

WW II

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

Short Stories of
Exciting
Headline Events
in the Life of a
SEABEE

Now Uncensored!
and Declassified!

WW II

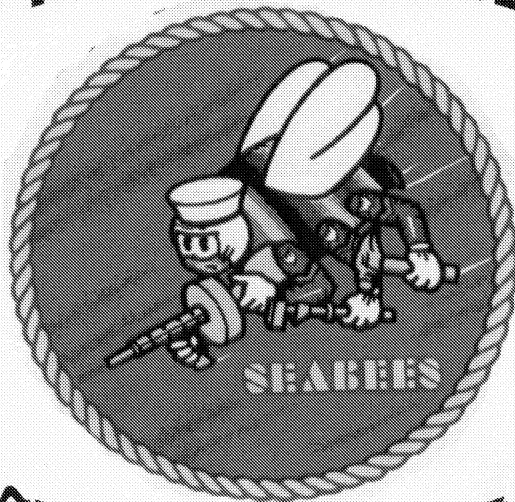
SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

Short Stories of
Exciting
Headline Events
in the Life of a
SEABEE

Clayton F. Rasmussen

REDEMPTION  PRESS

110th N.C.B.



"SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT"

ISLAND "X"

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Clayton F. Rasmussen

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Foreword

Personally, I deny any claims of being an historian, and yet history is made up of people, events, and periods of time. These components of history are included in the following accounts, but they also include personal emotions of which most historical accounts are lacking. They are written for your enjoyment and entertainment, while being accurate to the best of my ability. Put yourself into the event as you read, and adventure along with me, enjoying the trip!

Having grown up in our beloved country, America, my loyalty and patriotism runs deep. Seeing the world drawing headlong into a world war, during my high-school days, we kept up with the news as then available by radio and newspapers. We realized nations were drawing up battle lines in diplomacy. America was quite strongly split between isolationism and global participation. We recognized two great potential enemies were Germany, and Japan. The isolationist forces desired our nation to remain independent from world conflict, even though the Administration desired to join European allies against Germany. The Japanese were a power-

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ful force in the Pacific region, but as long as they stayed in their place across the ocean, America was content to remain at peace.

The citizenry was quite unaware of the constant, severe threat that Japan was considered by our military. However, the author's brother was in the Army Air Corps, based in Hawaii during the first half of the 1930's. Upon leaving the Army in 1935, he was placed on "call-up" status for the following four years, because the military expected an outbreak of war with Japan. At the same time the United States was shipping scrap metal to Japan. Often heard at the time was the saying: "Today we ship Japan scrap metal, tomorrow they will drop it back on our heads in the form of bombs."

Then came that awful day of infamy, December 7, 1941! Japan made a surprise, unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor. Our Naval Fleet caught in the harbor was devastated.

War was declared then against Japan and their ally Germany. We had already heard of the atrocities done by the Japanese upon the Chinese, and now they were aiming at America. Our very existence as a nation was threatened. To say we were unprepared as a nation to go to war was a gross under-statement!

I was nineteen at the time, and found myself in a critical type of work; an engineering machinist, in a Scientific Laboratory involved in developing scientific instruments for critical need by both civilian and military customers.

By order of the government my job was frozen; I could not be drafted, nor could I enlist unless released by higher authority. My deferment was continued until I finally convinced Dr. Beckman, for whom I worked, to release me to go into the military. So on June 16, 1943 I was sworn into the Navy Seabees (CB's), on "Special Assignment."

The reader is alerted to the fact that the language used in the following stories, such as "Jap," or "Nip," used instead of "Japanese," was the jargon of that time. It was intended to convey the

Foreword

message of that day as we felt it, toward a savage, merciless enemy, who deserved no less disrespectful name. They were our sworn enemies. Kill them, or be killed ourselves; they gave us no other choice.

Having seen friends die, or being maimed for life by these brutal enemies, made a righteous anger well up, even in a Christian. War is terrible, but our nation was placed in a position of defending itself against enemies who designed to conquer the World, and subjugate their victims to brutalities unknown in our former days. During our early days in the military we were trained both physically, and prepared mentally to fight for total advantage over the enemies we would encounter.

As Seabees our specialty was to use our skilled craftsmanship to provide facilities for military operations, and to maintain them, all done in combat areas. So besides honing our technical skills we were also trained in combat techniques. We would be exposed in our line of duty to all the fierceness of the enemy's attacks. We must respond with equal or more effective tactics.

No historian can faithfully transmit the total truth about events during any period, or culture, without also knowing firsthand the emotions of that time period. America had been suddenly plunged into a war it did not want, and for which it was ill-prepared. Civilians suddenly became soldiers. The transition was traumatic, and affected lives in many adverse ways, as well as providing loyal disciplines. Individuals were taught to work together with others to provide a team effort that was for the common good.

The goal at the end of the tunnel was to win the war, so all-out effort was aimed at that objective. The enemy we were fighting in the Pacific was Japan. The enemy soldiers we faced were Japs, or Nips, for short, who believed it was glorious to die fighting. We believed in fighting to return home again after obtaining our objective of defeating our enemy. This difference in philosophy of

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life and death made for entirely different response mechanisms by the forces engaged in battle.

World War 2 was a period of national testing. It was to prove the moral fiber of a people. It would prove their commitment to one another, their cohesiveness, unity of purpose, and their belief in an Almighty God who raises up nations and puts others down, all according to His divine righteousness and eternal plan. It was a time for training me for the rigors of life in the future, to test my faith and trust in God, and to offer me the sweetheart who would be my marriage partner for life.

The military had full support from the citizenry. There was a little “conscientious objection” by individuals, but even as a Christian I would never have thought to object to serving my country in this time of crisis, even in the military. To be given all the blessings and benefits of being a citizen of this God-blessed nation without being available to defend it, was unthinkable. However, I do thank the Lord He never placed me in a situation where I had to directly take another person’s life, but I do thank those who did it for us by necessity!

Now as you read these accounts of various events in which I was involved, realize you are being presented happenings from a period of time quite different from the time in which we live today. Do not be offended. I was a Christian then, and thankfully I’m still kept by my same Lord and Savior Jesus Christ today. His omnipotence is the measure of my expectations!

In providing research for the events recorded in these story accounts, I have relied heavily on personal memory. My mind was sharpened by emotional reaction to the excitement, or trauma of the events, as well as a desire at the time to write about them in the future. Chronology, and statistical details were gleaned from my personal diary kept in secret at the time, letters written to my sweet-

Foreword

heart, which she kept in a perfumed, locked box, and letters to my parents. (Thankfully, they saved them).

Other details were recorded in our Battalion's official record book: "Contract Completed," which includes many pictures, and artist sketches, along with narration of the 110th CB Battalion activities over its entire activation period. The battalion was commissioned in the summer of 1943, and de-commissioned in the late fall of 1945.

My service days extended from June 1943 to February 1946. Other Seabees of our outfit have provided refreshment of memories, as we have met on occasion, and the Seabee Museum at Port Hueneme has offered documents that record actual declassified military information unavailable from other sources. The Public Libraries have revealed details of interactions of our various units during military operations.

This writing has certainly been a personal delight, and a spiritual blessing to see in retrospect the hand of God at work on behalf of one of His children. We are enabled to see His overall purpose for events, unknown at the time because of our direct involvement, which can now be seen in light of events which followed.

Please understand that the events and adventures recorded here were all a part of our total time commitment to perform the assigned tasks for which we were responsible. Our lives, 24 hours each day, were dedicated to our military service. What we chose to make of it was each person's privilege, and was in accordance with his character, interest inclination, and personality. In these accounts I believe you will detect what my motivations were.

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(50 Years Later—Author Composes Memoirs)

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my three adult children, Cheryl, Gary, and David for their tolerance in their growing up years of my repeated relating of many bits and pieces of events from my experiences in WWII. Many times those stories were retold upon their insistence so their friends could hear. As adults they encouraged me to put these experiences in writing, so that others could also share them.

My dear wife, Cora encouraged me to start writing, as she put together the pictures I took during the war into albums which could be shared. She started this legacy by gathering our pictures taken over a period of four decades from storage boxes and organized them into photo albums which now fill an entire bookcase. This provided the incentive to write the history that accompanied those photos.

Cora also critiqued and edited my first story: “Divinely Directed Delays.” She was also the guiding light of my life as I lived those dark days in WWII, later to be my marriage sweetheart. Having lived a most fulfilling life together, she has now departed this life

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for a far better place with our Lord God in His Heavenly Paradise, where we will meet again.

I owe much to my Seabee mates with whom I served, and who have shared refreshing memories which correlate with my own experience, through those often frightening events. Pictures and artistic sketches have been gleaned from our battalion history book, "Contract Completed," faithfully recorded, edited and published by several officers and enlisted men of our 110th Seabee Battalion.

The very fact that I'm still living today is entirely due to the gracious and loving care God gave me during the events which are hereby related. He was always my protector, friend, and my very salvation. He provided during those war years rewards for me of which I was often unaware at the time. He included a sweetheart who became my lifelong wife; a G.I. Bill which provided the education for my profession; lifelong friends; and above all my spiritual growth through it all.



(Lifelong friends, 110th Seabee Machine Shop
Crew on Tinian)

Cora, to you I dedicate these writings; you who offered such encouragement and love, by which you helped mold and shape me during those trying war years into that man you would eventually marry. Then we shared forty-one memorable years together,

Acknowledgments

always deeply in love! A love that would touch many lives, and produce three lovely children who can now share these experiences with their spouses and their own children. I owe you my deepest love for all eternity, Cora! Love transcends all else, for true love comes from God Himself.



(Author, with Wife Cora, and Children David,
Gary, & Cheryl)

Introduction

“Hey Kids! Meet Your Dad.”

“To Know Me is to See Me in My Early Twenties!”

Take a Look!

Multitudes of military veterans of WWII could begin the memoirs to their children by a headline similar to the above. However, too few of them have documented their activities so that their offspring could know how their experiences helped shape their lives for the future. For those of you who have longed to know what went on in the everyday life of a serviceman in his training and in the combat areas, read along. In the privacy of your own home participate in the dangers, the excitement, the stresses, the adventures and the personal services rendered by such a young man. Although the pattern of warfare in the Pacific theater of operations, was quite different from that in the European theater, many similarities in personal trauma will be recognized.

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The moral fiber of those participating was being molded and shaped. Perhaps that is why that generation has been sometimes referred to as the greatest generation. Their lives were forever changed, and would help them to shape the very makeup of our nation with its future accomplishments.

Documented here, for the first time, is a series of true-life, short-story accounts of special events in the life of a young enlisted man, in the U.S. Navy Seabees. Embroiled in the battling for Pacific Islands in WWII, he like millions of others was only one of the support troops for the Military. Yet each man had his own special adventurous, and often-traumatic experiences, and Clayton F. Rasmussen, Machinist Mate Shop, 3rd Class, relates some of the events in which he participated.

Except for the strictest censorship at the time concerning some of these events, they would have been headlines in newspapers across the nation. Yet they were only everyday happenings in the lives of those giving their all to make America again a safe place to raise their families. The success of these efforts, amidst the merciful protection of Almighty God, can be evidenced by the fact the children of this author are able to read these accounts in the safety of their own homes.

The Seabee battalion was an outfit designed to perform construction projects in the combat areas, or when necessitated, to join forces with the Marines for combat. The 110th Seabee Construction Battalion was especially prepared to build airbases, and in addition was chosen by providence to perform combat functions. Fortunately the author was selected to be a machinist in the Machine Shop, as well as being one of the first one hundred Seabees to see combat with the 22nd Marine Regiment in the invasion of the Eniwetok Atoll, in the Marshall Islands.

The next assignment for the Battalion was helping secure the island of Tinian in the Marianas, and development of the *largest*

Introduction

airbase in the world. Our final thrust was helping to bring the war to a successful conclusion, with delivery of the atomic bombs on Japan itself. Then to make a rounded career of Navy life, the last three months of his service was on the Aircraft Carrier Suwanne, CVE 27, touring to Okinawa.

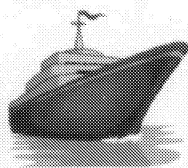
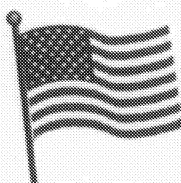
Meet this young man!



(Clayton F. Rasmussen, Machinist Mate Shop, 3rd Class)

BEGINNINGS

**PRE-MILITARY
INDUCTION
CAMP PEARY
GULFPORT
HUENEME**



Chapter 1

The Training of a Seabee

Pre-Military

Upon graduation from High School, I had no knowledge that in a short while our nation would be in war, neither did I realize the work I was being trained and involved in, would lead me into military service. Eighty percent of each Seabee unit was made up of men with considerable experience in some particular trade or profession.

Following is a brief of my experience prior to being selected for Special Assignment in the Navy Seabees. This experience, along with special interest in precision and innovative machinist projects help provide background. From this pre-military information the reader may better understand the reason I was selected to perform some of the more creative projects in our Seabee unit, discussed in the following stories.

The basic training for Seabees was the same for all of us, but the pre-military experience of each tradesman varied infinitely. The Seabee unit was composed of a vast number of abilities, which led

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to our motto of “Seabees Can Do”! As a unit we could undertake *anything* and successfully complete it!

Thus the lessons learned from such synergistic cohesion led us to continue the practice into civilian life as we returned to our individual careers after the war. Therefore, this first chapter includes my particular pre-induction experience, followed by the special training every Seabee received.

Clayton Rasmussen—A VET



(Pre-military Preparation—Seabee symbol)

Pre-Military Preparation

WWII was a world event that none of us young people growing up in America during “The Depression” years expected. Hadn’t Germany been defeated in 1918? Was not Japan such a different culture from our Western civilization that they would not pose a real threat to our nation, isolated from them as we were by the vast Pacific Ocean? Because our nation was so divided by views of Isolationism-Vs-One World perspectives, Germany posed no real threat to the U.S.; so we imagined. As we young people entered the work force in 1940 the employment picture was becoming better, after so many years of harsh and sparse living for those unable to find adequate employment.

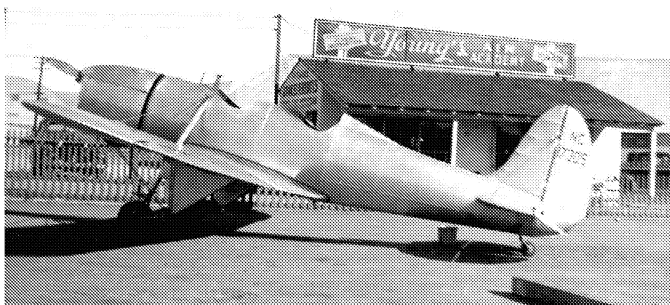
Even as I ventured from Pennsylvania to California in search of work in the aviation industry, it was not easy for a young man of 17, just out of High School, to find employment other than part-time. So investment in the training of trade skills seemed most likely to result in a job. I enrolled in two aircraft sheet-metal night school courses.

Aviation ambition was an obsession. Having a very strong desire to be a pilot, it was inspiring to hear songs such as: “Men with Wings,” and “Off we go, Into the Wild Blue Yonder.” And to read about airmen Charles Lindbergh, Billy Mitchell, and air racing pilots such as Jimmy Doolittle, and Roscoe Turner. Then having the opportunity to personally meet Roscoe Turner at his hanger in Burbank was only to strike a stronger spark to the glowing embers of flying. This was capped off by living with my brother who had served in the Army Air Corps and was then working for Lockheed Aircraft Company.

Around the same time I met a man who was on his way to Canada to serve as a volunteer in the Canadian Expeditionary Aviation group on their way to England to help defend the British Isles from Hitler’s threats. He offered to take me with him to enlist, but

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after considering the alternatives, I did not have the makings of a mercenary pilot. Another offer came to our night school class, providing opportunity for volunteers to train in the Ferry Pilot Program at a near-by military training field as a civilian flyer. But I turned that down for reason I wasn't ready for the military discipline, being we weren't at war.



(My First Aerobatic Flight was in this Ryan Sportster)

I was anxious to learn flying, and especially in the test pilot arena. I went to Van Nuys, in the San Fernando Valley, and convinced a pilot to take me on a trial flight in an aerobatic sport plane to see how I liked it. He took me up to altitude over the Griffith Park area and proceeded to do rolls, loops, spins, and sharply banked turns till I was ashen in face, with a squeamish stomach. Boy, I guess a fellow would have to get used to that type flying. I suffered all afternoon long with motion sickness. Maybe this flying game wasn't so much fun after all!

Having turned 18, I still did not have a full-time job, and the reason for this was bothering me and it wasn't paying my bills. At this time an evangelist came to the church we were attending, and I went to the meetings on the nights I had no class. One night he spoke on the subject: "Afraid to be different!" It was addressed especially to young people, and it really hit home with me. I had

The Training of a Seabee

reached the point in my life when I must make my own decisions, not relying on what my parents wanted, because they were clear across the continent from me now. I must make my decisions on what the Lord desired for me.

I had accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior at age 13, so I knew I was a Christian, because I believed the Bible and what it said about being born again. Since then, and even before, I had been quite firmly grounded in the study of God's Word, the Bible. So when this evangelist described what I knew was my need, I made my *life* commitment to serve the Lord *wherever* He would lead me, even relinquishing my aviation aspirations if He so desired. From that point on I knew I was being led of the Lord and that He was opening doors for me, while sometimes closing doors where I was not to go. He was leading the way! What He wanted for me was what I wanted, which was to follow His will for my life.

One night shortly after that decision, a knock came on the door of my brother Marius' house where I was living. It was a man asking for me. He had observed my work on outside construction projects at the house, and had inquired of Marius about my schooling and discovered I had all the college preparatory courses in Mathematics and the Sciences. So he was there to ask if I would consider applying for work at Dr. Beckman's company in South Pasadena, "National Technical Laboratories" (NTL). Beckman was looking for young men he could train, and encourage to grow in the field of Science. He recommended me, and took me to their Laboratory the next day for an interview. I was hired, and became the 57th employee, including Dr. Beckman!

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(National Technical Laboratories, NTL, 1940,
South Pasadena, CA)

On the day after Thanksgiving, while the rest of the employees had the day off, they offered I could come and start work. I appeared, with my supervisor, and was escorted to the rear of the plant to their apple orchard. Seeing a man in overalls on a ladder trimming trees, I was told to help him and haul the trimmings to a pile of brush to be burned. This I did for about two hours, and then, assuming the man doing the trimming was getting tired, I offered to relieve him on the ladder. He agreed, and instructed me on the method of pruning, and I climbed the ladder. We proceeded all day, alternating the trimming and hauling, and so went my first day of work at NTL. I was so pleased to have a steady, full time job!

Two weeks later, it was time to receive our pay-checks, and I anticipated this with joy. My friends said the President of the Company would deliver them personally, so I would then get to meet him. Here I was, the least experienced employee in the company and I would get to meet the President, and CEO. The time for check distribution came while we were eating our bag lunches, and as the big man in a business suit approached, I suddenly began to blush.

“Well, Clayton, now that you aren’t trimming trees anymore, how are you doing on this more technical job we have you on?” Here was the man I had trimmed trees with and who I thought was the janitor! What a surprise, to say the least. That was my introduction to the man who probably had more influence on the ca-

The Training of a Seabee

reer I would choose for my lifetime work than any other human being. I owe much to him, and appreciate the personal friendship of such a well rounded person. Friendly, extremely intelligent, a Physical Chemistry Professor, California Institute of Technology Trustee, philanthropist, entrepreneur, businessman and industrialist of the highest caliber, is only an introduction to this man's qualifications. At age 87 he was inducted into the Inventors Hall of Fame, and at age 89 he received the nations top science honor, the National Medal of Science, from President Bush, at a White House ceremony.

Even at age 100, he was still going into the office at the "Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation" to attend Board meetings, keeping up on the philanthropic projects that he and his wife Mabel founded. To date he has donated Hundreds of Millions of dollars to Medical and Scientific research projects.

After my first day of work at NTL, I started working in the chemical mixing facility which they called the "Green House" where we made a sterilizing chemical called "Sterimatic Solution." I don't know if the name for the facility came because of the color of the house, or if it was describing the chlorine haze that always hung in the atmosphere. Incidentally, the air we breathed there had a wonderful medicinal effect for preventing colds and flu.

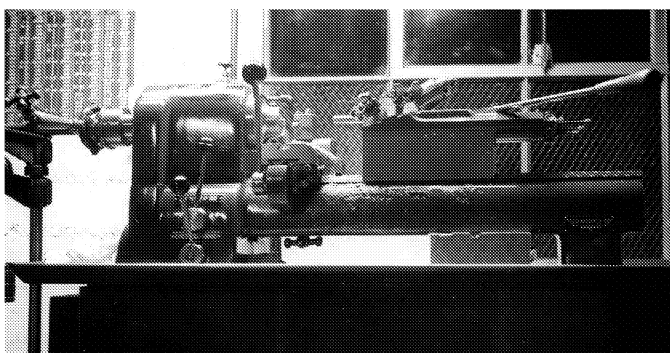
After five weeks in that facility, Dr. Beckman himself commended me on my work and offered to promote me to the "case assembly" of their "pH Meters," which was a one man operation. I gladly accepted, and went to work in the lower floor of the main building. This responsibility grew to include inspection of the meter cases as they came from the wood shop and lacquer finishing facility. After about three months I was approached by the supervisor of the Machine Shop, who had been looking over my personnel files and discovered I had taken courses in Sheet-Metal. He was about to start a sheet-metal facility as part of the Machine Shop and wondered if I would be interested in being the man to set it

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up. Always on the lookout for further opportunity, I heartily agreed. Then came a time of waiting for this to happen.

After about six weeks I was getting quite anxious, so I approached him to see if he had given the job to someone else. They had been delayed on the sheet metal equipment, but said he was expecting a different machine to arrive, any day soon. It was a new “Hardinge” Screw Machine, which no one in the shop knew how to operate, and he wanted to know if I was interested in becoming a machinist, specializing in screw machine operation and set-up. I jumped at the chance to learn something new!

He notified my supervisor that I was to be transferred to the Machine Shop the following week. Learning the *operation* of the screw machine was fascinating to me and after awhile he started to teach me the *setting up* of the jobs on the machine. The multiple operation screw machine performs nine or more different operations on a part that is in the lathe to be machined. To set-up the operations requires being able to precision grind cutting tools of various shapes, setting them in the turret in the sequence determined for the machining operations to take place, and adjusting the various feed speeds.



(Hardinge Screw-Machine I operated and Set-up)