

PERSONAL DIARY

Gene B. Leek

The following pages record the experiences of Bandsman Gene Leek aboard the U.S.S. ERIE (PG-50) during the period December 8, 1941 through February 23, 1942 (part of his tour of duty aboard the ERIE).

This is a transcription of the diary now owned by Prof. Peter O'Connor (Musashino University, Tokyo), who purchased Mr. Leek's diary on eBay in October 2006 and graciously provided a copy to Jon Balson (the transcriber).

Note: These pages contain a literal transcription of Mr. Leek's entries many of which contain misspellings. Some corrections have been provided for the sake of clarity; any corrections are placed within brackets.

FRONT COVER

Grid with country names **Japan, Germany, Italy** (top right corner)
ERIE
December – 8 – 1941
?-

INSIDE FRONT COVER

This Belongs to GENE B. LEEK
United States Band of the Navy

PAGE 1

Balboa Panama - -
U.S.S. ERIE
{of The South Sea's}
Gene B. Leek

PAGE 2

Score for warfair for U.S.S. Erie -
Feb-8-1942
9.00 7 depth charges for (1) sub

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- Dec-8-1941** War declared on Japan after attack on Honolulu -
U.S.S. Erie on (1) one hour notice to get under way -
"00:00-12:00" underway to unknown destination-
- Dec-9-1941** 1300 U.S.S. Erie at sea, fuel and stores, "full" ammunition - "enough"-
17:00 a fishing craft stopped to be investigated – no Japs -!
- Dec-10-1941** 10:00 sea rough – no encounters but stopped freighter for inspection,
Marines aboard with machine guns, hand grenades – no Japs - ! -
War declared by German & Italy X
- Dec-11-41** 16:00 Mexico & Central amer – and South america joined U.S.A. –
Japan Battle ship and distroyer sunk by U.S. Army planes
- Dec-12-41** 8:00 sailing good – no land – no ships – lots of rain – Japan catching
hell now -
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- Dec-13-41** 11:00 U.S.S. Erie at Punta Arenas [Puntarenas] Costa Rica, have taken
aboard 17 Jap "prisoners of war", after fight of hand battle, killing one
Jap - prise [prize] crew of Erie taking Jap ship to Balboa. Com of Erie to
be Cap of Jap ship – Tuna Boat – ALERT
- Dec-14-41** 7:00 Sighted Tuna boat, stopped it at 7:49, Com Sweeney and party
aboard, found nothing – Tuna Boat – Sea Star -
8:30 sighted another – 9:00 aboarded found one Jap – "Sea Boy"
another prise crew went aboard which makes two, is around 40 men,
which doubles our watches -
- Raining hard – just on my watch -
Air Plane is badly damaged from lifting from watter, wing rib broke – tail
bent also

pilot says " in case of war, I'll fly her as is"-

Dec-15-1941 Had early watch – tropicle storm hit hard – “Sea Boy” using 500 gal. of fuel per day, refueled it, left it to search for the Tuna Boat “Navigator”- said ship broadcast position of Erie to other ships -

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Dec-15-41 continued 11:45 Plane is lowered, attempt take off – O.K.! - in search of “Navigator” – we now are back patrolling Costa Rica – “Pacific side”

-
15:00 Stoped “Star of the Sea” + “Normandy” for the second time, commanding them to the nearest port -

15:45 Plane hoisted aboard, no casualties – sighted two (2) Tuna Boats

Dec-16-41 3:00 The Santa Alena [Santa Elena] was ordered to “lay to”, guard an officers went aboard, sealed her radio, ordered to report to Balboa. Two small craft – the same – 8:00 received signal from boat “Fire Rescue”, lowered boat with F-R party, motor of said boat afire – secured – pulling back to beach – Punta Arena [Puntarenas] C.R. -
13:00 Left Port for Balboa Panama (390) miles

Dec-17-41 8:00 Had Plane operations 2 hour 15 min,
Located 5 Tuna Boats
11:00 sight from ship two of the boats, “Navigator” “Counta Banica,” we are convoying them in - -
12:00 sighted Shasta and another, have put an officer an two armed men on

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each boat – on heading to Balboa – 14:00 Passed Cape Mello [Cape Malo]

Dec-18-41 9:00 Traveling at 9 knots to Balboa with convoy long side,
14:20 Are now in Balboa Harbor
16:00 Bringing stores aboard, around 90 day supply – fuel also being set -

Dec-19-41 11:00 Early chow – Concert --
13:00 Liberty – I feel a good one coming on -

Dec-20-41 9:30 I did – gosh what a head – and stomach -
9:35 Set sail – underway for unknown destination -
23:37 still under way 16 knots

Dec-21-41 9:10 Raining – rough sea – still hitting 16 knots -
17:00 – Same – Calm wind –

Dec-22-41 3:30 Signaling ship 3 pts to Starboard Beam – answer – O.K. -- con.

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“Con.” 7:00 Crossed Equator – I expect the ceremony any time now -
11:00 Calm watter - fog – Cool -

Dec-23-41 7:30 "Jesus" – had Polly Wog Chow this Morning, spuds with pounds of black pepper on them, raw meat with flower and milk – That's flour – not flower - - at 8:00 the ceremony started -
11:30 I'll never sit down again – what a beating - -well now I am a "shellback" now – but such a pain in my _____ ?????
12:00 I forgot to say that we got to port – Galapagos Islands – are leaving 15 Marines an 5 sailors here – guarding what? I duno -

Dec-24-41 9:30 Xmas eve – and Im sure far from home and a Xmas spirit – Had candy – cigs- and a swell diner – went swimming on the beach – watter very cool -

Dec 25 Xmas – or is it? – no music – no party – every one sleeping in

Dec-26-41 Going ashore looking for island with fresh watter on them – no luck – will leave settlement of sailors and Marines -

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Dec 27 18:32 Dropped anchor at Reck [Wreck] Bay – Population around 75
Weighed anchor 19:00 – nothing else happened - Took on bouy anchors for sea plane – to drop them at the mouth of river of Ecuador -

Dec 28 supposed to be near Ecuador no sight of land as yet – all day nothing new – 0000 – still nothing - I turn in -

Dec 29 dropped anchor at 1300 – at Santa Alena [Elena] Ecuador – are going over to look around -
17:00 Sure is a clean little city – oil is their living – sweetest little girls are there – and lots of them - - "no luck tho",
1900 are under way for Balboa again – I hope – This sure is making me sick of the sea – haven't been sea sick yet - ????? the war is not so much noticed here, except for watches continually – 4 on and 4 hours off – day and nite – we have the news every nite sounds like our navy is not doing so good --- I pray our military standard is better than our enemies "- I sure miss you Dutches" [Dutchess, his fiancée - see last page]- -

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U.S.S. Erie went through a short over hall – not complete – painting and cleaning ship, brought aboard life rafts – and other gear, now we start another cruse of war-

Jan 14-1942 (1500) yesterday we left Balboa after filling the ship with stores and fuel - at 1630 we were underway – at $\frac{3}{4}$ speed we have reached today now at – 1000 miles – Cape Mollow [Malo]

Jan 15-42 at sea – seen nothing but watter

Jan 16 " " " " " "

Jan 17 " " " " " "

Jan 18 Land sighted, Glopagus [Galapagos] islands
14:00 anchored, same island as when we left the marines and sailors –
picked them up Traided for 10 more,
15:30 men from the island coming aboard to buy small stores and try a
little ice cream – shall “lay” “to” all nite -

Jan-19-42 9:00 under way – sea – sea -- sea

Jan-20 15:32 drouped anchor at Post Office Bay

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There is a large oil tanker here, we are to re-fuel -
Started at 17:00 – fin at 2100, the tanker holds 6 and a half million
gallons of oil – its waiting for 2 unknown U.S. war ships, we are laying to
tonite -

Jan 21 (We got paid - \$5.00) ship is as busted as I am – Ha – Ha-

Jan 22nd “Lay to” island,
19:30 under way to Post office bay
2100 anchored off “ “ “

Jan 23 10:00 went ashore, finding very little, took pictures of the place -
17:32 under way for diff islands
18:00 anchored at island, achidemy [Academy] bay, I met Mr. Conway
the author, swell guy – lives here on island with 6 natives of Ecuador -

Jan 24-1942 under way for Balboa

“ **25** under way -

“ **26** under way - - -

Jan 27-1942 sighted Baradge Baloon [barrage balloon] that broak its lines at Balboa,
nearly deflated so is laying near watter, recovered it.
11:27 side of baloon burst, falls to the watter, pulled aboard and

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head for home again

Jan-28-1942 today is pay day, 28 days pay coming - - - \$105.00 – not bad - - - all
goes for a beer and my honeys rings -

Jan-29-42 Lay to Balboa

30-42

31-42 Sent Mail - \$40 to Tommie – makes \$115.00 all total – ring paid for

Feb-1-1942 left Balboa with 3 cruiser 2 destroyer and 9 ships carrying 45 Thousand
soldiers – convoying is a tough job – standing watch all nite and every
day, 10 hours too,

Feb-2-42 under way
3-42 “ “

Feb-4-42 have decided to give U.S.S. Moffet [MOFFETT] (Destroyer) 30,000 gal. of our fuel – we are 2000 miles south, west, we are heading now for Glapagus Islands – ocean too rough to refule her, shall at the island – “I love the dutches” – [Dutchess, his fiancée – see last page]

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Feb-5-42 Refueled destroyer at Sulavin [Sullivan] Bay – took 10 hours to do so -

Feb-5-42 Swam most all day – sure have a sun burn -
17:30 picked up 9 marines from island – replaced with 10 men
19:25 under way for Balboa

Feb 6 under way -

Feb 7 under way – Plane operations -

Feb 8 had an attack on our ship by enemy sub – things “tin fish” missed us, crossing our bow by 36 feet, 27 seconds later we dropped our first “ash can” – (depth charge) not hitting with first we dropped [set] at 200 feet 6 more – we made a hit, radioed for sea planes to assist us in finding floting particles of hit sub – took not half hour for 2 P.B.Y. air (sea) planes to show up – particles were seen from planes which means sure hit - Horray – sounding device says there were 2 subs about – so we have a tough nite ahead of us – we pray for safety through the long nite-

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Feb-9-42 Sighted sub at 9:00 dropped one charge – Richmond – Cruiser, came to the scene, she dropped 5 depth charges – signs of oil and particles floting are sure sign of one more sub -

Feb 10 Sight Balboa from here – are securing from condision baker [Condition Baker] – band concert ashore –sure glad to be back -

Feb 11 brought 20 tons of stores aboard – refueled – got mail today - -

Feb 12 Band Concert – relieved – brought 60 depth charges aboard -

Feb 13 Field day aboard – short practice of orchestra – received mail again today – that makes twice this month – gosh

Feb 14 nothing - movie 20:00 -

Feb 15-42 Brought plane aboard, 25 civilian engineers and 90 Marines came aboard plus 200 cases of States Beer – under way at 11:05

Feb 16-42 Windy (under way) course S-SW – 18 knots -

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Feb 17 1:37 dropped anchor at Guayaquil [Guayaquil] Bay

Left civilian – under way at 7:30 -

Feb-18-42 Ready to initiate all pollywogs, tomorrow – plus civilians – after
convoying Dutch frieghter to Seymore [Seymour] Bay

Feb-19-42 Anchored at Seymore, initiated pollywogs – rained all day -

Feb-20-42 Moved Civilians to beach plus Marines, lay to all day -

Feb-21-42 Launched plane, put few stores on beach – Seymore Bay -

Feb-22-42 Under way – 7:30
anchored at Wreck bay 12:45.
stayed all nite -

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Feb-23 Field day - fishing

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LOOSE INSERT

In one of your letters you asked me for the birthday here they are -

Mother – Feb 13

Dad – Aug 24

Dot July 3

Mary Aug 23

Charlotte May 29

Fred July 2

Bob Nov 22

Dolly Jan 9

Edith Oct 4

PAGE 16

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PAGE 17

(P.G. 50) U.S.S. Erie Gun Boat “S.S.” [Label for picture that is missing]

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PAGE 19

S.o.S. - S.o.S. - S.o.S.

M.S. Leborie [Lebore] carring crew of 4 torpedoed ships has been
torpedoed, Swan Island, - Near New Fredricks Islands. [label for picture
that is missing]

[Space for missing picture]

First sight of any survivors, nearly dark, have drifted 70 miles from the
scene of action out of the crew of 4 now 5 ships, only one small boat is
to be seen, [label for picture that is missing]

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[Space for missing picture]

Hardly visible is the crowded boat of frighten and sick men and women, the tropicle sun has burn there flesh, the salt watter has smarted the cuts and wounds of them, [label for picture that is missing]

PAGE 21

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PAGE 23

[Page contains scribbling below that may be related to a contest sponsored by Raleigh cigarettes to promote sale of Victory Bonds]

Rauley

Ralew

We should Box 1200 Chicago

~~More~~ people should buy more Victory bonds because ----

[Stricken and unreadable notes follow.]

PAGES 24 & 25

(List of stamps, by country, with date of issue and denomination)

PAGE 26

(Short list of pictures he apparently had taken – stricken with a number of lines)

PAGE 27

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PAGE 28

WAYNE DAVIS
240 PASSAIC ST
TRENTON, N.J.

PAGE 29

To The Dutches and her faith that so strongly kept a live the love that has survived the war of man – and the war of lonelyness, months at sea – no letter to be mailed, no mail coming in – still the love of one so dear and far away is aglow -

G Leek

To The Dutchess