

Their Names Were Once In Lights; Now GIs Give Their Talent to Entertain Buddies at Our Post

Lodged in the nooks and crannies of the army there are hundreds of stage, screen and vaudeville stars who have turned from the footlights to Army duties far removed from their professional lives.

Four of the best "Backdrop" artists in the business are now in the 91st Division. They are not the only ones; but before they entered the army they were tops in their line.

There is 1st Sgt. John Burton, who used to execute those effortless impossible twists and turns 110 feet above the ground on a swinging trapeze. There is also Tec5 George Schwable, graceful ballet dancer who did "pirouettes" with Vera Zorina, famous screen ballerina. And there are S/Sgt. John Ratekin, actor, director, playwright and dancer from Hollywood and Los Angeles and 1st Sgt. Ben

Stein, top-notch master of ceremonies who has worked the Northwestern circuit for something like ten years.

With Ballet Queens

George Schwable, now in the entertainment section of the 91st Division Special Service Office, was one of the top ballet artists in the country, before he joined the army, barring none. Born in the show business and dancing at the early age of nine, Schwable has been at one time or another the dancing partner of all the leading feminine ballerinas in the nation.

In 1939 he danced with Vivian

Fay at the St. Louis Municipal Opera House. He was also with Patricia Bowman, Harriet Hocter, Vera Zorina and Gypsy Rose Lee. He was starred in "Louisiana Purchase," "I Married an Angel," "By Jupiter" and "Star and Garter," and a dozen other shows on Broadway and every other legitimate stage in the country. But in his last show, the musical comedy "By Jupiter" he quit his job to dance with his new wife, the former Miss Cavanaugh. The couple were featured in Los Angeles in exhibition ballroom and ballet adagio dancing.

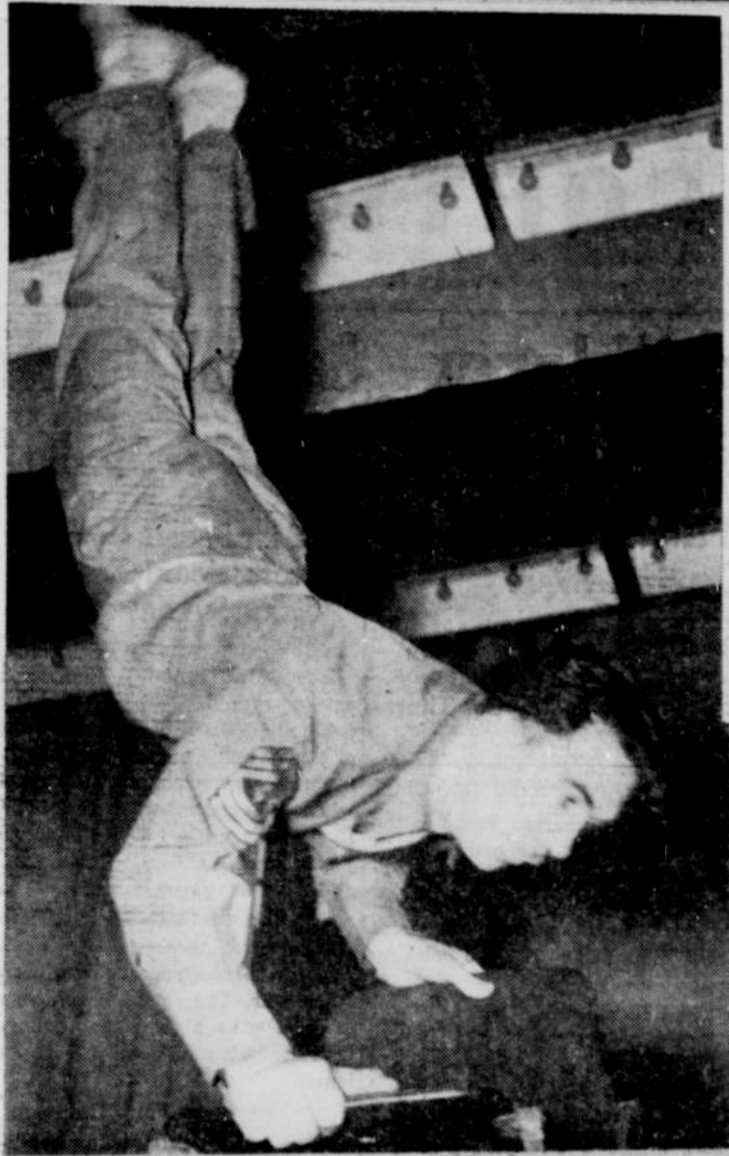
Sgt. Burton, now in the 362nd Infantry, spent seven years under the big tops on the proverbial flying trapeze. He has traveled all of the well-known circuits and had some close calls as he chilled the crowds with his daring antics in the clouds above a circus ring. He played at the San Francisco Fair, the New York State Fair, the Los Angeles Exposition and a dozen other top billing throughout the nation.

Fell From Heights

"It's a tough business," he reflected. "I'll never forget the night I was playing in Celina, Ohio. We were working 110 feet above the ground when a guy cable broke. The snap threw one fellow all the way down and put him in the hospital for several months. But I was lucky. When the cable broke, I went too, but I fortunately caught another guy wire and was able to break my fall."

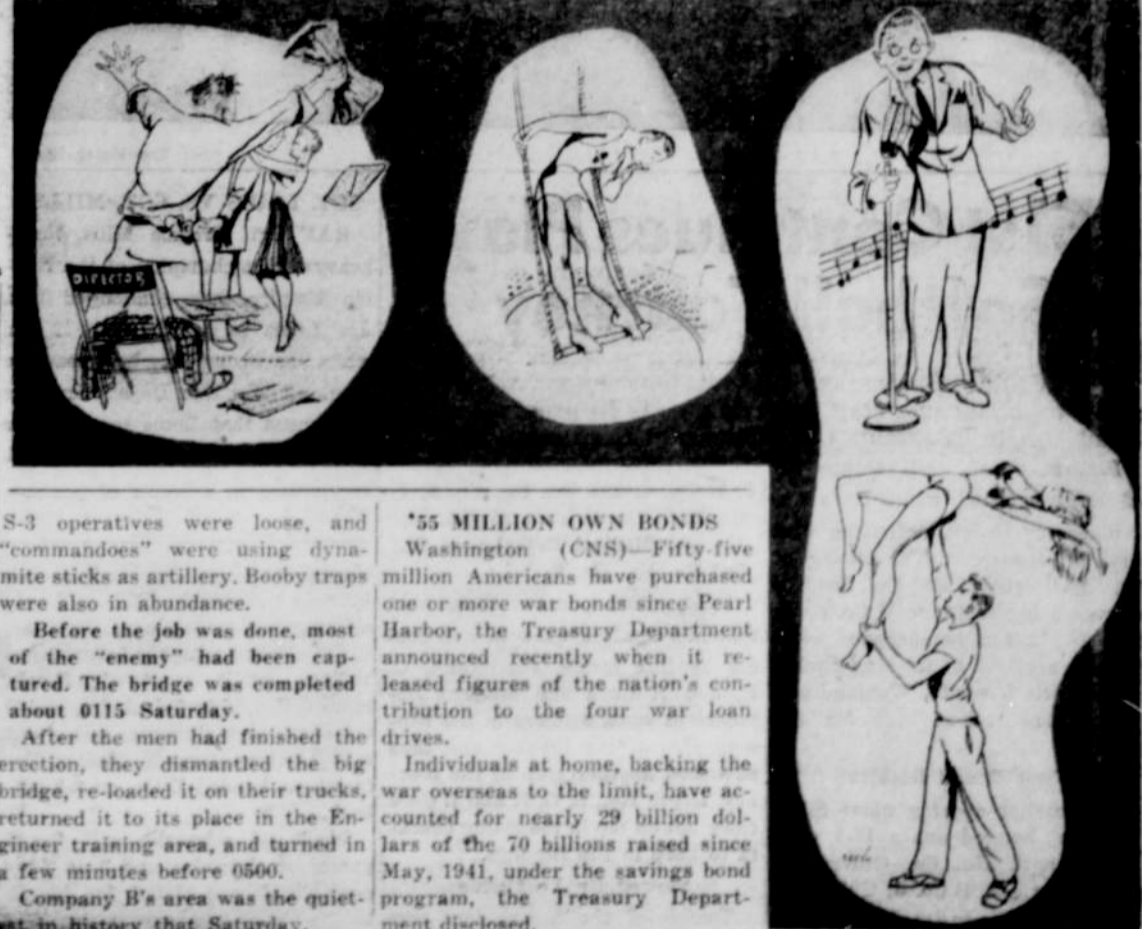
"But I suppose the toughest show we ever did was the night we were doing the finale at the Los Angeles Exposition. The "riggin" was damp and as slippery as Oregon mud. And then just before we got our cue from the band, one of the cables kinked. The crowd was waiting and we had to go through with it. But I was plenty scared and there was a cold sweat on my face. I always carried a lemon in my wrist band and I bit on that. Luckily however, nothing happened and the act went over with a bang. But the crowd never did know what had been taking place up there where we were."

From the environs of the callops and canvas, it is a far cry to the profession of Sgt. Ratekin, Hollywood theatrical director and actor. (Continued on page 11, column 2)



Signal Corps Photos; Sketches by Tec4 Will Woolway.

AN ABBREVIATED GLIMPSE of four out of the many pre-army professional thespians now in the 91st Division. Diving out of the upper left corner is 1st Sgt. John Burton, big time aerialist of the Big Top, and the man holding Tec4 Jerry Lakefish (obviously a stand-in only) is Tec5 George Schwable, ballet artist. Directing Tec5 Gergory Estrada and Pvt. Vern Albertson in the immortal scene from Romeo and Juliet is S/Sgt. John Ratekin who used to do better directing for Aimee McPherson in Hollywood. Playing the piano, singing and composing all at once is the versatile 1st Sgt. Ben Stein, Oregon entertainer.



Under Combat Conditions, 316th Bn. Builds 76-Foot Bridge in 4 1/4 Hours

By Tec4 Thomas C. Fesperman
Despite blackout, rain and the harrassing of "enemy" soldiers, officers and men of Company B, 316th Engineer Battalion, erected a 76-foot, 40-ton Bailey bridge in four hours and 15 minutes of combat-like action last Friday night in Area One.

The construction of the heavy bridge by the Engineers brought the 91st Division soldiers well into their advanced combat training, and marked a new phase in front-line schooling.

When the Engineers had completed their job, it was nearly 0500 Saturday.

Interested Onlooker
Among the interested lookers-

as the men worked quietly with the heavy steel were Major General William G. Livesay, commanding general of the 91st Division, and his aide, Captain Fred F. Lash.

At dusk the Engineers entered the bridge area, quietly dispersed their trucks and equipment, put out security, and set to work. They observed strict blackout discipline, kept the noise of such heavy work at a minimum, and kept constantly on the alert against "attack."

Not knowing just what action to expect, but prepared for anything that might be thrown at them, the Engineers weren't too surprised when, in the course of their work, they were targets of explosives.

S-3 operatives were loose, and "commandoes" were using dynamite sticks as artillery. Booby traps were also in abundance.

Before the job was done, most of the "enemy" had been captured. The bridge was completed about 0115 Saturday.

After the men had finished the erection, they dismantled the big bridge, re-loaded it on their trucks, returned it to its place in the Engineer training area, and turned in a few minutes before 0500.

Company B's area was the quietest in history that Saturday.

'55 MILLION OWN BONDS

Washington (CNS)—Fifty-five million Americans have purchased one or more war bonds since Pearl Harbor, the Treasury Department announced recently when it released figures of the nation's contribution to the four war loan drives.

Individuals at home, backing the war overseas to the limit, have accounted for nearly 29 billion dollars of the 70 billions raised since May, 1941, under the savings bond program, the Treasury Department disclosed.