

customers. In a letter to the homefolk he spoke appreciatively of Abduk:

"I think I told you some time ago I was having most of my laundry done by a neighboring Arabic family. They have a young son named Abduk, aged 10, who comes to collect and deliver. He has made friends with all of the unit and has developed a real business. He has learned English in the weeks we have been here and has an amazing conception of what it is all about. He has the brightest face you can imagine and breaks into a quick smile which shows his white teeth. He now knows the value of the dollar with respect to the franc and keeps up with his accounts in good order. He has been at this so long now he can tell whose clothes belong to whom. He is rank conscious and looks after the higher ranks first, altho he says the lower ranks are nicer to him. He is not particularly interested in the money and is now tired of eating candy and chewing

gum. He much prefers to come and visit and talk and get a lesson in 'Americano,' as he calls our language. He wants to know the why of everything, why wear leggings, why your insignia is at a certain spot, why so much saluting (here I wonder, too, since according to the regulations we are not supposed to salute in a war theatre, but 'orders is orders'), why we wash so much, why so much laundry, why we have so much soap, and so on. I get a great kick out of spending some time with him and telling him. He will never forget his experience with the American troops. His father works for the planter on whose property we are encamped. He makes 37 francs per day, the father does; that's about 50 cents. There are at least six in the family. They seem to do all right. Abduk is being well fed now and some of the nurses are working on some clothes for him. He has for the time being developed into the mascot of the 38th.

## 8

Early on a morning in mid-November of 1942 Louie Dennison, the Swiss architect, and his Colorado-born wife heard the disturbing sounds of gunfire from the direction of the nearby Algerian town of St. Cloud.

"I wonder what the commotion over there is about," he said to his wife. "I think I'll ride over and see."

"Well, be careful," she cautioned. "And remember your liver."

He got on his horse and rode into St. Cloud. After some hours he was home again.

"What was the commotion about?" Mrs. Dennison asked him.

"The Americans are coming," he told her.

"Now, Louie, I told you to remember your liver. Drinking this early in the morning doesn't help it. You should have stayed away from those cafes."

"But the Americans are coming," he insisted. "In fact, they're already here. That's what the shooting was about."

"Oh, Louie, your liver. You should think of your liver."

But a few minutes later, when she saw along the road a group of refugees streaming out of St. Cloud, she believed her husband. And she was overjoyed to realize

that at last her fellow Americans—though now she was a naturalized Swiss citizen—had arrived to challenge the Nazis.

This was the story Mrs. Dennison herself told to four of the officers of the 38th Evacuation Hospital unit some two months later as the four were guests at dinner in the Dennison home. The four American officers were enjoying an interlude in the hospital routine. Captain Pickens, who had referred in an earlier letter home to a visit he and Colonel Bauchspies had made to the Dennisons, relates the story in a long letter dated "North-west Africa, Feb. 5-6, 1943."

"Lt. Col. Paul Sanger, Lt. Col. George Wood, Major Vaiden Kendrick and I had been invited to come up on the mountain to the Dennison home for dinner. It was a change and we had heard from Col. Bauchspies what sumptuous meals they could prepare and serve, so we looked forward to the visit. We were not disappointed. The house is comfortable, with tile floors and pleasant furniture on the modern manner," he continued his narration of the visit away from the unit's encampment. "The servants are all Arabic. Rosalie, a middle-aged Arab, is a marvelous cook, with just the right touch for proper seasoning. We had in times past given Mrs.

Dennison some condiments. On this trip I took along some salad oil. They don't have any of that sort of thing now. The others took cigarettes, chewing gum and candy.

"We were invited for 1 p.m. and sat down to eat at 1:30 and finished at 4. We didn't waste much time during that period, nor was there any wasted food." He went on to tell of the African meal, one that was quite a change from the American tinned meats and vegetables of the hospital's mess. "After a peculiar tasting appetizer made from bananas, we set forth on a salad made of deviled eggs, fresh eggs, and they were very good. With salad we had stuffed olives, both ripe and green, a good supply of green lettuce and mayonnaise. That was a meal in itself.

"Then came the piece de resistance, roasted guinea, and I mean roasted to the king's taste. Rosalie brought all of them in on a platter and Mrs. Dennison explained to us that she wanted us to admire them before she took them back for carving. To Rosalie, who speaks excellent French, our reply was 'L'appetit est le meilleur condiment,' 'C'est bon,' 'L'appetit vient en mangeant,' 'La bon cuisiniere,' 'Tres bon.' To these we added all the other expressions we knew. Rosalie beamed and hurried off for the carving. I never saw white meat in a guinea before. This was white and good. We stuffed. With the fowl we had small fresh potatoes, and another salad of lettuce.

"After this was cleared away we went to work on a dish of custard made of goat's milk. The white of eggs had been toasted into a meringue over which was poured the yolk and the cream. It was good. Of course, with each course we had the proper wine and at the finish we enjoyed a choice of Benedictine or Cointreau. I could hardly get up when we finished. It was four o'clock and we were full. During the meal we heard about Louie going to town. During the latter months Mrs. Dennison said he had complained about his liver hurting. After being shot at a few times on that important day," she had added, "he has never mentioned his liver again and has no hurts to speak of."

It was on this visit that the four officers of the 38th had a further first hand view of the Arabic manner of living. It was the first time, Captain Pickens related, that he and his companions had been given an opportunity, as he expressed it, "to get the truth about the ways and habits" of the Arabs in this region of Africa. Later during the visit to the Dennisons, they visited one of the Arab houses on the farm and saw first-hand the way the people lived. "It's primitive, to say the least," he described it. "I think their custom of marriage might interest you. . . . The oldest brother always arranges the marriage of the sisters. Of course, we asked about the chance of having no brothers, but apparently

there is little chance, since they are a prolific race. The brother picks out the groom and makes all the arrangements for the wedding. The bride and groom never see each other until they are married. The groom must give as his part of the dowry one pair of ear rings, one sheet or cover they use to hide their whole body, including their faces, 100 kilos of wheat and 100 kilos of either barley, oats, or rye, one goat, or one sheep. A kilo is about two pounds. The brother usually gets the grain and the animal and the bride gets the ear rings and sheet. She, on the other hand, must furnish one sheet and one pair of ear rings and all the linen for the house. When all arrangements are made by the brother, then the girl has her hand painted with henna and begins to cover her face whenever she goes outside the house. She is not allowed to go out except for very unusual occasions like a funeral for her parents and the like. This hand-painted stage is known as the little marriage, like our engagement time.

"The bride and groom have not yet met. They meet at the wedding. The best man plays the main part at the wedding. He manages everything and has been picked by the brother. He is a witness of the final consummation of the marriage at the wedding bed and when the bride has proven that she was virtuous, he comes out to announce it and the feasting and celebration begin for those attending. If she is found otherwise, she is dismissed immediately and the marriage is off and she and her family are in disgrace and no one ever speaks to them again.

"After the wedding the bride must stay almost within the courtyard of the house until she gets to be thirty years old or approximately that," the captain's account of the Arabic wedding customs continues. "After thirty she can move around the streets of the nearby towns but always with her face covered. They are usually married between the ages of twelve and fifteen. The marriage is performed by the maribout, pronounced maribo. He is a combination lawyer, priest, minister, justice of the peace, judge and jury. His word is law and he is considered perfect. He gets a fee for all of his work so you can see he is usually well to do. He can also grant a divorce. In this case, if the girl wants to marry again, there is no feast or celebration allowed. The arrangements are made as usual by the brother and he gets his cut. It appears to me that he is always trying to marry his sisters off. However, divorce is rare. All of this information came from Mrs. Dennison during our dinner."

At the end of the dinner the American officers asked their hosts if they might visit one of the farm houses. The house was in the nearby hills. This is how Captain Pickens described it:

"The house was built of stone and stucco. There were

three rooms and three generations. I counted twelve people who were supposed to live there; some may have come from other houses. One room was used for storage and some cooking. It was there that they made coffee for us, using the fireplace and the metal pot. They used a bellows to whip the flames; it was made of goat skin and wood. It worked so well that we asked them to get three for us to send home. I don't know whether we will ever get them or whether you will get one, but at least we tried.

"Vaiden Kendrick speaks good Spanish, which these people understand better than French, and he made arrangements for us.

"The other two rooms are for living, cooking and sleeping purposes. George Wood spent most of the time we were there trying to find some sanitary facilities. He reported there were none. It was just every man for himself. George thought he was going to get out of drinking the coffee, but Mrs. Dennison explained that we had to drink it or otherwise they would feel insulted and we would never be welcome again. It was a bitter dose but we all made it. The coffee was made from barley, wheat, and a little coffee ground together. It was hot and that may have saved us. It had been ground in a metal container with an iron muddler. It looked like an oversized gadget used by a pharmacist.

"Then we sat on the floor or in some cases on simple boxes. They, of course, sit on the floor to eat. They had a small, round, wooden table about two feet high and about two feet in diameter from which they serve and eat. They had few dishes. We drank from cups like our cups but without handles. The dishes were arrayed in a sort of cupboard on the wall made from driftwood they had gathered along the coast. They card, spin, and weave their own wool. Their clothes they sew themselves and I must say they do a good job of it. They have heavy wollen comforts and goat skins for their bedding. They cure the skins for this purpose and for the sandals they wear and harness for the donkey. The donkey hauls all the water and supplies with this harness and usually one or two people riding in addition. He is truly a sturdy little animal. He may be an ass to some people, but he's really horsepower to me.

"They have a system of drying their goat meat quickly after the kill and preserving it somewhat like our chipped beef."

He turned aside from food to reveal again the 38th members' preoccupation during these months in Africa with the thoughts of bathing:

"Once each week on their day off from work they go to the neighborhood town of St. Cloud for a Turkish bath. This was the first time I had heard of their taking a bath but it seems to be a fact, and they do it regularly."

Then he returned to his narration about food:

"The oven for the baking of the bread was interesting to me. It is made of mud in the shape of a small igloo about two feet high. Into this they put the charcoal made from the discarded vines from the vineyards. They whip it up and get the place almost white hot and then put the dough in to bake. Mrs. Dennison said it made very good bread, all whole wheat, of course. This all depended upon their getting some wheat. As I told you once before, the Germans and Italians had cleaned out all this part of the country of grain of any sort. They have another crop coming now and should be eating better by June."

He revealed how the Arab families grind their grain:

"They have two stones, one with a short handle and a small hole in the middle. Into the hole goes the whole grain and out the sides between the rocks comes the flour. I will try to get a picture of that operation."

His letter further describes the Arabic household:

"They have a lean-to attached to the house which houses the two donkeys the family owns. They all appear to live happily together. The grandfather suffers from diabetes and since the war started has been unable to get insulin. He is in a bad way now. Paul said he thought he had some in his luggage and would bring it back to the old man. For all the fun and knowledge we had there, that will be real lend-lease if it makes the old man enjoy his latter years. He appeared to be about 85 years old.

"There were four children in sight. They pounced on the candy and chewing gum we happened to have left in our pockets. When I go out away from camp I always carry a generous supply with me. It always makes some child happy and I hope leaves an impression that will last in their minds that the Americans are friendly and believe in peace on earth, good will toward men. The children were healthy and animated. Two of them were positively pretty, with good looking teeth and winsome smiles."

Captain Pickens wrote that they were still at the encampment where they had been for the past months, although the APO number had been changed. The government, too, he reported, had changed the value of money. On February 8 the dollar would be worth fifty francs rather than seventy-five. "Our pay for January was on the old rate, so we had a material increase in the value on our money if we send it home. If we spend it here we get less for it. . . . There is no way to spend money except for haircuts, laundry, photographs, and a few items at the post exchange. . . . The perfumes have gone and there are no semi-precious stones to be found as yet. . . ."

He wrote of plans for a party the officers and nurses of the 38th were planning for the next evening. "The mess section has been called on to have some refresh-



ments. The chief cook asked me to find some fresh eggs. Those are to be used in making some cakes, some mayonnaise for the sandwiches, and some deviled eggs. All our eggs come in dry, dehydrated. I got a jeep and my little Arabic friend Abduk and started to forage around and find the eggs. They are quite rare in these parts, since there are few chickens because of the lack of grain. We went thru the French section and picked up about three dozen and then into the Arabic section and found about three dozen more. I bought them one, two, three, five or ten at a time. The price was five francs per egg. On the rate of exchange that meant I paid ten cents per egg, \$1.20 per dozen. Of course, our mess fund, which we had accumulated at Bragg, was tapped for the payment. That was what it had been carried around for and it has come in handy at various times. I think we will have the proper things for the party."

Captain Jack Montgomery's first entry in his diary in 1943 was dated March 1. He wrote:

Left St. Cloud 7:30 P.M. by truck to Oran. Finally got on train by 10:00. 8 to a compartment—Hoffman, Perry, Kavanagh, Query, Stokes, Aubrey, Vaiden & I. Slept on the floor.

His next entry was less informative:

March 2nd. Left at 6:30 A.M.

He next wrote of the arrival at El Guerrah three days later:

March 5th. Arrived El Guerrah after a very unusual trip. Slept on floor. C rations only, only little water. Bought eggs from natives. Arrived here filthy. Everyone in bad humor. A hot breakfast at 61st station hospital helped everyone. Set up temporarily in field 5 miles from El Guerrah. In tent were Sanger, Pennington, Medearis, Query, Pitts, White, & Stith.

His next entry:

March 9th. Moved to Telergma. A nice location along a creek. Trees and grass. A spring gives water for washing. We are not far from Constantine. Bob & I still together.

Two days later, he wrote, the hospital was functioning:

March 11th. Received first patients—23.

The next entry:

March 12th. First operation. Very cold here at night. No lights, heat, or much food. Much grumbling.

A considerably more detailed story of the 38th's routine in these early days of 1943, however, is provided in the narrative that Dr. Stokes Munroe was preparing before it was cut short by his death. His account begins

as far back as January 2, when in preparation for moving to a base nearer the battle lines the hospital stopped receiving new patients.

"No patients, other than from command, were admitted after 2 January 1943," he recorded. "Patients remaining in the hospital were evacuated to duty and to other hospitals as speedily as possible. The last patient was discharged from the hospital at 1800 hours 6 February 1943, and the hospital was officially closed per verbal orders from the Surgeon General, Mediterranean Base Section. During the period from 13 November 1942 to 6 February 1943, a total of 2,027 patients were hospitalized, including 98 battle casualties. After closing the hospital, the ward and necessary tents were struck, and with the equipment of the hospital were packed and stored in readiness for movement to our next location. An intensive training program was instituted and carried out for the remainder of the time spent in bivouac near St. Cloud, Algeria. On 11 January 1943, this organization was relieved from attachment to the II Corps, assigned to the Fifth Army and attached to the Mediterranean Base Section, in accordance with General Order No. 3, Headquarters Fifth Army, dated 11 January 1943."

His account continues:

"On 1 March 1943, the unit started movement to a new location, in accordance with instructions contained in letter from Headquarters, Mediterranean Base Section, subject: Movement Orders, dated 1 March 1943. The movement was accomplished in four echelons: the first echelon departed from Oran on 1 March, via rail, arriving in El Guerrah, Algeria, on 4 March; the second echelon departed from Oran, via rail, on 2 March, arriving in El Guerrah on 4 March; the third echelon departed from Oran, via rail, on 3 March, arriving in El Guerrah on 6 March; the fourth echelon departed from St. Cloud via motor convoy, on 4 March, arriving in El Guerrah on 6 March. The unit established a temporary bivouac area approximately six miles south of El Guerrah, Algeria, awaiting final selection of a site for erection of the hospital.

"On 9 March 1943, the unit moved to the new hospital site, approximately 1 1/2 miles north of Telergma, Algeria, and proceeded to erect the hospital. On 10 March 1943, the hospital was placed in operation, the first patients being received at 1445 hours. Upon arrival at El Guerrah, Algeria, the 38th Evacuation Hospital was relieved from assignment to Fifth Army and attached to Mediterranean Base Section, and assigned to the Eastern Base Section and attached to L of C for maintenance and supply, in accordance with letter, AFHQ, Subject: Troop Assignment, dated 2 March 1943. On 29 April five (5) nurses from the 3rd Auxiliary

Surgical Group were attached for quarters, rations, and duty. No patients were admitted to the hospital after 29 April 1943. 448 patients remaining in the hospital were evacuated to duty and to other hospitals on 29 April 1943. During the period 10 March 1943 to 29 April 1943 a total of 2,995 patients were handled, including 1,136 battle casualties. After the closing of the hospital, the ward and accessory tents were struck and put in readiness for a quick move to a new location."

Captain Montgomery's terse diary speaks briefly of this period:

March 23rd. Went to Constantine. It is a beautiful city. April 1st. 918 patients.

April 4th. Received my back pay following having my orders changed to April 15th, 1942.

April 11th. Col. Churchill visited hospital.

April 15th. In Army one year today. Eight & half months foreign duty. 5 months 1 week in Africa.

April 30th. All patients were evacuated last night. Today spent in packing and striking ward tents. I cleaned clothes, blouse, pinks & trench coat with gas today. Hope it does well.

Publication of the 38th's Daily Bulletin was temporarily suspended on February 27, 1943. The unit's A.P.O. was then 700.

Daily publication was resumed, following the removal of the hospital to its new base, on Wednesday, March 10. The A.P.O. was 509. On that date, the Daily Bulletin reveals, Lieutenant Felts was the administrative officer of the day and Lieutenant Hoffman was alternate; Captain Gay was medical officer of the day and Lieutenant McGrath alternate; surgical officer of the day was Major Leonard, with Captain Hawes alternate; Major Kendrick was dental officer of the day and Lieutenant Hoffman alternate; and Lieutenant Bachoka was nurse officer of the day and Lieutenant Barbee was alternate.

The Bulletin carried one notice:

The Hospital was set up and ready for operation, including seven wards comprising 146 beds. At 1445 hours, the first patients were received, 23 by transfer from the 77th Evacuation Hospital and 3 from command.

The next day, March 11, the Bulletin prescribed the limits of the camp.

The following limits of the camp are established: on the East by a stone wall running along farm yard; on the North, the creek running along the Camp Area from West to East; on the West by the road running thru ford; on the South, along the mill run. The Officers' and Nurses' Area will include the eastern end of Camp and will be separated from the hospital proper by a barbed-wire fence. The Enlisted Men's Area will be included in the triangle from the bridge over the mill run at the south-eastern section of the Camp directly across to the creek and ending at the road leading into the ford at the western end of Camp.

No personnel will leave the Camp Area except on official business. All messes and supply will be out of bounds to all personnel except those on duty therein. Supplies will be obtained by informal requisitions thru the Chiefs of Services.

The Bulletin showed the following status of the hospital:

Number of patients	26
Admissions	23
Dispositions	0
Vacant beds	120
Wards in operation	7

Fortunately, the recorded story of these months of the 38th in Africa is not limited to the brief notations in Captain Montgomery's diary and the statistical information provided in the Daily Bulletin. Letters survive which provide a wealth of details to give color and drama to the account of the 38th's service during these early months of 1943.

On July of that year, for example, Lieutenant Charlotte Jean Webber in a long letter to her sister, Mrs. Ben C. Fritz of Lexington, Kentucky, summarized the eight-month tour of duty since the 38th's arrival in Africa. The greater part of Lieutenant Webber's letter is devoted to a narration of experiences upon leaving the St. Cloud area.

But even more details are provided in a series of long letters to relatives and friends at home written by Captain Pickens that by good fortune were saved. These letters clothe the frame of the 38th's service during the first half of 1943 with the warm flesh and sinews of day by day existence in this strategic sector of the fighting. He wrote two such letters in March, three in April, and three in May, and though they were not designed, when he was writing them, to be preserved as an informal history of the 38th's experiences during that period, they have survived to afford a close-up, authentic, and interesting picture of those lively and desperate days.

Lieutenant Webber's letter begins with the 38th's arrival in Africa:

"On Nov. 9 we landed at the port of Arzew near Oran—down the side of the ship we came on landing nets and came ashore in barges. I had the toothache, darn it, and felt pretty miserable. We had sneaked into the harbor the night of the seventh and could hear and see the artillery fire ashore and anti-aircraft on the ships around us. We formed first aid teams and prepared to receive the wounded but most of the casualties were ashore. We sat in the ship all day the eighth waiting until our boys had cleared a way for us to land—then around noon on the ninth we landed.

"Arzew is a very small village, about the size of

Paris, Ky. We marched through the village, nothing happened; the French and Arabs peered out at us from their huts apparently very glad to see us. We conversed with some of them. As soon as we reached our destination (a French barracks turned into an American hospital) and got inside the gates, they started shooting at us—snipers, sharpshooters from the rooftops, church steeples and the hills around. Surprised? Golly Moses! We were dumbfounded. We realized then that the town hadn't been taken and that the natives were not on our side. But we gave them bullet for bullet and in a day or two things were quiet. I'll never forget when the bullets started whizzing down through the hills and we all flopped off flat on our faces. . . . We hung around those barracks a few days, slept on concrete floors on anything we could find. I swiped a few old French army overcoats and lay on buttons all night.

"One day around noon the chief nurse and I got tired of eating old cold C rations out of a can (meat and vegetable hash I wouldn't feed to a dog, meat and beans, hardtack and condensed coffee), so we built a fire and dumped it all in a pot of boiling water to make a stew. Well, all the girls came out to watch. Pretty soon everything got quiet and she and I looked around. Not a soul was in sight except an occasional guard ducking around buildings with his gun—everybody else had scrambled inside and locked the doors. Judas Priest! There we were, 'ketched' again, two helpless women. We both got 'kinda' nervous and everybody was screaming for us to come inside, but we couldn't get in. Well anyway, we finally climbed in a window and fell down on our tummies—it seems the snipers got a little closer.

"Well, we left the place in a few days and set up the hospital in the middle of an oats stubble field, lived in tents. We've been in tents ever since we've been in Africa. But I 'kinda' like 'em even though it is 'kinda' hot in this heat—tropical heat, too. Well, we stayed near Oran three and a half months.

"We left there and went on a train ride to a place near Constantine. But I'm getting ahead of myself. We were darn glad to leave that muddy field. It rained three-fourths of the time we were there and the other fourth the windstorms were terrific—dust blew everywhere. Back at those French barracks we took over at Arzew, the Arabs would come up to the gates to sell us eggs and souvenirs, all dressed up in their long multi-colored robes, apparently very harmless. Then when we got up to them they would pull out long knives and guns and start shooting at us. Oh, boy, they were tricky. They'd take big coffins up in the hills to bury their dead (we thought), but the coffins held nothing but ammunition for them to fire down on us.

"We left that little place by the sea and rode four days and five nights on a train, and what a train! The

windows were blown out. We had no cushions in our compartment, in fact, we happened to end up in a baggage car. We were allowed only one canteen of water a day. . . . We ate nothing but C rations. Once in a while, during our many stops, we bought eggs from the Arabs but had no way of cooking them. Finally we ran on to some who had them already cooked. I guess we must have paid 10 or 15 cents each for eggs; they sure were expensive eatin's. Then we bought oranges, tangerines, dates and figs. We certainly did crave some home cooked food.

"I remember one night as we pulled out of some town, the Jerries started bombing it, so we had to scramble around in the darkness for hours. None of us slept much—I had my fur coat with me and wrapped up in it on the floor. We wore coveralls which saved our slacks, etc. We were dead tired when we finally got to our grassy little valley. Gee, I loved that place. The Air Corps was only a mile down the road and did we have fun. We worked hard there, too. But we were still many miles from the front and were itching to get there. We had our wish.

"But first, I'll tell you about Constantine. I went there twice. Gee, I wanted to buy jewelry and oriental rugs and everything because I had plenty of francs. Just as we were driving out of the city that night the Jerries came over and dropped a few eggs. We drove on to a safe distance and stopped to look back. It was beautiful. The moon was shining bright as day, which gave Jerry a break, of course. The city fairly shone in the moonlight—white marble buildings, arched bridges. They just glistened. Constantine is the most beautiful city I have seen in Africa. One can see it for miles away.

"We had a long truck ride up here at our present home. I was rather glad to get out of Algeria. I like Tunisia much better. The climate is much drier. . . . It took us a day and night to make it, but we had so much fun. That was a few days before Tunis fell. At one time on the road we were only 10 miles from the actual fighting. Boy, the things we could hear and see! When we got here we set up and worked like mad, for we were badly needed—casualties were pouring in by the hundreds. Germans, Italians, Arabs and French as well as our own Yanks. We are now only a few miles from Tunis. I've been to Tunis once and, darn it, I went one day early, for the big Allied Nations Parade was the next day. Anyway I had my picture taken countless times by English Highlanders, boys who had just come in from long months in the desert and hadn't seen a white woman for so long.

"Tunis is a nice city, not messed up so much downtown but the docks are blown to ———. Our boys did some good work there. We didn't realize what they were doing when they left us every day to go out on





In this posed photograph Lieutenant John S. Powers, left, and Sergeant Paul White and Private Walter Rex are "receiving" a new "casualty," Private Ian (Scotty) MacLean. The smudge on his cheek is mud, not blood.

a mission back there in our little valley. They never talked much about it. But we all stood out and waved to them when they came flying back to us and knew they had accomplished their purpose.

"I've been swimming in the blue Mediterranean. I've been twenty miles behind the fighting lines and I've seen more action the past few weeks than all my days in Africa. I've talked with German boys, Italians, French and Arabs. I've seen all kinds and every kind of defense machine. I think I've seen it all, but they tell me I haven't. I've seen all of North Africa now and I'm ready to leave it all. Where to from here I don't know, but I hope it isn't home. That sounds mighty funny . . . when I come home I want it all to be over with.

"I have a different outlook on this war now. At first I thought it was going to be more of a lark. I realize now that we've all accomplished what we came over here to accomplish and it's serious. . . . The hardships

which seemed big to us at first are small now. I'm used to C rations and men's clothes and dirt and hard work. . . . We're all still one big happy family. Haven't lost anyone except a few who were transferred out to some other unit where they were needed more."

In his last letter home, written early in February, Captain Pickens had noted the change in the unit's A.P.O. number but in it had seen no significance. His next surviving letter, however, would not be written until the hospital had been moved to its new base and was in operation. It was dated March 14, 1943. He speaks first of his feelings on leaving the base that for months had been their home:

"Again the move was made with a feeling of poignancy. At St. C. we had become attached to the oat field with its mud and mice. Of course, as always we moved at night and in the rain. I hated to move; I suppose I am getting older and a little further away

from the spirit of the parsonage in that we were always ready for the next place. Thinking back, I recall some of the experiences of our first stand, little things, but things that I will remember. Here are a few of them:

"The original password reminding me of Merita bread and the Lone Ranger; I suppose it is too old now to be used again; my first walk up the street of our original city and seeing the Arabs and the unsanitary conditions they created; the running of jeeps thru the water to land them; the hoisting of guns and tanks from the ships in a hurry; the first night spent on the concrete floor of a hastily emptied building; the scampering for cover when the snipers cut loose on us, and Paul Sanger beating an enlisted man to a hole he had dug for himself; the hurried setting up of the first hospital in the field in North Africa; the consistent rain throughout the entire winter; the heavy winds that always came at night and always made us think our tents would blow down, but they never did; the mud; the mice that eventually came and lived under our improvised floors; I killed five when we broke up housekeeping and tore up our floors; the trips into the neighboring city; watching American soldiers buying cheap jewelry and getting pictures taken—I got mine, too, and sent some copies to you; getting dressed to go into town; we always had to wear our blouses when we were on pass and it seemed so stupid living out there in the mud and then trying to appear to be a stuffed shirt when country came to town."

Once again he refers to that most pleasing of experiences, getting a bath:

"My first bath in Africa was a real event; the movies we had, shown in a tent about 17' by 48' where over a hundred people crowded in to see, but it was something to do, and different; the tour of duty as Officer of the Day and checking the guard after midnight in the rain and mud and slipping down in the mud in the dark; the washing in the morning in the dark and cold;



Pharmacist Joe Neil stands before his improvised shelves. When the hospital moved, he packed his drugs in the boxes below the counter.

the inability to please everyone with the food I was able to get; the comfort of my sleeping bag on my cot; the many oranges we were able to get; the installation of electric lights in the tents (I am now writing with the aid of a lantern); the American flag always blowing in the wind in front of our camp and the installation of the rather inspiring ritual of retreat at five in the afternoon when the flag was lowered; the French and the Arabs who came to look at us on Sunday afternoon and who stole our soap if we left it at the back of our tents; they came literally by the hundreds and just looked and stared as if the circus had just come to town; the remarkable interest in the church services with Chappie doing the best he could to inspire us; the jackals howling at night; the trucks filling the lister bags with water; the exciting time when rumors spread that mail had arrived and how everyone flocked to the recreation tent to see what his luck had been; the nurses in G.I. shoes and coveralls; the playing of volleyball when the weather permitted and the constant chess game that was always in progress in the recreation tent; the difference between pay day in Africa and the same in England; here we had more money than we could use; there we did not have enough to get through the month; the Christmas packages that arrived from so many places with so many useful articles; they were such a surprise and such a pleasure; the collection of pictures of some of the scenes and personnel in the hospital, copies of which I have sent on home; the buying of the violin and the music and the enjoyment I have had with it; seeing Lt. Col. Roy Norton with fresh word from London that Bob was doing all right; the same message from General Lee, which I wrote you about; meeting and visiting with General Roosevelt; the sad feeling among the officers and nurses when the colored troops left us, those men from North and South Carolina who helped build our sanitary section and in addition waited on the tables of the officers' mess; the outdoor band concerts for the patients; the first and only ice cream we were able to get and how welcome it was by the officers and the nurses; the hurried extra ditching done around the tents after a particularly hard rain; the long road marches after the hospital closed, and my first blister; the brackish water we had to drink with all the chlorine added; the plane trip to Algiers which I never got to describe, since there was more business in it than pleasure; the general excitement when Ernie Pyle's articles began to come back to us and we saw ourselves as others saw us (there was a semblance of truth in parts of what he said); the trip down to the hot water spa and the excellent bath; the jeep trip with George Wood and George Snyder over a hazardous trail across the mountain overlooking Oran; my roommate, George Snyder, keeping onions in his mess kit with vinegar and



salt and pepper added and our joking about whether that combination or my violin playing smelled the worse; my growth of beard during the first few weeks we were in Africa; my first swim in the Mediterranean on Valentine's Day. I could go on for a day about these simple things that come to my mind now that I have left the place, but I know you are not interested."

Then he brought the letter to date:

"Now we are set up in another section and I will try to give you a picture of the moving, paying particular attention not to give away any military secrets and pass on any information that might be of aid to the enemy.

"As I said before, we always move at night and in the rain. This was exceptional only in that it was mud instead of rain. We boarded a French train with compartments similar to the British trains. . . . There were eight of us to a compartment. The first day I drew for partners Calder, Chappie Jones, Hunter Jones, Bill Evans, Bill Leonard, McChord Williams and Shorty McGrath. After the first night we found some additional room and we had to divide up. We drew lots to see who would move and I lost or won, I'm not sure which, since I had to move. My second group included Bernard Walker, George Snyder, Ed McCall, Bill Matthews and Jimmie Felts. Six to a compartment may have helped some but I couldn't see much advantage. I moved out in the aisle at night and spread my trench coat out and fortunately had brought a blanket along by hand. That kept me reasonably warm but not too comfortable. With me out of the compartment that left a little more room for the others to stretch out. Truthfully, however, we did not do so much sleeping.

"Our water supply was limited to about one quart a day. We carried some five-gallon cans along and found two spots along the way where we could refill with good American treated water. I learned to brush my teeth without water, and, honestly, it is not bad at all. You should try it. One of our dental men said it was actually better for you. Twice during the trip I slipped up to the engine and got the engineer to give me a cup of water from the engine, with which to shave.

"That reminds me of the trip up when we stopped at one place and a freight train pulled in beside us going in the opposite direction. The engineer got off and came back thru our train looking for Capt. Snyder or Capt. Pickens. He was from Charlotte and had pulled a train the day before with some of our advance group unit and found out that little Charlotte was on the way. His name was Clanton and he once ran a small restaurant at the corner of Graham and Sixth in Charlotte. He had bought many a case of Coca-Cola from George and me. He was in a railroad battalion and had gained his railroading experience with the Seaboard. His great big No. 500 American locomotive looked good to me

with a big 'Queen Charlotte' written on it in chalk. It was like old home week. We were sorry that he wasn't pulling our train. He was the one who told me how to get the hot water from the engine for shaving purposes."

He told of meeting a Charlottean for whom some months before he had done a good turn:

"On the way up we ran into Fred Brackett from Charlotte again. He and his gang were on the way back after a harassing experience. He looked healthy and well. For the cot and food I had given him some months back he had his crowd give us some hot coffee from his kitchen car. They were traveling in the old 40 and 8 cars while we were more deluxe without passenger cars (still 6 and 8 to a compartment) but we were not allowed to set up a kitchen car and have hot food and coffee. However, Bernard Walker had a small alcohol burner with him, so we heated water enough for the powdered coffee that comes with our food. We also were able to heat the cans with the ham in them. It made the eating a little more pleasant.

"We also purchased eggs en route from the Arabs whenever the train stopped. These we were able to boil; from time to time we would beg some salt and pepper from some group that was passing. All in all, we fared very well. We were able to buy oranges and tangerines along the way also and had a lot of fun wrangling with the Arabs about the prices. George and I bought a large supply for his men with the help of McChord Williams, who did the interpreting for us. Our living for the three or four days turned out not so badly. The first day we all snapped at each other because we were so crowded, but after that we settled down and made the most of a rather funny situation. The nurses were in a car to themselves and, I think, made the trip very well, if you can imagine 52 women in the same railroad car. I think there were 78 in all in our car. We gave away some of our room for the men."

Colonel Bauchspies, Captain Pickens related, had brought a record player and was able to provide "some good and bad music. He had several of the old canned recordings of radio programs. . . . It helped pass the time. We also had Jack Benny and Bob Hope in their programs. Duncan Calder rigged up our portable battery radio so we could hear from time to time the news from 'This Is London Calling.'"

On their arrival at their destination, he further reported, they "for the first time moved during the daylight. We sat for two days in a temporary location and then moved to this place," which in his letter he had date-lined "Northcentral Africa, March 14, 1943." He went on to describe the new location:

"Here we are in a green valley, plenty of grass and

big trees, one of the few such places I have seen in Africa. For our purpose it is ideal except for the water supply. There is plenty of water but it must be boiled and highly chlorinated. That takes time and few people want to wait. Of course, for washing it is all right.

"Our tents blend with the color scheme and we are fairly well hidden. However, we are painting a large Red Cross in the center of the area. It is reported that the enemy has left the hospital installation alone. The lack of mud is refreshing and the green grass is easy on the eyes. The altitude here is slightly over 775 metres and if I remember correctly a metre is slightly over 39 inches, which would make us up about 2,500 feet. It is cold at night, with a heavy frost every night and freezing almost every night. There is a slight amount of ice on my wash water every morning and we have no heat except what the lanterns put out. It gets warm during the day; just as soon as the sun gets down the cold comes, and does it penetrate! I say we have no heat, but I was wrong in one respect; I got some hot water yesterday, Saturday, for my first bath since February 28th and I got that from the kitchen. I was able to get hold of an empty oil drum and got a man to cut it in half and in that I clambered and took that much needed bath. So far as my clothes are concerned, I have done nothing about washing them. They are piled over here in one corner of my tent awaiting my next move. I have been so much on the go these last few days that there has been no time for laundry. I'll get to it though, in time, no doubt."

He told of having met another Charlottean who was stationed not far from the new base. He was Albert Whisnant. "He has been a great help to me in getting supplies and I appreciate it. I was able in turn to help him today. He came down and said his stoves had quit working and he needed some parts for them. Among his other duties he also looks after the mess with his outfit. We were able to furnish him with the parts he needed. I traded two pounds of yeast and three pounds of baking powder yesterday to a soldier for a 100-pound sack of flour and some repair work on some of my stoves. He had the tools and the flour and could do the work. I had the yeast and the baking powder without any flour. It worked to our mutual advantage. Now he will have hot biscuits and we will have hot cakes. . . .

"I had packed my violin in a box for shipment along with another fiddle owned by Stanley Nowacki and a trumpet and cornet owned by Bob Miller from Lincoln. All of the musical instruments came thru in good shape but I have been a little slow in playing much here because of the cold at night. Stiff fingers are not conducive to good music and mine is not so good even under the most favorable circumstances. We have

had one session together and no one threw rocks at us, so we may try again when the weather gets a little warmer. Nowacki really knows how to play and is most willing to put up with me. We enjoy it and it helps when things get dull."

In the moving to a new base he had lost his St. Cloud roommate:

"... Capt. Snyder has been moved down to be nearer the men, since all of his work is with them. I have missed him sorely already. We fussed with each other and enjoyed it and griped in about the same vein about the inefficiency of the Army. I will continue to miss him. It has been the unfortunate fate of Capt. Medearis to be quartered with me. He and I see eye to eye on almost everything so we will hit it off in great shape. . . ."

The first patients were received at 2:45 o'clock on the afternoon of March 10 at the newly established base at Telergma. The next day the hospital had 26 patients. March 12 twenty-eight were listed. But the following day the list increased by five times to 138. On March 14 the list had grown to 160. And five days after the first patients came in the total had jumped to 230. March 16 the patients numbered 319, and the next day, one week after opening for duty, the 38th's Daily Bulletin showed the status of the hospital:

Number of patients	353
Admissions	49
Dispositions	15
Vacant beds	161
Wards in operation	25
Operations performed yesterday:	
Herniotomy	1
Vein ligations	2
Hemorrhoidectomies	3
Miscellaneous	10

The Bulletin also announced that with the present setup of the hospital, it was contemplated that 830 beds would be available for patients. It added that it would be "necessary to use all Government Property such as blankets, lanterns, buckets, basins, towels, etc., now in the hands of the personnel. In the event that anyone has such property, which is not needed for immediate use, it is requested that the same be turned in to either Quartermaster or Medical Supply. If the need becomes more urgent an inspection will be made of all quarters, and all Government Property taken up. It is not desired to cause any personal hardship on any member of the command, however the needs of the patients have priority."

The number of patients being admitted continued to mount as March advanced and the Bulletin two days later—Friday, March 19—showed 448. On March 24 the number had advanced beyond five hundred—to 504, and the next day the patient total jumped to 582. On March 30 the total was 642. As April began the hos-

pital had attained a total of 819 patients. Operations performed that day totaled twenty, including five listed as "excisions for foreign bodies." On April 4 the patients, the Daily Bulletin reported, numbered 856 and there were 21 operations; on April 12 a total of 868 was reported and the next day the number was 880. The

Bulletin for April 30 read, strangely, no patients, one admission, 448 dispositions, no vacant beds, no wards in operations. "The hospital was officially closed 1830 hours 29 April 1943," the Bulletin explained.

Again, the 38th was preparing to change location that would bring it nearer to the fighting.

## 9

But before the 38th moved from Telergma, Captain Pickens in letters written late in March and during April, told in considerable detail of the stay there—the routine of battlefield hospital administration, the characters, both natives and invading military, encountered there and in nearby communities visited, the day by day happenings that had interested him.

"Fundamentally . . . we think of living in the rough," he wrote on March 27, 1943, "as the quest for food, clothing, and shelter. The refinements follow. Food comes first. . . . Every ambulance coming into this hospital is loaded with sick men and they all report that they are hungry first and sick second. Before they are relegated to their proper stations they are in the chow line crying for food. Of course, food has been refined by the art of cooking. . . . We try to cook the food the Quartermaster is kind enough to give us after he, incidentally, has taken the choice bit for himself. Someone once said they had never seen a thin Army cook and that two Army cooks could never sleep in the same pup-tent. I'll go a step farther and say no detachment of QM troops ever went hungry.

"Our cooking is done on field ranges, the proper use of which is fully outlined in certain field manuals which we try to follow to the letter. These ranges are operated on gasoline. They were designed to use what is commonly known as white gas, that cheap gas containing little or no lead, that stuff you bought back in the good old days from what might be termed second-rate pumps. But of course only the best for the Army, so all of our gas is leaded, containing tetra-ethyl. This makes the trucks and tanks and planes go zip, but it just stops up the lowly field range. So we just have to take the creation apart after each meal and clean out the lead and carbon. This causes wear and tear on the parts and since the IQ in the Mess Section isn't very high, the care of the parts is correspondingly low. I say the IQ

in the Mess Section is low, advisedly, since if it were otherwise, all of us would have sense enough to be somewhere else."

When the parts wear out, he continued his letter, "the job starts—try and find replacements. It's a game only the stalwarts can play. . . . Inspired by the thought of those sick and wounded and hungry men, we buck the pass-the-buck line in search of parts. We go to the nearest depot and gather rumor that the parts might be found in the second. To the second we go and they never heard of parts being shipped over and so we hurry home to put out a meal and then get to the third source. There they say at the fourth we might find them, since it has been said that parts are there and frozen except for medical units. . . . We take a little hope and go again. Incidentally, the depots are miles apart—good thing, since Jerry likes to find them bunched. With meager hopes we approach the fourth. Voila! Here we find the parts, but none will be issued since they will send a trained man around to visit all units to repair all breaks, and he will carry the parts. . . ." And so, he said, the grand run-around continued.

"The other branches of our unit are also tracking down needed replacements. My good friend Bernard Walker says his dental work must stop if he fails to get certain items, maybe false teeth, I don't know, and the X-ray group is out searching for film. However, I still claim priority, since they all get hungry and it's a funny thing how that hunger comes at about the same time each day. The game is still on and when the final whistle blows we will turn up with the much needed parts."

At this point in the letter he changed his reporting to tell the story related by one of the 38th's patients back from the front:

"He and some of his comrades had captured some Italian prisoners. They say they are not so difficult to