

SOUTHERN OREGON MINER

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Life With the WACs in New Guinea

By Frances Gallatin

We see natives in our area quite often; each group is under the supervision of an Australian. Periodically they come to cut the grass with their long knives. They use the same knives to knock down coconuts and dead branches from the tops of the coconut palms. At first we all stood with our mouth open as we watched the natives climb the stately palms with just bare hands and feet—getting up the slender bare tree trunks at quite a speed. Even now, as the natives work in the small areas between the Pentagon corridors, and around the outside, most every-one stops work to watch and listen to them. Their "jabber", shouts and chants, as they work are most interesting but get tiresome after awhile. Some of them understand and speak English; they are most obliging about cutting coconuts open with their long knives, for the WAC's and GI's. It looks very simple to see them do it, but you'd surely get a kick out of seeing a WAC trying to open one. Most of these native men wear some bright colored string, cloth or paper in their fuzzy hair—most have black hair, but some have it bleached to a yellowish red! Their only clothing is a loincloth, pair of G. I. shorts, or piece of material draped around their hips something like a skirt. Many wear G. I. "Dog Tags". The young men who are looking for wives, wear very elaborate colorful beaded earrings which fit around the whole curve of the ear. Some hang down from the lobe of the ear too. Some of the natives who work around here have a rather frightening appearance, but most of them are not so bad looking. I am enclosing a little story of a trip to a native village written by one of my former mess Sgts. which may interest you.

There have been many changes in personnel since I've been here—which always happens in the army. Many of the WAC's and WAC officers have been sent on to forward bases, and a good many of the Army units have moved north into the battle area from this vicinity.

Some units waited around several months and were anxious to get onto the fight.

26 Jan. 1945

Lately we have had some typical beautiful, romantic South Sea Island evenings—peaceful Pacific, soft moonlight, gentle breeze and the tall stately coconut palms silhouetted against the Southern starlit sky. Many of the beautiful pictures you see of the South Sea Islands are not exaggerated. The only drawback is that even some of the evenings are pretty warm, such nights with out rain are far between.

Irving Berlin, and his "This Is The Army" cast, has been in this area for more than a week and has put on 3 or 4 major shows for about 40,000 people, and a number of shorter ones. Last night the stage show was given here to a huge crowd (for this place) seated and standing fanwise from the stage in our open air theatre. The lighting and sound systems were excellent, and the evening was perfect without rain. The show was marvelous—every act seemed perfect professionally and was accepted with utmost enthusiasm by the audience. There were 50 GI's (or maybe some professional dancers dressed like GI's) in the chorus aside from all the additional personnel in special acts. Their band was "super". Of course it was an all man show, but the GI's taking the "female" parts were really wonderful—better than in the movie. I had seen and heard Irving Berlin at two officers clubs earlier this week and was thrilled no end to be in groups with him and see how friendly and "one of the group" he is. Last night he again sang some of his old songs, having the audience join in—"Oh, How I Hate To Get Up In The Morning," This Is The Army, Mr. Jones," "White Christmas", "God Bless America", "Easter Parade", "Alexanders Ragtime Band", "Always", and 2 or 3 other new ones he composed in Italy and the Southwest Pacific area, which are most appropriate—no doubt you have heard them at home.

This letter writing is really a "major operation"; when there

is time, pep is often lacking. Ones hands sticks to the paper and the envelopes and stamps stick together. I've had to use typewriters at "odd" moments when they were not in use—some of them good, and some poor; Please excuse the errors. I wonder as I write, what impression this narrative will give you who had never been in such a situation as we are. I only hope I've managed to convey to you something of the "conditions and atmosphere" of this place and maybe a bit of how it affects us. Really, we are still quite normal, perhaps a bit less reserved and more reckless, but fundamentally the same.

I do hope that you will find time to drop a line and tell me all the news, gossip, and what have you, in the states.

Bye for now, and write soon,
Lots of Love,
(Continued next week)

AMERICA INCORPORATED

By Ruth Taylor

What is America? As the series of world conferences in which we are but one nation, begin, are we sure we know just what America is?

We are America. America is all of us—incorporated, for our government is a people's government, made for the people and answerable to the people.

It was Carlyle who said: "History is the essence of innumerable biographies." America is the sum total of the lives and ideals of millions of seekers after freedom—not of freedom for themselves alone, but of freedom for all men. They realized the truth that no man is free unless all men are free. That all men are created equal is not just a high sounding phrase. It is the keynote in the Bill of Rights that has made America the greatest nation on earth.

The best prophet of the future is the past. What we will do and where we will go is determined by our past and by the ideals that shaped both past and present. Our national expansion has not been the result of blood conquest or plundering. We bought Alaska from Russia, Louisiana from France. The constant goal of the American people has been the attainment of a society marked by the individual liberty granted to all men, regardless of race, creed or economic status.

Dean Acheson, our Assistant Secretary of State, said over the radio recently: "We are individualists. For that reason we love freedom—freedom to be ourselves. We don't think brutality is a sign of greatness. We want a world that is free from bullies going around and beating people up and taking things away from them, or making them do what they don't want to do."

Today all of us have a stake in our foreign policies. Tolerance and fairness, sound judgment and understanding are just as essential in us as they are in our diplomats and statesmen, because they are but the reflection of ourselves. They represent us, the people.

As Americans - we hold as our basic thesis that the good of the majority is the good of all, that all men are entitled to equal treatment and equal responsibility. As Americans, we value duty above privilege, truth above petty phrases wisdom above cleverness; tolerance above prejudice.

Democracy is conduct, and its only stable foundation is character. What America is, is determined by what its citizens - you and I and the man next door - are. We are America.

Phone Company Has 991,559 Changes

Indicative of the tremendously increased and mobile population and the unprecedented activity on the Pacific coast, The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company last year installed and disconnected 991,559 telephones, N. R. Powley, president, stated in his message to shareholders accompanying dividend checks for the first quarter of 1945.

This movement of 991,559 telephones a number equal to more than one-third of the company's telephones in service - was composed of 360,443 connections, 340,590 discontinuances and 145,263 moves (both "outs" and "ins"). Thus to gain one telephone, Mr. Powley pointed out in calling attention to the company's heavy volume of work, it was necessary to connect or disconnect a total of 50 telephones.

Due to the pressing war demands upon manufacturing facilities, the unfilled civilian orders for telephone service continued to increase, Mr. Powley stated, adding, however, that all telephones essential to the war effort were being promptly installed.

"The cooperative understanding", the message read, "being shown by the many people who are on the waiting list is most sincerely appreciated, as is the splendid response of the public to our long distance requests to 'save 7 to 10 p.m. for the service men', and to limit calls to five minutes when circuits to war busy centers are crowded.

"The preliminary earnings report for the first quarter indicates earnings per common share of \$1.75 as compared to \$1.84 per common share for the last quarter of 1944, and \$1.55 per share for the first quarter of last year. Labor costs and taxes continue to increase markedly. Further wage increases involving substantial expenditures recently have been under negotiation with the Unions."

Cpl. Richard De Mers in B-25 Group

With A 12th AAF B-25 Group in the Mediterranean Theater—Talkative "kraut" prisoners reveal that the Wehrmacht's supermen in northern Italy returning home on furlough have been detained as long as 72 hours to help repair the constantly bombed Brenner Railroad which cuts through the Brenner pass.

One B-25 Mitchell bomb group with which Cpl. Richard K. De Mers, 19, of Ashland, Oregon flies as an aerial gunner has not found favor with these returning supermen in the past because of its accurate bombing. It has earned

even less favor recently on its 700th combat mission when it cut the final route leading to the pass by knocking out the San Michele bridge on the diversionary route of the Brenner Railroad.

"We made our bomb run and before we turned off the target I saw the bridge area belch black smoke upwards," said Corporal De Mers, whose parents, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur DeMers, live in Ashland.

The Brenner Railroad crossed the Adige River at Ora south of the entrance to the pass and followed the west bank for a distance of about 15 miles, when it again recrossed the stream at San Michele and continued down the east bank. The two bridges on this route were vulnerable targets for MAAF bombers so the Germans set about to build a diversionary line. It was this newly built route, the only one remaining open, that Corporal DeMers' bomb group slashed on its 700th combat mission.

Pvt. Eugene Gay With Ordnance Co.

6th Army Group, France—Mechanics of the 137th Ordnance Company, a heavy maintenance unit supporting troops of Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers' 6th Army Group have combined skill and ingenuity to operate an Army "assembly line" factory that gets damaged material back on the line and new material "fightin fit" for combat.

Artillery pieces, fire control instruments, and combat vehicles knocked out of action on the U. S. Seventh Army front are either rebuilt or salvaged for spare parts by the 137th's ordnance experts. From 70 to 80 per cent of all damaged artillery and combat vehicles is returned to action while approximately 875 out of 1,000 damaged rifles are made usable again.

"My mechanics have met many difficult tasks," said Capt. John E. Dimon of Roebing, N. J. company commander. "Their application of American ingenuity, cannibalization of certain pieces from irreparable material, and a knowledge of interchangeable parts enables a repair of many items which normally would be deadlined because of lack of supplies."

These ordnance men also process new artillery pieces, small

arms, fire control instruments and such combat vehicles as tanks armored cars, readying them for their first combat. A vehicle will hit six different shops for an over all check and emerge complete even to ammunition for its weapons.

Repair and processing for one normal week was 347 machine-guns, 34 artillery pieces, 356 instruments, 41 vehicles, and 100 welding and machine shop jobs in the improvising of spare parts. As many as 170 rifles and pistols can be handled in one day. A special field mission was recently completed in the record time of five days.

Members of the 137th Ordnance Company include: Pvt. Eugene J. Gay, 215 Gresham St. Ashland.

Bicycle Accidents Numerous in Oregon

A total of 382 bicycle riders were involved in traffic accidents in Oregon during the year 1944, with 17 fatalities resulting from these collisions, according to Robert S. Farrell, secretary of state.

Of the total, 255 accidents, or 66 per cent, involved unsafe riding practices on the part of the cyclists, Farrell said. These unsafe actions included, in this order: attempting maneuver under unsafe conditions, inattention, side-swipe, entering street carelessly, making sudden turn across traffic, hitting parked car, trying to avoid a vehicle or pedestrian under emergency conditions.

Eighty per cent of the fatal accidents involved riders 5 to 14 years of age and the same percentage of fatalities involved riders in unsafe practices at the time of the accident.

Of the ten fatalities, six occurred in rural areas and four in cities, indicating a need for greater care on the part of the bicyclists on rural highways, according to Farrell. Making a sudden turn across the path of an approaching car and riding across streets between intersections were the two chief factors in fatal bike accidents.

Seventy per cent of the fatalities occurred during hours of daylight.

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My neighbor on the next street had a telephone installed. Why did he get one before me?

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It's possible your neighbor on the next street ordered service sooner than you did . . . has been waiting longer.

Or the neighbor who applied later but got service sooner may be one whose responsibilities for defense, public health, welfare and safety require it.

Or there may be more wire capacity available on his street.

Until the telephone factories are able to turn from war production, there will continue to be shortages of certain facilities here on the home front.

We are doing our level best to meet the essential requirements of our country and community.

Your co-operation and understanding are appreciated.

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