

Dech, Harry H.

## Parents Get Last Letter From Son Drowned in Africa

A Bath mother and father this week received the last letter from their soldier son who lost his life in North Africa by drowning early in June.

The letter, dated May 18, and written by the late Harry H. Dech, who was a private first class in the U. S. Army, and received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer E. Dech, follows:

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer E. Dech, Penn Street, Bath, this week received the last letter from their son, Harry H.

Dech, a private first class with the American Army in North Africa, lost his life there by drowning early in June. The letter, dated May 18, follows:

Dear Parents: As the war here in Africa is over with now, we can write about it; so I am going to drop you a few lines telling of my Army life. I will start off back in November 1942. We left Camp Kilmer on November 1. We landed at Casablanca on November 18.

The first night on land was a great experience to me. That morning, when the sun started to come over the mountain, I could hear the jackasses bray, the roosters crow; the dogs bark, and the natives pray. Our first joy in Africa was working on the docks in Casablanca. We unloaded ships. It was interesting work. We proved to the people over there that we could do more work than any other outfit in Casablanca. We worked on the docks for about one month, through all kinds of weather. We had quite some rain at the time. After our work on the docks, we went back to our old training periods again. There's where we got angrier every day. We asked them whether they were going to kill us by training or if we were to get a crack at the "damn" Ger-

Our first experience of the war was on December 31. At three o'clock in the morning, the first air raid signal sounded. The raid lasted for three hours. I am telling you that it looked like the Fourth of July back home.

"I am in a heavy weapons squad, but at that time we were still in training so we did not have our guns set up.

"After a few more weeks of training we finally left Casablanca on March 15. From then on we were on the front lines until the very last battle at Bizerte. Some of the towns that we came through at one time had been very nice, but after our forces got through shelling them, there was not much left of them. Of course, we did not do all the damage. The Germans destroyed some of the most important towns, so that we cannot use them for some time to come. After we hit the road and got in under shell fire, we really found that all the hard training we went through was for our own good.

"My first experience of war came one fine morning in March when we woke up and found heavy artillery shells flying all around our tail ends. We always became angry because we had to dig a three foot fox hole in such circumstances. That was one time that we were damn glad to have a three foot fox hole.

"We played a big part in three of the major battles. The battle of Gabes, the battle of Fondruck, and the battle of Bizerte. This was the last and final battle of the war in Africa. I am telling you shooting at the German planes was like shooting ring-neck pheasants back home in good old Pennsylvania. I am proud to say that I am in the best of health and safe at this time, and you, as my parents, should be proud that you have a son who fought in three major battles for his loved ones back home.

"I think that the good Lord carried us through all of the well and hard-fought battles that we went through.

Love from  
Your soldier son,  
Harry H. Dech.

June 24, 1943