

By **MERRITT DAANE**
and **HUGH W. HARRIS**

NOW HEAR THIS. Now hear this. Operation D.E.E.D. under way. All hands attention. Operation D.E.E.D. In 30 seconds, at 0800, boat number 38B738 takes on capacity load—boat number 38B738 loads six persons.”

Flying the disaster flag—the red cross on a white field—boat number 38B738—the Ruth M—got in position in Motorboat Lane, boarded its six passengers, and cleared the dock in 50 seconds.

“Boat number 38G1248, board capacity load, five passengers.”

The bull horn blared instructions, passengers lined up to board powerboat after powerboat—each flying the American Red Cross disaster flag—until in 90 minutes, 73 boats had evacuated all persons waiting on the dock at Detroit’s Motorboat Lane.

“Feels like the evacuation at Dunkirk,” said one boat owner, “except I like this version better.”

This version was Operation D.E.E.D.—Detroit Emer-

gency Evacuation Drill—conceived and executed by the Detroit Area Council Explorers and the Detroit Powerboat Squadron. It was the Explorers’ good D.E.E.D. for the local Office of Civil Defense.

And it proved a point—several points.

A few years ago, Circuit Court Judge Frank Fitzgerald was looking around for a project for the Explorers of his district. As district chairman he felt a distinct responsibility for stimulating interest and activity in his area. The judge knew how important it was to keep teenagers busy, so he thought of a week-end cruise along the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair. He knew the Fitzgerald yacht could carry twenty passengers, and he thought he could round up fellow members of the Powerboat Squadron—maybe he could even get about forty of the members to join in the fun..

As for where to cruise, there was Harsen’s Island out across Lake St. Clair. The late governor of Michigan, Alexander Groesbeck, had had a fine estate at Harsen’s Island, and more than once he’d opened it for group meetings. Why not have the young men camp out overnight there, then come back the next day—by boat.

The first Explorer flotilla was so successful that in following years, the District Five Explorers opened their flotilla project to other districts.



Then the world was shaken with the fears and stirrings of atomic warfare. New and greater atomic bombs were set off at Bikini in the Pacific; the H-bomb experiment disintegrated an entire island; and political unrest made for an uneasy citizenry. The Office of Civil Defense tried to get volunteer help, but very little came.

District Five Explorers were swept up in the general current of fear and concern, so that this year when they began planning their flotilla, they had an idea: why not tie in with the O.C.D.?

General Clyde Dougherty of the O.C.D. thought the situation over when the Explorers brought it to him and smiled a wide smile.

"Could you fellows work out a pattern of evacuation by water which we could use for key personnel in case of bombings?" he asked. "Could you find out for us how fast we could get needed personnel out of this area? Could you find out whether it would be feasible to plan evacuation by water?"

Operation D.E.E.D. was born at that moment.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary helped to plan the evacuation route; the Detroit police harbor master kept the Detroit River channel clear of the constant stream of pleasure craft and fishermen; and yachtsmen and mem-

bers of the Detroit Powerboat Squadron found themselves the heroes of Detroit Explorers.

Planners hoped to load around 300 boys and leaders in 60 boats, allowing two minutes to board each craft. While TV and newsreel cameramen ground away and newspaper photographers and reporters made permanent record of the event, Operation D.E.E.D. evacuated 385 boys and leaders in 73 boats in 90 minutes, an average of 1:23 minutes per craft.

It all took planning, of course; these things do. But as General Dougherty said, "The pattern has been set. We no longer need to fear being caught with our key personnel grounded."

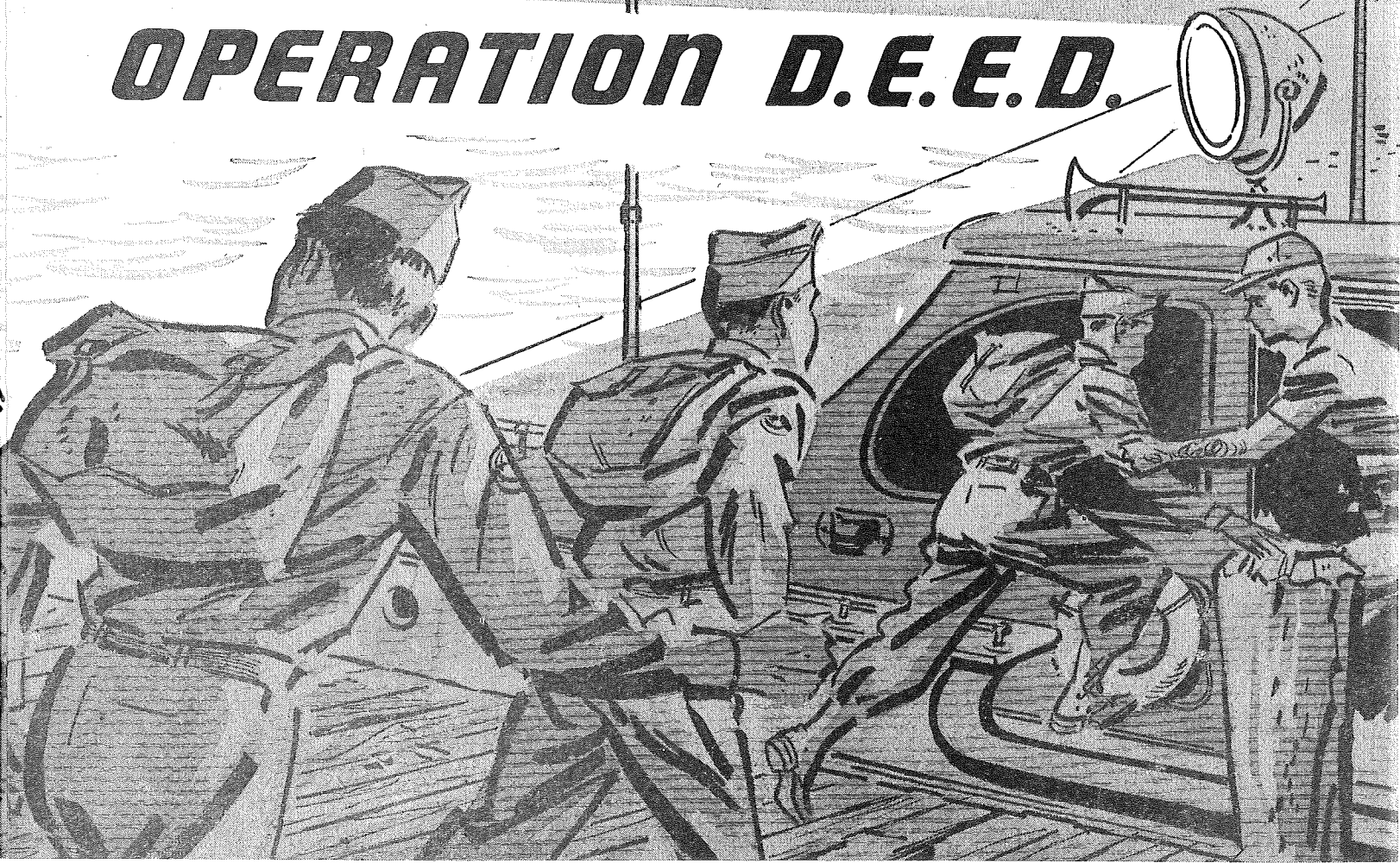
The details were simple.

Each Explorer was ordered to appear at seven o'clock Saturday morning, June 19, at Motorboat Lane, near the heart of downtown Detroit. Each self-sufficient unit would consist of nine Explorers and one leader; each person would carry his own camping gear; each unit would carry its own equipment and food; and each Explorer would wear his uniform and rubber-soled shoes. Everyone under twenty-one years of age was required to furnish parental consent in writing.

As the young men and leaders converged on Motor-

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OPERATION D.E.E.D.



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boat Lane, they were met by a moving van. Each piece of equipment was tagged by unit number and boy's name and left in the van to be carried to the island by land route and public ferry. At the van, each unit was given the number of the boat it was to board. Powerboat Squadron members had already set up the sequence in which the boats were to load and clear the dock. The Coast Guard Auxiliary directed the actual loading, and the flotilla swept out into the Detroit River and across Lake St. Clair for a two-and-a-half-hour cruise to the island.

On the way, the young men took a hand in navigating the craft; they were shown how to handle a small boat in water traffic; they brushed up on compass readings; they were shown other phases of general seamanship.

Once the flotilla reached Harsen's Island, each unit retrieved its equipment, set it up, and cooked lunch.

Harsen's Island is about fifteen miles long and four miles wide with plenty of room for activities. So the boys conquered an obstacle course, went swimming and canoeing, tried their hands at bait casting, skeet shooting, and archery, under the supervision of competent instructors from the Men's Club of the Standard Accident Company.

Then came the mosquitoes!

Probably every evacuation detail has some sorrow in it. In real war, it's the tragedy of broken family ties, of homes destroyed. For Operation D.E.E.D. it was mosquitoes. Jap bombers and Kamikaze artists could

not have competed. These were king-sized beasts which dive-bombed and feasted until Explorers and leaders alike gave quarts of blood to the Mosquito Corps.

It rained, too. For atmosphere, no doubt, because history shows no evacuation in dust or sand. Always in mud! So the elements cooperated for a mud-smearing Operation D.E.E.D.

Being well versed in Scout lore, the leaders prepared a campfire for Saturday night, piling wet wood on a reluctant flame with one hand, battling mosquitoes with the other.

Sunday's rain was just as wet. Despite the rain, outdoor church services were well attended.

After lunch, the first of the powerboats began nosing into the island from the blanket of fog. As a matter of fact, the fog was so thick and weather so miserable that many of the boats couldn't get to the island's dock on schedule.

Commander McFarland of the Coast Guard Auxiliary saved the day. He hailed a cruiser with ship-to-shore phone and contacted the Coast Guard, which sent out units equipped with radio to penetrate the fog and carry the operation to completion.

Operation D.E.E.D. made history.

It proved that the Office of Civilian Defense in water-bordered areas could depend on practical aid from powerboat units; and it proved to the O.C.D., the Red Cross, the Coast Guard, and the harbor master of police that when an experiment needs trying, the Explorers stand ready with their traditional good D.E.E.D.



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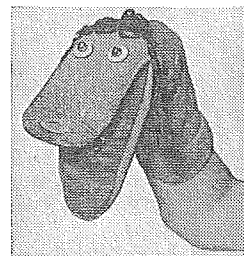
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