

Added info, by William Greene, Seabee

Left Seattle on the liberty ship, SS Henry Failing. Time about Dec. of 1943 headed for Attu.

We hit a typhoon about 5 days out, in Bering Sea. The ship became covered in about 1 foot of ice all over deck and even the lines. It blew away all of the equipment on deck. Trucks, cargo, even the life rafts. We were fortunate that our ship had been retrofitted with long plate of steel. About 2 feet wide and 20 + feet long. Torches had cut hole in the sheets and they could weld the plate to the deck. It looked like a whole deck of bandages, totally covering the deck. Had this have not been done, we would have broken in half and sent to the bottom.

Guys were crying for fear of dying. Everyone was sick, even the crew. It would toss the bow up to a 45-degree position, then come wapp wapp down, then the stern would raise to a 45 degree and again whap whap down, then roll to starboard 45 degree, you stand on bulkhead and deck, till it rolled to port side. Again, rolling to starboard again.

We would go to chow, table was pulled down from posts, no chair, stand. Impossible to stand and eat under these conditions. Plus, guys on each side were upchucking. Made for an interesting trip.

Arrived at Attu about middle of December. We were called the Christmas packages by the old troops.

Lived first in a tent. Wooden platform build-up, with 6 layers of tents for top cover. 6 men to a tent. Later transferred to a Quonset hut. 24 guys to the unit. My job was working on a power crew gang that installed power poles for lights to airstrips and all other needs. Winds of 75 to 100+ took out a lot of the power. We would be out there in -10 below weather fixing the down lines and poles damaged. Up on a pole, winds 50 mph + fixing the problem. Drilling holes with compressor to allow dynamite charge that would cleverly clear the hole. Drill on an angle and debris would fly out at a angle and clear the area. Also drove the "A" frame truck to erecting the poles and later to drive the area for damaged lines. We dug the hole framed the poles, small ones piked them in. Big one raised by "A" frame.

The chow hall was in the shape of the figure H. company A thru D each had a wing. One wing blew away one day. Blew it about 50 feet away. Did have the Red Cross arrive, coffee, doughnuts etc. 25 cents for each... never forgave them for that. Did have a USO troop come on island. My buddy and I picked them up at the plane in a Weapons Carrier. The best vehicle on the island.. jeep got bogged down in tundra. Marlene Dietrich and her crew put one a great show for us.

Not a tree on the island, except a manmade model. Only critter on island was a silver fox. Lots of birds, People travel there to study the birds. Could go on forever, but this is a glimpse of the "Hell Hole" Did go over to army town for thanksgiving one time, waited in line for 4 hours, got to me, out of food, got some K-rations. Bummer.

Did a ton of beach patrols, mostly at night. Two and at a time. We were at the rock quarry one time, saw a shed that looked like a outdoor John. Opened door, found it was dynamite storage. We took to sticks and played keep way with them. Next day at chow I was commenting on it, and guy next to me was a power monkey, said you are lucky to be alive. At 10 degrees below, nitro goes to the end. If you had dropped it, they would have never found you.

Someone was watching over us I think. Did make some neat knives. Used the end of a Japanese knee mortar at the end of the knife. Took knee mortar apart and used the detonator. Not a smart thing to be

messing with. Saved two pound can of gun powder, used it to make a rocket. Used an aluminum pipe for rocket case. Stuffed it full of gun powder, soaked a handkerchief in lighter fluid and took it out in a field. My buddy and I build a loading ramp for to launch it. We had a small hill between it and launch site. I light it, ran back crouch down and waited for rocket to launch. Pow...it blew up like a bomb, again not a smart thing to do. Just filling the day with fun. We did get 6 bottles of beer per week. We saved up 4 weeks drank some, set up bottles like pins and bowled with a bottle.

Wow, what a mess.

Enough of the dumb things we did.

Salmon fishing was my favorite. 3-foot silver salmon. Boy do the fight, they run full speed up stream then back down. Difficult to land. But so good when we cooked them. I built a salmon ladder on the Army Engineers bridge by our hut. Our CO asked me to do it because I was from Washington state. Seattle area.

There were 3 flumes, not enough water when we built the latter to one flue. So we blocked two flues. Boy did it work. My CO was so proud of his idea. Well in about we had a rain that wouldn't stop. I washed that bridge about 50 feet down stream. I was confined to my hut for a month. CO said all the planes out, kept them from burning up.

The hanger burned totally to the ground... I knew we could do it...