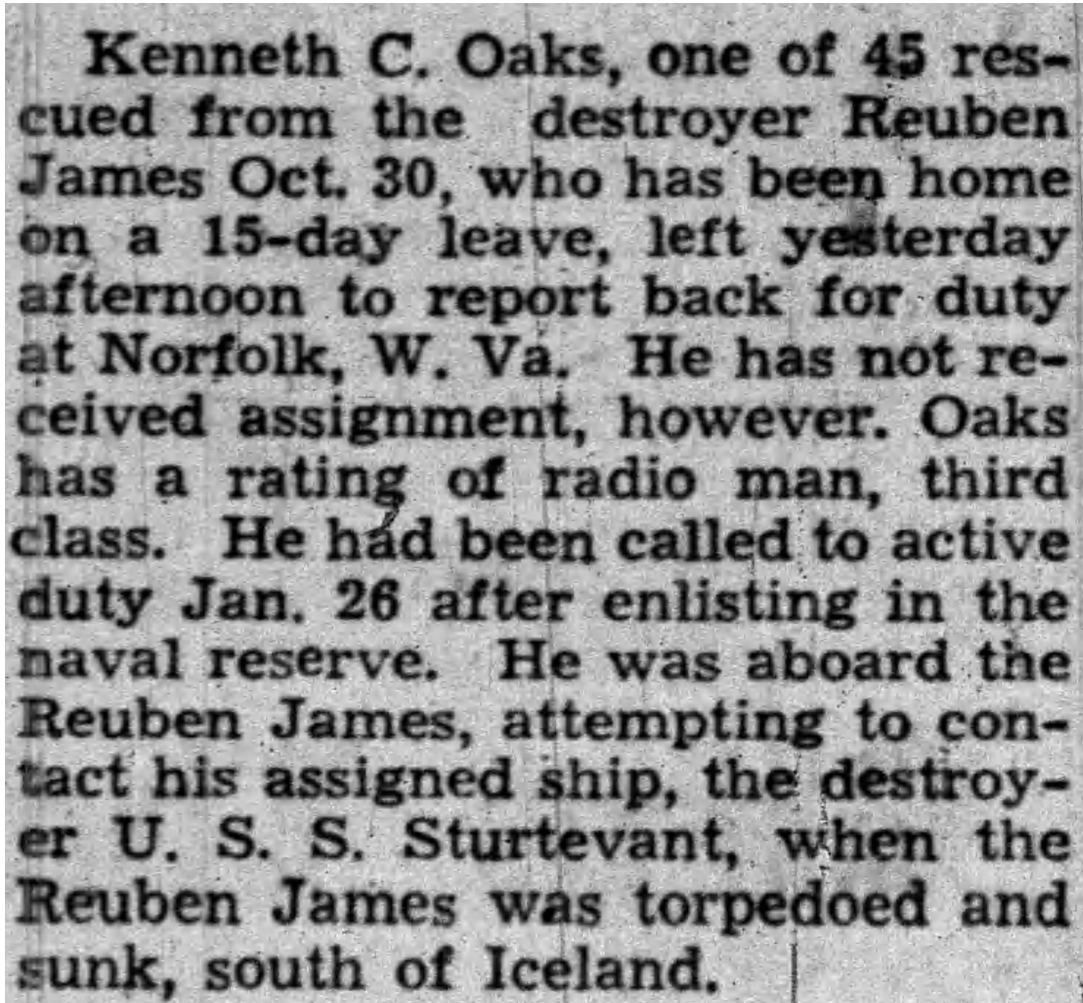


RM1 Kenneth C. Oaks

Location - East-N: R3, C10

RM1 Oaks was on the first ship to be sunk in WWII - The Reuben James and then on The Bristol (also sunk). He survived both.



Kenneth C. Oaks, one of 45 rescued from the destroyer Reuben James Oct. 30, who has been home on a 15-day leave, left yesterday afternoon to report back for duty at Norfolk, W. Va. He has not received assignment, however. Oaks has a rating of radio man, third class. He had been called to active duty Jan. 26 after enlisting in the naval reserve. He was aboard the Reuben James, attempting to contact his assigned ship, the destroyer U. S. S. Sturtevant, when the Reuben James was torpedoed and sunk, south of Iceland.

KENNETH C. OAKS ARRIVES HOME FOR 15-DAY FURLOUGH

Oshkosh Radioman, Who Was
Aboard Reuben James,
Tells of Dramatic Sea
Incident and Rescues

It was an experience better to be forgotten, than to have had in the first place, Kenneth C. Oaks, son of Mrs. Clyde Oaks, 224 Merritt street, related last evening on his first visit home, after sinking of the destroyer Reuben James.

He was one of 45 rescued after the American ship was torpedoed and sunk Oct. 30, supposedly by a German submarine, south of Iceland. He arrived home last night on a 15-day leave, after having docked at New York City in a slow convoy from the big island.

Oaks had gone off a four-hour watch in the radio "shack" at 4:30 o'clock the fatal morning and went below deck to sleep, after abandoning a first thought of sleeping on deck. He had reason to thank his second hunch a short time later.

A terrific explosion awakened him by rolling him from his bunk about 5:30 o'clock, and it was only a few seconds before he had scrambled onto deck. The ship apparently had been broken in two and the forepart had already sunk beneath the waves. The bunks were located in the after-part of the ship.

Immediately after he had gained the deck, two life rafts were severed and thrown overboard and many of the sailors, equipped with life preservers, jumped from the boat. A number of the crew hung back, obviously afraid to jump into the water, and lost their lives 10 minutes later when the rest of the destroyer sank and several depth bombs exploded.

Explosions Create Waves

The Oshkosh young man admitted he wasted no time in getting into the water and had reached the life raft before the depth bombs went off and set up waves that washed his seven companions from the raft. They were able to return to it, however, as the waves subsided.

Morning light had not yet begun to show and the eight boys hung in the water from the raft for about three hours before they were picked up by one of the other destroyers of the convoy. The temperature of the water was estimated at about 50 degrees.

As light began to appear, hopes grew brighter as large boats could be seen in the vicinity. All realized their chances of rescue were slight before morning. Oaks said they noticed a number of empty preservers floating with one corner tipped upward and each thought of sharks, although none mentioned it until they were safe on shipboard.

He thought about his lost ship and realized how close to death he had been. The radio "shack" where he had been one hour before had been blown up and all hands lost. He suffered no ill effects from the water, and the three inches of oil covering the ocean in the area seemed to keep him warm, he said.

Reaches U. S. Nov. 24

After being transported to Iceland, he was later transferred to the battleship Idaho and then to a supply ship for the trip back to the states. When he got back to New York Nov. 24, he experienced the relief of setting foot on solid ground for the first time since Oct. 20.

Oaks had been taken aboard the Reuben James to contact his assigned ship, the destroyer U. S. S. Sturtevant. He has a rating of radio man third class. He was called to active duty Jan. 26 after enlisting in the naval reserve. He studied radio work at the naval armory school at Indianapolis until May 25 and from June 1 to Oct. 25 was on the destroyer tender, Denebola, operating out of Bermuda. He has not received further assignment since the Reuben James disaster.



Kenneth C. Oaks

Kenneth C. Oaks, 84, who lived his first 55 years in his hometown of Oshkosh, Wisconsin and then moved to Carefree, Arizona died March 5th, 1999, following an illness. Ken was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, April 21, 1914 and married Elizabeth (Betty) Morainville Johnson on March 31, 1947. After Betty died in 1972, Ken moved to Carefree Arizona where he married Shirley Meyers. Shirley passed on in 1997.

While in Oshkosh, Ken was partners in Oaks Candy with his brother Robert Oaks and later left Oaks Candy and purchased Badger Mill Supply Corporation, where he prided himself on his salesmanship, often referring to himself as just another peddler. Ken's passion was golf and he managed to win or tie for the club championship a number of times at the Oshkosh Country Club. He lived his final years in Carefree, Arizona, married to Shirley Oaks and played golf at Desert Forrest Golf Club.

Surviving family members include a brother, Richard Oaks of Tucson, AZ, sons Kenneth C. Oaks Jr. of Coeur d'Alene, ID, Thomas B. Oaks of Salt Lake City,

UT, step-daughters Holly J. Meyer of Federal Way, WA and Jo Ann Clarke of Carefree, AZ. Grandchildren include Kenneth C. Oaks III and Kelly C. Oaks of Spokane, WA, Briand Bur Oaks of Salt Lake City, and one Great Granddaughter, Hailey Oaks Roellich in Spokane, WA.

Ken will be entombed in Lake View Memorial Park mausoleum, next to his first wife, Betty.

The family asks that donations be made to the American Red Cross in lieu of flowers. Ken was a multi-gallon blood donor over his lifetime and Betty worked as a Red Cross volunteer for many years.

Ken was a great Father, Husband, Salesman and Businessman. He excelled at Golf, Tennis, Cribbage and Softball. He was a Navy Radioman aboard 2 ships that were sunk in WWII: the Rueben James and the Bristol. He loved Golf, Dancing, Dixieland Jazz, Singing, the Green Bay Packers, Dining Out, Dry Red Wine, a Rare Steak, Driving Fast, The Banjo, a good Piano Bar, Charming Women, Vacationing in Acapulco, a good Scotch and Ron Castillo Whiskey.

He will be greatly missed.

**Rm/1 Kenneth C. Oaks, 320½
East Irving street, has been ship-
ping on a destroyer. He enlisted
Dec. 11, 1940.**

KENNETH OAKS CABLES MOTHER, "WELL AND SAFE"

10-26-43
Message Dispels Worry Which
Was Caused by News of
Sinking of Ship on Which
Presumably He Served

After two long weeks of anxiety and hope, Mrs. Agnes Oaks, 224 Merritt street, this morning received a cablegram from her son, Kenneth C. Oaks, radioman first class, "Am well and safe."

Last word from him, dated Oct. 4, indicated he was aboard the American destroyer Bristol. The ship was reported sunk Oct. 13 in the Mediterranean as a result of underwater explosions, and no further information has been released by the government on the cause or resulting casualties.

Mrs. Oaks was thankful for those few words from her son, although the cable bore no indication as to whether it came from the east or west coast.

The local young man had an earlier similar experience when he was one of 45 rescued of a crew of 114 when the destroyer Reuben James was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine, Oct. 30, 1941, west of Iceland, which he termed as "an experience better to be forgotten."

Oaks left New York Aug. 20 on this last trip, aboard another ship, and later transferred to the Bristol. The Bristol was sunk at the same time the destroyer Buck was sunk.