

The youngsters were all asking—"When are we going home?" This is the inevitable G.I. cry all over the place.

On this flight from Paris to London, we flew over Cherbourg and saw terrific damage, with bomb craters all over the fields. One cannot discern much damage to the buildings but wherever there is a semblance of an airfield it is completely peppered, as with smallpox.

Arrived at Bovington Airdrome at 6 p.m., U.K. time. Ben McPeake met us with his car at the airdrome: cleared immediately through Customs, we were taken to the Claridge, where Ben had engaged a lovely suite for us.

## ***Conditions in London***

*Tuesday, July 24*

Up at 8:30, delightful breakfast, eggs (furnished from the farm of a friend of John Hanes). Eggs are almost impossible to obtain here and the food situation is more acute than during the war.

McPeake for 2½ hours drove us through the blitzed, devastated sections of London. The West End, comparable to our Fifth Avenue district, doesn't seem to have been severely damaged, except for an odd building here and there.

We went to the Moorgate section which is in the City and here the damage was terrific. You see entire sites of blocks completely obliterated. In this section 135 people were killed standing in line to purchase fish rations. Business buildings and homes have been completely wiped out.

Any number of people who went to their shelters during the blitz were drowned by water bursting from sewer mains. McPeake said that one house out of every three in London received some sort of damage. The worst casualties resulted from flying glass—when a bomb or rocket hit it blew the glass out for blocks around and caused untold damage and injury.

We saw the rear of St. Paul's Cathedral which had been hit although the damage to St. Paul's itself was little. A number of beautiful old Christopher Wren churches have been obliterated. Fleet Street, the newspaper district, had been mangled. I stopped at our old magazine office, 153 Queen Victoria Street, which holds many happy memories. It is blown almost beyond recognition. We visited a spot in Chelsea where 130 American soldiers were killed by a rocket bomb while in morning parade.

In the Battersea section the Germans, trying to destroy a huge electric power plant, destroyed everything surrounding it but never hit the plant. It reminds me of a story one of the correspondents told me of the accuracy of their bombing in Europe. For three days they tried to bomb a certain bridge—he figured the safest place to be was in the middle of the bridge, so he parked himself there and came through safely.

Inspected the Air Raid shelters and were impressed with their construction and efficiency. In the poor sections we saw the shelter known as an "Anderson" of corrugated iron, built like an Eskimo igloo and installed in yards of cottages on the outskirts. Though all the homes around would be demolished, we could see block after block of these shelters intact. You don't have to draw on your imagination too much to realize the privations of these people, being compelled to sleep night after night in small, crude air-raid shelters, through London's cold, clammy winter weather.

A friend who came in for tea told me the windows of his flat were blown out three times, or rather, twice blown in and once blown out. The rocket bombs created a void and in many instances, the concussion pulled the windows out of buildings rather than blew them in.

You see thousands of buildings with the entire window structure bricked in and then a little peep-hole, so to speak, comparable to that of our speakeasy days, sufficing for a window. Everyone you talk to, however, has kept his sense of humor. One marvels at the fortitude of the people who receive some consolation as they all tell you, "We had nothing compared to the havoc you will see in Germany."

Being built were some new American pre-fabricated houses—modern and good-looking—consisting of two bedrooms, bath, kitchen and living room. These are an experiment for future building operations over here. The rebuilding job in England will require millions of man-hours of labor and tremendous industrial activity.

After lunch with McPeake and our lawyer, discussing business and tax problems, we went to our magazine office to meet members of the staff. Fortunately the office was never hit. Four different buildings which we have occupied here in London were all razed, but the present location came through.

I recall that when we rented the present quarters in 1935 our manager said to me, "If we ever have another war, this will be a fine spot for air bombing, as it is almost adjacent to the Victoria Station (a leading railroad station comparable to Grand Central), with Buckingham Palace a short distance away." Fate decreed otherwise. The building we moved from in Queen Victoria Street was wrecked and the present building undamaged.

McPeake's home was occupied during the war by General de Gaulle and family. The waitress is profuse in her praise of de Gaulle. She says, "He is a fine family man with three children and a lovely wife who remains always in the background."

### *A Message to Honey*

Dropped in at Rainbow Corner—one of the large American Red Cross clubs here. Had a nice visit with Rebecca Stickney, who is managing the canteen. Rebecca looks very well, sends her love to you and tells me that she is going to return to New York in the not-too-far-distant future.

Honey, the only thing lacking here is your presence and how you would be interested in seeing everything we are seeing! We will certainly do it next year together. I am told there is an absolute ban now on non-essential travel over here, unless one