

THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 1944

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# SGT ELDON WAKEFIELD HELPS ENGINEERS CARE FOR TROOPS

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NEWTON BOY FINDS HE MUST BE  
VERSATILE TO CARRY ON  
INVASION PLANS

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HEADQUARTERS, EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS — Used to doing all sorts of odd jobs, the United States Army Engineers had a brand new role in the assault on Europe.

They provided "hotel service" for the thousands of tactical troops massed in the marshalling areas before the take-off. They included Sgt. Eldon Wakefield of Newton; Sgt. Orville Yelton of Yale and Sgt. Donald Trigg of Oblong and Pvt. Robert Clark of Olney.

Up a gently curving drive bordered by flowering rhododendrons, the officers and enlisted men of the Base

Section Headquarters are catching their breath. In their Nissen huts, close by the white columns of what was formerly a country squire's abode they are glowing over the fact that the Engineers have done it again.

"We claim to be versatile," said Colonel Car. R. Shaw, Base Section Engineer, "but this was something new, even for us."

In their peaceful garden retreat, the headquarters personnel seem to be very far from war. But they were furiously busy for weeks making all the plans for taking care of the troops while they waited at alert stations for D-Day. Since all of the house keeping equipment of the invading units had been fully packed, someone had to give them food, beds, sanitary facilities and other necessities for living.

First of all, most of the camps had to be enlarged. In most cases, their capacity was increased many-fold. Then there was the urgent need to

camouflage them well. There must be no chance of the camps being spotted from the air. All this was straight Engineer work and it was done with usual speed and thoroughness.

It was later that the Engineers took over as cooks, K. P's., supply men and the like. Naturally, there was some grumbling about "the dirty old Engineers having to do the job nobody else wanted to," but before long, they got the spirit of the thing and actually had some fun. Besides, additional personnel came in to relieve them, leaving them as bosses.

Often there would be a lieutenant of the Engineers as camp commander. It didn't matter a bit that a general of the field forces was present. The lieutenant was strictly in charge. If he'd wanted to make a general do some extra policing up, theoretically he could have done so.

Besides the Engineer General Service Regiments, there were platoons and companies of Engineers expert in waterproofing, fire fighting, water supply, engineer stores, etc. Some were there just in case of emergency. If, for example, Germans bombed, there were bulldozers to fix things up and bridging material to replace those destroyed. No contingency was overlooked

And after the soldiers had gone, the Engineers still had work to do. They had to clean up and ready the camps for new occupants. A major problem was disposing of the enormous stocks of clothing and equipment the troops left behind. There were mountains of blouses, caps, overshoes, boots — all of which had been exchanged by the Engineers for the precise equipment the men needed for the great assault.

That the Engineers did a fine job was attested by several high-ranking officers. One of these was an Infantry Colonel who commended Second Lieutenant John K. McGrath, Jr., one of the camp commanders, for his efficient administration of the camp and for the smoothness of the operation of moving the troops in and out.

"I think we did a pretty good job as hotel-keepers," said Col. Shaw, smiling.