

Captain Munroe's narrative of these early days in North Africa discloses:

"In the beginning we had only one flashlight, advanced to kerosene lamp, then began generating our own electricity with small gasoline engines. Finally the Engineering Corps was bringing electricity from a nearby power line. From the water paucity stage of the hospital the Engineer Corps was soon pumping us water from a not too distant uncontaminated well. Soon there were available showers for the more hardy to graduate from the helmet bath stage. After one experience in the cold water shower, that offered small protection from the cold North African wind, many went back to the helmet stage. We can still visualize Aubrey Hawes' daily trips to that torture tent shower. Few seemed to feel that much in need of a shower."

He speaks of other methods they devised to obtain baths:

"The water was hard and defied the lathering of soap. Many of us, by hook or crook, availed ourselves of Arab stoves, which burned either kerosene or gasoline through a needlepoint valve that was constantly on the blink. We always felt that it took two men and several small boys, with a blend of profanity and patience added, to run the small Arab stove, but it was better than nothing. It was our only method of getting hot water for helmet bathing, and it also partially took

some of the chill from the air. We either hovered over the small stove or immediately removed our shoes or boots and climbed into our million-dollar sleeping bags. As so many others had, we had always pictured Africa as hot desert desolation that immediately ran into hot jungles, but we soon learned that North Africa, in the Oran, Algeria, area, was an undeveloped strip of land in which trees, except for the occasional date palms and olive trees, refused to thrive in the face of such filth and such horribly cold wintry and rainy weather.

"There seemed to be no trees for lumber or burning, as practically all wood for burning consisted of roots from burnt out grape orchards. Those first cold dreary nights were a reality of desolation. Our operating room tents and ward tents contained pot-bellied stoves, but due to the coal shortage, the coal was rationed severely. When not at work we all jumped into our sleeping bags and lay in darkness for warmth's sake. When electric lights and reading material came into being for our living quarters, we felt that we were getting up in the world.

"The most interesting part of it all," Captain Munroe concludes his summary of the early experience of the 38th in North Africa, "the organization and running of our hospital inspired us constantly and always gave some surcease from our many discomforts."

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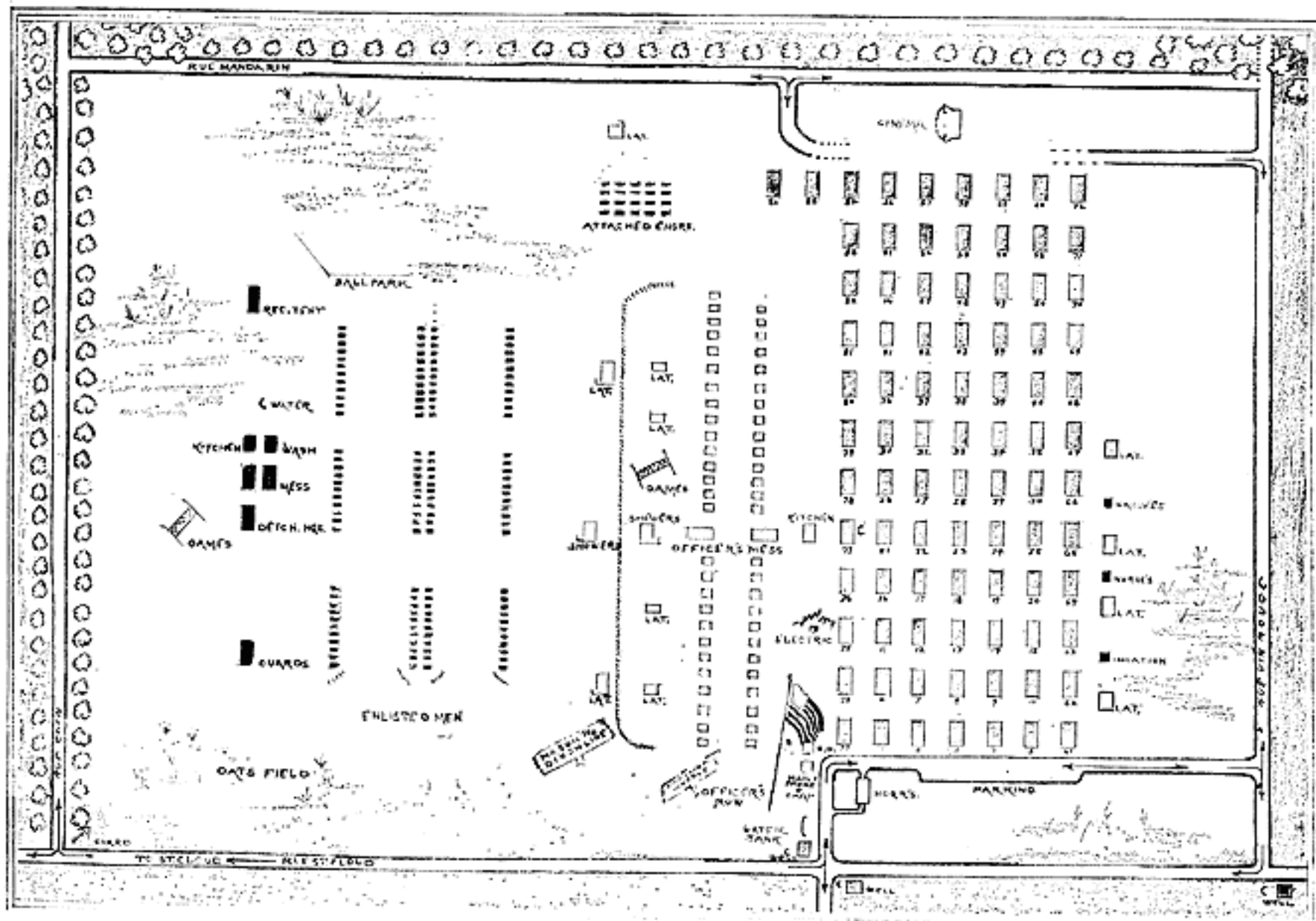
On November 16, 1942, four days after the 38th left Arzew and arrived at St. Cloud, Captain Pickens wrote the folk at home a long letter in which he sought to tell of his feelings in leaving England three weeks before and of the subsequent experiences of the unit as it began its tour of duty in northwest Africa.

"There was a definite feeling of poignancy upon leaving England. The time spent in the British Isles made a profound impression upon me. As most of my letters expressed, I liked the British people. They were exceedingly good to the Americans in their midst. I like the countryside. It is very pretty."

He had reflected upon his stay in England, he revealed, as he was leaving the beleaguered little island. "Riding along the other night in the back end of a truck, I had time to reflect about some of the things I

had seen in England," he wrote. And then he went on to relate details of their leaving and the thoughts that had come to him as they drove toward the embarkation point:

"We had been awakened in the middle of the night, literally, and were being trucked off to the nearest railway station. We were packed in like the proverbial sardines, but I got in last and had a seat on the rear where I could see. The moon was up and the many chimneys, of which England has plenty, made long shadows. England has been good to me and I was grateful. I began to think about some of the little things I could remember. The hedge-lined fields and the lanes and the country roads; we had practiced running for cover along these hedge-lines and had studied camouflage and reflections along them. The friendly public



This drawing, made at St. Cloud by Clarence O. Kuester, Jr., of the 38th personnel, shows the layout of the hospital in that North African sector. The "Mason and Dixon Line," center, divides the "southern" officers' area from the "Yankee" enlisted men's quarters.

house with its ever-present dart game. The grazing cattle and sheep, and we had our share of mutton while on British rations. The trains running on time; they never missed a minute on any of the trips I made. The everlasting stop in mid-morning and mid-afternoon for tea and the accompanying bread and jam or the cookies that went with it. The daily rainfall and the accompanying fog, and it can really get damp in England. The lack of sugar in the quantities to which we were accustomed, but you soon get used to it. The left-hand drive on the streets and the thousands of bicycles, and the bicycles having the right of way. There was the everlasting blackout with its feeling of being lost and the sudden jerk when you step off the curb and didn't expect it. The poor teeth possessed by the majority of the population I saw. The many book shops in every town regardless of the size of the town and the complete choice of books on the shelves. They inspired me to some reading which I had gotten away from in these latter years. There was good music on the radio with a lack of commercial announcements. The harbored rivalry between the English and the Scotch is con-

siderably more pronounced than that left between our most rabid Yankees and Rebels. The thousands of crows or rooks or whatever they are called that infest every field and how they could attack a freshly cut field of barley. The handsome cathedral in nearly every town with the tombstones inside instead of out. The lack of heat on the cold days; they are used to it but I don't think I ever will get accustomed to freezing slowly. The hot tea helped to save me. The beep-beep of the nearly extinct taxi in London and the cry in the blackout at night "Taxi!" to every passing vehicle. The raucous sound of the full-blooded Welshman talking his native tongue. Parliament had just passed a law that the Welsh may plead their cases in the common courts in their own language. The fierce pride all Britishers have in their Navy and RAF and rightfully so. The Navy has kept them in food and the RAF has been striking back at the enemy wherever possible. Every housewife apparently has a perambulator whether she has a baby to push or just uses it to get the groceries. They clutter the streets in every small town. The lack of slang in the King's English; they

have picked up a few of our expressions but on the whole you never hear our slang. They judge us by the movies they see and then get mad if we say their newspapers express their public opinions. The people still feeding the pigeons at Trafalgar Square and the queue lines waiting for the buses. Everyone gets in line in England."

So much for embattled brave little England.

"But now I am away from England and turn my attention to other parts of the world. We sailed from the British Isles and the first day was rough and the majority felt the roll. I was fortunate and got by without being confined and I make no claim to being a good sailor. Many of our group stayed in their cabins for two days and came out slowly. We are headed for Northwest Africa and my feeling is not as keen about it as was Stanley's and Livingstone's.

"We have been coached as to our procedure with reference to the natives. We have been immunized against everything from dandruff to falling arches. We know what to do in case the sun gets too hot. We have been weaned from drinking water. This was done in Britain. We learned how to swat flies in the States and this should stand us in good stead. Because of my knock-knees, I have not taken to the short pants and, besides, the longer ones may keep off some of the mosquitoes.

"We have learned something about the Moslem religion and the customs that go with it. We know not to cut bread but to break it and to always eat with our right hand. I am wondering what Bob will do when he gets down here, if he ever does, since he is a south-paw. We have learned that if we are invited out to dinner and are required to sit on the floor to always cross our legs and never eat everything on the plate. What's left goes to the women and children. We know

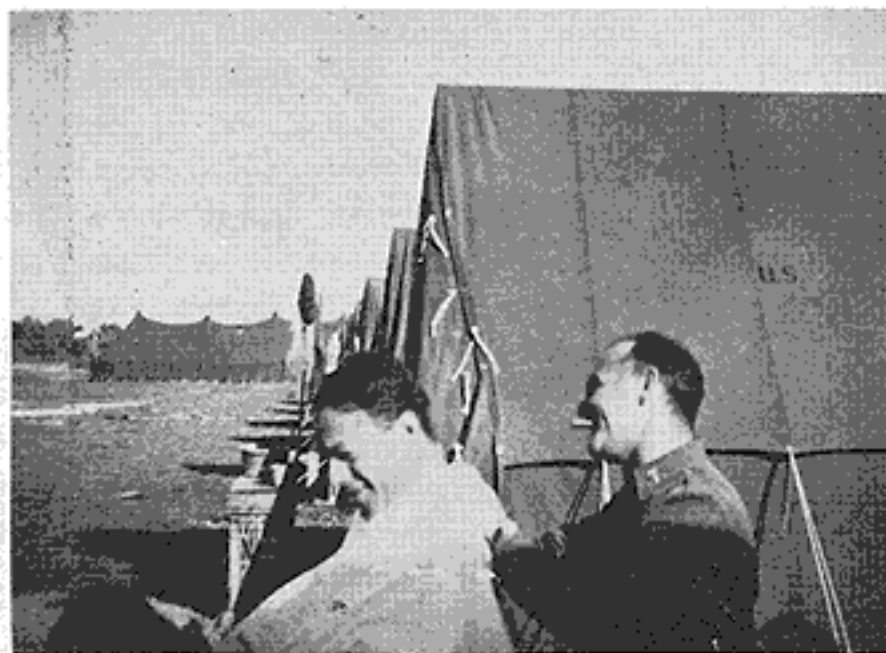
to shake hands upon meeting and leaving. We must always inquire of their health. As a matter of fact, this experience with the people will teach us some good manners, since it is apparent that we will run into them on all sides."

He returned for a moment to refer to the boat trip with the observation that there was "little to be said . . . that would pass the censor and I am not interested in trying to outwit him. I am concerned as much with my own safety as he is." But he did describe briefly their quarters. "I have three roommates, Stokes Munroe, Jack Montgomery, and Buck Medearis. We were assigned in alphabetical order, so they had no choice as to their fourth man. We are in a cabin that measures 6 feet by 12 feet. If you stop and figure that out you can see that we are not overrun with room. We have no chair but we do have two wash basins which are useful only for thirty minutes three times daily when fresh water is available. My bunk is exactly six feet long and I stretch a little over six feet two inches, so I sleep in jack-knife style, up one side and down the other . . . The others are more fortunate since they are not so tall. We get along together in fine fashion. I was able to bring on board two tins of soda crackers and a No. 10 can of peanut butter, so we have a spread every evening before folding into our niches. There is some advantage in being a mess officer.

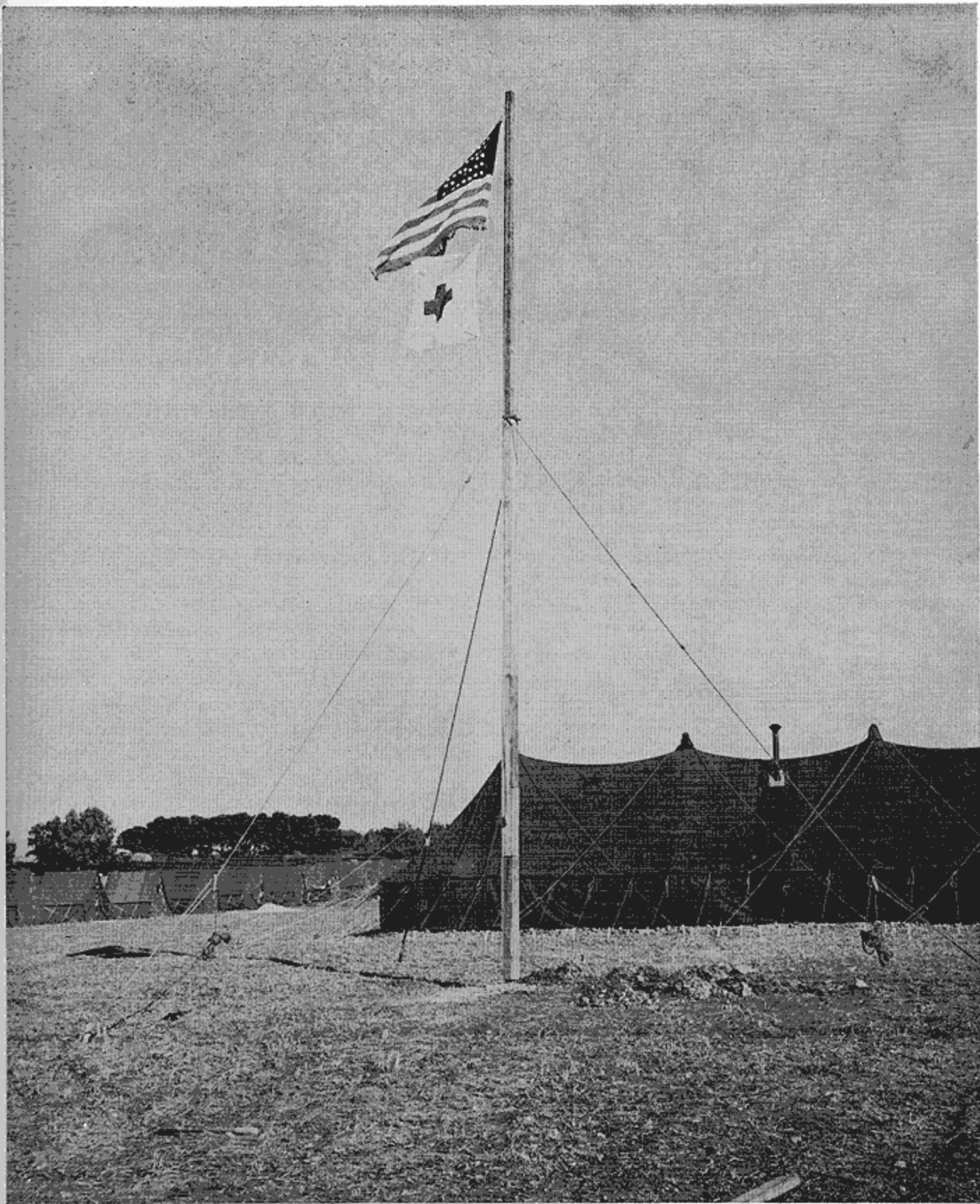
"Many of our group," Captain Pickens' letter continues, "have taken to my favorite game of chess. Stokes Munroe, Jack Montgomery, Paul Sanger, Bernard Walker, George Wood, Milo Hoffman, George Rowe, Vaiden Kendrick, and George Snyder all have had lessons and now the majority of them can lick me in a game. We have decided that at the old soldiers' reunion all that would be necessary for its success will be to have three or four chess games available. When we have not been practicing boat drill and so forth, the game has helped pass the time. Bridge has also attracted some but I have taken little time off to help my game. Darts are also available but they are difficult on board ship, as are the ping-pong games."

His letter speaks of other entertainment aboard the ship taking them to North Africa:

"We have had a number of amateur shows on the boat put on by talent that turned up or was unearthed. One evening the enlisted men put on a good show with a variety of acts. They turned up with guitars and mandolins and did some songs and a blackface skit and a novelty dance. The dance was to a tune written by one of the men entitled 'G.I. Shoes.' It was really clever. One evening some of the officers did their job. One of the men has a violin with him so we had a solo from him and then some piano selections and then the old glee club which performed with Bob Hope and



Colonel Bauchspies, right, is about to—for the photographer, at any rate—begin giving Major Sanger a haircut. It was during the period the 38th was at St. Cloud.



The 38th's encampment at St. Cloud had a tall flagpole from which the Red Cross ensign flew just beneath the Stars and Stripes.

Frances Langford in Charlotte came on and did its part. It sounded pretty good to me. After each performance refreshments were served in the dining room. These consisted of cookies, Dutch style, and some punch made from canned fruit salad and carbonated water. But it was good. Under the circumstances I think the whole plan helped to keep up morale and those who participated had a good time working on it."

The voyage and his letter neared their ends together.

"We sighted the African coast last night," he wrote. "I had always heard of Africa as the dark continent, but believe it or not, the first city we passed had the lights on as bright as day, more lights than we have seen since we left the states. To me it looked like Times Square on a clear night. Of course, we were moving along in the blackout and that emphasized the lights we saw. However, it was somewhat of a relief to see land again.

"During the long nights in the dark I have spent much time studying the stars again. It has been a long time since Father gave me my first knowledge of the constellations and Wiley helped by telling stories about them. I was reminded of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall* where he said 'Many a night from yonder casement, ere I went to rest, I watched beautiful Orion, sloping slowly to the west.' I can't quote the rest of the verse, but there was something about the Pleiades and the Hyades. You remember it. Running the eye around the heavens and picking out the stars and planets helped during my tour of duty as officer of the day. Our shifts

start at 3 AM and go to 3 PM. I always caught the 3 AM starting time so I had several hours on deck to meditate. . . ."

A wealth of details provided in a letter written exactly two weeks later, on December 1, 1942, by Captain Pickens supplements the reminiscences of Captain Munroe and adds both information and descriptive narration to help record the story of the 38th's African experience.

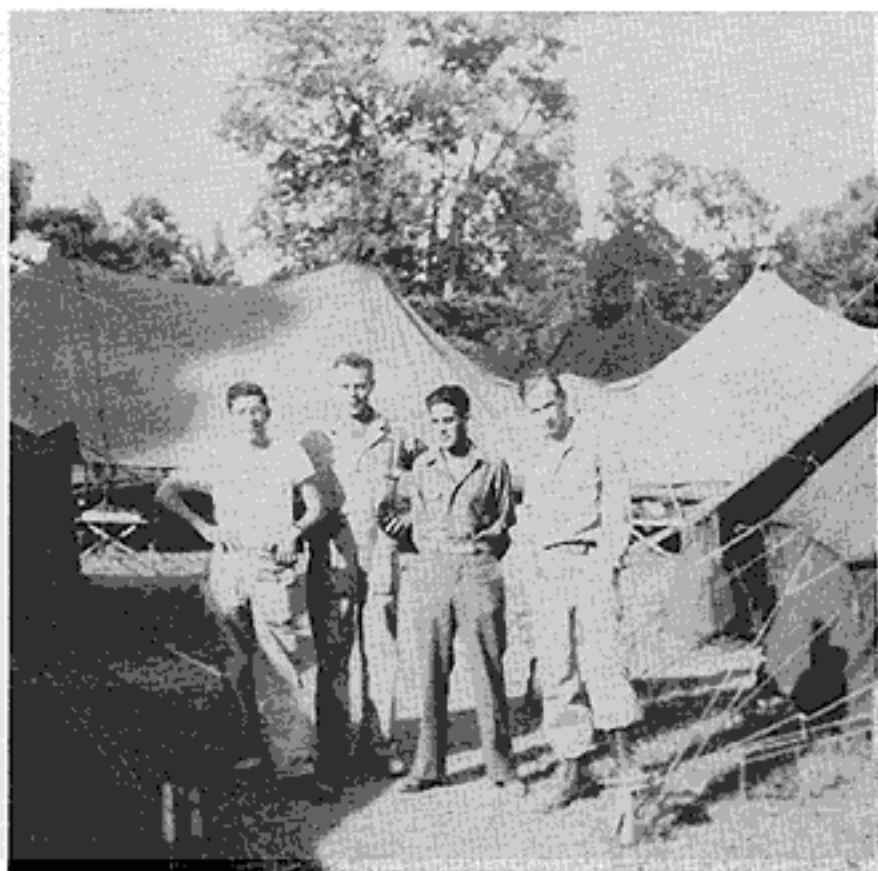
The letter was being written, Captain Pickens said, during the "first opportunity to sit down and really try to write a letter to all the folks at home." Since arriving in Africa everyone had been busily engaged. He began to enumerate some of the tasks:

"For the first few days we lived like the proverbial Indians from hand to mouth, but since the dust has settled we have been hard at work. Our hospital was the first of its kind to be set up in the field and we had a job getting it fixed. Our experience in the states with our meager training was not enough to let us know exactly what we were going to run into, so we had to learn the hard way. This we did in a fairly creditable manner according to the visiting generals we had.

"At present we have more patients in our hospital than all of the hospitals in Charlotte. However, they don't pay as well. They are a cheerful lot on the whole and appreciate the fresh air and sunshine and good food we dish out to them. I am limited in what I can say about our operating here because of the censorship, since we are in the combat zone, but I may come back to it a little later and enlarge as much as possible."

He explained that it was going to be hard for him to describe his experiences, but he promised that he would "just ramble along as I did on the boat coming down." He wondered if that letter had reached them. "But," said he, "here goes on northwest Africa," from where the letter was being written.

"First, the money is on this rate: A dollar is worth 75 francs. We are paid in American currency printed almost the same as your money but with enough variation to make it legal tender only where the government allows. This, I take it, keeps the money we spend from eventually getting into Axis hands and being used against us. Of course, anything we buy is paid for with our money and gladly accepted by the merchants in this area, but in change we receive a lot of Algerian or French notes. These are usually dirty and torn and are not as good as our bank notes. They are larger than ours, as you probably remember, and a few five and ten and twenty-franc notes can fill your pockets. I am always afraid that I will throw some of it away inadvertently or use it the wrong way. Actually there is little to buy, since the Germans apparently have cleaned this part of the world out of all merchandise



Four 38th buddies are caught on a day off in Rome—Jack Macario, Wilbur Knopp, Norman S. Reynolds and Helke McCaughon.

that could be used and food that could be consumed at home. The local population is almost destitute except for a few fairly well to do planters who had saved enough for the rainy day. Their principal crops are grapes, from which they make the most atrocious wines and brandies. I suppose the Germans took this output in order to get the alcohol from it to use in their war machines. They have some grain and some vegetables. These have to be irrigated. They have wells and irrigating ditches all thru the country. They have a rainy season during the winter and during the spring and summer the place is as dry as Volstead could possibly make it. Of course, we *would* get here at the beginning of the rainy season and have the questionable privilege of wading around in the mud too often for comfort. The grapevines are small and beautifully planted and well trimmed. They take the cuttings or refuse and burn it for fuel or make coke from it to run their trucks. Of course, they have had no gasoline since the war started. There are few trees and no forests and no coal, so the question of fuel is acute at times. It is fortunate that the native Arabs eat no meat, since the vegetable diet requires less cooking and hence less fuel.

"Speaking of Arabs eating no meat," Captain Pickens' letter continues, "reminds me of the experience we had on Thanksgiving. The Commanding General sent out a manifesto that all troops were to divide up their day's rations from one-third to one-half and dish it out to the native population. Of course, we planned to try to execute the order. We didn't know about the Arabs not eating meat. I thought they just didn't eat pork, so after we had planned our party we had to change it and hurriedly give all the meat to the French and the poor Arabs got only hardtack, candy, and English tea and coffee and a little canned fruit and puddings. Of course, the vegetables were canned with the meat. The French were quite orderly in getting their part but when our Moslem friends started down our dole line they just



War has its lighter moments, judging by the demeanor of this quintet from the 38th's personnel relaxing in Rome.



Lieutenant Annette Heaton's wide smile is as therapeutic as her proffered medicine, or is it coffee?

broke the traces and started to mob us. They had never had anything given to them before and they just couldn't stand it. Even their chief could not control them. We finally got thru with the job without anyone being hurt, but we missed only by a hair. Everyone was most appreciative. I had two men in my department, one who spoke French very well and one who spoke Arabic and they were delegated to tell the local populace what Thanksgiving meant to us and why we were sharing with them and why we could not do more. Those two soldiers had a grand time. All in all, I think we had a successful time of it and I know we made more friends than enemies."

Other observations of Africa and Africans in the St. Cloud area, perhaps representative of those shared by the members of the 38th generally, were offered by Captain Pickens in this first long letter written from Africa.

For example:

"There are lots of small donkeys in view. We call them one-fourth horsepower transports. When they are harnessed they pull a two-wheeled cart and with the driver and the load the donkey is about one-tenth the size of the weight he is required to pull. They are strong animals and trudge along with considerable less prodding than our familiar mules. Sometimes you can see a man on one of the little beasts sitting on the side rather than straddle. . . . I have been tempted to try a ride on one that way . . . I hesitate to take advantage of the little critter, however. . . .

"The Arabic dress is funny to me. The men wear baggy, droopy, oversized diapers for pants. Of course, the women are completely covered, including their faces. Occasionally one of them allows her face to be seen and there is always the familiar tattoo of her tribe

marked across her face. The same signs are placed on her feet also.

"Everyone shakes hands with you when you meet and as you part. I feel like running home and washing my hands immediately. Of course, this is limited by the amount of water we have or can haul from our water sources, so I am getting used to being dirty and feeling dirty and just not caring. For a while I grew a beard that began to take on the look of the Arabs, but when it got too dirty for me I shaved it off.

"The children all give you the V-sign when you pass in the truck. That is their method of greeting. They cry for bonbons and are overjoyed when we are able to pass out a little of our candy supply. They get a great kick out of our chewing gum of which we get a limited supply. The men really appreciate our American cigarettes."

His letter provides an additional glimpse of the North African climate, scenery, products, people:

"The sunrise here is the most beautiful I have ever seen. Of course, you will say that I had not seen so many before getting into the Army. But the color here is for the painters. After a rain, when the dust has settled, you can see for miles and mountains in the background just make the setting complete. Of course, brushing my teeth with moonbeams in the cold morn-

ing is not so pleasant, but it has its compensations when the sun starts up. The sunsets are equally colorful and beautiful. It is cold at night, it must get down to about 40 some nights, but the days are warm and balmy and you can go without a jacket quite comfortably. Under my tent it is good and warm, but the flies interrupt my siesta at midday.

"Along every road there is a line of olive trees on both sides. They line all the fields, but so far as I have been able to see, there are no complete groves. The natives have been busy with long poles knocking the olives down these last few days. I have not tried to eat any of the olives because everyone says they are rancid and bitter, that they need to be pickled first. That I can't say because my experience with olives has been out of bottles so far. They grow like cherries on the trees, and the trees are the only sizable foliage that you see with the exception of an occasional palm with dates. We have had plenty of oranges and tangerines but I have not seen where they were grown. The oranges are large navel types and are delicious. The tangerines are small and tasty. We were glad to get them since we had been without citrus fruit all the time we were in England and the lack of Vitamin C was becoming apparent in our personnel. All of the citrus must grow somewhat to the south of us, not in the desert."

Of the costs of employing an Arab to do his laundry:

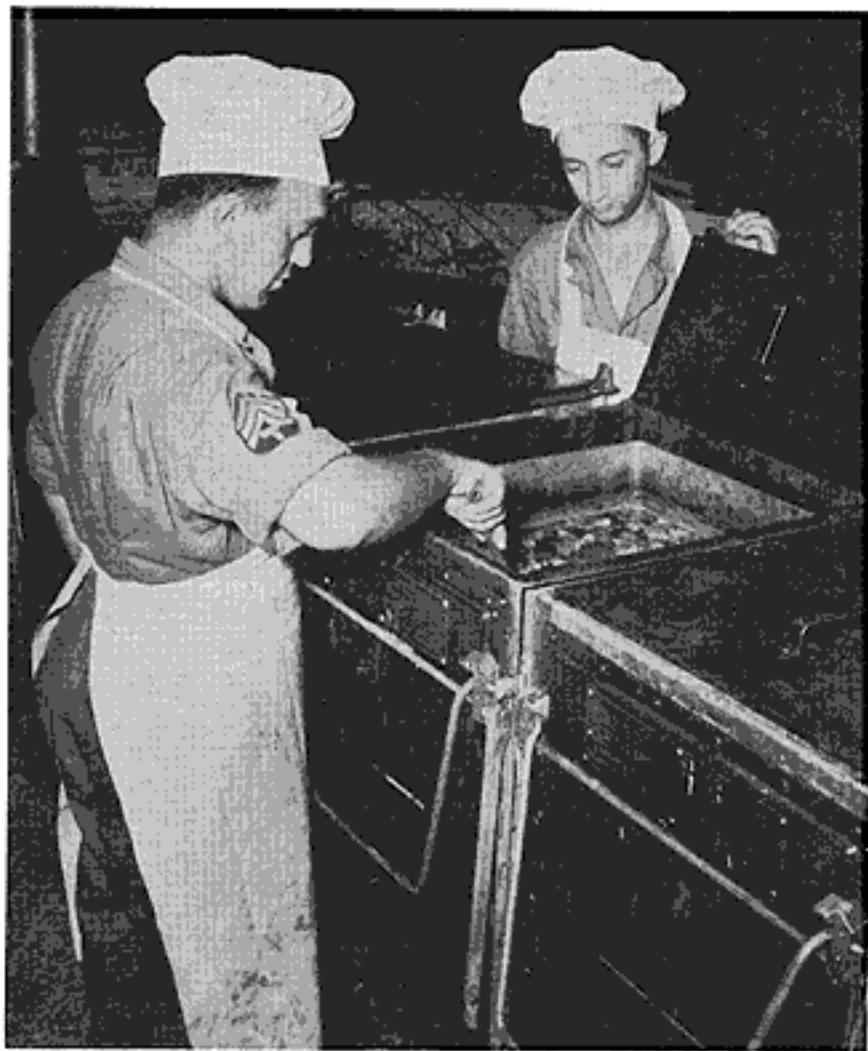
"Yesterday I gave some laundry to one of the natives who works near here among the vineyards. The manager of the plantation said he would do my wash for me. I gave him two field jackets and plenty of linen and a complete wool uniform and the sheets out of my sleeping bag. They came back the next day just as white as any laundry could do them, altho not ironed, and the cost was only 50 francs. If I stay at this point long, I will be delighted with this help because I have not had time to do my washing. On the deal with the Arab I had to furnish the soap."

He wrote a paragraph about a famous visitor the hospital had had:

"... Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., came by to see the hospital the other day. It was the first time I had met him. I met Mrs. Roosevelt in London. She was doing Red Cross work near where I was stationed and doing a good job of it. I had a pleasant visit with the General and he promised when he wrote Mrs. Roosevelt that he would tell her to see Bob and tell him where I was. . . ."

Captain Pickens adds his account of the setting up of the 38th's hospital. It supplements the report made by Captain Munroe:

"Now back to setting up a hospital of our size. We moved into the area one day and a hundred patients



The most important soldiers in the Army! The Army moves on its stomach, it has long been said, and the cooks move it. This photo was made in North Africa. Roy Morrison is facing the camera. Sergeant Joseph Gleba is the other man.

moved in the next. In the meantime we did a lot of moving, and I don't mean maybe. It was hectic for a while but we came thru. On the second night a strong wind started blowing and one tent came down. It housed some twelve nurses and some of them were covered with canvas for a while but were not hurt. It was about three in the morning when the blow started and with it came rain. Everyone was roused out of bed and there was much running around tightening tent pins and ropes. We lived thru it. At first, our latrines were the old-fashioned straddle trench type. After a few days this gave way to well-built boxes, so now we feel quite fancy. Chic Sales never had anything on us. The kitchens and mess halls are the show places, however, since I spend most of my time there. We feed around a thousand people a day and they all appear to get plenty to eat. No S and W can rival our menus. We now have steak, ham, fish, wieners, hamburgers, eggs (dehydrated), bacon, peas, carrots, potatoes, onions, also dry, canned fruit and juices, sardines, cheese, jam, coffee, tea and cocoa. We have corn fritters, hot cakes, butterscotch pudding, chocolate pudding, and canned pineapple. The menu sometimes calls for corn beef or Irish stew. There is nothing we can't get except bread and ice cream. We still eat crackers or hardtack."

Captain Pickens turns his attention from his own specialized duties to write a few lines about the doctors and the nurses:

"The surgeons are prepared to give any sort of operation required, and the medical men are busy going around prescribing for their patients and looking after their general welfare. The nurses add a bit of color and I can see now why the Army likes to have them along. They give a touch that the men can't give. A skirt going by the cot just makes the hospital seem different. And they can write home for the patients better than the men can, and they know what to say. I have seen two nurses teaching lip reading to a man who had lost his hearing. I spent one Sunday afternoon reading Edward Everett Hale's 'A Man Without a Country' to a group of patients. They appeared to enjoy the story, and it helped pass the time for them and me. Of course, I got a kick out of it."

Closing this long letter, he explains how it is being written:

"This letter has been written under the most trying circumstances, with numerous interruptions, so I am sure it won't make much sense to you. I started it yesterday and am just getting it finished. This typewriter is sitting on a hastily constructed box and I am sitting on a small box in front of it. Neither of the boxes is too sturdy, but I do hope you get some idea of what goes on in Northwest Africa with a small part of the American forces.

"So far I have had no mail from the states since arriving in Africa," he concludes the letter. "I don't worry about it. About Christmas I have the feeling that there will be bundles of it for me to peruse. You have probably been in the same boat and I hope you have not been too concerned. I am in good health, as the enclosed picture will indicate."

A quick look at their new African base of operations is provided also in a short note written about that time by Lieutenant Charlotte Jean Webber of the 38th's nurses group to her family in Cynthiana, Kentucky:

"We live in tents somewhere in Northwest Africa and love it. Only we don't take baths, wash our hair, shave or wash clothes—just one big, dirty, happy family. It's cold at night. I sleep on an Army cot in my sleeping bag with my wool robe on and four Army blankets over me and my fur coat in my little field hospital. Worked like blazes to get it set up these first few trying days—and now we have something to be proud of.

"We've named all our little streets in the field—my ward tent is on the corner of Kentucky Ave. and 2nd St. Our mess tent's called 'New York Hotel' and my tent is named 'My Old Kentucky Home.'"

"I certainly have a time trying to talk French with these French people. Those two years I had in French in Cynthiana High do come in handy. When I was in



Jacob Groff appears undisturbed by his duties involving the autopsy bucket.



Famed war correspondent Ernie Pyle visited and wrote frequently of the 38th. Here he is shown during a visit to St. Cloud talking with two patients, Private Raymond Astrackon, left, and Sergeant Ralph Gower. The nurse is Lieutenant Annette Heaton, supervisor of the medical service ward.

town I went into a shop to buy some pins; the French shopkeepers kept jabbering to us and we couldn't understand a thing they said. Finally I gathered they wanted us to go with them for a drink of wine. Well, they left their shop wide open and took us down to their house, sat us down and brought out three bottles and finally F.D.R.'s picture and we all drank a toast to Roosevelt."

On December 2, 1942, three weeks after their landing in Africa, the men and women of the 38th Evacuation Hospital had a distinguished visitor who would become perhaps the best known and most widely read correspondent of World War II. Ernie Pyle was the fourth man to sign the 38th's guests register. In his straight up and down distinctive handwriting he wrote:

Dec. 2, '42
Ernie Pyle
Correspondent
Scripps-Howard Newspapers

Ernie Pyle came to be a good friend and great admirer of the hospital's officers, nurses, and enlisted personnel, and he would write a series of syndicated columns about the 38th that would tell its story to his readers throughout the United States.

In his first column mentioning it he said he had planned earlier to write of the nation's preparations for treating war casualties, but had been reluctant to do so because to him the thought of so many men's soon becoming war cripples was positively shocking.

When he did write on the subject the 38th was in Africa and he datelined his column from that sector:

WITH AMERICAN FORCES IN ALGERIA—Back in England last summer, I spent some time with the Army's Medical Corps, intending to write about our preparations for wartime wounded.

But I never wrote the columns. The sight of surgeons being taught to operate at the front, of huge warehouses filled to the roofs with bandages, of scores of hospitals built for men then healthy who would inevitably soon be cripples—it was shocking and too morbid, and I couldn't write about it.

But now that preparation is being put into effect. Our doctors and nurses and medical aides have had their first battle experience. The hospitals are going full blast. And it doesn't seem morbid in actuality as it did in contemplation.

In the Oran area, where our heaviest casualties were, the wounded are in five big hospitals. Three are French hospitals taken over by the Army. One is an abandoned French barracks turned into a hospital. And one is a huge tent hospital out in an oat field. It is the most amazing thing I have seen, and I'll write much about it later.

The hospital in the oat field which he considered amazing was Charlotte's 38th. And, indeed, he did

write of it often and with lavish praise of its accomplishments. But his column continues:

So far the doctors can be, and are, proud of their work. The nurses have already covered themselves with glory. The wounded have only praise for those who pulled them through.

Our only deaths were those killed outright and those so badly wounded nothing could save them. In other words, we have lost almost nobody from infection, or from the hurly-burly of battlefield medical shortcomings.

You've already read of the miracles wrought by sulfanilamide in the first battles of Africa. Doctors and men both still talk about it constantly, almost with awe. Doctors knew it was practically a miracle drug, but they hadn't realized quite how miraculous.

Every soldier was issued a sulfanilamide packet before he left England, some even before they left America. It consisted of 12 tablets for swallowing, and a small sack of the same stuff in powdered form for sprinkling on wounds.

The soldiers used it as instructed, and the result was an almost complete lack of infection. Hundreds are alive today who would have been dead without it. Men lay out for 24 hours and more before they could be taken in, and the sulfanilamide saved them.

It's amusing to hear the soldiers talk about it. Sulfanilamide is a pretty big word for most of them. They call it everything from "snuffalide" to "sulphermillanoid."

There's one interesting little sidelight about it. Some of the wounded soldiers didn't have any sulfanilamide left, because they had surreptitiously taken it all to cure venereal diseases. They say you knock out a venereal case in four or five days with it, and thus don't have to report in sick.

The doctors told me that most American wounds were in the legs, while most of the French were in the head. The explanation seems to be that we were advancing and thus out in the open, while the French were behind barricades with just their heads showing.

Both sides treated the wounded of the other side all during the battle. Our soldiers are full of gratitude the way



While the 38th was at St. Cloud, officers and enlisted men sometimes were able to arrange short rest leaves. Here three young women go for a fast ride, North African style. The two 38th nurses are Lee Rodstein, Elva Wells, and next to driver, Jean Webber. They are at Caserta.



The hospital at St. Cloud sat in a level field bordered by trees, and white stones edged the walkways and roads through the tented encampment.

they were treated in the French hospitals. They say the French nurses would even steal cigarettes for them.

It is fantastic the mixup of French emotions that showed itself during the fighting. One French motor launch went about Oran harbor firing with a machine gun at wounded Americans, while other Frenchmen in rowboats were facing the bullets trying to rescue them.

I know of one landing party sent ashore with the special mission of capturing four merchant ships. They took them all without firing a shot. The captain of one ship greeted the party with "What was the matter? We expected you last night." And the skipper of another met the party at the gangway with a bottle of gin.

There was much fraternization. In one town where fighting was heavy, the bodies of five men were found in a burned truck. Three were Americans and two were French.

Morphine was a great life-saver. Pure shock is the cause of many deaths; but if morphine can be given to deaden the pain, shock cases often pull through. Many officers carried morphine and gave injections right on the field. My friend Lt. Col. Louis Plain of the Marine Corps, who had never given an injection in his life, gave six on the beach at Arzew.

Many of our wounded men already have returned to duty. Those permanently disabled will be sent home as soon as they are able. Those still recovering are anxious to return to their outfits. I've inquired especially among the wounded soldiers about this, and it's a fact that they are busting to get back into the fray again. Morale was never higher than now.

In a subsequent column to his newspapers Ernie Pyle wrote of the 38th's activities. It was one of his favorite military units, as the column, carried by *The Charlotte Observer* on Wednesday, January 13, 1943, reveals. This column with others about the 38th, edited and condensed, was included in his book, *Here Is Your War*, published in 1943 by Henry Holt and Company. Pyle wrote:

WITH THE AMERICAN FORCES IN ALGERIA—When a soldier is in perilous predicament or especially aggravated with the rough-and-tumble life of the battlefield,



This view of the 38th's layout at St. Cloud shows the hospital tents. There were seven rows, a dozen tents to the row. On right are various service tents. The living quarters were to the left of picture.

he usually pacifies himself by thinking, "If the folks at home could only see me now!"

And if the folks of Charlotte, N. C., could only peep down out of the African sky and see their family doctors and nurses in their new kind of life—what a surprise they'd have!

For a bunch of men and women from Charlotte are operating the only American tent hospital so far set up in North Africa, and they're doing a dramatically beautiful job. They're really like something out of Hollywood, and I've visited them time after time just out of fascination.

They are far from any town, set in the middle of a big oats field, out on the rolling plains. They began setting up the day after troops had battled their way over that very ground. They took in their first patients the next morning.

Now the hospital has more than 700 patients, it takes 400 people to run it, and there are more than 300 tents covering 80 acres of oats stubble. The stubblefield was picked so the mud and dust wouldn't be so bad—but they are anyway.

Everything is in tents, from operating rooms to toilets. Everything was set up in three days. They can knock down

and be on the move again in another three days, and they expect it to happen at any moment. They are like a giant medical Ringling Brothers.

• • •

They are known as the—evacuation hospital. They were taken into active service last April, practically denuding the Charlotte Memorial Hospital of doctors and nurses.

They arrived in England in mid-August. They stood off the North African coast with the great overwhelming convoy that brought our occupying troops. They came ashore in assault boats the morning after the occupation. They jumped immediately to work.

There are 50 Charlotte men in the unit—mostly doctors and surgeons, but a few businessmen who do the non-medical part of running a hospital. There are 50 nurses too. None had ever lived any closer to nature than an occasional hunting trip. Today they have become nomads of the desert, living on the ground and under the sky, and they love it.

Their commanding officer is a regular Army man—Lieut. Col. Rollin Bauchspies, who only recently joined them. He's

a tough, hoarse, friendly guy who cusses continuously and drinks hard likker and drives his own jeep and says to hell with regulations, dying people can't wait. He's a Pennsylvanian and says he could lick the whole damn Dixie tribe if he had to, but you see he doesn't have to because the whole outfit vibrates with accomplishment and they're all proud together.

. . .

Pyle tells of the unit's arrival in Africa as inexperienced at living in the open but of their ability quickly to adapt themselves to the new routine:

When they arrived in Africa, they were neophytes at living in the field, for that part of their training had been overlooked. Lieutenant Colonel Bauchspies had taken over command while they were on the boat coming from England, and he'd had no time to give them the neglected field training.

So they arrived in the middle of an African oatfield with three hundred tents to set up, and not a soul knew how to put up a shelter-half or drive a tent-peg properly. But they soon learned. Colonel Bauchspies, who did know how, being a Regular Army man, got out and drove ten pegs himself. Everybody worked like a slave. Doctors helped dig ditches. Nurses helped unload trucks.

One amateur electrician among the enlisted men started wiring the office tents for lights. A couple of carpenters-by-trade made themselves known, and went to work. A professional sign painter turned up among the first patients, and painted the street signs that helped to give the hospital a civilized touch.

In a few days the veterans had taught the tenderfeet how to make themselves comfortable living in the rough. The tents of officers and nurses were touchingly homelike. There was canvas on the floor, mosquito nets over the cots and framed pictures of wives and children standing on the wooden tables. The Charlotte doctors and nurses were wise enough to bring air mattresses and sleeping bags, and they had never slept more comfortably.

Of course, getting up in the cold before daylight and washing in cold water out of a canvas washpan took some getting used to. And yet it grew on them.

Major Paul Sanger was chief surgeon of the hospital. He had been chief surgeon back in Charlotte. He was a highly skilled, well-to-do professional man. He told me, "I never go into town. I feel better out here than I've ever felt in my life. We were all prima donnas back home. We had every comfort that money could buy. We would have been shocked at the idea of living like this. But we love it. We all do. I suppose we'll be making our families live in tents when we get home."

Pyle revealed that Lieutenant Colonel Preston White, the unit's chief medical officer, whom he described as "enthusiastic as a child" over the whole hospital setup, had become "an addict to outdoor living." He quoted Colonel White:

"We have only a quart of water a day to wash, shave and wash clothes in, so we don't take many baths. Maybe we don't smell so good, but when we're all in the same boat we don't notice it. And it sure feels good living out like this."

Pyle continued his description of the 38th in a part of a column he used also in *Here Is Your War*:

The hospital was already spreading a fame for its food. Anybody in the Army knows that a field hospital is the best place to eat. One night we had big juicy steaks for dinner. "Where did these come from?" I asked Colonel Bauchspies.

"Hell, I wouldn't dare ask," he said. "I suppose Stan stole them."

Stan was Captain Stanton Pickens, who had gone along as mess officer. His brother, Lieutenant Colonel Bob Pickens, was a friend of mine in London. Stan set such a good table that the trucks bringing patients from outlying camps always managed to arrive just at lunchtime. And another indication—Stan made arrangements with a local Arab to collect their garbage, for which he was to give the hospital a crate of oranges every three days. But it seems everybody cleaned his plate, and the Arab was getting so little garbage he wanted to give oranges only every four days now.

Ernie Pyle named others in the Charlotte unit's administrative group:

The hospital's supply officer was Captain William F. Medearis. He was a Charlotte bigwig. They said he owned all of Main Street, plus half the real estate and all the laundries. He was national secretary-treasurer of the Laundry Association. He turned down a lieutenant-colonelcy in Washington in order to go to Africa with his friends.

Captain George C. Snyder, who commanded the non-medical detachment of enlisted men at the hospital, shared the Coca-Cola honors with Captain Pickens. Between them they had a special gold mine sewed up in Charlotte. But they had nary a bottle of it in Africa.

He mentioned the two Captain Joneses:

In the outfit there were two named Captain Otis Jones. They were no relation and had never heard of each other until they joined the Army. One was the chaplain, and he was from Bude, Mississippi. The other was a Charlotte obstetrician. Since none of the soldiers was given to having babies, Dr. Jones was registrar for the hospital. So they wisecracked that he "delivered papers" over there.

Pyle's report continues with a return to his describing the physical arrangements of the tented hospital city:

Seen from the mud road leading across a field, the hospital looked like a dark-green sea of tents. It blended so well with the fields and against the low rolling mountains in the distance that a person could hardly pick it out half a mile away.

Even the first tent had a "going concern" air about it—there was a tidy, painted sign on a stake saying "Headquarters," and a little dirt walk lined with whitewashed rocks led up to it. Inside that ten men worked at crude tables with folding legs. Before them were file cases that folded up into small portable trunks. Field telephones rested in their leather cases. It was the same equipment I had seen in all the camps in England and Ireland, and there in Africa its quickly movable character was being genuinely put to work.

Back of headquarters the tents spread out and formed a city, with streets between the rows. The whole place was

laid out just as it had been planned on paper in Washington years before. But the little touches—the street signs, the whitewashed rock borders all over the place—they were additional, and were the volunteer work of the enlisted men.

The officers and nurses live two in a tent on two sides of a company street—nurses on one side, officers on the other. The street has a neat sign at the end on which is painted "Carolina Avenue." Some Yankee has painted under this "Rebel Street."

The 300 men who do the non-medical work live in their little shelter tents just on beyond. They're mostly from New England. They've built a little wall of whitewashed rocks between the two areas, and put up a sign saying "Mason-Dixon Line."

The chief nurse is First Lieut. Bessie Fullbright. In true Southern style everybody calls her "Miss Bessie." They've even got a small detachment of Negro Engineer troops, just to make everybody feel at home.

The nurses wear khaki overalls because of the mud and dust. Doctors go around tieless and with knit brown caps on their heads. Pink female panties fly from a line among the brown warlike tents. On the flagpole is a Red Cross flag, made from a bed sheet and a French soldier's red sash.

Your operating room has a dirt floor, and the canvas walls blow in and out. Diseased Arabs, seeking relief, wander timidly in toward the tent marked "Native Surgery."

You wash outdoors in cold water and go to a Chic Sale with a canvas wall around it. You eat and read by lantern light. You almost never take a bath. You seldom drive the 20 miles into town because you get to like it out here, and you feel so healthy.

Planes bound for destruction of the Axis roar tent-high over your weird city of canvas. At night a trillion stars shower down out of the clear African night. You sleep on a folding cot under mosquito bars, with the tent flaps open.

Pyle reported that the Charlotte folk "were up in the darkness of 6:30 A.M.—boy, was it cold! At first, they sometimes even put off washing their faces till later in the day." Yet, he reasoned, their "whole crude existence was built around the call of those thousands of men whose lives depended on them—and they realized they were happier than they had been in a long time.

"Yes," he ended this particular column, "if the folks back in Charlotte could only have seen them!"

The routine of the 38th's reason for existence, the treatment of the battle casualties, was related in highlights by the famous war correspondent in a subsequent report from North Africa:

At the receiving tent, trucks and ambulances arrived with wounded men transferred from other hospitals, with sick men from incoming ships, with ill and injured from our dozens of camps around the countryside, with airmen stricken at high altitudes.

Those able to walk went down a long line of desks, where their history was taken for the files. In the next tent they turned in all their belongings. That tent was stacked high with barracks bags. Rifles and mud-covered bayonets stuck out of bags. Attendants gingerly accepted hand grenades and gave the owner a receipt.

In the next tent the patient turned in his clothes and got a tag in return. He was given a pair of flannel pajamas and

a red corduroy bathrobe. He had to keep his own shoes, for the hospital had no house slippers. Then he went to whatever ward tent his type of illness indicated. His belongings were taken by truck to the opposite end of the hospital a quarter mile away, to await his exit.

The surgical and laboratory tents were in the middle of the big compound. There were three fully equipped surgeries, and they were astonishingly modern. All equipment was brand-new. It was like the newest hospital in New York, except that the floor was canvas-covered dirt, the walls canvas, and the street outside a deeply rutted bog-hole of red clay.

When an operation was going on, a triple flap was pulled over the tent entrance, and a heavy mosquito bar dropped over that. Inside, the air became stiflingly hot even then; by summer it would be cruel. Patients were brought up the muddy street on a field stretcher running on bicycle wheels. Surgeons wore white robes, white masks, rubber gloves. Everything was white, and I was struck with the vast amount of sheeting, swabs, bandages and towels—all white—around a desert operating table.

The light above the surgeons was fiery bright. The hospital tapped a nearby high-tension line for its operating-room current. If that failed, there was a whole progression downward for emergency—a generator run by a gas engine, a portable battery set, then powerful flashlights, then lanterns, then candles, and finally just matches if it ever came to that.

There was an X-ray room, and a fluoroscope. The dark-room was a tent within a tent. All the new equipment shone and sparkled, sitting incongruously on its dirt floor.

There were more than forty tents of wards. Each tent held twenty men, on folding camp cots. The floor was stubble. It sounds makeshift, but the patients were thoroughly comfortable.

There was also the dentist's office, in one end of a surgical tent. The chair was just a hard green metal one, tilted back. There were no arms to hold to when it hurt. The drill was run by the dentist pumping on an old-fashioned treadle. Yet the dentist, Major Vaiden Kendrick, said he could do anything he did back home in Charlotte. He offered to make me a plate just to prove it, but I gnashed my original teeth at him and fled.

One tent housed a laboratory, filled with basins and test tubes and burners. Another was a drugstore, where thousands of prescriptions were filled from endless bottles on shelves. And all this, mind you, every bit of it from tents to kitchen stoves to anesthetics, had come to Africa on a single boat.

In another of his columns to the newspapers at home Ernie Pyle's report of certain incidents involving Arabs in the vicinity of the 38th's hospital serves to supplement stories told about the Arabs by members of the unit.

"There were a lot of things that Charlotte doctors and nurses hadn't visualized before they set up their big tent hospital there in the field," this column began. Then he proceeded to enumerate some of these unforeseen problems:

The natives, for instance. Arabs in their long gowns came wandering across the plains hoping the miraculous Americans could cure their ailments. So the hospital had to set up a separate tent for them. They had local people in there

wounded by shrapnel in the first battle. There was one old woman of eighty-one whose arm had been blown off. There were several patients on whom they had done normal operations.

One Arab woman had been shot through the stomach. Her condition was grave, but on the second morning her husband arrived, said he had to go to work and there wasn't anybody to take care of the kids, and for her to get the hell home where she belonged. So she got up and walked out. The doctors didn't think she could have lived through the day. But you know how it is with us Arabs—we don't like our women gadding about when there's work at home.

While I was there a ragged Arab with a long stick came in with his ten-year-old boy. The child had a hideous rash over his neck and face. Through the interpreter, the Arab said he had been praying and praying for the Americans to come, so they could do something for his boy. His belief in us was touching, but the doctors feared the scourge was beyond their ken.

The Army's Arabic interpreters, incidentally, were completely accidental. They weren't assigned to the hospital unit by design or anything. It just happened.

One was Private Israel Tabi, of 245 Broome Street, New York City. He was born in Yemen, and had settled in America when he was twenty. He was thirty-five when I met him, and a house painter by profession. So far as he knew his parents were still in Arabia, and who could tell, he might see them some day. He said the Arabic spoken around these parts was quite similar to what he knew. I mentioned that he was performing a very valuable service. Private Tabi was volubly patriotic. He said, "I will do anything for my country. Whatever they ask me to do, I will do. I will work day and night. I love my country. I will do anything for it."

The other interpreter was an Egyptian—Private Abraham Casper Leon Saide (pronounced Sadie). He lived at 343½ Seneca Street, Buffalo, New York. He was a watch repairer by trade. He had been born in Alexandria, Egypt, was thirty-four, and had migrated to America in 1924. He spoke Turkish, Greek, Egyptian and all those exotic languages. It looked as if Private Saide might have a very useful career ahead of him in the army.

The hospital already had handled more than 1,000 patients and hadn't lost a one. The doctors ran to the nearest stake and knocked on wood when they said it. The surgeons had performed more than 125 operations.

There was no red tape about whether a patient was legally entitled to enter the hospital or not. They took anybody who came along—soldier, civilian, Arab, Frenchman, anybody. The way they ignored formalities when emergency arose was one of the things that made me feel so warmly toward this battle-front hospital. One day we were looking at the round-bellied iron stoves half buried in the ground in each tent.

"What do you burn in them?" I asked Lieutenant Colonel Bauchspies.

"Wood," he said.

"Where do you get the wood?" I asked.

"Steal it," he said.

When you were saving lives you didn't requisition and wait; you foraged and borrowed and even stole if necessary. And nobody stood on rank. Once Major General Fredendall made an inspection tour through the hospital. Colonel Bauchspies croaked hoarsely like a frog.

"How did you lose your voice?" asked the general.

"I lost it driving tent pegs," said the colonel.

"Your guard looks nice," said the general. "Where did they get those new rifles?"

"I daren't tell you, sir," said the colonel. The general smiled. And nodded.

One of Ernie Pyle's most interesting and revealing columns was devoted to the nurses of the 38th:

The American nurses—and there were lots of them—turned out just as you would expect: wonderfully. Army doctors, and patients, too, were unanimous in their praise of them. Doctors told me that in that first rush of casualties they were calmer than the men.

One hospital unit had a nurse they were afraid of. She had seemed neurotic and hysterical on the way down. The head doctor detailed another nurse just to watch her all through the hectic first hours of tending the wounded. But he needn't have. He admitted afterward that she was the calmest of the lot.

The head of one hospital, a full colonel who was a soldier in the last war, worked in the improvised hospitals set up at Arzew to tend the freshly wounded. He said they worked thirty-six hours without sleep, with wounded men lying around knee-deep, waiting. He said not a soul in the outfit cracked up or got flustered.

"We were so busy we didn't think about its being horrible," he said. "We weren't ourselves. Actually we seemed to become different people. And after it was over, we were thrilled by it. Gosh, I hope I'm not stuck in a base hospital. I want to get on to the front."

Then Pyle wrote of the 38th unit's nurses:

The Carolina nurses, too, took it like soldiers. For the first ten days they had to live like animals, even using open ditches for toilets, but they never complained.

One nurse was always on duty in each tentful of twenty men. She had medical orderlies to help her. Most of the time the nurses wore army coveralls, but Colonel Bauchspies wanted them to put on dresses once in a while, for he said the effect on the men was astounding. The touch of femininity, the knowledge that a woman was around, gave the wounded man courage and confidence and a feeling of security. And the more feminine she looked, the better.

Only about one hundred of the hospital's seven hundred patients were wounded men. The others were just sick with ordinary things such as flu, appendicitis, sprains. They had a whole tentful of mumps, and a few cases of malaria and dysentery.

At the far end of the hospital, behind an evil-looking barricade of barbed wire, was what Colonel Bauchspies called "Casanova Park." Back there were a hundred and fifty soldiers with venereal disease.

"What's the barbed wire for?" I asked. "They wouldn't try to get out anyhow."

"It's just to make them feel like heels," the colonel said. "There's no damned excuse for a soldier getting caught nowadays unless he just doesn't care. When he gets a venereal he's no good to his country and somebody else has to do his work. So I want him to feel ashamed, even though at the same time he does get the finest medical treatment."

Many of the wounded soldiers were then able to be on their feet. On warm days they went out in their bathrobes and sat for hours in the sun, out in the stubble field. Most of them were getting a good tan. At night they played



Lieutenant Bessie Fullbright and Lieutenant-Colonel George T. Wood at St. Cloud, North Africa, check over hospital encampment plans.

cards on their bunks, by the light of the lanterns hanging from the ridgepoles. The usual bunkhouse profanity was strangely absent from those tents, for there was always a nurse around.

The boys liked to talk about their experiences. I spent much time with a tentful of men wounded in the harbor battle at Oran, and they recounted the fight by the hour.

More than two decades after they last saw Private Saide of whom Ernie Pyle wrote many veterans of the 38th Evacuation Hospital remember him. Shortly after they arrived at St. Cloud, Joe W. Neil, who was pharmacist of the unit, recalls, Saide brought a pregnant native woman to the hospital and Dr. Hunter Jones delivered her baby. "We hadn't been there but a few days, as I remember," Mr. Neil says of the incident, "when Saide brings in this pregnant Arab woman for Dr. Jones to deliver her. I don't know how he happened upon her; he'd probably been around St. Cloud and had made some connections, since he could speak the language. But that was Saide. He was always doing something unusual."

Mr. Neil supports Ernie Pyle in the columnist's description of Saide as a watch repairer. "One day in Tunis—Saide was working on my watch—I went down to his tent and asked him about my watch. He was working on another one at the time and he had on this magnifying eyepiece that jewelers wear and he put it down for a moment to see about something, and when he did I picked it up and looked through it. Then I stuck my finger through it. He didn't even have any glass in it.

"Don't tell on me," he said, and I told him I wouldn't. And I didn't, for a long time. But that really tickled me. I guess he was trying to look very professional. But that Saide was a character."

Joe Neil remembers another incident in which Saide was a participant. It also happened during the 38th's stay at St. Cloud. "Saide had the job of burning the garbage. This particular day the Colonel was pulling

a big inspection; he was determined that everything would be in order, the pup tents just so, and everything right. He was walking along with his swagger stick and his officers walking along behind him. He was pointing out this and pointing out that, and he got down around the kitchen area, where old Saide had all the garbage piled up and saturated with gasoline and ready to burn it. And about the time the Colonel got up pretty close to the garbage, old Saide struck a match and threw it into the pile, and WHOOOM! The Colonel about-faced in a hurry and got away; he didn't say a thing to Saide. He just got away from there.

"Some of us wondered whether Saide didn't pick that time to throw the match. I doubt it though. It was just time for him to burn the garbage; he was ready and he just didn't give a rap whether the Colonel happened to be there at that time or not."

Some time later, said Joe Neil, they gave Saide a job overseeing war prisoners working. "I remember one day going by a group of prisoners who were moving a big pile of dirt, and old Saide was sitting there with his arms folded, bossing the prisoners."

One of the functions of the hospital's pharmacist that helped establish his popularity in the unit was that of custodian of alcohol. It was the custom, Joe Neil recalls, to give two ounces of whiskey to the donor of 500 cc's of blood. "Some of them would try to get back in line after having given the pint in order to get another two ounces of whiskey. Two ounces was about a good double drink and 500 cc's of blood was about a pint," he remembers. "Most of it was cut. I'd pour out half the liquor in other bottles and proof it back with grain alcohol and water, and burn sugar and make caramel to put the color back, and we'd save whiskey that way. But the drinks they got had plenty of alcohol."

"Joe was the most amazing guy to get good liquor I ever saw," declares Randall K. Davis, his war-time buddy who was the hospital's X-ray technician. "He'd head out with his little bag and he'd come back late that afternoon, and that bag would have about five bottles of Scotch in it."

"I had contacts over in the British Eighth Army," Neil explains. "That's where I was getting it. I had two lords from Scotland, brothers, and they'd fix me up. The first time, I got a case. I even got on their ration list. I was getting a quart a week, I believe it was, while we were down there in Africa, and still I could buy it for \$1.74. You see, in this ack-ack outfit the way the setup was, all the British soldiers had a ration of whiskey, and a lot of them wouldn't buy it; that's what I was getting; I'd buy that."

He goes on:

"The first time I made contact I got a case; it was



The big boss arrives to visit the 38th at St. Luce. General Mark Clark is being greeted.

marked 'For Export Only.' I didn't open it then. Sergeant Baker and I got it up at Cape Bon. That was the time Dr. Query let me have the truck. I went up with Dr. Query and Dr. Pitts and went swimming. I told Baker I was going to look around and see if I could find some of that good English or Scotch whiskey. I ran into a soldier and asked him about whiskey. He said 'Yes, if you get transportation, I can get you some.' So I went over on the beach and I asked Dr. Pitts and Dr. Query if I could have the truck a little while. Dr. Pitts said no, but Dr. Query said, 'Aw, Bill, let the boys have it.' So Sergeant Baker and I went down to this place, the English camp, and walked in, and met this fellow's sergeant, and these brothers, majors, I think, and asked them about the whiskey. They said, 'Yes. How much you want?' I said, 'Well, any amount.' They said, 'You want a case?' Boy, I almost dropped dead! I said, 'Yes.' So they came out with it. I paid them for it, and it figured up \$1.74 a bottle for the twelve bottles.

"So we got back, and picked up the officers. I had it under the seat, and it was the first thing Dr. Pitts saw when he got in the truck. He said, 'Joe, what you got in that box?' 'Oh,' I said, 'I've been finagling around a little with those English soldiers, trading with them a little bit.' Dr. Query said, 'Bill, that's Joe's stuff; you leave it alone.'

"So we got home with it, and I got that case under my arm and took off to my tent. And when it got dark, old Baker came down and we opened it up. I didn't know but what we'd bought a pig in a poke. But sure enough there were twelve bottles of Black and White Scotch. So I'd made contact; from then on it was a matter of getting over there. I'd sit around with these two English officers, and we'd have a big time. I kept in contact with them a long time; sometimes we'd be fifty miles apart, sometimes seventy-five. They moved up to Tunis when we did, and were close to us."

His friend Davis recalls, too, the 300-gallon cask of wine presented to the hospital the night it encamped at St. Cloud.

"The first night we got set up there some fellows who ran a winery nearby got a cart pulled by a burro and brought us a big hogshead of wine—it was a 300-gallon barrel, they said—and they set it out in a field and just turned us loose on it. Well, none of us was used to drinking wine; we didn't know how to drink the stuff. That night the whole outfit was drunk. So from that night on they stationed somebody at that big keg and allotted each fellow so much; I think it was half a canteen cup full each night before we ate our supper. That barrel sat out there for two weeks and we finally drank it up. It was cold and good, regular old dago red wine."

Three days before Ernie Pyle signed the 38th's visitors register, Captain Stokes Munroe in a letter dated

"North Africa, November 29th," to his Charlotte friend T. D. Kemp, Jr., gave further illuminating details of the operation of the tent hospital at St. Cloud, although he could not at that time reveal where the unit was based.

Captain Munroe's letter is particularly interesting in its revelation of the situation as observed through the eyes of one of the unit's surgeons. His long letter began:

"We are now living under tents, which is a real blessing compared to conditions under which we existed when we first landed. I do wish that I could tell you all the details, but until this war ends, it is not permitted. . . ."

He continues, after a part of the letter appears to have been deleted:

"Then, with a very limited water supply we attempted to make the place as habitable as possible. That attempt, however, was far from being wholly satisfactory. We did not have any of our bedding or baggage so we slept for several nights on the cold concrete floor. We only had a pint of water a day for both drinking and washing and even that had to be first chemically treated. We did not remove any of our clothing for seven days. We were indeed a filthy lot. It would have shocked any of you back home to see us. And we are still far from being just out of the band box. Still everybody was of good cheer and all laughed at our poor state of affairs.

"Our food for days was all in two types of cans: one contained biscuits, three blocks of sugar, some powdered coffee, and four small pieces of hard candy; the other contained a conglomeration of meat and vegetables. All was eaten cold and out of the cans. . . . These African flies aren't like good old American flies. They refuse to move unless you build a fire under them or actually bite them.

"While at the garrison we were constantly sniped at



Off duty for the moment, Captains Duncan G. Calder, Jr., left, and Robert B. Stith, get shot—by a camera.

by unfriendly natives in the surrounding houses or from a nearby hilltop. I do wish that I could give you details of these experiences but the censor will not permit. We finally moved out, however, into an enormous open field and there we began setting up our hospital."

Then Captain Munroe proceeded to give a comprehensive view of the 38th's African home in the oats field:

"We are all really very proud of this country hospital. We have over fifty large tents, each of which contains beds for twenty patients. They are all arranged in a symmetrical fashion, down to each tent pole and each stake. The roadways between the tents are all named: The Parade, New York Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, Kentucky Avenue, Indiana Avenue, First Street, Second Street, etc. Each name is painted on a white spick-and-span signpost painted by one of our recuperating patients who used to be a sign painter.

"The U-shaped driveway into the receiving section, which is the front of the hospital, is lined with white-washed stones as are the other streets. The officers and nurses are quartered on one side of the hospital area, the officers being on one side of Carolina Avenue and the nurses on the other. Each tent has a neat number just like the number of your house. The tents are quite large and comfortably accommodate two persons. There are fifty of these tents along Carolina Avenue. Then, just beyond us, are over 160 smaller tents where live the enlisted men. . . . In addition to all this we have several large kitchens and mess halls for officers, enlisted men, nurses, and patients. We also have constructed latrines of the family size. Now all these things have come by degrees and hard work. At last we are getting our meals served on enamel plates and at the table.

"We had only our own flashlights when we arrived. Later we had kerosene lanterns. Now we are generating our own electricity with gasoline engines and soon the Army Engineers will bring us electricity from a nearby power line."

The water supply, too, he revealed, had improved and they were expecting further improvement soon. They still hadn't had baths, however, except for those obtained with wet bath cloths, in more than a month. Things that a few months before they had taken for granted had now become for the 38th's members luxuries they dreamed about. His letter continued:

"Now I come to the most interesting part of all, the organization and running of our hospital. We have an operating tent for clean cases, another for infected cases, and one for minor surgery. Each contains three operating tables with all the necessary equipment so that it is possible for nine operations to proceed simul-

taneously if necessary. The tent floors consist of thick canvas. The surgical instruments as well as all the equipment is of the very highest grade. It is really amazing to see what wonderful equipment the U.S. Army has for every single type of arm and service.

"One entire tent is taken up with X-ray and the X-ray material is the latest and finest. We have a pharmacy and a laboratory that would put many of those at home to shame. Actual numbers are not permitted, but I can say that our hospital here has more than half the patients in the whole area in which we are now operating. With such a large number of men, subject not only to the diseases that they might have at home but also to the results of war, you can well imagine how busy such a hospital will be. Nevertheless, we are all quite happy, as that is exactly what we are here for."

Captain Munroe's letter went on to tell further of the work of the doctors and surgeons:

"The greater part of our surgery closely simulates surgery that one encounters in civilian practice except there is more of it. Since hostilities in this immediate area are now under control, this is now even more true than at first, although we still have some reconstructive cases because of battle injuries. All the services, including surgery, medicine, orthopedics, urology, eye, ear, nose and throat, dentistry, X-ray, and to some extent obstetrics and pediatrics (among the natives) have been busy. I have been doing as much surgery here as at home—and soon will be doing a lot more."

Captain Munroe told of a recent appendectomy he had performed:

"It is really surprising under what fine conditions I can operate. While doing an appendectomy the other day it was amazing to realize that the whole setup was about the same as if I had been at home. My assistant was Lieutenant Miller, who was surgical intern at Duke Hospital and at the Charlotte Memorial Hospital. My scrub-nurse was Miss Martin, who used to be one of the scrub-nurses at Charlotte Memorial. My anesthetist was able Capt. Jack Montgomery. The supervisor was Miss Shipp, who was operating room supervisor at Charlotte Memorial. I have worked with all these very same people many times in Charlotte and it seemed almost incredible to be working with all of them in far-away Africa. I remarked about it and we all had a little laugh."

He spoke of the variety of cases the 38th's surgery and medical services were treating:

"We have an unusual variety of cases and quite a collection of each variety. We could put on clinics on some conditions, with the patients to show, that would surely shame many of the large medical centers back in the States. We are all mighty proud of this outfit. I don't mean to be bragging, but I must tell you how

thoroughly the War Department planned this thing and what amazing things can be done, in so short a time, on a bare field simply by a lot of hard work and under an able commanding officer that knows what it's all about. It has surprised me to the n-th degree. Any type of surgery can be done here and there has not been even one infection.

"Thus far I have left the hospital area only one time. I went into the nearby town . . . for about four hours

day before yesterday. As far as I'm concerned they can give this country back to the Arabs when this war ends. Here you find mostly Arabs, French, and Spanish, and all three of these languages are spoken. We have interpreters with the unit but I do wish I could understand and speak the languages.

"Well, I'm informed that the General is on the way to look over the hospital, so must close."

6

More details of the 38th's day-to-day existence in the St. Cloud area as seen through the eyes of its mess officer are revealed in the letter begun on December 13, 1942, described by Captain Pickens as "the second of my more lengthy letters to the folks."

It was written, he explained, during the spare moments he was able to find between duties of seeing to the feeding of the unit. That same day, he added, the unit's second mail since its arrival in Africa was received "and my only luck was three copies of the *Charlotte Observer* dated Sept. 16-18 and a copy of the *Charlotte News* dated the same time, which Marshall sent me. The *News* contained some pictures which were made in England about which I had heard from home but had not received a copy. It looks like the mail service is beginning to pick up, so it should not be long before I get some word from someone at home. We got word that one boat containing a great deal of Christmas stuff was lost."

He began the letter with what he termed "a fair description of my Saturday bath," which must have been hardly representative of the baths that even a certain favored few members of the unit were being able at that time to obtain at St. Cloud. "I can remember when every Saturday it was customary for the Pickens household to get some hot water from the kitchen stove and settle down for the weekly bath. My experience here is reminiscent of those days. There are few advantages in being responsible for a mess section in an army," he declared, "but among the few is the opportunity to get hot water. On Saturday, every Saturday, I use my prerogative and call by the main kitchen and get a full gallon of steaming hot water. At the same time I pick up a very large dish pan, of which the Army has

too few. These I carry carefully to my tent, usually going the most out-of-the-way path in order that my advantage not be discovered by the remaining officer personnel. My tent is approximately 7 x 10 feet, in which there are two cots, two large bedding rolls, gas masks, eating equipment, canteens, musette bags, valapaks, a couple of boxes, a lantern, raincoats, trench coats, two sleeping bags which stay on the cots, helmets, toilet articles, a basket of oranges, a violin and some music, extra shoes and galoshes, rubber boots, sterno and accoutrements for heating a little shaving water and a few other odds and ends.

"Into this I carry my dishpan and hot water. Then, after carefully closing the tent in order to have a modicum of privacy, I strip off for my weekly ablution. Into the pan goes Mrs. Pickens' favorite son and off comes a small part of the accumulation of African soil and Mr. Roosevelt's sweat. Boy! does it make you feel good. The only trouble is that the soap sticks to you and you can't get it all off, but that matters little in these times and in this particular place on this so-called green planet. After this rather vicarious procedure and providing there have been no interruptions, I leisurely powder and dress with so-called clean clothes. Thus the Saturday night custom is revived and Sunday's sun finds me sweet-smelling and ready for another week's labor in the interest of Uncle Sam's honor."

The next long paragraph of the letter, he expresses it, is "devoted to the can-opening department of this branch of the Army. I can't imagine how Hannibal crossed the Alps or how Napoleon rushed to Moscow without the aid of the lowly can, the tin can," he begins this particular revelation of the living habits of the 38th in Africa. "Practically everything we get comes in