

philippine
assignment

142nd U.S. Naval Construction Battalion

Charles Novak 1944

U.S. N. C. B. 142.

CHARLES NOVAK

4916 SERENO DR

TEMPLE CITY CALIF

2-7-88

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PETER BEHENNA 142ND NCB Co C PLATOON 6

14516 Grinnell Ct. MAGALIA, CA. 95954 JAN 26, 1999

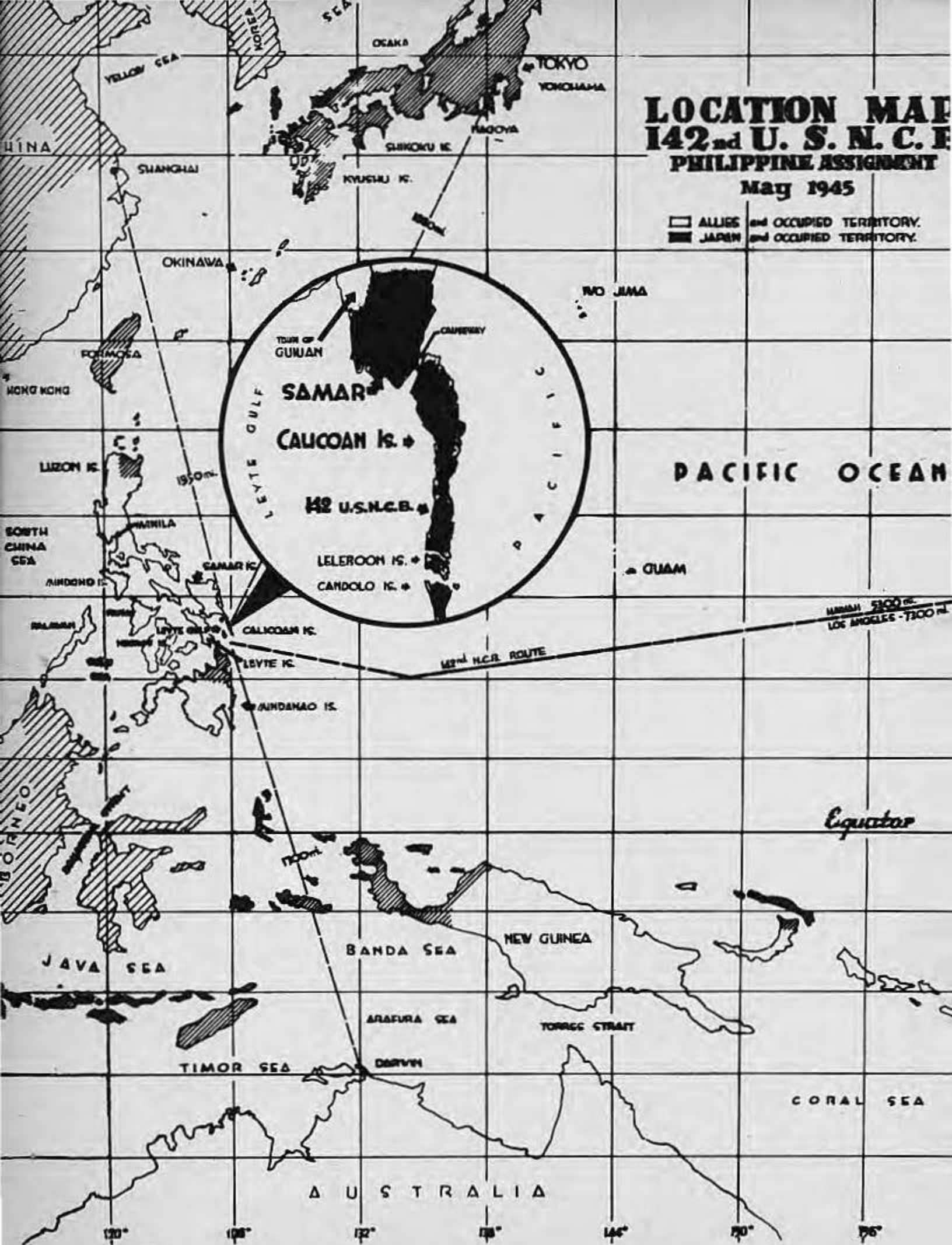
**philippine
assignment**

142nd U.S. Naval Construction Battalion

May - Sept. 45

LOCATION MAP 142nd U. S. N. C. B. PHILIPPINE ASSIGNMENT May 1945

ALLIES and OCCUPIED TERRITORY.
 JAPAN and OCCUPIED TERRITORY.



PHILIPPINE ASSIGNMENT

The Philippine assignment of the One Hundred Forty-Second Naval Construction Battalion, following an assignment of eleven months duration on the Island of Maui, Hawaii, took us to the Island of Calicoan in the Philippines, there to supplement the construction forces engaged in preparing the Leyte area for use by naval activities.

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The flying rumors gather'd as
they roll'd
Scarce any tale was sooner heard
than told:
And all who told it added
something new,
And all who heard it made
enlargements too.

—ALEXANDER POPE

FOREWORD

Upon nearing the completion of our Philippine Assignment it was deemed proper to compile and record in pictorial form this supplement to the previously published history of the battalion, "Of Men and Might." Duplication of material used in the previous booklet has been purposely avoided as evidenced by the omission of personnel photographs. » To the men of the battalion who served under the difficult conditions encountered it is sincerely hoped that this record will serve as a basis for many pleasant and satisfying recollections of an assignment well done.

★

L E Y T E G U L F

A tranquil scene by moonlight
but a different scene by day-
light, when destroyers, oil
tankers, and carrier craft are
to be seen by the score.





CHRONOLOGY

Battalion commissioned at the U.S.M.C. Camp Lejeune, New River, N. C.	15 January	1944
Departed Camp Lejeune, N. C.	26 January	1944
Arrived at the U.S.M.C. Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California	2 February	1944
Departed Camp Pendleton, California	19 April	1944
Arrived Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, California	20 April	1944
Relocation at adjacent Camp Mugu	10 May	1944
Presentation of Colors, Camp Mugu	1 June	1944
Embarked Port Hueneme, California, Dutch Vessel, S. S. Weltevreden	8 June	1944
Disembarked at Kahului, Maui, Territory of Hawaii	15 June	1944
Duty at Naval Air Station, Kahului, Maui, T. H.	June 44 - May	45
Embarked Kahului, Maui, T. H. on board U.S.S. Sea Sturgeon	1 May	1945
Crossed International Date Line	8 May	1945
Disembarked at Guiuan, Samar Island, Philippines	22 May	1945
Duty on the Island of Calicoan, Province of Samar, Philippines	May - September	



Construction

CONSTRUCTION

Construction projects encountered were of interesting and varied types, constructed simultaneously; priorities dependent upon the importance and urgency of the project. Several projects were of such demand that a continuous twenty-four hour production schedule was maintained. The extremely high daytime temperatures and conditions conducive of fungus infections, combined to create a difficult physical working condition. Detailed project description is not intended or permitted, the intent being to portray pictorially in cross-sectional manner our work and life on the Island of Calicoan in the Philippines.

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GASOLINE TANKS



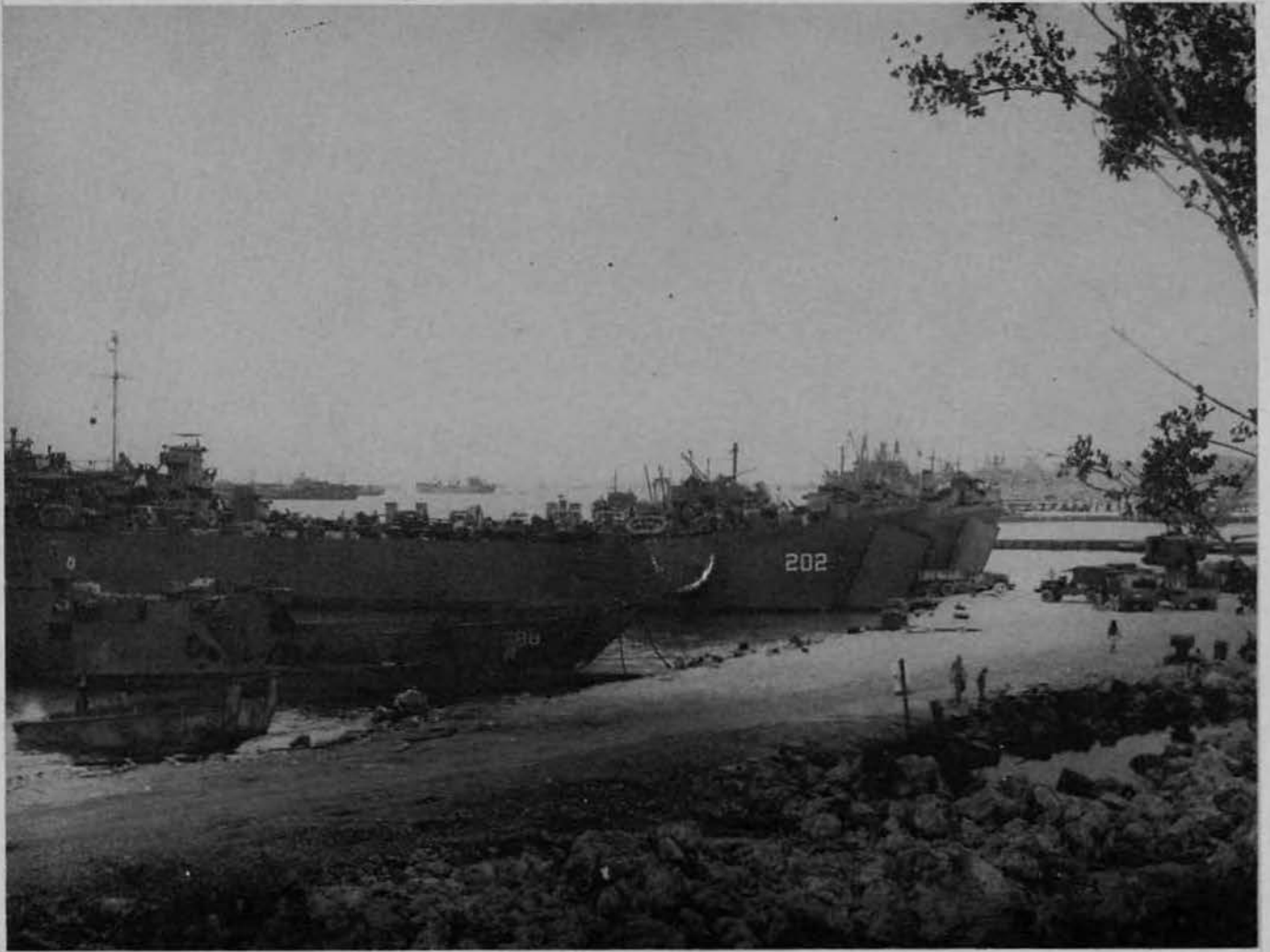
TANK ERECTION

FUEL STORAGE PROJECT

The bulk fuel storage project was an important one in that fuel, the life blood of all transportation; of the electrical generators; of construction equipment, and other uses too numerous to mention, is an important item in any large military operation. The facilities constructed consisted of: a pier for fuel tanker mooring and unloading; pipe lines from pier to the storage tanks inland; prefabricated steel storage tanks totaling twenty thousand barrels capacity for diesel oil and gasoline; and a dispensing station serving the tank trucks which transported the fuel to various parts of the island.

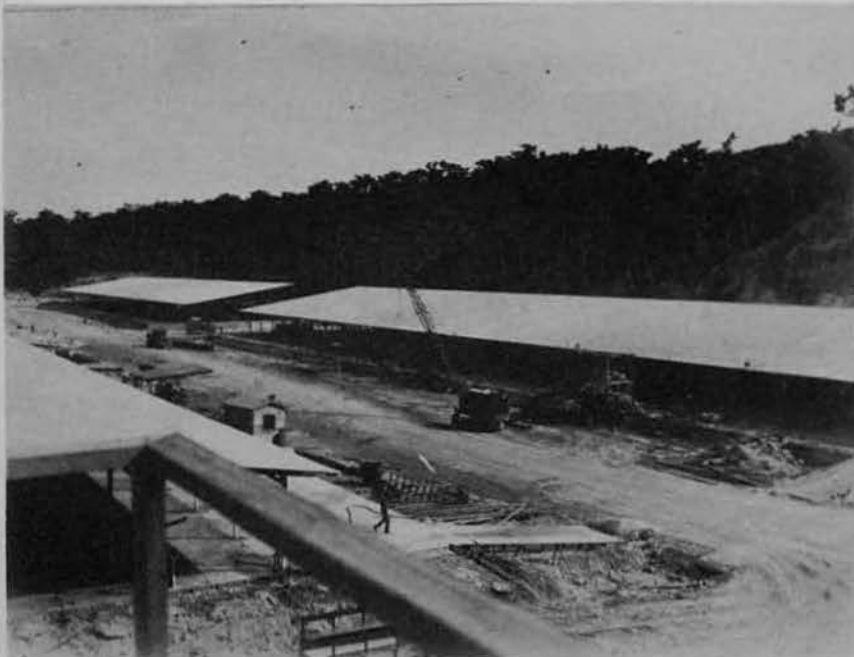


FUEL UNLOADING PIER



L. S. T. LANDING PROJECT

SORTING SHED PROJECT



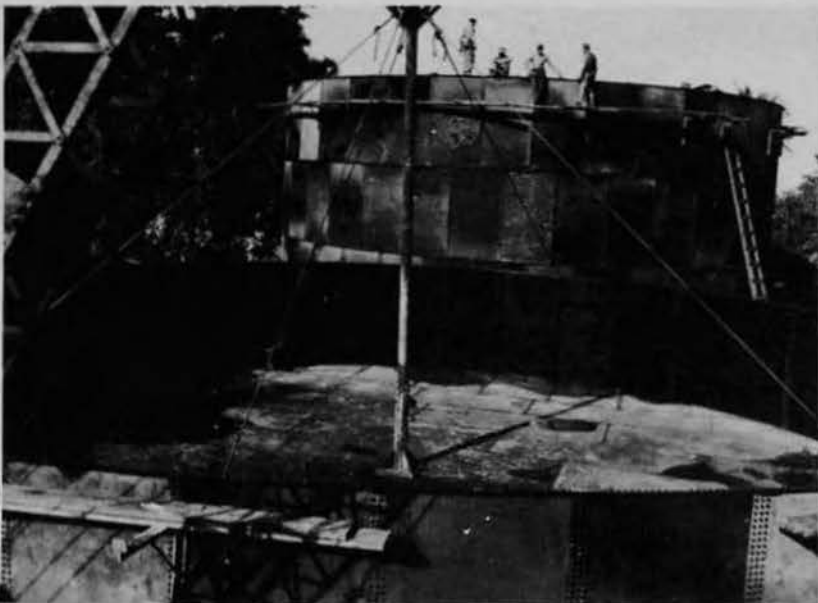
WAREHOUSES





WATER SUPPLY PROJECT PIPE LINES

WATER STORAGE TANK ERECTION



DISTRIBUTION LINE





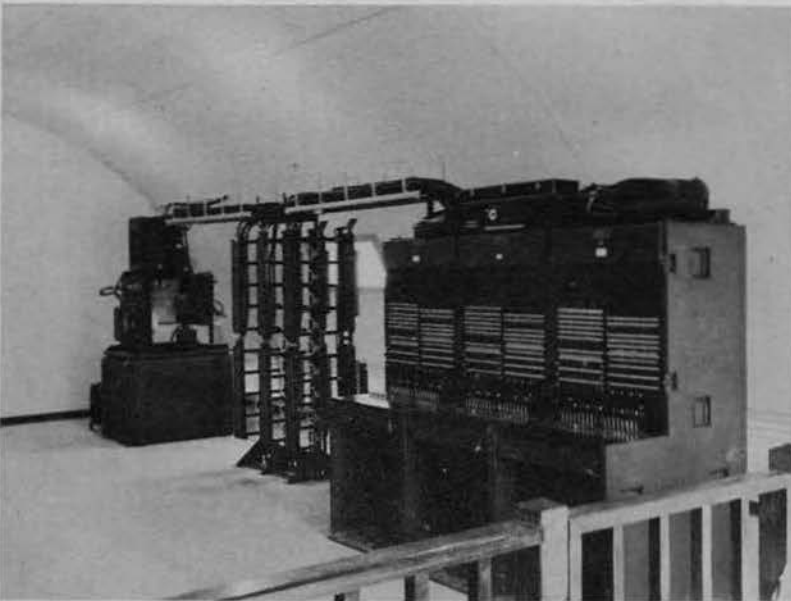
TWENTY-SIX HUNDRED MAN CAMP PROJECT

GATEHOUSE

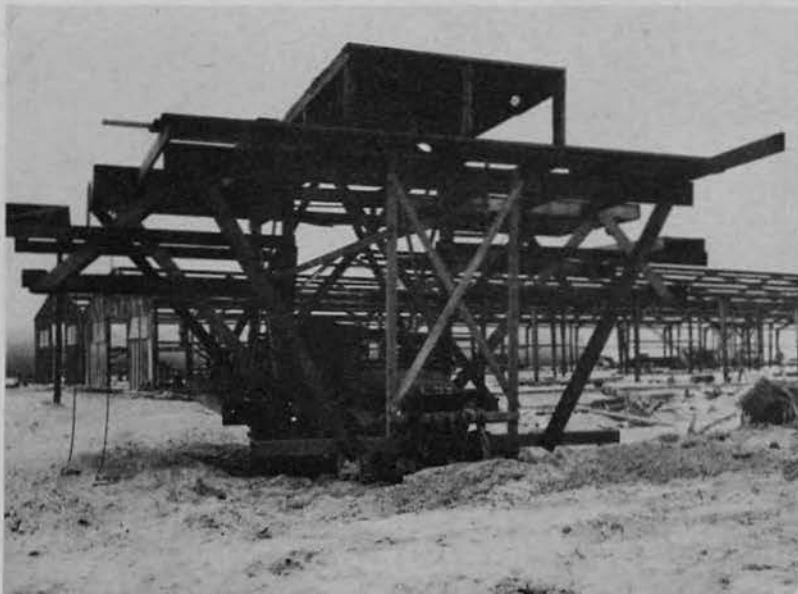




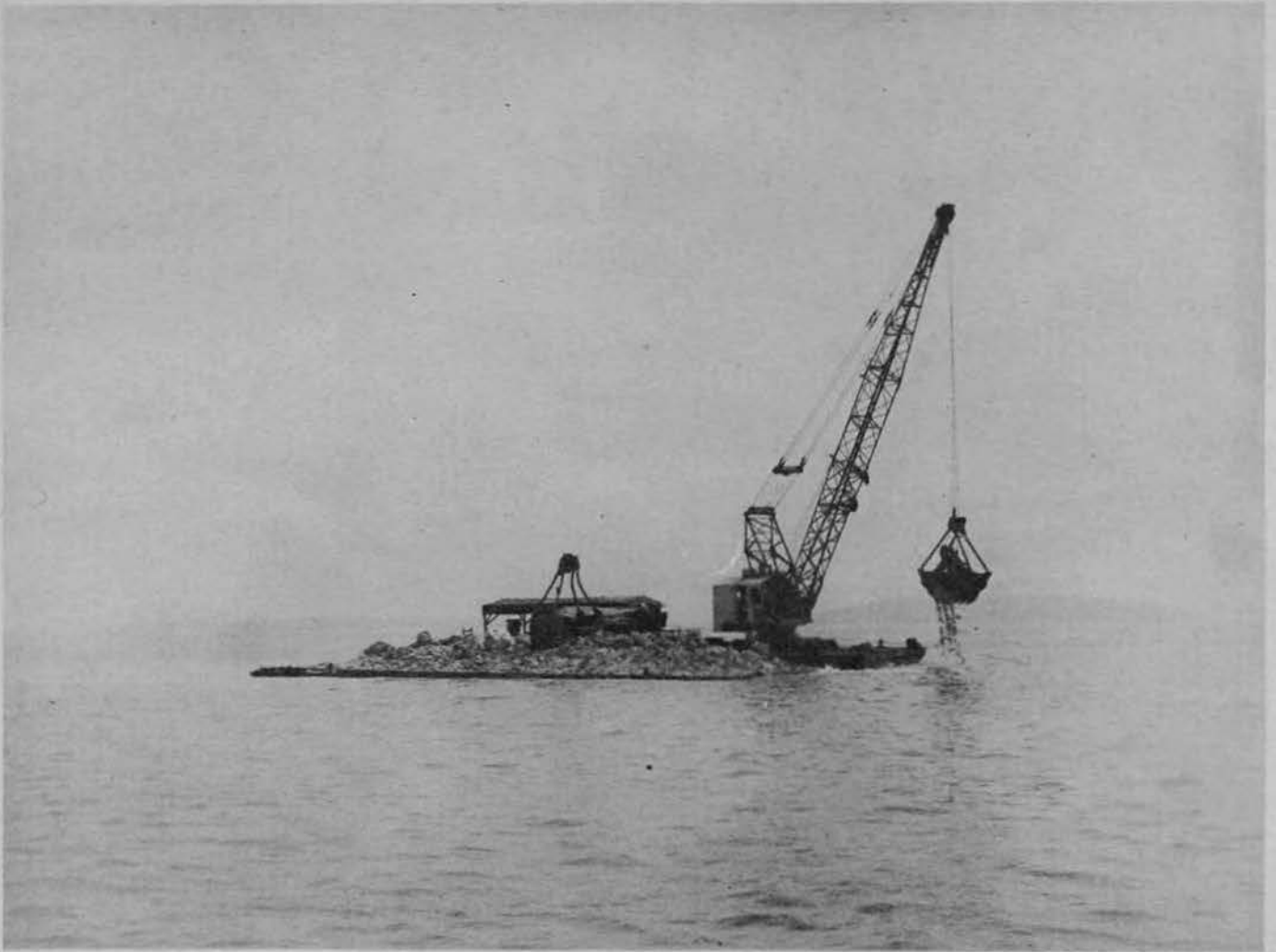
TELEPHONE EXCHANGE
BUILDINGS



TELEPHONE EXCHANGE
INTERIOR



MOBILE ERECTION
SCAFFOLD



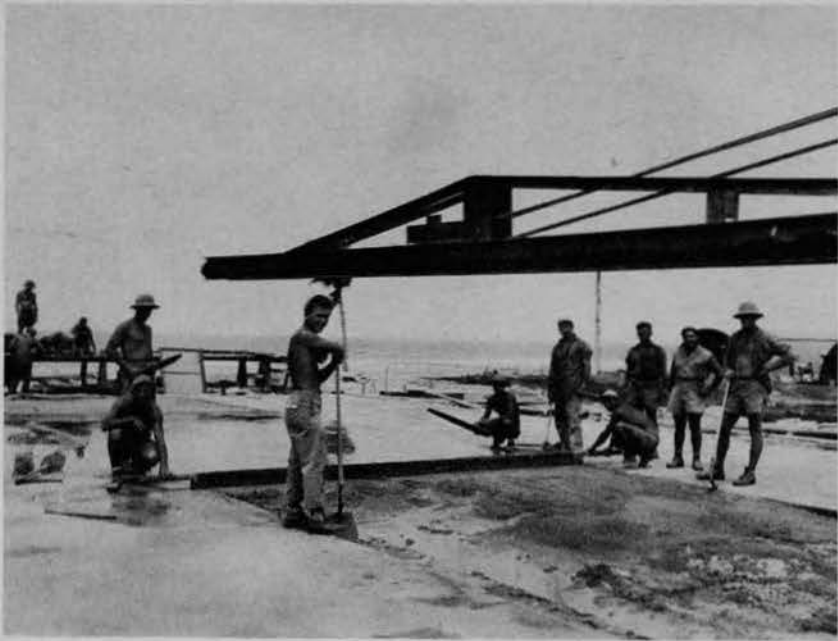
SHOAL DREDGING PROJECT IN LEYTE GULF

CEMENT LOADING



CALICOAN HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION





STEEL WAREHOUSE
FLOOR SLAB



STEEL FRAMEWORK



COMPLETED WAREHOUSES



TWO STORY WAREHOUSE AND SORTING SHEDS PROJECT

ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROJECT



OFFICERS MESS PROJECT





Natives

NATIVES

The natives, by appearance and habit, show strongly the results of varied influences of other peoples, begun when Chinese traders of the Ming dynasty, in the twelfth century, sailed to these islands with their wares. » Spanish influence began when Magellan, sailing from Seville, landed at Samar, in 1521, and found here a people using balance scales and measures—trading with the people of other islands. Cock-fighting, which is the major sport of Calicoan, was popular even then. Magellan, stopping at Cebu, Christianized several hundred natives and was killed soon after, while leading his newly Christianized people against their enemies of a neighboring island. Rice, bananas, cocoanuts, shells, and woven matting, were some of the products of trade even at this early date. Later, Spanish partial occupation, with resultant inter-marriage, brought a strong influence, which is evident today on the little island of Calicoan, where the Sunday dresses and veils of the native women, on their way to Mass, indicate a Spanish fashion—the facial features of many showing traces of Spanish blood. Manila in the time of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was the commercial trading center of the East. The Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, and Portuguese, with their products of the period, all traded in Manila, and therefore all contributed some influence. » The little boy with Oriental features with whom we talked, may easily be a descendant of a merchant of early days.

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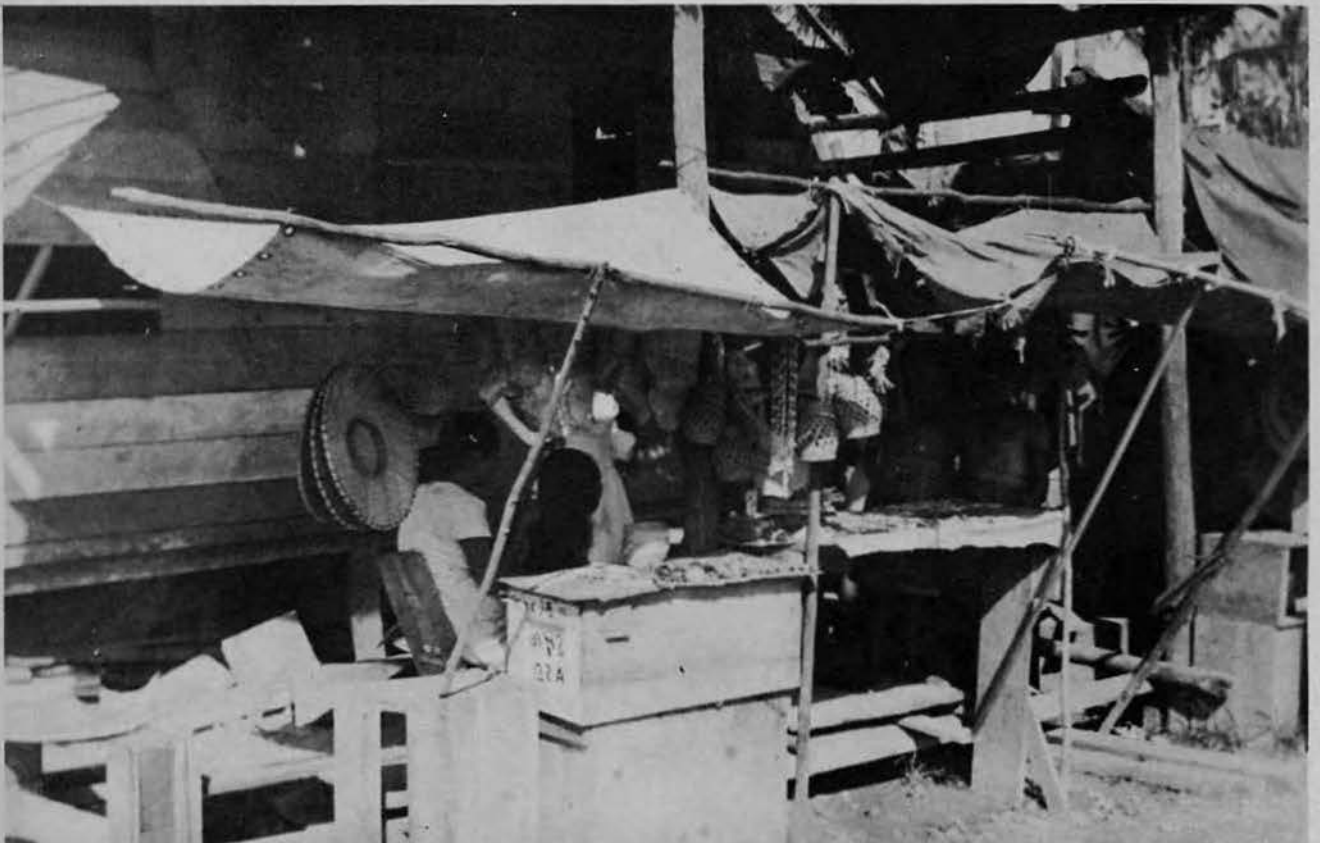
GUIUAN

Guiuan, the town of our landing, impressed us strongly, for here it was we met a people of quite a different type and habit. Here, traffic was opposite—one drove to the left side of the road. Money was of Philippine currency in pesos and centavos. Little tots of four were to be seen carrying large and heavy bundles balanced on their heads, with perfect ease and grace. Here too, we saw our first bolo knives, abaca cloth, and odd sea shells—woven matting and Oriental type hats, and numerous other objects that would make interesting trinkets for those back home. Our first Sunday visit to town introduced us to cock-fighting, a legalized sport, in a public pit, for the admission price of one peso. The spirited betting and exciting atmosphere of the pit was most interesting. One would accept an offer of a bet from a Filipino who could not speak English—the transaction being little more than a pointing to the bird of choice, a nod of agreement, a handing of money to the other—and then the settlement at the end of the match. One could also bet the pit merchants, or the bird handlers themselves. Often when betting the pit and winning, the money returned was bloody, the result of a habit or custom of the pit money handlers to place all stake-money on the ground in neat piles, in front of them, until after the match—the cocks often choosing this spot of the small arena to slash each other. Some of the men purchased birds from native friends, who still tended them, and entered them in matches, many of the ventures being quite profitable. Little did our wives or friends realize, that the cute abaca luncheon cloth with matching napkins, may have been paid for by a little straw-colored game chicken who did not know when to quit fighting.

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GUIUAN STREET SCENE



GUIUAN STREET SHOP



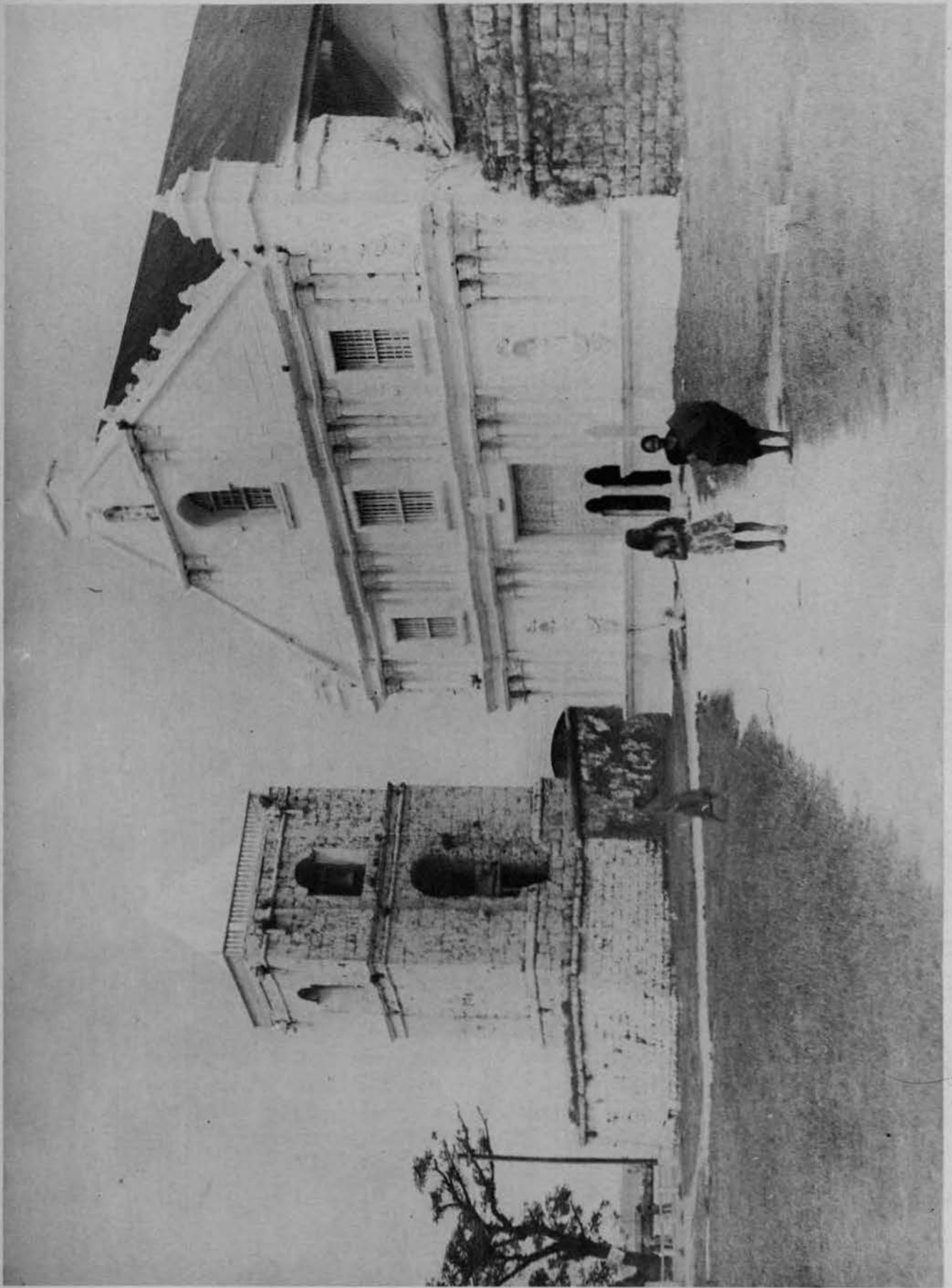
BACK-BAY GUIUAN



ENROUTE TO THE COCK-FIGHTS IN GUIUAN THESE MEN
ARE CONFIDENT AND HAPPY



SCHOOL RECESS



CATHOLIC CHURCH, GUIUAN, SAMAR



CHURCH ENTRANCE, GUIUAN

The Catholic church at Guiuan, built three hundred and sixty odd years ago, by native labor and craftsmen who were tutored by the Jesuit Fathers, bears evidence of the inherent skill of these people. The stonework of local soft stone has weathered considerably, but the wood work of the doors is well preserved, as seen in the photograph above. A stone wall, of battlement type, encloses the church, bell tower, and other buildings of the church group, and was intended for the defense of the church against non-Christian attack.



STREET CORNER, GUIUAN

LELEBOON

Leleboon, the little island to the south of Calicoan, originally sparsely populated, became a relatively sizeable community of sixteen hundred natives. The rapid expansion was due to the fact that naval projects on Calicoan required land inhabited by the natives, and in recompense for land appropriation, the navy transported the families—including houses, chickens, pigs, and all other possessions—to Leleboon. The houses were disassembled, moved, and reassembled at their new location. In some instances, new houses of native type were constructed, but generally, the owner, preferring the native materials of his own labors and having a strong sentimental feeling for his home, desired that it be transplanted, stick for stick. To the navy it was but a house—to the native it was a home. The navy honored the owner's request, as the houses, being of simple pole and thatch construction, were easily moved.

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NATIVE BOY

The native boy above, typical of all the boys of Leleboon or Calicoan, dresses in shorts usually, excepting Sundays when he attends church. He is comparatively well groomed, proud, an excellent swimmer, peaceful and, not uncommonly, able to speak and read three languages. Spanish, English, and his native Visayan dialect are taught in the schools, his facility depending upon the age and length of school attendance. Cock-fighting, with its wagering, is his major sport. An outrigger canoe, as in the photograph above, which is poled or paddled, depending upon water depth, is his chief means of transportation for any great distance. His wine, made from cocoanut frond sap, aged in the shell high in the tree, is called "tuba," and is a potent sweet wine. Some of the native toppers, out for an evening of fun, will climb a tree, sit perched in the top drinking tuba, and later climb down—to stagger off in unsteady fashion. Several natives will sometimes climb into the treetop and there, with little support, the tree swaying in the wind, lighten their sorrow. The probable explanation of why we never heard of a tree top drinking scrap is that 'twould be a poor place to start one.



TYPICAL STREET SCENE, LELEBOON

PLAYMATES



THREE SCHOOLTEACHERS AND FRIEND





NATIVE THATCH HUTS WITH RICE DRYING IN THE FOREGROUND, THE NET BEING USED TO PROTECT THE RICE FROM THE BIRDS AND CHICKENS

CALICOAN-LELEBOON FERRY



BEACH HOUSE





GRINDING RICE



PURE BALANCE, A HEAVY LOAD, AND NO APPARENT EFFORT



A GROUP PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN AT ONE OF THE MANY COMMUNITY WELLS, WHERE THE GOSSIP OF THE DAY IS BROUGHT, WHERE THE BATH IS TAKEN, WHERE WATER FOR COOKING IS OBTAINED, AND WHERE THE CLOTHING IS WASHED



LELEBOON STORE

The bamboo pole as a means of carrying objects probably originated in China and is often seen here. The building in the background is one of the two native stores on Leleboon. A sack of rice and a bunch of bananas, both visible in the photo, are the complete stock—another evidence of the simple needs of these people.



GRANDDAUGHTER'S BATH TIME



RETURNING FROM A SWIMMING LESSON

A black and white photograph of a quilted surface, possibly a tent or a sleeping bag, with a repeating diamond-shaped pattern. In the upper center, there are five small, light-colored stars arranged in a pattern. The word "Camp" is overlaid in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and partially overlapping the stars.

Camp

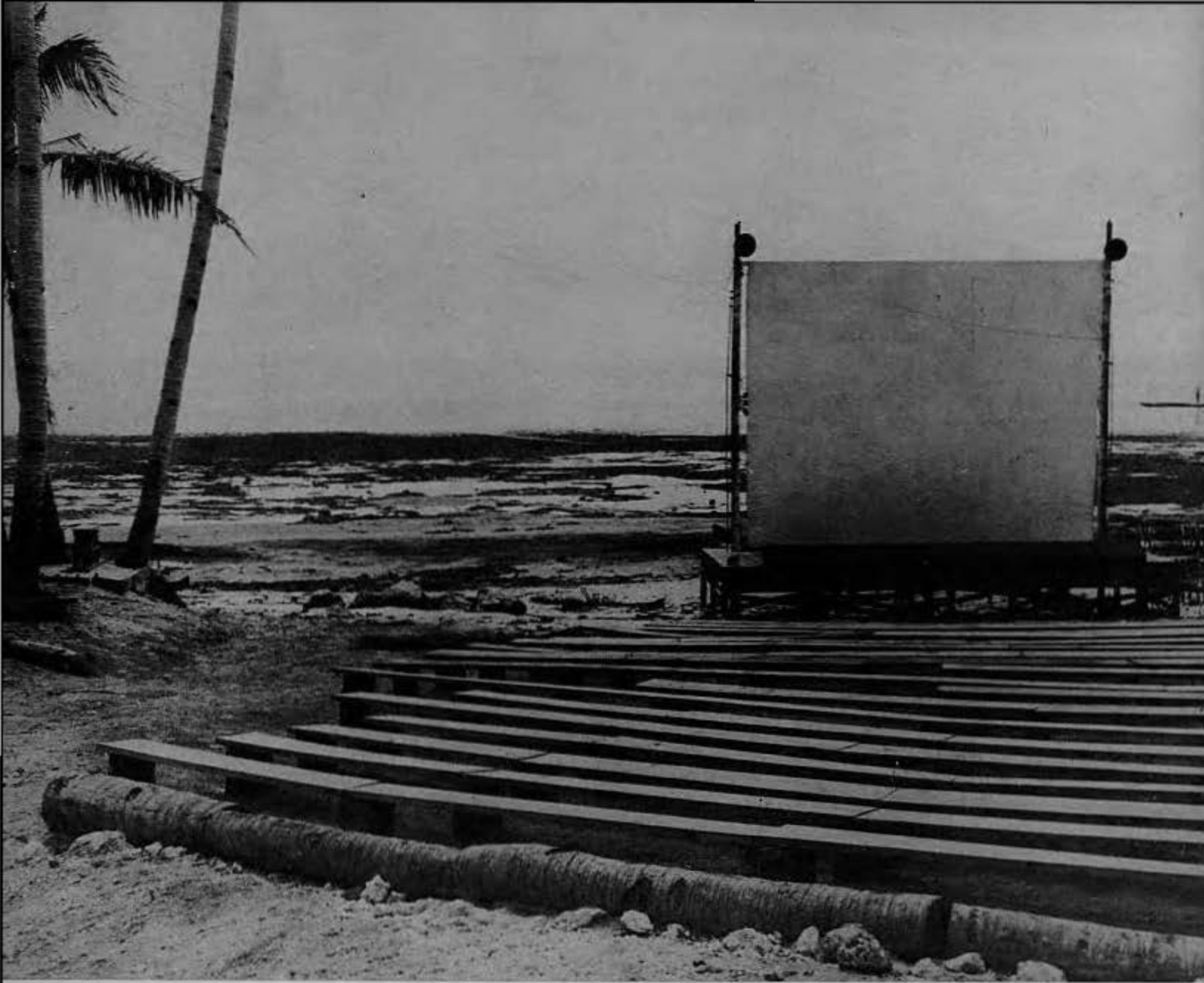


CAMP

Our campsite, a coconut grove on the southwestern shore of Calicoan, overlooking Leyte Gulf, became the scene of busy activity day and night. Everyone helped in some way to build the camp which was to be our home. Bulldozers felled the coconut trees; a group of men following cut the trunks into lengths for foundation posts; another group following began the framing; and step by step, in swift succession, tents appeared as from a production line. A total of two hundred and fifty tents, of various sizes and uses, comprise the camp. Coral sand fill material, for filling low spots of terrain, was obtained by use of carryalls which operated during low tide periods just off shore.



An aerial view showing part of the camp. The outdoor theater can be seen at the extreme left. Administration offices are grouped in the semicircle. The open area at the upper right is the ball field.



At high tide the platform supporting the screen would be partly under water. Here on rainy nights one could see some odd appearing costumes in the audience, and odd, too, the emotional reaction to a torrid love scene, with water dripping from the end of one's nose.



CAMP SCENE FROM THE PIER

OFFICERS MESS INTERIOR



OFFICERS MESS EXTERIOR





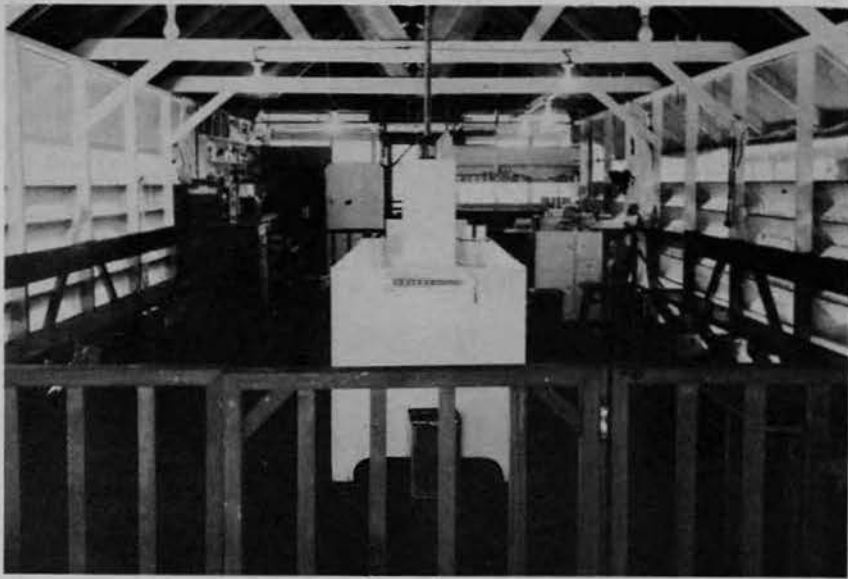
GALLEY



SHIP'S STORE



LAUNDRY



DISPENSARY



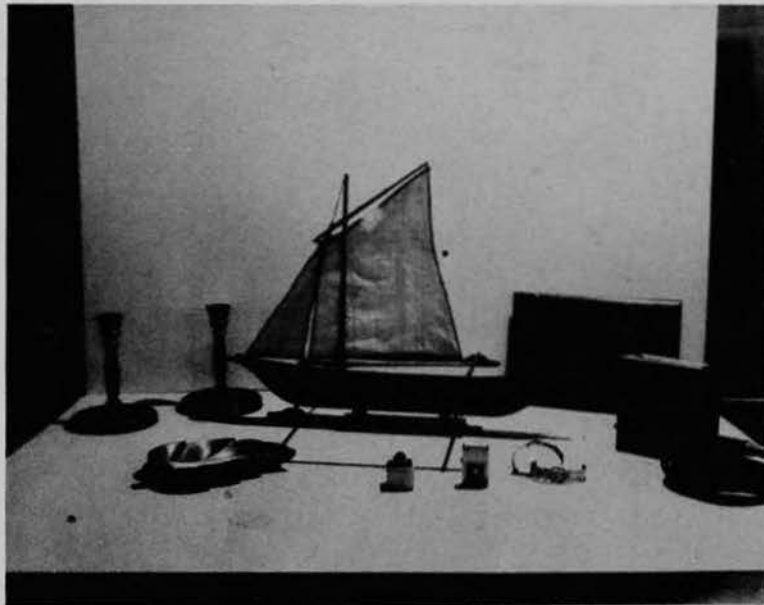
WARD



DENTAL OFFICE



BATTALION BASEBALL TEAM



HOBBY-LOBBY EXHIBIT



DIVINE SERVICES AT A
NEIGHBORING UNIT
CHAPEL



NIGHT BASKETBALL GAME



NATIVE CIVIC LEADERS AT
THE BATTALION DANCE

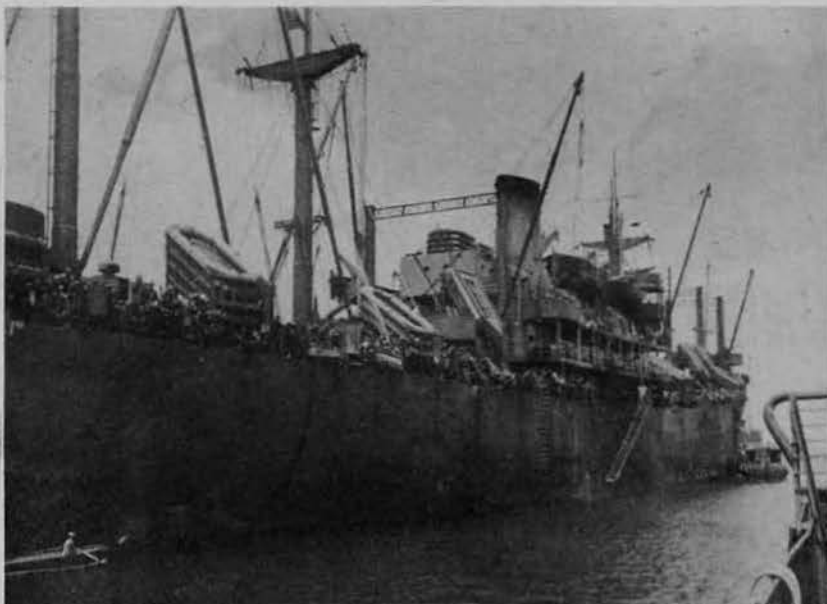


PETS

This island provided pets of a different type than those in Hawaii. There we had dogs and rabbits; here one could see a variety of tropical birds—parrots, parakeets, love birds, pigeons—and monkeys, including our usual following of dogs of every non-pedigreed description. A native boy walked into camp leading a deer which he wanted to sell, but could find no takers.



DIVINE SERVICES
ABOARD SHIP



THE SEA STURGEON



ENTERTAINMENT
ABOARD SHIP

