

ATLANTIC CONVOY

By S/Sgt. ALBERT DUNN,
Somewhere in Italy.

Some time ago in one of our issues we printed a story sent to us by Corporal Alfred Dunn concerning his experiences just before leaving for overseas. He called that story, "Port of Embarkation." Due to delay in the mails and getting his writings pass the censors, we have not had another story from Cpl. Dunn until this issue. Corporal Dunn is a Portlander, lived at 236 N. Page Street before going into the service. We are proud to be the medium through which he is reaching the people who knew him here and to give a soldiers impression of some phases of Army life.

We hope later to have more of his writings to present for our readers' benefit.—The Editor.

The band had finished playing "There's something about a soldier that is fine, fine, fine." Only to break out with our favorite torch, "Don't Cry, Baby." That is all we could say to any of them. Don't cry, baby. For sure enough, Daddy was off to the seven seas. Well, at least an ocean and a prayer.

As we marched up the gang plank a hush seemed to settle over the entire ship. It was as if the world had stopped breathing for just an instance. In that instant we began to realize a little of what it was all about. The ocean we were about to cross had a temperature of two hundred and forty degrees by any standard. Yes, the Nazi SUBS were still on the loose. All of the big brave talk that some of the boys had been doing was finished for this moment at least. Some one sighed and all of the hub dub of embarkation fell upon us once more. After we had dropped our packs on deck and struggled into our life belts one of the boys brought out a pair of dice and we were once again a big bunch of GIs.

We slipped out of the harbor so fast that we almost missed the Lady with the torch in her hand. We didn't know where we were going, but we did know that we were a part of one of the largest single convoys of this war. The water was calm but the food was lousy. The chow line was worse and if possible the mess hall could have spotted both of them cards and spade, and still been the hottest and dirtiest place I have ever been in up until then. Sea sickness was just a word we had heard some one say until we came out of the mess the first time. Then the word and the Sea it was named after it hit you like a bolt of lightning. Most of the boys gave up but it was my misfortune to be one of those who didn't. As a result I was miserable for two days. It didn't take us long to get our sea legs after that. In a couple of days you would have

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thought we were Old Salts, well our talk would have given you the impression, but we were still green so how did we know that the sea would get rougher as we moved farther out into it's vastness.

The ship on which we were sailing was an old timer. It had been made to haul troops in the last days of War 1. After the Armistice was signed she had been pressed into the West Indies service. When Germany had declared war on France and England, she began to carry the precious food supplies that the French and English needed so badly. Well, as you know, France capitulated in 1940 so England had to carry on alone. Then Russia was chucked into this mess that was to involve all of us. The ex-luxury liner began to make the death rim. You know Murmansk and the long hot route to the Russian arctic ports. She had given as good as she took. She had two of the Wolf pack to her credit as well as four of the Luftwaffe. On the other side of the ledger she had one collision with a fellow steamer. So she was well up on the heels of the big Rat Hitler. She was well armed and her speed was surpassed by that of our escorts and a couple of the new troop carriers in the convoy. Her captain was at one time an officer in the Danish navy. He was to take command in the event that something was to happen to our escort. All in all she was not a bad ship. She had been to sea too long.

My outfit was to sleep on the bottom deck of the ship. The only time most of us saw our bunks was when we had time or a place to shave, wash up and those other things that are to be done to stay clean. All of us could not have been able to sleep there at one time. So half of us spent twelve hours below deck while the other half stayed above. At that, most of us sleep on deck when it was possible. It rained a couple of nights but it didn't last long so none of the boys suffered from the wetting they took. We were used to getting wet. We had slept in the rain for a month before we went to P. O. E. The only thing that bothered us was the shots we had to take. I took about four of the same type because somebody forgot to keep the records straight.

After the first two days at sea we became used to the monotony of ship travel. To most of the boys on board the trip was uneventful. We knew we were to land in North Africa, but we didn't know where. We read all of the little books on the country people and their customs. It looks as though we were going to find the Arabs and North African French a tough bunch of people. We were to find out later that those books didn't mean all they had to say. If we had lived them to the letter we would have been bigger suckers than we were.

To get back to the crossing I'll say, we, those who saw the incident had a little scare. One morning about 10 o'clock we heard a few guns going off very rapidly. At first it didn't make an impression on us because this was the usual time for target practice. But this time the firing was prolonged. By being on the aft deck, some of us saw the big sea raider when it reared its head and dipped into the sea for the last time.

We heard from one of the gun crew that four of the big undersea babies had been following us for a day or two. It was not until the escort planes of the Navy left us that they became bold enough to think of attacking us. Now there were only three for us to worry about; luckily for us, they never dared to attack. I'll bet my last months pay that the sight of their sister sub sinking so swiftly changed a lot of their plans. We heard that they were sighted a few miles behind on 4 different days. We were worried for a while but we soon let all of that sort of thing rest when it began in our minds.

The subs passed away as silently as they appeared. Now we began to wonder when we would see the "Rock."

On our ninth day out rumor had it that we would pass the Rock at 12 o'clock that night. We stayed up late that night, we had come this far so you know we didn't care to miss the sight of Gibraltar. We didn't see it that night, no, all we saw was the same grey Atlantic that had been beating relentlessly against the sides of our boat. The same sea that had upset our stomachs and spoiled our sleep. For two more days the rumor and the sea kept at us. The rumor became less a rumor as the days passed. The sea became less a sea and more of a boiling pot as it grew rougher and rougher. Then almost as suddenly as it had begun, the ocean became calm off on the distant horizon we could see a dark haze. Instinct more than anything else told us that this was land. We knew at that moment that land and the Rock were not far away. The sky began to get bluer and if possible the sea rid itself of all her wrinkles — a hush over the ship. The boys lined the railing of the ship and waited. Then as a picture being unveiled the haze lifted and before us loomed the legendary Rock.

It did not have the shape that one sees in pictures, but we had learned long ago that the real thing is never like the pictures or the tales told about it. We were disappointed because we were not close enough to see the big guns mounted on her face or the landing strips from which the planes that took part in the attack on North Africa took off. Well, at least we had seen the Rock. Slowly the huge black hunk of stone disappeared, as suddenly as it came in to view it vanished. A fog fell over the convoy. We were passing from the Atlantic into the Blue Mediterranean Sea.

The fog was real, it was one of those things cooked up by Chemical Warfare to fool the enemy. It only lasted an hour, but in that brief span of time we were as alone as a couple of people on an out of the way island in the Pacific. At last we were back in the sun once more. The positions of some of the ships on the convoy had changed, but it did not take long to get back into position. The fog bouys were pulled in and everything went along as scheduled.

I had always heard of Mussolini's private lake being referred to as blue, but I had thought it was just a figure of speech. It is blue and no mistake. So blue in fact that not so deep. Smooth as glass. Why, looking at it made you think of

yachting and all that sort of thing. Say, if I had a million I think I would try some of that stuff myself. Well all that looks well does not mean that it is that way. Some of the fellows claim they saw a shark or two, but me, I did not see anything larger than a few schools of Porpoises. They were having a fine time racing ahead of the ship. Again everything looked as innocent as a child that had been in his mother's cookie jar. It was like that for two days more.

We have passed—a day ago. At noon we would pass— Here we lost about half of our convoy. They steamed into port while we picked up two Airplane carriers and moved on toward the most heavily fortified spot in the world at that time. Needness to say that it was also the most heavily bombed spot. Four o'clock that evening we were told once more all of the emergency signals. At 4:30 we had a practice alert. Everything rolled along smoothly until 7:30, then we got it, our first air raid.

When the gun on the fore deck went off I thought a bomb had hit the ship. GIs were running every direction under the moon, man oh! man, if you think they were moving then you should have seen them when all of the guns in the convoy began to bark. I saw a guy try to crawl into a crack on deck. Some guys who had not prayed since they were kids were doing a fine job of asking the Lord to forgive them. There was no need to tell any one to put out lights or shield cigarettes. If you spoke too loud somebody was ready to cut your throat. Guns of every type were barking like angry dogs at the heels of Hitler's flying hoard. Even though we threw everything but water at them we suffered a little damage. I saw an axes torpedo take the bow of an escort boat away in a flash of flame. Eleven Gobs lost their lives in that riff. The Nazi boys lost two fighters and a bomber that night. And I was christened a soldier that night. Now I shall have something to tell my kids before they march off to war.

From then until we landed at

DELTA SIGMAS SPONSOR LOAN PLAN

Portland members of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority have devised a plan to help any girl attending a college who is in need of a loan. As a civic enterprise, it is unusual for Portland, and as an incentive for continuing one's studies, the plan would do credit to any locality. Just how the plan is to be put into operation we are not in position to say. But the first step toward acquiring the necessary funds is by way of a Holiday Dance to be given by the Deltas on December 4. This is the first project of its kind to be attempted by the Deltas, the success of which will depend largely on the support given them by the public in general.

Again the opportunity presents itself for the Negroes of this area to help some worthy student to prepare himself for a higher plane. The opportunity first presented itself in the suggestion of The Criterion Scholarship. This plan is different in that many girls may be helped and in the case of the scholarship fund, only one could benefit.

To members of other Sororities and Fraternities who are newcomers in the community, we suggest that you identify yourself to members of the Deltas. This can be done by phoning the offices of the Inquirer or by letter. We will gladly forward your name to this group of civic minded young ladies.

the ghost town of—, everything was like taking a stroll thru the Park at home. We pulled into the harbor of what was left of it the following evening just after dark. So at last we were again on good old terra firma. Boy, did it feel good! I almost kissed it from sheer joy. I was to learn to dislike this same ground a few nights later, but that's another tale. Tonight I could sleep without the lapping of waves and the rumble of engines to break into my slumbers. North Africa had me for her own.

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