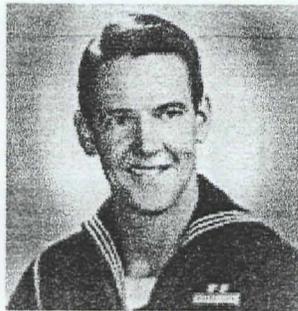


World War II Honoree



World War II Veteran



Benjamin Clifton Barbee, Jr.

BRANCH OF SERVICE
U.S. Navy

HOMETOWN
Wilson, NC

HONORED BY
**Lawrence S. Edwards,
Son-in-law**



ACTIVITY DURING WWII

SERVED IN THE U.S. NAVY WITH THE 20TH AND 130TH BATTALION SEABEES AND WAS ATTACHED TO THE 2ND MARINE DIVISION DURING THE INVASION OF OKINAWA.

This is a summary of my dad's service to our country with the U.S. Navy during World War II:

Benjamin Clifton Barbee Jr. "Ben"
Active Duty from 7-28-42 to 1-12-46
Branch: US Navy "Seabees"
Rank: Carpenter's Mate Second Class
Medals: Asiatic-Pacific & Star
American Area
Victory – WWII
Good Conduct

Timeline:

7-28-42 Enlisted Raleigh NC. U.S. Navy 20th Construction Battalion
Basic Training: Norfolk Va.
Advanced Training: Bainbridge Md., Camp Peary, Va. and San Diego, Calif.

10-6-42 San Francisco to New Caledonia
Arrived New Caledonia 10-18-42
Left New Caledonia 5-13-43
Arrived Townsville, Australia 5-20-43
Left Australia 7-20-43 to return to San Francisco.

Joined the 130th U.S. Navy Construction Battalion C Company which was commissioned 10-23-43.
Training at the Naval Construction Training Schools at Camp Endicott and Camp Thomas, Davisville, Rhode Island.
2-23-44 boarded the USS Frederic Funston.
3-2-44 passed through the Panama Canal.
3-16-44 arrived Oahu, Ewa Marine Air Station, Hawaii.
1-18-45 boarded the USS President Johnson which was attacked and sunk by the Japanese in the New Hebrides three days after dad got off the ship.
1-22-45 crossed the International Dateline.
1-28-45 arrived at Eniwetok, Marshall Islands.
2-6-45 arrived at Saipan, Marianas Islands.
3-45 trained with the 2nd Marine Division on the shores of Tinian.
4-1-45 and 4-2-45 with the 2nd Marine Division invasion of Okinawa.
Returned to the China Sea.

4-12-45 landed on the west coast of Okinawa and established base between Yontan and Kadena airfields.

11-27-45 boarded the light cruiser USS Biloxi and returned to San Francisco.

Honorably Discharged 1-12-46.

Attached is an overview of activities of the U.S. Navy 130th Construction Battalion and the 2nd Marine Division. Refer to page 18. Dad was one of the three hundred twenty sailors from the 130th transferred to the 2nd Marine Division for the invasion of Okinawa.

Respectfully submitted to the Wilson County Public Library by his son,
Benjamin Clifton Barbee III.

Men in Motion

- The 130th Naval Construction Battalion was formed in Camp Peary, Virginia, trained in Davisville, Rhode Island, Pearl Harbor, T. H., Saipan (Mariannas), and participated in the invasion of Okinawa. This is the story of that battalion.

You will be taken around to every department to see details of organization and accomplishments during the war years. Mainly through photography, and partly through narration, you will be made aware of the things each department did of which they are most proud. Put a thousand men together for over two years of war and they are certain to come up with stories worth telling.

Before you become immersed in the details, however, there are some facts that you should know.

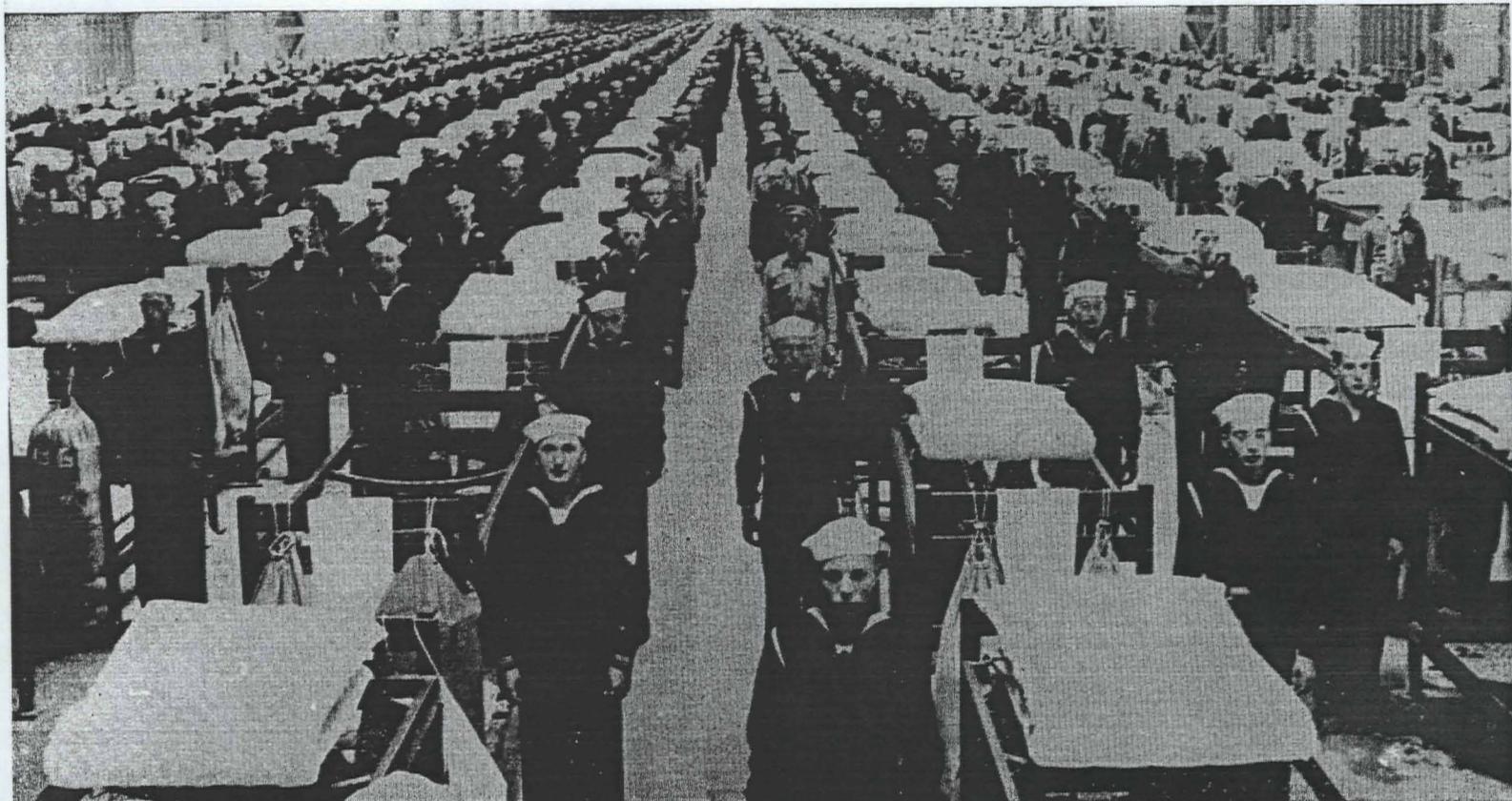
The United States Naval Construction Battalions were born in World War II. The 130th Naval Construction Battalion was part of the Navy Department's plan to build, to repair, and to defend innumerable bleak coral atolls in the vast liquid desert which is the Pacific Ocean.

- The Rising Sun had thrown its bloody light on one Pacific Island after another until by July, 1942 the Japanese Empire described a great circle bounded by New Guinea, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Kwajalein, Wake, and Attu.

The defense of lost American bases within that great

circle had sometimes fallen partly upon civilian workers sent from the States to improve our stations. When the Japs hit Wake Island, for example, thousands of defenseless American construction men were captured. It was unfair to expose untrained, unarmed, civilian workers to modern warfare, and it was hardly good military strategy. Had the construction men at Wake and other Pacific atolls been trained to build and to defend, to repair and to rebuild, under conditions of savage combat, the island-snatching Jap would not have spread so quickly over the Pacific. Naval Construction Battalions were formed to meet this situation. December, 1941, the same month which was scarred with the Pearl Harbor attack, witnessed the birth of the first Naval Construction Battalion. During the following months, the program accelerated until almost 300,000 Seabees were trained to live and to build under fire. The same American genius for organization, which sent ships and planes off assembly lines in an avalanche of mass production, took construction men trained for peace, regimented and trained them for war. By the summer of 1943, battalions were coming off the Camp Peary assembly line at the rate of one every day and a half. At the height of this fertility, the 130th was born on 9 September, 1943.

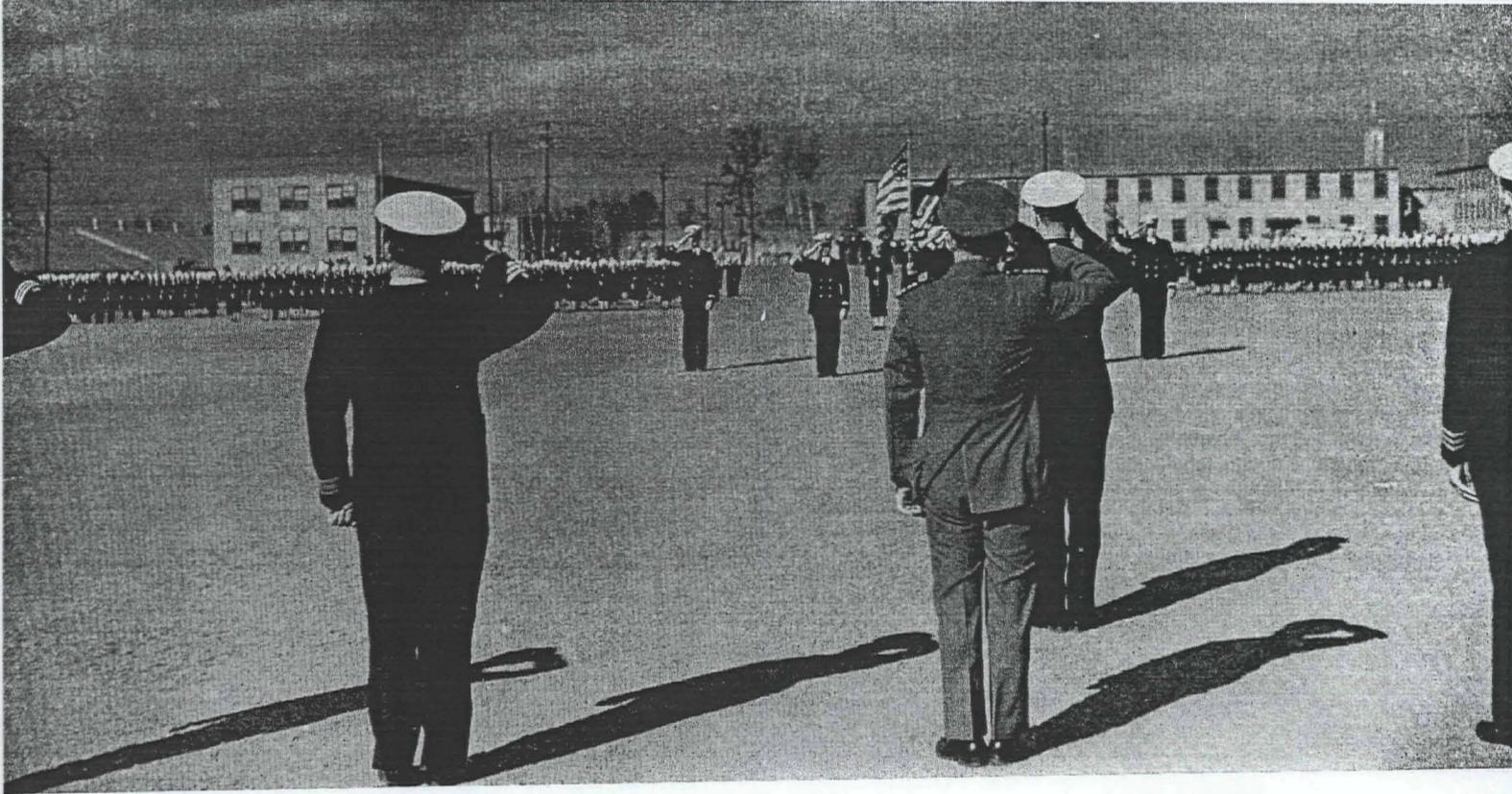
- Most of the eleven hundred men in this giant drill hall at Camp Peary, Virginia, were very confused when



this picture was taken. Most of us had had but four frustrated weeks of boot training in which to make the transition from civilian to military. Fifteen of us were under eighteen years of age, but sixty-two were over thirty-eight, and our average age was twenty-seven years. Besides this, more than half of us were married; with but few exceptions we struggled through to a more or less suitable adjustment. We started our trek from homes in large cities, from farms, from every conceivable walk of life. We were insurance men, grocers, welders, merchants, accountants, architects, bakers, butchers, brick masons, mailmen, machinists, dining car stewards, teachers, salesmen. We came from the sparsely settled regions of the west, from the north and from the south, and more than one-third of us were from the metropolitan areas of Illinois,

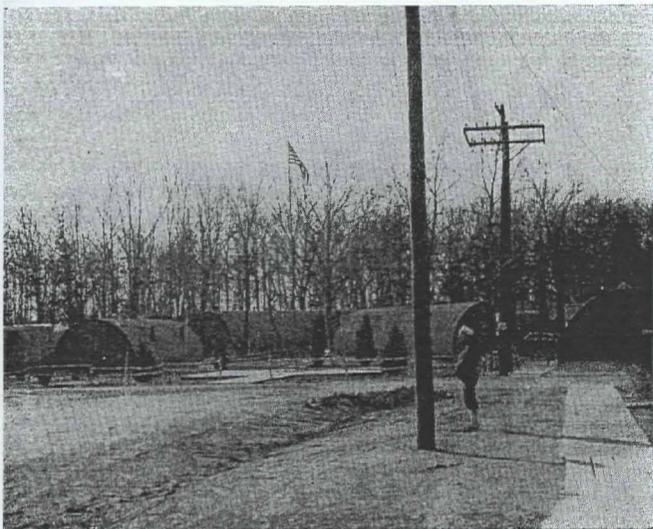
New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.

Four days after gathering in that giant drill hall, the 130th entrained on 1910-model coaches for Davisville Rhode Island, where there was set in motion a training program in diesels, refrigeration, demolition, motor mechanics, sanitation, mosquito control, first aid, jungle warfare, and range firing. Instruction was received in automatic weapons and anti-aircraft; the men who later manned guns aboard vessels on which we sailed to war were taken to Newport and naval outposts around Narragansett for practice with 40mm. defense guns. One of the most valuable schools in the program concerned earth moving, where men were trained in the operation and maintenance of carryalls, cranes, shovels, bulldozers, hoes, clamshells, ditch-diggers, patrol graders, and other heavy machines.



Four weeks of intensive training completed, all hands went on a ten-day leave, the last visit home, for the majority, before shipping overseas. The picture above was taken on 23 October, 1943, three days after we returned from this leave. On this day the battalion was put through its commissioning exercises.

- From the naval construction training schools at Camp



Endicott, Davisville, battalions went on to advanced training at one of three main points: Camp Lejeune, Gulfport, Miss., Camp Parks, near San Francisco, Calif., or across the fence to Camp Thomas, Davisville. We crossed the fence.

Camp Thomas was designed to create the environment of an overseas base. The camp was bleak; the quonset huts were cold; primitive pot-bellied stoves were the only source of heat. Even after the serving line was enclosed, food lost heat, became cold and unappetizing before it could be devoured.

But Davisville was unique among training camps; you could escape to the arms of surrounding Rhode Island hospitality. Lord knows they should have been as tired of servicemen as were other American communities, but this piece of New England seemed to like us. The feeling was sufficiently mutual that when over-

night liberties became difficult we contrived special ways and means. Some Chiefs were not averse to selling forged green chits to help overcome the liberty problem.

At Camp Thomas the battalion continued some

several trips were made to Sun Valley, a five-mile hike from Camp Thomas.

- Besides the range firing, there were problems of storming and holding vacated cowbarns, extended order drill, our first taste of K-Ration, and scuttlebutt.



classes begun at Endicott and went into pontoon structures which pioneered formations that later facilitated unloading operations at Normandy in June, 1944. Rhino-ferris, pontoon structures, transported across the English Channel eighty per cent of all supplies landed on the Normandy beaches during the first twenty-four hot hours of the invasion. These rhino-ferris were manned by Seabees. Along with pontoon experiments, military training became a series of hikes, night problems, and operation of new weapons. During the early fall,

Scuttlebutt was always with us, but as weeks passed and the training program palled, and the battalion went into public works, flashes came from every stool. We were shipping to Europe; it was Bermuda; we were permanent station force. The men with wives in Providence or East Greenwich grasped the latter straw to their hearts with hooks of steel. Men preparing for a foreign war went on liberty with new appreciation for Stateside peace. A four weeks visit lengthened to four months, each month colder than the last.



Except for one man who brought his girl from Illinois to be married in our Chapel on Christmas Day, few of us remembered for long that Christmas in a drear, military setting. The extravagant party in Camp Thomas' theater was strained yuletide gaiety, bravely hiding the hankering for Christmas of more dependable years.

Every time we passed through these gates we hoped that next Christmas would be different. Mostly, we avoided the Christmas theme.

When the genuine scoop on shipping out came, we were on maneuvers at Sun Valley, learning security on the march the hard way, in twelve inches of snow. Building shipping crates became a major project. While men hammered, they wondered how many liberties were left, and the liberty became more desperate.

When we marched into Endicott to the stirring music of our military band, people turned to look at us. An outfit ready to ship. Actually, we were not ready at all, not to turn our backs irrevocably upon home. We were not ready when restriction was clamped down in the midst of Endicott's Winter Carnival. Only one man got to Providence legally after that; he went to increase his stake in the life we were leaving by a quick wedding and four-hour honeymoon.

With the Chaplain's prayer drifting somewhere around the fringe of our minds, a Red Cross doughnut resting its lead in our stomachs, body all aching and racked with pain under full packs, and a number on our helmet, we boarded the USS Frederick Funston in a four-hour column. On the pier a band blared, then swung, while three girls jitterbugged. We waved and cheered as the

Funston pulled away. Little Rhodie faded in the mist.

The short-lived enthusiasm for a new experience was drowned off Cape Hatteras, drowned in vomit, when 2/3 of passengers and crew puked their seasickness over ladders, passageways, and decks. It was a brave stomach that stayed afloat in the turbulent Cape. The calm Carribean returned our balance, but compart-

imagination provided. Jerked away next day, no one allowed ashore.

From the ship's speaker system, the captain called his crew to alert attention as we slipped quietly into the Pacific. "We are now entering Japan's back yard." Drills were conducted daily for all hands; abandon ship, fire, and boat drills. One alert, "Submarine con-



ments, below the water line, became stifling, and the only liquid to slake your thirst was water sickened with paint from the inside of the tank; showers were rationed salt water.

Through the Indies and into the Canal, staring at Balboa and Panama City through glasses handed around, hungry for the parts of the sight which your

tacted off port side," was the Sonar system's reaction to a mass of fish.

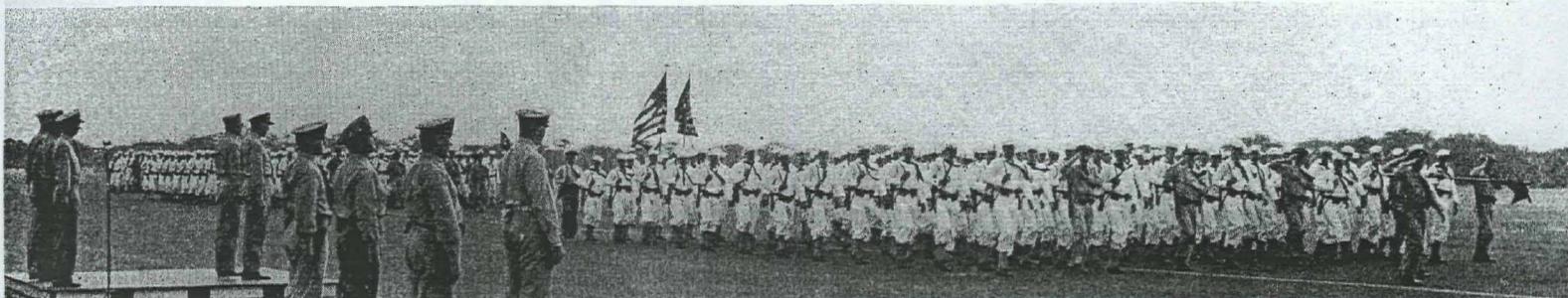
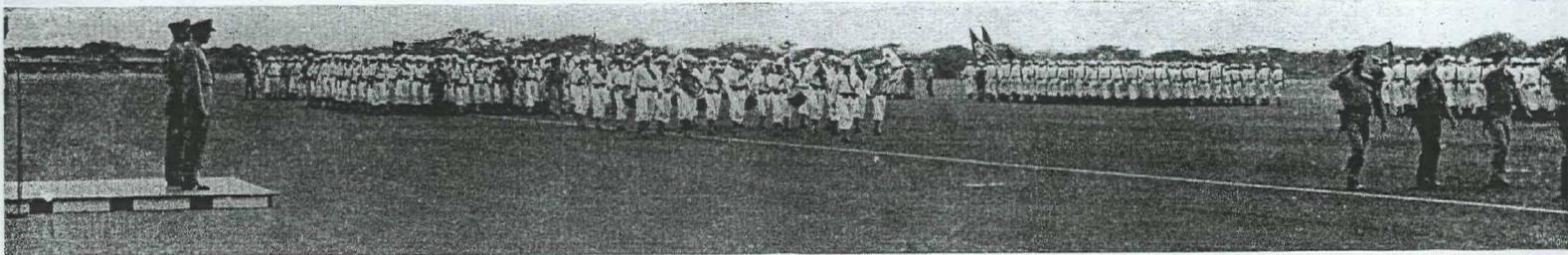
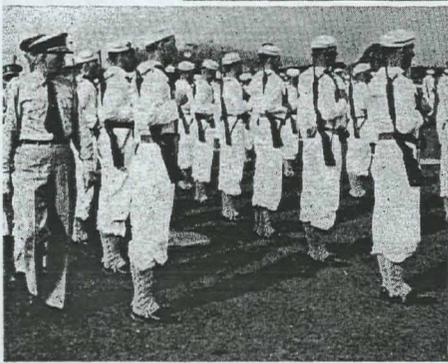
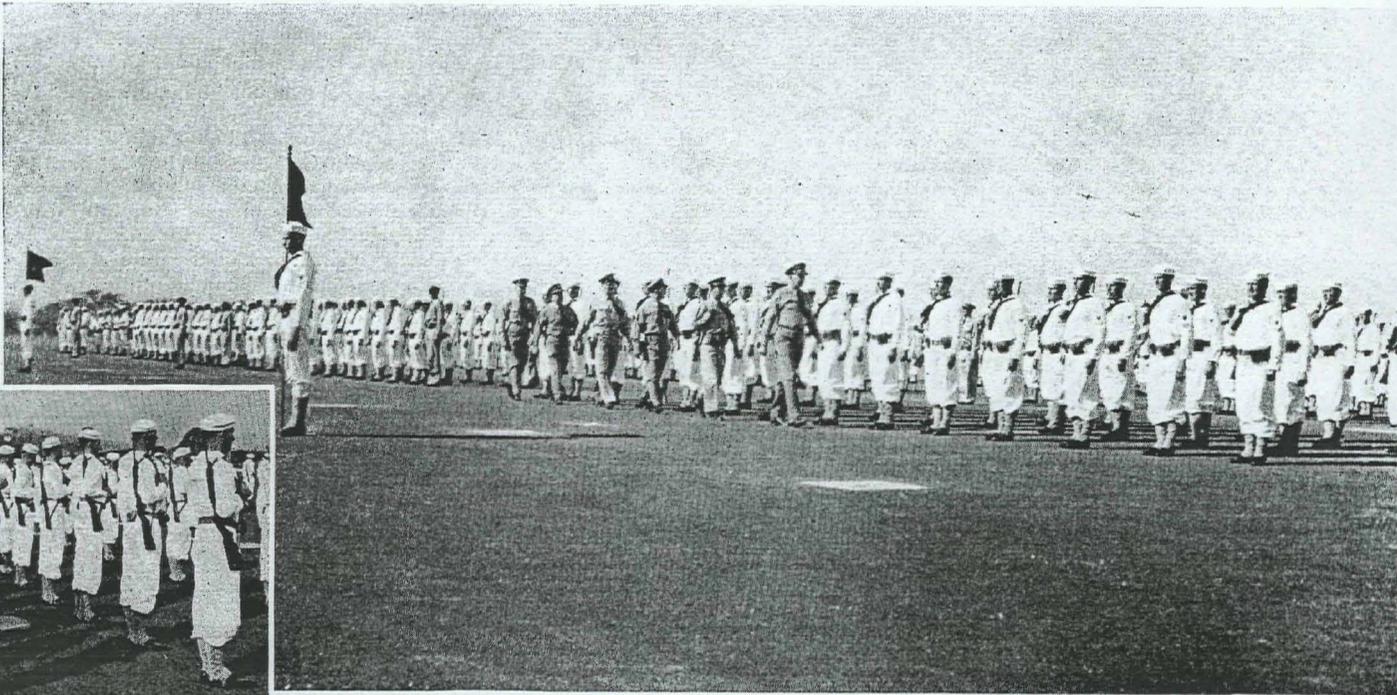
Twenty-three cramped, monotonous days of stale stanches, boredom, and food unfit for a dog. Words cannot convey the joy which the sight of Diamond Head released in us.

• Worming our way ashore and onto waiting trucks,

half of us went to Ewa to begin the squeeze play which ousted the tired 10th Battalion a few months later; the other half of us crawled under pieces of canvas or lumber in the rain of Waiawa Gulch. The halves joined in three weeks. In the meantime, work commenced on the Marine Corps Air Station, Ewa, a two-and-a-half million dollar construction program.

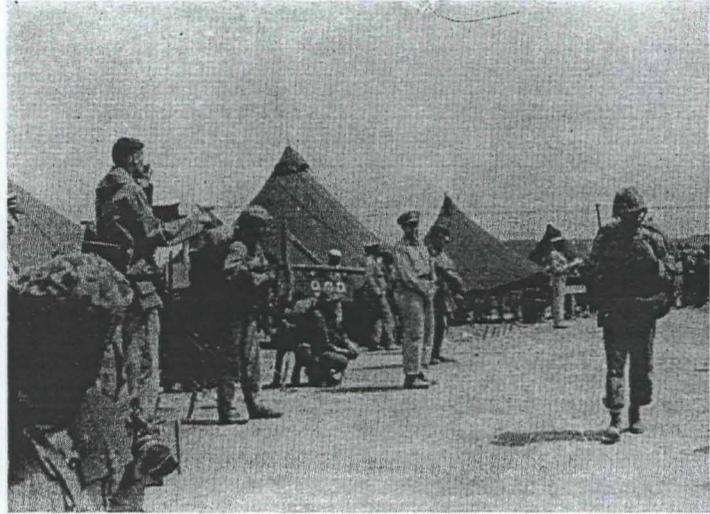
As a long assignment, Hawaii had its difficulties. Too far from the States to go home, even if your mother

was dying, too far from Pacific action to find an obvious relation between our work and the war, it became necessary for top-side to issue a statement clarifying that 'relationship. Not many of us were content to spend our stretch in the service doing post-war construction, not, at any rate, thousands of miles from home where the ratio of men to women, including kanakes, nurses, and WACs, was around 500 to one, and the officers had that one. Fact is, when we left the



States, women became a memory for nearly all except the gold braid. A few casualties from Honolulu's social life were hauled in for company and anniversary dances at the Ewa school auditorium, but not many men got their dates into bomb shelters on the moonlit lawn. Morale was a lot of little things, and in most of them we were frustrated. War was mainly waiting, wondering where we came in. But there is an end to even sixteen months of boredom, inactivity, waiting, and post-war work. The reviews illustrate the beginning of a new deal.

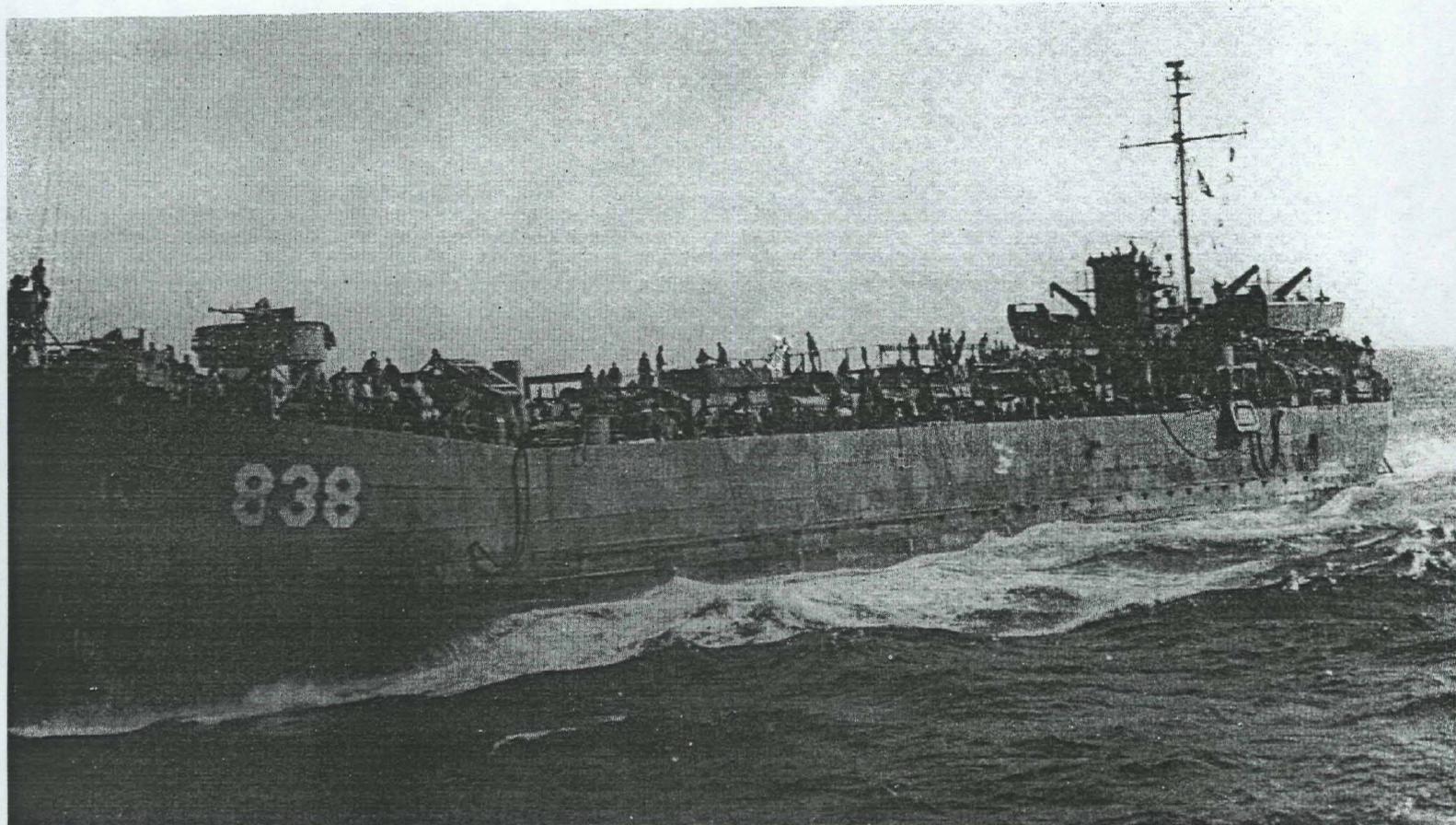
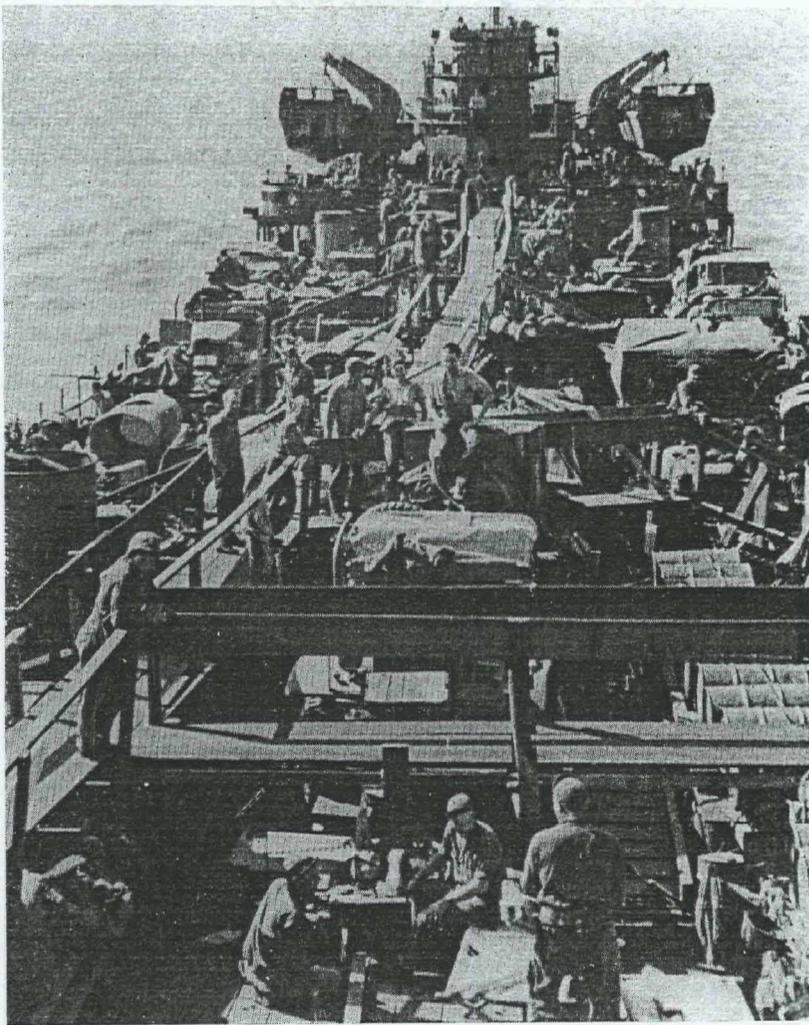
- Our role in World War II did not begin until we arrived in Saipan to join the Second Marine Division for the invasion of Okinawa. Finally, after five warm, dusty weeks, and a squalid Christmas at Iroquois Point, we shipped to Saipan in two advance echelons aboard the freighters, USS Alexander and USS Japara, and the main body aboard the old luxury liner of the twenties, USS President Johnson. Other branches of the service were aboard, more specifically over a hundred Army nurses, segregated, as usual, to regions above the promenade decks with over a hundred male officers luckwise confined. It was a field trip in democracy. Some of us Congress had declared gentlemen; from others Congress had withheld that privilege, and a nurse's love, giddy or sedate, panted in the balance. On Saipan in mid-January, 1945, six months A.M. (after the Marines), Japs still hid in the hills, dumped mortar shells into a crowded Seabee movie across Mt. Topacho from our camp. We dug our first fox-holes, filled them



with empty beer cans, for bombings were infrequent and uneventful for us, although the advance echelon had been shaved by shrapnel from a bombed gas tank.

Saipan meant two months more waiting, watching giant B-29s take off loaded for Tokyo, and standing quizzically upon Suicide Cliff trying to imagine Jap women leaving off combing their hair to wade, child in hand, to meet an indoctrinated death in the surf.

- While the docks of Tanapag Harbor commenced piling up with supplies to equip the Second Marine Division for an amphibious operation, we began to catch up with the war. The ten months on Oahu had been ten months of peace-time construction; eight more months had slipped by in training, traveling, and waiting. Now, eighteen months old, the battalion became a community in a new sense. Looming ahead were common dangers drawing the attention of a thousand men into common preparations: shots for bubonic plague, cholera, and typhus; lectures on climate, animal life, snakes, pests, and diseases; clothing impregnated with DDT; gas masks and ordnance gear handled



with new affection; final lectures on mines, mortars, sanitation, and water purification, all heard with new ears.

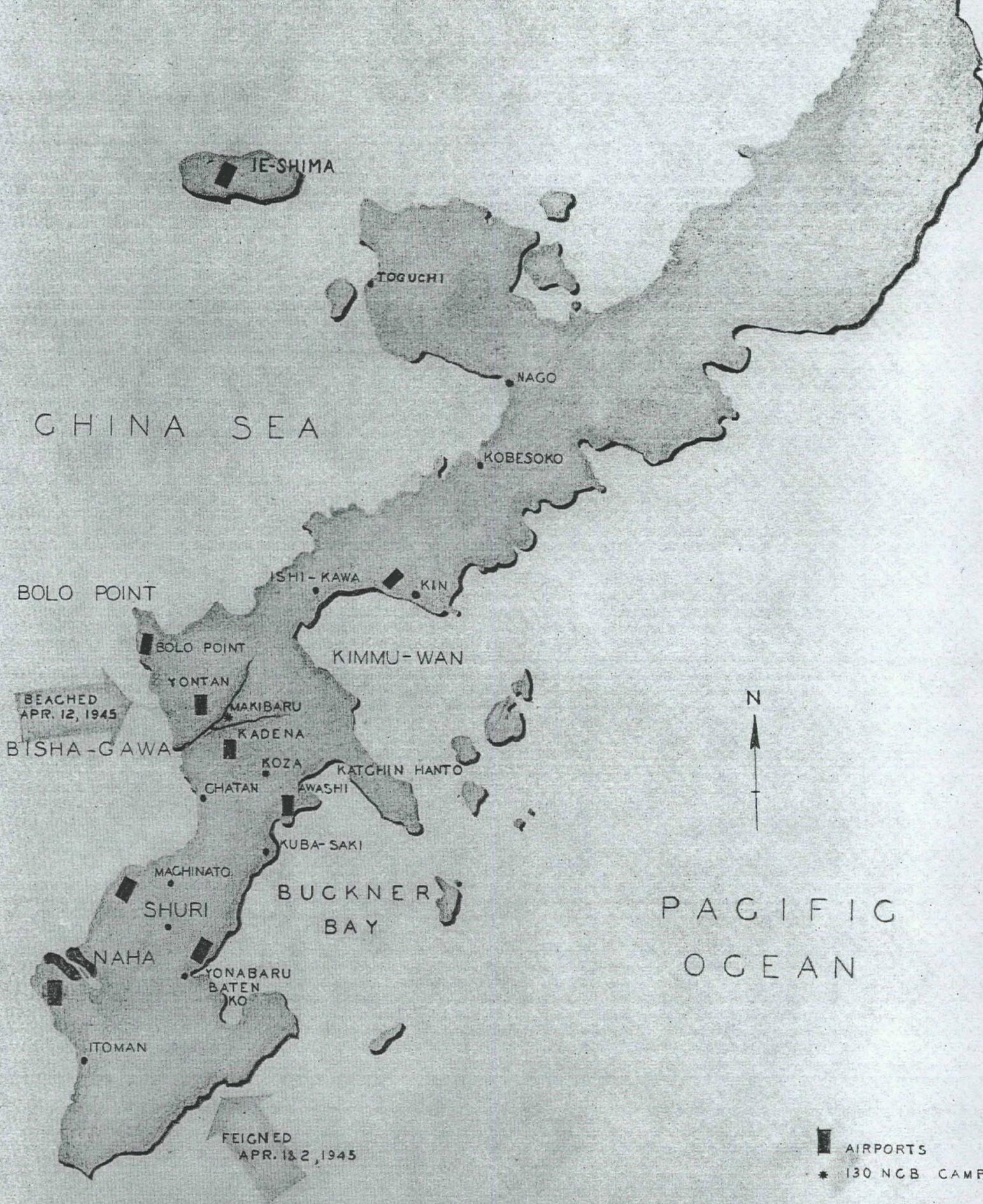
It was no secret that we were on the threshold of action, the largest amphibious operation yet attempted on Japan's doorstep. A general court-martial threatened the man who revealed our destination, but the secret was poorly kept. Every private and seaman on Saipan told you that it was Okinawa on April 1, and everyone knew that it would be the first time that land-based Jap planes might give the enemy his first definite air superiority against an American invasion. "Tokyo Rose" punctuated her nightly broadcast with promises of death for the foolhardy Americans whom she, too, knew would attack Okinawa on Easter morning. And while many of us envisioned vicious bombings and strafings, some of us knew the finger of panic tapping on our heart. Men talked about the last letter home, some were certain that their number was up, but gear in excess of marching pack was carefully stored, just in case they did survive.

We sent 320 of our musclemen with Marines aboard transports to perform as shore party teams on Okinawa beaches. Other small details went with Marine combat troops to work on sanitation and mosquito control, and 115 men were left behind as custodians of excess gear. The remainder of men and equipment, about six hundred of us, were loaded aboard two LSTs.

- We had tons of equipment aboard, but everyone had his mind on the fifty tons of explosives, high test gaso-

line, TNT, and ammunition. During the four day dress rehearsal off the beaches of Tinian, with the entire Second Division and supporting convoy, we had our first brush with disaster. The fear of sailors on night watch in convoy, the fear of collision, became a reality. The convoy lane had become jammed, and the five hundred yard interval between ships narrowed, became impossible to maintain. Watches, fore and aft, called out, "Three hundred yards," "Two hundred yards aft," "One hundred yards aft," and finally the stern ship leaped at us out of the night. There was a crunching thud; lights went out; gas fumes filled the air; everyone jumped or was hurled from his bunk. Narrowly missing the watch on duty in the aft port gun tub, the bow of the offending ship struck and careened along our port beam, buckling the rail and ramming one of our LCVPs. Men asleep on that port deck narrowly escaped death. Two dogs acquired at Saipan barked furiously. But morning light revealed only a few buckled plates and railing, a damaged small boat, and laughter. We laughed with relief against a background of fifty tons of dynamite, ammunition, and high octane gas.

We returned to Saipan, took on and sent the last mail, procured a new LCVP, and in Palm Sunday dawn, 25 March, we hit for the target. We had moved dozens of times in the past eighteen months, had mobility down to a science, but this was our first big league game. While the 320 men in shore party teams quarreled with gyrenes over food and six-hour relays in a 3-in-1 sack aboard the transports, life on the LSTs was comfor-



CHINA SEA

PACIFIC OCEAN

BOLO POINT

BEACHED
APR. 12, 1945

BISHA-GAWA

FEIGNED
APR. 1 & 2, 1945

IE-SHIMA

TOGUCHI

NAGO

KOBESOKO

ISHI-KAWA

KIN

KIMMU-WAN

BOLO POINT

YONTAN

MAKIBARU

KADENA

CHATAN

KOZA

KATCHIN HANTO

AWASHI

KUBA-SAKI

MAGHINATO

SHURI

BUCKNER BAY

NAHA

YONABARU
BATEN
KO

ITOMAN

AIRPORTS

* 130 NCB CAMP

OKINAWA-SHIMA

table, food excellent, bunks strewn all over the decks, in and under mobile cargo. Everyone was more congenial than usual, quietly visiting with a little-known neighbor at general quarters an hour before breakfast and sunrise. We were a community exposed to a common crisis, and we were a team. The crew, members of the Amphibious Command, held themselves aloof from the Common Navy, enjoyed Seabee company. We had lots of company standing off Okinawa on Easter morning. Hundreds of ships; all over the sea, friendly vessels. Reefs encircled the entire island with few breaks; this coastline presented fewer natural obstacles.

• Long before daybreak action commenced. The fleet laid off-shore pounding beach emplacements with its big guns; cruisers and battlewagons out near the transports, destroyers like bulldogs barking their guns under the nose of Jap shore batteries. Like ducks on a pond, we floated in the middle with about fifty other LSTs. Rocket boats slid up and down the coast, closer in even than the destroyers, pouring fire into the beaches. It was still quite dark when we had our first brush with the same Jap Kamikaze (suicide) planes which we were later to know so well. Amid the noise of spasmodic booming of the Navy's big guns, suddenly we heard the warning come over the speakers, "Enemy aircraft approaching." Straining eyes and ears, intensely alert with alarm, most of us saw nothing until 20s and 40s opened up, throwing orange and red spurts across a narrow strip of water. Some saw that bat-shaped

splurge of denser blackness hurtle into the dark convoy, but, if the guns which opened up found their mark, they were too late. That Jap pilot dove to meet Honorable Ancestors via two bulkheads of the LST in the lane next to us. Hit just above the water line, gasoline from the Kamikaze spewing flame over decks, the LST lit up the dawn. We stood by to pick up survivors as "Abandon ship" became the order aboard the ill-fated vessel. Everything was unreal to the spectator; only the man in the water appreciated and felt the crisis. Later, we began to feel and appreciate vicariously the experience of burning Marines caught in a flaming compartment, or of one sailor who, both arms shot off, leaped from the burning ship to discover that he needed arms to stay afloat. Some we took aboard were horribly burned.

Weeks before, the hour of invasion had been set at eight o'clock, and promptly on the appointed hour the morning sea was cut into white ribbons by LCVPs streaking for the beaches from outlying transports. Two planes laid a wide smoke screen on the beaches, while guns from the fleet continued to speak their piece. No Jap battery replied; they continued to protect their gun positions with stubborn silence.

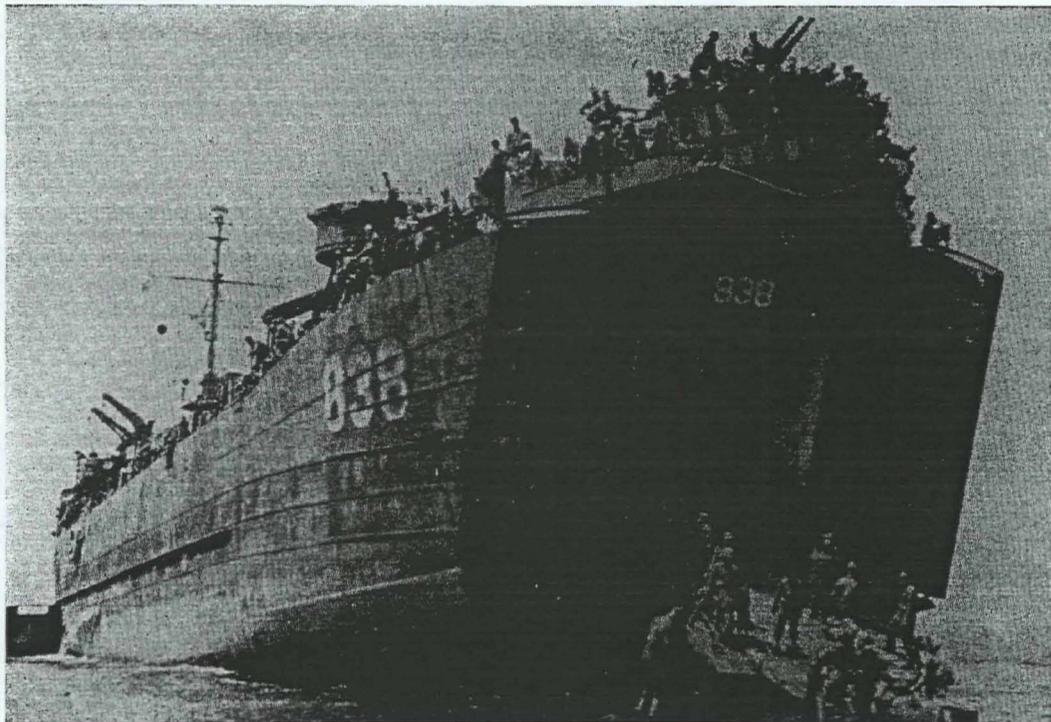
It was a successful fake invasion. A few yards before hitting the beach, LCVPs turned around under cover of smoke screen and, like chicks, streamed for their mother transports. We laughed when "Tokyo Rose" reported later in the day that the American had been repulsed off the southeastern coast. We laughed and

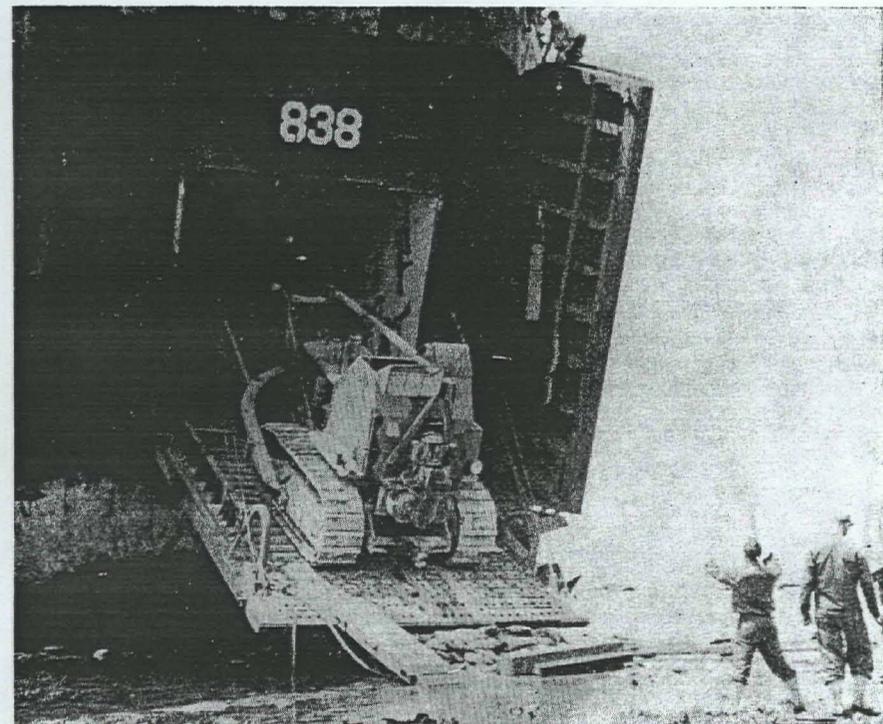
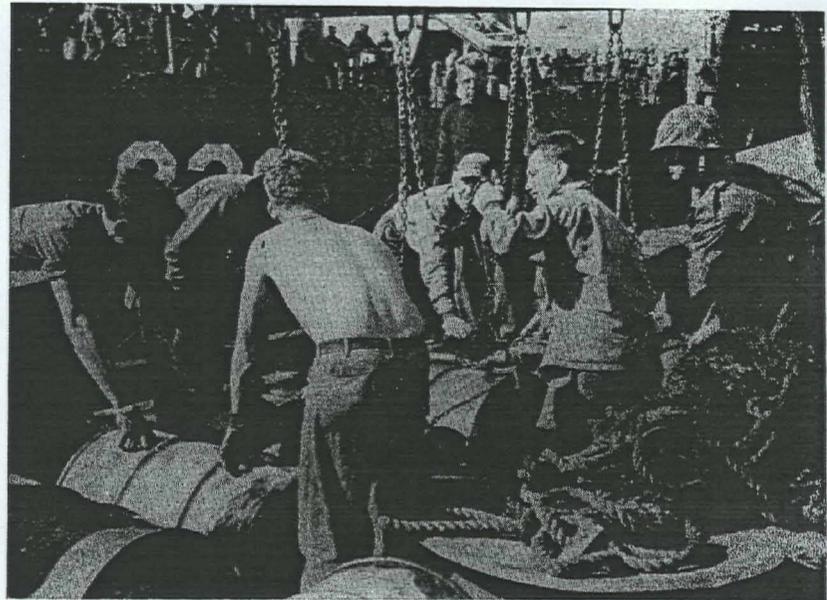
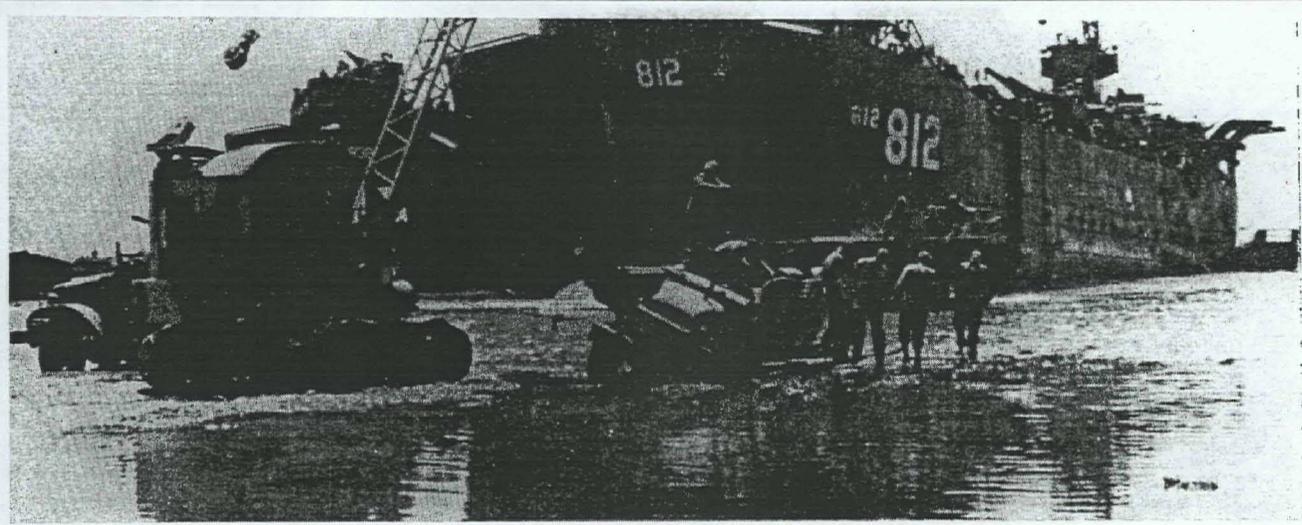


relished steak sandwiches and coffee while we stood battle stations until mid-afternoon. That night we pulled out. In Lingayen Gulf, the Japs had used small suicide boats in darkness, had even thrown hand grenades at anchored ships. We pulled out full speed ahead and circled many miles to the northeast of our target. The next morning we came back to emphasize our fake invasion by doing the same thing again. Weeks later, when that southeastern coast had been taken by the Seventh Army Division, we learned that

the Jap had been best prepared on that strip of coastline, had dozens of inter-connected caves and tunnels equipped with guns on railway tracks ready to cut our assault to ribbons. American strategy had pinned this defense power down, while poorly defended Yontan and Katena airstrips on the western coast fell quickly under our main assault.

Harrowing as was our part in the fake invasion of the southeastern beaches, our worst hours came in the nature of pure nervous tension while we roamed





around and around in the company of other landing ships waiting to be called to the beaches. We grew accustomed to rushing to general quarters morning and evening, and sometimes during the day, over an obstacle course of conduits, vents, bunks, benches, ladders and lockers. We adapted ourselves to being close to the action toward which the eyes of the world were turned, and yet having to tune into an American short-wave broadcast for news of the battle's progress. But the wear and tear of time, fifty tons of high explosives in the hold, and Jap home waters, day in and day out running in great circles, sometimes three hundred, sometimes fifty miles off the invasion coast, without the protecting fleet within sight, ruffled our nerves. We were in the worst spot most of us had known. Had we encountered even the smaller vessels of the enemy fleet, they could have picked us off like ducks on a pond. One small shell in our TNT would have added considerably to the government's list of widows' pensions. One evening we narrowly slid by a mine, and the command sharply called for a more alert watch.

- Happy were we when four short words came over the speaker system, "We're going in!" We wanted to free ourselves from that volatile cargo.

With the liberating message in our ears, we headed for the western beaches of Okinawa, which had fallen easily to our main forces. The mouth of the Bisha Gawa was reached just before noon of the 12th, and we drove that gaping mouth of the LST across the coral reef, opened the passageway, and hurried bulldozers,

loaded trucks, and construction equipment across the reef. Small boats came alongside to receive the highest gasoline from cranes.

- Unloading operations continued all afternoon until the Beachmaster ordered us away for the night. That night the Japs came over with their second large air raid since D-Day, and the sky was brilliant with tracers. Some of us, ashore with unloaded equipment, squeezed under chasses and wheels, narrowly escaped the shrapnel which fell like rain. The rest of us rode our dynamite through that night of fireworks. The next day we got it ashore where we could run away from it. We felt once more in control of our destiny.

Work during the first weeks ashore was hurried and confused; living was rough. A foxhole was something you dug with care; it was not just a hole in the ground. You took into consideration the prevailing winds, the rain and the drainage, and when it was completed you stood off and reviewed it from the viewpoint of a quick approach. But not many of us were prepared for rains which came every day, often at the rate of an inch per hour. Fox-holes seldom dried out, and after slopping around ankle-deep, we put in make-shift floors from packing cases.

Work was pressed through air raids, stopping only when actual firing commenced. Trucks bogged down on the way to supply four Army and two Marine divisions at the fronts with critical materials. Roads had to be raised from the sea of mud. Coral pits hummed with shovels and trucks, and we stayed with our ma-

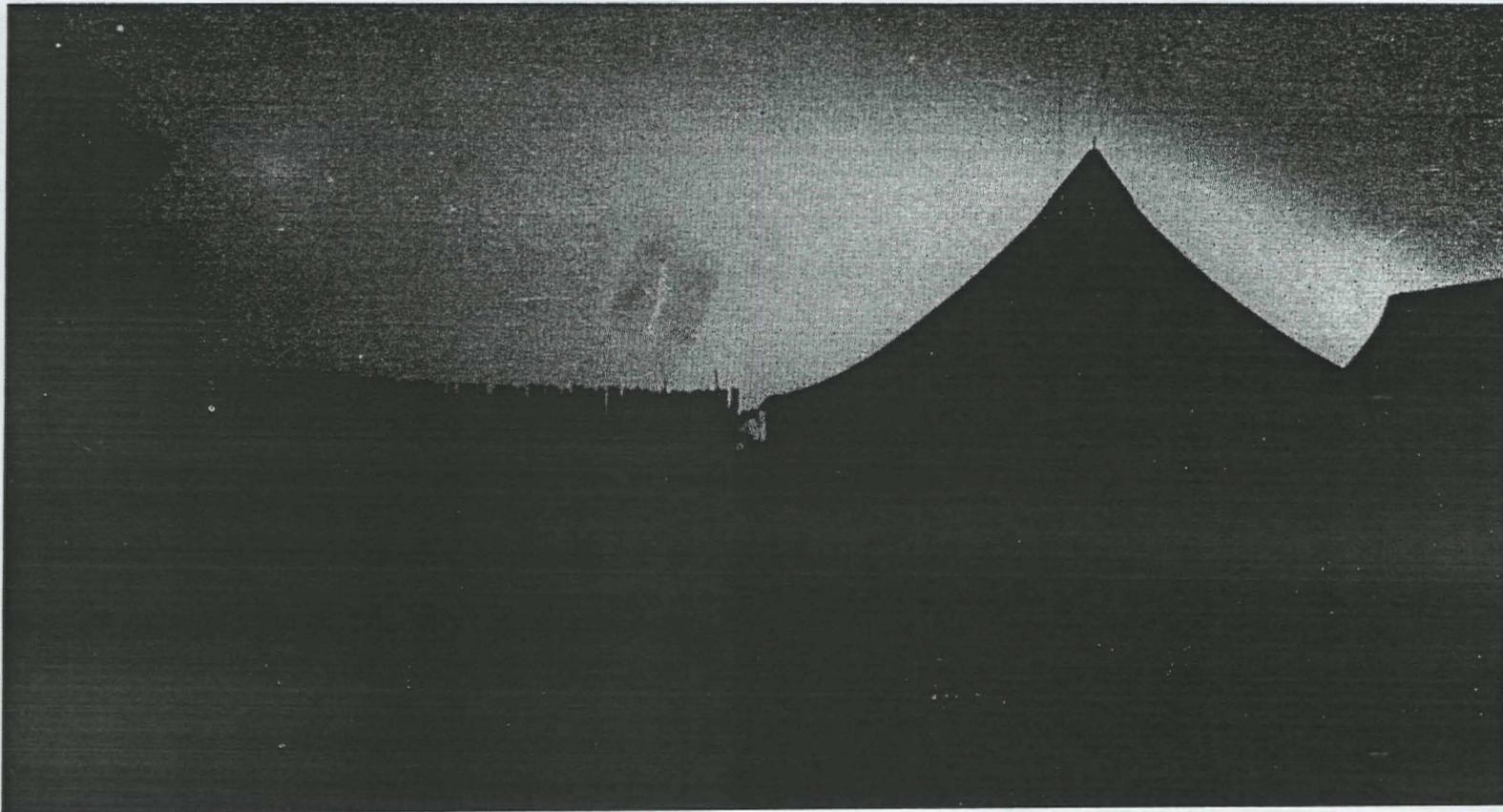
| OKINAWA AIR RAID ALERT CHART | | | | | | | Officer 130° |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|-----------------|
| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
| April 8 to 14 | | | | | | | |
| April 15 to 21 | | | | | | | |
| April 22 to 28 | | | | | | | |
| April 29 to May 5 | | | | | | | |
| May 6 to 12 | | | | | | | |
| May 13 to 19 | | | | | | | |
| May 20 to 26 | | | | | | | |
| May 27 to June 2 | | | | | | | |
| June 3 to 9 | | | | | | | |
| June 10 to 16 | | | | | | | |
| June 17 to 23 | | | | | | | |
| June 24 to 30 | | | | | | | |
| July 1 to 7 | | | | | | | |
| July 8 to 14 | | | | | | | |
| July 15 to 21 | | | | | | | |
| July 22 to 28 | | | | | | | |



chines until the flak fell. Yontan airfield grew in spite of harrassing raids; we saw it change from a small gravel field into hard, white, coral strips wide and long, where B-29s could land and get repairs among innu-

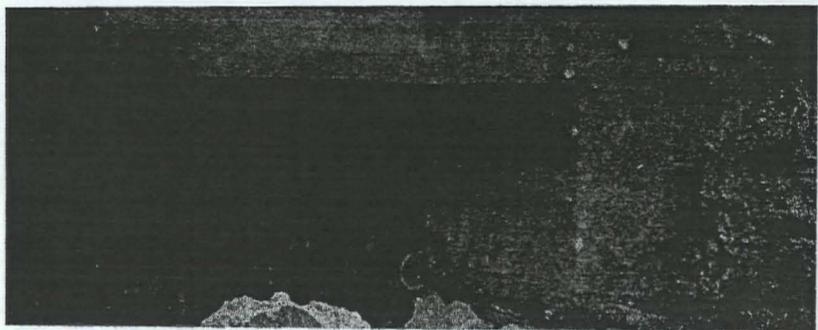
untiring. Most of us felt new vitality, new energy, in the emergency; we worked harder with less sleep than we ever had before.

- No spot on earth during World War II was subjected



merable shop structures. The roads we built solved genuine difficulties of front line supply; a few thousand yards of coral, a Bailey bridge or two, and thousands of vehicle-hours were saved from long waiting at points of congestion. At a Marine evacuation hospital we built bomb-shelters for wounded veterans. One shelter was completed too late; on the night of a big raid, when shrapnel filled the air, a tent ward full of patients took a direct bomb hit, and fourteen were killed who might have been flown out the next day. We knew the stakes were high and worked around the clock,

to as many air raids per week as we were on Okinawa. The destroyer picket lines sixty miles off shore took ceaseless punishment at considerable cost in ships and lives. In one day 168 Jap planes were shot out of the Okinawa atmosphere. Every day saw Kamikaze planes striking for ship or shore installation; many of the 80-odd ships hit in the Okinawa action were victims



of the Kamikaze. Every day saw a few Japs get through our outer air defenses to harrass men and machines at work. By the end of July, we had gone to Condition Red one hundred sixty-six times.

- We got along on surprisingly little sleep; we had to. Danger released undeveloped resources within all of us. One stick of bombs fell in our back yard. Not many could take life easy in those days.

- A man took his life in his hands walking about camp after dark. Everyone was on his toes, ready for anything. It did not matter who you were, show a light during an alert and a hundred voices rose out of the dark, "Turn off that damn light!" One guard was shot by another at two o'clock in the morning, and military prestige was forgotten in raucous calls, "Get the doctor!" "Where's that damn doctor?"

To harrassing air raids were added the whistling mortar shells of one sly Jap, Whistling Willie, holed up in a cave, who sent his missiles whining over our heads and onto Katena airfield during the late evening air raid. After the first week, men stopped bringing hunks of flak to the OOD's office just because the sanctity of their sacks had been invaded by an ugly piece of jagged steel. Such things became commonplace, along with the amazing skyful of fireworks. Five degrees of any night's sky would have made a breath-taking Fourth of July back home.

The island was secured on June 21, after eighty-two days of a long, vicious, expensive struggle. The entrenched Jap guns were silenced.

- But our role was not ended with the destruction of the enemy. Men in motion through a twenty-four hour schedule, took no holiday, went to no rest camp, shifted to a shorter, eight- instead of twelve-hour work schedule and plunged into the work of reconstructing damaged installations and expanding a base of further operations against the Jap. Tension relaxed, the pace subsided but construction men remained in motion. Until the shock of two atomic bombs and the tread of Russian troops jarred the Jap into defeat and peace, we built heavy duty roads, air strips, shop facilities on Yontar. We fulfilled our role the best we knew how, pursued our obligations as we saw them, gave the strength of our young manhood down every avenue which opened unto us. While the FBI tracked down half a million draft evasion cases, sentenced over twelve thousand of them to prison terms, we accepted the obligation or privilege to help our nation in a time of crisis.

Toward the end of that summer of 1945, Ingrid Bergman on a USO tour, stood on a Berlin balcony which Hitler had used, delivered the Gettysberg Address to GIs, Russians, and Berliners in the square below. Hirohito wiped tears with white-gloved hands as he sobbed a message accepting the Potsdam peace terms; on hearing their emperor's words over the radio, one hundred million Japs prostrated themselves and shed bitter tears of self-examination and self-reproach (Domei News Agency report). We felt good, knew a great flood of relief. It was over, and we had played our part.