

case, decides what is to be done for him, gets the enlisted personnel started on the shock treatment, gives him the priority for the operating room, and actually designates him for a particular surgeon in the operating theater.

"This is a very important job, one of the most important," Dr. Pitts points out. "It is most important very quickly to find out what's wrong with the man, second, to get emergency treatment started on him, in the way of resuscitation, blood, plasma, fluid, medication. What is required for that is the surgeon who has had a lot of experience, is capable of coming to quick decisions, and knows his personnel in order to be able to make the proper assignments. So actually Dr. Sanger and I oftentimes in stress and strain when we had a lot of casualties to deal with would divide time being the triage. So when we had another neuro-surgeon assigned to us from one of the auxiliary units, that would leave me some free time to do this."

Major Pitts operated upon more than a hundred brain wounds during the Italian campaign alone, most of them, he reveals, received during the action around Anzio, Cassino, and the Rapido River crossing. On Anzio he did the neuro-surgery for the two British

hospitals there. They had two casualty clearing stations, comparable to the American field hospitals, but no neuro-surgeon.

"So I did most of the neuro-surgery for the British on Anzio," he recalls, "and the only time I ever left my hospital area at Anzio was to go up there to one of their hospitals on consultation. They had a couple of patients who had multiple wounds as well as brain injuries and they felt that the patients were too sick to be moved. I got to be sort of a part of their unit, since I was taking care of their brain wounds, and their personnel officers would come down to visit the British patients that I had under my care there. So after the Anzio battle was over they had a hospital personnel farewell party up there for their personnel and they invited me to come up to their party because they felt I was a part of their personnel, since I'd been operating on their brain wounds."

The unit's work in the Anzio area quickly gained the attention of the Fifth Army's leadership, who spoke appreciatively not only of the great volume of cases it was handling but also of the excellence of the treatment being provided.

21

Sixteen officers—ten surgeons and six nurses—came into the 38th Evacuation Hospital's organization early in December from the Second Auxiliary Surgical Group.

The Daily Bulletin of December 4 listed them under "Item No. 2, Attached Personnel:

"The Commanding Officer takes pleasure in welcoming to the organization the following Officers and Nurses of the 2nd Auxiliary Surgical Group, who are attached to this unit for duty:

GENERAL SURGICAL TEAM NO. 18

Major Charles F. Chunn
Captain Charles L. Weston
2nd Lieutenant Anna B. Berret
2nd Lieutenant Mary V. Shearer

MAXILLO-FACIAL TEAM NO. 3

Captain John K. Nattinger
Captain Hubert H. Nall
1st Lieutenant Waldemar Hoeffding
2nd Lieutenant Marguerite Ruff

GENERAL SURGICAL TEAM NO. 2

Major Paul L. Dent
Captain James L. Kocour
2nd Lieutenant Anne K. Brix
2nd Lieutenant Catherine M. Rodman

THORACIC TEAM NO. 1

Major Reeve H. Betts
1st Lieutenant Aaron Himmelstein
Major Frederick W. Bowers
2nd Lieutenant Opal G. Davis

The transfer of Captain Irving Pomper, M.C., from the 38th Evacuation unit to the 45th Infantry Division was announced in the Daily Bulletin of December 10. There, the Bulletin revealed further, Captain Pomper would assume the duties of a psychiatrist in a newly formed medical unit.

The same issue of the Daily Bulletin carried instructions concerning the wearing of the uniform by personnel on pass:

"a. The dress for American troops is optional be-



This badly wounded soldier, near death, is being given blood plasma in the 38th's shock ward. Wounded by shell fragments, he required also a transfusion of whole blood, since he had lost a considerable amount. The nurse in the fatigue hat is Lieutenant Hazel Simmons. This is another in the series of photographs made at Riardo by Margaret Bourke-White for *Life*.



Lieutenant Russell, right, with Lieutenant Rosamond Shipp, is drawing water from the Lister bag.

tween (1) the Service Uniform as prescribed for field duty and (2) the Service Uniform as prescribed for habitual wear when not in formation under arms.

(1) The Service Uniform as prescribed for field duty will be worn as follows:

(a) The shirt will be worn fully buttoned except when the necktie is not worn, in which case the collar will be left open. Sleeves will be down full length and buttoned.

(b) The field jacket will be worn fully zipped and buttoned. When combat jacket is worn in lieu of the field jacket it will be zipped as high as the first button from the collar of the shirt.

(c) The trousers will not be turned up at the cuff. Leggings may be worn when prescribed by unit commanders.

(2) The Service Uniform will be worn as prescribed for habitual wear when not in formation under arms.

(3) The knitted cap will not be worn as an outer garment.

(4) When the cap "Garrison" is not available, the helmet liner will be worn as an authorized substitute therefor.

(5) The Work Uniform will not be worn when on pass. When worn on duty, or when going to and from duty, the one-piece uniform will be buttoned throughout except that the collar may be left open. It will be fastened at the wrist and ankles. The two-piece suit will be worn with the jacket buttoned throughout ex-

cept that the collar button may be left unfastened. When the hat, herringbone twill, is worn, the brim will be turned down all around.

"b. Hands must be kept *out* of pockets."

The bulletin that day declared that "the Commanding Officer was well pleased with the condition of the hospital area on the general inspection this morning. Considerable improvement was noted over previously-tolerated conditions; however, every effort will be made to maintain the present good condition."

The Bulletin did not add that improvement in conditions in the camp had been ordered because distinguished visitors were momentarily expected. Nevertheless, on the following day the 38th was host to four generals, as noted in the Bulletin's announcement in its December 12 edition:

"The Hospital was honored yesterday by the visit of: General Arnold, Chief of the U.S. Army Air Forces; Lt. General Spaatz, N.W. African Air Forces; Lt. General Clark, Commanding Fifth Army; and Major General Cannon, N.W. African Tactical Air Forces."

But when three days later Captain Pickens wrote his next letter home he made no mention of the visit of the four officers of high rank. Instead, he wrote, more significantly and more dramatically, of the ministrations of the doctors and nurses and of the grievously wounded patients, privates and corporals and sergeants in the main, and of one young soldier in particular. He wrote of the very essence of war:

"15 December 1943

"Sunny (?) Italy

"Some time ago I was Officer of the Day and in making my nightly rounds to check the guards and the blackout and to see that our installation was in good shape, I stopped by the receiving tent and just back of it the shock tent. There the wounded come first from the battlefield just forward. Up there they have been given first aid and possibly a shot of morphine to ease their suffering and then as swiftly as possible, by ambulance, they are shuttled back to us. They sometimes stack up when the going is slow here and rapid there. They sit, if they are ambulatory, around a hot stove and dry their feet and get a cup of hot chocolate. If they are litter patients, they stretch on their litters across two wooden horses. They all await their turn to get to the X-ray tent and then thru the operating room to get their wounds treated.

"The operating tent is a busy place at night. Most of the patients come in at night. There, under bright lights, in a warm tent, skillful doctors and gifted nurses and able ward men do their work. The doctor probes for the foreign body, the bit of steel remaining in the arm or leg or chest. They sometimes have to take off a limb in order to save a life.



Frequently the 38th Evac was paid visits by the top brass of the nation's military service. In this photograph the 38th's Lieutenant Hallie Almond, left, and Lucy Brooke of the Red Cross stand between General H. H. (Hap) Arnold, head of the American air forces, left, and General Mark Clark, commanding general of the Fifth Army.

"On this particular night there was a young chap lying quietly on a litter in the shock tent. He was looking straight up at the ceiling of the tent. His eyes were fixed. The doctor said he was just coming out of shock and was fully conscious. His left leg was hanging on by a thread just below the knee. His belly had been riddled with bullets and the hurried dressing was in need of a change. He had a gaping wound on the left side of his head, which the doctor was examining when I stepped in. The others around on other litters were quiet and those around the tiny stove had stopped their talk about the day's fight. On the litter beside him were his few personal possessions, pocketbook, pictures from home, knife, and a little Italian money. In addition there were three packages with Christmas seals on them.

"I asked them what they were and they replied that

he had just received them that day and had insisted on bringing them along when his buddies had gently placed him in the ambulance to send him back. The doctor looked at me in a knowing way and said to him, 'Why don't you open your packages and see what the folks sent you?' He protested weakly and said he wanted to wait for Christmas. The doctor told him that it might be some time before he would be able to enjoy them and his advice was to enjoy them now.

"The lad slowly opened the first one. I helped him a little. Then the second came open, and the third. Such joy on that chap's face as we got the little things spread out before him. There were small paperbound books, candy, tooth brush, chewing gum, socks, a sweater with a note pinned to it from his mother saying she had knitted it for him for winter days and nights. There were other items too numerous to mention. He

handled each one slowly and gently and smiled each time we handed him one. Then he put them down and sighed and said in a voice almost inaudible, 'Wouldn't it be nice to be home for Christmas?'

"Then he closed his eyes and breathed his last."

Captain Pickens continued:

"The Red Cross worker in our midst wrote his family, acknowledging the receipt of the packages, and saying that he had enjoyed them. Of course, the War Department will send the actual message of his loss. But such is the drama of life and death around us every day. We don't lose many, but occasionally they come to us beyond hope of repair. This chap was quickly moved out and in a very little time those around the stove were talking again about what they had been doing that day when the shell broke a little too near them and caused them to be sent back for overhauling. So it goes in the war."

In this letter he revealed that he had been given a new assignment:

"I am no longer a kitchen knave but have the title of detachment commander, which primarily consists of seeing that three hundred Americans are fed, housed, and clothed and are on their jobs. This extra-curricular activity consists of writing letters for the few illiterates we have in the command. It is not the same as writing for a person who can speak English but who cannot write it but one who has had some education."

"This is different. It is hard to find out from them just what they want to say, and I steadfastly refuse to make up the letter myself. It is just another one of those duties that come in the Army that few people in civilian life ever think about. I doubt if any of you ever had an assignment of that sort. Try it sometime if you think it is easy."

It was beginning to appear likely that Christmas would be spent at the base, he reported. "We had hoped that we might see the midnight mass at St. Peter's, but the rain has just kept everything from moving on time. You have no idea how much mud can accumulate and there appears to be little sign of relief. However, we will make the most of it and continue to carry on. You folks at home have been doing a marvelous job. There appears to be a oneness of purpose that shows in your letters and in the public opinion that we are able to get. The headlines are still too optimistic, but that is typically American. We are beginning to get under way as a nation at war. . . ."

During the period of which Captain Pickens had written, Captain Montgomery, too, had been given a new assignment. He mentioned it, briefly, as was his characteristic manner of recording entries in his diary, in two lines:

Dec. 1st. I am officially chief of ones. Stan Nowacki added to service.

Captain Montgomery made no further entries until December 22, when he wrote of a visit he and Major Query had made to Naples:

Nothing startling since Nov. 30th except I had a three-day leave & Dick and I went to Naples. First we went to the Parco, but because of rank I couldn't stay. Then to the Touristico. Saw Billy Johnston. Also "La Traviata." Had a nice time. Tomorrow Bill Pennington, Paul and I going to Ravello.

The day after Christmas he reported a Christmas Day trip and the return to the base:

Went to Sorrento without orders & got back in O.K. at the Vittorio. Two nice rooms with balcony & bath. Good food, a grand rest. Arrived home Christmas evening in time for Buck & Stan's party.

Captain Montgomery's experience in being turned away from the Parco because of insufficient rank was not the only incident of that sort to be experienced by members of the 38th. Nor by Captain Montgomery. More than a year later he and Major Hunter Jones on their way back to the United States had to go to Naples and stay in the officers' pool until they could be assigned to a returning ship.

Dr. Jones records that experience:

"So while we were waiting to get a boat, Jack got the bright idea of trying to fly home. 'A lot of other folks are doing it,' Jack said. 'Why don't we go down and see the commanding officer and tell him we want to fly home?'

"Well, Jack,' I said, 'I don't believe we can work it, but I'll go with you and we'll try.'

"So the next day we went down, and we got in to see the colonel, and we saluted, and the colonel said, 'How are you?' without seeming to be particularly impressed with us. Jack gave him a spiel, about how we'd been over a long time and working hard in the hospital and how we'd like to get a flight home, and so forth. The colonel, without raising his eyes from the paper we'd handed him, says, 'Captain, do you have any medals?'

"Medals? Medals?' Jack repeated question. 'No, sir.'

"Do you have any awards?'

"No, sir, I don't.'

"Have you the Legion of Merit?'

"Don't have any of them, sir.'

"Well, Captain,' the colonel said, 'we are saving these return flights for veterans who have honors and awards.'

"I don't have a one, sir,' Jack told him.

"That's all right, Captain. Don't think you'll make it, but thank you for coming.'

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"I don't have a one, sir,' Jack told him.

"That's all right, Captain. Don't think you'll make it, but thank you for coming.'

"So we walked out."

But these were not the only occasions when Captain Montgomery's plans had failed to materialize. And Colonel Sanger was also involved with him in another such incident. Captain Montgomery tells about it:

"This happened back when we were in North Africa. One day Paul said to me 'Would you like to go to Algiers?'

"Yes, I'll go,' I said. So we went to Algiers and to that big, old, fancy hotel, where everybody stayed—we thought. It was the Majestic, and was then being operated by the government. Paul said to me as we

went in, 'I'll take care of this; I'll do the talking.' So we walked up to the desk, where there was a sergeant in charge whose creases in his pants would have cut your throat. 'We'd like to have a double room,' Paul said to the sergeant.

"This sergeant must have worked at the Waldorf or somewhere like that, because he just looked Paul up and down—and Paul was a lieutenant-colonel then—like he might have been the scum off the bottom of some ship, and he said, icily, 'Nobody below admirals and generals stay in this hotel.'

"We just crawled away."

22

The four high ranking generals had visited the 38th Evacuation Hospital on December 11. Two days later General Mark Clark wrote to Colonel J. I. Martin, the Fifth Army surgeon, commending the medical service for the excellent work its men and women had been accomplishing. Members of the 38th wondered if, and hoped that General Clark's visit to their hospital had occasioned the writing so quickly after his visit of the general letter of commendation.

General Clark's letter was transmitted to "all Fifth Army medical personnel, British and American," by Colonel Martin, and was published on Saturday, December 18, in the 38th's Daily Bulletin:

13 December 1943

Colonel J. I. Martin, M.C.,
Surgeon, Fifth Army,
Headquarters Fifth Army

Dear Colonel Martin:

Since our landing in Salerno Bay I have been continually impressed with the excellence of the medical service throughout the Fifth Army. Conditions in this campaign have, from the beginning, taxed all the services to the limit of their capacity, but none more than the Medical Department.

The removal of the wounded from the battlefields has required more than the ordinary amount of skill, fortitude and endurance on the part of the litter bearers, who carry their comrades by hand, over miles of treacherous mountain trails, through artillery and mortar fire, and in all kinds of weather. Truly they have earned their place among the unsung heroes of this campaign.

The skillful medical attention rendered each patient so willingly is indicative of a superior degree of singleness of

purpose—to achieve the Medical Department's mission of conserving the fighting strength of the Army.

The many long hours spent each day, often in the face of danger, by enlisted men, nurses and officers in caring for the sick and wounded have not only contributed to the military achievements of the Fifth Army but have had a splendid effect on the morale of the entire force.

For this most willing sacrifice and outstanding service I wish to commend all ranks of both the British and the U.S. medical contingents of the Fifth Army. It is my desire that you convey to them all my appreciation of their fine work and my confidence that the future will never present a problem that they will not meet with the same willing energy and skill that has been so evident to all.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mark W. Clark

/t/ MARK W. CLARK

Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

To General Clark's letter Colonel Martin appended the message:

I wish to add, at this time, my personal appreciation of the splendid service rendered by all medical units of this command.

But a letter in further praise of the medical services, this one specifically in commendation of the 38th Evacuation Hospital, would be received within another few days from another general in the Medical Corps. This doctor, a personal friend of several of the officers in the 38th and first cousin of Charlotte's Dr. W. S. Rankin, was Brigadier General Fred W. Rankin of Lexington, Kentucky, a native North Carolinian and then attached to the Surgeon General's office in Washington. Dr.