

American military historians, seeking perhaps years from now to discover the time and place of birth of Charlotte's famed World War II Evacuation Hospital Unit, might be expected to search the records of the various Charlotte hospitals.

But they won't find the vital statistics there. The 38th was not born in a hospital.

Officially organization of the unit was approved at the War Department in Washington early in January of 1941. Actually the 38th was born three months earlier at a lawn party in Charlotte on October 12, 1940. The birth was precipitated by a football game played earlier that afternoon in Charlotte's American Legion Memorial Stadium.

The circumstances of the 38th's birth provide an intriguing story.

In the early fall of 1940, General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, tired after many months of directing the nation's defense preparations in a world situation that daily was growing more alarming, had accepted the invitation of his Charlotte brother-in-law E. P. Coles to spend a few days resting at the Coles home. The planned visit would also give the General an opportunity to see the football team of his alma mater, Virginia Military Institute, play the eleven from Davidson College.

But a few days after the Marshalls had accepted the invitation to come to Charlotte, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and Mrs. Stimson announced that they were giving a reception for members of the General Staff. General Marshall felt that he and Mrs. Marshall should cancel their plans for the Charlotte visit and instead attend the Stimsons' reception.

Mrs. Marshall, however, thought that the Charlotte trip would provide her husband a few days of needed relaxation, and she spoke to the Secretary of War about it.

Mr. Stimson agreed with Mrs. Marshall. But how, he asked her, could he tell the General not to come to his reception but to go to Charlotte.

"Give him an official order," the General's lady suggested.

So the next morning Secretary Stimson with a wry grin handed the Chief of Staff an order. The General read:

The President of the United States directs that General George C. Marshall during the period between Friday, October 11th, and Monday, October 14th, shall visit the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, for the purpose of making a report upon the comparative skill and valor of the football teams of Davidson and Virginia Military Institute.

During said period he shall be under the exclusive control and direction of Mrs. Marshall and shall be protected against all interruptions, particularly by members of the War Department and of the Congress.

During said period the War Department shall be relegated to the tender mercies of the Secretary of War, the Assistant Secretary of War, and the Deputy Chief of Staff, General Bryden.

(Signed) Henry L. Stimson

The Marshalls went to Charlotte. In further pursuance of the order given him by Secretary Stimson, he sat in the stands on Saturday afternoon, October 12, and watched his school's team in a warmly fought game defeat the Davidson Wildcats 13 to 7. And as a result of his compliance with the happily-contrived order to attend the football game, Charlotte's soon to be widely heralded hospital unit was proposed and soon afterward organized.

It was after the football game, however, at a party on the lawn of the Martin L. Cannon home that General Marshall in chatting with Dr. Paul W. Sanger, a Charlotte surgeon, first considered the possibility of the organization by Charlotte medical men of a military hospital unit. Charlotte, Dr. Sanger told the General, as one of the South's most important medical centers was the home of numerous specialists of national reputation in various fields as well as scores of skilled general practitioners. These men, said Dr. Sanger, were anxious to make their contributions to the rapidly developing effort to prepare the nation's defenses to withstand any assault that might be made upon them.



The staff of Charlotte Memorial Hospital on the night of April 8, 1942, honored the commissioned officers of the newly formed 38th Evacuation Hospital unit at a dinner party at the Myers Park Club. One week later the unit was activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Shown, left to right, are the following: seated, R. S. Dickson, chairman of Memorial Hospital's executive committee; Dr. Raymond Thompson, chairman of dinner arrangements committee; and Major Richard Z. Query; standing, Major George T. Wood, Major Paul W. Sanger, Lieutenant-Colonel T. Preston White, and Captain H. Stokes Munroe. (Charlotte Observer staff photo.)

General Marshall was impressed. He promised Dr. Sanger that he would give the proposal careful consideration. There was one serious obstacle, however, in the way of the organization by Charlotte physicians of a military hospital unit. The War Department by a long established policy required such units to be organized under the sponsorship of medical schools. And Charlotte had no such institution.

Since the medical staff of Charlotte Memorial Hospital was such a highly qualified group, however, and so recognized, it was hoped that the War Department's policy might be relaxed to permit the hospital to sponsor the organization of a military hospital unit. On December 1, some six weeks after General Marshall's

visit to Charlotte, Dr. Brodie C. Nalle, the hospital's chief of staff, in a telegram to the Surgeon General of the Army, asked if the hospital could sponsor such a unit.

On December 13 in a letter written December 2 by Lieutenant Colonel Francis M. Fitts, Medical Corps Assistant, Dr. Nalle received the answer to his inquiry:

My dear Dr. Nalle:

The Surgeon General has directed me to acknowledge your telegram of December 1st, and to inform you that he is pleased to be able to extend to the Charlotte Memorial Hospital an invitation to organize a military Evacuation Hospital as an affiliated unit of the Medical Department of the United States Army.

I am inclosing a compilation of the War Department directives governing such units, together with copies of Table of Organization and of Training Regulations No. 405-960. I feel that careful perusal of those will present rather adequately the proposal and the conditions of affiliation. Should the hospital authorities decide to make a formal request to the Adjutant General for authorization to organize an Evacuation Hospital, the application should be forwarded through the Commanding General, 4th Corps Area, Atlanta, Ga.

When approved, I will send the necessary blank forms to accomplish the appointment in the Officers' Reserve Corps of those individuals recommended for assignment to the unit. If eligible individuals now in the Officers' Reserve Corps are desired for assignment in their existing grades, only the names need be submitted. If desired for a higher grade, application for a new appointment should be forwarded together with report of physical examination.

It is not contemplated that affiliated units will be mobilized in connection with the present limited emergency, nor are those who are appointed in the Officers' Reserve Corps for assignment to affiliated units eligible for extended active duty. Others, however, now in the Officers' Reserve Corps, assigned to these units in existing grade, are eligible for duty and may be selected for twelve months' service by the Corps Area Commander prior to transfer to the jurisdiction of the Surgeon General; the War Department will issue orders in the cases of those who have so been transferred.

Very truly yours,  
Francis M. Fitts  
Lt. Colonel, Medical  
Corps Assistant

Dr. Nalle's response was immediate. The next day, December 14, 1940, he wrote to the Commanding General of the 4th Corps Area, Atlanta:

Dear Sir:

As per letter from war department, office of Surgeon General 326.01-1, FMF-mw.

In reply to letter of above, we wish to make a formal application to organize an Evacuation Hospital, Charlotte Memorial Hospital of Charlotte, North Carolina, and wish to apply for the necessary blanks to be sent to us from the 4th Corps Area.

Very truly yours,  
Brodie C. Nalle,  
Chief of Staff, Charlotte  
Memorial Hospital  
Charlotte, North Carolina

On January 9, 1941, Major General E. S. Adams, the Adjutant General, in a letter to Dr. Nalle, announced action upon the application:

Your proposal for the sponsorship of an Evacuation Hospital Unit by the Charlotte Memorial Hospital has been approved by the Secretary of War. This hospital will be organized as the 38th Evacuation Hospital. The Commanding General, Fourth Corps Area, and The Surgeon General have been advised of this action.

The infant now had a home and a name.

Upon receiving from General Adams official notice of the approval by the Secretary of War of Charlotte Memorial Hospital's application to serve as sponsor in the organization of a military medical unit, Dr. Nalle as the hospital's chief of staff appointed Dr. Paul W. Sanger as chairman of a committee from the hospital's staff to proceed with the organization of the unit. The other members of the committee were Dr. Thomas W. Baker and Dr. Thomas D. Sparrow.

On February 8 the committee sent to the members of the staff of Charlotte Memorial Hospital notices of the contemplated organization of the unit and asked the doctors who wished to affiliate with the unit to notify the committee within the next one week.

The letter to the hospital's staff members said:

As you know, Charlotte has received special recognition in the field of medicine by our Government in its national defense program. So far as we are able to determine, the Charlotte Memorial Hospital is the first hospital in the country not associated with a medical school to be granted the privilege of organizing its own hospital unit. This unit will be designated as Evacuation Hospital #38, and the hospital has been instructed to perfect its own organization.

This group will function as a unit and will be called only as a unit in some dire national emergency. The following is a verbatim quotation:

"Prior to the declaration of a national emergency by Congress, individual Reserve officers required for extended active duty may be called upon to perform such active duty on a volunteer basis *only*."

Those who are best acquainted with the medical angles of the present military situation are strongly advising physicians, particularly those of the draft age, to affiliate with some hospital unit if possible, and secure the proper commission before being called by the draft, or by a separate draft of physicians which may be in the offing. The advantage of being affiliated with a local unit are obvious to you.

The number of physicians to be included in this hospital unit is only 31, with two dentists. The number of applications which have been received is almost sufficient to complete the unit, but several of the applicants are from neighboring communities. Your Committee, which was elected by a recent call meeting, deems it only fair that Charlotte doctors should be given preference and hence this letter offering you the opportunity.

All applications must be in the hands of the committee by February 15, 1941. This is the date on which commissions will probably be assigned and the organization perfected. Since we realize that it may take several days for you to complete your physical examinations, etc., we are asking you, if interested, to return the enclosed card immediately.

Response to the committee's notice was immediate and enthusiastic. A large group from the hospital staff tentatively enrolled in the unit being formed and these doctors and the committee members during the next several months proceeded with the procurement of a commissioned personnel and initiated the necessary



Lieutenant Bessie V. Fullbright and Lieutenant Lela O. Russell pose in their dress uniforms soon after they were commissioned as officers in the newly formed 38th Evacuation Hospital unit.

steps toward obtaining reserve commissions for those doctors who had definitely decided to enroll in the unit.

During this period, too, the doctors were successful in interesting several young Charlotte businessmen in joining the unit's administrative corps section. Five were selected and procedures were started to obtain commissions for them.

But during these early months in 1941 an unforeseen problem arose. Because of the response of the Memorial Hospital's staff members, it was discovered, the hospital's staff would be dangerously depleted if all those considering joining the hospital's new military unit should be called into Army service.

So in order to enroll a full complement of doctors without materially decreasing the hospital's staff, the committee presented the situation to the Mecklenburg County Medical Society. Several members who were not on the Memorial's staff volunteered to enroll in the new unit being formed. Several other volunteers were enrolled by Dr. Sanger from among his friends in surgery in various communities in the Southeast. And since the Surgeon General required that all doctors enrolling in the 38th Evacuation Hospital Unit be members of the staff of Charlotte Memorial Hospital, these doctors not on the staff were given courtesy appointments to it. Three dentists were also enrolled to serve in the unit should it be called to duty.

Among the Charlotte physicians who joined the unit during these early months of its existence was a veteran of World War I, Dr. T. Preston White. He was commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the medical section and thereby became the ranking officer in the unit. Dr. Sanger was commissioned major in the Medical Reserve

Corps. Because of his seniority, Colonel White took charge of further organizational procedures and with the aid of Major Sanger and the other enrolled doctors began to recruit additional commissioned personnel, nurses, and enlisted men.

And then, eleven months after formation of the unit was approved by the Secretary of War, on a day—December 7, 1941—termed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt infamous in history, the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor.

The war was on.

When would Charlotte's 38th Evacuation Hospital Unit be called to active duty? Everybody remotely concerned was asking the question. And no one knew the answer.

But the procurement of officer personnel was speeded. And in February, with the unit's complement of officers nearly filled, Colonel White and Major Sanger went to Washington to report to the Personnel Section of the Surgeon General's office the status of the Charlotte unit.

Three and a half months after the attack upon Pearl Harbor the 38th Evacuation Hospital was ordered into active service.

The orders, dated March 21, 1942, came from the War Department, the Adjutant General's office, and were addressed to the commanding generals of the Fourth Corps Area and the Medical Replacement Centers at Camp Grant, Illinois, Camp Lee, Virginia, and Camp Barkeley, Texas.

The first paragraph of the orders provided that:

The 38th Evacuation Hospital, Charlotte, North Carolina, is ordered into active military service of the United States at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, as directed by the Commanding General, Fourth Corps Area, at the earliest practicable date and will be organized in accordance with the Table of Organization 8-232. Concurrently therewith, the personnel of the 41st Evacuation Hospital, Fort Bragg, less a small cadre, will be transferred to the 38th Evacuation Hospital. Additional personnel required will be requisitioned on this office and furnished from Medical Replacement Centers.

The order, which contained four other paragraphs of instructions, was signed by General Otto Johnson, the Adjutant General.

Five days later, on March 26, telegrams similar to the following one addressed to Captain Henry Stokes Munroe, Jr., were received by officers of the 38th:

Contemplate ordering you Fort Bragg, N. C. effective April fifteenth. Await orders.

Clapham, Adjutant General

These preliminary orders provoked a furor of excitement and activity. Each of the officers began immediately to arrange plans for the care of his family while he was away on duty. The businessmen in the administrative section made arrangements for the conduct of their businesses or for closing them temporarily. The doctors began preparations for the future care of their patients. The case histories of their patients were made available to other doctors who during the absence of the regular physicians might be called upon to treat them. Some doctors closed their offices, others decided to continue to rent theirs in order that the offices would be quickly available to them on their return from the war. Innumerable details of preparation had to be made, and made quickly. Now that the time had almost arrived for the actual departure, some of the 38th's members were depressed and others were elated as they awaited orders to report.

They were not long arriving. Five days after the preliminary telegrams came from Washington, the fateful order reached Charlotte. This one, dated March 31, 1942, was signed "Ulio, Washington, D. C.":

You will proceed on April fifteenth to Fort Bragg, N. C. reporting to commanding officer thirty-eighth Evacuation Hospital for duty.

Two weeks remained for finishing the job of getting ready to go to war.

To command the Charlotte unit a veteran of the Regular Army's Medical Corps, Colonel Raymond W. Whittier, had been transferred from Camp Grant, Illinois, to Fort Bragg in an order dated March 26. He reported for duty on April 5 and one of his first duties was to select an area in the vast Fort Bragg reservation to serve as the training home of the 38th. Colonel Whittier chose a location on the shore of Spring Lake.

Seventeen buildings, including the headquarters building, kitchen, day rooms, barracks buildings, and storerooms were assigned by the Fort Bragg commanding officer to the Charlotte unit. During this early period also 108 men were selected from the enlisted personnel of the 41st Evacuation Hospital. Their transfer to the 38th left but a small cadre as a nucleus for building up that unit. Two officers, Captain Willard F. Angen, M.C., and First Lieutenant Alfred Yankauer, Jr., Medical Reserve, were also transferred from the 41st.

All buildings were placed in readiness for occupancy by April 15, 1942. The nurses of the unit were not to arrive until about two weeks later and awaiting their arrival the buildings that were to house them were being put in condition. Forty nurses to serve the unit were ordered to active duty in a letter from the Fourth Corps Area headquarters at Atlanta, dated April 24.

On arrival at Fort Bragg, however, the nurses were placed on temporary duty at the station hospital pending movement of the 38th.

Three days after Colonel Whittier's arrival at Fort Bragg the medical staff of Charlotte Memorial Hospital honored the commissioned officers of the unit at a dinner party at the Myers Park Country Club in Charlotte. The party was held on the evening of April 8, one week before they were to report to Fort Bragg to begin training.

More than 150 persons, including the doctors and nurses in the unit, Colonel C. E. Dunbar, Medical Corps, commanding officer of Camp Sutton hospital at nearby Monroe, Major J. Kingsley MacDonald, M.C., officer in charge of the substation in Charlotte, and several of the Army doctors and nurses stationed at Charlotte's Morris Field, attended the dinner party.

Speakers included Dr. Addison Brenizer, who organized and led a similar unit in World War I, Dr. John Q. Myers, Colonel Waldrop of Morris Field, Colonel Dunbar, R. S. Dickson, chairman of Memorial Hospital's executive board, Dr. O. L. Miller, Dr. Allan Tuggle, acting administrator of Memorial Hospital, Lieutenant Colonel White and Major Sanger. A special entertainment program had been arranged by a committee from the hospital composed of Dr. Raymond Thompson, chairman, Dr. Robert Moore, Dr. B. C. Nalle, Dr. W. M. Summerville, and Dr. O. L. Miller.

It was revealed that when the unit was fully organized it would have more than 400 members. The roster, incomplete, was announced on April 8. It listed:

Medical officers: Lieutenant Colonel T. Preston White of Charlotte, internal medicine; Major Paul W. Sanger of Charlotte, chief of surgical service; Major Laurence E. Fleming of Charlotte, surgery; Major George Thomas Wood of High Point, surgery; Major William H. Pennington of Lexington, Kentucky, internal medicine; Major Richard Z. Query of Charlotte, internal medicine; Captain Glenn Perry of High Point, surgery; Captain Duncan G. Calder of Concord, surgery; Captain George Aubrey Hawes of Charlotte, urologist; Captain Otis Hunter Jones of Charlotte, medicine; Captain William T. Cavanaugh of Cooleemee, internal medicine; Captain John C. Montgomery of Charlotte, anesthetist; Captain Henry Stokes Munroe, Jr., of Charlotte, surgery; Captain McChord Williams of Charlotte, surgery; Captain Robert B. Stith of Florence, South Carolina, surgery; Captain William P. Leonard, formerly of Charlotte, then in the armed service, surgery; First Lieutenant Robert E. McCall of Charlotte, nose and throat specialist; First Lieutenant William C. Matthews of Davidson, internal medicine; First Lieutenant Robert H. Schirmer of Jacksonville, internal medicine; First Lieutenant George A. Sotirion of Gastonia, surgery; First Lieutenant Claud Walter



With Colonel Raymond W. Whittier, right, commanding officer, is Major George T. Wood, executive officer. Major Wood would later command the unit.

Perry, Jr., of Louisville, Kentucky, surgery; First Lieutenant Charles Bryant Porter of Calhoun, Kentucky, surgery; First Lieutenant George Rowe of Atlanta, surgery; First Lieutenant Colin Munroe of Charlotte, surgery; First Lieutenant Robert Miller of Lincolnton, surgery.

Dental officers: Major Vaiden B. Kendrick, Captain Bernard N. Walker, and First Lieutenant Milo Johnson Hoffman, all of Charlotte.

Administrative officers: Captain Stanton W. Pickens and Captain George C. Snyder of Charlotte and Second Lieutenant James R. Felts of Concord.

Enlisted personnel: Sidney H. Murray of Charlotte, X-ray technician; Alfred G. Chiswell of Durham, X-ray technician; W. G. Calhoun of Mooresville, laboratory technician; Joseph Walton Neal of Shelby, pharmacist; Randall K. Davis of Huntersville, laboratory technician; Clarence O. Kuester, Jr., of Charlotte, general clerk; and William F. Masten, Jr., of Charlotte, chief clerk.

Nurses, all second lieutenants: Hallie E. Almond, Ida Pauline Bell, Mary I. Boggs, Violet O. B. Burgess,

Mary Louise Cashatt, Evelyn Kohler Egger, Martha G. Fliedner, Lucille Frye, Bessie Viola Fullbright, Josephine Lee Harmon, Bertha Elizabeth Hough, Ruby Elnora McCain, Ruby G. McElwee, Angeline Neil, Hazel Ann Simmons, Mary Lahome Thompson, and Elva Earle Wells.

The week following the party for the unit was one of strenuous activity as members of the 38th completed arrangements at home and set out for Fort Bragg and the unique experiences they looked forward to with activation of the new hospital.

Among the doctors reporting one would have the unusual experience of finding that another doctor with the same name had reported ahead of him. He was Dr. John C. Montgomery, Charlotte anesthetist. Fortunately for the recording of the story of the 38th, Dr. Montgomery would keep a diary throughout his service, beginning with his first day at Fort Bragg. On April 15, 1942, he wrote:

Left Charlotte around 9 A.M. Arrived Raeford and had lunch. Duncan Calder and Jimmie Felts drove up & ate also at the hotel. Arrived Fort Bragg at 2:30 P.M.

At Post Headquarters I learned that a Capt. John C. Montgomery had already entered active duty with the 38th Evacuation Hospital. Since my orders have never been received I was in a mess. Went over to the Spring Lake area where the unit was located. Col. Whittier suggested that I stay around until my orders came.

Five days later Dr. Montgomery made another notation:

April 20th. No orders yet. John Crowson Montgomery nice fellow. Will go home soon unless they arrive.

On April 28 he wrote in the little brown diary:

In Charlotte. Wired Washington again for orders. Found that my physical was on CO's desk at Morris Field all the time.

The next day he noted:

Received radiogram today to report at Fort Bragg May 1st.

And on May 1 his ordeal of getting into the service was ended. He wrote:

Reported for duty with the correct orders.

The next day, May 2, the other Dr. John C. Montgomery, a Texan, left Fort Bragg. He, like Charlotte's Dr. Montgomery, had been in a quandary because of the mixup in orders. The Charlotte men were reluctant to lose him; in the two weeks at Fort Bragg they had come to like him.

But it was quickly discovered that the unit had two other captains with the same names. One was Charlotte's Dr. Otis Hunter Jones, an obstetrician; the other was Chaplain Otis Jones, a Baptist minister from Bude, Mississippi. Chaplain Jones would remain with the unit until May 22, 1943; Dr. Jones would not leave until February 5, 1945.

## 2

Hardly a month after their arrival at Fort Bragg to begin their training, Captain Stanton Pickens in a letter to his wife spoke of the early results of the training. Though it was not intended that it be preserved, the letter fortunately survives to provide an interesting observation on the situation in which the members of the 38th found themselves four weeks after they had been called into active service.

The letter, dated May 12, 1942, revealed:

"The exercise and the drill continue and gradually I am getting a little harder and my stomach is moving upwards and my chest is taking its rightful place. I don't think I have lost any weight but my pants feel free around the middle.

"We took a turn thru the gas chamber the other day to make sure our masks were in good shape. The chamber was loaded with tear gas only but it showed some weakness in our preparation and some of the men cried all the way back home. I, for once, was lucky in that my mask fit exactly and I suffered no ill effects. We were all interested in Mr. Churchill's warning to the Germans about the use of gas. However, our attitude is that when a rat gets cornered he will bite you, so you had better be prepared for the worst.

"Arrangements have been made for me to attend the

Officers' Cooking and Baking school when it opens again. I am anxious to find the difference between a carbohydrate and a protein. It might teach me to slow up on the potatoes that come almost each meal in the Army. Next week I have an assignment to talk to the Officers in our unit on Mess. If I don't get better prepared than I am now, the title will be most apt.

"I brought my projector down last week and some of the men were interested in the fishing pictures. We had taken some pictures of our drill and these proved funny at times as well as instructive. This is a picture taking crowd so we should have a good record of our early training. It is our understanding that no cameras will go overseas with us.

"Just before I left home I tried my first colored still pictures and the results were surprisingly good. I recommend this to you.

"This note will be short because I must get back to my class. We are studying map reading at present. When I get thru I am sure not to be lost, if I have a map."

In these early days at Fort Bragg the doctors would discover quickly how little they knew about the routines in the life of the military, particularly the rules of military courtesy. For instance, two decades after the ending of the war several of them recall what Dr.