

quinine. It is said to do the work better, with less harmful effects. We are getting malaria-conscious and are running from the virile, African type. Apparently the Arabs are somewhat like our low country Negroes, immune from the worst of it, but able to pass it along to the puny visitors from across the sea. We are busy

running around turning over tin cans and spreading oil on the not too troubled waters. I hope we get by without too much of the dreaded disease. Incidentally, disease causes much more trouble to an Army than guns, dive-bombers, and mines operated by the enemy."

## 11

In the same concise manner in which he had reported the movement of the 38th's Hospital from St. Cloud to Telergma, Dr. Stokes Munroe in his account of the North African experience wrote of the transfer of the hospital from Telergma in Algeria to Beja in Tunisia and then after a stay of about two weeks there on eastward to a new site near Tunis:

"Preparations to move to the Tunisian battle front were completed and on the 2nd of May 1943, the unit started a movement to a new location in accordance with instructions contained in Letter, Headquarters, Eastern Base Section, Subject: Movement of Troops, dated 5 May 1943, confirming verbal orders. The movement was accomplished in five echelons: the first echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 2 May 1943 via motor convoy, arriving at new location, 4 miles SW of Beja, Tunisia, 3 May 1943 and 4 May 1943. The second echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 4 May 1943, via motor convoy, arriving at new hospital location 5 May 1943. The third echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 5 May 1943, via motor convoy, arriving at new hospital location 6 May 1943. The fourth echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 6 May 1943, via motor convoy, arriving at new hospital location 7 May 1943. The fifth echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 7 May 1943, via motor convoy, arriving at new hospital location the same day. Due to the capture of a number of German hospitals, a considerable number of German prisoner patients were received. A detachment of military police of five enlisted men and one officer was attached to this organization for the purpose of guarding the prisoners. Fifteen additional nurses from the 3rd Auxiliary Surgical Group were attached for quarters, duty and rations.

"On the 19th of June the unit started a movement to a new hospital location 1 1/2 KM north of Tunis, Tunisia, in accordance with instructions contained in

Letter, Headquarters, Eastern Base Section, Subject: Movement of Troops, File AG 370.5, dated 19 June 1943. The hospital at Beja, Tunisia, was officially closed at 0930 hours 20 June 1943 with the transfer of 35 remaining patients to the 3rd Provisional Hospital. The total number of patients was 3357, including 842 battle casualties and 760 prisoners of war."

Telergma, as an airplane would fly it, was some twenty-five miles south and west of Constantine, and Bone on the Mediterranean coast almost at the border of Tunisia was about seventy-five miles from Constantine on a straight line. The city of Tunis lay eastward from Bone perhaps twice the distance from Bone back to Constantine. And Beja in Tunisia, the base to which the 38th was moving, was sixty miles nearer Telergma than Tunis.

Captain Jack Montgomery in his usual brief recording in his diary on May 2, 1943, covered the journey from Telergma to Beja in exactly eleven lines. In green ink he wrote:

May 2nd

Left Telergma at 1300 hrs. by truck convoy—about 2 or 3 miles in length. Went over the mountains to Bone. Then east to Morris, arriving about 2230 at the 77th Evac. Hosp. Bob & I pitched our pup tent alongside of the truck. Many mosquitoes—then put up the mosquito netting. May 3rd. Left Morris at 0730—Tabarka—Beja. Hospital set on side of hill—no trees.

Two days later, on May 4, Captain Montgomery made another brief entry:

Tents rapidly going up. Mess tents, OR, X-ray and many wards are up. We have our small wall tents up. This morning officers dug latrines.

First operation tonight in this location. GSW leg and abd. wall.

The next day, Wednesday, May 5, the Daily Bulletin, which had suspended publication on the Saturday be-

fore to make the move to Beja, came out. It listed for that day 45 patients, 45 admissions, no dispositions, 267 vacant beds, and 18 wards in operation.

Captain Montgomery noted in his diary for May 6:

A steady stream of casualties the past 24 hrs. Four tables going at a time night & day.

The Daily Bulletin for that day confirms Captain Montgomery's entry. Under Status of the Hospital it listed 125 patients, 80 admissions, no dispositions, 187 vacant beds and 18 wards in operation.

The next day the patient load had increased by an even 200 to 325. Again there were no dispositions. Wards in operation had increased to 31.

On Saturday, March 8, the captain wrote in his diary the two-word observation:

Casualties continue.

And once again the Daily Bulletin's report confirmed his short statement.

Two hundred and forty patients had been admitted to bring the total that day to 513 and ten more wards were being used. But the report showed, too, that 52 cases had been disposed of by the hospital.

Sunday, May 9, was Mothers' Day, and it was the busiest day since the hospital had been set up in the new location. The hospital that day had a total of 673 patients, of whom 256 had been admitted within the 24-hour period, and 48 wards were in use. The surgeons were unusually busy, too. The operations performed were listed:

Craniotomies	2
Thoracotomies	2
Gen. Arthrotomy	1
Amputations	3
Removal shrapnel	4
Reduction fractures	4
Debridement of wounds	27
Minor procedures	10

The Daily Bulletin also carried this message concerning Mothers' Day:

Today is traditionally designated by our President for the purpose of honoring our Mothers. This is part of our American way of living. All of us have had mothers, some of us are still fortunate to have our Mothers back home patiently awaiting our return. It is the earnest desire of the Commanding Officer to have every member of his command write a special letter to Mother or some loved one back home. All persons are enjoined to assist our patients in getting this letter written and posted.

The Bulletin that day was signed by order of Colonel Bauchspies by Captain A. J. Guenther, the adjutant.

Captain George Snyder was administrative officer of the day the following day, Monday, May 10, and Captain Pickens was his alternate. Captain Tyson was

medical officer of the day; his alternate was Lieutenant Schirmer. Captain Williams was surgical officer of the day, and Major Fleming alternate. The dental officer of the day was Lieutenant Milo Hoffman and Captain Walker was alternate. The nurse officer of the day was Lieutenant Niemeyer and Lieutenant Trainor was alternate.

It was a busy day. The patients totaled 686, including 261 admissions, and the dispositions numbered 248. Forty-nine wards were in use. The surgeons had a strenuous day. Operations totaled 59, classified as follows:

Debridements of wounds	16
Amputations	1
Reduction of fractures	5
Removal shrapnel	2
Applications of casts	20
Minor procedures	15

That was the day, too, for the hospital to have four distinguished guests, including the Surgeon General, Major General Norman T. Kirk. The other three were Major General Fred W. Blesse, Colonel Joseph I. Martin, Surgeon of the 5th Army, and Colonel Richard T. Arnest, II Corps. In the Daily Bulletin of the next day, Tuesday, May 11, Colonel Bauchspies would issue a memorandum, addressed to all personnel, concerning the visit of the four men. It was one of the longest and doubtless the most effusively complimentary the 38th's commanding officer would issue:

It was a genuine pleasure for your Commanding Officer to have as visitors our newly appointed Surgeon General of the Army, Brigadier General Norman T. Kirk; NATO-USA Surgeon Brigadier General Fred W. Blesse; II Corps Surgeon, Colonel Richard T. Arnest; and Fifth Army Surgeon, Colonel Joseph I. Martin. These officers are personal friends of mine. Brigadier General Blesse and Colonel Martin were my instructors during my first years in the Army. It afforded me great pride and personal satisfaction to conduct them through the hospital, where they inspected the latrines, the messes, the utilities, the quarters, as well as the departments of the hospital itself. It is always my intention to do my job to the best of my ability, but in this particular instance, I wished to show our visitors what their former people had achieved, and that their efforts years ago in training me for the field had not been all in vain. Naturally, as in every effort, success cannot be achieved unless every individual who has a part to do, does his particular job to the best of his ability. This has been true, and was conspicuously evident during the past week when this hospital was erected. The only part I had in the erection of the hospital here was choosing the site, conducting the personnel and equipment to the site, and planning the erection of the hospital. The hard work was done by you. For the first time since taking command of this organization, the personnel of this unit functioned as they should. Officers, nurses, and enlisted men all joined in doing whatever they could to speed the erection of the hospital. You all know why this is so necessary—you are all aware of the kinds and types of patients which have

passed through our hospital. This tremendous effort could not have been accomplished if one quality had been missing—the willingness of every individual in the organization to go to work until the job was done, and done to my personal satisfaction. The hospital stands as a monument to your efforts, and it serves the purpose adequately for which it was erected. All of us can have equal shares of personal satisfaction of a job well done.

The campaign in Africa is rapidly drawing to a close. I believe your training days are over. I am convinced now that the 38th Evacuation Hospital can be erected and function in any Theatre of Operations. You have passed your board examination and are now ready to practice. Colonel Martin, the Fifth Army Surgeon, has assured me that this organization will play a prominent part in the next phase of this campaign. I told him we are ready, and yesterday he had the opportunity of seeing an example of what this organization could do.

We are all tired physically, but we must remain on the alert. Discipline must and will be maintained. You all have done an excellent job. I am justly proud of you. I wish to take this means of expressing my thanks to every member of this command, both assigned and attached.

Rollin L. Bauchspies,  
Colonel, Medical Corps,  
Commanding.

The next day, May 12, 1943, the Daily Bulletin carried a somewhat naively worded notice perhaps even more appreciated than the Colonel's commendation:

An Officers' and Nurses' bath tent has been erected between the Officers' and Nurses' latrines. This utility has been made available for the purpose of providing a place for bathing. Officers and nurses using this facility must remember and *constantly* bear in mind that all water must be carted into this area and the storage space for water in the bath tent is limited. With proper consideration for each other the bath tent can prove of great usefulness to all concerned. Only sufficient water should be drawn for the purpose involved. The hours for use are as follows:

OFFICERS:	0800-1000 hours	1600-1800 hours
NURSES:	1000-1200 hours	1400-1600 hours

On Sunday, May 9, Mothers' Day, Captain Montgomery had written in his diary, in the same green ink, the two-line notation:

Hear today that Tunis & Beserte had been entered.

The next day, the same day that the four distinguished visitors, including the Surgeon General of the Army, were guests of the 38th Hospital, Captain Pickens in a long letter to the homefolk confirmed the accuracy of the report recorded by Captain Montgomery.

"The news has been good these last few days, showing that we have taken both Tunis and Bizerte and are now in the midst of cleaning up the rest of the Tunisian area," he revealed. "This will be old when you read this letter, but now it has provoked everyone into doing even better work than usual. We, of course, follow the trend of the battle and have seen it from

not too far away. At night we could see the flares of the artillery or the dropping of flares. For a short time we heard the sound of the big guns as both the British and the Americans pushed on. There was a determination about the sound and the movement that passes us on the way up that precluded the final result. But the Americans and the British didn't do it all. Our ally, the French, came in for a large part. Among the French troops is a group called the 'Gouams,' pronounced Gooms, and that brings on a tale which has brought us plenty of laughter. They are a cross between the Berbers, Arabs, some of the lost tribes, a few Ethiopians and some European strains. They dress in colorful blue uniforms with those baggy pants that make you think you are looking at a Shriners' parade. They have a blue or red fez on their heads. They carry old-fashioned rifles, relics of the last war, the long bayonets. These rifles they don't use very much on account of the way they are paid. It seems that they draw their clothes and food and a regular ration of wine. No money is involved in their pay envelopes until they run into the enemy. Then they get a bonus of two francs for each German ear they bring into camp. This apparently stimulates them to go out and cut off ears and they really do. An American officer coming back from the front tells of an assignment his group had to take a certain hill position. They were encamped just a few miles forward of a group of Gouams. Their job was to begin at dawn the next day. During the night, the story goes, the Gouams got through their lines without the slightest indication of detection and the next day when the Americans were to storm the hill, they got up there to find no live Germans but a lot of dead ones, sans ears. The Gouams had gotten there ahead of them. Another story about these ferocious soldiers was one told by an ambulance driver bringing some German prisoners back to our hospital. He was stopped on the way back from the front by a few of these strange



Hurry up to stand in line—or hang around—and wait, they say that was the Army—even the 38th. This was after church services at Anzio.





One of the diversions of the personnel of the 38th, both in North Africa and Italy, was watching the American planes come over. Here soldiers and patients at St. Cloud watch transport planes flying fairly low over the encampment.

people and asked if he had any German patients. When he replied that he had, they offered him a hundred francs for them, but he turned the offer down. They not only want their ears but they want their lives as well.

"... These Gouams are interesting and I come back to them again. I have just watched some of them pray. They are all Mohammedans but they add a little ritual that I have never seen before. Before they pray, and praying means anything from falling flat on the ground to kneeling in a dignified manner beside a cot, they have to wash their feet. This has put a rather serious strain on our usually limited water supply. I have seen them out behind our 3,000 gallon canvas water tank just running our good chlorinated water freely washing what in a few minutes are just two dirty feet. They all prefer to go barefoot. Some of the better class have simple sandals, but the majority wander around our

camp in the dust without anything on their feet. Those who are too sick are a problem for our ward men and nurses. They have a feet washing problem the answer to which is not found in any Field Manual put out by the Army. I would like to see what some armchair surgeon in Washington would write in Army regulations, say, AR 250-305 paragraph 16, on the methods to be used in washing Gouams' feet in North Africa. I'll bet it would be a masterpiece."

The letter of May 10 is of primary value, however, in its recording of a description of the new hospital site in Tunisia and of the detailed operations of setting it up. It is one of the most detailed of the close-up views afforded of the 38th's experiences in North Africa.

Captain Pickens went on to tell of their new base: "But back to this oat field in Tunisia. We sit on the side of a field that has just been cut. The poor Frenchman didn't have time to rack the grain before we

moved in. I have often wondered if the Army asked permission to use this and other pieces of land to run a war on, but of course, I know this is a stupid thought. We probably just moved in and the fast talking little Frenchman with his beret bobbing in the breeze just had to say that the Americans are always welcome. He really got upset when we told him we had to have a funeral.

"Not here," he said, almost in tears, "not on my property." We told him we would move it to the neighboring town and he was greatly relieved.

"But we took over the hillside and pitched a big hospital about as fast as Ringling Brothers could set up their five rings and all the side shows. I have fully decided that I will never attend another circus; it will remind me of some of these Army days with tents flapping and straw on the ground and ants crawling up my legs. I want all the comforts that a modern after-the-war can afford.

"We moved in one day and a couple of hundred patients moved in the next. The surgeons had a field day, the orthopedists just fixed more bones and made more plaster casts and the nurses and ward men did more bandage work. The mess section busied itself as usual feeding a lot of hungry soldiers. It was all routine with us except we had to hurry the first day to get fixed up. We put on the refinements a little later. Everyone worked. Even the officers dug their own latrine, and when you get manual labor out of a group of specialists, that's something for the books. We pitched our own tents; Buck and I struggled with ours, but his long association with the Boy Scouts helped us no end. It was dark when we started but when morning came and we came out to survey our handiwork, we both said it was the best job we had done since entering the armed forces of our nation. We kept on our steel helmets, since everyone up this way seemed to be doing the same thing. They are heavy and bundlesome and more useful for washing in than wearing, but we wore them and felt some comfort with the added protection. We hurriedly put up a large Red Cross. Paul Sanger did some real manual labor on this. He took the burlap that Buck had probably stolen and ran it through some red paint Buck had also brought along and at the end of a long day turned out a creditable looking cross. I went out yesterday to find some lime to mark out the outer line in white. I also took my interpreter from up in Van Buren, Maine. We had to get in the next town and buy the lime thru the black market, Noire Marche, the biggest business setup in the town, incidentally.

"The town itself did not look so healthy. Both sides of this war had argued about its possession and the results were sad indeed. In addition, there were signs

posted saying that typhus was prevalent. But we had to have the lime, so a marketing we did go and came back with about 80 or 90 pounds of questionable grade, but it served the purpose. The little Frenchman begged to visit the town hall and post office. It appears that he hasn't been allowed to go into town for some time and from the looks of the place I think he was wise in waiting. He wanted to visit the townfolk and talk the situation over. He also had to get a singletree for one of his carts. This we helped him to do in return for his aid in getting the lime. When we got back to his house he insisted that we come in and have a glass of wine with him. I settled for some fresh eggs and made a deal with him to furnish us with eggs in return for our garbage. He has plenty of hogs and from the looks of them some good American garbage would help them no end. He also gave me some roses. Now what does a soldier out in the middle of North Africa, living in a hurriedly erected tent, do with a bunch of roses from a fast talking French farmer? I just took them back to camp and put them in an empty can filled with cold water and set them on a box I use for a desk. I stopped by the neighboring field and picked some poppies, red as blood, to go with the yellow and white roses. The poppies, as I have said before to you, just grow wild and cover field after field. I wore one yesterday for Mother's Day."

Then he returned, as he invariably did in his letters home, to provide news of the hospital itself:

"We have a number of casualties that are prisoners. I have forgotten what the rule is about mentioning them in mail home. They get the same care that our troops get. The only difference, they have an armed guard that keeps watch over them. They have been so appreciative of getting some good food. They have almost done handsprings over the coffee and cocoa and the white bread. The Italians say they would be satisfied with just the bread alone, even if we gave them nothing else. The Germans say they have an ersatz coffee made from barley and some other mixture which they couldn't describe, but nothing like what we gave them.

"I don't know whether they have been coached about their behavior if captured or not, but almost to a man they say they didn't want the war and would be glad when it is over and they can return to their homes. The Italians were surprised that we had so many with our unit who could speak their language and who had relatives in the old country. They acted like they were back among friends. As a matter of fact, I have a man in my section who fought in the Italian army when Il Duce invaded Ethiopia. He's much better pleased with his treatment and pay in our Army. I have been trying to practice my German on these poor devils but I find

that I am now getting German mixed with the little French I have picked up. The result is a grand mess. They all like our cigarettes as much as the British do.

"We are neighbors of the British now and some of them are always dropping in to visit. It is flattering that they always come as near our meal time as is diplomatically possible. The men particularly like to come and eat with our men. It helps us since they are so appreciative of anything they get to eat. They always ask for tea but never fail to take coffee, cocoa, or lemonade, whichever we happen to have at that particular meal. Our men having been in England for a time make it more pleasant for them because they can discuss the advantages of London over the Midlands or vice versa."

In this letter also, as in most of his previously written ones, he turned his attention to the subject of bathing. "I always seem to get back to that subject somehow," he interjected. He went on:

"Our host told me yesterday that he had some hot springs on his land and we could get a shower bath. Tomorrow I hope to get the time to go with him and see what the possibilities are. My last trip into Constantine I went with Bob Miller and Bob Schirmer and Kavanaugh to a hot springs swimming pool. We had a good swim and then in one of the showers I washed the G.I. underwear I had used for the bathing trunks."

At this point in his letter his writing was interrupted. When he resumed writing it he had investigated the hot springs, and he reported:

"Since starting this letter I have had an opportunity look over the bath situation. There are some natural hot springs nearby with sulphur water gushing out of the ground at a rapid rate. The locals have built a house with some basins. We will clean the place and make use of it. The water is very hot, making it possible to put in only one foot at a time, easing it in and gradually working on in. It is going to be a treat when we get the place fixed up, and we will have to make a free use of creosote, lime and soap in order to have the place up to hospital standards. The sulphur water will be of little use in washing clothes, but to get the dirt off the personnel will be worth much. As a matter of fact, there will be many colds when we get one or two layers off some of this crowd."

Soon after they set up the hospital in Tunisia the members of the 38th were visited by an old friend. This time he wrote particularly about the nurses:

With Ernie Pyle in North Africa

IN TUNISIA—American tent hospitals in the battle area seem to be favorite hangouts for correspondents. The presence of American nurses is alleged to have nothing to do with it.

At one hospital three correspondents just moved in and

made it their headquarters for a couple of weeks. They'd roam the country in their jeeps during the day, then return to the hospital at night just as though it were a hotel.

There are two favorite hospitals where I drop in now and then for a meal or a night. One is an evacuation hospital—the same one where the other boys stay—which is always kept some 80 miles or more back of the fighting. This is the one staffed largely from Roosevelt hospital in New York.

The other is a mobile surgical hospital, which is usually only about an hour's drive back of the fighting. This is the hospital that landed at Arzew on the day of the North African occupation, and whose nurses were the first ashore in North Africa.

### They Keep Moving

This gang is kept pretty much on the move. They don't dare to be too close to the lines, and yet they can't be very far away. So as the war swings back and forth they swing with it. The nurses of this outfit are the most veteran of any in Africa.

There are nearly 60 of them, and they are living just like the soldiers at the front. They have run out of nearly everything feminine. They wear heavy issue shoes, and even men's G.I. underwear. Most of the time they wear Army coveralls instead of dresses.

I asked them what to put in the column that they'd like sent from home, and here is what they want—cleansing creams and tissues, fountain pens, shampoos and underwear. That's all they ask. They don't want slips, for they don't wear them.

These girls can really take it. They eat out of mess kits when they're on the move. They do their own washing. They stand regular duty hours all the time, and in emergencies they work without thought of the hours.

During battles they are swamped. Then between battles they have little to do, for a front-line hospital must always be kept pretty free of patients to make room for a sudden influx. A surgical hospital seldom keeps a patient more than three days.

During these lax periods the nurses fill in their time by rolling bandages, sewing sheets and generally getting everything ready for the next storm.

### Social Life Non-Existent

They lead a miserably blank social life. There is absolutely no town life in Central Tunisia, even if they could get to a town. Occasionally an officer will take them for a jeep ride, but usually they're not even permitted to walk up and down the road. They just work, and sleep, and sit, and write letters. War is no fun for them.

They make \$186 a month, and pay \$21 of it for mess. There's nothing to buy over here, so nearly all of them send money home.

Like the soldiers, they have learned what a valuable implement the steel helmet is. They use it as a foot bath, as a wastebasket, as a dirty-clothes hamper, to carry water in, as a candle-holder, as a rain-hat, and—er, ah—yes, even as an emergency toilet on cold nights!

Being nurses and used to physical misery, they have not been shocked or upset by the badly wounded men they care for. The thing that has impressed them most is the way the wounded men act. They say they've worked with wounded men lying knee-deep outside the operating rooms, and never does one whimper or complain. They say it's remarkable.



The girls sleep on cots, under Army blankets. Very few have sleeping bags. They use outdoor toilets. At one place they've rigged up canvas walls for taking sun baths.

Mary Ann Sullivan, of Boston, whom I wrote about last winter, is in this outfit. Some of the other girls I know are Mildred Keelin, of Louisville, Ky.; Amy Nichols, of Blythe, Ga.; Mary Francis, of Waynesville, N. C.; Eva Sacks, of Philadelphia; and Kate Rodgers, of Houston, Texas.

Like the soldiers, they think and talk constantly of home, and would like to be home. Yet it's just as Amy Nichols says—she wouldn't go home if they told her she could. All the others feel the same way, practically 100 per cent.

They're terrifically proud of having been the first nurses to land in Africa, and of being continually the closest ones to the fighting lines, and they intend to stay. They are actually in little danger, except from deliberate or accidental bombing. They haven't had any yet.

On May 13, 1943, Captain Montgomery added another notation in his diary. It, too, was terse:

Hostilities closed in Africa today.

Four days later Captain Pickens in another long letter home would provide embellishing details. It was particularly interesting and of documentary importance in its revelation of the 38th's involvement with German prisoners and their attitude toward the war and especially toward the American soldier.

"The African campaign has been brought to a temporary close," he wrote on May 17. "The fighting has ceased and so far as I know the enemy has not sent a single plane over since the end of the combat. The enormous number of prisoners has been passing for days going back to the prisoner of war camps. During three days I would guess that some 40,000 passed our camp. They came in every kind of vehicle and in most cases they drove them themselves without any visible guards. I may have written this to you before but it struck me as being rather funny that we guard our prisoner patients with much care and the majority of them couldn't walk if they wanted to and yet 40,000 able-bodied men pass here driving their own trucks without a guard ratio of more than one per hundred. We had one truck load of Italians stop and ask us if our place was the prisoner of war camp. I suppose it looked like it with the barbed wire we keep up to keep the Arabs from stealing our shirts and to protect our fair womanhood. We directed him on down the road and he left with his group in a hurry, saying that he had to get along and get there before supper. They sang as they went by and once we asked them why they seemed so happy. A man replied that they were on their way to America and we were the ones that had to go to Italy and Germany. I guess they had a right to laugh."

He told of his conversations with various prisoners:

"I have been visiting with some of our prisoners, mostly Germans. I try to avoid talking politics with them. It always settles nothing and they are so rabid

on the subject of Hitler. I said to one of them the other day that I had the privilege of saying in America that I did not like the President, but that he had no such right in Germany to criticize the Fuehrer. He answered that this was true, but that Hitler was so good that no one needed the privilege to criticize him. They have an answer for everything. They rationalize every act that has been perpetrated. They blame the English for starting the war and when asked why they went into Poland they just say they asked a road to run thru the corridor and when the fool Jews refused them they had to take the roadway. In the case of Russia, they say it was to get the Russians before the Soviets got them. They are mortally afraid of the Russians, say they have no feeling, that they know of their own men who have committed suicide rather than be taken prisoner. The Russians apparently have not been as easy on them as we have been. It appears that they all wanted to surrender to the Americans. They fear the French and the English, but seem to think they will get fair treatment from the Americans.

"But in case this leaves you with the feeling that they are not afraid of the Americans I will tell you one man's description of the three armies they met in Tunisia. This man said the French yell and holler at the top of their lungs when they go into battle. They come in with all the noise they can muster and he said it was terrifying at best. The English, he said, come in singing with a grim sort of determination but still singing some regimental ditty. The Americans, he said, just keep coming; they don't say anything, they don't act as if they are mad; it is like they were playing some sort of game and want to get it over, but they just keep coming. He said there was no way of stopping them because they just kept coming. Several of our high ranking men have said that our boys took a licking down on the southern side during the early spring because they lacked equipment and numbers and experience, but



Lieutenants Robert Miller, left, and Colin Munroe pose with two of their North African friends.



The Munroe brothers, standing, Colin, left, and Stokes, with Kavanagh, right, pose on the walk outside tent at St. Cloud.

that now with sufficient numbers and enough supplies and the experience gained during this campaign, they were the best soldiers in the world, simply because they won't quit and don't know how to give up. It is not an American's makeup to think of losing once the battle has started. These Germans have a healthy respect for American soldiers."

Captain Pickens talked frequently with German prisoners, most of them youths, and obtained a good cross-section of their views concerning the war and its probable outcome. His letter of May 17 continued:

"Many of these prisoners have said to me that when Russia is licked, they will end the war, since they have nothing to fight us about. They say the English will join us in stopping it. When I tell them that we only stop with 'unconditional surrender,' they laugh and say that we will never get to Europe. They were told, some of them, before they came to Africa that they were just coming over to hold all of North Africa and were surprised when they ran into the hornets' nest in Tunisia. Most of them have been in Africa only a few weeks. One chap I talked with, who had lost his leg from a bomb fragment, aged 19, said he had come over by transport plane in April and was driving a truck for a food depot at Bizerte. He said the bombs just dropped all of the time and he felt lucky that he had gotten out with just the loss of one leg. Most of the Germans are young, none of them over 23 or 24, and most of them say they have been in Russia and some have been in France, Norway and Greece. They all, almost to a man, swear by Hitler and think they will win the war. Some are sullen about it; the officers are arrogant and gener-

ally disdainful. However, they all like our food and are surprised that we are still able to get it. One man asked what the sinkings were for March and April and when I told him he said that was not true, that they had been told that we lost over 2,000,000 tons each month for those two months. I told him that what he said might be true, but I doubted it and the only thing I could go by was the fact that we finished up the campaign in Tunisia with plenty to spare and had been eating every day since and he was not going hungry, so some ships had been coming thru. He thought it was incredible that it could happen to his Germany. It appears to me that this loyalty to Hitler has been hammered into them so long, and that during those years they were growing up, that it really took hold. It will be a hard job to get it out during this generation. One Austrian said he liked the Hitler government because it had given him and many Austrians jobs. He said that before the advent of the Nazis they were hungry and after they had taken over the government jobs were plentiful and his people lived better. He thought that was reason enough to back it. He had not thought that the employment he got was for the purpose of making war. Hitler had given him a job and that was enough. The rest of the demagoguery made no difference."

He reported the condition of the captured Germans' equipment:

"Many of the Germans have shoes made with a little leather around the foot and the remaining part of the shoes made of canvas. Some of them have wooden soles. Their equipment otherwise appears to be good. Their gas mask is more convenient to wear than ours but not as easy to carry while waiting for gas to come. Their chlorinating tablets, which every soldier carries in Africa, are about the same as ours. Their insignias are more fancy than ours and more on the order of the British. You know, the British have all sorts of gadgets on their uniforms and caps showing the Cold Stream Guards or the Royal Rensselaers or the Highland Blackwatch or any number of others. The Germans go in for the same sort of junk. All of the insignias carry the swastika somewhere on them. Many of these men wore arm bands reading AFRICA KORPS. This was woven with some fabric like rayon.

"These men are interested in our currency and its value with reference to the mark. They ask questions about our mail and are surprised when we (bragging just a little) say we get mail from the United States in about three or four weeks. They say it has taken that long for them to get mail from Germany and they are a lot closer home than we are. Possibly I shouldn't kick about our service, but it is the American privilege. They ask if they will be sent to America. Of course I don't know, but I know that it would be stupid to try



and keep 175,000 of them here and try to haul enough food over here to feed them and there is not enough food from the land here to take care of them. So I tell them that they will probably be sent over and will be put to work. They are afraid to be sent to Canada. They say that is English and the English will put them in chains. I told them they could do better work without chains and that the idea was a mistake. But, they say, that is what they have been told by the Fuehrer and he never tells anything but the truth. The German officers are afraid of having to go to work. . . .

"Every morning when I go thru and give them the radio news about the bombing of some town in Germany or the work of the Russians, they say that what we get is only propaganda. I appreciate their feeling

sorry for my not getting the truth, but I have the privilege of walking around without a guard and can send my mail home thru the Post Office rather than the Red Cross. We are going to have a real job curing the festering sore that Hitler has planted in these poor souls. I am wondering if we will ever do the job satisfactorily and avoid a similar conflict in the future. They are so positive they are superior. They treat the poor Italians with utter disdain. I think they might deign to wipe their feet on the Americans but not much more."

He closed the letter with the observation that it had presented "a worm's eye picture of the enemy as I have seen him. I hope I give you a fair picture. The minister's son is getting in practice again."

## 12

What the war-ravaged country between the 38th's base at Beja and the coastal city of Tunis, as well as Tunis itself, looked like in the closing days of May 1943 is revealed in a letter written by Captain Pickens on May 20, three days after he had provided what he described as his worm's eye picture of the German prisoners he had been observing and with whom he had been talking.

Two days after he wrote the letter about the prisoners he was off duty and rode into Tunis, about a hundred miles eastward and a little to the north. His letter the next day gives an authentic picture of the North African region in northern Tunisia after fighting armies had swept across it.

"Yesterday was my day off duty and since transportation was available," he wrote, "I took the time to ride into Tunis and look the situation over. The route carried me thru Medjez-el-Bab and across the highly disputed Long Stop Hill. I find these places described in the April *Observers*, so I don't think I will be giving away any secrets if I mention them and tell a little of what I saw.

"I have learned one thing since being in the Army about where a war must be fought and that is, it must be fought on a road. The control of towns is important only if they are the centers of roads or important as ports. If they are the centers of networks of roads, they will contain supplies and men, but the roads are the

main things. In this country from where I live you move only on roads. The ground is too rough otherwise. From Long Stop Hill on to Tunis the hills disappear and the open plains are before you. But the road must be occupied up to that point before you can fan out. Medjez is a road junction, and so important; otherwise there is little to the town except the fairly good-sized stream that divides it. The argument over the possession of it left its mark. The ruins are there and we crossed the river over an improvised bridge. The road from there on to Long Stop is pockmarked with shell holes and you can see signs of tank barriers of everything from broken two-wheeled carts to railroad ties and concrete slabs. To the top of the hill it is quite a climb and I can understand how it was a job to get the Bosche moved off. After you get over the hill and move along the plain into the city there are wrecked tanks scattered all over the rolling country. Trucks that have been burned dot the road. The area from about twenty feet away from sides of the road on out is marked unsafe. There are mines still planted. Some of these days some Arab will be pushing his six oxen along to turn the soil and will wake up with Mohammed. I feel sorry for him in advance, since he had no part in the making.

"Between Beja and Medjez we passed a prisoner of war camp with several thousand Germans behind the barbed wire. On the way home we saw them cooking