

was prevalent, but they had doctors in those days, too, as was indicated on the stones where he had his home." Then the 38th's mess officer made a sly gibe at his medical associates of the 38th: "He was probably a very busy man and his fees must have been sizeable, since he lived in a larger house than the majority and had two bathrooms."

Captain Pickens referred to the fact that the "Germans in their propaganda broadcasts to the American troops in North Africa said in their earlier broadcasts that we were just here on a sightseeing tour. Our five tried to carry out that idea," he admitted. But, said he, "while we were doing that, some of our brethren were impressing the Boche that we could do some fighting at

the same time. They never suspect that we are such a versatile group and can sometimes combine business with pleasure. However, I must say in all honesty that I am yet to figure out the pleasure of freezing to death to look at a lot of bones."

He concluded his description of what the five men of the 38th had seen that April day in the ancient ruined city of the Romans:

"So much for Tingad, except this: an earthquake came along in the seventh century and razed the place. Twenty years ago the French got tired of digging it out again, and today I am tired of the whole blooming thing."

## 10

April 15, 1943, at Telergma marked the first anniversary of the 38th Evacuation Hospital unit's activation into the service at Fort Bragg. The year, more than likely, had been the busiest and surely the most exciting in the lives of the men and women who composed the organization.

Of the twelve months since their beginning training at the great, sprawling North Carolina military base, almost exactly four had been spent in preliminary training at Bragg and sailing for overseas duty; almost exactly the next three were devoted to further training and organizing in England and embarking and sailing for duty in Africa; and the remaining five months had seen the hospital fulfilling in northern Africa the assignment for which it had been organized as the fruition of a dream eighteen months before of certain Charlotte medical men.

For Captain Jack Montgomery the day marked one year in the service, as he noted in his diary, of which, he wrote, "5 m. 1 week in Africa."

The next day, after datelining his letter "16 April 1943 Northwest Africa," Captain Pickens would type out a long message to pay tribute to the work of the Red Cross as he had observed it. Whether his opinion of the organization was generally shared by the officers, nurses, and men of the 38th, he did not venture to suggest. Many returning service men, in fact, were critical of the Red Cross and some were even abusive, and for that reason the 38th's mess officer's observations, par-

ticularly if they were representative of the 38th's attitude, are interesting.

After saying that many things had happened during his months in the service that he would prefer to forget, he added quickly that "there is one thing I would like to give you that has proven worthwhile. The clear-cut work of the Red Cross, as I see it every day in our little part in this job of cleaning up North Africa in order to give it back to the French, is a part important."

He proceeded at once to elaborate:

"In our hospital where we first set up, there was no provision for Red Cross and what they do. It seems that this work, being purely civilian, has to be requested by the Army. So, at the request of the commanding officer of this theatre, we have two Red Cross representatives who are stationed with us. They are Mrs. Wright and Mrs. Brooke, the first from Philadelphia and the latter from Englewood, New Jersey. They are both women who obviously had other means of support, refined, well trained, able. One of them reminds me so much of Vinton that it isn't funny. They volunteer, and after a thorough orientation course, are placed in a pool in the States. From there they are drawn to fill in wherever the Army requests them. Here they set up their little pyramidal tent and have gone to work. I will try to give you a little picture of what they do in order that you can appreciate the Red Cross a little more."

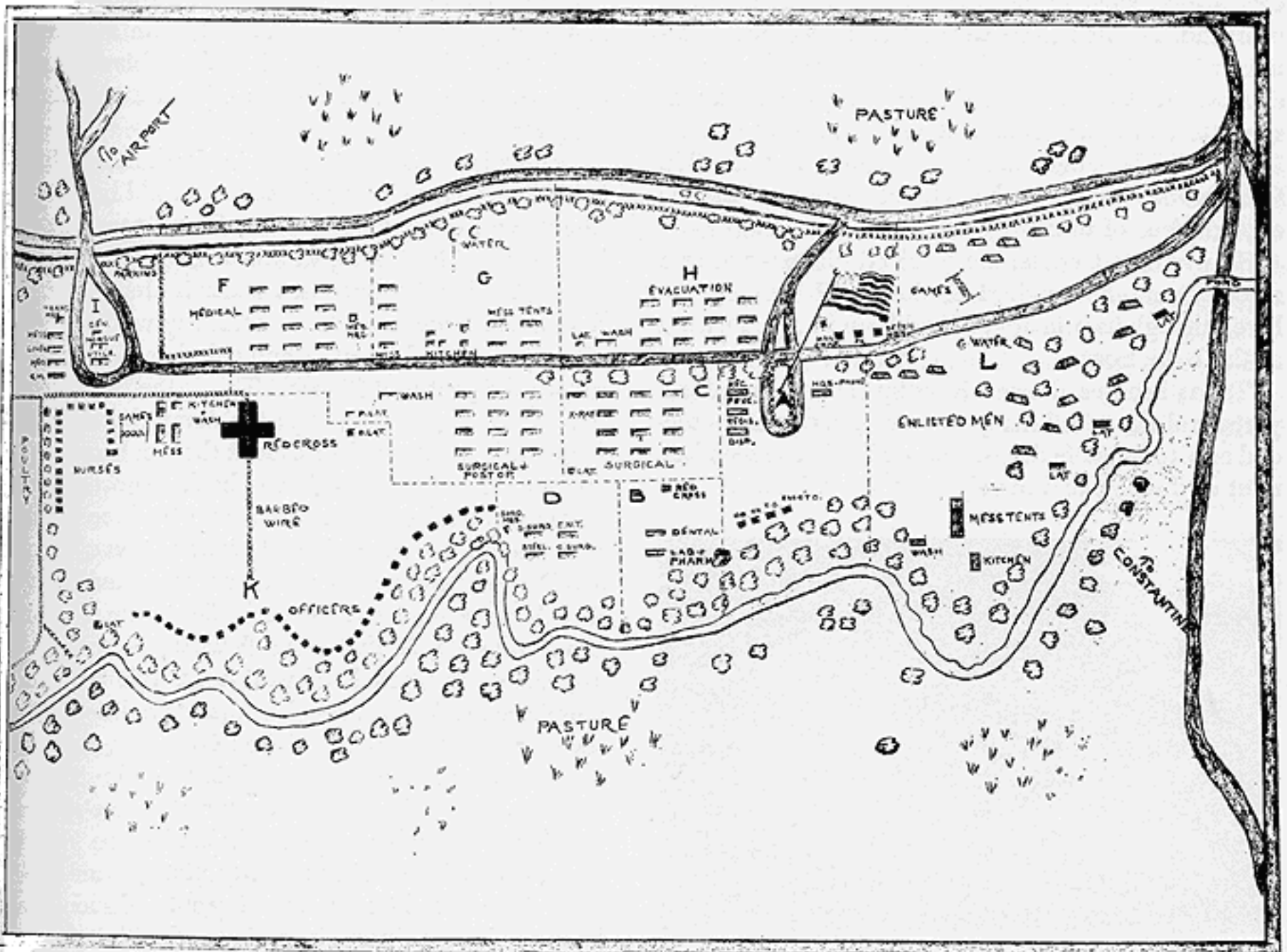
He proceeds with his picture:

"First, they handle the home service problem of the patients. This involves so much that I hesitate in going into it. Suffice it to say, they can find out if Grandpa had to give up the farm when the mortgage came due on up to when the last child was born at home, and they can do it faster than any Army postal service. They pick up where the neuro-surgeon and the expert medical men and the chaplain leave off and carry on from there. This sort of work takes time, but they barge in where angels fear to tread.

"Then, they handle most of the patients' outgoing mail. They furnish the stationery which you paid for. After all, a soldier coming back from the front doesn't carry a secretary and a portfolio full of paper, first and copy and carbon. Often, where the soldier is severely wounded, they write his letters for him. They also get all the incoming mail for the patients and see that it is distributed. Sometimes they have to track down a letter that went to the wrong hospital. They seem to be a tenacious lot when they get started, but volunteer

workers are that way, I have found from my experience with the Junior League. However, don't let me leave the impression that these people are not paid; they draw what I guess to be about \$125 a month. Out of this the Army bills them for their room and board.

"In that little pyramidal tent here they have set up a sort of store. Nothing is for sale, everything is free. Here they keep such items as sewing kits, wash cloths, combs, soap, soap dishes, towels, playing cards, cigarettes, candy, chewing gum, Kleenex, books and stationery. The Red Cross furnishes half and the Army the other half of these items. They have one radio, which is loaned around to the various wards. This is one item they could use more of if it were available. The method of distribution of these things is as follows: one patient or ward man comes from each ward with a list of the needed things and is checked in and out. You must keep in mind that there is a constant turnover in patients. This makes a busy time in the morning for the Red Cross representative. I almost forgot two of



The general arrangement of the hospital encampment at Tergma, Algeria, is shown in this drawing by Charlotte's Clarence O. Kuester, Jr., done in color on the back of a map of that area in North Africa.

the most important things they keep for the men: shaving equipment and tooth brushing equipment. The sick and wounded always turn up without these articles. So they get these things spread around where they are most needed. One thing they said they never had enough of were 'ditty bags.' These are little bags that the soldier can put his toilet articles or any other small articles in for easy carrying. They are sewed in the many Red Cross rooms across the country there. They are made of duck or canvas. You may have seen them; I never have.

"After the distribution of these things," his letter went on, "they work on the mail problem and then to the home service problems which take them into the wards with the men. I have seen them stop and talk over many questions. Sometimes they take the time to tell fortunes with the cards."

In the evenings, his report continued, the Red Cross workers go thru the wards with candy, cigarettes, and any little snacks that may make the time more pleasant for the men. A ward, he points out again, is a tent about seventeen feet by forty feet containing about twenty cots, a small stove in the center, and three small lights overhead. The Red Cross workers, he added, were particularly anxious not to be classed with the nurses and had no nurse or first-aid training. Their work was separate and apart from that of the nursing service. "All in all," he summarized his discussion of the Red Cross workers, "I think they fill a definite need and do a good piece of work."

He wrote, too, of the use of blood plasma—not as a medical man, he emphasized, but as "I have seen it here," though its primary use had been further forward at the battlefield.

"It has been used extensively up there, from all reports, and has saved many lives, ranking possibly second only to the sulfa drugs. Our use has been secondary most of the time and merely supporting. However, we



Lieutenant Elva Wells, center, with Lieutenant Charlotte Jean Webber, appears to be little interested at the moment in the book before her. But he is her husband.

have had a great deal in the case of burns. It seems that a burn immediately takes away the protein and plasma can almost as quickly put it back into the body. It does not have to worry about blood types; it is either combined or it is not necessary, since the red corpuscles are not concerned. It comes in bottles in combination of two, one which holds the plasma and also contains a section that is a vacuum; the other contains the sterile water. It is a simple and swift operation to move the water into the vacuum and the mixture is complete and ready for transfusion. The average transfusion here takes about two pints. Other than for burns, its use here is routine, as you would find it in any hospital where dry plasma is available. This seems to me to be a poor picture of what is an interesting and new treatment of shock, but not being a medical man, I am unable to give it the proper shadings. Suffice it to say, it has proved its worth in many ways many times over."

Their first spring overseas was beginning to arrive in North Africa about the time the members of the 38th were making preparations for moving their hospital base farther eastward from Telergma.

In the last letter written before they moved to the new base, dated April 21, 1943, Captain Pickens devoted a long closing paragraph to describing the place they were about to leave and the climate at that time of the year:

"Spring is beginning to come to North Africa. In this location we have grass and trees, large old beech trees. The green is beginning to show. Our stream that runs by the camp is slowing down. The spring where we have been drawing our wash water is almost dry. The days are starting to be hot. At midday we have off all of our jackets and sweaters and galoshes. At about two o'clock the heat is at its peak. This is the time I would like to take my siesta, but in the Army that doesn't fit in properly. At about four o'clock the sun begins to get away and it gets cold again and back on goes the extra clothing. We sleep under from one to three blankets every night. It is not as bad at night as it was a month ago. Now we can go to an outdoor movie and live thru it. I have seen two this week, *Santa Fe Trail* and *Gentleman Jim Corbett*. The flowers are coming out and there are myriads of wild ones. Whole fields of poppies wave in the wind, blotches of red outlined by the green fields of grain. White iris seem to grow wild and there are a number of rambling rose bushes to be seen. To add to this show, we have at the neighboring farmhouse a number of peacocks, and when papa begins to spread he makes a pretty picture, and can he strut! The almond trees are coming out and soon should be in full bloom. Spring is coming and with it we retire to our mosquito nets and begin the swallowing of atabrine. That, as you know, is the German substitute for

quinine. It is said to do the work better, with less harmful effects. We are getting malaria-conscious and are running from the virile, African type. Apparently the Arabs are somewhat like our low country Negroes, immune from the worst of it, but able to pass it along to the puny visitors from across the sea. We are busy

running around turning over tin cans and spreading oil on the not too troubled waters. I hope we get by without too much of the dreaded disease. Incidentally, disease causes much more trouble to an Army than guns, dive-bombers, and mines operated by the enemy."

# 11

In the same concise manner in which he had reported the movement of the 38th's Hospital from St. Cloud to Telergma, Dr. Stokes Munroe in his account of the North African experience wrote of the transfer of the hospital from Telergma in Algeria to Beja in Tunisia and then after a stay of about two weeks there on eastward to a new site near Tunis:

"Preparations to move to the Tunisian battle front were completed and on the 2nd of May 1943, the unit started a movement to a new location in accordance with instructions contained in Letter, Headquarters, Eastern Base Section, Subject: Movement of Troops, dated 5 May 1943, confirming verbal orders. The movement was accomplished in five echelons: the first echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 2 May 1943 via motor convoy, arriving at new location, 4 miles SW of Beja, Tunisia, 3 May 1943 and 4 May 1943. The second echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 4 May 1943, via motor convoy, arriving at new hospital location 5 May 1943. The third echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 5 May 1943, via motor convoy, arriving at new hospital location 6 May 1943. The fourth echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 6 May 1943, via motor convoy, arriving at new hospital location 7 May 1943. The fifth echelon departed from Telergma, Algeria, on 7 May 1943, via motor convoy, arriving at new hospital location the same day. Due to the capture of a number of German hospitals, a considerable number of German prisoner patients were received. A detachment of military police of five enlisted men and one officer was attached to this organization for the purpose of guarding the prisoners. Fifteen additional nurses from the 3rd Auxiliary Surgical Group were attached for quarters, duty and rations.

"On the 19th of June the unit started a movement to a new hospital location 1 1/2 KM north of Tunis, Tunisia, in accordance with instructions contained in

Letter, Headquarters, Eastern Base Section, Subject: Movement of Troops, File AG 370.5, dated 19 June 1943. The hospital at Beja, Tunisia, was officially closed at 0930 hours 20 June 1943 with the transfer of 35 remaining patients to the 3rd Provisional Hospital. The total number of patients was 3357, including 842 battle casualties and 760 prisoners of war."

Telergma, as an airplane would fly it, was some twenty-five miles south and west of Constantine, and Bone on the Mediterranean coast almost at the border of Tunisia was about seventy-five miles from Constantine on a straight line. The city of Tunis lay eastward from Bone perhaps twice the distance from Bone back to Constantine. And Beja in Tunisia, the base to which the 38th was moving, was sixty miles nearer Telergma than Tunis.

Captain Jack Montgomery in his usual brief recording in his diary on May 2, 1943, covered the journey from Telergma to Beja in exactly eleven lines. In green ink he wrote:

May 2nd

Left Telergma at 1300 hrs. by truck convoy—about 2 or 3 miles in length. Went over the mountains to Bone. Then east to Morris, arriving about 2230 at the 77th Evac. Hosp. Bob & I pitched our pup tent alongside of the truck. Many mosquitoes—then put up the mosquito netting. May 3rd. Left Morris at 0730—Tabarka—Beja. Hospital set on side of hill—no trees.

Two days later, on May 4, Captain Montgomery made another brief entry:

Tents rapidly going up. Mess tents, OR, X-ray and many wards are up. We have our small wall tents up. This morning officers dug latrines.

First operation tonight in this location. GSW leg and abd. wall.

The next day, Wednesday, May 5, the Daily Bulletin, which had suspended publication on the Saturday be-