



"Go back! Go back! Can't you see? That's water!"

What an Army!

By Tech. Sgt. ROBERT C. GEAKE

The irrepressible Sergeant Geake, of Fort Wayne, Indiana, who has been amusing the customers from time to time during the past few months, has sent us by slow boat, apparently—another batch of memoranda, dealing with the vicissitudes of Army life. Sergeant Geake is with the 5th Army, which recently fought its way into Italy, but these letters were written while his outfit was still at its North African base. Our attitude is that if they had been written during the Civil War they would still be joyous reading.

—The Editors.

DO NOT be deceived. It is not difficult to be a surgeon in the Army. All you need is an inborn reluctance to let soldiers alone and twenty-nine signs reading, CONTAMINATED.

Army surgeons and normal people seldom see eye to eye. Over here in North Africa, for instance, they seem constantly to be at odds with the Army as to just who or what constitutes the enemy. Obsessed with the happy faculty of being unable to see the war for the germs, they are apt to go bouncing around the front lines through machine-gun and artillery fire, shouting, "For heaven's sakes, stop this nonsense and get your mosquito bars on!" At Kasserine Pass they answered Rommel's dive bombers by distributing posters depicting a contented-looking red-blue-and-yellow mosquito a foot long, and bearing in huge black letters the somewhat debatable proposition: AS DEADLY AS A STUKA! Just so the boys wouldn't lose perspective.

In the field, our pill rollers live in cycles. They go on wild shot crusades and will not rest content until every

There was, for instance, the time Private Chapman sold "sea stamps" to the officers aboard a transport.

soldier in the outfit has two sore arms. It's about time now for the teeth-inspection cycle. That will be something. All the dental surgeons of the 5th Army will rush frantically about with little sterilized sticks, looking into the mouth of everything from a cannon to a gift horse.

Africa has been a windfall for the Medical Corps. In American camps, the docs had to be good to scare us with reports of flies seen loitering around the kitchen. Here they can simply exploit our own natural caution about drinking water and malaria.

The policy of our unit surgeons on water is simple. Briefly, it is: "Go back! Go back! Can't you see? That's water!" To meet this grave emergency, our doctor hangs a Lyster bag out under a tree whenever we stop in the field. This is a large, canvas-rubber bag filled with chlorine, to which a little water has been added as a safety precaution. It is white, hangs within a foot of the ground and has four nozzles near the bottom.

After a good mung at the healthy life, drinking nothing but pure disinfectants, most of us are ready to trade a slightly used surgeon and one Lyster bag for a good swig of contaminated water.

I think the surgeon is behind this mile-run thing too. At least it illustrates his policy: "Keep the boys fit if it kills them." Every morning before breakfast we bring victory a step nearer by double-timing desperately over the African countryside in fatigues. At the head of the floundering column prances the pace setter—some minor-league Gunder Haegg in his middle twenties who can't appreciate that we elderly men in our late twenties aren't what we used to be. The only intelligent people out there are the Arabs, who stand at the side of the road and watch us go by.

For months now the surgeons have been making us take atabrine. Atabrine has something to do with malaria—probably causes it. Anyway, it comes in lit-

tle yellow pills, and no Army doctor can resist a pill, if someone else has to take it.

In our company we were introduced to atabrine at a clubby little gathering one warm April evening in a Tunisian cork woods. There was a kindly speech by the battalion surgeon and a beguiling talk by our company commander, who held up the new pill in his thumb and forefinger so that all might see. We could hardly wait to take our atabrine. Finally they let us line up—"No bucking the line, men; there's enough for everybody"—and checked off our names. With the pill we received a canteen cup, brimful of cold lemonade, after which we all sat around on the ground and shot the breeze. Never were our relations with the Medical Corps more cordial. Corporal Klomp sounded the keynote of the evening when he observed, "All this and no malaria too."

I can, perhaps, suggest the deceit and treachery that scene represented in point of fact by noting for the record that today we take our damned atabrine every Tuesday and Thursday evening or we go on a ten-mile hike.

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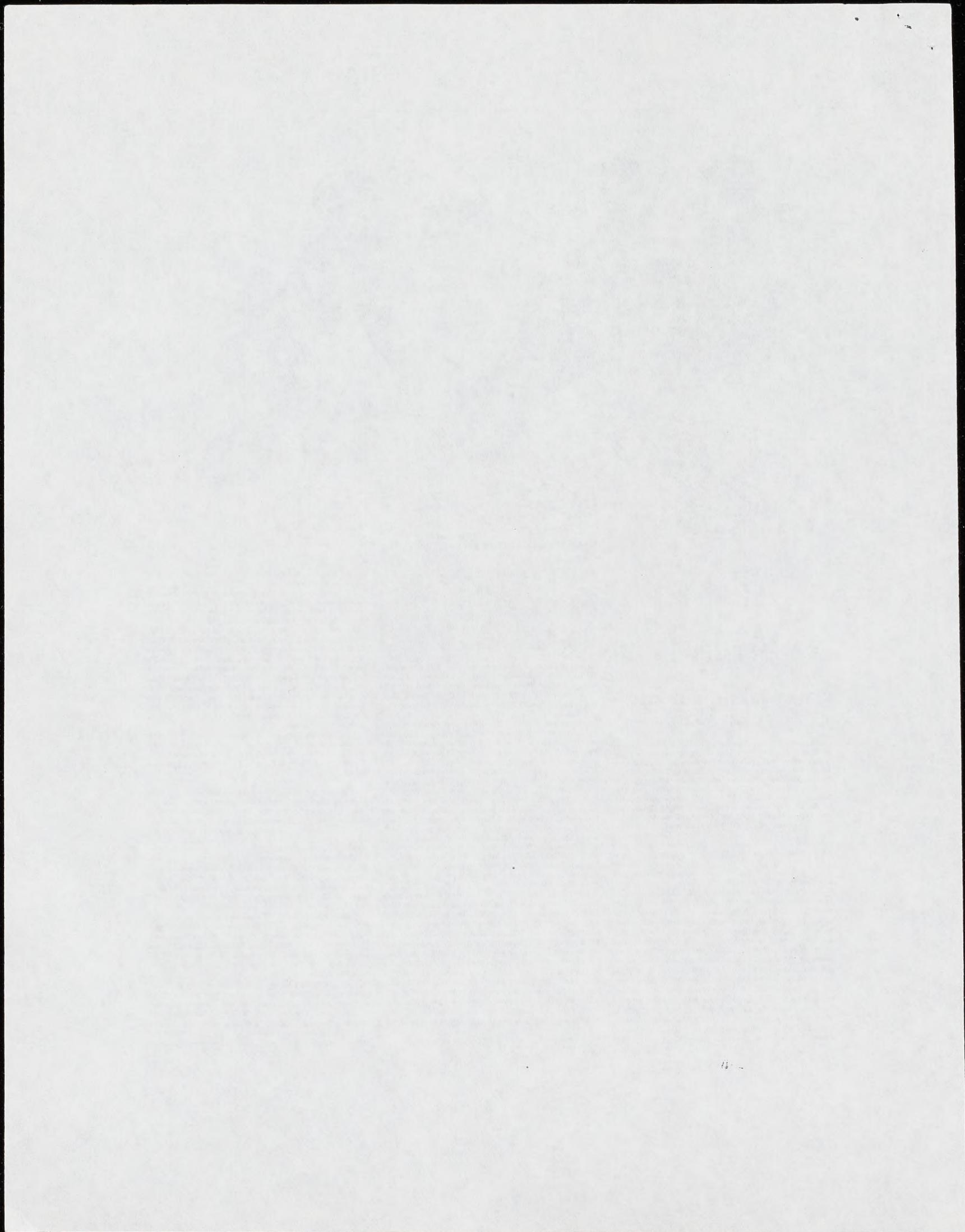
One morning this past summer, a mighty troop convoy was steaming over the shining sea toward Africa. The vast armada was six days out of an American port, enjoying calm weather and an uneventful voyage. Suddenly the flagship ran smack into Private Chapman. This is the story of the incredible forty-eight hours that followed.

That morning there appeared in the ship's mimeographed newspaper, of which Private Chapman was the editor, the following announcement: "Sea Stamps will be issued tomorrow morning. Contact your first sergeant and he will give you permission to get some. Sea Stamps are invaluable on ocean-going mail."

Immediately, the 8000 soldiers aboard were interested in sea stamps. First sergeants were besieged with questions and offered bribes. They, in turn, asked their officers, who were enthusiastic to a man, but as vague as anyone else. How much do they cost? How do they work? Where do we get them? Let's check with the editor.

With thousands of soldiers clustered around loudspeakers, Chapman went on the air just beforechow and answered most of the questions. The sea stamps would cost twenty-five cents. You fixed them on your letters in normal fashion. All mail bearing sea stamps would be packed in special sacks and dropped off at night at a secret mail buoy, where a fast patrol boat

DRAWINGS BY FLOYD DAVIS



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young'uns, and they weren't even hurt. Well, in a little bit the mother bird comes right down into the fireplace in front of us there in the room, to feed the young'uns. My mother, she rigged up a kind of screen all around the place and, don't you know, she wouldn't let my father or me get near those birds—no, sir!—and all the rest of the time that mother bird came down the chimney all day and fed those little ones until they were able to fly up the chimney and mother took the screen down.”

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One can end up doing some dizzy things in the Army, but the other day I ran across two chaps whose careers with the Allied forces can only veer sharply after they finish what they're doing now. Certainly they can't go farther in the same direction.

They are Pfc Joe Lopez, of Houston, Texas, and Pvt. Eldon Herley, of Chicago. Twice daily at the 5th American Army's invasion-training center in North Africa, these two gentlemen come into their own, and pass out. For a few precious moments they suffer horribly, but just when they have a beautiful death in the making, they have to get up and put on their packs and go home. The next morning they are out bright and early, to try again for the perfect corpse.

Joe and Eldon take the dive in the first-aid act as the demonstration platoons at the ITC assault and knock out a pillbox or fight their way through the streets of a town with live ammunition, grenades, torpedoes and shells. These battle spectacles are staged for the benefit of invasion troops, who watch the experts from a hillside before they practice the attacks themselves.

In every show, day after day, Joe and Eldon dash dramatically into the action, are hit, stagger and collapse to the ground. Instantly a medic rushes over and begins first-aid treatment. The act was inserted in the demonstrations to give the troops confidence in their first-aid men.

The performances of these two Thespians, both newcomers to the African theater, are deserving of critical attention, as they represent two schools of thought on the actor's art. Joe uses the Stanislavsky method; Eldon uses ketchup. Joe loses himself in his roles—

he lies where he falls. Eldon is apt to sit up and count the house.

The street-fighting show got a big play this past season from out-of-towners, like General Marshall and Generals Eisenhower, Patton and Anderson. It was in a demonstration for General Montgomery that Eldon achieved his greatest personal triumph. In cooking up something special for the great English general, he apparently turned to Shakespeare and misinterpreted Hamlet's advice to the players, for it is reported that at that performance he did indeed out-Herod Herod and in the torrent and whirlwind of his passion did oft saw the air with his hands, thus.

"Twas caviar to the general, all right. The commander of the British 8th Army took one look at Private Herley, lying grotesquely in the dust, blood already appearing on his shirt, and insisted that the demonstration be stopped. When an American captain protested that it was all in the show, the general protested right back, "Captain, I've seen too many men hit! That man's been hurt!"

"It was only a straight chest wound," says Eldon. "It was the ketchup that got 'im. I smear it on as I go down. Later on, we ran off the show for the King of England, and I had no ketchup, and sure enough he didn't scare. The ketchup is everything in my act." Lopez, on the other hand, likes to feel that his act is not built on props.

Joe's first-aid man is Corp. Commodore Wagonman, of Elkhart, Indiana. According to the script, Commodore, while kneeling beside Joe in their big scene, is supposed to watch his fellow performers, just in case one of them should get clipped by a ricochet. Now, Commodore is strictly a script man, so the minute he gets on stage he makes a few passes with a bandage and then proceeds to gaze professionally about, completely ignoring poor Joe, expiring on schedule at his feet.

Reflecting on his own artistry, Joe got to wondering what would happen if he really were hurt sometime. Would his partner know the difference? To ease his mind on this point, he decided to experiment one Saturday afternoon. When the flame throwers finished their act—his cue—he dashed out of the bushes and went into his dive. At the time he was regularly using the No. 4 routine: "Jagged shrapnel, deeply embedded in face and chest; semiconsciousness; great loss of blood." But this time Commodore found Joe on his back, trembling

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and clutching the grass. His face was distorted; his eyes dilated.

He was gasping, "I'm hurt! No kid-din'! In the back! I'm hit, Commie!" His eyes closed.

Commodore looked down at him in profound admiration. "Yer gettin' better every day, kid," he said.

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Wives are apparently more clever than women who are not wives. Whether this is a cause or a result of their being wives, I wouldn't know, but I do believe it's true, judging from what I have seen and heard while knocking about with their men overseas.

Many AEF wives whose men I know are remarkably successful at keeping their husbands thinking of them, which is, I am told, the idea. There is Penelope, for example, the wife of a young warrant officer in the headquarters of my old outfit. Penelope has managed to instill in her John the most profound conviction that if she were around from time to time things would go much better. Whether his truck had edged over in a ditch full of water on a rainy night or he had made a disastrous guess in a poker game, after an appropriate silence would come that forlorn plaint, "If Penelope were here, she'd get me out of this!" He repeated it through Tunisia so often and so earnestly that it became a sort of division motto, and no one doubted the omnipotence of little Penelope.

An analysis of Penelope's triumphant technique reveals nothing more esoteric than the familiar little-things-in-life approach, a stand-by with the wives of a lot of fellows over here. Nearly every day there arrived at division headquarters, from Penelope, John's favorite comic strip. This so impressed the man that he regularly gave it an "A-B buck" around the office as an official memo, to be noted and signed by everyone from the colonel on down. Among her devices, too, were bright birthday cards once a week end and, less frequently, mysterious messages from famous people, including Superman and Count Fleet, con-

gratulating Penny and John on their wedding anniversary. She had him so mixed up he didn't know when it was.

An Ohio wife uses a serious variation of the Penelope system. She writes her husband in our office of the job she has for him after the war and sends him stacks of commuting schedules between Baltimore and Washington. It seemed a bit silly to us, too, at first, but her wisdom proved surer than ours. Now he pores over these timetables at night and pauses by day at his typewriter to dream of things to come, taking regular rides with her between this and the good life on a Baltimore-Washington coach.

And what cutie could match the deadly understanding of the wife of a captain at 5th Army Headquarters? The other day he showed me, in rapt silence, a present from her. It was a beautifully mounted photograph of his easy chair at home—empty. His lounging robe hung over the back. On an end table beside it were his favorite book and newspaper, his reading lamp and a can of tobacco. Before it were his slippers on a footstool.

In contrast to such subtle technique, women who are not wives tend to rely on lipstick kisses on stationery, which may or may not be sufficient to cut out some of the girls their lads meet around the world.

Of course, it takes all kinds of women to make a world. A sergeant I know had a girl in North Dakota, named Madeline. Moving up into Kasserine Pass, he named his monster tank destroyer after her, and together they blasted their way gloriously through the Tunisian campaign, once knocking hell out of three Mark IV's in one afternoon. Upon returning from the wars the sergeant received, in addition to a couple of ribbons, a letter from North Dakota informing him that campaign was over too.

When I ran across this sergeant on a training range in Algeria, he was painting "Madeline" off the side of his tank destroyer. In the process he dismissed women in a phrase. That's been done before, of course, but never, I think, more eloquently. As he slapped on the last brushful he observed laconically, "Muh gal let me down; muh tank destroyer didn't."