

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."

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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'

hospital is the nearest place to gunfire where a wounded man can get more than emergency treatment. Until he gets there, a soldier keeps his boots on.

"Waiting last week on the African mainland to put the sick and wounded from Sicily to bed was the Charlotte, N. C., Evacuation Hospital, an all-tent, mobile affair, with over 1,000 cots and a big staff of doctors, nurses and enlisted men. Correspondent Ernie Pyle has told how this evac took in patients twelve hours after the U.S. landing near Algiers last November."

*Time* goes on to reveal the story of the 38th:

"*It's Different.* With over 9,000 patients and only 19 deaths behind it, the Charlotte Evac now has the honor of handling casualties from Sicily and routing them to other evacs or to station hospitals in the rear. Most such medical units are volunteer doctor groups backed by rich, big-city hospitals. This evac is different: its medical staff is composed of young doctors from Charlotte, N. C., and a sprinkling of other doctors, mainly Southerners. As Charlotte has no rich hospital, initial support for the unit came from the proceeds of a local show and from contributions around town."

The article says of the conception of the unit:

"The idea got started when blunt, handsome, 38-year-old Surgeon Paul Sanger confided to General Marshall at a cocktail party in 1940 that the Charlotte doctors wanted to form an Army unit. The unit was authorized in December, went on active duty at Fort Bragg in March, 1942, left for England Aug. 6, scrambled ashore in Africa Nov. 7, and was fully set up about ten miles from Oran a few days later. At Oran, the unit handled 2,027 patients."

It continues with other one-line descriptions of some of the officers in the 38th:

"Besides Surgeon Sanger, now a lieutenant colonel, there is medium-sized thin Lieut. Colonel Thomas Preston White, who heads the medical staff, Lieut. Colonel George T. Wood, executive officer, Dentist Vaiden Kendrick, Charlotte's ace tooth puller (there was a rush of dental procrastinators to his chair when he announced he was leaving Charlotte). Charlotte also contributed several other doctors, two business managers—Captain Stanton Pickens, who used to work for the Coca-Cola Co., and 'Buck' Medearis, manager of a laundry—and many of the nurses. Once when the Evac was stuck in a siding waiting to move nearer the front, the engineer of a train going the other way called: 'Anyone from Charlotte, N. C.?' The answering chorus nearly knocked him from his cab."

The *Time* account continues with mention of the commanding officer who had been transferred after the article was written:

"Though not from Charlotte, the commanding officer

is one of the Evac's favorite characters: he is a non-medical Army man, Colonel Rollin L. Bauchspies of Nauch Chunk, Pa., who calls the hospitals venereal disease section 'Casanova.' The enlisted men of the unit are mostly New Englanders. They come in for a lot of Mason-Dixon Line ribbing.

"During the Mateur and Bizerte battles the Charlotte Evac was just behind the lines," the *Time* account continues. "The unit got so good at moving that in the final North African push it discharged patients in Beja and received some in Tunis (some 55 miles apart) on the same day."

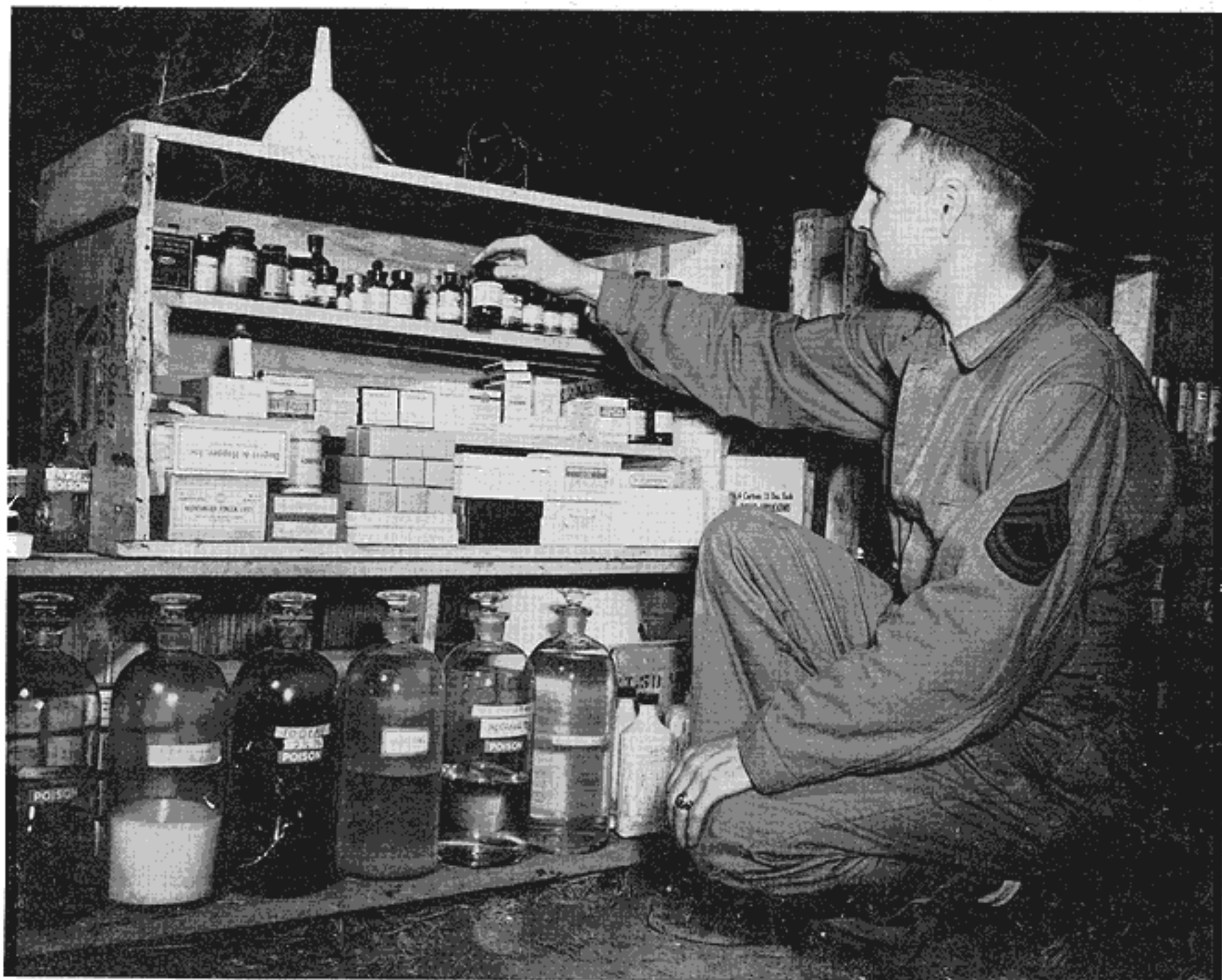
The *Time* correspondent pictures the hospital in its Tunis location:

"Compared with those dynamic days, the tent hospital on its broad hill with gravel driveways now has a settled look. Italian prisoners have installed running water and some of the other comforts of home. The pharmacy hands out prescriptions and runs a blood bank (plasma is not enough for some cases with great blood loss, and Evac stores whole blood bled from its own personnel). The shock tents give transfusions, prepare men for operations; the operating tent can handle 16 cases an hour around the clock. The dentistry tent with only three chairs was for a long time the only place in North Africa where U.S. servicemen could get false teeth.

"As usual in war, there is much improvised equipment: sterilizers made from potato cans, shower baths made from gasoline drums, hinges from shell cases, an icebox from a Coca-Cola vending machine, can openers from any old thing (though 90 per cent of field rations come in cans, the hospital set out without a single can opener). The Evac's most elaborate contrivance is a 'Hawley' table, a device for holding a man's body suspended for the application of big casts, which some men from the Air Corps Ordnance Department made from spare parts."

The time reporter was impressed by the impartial treatment given the sick and wounded even though they may be of the enemy forces. He writes:

"Sicilian casualties (both Allied and Axis) are picked up by the U.S. Army Medical Corps in Sicily, get first aid, are then flown over the water in an air ambulance to a field near the Evac. A ground ambulance picks them up and deposits them at the hospital's receiving tent. There a casualty is treated much like a patient entering a ward at home. His field medical record is begun with entries describing his wound and how he got it—these entries are copied from the tag attached to his coverall. The record, stamped with the man's 'dog tag' and put in an envelope, goes with the patient until his hospital discharge, even if he goes to the United States to convalesce."



Pharmacist's aide Richard B. Robinson at St. Cloud selecting medicine from the improvised pharmacy constructed of wooden packing cases.

He goes on with his description of the hospital's routine:

"Patients are assigned to wards according to their injuries; there are orthopedic wards, head and spine wards, malaria, abdominal wound and dysentery wards. At his ward a patient is undressed, put in pajamas. His clothes, except for his shoes, helmet and gas mask, are stored away in a labeled bag. After that, he is X-rayed to find whatever metal he is carrying inside him, or the extent of his hurt. Then he is given what dressing and surgery he needs. As soon as a patient's condition warrants moving, he is sent to a hospital farther to the rear."

The *Time* account closes with a description of the photograph illustrating the article:

"The Charlotte Evac is a desperately efficient place these days, but its personnel still finds time for a little fun. Right now on the ground outside the surgical tent

are two neat patches outlined in white pebbles and decorated with a heart-and-arrows design that says: 'Lieut. Perryman, Miss Guyett. Ward 28.'"

Seven weeks after John Hersey's article appeared in *Time*, Mr. Hersey came to Charlotte with his wife and two children for a short vacation before returning to his duties in New York. On Sunday morning, September 26, the *Charlotte Observer* carried an interview with the *Time* correspondent in which he related further details of his visit to the 38th in Africa. By that time, although he did not know it, the hospital had moved from North Africa to its location at Paestum in Italy.

"The best meal John Hersey had in Africa was the one he stumbled into one day when he came upon Charlotte's 38th Evacuation unit while searching along a back road in Tunis for a certain bombardment group," the lead paragraph in the *Observer* interview reported.

"Those fellows from Charlotte were doing all right,"

said Mr. Hersey yesterday," the article continued. "They were eating well. In fact—he grinned—"I went back to see them several times. They had their bivouac all fixed up, too. They got some Italian prisoners over there and put in running water, and had even rigged themselves up a shower bath. If there is any such a thing as having a civilized war, they were having it then."

After an explanatory paragraph revealing Mr. Hersey's recent return from the African assignment for *Time*, the interview continued:

"The Charlotte unit, he thought, has likely moved up into Italy somewhere in the Naples area. He didn't know positively where it was. He knew quite a number of the Charlotte men before he ran into them that day in Africa and he was delighted to see them again, he said. 'We were out rambling along on a back road up in Tunis trying to find a bombardment group when

I saw a sign on the side of the road, '38th Evacuation.' So I decided right then I didn't want to look for that bombardment group and I went down the road until I came upon the Charlotte crowd. We really had a good meal, too. They were looking fine, had the place all fixed up, and were living about as civilized a life as anybody I saw over there. I knew a bunch of them already and I met a lot of others. There were Paul Sanger, Buck Medearis, Stan Pickens, George Snyder, Stokes Munroe, Duncan Calder, Pres White and a lot of other fellows.'

"He even had some Coca-Colas with the Charlotte crowd, he said. You see American bottled drinks frequently. 'They even made Coca-Colas over there,' he said. 'But none of that for me. The syrup is real, all right, but they mix it with some sort of Algerian fizz-water that has lost its fizz. Well, it's worse than flat.'"

## 16

Three weeks after Colonel Bauchspies was transferred from the 38th, his adjutant, Captain A. J. Guenther, was transferred to another unit. His last signature on the Daily Bulletin was on August 20. That same day Captain Montgomery confided to his diary:

Capt. Guenther left today. Now all regular Army is out. We should have a good unit.

Four days later, August 24th, Captain Montgomery recorded:

The hospital closed officially at noon today. Packing has started.

It was on a Tuesday that the 38th closed its operation at Tunis. The Daily Bulletin for the following Saturday, August 28, announced:

By Special Order 166, Commanding General, Eastern Base Section, under the provisions of Circular No. 116, NATOUSA, the announcement is made of the appointment of Lt. Colonel George T. Wood, Jr., as Commanding Officer of the 38th Evacuation Hospital, effective 18 August 1943.

The next day, Sunday, one month and one day after he had written his last letter home, Captain Pickens wrote of the dullness of existence as the 38th's members awaited transfer to their next location:

"Our life has been so dull during the last few

weeks," said he, "that there has been no inspiration for writing. Our hospital is closed and we await orders. We have been busy for awhile but now it has slowed down. We take time to get to the beach for a swim but seldom go into town. We have 'done' the town and have no reason for going in. We get used to staying in our tents and with our own crowd and it is hard to stir away. We have limited transportation and altho it is about a mile into the center of the city, we don't feel like walking. Calisthenics have started again in the morning and the extra exercise, plus the occasional trip to the beach, makes the cot feel mighty good when the day is finished. We are getting back into shape for some of the hardships that are sure to be ahead. The war news has been good these last few weeks and I fear we are prone to be too optimistic. The really rough sledding is before us. Our landing in Africa was hazardous enough, but I fear it was mild compared to what we may expect. The landing in Sicily was accomplished with small loss, but the coordination was almost perfect. I hope it continues."

A few days before he wrote that letter, Captain Pickens revealed, he and Colonel White had occasion to go down to Constantine on a mission for the hospital. His report of the trip reveals the difficulty at that time of obtaining seats on airplanes even when the missions