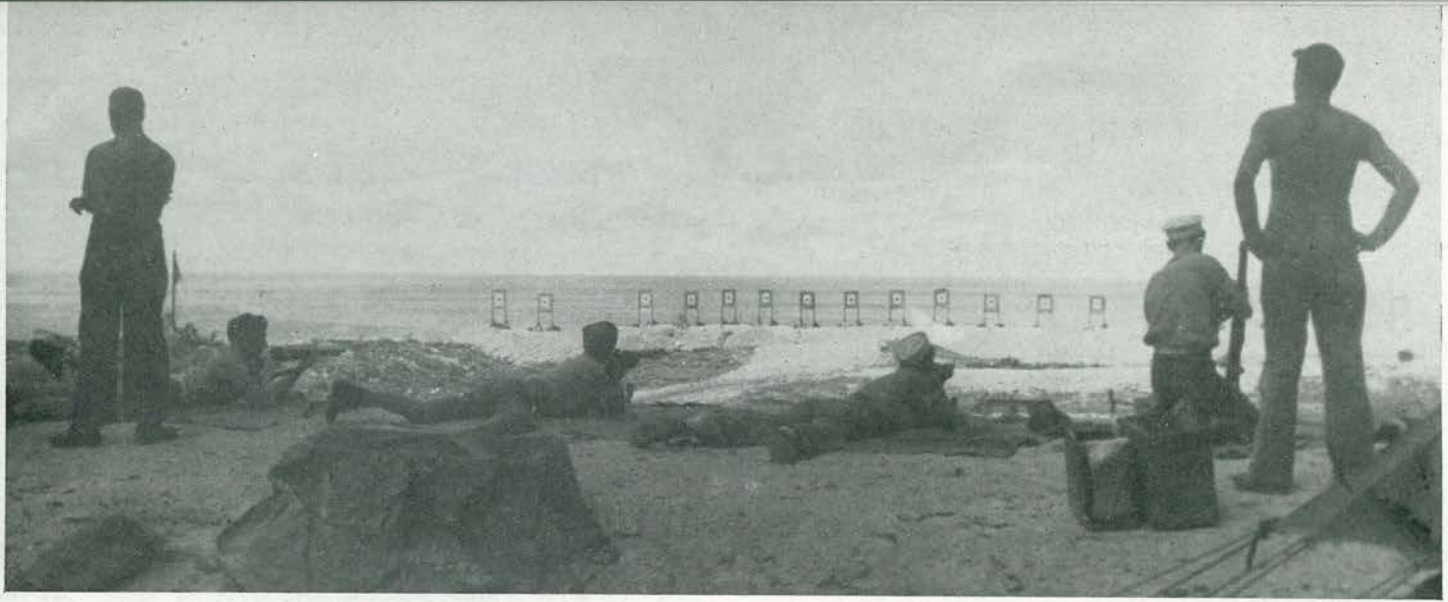
To the average Seabee—primarily interesting in construction—military training holds little allure. Yet, this particular program, coming when it did, probably kept many slightly "rock-happy" men from blowing their tops.



**TIME OUT.** A moment of relaxation occurs on the range as firing ceases and men gaze skyward at flight of P-38s headed for the Shortlands and Bougainville. Mates seated on coral have just finished firing and are standing by to watch mortars in action when firing is resumed. Ordnance

Chief John Porter sticks by mortar, as Chief Carpenter Hugo Olsen, Ordnance Officer (right foreground), stares at flight formation. Lieut. James Castanes (wearing dark glasses) stands slightly to right of mortar.





READY ON THE FIRING LINE? Of particular interest to all men overseas is a thorough knowledge of their '03 rifle, dubbed in training camps as "your best friend." Here, on the battalion's 90-yard range, Frank Mar-

tin and Robert Hardcastle (standing, left to right) coach in marksmanship. Red flag (to Martin's right) is popularly known as "Maggie's Drawers."



LINING HER UP! Chief John Porter lines up tripod with base stake of 60-mm. mortar as Ernest Green prepares to drop shell. Target is a coral island approximately 1,000 yards offshore. Chief Frank Thibodeau (next to

Browning .30 machine-gun), Jim Kellar and Eugene ("Snuffy") Smith surround the weapon. The rugged terrain shown here is typical of Stirling topography.



YOUR LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT! No military training program would have been complete without the old "one-two-three" of close-order drill. Marching along the highway in the cool morning shade of towering

jungle giants, S Division's four platoons stride toward supply dump that was the drill field. Chief Charlie ("Pappy") Moers (left flank, forward) counts cadence for leading platoon.



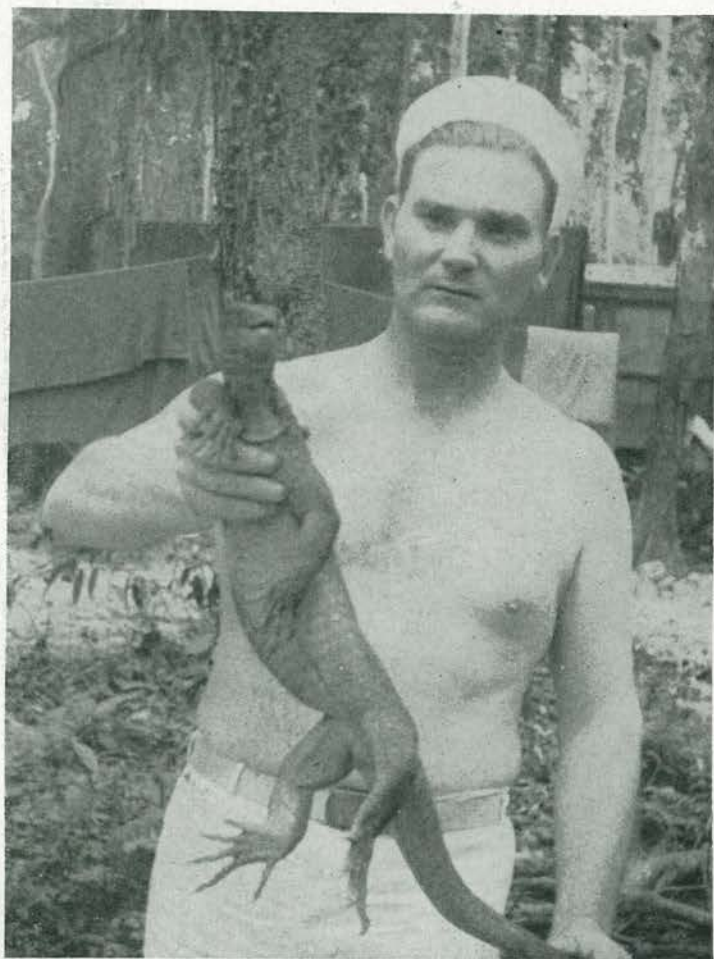
# REPTILES PLENTIFUL, BUT ANIMALS WERE SCARCE



**SMALL ONE.** Monsters like this 30-inch iguana soon became a commonplace sight in the tropics. The irrepressible mates attempted to domesticate these giant lizards, but without success. Left to right: Richard Rehrig, Jr., George Tschudi and Chief John Porter.



**FRUIT SLOTH** (above) was only animal seen during a year in the Solomons. Sometimes called a "banana bear," this strange, little creature enjoyed hanging by its long, sleek tail from overhead objects like rafters, braces, etc. Sloth resembles the o'possum.

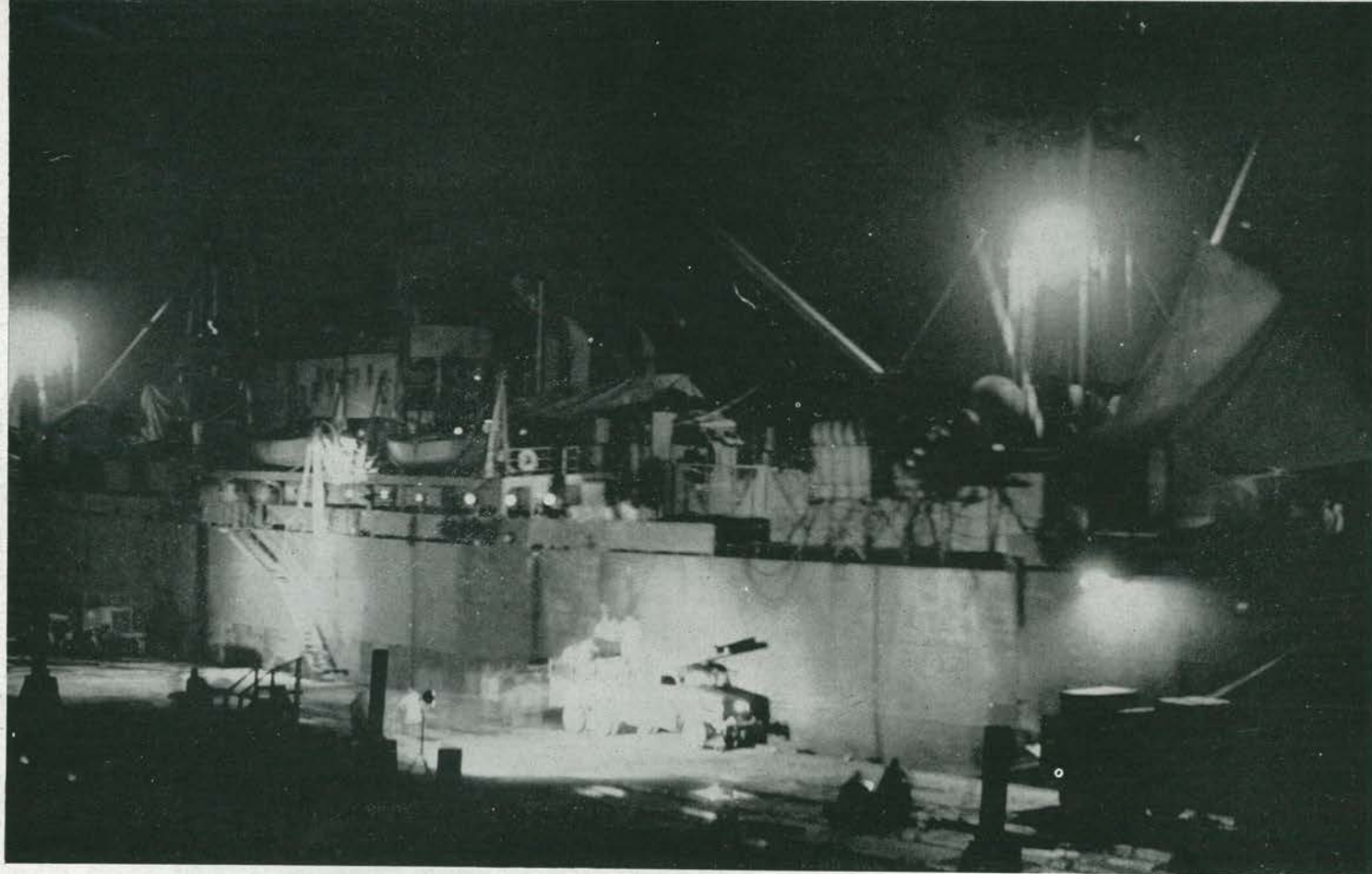


**REPTILE AGE.** Julius Bridges, Baytown, Texas, exhibits a superb 48-inch iguana—largest specimen seen on trip. Such monsters were harmless to humans, but a scourge to mosquitoes and other insect pests, which they trap with their lightning-forked tongue.



**TIPPY, 7,** was lone survivor of six battalion mascots leaving California in August, '43. She sweated out all the months, returning in December, '45 with two stars on her Asiatic-Pacific ribbon, Shellback certificate, complete service record—and the Victory Medal!

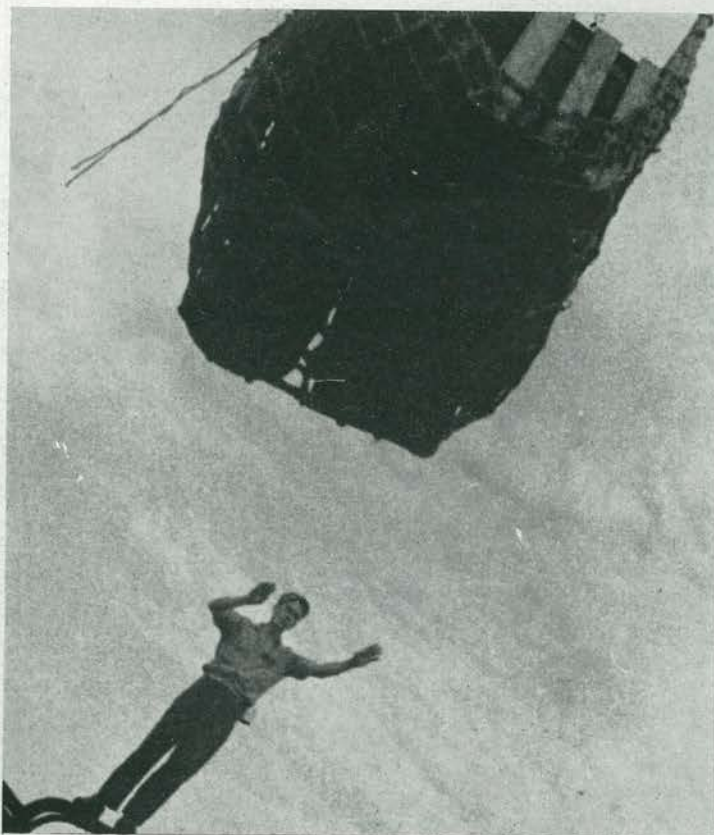




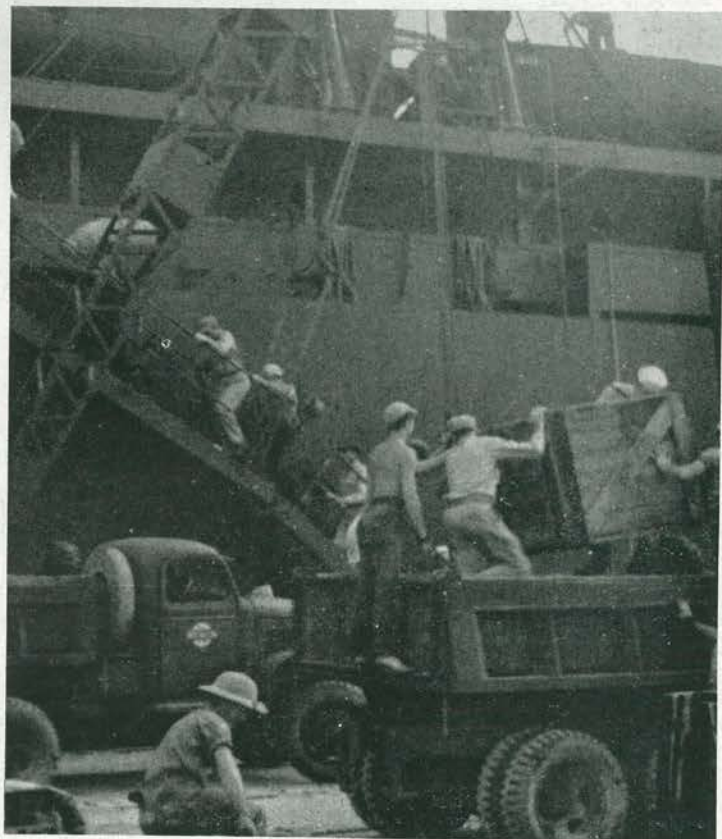
"LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!" Crews loading the U. S. S. NAOS required little pushing. The perspiring men well realized the sooner she was loaded the better. The 87th was long, long overdue anywhere else. Here, floodlights illuminate Stirling Dock as night crews turn-to with a

will. Two trucks and a low-boy trailer are being relieved of their cargo. Huge tarp (right) is already in place as it looks like rain and certain valuable cargo must be protected against elements.

## 87TH LOST NO TIME LOADING THEIR "MERCY SHIP"



EASY DOES IT. Silhouetted against the slate-colored Solomons sky, Eugene Goldie stands on truck-cab aboard the NAOS, directing boom operator in raising groaning cargo net. This type of net is capable of hoisting a maximum of 2,000 pounds.



THE SAFE. Disbursing's heavy safe is one of the last major items to be loaded aboard the NAOS as the crew prepares to button up the hatches. Safe was stored near topside so as to be accessible for possible transfers. Lt.(jg) C. Schlotter should be nearby!





AK-105. Before climbing up the narrow gangplank of the U. S. S. NAOS, members of the 87th had never sailed on an AK-type ship. First, it had been the S. S. ROBIN WENTLEY (C-3) from Port Hueneme to Banika and then the lumbering LSTs to "Island X". Loading of the NAOS (above)

continues unabated as two Seabees give hand signals to winch operator and dock gang. Others (all along ship's rail) are awaiting the change of shifts before turning-to.



INVENTORY. Alexander ("The Baron") Lesch, SK2c (lower right), maintains close checklist on cargo being loaded aboard the NAOS as dockside operations near the peak of efficiency. Cargo nets were spread out in truck-bed before pallets were loaded at Supply dump. Men in this typical

stevedore scene are: (on truck, left to right): Joe Hebert, Albert Magninari, Ernest ("Partner") Bertoniore and Checker Lesch; (along the rail): Wallace Ohlstein, Mike Kocian, James Smith, Meredith Walls, "Bobo" Escobedo and James Stewart.





**THE DAY!** All set and ready to go, the Headquarters gang sweats it out while waiting for their farewell ride to Stirling Dock. Peter DeRyke (center) adjusts his gear while Chief Carl Ruble makes final check of division bulletin board.

## ROCK-WEARY 87TH GLADLY LEAVES CAMP OSTMAN

Everyone in the first echelon—all but a rear detachment of 50 men and one officer—had been waiting for passenger trucks since daybreak. Most had packed the day before.

The Seabee method was to stack all personal gear and accumulated odds and ends on the tent deck. One seabag was filled from this pile. The rest helped a rubbish fire become larger.

Excited groups huddled around each Division office. Before this day—5 September—had ended, they would be far away from Stirling!

This meant no more petty details just to keep occupied; no more working to keep the ACORN comfortable; no more endless rain and trees falling in the camp area at night; no more "jiggers," fungus, earaches, ringworm, enveloping rash or the many other diseases to which everyone living on Stirling had been exposed; and no more scorpions or giant centipedes crawling in one's sweat-drenched bedding!

Scuttlebutt said the battalion was bound for New Caledonia. Real civilization there with plenty of refreshments and white women; in fact, more than enough of everything the mates had dreamed of and done without for such a long, long time.

This was really the battalion's red-letter day. No one felt the least nostalgia about leaving. The men weren't even sore any more over cancellation of the first overseas anniversary party nine days earlier.



**WHAT'S THE DELAY?** "Tippy," durable battalion mascot, stands by wondering what could be detaining her shipmates. Except for a bad time on the COMET between California and Banika in '43, "The Old Lady" proved herself to be a good "WAVE."



**TAKING IT EASY.** With only "the duration and six months" ahead of them, Lawrence Wilburn (left) and Ira Loden nonchalantly await their last Stirling ride. Seabags bearing their E Division designation make somewhat better seats than the hard coral earth.



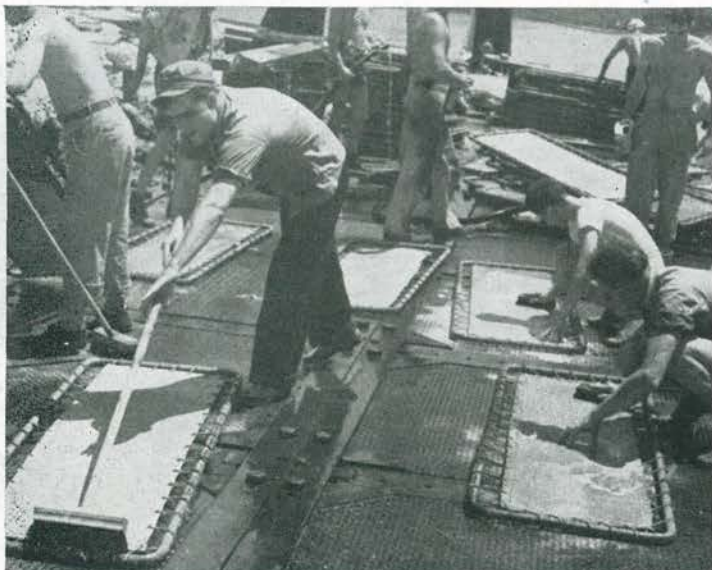
**THE ARMY COMES THROUGH.** GI trucks begin pouring into camp to commence job of transporting the Seabees dockside. E Division men climb aboard vehicle for the last mile as Chiefs Arthur McKinney (left) and Verne Franke supervise the loading.



**WHEN A FELLOW NEEDS A FRIEND.** Lugging a weighty, bulky seabag is no fun. Here, as still another division loads, mates assist one another in getting gear aboard truck. The ever-useful GI pails are quite in evidence. These were eventually left overseas.



# MATES SCRUB DOWN "NAOS" BUNKS BEFORE EMBARKING



**LAY ON!** In its long months of Solomons duty, the NAOS had acquired a thick layer of grime and dirt. Bill Doster (left) gets in some back-breaking licks at a crusty bunk as STOREKEEPERS and YEOMEN scrub down, too! Few observers could believe their eyes!



**SWABBIES.** Ed Towey (left background) and Bernhardt ("The Lord") Nelson (left foreground) diligently scrub two grimy bunks. Dark glasses were worn as protection against glare and heat reflected by steel pontoon pier. This Sabbath detail was supervised by Chief Cedarstaff.



**"DOWN TO THE SEA . . ."** As the long, tedious morning slowly draws toward noon and departure, the lush, green jungles continue to disgorge trucks loaded with perspiring, but happy, mates about to leave Stirling forever. Early arrivals have lined up preparatory to boarding ship. Heat

from the glaring white coral pavement was terrific, so Chief Pharmacist Mate "Gene" Tunney (extreme right, in undershirt) and Bill Armstrong, Hospital Corpsman, stand by in case of heat prostration. Thus, the 87th left Stirling.



# U . S . S . N A O S



## STIRLING TO NEW CALEDONIA



# VETERAN 87TH LEAVES STIRLING A SEASONED OUTFIT



**BUCKET BRIGADE.** T Division approaches gangplank of the NAOS. Tom Nanfra, "Crusty" Green and "Lippy" Lipshitz head long line. Green carries the beloved guitar he has lugged all the way from Camp Peary. Each man wore uniform of his choice.



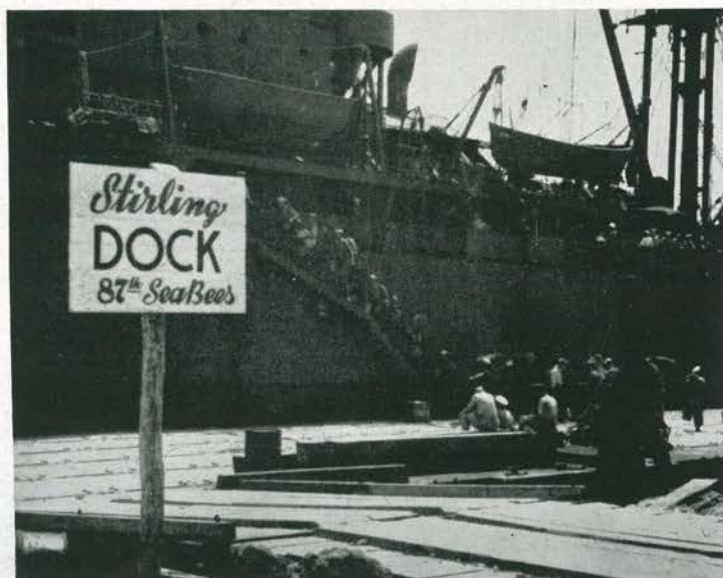
**WHITE HATS.** A sure sign that the outfit is not heading for enemy territory are the sea-going white hats worn by most men for this move. The mates are traveling light as all non-essential gear has been left behind. The trash heaps would burn for days.



**NO HANDS.** Charlie Johnson and Willard ("Bill") Allen struggle toward ship with duffelbags while puffing farewell "stogies." Mailman Joe Cantrell (third from left) has his hands full without cigar handicap. Few will forget these soul-testing embarkations.



**BON VOYAGE SMILE.** Maurice Goodman, traveling light, mounts the NAOS gangplank. His unrestrained smile reflects how the men felt about finally leaving "The Rock." The ascension of a narrow ladder of this type was an unparalleled ordeal for most passengers.

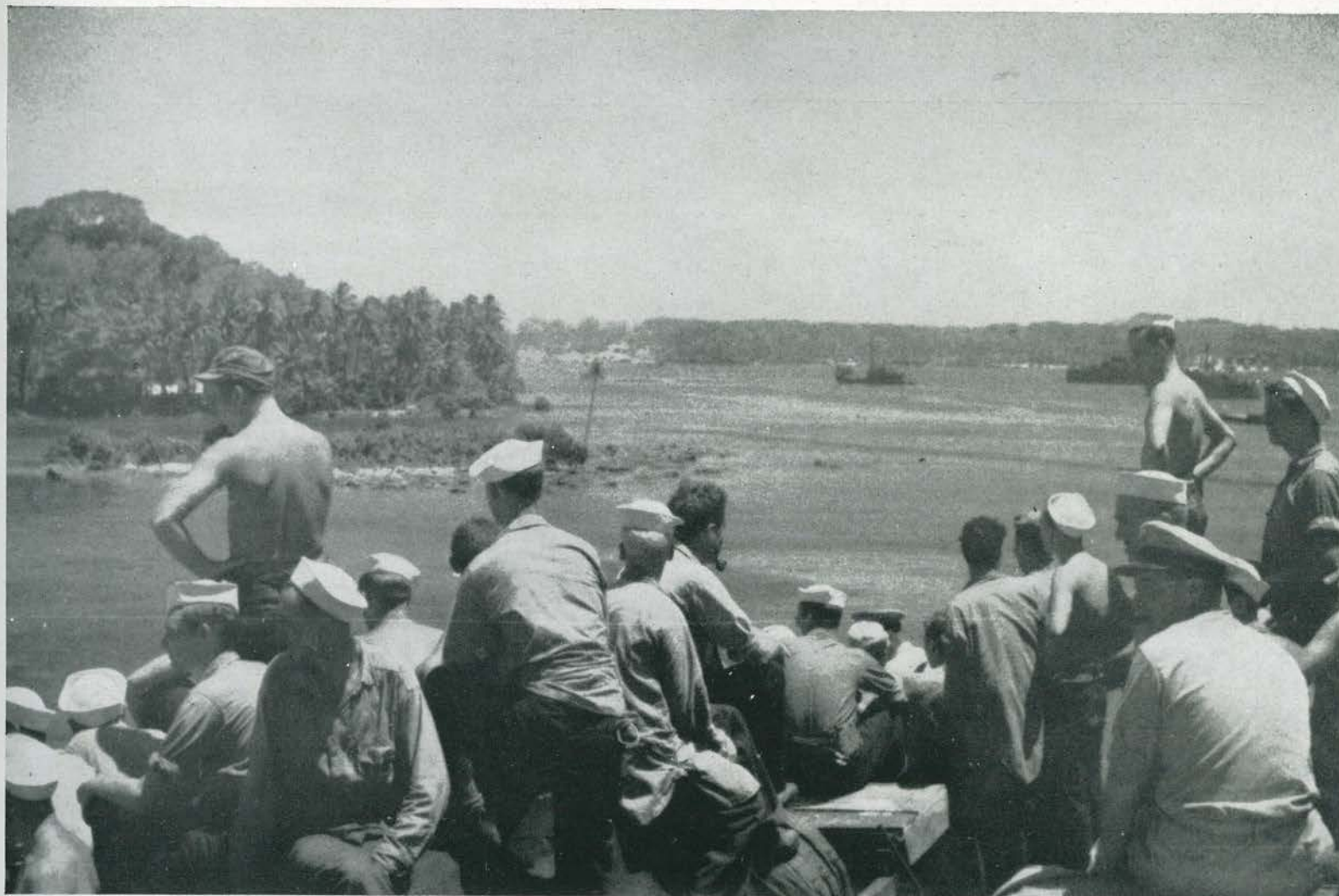


**AND STILL THEY COME.** Three CPOs sweat it out (seated on piling, right foreground) as endless lines continue up accommodation ladder. While the 87th builders are still given credit for Stirling Dock, gone forever is the famed sign, "What's Up, Dock?"



**ALL SECURE.** Assurance of soon getting under way is guaranteed when Comdr. Easterly, last to come aboard, salutes the quarterdeck and the Officer of the Deck. The NAOS is now ready to sail. Lieut. Reilly and crew remain behind.





CAST OFF! Relieved men sit in bow of the NAOS and watch ship move slowly away from the dock as lines are hauled in. Chief Bill Inness (foreground) calmly smokes cigar as installations, on which his carpenter crew worked many long, hard hours, gradually recede.

Small island with lone spindling tree (left foreground) was a popular catfishing hunting ground. Many necklaces and bracelets currently worn in the States originated at this spot. The Bees took the departure in stride.

## BATTALION SURVIVES THE NAOS TO ESCAPE TROPICS

Veterans of the early Solomons campaign will doubtless relate many tall tales for years to come. Even so, anything the 87th may say concerning the U. S. S. NAOS, a tramp Naval transport, will not be a product of imagination. She was something that should happen only to Japs—or worse!

The NAOS had just discharged a cargo of troops at nearby Bougainville, and had then picked up the 18th Naval Construction Regiment in the Admiralties. She had next sailed south in search of the 87th, marooned on Stirling for the past 11 months.

This somewhat weird itinerary made the Treasuries a mere port of call—an evacuation point—not a point of embarkation. The jungle-wasted mates, however, were not interested in technicalities. In their tropical-baked minds, the dirty NAOS was their "Dream Boat," a means of escape from the disease-ridden Northern Solomons back to a temperate "Promised Land."

They glanced at the grimy bulkheads in sleeping compartments, examined the tattered canvas on bunks and concluded that the NAOS was not "a happy ship." Bluntly speaking, she was dirty as a hog-pen!

On 5 September, when the vessel finally put to sea, the ship's rail supported men who cursed the Treasuries with their every breath until they were completely out of sight, but "The Rock" would never be erased from their seared memories.

However, it was only a short time until most of these same men were woefully clutching the rail, giving "Old Man Ocean" their all. The weather became progressively worse and all hands knew it would be the worst voyage of all. At times, the tiny armed escorts were barely discernable as they wallowed in the boiling Coral Sea.

The journey got off on the wrong foot and never regained stride. The starboard passageway was barred to all passengers. This resulted in permanent congestion and endless traffic jams in the port passage.

Moreover, all chowlines formed on the port side. Those craving food had to present a chow-chit and a life-preserver at the confused mess hatch. It was a sort of combined entrance fee. Neither was good without the other. Food was rigidly rationed in No. 2 hold, which boasted tables for all, but seats for only the chosen.

The place smelled of garbage, even when overhead hatches were tardily removed to permit a semblance of ventilation. The endless se-

ries of squalls further added to the general discomfort. Many men became deathly seasick for the first time since leaving the States.

The noon meal—the NAOS "Blueplate Special"—cannot be ignored in a chronicle of this long-remembered exodus. It was, in fact, a creation! The first course was a watery soup—unidentified! The final course was either corn-starch or canned fruit. There was never a middle course. No seconds either. And no more chits until the next chow call.

Drinking water throughout the trip was lukewarm. Volunteer Seabees with reefer know-how were not permitted to fix the cooling system. Neither was anyone allowed in the restricted passageway where ship's company drank ice water.

Opinion was unanimous that never in its checkered history had the 87th taken such a terrific, all-around drubbing aboard a single vessel with such a sustained smile. But the "rock-happy" veterans apparently didn't care too much. Every turn of the screw was bringing them closer to "The Land of Milk and Honey"—peaceful New Caledonia.

To preserve their sanity, the men tossed cards, plowed through innumerable books or speculated about coming events.

The sure-fire topic of all conversation was the first liberty just around the corner after over a year with little time off.

Everyone, it seemed, began airing private opinions regarding life's bare, neglected necessities. These essentials, it appeared, would come out of a fancy bottle or out of a fancy—in a fancy dress anyway!

An unrestrained roar was heard all over the grimy transport as the picturesque Noumea lighthouse hove into sight. The men were sorely disappointed when the ship was unexpectedly diverted from Noumea and continued on to Monte D'Or where the hook was dropped 10 September. The 1,280-mile trip back to New Cal. was completed in five days.

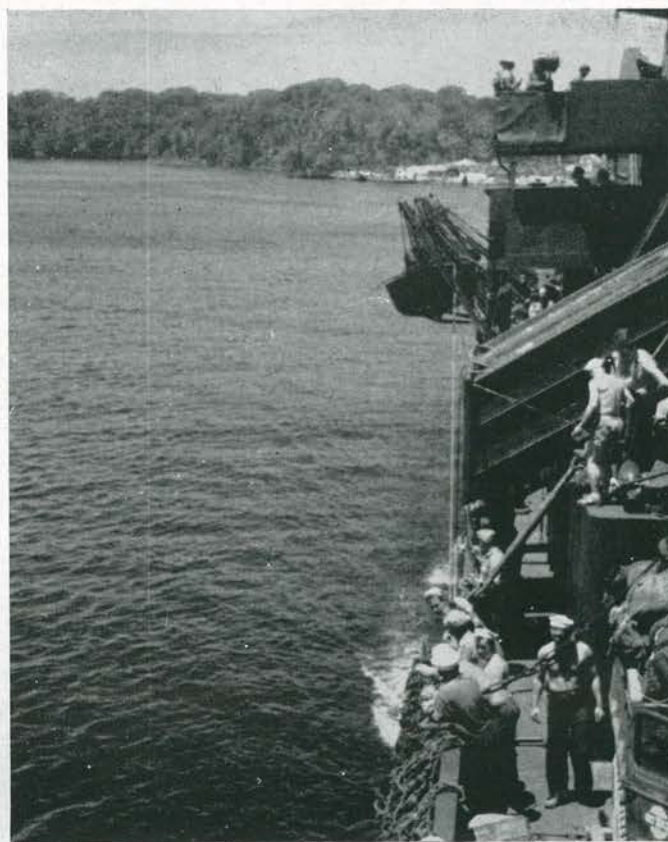
All hands stood by to shove off for the beach next morning—all except one: John F. Phillips, Carpenter's Mate, First Class, had died quietly of a heart attack aboard ship the previous night.

Coming at the eleventh hour, the "CHAOS" had been a formidable obstacle, but in its unseemly way it had fulfilled its ignoble destiny.





**LAY BELOW.** Troops enter hatch to stow gear below. Bunk numbers were assigned men before leaving Camp Ostman, Division MAAs—below with compartment diagrams—helped passengers find berths. Each man had scrubbed his bunk (or someone else's!) ashore.



**UNDER WAY.** Stirling Dock lies directly astern as the NAOS heads to sea. Crew signalmen (top right) blink farewell message to shore before leaving harbor. This portion of Stirling was where 87th camp was pitched for almost a year.



**OUTWARD BOUND.** Men perch atop trucks and crowd rail for a last look. Howard Sansom has lifebelt already inflated to test its effectiveness. Gear-wheel emblem on truck door was the 87th's equipment "trade mark." Equipment was parked everywhere topside.



**SUB NET,** stretched from Stirling across to Mono, protected harbor and PT Base from enemy raiders. Seaplane tenders and PBYS, as well as sizeable warcraft, also found sanctuary inside its protective rim. Skillful navigation was required upon passing net opening.





**DECK CARGO.** Routine shipboard life begins as the NAOS hits open sea. Marvin Klaes (standing, center), S Division MAA, searches for prospective "volunteers" for KP duty. Trucks are well lashed to iron decks in event of anticipated rough weather.



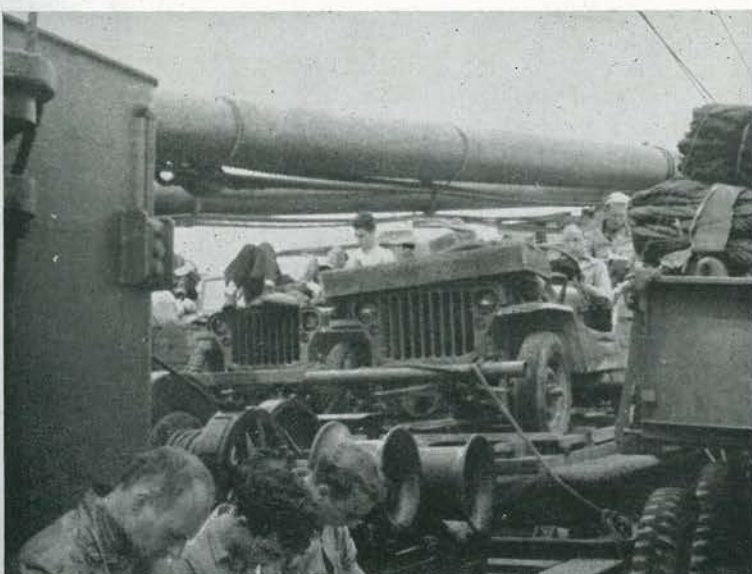
**MISSEABEE UNDER WRAPS.** Pride and joy of the 87th fleet—freshly painted and overhauled—the MISSEABEE takes her first long voyage under other than her own power. The NAOS was hardly under way before the old, familiar card games started.



**CHOW CHITS.** Headquarters lines up for first chow aboard ship. Joe Hudson, division MAA, distributes chits. Due to unappetizing food and the added discomfort of standing while eating, these chits were an unnecessary precaution against overeating.



**STAFF OF LIFE.** Not having eaten since dawn of embarkation day, passengers chow down with a vengeance. Here, a baker doles out bread. "Boarder" in foreground juggles tray, canteen cup and lifejacket while searching for a place to park his gear.



**READING ROOM.** Jim Carpenter, Theodore Gambert and Willie Crouch (left foreground) have evidently come into possession of some choice "literature," judging from their studiously bowed heads. Charlie ("Dry-Dock") Boyd and Peter DeRyke (nearest jeep) are likewise improving their minds!



**TOPSIDE.** Group atop truck loaded with tents finds ideal spot to play without being annoyed by "kibitzers." Dejected character (lower right), after three days of the NAOS, longs for land. Icie Hooks (bending, left of truck) still looks for cateyes or something he can send home!





**WELCOME HAVEN.** Relief from the trying trip is, at last, in sight as New Caledonia appears on distant horizon. Observer on ship's boom studies one of many treacherous reefs, which make Noumea harbor perhaps the world's most difficult to navigate, especially in bad weather.



**BACK HOME.** The harbor lighthouse and its scenic little island were well remembered from the battalion's first brief stop at Noumea in September, 1943. New Caledonia's mild, temperate climate felt cool after the tropics and some have already donned jackets.



**MONTE D'OR.** The NAOS anchors as mates attempt to pick out landmarks. Towering mountains looked heavenly to the ocean-tossed Seabees. Quonset hut camp (left center) was jestingly selected by many as most ideal camp site. When this guess surprisingly proved to be correct, few

could believe the outfit's sudden change of fortune. English translation of Monte D'Or is "Mountain of Gold," but the Earthmovers found no precious metal here in 4½ months of casual searching for legendary mineral deposits.





**AWAY THE GIG!** Comdr. Easterly and party go ashore in MISSEABEE to make funeral arrangements for Jack Phillips, CMic, who died the previous night—the tenth fatality since Camp Peary. Battalion was ordered to occupy 40th Seabees recently vacated camp.



**SHIP TO SHORE.** The NAOS rides peacefully in Monte D'Or harbor as another large pontoon barge of land-hungry Bees come ashore the morning of 11 September. Alert bargeman (extreme right) prepares to heave line as crowded barge nears pier. Men could hardly wait.



**BEACHHEAD.** Cooperative mates crouch low as ponderous barge nears pier so coxswain may correctly judge his approach. On a large barge like this, a man is usually stationed forward to give hand signals to the coxswain. Pictures of this type were accorded preference by the editors, be-

cause it was one way of getting a maximum number of battalion personnel into these pages. This candid shot was a staff favorite because it was judged an excellent close-up of many Stirling veterans.





OPERATIONS RESUMED. Lieut. Ray Pape, noticeably refreshed by two weeks in Australia, was on hand bright and early to supervise unloading. Here, he directs Chief Al Broomfield and his R Division crew to a truck. Outfit shows unmistakable evidence of wear.



PUSH 'EM UP! Frank Mordente takes duffelbags from shipmates and hurls them into truck. Needless to add, men will have no little problem locating them later. New camp, only partially completed by 40th, is only short drive from here. There was work ahead.

## RETURN TO "THE PROMISED LAND"



STRIKERS ARRIVE. Obviously determined to "ignore" the camera, Augustine Borelli, "boogie-woogie bugle boy," smiles as he takes up his burden and heads for truck. The tool of his trade may be seen suspended from his neck. Jack ("Josh") Kenning, the battalion's Gene Krupa, precedes the "young man with a horn." Ira Thomas, Richard ("Mail Call") Rogers and Roland Janson (behind) prepare to hoist gear and follow. Prominent division marking on bag was solution to knotty sorting problem.





RICE CULTIVATION  
(A New Caledonia Water Color)



# NEW CALEDONIA



MONTÉ D'OR—NOUMEA—BOURAIL





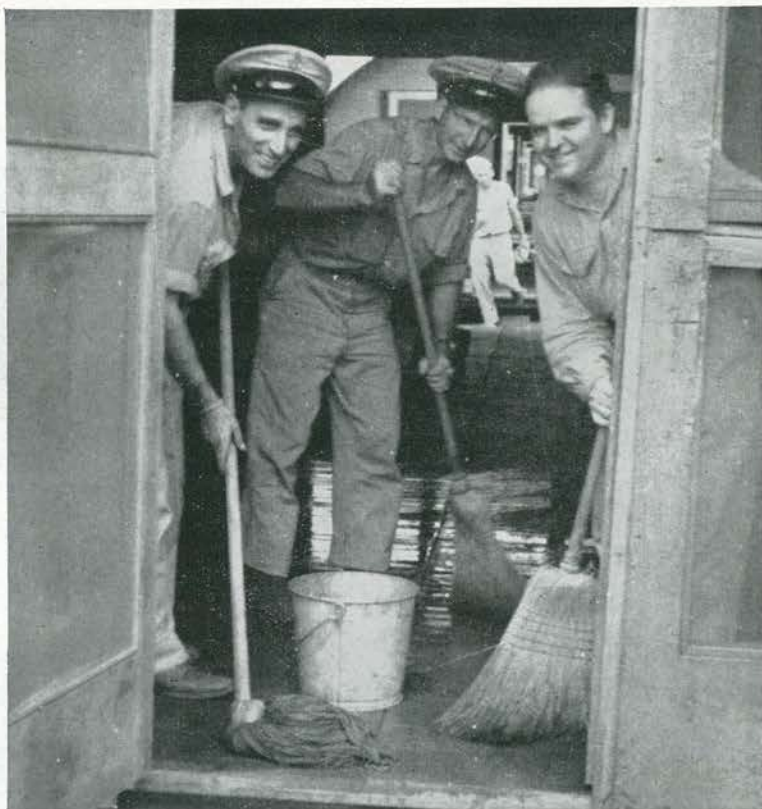
**LOST AND FOUND.** Establishing a new camp was an old story for the far-ranging 87th. In spite of this, duffelbags, rifles and pails were lost and found a dozen times before the battalion settled down for its first night ashore.



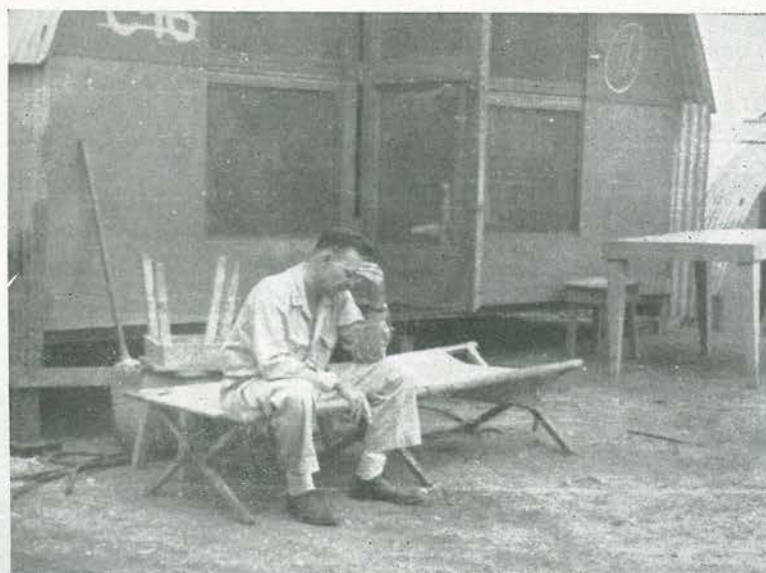
**FARE LIMIT.** Trucks filled with tired, dirty Seabees shuttled madly between dock and camp all day long. For the first time in all its moves, the battalion had a camp of sorts waiting to be moved into right away. Debris was everywhere.



**SOUVENIRS A LA CARTE.** Souvenirs, the weakness of all Seabees, appeared in camp as if by magic with their local Javanese vendors. Lt.(jg) A. L. Davis and some mates examine a few choice items on their way to chow. Purchases were made on spot.



**UNACCUSTOMED AS WE WERE . . .** Many rare sights presented themselves at Monte D'Or, but none was more unusual than Chiefs Competello, Sowers and Ruble tittivating their own quonset deck. The collective reputation of CPOs was never the same after this!



**TIME OUT.** Lieut. Bertsell Henning was a tired man at the end of the first day. As camp officer, he shouldered the mammoth task of housing, bedding and feeding the entire battalion in a matter of a few hours. He received all complaints.



**TENT CITY.** The new camp was far from being all quonsets. Two divisions, S and T, settled on ground floor of the familiar pyramids until such time as new buildings could be thrown together. However, Transportation soon moved to Bourail.





**THE LINE-UP.** The cooks outdid themselves the first day in camp. Much to everyone's surprise, dinner was ready and waiting even before the men arrived. With a huge quonset already set up, it was only a matter of hours until the outfit was eating in a comfort-

able mess hall serving 500 men at each sitting. Enterprising Javanese souvenir vendor (left foreground) peddles his wares to mates waiting in long line. Note nearness of mountains to camp site.

## TRIP'S BEST DUTY FOUND AT NEW CALEDONIA

Not until the men had arrived at Monte D'Or did the strained expression leave their faces. After the tropics, the long, rolling hills, green pastures and tiny villages of New Caledonia were like a fairyland.

Scuttlebutt, moreover, pointed strongly toward home. Life was suddenly bright, and for the first time since leaving the States, the men felt a new freedom, which was quickly perceived in their jaunty bearing.

At first, it seemed that everything on their new island was perfect. The climate, for example, was ideal. Blankets again came into use after a year's storage. Fresh eggs, purchased at nearby farms, were fried by the dozen in ingenious utensils.

Tomatoes, cucumbers, onions and other vegetables graced each hut's table. Life was going to be full to the brim during the "rest period."

However, before the men could become adjusted to the new climate, work projects began rolling in from everywhere. Apparently, all units—from Island Command down—had been waiting for the 87th.

Battalion welders were dispatched by plane to Espirito Santo to repair damaged ships. Bullgangs left for ABCD; others to live with the CBMUs near town. Carpenters rushed off to Noumea to work on TRADE WINDS and the theatre. Cement crews were pushing wheelbarrows at the Officers Receiving Station Club and at the Base CPO Club. Riggers strained and sweated pulling down seaplane hangers at Ile Nou.

Practically all of T Division left for the farway mountains of Bourail to do a futile road job. The few who remained at Monte D'Or strained their backs storing the vast quantity of supplies that poured in continuously. All of this in some mysterious way constituted the fabulous "rest period."

However, one bright spot shone through all the storm-clouds. After a prolonged waiting period, the battalion was finally rationed its long overdue liberty in Noumea. The result of this pent-up frustration was vividly recorded in the Provost Marshall's log of that first hectic day. The 87th "Gestapo" had a field day retrieving the liberty-happy mates. "The Battle of Noumea" was the talk for weeks.

After another prolonged probation period, the battalion resumed liberties. This time a bit more reserve was noticed. The "Black Maria" made only four trips to town!

Almost every quonset at Monte D'Or blossomed out with a black-market radio and many thrilled to the titanic struggle between the

Cardinals and Brownies for the World Series championship. FDR's election to a fourth term was received by radio. Summaries were found in the SOUTH PACIFIC DAILY NEWS, Chief Carl Ruble and Photographer Edmund Jaskulski commenced work on the battalion trip book (THE EARTHMOVER) on 19 December. The second overseas Christmas came and passed almost unnoticed except for packages from home.

To the more sober-minded, the liberty city of Noumea was indeed a pleasant return to civilization. Wearing cool whites and shiny black shoes, the men strutted about town, whistling with equal abandon at the amazing conglomeration of white, black, brown and olive women. In this heady backwash of civilization, anything seemed permissible, and everything—no matter how strange—seemed logical. It was astonishingly simple to fall into the pattern of the easy-going metropolis.

The street scenes resembled a lavish bazaar. The town was filled with snooty French colonials; graceful, sarong-clad Javanese; broad-beamed, barefooted Kanakas; and tiny, servile Chinese. Mixing with these were the armed forces of all Allied nations: Americans, British, French, Dutch, New Zealanders and Australians. It all added up to a most picturesque and colorful melting pot.

Activities in town, generally speaking, were restricted to three basic points of interest. First, there were the gaudy souvenirs sold by all stores—even the Army's deluxe Super-PX! Next in popularity was liquor. At half a dollar a shot, it was guaranteed to deliver the KO punch in three short gulps!

The final and, of course, ultimate attraction was women. Here, the chase was perhaps a bit more difficult, but it was nevertheless pursued with bloodhound tenacity born of long enforced abstinence. In the end, however, the men could always find consolation in the long lines at "The Pink House."

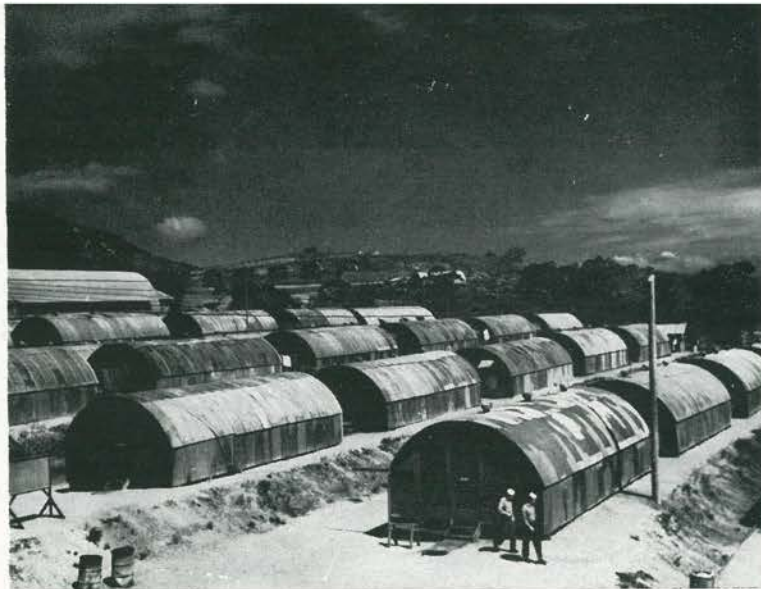
Liberty soon fell into a definite pattern. Names such as the NORMANDIE, SEBASTAPOL and CHICAGO BAR eventually became bywords. The initial curiosity was slowly giving way to monotonous restlessness toward the end. The men knew that only a change of scenery could erase that strangely familiar feeling. News of another forward move, at least, guaranteed something different.

However, the 87th never again encountered such a delightful land as New Caledonia—the only place most of the men would consider revisiting in later years.

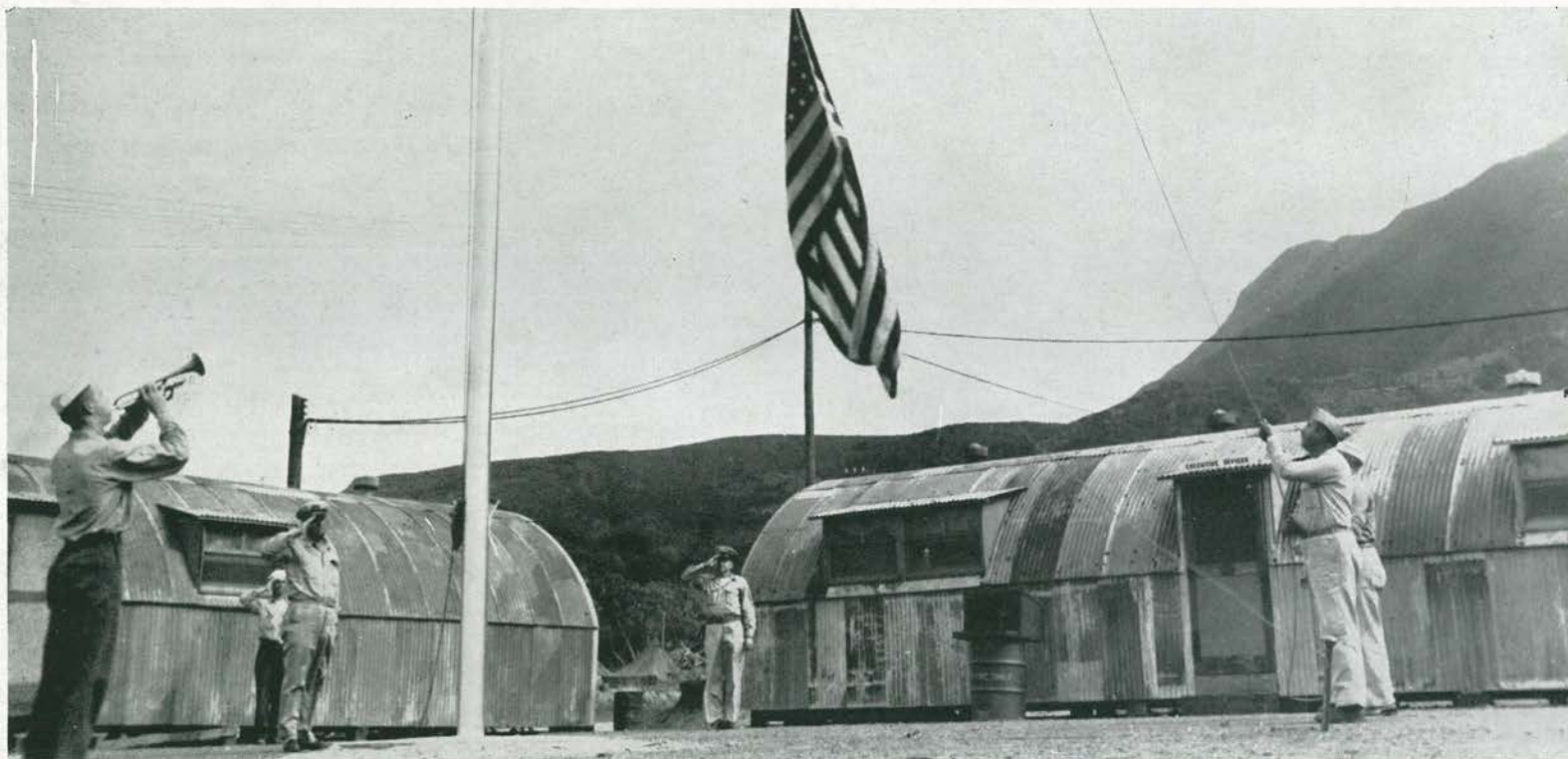




**ASSEMBLY LINE.** Four quonsets every eight hours was the record set by the four carpenter crews of 10 men each. Here, Chief Sam Beacom stands by as the arches are being hoisted into place on the steel-ribbed foundation.



**SEABEE HIVES.** It was only a matter of days until almost everyone was comfortably settled under metal roofs. Located on a sharp slope, the rows were first terraced to keep the huts on an even keel. Officers Country is in background.

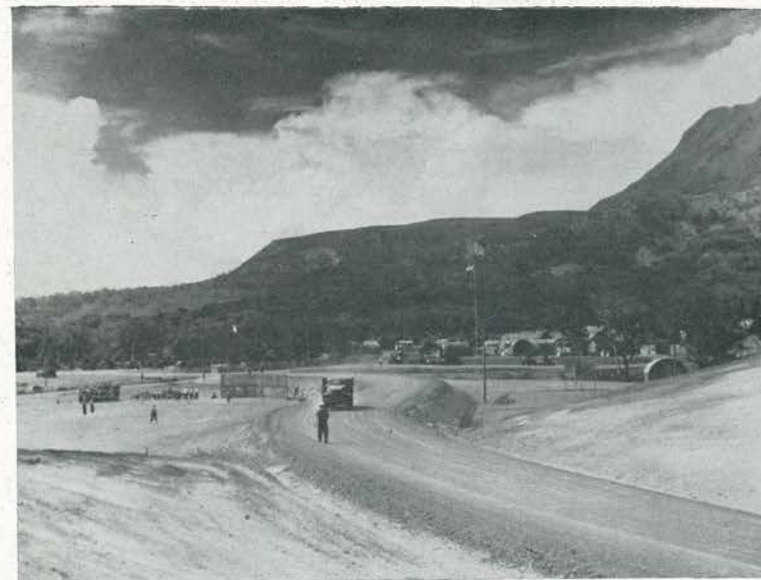


**COLORS** Comdr. Easterly raises the first flag at Monte D'Or to the call of "Colors" by Bugler T. W. ("Junior") Berry. Standing at attention (left to right) are: Harry Lavery (nearest left quonset), Chief Carpenter

Hugo Olsen and Chief R. J. ("Pappy") Holt, Jr. O.O.D. Set up in the administration area, the flagpole stood 70 feet above its base and was a landmark for all wayward Seabees for miles around.



**MOUNTAIN OF GOLD.** Monte D'Or loomed ominously over camp with its deep creases formed by ravines and gullies. Toward evening, its rusty face softened with a brilliant golden hue as it reflected last rays of sun setting over the Pacific.



**SPORTS CENTER.** In time, the camp sported a super-highway, a baseball field, and basketball and handball courts. By far the finest camp on the island, it was little wonder men held their breath each time scufflebutt mentioned moving.





**A PRIZE IN EVERY PACKAGE.** The Post Office was a beehive of activity whenever "surface" mail arrived by ship. The hundreds of packages—containing items ranging from Stateside whiskey to radios—invariably called for extra help. Chief Mailman Donald Arthur never forgot the

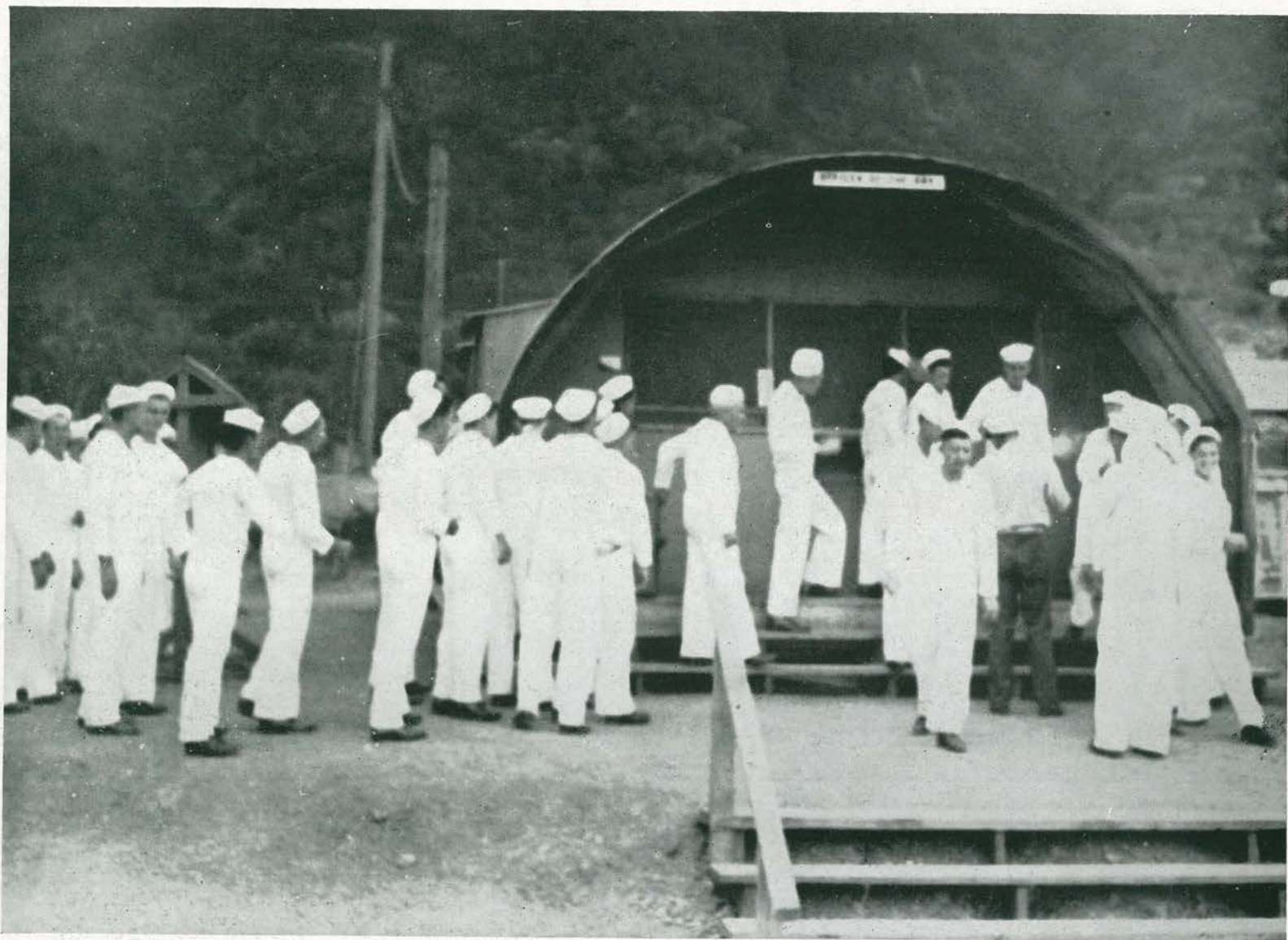
division clerks upon such occasions. Above group, with CPO "Art" wielding the whip, includes (left to right): Inglis, Lundquist, Berry, Thompson, the Chief, Siefker, Printz, Karas, Newkirk, Schmidt, an unidentified clerk and Cantrell. These were Christmas packages.

**BUNDLES FROM THE OLD COUNTRY.** Morale rose and fell proportionately to the amount of incoming mail. No men were more aware of this than the three postal clerks—past masters at reassuring anxious mates concerning lack of mail. When the bulky sacks (often watersoaked) did pour

in, Chief Arthur (left), Wallace Berry, (top of pile) and Joe ("Private Tussie") Cantrell were right in there pitching for THE EARTHMOVER photographer, but "Art" always made sure division clerks did the work.







**LIBERTY AHEAD.** Spotless whites and polished shoes were the order of the day for a liberty card at the OOD Office. From 1300 to 2000, the boisterous 87th had its daily fling in Noumea—come rain, heat or high winds! After its first liberty (rightly termed "The Invasion of Noumea"),

the gang settled down to weekly visits devoted mainly to souvenir-hunting in Chinese shops, New Zealand beer at **TRADE WINDS**, and potent rotgut in the town's dives.

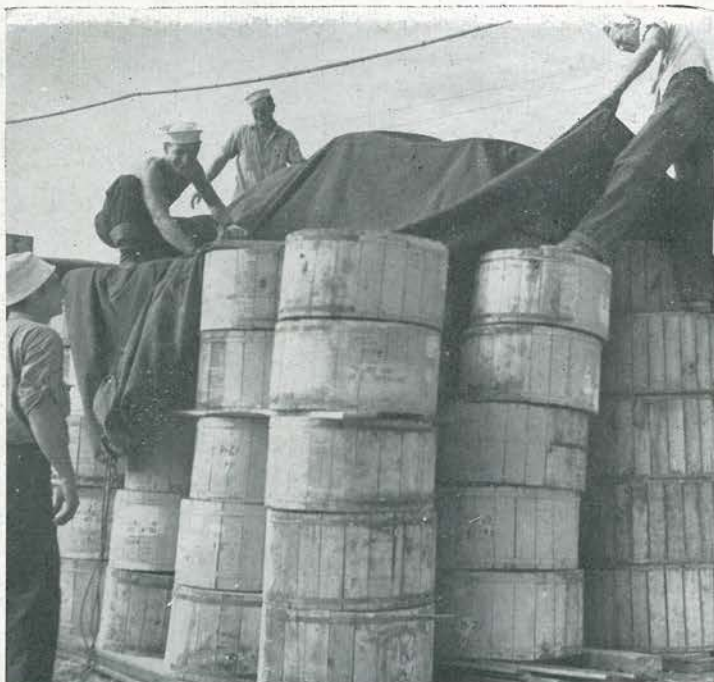


**LIBERTY BUSES.** Only point in favor of 87th liberty buses was they carried the men to Noumea and somehow got them back. The roughest drive in any man's experience, the ordeal was comparable to the toughest commando course.



**LIBERTY HOUNDS.** Jampacked in sardine fashion—21 to each truck—the unfettered men figuratively closed their eyes to the bumps picked up by converted dump-trucks and paid their weekly visit to the capital city for pleasures long denied.





**STORM WARNING.** With a hearty heave-to, a supply dump bullgang spreads a tarp over huge rolls of new wire in face of an approaching storm. Supplying the grunts and sweat are: Chris Condon, Walt Czerwinski, Ralph Chaney and James Little.



**SUPPLY TEAM.** Management of entire supply dump rested on above group. Combining brains and brawn, these men were tops in efficiency and hard work. Front row: Ponder, Beams, Simon; back row: Peterson, Sakowitz, Chief Hall, Hunt and Britvich.



**QUONSETS BY THE CARLOAD.** Supplies poured into the supply dump in never-ending streams, always a sure-fire indication the unit was getting set for another forward move and another big job. Little did the unloading crew realize that these same quonsets would be their future Sick

Bay, mess hall and office buildings at the Jap fortress-base of Okinawa. The crew: Tommy Lowe, Walter Hurley, Al Blasso, Roy Largen, Martin MacDonald, Jimmy Quinlan and Maurice Goodman.





WHAT'S YOURS, MATE? The Ship's Store was no place to pass the time of day. From the moment the blinds were lifted until the last minute before closing, a steady flow of customers plied Chief John Ahaesy and John ("Fats") Spence with purchases of drygoods, drugs, toilet articles and

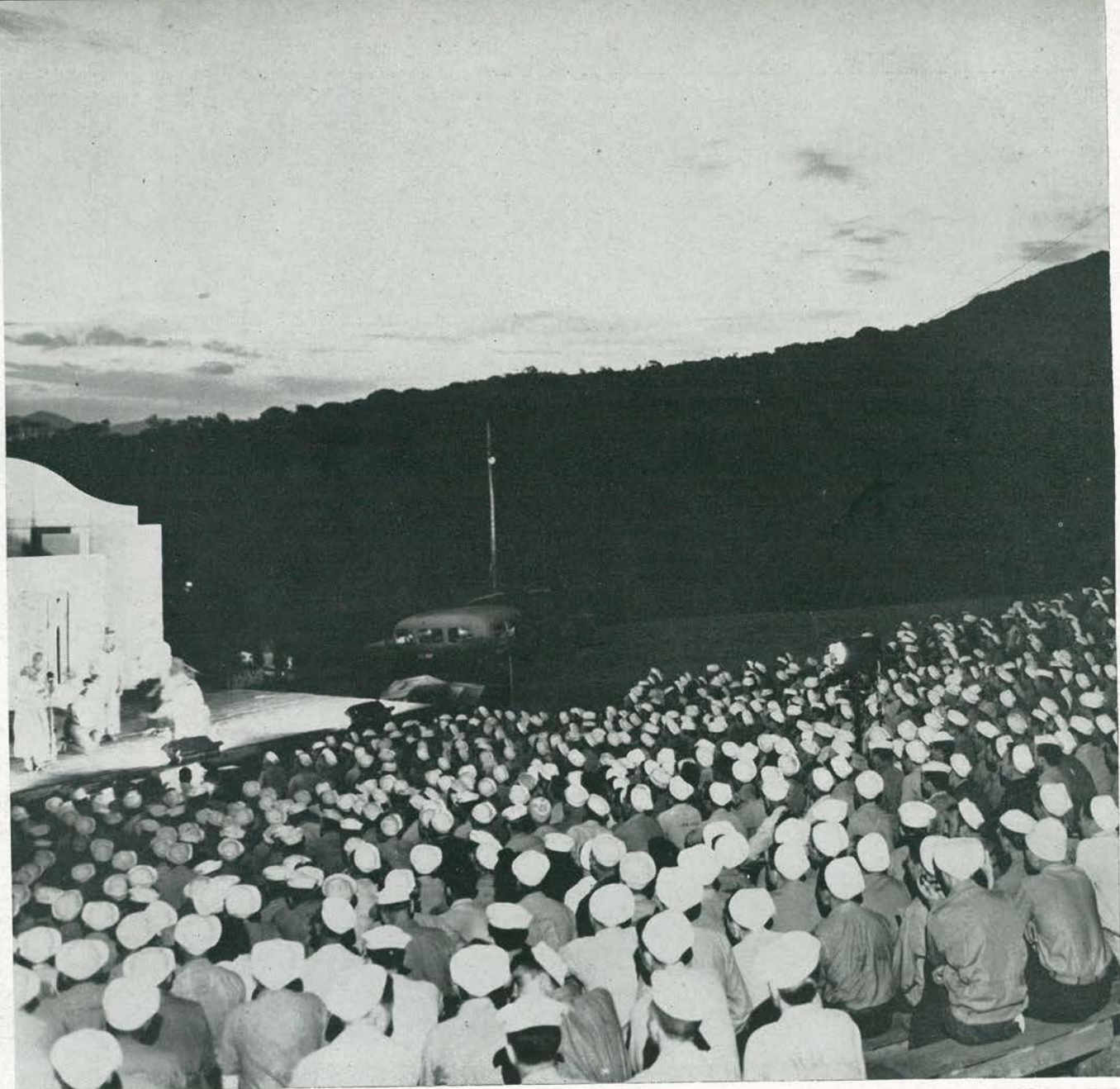
soft beverages. Due to the energy of "The Big Pink Chief," stock was always varied and the supply ample. Occasionally a few dated magazines were on sale.



GET YOUR CHITS HERE, MEN! No assignment was too large or too small for Supply. Here could be obtained a chit for anything from shoelaces to D-8 dozer blades. With its best foot forward, this group procured and distributed approximately a million dollars worth of supplies and equip-

ment in reoutfitting the Earthmovers. Above group (left to right) includes: Chief Elmer Isaacs, Barrett Sumrell, Lt.(jg) Grover J. Daly, Jr. (Supply Officer), Chief Ahaesy, Al Lesch and George Pritchard.



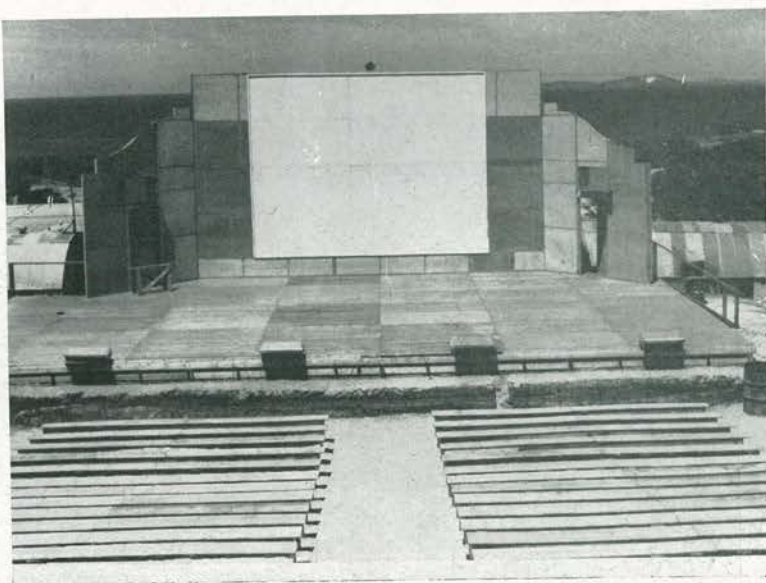


**WHAT! NO MICKEY MOUSE?** Movies every night and an occasional stage show made the outdoor theatre the most popular spot at Monte D'Or. Situated high above camp, it provided an ideal view of the harbor, Noumea peninsula and the craggy mountains beyond. Highlight of the

stage shows was the USO production of the popular George Gershwin folk opera, **PORGY AND BESS**, with an all-Negro cast, starring John Garth, III and Frances Brock, both well known on Broadway.



**FLICKERS.** The addition of two new 35-mm. projectors—guaranteeing full shows without interruptions—enhanced the stock of the movie booth gang with the men. Comdr. Easterly observes workmanship as Chief Carson Rhyne, John Roche and Dale Gillings thread film.



**CAPACITY, PLUS!** The stage of the battalion's mountainside theatre would have—if necessary—accommodated approximately one-fourth of the men aboard. Mates contended such unusual capacity was second only to the mammoth stage of Radio City Music Hall.





THE HILL. Igloo-like Dallas huts, small quonsets and a choice location established Officers Country at Monte D'Or as a snug, comfortable community. Erected long after the crew camp was completed, it was never-

theless the scene of many gay social affairs—thanks to the patronage of neighboring Army nurses and Red Cross workers. The panoramic view from here was very fine.



TOP OF THE HEAP. Comdr. Easterly and Lt. Comdr. Flynn occupied the three-room quonsets shown on upper terrace. The breath-taking view from this highest level surpassed all others in the area. Equipped with run-

ning water and individual showers—in fact, what amounted to Stateside bathrooms—this lay-out was indeed a far cry from the rugged jungle existence.



NOB HILL. Recreation for officers was largely made up of volleyball on a hard-packed court (right foreground) and almost perpetual Bridge games in the well-appointed, T-shaped officers mess hall (left). Commonly known

among the mates as "Nob Hill," comparatively few enlisted men ever scaled these heights. The crew chow hall is the large quonset at right.

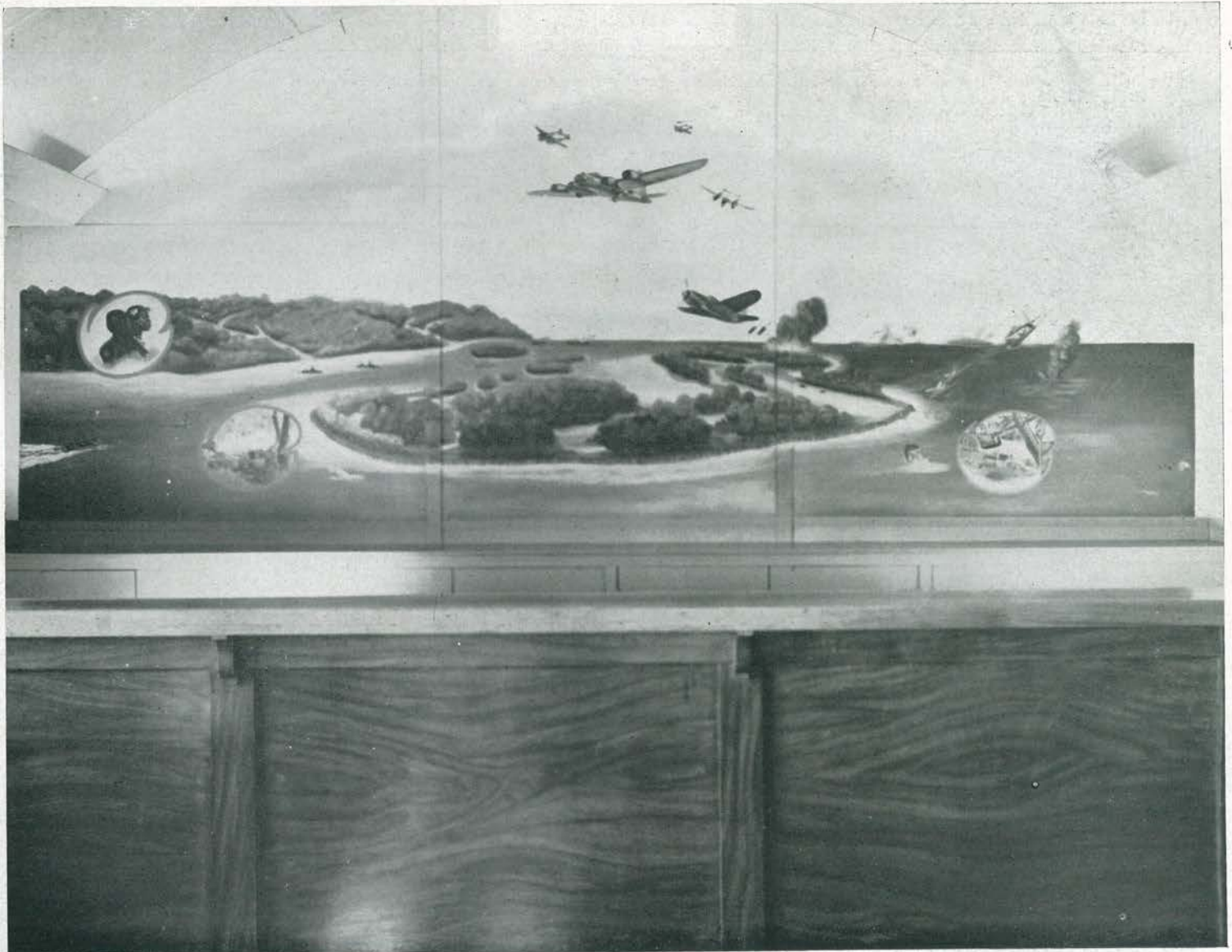




**LOUNGE.** Designed with simple, good taste, the lounge of the officers mess was an ideal spot for a quiet evening of Bridge or a bit of music. Indirect lighting and ample window space added considerably to its airiness.



**DINING HALL.** Ship's Cooks Merlin Monroe and Louis Pacheco were the caterers at officers mess. Individually engraved napkin rings of silver-plated brass tubing added a touch of luxury. Officers were seated at table according to rank.



**REMINDER OF THINGS PAST.** Covering the entire end wall of the bar in the officers mess, this splendid mural by Artist John Schaefer was a vivid portrayal of old times in the Treasures. Done in well-blended oils, it portrayed the many familiar sights and incidents, which made battalion

history in 1943-44: B-25s, P-38s, enemy planes bombing Camp Ostman, the Tassone episode (lower left) and the bombardments of the Shortlands (right background). All blend into a highly dramatic pictorial scene.





**TAKE IT OFF!** Eye-filling Hollywood pin-ups of all shapes, sizes and contours warmed the barren walls of many quonsets. Vic Schultz (in his corner) displays a keen appreciation of feminine anatomy in his choice of sweater-girl glamour.



**GENUINE SEABEE.** Alten Storts goes the ordinary Seabee one better by being the first Seabee-hivekeeper in the Pacific. His apiary boasted three hives of seven combs each. These netted him ample honey for daily breakfast of hot cakes.



**MUSCLE MEN.** Doffing their gold and khaki, four officers display their "Superman" torsos as a ringing challenge to all comers. Strenuous exercise, both in the field and on the volleyball court, kept these "Braid" in superb physical condition—a shining example of vigorous, rugged Sea-

bee leadership. Left to right: Dr. E. L. Zorn, Lieut. Ray Pape, Chief Carpenter Carl Mitchell and Carpenter Joseph Stewart. (Though hoary with all the earmarks of the typical gag shot, THE EARTHMOVER editors liked this.)

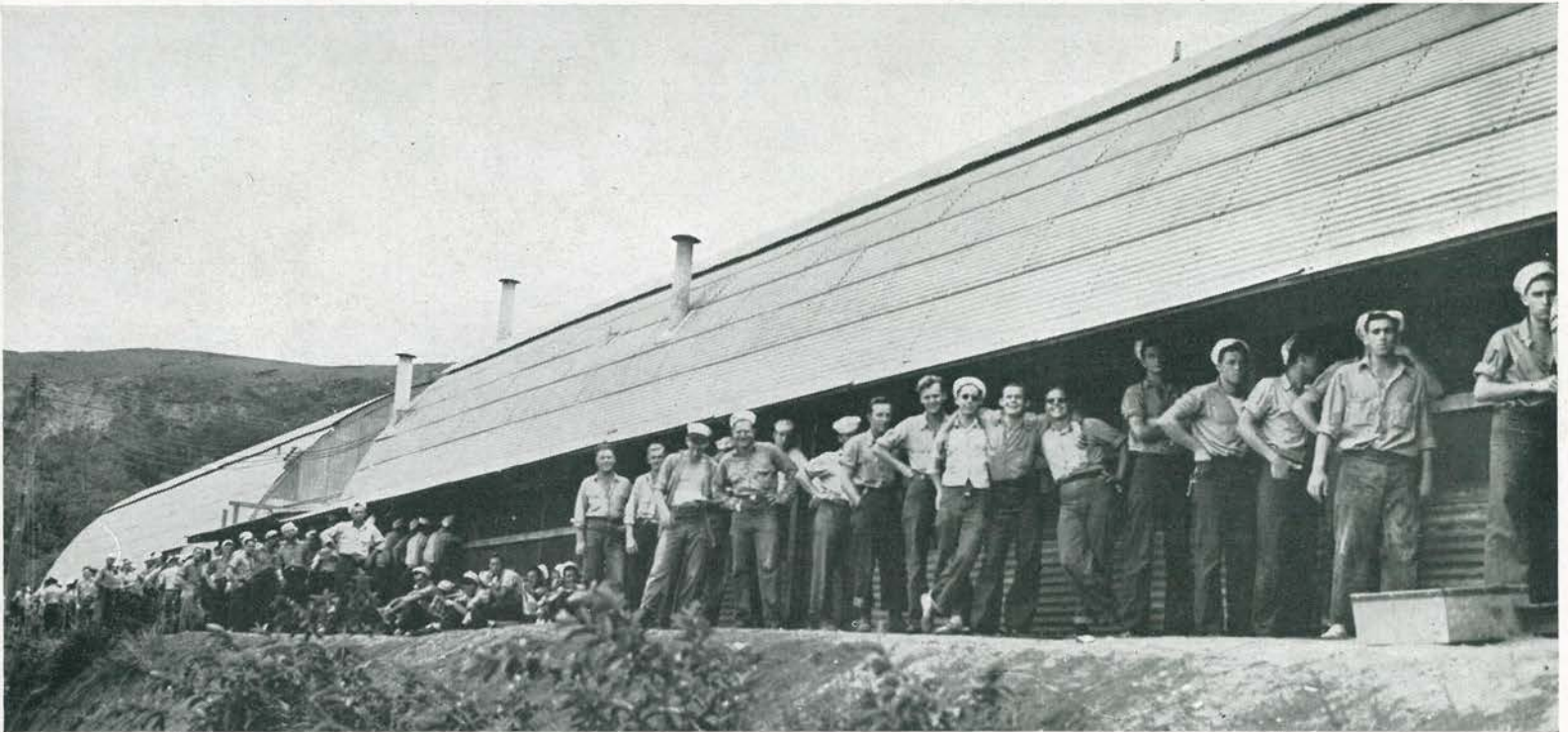




"... FOUR, YOUR LEFT ..." Military training again took over. Close-order drill, long-distance hikes and extended order first blistered, then toughened, soft feet and reduced many extended waistlines. Here P and R Divisions drag out last hundred yards.



SPOTLESS. Eli Pifer and Dave Ehrich "pass in review" before brand-new jeeps lined up in T Division shop area. Operators had to be broken in by the dozen to take care of new equipment, which rolled in during reoutfitting. Moving time was near.



AND DON'T FORGET YOUR CHOW CHIT! Like all Navy outfits, the 87th learned to stand patiently in line early in the game. By far the longest and hottest was noon chow-line. This line-up snaked half-way down to T Division long before doors of the enormous mess hall opened. After

the cornwilly and spam diet of the Treasuries, the men could never get enough of the fresh meat, eggs and vegetables that were served daily at Monte D'Or.



RESCUE. The camp area of CBMU 519 was directly in the path of a raging forest fire, so the 87th received a call for help. The Earthmovers responded by dispatching trailer-loads of volunteer fire-fighters. The camp was saved after hours of effort.



CHARGE! Lieut. Ben Markette gives direction to Jimmy McLelland, 'dozer operator, cutting fire-break through dense mountainside brush. Men stationed along trail eventually got fire under control with shovels and axes. However, two miles of dry oak timber burned.





DEDICATION. And then one Sunday, 17 December, the battalion had its own chapel. A simple structure, molded around the clean lines of a quonset, it had the solemn beauty and restful atmosphere of the true house of worship. Men's response was an overflowing congregation—irrefutable

testimony of their real religious spirit and God-fearing nature. The 87th's third chaplain, Lieut. Marvin Sielken, introduced Captain H. M. Peterson, Senior South Pacific Chaplain, who, as guest of honor, delivered dedicatory sermon.



CHOIR. Originated by Chaplain Sielken, the choir was soon turned over to Ens. Donald Porath, who did a fine job of directing it during chapel services. Chief "Jack" Ormiston is at portable organ. Front row (left to right): Chaplain Sielken, Elzie King, Orville Swanstrom, Harry Bell, Jack

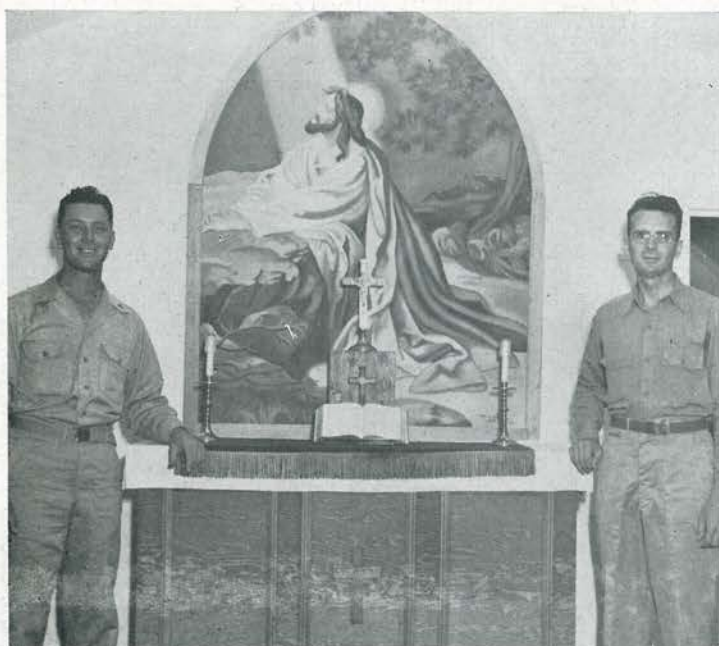
Jones, Gideon Bucuren, George Scherer, Clyde Hunt and Ens. Porath; (rear row): William Weber, Albert Printz, Jack Thomas, James Little, Swen Helge, Edmund Jaskulski, Paul Stache, John McGill and Emmett King.



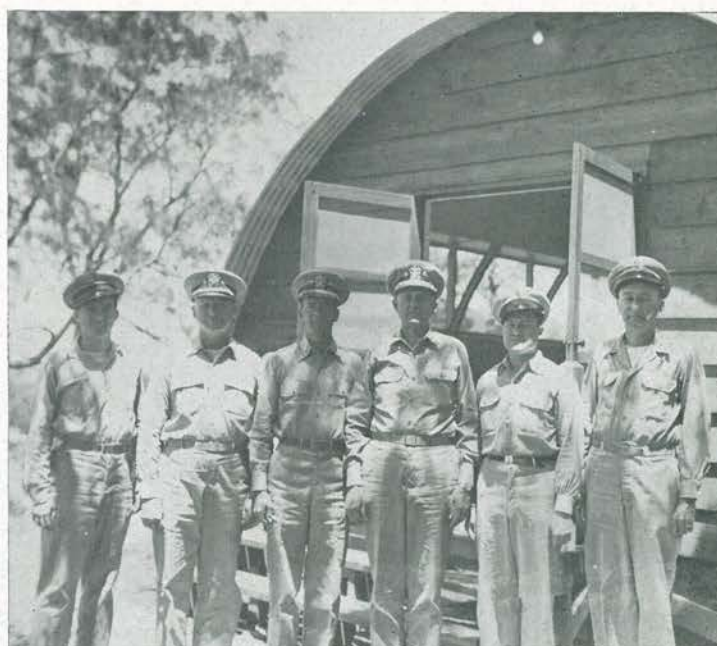


**DAY OF REST.** Set in an abundance of wide-spreading oak, pine and sweet-smelling lemon trees, the chapel was a restful haven for body and soul. Climax of its religious activities was the candlelight service on Christmas Eve—a fitting commemoration of the 87th's second Christmas

overseas. It was the third consecutive Yuletide away from home for some who were in boot training at Camp Peary in December, 1942. Scrubbed and washed mates are seen leaving chapel after services.



**MEN OF GOD.** Chaplain Kofflin (left), 78th Battalion "padre," and Chaplain Sielken stand on either side of painting, "Christ at Gethsemane," above chapel altar. Artist John Schaefer executed this inspirational painting in oils. He was invaluable to unit throughout trip.



**KEEPERS OF THE FAITH.** Senior Chaplain Peterson often jeoped the 18 bumpy miles from Noumea to Monte D'Or to address an 87th congregation. Left to right: Chief Lauren Merriam, Chaplain Schwake, Chaplain Sielken, Capt. Peterson, Chiefs Herman Pack and "Jack" Ormiston.





**WEDDING BELLS.** Many braved a thunderous rainstorm the evening of 22 January to see Lt.(jg) John Robert Boyver take as his bride pretty Second Lieut. Martha Jane Arrowsmith, ANC. Performed in the chapel, it was the battalion's outstanding social function.



**HERE COMES THE BRIDE!** The happy bride and groom are shown striding down the aisle once the ceremony is over. A portion of the wedding assembly have already departed for the movie, *MRS. PARKINGTON*. Some men still wear their parka hoods.



**MR AND MRS.** The bride (from Scio, Ohio) had been 29 consecutive months overseas when she met Lt. Boyver, formerly a mining engineer, at a 109th Station Hospital Thanksgiving party in fall of '44. The attractive bride holds her corsage.



**ENTOURAGE.** Bridal party included Comdr. Easterly; Lt. and Mrs. Boyver; Col. Jenkins, MOinC, 109th Hospital, who gave bride away; Capt. McIntyre, head 109th nurse; and Lt.(jg) Hal Chapin, one of Lt. Boyver's college classmates.



**INFORMAL.** A reception, attended by 87th officers and 109th guests, was held at the officers mess following the ceremony. Lt. Ina Tucci of North Carolina, close friend of Mrs. Boyver, poses with the couple before the buffet supper table.



**THE CAKE.** 109th Hospital bakers contributed a lovely wedding cake. After the reception, the couple repaired to Magenta Hills cottage of M. Hagen, Noumea bank president, for a five-day honeymoon. Lt. Boyver soon embarked for Saipan.





**HINKY DINKY PARLEY VOUS?** A hilarious Christmas party at the French farmhouse near Glass House outside of Noumea brought forth abundance of good cheer and plenty of vin rouge as gang celebrated second overseas Yuletide. In addition to the charming hostess, her husband and win-

some daughter (center), others in this confused, but happy, scene are: Chiefs Ruble, Arthur and Ahaesy, plus—Jaskulski, Soule, Schaefer, Silver, Bernie Kruger, "Barney" Nelson, Towey, Berry, Lamoureux, Bartlett, Jack Jones, Bucceri, Hosey and Asich.



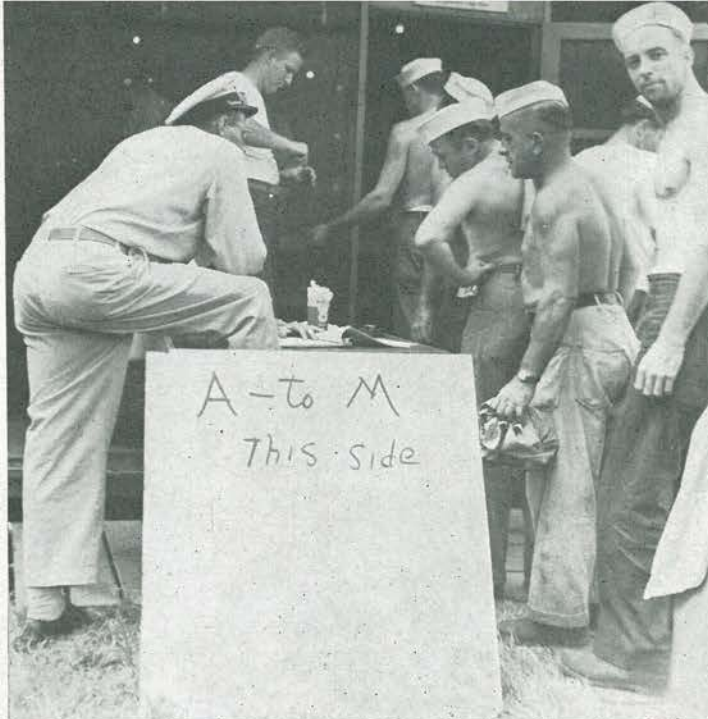
**"'T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE . . ."** While a weird mixture of rain and fog swirled about the summit of lofty Monte D'Or, mates in the quonsets nestled at the foot of the forbidden elevation were preparing for the "Old Man With the Whiskers." Jack Jones (left), Carleton Soule (kneeling) and "Barney" Nelson add a bit of Christmas cheer to their crowded quonset.







**BUSY MAN.** Leading candidate for title of most overworked officer at Monte D'Or was Lt.(jg) Steve Lynch, battalion dentist. Working two chairs simultaneously, he took care of an average 300 cases per month throughout busy New Caledonia period.



**NEEDLE TIME.** To make sure no man sneaked by for seconds, "eager" victims were checked off muster list outside of Sick Bay. Only after both arms were well swabbed with Iodine could mates pass into the inner sanctum for the real business.



**THE SQUARE NEEDLE.** Shots increased in volume and intensity as the battalion prepared for its next forward move. A list of diseases the men were immunized against read like a medical dictionary—typhus, plague, cholera, yellow fever, smallpox, tetanus, etc.! All these horrible maladies

were supposedly laying in wait for the 87th at BIVE—wherever that was! Dr. Eugene Zorn chats with Lt. Boyer (center) as Corpsmen Guenerra, Byers, Schneider, Malkassian and Chief Tunney prepare to administer injections.





**WATER MAIN.** Laying the principal waterline into the Monte D'Or camp involved skinning the heavy pipe a distance of approximately two miles over the rolling, scrubby hills adjacent the towering mountain range. An

estimated 10,000 feet of six-inch pipe was used for the entire project. Chief Owen Lawson (right) and his "pipe-bucking" gang are shown hard at it.



**NOT IN THE CONTRACT.** Battalion plumbers were truly "jacks-of-all-trades." Besides piping the entire camp for showers and plumbing Sick Bay, mess hall, laundry, etc., they frequently had to dig their own ditches

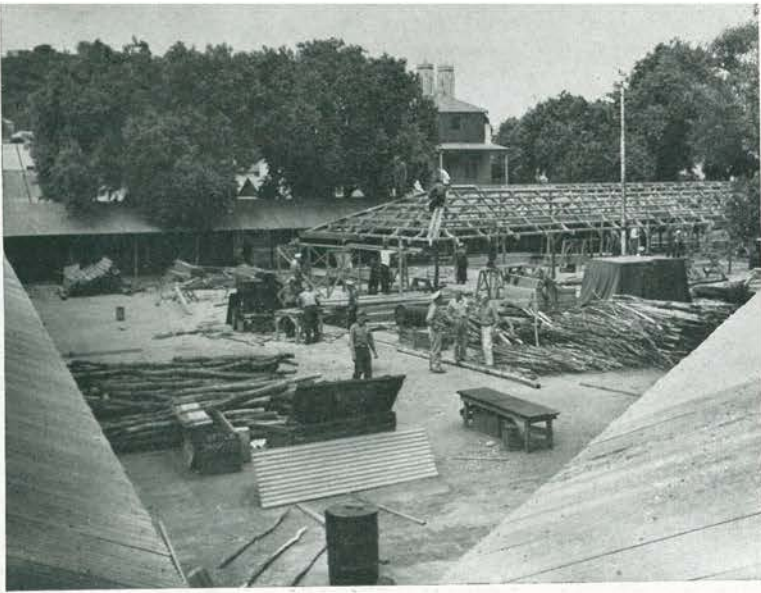
with pick and shovel. Taking five, with a smile, (left to right): Chief Louie Carlisle, Charles Reid, Hurschel Turner, William Brekke and Ed Joe Mulhern.



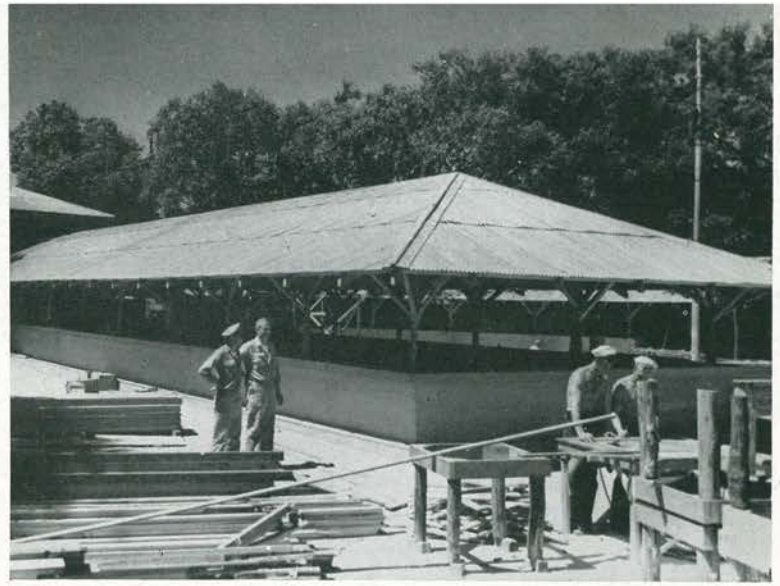
**SOME CONTAINER!** One section of a 10,000-barrel, bolted steel tank served as the water storage point for entire camp. Planned by Carpenter Tom Bailey and rushed to completion by Christmas Day, the filtration unit

was capable of turning out 40,000 gallons of drinking water a day. Steel work on construction of this immense tank was supervised by Chief "Hank" Ahrens.





**GOOD START.** Carpenter crews of Chiefs Emil Schoenke and Frank Lutterall were assigned the construction of a servicemen's center in the heart of Noumea. A concrete deck (easy to clean with hose and water) has hardened as building commences.



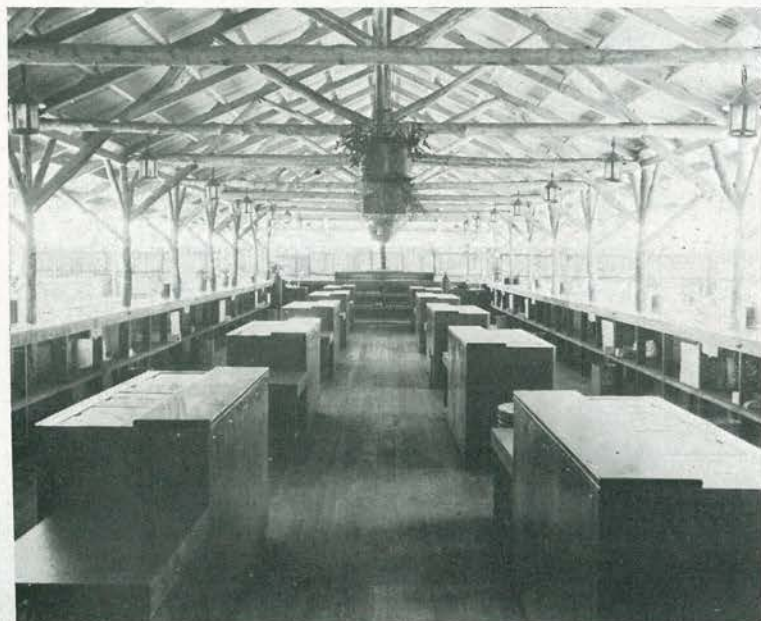
**PROGRESS.** Lieut. W. C. Reilly commends "Uncle Slug" Schoenke on progress his carpenters have made on the main building (central structure), which is spacious beer and soft drinks counter. Joe Ponaski (left) and Glen Ludwig are working saw.



**SETTING UP HOUSE.** Prefabricated tables and really comfortable chairs were thrown together quickly once the basic construction was completed. Later painted in brilliant hues, the enlisted man's center had the rich carnival atmosphere of a gay beach resort.



**SPRAYING, INC.** The 87th paint crew eventually became a rather familiar sight along Noumea's busy streets. Chief Cedarstaff's crew of experts mixed and prepared color mixtures on the spot with this mobile unit. All paint was applied with spray guns.



**WELL DONE.** Ten sizeable coolers in interior of completed fountain assured thirsty GIs of iced beer and coke. More large reefers in surrounding buildings kept reserve supply of beverages at constant temperature.



**ALL SET** to open next day (Thanksgiving), exterior of TRADE WINDS fountain was finished with stained plywood and a fireproof asbestos roof. Once opened, its 175-foot bar was never without several hundred parched servicemen.





**GRAND OPENING.** Thousands of Allied servicemen attended the formal opening of **TRADE WINDS** Thanksgiving Day. For first time in Noumea history, real hamburgers, embellished with the "works," were served over the counter for the price of a dime. Also ex-

ceedingly popular was the counter serving New Zealand beer. Two bottles of this potent malt and the amateur imbiber was almost certain to require help in locating the liberty bus for the gruelling, sobering truck-ride back to camp.

## 87TH BUILDS "TRADE WINDS"

During the two years of Allied use of New Caledonia as a supply base for the South Pacific, no provision had ever been made for furnishing the enlisted men of all service branches with a recreational center in the liberty city of Noumea. Blessings were finally given for such a project by Island Command to be built on the sight of the old Triangle Gardens.

A contest was immediately announced for an appropriate name and **TRADE WINDS** was chosen.

The project was started with the various branches of service furnishing unskilled work details to aid in the construction, but this soon proved most unsatisfactory and the entire project was assigned to the 87th Seabees.

Lieut. William C. Reilly, as officer in charge of construction, and the seasoned carpenter crews of Chiefs Emil Schoenke and Frank Lutterall were detailed to carry out the work. They immediately moved gear and bedding to the deserted **ARGUS** camp on the outskirts of town. This move eliminated the long, dreary ride each morning and evening between Monte D'Or and Noumea.

The men worked a long, ten-hour day, but the freedom from the tiresome restrictions of the main camp counterbalanced the exacting work schedule. Moreover, the prospect of nightly liberty was a further compensation for extra work.

Beginning the project in early October, it was scheduled for completion on Thanksgiving Day. Using many labor-saving devices to streamline operations, the job was well timed to meet the deadline.

At precisely the right moment, Chief Vic Cedarstaff and his itinerant paint crew charged into town with loaded spray-guns and in a few days the entire project—inside and out—was decorated in a gay, colorful motif.

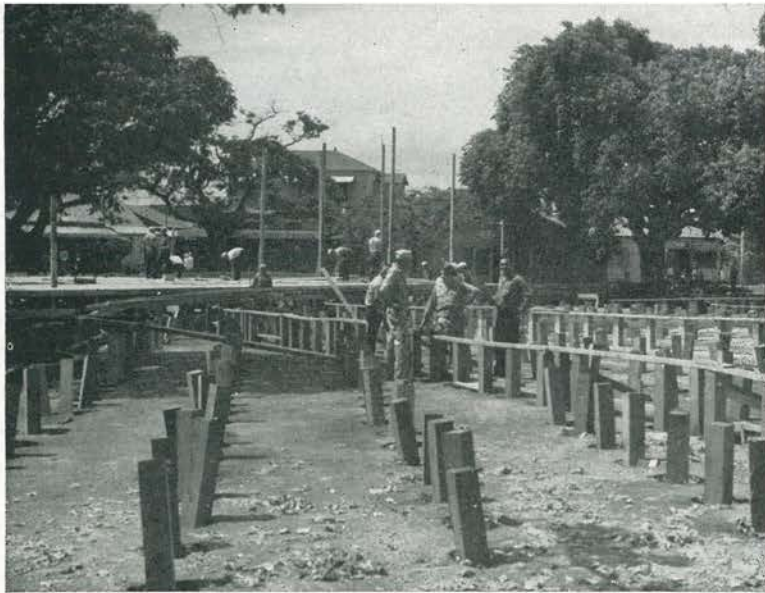
Promptly on 23 November (Thanksgiving Day), **TRADE WINDS** was opened with appropriate ceremonies. The mates queued up in long lines for the iced beer, hamburgers, hot-dogs and soft drinks. The long step toward improving the enlisted men's welfare had been accomplished.

**TRADE WINDS** literally blew the black market trafficking in liquor out of its once flourishing spot in Noumea. At the same time, the new center gave all enlisted GIs a decent spot to eat and drink or just to sit and shoot the breeze.

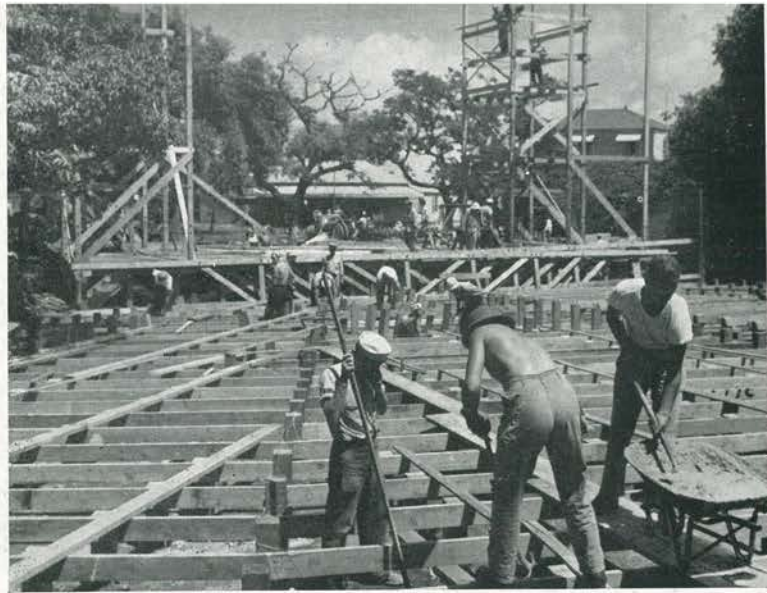


**RUSTIC UPHOLSTERY.** Framework for all structural work in compound was of native rough timber and a minimum of finished lumber. Project was stymied time and again for lack of sufficient building materials. Here, construction was still in progress.

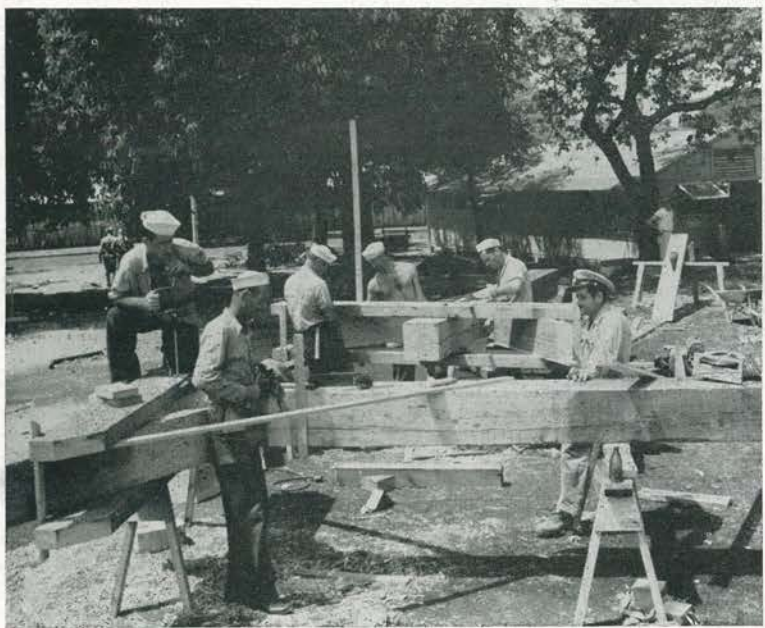




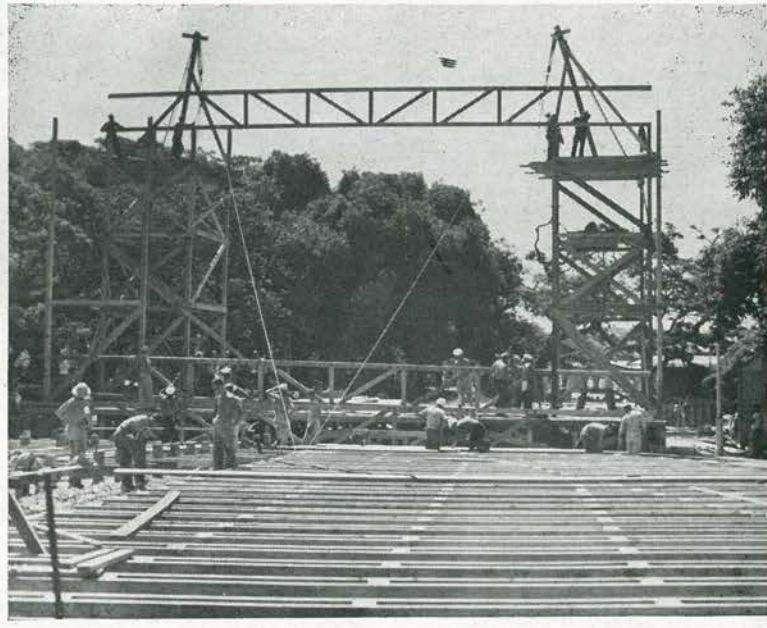
**VISITOR.** Chief Carl W. Ruble (center, foreground group), recently appointed editor-in-chief of 87th trip book (eventually named **THE EARTH-MOVER**), interviews Chief Emil Schoenke (left) as Community Theatre project commences in Noumea.



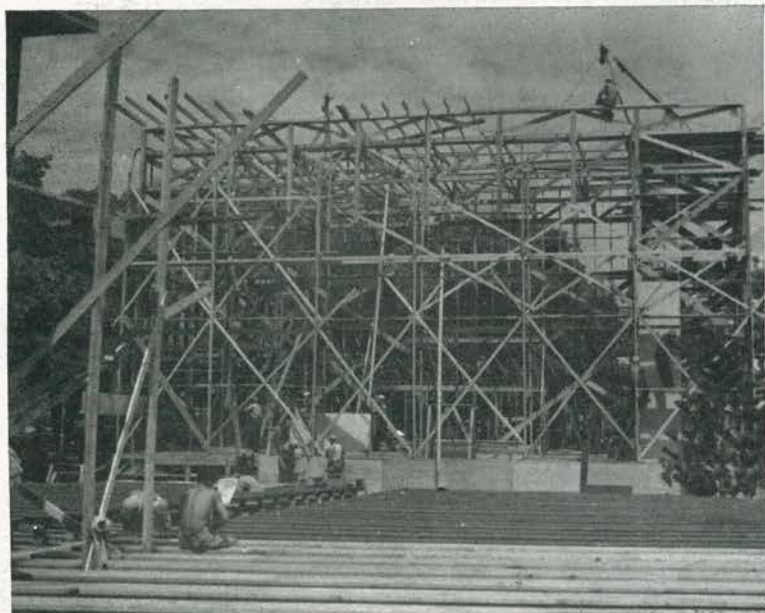
**FRAMEWORK** begins to rear skyward on stage of theatre project as crew in foreground pours concrete around foundation posts for seats. Stage wings are beginning to take shape as carpenters clamber over filmy structure with ease of trapeze artists.



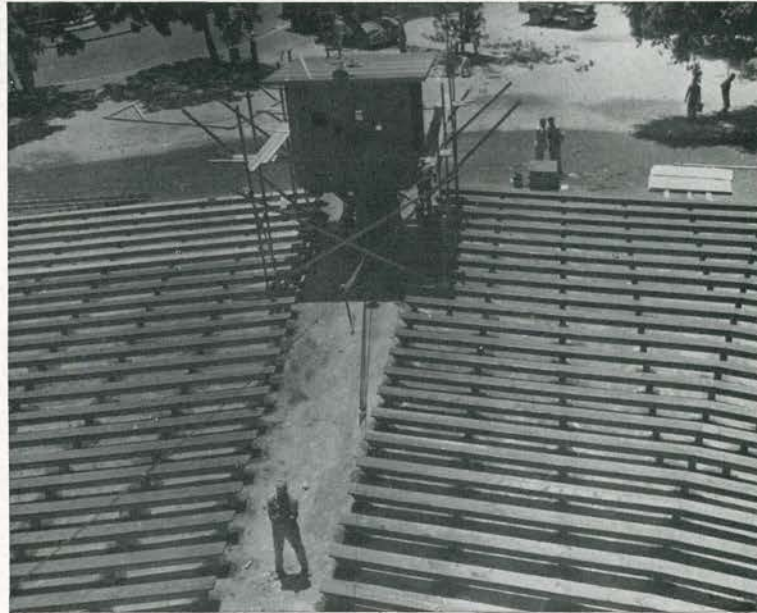
**ACROSS THE STREET** from thriving **TRADE WINDS** (see picket fence), Chief Rufus Bland (right) directs construction of foundation for projection booth. Carpenters are: Darrell Haws, Julius Scruggs, Joe Williams, Daniel Petrich and Bob Droeger.



**RIGGERS**, fresh from Ile Nou, are rushed to theatre project to set entire top of stage with improvised rigs as first truss is hoisted into place. Chief Charlie Stauss supervised rigging until his crew finished their job and moved on to another.

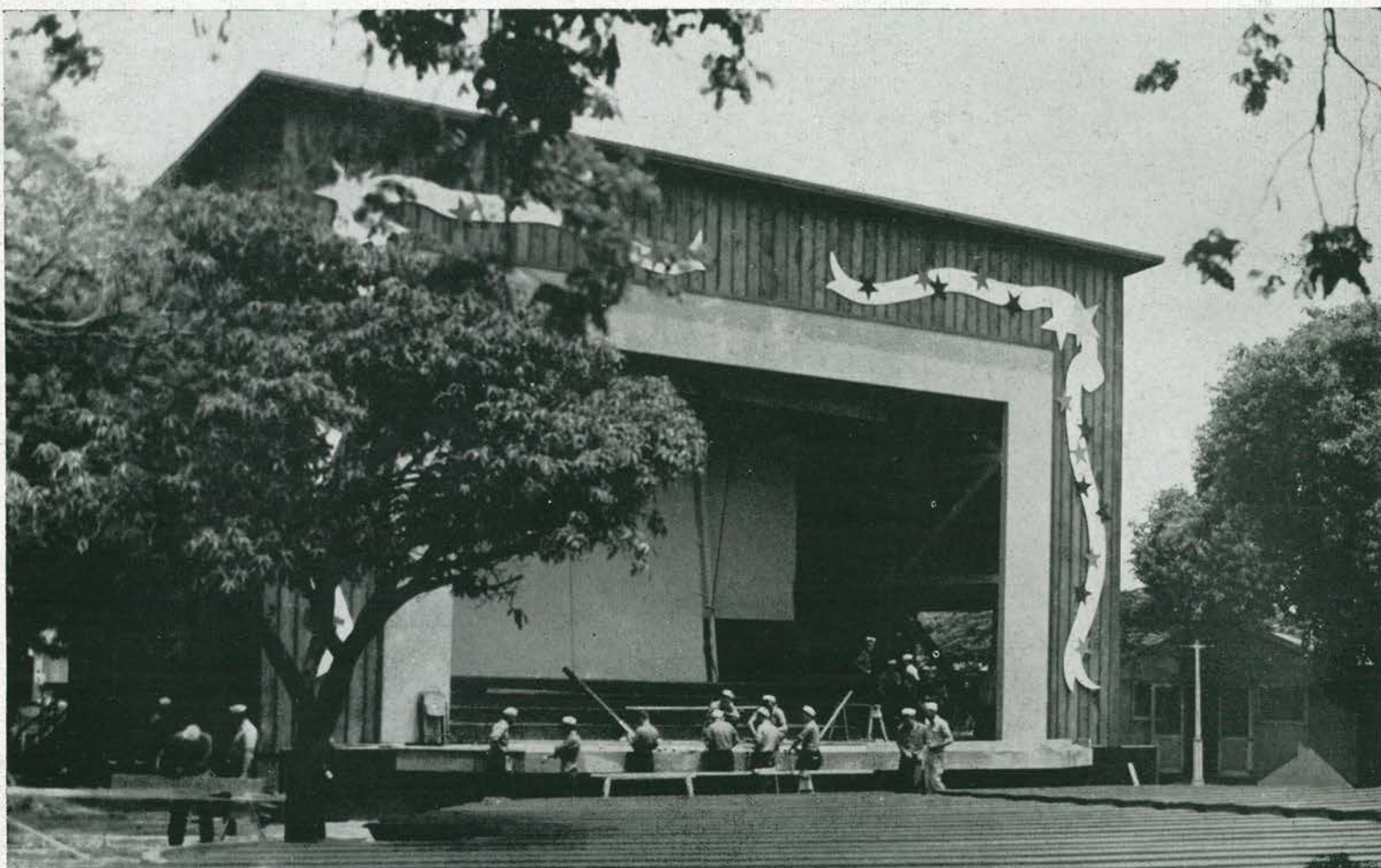


**SPIDER WEB.** Framework of mushrooming theatre project assumed appearance of a jig-saw puzzle with its tangle of scaffolding in preparation for fitting on plywood facing. All hands were turning-to with a will as Christmas opening was near.



**PROJECTION** booth almost finished and seating arrangements for an audience of 1,200 ready, Chief William Martin (arms folded) focuses attention on few remaining touches needed to complete stage. **EARTH-MOVER** photographer found theatre an arresting subject.





NOUMEA THEATRE. Finishing touches to new theatre were rushed to meet the deadline of 23 December for the colossal Red Cross Christmas Festival. Carpenter crews worked feverish 14-hour shifts and came to a breathless completion only four hours before the

formal opening of the pageant. Here, carpenters and electricians are installing floodlights on the last work day. Already gala Yuletide designs have been tacked on front of structure for the occasion. This project attracted much attention from Noumea natives.

## CIVIC THEATER BUILT—FLOPS

With the servicemen's recreation center, TRADE WINDS, well on its way to completion, Island Command suddenly decided, with the aid of Red Cross suggestions, to sponsor a huge, open-air theatre in the central park area of Noumea.

The project was assigned to Army Engineers in mid-November with a finish date of late December. By the first of December, however, the extent of construction was a few post-holes dug with some 6x6s leaning out at odd angles. It was quite apparent that the project would never be completed on schedule.

At this point, Lieut. Reilly and his construction gang, fresh from completion of TRADE WINDS, were assigned to the job.

Chiefs William Martin and Rufus Bland and their crack carpenter crews were installed in the ARGUS camp and work began in earnest. It was a rush job from the start. As in all these operations, however, excellent craftsmanship was apparent.

To set the intricate stage framework, Chief Charlie Stauss and his riggers were brought in for the ticklish work. Charlie's men were just in from Ile Nou where they had dismantled the huge seaplane base hangars and other steel installations.

The mobile paint department again rolled into Noumea to put the finishing touches and decorations to the elaborate stage and projection booth. Battalion electricians installed sound and with the installations of footlights, the job was completed, and, to everyone's surprise, on time for the long-planned Christmas festivities.

In collaboration with the Red Cross, Army Special Services presented Handel's "Messiah," a Yuletide carol sing and a huge Christmas party for the native children—Santa Claus and all!

After such an auspicious opening, the theatre was almost certain of success. Unfortunately, when Army Special Service attempted to set up a movie schedule, French civil authorities stepped in quite unexpectedly.

The proprietors of the local theatres, which showed French and American movies of ancient vintage once a week, refused to sanction the showing of free movies—not even to servicemen.

Thus, the mammoth installation was destined to the ignominy of a "white elephant." Nourished only by a few afternoon concerts and occasional stage shows, it stands today as an expensive monument to the war in the Pacific.



SPRAY BOYS. Albert Mundy and Sheldon McCaleb get in the last licks on the otherwise completed screen and stage from swinging scaffold. One of several community Christmas trees is already decorated and wired for lighting in anticipation of pageant.





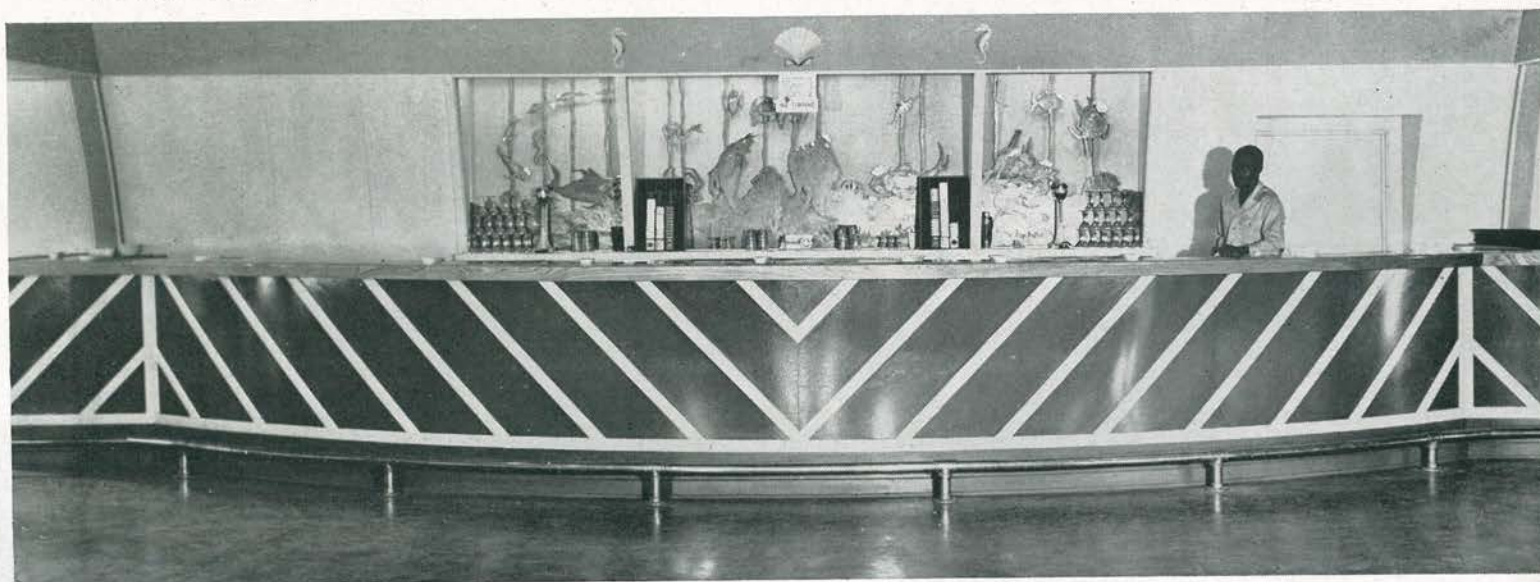
**NRS OFFICERS CLUB.** A plywood entrance, screened terrace, a few ship's lanterns—and presto!!!—the once lowly quonset acquires the regal lines of a modern night club. Designed and supervised by Lt. Comdr. Flynn, it

was by all odds the most sumptuous officers club in the entire Pacific. This luxurious retreat was ideally located on the outskirts of Noumea.



**INTERIOR.** Five nights a week, dances were held on this highly polished composition dance floor. At far end is the roomy, comfortable lounge, which extends to the library and writing room. Ingenious use of cloth net-

ting in the terraced ceiling provides fine, natural air-conditioning. Elaborate bar may be seen at right center. Dance orchestra occupied raised platform at right.



**SHADES OF THE RITZ.** Most popular spot in deluxe building was the gala 40-foot bar, complete with polished brass rail and lacquered masonite top. Serving everything from plain beer to resplendent zombies (with

cherries!), this cleverly decorated bar was an oasis for officer refugees from Noumea's sweltering semi-tropical heat. Deep-sea figures back of bar were cut-outs.



# n o u m e a







**SUPER PX.** To all Allied servicemen, the real heart of Noumea was the Army's Super PX, located in the main business district of town. Its separate sections included dry goods; toilet articles, clothing, souvenirs, magazines and—most important of all—ice cream sundaes and sodas! The

nearest thing to a Stateside corner drugstore, it attracted hundreds of curious natives who stood outside and stared in amazement at its endless variety. Establishment was staffed by GIs and attractive French girls.



**MACY'S, SOUTH PACIFIC!** Largest department store in Noumea occupies one city block and deals in everything from jewelry and food to clothing and souvenirs. More appreciated than the articles for sale on its dusty counters is the wooden canopy stretching the length of the building, offer-

ing much-needed shade to footsore sightseers. Cars at curb are predominately of French manufacture, although an occasional early vintage Ford makes its wheezy appearance. The spacious city park starts just across street.





**JAVANESE WEDDING.** Festivities are in full swing as aftermath of a Javanese wedding. The ceremony proper was an unusually simple affair compared to the gay, noisy reception here taking place in a converted vegetable storage barn. Gay, many-colored streamers and banners cut from

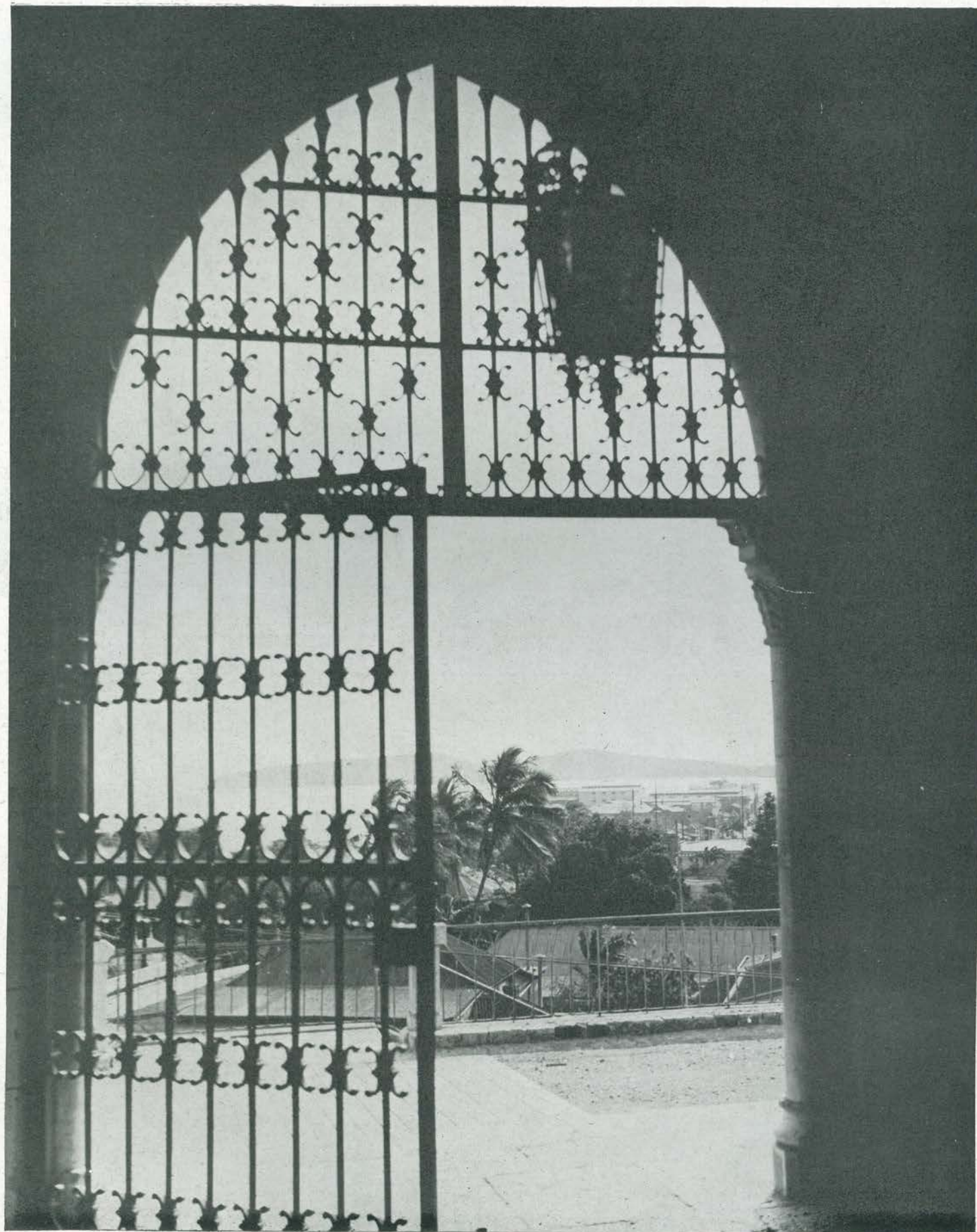
paper and cloth are strung entire length of building. Women and children occupy one side of the room while men sit on the other. Food consisted mainly of sweet rice cakes and colored soda water.



**THE EAST.** Entertainment at the wedding centered around a professional female dancer and her partners. Dressed in striking costume of gilt and crimson and wearing white camellias in her hair, she performed ritual Javanese dances with unusually graceful and expressive gestures of her

hands. Orchestra consisting of many sized drums and bronze xylophones produced very rhythmic, but unmelodic, accompaniment. Members of orchestra are really in the groove, resembling a group of Gene Krupas in their facial contortions.





WROUGHT IRON gates of St. Joseph's Cathedral are typical of French architecture throughout the world. Rich homes in Noumea were almost all decorated with grille-work gates or fences. Tall buildings (right) are part of Nickel Docks. Nickel is leading export of New Caledonia. Deserted har-

bor reveals war has progressed since 87th's first visit here in September, 1943. Then, Noumea was a crowded, bustling main base. By late '44, however, it had become a comparatively deserted rear-area receiving station.





**SUNDAY IN THE PARK.** Civic center of the city of Noumea is this spacious park located in the heart of the town. Shaded by squatty eucalyptus trees and swaying coconut palms, it attracted hundreds of native French, Kanakas and Javanese at the regular Sunday afternoon concerts in the

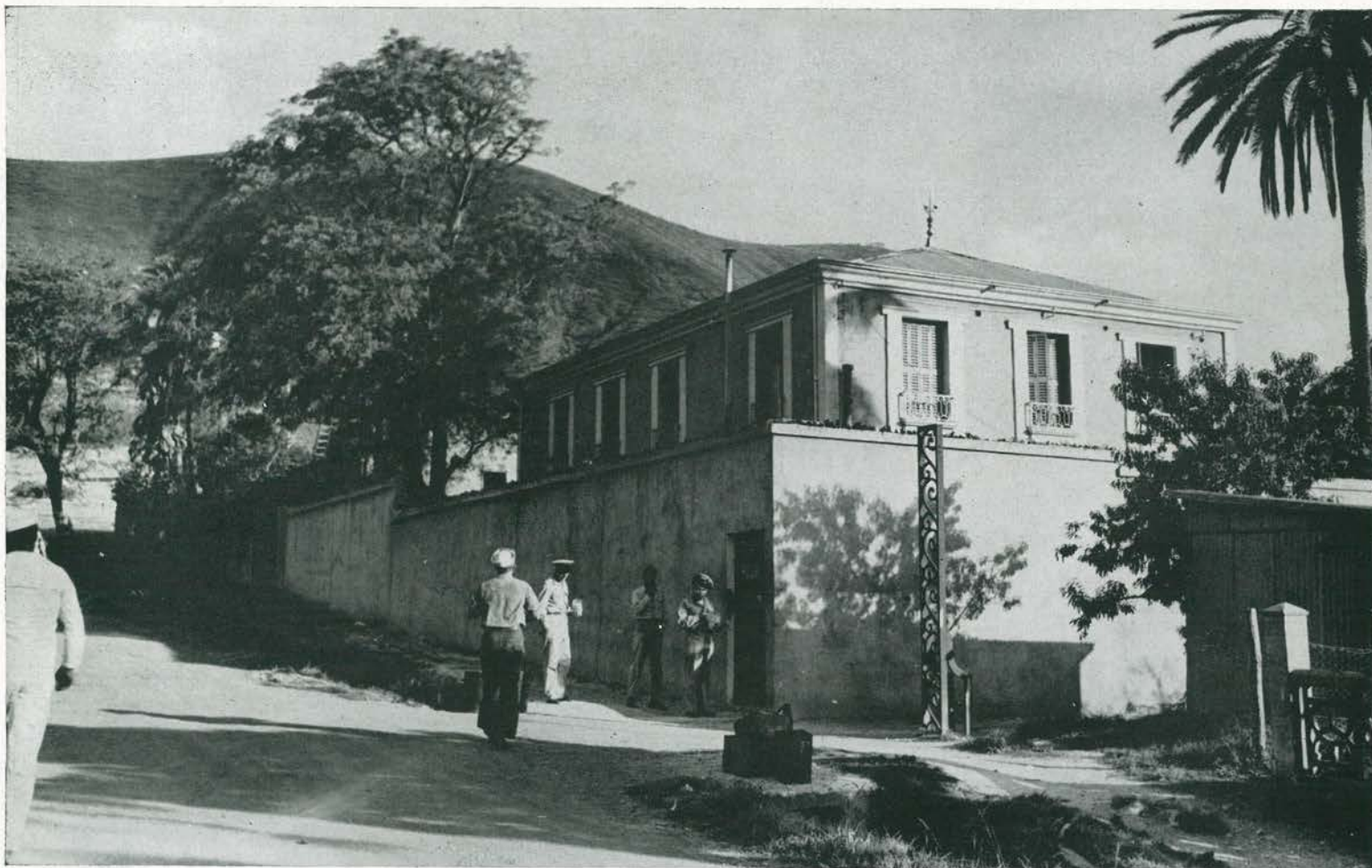
small circular bandstand. At night, GI bands frequently entertained with their renditions of American jazz and long-haired concerts. The 1944 World Series was rebroadcast from speakers set up at bandstand.



**INTERSECTION.** The enlisted man's center in Noumea, **TRADE WINDS**, presents an unusual sight with its tall picket fence and surrounding SPs. Built by the 87th, it was favorite meeting place for all servicemen in town. This was only spot in the sprawling city where hamburgers and

beer were sold at Stateside prices. Camera picks up two Kanakas crossing intersection (left center). Spires of landmark St. Joseph's Cathedral can just be seen beyond trees. Noumea's main streets were wide and spacious.





LOVE IS WHERE YOU BUY IT. All armed forces stationed in the South Pacific area sooner or later made the acquaintance of the widely-heralded "Pink House." This industrious institution was sponsored by the French government to serve as a buffer between its feminine population and the

female-hungry GIs lately returned from forward areas. The line starts early as evidenced by the above group of veteran Treasury Seabees, who are waiting at the gate. It is only 0700!



HUNTING GROUNDS. Hotel du Pacifique was the focal center of all officers in New Caledonia. Here they found amusement and entertainment comparable to the best Stateside quality. Frequent dances held here were attended by Red Cross workers and service nurses, thus assuring the

"Gold Braid" of an ample supply of dancing partners. Transient officers were also housed here. Passing enlisted personnel were kept at a safe distance by a horde of GI cops. This hotel was leased by the U. S.





**THE HANGOUT.** One of Noumea's many shabby side streets harbored a favorite 87th rendezvous, the justly famed CHICAGO BAR. Hardly an ideal name for a South Pacific saloon, it nevertheless prospered mightily. Owned by a Frenchman named M. Etienne Boulanger, the proprietor's

knowledge of English was strictly limited to such expressive phrases as "OK," "50c" or "SP." It seemed everyone in Noumea—from dignified French civil administrators to colorful Kanaka laborers—rode bicycles as shown in this typical street scene.



**MUSIC HATH ITS CHARMS.** French owners of Noumea's dinky little cinemas howled to high heaven when Island Command attempted to exhibit GI movies at the 87th-built Community Theatre, which was intended for servicemen, as well as the local populace. The movie magnates won and

only one show was screened. Instead, the huge affair was only used on Sundays and holidays. A Navy band plays as mixed audience sits and stands despite ample seating arrangements. Native children watch cameraman.





**WELCOME RESPITE.** Visiting servicemen on liberty in Noumea often found momentary relief from the sun's boiling rays by strolling along under canopy-covered sidewalks such as this. Walks were often protected by high blinds (upper left)—permanent property fixtures.



**LIBERATOR.** One of several impressive monuments in Noumea's spacious public park is this one of the great French liberator, Admiral Olry. Two Free French soldiers of the New Caledonia Territorial Forces pose beside statue. Joe (right) was an eager subject.



**MARKET DAY.** American servicemen rubbed shoulders with many types of people in Noumea while walking down the sidewalks of the French capital. Chinese, Javanese, Kanakas and French—all jumbled together in the great South Pacific melting pot—attempted to sell their wares to Allied visitors.

Here, a sidewalk vendor (Javanese) has his display of cheap trinkets. However, in case of a shady deal, his cart has wheels and the dealer can usually vanish before irate authorities can apprehend him.





SENTINEL. St. Joseph's Cathedral (right background) looms like some medieval sentinel over this intriguing street corner scene in ever-colorful Noumea. Here, the camera has picked up a typical mixture of GIs, civilians and service cops (extreme left). Noumea was crawling with cocky

SPs and MPs, most of whom patrolled in pairs for obvious reasons. Most stores were built like barns with roofs but no ceilings. Many were vacant due to lack of merchandise. Javanese women (left) always excited interest.



"SOME OF EVERYTHING, ALWAYS" is literal translation of horizontal sign and one visit usually converted shoppers into "believers." Some American products were still available as jumbled RINSO boxes (right show window) prove to French Marine passing in shorts. Scarcest merchan-

dise was that manufactured in prostrate France and the little that was left was retailed at exorbitant prices. Noumea stores had one amazing (to Americans) thing in common—no merchant bothered about window displays. Latticework overhanging canopy is characteristic.





MAID OF ORLEANS. Native boy points out statue of Joan of Arc to an attentive audience composed of Bernie Kruger, Jack Jones and Russ Even-son. The memorial to France's national heroine is located in St. Joseph's Cathedral courtyard. Painted a bright aluminum color and kept well pol-

ished, this dazzling figure is visible for many blocks. Sightseeing in Noumea entailed considerable hill-climbing and, combined with the usual bright sun, provoked a prodigious thirst.

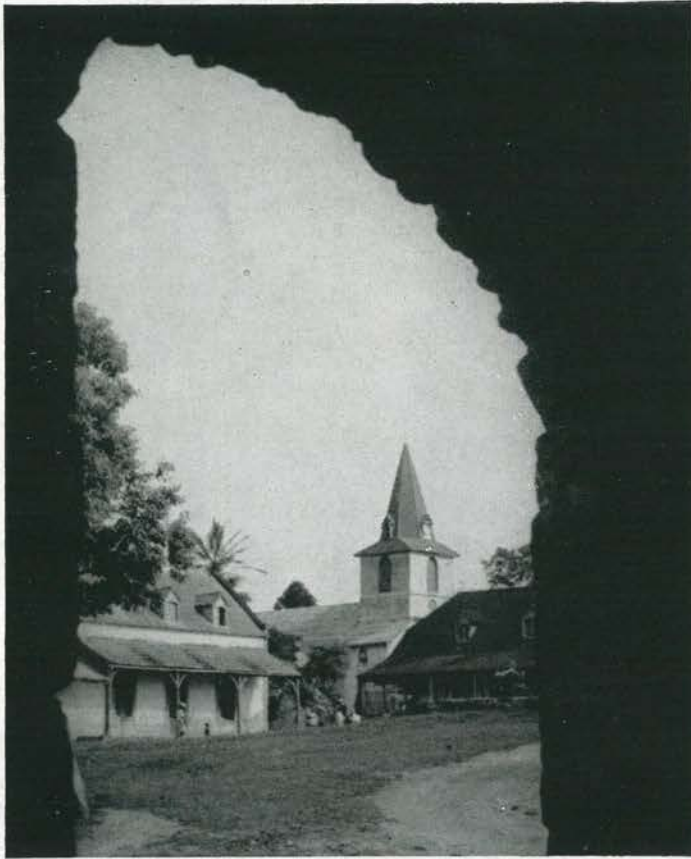


CLOSED FOR DURATION. Commonly known as the Ford car of France, Noumea automobile dealers in this low-priced, popular vehicle were forced to close up shop for lack of cars. In far off France, Renault was manufacturing tanks for the Nazis. (When his country was liberated,

Renault was rounded up as a collaborationist. Found guilty and sentenced to hang, the once-proud magnate cheated the gallows by committing suicide.) Such depressing sights were one of many eyesores along back streets.



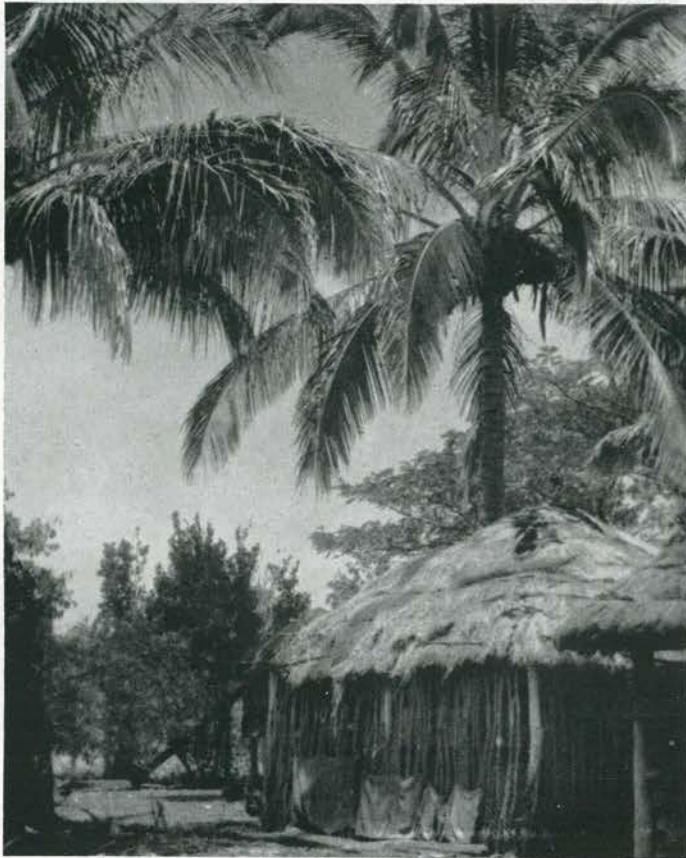
# “MEET ME IN SAINT LOUIS”



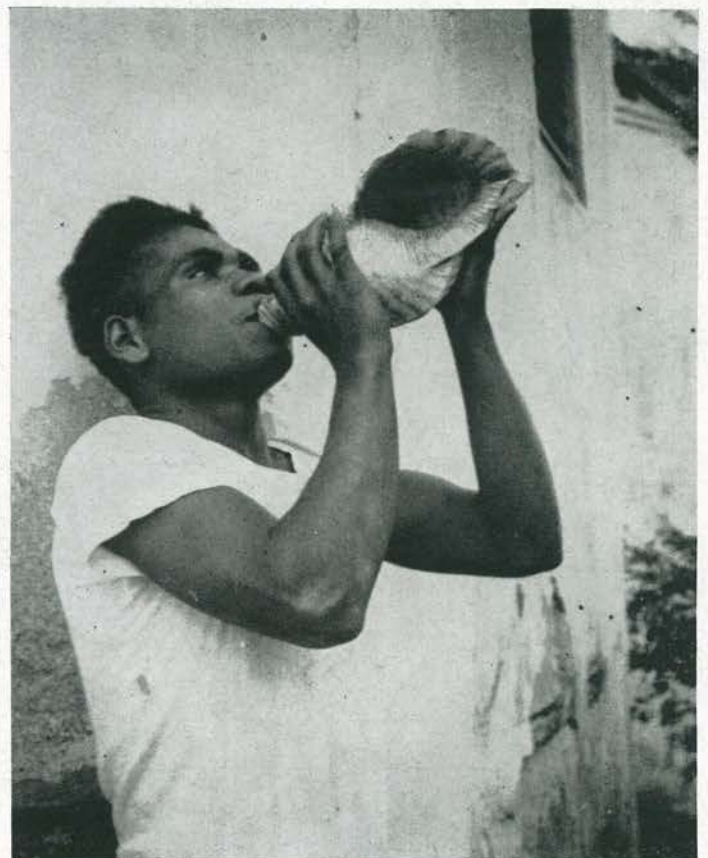
ST LOUIS MISSION, with its rich mixture of the medieval and the primitive, drew hundreds of incredulous Seabee visitors. The mission church, seen here through a massive archway, was built by native Kanakas under guidance of missionaries, who also helped.



GARDEN OF EDEN. Narrow lanes and streets winding through St. Louis village were veritable open-air greenhouses. Orchids, poinsettias, hyacinths, lilies and myriads of other flowers of all colors and fragrance spilled over the lanes in breath-taking beauty.



HOMESTEAD. Native inhabitants of the village, which was the half-way mark between Monte D'Or and Noumea, still clung to their primitive mode of living. Homes were customary thatched-roof affairs, which were shared by man, fowl and animal alike.



CHURCH CALL was a series of long, weird blasts blown on a huge conch shell by native sexton of St. Louis Mission. Barefooted natives listened with characteristic religious fervor to the French-spoken sermons delivered by aged French missionaries.





**SMILE, LADY, SMILE!** From Java (Seerabaja Province) hails this beauty working in New Caledonia under the indenture labor system. The Jap occupation of Java prevented thousands of such laborers from returning to their native country. Childless, Genah loved her cat.



**THE LOOK.** A local Kanaka, wearing the Free French Marine uniform, stands guard duty in Noumea, armed with an Australian rifle. However, New Caledonia natives serve as garrison troops instead of duties usually associated with Marines of most nations.

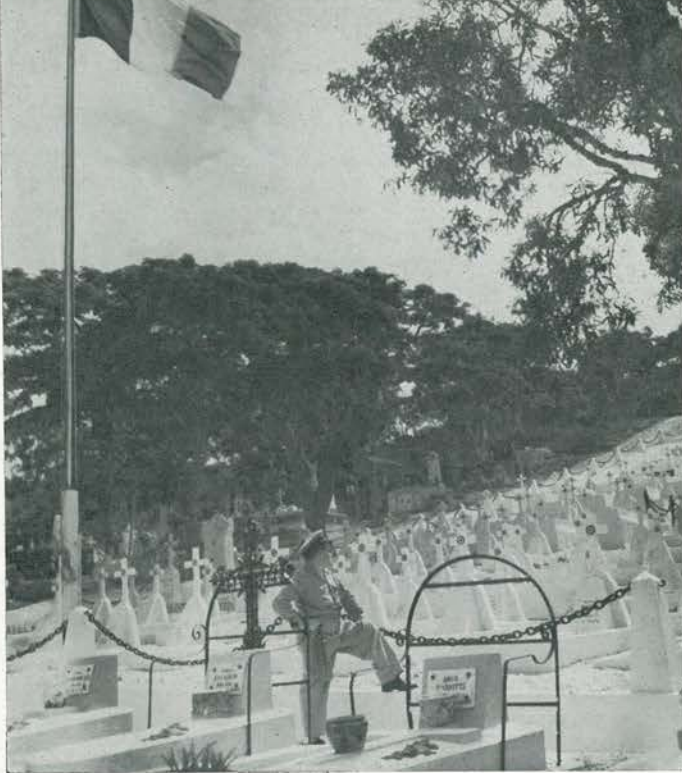


**BOY MEETS GIRL.** Dressed in summer uniform, Free French Marine poses for THE EARTHMOVER with lady of his choice. Usually a gay people, Kanakas invariably freeze up when facing camera. Lady wears typical Mother Hubbard dress. Shoes were no problem!



**MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.** Sartama radiates Ipana smile as she exhibits her daughter to Seabee guests. Originally from Batavia (Java), Sartama also signed for indentured labor. Most French families in New Caledonia had Javanese servants who worked for very low wages.





**UNDER THE TRI-COLOR.** French cemetery, near Noumea, has Javanese, Chinese, Kanakas and even Japanese buried in individual sections. Chief Carl Ruble, *EARTHMOVER* editor, surveys new French portion where memorials to Frenchmen killed in North Africa stand in gleaming rows.



**REST IN PEACE.** Each mission had its own tiny cemetery. Fancy wrought iron crosses of intricate design denote occupants of these graves were of French decent. Section was badly overgrown with weeds. The Seabees were learning the world's burial customs.



**THE SMALL WHITE CROSS.** Lying peaceful under the flag of the United States and a small white cross, hundreds of dead Americans repose in their final resting place. Casualties of the costly Solomons campaign and others who died while receiving medical attention are buried here. A mem-

ber of the 87th Battalion points out the grave of John F. Phillips, CM1c, who died on the U. S. S. NAOS as the ship lay at anchorage in Monte D'Or harbor on 10 September 1945.





**SMALL WORLD.** Here is 87th camp lay-out as seen from approximately half-way up Monte D'Or. (For contrasting view taken from summit, see frontispiece, page 149.) In both classic shots, EARTHMOVER photographer, Edmund ("Jas") Jaskulski, has used camera to great advantage in show-

ing compact camp sandwiched between ocean and mountains. Some landmarks showing are: Officers Country (left); movie area (central foreground); T Division shops and parking areas (right background); mess hall (huge quonsets, center). Other features are fairly obvious.



**RUGGED.** Looking East across huge island from the majestic heights of Monte D'Or, the ambitious climber saw an awe-inspiring panorama. An exceedingly rugged climb, it was well worth the effort, but once was usually enough. Beyond the mountains (right) was located the Army's Sixth

Replacement Depot. It was in this type of terrain that Lieut. Alexander G. Shisko, jovial 18th Regiment officer, was lost while mountain climbing. He was found dead by an 87th search party one Sunday morning.





SKY, LAND, WATER. Looking over the bay to a peninsula (left) may be seen the approximate location of the capital of New Caledonia. From atop Monte D'Or, looking north, the excellent land-locked harbors of the far-reaching peninsula are obvious. The 87th camp was located 18 miles

out of Noumea by road while across the bay it was a mere five miles. The shoreline, rugged but with sandy beaches, offered swimming and fruit to cateye hunters.



THE HARD WAY. Totally ignorant of modern methods of farming, these Javanese cultivate a rice field by use of oxen. The man in front keeps the rows straight and removes rocks that may hinder planting. The oxen are guided by the touch of the stick held by man holding the plow. The

women (extreme left) plant rice sprouts in the furrowed ground that is irrigated from nearby stream. This was a familiar scene to liberty-bound Seabees.





**COUNTRY LANE.** Typical of a native town with palm trees and green bushes lining the road is this village off the beaten track. The huts, with thatched roofs and fences always in need of repair, resemble closely the

majority of native homes on the island. The roads are usually well cared for as they are the vital link with the outer world. All in all, the life led by the natives is a peaceful one.



**A LITTLE GRASS SHACK.** A small farmyard, cluttered with chickens, hogs, trees, bananas and various types of fruit, is the essence of good living for the average Kanaka. His home, made of a clay composition with leaves for a roof, is invariably a modest structure. As virtually all cook-

ing is done outside over an open hearth, the dwelling is used primarily for sleeping. One or two openings for windows are sufficient for this simple way of life.



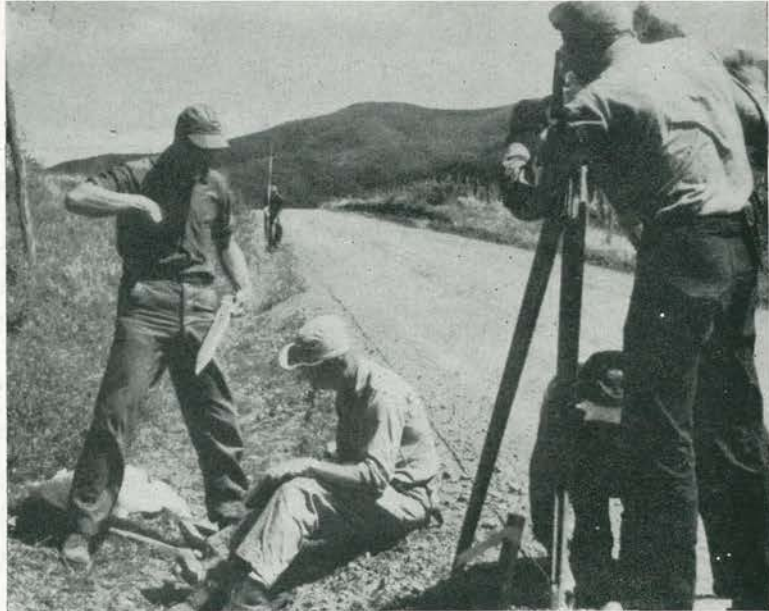
# BOURAIL







**COVERED WAGON.** A hardy lot, 87th surveyors pause only for chow before shoving off again on Bourail road job. Here, Jim Moore checks final data as Robert Smithgall, Charlie Johnson, Byron Chronic and J. R. Olivares wait in engineering caravan.



**ON LOCATION.** With eight projects in progress simultaneously, the battalion's two survey crews had more than their hands full in keeping a jump ahead of the hustling construction gangs. M. O. Brenn reads transit data off to Chief Paul Sowers (seated).



**TOPOGRAPHER.** Jean Worley of Lincoln, Nebraska, pores over his plane table to plot the topography of one of the multiple bridge sites and culverts, which were built along 13-mile stretch. Worley sports typical cap worn by most Seabees overseas.



**HEAVE HO!** Miles of fence had to be reset by hand to make room for the road widening. Chief Al Broomfield (right) directs a straight line for the post-hole diggers, who are (left to right): Listenberger, Perlak and Ahlf.



**FILLING TO GRADE.** Bawled out by both surveyors and operators, 87th grade foremen led a harried life. One exception, however, was Gushion Bolt (left) who "stood his grade" against worse gripers. Ralph Carter is at right.



**CAFETERIA.** Noon chow, served on the job, was usually a combination box-lunch and K-rations. Boiling-hot lamb stew (with a sprinkle of sand) was a favorite dish, even with midday temperature of 110 degrees, in outdoor cafeteria.





**LITTLE BURMA ROAD.** Snaking over exceedingly treacherous mountain passes, the original road above Bourail was actually no more than a narrow 15-foot wagon trail. Earth, cut away from the bordering red-dirt bluffs, was dumped over edge on opposite side

where it was eventually graded, rolled, etc. Existing narrow culverts were braced and extended to a width of 75 feet in many cases. Three trucks await turn to be loaded as one is under bucket and another drives off.

## EARTHMOVERS REGAIN STRIDE ON ILL-FATED BOURAIL JOB

Instead of the long anticipated relaxation in a rear area, the 87th was assigned various "must" projects almost immediately upon returning to New Caledonia. The "rush" never let up until the battalion embarked for Saipan some four months later.

The assignment involving the most men (300) was the repairing of a tortuous, one-lane road leading over the mountains north of Bourail.

A tent camp was erected in the hills where the climate was blistering during midday and breath was transformed into vapor at night. This camp was located 133 miles north of Monte D'Or.

Lieut. Ray F. Pape, OinC at Bourail, further enhanced his enormous prestige with the men by promptly establishing a six-day work week with liberty every night and Sunday.

The liberty trucks either drove to Bourail or to distant places like Haïeloue where the wine was generally bad, the liquor vile and the sociable females predominately black.

Whenever possible, men drove off to pre-arranged dinners at nearby farms. Deer were plentiful in the mountains and frequent hunting parties kept the camp well supplied with venison.

Bourail maintained communications with Monte D'Or by truck. Making the 266-mile round-trip every other day, this service transported personnel, spare parts, mail, laundry, ship's store stock, etc.

The road-repair work branched into road-broadening. Bulldozers tore into the mountainside. A gravel-hopper was built, concrete culverts were poured and box culverts were fashioned of stout beams.

A long relocation was cut across a deep, muddy valley, eliminating miles of treacherous, winding, mountain road. Pilings were driven across the lazy Wahoo River and many trailer-loads of heavy timber were bolted into place. Soon, the natives had a heavy-duty bridge alongside their horse-walk.

Work crews absorbed brutal treatment, bouncing and vibrating the 42 kilometers to the job every morning over a wagon highway whose heavy, red dust seemed to settle only on passengers.

The engineers swore no place on Earth had been surveyed so often for so many reasons. One day, as expected, the project collapsed and everyone returned to Monte D'Or to await the Saipan move. No one seemed to know why it folded—or why it was ever begun! Nor was it ever learned what happened to the "rest period!"



**SPLASH.** Final gravel-topping for completed stretches of new road was scooped out of handy stream bottoms with the dragline. Splash resulting from this operation was fodder for visiting picture book cameraman. Semi-tropical tree adds class to shot.





**FACE LIFTING.** The big Northwest shovel was kept busy tearing out huge chunks of the mountainside, which bordered the road project. Transporting the above monster and other heavy equipment the 133 miles between Monte D'Or and the Bourail location presented a major traffic problem.

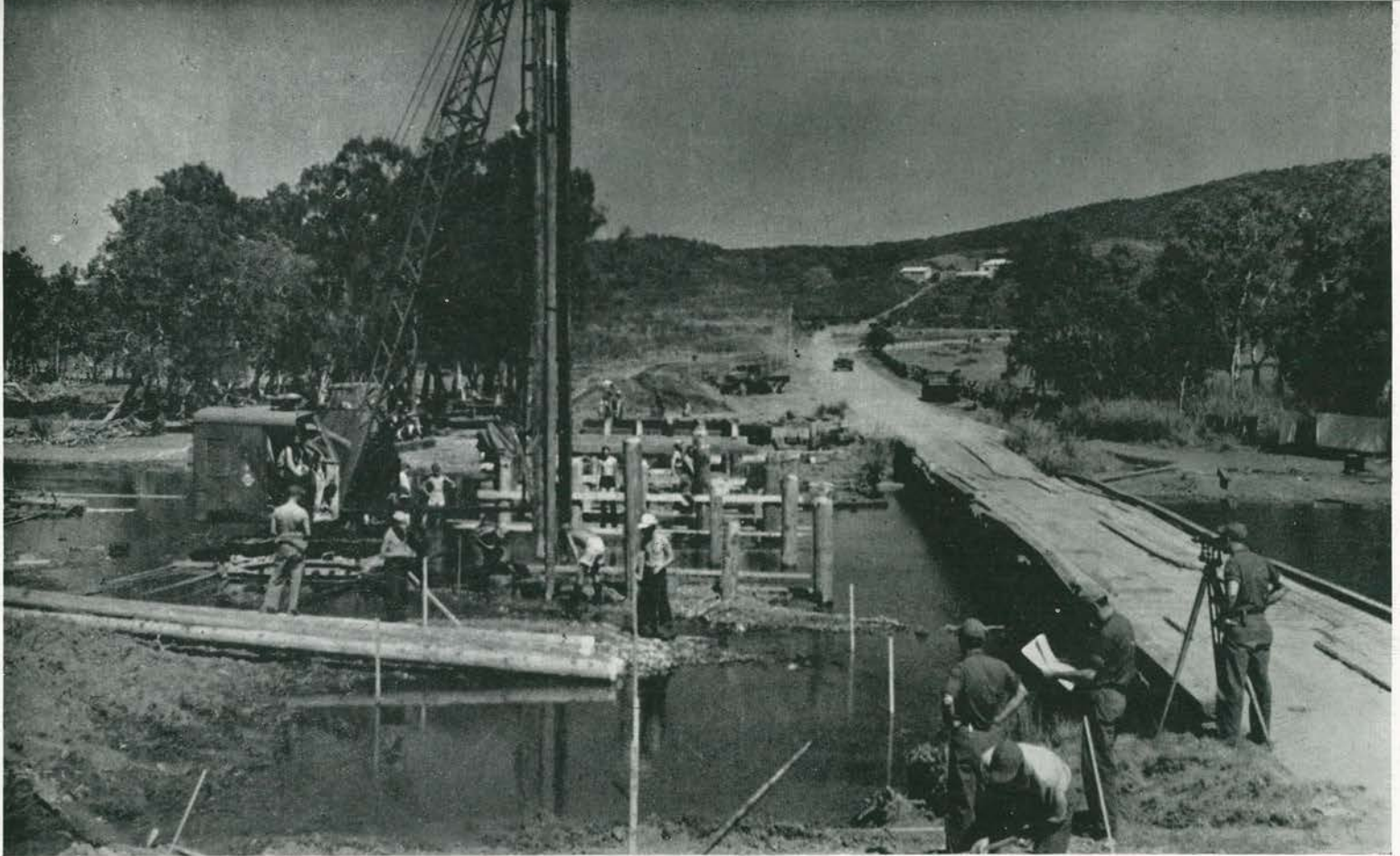
Finally, a LST was pressed into service and the rolling stock was shipped to Point Nepui above Poya. Again, the prickly Bourail chestnut was pulled out of the fire, but Lieut. Pape's troubles were just beginning.



**THE HIGH ROAD.** The mountains extended thousands of feet above and below the Bourail road. In many locations, these one-way roads were the only connecting link between villages separated by miles of towering slopes and deep gorges. In spite of these dangerous conditions, accidents on the

job were astonishingly few. The chief gripe of the truckdrivers and machine operators was the choking red dust, which meant wearing dust-masks and goggles at all times.





**BRIDGE SITE.** The old road site led over numerous narrow, rickety bridges, which threatened to collapse at virtually every crossing. Although most streams were shallow, they quickly overflowed during periodic flash-floods. New bridges, constructed of heavy timbers and set solidly on stout piles,

were built. Here, pile-drivers are shown at work while surveyors (right) set more piles. These pilings were usually driven into the earth an average 15 or 20 feet. Most men worked in shorts and boots.



**SKELETON CROSSING.** Largest bridge of the project was the one across Frenchman's Creek in the long valley between Poya and Point Nepui. Utilizing a total of 55 piles, this sturdy bridge was 110 feet in length and 22 feet in width. Heavy 16x16 stringers (tying in the piles) were, in turn,

capped by 10x16 beams. This basic structure was covered by heavy planking for the bridge deck. At left, a 'dozer is performing a different task.





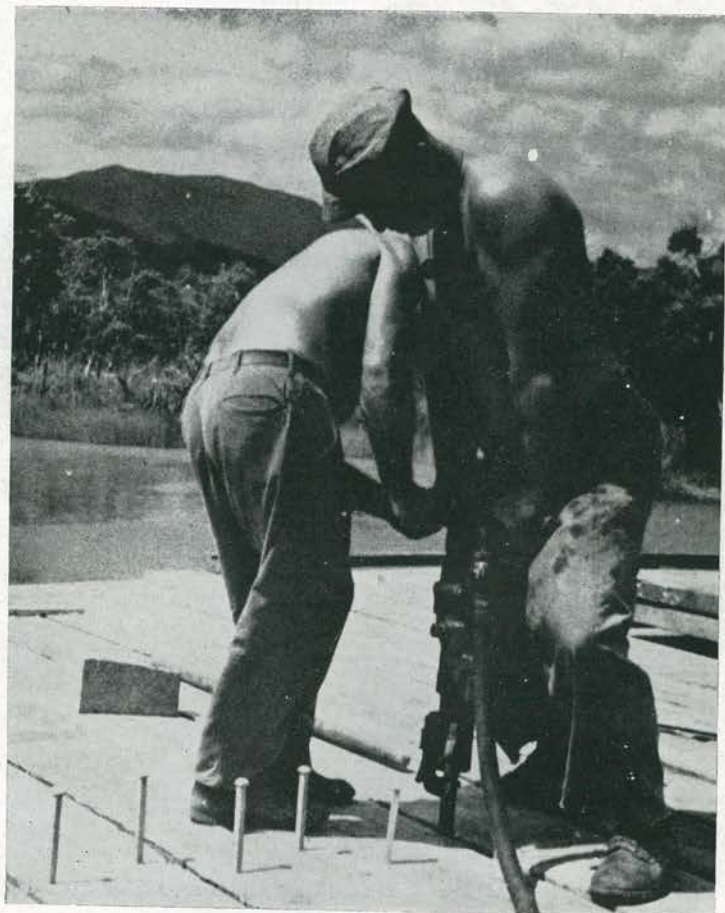
**BULLGANG.** Roughest and toughest crew on Bourail job was Chief Frank Rychlak's "devil-may-care" bullgang. These huskies threw trailer-loads of heavy timbers around with ease of lumberjacks. Above: Eddie Breitenbach, Leo LeBlanc and Phil Mungiole.



**MILES OF PILES.** Battalion pile-driver assembly more than earned its keep. Shuttling from one bridge to another, the Northwest "25" rig, with its 2,000-pound hammer, kept ramming the long piles into the earth until last day of construction.



**SHOEMAKER.** Frequent solid-rock ledges in river beds presented formidable obstacles to pile-driver. Only after pointed shoes of steel plates were fashioned together and attached to the leading end could piles be driven home. Tom Clements is welding.



**TIE HER DOWN RIGHT THERE!** An almost miraculous time-saver was the air-hammer, which practically eliminated the back-breaking sledge hammer and an extra crew. Here, the Jones boys add their combined weight and brawn to vibrating spike-driver.





**SIX O'CLOCK SIGHT PICTURE.** Sloshing in rivers and muddy streams, the 87th pile-driving crew was soaked to the skin from morning to night. Paced by big "Spook" Elliott (left), the gang included: Warner, Hewitt, Hoback and Rooney.



**SMOOTHIES.** Final touch to the bridge was smoothing off rough, uneven planking and rounding off end approaches. Here, men revert to use of time-honored adze, which in hands of such men as Gordon, Lingle and others, gets results.



**GOLDEN SPIKE?** Four lanes of heavy top tread were eventually added to save wear and tear on the main decking of bridge. Chief Bill Inness, Lieut. Ray Pape and F. K. Jones observe as J. C. Jones drives a final row of spikes.



**BIG BOSS.** Directing head of the sizeable Bourail project, which actually included lots more than a tough road assignment, was cigar-chewing Lieut. Pape. Charged with overall welfare of 300 men, Lieut. "Crusty" never faltered.



**BLUE MONDAY.** Every day was wash-day for the old French couple and their two attractive daughters near the bridge job. This frugal family had given up working the land in favor of the more lucrative hand-laundry business for Seabees.



**BRIDGE BUILDERS.** Most of the credit for construction of seven fine bridges on tough Bourail job must go to Chief Inness and the 18 stalwarts of his hustling carpenter crew. Here, the entire gang knocks off for a group portrait.





**MACHINE AGE.** In order to speed the distribution of mixed concrete, a mixing plant was centrally erected in the primary construction area. A clamshell rig was set up next to it. With this convenient arrangement, the aggregate was scraped directly into large, wooden hopper from

where it slid down a gravity-flow chute into the mixer. Operated by only five men, this arrangement saved many hours of back-breaking labor. It also turned out four yards of concrete per hour.



**DRUMMERS.** Oil drums (with ends out) were spliced together in long double rows and set on concrete foundations for culverts. Carpenters, like Ray Pursley's crew, then built forms around drums for other three sides. Others shown: Nelson, Stuchlik and Straz.



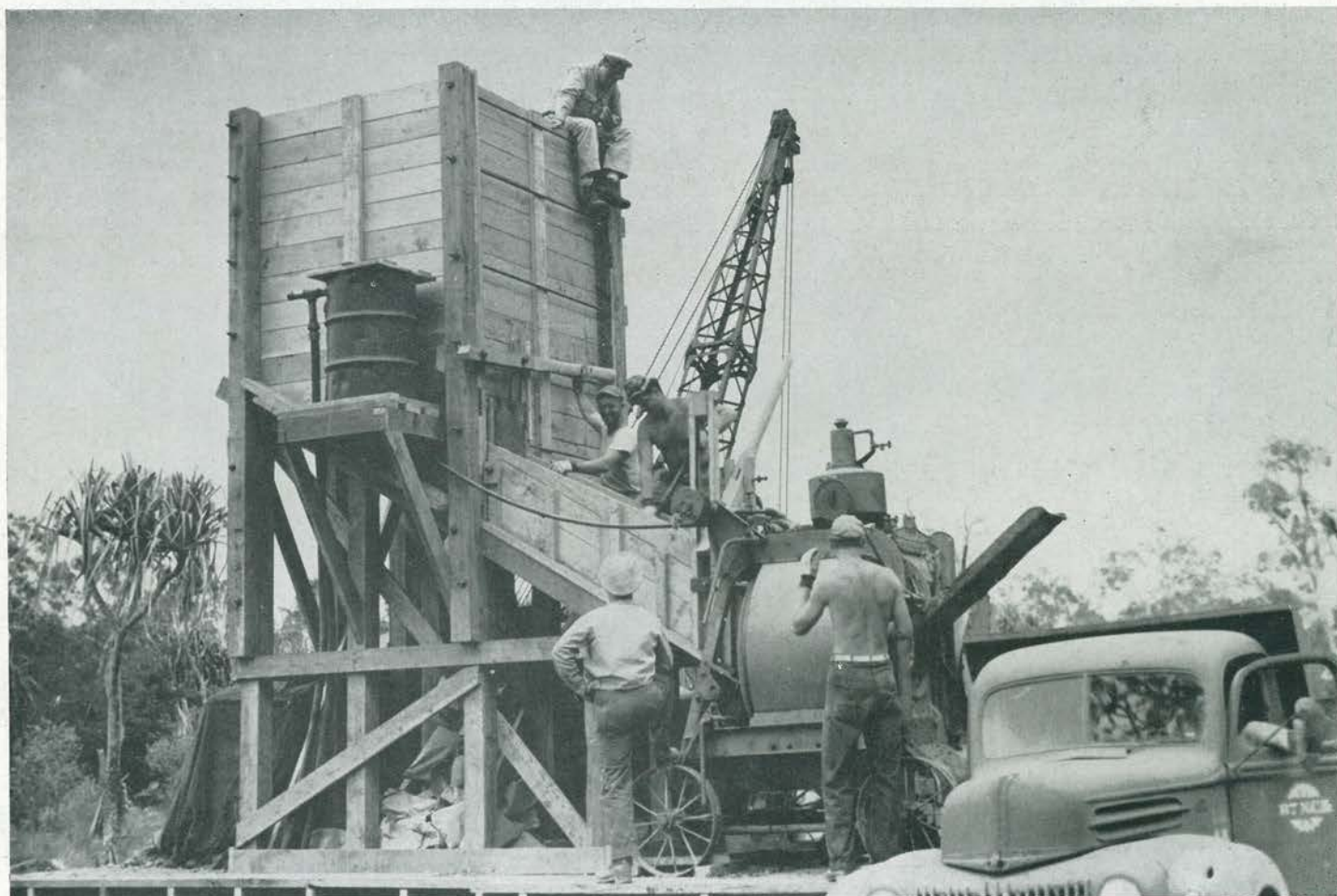
**OVER THE TOP!** Once the concrete had sufficiently hardened, wooden forms were stripped off and the indispensable bulldozers bladed tons of earth over the drains to bring spot to road level. Grady Thompson (at controls) shows how it's done.





**POURING THE MUD.** Once the oil-drums were fashioned together and the supporting forms built, mixed concrete was driven up in trucks whose beds had been somewhat redesigned and poured through a rear chute. Mike Kocian and Raymond LaRue (right) stand back from wildly splashing

concrets, which is controlled by Joe Bentley in the driver's seat. Trucks hauling the soupy concrete made many quick trips to central mixing plant until forms were full. (Mate in undershirt is not identified.)



**TOP MAN.** In almost every possible way, the indefatigable Lieut. Pape was top man on the road job. With the alacrity and daring of a trapeze artist, he could be found in the most precarious positions at any hour. Here, The Man looks down from top of gravel hopper as men operate

mixing chute. With plenty of liberty and minimum restrictions, the men worked well. Mere insinuation that "goldbricks" would be returned to hidebound Monte D'Or kept all hands turning-to.



# BOURAIL CAMP LIFE APPEALED TO PAPE'S MEN

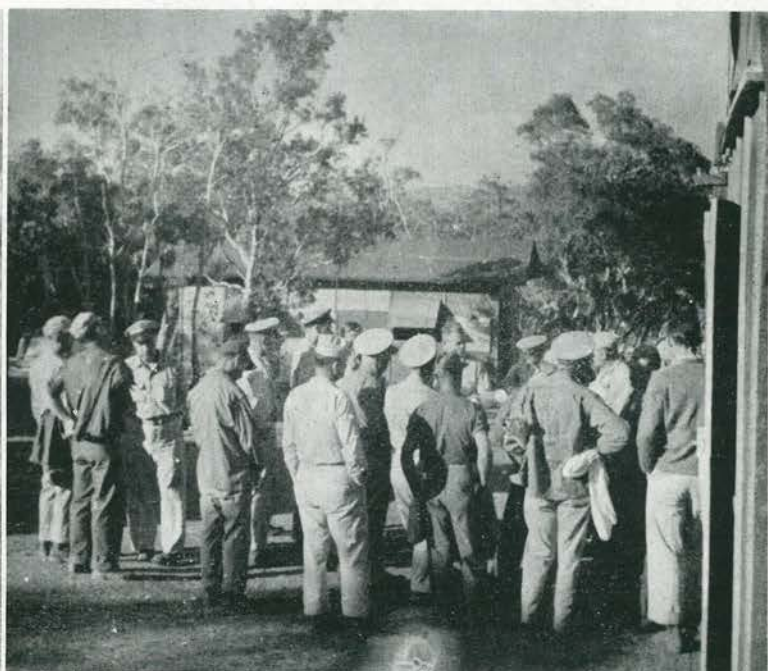


**MAIN STREET.** The Niaouli-shaded main street in the road camp housed all administrative and service units in one compact area. On the one side, the tents included: Sick Bay, Post Office, Operations, Ship's Store, Drafting and the ever-popular chow hall. Across the street was Officers Country.

The men lived in nearby areas, conveniently located to "Main Street." Here, at Bourail, the mates enjoyed a freedom of movement and action rarely, if ever, found in a military camp.



**DEERSLAYERS.** Fresh meat was assured by quick-triggered hunting parties. Many groups roamed the abundant hills during off hours. One successful group was that shown above: Chief Al Broomfield, Jimmy Beachler, Charles Ahlf, Virgil Kaeshoeffer and Bill Listenberger.



**HUDDLE.** An important part of the daily work routine was the morning pep talk to crew chiefs by Lieut. Pape. Here, the past day's work was reviewed and orders given for the new day's construction program. Attendance was mandatory—and without fail!





A SUNDAY OFF frequently meant a trip across the mountainous island to small town of Hailoue. Above, pausing for a glimpse of the breathtaking beauty, are: Fields, Smithgall, Barker, Jim Moore, Buonora, Brenn, Ackerman, Olivaries, Johnson, Worley and DeRyke.



INSIDE VIEW. Roadside attractions were not restricted to scenic beauty alone. Other items of interest included unusual specimen of vegetation, multi-colored bird life and a periodic canvas structure which attracted many a connoisseur's closest scrutiny.



SOLITUDE. Most farm buildings in Northern New Caledonia are picturesque, primitive structures. Usually nestled near thick groves of coconut palms, each group presents a scene of unparalleled beauty. Natives claim palms are best protection against winds.



"KIDS IS KIDS!", one native mother told an 87th Seabee in broken English. Wearing cast-off GI clothing, the numerous Bourail children play games in much the same manner as kids in the States or on Banika or on Mono. Kids make it "One World."



INSIDE CURVE. In sharp contrast to modern road and bridge construction methods of Seabees were the primitive, hand-made efforts of the native French. Lack of equipment and proper materials, coupled with different ideas, resulted in this curved curiosity.

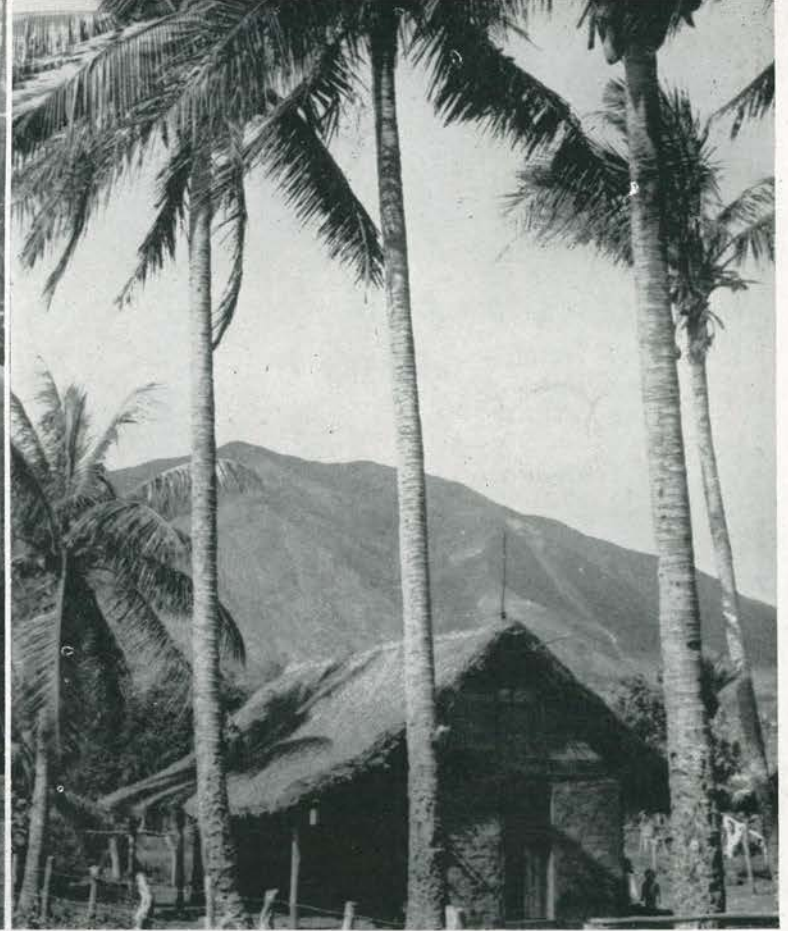


HOME, SWEET HOME. Besides providing an adequate shelter against the rain, straw-thatched roofs of native huts were a haven for rats, snakes and insects. Walls were mixture of clay and earth, but kept the temperature inside quite comfortable.





**SPLASH ONE!** It was back to Nature for the mates in Bourail's thickly-wooded hills. Frequented by both officers and men, this type of outdoor recreation appealed to all hands alike. These men are swimming during lunch hour.



**THE SIMPLE LIFE.** Nestled in the shadow of lofty mountains, well-kept native huts and fertile farms provided the 87th's city-bred element with an appealing glimpse of a truly idyllic existence. Palms had now become the Pacific trade mark.

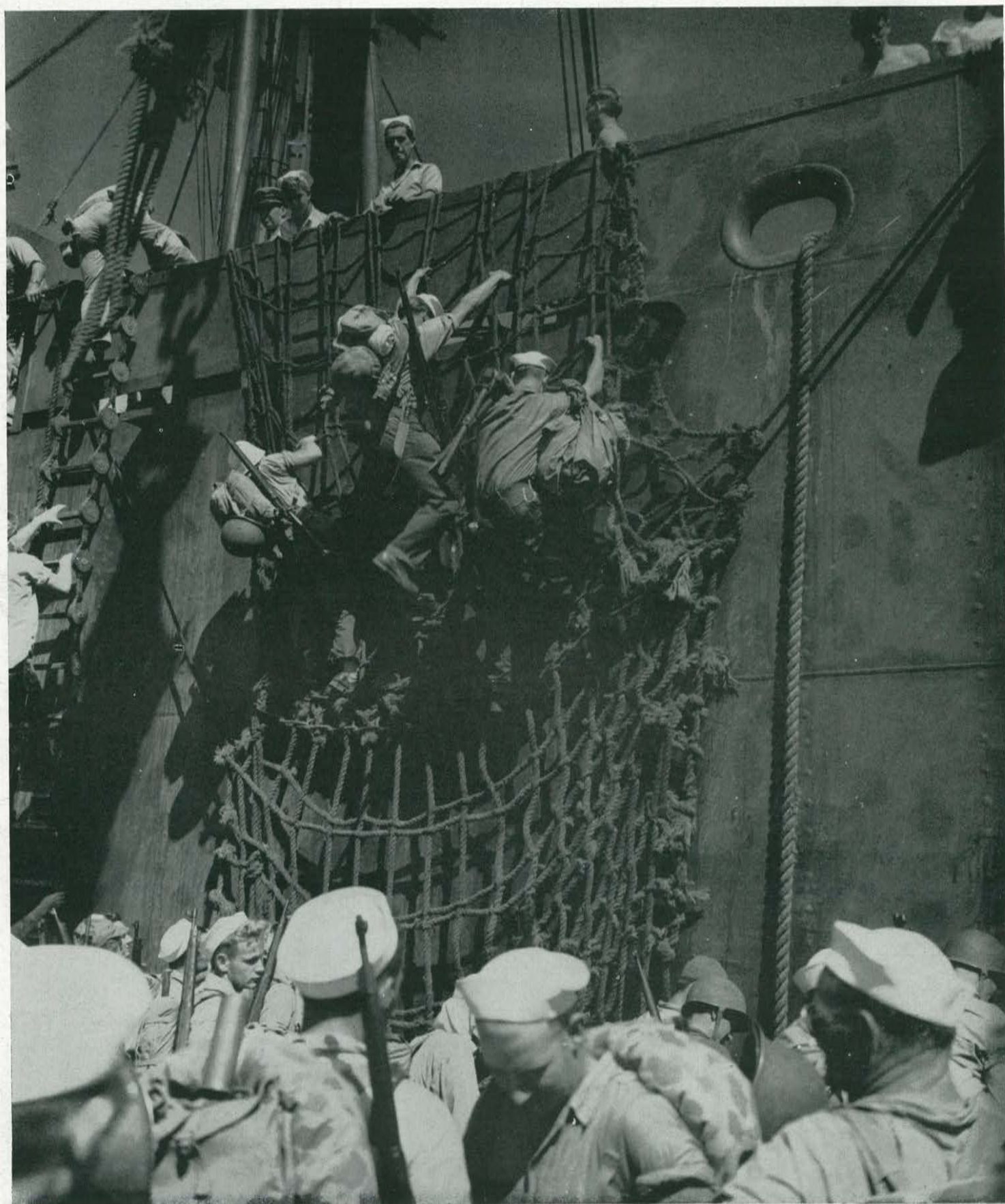


**THE LONG VALLEY.** The 87th's principal construction project was the re-location of the road leading into the low, flat valley bordering the ocean near Point Nepui. Covered with knee-deep grass and thousands of stubby pines, this four-mile stretch of pasture land absorbed the full

impact of the Earthmovers' last blow for liberty on New Caledonia. Suddenly and without advance notice, the Pape contingent was ordered back to Monte D'Or to pack for the move to Saipan.



**U. S. S. R O T A n I n**



**N E W C A L E D O N I A T O S A I P A N**





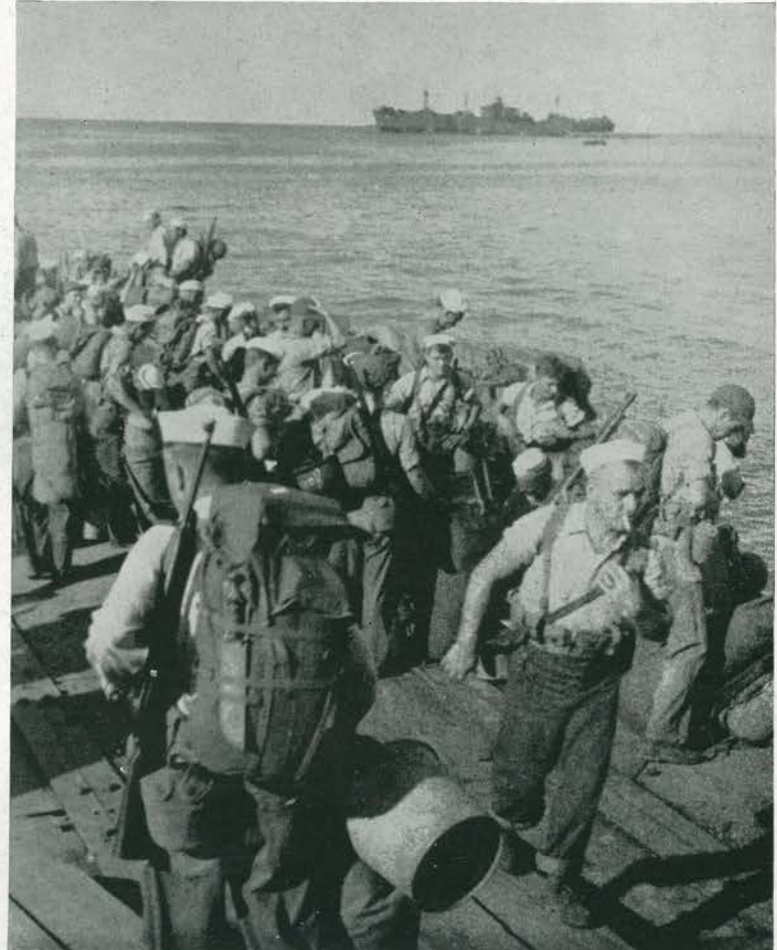
**SAIPAN BOUND!** After more than 17 months overseas, mates have learned each move brings the usual portion of "hurry up and wait." Jim McLaughlin (foreground) realizes that "standing by" is easier sitting down. This was 31 January 1945.



**AWAITING TRANSPORTATION!** The tables are turned on most of the 87th's Transportation Division boys as they wait for trucks to move them dockside. Lieut. Ben Markette, division officer, checks those present against muster list.



**UP YOU GO!** Last minute rush and scramble for truck space, tireless chatter about nothing in particular and the noisy hustle in climbing aboard vehicles are all in marked contrast to the listless monotony of just standing by.



T. S. Long before the Saipan move, some men had decided they had absorbed an abundance of forward area duty for one war. Quietly, these individuals had sought Station Force in Noumea. A few succeeded; the others were on this barge!



**EPISODE.** The men watch listlessly as the last barge eases along the ROTANIN's starboard side. Ralph Pontow (left foreground, hands on hips) readies himself for his famed "swan dive." (The barge suddenly reversed—Pontow didn't!)



**THE SEABEE WAY.** John Barker and Ed Shaffer board the ROTANIN in typical Seabee fashion as Chief Ted Marienthal mutters encouragement to others in midst of rigorous ascension. The practical Seabees never learned why this was necessary.