

Mangrove Swamp Now Naval Base Under Seabee Magic

By John M. McCullough

The following article was sent to Bud Adams by his brother Ralph who is a Seabee.

(Continued From Last Week)

The Water system, down to spigots in the officer's mess, was completed in 58 days.

The coastal area of Manus was one continuous mangrove swamp—the toughest, densest, most suffocating jungle growth in the world. So dense was it that survey parties, hacking their way with machetes, walked on an almost solid jungle matting 15 feet above the ground.

As an escorting naval officer told me this story, we were skirting the edge of just a jungle. In sheer of self-defense, I said: "I don't doubt that its true—but I still don't believe it."

He grinned delightedly, proud as Punch of his Seabees, and told the story.

Bull-dozers, the Seabees' good right hand, poured ashore, rumbled deep in their steel chests, and waded into the jungle. Vines as tough as steel cables snapped; palms, mangrove, pandanus and mahogany went down under their bull-like rush.

TNT charges rumbled and roared and geysered in the harbor, blasting loose live coral from the harbor ledges. Hydraulic pumps spewed it upon the shore. Trucks by the hundreds picked up dry loads. In three months, miles of swamp—and that is a literal, not a figurative, phrase—were buried to an average depth of five feet under concrete-like coral upon which were erected the seemingly endless supply warehouses.

This is Uncle Sam rolling up his sleeves. This is Uncle Sam, mad as a hornet, getting down to business. This is Uncle Sam tossing a sarcastic "The Hell you say!" at the doubting Thomases who said it couldn't be done. It is one of the greatest and most speedy jobs of construction and base organization in world naval history.

The mess-hall at the receiving station alone will feed 7000 sailors in one hour and twenty minutes—on a spot which nine months ago was a desolate island trading post, boasting hardly a single livable hut.

As we steamed down the harbor under a roaring tropic rainfall the great anchorage seemed alive with ships. They extended hull-down beyond the horizon, only the tips of their masts visible. Every conceivable type of craft, from brine-whitened battle-wagons to stubby-

bowed harbor tugs, was at anchor or boiling along busily on its diverse errands. On a monster floating dock lery sparks cascaded from the purple glow of a welder's torch.

But our exhorting officer was apologetic.

"The harbor is almost empty now," he said soberly, and protested in surprise when we laughed. "No kidding," he insisted, "we've had more than three times this number here."

Three times that number was anchored comfortably in the so-called "Inner" harbor, which is only about nine miles long by three miles wide. Seadler Harbor itself is fifty miles long, and in some places fourteen miles wide. Maybe that will give you the idea!

High on a shoulder of Manus, overlooking the harbor through a fringe of rustling palms, is a 1500 bed hospital, constructed of quonset hut units, all of the huts interconnected by an all-weather series of covered corridors.

You could put the surgical operating rooms in the University of Pennsylvania or Temple University or Jefferson Hospital, and none of the Philadelphia surgeons would demur. The wards are continually swept by cooling northeast trade winds. They are continually scrubbed by strong-backed corporals.

We made the return trip at night—up the harbor toward Los Negros and the Momote airstrip where our plane waited. The vast harbor blazed with lights, was gangway lights, the razor-like sweep of searchlights. Red, white, green and yellow blinker-signals chatted volubly but silently from ship to ship, from ship to shore. Marked only by their riding lights, great ships ghosted up the harbor to their anchorages.

On a distant dock, cargo winches clanked and puffed and whined, slinging their tremendous cargoes outboard. Nearby, an iron-lunged

sailor jerked a peremptory thumb at a group of wool-thatched natives with aching gazes on their faces, squatting comfortably in loam clothes along the lee of a warehouse. "Hey, you," he bellowed companionably, "let's get movin'". They grinned, and rising padded silently after him in their bare feet.

Overhead with the invigorating odor of the salt spray was the elusive scent of tropic flowers, borne down from the jungle-matted hills.

A half dozen of us, leaning upon the rail with the salt spray on our faces, sighed in unison. One of the group commented that it was sickening to suppose that all of this panoply of back-breaking effort, of unthinking sacrifice and of prodigious accomplishment sooner or later would be "rolled up," as other rear areas had been rolled up, and given back to the jungle.

The Officer's face was non-committal in the flare of his cigarette lighter, but he said: "hope not."

PUBLISHED SUMMONS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR THE COUNTY OF JACKSON

Eddie Maya Fox and Milton E. Fox, Plaintiffs,

vs.

J. S. McCullough; Jane Doe McCullough; Sarah Ganiard; John Doe Ganiard; George Chamberlain; Mary E. Chamberlain; also the unknown heirs of J. S. McCullough, deceased, of Jane Doe McCullough, deceased, of Sarah Ganiard, deceased, of John Doe Ganiard, deceased, of George Chamberlain, deceased, and of Mary E. Chamberlain, deceased; also all other

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persons or parties unknown claiming any right, title, estate, lien or interest in the real estate described in the complaint herein, Defendants.

TO EACH AND ALL OF THE ABOVE NAMED DEFENDANTS: IN THE NAME OF THE STATE OF OREGON: You and each of you are hereby required to appear in the above entitled court and cause and there answer the complaint on file against you within four weeks from the date of the first publication of this summons, and if you fail to so appear and answer said complaint, for want thereof, the plaintiffs will apply to the Court for the relief prayed in the complaint, to-wit: that a decree be entered adjudicating each and all of the claims that may be made on the part of any or all of said defendants herein in or to the following described real property located in Jackson County, Oregon, to-wit:

Beginning at a point which bears North 1270 feet from the Southeast corner of Donation Land Claim No. 67 in Township 38 South, of Range 1 West of the Willamette Meridian in Jackson County, Oregon; thence North 288 feet; thence East 350 feet to the center of the County Road; thence South 4 degrees 30 minutes East along the center of

said County road 290 feet; thence West 374 feet to the point of beginning.

or any part thereof, to be null and void; that the plaintiffs herein be decreed to be the owners in fee simple of the said real property, free and clear of any right or claim whatsoever on the part of the said defendants herein and any and all persons claiming, or to claim, by, through, or under them, or any of them, be forever enjoined, restrained and barred from asserting, attempting to establish, or claiming any right, title, estate, lien or interest whatsoever in or to said real property, or any part thereof, and the plaintiffs' title to said real property be forever quieted and set at rest, and for such other and further relief as to the Court may seem just and equitable in the premises.

The date of the order for the

publication of this summons is April 12, 1945. The time prescribed in said order for the publication of this summons is once a week for four consecutive weeks. The date of the first publication of this summons is April 12, 1945.

Kenneth G. Denman
Attorney for Plaintiffs
Room 1, Brophy Building
Medford, Oregon
90—April 12, 19, 26, and May 3, 1945

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