

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:

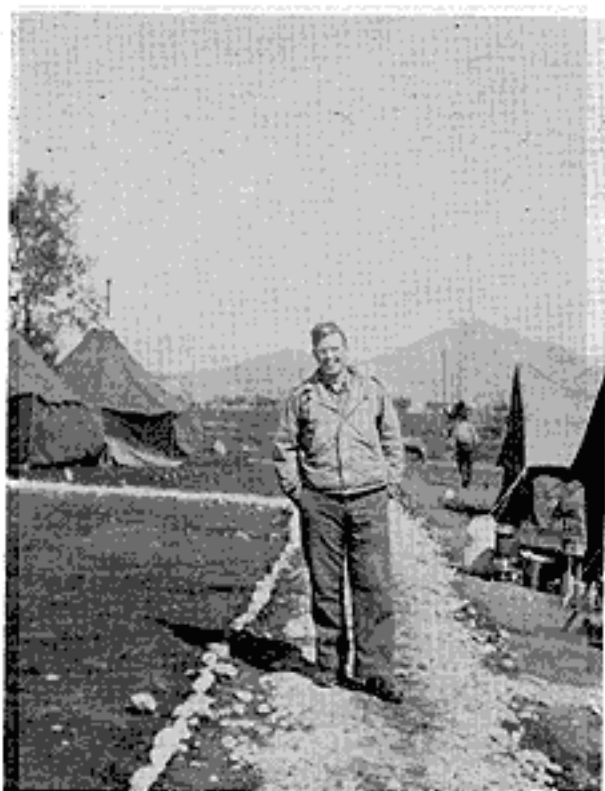
By Special Order 166, Commanding General, Eastern Base Section, under the provisions of Circular No. 116, NATOUSA, the announcement is made of the appointment of Lt. Colonel George T. Wood, Jr., as Commanding Officer of the 38th Evacuation Hospital, effective 18 August 1943.

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



During one of the pauses between pulling or drilling teeth, Milo Hoffman catches some sunshine.

were on official Army assignments. He tells of that particular incident:

"It developed rather suddenly for me, although he had been planning it for some time. I appreciate his thinking of having me join him, since I had a pleasant experience. We arose early the other morning and had a driver take us to the nearest airport. There we made application for a seat to Telergma, the nearest airport to Constantine. We had some argument with the lieutenant in charge about the proper priority. Even here and in the Army you have to have a priority. We ended up with a No. 2, which we thought was very poor. At the time we received it the lieutenant said that the 8:30 plane had been cancelled and that our seats were on the 12:40 plane. A seat on one of these courier planes consists of a small space on a long aluminum bench that runs along the side of the plane. You squeeze in there among the mail bags and any important freight that must go thru. We were sorely disappointed in the delay and asked if there was a chance of getting other rides. The lieutenant said we might go to the neighboring field and see if the British had anything going down.

"Over we went and we had no luck, but there they said they would call Foch Field on the other side of the city and see if there were any freight planes going thru. The reply came back that they had four planes there waiting to get out and if we would hurry we might catch one. We drove thru the city like mad in the rattling jeep and got into the office of the other port in time. They booked us and said to go out and get into the second plane on the right. We checked and

asked to be sure if that plane was going to Telergma. Then the sergeant said no, the planes were all going to Palermo and that was what he had thought we had wanted when the telephone call came thru from the other field.

"So we were stymied again. I told the Colonel if he had no particular objection we might go on to Palermo, since it had been recommended so highly by my mother-in-law and since the enemy was no longer there. Of course, he said, we would have to get to Constantine. Then the thought hit us that possibly the photographing group might have a plane going in that direction, so over to that field we went. No, they said, the only plane they had going out was to take a general to Sicily and he wanted no company. We went back to the original field to wait for the midday courier. While standing around and watching the incoming and outgoing planes and hearing the conversation of the passengers, in came a general from London. He went to the nearest telephone and tried to call another general. He had been used to the conveniences of England and was slightly irritated with the poor communications in Africa. I overheard his trying to locate his associate and knew he was the one who was leaving for Sicily, so I walked up, and in my best military manner told him where he might find the general."

While the general was putting through this call, he talked with Captain Pickens, and the Charlotte officer learned that the general had met his brother Bob in London. After awhile their plane came in and he and Colonel White took off for the airfield near Constantine, where they arrived in about two hours. From the field they were provided transportation into Constantine.

"From the city proper we went out to a general hospital where Colonel White attended to his work and where we spent the night. The hospital is staffed by people from the University of Minnesota. They were very cordial and kind to us. We enjoyed the visit. The following afternoon we started back to our station. The priority No. 2 we thought was so poor turned out to be the highest one issued except by Mr. Roosevelt or Mr. Churchill or General Eisenhower. However, it did not get us on the last courier headed for the east by just a minute. We had to take a B-26 that was going east a few minutes later. Everyone says a B-26 is not safe and we boarded this one with plenty of misgivings. But, I must say, we made our trip back in one hour and with as comfortable a takeoff and landing as you could ask. We moved along at 10,000 feet and listened to the London radio thru the earphones used by the radio-navigator. The whole trip was most pleasant."

The 38th's Daily Bulletin of August 30, 1943, carried two congratulatory messages. The first was from the

President of the United States, the second from King George VI of England.

President Roosevelt's declared:

"All of us are thrilled over the Sicilian campaign now successfully concluded in accordance with the timing and planning of the Allies. This is especially true when we realize that the enemy forces in Sicily amounted to 405,000 men. The events of the past thirty-eight days show what can be done by teamwork based on preparation, training, timing, and above all on gallantry on land, on sea, and in the air. From the ancient Citadel of Quebec I send to you my warm congratulations, and to the officers and men under your command, British, Canadian, French and American, my thanks and enthusiastic approbation. Tell them 'well done.'"

King George's message to the Allied Forces was substantially the same:

"On the final accomplishment of the occupation of Sicily, I wish to send to you and to all members of the forces that you command with such distinction my heartfelt congratulations on a great achievement. Throughout the British Empire, we have watched with admiration the ordered progress of the campaign by sea, by land, and by air, and we rejoice at its successful conclusion. I should be grateful if you would convey to my British and Canadian troops a special assurance of my pride in their share in this victory."

That same day, August 30, 1943, General Clark wrote to Colonel Bauchspies, who two days before had been officially succeeded by Colonel Wood as commanding officer of the 38th, to express his satisfaction at the unit's having been assigned to the Fifth Army. The letter, marked RESTRICTED at that time, would remain in the records of the unit:

General Clark wrote:

"My dear Colonel Bauchspies:

"I want you and the personnel of your command to know that I am proud to have your organization assigned to the Fifth Army. In addition to the many U.S. organizations which belong to us, we are fortunate in also having British and French troops as a part of the Fifth Army. All of these Allied organizations will enter combat as an Army team, with but one thought in mind—the complete destruction of our despised enemy who for years has attempted to deprive us and our loved ones at home of the liberties and principles of freedom for which our country has always stood.

"I want you to explain personally to your men the necessity for being well disciplined and thoroughly trained, in order that they will outfight the German soldier who for years has been trained and disciplined for battle.

"Great opportunities lie ahead of our Fifth Army,

opportunities which will lead to the complete liberation of Europe from its present rule of tyranny. It is a great privilege that we of the Fifth Army can be associated with such an enterprise. If your organization is alert, determined, disciplined and trained in the manner in which you are capable of being, we can and will defeat the enemy on the field of battle. It is absolutely essential that your organization do its part to win this victory.

"I am confident that the Fifth Army will be faithful to the American soldiers of the past and to the United States of America, whose glorious existence and development it is our privilege and duty to guarantee. With each man doing his duty to the exclusion of every other consideration, we shall be worthy of our trust. Our cause is a righteous one, and God will direct us in our undertaking.

"It is my desire that the contents of this letter be brought to the attention of every member of your command.

"Sincerely,

"Mark W. Clark,

Lieutenant General, USA,
Commanding"

On September 1, two days after General Clark wrote this letter, the Daily Bulletin temporarily suspended publication. The next day Captain Montgomery wrote in his diary the longest entry he had written since his landing in Africa on November 9 the year before. He lavished thirteen lines to record:

At nine this morning all our personal tents were struck and packed. Personal luggage was ready. I am to take the advance detail and go on the first train. Suppose to have left at noon. The train was ready at five.

Were loaded by 10 PM. 16 cars of equipment, two (40 and 8) for men. Men preferred the open cars. Bob with me. We have our cots, mattresses, sheets, etc., and half a car. Very comfortable. Finelli, Solomato, Zeilinski are with us. Pulled out of Tunis 10:45 PM.

His entry the following day, September 3, was much shorter:

Awoke after a good night's sleep at Medjez-El-Bab. 30 miles from Tunis. Engine is broken. Replaced it & left at noon. Elias & Riegan were A.W.O.L but caught up tonight.

September 4 he wrote but three lines:

During night 4 cars with 11 men taken from train to reduce load. Expect to be joined at Krubes.

Two days later, on September 6, he was again reckless with his supply of green ink and wrote:

Yesterday at Devivier was left with 3 men getting water. Said we would be an hour there. Left five minutes later. While there the 4 cars came in. Men had no rations. Rode to Krubes with them where I drew rations. Our train had

gone. Last night I slept on a flat car. Was I filthy this morning. The engine broke this morning. Bummed a ride to Setif. Our train had gone. Continued on the truck for 100 miles. Met the train at Maillot. It was good to get back to my boxcar.

But they finally reached Oran. He wrote on September 7:

Arrived at Oran at 5:30 PM. At the staging area No. 1 near Fleurus at seven. In pyramidal tents.

His next day's recording was even briefer:

Sept. 8th. Went to Oran. Many changes since March. Italy surrendered today.

More than a score of years after it happened Dr. William Matthews recalled with keen delight their encountering their colleague, Jack Montgomery, that day in North Africa when he was attempting to hitch a ride after his train had left him stranded.

He tells the story with relish:

"The funniest thing that ever happened to us during the whole war, as I remember it now anyway, was Jack Montgomery's getting left and how he looked that day. We were taking the train from Tunis back to Oran so that we could be combat loaded. We came back in four or five groups, and I was in the last one breaking up camp. The truth of the matter is that we had a problem in breaking up the camp because of everything we had acquired in North Africa. For example, we had a generator that would light a town of 3,000 people. It was hard to get rid of it; you couldn't just leave it sitting out there in the field, and yet nobody wanted to sign for it. Or a water-purifying system that would take care of a town of 10,000; we weren't supposed to have had either one. We had picked up a lot of stuff for the hospital by the method of what we called moonlight requisition, like the way we sometimes ate.

"But, anyway, I was in the last group and with us was Bub Porter, I remember, and Bob Augustine. Bob wasn't a local fellow. He was an orthopedist, and a very good one. He happened to join our unit, I believe, because he had had a residency at Duke, maybe finished it here. But before he took medicine he had got a degree in engineering; for that reason he ended up being what you might call a planning officer. When we got into a new area, Bob would figure out the layout of the camp, tell where to set up the tents, that sort of thing.

"Well, this day we were ready to go, having got rid of our equipment in one way or another, and we were traveling in old 40-and-8 cars. We had fixed up our car for traveling in style. We had taken rugs and other things left from breaking camp, and we had two 55-gallon drums of water, and we bartered for eggs and

other stuff along the way; so we were getting on fine. But Augustine had got in bad with the French engineer of the train; the fellow had wanted to pull out before Bob was ready and they'd had quite a tiff about it. But we'd got the thing straightened out and were going along down the road, when we looked out and there stood a bald-headed fellow with nothing on but a pair of shorts and GI shoes and a little bit of a pot in the middle. The fellow was waving desperately and shouting. We saw it was Jack Montgomery. Later we learned that he had got off to get something, some water I believe he said, or maybe boiled eggs.

"And speaking of boiled eggs," Dr. Matthews continues his recital of that North African experience, "I remember we had four Jewish boys on our train. They were good boys, and good traders. I recall we had some enlisted men, sixteen, I think, riding the cars to keep the Arabs from stealing from us. Of course, the Arabs got around this by stealing from the opposite sides of the cars from the sides on which the enlisted men happened to be sitting. It was always a job trying to protect things.

"This day while the train was stopped for a few minutes a man came up to the side of the train, an Arab, with a tremendously big woven basket of fresh eggs. He said they were fresh anyway, and they appeared to be edible. Well, one of these enlisted fellows, one of the four Jewish boys who prided themselves on being such sharp traders, looked at the basket of eggs and began trying to trade with the Arab. Our boy wanted to barter candy for the eggs. It was one of the big five-pound cans that we had been issued, but they had doctored it. They had taken out the candy, put some rocks and papers in the bottom to make the weight right, and then they'd covered this with about two layers of the candy.

"It was always the practice of our boys in bartering with the Arabs to haggle until just the last moment before the train got moving. So this day our fellow argued and haggled, though he was willing from the start to make the swap of candy for the eggs, until the train began moving. In fact, the Arab was running along the track by the time they agreed to trade. Our boy handed down the can of candy covered rocks and pulled the basket in the window, and with visions of all the good boiled eggs he and his buddies were going to have and delighted that he had worked such a clever trick on the Arab, he set the basket of eggs on the seat beside him and began to check on the bargain he'd made.

"Well, it didn't take him long to count his eggs. Two layers down he came to papers and under the papers neatly arranged a peek or so of North African rocks!"

During this period of Captain Montgomery's entries recording the movement of the hospital from Tunis a

considerably more detailed account of the transfer was being written by Captain Pickens in the longest and the last letter he would write home from Africa. The letter, dated September 2-7, 1943, gives the most complete available account recorded by any of the members of the 38th during this first week in September of 1943, one of the more eventful periods of the unit's action-crowded existence.

From North Africa he began writing:

"We leave our old station with a few things I would like to remember, things that might not interest you, but which will remain with me. Here are a few of them: the dust that covered everything in the tents; it sifted thru the clothes, it spread over the food before we could eat; the sirocco with its deadening heat from the southern desert; the selling of odd things we had accumulated during the last few days we were there; the Arabs and Jews had charged us exorbitant prices for meals and souvenirs, so we had to get it back; we charged and received 200 francs (\$4) for a carton of stale cigarettes, 50 francs for wornout socks, old handkerchiefs brought 25 francs, underclothes that would stand very little strain brought as high as 100 francs; the comfort of having ice almost every day; the trips to the beaches with the sand cutting us on a windy day; trips into the Arabic section to trade and shop and visit; ice cream; the excitement when the Sicilian campaign started; the relief that came with the change in command; the buying of fresh vegetables, fruit, and melons (we never did find any corn); the neighboring Jews doing our laundry at high prices if we furnished the soap, and I am sure that over half of the soap is still there; the hiring of civilians for the first time to work in the hospitals; we tried a group that had been bombed out of their homes but they were very unsatisfactory as workers and carried off too many supplies; the Arabs that came into the hospital as patients when they had inadvertently stepped on a hidden mine; Mac Jackson's stop on his way back to Charlotte; John Hersey's and Raymond Clapper's visits to the hospital; the Arab boys selling the English newspaper the British published three times a week giving the news; the pleasant association with the Intelligence Group staying near us; the RAF descending on us to visit with the 'sisters'; watching the nearby air raids which lighted up the sky at night like a Fourth of July fireworks; the ground shaking with the big guns firing and the bombs dropping; the many visitors (we were at the crossroads and everyone stopped for the night, all ranks); the orderly packing and departure."

He went on to describe the unit's movement from the Tunis area:

"On the French trains operated by British transportation officers we spent five days to cover some



Drs. Calder, left, and Pennington pose during a moment's relaxing.

eight or nine hundred miles, an average of less than 200 miles per 24 hours. It was slow going, but we had learned from previous experience how to prepare for it and what to do. We had a kitchen car which allowed us two hot meals per day during the travel. The men used the 40 and 8's, the officers had compartment cars with wooden seats, the women had cushioned seats in their compartments. In my compartment I took the floor with my air mattress and spare blanket and slept quite comfortably. At the many stops we had to make we traded with the Arabs for melons, eggs, and ice. At one stop we were able to get a shower of good cold water. That always helps on a long trip, and more so when your car is attached too close to the locomotive. A part of the trip was covered with good American engineers operating the engine. It was a relief when we found them on the front, since we could make arrangements for the eating and know when to expect to pull out. When the French ran the train there was no telling when they would take off."

One of the "good American engineers" to whom Captain Pickens referred was a fellow Charlottean, the 38th group on that train happily discovered. He was Luther C. Clanton of the 761st Railway Transportation Company, Military Railway Service. Engineer Clanton, now retired and living in Charlotte, recalls well the assignment:

"We picked them up at St. Barbe about five miles from Oran. I had brought the engine out from Oran. There must have been about a dozen or so coaches in the Charlotte party. I remember when I got there I started back through the coaches. 'Anybody here from Charlotte, North Carolina?' I yelled out.

"'Everybody here's from Charlotte!' they hollered back. Pretty soon I was talking to the crowd and asking



Lieutenants Christine Wills, left, and Mary Blandford model the service coveralls that the hard working 38th nurses wore most of the time overseas.



Lieutenant Elva Wells, right, and Beth Killeen stand in front of the hospital's Receiving sign.



The X-ray service officers, Tyson, left, and Colin Munroe, chief and assistant chief, are dressed and shined and ready for a short rest leave.

about news from home. I surely was glad to run into that bunch. I remember Dr. Preston White introduced me to a fellow named Ernie Pyle.

"Ernie, you're one of these newspaper correspondents, aren't you?" I remember I asked him. Dr. White told me he had met Pyle at a hotel in Oran and while they were there, Dr. White said, Ernie helped him unstop the toilet in his bathroom. It's funny the things you remember after all these years."

The locomotive with which he shuttled troops and supplies from Oran to Algiers was a big one, he remembers. "It had sixteen wheels, and we burned briquettes compressed with creosote to provide the steam. We had two engine crews; one slept while the other was on duty, with three in the cab, the engineer and fireman, and a conductor. The Charlotte crowd was on a siding when we met them, as I recall. We pulled out late in the afternoon, went all night and about all the next day. We had no headlights, because of air raids, and had to feel our way—through tunnels, over bridges—not knowing just what was ahead. But we made it all right, though we had an air raid right after we got to Algiers."

Captain Pickens continues his account of this trip toward the embarkation port:

His account of the trip toward the embarkation port continued:

"Some of our group had traveled back in our own trucks. One officer had flown back a few days ahead of us. He was the lucky one of the crowd. He was Captain Medearis, and it took all of his persuasive powers to keep our allies from unloading the train about 20

miles from our destination in the middle of the night. He finally persuaded them that it would save truck wear and gasoline and since the train had to pull into the city anyway, why not let the personnel go in. That allowed us to get off of the train at a reasonable hour in the morning instead of 3 A.M. as they had planned. We were whisked out to our area about seven miles from the city. The nurses were sent to another area where all the females are kept, including the first contingent of WACs that are filing into Africa. Our area was a most temporary setup. We knew we had only a short stay there and the Army knew the same thing, so we both did little to add to the comfort of the place. The only thing the Army provided was a lot of pyramidal tents. We put in our own bedding and fortunately had our own kitchen with us. It was rough, but fair enough for a short stay. The wind blew and the dust sifted in. Everything was grimy until the last day we were there and then the rains came and great rivulets ran thru our tents and on down the hill. It settled the dust and also some of our enthusiasm."

Captain Pickens reveals opportunities they had for relaxation as they awaited embarkation:

"During our stay back near our original landing spot in Africa we had time to get into the city. There the Army had provided a comfortable officers' club with a snack bar with sandwiches and a drink bar and comfortable lounge chairs. The radio gave us the news on the hour, always from London. In the afternoon an orchestra played and there was dancing if there were any females. Some of the nurses came and a few of the WAC officers, but they were outnumbered 100 to 1.

There was a setup for showers, too. In another section of the city the Red Cross had set up a community spot for officers also. It was the first time that I had seen anything done for officers since I had been in the Army. Of course, all of this was done considerably back and away from any field work or any fighting. It was pleasant to get in town and get a bath, get some of that dust off and sit in comfortable chairs and read or listen to the radio and visit with the numerous officers that we knew and had not seen for some time. It was at the Officers' Club that I saw most of the Emory unit and visited with them. They were staying not far from us and had been in Africa for only a few days. They had about the same facilities, which amounted to nothing except a tent over their heads. It was a bit of a shock to them not to have all the comforts of home that can be found around most any Army camp in the United States. They were taking it in good graces but they did not like it. There was nothing they could do about it, however. We renewed our acquaintance with some French people we had known back last winter and some of us had a meal with them one evening. They all promised to come and see us in the States after the war, so you had better prepare for foreign visitors in droves when this mess is over."

Finally the day arrived for them to embark. He reviews the details of boarding ship:

"When the day came for us to board our transport, the rains came. We moved down to the docks in the long convoy and edged up right alongside the big ship which was to be our next home. Our equipment had been placed on a freighter except that housekeeping equipment that we always carry with us. Just as we were getting ready to board the ship, whistles blew and bells clanged and the gangplank was hoisted and the ship pulled out. I never thought a large ocean-going liner could move away from a pier so rapidly. In ten minutes it was almost out of sight and there we stood in the rain.

"I thought, well, this is the first time I had missed the boat. I have heard that expression all my life, but this was the first time it had ever happened to me. In spite of the rain and the drenched clothes, we all had to laugh at our predicament. We knew the nurses were on board and two of our officers, Lt. Col. White and Sanger. We all said, 'All right, we didn't want to go and fight a war anyway.' Let the blooming ship go wherever it wanted to go.

"It was not long before we learned that the ship had just pulled out to another part of the harbor and we could board it from another section of the city with the aid of barges. It had turned dark by this time and I was in a truck with my kitchen equipment and there is one thing you will learn in the Army, and that is, if

you don't look after your own equipment, no one else will, so I was all set to stay with my stuff until it was loaded on that ship. The personnel got off on the personnel barges and disappeared in the rain. Buck and Augustine and Jimmy Dunn and I stayed behind to see that all the personal baggage got aboard. We finally located some barges and about midnight had all of our equipment loaded. Then the problem came up as to how to get the barges moved out to the big ship.

"I went to the Navy and asked their aid. They in turn gave me the French port authorities and they said they could not move us until after their workmen had had their midnight meal. That meant waiting until after one A.M. After I reported back to the crew we all thought that possibly we could find something to eat, too. I realized that I had not eaten anything since lunch and that was only a cold can of the famous 'C' rations, consisting of meat and vegetable stew with some crackers and some lemonade. Some Negro troops were having 'chow' down the wharf from us. We sent the men down to see what they could get. They found some very poor coffee and some applesauce. It tasted good in the rain.

"When I went back to the Navy down the row of docks, they were having a midnight snack and after I stood on one foot and then on the other for about ten minutes, one of their number offered me a cheese sandwich and a cup of coffee. Modestly I accepted it and nearly choked getting it down, I was so hungry and wet and cold.

"They called the French and they said they were ready to move us, but that they had no tugs available and would not have any for two hours. They were going to be busy getting some gasoline loaded on another ship. I felt like giving up and yet I knew it would not be safe to leave those two barges loaded with suitcases and bedding rolls and 'A' bags for the men sitting out there in that harbor. I pleaded with the Navy but they said they couldn't do anything for us. Finally a young corporal came in and overheard my plight. When I had given up and was prepared to spend the night on that barge in the rain and had started out of the Navy office, the corporal spoke up and said he knew how to run a barge; he was from New Orleans, and if we could find one he would see that we got our stuff to the ship. Out we went together to find a tug. We found one down the harbor all steamed up with the French still enjoying the midnight meal somewhere else. The Arab crew of two was aboard, so we just took it and started to move our stuff. The corporal knew how to maneuver a tug and it was not long before we were alongside the big ship.

"There, we could get no one to answer our calls.

Finally, the corporal cut loose on his whistle and then the English sailors began to stick their heads out of portholes. We got the gangplanks lowered and fastened the barges alongside and went aboard. I sent the crew of our men who had loaded the barges on to bed and decided to let the rest of the crew take over in the morning. Bob Miller had been along with us, too, and had been responsible for seeing that a lot of the equipment got on board. Buck and Jimmy had disappeared during the night around midnight, so it was Bob, Augustine and I that had the load. We found our quarters and fell into our bunks at a little after 3 A.M.

"The next morning the commanding officer sent word to us that we need not worry about the loading, that others would take over and see that everything was put on board. That was a relief. It had been a trying night and the rain had just kept coming down. It was not long before the big ship pulled up its two anchors and we were moving along the coast of Africa. For some time to come we had done our last walking on African soil. It was with a bit of relief that we watched it slip by us. We were tired of the dust and the rain and the mud. It was comfortable to stand on a ship where things were fairly clean and look at the blue water beneath and watch the coast slip along. What the future held was anyone's guess, but so far as Africa was concerned, we had done our duty and done it well. Charlotte's hospital had done a good job."

They had been on African soil ten months almost to the day, months filled with experiences none would ever forget. But Captain Pickens' letter continues with his description of the Mediterranean crossing:

"We picked up the rest of our convoy and left Africa behind and immediately began to see the islands of the Mediterranean. We guessed as to their names but didn't worry too much about it. There were eighteen officers in the large, or rather enlarged, stateroom where I was quartered. Fortunately none of them snored too loudly. We made the best of the crowded situation and, I think, lived together in good harmony. The water was turned on twice a day, in the morning from 6 to 6:30 and in the afternoon from 4 to 4:30. In the morning the early risers filled all available containers, including canteens and helmets. This allowed us to wash and shave in shifts at the two available basins. Across the hall the large bathtubs had plenty of hot and cold salt water for washing, but it was necessary to have a little fresh water to get the salt water off. It was good just to relax in those big tubs and soak. It had been so long since we had had a chance to do that."

He tells of the diversions aboard ship:

"In the lounge of the ship there was always a rummy game or a bridge game going on. Rummy took the

place of chess on this move. At night it was crowded and the smoke was thick, since the blackout was strictly enforced. One night we had some entertainment put on by some of the personnel on board. There was a cry for the 38th and their glee club, but we had not practiced for some time, so we could not perform. During the day there were the usual boat drills and action stations. At boat drill you hurry to your appointed spot and wait. At action station you get off the deck and get under cover.

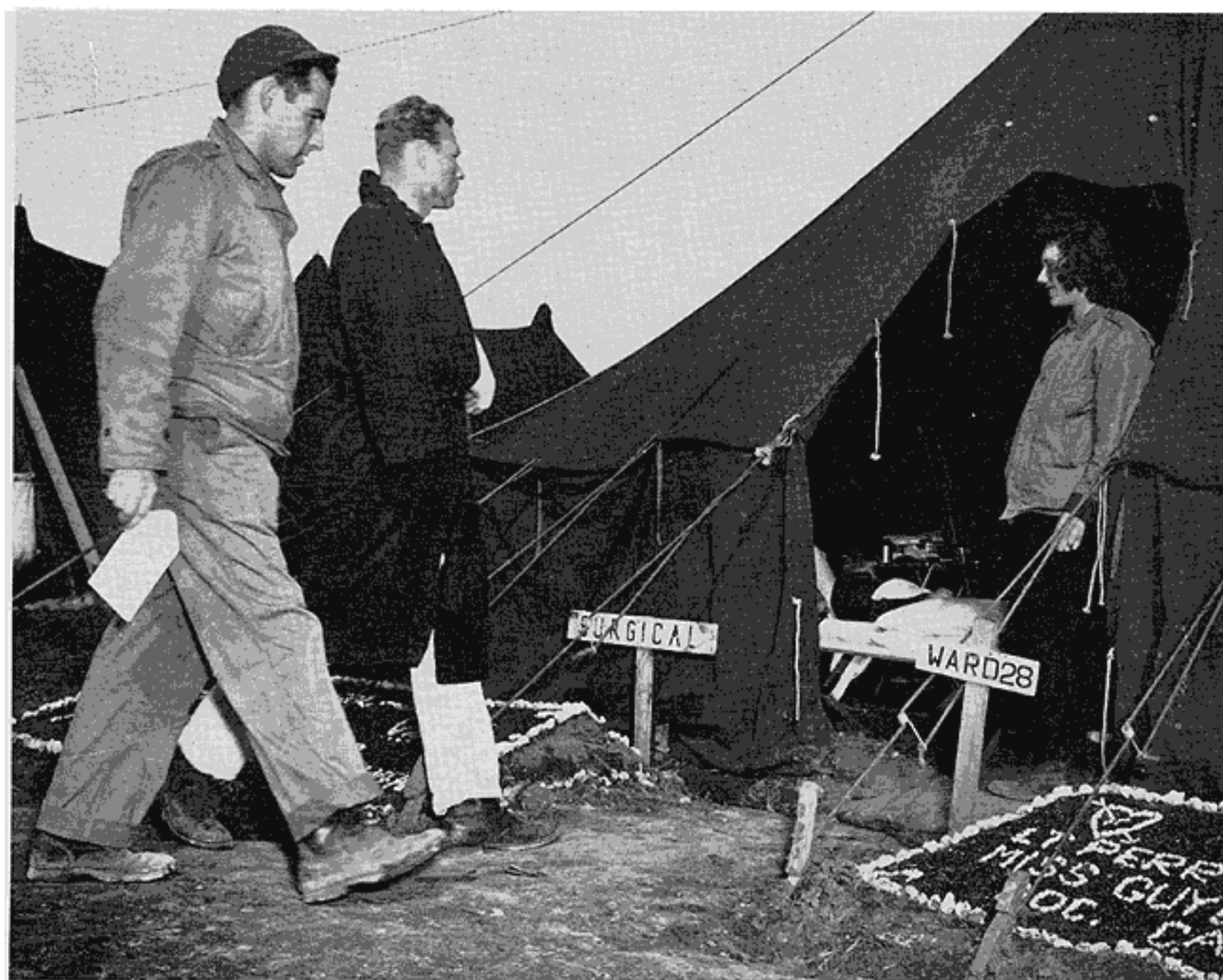
"The crossing was uneventful. I am satisfied with that, I am not interested in running into enemy action. On occasions we have come too near for comfort. It gets awfully personal at times. A big balloon floated along on the tail of the ship with us. They are placed there to keep a plane from coming in low and strafing the ship. Occasionally the gun crews would check their guns and fire a few rounds. The big cannon on board would shake the ship when they fired, but it was comfortable to know they were there."

He describes next the arrival on the shores of Italy:

"The landing was also uneventful, but the steady pounding of the artillery up the coast, or to the north of us could be plainly heard. We landed on almost every type of craft. From the big ship we took off on what is called an L.C.I. (landing craft Infantry) and when we were as near the shore as that boat could take us we moved on to what is called a duck. A duck is a most ingenious concoction. It is a 2½-ton truck with boat sides and a propeller. It is steered in the water with the steering wheel by just turning the front wheels. When the duck gets up to the beach, the gear is shifted from propeller to wheel drive and it takes off on the land like any truck. The wheels can be used in about five feet of water. We dashed along in the surf and then smoothly eased up on the shores of Italy. The only thing we did not ride or sail in was the amphibious jeep, but they were there and being put to good use."

He gives much credit for the smooth landing that day to the efficiency of the Engineers.

"One of our earlier instructors back at Bragg once said that 'the product of the battle is confusion,' and a beach landing with a war not ten miles away can prove that. The Engineers had cleared a part of the beach of barbed wire and marked the safe route over which there were no mines. All manner of units were unloading at the same time and all were moving in different directions. Signal, infantry, anti-aircraft with their guns, artillery, tanks and anti-tanks, quartermaster, medical and even AMGOT (Allied Military Government of Occupied Territory) all were pouring into Italy. Everyone moved swiftly to get off the beaches; it was not healthy to get caught there. Inland



This is another picture posed in North Africa. The "wounded" soldier about to enter the surgical tent, perhaps to have his "wound" dressed, is Ian (Scotty) MacLean; the soldier wearing cap is Robert C. Stahl; the nurse is Lieutenant Edith Guyett.

the dust was thick and settled on everything and everybody. Jaundice would be pale compared to the color of our troops; even the Negroes took on a dust color."

Just at nightfall they found their bivouac area and began to bed down, Captain Pickens records. "I had carried my air mattress and a blanket and these, coupled with my rain coat and field jacket, kept me fairly comfortable for the night. We were in a clover field and it smelled sweet as we lay there looking up at the stars. It was not too cold. We had some food given us before we left the boat and the British had made some cheese sandwiches also. I lay there and munched on a sandwich and looked for the Big Dipper, the North Star, Job's Coffin and any of the other constellations that I could recognize.

"The artillery up the way was booming along with monotonous regularity and the flares lighted up the

sky from time to time. You could feel the ground beneath quiver when the big boys fired. The excitement of the day kept us from sleeping immediately and the Italian loam would reach up and press into your hips when you tried to relax on the side. I was on my back and eventually I dropped off to sleep with thoughts of home in my dreams."

With the coming of morning, they were up and firing their little rock-made, individual stoves to heat water for coffee. For that morning's breakfast, he relates, hot coffee and some biscuits, which were actually hard crackers, never tasted better. After breakfast the mess officer then had to begin a search for food and water for the whole unit the next day.

"The same old grind began to set in," he says. "We sat this way for two days until we could get our house-keeping equipment off the boat. We set up our pup

tents and began to get as comfortable as possible. Our hospital equipment did not get to us for several days, so we sat. About the fourth night a storm broke, the like of which I have never witnessed. The rains came and the winds blew. The wind blew with the ferocity of a whirlwind. It picked up pup tents like small scraps of paper. Some of them have never been seen since. I hung on to mine for a good two hours with the feeling that it was going to take off with the next blast. It seemed that the good Lord was determined that my tent should come down. It finally gave way but did not blow away as some did.

"The water just poured in. Everything I owned was soaked and I was not alone in my misery; nearly everyone had the same experience. Daylight the following morning was most welcomed. We were still able to laugh about it and no one was hurt and nothing of any great value was lost."

The day after the storm, with borrowed equipment,

they set up the hospital and began work. The first day they had about 250 patients and by noon of the following day the patient list had grown to more than 800. "That was a real mushroom growth," he observes, "and if you don't think that taking care of a small community of a thousand with food and water and hospital treatment is a job, you are wrong. But that is what we came for and that is what we did. The mud was reminiscent of last winter in Africa, but we waded thru with little thought of the discomfort. We were busy."

Hardly had they got housekeeping arrangements made and their own equipment on the ground, however, before the war moved away from them. Naples fell and the fighting line moved on to the Volturno River. "Up we jerked and moved again, and so it goes."

His letter, begun in Africa, had been continued in Italy through late September. It would be November before he would have an opportunity to write again.

17

While the 38th's mess officer was recording in his long letter home the experiences of the unit as he observed them during the movement from North Africa to Italy and the settlement there, which embraced virtually all of September, 1943, Captain Montgomery was adding entries in his diary that served to supplement the information provided by Captain Pickens.

On September 8 he had recorded his arrival at Oran and his realization that many changes had been made there since his leaving it in March. His entry that day had noted, too, that "Italy surrendered today."

One week later he wrote:

Left Goat Hill at 5:00 PM after being ready all day. It rained off and on all day. Drove in open truck to Mes-El-Kabir & got there in time to see our boat—*Otranto*—pull out. Drove back to Oran and after much waiting around were taken by tender to the *Otranto* which was anchored. 18 in our cabin.

The next day, September 16, he wrote:

Still at anchor. Meds just fair.

The following day he recorded:

Pulled out of harbor this morning. Convoy pulled out

about 5:30 PM. There are nine troopships. We have almost 5,000 aboard.

Four days later, on September 21, he recorded their arrival in Italy:

Arrived at our destination today, which is D 12. We are at Agropoli. Landed by LCI to Blue Beach & by duck from the LCI to the beach and up to one coordination field. Sat there amid much dust. Then by duck to our area, after going by the 16th. They are operating a few miles from us.

Three days later, he writes, they were still in tents. The date was September 24.

We are still living in our pup tents. There are many ingenious ways of putting them up. At noon today we had our first mess since landing. Up until now it has been C rations & tomatoes. Had a bath in the creek today.

Captain Montgomery's next entry dates the wind storm and heavy rain to which Captain Pickens referred to in his letter. The storm occurred on September 25, for Captain Montgomery's diary records on September 26:

Had a severe wind and rain storm last night. Blew down tents & the mess tent in which officers were quartered. Mine did not come down. The 16th Evac was leveled.