

Yo Do Island, 1953

Great and magnificent though the striking power of the United States Navy's shipborne aerial force is acknowledged to be, there are times, when enemy action or nature's unpredictables make landing on a piece of firm ground a desirable maneuver. Crippled chicks seeking a safe haven, as it were. Carrier-based aircraft often are crippled during repeated missions over enemy emplacements in Korea. It is not always possible to keep enough fuel for the return to the home carrier. With this in mind the Seabees were ordered to construct an emergency air strip on one of the islands in ~~the~~ Wonsan Harbor.

Arriving at Yo Do Island, unexpected conditions forced the use of emergency unloading techniques. Oil drums and other equipment were floated ashore through shallow water, as native "sidewalk superintendents" supervised the proceedings. ~~This lightened the ship.~~ Heavy equipment was brought ashore, while engineers surveyed the site of the proposed 2400-by-200-foot landing strip.

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Nets serving as protective covering over native rice ^{paddies} ~~patties~~ were removed, and bulldozers were immediately at work cutting and filling. Oil drums were cut and fitted to serve as drainage canals and pipe lines to carry away the excess water from the paddies. Carryalls, graders and dozers, just recently rebuilt at Advanced Base Depots proved up to the job. From dawn to darkness, practically around the clock, the Seabees worked against time.

Native kids, stopping only occasionally to watch the hurry-up construction, busied themselves with games which resembled those the Seabees themselves had played not too many years before; some of them.

Even occasional bombardment by the enemy, seeking their spot of operations, slowed progress only slightly. Sporadic cannon fire seemed only to add incentive to complete the job, rather than slow it down. By the use of emergency supplies, flown in and paraded, the landing strip was

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ready to receive "crippled chicks" within twelve days after the strip was first started--and they came. Seven carrier-based Corsairs practically out of gas and oil came in safely, were refueled and took off. The saving of just one plane more than paid for the entire cost of construction of the air strip, not to mention the irreplaceable pilots.