WORLD WAR II EXPERIENCES

of

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World War II was a very important part of my life just as it was in the lives millions of other young men. Those of us who survived the conflict came back to a way of life that was rapidly changing. The war against Hitler's Germany had to be fought, and it had to be won, or live with the prospect that all freedoms might be lost.

The country was on the brink of war in August,1941 when I graduated from the Teacher's College at Springfield, Missouri. The draft was in force and many young men had already been called to service. My draft status was uncertain, but I was 1-A with no idea when I might be called. I had trained to be a teacher, but the school administrators where I was interviewed, were reluctant to hire me because of the uncertainty of when I might have to leave. My sister, Marie Stillwell, Who lived in Alton, Illinois, suggested that I go there to look for work which I did. In a haphazard way I looked, but I didn't know how to approach job hunting systematically. My future father-in-law, George Bonnell, who worked for the Owens Illinois Glass Company, used his influence and got me a job with that company. At that time he wasn't a prospect to be my father-in-law. That was his way of being a good neighbor.

On my first day of work I was assigned to a jar capping machine in the packing department. The machine kept jamming which slowed production; thus, creating much confusion. I was working the afternoon shift which was scheduled to run from 2:00 P. M.to 10 P. M. About 9:00 o'clock, the shift foreman, Oma Hefley, came and asked me to work the next shift, too, since my the relief man had called and said that he couldn't make it. I was young, naive, and needed a job; so I said all right. The next morning at 6:00 A. M., after working sixteen hours straight, I was dead tired. I stumbled out to the city bus and rode it to Washington and Benbow then started walking the rest of the way. As I was approaching Spalding Ave., I met George Bonnell's daughter, Myra, who was on her way to Alton High where she was a senior. I was embarrassed for her to see me in my dirty work clothes. She was a sweet young high school student who I knew only in a casual way, but I was interested, yet too shy to do anything about it. Myra was more than five years younger, so I was reluctant to push a relationship with

a young girl. Besides that, I was not adept in approaching the opposite sex. We greeted each other with a big smile and kept moving. I remember even now how cute she was.

After the first few days, I was assigned to two lehrs in the packing department where I worked as a checker. My work was with the newly manufactured glass bottles as they came down the assembly line. Girl packers took the bottles off the lehr, packed them into boxes and then placed the boxes on a roller. My job was to load the packed ware from the roller onto a cart which then went to the warehouse. I also kept a record of production, figured the time of job changes and notified the machine foreman of it, inspected a sampling of the ware that the packers were discarding as defective, and turned in a record of production to the office of the superintendent. My pay was seventy cents per hour plus a small production bonus.

I worked at Owens Illinois until April 1942. During that time I lived with Bob and Marie Stillwell at 2907 Fernwood Ave in Alton. Marie was my sister. Her husband, Bob, was from Tuscumbia, too, and he worked for Union Electric Power Company. In April, 1942 I went to the recruiting station in Alton and volunteered for the draft. The order came in a few days to report to East St. Louis for a physical examination. Many soldiers earlier had been turned down because of bad teeth. I just knew that this would be my lot, too. After the examination, and while waiting for the results, an enlistee walked back from the latrine and said that he had seen the pass list, and David Bear's name was not on it. As I sat waiting to be told to go home a sergeant came out and read off a list of names that included mine. I knew then that I had failed until he said, "Raise your right hand and repeat after me." A surprised young man took the oath of allegiance, and very shortly was on the way to the Scott Field Reception Center.

At Scott we received several days of instruction, immunization shots, an issue of G.I. clothes, mess gear, gas mask, and miscellaneous items.

For the weekend I returned to Alton to visit and to say another goodbye. My visit was with Bob and Marie; however, I remember going next door and saying goodbye to the Bonnells. Myra said something about writing to me and I agreed that I would write to her.

Camp Barkley, Texas

Shortly after returning to Scott Field a large group of new recruits was loaded on a train headed for an unknown destination. These new soldiers had received their immunization shots just a few days before and many were feeling quite low. One of the young men from Tennessee became deathly sick from the smallpox immunization. During the train ride, time hung

heavily on our hands. I sat across from a seat that had the service records on it. I sneaked a look and discovered my record and scanned the test scores. I discovered to my amazement that my I.Q. score was at the 99th percentile. The reason I was amazed was that I didn't believe that I had much ability. My school grades were not impressive until the last two years at Springfield. I was informed by a sergeant that the Medical Department of the army selected persons who scored highly on this test for special assignments and for training in special schools. These two pieces of information did much to improve my self esteem, and have been helpful ever since.

The train traveled all day and in the middle of the night passed through Texarkana. Next day the train stopped in Dallas where there was a short layover and an opportunity to leave the train for a short time. I visited the USO and became acquainted with their services. This was the first time I had been in the southland, and on this occasion, I saw the "put down" of a little black shoeshine boy. A shoplady thought the little boy was getting too pushy with his solicitation of business so she castigated him for it. We left Dallas not knowing our destination. Upon arriving at Abilene, we had a good idea about where we were going. The train continued on to Camp Barkley. The details of our arrival have faded from memory. We arrived in the middle of May, and were scheduled to stay for twelve weeks.

I was assigned to a wall tent with a wooden floor along with four other young men. The walls of the tent could be rolled up to catch the breezes and the dust of west Texas. The first week of our stay consisted of indoctrination and more shots. Medical records have difficulty catching up with soldiers on the move, so the shots were given to us again. Long lines formed at the dispensary as the platoons lined up. On one occasion, my tent mates and I decided to have some fun. Three of us were involved. We received our shots, then on cue one of the men faked a fainting spell. The rest of us carried him down alongside the long line of waiting soldiers to scare them a little. This increased their apprehension greatly, and amused the perpetrators immensely.

My tent mates were David Saville from Alton, John Stokes from Taylorville, a man named Georgeoff from Granite City, and another man whose name I have forgotten. They were good soldiers.

Mail started arriving soon after I notified those at home of my new address. True to her promise, Myra also started writing. These letters were mostly the newsy type for the first several months, but gradually, her letters and mine began to show an increased interest in one another.

The weeks spent at Camp Barkley were rigorous. We all arrived in poor physical condition and left with our manhood much improved. Much time was spent in close order drill, calisthentics, hiking, maneuvers, inspections, sex lectures, first aid classes, dress parades, and many others. Much of our training was directed toward dealing with casualties in the field. This weather was hot, dry and dusty.

One of the major objectives of basic training was to establish military discipline. Individuality was to be submerged to the needs of the army. Officers and noncoms had to be obeyed without question so no nonsense was tolerated. One young soldier in another platoon committed a serious offense that resulted in restriction of the whole platoon to the base for a week. Soldiers hate to be punished for the sins of one person, so in this case the platoon lined up, took off their belts, and made the violator run by this long line of soldiers where each one swatted him with a belt. I feel sure that this made him a more responsible soldier.

I was able to go to Abilene a few times while at Camp Barkley, but it was always disappointing. The town was so overwhelmed by the thousands of soldiers that one had a great feeling of loneliness. The state of Texas allowed local option to each county concerning the sale of liquor. This particular county was dry, so many men went to the closest town in the next county and made their purchases. Some of the noncoms who had cars made money by buying the liquor and hauling it back to camp and selling it at a profit. This never bothered me since I had no use for the stuff. Abilene had a lot of camp followers, that is young girls, who were there for various reasons. Some came to be near a husband or a sweetheart, and others were there to entertain. Abilene had all the sins of a boom town.

Pay for being a soldier at that time was $21.00 per month, and out of this we were required to pay $6.70 per month for a life insurance policy. Soldiers who used wine and women had a hard time financially. Many sent home for money but I never did. After a few months, the pay for privates was raised to $50.00 per month. Before this raise, there was a popular song with the title: "$21.00 Per Day Once a Month."

During the last two weeks of basic training, our company hiked about twenty miles from camp where we bivouacked for several nights. This was my first experience living under field conditions and being on maneuvers. West Texas is one of the hottest places imaginable in the summertime, so keeping cool was a problem. Many of the men compared the heat of Texas with the heat of a place referrd to in the Bible. The terrain was hilly and the climate was arid. Rattlesnakes were prevalent in the area. I never saw any, but everyone was cautious.

The training dealt with simulated war conditions where the things learned in classrooms and demonstrations were applied under field conditions. Most of the exercises involved giving first aid at the battlefront, then evacuating the wounded to a battalion aid station a few hundred yards behind the front line. Evacuation was done by litter bearers so we practiced carrying simulated wounded to a simulated battalion aid station where our real M.D's assigned to the unit gave simulated treatment to the simulated wounded. At the battalion aid station, ambulances were waiting to evacuate the simulated wounded to a hospital still farther from the front. Later, the officers evaluated the efficiency of the operation and followed this with other classes.

My assignment was to "D" company which included about 180 soldiers divided into four platoons. The entire company was involved in the bivouacking. This was my first experience living under field conditions. The company, including the officers, marched the twenty miles. The cooks and the drivers of the necessary vehicles such as ambulances and supply trucks were the only ones who rode. The mess tent had a roof for protection from the sun and rain, the officers slept in wall tents, and there were tents for the battalion aid station. The remainder, which included the enlisted men, slept in open-faced pup tents. Each soldier carried one-half of a pup tent in his pack. He teamed with another soldier to complete the small shelter. Each soldier also carried two army blankets. Since these tents were open in the front, it was possible for rain to blow in. At such times the rain coat could be hung which helped somewhat. Critters could get in at any time, but none did. I was scared that a rattlesnake might get lonesome and need human companionship during the middle of the night. There were also armadillos that could have entered but didn't, and mosquitoes and other insects that did keep us company.

In World War I, the Germans used poison gas, and it was fully expected that they would do the same in the present conflict. Because of this, all soldiers were trained in how to recognize the presence of the different gases, and how to know them by their smell. Instruction was also given in how to use the gas mask, and several trips were made to a gas chamber to test the effectiveness of the equipment.

Looking back on this field experience, I now consider it a pleasant one. The war hadn't directly touched us yet, and we were trying not to think very far ahead, so we worked hard and tried to enjoy the present. I became associated with young men from all across our country which was true of all my army assignments. I gradually developed a more cosmopolitan outlook.

As the twelve weeks were drawing to a close, we began thinking about our next assignments. There were many possibilities. Some would be assigned to fighting units to serve

as first aid men at the front, and others as litter bearers. Others might work in battalion aid stations which were the medical units closest to the front line, then others might be assigned to hospitals farther to the rear. The most serious cases of wounded usually were evacuated to a general hospital. From here some could be returned to their frontline unit after a period of treatment and rehabilitation. If there were little possibility of restoring the patient to active duty, he was usually sent to a general hospital back home. These were a few of the kinds on medical units that one could be assigned to directly from basic training. Within each of these units there were many kinds of jobs that one could be assigned to. Another possibility, and one that I preferred, was to be sent for further training at a specialized school. Upon entering the service I asked for a job as a bacteriologist. This interest had developed at Springfield where I had majored in biology including a course in bacteriology. Even though I had requested this assignment when I enlisted, I never dreamed that it would be considered in war time.

The day we had been anticipating finally arrived, and my assignment was to go to the Fitzsimons General Hospital at Denver for twelve-weeks of training in the medical laboratory school. I was really pleased with this assignment since it would mean a future assignment to a hospital unit.

Fitzsimons Hospital

The train ride to Denver is something that has left my memory. It appears that train rides are not very interesting. Our arrival was sometime around the first of August. From the very first day I liked this assignment. The school was a real challenge with all the lectures, demonstrations, visual presentations, tests, etc. Not only the school made an impression, but the officers and noncoms treated us with respect. There was no bed check. We could be gone over night as long as we were back on time for duty; however, I had no need for this leniency. There were no special details such as K.P, guard duty, marching, etc. On Sunday we were free to leave for the day which I often did. Two times I went to the USO in Denver on Sunday morning and received a free ride to the mountains. The citizens were interested in doing something for the servicemen, so many of them would use their rationed gasoline and tires to help the men in service. This was the mood of the country, since patriotism was running high.

The school was composed of students who supposedly had the mental ability to handle a crash course. Most of them did very well, and some I had the pleasure of working with the rest of my army career. I am not sure what happened to one "good ole boy" from Texas who was doing poorly on the tests. One day he was discussing his academic problem with some other

students, when one asked what he did in civilian life. He replied; "I teached, but I didn't teach like they do here. I just writ the questions on the board and had the kids answer them."

Bamber Wright, a boyhood friend from Tuscumbia visited me once while he was stationed at Lowery Field. Bamber tried to make it as a pilot, but finally did some other work in the Air Corps.

Some time during my stay at Fitzsimons, My Dad, Sister Susie, and her husband, Harold Pryor, drove out to visit me. The visit was a big help to me. My mother couldn't come because of her struggle with Parkinson's disease. During their visit, we drove to the mountains, but I don't remember exactly where, except one place was a drive up Pike's Peak. On the way up, the altitude affected Harold, so he turned the driving over to me. This was the first time that any of them had been to Colorado, so it was an enjoyable trip for all. I don't know how they obtained the gasoline to make the trip since it was strictly rationed.

Well! I passed the course at Fitzsimons. With twelve weeks now behind us, the new assignments came out, and about twelve of us were to be sent to the 17th General Hospital, a unit just forming at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. We said goodbye to a happy twelve weeks knowing that from now on there was to be much uncertainty in our lives.

Camp McCoy

Those train rides must have been a bore, because fifty years later as I write this, I remember nothing about it. We did arrive, however, and joined several hundred other young men who had been assigned to the 17th General. Our medical detachment was now up to strength with 500 enlisted men plus about 100 doctors and nurses.

Our arrival was in mid October. The army sent us to Texas in the heat of summer and to Wisconsin in the cold of winter. The winter was very severe with several feet of snow that stayed several months. Our hospital had no mission to perform except to wait for orders to pack up and go overseas. These orders came eight months later which gave us too much time to loaf. This was a most boring time in my life. The officers tried to find work for us, but there was no need for our skills in the base hospital since it was already staffed. Some classes were set up that were rather stupid. We were already trained in first aid, so a major stood before a group of us showing how to tear adhesive tape. This activity did not excite my cerebral powers, so my mind wandered. My inattention showed, and the major finally looked at me and said, "Is this too complex

for you?" I responded with, "No Sir!" A laboratory was finally established in two small rooms of a barracks, but it was too small for many of us to work at the same time. The only patients were members of our own detachment of 600 persons who came down with colds and runny noses. They became real guinea pigs in the sense that we ran many unnecessary tests.

Since we were not a combat unit, there was no training in the field available for us. We were fortunate in that respect, since many soldiers of the 2nd Division on maneuvers suffered frozen fingers, toes and ears. Many of the men from our unit went to Sparta and LaCrosse frequently for wine and women, but very little song. During this period I had a ten-day furlough which enabled me to go home and see Dad and Mom and my brother and sisters at Tuscumnbia. We had a very good time visiting, but when I left, it must have been very difficult for Dad and Mom to see me go, not knowing when they would see me again. I had feelings like that too. After visiting at home for a few days, I next went to Alton to see the Stillwells, but now I had another interest, too. Myra and I had become great friends through writing, so we needed some time together. I don't remember all we did, but I do remember one happening. One day on a trip to St. Louis we were sitting on a bench waiting to catch the interurban streetcar back to Alton, when Myra looked up at me and said, "Do you love me?" The only response I could think to say was, "Yes, I do." after that We were not so shy, so we started talking about our future together. Our decision was that we should wait until after the war to get married. Following our decision to be sweethearts, the letters were more frequent and more "lovey dovey."

I had a three-day pass while at Camp McCoy to go home to attend Grandma Abbett's funeral. Travel was by train and the trains were crowded, resulting in delays. The funeral was under way when I arrived, so I missed it, but I did have a good visit with my family. I also saw Myra for a short time. My grandfather, David C. Bear, Passed away during my time in service, but I couldn't return home for it. My grandparents were all great people. My grandfather, David, lived with us during my growing-up years, and he had a great influence upon all his grandchildren.

About the time of my arrival at Camp McCoy, the 42nd infantry regiment made up of Japanese Americans, were shipped in. The second Infantry Division from Texas was also sent in for winter training. This created a problem. Antipathy toward the Japanese was very high, and this carried over to hatred for the Japanese Americans. Most Japanese Americans were still in internment camps in the west, and many Americans distrusted them. The young soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Regiment were eager to prove that they were loyal Americans, and later in the war they proved this without question; however, at Camp McCoy they received

much abuse from members of the 2nd Division. Many fights were provoked by the men in the 2nd Division which usually resulted in many of the Nisei getting hurt.

An incident occurred in my barracks one night that involved me. A soldier from my floor in the barracks came in drunk and talked about going out and beating up on some Japs, and he demanded that I go with him. I refused, and he called me a "dirty Jap lover" and started toward me with his pocket knife open. I was a little narrow minded about this, so I grabbed the only thing readily available, an army cot, and started toward him hoping to knock him off his feet, and then grab some other object to clobber him. When he saw me coming he backed off. This was the second time in my life that someone had drawn a knife on me, and, both times, the aggressor backed off when he saw retaliation coming. People like this are usually cowards at heart, and won't stand up to resistance.

Graduation from Fitzsimons carried with it a rating of "Technician Grade 5" which is the equivalent of corporal. Upon arrival at Camp McCoy, we found other young men assigned to our laboratory who had not had such training and were still privates. This was true for other specialties too, such as Xray technicians, dental technicians, etc. We became a threat to those who were there ahead of us. They were mostly from the Detroit area along with the cadre of doctors from the Harper Hospital who initiated the unit. The Fitzsimons' group came in with two stripes, whereas none had been given yet to the others. This caused animosity as the Table of Organization was gradually filled out, with most promotions going to those from Fitzsimons. The rivalry thus created existed for the duration but on a subdued scale. In softball and other sports, there was always a Fitzsimons team versus all the rest.

Another problem was created by Colonel Carstens, who I later dubbed as "Chicken Colonel Carstens." As detachment commander, he assigned two pathologists to the lab and had promised both that they could be Chief of Lab Services. Both were from Detroit, Captain Carlyle Payne, and Captain McClure. The Table of Organization only called for one doctor, so a choice had to be made. For the enlisted men, the wrong person got the job. Captain McClure was a personable man who all could relate to, and Captain Payne was an egotist interested only in his own advancement. With the enlisted men, Captain Payne became a major pain long before he finally became Major Payne.

At Camp McCoy, I made some very good friends, some of whom I corresponded with for many years. Most of these friends are now deceased. To name a few: Leowen Bassett, Otis Crozier, Walter Mueller, Joe Dan Prado, Joel Martin, and Jean Linford. Joel was the brains of the group. Jean was a highly moral person from Utah who minded his own business and was respected by all.

The stay at Camp McCoy ended sometime in July, 1943 when orders came to ship out. After much preparation and packing, we boarded a troop train headed east. I remember nothing about the train ride, but at the end, we found ourselves at Camp Patrick Henry near Newport News, Virginia. Many other military units were there waiting to be shipped out by boat. Several days were required for the brass to get our departure worked out. While waiting, the base officers asked for some help from our medical officers. One of our doctors drafted Walter Mueller, an enlisted man, to help with the physical examination of some WACS to clear them for overseas duty. Walter, a 35-year old bachelor, had a great time. The WACS were in a waiting room clad only in a sheet that was supposed to have been draped around them. Many of the girls found the sheet a hindrance, so they walked around clad only in their skin most of the time. Walt worked with the doctor during the examination, so he had a front row seat. When he came to the barracks bemoaning his hard day of work, we all sympathized with him. He thought it was a tough job, but somebody had to do it, so he made the sacrifice. How sad!! Sometimes life is cruel.

Ocean Voyage

After a few days of loafing, we loaded on a troopship formerly known as the "Empress of Scotland." It had previously been a passenger liner, and was a fast ship compared with the speed of many navy ships. We were sent on our way unescorted because of the ship's speed; however, we were required to change direction every seven minutes to prevent a German U-boat from lying in wait. Our ship could outrun the U-boats, but the change of direction was necessary to prevent them from charting our position. Most troop ships traveled in a convoy, and when we heard that we were traveling alone, it gave us an eerie feeling.

The ship was crowded with several thousand GI's. They were everywhere. I was assigned to one of the lower decks which was too hot and crowded for me. Joe Dan Prado and I decided to sleep on the top deck out in the open and blend in with some of the infantry that was assigned there. We were not apprehended, so we spent the rest of the trip sleeping under the stars.

Our food consisted of two meals per day that most of us found lousy. The ship was British owned, and they were paid so much per day for each soldier transported. To increase their profits they fed us for as little cost as they felt they could get away with. To further increase their profits, they operated a store where we could buy packaged food items. I was a good customer, since the food was so terrible in the mess. One time we were served boiled liver and onions for breakfast. Yum yum!

Any time you find a group of soldiers together, you will find a poker game and a crap game. Many of these went on day after day on the way over. Usally a few sharpies wound up with

most of the money. Gambling fever got in the way of good judgment, so that some of the soldiers were always penniless with most of the money gravitating to the sharpies. A private only made $50.00 per month and a corporal $66.00, and every penny was needed. I didn't participate in this sport.

Nights on the ocean were beautiful. Prado and I stayed on the top deck all night, so we would stand at the railing and see the stars and the moon shining on the waters. It was so peaceful and so difficult to believe that the world was in such a mess. During the daytime the porpoises and the flying fish were interesting to watch. This was my first experience on the Atlantic Ocean so there were many wonders to observe. In the back of our minds was always the thought, that at any moment, a torpedo could quickly send us to the great beyond. Faith in God was always uppermost in our minds.

Casablanca, Morocco

After many days, perhaps seven, we landed at Casablanca, Morocco in Africa. Debarking from the ship has been completely erased from my memory. This event occurred in July, 1943 shortly after the Germans and Vichy French had been defeated for control of North Africa. From the docks where we landed, we were loaded into trucks and taken to an open area outside city. The spot assigned to us was probably part of a farm. Many soldiers and much armored equipment and military supplies were in evidence. The military was engaged in a big build-up to go somewhere. We anticipated an invasion of Europe, but didn't know where.

After arriving at our assigned space, pup tents were pitched and these were to be our tabernacles for the next six weeks. Each soldier carried half a pup tent in his pack, so two soldiers teamed up to complete a shelter. These tents were open at the front, so in the event of rain, a raincoat was hung across the opening. These tents were tall enough for a soldier to sit but not stand. Duffel bags containing gear and clothing were stored in back of where one laid his head. After the gear was stored it became a little crowded. The ground was the mattress. There was no canvas floor, so dust presented a problem. Every little pebble felt like a boulder before morning. The days were hot, but the night air was so cold that we slept in our clothes to keep warm. Two blankets were insufficient. For a pillow I used the gas mask, which was the only thing I used it for throughout the war. The helmet consisted of an outer steel shell and an inner liner which could be worn by itself. The steel helmet had many uses: shaving, washing, general bathing and the washing of clothes. Looking back on the living arrangements, I am happy I did it while a young man.

The mess kitchen was under a canvas top, where three times

per day the cooks prepared and served our meals. At the beginning of our stay, while the cooking team was getting set up, we were served C-rations which was a can of hash and another can containing hard biscuits and a hunk of chocolate. Later in the war, K-rations were used which was somewhat better. When the kitchen was operational, the cooks did a good job considering the fact that they used much dehydrated food, and the rest mainly from tin cans. The coffee was usually good and there was plenty of it.

At meal time the soldiers would line up and wait to be served. The aluminum mess gear, cup and tableware constituted our place setting. Upon getting the food, we usually ate standing up. When finished, the leftovers were put in a garbage can, the mess gear rinsed in cold water, then washed in hot soapy water, and finally a rinse in hot water. Following this, the gear was air dried.

Our unit was in a holding pattern in a staging area. This term refers to a temporary place used while the unit was in waiting for a more permanent assignment. There was no real work for us to do, so the soldiers filled the void with poker, crapshooting, softball, writing letters, loafing, and visiting Casablanca. The officers never liked to see GI's loafing, so they used their fertile minds to conjure up stupid projects. One such project was an assignment to pick up little pebbles from a horse-racing track and move them to a less visible position. Much goldbricking was done on inane projects like this, so we worked all morning picking up pebbles , and when our truck came to haul us back to camp, we tossed the rocks back on the track. I went out on another assignment with several men where our job was to knock apart some wooden packing crates, then use the lumber to build chairs for the officers to use at the outdoor theater. It seemed to us that this project contributed very little to the war effort, so after working all day making one chair, we took it back to camp with us. The base officers didn't appreciate the hard work done by the men from the 17th General Hospital. Our own officers didn't seem to be concerned about it. At least we were never disciplined.

Occasionally I went to Casablanca. The place seemed eerie so I didn't like it. The culture seemed strange and I didn't trust the people. When going to town, I would always be with others. The city was overrun with soldiers of several nationalities plus many Arab natives. The soldiers called them "Ay rabs." The natives here would kill for the clothes on your back which then would be sold on the black market. I went to a beach one day on the Atlantic which was the first time I ever swam in the ocean. Here I experienced a strong undertow which later I found out was quite dangerous. A few other times I went to town, walked the downtown streets, visited small shops and made a few purchases. The French influence was quite evident

which added a bit of interest.

Young soldiers admire young girls. There was much whistling as our truck would haul us places. Some soldiers did more than whistle. Some developed intimate relations with members of the female gender, and married men were the worst offenders. Many young Moslem girls became involved with soldiers which made them outcasts in their own society. After the GI's moved many of these girls were either starved to death or killed. There was a real clash of cultures.

The Arabs in the neighborhood next to our camp were very poor, and scavenged everything that we threw away. They smoked our cigarette butts, ate our garbage, and grabbed every tin can they could find. A soldier could get almost any favor in exchange for these items. An Arab farmer adjacent to our camp had four wives and many children. One day upon seeing a crowd and hearing commotion, I walked over to see what was going on. One of the women near the woven wire fence surrounding our campground, was trying to reach a gallon tin can, and in doing so, was jabbering to the soldiers in her native language. The soldiers knew that she wanted the can, so one of them motioned to her to pull up her dress and show off. She promptly obliged and received her can. The Army tried to keep the natives and soldiers apart, but a fence doesn't always do it.

I received a very bad scare one night on guard duty. An army post exchange (known as a P.X.) had been established at a facility recently taken over from the natives. It consisted of a building and a large courtyard. Our soldiers spent time there relaxing. One day while I was there, one of the GI's accidentally let his rifle go off and it killed one of the native men. At night just outside this facility, an American guard from the infantry was always placed on duty to watch the place. For some reason, on the night of this killing, the base officialdom called on the 17th General Hospital to furnish guards. I was erroneously assigned to this P.X site for a two-hour stretch during the middle of the night. Being in a non-combat unit, I had no rifle. The night was dark as pitch. The place was situated alongside a wooded ravine. Many of the natives would slit a person's throat for his clothes, and I was aware of that. I was fit prey for an ambitious Arab. I didn't walk the beat, but kept extremely quiet and used the darkness as my ally. This two-hour stretch of duty seemed like days. When headlights appeared in the distance, I knew that my relief was coming, and I uttered a prayer of thanks.

Another scary thing happened one night after landing at Casablanca. I heard a loud scream coming from a tent close to mine. I didn't understand what the problem was until the next morning when we were informed that a young soldier had a nightmare during the night and jumped up and started running. Standing up in a pup tent can be quite messy, and it is much

worse, if the person starts running. This particular tent was a mess. I have often tried to imagine the look of consternation that must have been on the face of the tent mate during this action. This episode was an indication that many of the young men were worried about their future.

The native Arabs wore long robes and turbans. One interesting thing was the way they took care of the call of nature. They didn't have privies like the Americans; they had another approach. When the notion struck, they simply squatted keeping their robe around them, and then enjoyed complete privacy while completing their appointed rounds. Any time we saw an Arab in that position, we knew what was happening. Arabs have another custom related to this. They eat with their fingers from a common bowl, so because of this, they only use the hand for eating that is not used in performing the sanitary procedures necessary for the above job. This custom probably developed because of a shortage of water in this region.

After several weeks at Casablanca the base officers sent orders to our commander for a detail of men to clean out some boxcars. I was on this detail with several other soldiers, and after getting to the site, we were informed that this train was being readied for the 17th General Hospital to take a joyride. We didn't know where we would be riding off to, but it had to be north. These boxcars were small and ran on a narrow gauge track. Soldiers of World War I called these cars the "Forty and Eight," which meant forty men or eight horses. The previous cargo must have been horses, since there was still a copious quantity of hors d'oeuvres left from the previous trip. After working several hours, the cars were much cleaner, but the cracks in the floor still contained remnants of horses.

Oran, Algeria

I don't remember the number of cars in the train, but my estimate is about twenty-five. Our detachment of 500 enlisted men and 100 officers plus gear and personal belongings made up the cargo. Within a day or two we loaded and started rolling. The enlisted men were jammed into the cars so tight that there wasn't room for everyone to lie down at the same time. I didn't count the number in each car, but I suspect that forty was about the correct number. The doors of the boxcars were kept open during the trip, even though there was some apprehension that snipers might still be in the vicinity. On this trip. I was fortunate in being assigned to the sanitation detail, and was able to ride and sleep in comfort in the boxcar that carried the equipment. One piece of equipment was a lister bag; a large canvas bag in which water was purified for drinking. There were only three of us assigned to this detail, so we had good sleeping quarters on top of some of the supplies.

The train traveled slowly moving north through the countryside, and finally arrived at Oran, Algeria where we were assigned to another staging area. At this location our living quarters were much better. We were in wall tents with four-to-six persons per tent. We had no meaningful work to do at Oran either, so another six weeks were spent loafing, card playing, playing softball and other forms of fun. At this location the rivalry between the Fitzsimons group and all the other 470 enlisted men, was expressed through intense games of softball. There were ample opportunities to visit Oran, where I was greatly impressed with the beauty of the harbor area located on the Mediterranean.

During our stay at Oran we eagerly kept up with the war news as reported in "Stars and Stripes," the armed forces newspaper. During this time Sicily was captured and the Italian mainland was invaded with heavy fighting in the southern part. We knew that our next destination would probably be Italy.

One event highlighted how idle soldiers can create trouble for themselves. One morning, the chow line had formed for breakfast, and the serving was delayed, probably due to too much inebriation the night before by the cooks. The impatience of a few soldiers at the front of the line caused them to start banging on their aluminum mess gear with their spoons. The other soldiers picked up the cadence, and all this resulted in a very loud clamor. Our very capable officers, who were usually awake at the crack of noon, were alarmed, and ran out of their tents in various stages of undress, leaving their favorite nurse of the night behind. These officers evidently thought they were under attack by some enemy, I guess. The only thing they learned was that many GI's were hungry and wanted to eat and get back to their busy schedule of loafing. Chicken Colonel Carstens, our senile commander, was extremely disturbed at what he thought was mutinous behavior. His investigation tried to ferret out the instigators, but none of the soldiers would admit to any knowledge of it, so Chicken Colonel Carstens restricted all of us to the camp area for a period of time.

Mail was always slow in catching up with the troops. While here I received several letters from Myra. Dad was always faithful in writing, so some from him probably arrived. Mom usually appended a note to Dad's letter, but it was very difficult for her to write. Others who wrote were Marie and Bonnie. Many of these letters I kept. The folks at home had no idea where I was located. My address was an APO number in New York, and from there the Army forwarded the mail to the soldier. Usually the home folks as well as the soldier wrote their letters on V-mail stationery which was a one-page foldover that was then reduced in size and photographed. The letter that was delivered was much smaller than the original. Mail written by enlisted men was always censored, so there was no

way I could have revealed my location. Officers were a part of the intelligentia in the army, so they were not subject to censorship. Before leaving home, I worked out a code with Dad to give him some inkling of where I might be located. The arrangement was that I would write asking about the health of someone. The beginning letter in the first name would be the first letter in the name of the city where I was located. The first letter in the surname, would start the name of the country. I wrote home and asked about the health of Oscar Abbott to which he responded: "I didn't know that Oscar had been sick, and even if he were, how did you know about it"? Evidently, he had forgotten our arrangement. He didn't realize that I was trying to tell him that I was in Oran, Algeria.

While stationed here, I took several trips to the city. Much of the city was on high ground, about two hundred feet above the Mediterranean. When going to town I was always in the company of another soldier. French was the dominant language, so we all tried to learn a few words to help us get directions and to bargain in the shops. One day two of us needed directions to some place so we stopped to ask a native. He responded in an unintelligble language, of which we faked an understanding. My friend then responded "mercy mercy" for the French word "merci." We were the ones who needed the mercy. Oran had many similarities to Casablanca. The French influence was prevalent, and the inhabitants were mostly Arabic. Small shops abounded and our money was in much demand, as were our cigarettes and other items in demand on the black market. Some of the soldiers who were entrepeneurs took advantage of the opportunities to make a few bucks. I had reason to believe that the cooks and others who worked in supply had a field day in this activity. I have always felt that Oran was a good place to be from, (i.e. a long ways from).

Clothing became dirty and had to be washed. This was done by using the steel helmet as the basin and GI soap to cut the dirt. After the items were hand washed in the helmet, they were then rinsed in cold water and hung somewhere to dry. Drying was no problem in the arid climate of North Africa. Fatigue clothing was worn almost entirely at that time. This was a greenish cotton twill, which consisted of trousers, a jumper-type shirt and a hat made of the same material. These uniforms didn't show dirt readily like the khakis. Our issue of socks and underwear was two pairs each so one pair was washed every day. The underwear was light brown in color; therefore, it was difficult to know when they were clean (or dirty). Our issue of clothing at this time included two pairs of khaki trousers and two khaki shirts. Two pairs of shoes which had to be kept shined completed the wardrobe. Later in the year, O.D.'s were issued which was the woolen winter uniform.

The following is a part of army life that is not discussed openly, but it was a part of our existence; therefore I include

it. Restroom facilities must be provided for men in the field to maintain sanitary living conditions. Soldiers must construct their own, and I have done my share of this work. In Oran, we dug a straddle-trench latrine, which was a ditch about eighteen inches wide, two feet deep and perhaps ten feet long. The name straddle-trench is a description of how one uses it. This facility was surrounded by a tarpaulin for privacy, which was necessary because of the presence of nurses. This was a far cry from the amenities of home. Soldiers at the battlefront who were continually on the move, could not take time for such conveniences. Survival takes precedence over everything else when the shooting starts.

After six weeks in Oran, orders came to move again. Not much preparation was needed since we only had our personal gear to be concerned about. We were not aware of our destination, but everyone suspected Italy, since the allied armies had already established a foothold on the mainland. Our boat was a liberty ship converted from hauling cargo to hauling troops. There were a number of military units on board and the ship was crowded. I don't remember how we slept or ate. I only remember that we were scared of German U-boats. Our ship was extremely slow and it was unescorted. German submarines were not as prevalent as before the fall of Sicily; however, they were still a threat. In spite of our fears, we made the trip without incident.

Naples, Italy

Early one morning, I looked out in the distance from the top deck and saw a ball of fire which turned out to be Mt. Etna in Sicily. We knew then that our destination was Naples and that our landing was not many hours away. Several hours later, our ship steamed into the Bay of Naples. After a long delay, we were informed that the ship couldn't dock because of the damage the departing Germans had done to the piers. Orders finally came for us to prepare to leave the ship and take small boats over to the beach. Going over the sides of a ship on rope ladders carrying a full pack is not an easy thing to do. In fact it is frightening. A few soldiers who were fortunate were able to get into lifeboats that were stored on deck, and then be lowered to the water with power equipment. No such luck for me. When my turn came, I started over the side, and as I started down, I discovered that the ladder was not secured from below. Because of this, the weight of my upper body and the weight of the pack threw my descent into disarray. My feet, instead of going downward toward the small boat, tried to follow the curve of the ship's hull as it arced toward the water line. This put my body in a position almost horizontal to the water. I quickly considered many undesirable alternatives to get out of this mess, but rejected them all and decided to hang on to that rope. I still can't figure how I got down, but I distinctly remember that no one at the bottom of that ladder helped me.

After getting in the boat, I realized why they didn't help. They had gone through the same experience that I had and were still in shock.

As soon as the boat was loaded, we motored to a beach and waded ashore. As soon as I got out of the boat and moved toward a group of trucks waiting for us, I spied someone that looked familiar. Standing up on the fender of an ambulance was my boss from the glass company who had entered the army a few weeks ahead of me. He was waiting to pick up anybody who might have been injured from our landing. I had little time to talk since we were on the move. I never saw him again.

Our group was immediately loaded into the waiting trucks, and were taken to a location where I would spend the next twenty-six months of my life. The 17th General Hospital had been assigned a large Italian hospital that had been commandeered from the local authorities. It was situated near the top of a long grade, looking out over the Bay of Naples with Mt. Vesuvius in another direction spouting smoke by day and fire by night. Quite a sight for a country boy!

All enlisted men were taken to a section of the hospital grounds that had been beautified with evergreens grown to about eight feet tall. Here our pup tents were pitched, and this is where we stayed for several weeks at the height of the fall rainy season. Our arrival was around the first of October. My tent mate was Joe Prado from Nacogdoches, Texas. We immediately ditched around the tent and put cardboard on the ground with our sleeping gear on top of this. Everything we owned became damp and soon mildewy. To keep warm at night, we slept in our clothes and wrapped the two blankets around us. Cold C-rations and K-rations became our fare for the first two days. After several days of this, I caught a cold that turned to rhinitis and sinusitis which hung on for weeks.

The officers were assigned to heated buildings with comfortable beds. The nurses, who were also officers, had similar quarters which were comfortable as well. Rank had its privileges.

During these early days, we were busy getting the lab established. Equipment and supplies were unpacked, assignments of the men to departments were made by Captain Payne, and a trickle of work started coming in from the wards. Other departments of the hospital were also getting organized. Not much time passed before the work got heavy. Casualties from the front (only twenty miles away) started coming in, and sickness caused by the damp weather also produced many patients.

The mess hall was set up after a few days, and it was good to get a warm meal again. The aluminum mess gear was used, and it continued be our place setting until returning to the

States. The usual lunch lines were formed, and since there was no place to sit, we usually ate standing up. At chow time there were usually many hungry Italian children standing around watching us. They were not hungry from missing just one meal, but were instead, grossly undernourished. They would beg for handouts, and grabbed for anything that we tossed out. Their favorite expression was, "Hey Joe" to get our attention. One time I had a well-chewed piece of meat that I could not masticate, so I placed it on the side of my mess gear and headed toward the garbage can. Before I could get there a young boy ran by, grabbed the morsel, stuck it in his mouth and swallowed it. He didn't need to chew it. All the soldiers felt sorry for these kids, and we tried to help even though we were not supposed to do it.

The laboratory facility in the hospital was certainly adequate for our operation. It consisted of three rooms, an anteroom, and a sun room with a glass ceiling. The lab was on the top floor of the building. There were departments of hematology, serology, blood chemistry, bacteriology and parasitology, urology, blood bank, and histology (including autopsies). During the next twenty-six months, I worked in hematology, urology, bacteriology, and the blood bank. Each person needed skills in several areas to help with peak periods and with night emergencies. I spent more time in bacteriology and parasitology than anywhere else.

Much of the work in this department dealt with examining the body fluids for the presence of bacteria. Intestinal parasites were rampant in the Italian population, and occasionally one of the soldiers would become infected. This examination involved placing some feces on a slide and examining it under a microscope. Our hospital hired many Italians in jobs that required them to be free of the parasites, therefore, many specimens came from this source. Since these people lived in a polluted environment, it was next to impossible to keep them free of the infestation. Food handlers, especially, had to be tested for bacterial infections of the intestinal tract, such as typhoid and paratyphoids.

In bacteriology we examined all body fluids, tissues from autopsies, throat swabs, blood, etc. This was done in several ways; such as, reactions to different culture media, identification through stained slides, Physical characteristics such as size, shape, and degree of motility. Most of this work was dealing with infections such as pneumonia, typhoids, paratyphoids, strep throat, and other routine diseases. Occasionally we would find a case of tuberculosis, and one time a case leprosy. One big part of our work was with patients who had syphillis or gonorrhea. Usually these infections could be identified microscopically, especially in the early stages of the disease. Syphillis was a silent killer which had three stages: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The primary stage

is the one where a lesion is present. At this stage it is easily identified under the microscope. In the secondary stage, the disease is somewhat dormant, except perhaps for an occasional rash. The tertiary stage comes about ten-to-twenty-five years after the primary stage, and death is not far behind. At this stage almost every organ of the body is affected, especially the spinal cord which very often causes insanity. In the secondary and tertiary stages, it is extremely difficult to diagnose microscopically, so a serological examination of the patient's blood serum is usually done by the Kahn or Wasserman tests. Syphillis, especially, has been the major scourge of the centuries, and is passed on through sexual contact. There was no effective treatment for it until the development of antibiotics. Penicillin became the most effective treatment for syphillis, as well as most other infectious diseases, but it was not available until early 1944. Before the advent of penicillin, many syphillis patients died from the disease.

Another killer prior to penicillin was pneumonia. A strong immune system was necessary to fight the disease successfully. Symptoms included high fever, coughing blood, and extreme weakness. The disease reached its climax in nine days, at which time the patient died or the fever broke and improvement began. Armies through the years lost many men to this malady. I experienced the disease in 1938 before antibiotics, so I know the problem. There were thirty-two strains of the pneumococcus bacteria that caused the disease. The only treatment available early in the war, was to identify which of the thirty-two strains was the cause, and then inject the patient with serum that had specific antibodies to fight against that strain. Our lab did the identification, but it was a slow process. This treatment was of questionable value. Penicillin that became available in early 1944 revolutionized and simplified the treatment, and almost eliminated the threat of pneumonia and many other diseases. The generations of persons born after the advent of antibiotics cannot visualize life without them.

The blood bank was a big operation. As battle casualties increased, our work increased. There were two phases to this work: one was to collect blood from healthy GI's, type it and then store it until needed; and then, upon orders from a doctor for a transfusion, the patient would be typed again, and a cross match made between his blood and the blood of the donor. Occasionally there would be a big problem, especially when a severely wounded soldier with a rare blood type needed multiple transfusions. During peak periods, many of us who worked in other departments, would shift to helping in this work. It was a life-or-death matter for the wounded. Particular attention was necessary in cross-matching in order to keep from killing a patient.

I worked in urinalysis for awhile at the beginning, but

this work was so routine, that I requested a change of assignment and it was granted.

Malaria was another disease that had plagued armies for centuries, and that was true of our troops. Quinine was the standard remedy, but our supply was completely cut off when Japan invaded the East Indies. Malaria is not a bacterial disease, but a disease caused by a tiny parasite which attacks red blood cells. The anopheles mosquito is the carrier. The disease produces a high fever, and can have many complications that may affect the kidneys, liver, brain, and often can be fatal. Our hematology department was responsible for identifying the disease through stained slides of blood examined under the microscope. I worked occasionally in this department. Soldiers who entered the hospital with malaria usually became illbecause of not taking their daily dose of atabrine. This was a small yellow pill that was developed as a substitute for quinine.

The above activities represent a few of the things done in the departments where I worked. Many things were being done in the other departments, too. Blood chemistry was another important department in which I never worked, but in which there were many night emergencies to check on the amount of alcohol in the blood of soldiers who were involved in serious automobile accidents. Jeeps especially were dangerous in the hands of a drunk. There was no roof and no seat belts for protection.

An autopsy was performed on each soldier that died, and this was a job I didn't want. Charles Lambert was a large man, so he was the one that Major Payne took with him to the morgue to handle the bodies. The Major removed suspicious tissue for further examination in the lab. These tissues were imbedded in paraffin and sliced into very thin slices for microscopic examination. The Major did the examination of these tissue specimens. Jean Linford was the enlisted man who did the preparatory work for the Major, and in this job he contracted tuberculosis from handling diseased tissues. Those of us working in bacteriology also had exposure to diseases from the specimens we handled. Much soap and water and, occasionally, rubber gloves were used as a preventative.

Each day usually presented something different; however, there was a routine that we followed. Each morning about three people would go to the wards to collect blood samples. Finger punctures were used in slide preparation for differential white blood cell counts, malarial studies, blood typing, etc. Venipunctures were necessary in blood chemistry and serology. This job required most of the morning. Ambulatory patients came to the lab to have their blood taken. I became skilled in this type of work, but some of the big fat boys whose veins couldn't be seen gave a little trouble. Specimens of urine, feces and sputum were brought to the lab by ward men.

With the gathering of all these interesting specimens, we then went to work. If we didn't finish by supper time, we went back.

My laboratory friends, for most of the time, had the following assignments: Otis Crozier in serology; Charles Sheppard, Walter Mueller, Emanuel Kapitanoff in blood chemistry; Leowen Bassett, Joel Martin, and I in bacteriology and parasitology; Joe Prado, Jack Herbold, Erich Ryll, Leonard Sundquist, and Bob Adams in hematology; and Charles Lambert in the media room and in autopsy work. There was another person whose name I have forgotten.

After a few weeks of discomfort living in pup tents, we were assigned to more comfortable quarters, if an unheated building can be called comfortable. This building was the first floor of a building that was started but never finished. It was mostly the foundation for a large hospital building. This facility was rectangular with a courtyard in the center. A hallway went around the inner side next to the courtyard, and there were perhaps twenty rooms of various sizes along the outer walls. Everything in this building was unfinished; no lights, no heat, no windows, but there was a rest room with running water that the army installed. Eight men from the lab shared a room which was approximately 400 square feet in capacity. The army made no materials available to cover the windows or to provide heat. Enterprising soldiers on moonlight expeditions took care of many of our problems of supply. During the remainder of our stay in Naples, we had the comfort of sagging army cots for R & R.

Morra Giuseppe, an ex-soldier in the Italian army, was hired by the enlisted men to keep the place clean and to do whatever else was needed. Each soldier contributed something to him, usually cigarettes or soap which was better for him that our allied military currency. Giuseppe had been in the Italian Army in North Africa where he deserted and found his way back to his family in Naples. Here he hid from the authorities until the Americans arrived and then he was free. He and his wife, Tina, had several young boys. He became a good friend to all of us. We visited in his home several times which was a small apartment. Once, Tina prepared an octopus for some of our lab people, but I gave an excuse, and didn't go. I didn't want to eat octopus. Tina also did the laundry for many of us for which they preferred cigarettes in payment. Cigarettes were valuable on the black market; actually worth about $20.00 per pack. After the war, I corresponded several times with Giuseppe and sent him a few items.

The language presented a problem, but some of us learned a little Italian, and the Italians learned a little American, so we got along fairly well.

After moving to this new location, we were able to go to

Naples and vicinity on our day off. The USO was visited by me several times, but it didn't contribute much to my way of life. I went to the Isle of Capri on one occasion, and, also, to the buried cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Another time a friend and I hired a sailboat and the owner gave us a good trip on the Bay of Naples. Usually on our day off, we would go downtown and shop. Cameos and mother of pearl shells were available, and skilled workers carved many designs on them. I purchased several of these to take home with me. I bought a bracelet for Myra that had several mother of pearl carvings set in silver filigree work. Another large carving was later made into a brooch. These items were handcrafted in little shops along the street.

In the fall of the year there were many street vendors selling different kinds of food items. I well remember the roasted chestnuts that were sold hot from a little charcoal grill right on the sidewalk. They were most delicious. I have always been a fruit eater, so I purchased many oranges and apples. It's a wonder I didn't get hookworm and ascaris from eating unwashed food, since there were so many of these parasites around.

The Germans, also known as Krauts or Jerries paid little attention to the terms of the Geneva Convention. On many occasions, a siren would sound (always at night) to warn of enemy aircraft approaching. At first, we thought they were going after the port facilities or other military installations, so we would go outside to watch the criss-crossing of the tracer bullets from the antiaircraft fire. This presented a beautiful display of fireworks. When the bombs started getting closer to us, the firing was no longer beautiful. We finally got in the habit of going to an air raid shelter when the alert came in early evening. From here we could hear the bombs explode and feel the building shake from the concussion. This shelter was under the administration building close to our quarters. If the alarm came after going to bed, we were often too lazy to put our clothes back on and walk or run one-hundred yards to the shelter. This foolhardy practice came to a halt one night when a cluster of bombs were dropped on the hospital buildings. One bomb landed next to the outside wall of our living quarters. Our quarters were on the other side of that thirty-inch-thick. The bomb blew a large hole in the wall and scattered debris in our living area. Joe Prado had shrapnel go through the wood of his army cot, and a door landed on top of him resulting in a broken foot. There were a few other minor casualties in our room. From looking at the size of the big hole in the wall, I knew that the Lord had been with us. After several more months of bombing the air force finally got control of the skies over southern Italy and the raids stopped.

Major Payne, lab chief, had been a medical doctor at the Harper Hospital in Detroit. He was indeed a major pain. He

joined the hospital unit at Camp McCoy as a captain, and by fawning over the Colonel, he beat out Captain McClure for the job of chief. From the time he entered the army, he started bucking for promotion, and when he was promoted to major, he then started bucking for lieutenant colonel. He had no respect for enlisted men and they had no respect for him.

Two lieutenants were assigned to the lab; lieutenant Silverman, a chemist, and Lieutenant Edward Van Eck, a bacteriologist. They were both agreeable to work with. Lieutenant Van Eck was a Christian and was a kind and generous person. Since he was a junior officer, he couldn't do much about the Major's behavior. After the war, he went to India where he served as a missionary teacher for the Lutheran Church.

I could cite many examples of the haughtiness of our medical officers. On one occasion, I examined the feces of a nurse who was ill, and found the ova of ascaris lumbracoides (an intestinal worm). These are easy to identify and there was no doubt about my accuracy. Shortly after the report got back to the ward doctor, he called me, quite upset. He wanted to know if an officer had examined the slide. I said, "No sir," and then received a tongue lashing. I turned it over to the Major Pain. My mistake was in not knowing that officers never get gonorrhea, syphillis, or intestinal parasites. They are treated on the sly and the medical reports are faked, so that these things do not become a part of their record.

Another time Bassett and I were returning to work following lunch, and boarded the elevator on the first floor for a ride to the lab on the eighth floor. Before the door closed, a major and another officer walked up, got in, and ordered one of us to get off to lighten the load. Bassett and I both got off, thinking nothing of it, and walked up the stairway to the eighth floor. Upon arriving, this major was waiting for us and was as mad as a hornet for what he claimed was insolence. He threatened to send us to the front lines for such behavior. This was not just an idle threat, since young men who were 1-A physically were being transferred out to combat units. The charge against us was ridiculous. Both of us had good conduct medals and were smart enough to know the place of an enlisted man. Enlisted men had no recourse from this kind of treatment.

Another example of a lack of concern for enlisted men occurred one night when Major Payne called together those men who held the rank of Technician Grade Five. This gutless wonder told us that Colonel Carstens thought that the lab had too many persons at that rank. He went on to say that the only fair way to resolve this was to put our names in a box and the major would then draw out two of them. My name was drawn, so I lost the rank that had been awarded to me at Fitzsimons. This was done to fit a Table of Organization which the Colonel had

authority to amend, but no one brought it to his attention that the excess number was due to our specialized training. Major pain didn't want to jeopardize his own chances with Chicken Colonel Carstens. Several months later, the rank was restored, but I had no reason to thank anyone for it.

During the latter part of my stay at Naples, I received two visits from my cousin, Frank Martin. Frank was like a brother to me from having lived in our home for several years, so I was most happy to see him. He was stationed in the Air Force up north of us, and worked as a mechanic. His last visit occurred when he was being transferred to the Pacific Theater of Operations. He was on the high seas when the war ended, so his unit was called home, and he was immediately discharged.

During my stay in Naples, I received many letters from Myra, Dad, Marie and others. These people still didn't know where I was located. Since Dad forgot our code we had established, I never tried again to let him know where I was by asking about the health of someone. He thought, though, that he knew from a statement I made in a letter in which I said that I had been eating lots of nuts and apples, which was definitely true; however, I was not trying to tell him anything. He thought that statement over and said, "Nuts and Apples! He's telling us he is in Naples."

During the twenty-six month stay in Naples, we were all kept very busy; however, at night there was much time for loneliness. At such times we would write letters, read and re-read letters received, and wonder whether the war would ever end. The letters from Myra received a lot of attention. She was faithful in writing, and must have written about every day. I looked at her photo every day. All letters arrived by boat and usually came in bunches. News was usually several weeks old when the letters arrived, but they were very important. It seemed to me that I was getting older and life was passing me by. It appeared that the stalemate on the Italian front would go on forever. There was no way that we could know that the stalemate was on hold while preparations were being made for an attack across the English Channel.

To keep from brooding too much on our condition we needed diversions. Many soldiers went to alcohol and illicit lovers, but neither of these were of interest to me. Having grown up in our home, and having been under the influence of the church in my early life, I could not go in that direction. In my early life, I was not an avid Bible reader; however, when I did pick up the New Testament as a child, I usually opened it to the Book of Matthew and would read the first few chapters. I did much of my own thinking as a child and these few chapters containing the Sermon on the Mount influenced the development of my conscience. Also, I felt that a satisfying life in the future would be difficult if encumbered by such immorality.

In addition to passing the evenings on reflections of things back home and commiserating with my friends, we found diversion in friendly, but competitive, games of cards. Nickel limit poker was fun and everyone tended to break even. Just outside our doorway, there was no-limit poker and crap games, but my friends and I kept out of that. We confined our game to our small group, where we could enjoy friendly banter, and take part in some erudite discussions. Many of my friends were several years older than I, and some of them had sharp minds, and had read widely. These discussions stimulated my mind and enabled me to develop new interests. Joel Martin was an intellectual whiz and a most challenging thinker. I admit that this was a real educational experience for me, and these times together helped relieve the depression brought on by a long war.

A happy time that helped dispel the gloom that so often came over us, was the fall of Anzio and Rome to Allied troops. This gave us hope that the war was going our way. In May, 1944 the Allies made a heavy attack and broke out of Anzio and raced northward. On June 4, Rome was taken without heavy fighting, and the Allies continued moving north. Florence was taken on August 4, and throughout August the Allies continued to move north to a German defense line in northern Italy.

A few weeks after Rome surrendered, many of the GI's from our unit began taking three-day passes to Rome. Our good friend, the benevolent Major, made no attempt to make these passes available to us. No one wanted to approach him on the subject, so I did. It was granted, and I hitched a ride on a cargo plane riding stretched out on the tops of five-gallon cans of gasoline. The pilot wasn't scheduled to stop in Rome but he landed anyhow and let me out somewhere close. While in Rome I visited many of the famous landmarks; the old Forum, Vatican City and various cathedrals. While at the Vatican, Pope Pius XI gave audience to all soldiers. He was carried by Swiss Guards down through the waiting soldiers, and he reached out, touched and blessed the rosaries carried by the men. He could have touched me if I had a rosary, but I had never heard of such a thing. On the way back to Naples, I hitched a ride on an army truck.

Later, I made another trip to Rome, but the events of this trip have blended with the other one in my memory, so that only one vivid impression remains. I was housed in a building that the army had taken over for GI's who were visiting the city. A part of this facility was a horse-racing track. One day I went to the track and while looking at the buildings, I took a drink of water out of a faucet. Just as I swallowed some, one of the workers ran out in an excited manner saying, "No No." I knew then that I had made a mistake. A few days after returning to Naples, I had an intestinal disturbance which caused me to look at a specimen under a microscope. There I found that the problem was amoebic dysentery. I knew that this one-cell

parasite could be dangerous unless treated early, so I reported it and was placed in the hospital for treatment. For several days I was given shots which seemed to cure me. While still a bed patient, one of the wounded GI's died about three beds away from me. I heard his dying gasp and it was quite unnerving.

On May 7, German emissaries signed a surrender document, and the following day it was ratified in Berlin. This was a cause of great rejoicing everywhere. This meant that most of us would be heading home. The war in Japan was still a factor, but I knew that with all the demobilization points that I had accumulated, that my next stop would be the USA. Our hospital was still needed for awhile after Germany surrendered, since there were still patients too weak to be moved. Japan surrendered on August 10, and some time after that, our unit got orders to begin preparations for leaving.

Those soldiers in our unit who had accumulated 70 points were immediately sent home. Since I had only 65 points, I was reassigned to the 300th General Hospital in Naples. About that time the point system broke down. Demobilization was wanted by everybody. I was never assigned to a job at the 300th. They didn't need any help, and they were also close to being demobilized themselves. I stayed with that unit several days just killing time. I had one experience there that has been in my memory ever since. I was assigned a bunk bed four bunks high above a concrete floor. The bed was about thirty inches wide with no side boards. I slept very little in the time I was there because of the fear of falling.

Finally, during the first week of November, I was sent to a replacement depot (known as the repple depple). In short order I was on a boat.

Going Home

Around November 10, several hundred of us were loaded on a converted liberty ship at Naples and made a stop at Oran to take on some ore for ballast. This was the stormy season on the Atlantic, and the ore was to prevent the boat from capsizing. We no longer had the threat of submarines, but we had a severe winter storm to contend with. Twenty-one days were required to go from Naples to Newport News, Virginia. Several days were spent riding out a severe storm which was most frightening. Before being required to stay below deck, I could look out and see the ship riding the waves. It would ride to the top of a wave, then drop suddenly into the trough, and at that point a person could look out at another wave that appeared to be fifty feet high. We were finally sent below deck where hundreds of soldiers stayed for several days. From below we could feel the ship drop from the top of a crest to the bottom of a trough, and then it would shake and shudder as if falling apart. I heard later that one returning ship caught in this storm did

break up.

We were assigned to bunks stacked about six high. I was the third from the floor which wasn't bad, except that the soldier immediately above me had a big German lüger strapped around his waist. I was always afraid that it might be loaded and go off accidentally.

The ship's officers tried to provide activity for us, but the sea was so rough and the ship so crowded that it was impossible. A movie showing was tried, but the projector couldn't be anchored. There were tables in the middle of the hold where we could stand up and eat our meals. During one severe storm, we were standing up, eating from our mess gear, when a huge wave hit us. We all used both hands to brace us to keep from falling, and this caused our mess gear and food to slide to the low end of the table into the lowest bunk and on to the floor.

I went to bed hungry that night on my 28th birthday.

There was much sea sickness during the trip which I avoided, but I did have a problem. I had no action for the 21-day trip from the lower region. The dispensary tried to help but nothing worked. A stick of dynamite was needed.

After docking at Newport News, we were sent to Camp Patrick Henry. I was disappointed that it wasn't to another location, but any dry land was acceptable after the torture of the high seas. One liberty ship failed to survive the storm. The officer who welcomed us at Camp Patrick Henry assured us that he always ordered only first class train accommodations for returning soldiers; then he said, "Of course we never get them." Our first meal at Camp Patrick Henry was delicious steak, the first we had eaten in a long time. It was real steak made from a cow (or bull or steer). Who cared! After the meal I had great relief from my 21-day ordeal, and this will remain undescribed.

Once again I have no recollection of the train trip to St. Louis. I do have proof that I arrived. I arrived at Jefferson Barracks in south St. Louis about December 5 and was discharged on December 7. At last I found those papers that I had wanted for a long time; my discharge papers.

After finding those papers, I went to the interurban street car station on 12th Street, and went to Alton for a great reunion. Myra met me at the depot in Alton, and know what? I kissed her. We had a lot of getting acquainted to do, since our courtship so far had been mostly by mail. After a few days in Alton, I caught the Rock Island railroad to Jefferson City where someone met me and took me to Tuscumbia for a reunion with the home folks. It seemed like a different world to be back with Mom, Dad, Bonnie, and the families of Arthur and Susie.

I saw Joe for the first time, since he was born after I left. Many of the anxieties of my parents were now dispelled. Mom had been suffering for several years with Parkinson's disease, and she looked frail and worn out. I know that she sent many prayers toward heaven while I was gone. No one ever had more grit and determination than she had.

After visiting for several days at home, I returned to Alton to renew my courtship, and to take my old job at Owens Illinois Glass Company I soon discovered that there was little challenge in the work, so I applied for a laboratory job at Jefferson Barracks Hospital in south St. Louis. The job was offered to me and I took it in April, 1946.

Epilogue

The above narrative of my World War II experiences has been written fifty years after my entry into the U. S. Army. The forty-four months spent in military service was traumatic, yet I was fortunate in serving in a capacity where my efforts were joined with others in providing medical services to our fellow soldiers. I matured in many respects during these years. I served with men from many parts of our nation, many of whom had excellent minds. I served in Africa and Europe where many different cultures were observed. I read books and materials that improved my skills and thoughts. Also, I had time to think and integrate all of these new experiences with those of the past which helped me get a better sense of direction for the future. All these experiences have helped me through the years.

I think often of all the young men who didn't make it back. We all owe them a big debt of gratitude. They didn't want to die, but they did. It behooves the rest of us to hold high those principles of liberty for which they died, and to keep these men and those principles in our hearts and minds forever that their sacrifice shall not have been in vain.

I have always been a person who shared very little of his innermost thoughts and experiences. I now share these experiences with my wife, sons and grandchildren.