



Assistant Dental Officer Milo Hoffman, seated, is examining a newly completed dental plate. With him is Major Vaiden Kendrick, dental oral surgeon of the 38th.

take me long to get back in the groove of living like gentle folk when this mess is over."

The coming of the American troops to the area, he reveals, had a great effect on the prices charged for various items in the Sorrento area:

"The principal excuse for Sorrento, outside of the fishing and the scrubby oranges and lemons, is the production of linen tablecloths and napkins and fine handkerchiefs. The women do the work and they are skillful with their needles. Of course, since the war began there has been little raw material coming in, so their production has been limited. When the Americans came they must have clapped their hands with glee and raised their prices 100%. The shops had plenty of choice, but the prices were outrageous. Two hundred lire or \$2 was the cheapest priced handkerchief for either man or woman. The tablecloths and

accompanying napkins started at \$90 and went on up. From this you can see that my shopping was limited, although I spent a good deal of time looking. I bought a few things which I have sent on to Mary. The wooden box business is good, too. They make cigarette boxes, jewel boxes, canes, umbrella handles, and card boxes. The prices were just as bad on these. I bought a few nuts and sent them on home, which I hope pass the censorship. I also picked up a few ash trays made from olive wood that may be useful to some of my friends and be fair mementos of Italy. The shopping was interesting in spite of the high prices. The sales people all spoke English, French, German, Spanish. I say they all spoke all of these languages. I wouldn't be sure, but they said they did, and since they spoke English, I assumed they could speak the other languages as well. Their advertising was not

along the typical American lines; there were no screaming signs in front of any of the shops and there were no loudspeakers playing 'Funiculi, Funicula' or 'Return to Sorrento.' There were a few people along the streets who would stop you in a furtive sort of way, like they were going to sell you some questionable post cards, and ask if you wanted to buy some boxes or linen very cheap and then hand you a card giving an address that you had already visited several times. The sales people were enthusiastic about their wares and were surprised when we said we did not have the money to buy at their prices. In one shop I asked the man in charge if he would be interested in trading some cigarettes and some candy and chewing gum, which I had accumulated, for some of his handkerchiefs and boxes. He said he would trade, so I swapped him Twenty Grand, Chelsea, Wings and Old Golds at the rate of 400 lire or \$4 per carton. I also worked in some multi-flavored Life Savers and some chewing gum. These things we have issued to us at regular intervals and we accumulate them, since no one likes them in spite of the Army thinking we do. This was the best way of disposing of them. We occasionally trade a package of cigarettes for an egg when they can be found or for a dozen sour little oranges. I think I came out all right with this merchant and we were both satisfied that we had beat the other in the trade."

He continues the account of his visit:

"As I said, Sorrento is a quiet place and an ideal place to rest. It is inaccessible except by boat or a very bad road. From there it is customary to go to Capri, the little island which lies just a few miles off shore. The Army had arranged for us to go each Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. We got there too late on Monday and had our reservations for Wednesday, but on that particular day the weather was so rough that the little boat could not make the crossing, so I missed the chance. I am sorry not to have seen the Blue Grotto, although I have a feeling that going there is a little like going to Silver Springs in Florida. What I did want to see was some of the handiwork of the old Tiberius Caesar who was not too bad an architect in his day. Possibly I will get another chance.

"In this hotel there was a young singer who performed during the dinner hour," he recalls. "She was very attractive and had an unusually good voice. She made the meal time more pleasant with her selections from the Italian operas and the folk songs. The orchestra consisted of several string instruments and one brass horn and the piano. . . . Once during the evening meal they brought in a native folk dance-tarantella performed by local talent in native costumes. It was quite close kin to the Hungarian folk dances, but with

the men using the castanets. To have a floor show during a war and that near the fighting was just too much, but it helped to make the vacation more pleasant."

He defends the program of a rest hotel for Army officers:

". . . I tell you it is worthwhile after living in the mud and dirt in a canvas tent for a year and a half," he says. "They even had our shoes shined if we could remember to leave them outside our room door at night. I forgot the first two nights, but the third and fourth nights the shine was on the house. They had 48-hour laundry service. I had heard about that before going down, so I went with all the dirty clothes I possessed. They apparently used hot water, because all my clothes seemed cleaner when they came back, and I know the local *senorinas* here around the camp don't bother to heat the water before trying to do the wash. Sometimes I send the things back for a second scrubbing and that helps a little."

Captain Pickens sums up the time-out period from the mud and dreariness of life in the 38th's tent city:

"All in all, it was a pleasant interlude in this rather dull existence. I came back much refreshed and somewhat cleaner."

But as in all his other letters, he cannot avoid entirely referring to the war as the members of the 38th were seeing it in the early days of the new year of 1944:

"The war has taken on new life in this theatre with the advent of almost two weeks of clear weather. Some of the Bulldogs slipped out on an end run and it appears to have caught the enemy by surprise. The pressure has been great in front, too. Possibly we will get somewhere with our phrase before the spring thaw allows bigger things to come from other directions. I hope so. We are anxious to get the whole business over with and start toward home. The sinking of the hospital ships off the new beachhead, a deliberate assault, has made everyone more determined. That is not propaganda. Some of our friends were lost trying to save some of the helpless patients."

Major Munroe summarized the activities of the Fifth Army during the three months preceding the middle of January and wrote appreciatively of the 38th's experiences in that period:

"During this period Lieutenant Colonel Thomas P. White, Major R. Z. Query, Jr., and twenty-two enlisted men were transferred from the unit. Most of them were going immediately to the good old U.S.A.—from Spain to home.

"Toward the latter days in Riardo," he continues his account, "many visited Capri, Naples (when the typhus epidemic was over) and other nearby spots. For a while

weekly Fifth Army medical meetings were held in the opera house at Caserta, but were transferred and held in our unit's 'Mason-Dixon Theatre.' At these meetings everyone's experience and opinions in the care of the wounded and the sick were aired. Some members returned to Sorrento to revisit the Hotel Vittoria that was taken over by Fifth Army for a rest camp.

"During the three-month period from October 12, 1943, to January 15, 1944 the Fifth Army push consisted of three phases: the Volturno River crossing and the advance to the Winter Line (12 October-15 November); regrouping (15-30 November); and the push through the Winter Line toward Cassino (2 December-15 January 1944)," he wrote.

"Many of us visited the more forward zones, where after 15 January 1944 we could view the Liri Valley. We could see Highway 6 as it coursed across the plain below to German-held Cassino, bent around the lower edge of Monastery Hill, and disappeared in the haze of the valley on its ninety-mile path to Rome. The plain of the Liri Valley was cut up by the Rapido River, which entered the Gari River. This latter river then wandered two and one-half miles to its junction with the Liri River, which drains the Liri Valley to its junction with the Gari to form the Garigliano River, a sizable stream that entered the sea fifteen miles away.

"These continuous water barriers in the Liri Valley confronted the Fifth Army forces. Beyond the valley could be seen the mountain ranges and the little village of Cassino near the foot of Monastery Hill. Behind these rivers lay the strongly fortified Gustav Line. Cassino was more strongly fortified than any other city that the Fifth Army had encountered. The rivers were diverted in such manner that the mud and mire of the Liri Valley were almost impassable for heavy armor. Mines were lavishly placed. One has to see the Liri Valley from the distance to more clearly visualize the difficulty of breaking the strongly fortified Gustav Line."

Many members of the 38th, Major Munroe reveals, witnessed the initial bombardment of the monastery atop the mountain. "On February 15 the hallowed Benedictine monastery, the Abbey of Monte Cassino, was heavily bombed and this was subsequently followed by thousands of tons of bombs and shells."

During the first half of February several members of the 38th, through arrangements made by the Special Service section of the Army, enjoyed some experiences removed about as far as possible from the usual routine of operating an Army hospital.

They went to the opera.

"What a far cry from the war to be sitting listening to one of the world's favorite operas!" Captain Pickens

wrote the homefolk on February 10, 1944. "But that is the way I spent the other evening."

He went on in his letter to relate in considerable detail his evening at the San Carlo Opera Company's production of *La Boheme*. And six days later, on February 16, he tells of his second visit, this time to see *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Both evenings, he declared, were pleasant interludes in the grim business of war. His accounts, as many of his previous letters provided, add color, atmosphere, and details to the picture of the 38th's strenuous months overseas.

"It is always funny when Mimi in *La Boheme*, being sung to and made love to by Rudolph, turns out to be a buxom filly with plenty of health, altho she is supposed to be passing away with consumption," he begins his first letter. "Her full bosom, rising and falling with emotion, belies the presence of the heartless little bugs within her broad frame. Such was the case with Gilda in *Rigoletto*, which I saw the other night. She was bigger than Ponselle and her father had plenty of trouble carrying his sack in which her nearly lifeless body was placed."

The San Carlo Opera Company, "which was either caught or escaped to our side of the lines," he said, was in charge and did a good job. "They have been running a series for the headquarters group," he went on. "Common field troops get in by knowing someone among the brass hats. I happen to know Alec Schenck from Charlotte, who made the arrangements, and he was exceedingly kind to do it. They have the opera series on an average of three times a week, but this was the first time I had had a chance to hear one. The little opera house is in the castle built many years ago. It seats about 200 in the orchestra and another fifty or seventy-five in the boxes which tier up around the wall up to a high ceiling. It was the royal opera house in reality and while I sat there between acts I thought about the scenes that must have been enacted there in the years past when knighthood was in flower. The royal box was just two sections away from me and occupied by an American general and two British generals. There were no civilians to be seen, except in the orchestra pit and on the stage. The audience was entirely GI with a generous sprinkling of our allies scattered about.

"It was an appreciative audience," he reported, "and sounded considerably more genuine in its applause than that heard in the Diamond Horseshoe. When they like a particular aria they do not hesitate to whistle and stomp their feet as loudly as they would cheer Glenn Miller or Kay Kiser. Only the enlisted men were in the orchestra seats and the officers used the boxes. The appreciation came equally from both sections. The unusual part of the applause was the fact

that the company would repeat the aria as many times as the crowd wanted it and they did not hesitate bringing the singers back for more. They sang the famous quartet three times before going on with the rest of the performance, and the age-old 'la donna e mobile' was called back three times also. If I were writing a review or criticism of the whole performance I would say the main weakness was the orchestra's drowning the singers. They apparently keyed their voices to the smaller house, but the director of the instruments kept them at full tilt. On the whole, the performance was not up to anywhere near what the Met puts out, but it was pleasant relief from the dullness of the war drag."

His letter went on to reveal the arrangement of the orchestra, whose members, said he, must have been cold, since there was no heat in the house. Then he returned to a description of Gilda:

"She was a tall, buxom woman with a fairly good voice. As I said before, it might have been better if the orchestra had not outplayed her. The one time she came thru nobly was in the quartet and then they all did, but she particularly. Rigoletto, the old hunch-backed jester, did his part the best of the lot. He was dramatic in his presentation but did not overplay the part. He had a good voice and carried the whole show. The Duke who did the tenor was not the match of Martinelli, whom I heard last in Boston many years ago. He failed to have the fullness of voice, but his principal aria about all women being fickle was much appreciated and he sang it three times."

Of the staging that had been arranged for the American servicemen he wrote:

"The small stage was filled with old used scenery. There was too much of it, but I suppose they were making the best show possible. It is a far cry from the elaborate settings staged by the Metropolitan and the costumes had seen better days. Italians either don't believe in washing too much or there has been a prolonged shortage of soap. The costumes would have looked better with a washing."

But, said he, "it was a welcome relief to hear good music a safe distance from the war. Getting inside the huge castle, fourth largest in the world, if that means anything, and then into the intimate little theatre was like slipping into another world. The imagination could run rife on what went on in that little room a hundred years ago when command performances were held. Even that night I could look with hazy eye and see lovely gowns and white tie and tails instead of dull olive drab. The one thing that would shock you out of your pleasant reverie between the acts would be the sight of the singers and the musicians alike moving around the audience giving autographs in exchange for

cigarettes. Every surrounding and every art has its price, I suppose."

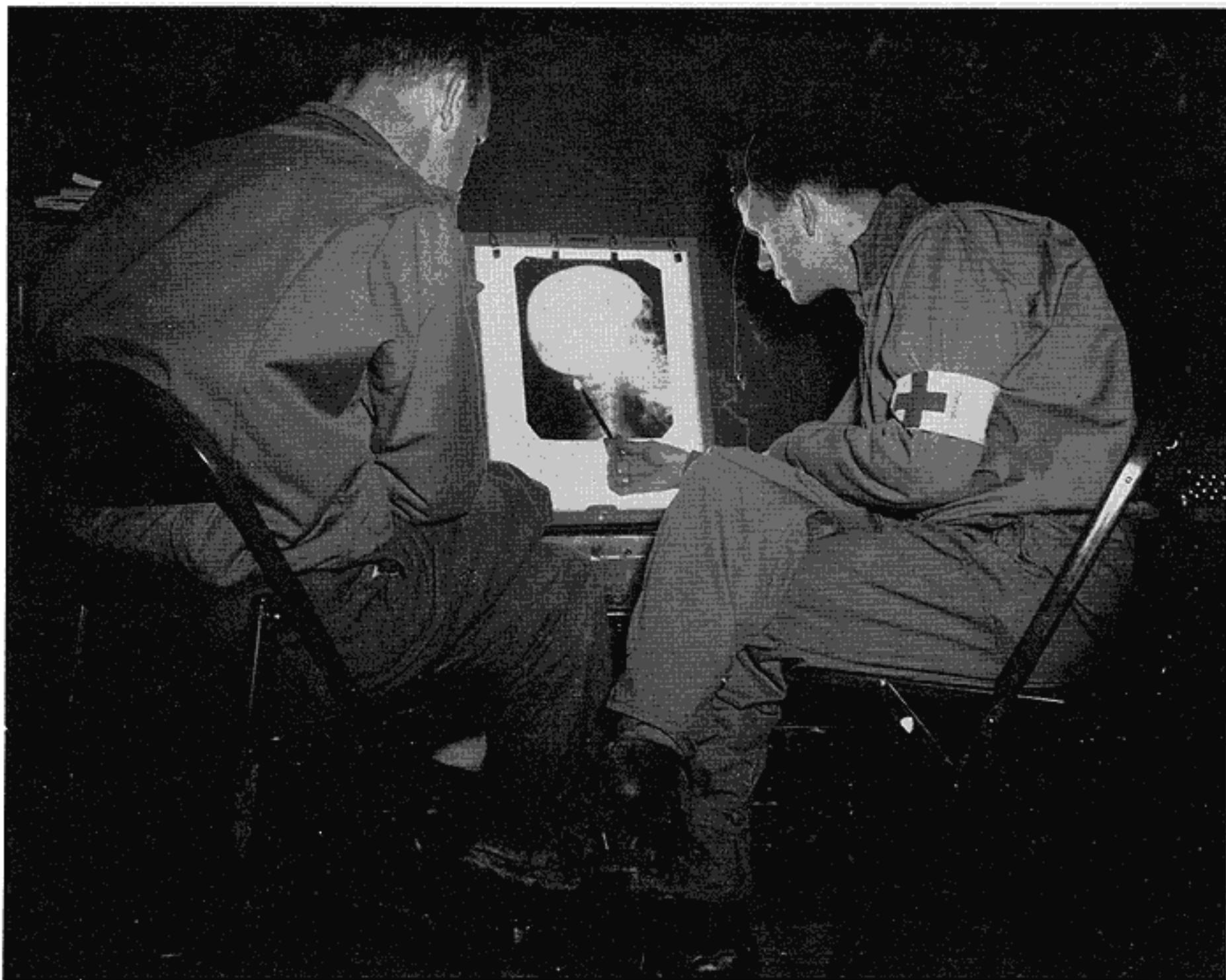
After the performance, his letter reveals in closing, they "hurried back across more than 30 miles and an hour and a half's travel to get to the mud and canvas and the sordid scenes of our part of this war. For a little while we had had something better."

Three other officers and a nurse from the 38th accompanied Captain Pickens on his next trip to the opera. He began his letter of February 16 with an apology for taking time out from a war to attend this performance.

"It seems a bit of a shame when the war is going on so tough up at the front to be chasing off for an evening, but the opportunity comes so seldom that I went to the opera again," he wrote. "There is little I could do about the pushing around being done up there and over on the beachhead, so I didn't feel too guilty. After over eighteen months overseas you take any relief you can get."

On this particular evening, he reported, the San Carlo company was producing *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and though he had heard the sextette many times, he had never heard the full performance. "This was the chance and I took it. The chance was well worth it, because the performance was far superior to that of *Rigoletto*, about which I wrote not so long ago. Everything seemed to work out properly.

"Alec Schenck again had made arrangements for the tickets. . . . He had six seats, but as luck would have it, only five of us could get away, and he was away up on the next landing. Four officers—Bill Matthews, Ed McCall, Mitch Mitchell and I, along with one nurse, Miss Polly Bell from Iredell County, made the trip. Upon arrival at the source of brass hats in this area, Alec had persuaded another officer to act as host, Lt. Col. Luther. . . . He did a grand job in showing the country folks around. We had dinner and he arranged for us to eat in the Colonel's mess, which was not a mean accomplishment. The only difference between the upper mess and the lowly company grade mess is that they have backs in their chairs and they all look tired and bored with each other. We did not have to sit on the stools, altho the food was the same, and I think we added a little life to an otherwise dull gathering. . . . After dinner we went directly to the little opera house in another section of the castle. When crossing the courtyard you dodge bomb craters and use a flashlight sparingly. Into the house we hurried, since we were running late. They start at 7:30 PM, which is somewhat earlier than the Metropolitan. Our box was partially filled when we arrived. The host did not like the seats to which we were relegated and made no bones about it. Before the performance got underway



Captain Thomas D. Tyson, chief of X-ray service, left, and First Lieutenant Colin A. Munroe, X-ray service assistant, are studying X-ray of a war casualty showing shell fragment lodged at the base of the brain.

he moved out and made a reconnaissance and came back with the information that they should move, presto, as the Italians say, into the General's box. It was the royal box and was the choice box in the house. We took over with befitting modesty and made the most of the extra privilege. The acoustics were obviously designed for that spot; we heard everything at its best. The British generals from the Royal Air Corps occupied a part of the box, but they were non-communicative, so we wasted no glowing personality on them. I'm not certain they enjoyed the opera at all. We did."

Lucia, he went on to say, was less buxom than Mimi had been. "But, nevertheless, she could sing, and she did. Without her the whole show would have fallen flat, since she carries the business until the last act. She had a grand voice and did not spare. When she hit a note it was like a ski jumper when he takes off after the preliminary slide is covered. She hit it exactly,

solid, true, and her voice was as clear as a bell. It was invigorating to listen to and I revelled in it. The supporting cast was good, too, and the chorus was as good as any I have heard."

He described the scene of the opera, the costumes, which were fresh, since this had been the first performance of this selection during the series. "The swarthy looking Italians looked a little incongruous with their skirts on and their actions were not as natural in them as I have seen with some of the Scottish troops with us, but they did all right. The dark-complected ladies did not resemble too closely those fair-haired females I saw in Edinburgh, but they could sing and that was what mattered. The individual arias were well executed, but the familiar sextette was the piece de resistance. The whole group pitched into that number in such a way that it brought the house down. Even the whole orchestra personnel arose and turned and

applauded. It was a real ovation. We were reticent in our box to turn on the heat too much but we let them know we appreciated their efforts and approved their talents. Different from the rendition of *Rigoletto*, the performers did not give an encore. . . .”

So another pleasant evening away from the tented city of the 38th's hospital came to an end. "After being in another world for a little while," he ended this letter almost in the words he had ended the one of the week before, "we hurried back over bumpy roads in the cold to our tents in the field." And there they were back in the routine of the war. "The wounded keep coming in a steady stream. We are busy as usual."

Captain Montgomery made no entry in his diary from January 24, 1944, when he wrote that the hospital had "just completed another batch of 190 battle casualties," until February 19. On that date the entry was characteristically brief:

Am going to 300th Gen. today to see about my cough.

But soon he would be leaving on a much longer journey and one long anticipated. In preparing to start the trip, he would be one of the actors in an amusing small drama that after two decades remains memorable and revealing.

"In February of 1944 I received orders to return home on a 30-day leave," he recalls. "So I had to go up to Fifth Army headquarters to check out the officers' mess fund, which I'd been handling. We had it set up so that every month I turned in the account to Colonel Pennington and it was verified and the money was counted, and then we just threw the records away. So I went up to the Fifth Army to check it out before going on leave, and this colonel at headquarters said, 'Captain, you can't do that. You'll have to bring me every record from the time you left Fort Bragg.'

"'But we don't have any such records,' I said, and I explained how we'd been doing.

"'Well, you can't go back home until you've brought the records accounting for every penny.'

"'But our executive officer has signed out everything as being all right,' I told him again. 'And there just aren't any records now.'

"'He's got nothing to do with it,' he said. 'We can't have that.'

"So I went back to the base and told Paul Sanger what had happened.

"'I'll go back up there with you and see what I can do about it,' said Paul.

"So we went, and we were sitting there talking, this Fifth headquarters colonel, and Paul and I, and Paul said to him, 'Colonel, this was just a little private fund among the officers.'

"'I can't help that, Colonel,' he said to Paul. 'The

Captain's got to—huh-uh-huh-h'—he started coughing—'account for this money by producing—uh-huh-huh-uh-huh—all the records before he can leave. He's got to—huh-huh-huh-uh-huh—do that.'

"'That cough you've got there, Colonel,' said Paul. 'Why're you coughing so much?'

"'I've had this little cough in my chest—' he began.

"'Sounds pretty bad, Colonel,' Paul told him. I think you'd better come out to the hospital and let us x-ray you. I think maybe you'd better go back to the States.'

"'You think, Colonel, I could go back to the States with this?'

"'Well, I don't know, Colonel, but it sounds bad. You come out and let us x-ray your chest and we'll see. I have an idea you ought to go back for a while. But you just go ahead and sign these orders for Captain Montgomery to go back to the States, and you come out tomorrow and let us check you over.'

"He signed the papers right there and then, and I left two or three days later. I don't know whether he ever got home or not. But Paul was really smooth that day."

Captain Montgomery's next entry in his diary was dated March 12. He wrote:

Returned today. Feel better. Have a chronic bronchitis. Geo Wood got his chickens today.

The Daily Bulletin of March 14 would report the promotion of Lieutenant Colonel Wood to full colonel in more formal phraseology:

"It is with pleasure that we learn that the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel George T. Wood, Jr., has been promoted to the rank of Colonel."

The Bulletin was issued that day under the signature of Captain Medearis as adjutant.

Two days before Captain Montgomery recorded Colonel Wood's promotion, Captain Pickens wrote a long news-filled and anecdotal letter home. It would be his last from the base at Vairano. It was datelined simply "Italy."

At the outset he tells of an incident illustrating his theme that "Even the bigwigs sometimes remember that the war is fought by a lot of little people and they have human feelings like anyone else. It gives you added faith in the leadership that we depend upon so much. It was a little thing, but it made everyone feel a little happier who had anything to do with it and most of all the general and the corporal."

He had related this anecdote:

"Most generals appear to move with a great deal of fanfare. We see them pass with big escorts of MPs on motorcycles and jeeps with radio equipment and weapons carriers with anti-aircraft guns. They have sirens screaming their coming and going. They have red

spotlights which blink a warning at night. It is quite a show when they go by.

"But we have one general who prefers to travel with as little of this as possible. He gets in a jeep with a driver and looks like any other soldier except for the three stars that show where the license plate is on a civilian car. He likes to move swiftly and consequently uses a siren occasionally. Recently this story was told about him by one who was his guest for dinner.

"There had been much traveling and the general thought he needed two drivers, since it was both wearing and tearing on one. He ordered his GI section of the Army to search thru its files of all personnel who had experience in driving and get him a good driver. His only qualifications were that the man be able to drive swiftly and safely. GI, as you know, is the personnel section. They keep all records of all members of the Army. The search was made and a driver produced. In civilian life he had been a dirt track racer. He had driven many miles without an accident and had won many races. He was the answer to the general's order.

"When he reported, the general made a trip with him and he took him there in less time than it was thought possible. The general said he had to hold his breath at times, but the corporal drove with assurance and confidence. He was not conscious of driving for a general and the general liked that.

"He performed his work well for some weeks. One day the general said to him that he had done a good job and asked him if there was anything he, the general, could do for him. The corporal replied that there was, but that he could not think of asking one of his rank for such a favor. The general told him to speak up, so the corporal stated that he had been overseas for some seven months and because of constant moving had not heard from home in about three months. He was due to become a papa about a month previous and he had been worried, not having heard anything from home. The general said that he would make the proper inquiry for him and for the corporal to quit worrying.

"The general told his aide to send a radiogram to Washington with the man's name and the other information necessary and ask for an immediate reply. He knew it was wrong to use the Army service for personal matters but this one time he thought he would try. Within a very few hours came the reply radiogram. It read something like this:

"General —————, Italy, re: Cpl. Robert Jones stop Robert Jones, Jr., arrived 7th February stop mother baby well stop baby sends this message "hurry up win war and come home" stop signed Marshall, Chief of Staff."

Captain Pickens went on with his letter to report

the routine of the 38th's activities during the last few weeks:

"We are being spoiled in our present setup because of the added service given by what is commonly called a striker. The British have another name for him, a batman. Here our striker is an Italian who turned up a few days after we set up at this camp. He was ill-clad and very dirty, but he smiled and asked if he could work for us. He kept on smiling and seemed so sincere that my tentmate and I decided to hire him. Back in our last stand we had a woman who cleaned up for us and did other chores. She had two teeth and scared us in the morning when she came, she was so ugly. But she worked.

"This new helper is named Gino Madzucci and he works, too. He was in the Italian army and when it disintegrated he found himself in the southern part of the country. He made his way up as far as he thought it safe, since the Germans don't treat them too well. That's how he came to us. His home is a few miles west of Pisa and he is counting on us getting him home. He has invited us to come and stay at his humble casa. We can have his primo da letto, his first bedroom. We will probably never get that far south (? north?) but I would like to see where he lives. He has not been home in four years and has not heard from his wife in over a year. With it all he is cheerful and has a winsome smile. He is either not very bright or doesn't understand how Americans live and act. But we are patient with him since he is so willing. He comes in the morning and wakes us as he lights the oil stove and puts on a No. 10 can filled with water. Then he makes a trip to the mess and picks up some bread and butter and salt if we need it. He has scoured the countryside and collected some fresh eggs for us and we have developed the habit of cooking our own breakfast in our own tent. He brings us fresh oranges each day. He trades cigarettes, candy and anything we want to get rid of for these things. If we have nothing to trade he just brings them in anyway. He sits and watches us as we shave and dress. He has been fascinated with my electric razor. He empties the wash basin for us and then sits smilingly by while we cook our breakfast. We have an orange and then fix the eggs either with canned milk scrambled or 'sunnyside up' or occasionally we soft-boil them."

His letter goes on further to describe the breakfast:

"The toast is brown and buttered. Gino has brought coffee from the mess. We have a little marmalade or jam to go with the rest. It's a good breakfast and it's warm in the tent. As soon as we get out, Gino gets the bedding outside, if it isn't raining, and lets it air out. He sweeps the floor we have installed with a ven-

geance and the dust spreads everywhere. We have never gotten it through his head that he should sprinkle a little water around before sweeping. The Italians don't mind a little dirt and dust on everything.

"He takes our dirty clothes off and two or three days later returns them washed and ironed. He keeps a laundry list and nothing is ever missing. The socks have been darned and all holes patched. The shoes are always shined regardless of all the rain and mud outside. The galoshes are always washed each day. When we want some English walnuts or almonds, he is sent out to find them and turns up with them. Then he sits down and cracks them for us. We had a time keeping him from cracking them with his teeth. We have furnished him with old clothing, a razor and a toothbrush. He has built himself a little lean-to at the edge of the camp and has fixed himself up quite comfortably. He enjoys most when we try to learn the language and he can talk with us. He makes no effort to learn English. So far his only word of English is 'OK.' At first we paid him at the rate of 10 cents per day, but then he hired himself out to some of the others, since he wanted to keep busy, and he accumulated so much money that he doesn't want any pay now. He can't buy anything or has no wants other than an occasional bottle of vino. While I was a patient in the hospital recently with a mild case of flu, he was a constant companion, running errands, doing anything to make me more comfortable. At the same time he was keeping the tent in good shape. I don't know what we will do without him if we should move in such a way that he could not follow. We are very dependent upon him."

The Daily Bulletin of Monday, March 6, had this "Notice to all Enlisted Personnel" that "A party will be held tomorrow night for Enlisted Men. Full details are given in the notices posted on the Bulletin Boards in Enlisted Men's Mess and Enlisted Men's Recreation Tent."

The next day the Bulletin had this further notice to enlisted personnel:

"Trucks will depart for the Enlisted Men's Dance at 1830 hours. Enlisted Men attending the Dance will assemble in front of Detachment Headquarters at 1815 hours."

And in his letter of March 10 Captain Pickens describes in considerable detail this dance. He writes of it in the concluding section of his long letter:

"Until a few days ago," he says, "I had never seen a WAC. That branch of the Army was being organized just about the time we left the States. The first part of this week, we, not being very busy, decided to organize a dance for the enlisted men.

"That is where the WACs entered the picture. I said

that we decided to organize a dance when I mean that one of our Red Cross workers thought it would be a good idea and promised to work on it. She did a beautiful job, too. She went to the neighboring town and got the Red Cross club there to let us have their building for the night. Of course, we could not have a dance out here in this mud or in any of these little tents. The men had not enjoyed anything like that since we left England a long time ago.

"With the club room and the orchestra from John Trescot's Engineers and with plenty of food, Coca-Cola and coffee, all we needed was some girls. That was the snag. The Italians won't let their daughters go out after dark unless mama goes along, and usually two-thirds of the family with her. That usually means about fourteen in all to get one girl who is the dance age. That stumped us. The Red Cross worker rounded up all her cronies for miles around. They came from the airfields where they dish out doughnuts and personality to the incoming fliers. They came from neighboring hospitals and they even left the headquarters comfort to help us. But in all only about ten of them were available and that number with a bunch of young jitterbugs, 130, to be exact, was not a drop in the bucket. We needed more females.

"We learned that a platoon of WACs was stationed about thirty miles from us and about six miles from the Red Cross club. The worker took some of our more attractive men down to see if they could line up some partners. They turned on the heat and as a result of their enthusiasm, they got the promise of several to come and also try to get others. I followed up the next day with a trip to see their captain and ask her aid. She was not in at the time, so I left my message and asked her to come as my guest.

"To my surprise, many of the girls came and when I arrived at the party the WAC captain was there, too. I was going as a sort of patron or chaperone, but I found I had to work, too. There were plenty of girls and the men had a good time. It was a change for them, altho I never looked forward to lumbering 25 miles in the back of a 2½-ton truck. They didn't mind and the girls didn't seem to mind bundling up in the big truck either. We started at seven-thirty and quit at eleven P.M. The last truck came in at one-thirty because of some trouble in getting started. I was sitting up like an old hen with a lot of biddies until the last one came in safely. I enjoyed seeing them have a good time. I think it was worth the trouble because the mud gets awfully tiresome after all these months."

On March 15, 1944, one month after the opening bombardment of Monte Cassino, another intensive air

and heavy artillery assault was carried out with the dumping of tons and tons of bombs and shells on Cassino and Monastery Hill. "This was to precede the New Zealand drive," Major Munroe's recording of that late winter period explains. "The city of Cassino and the Abbey were in ruins, but the Germans received few casualties in their deep dugouts, concrete-and-steel pillboxes, and strong fortifications. The New Zealand troops advanced a few miles into the valley, but little was gained. The Cassino effort, in fact, led to a critical reexamination of the use of air power in direct support of ground forces. The Gustav Line battle was on the verge of a stalemate, although casualties were still suffered by Allied troops."

On March 1 the Daily Bulletin had listed 392 patients, including 79 admissions. On March 9 the patient roll had increased to 426, with an even 100 admissions. Six days later, when the intensive bombing of Monte Cassino was resumed, the hospital had 232 patients. Two days later the patient load was down to 200 and to the end of the month it continued to decline.

The Bulletin of March 21 announced the promotion of Second Lieutenant Odessa M. Lindsey to first lieutenant and the welcoming to the hospital of Second Lieutenant Ruth Dierker, formerly of the 52th Station Hospital. Four days earlier Colonel Wood had welcomed Captain Henry Doubilet and Captain Harold Grosselfinger.

One week after the announcement of the arrival of Captains Doubilet and Grosselfinger, on March 24, the Bulletin carried the announcement:

"THE HOSPITAL OFFICIALLY CLOSED 1200 HOURS 24 MARCH 1944"

The announcement added that "All Passes and Leaves will terminate at 2300 hours, 25 March—no passes after that time, until further notice."

On March 24 the hospital had on its rolls 53 patients. The following day no patients were listed. Dispositions had been made of all patients. A notice to officers and nurses revealed that "Trucks will be ready at 0800 hours for those Officers and Nurses moving Sunday. Hand luggage will be carried on personal trucks."

The Sunday March 26, Bulletin carried the single notice:

"Approximately one-half of the personnel and organizational equipment moved to new location, 1 mile north of Nocelletto, Italy."

The Monday, March 27, Bulletin was equally brief. It announced:

"Completed movement of Personnel and Organization Equipment to new Hospital location, 1 mile north of Nocelletto, Italy."

Major Munroe summarized the work of the hospital

from the beginning of its operations at the Riardo site near Vairano, beginning November 7, 1943, and continuing until its closing March 24:

"The hospital was officially opened for a total of 138 days, during which time we admitted and cared for 9,793, almost ten thousand, patients, with a mortality rate of 0.77." That was one death in 130.

His account of the moving to the new site is more detailed than the Daily Bulletin's. It reveals:

"On 26 March 1944 approximately one-half of the unit personnel and organizational equipment were moved by trucks to a new location, two miles southeast of Carinola. To reach our new site, the trucks went south toward Naples and then turned west on Highway 7 toward the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea. We turned off Highway 7 to a smaller route to the south that after a few miles emptied us into a field that was to be our home. The remainder of the unit was transported on 27 March 1944. The hospital was set up and officially opened at 0800 hours on 29 March 1944."

March 28 Colonel Wood announced that Captain Earl Rasmussen had joined the 38th.

The following day the Daily Bulletin reported:

"THE HOSPITAL OFFICIALLY OPENED AS OF 0800 HOURS 29 MARCH 1944."

The next day the Bulletin listed four patients and 636 vacant beds. It also announced the meeting that afternoon at 2:30 o'clock in the Mason-Dixon Theatre of the medical officers of the Fifth Army for a conference on the subject, "Epidemiological and Clinical Aspects of Infectious Hepatitis." Happily, for all personnel, it also announced that enlisted men, officers and nurses would be paid at Detachment Headquarters.

"Blood Transfusions" was the subject of another Fifth Army medical conference, held April 6.

Operation of the 38th at the new location was short-lived. The April 7 Bulletin carried the announcement:

"THE HOSPITAL OFFICIALLY CLOSES AT 1200 HOURS 7 APRIL 1944."

The number of patients on that day was 255.

During the period from the official closing March 24 of the hospital in the vicinity of Vairano and near Riardo until its closing April 7 near Carinola, Captain Jack Montgomery had been making several entries in his diary and one of them had been extended to ten lines. On March 25, 1944, he had recorded:

Hospital closed today.

His ten-line entry was written two days later:

Left location near Riardo this morning. Arrived near Carinola in about an hour. This is the best location we have had in Italy. Green fields with trees. The engineers have

done a good job with drainage & roads. Bob & I have a good tent. We were all settled by supper time. Anteo came with us.

His next two entries:

March 29th. Hospital opened noon today.

April 5th. Buck got his orders to go home today. We are leaving this nice location. 2nd. Lt. Clarke & 2nd Lt. Johnson arrived to enlarge anes. dept.

He was referring to the transfer of Captain Medearis to the states, and to the stories going the rounds of the hospital that the unit itself would soon be moving.

"We knew that the unit was slated for Anzio," Major Munroe's account continues, "but we did not know when. We knew that the Carinola site was really a staging area for our Anzio takeoff. We were off the beaten path, so, of course, had very little hospital work. To keep mind and body occupied, all efforts were directed toward making our camp site a show place. The neatly arranged hospital and personnel tents, the crushed stone roadways, the whitewashed stones that lined the walkways and roadways, the abundant grass of the area, all these things added to the neatness of our area. The Fifth Army weekly medical meeting met at our 'Dixie Theatre.' Our time was spent twiddling thumbs, playing checkers or chess, bridge or poker, writing letters, and speculating on what was to come. Due to our uncertainty as to when we were to leave, everyone was closely kept on or near the area. We walked about the surrounding terrain but were always fearful of mines."

During the short stay there, from March 26 to April 8, Major Munroe revealed, the hospital admitted and cared for 311 patients.

The Charlotte surgeon continues his account:

"In the early afternoon of 7 April 1944 we were briefed on the facts of our ordered Anzio venture. On 8 April we were transported by trucks to the reconditioned harbor of Naples, where we embarked on two relatively small, but rugged, fast and compact L.C.T.'s. The trucks containing our hospital equipment were run into the L.C.T.'s, from where they could rapidly disembark on their own power upon our Anzio arrival. The officers, nurses and enlisted men were equally divided in the two L.C.T.'s. The night was moonless and black as we rather smoothly sailed toward our destination."

Captain Montgomery, too, recorded the unit's moving from the Carinola area. The entry was made in his diary on April 8:

We left the location near Carinola at 9:30 A.M. Arrived at Nedisa (near Naples) at 11:30. In a few minutes were on board LST 327. It is a remarkable boat. Bow opens for

tanks & trucks to drive in. We are divided into two groups. Weighed anchor at 1930 hours. A full moon at nine o'clock.

The next day, April 9, 1944, Captain Montgomery continued his report of the 38th's move to a new location:

Arrived at Anzio 0730 hrs. It has been shelled & bombed but not so damaged as Battapaglia. We went as rapidly as possible to our truck & out to the 56th area. One shell landed near us on the way. Quite a noise, but not visible.

The 56th personnel has gone. Our tents are all dug in & sandbagged on all sides. Shell fire is intermittent & we can hear them whistle overhead. Saw one explode across the road today. "The lonesome polecat" has been busy. This has been a busy Easter Sunday.

Two decades after that Anzio experience, several former officers of the 38th, including Major Montgomery, were reminiscing about those lively days on the Italian seacoast just south of Rome and "the lonesome polecat" to which Jack Montgomery had referred in his diary notation. What did he mean by "lonesome polecat," one of them wanted to know.

Dr. Hunter Jones recalled that it was also referred to by the soldiers as "the Anzio Express." He explained:

"We had been called up because one of the hospitals there had been bombed and they were sent back to rest; we were asked to replace them. As soon as we arrived in the harbor these shells started coming over. I got into a two-and-a-half-ton truck with some fellows and we started out, and the shells were coming over, but we finally made it into our camp. Then we saw tremendous holes on the ground right beside our tents, and somebody asked, 'What's that hole doing there?' and another fellow said, 'Oh, that. That's what the Anzio Express did.' Others called it 'the lonesome polecat.'

"We were right down on the coast," George Snyder added in further explanation, "and there was a mountain right behind us, and it had a tunnel cut into it in which they had placed a sixteen-inch gun—I saw it later on a train up around Rome. From time to time the enemy would pull it out of the tunnel and fire it, and the shell coming over us sounded like a freight train flying over your head. The shells were going over the airport and some houses down on the beach and they sounded just like a long freight train rolling by. That's why they called it 'the Anzio Express.' Others spoke of it as 'the lonesome polecat.' I never did exactly get the connection, but both terms, I was told, were used in speaking of the great gun firing down from the mountainside."

So warm had been their reception at Anzio, members of the 38th recall vividly two decades afterwards, that at the first opportunity they had to do so they began