

Sgt. Eckes Recalls Smell Of Death and Devastation

Marshfield Soldier Writes of War and the City That Was St. Lo



Sgt. Clarence Eckes

Sherman undoubtedly was right about war, and every American soldier who took part in the battle of Fortress Europe will remember the terrible things about war so long as they shall live.

Take Sgt. Clarence Eckes, for example. He cannot remember the names of all the towns through which he marched, but those towns will be vividly recalled by the smell of death.

In a recent letter to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Eckes, 1404 S. Cherry street, Sgt. Eckes tells of his experiences since leaving the United States on March 23, 1944.

He embarked at New York and after a rough trip, landed in Scotland. There the unit boarded a train, almost immediately, which took them past Glasgow, Scotland, to London, England and finally to Brantree, England. From that point, the group marched to a base near Halstead, England.

Nazis Drop Bombs
The first night in camp the unit got a "red alert" for a German air raid. The German planes flew over the base and bombed a town about 10 miles inland.

"We could see the flares they dropped, and on the way back they dropped several right on the edge of the field. They lit everything up just like day. We prayed that they'd keep going, and they did. Thank God," Sgt. Eckes said.

Excerpts from the lengthy letter to his parents follow:

"We were at that place for two weeks and then we went still further east and arrived at Rivenhall Field. It had several small towns nearby and the place was rather nice. We stayed there for six months during which time the German Airforce ceased. But we had the robot bombs every night. You could set your watch by them. They were always over at 10:45, 1:30 and 3 p. m., and we hardly ever slept through a whole night. The trouble with them was you never knew where they'd fall and many did fall near the camp and especially Rivenhall, which was almost completely wiped out . . .

Eckes Meets Clement
"In August we moved to Hern Field near Bormoth, a very modern city and the nicest in Britain. It was here I met Clement at a beach swimming in the English Channel. He talked very funny and I told him to quit flying. He said he didn't want to as he had completed 34 missions already and

planned on going home around Christmas."

Sgt. Eckes then told of walking 14 miles to Stone Field from Hern Field to see Clement and that he didn't recognize him because he had gotten so thin.

He then told that Clement was scheduled to fly another mission and that was the last time he saw him. He failed to return from the flight.

Pittsville
On Sept. 1, Sgt. Eckes boarded a boat outward bound. In referring to the ship and channel crossing he said, "We stayed on it for six days like rats . . . but on the afternoon of Sept. 6, we saw England for the last time . . . It was about 1 o'clock in the night when the ship's bells rang and we all went on deck and ready to hit the water as another ship nearly rammed us. It was only four feet from us when the skipper made a sharp turn and avoided our ship from getting split in half.

Sights Coast of France
"Finally we saw the coast of France about six miles away and it rose like a huge blue bank of lime. As we neared it we saw numerous ships that were sunk and scuttled. There were all types and from all nations; a very eerie sight with the masts sticking out of the water . . .

"We all assembled in a platoon and marched the longest march I ever had; 11 miles in mud half a foot deep and if this is a lie I hope God takes the arm I'm writing this letter with. We trudged along this road, traveled probably by a million men. I do not remember the name of the first village we got to but it was in utter des-

pair and the smell of death lay all around us. We finished the march and finally came to another slaying area and the smell of dead people, the soldiers of the German Army, and the damp earth began coming over the land again."

Army trucks finally took Sgt. Eckes and his group to their first Continental base of which he wrote, "I do not know the name of the town but it was a scene of despair. Everything tore to hell and the people living about like cave men amongst the dead. Under the piles of rocks it stunk in the sunshine, and in the damp evenings, at camp, it was the same.

St. Lo a Shambles
"We passed through St. Lo, the worst place I believe I'll ever see in all the years to come. I can't even go into detail of what it looks like as words cannot explain. Death would be the only word for such a place. It was a beautiful city at one time and large too.

"That photograph I sent you of the St. Louis Cathedral is where Sister Mary Paul from Sacred Heart School visited. I should like very much to see her when I get back."

From France Sgt. Eckes finally landed in Germany and at the time he wrote his letter, taken from the pages of his diary, he said he did not have much information about the country.

Sgt. Eckes entered the Army in December, 1942 and left for overseas duty on March 23, 1944. Prior to entering service he was employed by the Weinbrenner Shoe Company in Marshfield.

RENNEBOHN AS STATE NEWS

Lieutenant Governor Criticism That Se Received

Madison—(P)—Lt. Gov. Rennebohn, in what he as a farewell address to ate, charged Saturday ti papers had been seeking "city" him and had nev "— decent word a car Rennebohn."

Rennebohn's talk car informal session after 5 (D-Green Bay) had a to say a few words. He praised members of ate as a great body of has given him fine co- but assailed newspapers trying to find out somet to say about you instea ing to find something

"You men come down work hard," he said. "ba newspapers say anything about you? The newspa not said a — dece about Oscar Rennebc they do is try to crucify: "There would be ma good men who would go tics if they weren't afra criticism they get from pers."

Rennebohn paid tribu Conrad Shearer, (R-I president pro tem of th for his aid in presidi Rennebohn was not ther Lawrence R. Larsen, Racl clerk of the Senate and t retaries for their help d session.

NASONVILLE GROUP ASSEMBLE ON THU

Nasonville—(Special)— sonville Community La Society will meet at t Mrs. Jessie Schaefer I afternoon, June 21, at 2 c

PROFIT
Spokane, Wash.— F- Hunt of Warehouse Peint said he went to Henry J. Swan Island ship yard to of those "big wages."

He earned \$15.20 for tv work at the end of a wee His week's board was The federal withholdings \$1. Other tax deductions 17 cents. Hunt says he won't a one-cent check he receiv would cost too much

a father on kneels behind. Michael, under. (NEA)

ATION DELAYED

Plans to ning of laws

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