

Their host that day continued with his story of the sensational Doolittle flight over Tokyo by revealing what had happened to the American flyers after their assault upon the Japanese capital and their landing in China and Russia. Captain Pickens relayed the information the major had given them:

"Before the whole gang had gathered they were shipped off to Chungking and then sent to Calcutta to await orders. They traveled in a DC-3, the same type of plane used by Eastern Air Lines. At Calcutta they just waited. They were comfortably housed and the Indians were cordial enough. One day, after lounging around for two weeks, word came thru that all ferry pilots were needed immediately to help evacuate personnel from Burma. So, off to Mandalay the major went to help get the folks out ahead of the Japanese. They just went back and forth between Mandalay and Calcutta for several days. When this experience had run out they sat for another week or ten days and then orders came to start for the Middle East. The major said he had a hard time getting rid of his DC-3, but finally got someone to sign for it, and then boarded a plane for Cairo. After some delay there he was sent back to Miami. Back in the States, he was put in charge of a squadron to train. After three months training in

maneuvering and attack, off they went on their way to England. They were snowed in for two days at Presque Isle and two weeks in Iceland, but finally wound up to start working on the Germans from an east England base. They came down to Africa in December and have been here ever since.

"I think it is quite a saga, this round the world cruise. They celebrated their year's anniversary of the trip over Tokyo last month near us. General Doolittle came down and joined in with the boys that are left. It was a gay party, they report, and I think they are entitled to one gay evening a year for that job. They all, says the major, want to go again when this job is finished over here. They like to see the little yellow rats run for cover."

After hearing the major's story of the Tokyo raid and the lively events that followed it, says Captain Pickens, it seemed to them that their own jobs of helping operate an Army base hospital were rather routine assignments.

"Bob and I finished a pleasant day with the Air Corps and hurried back to the mundane job of helping run a hospital," he concludes his letter. "Our part is just another cog in the big machine organized to lick the enemy of our way of living."

## 14

Captain Jack Montgomery's next entry in his diary was again characteristically of few words. He wrote on July 10:

Sicily invaded at 0300 hours. We expect casualties from these tomorrow.

Eight days later, on July 18, he added another two lines:

Casualties have been very light. Hospital never as much as half-filled.

The Status of the Hospital report in the Daily Bulletin during that period bears out Captain Montgomery's observation:

On July 9 the number of patients was 344, with 466 vacant beds; July 10, the number was 322, with 488 beds; the next day, 275 and 787; July 12, 229 patients and 833 vacant beds; July 13, 227 patients, 871 vacant beds; July 14, 287 and 811; July 15, 253 and 845; July

16, 254 patients, 844 beds vacant; July 17, patients totaled 284 and 814 beds were vacant; and Sunday, July 18, the day he made his entry in his diary, 363 patients and 735 vacant beds.

The Daily Bulletin reveals in its July 17 issue that "The Commanding Officer had the honor yesterday of presenting to Private Marvin D. Regan, formerly of Company K, 26th Infantry, now a member of this organization, the Award of the Purple Heart for wounds received in action."

With much pride Colonel Bauchspies had inserted in the Daily Bulletin of July 21 two letters just received at the 38th's headquarters. Colonel Bauchspies introduced them with a brief note:

The following letters have been received from Brigadier General F. A. Blesse, Surgeon, NATOUSA, and W. G. MacKay, Lt. Col., RA, British Service. Lt. Col. MacKay was a patient in this hospital while we were stationed at Beja.

He expressed his appreciation for treatment he received while a patient in this hospital to the Surgeon, NATOUSA. The letters are as follows:

H E A D Q U A R T E R S  
NORTH AFRICAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS  
Office of the Surgeon  
APO 534

17 July 1943

MEMO TO: The Commanding Officer, 38th Evacuation Hospital

1. The attached letter is forwarded for your information.
2. I wish to also express my appreciation of the superior manner in which the 38th Evacuation Hospital has accomplished every task which has been assigned them. I feel that you, and every member of your unit, may be justly proud of their splendid record of highly efficient service and devotion to duty.

/s/ F. A. Blesse  
Brig. General, AUS,  
Surgeon

The letter enclosed said:

HQ No 1 Regt RA  
R.A.T.D., BNAF  
5th July 1943

TO: The Senior Medical Officer, United States Army.

Dear Sir,

I would like to express to you my thanks and gratitude for the kindness and most efficient treatment I had from the American Medical and Nursing staffs while I was in your hands.

Except for the great trouble taken both by the doctors and nurses I might easily have been a cripple for the rest of my life. As it is I am now in a little over two months as sound as I have ever been in my life.

I got blown up on an anti-tank mine on the 1st of May, with the result that I got an eye wound, deaf in both ears. My left foot two broken bones. Right foot four broken bones, right heel fractured in four places. (os calcus). I hope that is how it is spelt.

I landed in 38 Evacuation Hospital near Beja. Within two hours I was put to bed in real sheets, examined by a Doctor, given a meal, X-Rayed, on the operating table and in plaster casts and comfortable tucked up in bed. Next day an ear specialist came two hundred miles to see me.

I remained in 38 Evacuation unit until sent down to Algiers and sent to the British 95 General Hospital.

I would in particular express my gratitude to Capt. Augustine for not only his expert treatment but for his unfailing patience (I never was a good patient, I am too restless for that). To all those nurses who were always so willing to help and who did so much to relieve pain.

I am indeed Sir most grateful.

Yours sincerely  
W. G. MACKAY  
(Lt Col RA)  
British Service

On the same day that the Daily Bulletin carried Colonel Mackay's letter Captain Montgomery added a three-line diary entry confirming the two-line entry he had made the day before. The July 20 observation had been:

Tonight at the movie we heard that Col. Bauchspies had been relieved.

The confirming entry added:

Col. Bauchspies announced at the Surgical group that he was leaving. Corps VI. Everyone pleased.

July 29 his entry, another three lines, reported:

Col. Bauchspies left this morning by plane for Casa Blanca. Lt. Col. White assumed command of unit temporarily.

The Daily Bulletin of that day made the same announcement:

NOTICE TO ALL PERSONNEL

Members of this command are grateful for the excellent leadership and training given by Colonel Rollin L. Bauchspies, and extend to him heartiest congratulations on his promotion to Surgeon, VI Corps.

As Senior Officer present for duty, Lt. Col. T. P. White assumes temporary command of this organization.

All orders and regulations published by this Headquarters will remain in force until further notice.

During Colonel Bauchspies' final week as commander of the 38th Evacuation Hospital the number of patients had varied day to day from 338 to 365. On his last day, when Charlotte's Dr. White took command of the unit, there were 356 patients, 742 vacant beds, and 38 wards in operation.

One of the last duties of Colonel Bauchspies as commander of the 38th was to award nineteen Good Conduct medals to enlisted members of the unit. The Daily Bulletin of Sunday, July 25, 1943, records the awards:

The Commanding Officer has awarded the Good Conduct Medal on Letter of Award Number 14 to the following members of this command for exemplary behaviour, efficiency and fidelity in the performance of their duties as members of this unit:

Technical Sergeant William J. Pricckett  
Technical Sergeant Robert E. Laubengayer  
Tech. 3rd Grade Charles L. Purdy  
Sergeant Vincent J. Elliott  
Sergeant John A. Boulier  
Tech. 4th Grade Clarence O. Kuester, Jr.  
Tech. 4th Grade Leonard (NMN) Weinheimer  
Tech. 4th Grade Louise J. Bakelaar  
Tech. 4th Grade Joseph W. Neil  
Tech. 4th Grade Myer A. Freedberg  
Tech. 4th Grade Louis A. Fink  
Tech. 4th Grade Joseph B. Lucy  
Tech. 4th Grade Frank C. Link  
Tech. 4th Grade Kenneth M. Dale  
Tech. 4th Grade Gwynfryn T. Jones  
Corporal Virgil H. Cox  
Corporal Kenneth R. Sears  
Tech. 5th Grade Edward A. Jackson  
Pvt. 1cl Richard (NMN) Duerr

The week after Colonel White assumed command of the 38th with the transfer of Colonel Bauchspies

the unit marked the first anniversary of its sailing from New York for overseas service. Nine months of this year had been spent in North Africa. And now in the last weeks of the summer the heat had become for the American soldiers almost unbearably oppressive.

Captain Pickens tells in a letter written the day before Colonel White took over command of the unit that the thermometer's readings ranged from about 110 degrees to 120 degrees.

"As Damon Runyon says," he wrote, "it has been hotter here than somewhat. The thermometers we have register only in Centigrade, but by hard arithmetic we figure out the heat according to our own measure. Seldom does the mercury get under 110 during the day and more often it hangs around 120. Even with your heat wave during June you will have to admit that we have first claim, since it is no wave but a pretty steady stream and there is no relief in sight."

The heat, he went on to report, naturally caused them to think of ice cream, and ice cream they were determined to have. But how would the mess officer provide ice cream in North Africa with temperatures well above a hundred? He tells what they were able to arrange:

"Being located near a city enabled me to work out a solution to a problem that came with the hot weather. . . . We found some Italian Jews running an ice cream manufacturing place. Of course, they had no ingredients but they had equipment and occasionally the current was on in the city. I gathered together the ingredients, including sugar which I borrowed from the Air Corps with no intention of ever paying it back. They always have everything and will never miss what crumbs drop to the poor medicos. I also put in a large quantity of dehydrated eggs; that's one way of getting soldiers to eat the awful stuff; you have to camouflage it.

With all the trimmings down to the parlor, we went and asked the price of manufacture. It was 15 francs per litre or about 30 cents a quart, quite high when we were furnishing all the parts; but you can depend on the sons of Abraham to make the most of a war. We had no money in our funds and the commanding officer had forbidden us to make an assessment, so I was stymied as to how to get the stuff paid for."

How he managed to arrange payment is an interesting story:

"Just at this time the old man told me of his son who was ill and he wanted to know if we could cure him. I took one look at his son, a lad of about 23 or 24, and made a hurried diagnosis. He had an ulcerated varicose vein which looked as if we could take care of. I told the old man that I would have to have the specialists

at the hospital take a look at it, but that we had the best surgeons in America with us and I knew we could cure the lad. He agreed, and I hurried out with the boy and warned Bill Pitts and Pat Imes about the case. They went over him and said that they could do the work and that it would be successful. Of course, they said, we have no right in this hospital to do any elective surgery on troops and much less on civilians. But when I told them my plight about getting the ice cream paid for, they said to bring him on in and they would do the work.

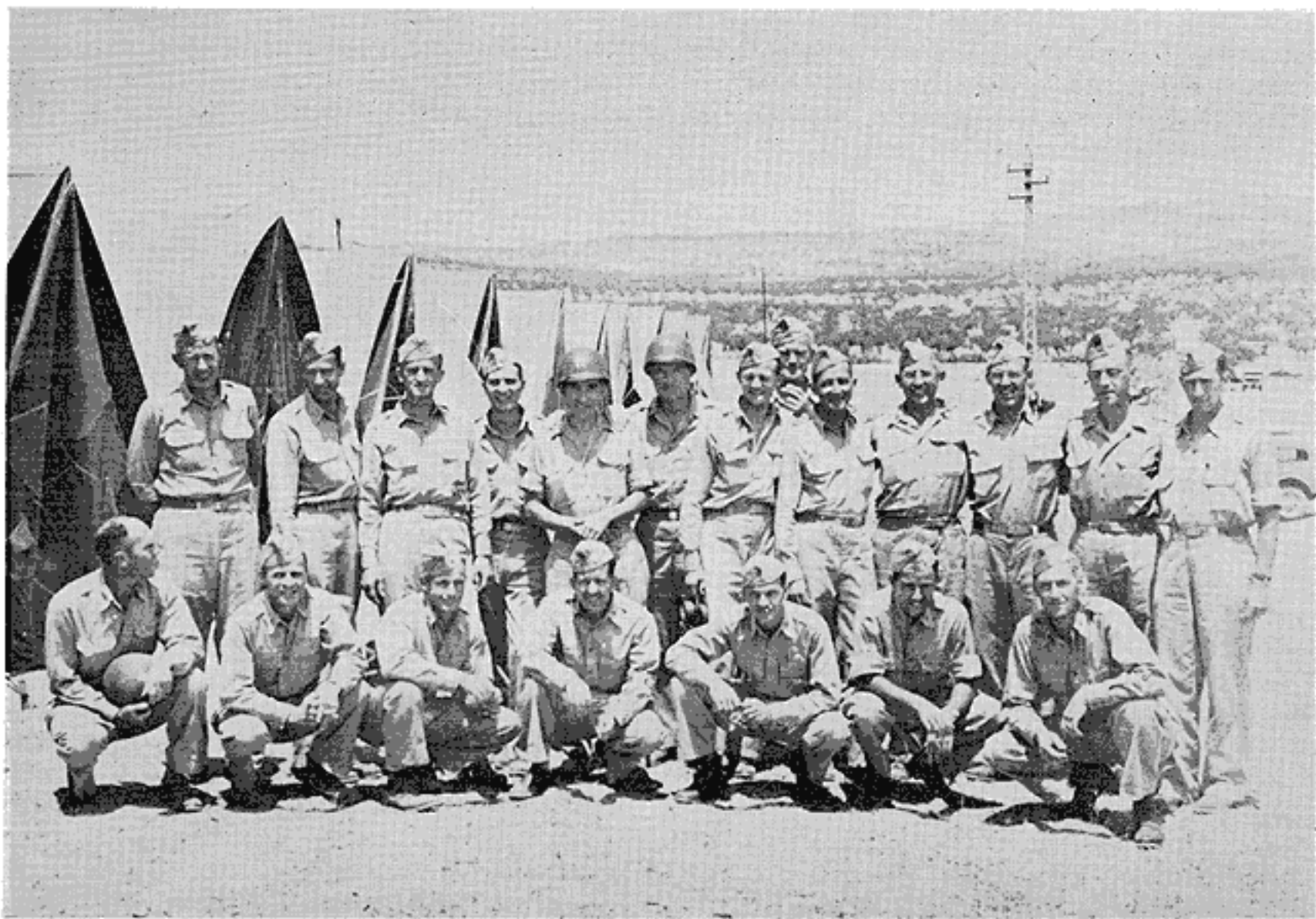
"Back I went to Papa and told him that we could fix his son up but that it was a very delicate operation and in the United States it was a very expensive one. The average cost for such surgery at home is about \$75, but since they had started out to beat me so badly, I thought I would get even. I told Papa that we would do the operation for him in exchange for eight freezings of ice cream for the hospital. One freezing would have cost us 2,250 francs or about \$45, so eight would amount to about \$350.

"The boy had to come for several treatments before the operation, so we have not yet fulfilled our part of the bargain, but the docs assure me it will be successful. In the meantime we have been getting ice cream once every week at no cost other than the ingredients. I am just waiting for the Air Corps to kick about my excessive borrowing, but so long as they are moving along so blithely, I am not going to worry and in the meantime we beat the heat partially."

On another day the mess officer found himself in a desperate attempt to procure for the nurses of the 38th a supply of as simple and ordinarily commonplace a commodity as sewing machine needles. He relates in the same letter that unmilitary though effective procedure:

"Another experience I had recently threw me with the local French. As you know, Tunisia is a protectorate, not a department of France. They are neutral and apparently don't care to have a war fought in their backyard. For this I can't blame them, but neither do I like to do my part of it this far from home. The war has created a shortage of many things in this section and then an abundance of others.

"One of the things they are apparently short of is sewing machine needles. We picked up a sewing machine back in Oran in the early days. The nurses use it in making operating room sheets and gowns and bandages, etc. They needed some needles or at least one needle. It was like looking for it in the proverbial haystack when we tried to get it away from the local French. Our first trip, of course, was to the local Singer agency. They are as numerous here as they are all over



This photograph of a group of officers was made during the encampment at Tunis, Tunisia, North Africa, from June 21, 1943, to the next September 3.

the world. Between Singer and Eastman, Standard Oil and Coca-Cola, it is hard to forget America wherever you may be on this globe.

"Singer said they had no needles; they hadn't had any for almost two years. They also said they had no machines and from what I could see in their shop, there was little reason for their being open for business. They did tell me where I might find some needles, down at the corner of Rue Es Sadikia and Avenue Jules Ferry. Down we went to a sort of woman's dress shop where there were more jabbering French women all talking at one time and looking daggers at a couple of American soldiers. That didn't bother me since my experience at Macy's in the millinery department. I did feel more comfortable when those without too many clothes on got behind the screens. I asked for needles and they said they had some which they would sell me, but first I must get the approval slip from the Comité du Textile which was over on the second floor of a building on Rue d'Algers. One lady, who spoke very good English, said there would be no difficulty,

but she had to have the slip before she could sell to me, a sort of coupon on needles, I guess. Over to the textile office I went and ran into another snag. There the only person who could understand my French or English was an Arab in a long white robe. He said before he could get the approval I wanted I had to go to the office of the Affaires de Ration and get their approval. It was hot and I was getting a little bit bored at this run-around, but I walked the eight or ten blocks to the building and broke into the first room I came to. While I waited for someone there to get me an interpreter, another one enjoyed one of my cigarettes. They enjoy our cigarettes and take them quickly when offered.

"The interpreter came finally and after hearing my story about going to Singer and then on to the dress shop and then to the Comité Textile and then here, he finally said that they could not give me the approval I was determined to get, but that I would have to go and see the American Consul, whose office was back about where I had come from. By this time I was weary

of the whole affair and thought we could do without the darn needles or I would just go and take them away from the source and let the diplomatic department settle the whole thing after the war. I was tired of being shuttled around.

"The day had passed, so the next day I went to see the Consul. This time I went on the offensive and barged in to see Mr. Doolittle, our local representative. I told my story and when he began to think up some other hoops for me to jump thru, I just told him I was tired of running around and was just telling him that I was going to pick up the needles and not pay for them and it was up to him to settle the whole thing. If they wanted money for them, I was perfectly willing and able to pay, but I wasn't going to see any more government officials, French or American. Well, he said, if that was the way I felt about it, that made it simple. 'Go ahead and take the needles.' I went and took and paid and told madame, 'C'est la guerre.'"

Though at the time this letter was written, July 28, 1943, the men and women of the 38th knew of no plans for moving the base from Tunis, they seemed to sense an impending transfer of the hospital even from Africa.

"When I woke up almost a year ago headed up the cold Atlantic," Captain Pickens wrote in the concluding paragraph, "I had no idea that the majority of my first year on foreign soil would be spent in Africa. I have the feeling that more has been spent here than will be spent now. I don't anticipate any immediate change, but you never can tell. In spite of our feeling that it

would take too long to get organized, it still keeps grinding along and progress has been made. Benito's quitting has given us all encouragement that it will not take too long before this theatre will be cleared of the rats that have infested it. I am glad to hear Mr. Roosevelt say the leaders will be brought to trial and punished. I hope we don't begin to pussyfoot about this business and begin to feel sorry for those who caused this trouble, when things begin to go against them. It has not been pleasant to spend a year away from home and loved ones and there are too many gold stars appearing in the States. Someone must pay."

He expressed what was perhaps his fellow soldiers' opinions concerning the involvement of the United States on the ending of the war in the political affairs of that part of the world:

"I feel that we should keep our hand in what goes on in this section of the world. These Arabs should be given a chance to go to school and own land and have some medical attention. With all of our poor treatment of the Negroes in our section, they have at least had these few opportunities. They have not been slaves for a good many years and when they were it was open and above board. While we are going about the world liberating people we can do a little job thru this section. It won't be hard and it can be done. But," he hastened to add, "I must not get involved in these subjects. In the Army we are not supposed to think and certainly not supposed to speak our minds. Someone might say I sound like Billy Mitchell."

## 15

Within less than two weeks after Colonel White assumed temporary command of the 38th Evacuation Hospital and three weeks before the unit would be moved from its base at Tunis to follow the fighting front into Italy, the unit would receive further national recognition.

*Time* Magazine of August 9, 1943, in the leading article in its section devoted to medicine, would give a full-page discussion to what it titled *The Charlotte Evac*, and would illustrate the article with a two-column Associated Press photograph captioned *Charlotte Evac in Algeria*.

It happened that *Time's* correspondent in North

Africa at that time was a young man named John Hersey. He would become famous both as a correspondent and an author. In fact, he had already published two best-selling volumes relating to the war in the Pacific, *Men on Bataan* and *Into the Valley*. Mr. Hersey had married a Charlotte girl, Frances Ann Cannon, and when his exhaustive schedule would permit it, he and his family would return to Charlotte for a visit.

"The term evacuation hospital may have a sound unpleasantly antiseptic to civilians," the *Time* report began. "To the badly wounded soldier it sounds like the difference between life and death. For the 'evac'