"I Knew Your Soldier" by Eleanor (Bumpy) Stevenson

Introduction by Pete Martin

I FIRST met the Stevensons at luncheon. I had just finished reading proof on the galleys of a book based on some articles of mine about Chuck (Command) Kelly. For more than two years I had spent most of my time interviewing and writing about war heroes of every sort and in nearly every service. As a result, I had begun to fall under the illusion that I had become acquainted — at second hand, of course — with as many phases of this war as the next fellow, and I was bumptious enough to wonder what Mrs. Stevenson could tell me about it that I hadn't already heard or read.

I found out that one of the things I hadn't heard was the woman's slant on the war.

Not many women have been near enough to it to feel her real kinship with the G.I. Only a handful have been under shellfire with him and have lived with him on several fighting fronts. Of that handful, it is a rare thing to find one who is as warmly and revealingly articulate about it when she comes back as Bumpy Stevenson is.

Later, when I rcad what Ernie Pyle had written about her. I could readily understand his enthusiasm.

"She is a sort of roving delegate, cheerer- upper. smoother-over and finder-outer for the whole Red Cross . . . and half the Army too," Ernie wrote. "She lends her ear to tales of woe, turns her smile on Generals and Privates without distinction."

Her husband, Bill Stevenson. graduated from Princeton. was a Rhodes scholar, worked in Federal District Attorney Buckner's office in New York City, helping chase down rumrunners. Later, he joined a law firm in New York. His wife attended Smith College, and was married to Bill in 1925. Her nick-name is explained by the fact that her maiden name was Bumstead — as in Blondie and Dagwood.

In 1942. Bill got a long-distance call from Washington. The upshot was his appointment as Red Cross delegate to England, and he afterwards became Red Cross delegate — manager — to Africa and Italy. Bumpy was not far behind. She visited Washington, where the burden of her successful plea was: "Please may I go too?"

There is a saying that the situation produces the man. In this ease, it produced a husband-and-wife team, for the Stevensons were obviously made to order for the job they did so well.

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Part I

The boy, an amputation case. lay with his face to the wall, without speaking, in an Army evacuation hospital in Italy. For days, doctors, nurses and Red Cross girls had tried to get some reaction out of him. Each day, different people had talked with him, but could get nowhere. As one of the Red Cross girls working at the hospital, I had tried as hard as any of the rest.

Then one day he brought out a worn letter he had received three or four months before and showed it to me. It was from his fiancee. The first part asked what he was doing and told him she was thinking of him, but the last part I wouldn't have believed unless I'd seen it myself. "You might as well know it now." she had written. "If you don't come back all in one piece, you'd better forget me."

I've tried, but I can't understand the kind of thinking in the mind of the girl who wrote that letter. It would have been kinder to have driven a knife into the boy's back. Certainly, it would have been cleaner and more sporting. The only thing I could think of to say to him was, "If she's that kind of a girl, you wouldn't love her very long or be happy with her, even if you hadn't lost your leg." It seemed empty and futile and small comfort, but what else could I have said?

When my husband, Bill, visited the commanding officer of one American division arriving in North Africa, he was told, "My division is a fighting one. We have no room in it for sissies. Can you give me Red Cross field directors who can take it?" As head of the Red Cross in that theater of war, Bill held a meeting with his men and told them. "We're on the spot. This general is a fire-eater. The going will be rough. and you'll be put over the hurdles." He selected four men for the job. Only one of them had to be replaced. In the end. of the four men who stayed with that division, one won the Silver Star. one was recommended for the Silver Star, a third was awarded
the Purple Heart.

I've thought of those two incidents a lot —when I was with the hospital on the Anzio beachhead, and afterward in Naples and in Rome and all the way back home to an amazingly clean and untouched United States.

I kept hearing, in the back of my head, the voice of a G.I. who said to me, "Do you think the people back home have any idea what we're going through?" And when I told him, "They read about you in the papers and magazines and they see you in the news-reels, but I don't think they really know," he asked, "Please try to tell 'em when you get home. Is it a promise?" I said
it was a promise.

So now I'm telling. And about the men like the amputation case with the well-worn letter, and the Red Cross field men—four of them go in with each division on D day and see more fighting than 85 per cent of the men in uniform—and a lot of other things, both funny and pathetic. For I had a unique chance to get to know the American soldier with his guard down, and see the work

the Red Cross did, and find out what the women back home mean to their men overseas. Also, I know a little of what is going to happen to those men and their families when they come home, unless somebody helps the families in the United States to understand the problems involved in that homecoming.

It seems to me that the best way to tell it all is to put down what happened to one man and his wife — my husband Bill and myself — during our time overseas with the Red Cross. If I tell it honestly — and I mean to try — the things I want to say will find their place in the story.

I never could remember the name, Oujda. When I was away from it and wanted to get back to it, I'd visit an airfield and ask, "What's the queerest name you've got for a Moroccan town?" They'd run through a list of them until they came up with Oujda. Then I recognized it.

When we first arrived there in January, the French Red Cross women told us, "Last night we served two or three hundred Americans. They were on trains that went through very late, but they didn't seem to like the tea we had for them. Do you suppose you could help usget some coffee?" We said we thought we could help get hold of some, but secretly we thought, That's our job. And together with another Red Cross girl. I got coffee and bread for sandwiches from the 5th Army quartermaster and we went to work. One night soon after we had begun, a trainload of G.I.'s pulled in, but none of them disembarked. The girl with me asked the lieutenant colonel in charge, "Can't they get off'?"

"No," he said. "I might not be able to control them if I let them off the train."

She looked at the men seated in the cars, cramped, restless, dog-tired, and flipped a verbal harpoon at him. "If you can't control them here," she asked, "what are you going to do when you get them up to the front?"

The lieutenant colonel was young and serious, and weighed down with new responsibility, but he grinned. " Maybe now's a good time to find out," he admitted. His men got off, and nothing happened except a heavy doughnut mortality.

One of the hardest problems I've ever had to tackle was getting the first dance started at Oujda. The mothers of the French girls in the town were very strict, and the Army had had hard luck with the mayor when they asked for his co-operation in putting on a party to be attended by military personnel and local girls. Somehow his ideas became confused and he nailed up posters on trees so phrased that it seemed the American soldiers wanted girls for other purposes than dancing.

The mayor's wife, however, was head of the French Red Cross and was friendly and level-

headed. I got together with her and we told the men, "You stay out of this and let us women handle it."

We decided that our first dance should be a very formal affair, and run on a high plane. The French Red Cross called up local mothers and explained that the affair would be heavily chaperoned.
The Army was so jittery about the whole thing, they almost drove us crazy asking us if we thought it would be a success. Apparently, they thought Americo-Moroccan good will was at stake. However, with the exception of the fact that all the French fathers, grandfathers, cousins, uncles, aunts and boy friends attended with the idea of getting a square meal, and ate our larder bare, the party was a glittering success.

It began with a grand march led by the mayor. his wife, the chef de la region, General Clark and his chief of staff. After the opening march, the soldiers took over, and I shall never forget the boy who cut in on me when I was dancing with General Clark. He didn't get over his amazement at his own boldness for months. After that, we had a dance almost every night, and they were so popular we had to turn the French girls away.

When France fell, a French law had been enacted proclaiming that no one should dance until the country was liberated: so the governor general of Algeria wrote an official proclamation saying it was now permissible. But despite the governor general's proclamation, a Frenchwoman with a characteristic French weakness for dramatization said to one of our girls, "How can you dance when our men are dying?"

"I was planning to dance with some of them before they died," our girl told her. The G.I.'s seemed to feel that way about it, too, for the first thing they ask when they come into one of our clubs is, "When is there going to be a dance?"

At first, the clubmobile work we were able to do in North Africa was primarily with the Air orce. The British had insisted on an inter-Allied rule that no women be allowed east of Constantine. **B**ut the Air Force was in Constantine. and General Spaat 7. thought we were all right, so we were allowed to have units attached to the wings of the Air Force.

I had thought I had got to know the. American G.I. in England. Now I discovered I had barely scratched the surface of knowing him. Every day I found myself discovering something new about G.I. Joe, until at last I think I came to know him even better than some of those he'd known hack home for years. For once he is overseas, his protective coloration disappears and his reticence shucks off.

From the moment we Red Cross girls first saw him, we were his long-lost friends, for he was hungry for somebody to talk to and discuss the things which he couldn't discuss with the man next to him in a foxhole. He could talk to a buddy about the jerries and about 80-mm. shells, and gripe about the food and build up a picture of himself as the leading wolf and vino drinker in the whole Army—maybe even in the world. But he couldn't try out his particular version of Noel Coward dialogue and Charles Boyer charm on the bearded and sweaty member of his own patrol. Nor could he get the things off his chest that touched him deeply. emotionally and mentally. That was where we came in. And it was a pleasure.

In the Constantine area, our Red Cross duty was to greet the men returning from bombing missions, and

between missions to serve the ground crews who worked on the planes. Our main contribution was making a boy feel normal again when he got his feet on the ground
after a trying night. Seeing us there, waiting for him, helped give him hack his sense of security. We met them before they were interrogated by the intelligence officer, and those intelligence
officers told us they were able to get 50 per cent more information out of the men if they had had a moment to relax and talk to the Red Cross girls first and consume some doughnuts and coffee.

Before we arrived, the air men had been allowed a whisky ration after each mission to help them achieve that same relaxation. and 90 per cent of them had been in the habit of taking it. But after
our club-mobiles got started, the 90 per cent dropped to 50 per cent. One day. as a test, the boys were asked to choose between the Red Cross doughnuts and the whisky, and to our great gratification, they chose the Red Cross.

The returning fliers liked to have the same girl meet their plane each time they came back, so they could feel they were returning to a girl they knew. The Red Cross girls with the Air Force units made a point of remembering how many missions a boy had had. and they brought the boys little presents when they had completed their fiftieth run.

You could see the entire range of human emotions in the faces and attitudes of the fliers who had just returned. Some of them were dog-tired. others elated. One would want to tell us everythi*ng that had happened to him; another wouldn't talk at all. Still others would tell you things both they and we knew* weren't true. We had to adapt ourselves to each new emotion as it came along.

The fighter pilots were a breed apart. It was clear they'd rather die than not fly their planes. Most of them were terribly young. and we wondered what would happen to them when they returned home and found everything flat and dull for them, with no flashing moments of triumph and no chance of cheating death several times a day. They were cocky and fresh and smart, but we thought them—and it would have been safer to throw a bomb at them than tell them that - "cute."

It was at Constantine just after the finish of the Tunisian campaign that L'Affaire Duckworth occurred. The story of Duckworth has been partly told in the newspapers, but this is the first time it has been told by one of those whos saw the whole thing through from beginning to end. It is also the first time the present whereabouts and welfare of Duckworth have been disclosed.

We received a report at headquarters that one of our Red Cross men named Markel had been killed on Cape Bon in northern Tunisia, and it felt necessary that one or two of us should check the facts of his death. So I asked Colonel Cook, of General Spaatz's staff, if he could arrange transportation for us to Tunis. He told us that would be a simple matter.

"I'm flying up there right now to look for a dog." he said, "and you may go with me."

"What dog?" I asked.

He told me about it. A Lieutenant East in one of our fighter groups had been killed in action. He had had with him a springer spaniel named Duckworth that he had brought from his home in the United States.

When Lieutenant East's family received news of his death, they wrote to General Eisenhower, requesting the return of their son's pet. The general took a personal interest in granting that request, and had asked General Spaatz to see that the matter was taken care of. But in the rapid movement that followed the fall of Tunisia, Duckworth hadn't been located. That very morning General Spaatz had said to Colonel Cook. "Go out and get that dog and bring it back."

We started in a C-47, with a fighter escort of both British and American planes, since there was still danger of German air attack and we were in the general's plane. We stopped at three different airfields, and on one of those stops we drove into an Air Force headquarters and were given a full account of how Markel died — his clubmobile had overturned and he had been buried on Cape Bon. Finally, we learned the exact location of the fighter group that had Duckworth. Having made that discovery, we went to see Lieutenant Colonel West, the group's commanding officer. When Colonel Cook told him why we had come, Colonel West said,

"I can understand the family's point of view, but that dog means as much to Lieutenant East's best friend, Lieutenant Taft, and to the entire squadron, as it meant to Lieutenant East."

Colonel Cook said he was sorry, but that he had been given his orders. A search was made, but neither Lieutenant Taff nor Duckworth could be found. Colonel West promised to send the dog on by air the next day, and we made ready to leave. Our props were turning over when a message came from the signal tower telling us to wait, and out on the field came a jeep bringing Colonel West, Lieutenant Taff and Duckworth. The lieutenant was heartbroken and tears trickled down his face.

"The dog will die on his way home," he said. "He'll be as lonely without us as we'll be without him."

Colonel Cook was reluctant to take the dog away, but said the matter was out of his hands. He had to bring Duckworth back. The lieutenant carried the dog into the plane in his arms. He remained aboard until the very last minute. Colonel West offered to take him back in his jeep, but he said he wanted to stay and see us take off. Looking back out of the plane window, I saw him standing there alone in the middle of the huge air-field, and I am not ashamed that I cried all the way back.

I kept saying to Colonel Cook, "If I were that mother and father, I'd want that dog to stay here."

Colonel Cook was very nice about it. He tried to talk to me and take my mind off the pathetic scene we had left behind. When we got back, Colonel Cook went in to report that he had brought Duckworth with him. As he walked in, General Spaatz asked, "Have you got that dog?" I was right on the colonel's heels, and I answered for him. " Yes," I said, "but we shouldn't have it."

Both of us described the situation to General Spaatz, who got General Eisenhower on the phone and told him what had happened. They talked it over and decided that Colonel Cook and I should both write and

explain to the dead flier's family why we thought it advisable to let Lieutenant Taff keep the dog. My first thought was to let the boy know the good news as soon as possible, so General Spaatz got Colonel West on the phone and asked him to send the lieutenant down to his headquarters the next day to take the dog back with him.

I was there the next evening when the boy came, and I saw the reunion. Duckworth leaped all over him and expressed his affection in every way a dog knew. General Spaatz asked Lieutenant Taff if he would have dinner with him on the headquarters porch, and Duckworth lay under Lieutenant Taff's chair all during the meal, retusing to leave him for even a minute.

In the meantime, Colonel Cook and I had written to the Easts, and eventually we got back an understanding letter which said they hadn't known what had happened to the dog or that anyone loved him, but that they would be happy to have him stay with the fighter group. The final chapter of the Duckworth story was a letter dated August 1, 1944, received by me on my return home.

Dear Mrs. Stevenson:

We learned of your return to New York in last night's World-Telegram. This gives us the opportunity again to thank you for your kindness when we asked General Eisenhower for our son's dog. Duckworth. You may be interested in the final chapter of Duckworth's travels. Last week, Mrs. East and I went to Gary, Indiana, where we visited Captain Taff and his family. Harold had asked us to come there to get Duckworth. They met us at the station, and Duck has been with us since. He seems content to retire from the Army and share our home. This followed his experience in our son's room, where Duckworth found happy memories of his former master through his nose. He jumped upon the bed, buried his nose in it, and then jumped up and rolled and rolled. There is no doubt in our minds that he knows that he is at home. Now he sleeps beside Dick's bed every night. We hope that you are well and that you are enjoying your children. With our sincere thanks and very best wish, I am

Very truly Bion R. East

At Constantine, I found lethal things being done in my honor. One bombardier came rushing up to tell me that he had chalked my name on a stick of bombs and had dropped them on the Germans, and he presented me with the pins pulled from each bomb as souvenirs. I thanked him with a sickly smile. But it didn't do my peace of mind much good—especially when my husband Bill began to call me Killer Stevenson.

Part of my education was discover-ing that each man's division, regiment, battalion or company was, to him, the Army's only No. 1 spearhead. Each G.I. thought his particular platoon or squad or patrol the spearhead to end all spearheads. They would say. "If it weren't for those others, we'd have gone right through; they're holding us back." That unit feeling is a solid gold nail in Hitler's coffin — even a platinum one.

Next to getting well when they're in a hospital, the principal thing on the mind of a wounded G.I. is that he wants to be sent back to his own unit. It is Army policy to try to do just that, but I've known many of

them to go AWOL from hospitals before they were discharged, and struggle back to their units because they were afraid that if they stayed their allotted time, they would be sent to a replacement depot.

The dark-skinned Moroccan troops carried that unit pride one step further. They refused to fight with any man who was not from their particular village. They were wild-looking men who, in days gone by, received their pay on the basis of the number of enemy ears they could produce. The G.I.'s called them goons and kidded us by saying, "Here come the goons, girls; better tie your ears down."

The G.I. equivalent of village pride was an overwhelming home-town, home-county, even a home-state pride. It was only a few degrees less impressive than his pride in his unit. The G.I.'s pored over the Red Cross state books by the hour. Not only the ones kept in the Red Cross clubs but the ones carried by the clubmobiles. Those state books were glorified guest books in which every man who visited a club or cluhmohile wrote his name and addre.. After signing them, if they found a signature from their town, county or state, they took of down the road even if it meant walking miles to find the man who had written it. Our field men told us stories of bringing brothers or even fathers and sons together by this means.

There was no guest book for Red Cross workers, but my husband Bill ran into a friend in Sicily without the help of one. When Bill first went to Sicily, the fighting was along the north shore. It was also moving east through the middle of the island, and Bill accompanied some R.C. field men with the 9th Division as far forward as he could get. Part of our Army's success in Sicily was based on moving ahead very fast over phantom roads. Army engineers made those roads by taking bulldozers and going straight across country. And General Patton drove his men so fast that the Germans just couldn't believe it.

One stretch was exceptionally dusty and dirty. When a dust cloud cleared away after a convoy had passed, Bill saw Red Cross man Ray FaIlona stand¬ing by the side of the road, clad in his undershirt, covered with dust. Behind Ray, only twenty yards from the road was his tent.

"What's the idea?" Bill asked him. "Why are you camping here in all this dirt and dust?"

"Yesterday, when I set up housekeeping, that road wasn't here," Ray told him.

Those mushrooming roads were so effective that they helped speed the Italian invasion, and the 16th Evacuation Hospital unit, staffed with person¬nel from the Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, went into Salerno on D day plus three. We got there on D plus twelve. We had persuaded General Clark to let a 5th Army Red Cross club-mobile unit go into Salerno on the heels of the invasion, and he had promised to wire us when he thought it time for us to make the move. But when, almost simultaneously with D day, we heard that Italy had surrendered, we arranged to go in on a troopship.

A few nights later, we were climbing down landing nets into an LCI at Paes-tum below Salerno. On the ship with us were the 5th Army money boxes containing $5,000,000. We landed about eight o'clock at night and slept in a ditch bordering a field near the beach. Ashore, responsibility for me and the other Red Cross girls was given to Major Newton, the finance officer in charge of the money. He was a practical man and, to save guards, he put us to bed next to the money boxes. "Killing two birds with one stone," was the way he described it.

When we reached 5th Army headquarters in an orchard, I suggested that we Red Cross girls go to a near-by evac hospital. When we got there, Colonel Bauspies, now in the Medical Corps of the 6th Corps, greeted us with open arms. To us, he seemed a saint straight from heaven, for when we asked him if he could put us up, he pointed at the tents his nurses would sleep in when they ar-rived, and said, "I haven't got a nurse in any of them. Help yourselves." Although the hospital was crowded with patients, there were no nurses there at first, because, on their way over, the ship carrying them had been bombed.

We did all we could to fill the gap left by the missing nurses. We washed wounded men, rushed bedpans, held aloft bottle; of blood plasma while it ran into their veins, shaved them, kidded them, and generally ran our legs off. We were trying to substitute for a hundred well-trained hands and it was a pretty hopeless undertaking.

On September twenty-eighth the hospital was blown down. There was a real hurricane — the kind of wind which leans against you and pushes. Afterward, of 100 tents, only two or three were left standing. A group of men glued to the ends of guy ropes stood all night holding up the X-ray tent. During the night we served two or three thousand bowls of hot soup and coffee.

During the storm, everybody on the staff went from one heap of canvas to another, peered under and asked
another, peered under and asked anxiously, "How are you?" When a feeble "O.K." came back to us, we'd crawl under with the wounded, and they would start joking saying. "Hey, this is worse than bombing. This thing is every-where."

Most of the men had lost their pants and shoes, and the clothes they had left were soaking wet. 1 noticed then that men who can stand almost any hardship quail and grow querulous when they lose their pants, for the only complaining we heard was plaintive cries of "I want my pants! Ain't that just like the Red Cross? They give us cigarettes when all we want is our pants!"

Pride Before a Fall

Part of the Allied army that took the field in Italy was a unit of American Japanese born in Hawaii. The American-born Japanese were good fighters, clean, polite and proud of being Americans. They were also proud of their small feet, just as Japanese women are. When they saw our G.I. shoes, they asked us what size we wore, and when we told them 5's or 5 1/2's, they grinned happily and said, "Ours are three and a half." In the end their small shoes caused them great sorrow, for they were so intent upon wearaing the smallest possible footgear. they failed to allow enough sock room, and, more than any other soldiers in Italy, they were subject to frozen and trench feet.

One member of that outfit was nick-named Chicken. Chicken was a chow hound. He would come along the chow line holding out his helmet instead of a cup for coffee, and he had no trouble consuming half a helmetful of it. I ran into him later, badly wounded with shrapnel in both arms and legs. When he saw me, despite his pain he remembered his hard-won reputation as a chow hound. We had teased him about it, and he thought it had made him outstanding in his unit, so, lying there in great pain, he tried to force down coffee and dough¬nuts to prove to us he still had the inner capacity that had made him famous. Chicken had his fill of doughnuts, but Bill discovered, when we went into Naples, that while we had

doughnut machines operating with some divisions, the 45th, made up of men from Oklahoma and New Mexico, was in a rear area for a brief period of rest and had never seen a Red Cross girl or a dough-nut. So he said to us, "Four of you girls get up there, but fast."

Doughnut Production

By the time we arrived, we found that we had only a week in which to serve them before they went back into action. We served 15.000 men in five days, averaging as many as 3000 a day. Which meant many more doughnuts than that, for there is no such thing as a single doughnut in the Army any more than there is a dumbbell with only one end. Then the 45th was ordered back into the line at Presenzano, and we said to the colonel in charge of G-1. "We haven't finished with your division. And passing over some men and taking care of others is worse than not having come up here at all. What will we do?"

"Why don't you come along up front with us?" he asked. It was a tremendous thrill, since it was the first chance Red Cross girls had had to work with troops in action.

After that, we lived with an ordnance unit in tents, and we housed our doughnut machine in a tent too. One night we were under fire, but, fortunately for our peace of mind, we didn't know just what was going on. I was sharing a tent with Betty Coxe, a cluhmobile girl from Haverford, Pennsylvania, and when the whistle of shells and the who-oomp of explosions increased outside, she raised up in bed and said. "Coach. aren't our boys doing a lot of firing tonight?" "Yes, they seem to be," I told her, and we dozed off again.

I had been given that "Coach" nick-name because Bill had used me from time to time as a trouble shooter. His pet phrase for describing those operations was, "Bumpy is good at infiltrating." When the Red Cross needed something very badly indeed, he said, "I send Bumpy to see the brass hats, and she usually comes back, like a well-trained retriever, with whatever we need, in her mouth." Also, the girls seemed to regard me as a mother superior, and asked me for advice and guidance in personal matters.

The next morning when we woke, we found, to our amazement, that thirty German shells had landed in our immediate vicinity. Most of the time our doughnut machines were operated by G.I.'s who had been given limited service while convalescing from wounds or exhaustion. The following night things got so bad, the boys insisted that we Red Cross girls climb into the clubmobiles and go six miles down the road, out of artillery range, where we sat until daylight. When we set up housekeeping again, it was pouring rain and there were inches of soupy, watery mud in the tent that housed the doughnut machine. We tried to hack out drainage ditches, but we didn't seem to be doing very well, for every ditch we dug led the water back into the tent, and we regretted that none of us had majored in engineering before coming overseas. In the midst of all that muck and goo, General Clark's aide arrived and warned us, "The general wants to see you. He's having lunch with General Middleton now, but he'll be over right afterward."

We feared the worst, and I could just hear his first words, "What are you doing up here?" And I was afraid he'd be very angry to find us so near all the excitement the enemy was sending us. When the general showed up, the pounding rain was drumming outside, but our doughnut machine was turning out doughnuts under full steam. He took one look at us, and instead of asking what we meant by being there, he said, "Why haven't you got girls with the other divisions up here?"

When the idea filtered through our heads that we weren't going to be sent back to the rear, I almost fainted. But I snapped out of it and said, "General, we have girls assigned to all the other divisions, but some of the other commanding officers don't want them along when the men are in combat."

" I'm the general commanding the Fifth Army and I want them there," he said.

That was my biggest moment overseas.

"When you finish with this division." he went on, "I want you to go to the Third, who have had a tough time and are coming out of the line very soon. Although, naturally, I don't want any of you killed, I consider that you Red Cross workers are so important a part of the war effort that you are expendable."

After that, we lived with the Quartermaster Corps of the 3rd Division for a while, then moved on to the 34th.

One of the most amusing characters I met was a boy named Hymie who was with a 45th Division service company. We hadn't been paying much attention to him as we helped serve breakfast. But evidently he had been watching us closely and soaking in our technique, for afterward he stepped forward and took us off in one of the most rasping. gravelly falsettos I've ever heard. Placing one hand on his hip, he said.
"Step up, sol-dier. What state are you from? From Pittsboig? Why, dat's in my own back yard. You'll get four doughnuts for being from Pittsboig. Don't bcome right along. Everything in this Army is in triplicate, so you'll get three doughnuts."

Watching him, we were speechless with laughter.

"So you're from Kentucky," he went on. "You're one of those honey chiles. Step up, sugar."

We'd learned to do anything and say anything to keep the conversational flow going. As part of our line of chatter, we learned to comment on a new mustache or a new beard as if it were something out of this world.

"Can I feel it?" we would ask, awestruck.

"Do you want me to wax it for you?"

Then we'd give its owner a doughnut to make it grow faster. Hyrnie wasn't exaggerating our style very much, and the other G.I.'s loved his perform¬ance. We felt self-conscious about our line of chatter for a while after that, but not for long. Clowning, we had found out, was part of our job. The men liked it and counted on it.

When a particularly fat soldier came along, we'd say, "You need building up," and slip him an extra doughnut. Hymie took that off too. "You look frail, soldier," he said. "You need to get some of these doughnuts inside of you."

One of the rackets the G.I.'s loved to work on us and on one another was to tell us that a certain boy was a wonderful dancer and that all he needed was a little coaxing to be an Arthur Murray or Fred Astaire. Invariably, the man so recommended was awkward and had never been able to get his feet untracked on a adance floor, but we would fall into the spirit of the thing and rush up to him and say,

"I hear you are a divine dancer. How about it?"

Sometimes they were so panic-stricken they ran frantically in the opposite direction with a Hed Cross girl in hot pursuit, while the men yelled with laughter.

Trying never to leave an outfit without first seeing to it that it had had its collective face lifted by a grin was only one of our many jobs. How to help prepare a boy who had lost a leg or an arm for his homecoming took every scrap of tact and diplomacy and understanding of human nature we had or could scrape up. And finding out what to say to men whose sweethearts or wives back home had let them have it in the back while they were away trying to concentrate on the enemy was an even more difficult assignment — almost an impossible one. We were to find out about those problems later.

Here is the second part of "I Knew Your Soldier", by Bumpy Stevenson, from the October 28, 1944 issue of the Saturday Evening Post. There is one instance of a racist slur, which, while not noteworthy at the time and place, is provided with an Editor's note.

I Knew Your Soldier
by Bumpy Stevenson with Pete Martin

II

I'VE often wondered what type of soldier I'd be if things were reversed and I found myself part of an army of millions of women living in foxholes or squeezing machine-gun triggers, and all of a sudden four men wearing Red Crosses came chugging up the road loaded down with doughnuts and coffee. I've asked myself if I'd be the type to push up front or one of the ones to hang hack and dig a toe into the dust and flush bashfully. And I've decided I'd be the one who hung around on the fringes, hoping for a look or a smile I don't think I'd rush up and monopolize the doughnut men of that imaginary war. There was one time when one of our Red Cross girls wished she had hung back a little and taken it easy. She was stationed at the casino the Red Cross had taken over as a beach club in Palermo when two aviators dropped in for a visit.

"How would you like to take a sail on the Mediterranean?" she asked. "I think we can get a boat."

One of the fliers gave every indication of fainting dead away. It developed that he had been on a life raft for three weeks in the Mediterranean and had just come ashore, so the flustered girl hastily tried to arrange a game of tennis instead.

But even without such embarrassing moments, it wasn't a soft life for us. Red Cross girls with clubmobile units and evacuation hospitals in the forward areas live in tents, and I didn't have a real bath from the middle of October until the day before Christmas. During all that time, I washed in a helmet. Perhaps the fact I used a khaki wash rag and a khaki towel, neither of which showed dirt, kept me feeling clean.

"Some of the things a soldier's woman at home does to him," says an experienced Red Cross worker. "seem to me a peculiarly vicious form of sabotage."

Because we were on the road all day, we ate our meals with a different outfit each time. Sometimes we served coffee and doughnuts to the boys as they passed by the chow line. This necessarily meant we ate last, so our food was often cold, and I recall many a time when it was well flavored with rain water. At other times we ate with the boys — who, incidentally, were always urging us to crash the head of the line. We insisted, however, on being strictly G.I. and patiently waiting our turn. The boys appreciated our attitude and we liked having a chance to chat with them. The soldiers got a kick out of the fact that we preferred to eat with them, despite invitations to join the officers.

The clothes we wore were a mixture of such feminine touches as handkerchiefs or scarves worn around our heads and anything else that happened to be handy. I remember getting out of a truck once wearing a Red Cross uniform with G.I. shoes and leggings, and 150 men started to sing, "Take 'em off" — meaning the leggings. "Here are the first American legs we've seen in months, and what do we get?"

they complained bitterly. "Leggings."

The solving of our laundry problem sometimes had startling results. Before we found out about the hazards of such a thing, we hung our undies in the sun, and soon afterwards we noticed a lot of air activity overhead. Four Cub reconnaissance planes circled over one pair of pink panties as if they were about to dive on them and strafe them. The next day we were given a warning, "Hang your clothes under trees where the enemy can't see them. Are you trying to signal our location to them?" After that, we hung them in the shade, where it took them forever to dry.

I think the nicest party I attended in Italy was a "shower party " that the quartermaster men of the 34th Division arranged for another Red Cross girl, Betty Coxe, and me. It had nothing to do with the kind of showers to which girls bring bits of trousseau. They had rigged up a shower bath with a latrine screen around it and had warned the men. to keep away. It was a cold day, and we stood there bare to the skin, with what seemed boiling water streaming down over us, and we didn't know whether we were being cooked or frozen. A stove had been stoked up in a tent near by, so we could dry ourselves in front of it. Boards had been arranged for us to walk on between the shower and the stove tent, and the boards in the tent itself had been scrubbed until they were spotless. After we were done, candy, coffee and cookies were served. Although it was morning we sat around and talked as if it were an afternoon tea.

Despite the fact that the nearness of the enemy hung over us as an ever-present threat, I don't want the parents of Red Cross girls to think that their daughters continually live under shellfire, because they don't. They often go in and out of artillery range, which is actually quite different from living under shellfire. Our experience living under shellfire with the 45th Division had resulted in General Clark's wanting us to work with all his divisions. But the Red Cross felt that nothing would be gained by having shrapnel in the doughnuts, so we decided that the girls should be attached to a rear echelon of a division, where, under normal conditions, they would he out of artillery range.

The G.I.s were solicitous about our safety. Now and then, they said, "You girls shouldn't be up here where the Krauts ran drop bricks on you."

But actually they were inordinately proud of our hardihood and faithfulness. When the French girls arrived to drive ambulances up close to the front lines, they said, "Why don't you girls do that?" They didn't want to think any other girls were braver than we were.

There are ways in which the women at home can "take it" too. Certainly the overwhelming majority of American women are ready and willing to do just that. But there are certain things it is important that they should and must not do. They must not play up stories about how they themselves are depressed or unhappy. They mustn't tell a returning soldier,

"You don't know what I've had to put up with since you've been gone. It's been awful. There have been times when I couldn't get any butter and had to wait in line for gasoline."

The things he has undergone recently have been so much worse, that such talk is bound to seem absurd to him.

Women shouldn't worry if their life at home is comparatively normal and quiet, and about the fact that

there is nothing really disjointed about it. Some of them seem to think that a reasonable normalcy is something to he ashamed of, and they strive to magnify the things the war has done to them, in an instinctive effort to build up a community of interest with the man overseas. Yet, sanity and normalcy are exactly what the soldier is fighting and dying to preserve. and he would feel tricked if he thought his country hadn't remained a green, clean place for him to come home to — neat and shining and running pretty much as it ran when he left it.

Once away from it, he begins to idealize America. It symbolizes perfection to him, and he forgets that there is anything wrong with it. For the first time, he really begins to appreciate it. He points to filthy little Arabs [This kind of slur was not uncommon in this era. – editor.]and says. "I'm glad my kid brother isn't an Arab," or "I'm glad I was born in the U. S. A." And he says about the country he happens to be in. "It would serve Hitler right if we gave him this dump."

The things we Red Cross girls did for the G.I.'s were varied and many, but none of them seemed outlandish to us. Sometimes when they came hack from the front, they complained that their heads felt full of nuts and bolts and mud and grit. Tentatively, I'd ask them if they would like to have their heads washed. There was nothing tentative in their acceptance of my offer. I became an expert at washing G.I. hair in a helmet basin, using the lemon powder with which we made lemonade, as a rinse.

There are certain kinds of trouble, however, we couldn't wash out of their heads — girl trouble and divorce trouble. You could see that some of them had things eating away at them inside, and finally they would come out with it. "My girl back in Texarkana" (or Jacksonville, or Richmond, or Scranton, or Sanberdoo) "is going with someone else," they'd say. "What will I do? Do you think she is two-timing me?" We did not maintain a private investigation bureau hack home, no there was nothing much we could do about double-dealing dames.

The divorce worries were more heartbreaking. A man would call us aside and say, "Can I speak to you for a minute?" And it didn't take a mind reader to see that he was struggling with great inner turmoil. His hands were cold, and he was visibly shaken. Then he'd burst out with pent-up bitterness, and we'd find he had just got a letter from a lawyer, asking him to release all claim on his wife. Or a letter from the wife herself, asking for her freedom. When such soldiers first began to talk to us about it. they were violent and explosive, and the things they called their wives were corrosive. But that was just a front, and before they were done, their throats worked and they wept unashamed.

One boy's wife had been writing to him regularly every week for eighteen months, and all her letters had been full of love and tenderness. Then came a gap of four or five weeks with no mail. The G.I. thought that her letters had merely been delayed. When the silence was broken, it was smashed wide open with a letter from her lawyer asking for a divorce.

These were not isolated cases. In one mail call for a company of 150 men, there were five requests for divorce; two from lawyers and three from wives. One other company commander told me he had had six such cases in one week. The legal documents from the lawyers seemed to me the more heartless of the two, although it was hard to choose between them. Such incidents were especially widespread with outfits that had been overseas as much as a year or more.

Then there were the my-girl-married-somebody-else cases. One boy repeated to me over and over.

"We'd been engaged for eighteen months and she promised to wait for me. I just don't understand it." Nor did I. Some of them shrugged it off and were outwardly hard-boiled about it and wore a there's-plenty-more-where-she-came-from facade. But, basically, they were just as deeply hurt as the violent ones.

Such running out on obligations on the part of women at home got to be so common that the 1st Armored Division established a Broken-Hearts Club, in an effort to help its members carry off emotional solar-plexus blows with an I-don't-care attitude. But to me it was an essentially pathetic organization. I feel very deeply about such broken ties - more deeply, I think, than anything else I ran into overseas. Aside from any considerations of faith and loyalty and trust involved, such a running out on men in uniform is unpatriotic and makes bad soldiers of the men to whom it happens.

One case of slackerism on the part of a woman back home can put a whole unit in danger. A company commander told me that his top sergeant and his staff sergeant — two men who were the backbone of his outfit — were of no earthly use to him any more. "I ought to break them," he said, "but I just can't, for I know what caused their slump. With one of them, his girl has married somebody else; the other's wife has asked for a divorce."

The lack of spirit in those two men had infected the whole company and had dropped its will to fight sharply down-ward.

A G.I. searched out Ted Andreas, one Red Cross field director, to talk over with him the divorce his wife had requested. "It's a hard thing to see a man who's lost part of his body." Ted told me. "but it's even harder to see a man who has lost his spirit. Shortly after that, I heard he had been wounded, and I went to see him. He was dead. When we checked over his things, we found a crumpled. blood-stained letter from his wife's lawyer in his pocket.. I could never make up my mind whether he had deliberately walked in front of death or not."

I try to understand such women. It isn't easy. Perhaps, they tell themselves, "He'll be killed and I won't have anything left." Perhaps they feel their youth slipping away and think that by the time the war is over, they won't he attractive to men any more. I'm no prude; I know that sex is here to stay. And sex is not a reasoning and patriotic emotion. I know that when some women read about a G.I. fathering quads in England, they get the idea that soldiers are having a terrific fling and are barging around high, wide and handsome, and dating the kind of girls who bathe with Chanel and chypre instead of water. The truth is that most of those men are working harder than they ever worked in their lives and spend many of their evenings sitting in foxholes up to their hips in water, instead of in a chromium-plated night club.

Hundreds of thousands of words have been written about what our soldiers are fighting for. I've known them intimately and have talked to them when they weren't bothering to keep up a front, and I know the vast majority of them are fighting for two things: The girl they left back home, and unit pride — in that order. The principal need of the American G.I. is a specific girl at home to fight for. Those who have one carry snapshots of them into battle. I've seen thousands of such snapshots, and when you talk to G.I.'s. those pictures come out in less than two minutes flat. If that specific girl lets him down, he has no way to form new associations, for he sees no American girls overseas, except the handful of us in uniform.

If the women who take run-out powders on their obligations could only realize what the results of their selfishness are, I know they wouldn't try the easy and cowardly way out. Perhaps they are lonely, but the average boy in uniform overseas is a thousand times more lonely. Women shouldn't indulge in self-pity. Comparatively speaking, they have everything. They have beds to sleep in, hot food to eat and clean clothes to wear. Certainly gas rationing and less butter and fewer steaks and a difficult time getting a seat on a train cannot really bother them.

If a soldier's girl or wife back home is worried about her man going off the sexual trolley while overseas, her best weapon to combat such a thing is to keep the soldier's faith and confidence in American women at par. If women at home want their men to seek the company of women in foreign countries, the quickest way to get them to do it is to let them down. A broken bond with home is a powerful encouragement to such practices. Take it from me, they really prefer talking to an Army nurse. a Wac or the Red Cross girls to the companionship of the local talent.

When an outfit comes back from days and nerve-racking nights at the front, a lot of loose talk flies around about how they are going to get likkered up and find a girl. But most of that sort of chatter is just part of a conversational routine that they feel is expected of men who have been deprived of the soft and comfortable things of life for a long time and have worked up a temporary eat-drink-and-he- merry-for-tomorrow-we may-die psychology. Even some of those who follow it out don't want to do so. and are secretly looking for some good cactus - not to. such as a Red Cross dance. When a Red Cross Club was opened at Oujda, the venereal-disease rate went down 80 per cent — that figure was given to me by an Army doctor — and we had similar experiences in other places.

The least American women can do is to keep faith or, if that proves too difficult, not make any decision of a radical nature until their men come back to them and they can talk it over. I realize that it is very hard for wives and sweet-hearts to have their men away for so long, but it is a privilege and a patriotic duty for them to be patient, understanding and even forgiving. It will be a shame if they spoil the sacrifice they have already made.

It is my conviction that the men who are doing the fighting will be helped in trying to readjust themselves to civilian life by the fact that in this war women are working alongside them. Those of us who were there and understand what the men were up against and what they went through will act as a small but important point of contact between those men and the women they left at home.

For example, every evac hospital has fifty nurses attached to it, and every field hospital near a clearing station has thirty. There are several hundred WACs in Italy alone, and many more elsewhere. There are a few thousand Red Cross women, and on the high seas there are Navy nurses. The Wars with the 5th Army were well up in the forward echelons and have had bombs dropped on them. In the last raid we had in Naples, a bomb hit the Wac barracks there, and if the girls in it hadn't lit out for the air-raid shelters in the nick of time, there might have been many casualties.

At least we shall be able to talk the soldiers' language when they return. And if we are articulate, and I hope many of us are, we should be able to sell understanding to a lot of women who didn't make the voyage across with us. For the problem of postwar understanding is terribly real. I've had G.I.'s start to talk to me about a spell of particularly bitter fighting they have undergone or of having a buddy killed by their side, and in the middle of telling me, they are unable to go on. A curtain drops inside of them. And,

although I was there with them and have heard shells whistle and crump just as they had, I could see them saying to themselves: "She doesn't know what it is like." If it was tough for me to get through their shell of un-shared experience. it will be even harder for those who didn't have my advantages.

Ostrich Psychology

Since I've been back home, I've run into women who have taken refuge in a kind of ostrich psychology. They are trying to shut themselves of from all knowledge of the war. They refuse to read newspaper accounts of it or magazine articles about it. They shun news reels showing war shots, and the terribly gripping documentary war films, as if those things were a pestilence. They make no bones about saying, "It's all just too horrible, and I'd rather not know anything about it. It is had enough to know it is going on, and I'm certainly not going to harrow my feelings and get myself upset by reading about it or looking at it on a movie screen."

I wonder if such women plan to keep on ignoring the fact that their husbands and sons and sweethearts and brothers have been in a war when those men come home. Most of the problems they are going to face in the next few years are having their beginnings right now in foxholes, in slit trenches, in machine-gun nests, in Army and Navy hospitals, and in replacement units and rest camps for the exhausted. Before we can settle any of the other problems, were going to have to solve the one of re-establishing men just out of uniform in their jobs and their homes, and see to it that their emotional and personal contacts are made easy. Pretending the war isn't there, making no effort to understand what men are going through, seems to me a pretty blind way of getting ready for the day of homecoming.

I remember a G.I. in the lot Armored Division who said,

"I don't hate the Germans as much as I hate the Four-F back in New York who stole my wife and my car. I want to kill him."

Many a G.I. thinks every man back home is a 4-F making easy and overlarge war profits. This is a frightening indication of the growing gap in understanding and mutual tolerance between the civilian and the man in uniform. Most of the things the G.I. resents about the home front are based on his lack of knowledge of what the real facts are. And there is a crying need for an educational program to cure such misapprehension.

Those G.I.'s who have been overseas for a long, long time find it hardest to take. They ask, "Where are all those seven million other men in uniform we keep reading about? Why don't they send some of them over to relieve us?

Some of the things they resent , however. are understandable. A seasoned outfit is of value because of its experience, but if it is kept in the field longer and longer and still longer, there cornea a time when the men in it feel they have nothing to look forward to but death or being disabled. And it is hard for them to see why the rotation system does not work in their case. I've talked to men in such outfits who have been decorated for bravery. But when I've offered them my congratulations, they've said, "I wasn't brave. I was hoping to God I'd be killed or wounded, so I could get out of here. It wasn't a decoration, as far as I was concerned; it was desperation."

Occasionally, there was a boy who just couldn't take it any more. One such G.I. said to a Red Cross girl, "I've been shifted to combat, and I don't think I can stand it. I'll kill myself first." The girl didn't take him seriously and tried to treat it matter-of-factly, hoping he would snap out of it. "Why don't you take a pot shot at a jerry first?" she asked him. Five minutes later, he killed himself in his tent. Quite naturally, the girl felt dreadful about it and told herself she should have known he really meant it and should have done something to stop him.

I've heard a lot of talk about how Purple Heart decorations are being handed out overgenerously but I can't sympathize with those who belittle them. Its wearers may be legion, but in spite of that it means a lot to a wounded man who receives it. I've seen them in hospital beds holding it by the hour or reaching into their pockets to bring it out to show it to you. Sooner or later, they ask you to mail it home, to keep them from losing it or mom can keep it in the place in which she guards her most cherished keepsakes. I've known Red Cross girls who have mailed as many as fifty to sixty of them home in a day.

The men know that a lot of them are given out. They joke about it and say. "Jim got the Purple Heart for cutting his hand on a C-ration can." But they still want it if they've earned it.

Love and War

No one has yet devised a bleeding-heart decoration or a heart-transfixed¬by-an-arrow insigne for wartime distribution, but a lot of those could be given out too. As Bill put it, "Take a few healthy American girls overseas and put them with a group of half a million lonely men, and somebody will fall in love with somebody. Then when you move them to another unit, the same thing happens again."

Under such conditions, marriage was a problem which inevitably raised its head Under such conditions, marriage was a problem which inevitably raised its head in our organization. Bill called it Colonel Trouble. That was probably not a fair label for it, but the day Bill first used the phrase, it just happened that colonels had loomed up conspicuously in helping Cupid infiltrate the Red Cross.

The Red Cross girls had little wolf trouble with GI's. They seemed to regard us as they thought of their sisters or the girls they had known back in high school. When we saw them riding by on a truck, we'd yell. - Hi, soldier! What's cooking?" and they'd yell back, "Chicken, wanta neck?" And I've heard G.I.'s in Africa say, "It's high time I'm going home; the Arabs are looking whiter to me every day." But they didn't mean to be fresh. They just thought those things funny and bright to say. In G.I. lingo, they were being "sharp."

In my two years of acting as * a Red Cross worker, I never had any trouble with G.I.'s, but an occasional officer was apt to be a playful pouncer and, with a remarkable lack of subtlety, would say such things as, "I've got only six hours leave. Let's get going."

Not that they were really dangerous. and any level-headed girl could easily develop defensive tactics that were crushingly effective. Which reminds me of the American girl in London who said to her uniformed escort: "Thank you. no! I'd rather walk. I'm too tired to take a taxi." I overheard another girl at a dinner party in London say to a similar companion, "I'd like to remind you that this is a dining room, not a love tunnel in an amusement park."

Nor did the business of putting a roving male in his place always stop, even after marriage. One friend of ours, a colonel, had married an Army nurse. Presently, she had to go back home for the usual reason —their union had been blessed [ed. note: with issue]. Our colonel friend stayed close to his knitting for about a month, then one evening he got into his best tailor-made uniform to come to dinner with us. On the way, he thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out a piece of paper on which he found in his wife's handwriting. "So you're all dressed up — why?"

Our Red Cress girls were very carefully selected, and though there were naturally a lot of heart throbs. there was very little scandal. Actually, they established a phenomenal record for good behavior. Bill has a theory that the kind of girls that are best for us are those who were tomboys when they were young. By that he doesn't mean they should be mannish in any way. I've never been called mannish, and I used to play baseball with the boys and be the only girl in the gang on our block. Overseas, I still was only a girl in a gang — only the block and the gang were bigger. We had a few girls with us whose husbands had been killed in action in the Pacific. They were wonderful workers. They drove themselves so hard that some of them had to be sent to rest homes.

One soldier pal of mine wanted to get a pass to come into Foggia to take me to a movie. He had a hard time arranging it, and finally, as a last resort, went to his commanding officer. "Sir," he said, "I've met a Red Cross girl from my home town. Could I have a pass to go into Foggia to see her?"

The C.O. visualized a boy and girl who had grown up near each other on the shadowed lawns of a small town, and, smiling an understanding smile, he gave his permission. But the G.I. had intrigued his C.O.'s interest just one degree too much.

The C.O. handed him his pass and asked paternally, "What town are you from, soldier?"

When he answered "New York City," the C.O. jerked the pass back as if it were red-hot, and the soldier removed himself from his presence a flicker of a second before wrathful lightning blasted him. My movie date was definitely out. It is rare, however, that a G.I. is at a loss for a word or a phrase to fit any situation.

Most of the G.I.'s were very, very young, and as with the young everywhere, catch phrases and popular sayings swept through them like a rash. If one of them said, "I don't want another cup of coffee," he was asked, "Why not? Are you noivous in the soivice?" Things were either "sharp" or "rough " — "rough " being the foot soldier's equivalent of the Navy's "rugged." It was, "You look pretty sharp this morning, Bumpy," or "They tell me it is pretty rough up at Anzio."

Once in a while, we Red Cross girls definitely had the wind removed from our sails. "Gee, Bumpy," one G.I. admirer told me, "I love to talk to you." Batting my eyes, I asked him, "Why?" "I feel so safe," he told me. In one second's time I felt practically a grandmother.

I saw another boy looking at me quizzically, and asked, "Why are you looking at me like that?"
"You must have been quite cute when you were nineteen," he said thoughtfully.

I overheard two of them discussing me. and one of them said, "She's really old. She must be thirty-one or thirty-two." It just didn't seem to occur to them that anybody lives to be older than that.. When I told

them I had two daughters, fifteen and sixteen years old, they wouldn't believe it, but when I showed them my daughters' pictures, they shifted conversational gears rapidly and asked, "Would you mind if I wrote to her? I'd like to look her up when I get home. She looks O.K."

I'd asked them, "What kind do you like? I've got one blond and plump, and one thin and dark."

Back in the 1920's, their fathers were supposed to have preferred blondes, but pigmentation doesn't enter into their sons' choice, for my offspring got a fifty-fifty break.

Shortly afterwards, my daughter, Helen, sixteen, wrote to me,

"My first letter from one of your soldier friends began, 'Hello, Helen,' but my last one from him started, 'My darling angel.' Do you think I'm leading him on too much?"

I think the story that brings out the deep, underlying difference between the British and the American G.I. more clearly than any other occurred when, together with two or three other Red Cross girls, I was trying to find one of our units. We were much nearer the front than we thought. and when we asked a British MP if he could help us find the outfit we were looking for, he said, "Madam, it is not advisable for you to proceed." When we asked him "Why?" he repeated his warning with even more dignity.

When one of our own MP's happened by, we asked him the same question. "For God's sake!" he exploded. " You dames get the hell out of here!

Here is the last part of "I Knew Your Soldier", by Bumpy Stevenson, from the November 4, 1944 issue of the Saturday Evening Post. The cover was by Norman Rockwell.

I Knew Your Soldier
by Bumpy Stevenson

III

WAR, viewed from a Red Cross clubmobile or a doughnut-and-coffee post or from almost any other place in which a Red Cross girl is apt to find herself, is a huge prism ranging from dark. heartbreaking incidents that tighten your throat, all the way through the spectrum to the brightness of humor that makes you hurt with laughter.

Someone somewhere back in the United States had invented a thing called a foxhole pillow. It was actually labeled that in plain optimistic lettering. I'll never forget the disgust on the face of the first G.I. I saw receive one.

"Look what I got," he said. "How to win the war in comfort. How to be happy and fight."

Those gadgets came complete with a slip cover, so that a G.I. could take it off and launder it, thereby keeping it fresh and dainty. For some reason, it had a slit in it, and the G.I. explanation for the slit was that it had been put there so they could use it as an ear trumpet with which to hear shells coming.
Even more disgusted was a G.I. who received a Christmas package containing a foxhole pillow, a shoeshine kit — he was muddy to his knees, and would be for weeks to come — and a package of those small round candies, of which there was such a superfluity in Italy, even the Italians refused to eat them.

I was not a trained hospital worker, but I hoped I could do a pretty decent job as a hospital recreational worker. I remember, when I first went to work in a ward, I felt I should talk in a whisper and walk on tiptoe, but I soon found out that the more I conducted myself in a normal manner, the better; for what those boys needed and wanted was something with a grin in it rather than a you-poor-dear-thing attitude. But sometimes my recreational efforts took an unexpected turn, for once when I sat on a bed, I tipped over a basin of water I hadn't known was there, and when I stood up with my rear soaked I was a howling success. Reprovingly, I was asked, "Aren't you even housebroken?" and without further ado, I was picked up and placed stomach down on a stretcher to dry, while behind me a conference took place about the wisdom of making me a set of didies.

At the other end of the prism, the dark and shadowy end, were things like the trail at Venafro. Fighting was going on to the left of Venafro. We had taken it, but it was still under fire. Working for five days and nights, our engineers had hacked out a trail, slicing their way five or six miles up into the mountains. Down it, soldier litter bearers, working from nine to fourteen hours at a stretch, brought the wounded. At the bottom of the trail, where the ambulances picked them up, one of our Red Cross men had taken over a peasant's home and served coffee and doughnuts there to the boys who were waiting for the ambulances. I think that but meant as much to the litter bearers as it did to the wounded, for the trail was cold, rainy and muddy. And the footing was so tricky that I could hardly walk around the corner of that house without falling down.

The shoulders of the boys carrying the litters were like raw meat, and they couldn't open their curled-up fingers for minutes after putting the litters down. I asked one litter bearer, "How do you do it?" "I don't know," he said. "I never was much for religion or God, but I was so bushed that from the time I put that litter on my shoulder until I put it down I don't remember a thing. All I knew was, I couldn't fall, and I figure Somebody held me up." The walking wounded and the dead came down on muleback. I reached that but for the first time after nightfall. and the cavalcade coming down the trail looked like a procession out of Dore'a illustrations for Dante's Inferno. You just couldn't believe you were seeing those bandaged and stumbling figures moving so painfully in the mud. In the dark, it took me a little while to realize that a head I saw bouncing crazily on a mule belonged to a dead boy.

The concern of the wounded for the litter bearers took your heart and squeezed it. "You'd better put me down for a while, pal," they'd say. "I'll be all right. . . Don't hurry. . . . You might fall and hurt yourself."

It worked the other way around too. At the 38th Evac Hospital during the big push when we broke out of Anzio, there wasn't a boy in the whole detachment who didn't, sooner or later. offer his services in helping us take care of the wounded. The-ambulatory cases helped cut off shirts and shoes and bring water. They knew the pressure was on, and they wanted to help.

The Red Cross installed a girl in the office of the surgeon general at Naples, where she could have access to the lists of the hospitalized, so that if a soldier came in and said, "My buddy is wounded and I want to find him," she could let him know where that buddy was immediately. And once he found him, the soldier would walk miles to bring him his clothes or his mail, or his toilet kit. They'd greet each other with "How-ya boy?". Then he'd sit awkwardly by the bedside, tongue-tied, afraid of being demonstrative. Then that phase would pass, and they'd warm up when the wounded boy dug for details and news and began to ask, "Is Joe all right?" and "Has Jim been captured?" Such bits of news were more important to them than medicine. When the wounded were brought in and you told them their outfit had made a breakthrough or had reached its objective, they were so proud that tears came into their eyes, and you could see them begin to heal then and there.

But the consideration and thoughtfulness of the G.I. wasn't confined to helping with the wounded. Their pleasure in doing things for the Red Cross girls was moving. They made us dressing tables of ration boxes, and chairs of odd pieces of discarded wood, and lamps with shades fashioned of burlap. And they were always arriving with some little present, such as a ring made from a piece of German airplane. They were not only considerate about chairs and dressing tables but when my husband, Bill, dropped in to see me from time to time, they took great pains to leave us alone for a while, figuring we wouldn't welcome interruption.

The mind of the G.I. is not complex. They never seemed to get over their surprise that Red Cross workers were there. Constantly, they asked us, "You don't have to do this, do you?" or "You don't hate to stay?"
Officers sometimes felt neglected because we purposely concentrated on the G.I. We did manage to open a few officers' clubs, but the Army agreed with our theory that our first duty was to the enlisted man. Then, too, the G.I.'s were pretty touchy about our paying too much attention to the officers. If we were nice to one, they called us on it immediately and said to us sternly,

"I saw you out with the hardware (GI. for 'brass hat ') last night. What's the big idea? -"

"We need a requisition for a shower in the club," I would tell them, "and I got it."

It wasn't a gag. I would go to a cocktail party and run into hardware, who gradually grew expansive and asked, "What do you need, young lady?"

Striking while the iron was malleable, I would ask for something we needed, like a generator for a doughnut machine. By the time the party broke up, I would have it all signed, sealed and virtually delivered.

After a while, there wasn't so much, need for my acting as a wheedler. General Sullivan, the 5th Army quartermaster, wrote letters for Red Cross people to take with them when they went with a unit. Those letters said we were to be treated as a part of the Army and given anything the quartermaster of that outfit could spare us, and that the 5th Army would reimburse the unit quartermaster.

From the first day our men went into Anzio, I wanted to go there, but we had another clubmobile unit just starting with the 85th Division, and I was persuaded to stay with it. But I still couldn't help wanting to be where I thought I could do the most good, and I was sure I could do that on the Anzio beachhead. Finally. I brought everyone around to my way of thinking, and I started the last week of April.

It was high time, for when we arrived. several of the Anzio evac hospitals needed extra Red Cross workers. I was attached to the 38th. a 500-bed hospital capable of expanding to hold 1000 patients in an emergency — which was practically all the time.

We went into the beachhead on a British hospital ship, while shells fell in the harbor around us. We arrived in the morning, and no one was allowed to get off until 300 wounded were loaded and brought out to us on barges through very rough water. While the harbor was under fire, no planes came over, thank God. With all that shipping around, the Germans couldn't have bombed our other ships without running a risk of hitting us too. Each LCI that came out to us bore 150 wounded, and we went ashore on the second one. We went right to the evac hospital. No one could leave it. It was dug in as if somebody had made huge, shallow cellars and had put tents in them.

We went down five or six steps into each ward. The tents in which the hospital personnel lived — we called them "flak shacks" — were surrounded with sandbags, and our living quarters had a wooden roof over each cot, covered with steel, and with sandbags over that. The sides of the ward tents were protected with sandbags, and at intervals throughout them, there were more sandbag revetments. Ordinarily, the sides of the ward tent could be raised, but because these were sunk into the ground, even raising the aid. let only two or three inches of air through. It was dark and dim inside, and electric lights were kept burning all day.

There was one section in each of the N.P. — neuropsychiatric — wards fitted with wood, steel and sandbags as flak shelters to give the men in them, who were abnormally sensitive to raids, a feeling of greater security. But during a raid I've seen the men in those wards digging, scratching and scrabbling at the dirt with their hands and fingernails in an effort to persuade the earth to open and receive them.

Perhaps my most heartbreaking job was helping the wounded boys in the hospitals write home. We wrote from five to fifty such letters a day. Their first and only idea seemed to be to write a letter that

wouldn't worry a wife, a mother, a sweetheart or a sister. We'd sit beside a boy with a leg gone or an arm missing, and he'd ask us to write, "Dear mom, don't worry about me. I'll be O.K." And it took a lot of arguing, to persuade them to try to prepare the folks left behind for the day of their return.

"But mom wouldn't he able to stand it," they told us. "She'll go nuts if she finds out how it is with me."

We tried to reason with them.

"If you think she'll be shocked now," we said, "how do you think she'll feel when they carry you home or you walk up the steps with one arm? What's happened to you is not so important as you think right now. After all, you're alive and the war is over for you, and you'll be going home soon. Maybe even in three weeks."

They grasped at our words like drowning men clutching at a floating oar. And when we told them,

"You are luckier than your buddies who were killed," they perked up and said,

"Yeah, that's right. I guess I'm even luckier than those guys moaning in the head ward or the stomach ward. When you get right down to cases, it's better to lose an arm than half your insides or part of your brain."

But with the best will in the world. it was impossible for our hospital workers to be more Pollyanna-ish than that. You simply couldn't look those men in the eye and say, "Your sacrifice was worthwhile. It's men like you who are ending war for all time to come and are bringing Christian brotherhood to the world."

For you can't sit in a ward like that and see the things you see, and hear the things you hear, and believe that the world is a very Christian place, or that there is any brotherhood of man, or that the world will have learned its lesson and this will be the last war. So we did the next best thing. A lot of them had never heard about artificial limbs, and they were thrilled and encouraged when we described them those aids to them, and how, with their help, a man could walk and even dance. And how a man who had lost his arm could cut his meat and dress and undress himself.

Just having women in the wards helped them. They had been lying there building up complexes in their minds about how always in the future they would be repulsive or repellent to women. And when we looked at them with neither of those things in our eyes, it cheered them.

They arrived at the hospital tired, dirty and scared, not wanting to see anybody, or have anybody see them. When we said quite naturally and normally

"How're you doing, soldier? Pretty rough, eh? How would you like a cigarette?"

the look that came into their eyes was incandescent.

Not all the amputation cases were brooding and depressed. however. Some of them faced their loss boldly and realized, without being told, that they were lucky compared to others. But whatever else they

put in their letters, they always mentioned the fact that they were having the best care in the world and that the Army had better doctors and nurses than people in civilian life.

In each hospital there is a recreation tent. I was lucky with the one in Anzio, for I was able to borrow a lot of stuff from a local prince's palace to furnish it. There were even love seats from the royal boudoir. There were cabinets and full-length mirrors too. And when we were all through. I'd never seen anything so snappy. The convalescents loved it.

The prince had been pretty naive about it, for he said to me, "I'm sure they will be safer with you, Mrs. Stevenson, than with the Army." He never knew his love seats, tastefully upholstered in pink damask, would be occupied by G.I.'s in a tent. We lugged two truckloads of fittings away from the palace and plunked them down in six inches of dust. G.I.'s lay back in those chairs with their feet cocked on petit-point footstools and said, with deep sighs of contentment, "Boy, this is the first time I've sat in an armchair in a year."

But it wasn't all pink damask and potted plants at Anzio. There was tragedy, too, for one of our Red Cross girls, Esther Richards, was so seriously wounded by a German shell she died on the operating table an hour later. The head Army nurse was killed at the same time. They were both wonderful girls.

The reading tastes of the boys in the hospitals ran toward old-fashioned love stories. What they wanted was a quiet romance with no war background. They wanted to see, hear and read things that were normal. There can never be too much reading material for men overseas — especially for those in isolated spots, such as radio crews, antiaircraft men and field artillery. You even see them in six-by-six trucks, riding up to the lines, reading as they ride. Then they sit out there day after day, sometimes with long stretches of hours when there is nothing to do at all, and time hangs heavy on their hands. It is true that when an outfit has to pick up and move quickly, they may have to leave their books and magazines behind.

Special Services called that a waste, but the boys ought to have enough so they can waste them if necessary. Certainly no spirit builder so vital should be restricted. The same need applies to writing material. It is a standing joke with the Red Cross that no matter how much writing paper we order, it's not enough. As a matter of fact, the Red Cross was the only one giving it out. We would order 25,000,000 sheets at a time. We had it printed in Africa, Italy and wherever we were, but there was just never enough of it to go around.

It's a funny thing about those heavy letter writers. Many of them in civilian life average two or three letters a year at most, but in the Army they are apt to write five or six a week. The real reason for the boom in correspondence is that they all want letters in return. For almost as important as the snapshots in a G.I.'s wallet is his mail. Mail from home is even more important than food.

The Germans had a hig railroad gun we called the Anzio Express, and as its shells, groping for a target, landed nearer and nearer, they made me think of the thudding of a giant's feet walking toward me. I never quite got used to it. Each day you don't get hit makes it seem more likely that tomorrow will be your day. Another part of me tried to belittle danger. Death, I told myself, is just too dramatic to happen to me, and I never got out of bed to get into a foxhole. I told myself I'd rather die warm in bed than cold, wet and miserable in a trench.

The soldiers at Anzio had elaborate flak shacks deep underground, with pin-up girls on the walls. One boy I knew there used his pin-ups for a double purpose.

"My pin-ups are so good that when the officer comes around to inspect the place," he told me, "he's so interested in those chicks, he doesn't notice if anything's wrong."

One boy hospitalized there had a girl who had married somebody else, and, inspired by the popular song based on the same theme, he had actually made himself a paper doll, which he carried around with him and talked to in endearing terms.

It takes a girl with intestinal fortitude to handle hospital work. You go through hospital wards and see things that tear you to bits inside, and you keep a grin pinned on your face. Then some little thing will set you off and you'll find yourself in tears.

At Anzio I was walking through a ward when I passed a boy who I had known before, who was just coming out of ether after the amputation of his right arm. He heard my voice and said, "Is that you, Bumpy?"
His nickname was Ace, and he had been wounded three times - twice before. I talked to him for an hour. Then I went outside and put in a telephone call for his brother. In the middle of the conversation, I broke down. He was such a kid. and it just didn't seem right that he had to keep on getting it until at last he had been disabled. In civilian life, he had been a photographer. good enough to work for The New York Times.

The Army had offered him responsible photographic jobs, but he had turned them all down to stay in the infantry. I think the thing that tripped my emotional trigger was that he had asked me, "Will I he able to drive a car again or take a picture?" Then he forgot he had asked me, and asked me all over again. Usually, the thing that touches you in a vulnerable spot is some relatively unimportant thing, undramatic in itself, such as a wounded man showing you a picture of his dog or betraying same small unexpected tenderness for a buddy. It was fortunate and healthy for us to be able to find release in such periods by letting down our emotional back hair.

Once when I was in tears, a dry-eyed Red Cross girl looked at me enviously and said, "I wish I could do that." The big thing. of course, is not to let the G.I.'s see you at such times. They'd never forgive you if they did.

By the time the average boy who has been disabled arrives home, he has worked up a philosophy to help him accept his lot, and he doesn't want to have that broken down once more. The thing he dreads most is the possibility that his mother will wring her hands and say, "My boy. my boy, what have they done to you?"

He longs to come home, but he is afraid of such emotional scenes. He doesn't want to be treated differently. He wants mom to be exactly the same as she always was. I was told one story about the family of a returning soldier who were so over-solicitous that they made the boy unhappy. Then one day he left his wet bathing trunks lying in the living room, and his mother bawled him out and said. "What do you mean by leaving them there?" It gave him his first moment of real happiness. Not until then did he feel that he was really back home once more.

The G.I.'s I've met are as much worried about the problem of readjustment as anyone at home can be. I've heard them say.

"What will my girl do when she finds out I've learned to drink a little?" and "I guess I'm going to seem different to them," or "I'll certainly have to watch my language when I get home."

If their families can keep in mind the fact that they've been engaged in a new, strange business — the business of raw killing or of being killed — and that such an undertaking will leave its mark on a boy, it will help. Some of the Red Cross workers at Anzio had experiences they will never forget, although they'll not leave the same kind of mental scars the G.1.'s get.

At Anzio. our doughnut machines made 28,000 doughnuts a day. Our Red Cross girls were not allowed to distribute them or take the machines up to the front — that was handled by Red Cross field men. Our field men at Anzio absolutely blossomed forth. It was the first time they had had no competition from us.

One of them, Stubby Speery, had the startling experience of having five Germans surrender to him. His clubmobilc was waiting at the head of a line of jeeps at a crossroad when two motorcycles and a car came up. and Germans boiled out of them, holding their hands aloft.

"What did you do, Stubby?" I asked him.

"All I had in the way of weapons was a handful of doughnuts," he told me. "For the first time. I found myself wishing they were as heavy as iron washers instead of being as light and flaky as we can make them."

Fortunately for his peace of mind, some MP's came along and took over. On the night the big push out of Anzio began, we could follow the war with our ears. It moved slowly away from us each night, and nearer and nearer to Rome. Then the time came when we could start air evacuation by plane, which meant the wounded could reach Naples in forty-nine minutes instead of fourteen hours by hospital ship. As each planeload went out, those left waiting their turn would say to some evacuee "My heart is break¬ing for you, you big bum. I know how you hate to leave this summer resort."

Many of the soldiers had never been in the air before, and they were thrilled at the prospect. When you are wounded and lying on your hack, any extra attention you get magnifies itself in your mind enormously. To them, the fact that they were being evacuated by air was tops in consideration and attention.

One general wanted ts to send some of our clubmohile girls to England to go into Normandy after D day, but Bill said, "No, there are plenty of Red Cross girls and equipment in England already. and, in comparison, we are terribly short-handed here." That general did not take Bill's "No" for an answer, and sent his aide to Algiers by plane with a letter to Bill asking him to reconsider. Every one of his men knew our girls, he said and the girls knew every one of his men. Their influence was such that their absence would be a blow to G.I. spirits. He even enclosed a letter from the divisional chaplain quoting his regimental chaplains to bolster his plea, but Bill stuck to his guns. "I just don't have the personnel to spare," he said. "We are spread too thin as it is over here." But we felt it was a compliment to the work

those girls had been doing.

The strong bonds of friendship that spring up almost instantly overseas are hard to analyze. You meet people on a clipper or a boat trip and you're practically blood brothers before you land, and you become fond of people you might not even have liked at home.

Those overseas friendships are the essence of democracy. You learn to take people at their face value. They all look alike in uniform. You judge them on the basis of their real personalities. The boy mixing doughnuts for you may have played the violin in a philharmonic orchestra or he may have spent time in jail back home. That is unimportant. The main thing is what kind of a Joe he is as you know him.

Once back home, I found I had to control myself to keep from winking, waving and speaking to any soldier I met on the streets. But my self-control has gaps in it. When I see a boy wearing a division patch on his shoulder that I knew in Italy or Africa, I still go out of my way to talk to him.

Bill is sure that in the years to come, I'll be hanging out of auto windows talking to a filling-station attendant about what happened at Altavilla or craning my neck at bricklayers on scaffolds to ask them what division they were with. Maybe he's right. Things like that get into your blood, and I don't think I'll ever get them out of mine.