

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



A group of patients moves along chow line at St. Cloud. Serving, in fatigue hats, are left, William E. Vaughn; center, Jack D. McKenzie, extreme right, Louis F. Cologgi.

cans; I can understand why there would be a shortage of the precious metal at home. It's all over here. And the famous brass hats in Washington (and I say this advisedly) send us out without a can opener. Ain't we got fun? I'm not kidding when I say we got here without a can opener. It's true. Nine-tenths of all our food comes in tin cans—eggs, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, applesauce, jams, coffee, tea, corn beef, crackers, hard tack, butter, cheese, cocoa, all vegetables, chicken, spices, pickles, macaroni, sardines, salmon, codfish, and possibly a hundred other items. Some are packed in No. 2 cans and some in No. 10. You girls who go to the grocery stores know what it is to try and imagine opening enough cans of green peas No. 2 size to feed 1,000 hungry wolves that are dressed like United States soldiers. Well, we get it done, but we had to set up a line that would rival anything General Motors ever devised. The first man uncrates, the second sorts and types, the

third starts with a small axe about the size of a hatchet, the fourth finishes the opening, and then the last two dump the contents into the cooking utensils. It's remarkable what can be done when men get hungry. Our peak day was some time ago when we decided to have one meal cold with the exception of the cocoa. This was a sort of Sunday night pick up job. We had sardines in those flat little cans you are familiar with and added to that was cold corn beef and cheese. Of course, we had crackers and jam and butter and peanut butter, all packed in tin cans. On that day we opened slightly over 4,000 cans and all without a can opener. Necessity is truly the mother of invention. Graduate cooks who know how to season food with the touch of Oscar of the Waldorf now spend their valuable time opening cans without the aid of a can opener. Truly, it is a terrible oversight, but we do very well in spite of it."

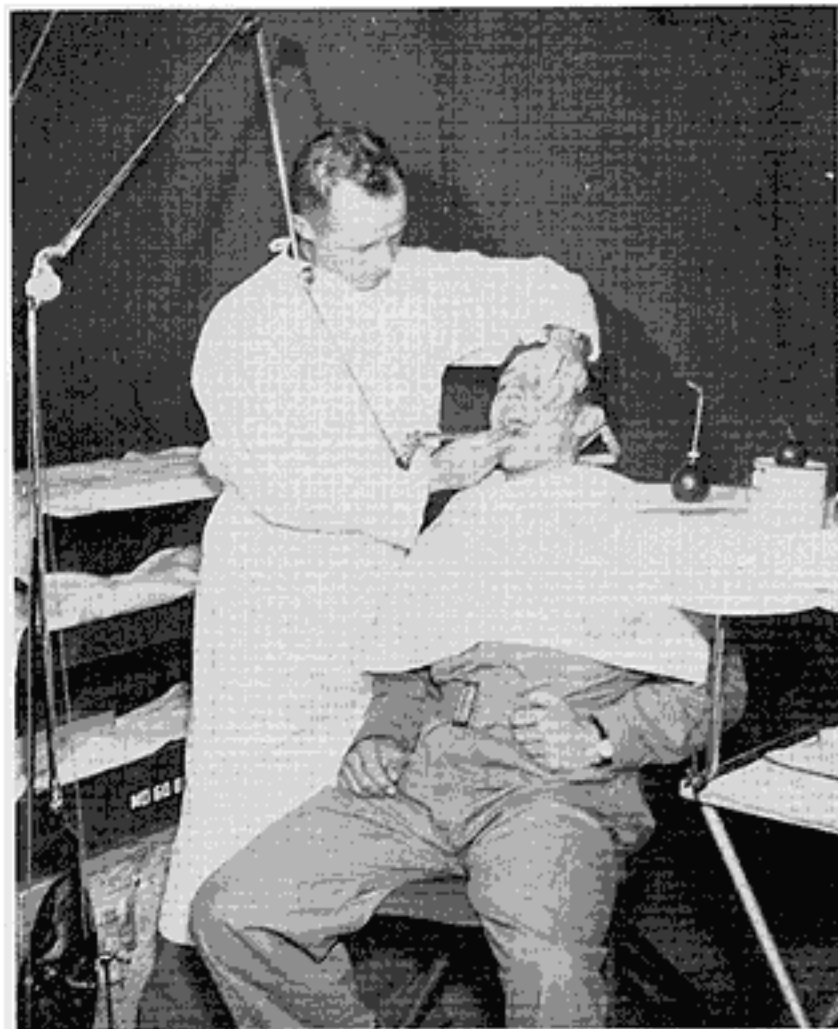
From the problem of opening thousands of tin cans without a can opener Captain Pickens turned to the problem of purchasing a violin and sheet music in nearby Oran with the aid of an interpreter who was not familiar with musical terms.

"The other day I went into the neighboring city of Oran with the sole purpose of purchasing a violin," he began his account of this adventure. "Stupid idea, I agree, but sitting out here on the edge of nowhere, I thought it might be a way to pass a little spare time pleasantly. Pleasantly for me only, since my neighbors up and down our tent street protest vigorously every time I tune up. But in this I am selfish. Going to town, I took my interpreter along, since my French doesn't extend to musical circles. My interpreter comes from Van Buren, Maine, just fifteen miles from Presque Isle, Bob Whatley's home town. Either his father or his mother was a French Canadian and he spoke French, but I failed to consider that he was not familiar with musical instruments and sheet music. The time I spent trying to tell him what a violin bow was and how the horsehair was used on it and what an opera was and what part the aria takes, I could have spent trying to tell the French what I wanted. But I didn't think about that before I started, so we spent the better part of my afternoon off making the purchase. I had fun at it and that's what matters over here when you have time away from the kitchen knaves and kitchen grease. I bought the violin complete with an extra set of strings and the bow and a dilapidated case for slightly less than 2,000 francs, a matter of about \$27. Then I had to get some music. You know that I can't do much by ear, nor much better with the music, but I like it. Getting the sheet music was almost the last straw, but I finally picked up a few selections arranged in a simple manner. Since then I have been having some fun, altho the neighbors must hurt to the quick. It's funny what men in the Army assigned to foreign duty will do for amusement."

An interesting look at a formal ceremony that did not proceed according to the Army's plan is provided in this letter of December 13, 1942:

"One of our generals came in the other day and said that he wanted to return at the proper time and distribute the Purple Heart medals to his men who had been wounded in battle. Our commanding officer told him to return the following day in the afternoon and the stage would be properly set for the ceremony. On the following day the General and part of his staff came in. They rushed up with much fanfare and motorcycle escort. We had arranged for the patients who were to receive the decorations to be put front near our flagpole with all the proper settings. The General stepped from his Ford and took his position before his men and started

his discourse about the history of the Purple Heart, how it was started by George Washington and was revived during the last war. Then came the climax. When he approached the first man to award the signal honor, he discovered that he did not have the medal. He turned to his aide and asked for the medal. The aide said he did not have them and turned to the next of rank and requested the medals. The next of rank said he did not have them and turned to the next, and so on down the line practically to the MPs who had escorted them out, but no medals. Then the General got slightly irritated and ordered one of his men to return to his headquarters, some twenty miles away, and get the medals. He told him to go pronto. Then we all waited for his return. Everyone tried to assuage the General, but he was not to be eased from his irritation. So we finally awaited the return of the courier in silence. The patients were the only people to really enjoy the show, and that was as it should have been, since it was staged for their benefit. Finally the messenger returned and again the General stepped up to the first man to bestow on him the honor. He opened the medal box and made his little speech and when he reached for the medal it had dropped to the ground behind him. He had failed to see this and when he discovered it was not in the box he blew off again. It was finally recovered and pinned on the man. And so down the list until the last



Major Vaiden B. Kendrick, judging by his patient's expression, had a light touch.





A company street in the St. Cloud encampment. The top sign on the post at left says "Carolina Ave." The bottom one says "Rebel St."

two men stood awaiting their turn, and then it developed that the courier had failed to bring enough medals to go around. The last two men had to wait for a later delivery.

"All in all, it was a good show," Captain Pickens summarizes the afternoon ceremony, "and the General's parting remark was that 'it was like trying to have a funeral without a body.'"

On December 12, the day before he began writing this letter, Captain Pickens was asked by the Colonel to ride with him on a short trip to visit two friends, a Swiss architect and his American wife. The account of the trip provides another interesting look at that region of Africa and some of its residents as well as the African countryside.

"Into his jeep I clambered with my usual misgivings because he drives like a wild man," Captain Pickens wrote. "Of course, he does other things like a wild man,

but in these other things he does not endanger human lives, so they can be properly discounted at the proper times.

"We drove a matter of ten miles up and over one of the nearby mountains. At the top we had a beautiful view of the Mediterranean. There we stopped at a typical hacienda of this section, surrounded by olive trees, cactus, rose bushes, date palms, turkeys, guineas, and dirty Arabs. Here lived a Swiss architect who had married an American woman from Colorado. They had this place as a refuge to which they came during the grape season. But they got caught here and although the man had returned for his service time in the Swiss Army, they were stranded here. Plenty of money but nothing to buy. They actually did not have leather with which to resole their shoes. They were rationed one kilo of bread per week for their whole household. That's about two pounds. And the bread is almost black. Our

trip up was to get the wife and take her to our dental department. She had not seen a dentist in three years."

The letter went on to recount more of the visit as seen by the two officers in Charlotte's 38th:

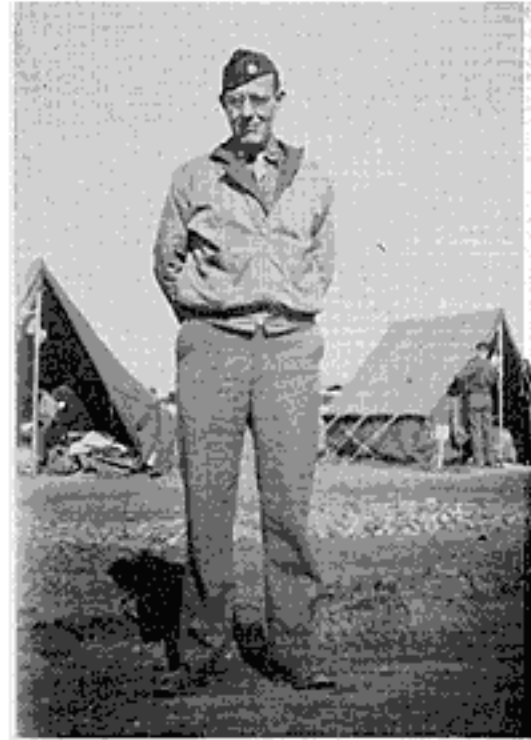
"After many years in Switzerland she had forgotten a great deal of her English but she could still express her gratitude over the coming of the Americans. The Colonel had taken her some beef the day before and some other commodities. She was overjoyed. On this trip we discovered that they had no pepper with which to season their food. Of course, they had hogs and you know what hog-killing time is without some seasoning. Incidentally, they had learned when they killed their goats to cure the skins and use it for leather. It was at their house I had my first olives from this section of the world. They know how to treat them. I told Mrs. Denison that I would trade her some black pepper for some of her olive crop.

"On coming down the mountain we learned the jackals were working havoc on their goats. She pointed out their holes and we saw a small one. They are about the size of a full grown shepherd dog with a nose that is pointed like a fox. They wait for one of the goats to get away from the herd and then they fall on him and that is the end of any goat milk or leather. We made arrangements to come back with some rifles and do a little hunting for them. As a matter of fact, the Colonel got out of the jeep and took several shots at the one we saw, but his revolver was bent in some way and did not harm the scavenger. Mrs. Denison also reported the presence of panthers in the section, but we decided to leave this hunting to Mrs. Denison or whoever wants to bring 'em back alive or dead. Mrs. Denison got her teeth fixed. Major Kendrick did the work. They stayed and had lunch with us and then the Colonel took them home. It was an interesting experience."

This letter, like others he had written home, had been compiled, he explained, over a period of several days. And the day he was finishing it, the 38th had an exciting and most pleasurable experience. Captain Pickens reported it:

"Today the first paragraph is out of date, since mail has come, and it is manna from heaven! Everyone is overjoyed with the news. I had two letters from Mary, two from Marshall, a card from the Holdings of Hempstead Court, a card from Vinton, a letter from Mother, and one from Father.

"Several copies of the *Observer* came also, still September news. Clarence Kuester got an air mail copy of the *News* showing where we had landed in Africa, so now you know just where we are and what we are doing. I got two packages from Davison's containing candy and orange juice. Oh! You will never know what it has meant to the morale of this outfit to get word



Lieutenant Colonel William H. Pennington is caught for snapshot while off duty between operating assignments.

from home, and I am no exception. No longer will I threaten to go out and eat worms and feel sorry for myself. Now I can eat candy instead and feast on what goes on in God's country in these letters. More about them to you individually later."

The *Charlotte News* story to which the letter referred was carried in the Saturday, November 28, 1942, issue under a front-page large banner headline "CHARLOTTE HOSPITAL UNIT IN AFRICA," with sub-headlines "Unit Makes History in Operation" and "Story Comes from Oran":

When those Yank troops piled ashore in North Africa, Charlotte's Evacuation Hospital Unit, formed here last year, dragged its gear up on the beaches, set up tents, and started caring for the wounded men. It was the first time in the history of the U.S. Army that a field hospital had been set up in a landing operation, and brought a signal distinction to the unit composed largely of doctors, nurses, and civilians from the Carolinas.

The information was contained in a story by Foreign Correspondent H. R. Knickerbocker, printed in *The Chicago Sun*. His dispatch, datelined Oran, was dated Nov. 19, but was delayed. He had visited the hospital with Generals Terry Allen and Theodore Roosevelt.

It was at the hospital's tent station that 200 American soldiers wounded during the first skirmishes were decorated with the Purple Heart, oldest decoration of the American Army, by their commanding field generals.

Knickerbocker wrote:

"The neatest and most competently organized field hospital the generals had seen in their 30 years of military experience was the evacuation hospital with 200 tents and 300 patients. The outfit arrived four days ago. Today its camp is a model.

"Lieut-Col. Rollin L. Bauchspies of Mauch Chunk, Pa., is the commandant responsible for the organization. Major

Paul Sanger of Charlotte, N. C., founded the outfit composed almost entirely of medical men and civilians from the Carolinas." Knickerbocker described Colonel Bauchspies as "nearly speechless from a sore throat brought about by shouting orders" and quoted the commanding officer as telling him that "This is the first time in history that a field hospital has been set up in a landing operation. My men were so tired this morning that I had to fire my automatic pistol to get them awake. I used a pistol instead of a bugle."

"The quality of our hospital service has never been equaled in the history of any army. The organization of this expedition's medical service provides one of the best illustrations of the vast and competent planning that led to its brilliant success. The expedition carried everything from food to a power plant.

"At Arzew the first two nights operations were performed by flashlight. The Americans now generate their own electricity and purify their own water. And for the first time in the history of North Africa, hospitals are clean.

"This one base has 50 fully qualified medical officers, 60 nurses with the rank of second lieutenant, and 275 medical orderlies headed by a colonel.

"At the peak they cared for 350 patients; now there are only 200. Surgeons said the remarkable good health among the wounded was due to a great extent to the fact that each soldier carried a packet of sulfanilamide to pour on an open wound."

The *News* story added that local confirmation of the unit's arrival in North Africa was contained in a letter received that day by Clarence O. Kuester, Charlotte Chamber of Commerce executive, from his son, Sergeant Clarence O. Kuester, Jr., of the 38th.

Members of the 38th happily experienced a deluge of Christmas mail, if the letters and cards received by Captain Pickens were representative, according to his next letter home, written three days after Christmas. "The mail has been pouring in and it is almost impossible to acknowledge all of the letters," he wrote, and he listed cards and letters from relatives and friends, one of which had been mailed from San Francisco on August 25, had gone to Fort Bragg, then to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, then to England, and after several other delays, had finally reached him in Africa.

"Christmas was quiet with us," he reported of the unit's first Christmas on active duty. "I tried to find some decorations for our tent and for our tables but none were available, not even some colored paper. George and I did take the wrappings off the packages we got and spread this around our tent. We took the string and ribbon and made a simulated wreath. It helped, but frankly, we were homesick for our families and friends. However, we vied up and down our tent street on the first 'Christmas Gift!' The night before Christmas we got together and sang carols around the ward tents for our patients. The heavy rain dampened this somewhat. Some of our enlisted men were invited

for dinner at some of the French homes nearby. We distributed a part of our food to the poor in the nearby town. The day before Christmas we took care of the Arabs, since they had practically nothing to eat. It was nearly a mob again, but we finally got the food spread around. Paul Sanger went with me. Of course, we came back to the hospital and washed ourselves immediately. The French on Christmas Day were more orderly and all appeared to appreciate the food we had. Of course, what we had was not so good, since some of the menu advertised for our Christmas dinner was not filled. We missed out on the turkey, but it came in today, so after we get it thawed out we will enjoy a belated feast."

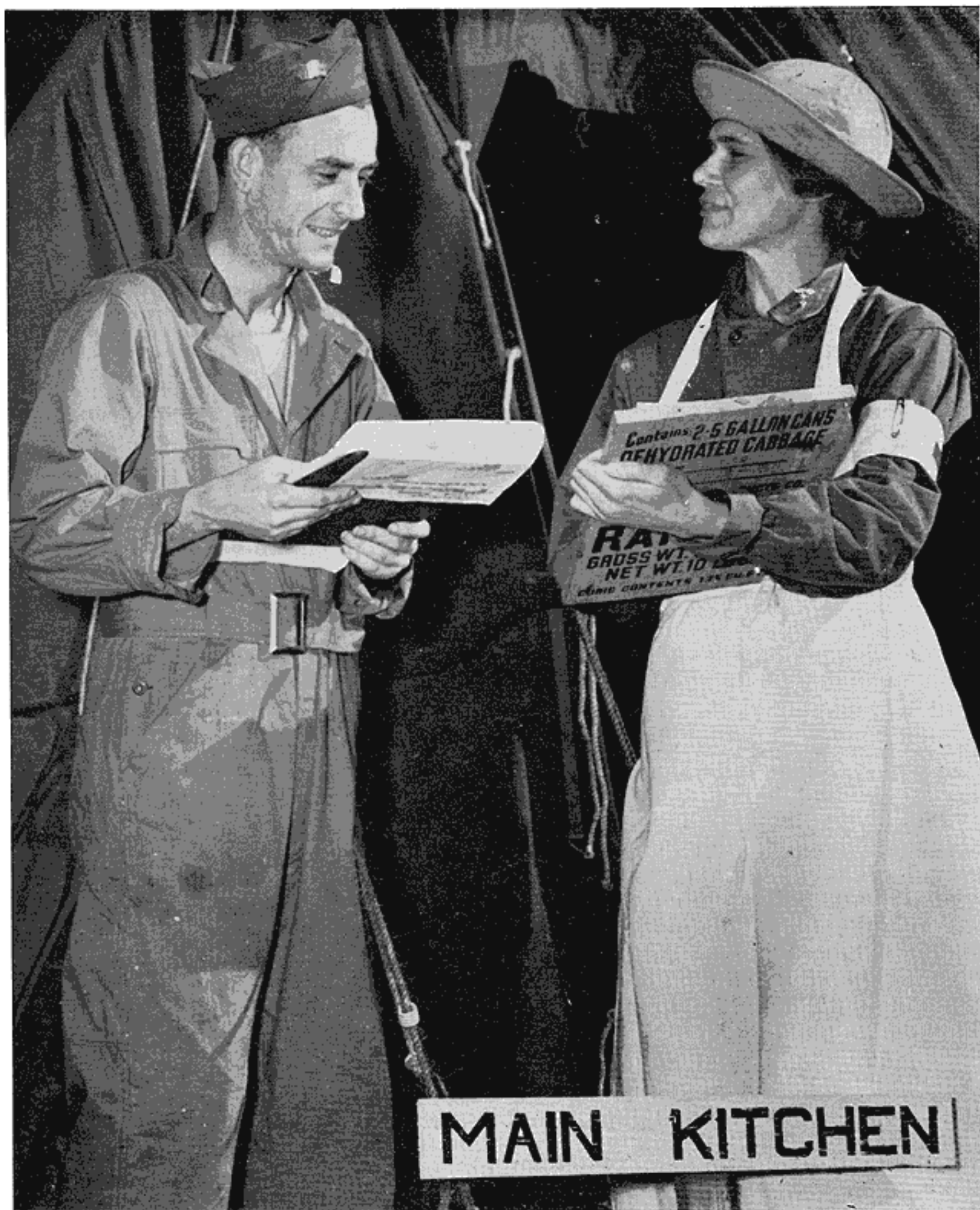
He referred to the earlier letter home in which he had described his Saturday baths. "We now have cold showers available, and I do mean cold. The engineers have tapped a nearby well with all their ingenuity and brought forth some cold brackish water. This they piped down a slight incline and thru the shower connections. We surrounded those connections with some canvas and put in a sort of floor. Now if we are brave enough to face the damp rain and mud and the cold water, we get a shower. Even with this handicap I have stepped up my weekly washing to twice a week."

Further innovations boasted of "in addition to the modern convenience of showers" were the addition of electric lights to the tents. "Now we can sit and look at the dirt in our tents at night as well as in the day time." The electric current had another advantage. "George brought one of his electric razors with him and by borrowing a connection from Bill Leonard next door we can shave with some comfort. It helps. In addition, if you can contort yourself into a position similar to one of those figures over the New York Public Library, you can read in bed. I have not been able to do it yet."

He reported another problem that has plagued soldiers through the centuries:

"It has been raining here since the first of December and it doesn't let up. We wander around in a sea of mud. I can understand how General Mud has so much to do with the movement of armies. We slip and slide and occasionally fall in. After you get your uniform nice and slick with mud you just don't care, and go on. It is a cold, driving rain like we have at home during the winter and it just keeps coming down. We dress with wool uniforms and I keep a sleeveless sweater on and a heavy field jacket and a raincoat and galoshes. It keeps me dry enough and I knock on wood when I say that I have escaped all appearances of being sick. Some of our group have developed colds and have been confined for a day or two. Wading around in the mud gets funny after a while and it's a game to see if you can get thru the day without falling."





Lieutenant Lela O. Russell, the 38th's dietitian, at St. Cloud, is discussing day's duties with one of her chief aides, Sergeant William J. Prieskett.

The terse "Medical History—Year Ending 31 December 1942," a report to the Surgeon General in Washington signed by Colonel Bauchspies, continues from its summary of the unit's duty in England to record the North African tour of duty through the end of the year. This part of the account begins with the unit's boarding the D.S.S. *Nieuw Zeeland* at Avonmouth on October 23:

"On 25 October, 1942, the unit arrived in Gourock, Firth of Clyde, Scotland, where it joined the convoy of the Center Task Force and left Gourock, as part of the convoy, on 27 October. After an interesting, but uneventful voyage, the unit arrived, as part of the 'D' Day convoy, in the Gulf d'Arzew, Algeria, on 8 November 1942 at 0630 hours.

#### DUTY IN NORTHWEST AFRICA:

At 1000 hours 8 November 1942, all personnel of the unit debarked from the *Nieuw Zeeland* and were transported to the beaches of Arzew on landing craft. The unit moved to the French barracks, where it bivouaced until 12 November. From the time of landing, the personnel of this unit assisted in the care of casualties in this area, and also furnished surgical teams to the hospitals in Oran. On 12 November the unit moved to a site, previously reconnoitered, 3 kilometers south of Saint Cloud, where it went into bivouac and immediately set up facilities for an Evacuation Hospital. Battle casualties were received within twenty-four hours after arrival at this site.

During the first week of operations 300 patients were admitted, and admissions rapidly increased so that on the 20th day the capacity of the hospital was exceeded, for on 3 December the hospital census was 757. All types of patients were admitted, and included American, French and British military personnel, and native French and Arab casualties. The hospital continues to be in operation, using all facilities available. The census as of midnight, 31 December: 617.

All personnel of the hospital were housed under canvas, the officers and nurses in small wall tents and the enlisted personnel under shelter-halves. All patients, utilities, and mess facilities were housed under large ward tents. All water used in the hospital was transported from a water point in Arzew, 22 kilometers away. Canvas reservoirs were erected in the hospital area, and the Engineer Corps assisted in the transportation of the water. A detachment of 1 officer and 30 enlisted men from the 708th Sanitary Company, and an Engineering detachment of 1 officer and 12 enlisted men aided materially in the construction of the utilities for the hospital. It being the rainy season, many adverse conditions due to the weather have been encountered. However, the operation of the hospital was not interrupted, and the physical welfare and morale of the personnel has continued to be excellent.

Captain John C. Montgomery, the unit's chief of anesthesia service, summarizes this same period in the life of the 38th in less than a score of short entries in his diary.

Beginning with the October 15 entry recording that "Lt. Col. Rollin Bauchspies replaced Col. R. W. Whittier as C.O.," he wrote:

Oct. 23rd. Left Norton Manor 3:00 A.M. by train. Arrived Avonmouth and boarded the *New Zealand*. Sailed at 7:00 P.M.

Oct. 25th. Arrived Greenock, Scotland, on the River Clyde, where the convoy was assembled.

Oct. 27th. Left Greenock 7:00 P.M. in the world's largest convoy.

Nov. 6th. At 10:00 P.M. entered the Strait of Gibraltar. I was very ill from atabrine and did not see the rock.

Nov. 8th. Sunday, 1 A.M. D day-H hr. In Med. Sea 50 miles north of Oran. Dropped anchor in Arzew harbor at 7 A.M. Many other ships present. Heard on radio that Oran & Algiers had surrendered. Sound of cannon and machine gun fire could be heard all day. French ship *Jamaïque* captured by destroyers in Arzew harbor.

Nov. 9th. Conflicting news about the success of our troops at Oran and Algiers. Went ashore in landing barges. Dick Query almost broke his neck getting in, also Bill Leonard. Bill Pitts lost his flashlight in ocean. One soldier fell in but fortunately was not crushed by barge. Arabs everywhere. We went to a barracks evacuated only 6 hours before by the French. Much personal litter about. Began cleaning the place. 48th Surgical took over.

Nov. 10th. Went to docks for supplies. On returning, sniping started. Spent much time under jeep. Sniping continued all day.

Nov. 11th. Sniping today. This P.M. Rangers cleaned out the town. At 11 PM went to Oran to work in Military Hospital.

Nov. 12th. Arrived in Oran 1:00 AM. Listened to CO rave for 2 hrs. Then went to Military Hospital. Many casualties. Worked until 9 PM when the 77th took over. Went to Civil hospital where had a nice bed.

Nov. 13th. Spent the day in Oran. A nice town. Bought some perfume for Mildred. Came by bus after dark to St. Cloud where the 38th had moved and had begun setting up as a hospital. Bob Stith and I have tent together.

Nov. 14th. Received 8 patients today.

Nov. 17th. First operation. Acute appendix by Major Pennington.

Nov. 30th. First mail since Oct. 20th.

Dec. 5th. Hospital full. 750 patients.

Many other members of the 38th hospital spent off-duty days in Oran while the unit was encamped at St. Cloud.

Sergeant Davis, the 38th's X-ray technician, still recalls one memorable night in that North African city:

"That's the town where I turned myself in one night to the MP's. I had ridden over to Oran in one of our trucks and had gone to a movie, where I went to sleep. When I woke up one of the ushers was shaking me to tell me that the show was over. I headed out in a hurry. But the truck I came in had either gone or I couldn't find it.

"I knew I could catch a ride once I got to the edge of the city, but I wasn't about to try hitching out of Oran. No, sir, not through those narrow, twisting streets and especially at that time of night. So I just stood there in the square and when some MP's came along, I told them what had happened.

"Well, you'd better turn yourself in to the curfew club,' they said. So that's what I did. It turned out that



the curfew club, as they called it, wasn't anything but a jail, though it wasn't a regular jail but a great big building with marble floors and marble walls and not a chair to sit on.

"And it was cold, and I didn't have an overcoat. I just sat on the floor until daylight, and I almost froze to death; and to make it worse, I ran out of cigarettes. When a sergeant came on duty and took off his overcoat, I asked him to let me borrow it a while, but he wouldn't let me have it. I asked him for a cigarette and he refused me. So just before he went off duty I said to him, 'Sergeant, I'm in the X-ray department in a hospital. I hope I see the day that you come in there for treatment. If you do, I'll turn that machine loose on you and, brother, you won't be any good from then

on, I'll promise you that.' But I never saw that sergeant again."

When another soldier came on duty, however, he lent the freezing Sergeant Davis his overcoat.

"And in the morning they took me to MP headquarters and questioned me a little and then they called the hospital. George Snyder was detachment commander at that time, and he told them he would have a truck pick me up. When I got back I told him the story. 'I just wasn't coming out of Oran in the night,' I said. 'I was sure that if I tried it those Arabs would have stuck a knife in me.' And I still figure they would have. I suppose Captain Snyder did too; at any rate, he didn't do anything about it and I went back to my job."

## 7

As the year 1943 began, the 38th was still encamped at St. Cloud, though letters home from members of the unit still carried the less identifying address of Northwest Africa. Many of these letters, along with snatches of diaries kept, usually with little regularity, by personnel of the 38th, provide interesting close looks at the routine daily life of an Army field hospital that none of the official records can reveal. They often disclose, too, how well or poorly the soldier on foreign duty is able to keep in communication with family and friends at home. Examples of these letters are five that Captain Pickens wrote to relatives and friends in the states. These letters, as were many others written by the men and women of the 38th—and, unfortunately, most of them have been lost or destroyed—reveal what the soldiers are doing, seeing, thinking, aside from their grim duties related directly to the war. They speak of the places and the people and of the soldiers' reactions to them, and since they are so intimately related to people, they are of the essence of historical documentation. They provide the flesh and clothing for the factual frame of events and thereby give life and warmth and color and movement to what without them would be little more than a recital of places and dates and cold statistics that for many persons makes the study of history somewhat forbidding.

Yet these letters often between the lines reveal also that the unit's business was going on at a pace that

would continue to gain the approval and admiration of the professional military men and the war correspondents as a highly efficient hospital providing a tremendous service to the nation's military effort. Perhaps the fact that the people of the 38th writing home were not permitted to say much of the unit's war activities caused them to write of the small, intimate, personal happenings and impressions. At any rate, the letters contribute happily to the recording of the 38th's lively and important story.

"I was over in the neighboring town the other day and went to see Ensign Henry Belk for a short visit," Captain Pickens disclosed in his letter of January 4, 1943. "He had called me a few days before and said he had tracked the 38th down and wanted to see a Charlotte face again. He had left the states only a few days before and had the latest news. He had seen Mr. Matthews in New York and had brought news to Stokes Munroe from his father-in-law. Henry was in good health and after a short stay on this side of the world appeared to like it. He had not been here long enough to get fed up on the sorry wine and see plenty of the hunger and filth that is scattered about the countryside. . . .

"George (Snyder) came in the other day with some Coca-Cola syrup from the plant. We have been busy trying to find some carbonated water but so far unsuccessfully. No 'Vichy' water available in the town.