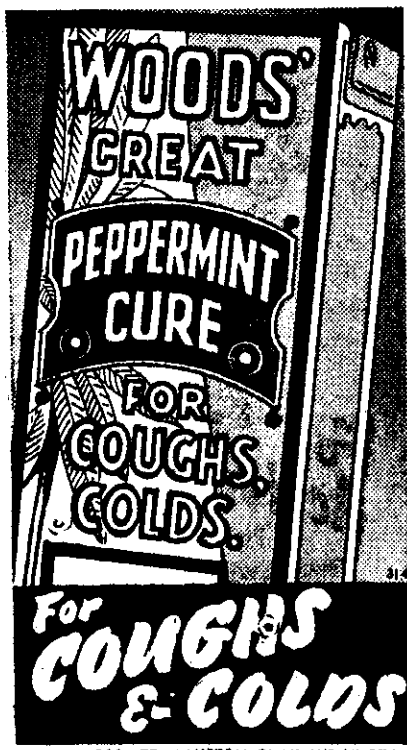


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# THIS IS WHY I SHALL REMEMBER ENGLAND

## *American Soldier's Farewell Letter*

I MAY be leaving England, perhaps never to return. Before I go I want to tell you some of the things I shall never forget—the scenes and episodes that have impressed me during my two years as an American soldier in Britain.

It has been an exciting time; not only because we have been in a strange land, with new sights to see, new friends to meet, and a new way of life to learn. But also because we have been watching and helping the growth of Allied fighting power on this armed-camp island, ready now to implement the greatest military adventure in history.

### \* \* \* I REMEMBER

that first night in England, standing in a wheat field in East Anglia and watching cascades of green incendiaries drifting down. This is it, we told ourselves. We are in it at last.

But it was hard to convince ourselves, for here were these crazy English standing in their gardens watching the raid as if it were a Fourth of July spectacle. It was hard to boast about our own experiences when all around us were five-year-olds who had lived through more than we had ever known.

The black-out astonished us. It was so oppressively black. It still gives us a feeling that the houses behind the staring windows are abandoned, lifeless.

The atmosphere of rural Suffolk, the workers in the fields, the stillness, the emptiness of the roads, the quiet of the village streets—these things made us feel that we had come to a country where all but a remnant of the people had moved away.

We changed our minds when we saw the teeming towns on market day, and walked the streets on Saturday evenings, and when we saw the hordes of people in London and other big cities.

MEMORABLE days. . . . Watching our first cricket match on the fields of St. Albans, within sight of the Roman ruins, and later having a beer with Eric, the Warwickshire soldier. . . .



Boxford, where two girls waited at their window every morning for eight months to wave as we drove past. We never once spoke to them, but we were friends.

I shall remember a Sunday in June punting on the River Cam, and talking to the don who badly needed a shave, haircut and press, but who had (we later learned) just been knighted. . . .

Biking to Lavenham with Vivian for a look at that perfect Tudor village and a drink at the Swan. . . . Walking across the meadows with Joan to listen to the skylarks, those most irresponsible of sunstruck birds.

I shall not forget the friendly evenings at the Unicorn, where we would buy each other rounds of ale and argue through the blue haze, and settle all the problems that baffled the world. . . .

Derby Day at Newmarket, where 9000 came to see a race that was run behind a hill, and the same 9000 tried to get back to London on one train. . . .

There were churches . . . the don who spent hours showing us Durham, and the woman verger in Canterbury . . . Lincoln and Peterborough and Ely, and the beautiful smaller churches. . . . Above all, Boston Stump, lit by the last rays of the setting sun, and shining across the fens like a white sword.



WE shall remember Piccadilly Circus after dark. . . the milling swarms of people, the men who pretend to sell newspapers, the 50 different uniforms. . . . The drunks, the pedlars and the police. . . .

The girl who sang operatic arias from the platform, as everyone cheered . . . the sailor, who played his violin and danced in the Morden train, when everyone joined in "Dear Liverpool." This was England with its hair down.

But we shall remember, too, our Christmas parties for the orphans and evacuee children. No one could ever forget those parties, with the kids yelling and gobbling ice cream, sitting on our shoulders and singing for us . . . going home along the lanes clutching armfuls of toys and candy, chewing gum and biscuits. Fifteen hundred we had at one party.

It was not all fun. There was the mud of the airfield building, the tents that leaked, the north wind that blew, and lots of rain.

(continued on next page)