

3rd Naval Construction Battalion

*Historical
Information*



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



3rd C.B.

- 5-15-42 - Hdqtrs Co. and partial complements of Cos A, B, C, D (971 men) trasfd from NCTC, NOB, Norfolk, to ABD, Port Hueneme.
- 5-20-42 - Detachment from Cos A,B,C, and D (approx 100 men) trasfd from NCTC, NOB, Norfolk to ABD, Port Hueneme.
- 6- 9-42 - 14 off. and 555 men trasfd to Rec Ship, San Fran FFT.
- 6-18-42 - Remaining 4 off. and 384 men trasfd to Rec Ship, SanFran, approx this date FFT. Dest: 4 off, "B" Co. and 1/4 HQ Co to Noumea; 12 off. Cos C and D and 1/2 HQ Co to Fiji Islands; 2 off. and 100 men from Co A to Bora Bora. Exact date of departure not known.
Cos C and D were designated the First Section. Co B and part of Co A were designated the 2nd Section. 2 off. and 100 men from Co A were called the First Const Detachment.
- 5- 2-43 - Co C trasfd from Fiji Islands to Funa Futi.
- 5-11-43 - Located as follows:
 - Co A - Bora Bora
 - Co B - Noumea
 - Co C - Funa Futi
 - Co D - Nandi, Fiji
- 6- 9-43 - Co D left Nandi, Fiji and went to Noumea.
- 6-26-43 - On this date, it was recommended by Comseronsopac that the First and Second Secs be merged. Cos B and D were located at Noumea and Co C at Funa Futi on detached duty was to be ordered to join the unit at a later date.
- 9-10-43 - Co A comprising 5 off. and 292 men went to Tutuila and reported to the 22nd Marien Reinforced. A small unit, 2 off. and 31 men, remained at Bora Bora to indoctrinate CBMU 519.

3rd Construction Battalion (INACTIVATED)

3rd C.B.

- 12-18-43 - On or about this date, the 2 off. and 31 men of Co A left at Bora Bora were ordered to join the batt at Noumea.
- 1- 5-44 - Co C left Funa Futi on 28 Dec 1943 and reported to batt at Noumea on this date.
- 5-12-44 - Co A comprising 2 off. and 225 men reported to battalion at Noumea.
- 5-22-44 - Batt left Noumea.
- 6- ~~2~~-44 - Battalion ordered disbanded as of this date.
- 6- ~~7~~-44 - Arrived Camp Parks with 19 off. and 749 men.

(Above Itinerary prepared by Lt Mavis from old cards)

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
5/30/44	-	Noumea	-	Left U.S. June 1942.
5/30/44	-	Noumea	Combs Pac. Sec. diap. 010301 - May.	Transfer to U.S.
5/30/44	-	En Route	Combs Pac. Sec. diap. 240406 - May	on U.S.S. General H.L. Scott EtA San Fran 7 June.
7/19	-	Inactivated	- C. B report 1 July.	

June 26/51

HISTORY OF NCB 3

Starting with the summer of 1942 NCB 3 played an important part in the build-up of bases in the South Pacific, bases designed to protect the line of communications with Australia and New Zealand. During the two years overseas the battalion was split up into detachments only to be reunited just before its return to Camp Parks in 1944. Its major activities took place in the Fijis and New Caledonia, but at one time or another elements of the battalion worked on Funa Futi in the Ellice Islands, Wallis Island in the Samoas and Bora Bora in the Society Islands. Moreover, a small group from the battalion participated in a number of combat operations during the Marshalls campaign.

In April 1942 the personnel of the battalion began assembly at Camp Allen, Norfolk, Virginia from training points at Varcous National Youth Administration Centers and Naval facilities. The battalion moved in two sections to the Advance Base Depot at Port Hueneme, California on 15 and 20 May. From Port Hueneme they moved to San Francisco whence the first elements embarked for the South Pacific on 8 June with the remainder following some ten days later.

Between 18 June and early July the various detachments into which the battalion had been divided arrived at their assigned stations. Two offices and 100 men from Company A joined the First Construction Detachment, the famous "Bobcats" on Bora Bora, where construction of an air and sea base facilities was already in progress. Company B with four officers and one fourth of Headquarters Company went to Noumea, New Caledonia while Companies C and D landed on the island of Viti Levu, largest of the Fiji islands.

The Fijis, a British Crown Colony constituted an important link in the United States line of communications to the South and Southwest Pacific areas. They formed one of a group of mutually supporting bases from which air and naval

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forces operated to protect the area. Under a joint Army-Navy plan for the Fijis, United States forces were to relieve the approximately 10,000 New Zealand troops who had been responsible for the defense of the islands since soon after the beginning of the war in Europe and extend the existing military facilities.

The major task facing the men of the Third Battalion in the Fijis was construction of a tank farm at Vunda Point on the west coast of Viti Levu. Companies C and D, together comprising Section I of the battalion were entrusted with this task along with a host of other construction jobs of varying magnitudes. After arrival on the island at the end of June Company C set up Camp at Vunda Point, with Lt. A.M. McKinnon as Officer in Charge. Company D, which arrived shortly after, remained for the time being at the port city of Suva, on the Southeast coast of Viti Levu, under the command of Lt. (j.g.) R.E. Flint.

Since material for the tank farm was not yet available the two companies occupied themselves with other tasks pending its arrival. In addition to establishing its camp, Company D's main accomplishments included extensive work on the New Zealand Air Force Flying Base at Lauthala Bay--Construction of "ablution buildings," a dispensary, guard house, roads, an underground tunnel for the power house, barges--additions to Force Headquarters with an underground tunnel to the Communication Center, Construction of a combined Army and Navy radio station, repair work on two destroyers and work on the 18th General Hospitals for Casualties. Meanwhile Company C conducted surveying, planning and drafting work for the projected tank farm; built a 300 foot jetty at Lautoka, a 300 foot concrete sea-plane ramp and apron and a 225 foot small boat landing along with camp facilities for 200 men at Sarveni Beach; began a small boat landing at Vunda Point and erected a 10,000 barrel gasoline tank at Lautoka.

Upon arrival of the tank farm material at the end of October, Company D broke

camp at Suva and joined Company C at Vunda Point. The move took two weeks, being completed on 22 November.

The tank farm consisted of five 10,000 barrel tanks for storage of fuel oil, two 10,000 barrel tanks for diesel oil and ten 1,000 barrel tanks for aviation gasoline. A six inch pipe line connected the tank farm with a 10,000 barrel aviation gasoline tank to be erected at Samheto from which a 4 inch pipeline in turn led to the Nandi airfield. Completing tank farm would also entail camouflage for the tanks, splinter protection for the four tanks requiring it sea lines and other waterfront loading facilities.

In order to facilitate construction a detailed division of activities between the two companies was made on 8 December 1942 and slightly revised 26 January and 3 February 1943. Thus, for example, Company C was responsible for all excavation for the tanks, building the salt water fire-fighting system and constructing a jetty. Company D, in turn, was charged with construction of the sea line and loading platforms. Other activities were split, with Company directing two-thirds of the tanks and each company handling its own tank to header piping, camouflage and splinter protection.

On 22 March Lcdr. Phillips was able to announce that the farm tank farm fuel storage facilities were complete save for purifiers and strainers necessary for certain use of the diesel oil and pumping facilities on the Samveto-Nande aviation gasoline line. As of April 3, 600,000 gallons of gasoline had been received with 182,000 gallons dispensed to the Army via its barges and approximately 100,000 gallons delivered to the Sambeto tank. Tank camouflage had been all but completed as had station facilities for 500 men. The salt water fire-fight system remained incomplete for lack of certain materials.

During its stay in the Fijis the detachment engaged in numerous other con-

struction activities in addition to the tank farm and its ancillary facilities. This additional construction included most notably extensive building of both operational and personnel facilities for Fleet Air Base Unit #2 and Carrier Aircraft Service Unit #9 at Nande and a Fleet Recreation Center at Vunda Point.

With its major construction jobs completed the detachment was freed for work in other areas, Company C, in transit from April 30, 1943 to May 9, reported on the latter date for its next assignment at Funafute in the Ellice Islands. As of 4 June 1943 Company D turned over its responsibilities for operation and maintenance of the tank farm to Base Maintenance Detachment 503. The company embarked on 9 June to join Company B at Noumea, New Caledonia and by 23 June was ready to join in the work in progress there.

Company B and one fourth of headquarters company had been on the job at Noumea since 26 June 1942 when they had arrived with Lt. L.R. Ouayle as Officer in Charge. American forces had replaced an Australian garrison in the Free French controlled island of New Caledonia in March 1942. The island was to be developed as an advanced air and naval base in pursuance of the overall plans for the South Pacific area.

Company B, the only naval construction unit in the area until December, 1942 had established itself on IleNou in Noumea Harbor, with little in the way of equipment or supplies except for 10,000 Tilly paper cups. Indeed, shortages of materials and equipment were to plague the company for much of its stay in New Caledonia. In its early days on the island, necessary living equipment and tools were acquired by barter, borrowing "and other methods." Pending arrival of supplies on August 12 the company kept itself busy with such work as could be done without heavy equipment.

In spite of adverse conditions, Company B had by 31 March 1943, compiled an

envisable record of achievement: a water supply system for Ile Nou with two lines leading from the mainland, a total of eight miles of line, three system reservoirs and a booster station; a 75 foot tunnel with a room offset for the radio receiving station; extensive facilities for personnel and for operations of various activities stationed at the base; restoration of a Japanese generator to serve the Ile Nou power plant; numerous pontoon barges, with and without propulsion, assembled for both Army and Navy usage; a 75 ton crane, built and operated by the company; a transmitter building and signal station; an incinerator for a population of 2,000 and a host of other building and renovating jobs.

The base Public Works Officer, in transmitting the report of these activities to Washington observed that the bald statement of work accomplished by the small detachment of Seabees could not possibly convey "the ingenuity and energy shown by this officer and his detachment in improvising from the few materials and items of equipment at hand, the many useful works performed." Their efforts, he added, "contributed very materially to the success of the American occupation of this island." It should be added that from December on the company at various times received help from other units, namely the 955th Army Engineers, Company C of Naval Construction Battalion 24 and Company C of Naval Construction Battalion 37.

In the period that followed March 31, 1943 Company B received further assistance from the above mentioned Seabee units as well as from detachments from Battalions 11 and 73 at various times. And as previously indicated they were joined in June by Company D coming from the Fijis. By that time the detachment's work had settled down into a relatively routine combination of construction, repair and maintenance as well as actual operation of many of the facilities and utilities already built.

The routine, however, went up in flames on one occasion. On 1 November 1943 men of the detachment were involved in a serious explosion and fire which occurred

at the Nickel Dock on the main island. One officer, Lieut. (j.g.) Harry I. Myers, was killed and four men were seriously injured. All thirteen of the surviving members of the battalion present during the blast were subsequently commended for their efforts to aid others in the midst of the flames and flying ammunition which were set off by the original explosion.

Meanwhile Company C supplementing a detachment of the 2nd battalion from mid-May 1943 busied itself with its assignments on Funafuti. Erection of a 10,000 barrel aviation gasoline tank farm constituted its primary project to be followed by construction of 47 revetements for aircraft. The tank farm complete with connecting piping, sea line, moorings and utilization facilities was finished by the target date of June 15. Dispensing of gasoline began eight days later.

When the company was detached on August 23 the aircraft revetements were 61% complete. Another major project, a 7,000 foot taxi stop, was 81% complete. The detachment had also erected an observation building and observation tower for the meteorological unit, an observation tower on the airfield operations building, galleys and messes for the Search Unit and Naval Air Transport Service respectively and Army radar and air weather service buildings. They had also made a good start on base and Search Unit housing. During their stay at Funafuti the base twice came under attack from enemy aircraft.

Company C next moved to Wallis Island, Samoa to construct another tank farm. The trip was made in great discomfort on a slow and inadequate old lumber boat, and things did not improve greatly after arrival at the destination. Not only were the men tormented by rats, rain and mosquitoes in copious quantities but work on the tank farm was hampered by unavailability of material. And then, as a final blow, the project was cancelled as it neared completion. As the detachment left Wallis on 28 December 1943 the tanks were just being dismantled for removal to

Apamama. "Little good can be said about our stay in the Samoan Islands," a detachment news release noted, adding "(p)erhaps we were on the wrong one. . . .

Company C arrived at Noumea on 5 January 1944 where along with Companies B and D already present it became for the first time an integral part of the battalion. On 12 May 1944 these three companies were joined by what was left of the original Company A after two years of vicissitudes, which must now be traced.

The two officers and 100 men detached from the original Company A had reached Bora Bora on 18/19 June 1942. There they merged with Th First Construction Detachment, the famous Bobcats, and joined in the advance base development in progress. The combined detachment was ordered to Noumea on 9 September 1943 but enroute these orders were changed and the unit instead reported to the 22d Marine Regiment at Tutuila, Samoa on 1 October.

There they underwent intensive combat training while doing minor construction jobs on the side. On 18 November 1943 they moved to Maui, t. of Hawaii, arriving on 26 November, for amphibious training and combat conditioning. Leaving behind a small rear echelon detachment, the Naval Construction Company, as it was now called, left Maui on 7 January 1944 in three groups as shore party elements with the Marines in the Marshalls campaign. They played a part in operations at Kwajalein on 31 January and then landed with assault forces on Engebi, Eniwetok and Parry Islands on 18, 20 and 22 February. The three groups returned on 28 February returned to Kwajalein where they improvised camps for their respective landing teams. On 13 April the reunited groups went to Guadalcanal where a camp had already been established by the rear echelon group from Maui which preceded them to Guadalcanal on 18 March.

From Guadalcanal the detachment finally rejoined the rest of the Third Battalion

at Noumea on 12 May, being incorporated in the battalion as Company A. On board at the time were just forty men and two officers of the original. Company A of 1942 with the remainder being members of the original Bobcats or men subsequently transferred into the company.

The newly reunited battalion left Noumea to return the United States on 22 May 1944, arriving at Camp Parks, California on 7 June. It was ordered disbanded as of 12 July and was finally decommissioned at Camp Parks on 16 August.

One of the first Seabee units active in World War II, NCB 3 under the pressure of events was called upon to perform its job not as a unit but as a shifting group of individual detachments, whose cumulative record of accomplishment is an impressive one: substantial construction's to the development of four important bases on the vital life-line Southern to Australia.

Moreover, since NCB 3 was a pioneer outfit, so to speak, its experience in the field offers valuable insights into the problems encountered in organizing an enterprise like the Seabees under the stress of emergency conditions. The suggestions made independent in the spring of 1943 by Lcdr. Phillips and Lt. Quayle on the basis of their activities in the Fiji's and at Noumea respectively agree remarkably. Both men recommended that in future battalions be sent out with some vacancies in the complement of higher ratings of enlisted men. In this way there would be openings for advancement which would enhance morale and at the same time increase efficiency by enabling leadership parts to be filled on the basis of demonstrated in the field. Both men also noted the difficulties involved in splitting a battalion as then constituted into detachments, for with the personnel available it proved impossible to provide each detachment with all the necessary specialized functions--medical and dental for example--and with adequate equipment. The two officers indicated as well that improvements in materials

supply methods were in order. They suggested co-ordination of supply activities by a single officer at each base so as to avoid competition between various units at the base. They also pointed to the need for prior notification of the arrival of designated materials, to avoid delay in their revised by ignorance of their availability.

3rd Naval Construction Battalion

Chronology

- April 1942 NCB 3 personnel undergo training at various NYA camps and naval facilities.
- 18 Apr 1942 NCB 3 Commanding Officer arrives at Norfolk, VA (CDR Benjamin Li Phillips).
- 01 May 1942 NCB 3 was commissioned at Camp Allen.
- 15 May 1942 Headquarters Company and partial complements of companies A, B, C, and D (971 men) transferred to Port Hueneme.
- 20 May 1942 Remainder of battalion transferred to Port Hueneme.
- 08 Jun 1942 4 officers, B company and ¼ of headquarters company deployed to Noumea, New Caledonia. 12 officers, C, D and ½ of headquarters company deploy to Fiji Islands.
- 09 Jun 1942 14 officers and 555 men transferred to the receiving ship San Francisco.
- 18 Jun 1942 About this date the remainder of battalion leaves San Francisco for the South Pacific.
- 19 Jun 1942 Detachment from Company A with 2 officers arrives Borabora in the Society Islands.
- 26 Jun 1942 Company B arrives at Noumea.
- 29 Jun 1942 Company C arrives at Vita Levu.
- 3/9 Jul 1942 Company C moves to Vunda Point.
- 13 Jul 1942 Company D arrives at Suva, Fiji.
- 8/22 Nov 1942 Company D joins Company C at Vunda point.
- 02 May 1943 Company C arrives at Funafuti from Fiji Islands.
- 15 Jun 1943 Company D arrives at Noumea to join Company B.
- 27 Aug 1943 Company C arrives at Wallis Island from Funafuti.
- 01 Oct 1943 First Construction Detachment (Bobcats, including the detachment from Company A of NCB 3) arrives at Samoa from Borabora for service with the 22nd Marine Regiment.
- 26 Nov 1943 Bobcats now known as the 1st Naval Construction Battalion arrives Maui, T. H.
- 11 Dec 1943 Indoctrination Unit detached from Company A arrives at Noumea from Borabora.
- 05 Jan 1944 Company C arrives at Noumea from Wallis Island.
- 07 Jan 1944 Bobcats embark from Maui T. H. to participate in the Marshall Island campaign.
- 13 Apr 1944 Bobcats arrive at Guadalcanal.
- 09 May 1944 LCDR Alexander M. McKinnon replaces CDR Phillips in charge of NCB 3.
- 12 May 1944 Bobcats report to Noumea, including 40 men and 2 officers of the original Company A detachment.
- 22 May 1944 NCB 3 departs Noumea for the United States.
- 07 Jun 1944 Battalion arrives at Camp Parks with 19 officers and 749 men.
- 12 Jul 1944 Battalion ordered disbanded as of this date.
- 20 Jul 1944 LCDR Raymond F. Peppin replaced LCDR McKinnon as Officer in Charge.
- 31 Aug 1944 Decommissioned, (last enlisted man transferred 17 Aug 1944, Officer in Charge detached 24 Aug 1944).

Officers in Charge

Commander Benjamin L. Phillips	15 May 1942 – 09 May 1944
Lieutenant Commander Alexander M. McKinnon	09 May 1944 - 20 Jul 1944
Lieutenant Commander Raymond F. Peppin	20 Jul 1944 – 24 Aug 1944

ITINERARY OF THE 3RD NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

15 May 1942 Hqtrs. Co. and partial complements of Companies A, B, C, D (971 men) transferred from NCTC, NCB, Norfolk, to ABD, Port Huenehe.

20 May 1942 Detachment from Companies A, B, C, and D (approximately 100 men) transferred from NCTC, NCB, Norfolk to ABD, Port Huenehe.

9 June 1942 14 officers and ⁵⁵⁵55 men transferred to Receiving Ship, San Francisco, FFT.

18 June 1942 Remaining 4 officers and 334 men transferred to Receiving Ship, San Francisco, approximately this date, FFT.

Destination: 4 officers, "B" Co. and 1/4 Hqtrs. Co. to Noumea.

12 officers Cos. "C" and "D" and 1/2 Hqtrs. Co. to Fiji Islands.

2 officers and 100 men from Co. "A" to Bora Bora.

Exact date of departure not known.

Companies "C" and "D" were designated the First Section. Company "B" and a part of Co. "A" were designated the Second Section. 2 officers and 100 men from Co. "A" were called the First Construction Detachment.

To Facilitate Administrative Handling of this Detachment changed from:

2 May 1943 Co. "C" transferred from Fiji Islands to Bora Bora, Futu.

11 May 1943 Located as follows:

Co. "A"	Bora Bora
Co. "B"	Noumea
Co. "C"	Futu Futu
Co. "D"	Nandi, Fiji

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Irvin S. Rosenbaum
Comdr. CEC-745, USN

9 June 1943 Co. "B" left Nandi, Fiji and went to Noumea.

23 June 1943 On this date, it was recommended by Comconsoyad that the First and Second Sections be merged. Companies "B" and "D" were located at Noumea and Company "C" at Futu Futu, on detached duty was to be ordered to join the unit at a later date.

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ITINERARY OF THE 3RD NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION - (Cont'd)

10 September 1943	Co. "A" comprising 3 officers and 292 men went to Tutuila and reported to the 22nd Marine Reinforced. A small unit, 2 officers and 31 men remained at Bora Bora to indoctrinate CBNU 519.
18 December 1943	On or about this date, the 2 officers and 31 men of Co. "A" left at Bora Bora were ordered to join the battalion at Noumea.
5 January 1944	Co. "C" left Funa Futi on 28 December 1943 and reported to battalion at Noumea on this date.
12 May 1944	Co. "A" comprising 2 officers and 225 men reported to battalion at Noumea.
22 May 1944	Battalion left Noumea.
7 June 1944	Arrived Camp Parks with 19 officers and 749 men.
12 July 1944	Battalion ordered disbanded as of this date.

NOTE: The above itinerary is based on the records available in the CB Operations Section of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

To Facilitate
Administrative Handling
Classification changed
from
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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To: **RESTRICTED**

Irvin S. Palmerson
Commanding Officer
Signature



**NO
LOGO
AVAILABLE**









