

ALLIED LANDING ON SICILY AIDED BY HEAVY SEA

Hamilton, Oct. 28 (Staff).—A heavy sea was running the morning of the invasion of Sicily, favoring the Allies in that the "Eyeties" were taken completely by surprise, Lieut. (Eng.) William J. Scarlett, R.C.N.V.R., of Hamilton said here tonight. He is home on leave after taking part in the Sicilian "show" as maintenance officer with a flotilla of assault craft which landed 8th Army troops at zero hour.

"It was the worst sea we had ever operated in and it was in our favor," Lieut. Scarlett recalled. "The Eyeties must have figured nothing could land in that sea and went to bed for a good night's sleep." On loan to the Royal Navy and specially trained in invasion tactics, Lieut. Scarlett was in charge of maintenance with a flotilla of L.C.A. (Landing Craft, Assault) which took 3,500 British troops of the 8th Army ashore in the first 10 hours of the attack on Sicily.

The first "flight" of Lieut. Scarlett's flotilla got ashore at zero hour, 2:45 a.m., and was the first to land on the Italian island. Other craft followed in rapid succession until his whole quota of 3,500 troops were landed. "They don't all touch down at the same time or place," the Hamilton officer explained. "Some L.C.A.'s made flanking movements. It was well planned and timed according to army strategy, which depended on surprise. The whole thing was quite complicated."

Prior to the land assault there was "plenty of flak," Lieut. Scarlett said, as the Italian ack-ack gunners tried to shoot down Allied planes operating out of North Africa. "Apart from that there was not a thing until the first surprise of assault was over. Then coastal defense opened up with light stuff—machine guns, followed by mortars and heavier stuff. It was a pretty heavy barrage.

"Once resistance was broken, the parent ship from which the L.C.A.'s operated moved closer to shore, about a mile off," Lieut. Scarlett continued. "We did that about dawn, and after that we operated a ferrying service. Once our job was finished we moved off and formed in return convoy to make way for the merchant ships going in with supplies and equipment. The harbors and waters off Sicily were jammed with ships, if you can imagine 3,000 ships together."

Lieut. Scarlett, whose home is at 35 Oak Knoll Dr., joined the R.C.N.V.R. in the fall of 1942 and went overseas two weeks later. After a short period on engine instruction in England, he was posted to assault craft maintenance work. The invasion of Sicily was his first show, although several officers who trained with him took part in the attack on North Africa. Lieut. Scarlett graduated in engineering from the University of Toronto in 1942, and prior to enlisting was employed with the National Research Council.

Besides the officer, five naval ratings who took part in the landings on Sicily are home on leave in Hamilton. All able-bodied seamen, they are: Harry Woof of 25 Chatham St., Edward L. Miller of 137 East Ave. 3., Arthur Howarth of 524 Ottawa St. N., Paul Brewer, S. Tennant and William Lee.

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