



With the Colors

8/25/44

Donald Curtright, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Curtright of Joliet, formerly of Sainte Marie, returned last week from England for a thirty day furlough. Donald had the harrowing experience of having the destroyer on which he was a crew member, shot out from under him.

"Donnie," as he is known to his many friends in Joliet and Sainte Marie, enlisted in the Navy shortly after becoming 18 years old. Of recent date he has been doing convoy duty in the Atlantic. His ship was the destroyer Corrie. While acting as escort for a convoy in the Atlantic several weeks before the invasion, his ship sank a submarine.

On D-day the Corrie was ordered to head an invasion flotilla of battleships and landing craft. At midnight their ship was two miles off the French coast of Cherbourg, awaiting daylight. During the early morning hours planes blasted the coast in swarms. Then came the paratroopers, who were sent in to locate gun emplacements of the shore. At day-break, the Corrie began firing on shore guns. The Corrie was sent closer to shore to draw the fire of the Nazi shore guns in order that they could be located. The Corrie blasted out three pillboxes and then was struck by a shell about midship. Later two other shells struck the destroyer, causing the boilers to explode.

The ship was hit about an hour after it started firing. Young Curtright was manning a large anti-aircraft gun at the time, above the deck. When it was seen that the ship was lost, the skipper ordered the crew to abandon ship. This was done and the skipper, after seeing that the wounded had been placed in lifeboats and the crew taken off the sinking destroyer, jumped into the water. Donald was in the water about three hours. Meanwhile, shells burst all about them. About twenty of the crew were lost. After jumping, Donald finally managed to climb on board a raft.

A sister destroyer, which was standing in the distance, came to the rescue, quited the rest of the shore guns and picked up the survivors. They were then taken to a troopship farther out in the channel that was being held to receive wounded from the coast. After the ship was loaded with survivors and wounded, they were taken back to England.

Donald said that it was one of the greatest shows imaginable and considered himself extremely lucky to be able to return and tell of the experience.

Troit McCoy, who is in the Navy somewhere in the Pacific, writes: "I came aboard my ship last night, and am a working man now. I have a very good ship, and have good chow. It sure beats that mudhole, I came from."

"Two of the boys I came with from Chicago are here, too. The boys here say I should get my mail pretty regular once it gets started. I sure will be glad to get some mail. When you write send the letters by air mail. They get here quicker.

"I never felt better. It sure feels good to take a shower bath once more. I am sitting out on the deck enjoying a very good breeze. It sure feels good after a hot day. I have good living quarters here aboard ship to what I have had since I left the states. We even have cold water to drink. I guess my department is responsible for that. There sure are lots of queer things in this water out here."

* * * * *

Mrs. Guy Sempstrott of Willow Hill received the following letter from her son, Leroy Duane Shaner, seaman