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The Rouen Post, November-December 1943

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AU REVOIR

Since May, 1936, I have served as editor of the Rouen Post, a pleasant avocation that has done much to awaken long dormant friendships among the men and women who served with Base Hospital Unit 21 in France. Those who saved the papers, that have rolled off Art Melville’s press during the last seven and a half years, possess a fairly complete record of the past and present activities of the Unit personnel, outstanding poems and songs of 1917-18, and an official history of the Base Hospital from Col. Borden Veeder’s final report to the Red Cross in 1919.

With the exception of sporadic protests from a few unsavory characters, whose anti-social conduct has been exposed on occasion in these columns, the paper has been well received and its readers more than generous in their financial support. However, during the past year my daily work has made such demands on my time that I have found it increasingly difficult to carry on as editor. In recent issues I have been forced to rely on letters from various veterans to fill space—a fact which convinces me that I should close my typewriter for the duration.

Therefore, with considerable reluctance, I am bowing out of the picture—until the lights go on again. Best wishes for a Happy New Year.

BILL STACK.

DOC GAY REPORTS

Dear Rouen Post:

This war is totally different from the one Unit 21 fought in Rouen quite a few years back. We have a building, floors, electric lights, central heat, running water and plenty of equipment. Also, plenty of patients when the weather gets cold. And it gets cold—entirely too cold—and the snow never leaves the ground. It’s very boring to see just snow all winter long. The past summer was hot as hell—a damn sight hotter than St. Louis ever dared to be; temperatures not so high but 100 per cent saturation all the time.

The post is very nice and we are doing interesting work all the time and I feel that I am making a real contribution to the war effort. This is not like being across but it is better than not being able to get in at all. It looked for a while as though I was not going to be re-commissioned as I had not kept up my commission in the reserve. Now there is plenty of work to do but it is fun to be back in uniform.

Truax Field, Madison, Wisconsin.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1943

"Doc"

MAJOR L. P. GAY.
Back in May of 1938 the personnel of the Army Medical Center were happy to learn that an old friend, then Captain Thomas G. Hester, MAC, was coming back to the "fold" to be the Adjutant of the Center. The "old timers" and his many new friends were overjoyed when on the 10th of November it was announced that he was promoted to the full rank of Colonel, Pharmacy Corps. Recent War Department Orders have assigned him to the Medical Field Service School, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, where he will take up his new duties after December 1. We are sorry to see him go, but we want to congratulate him on his new assignment and our good wishes go with him for his every success at Carlisle. We hope that Colonel Hester will visit his many friends at the Center as often as his official duties will permit.

From a weekly bulletin published in the interests of the Army Medical Center civilian employees, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Stack:

I wish to thank you very much for sending me the Rouen Post. I enjoyed the September issue and the letters therein from former members of Base Hospital 21. I am glad to know that Base 21 is again an active unit in this war.

I have been on duty at the Army Medical Center since I returned from the Philippine Islands in September, 1938, but have recently received orders transferring me to Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pa., for duty.

I am enclosing check for postage and hope you will continue me on your mailing list.

With kindest regards and best wishes to you and all former members of Base 21, I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

THOMAS G. HESTER,
Colonel, Pharmacy Corps, U. S. Army,
Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pa.

Col. Hester was an efficient, conscientious officer during his service with Base Hospital Unit 21 in France and we join the personnel at the Center in congratulating him on his latest promotion.

DR. ERNST HEADS MEDICAL SOCIETY

Dr. Edwin C. Ernst, radiologist, has been elected president of the St. Louis Medical Society for 1944. Dr. Peter G. Danis, secretary of the society, announced November 27.

Dr. Ernst defeated Dr. William E. Lighton, a surgeon, in a mail ballot by members of the society. He succeeds Dr. Robert Mueller. Dr. Ernst will be installed as president in January.

The new president of the society is 58 years old, and has been recognized widely for his work in X-rays. He is secretary of the Medical Board and director of the X-ray department at the Barnard Free Skin and Cancer Clinic; director of the X-ray department of De Paul Hospital; consulting radiologist of the United States Marine Hospital at Kirkwood, and a member of the board of examiners of the American Board of Radiology.

Dr. Ernst is a former president of the Radiological Society of North America, and in 1936 received a gold medal from that organization for his work in developing measurement of X-ray force in the treatment of cancer.

He is a graduate of St. Louis University Medical School and attended Washington University Medical School. He began practice in St. Louis in 1912 and during the first World War served as a Major in the Medical Corps at a base hospital in France. He is a past commander of Rouen Post No. 242, American Legion.
WESCHROB IN LONDON

The following postcard message from Sergeant Charles Weschrob arrived in our office early in December: "Hi, Willie! Here I am again—and doing all right. Would still like to receive the paper as I get a big kick out of it. A Merry Christmas to you and all the gang in Rouen Post 242. Will write more later.

Sgt. Charles Weschrob, 31232982
APO (563-AP) 563, c/o Postmaster, New York.

TRAINING WITH COAST ARTILLERY

By Philip Conrath of the Anti-Aircraft Division, Camp Callan, Cal.

Dear Family:

I am well and the training program is so vigorous that I have the appetite of a horse, though the cooks here are not so inspired as those at Jefferson Barracks. Our rifles were issued last week, the Model M1, called Garand, and we have to take them apart and oil them every day. Some got practice at this but our platoon was called in before my turn came, and for two nights I, who pride myself on mechanical aptitude, got the gun apart but needed help to get it together again. The day after, however, I carried on without assistance.

Our physical training includes boxing, wrestling, tumbling, bayonet drill and the obstacle course. One thing that awaits us is the experience of being thrown into the Pacific with a life vest and left to get back by ourselves. Today they took us out to see if we could swim and I got my first look at the ocean. It won't be so bad; the waves would bring me in even if I couldn't swim. They put me down as a swimmer because I swam across a pool near the sea.

Our battery has been assigned to the 90mm. gun—the largest and most modern type. I am going back to college after my basic training is completed. If a soldier is under 22, is a high school graduate with credit in certain courses, and makes a high enough grade in his general army classification test he is eligible for A.S.T.P. If he passes the board he will be sent to a Star Unit after his basic, where tests will be given to find his aptitude whether it be for language, engineering, medicine or dentistry. All reports that an A.S.T.P. man must sign up for a period of years after the war is false. After about four days at the Star Unit, where the soldier's preference as to his training is respected, he is sent to a college or a university. Again the soldier's preference is respected, so I may be able to be at Washington again at the engineering unit there and come home every week-end on pass.

Yours,

Philip.

MRS. PROCTOR REGRETS

Dear Rouen Post, 242:

Wish I could put on paper my regret at being unable to see you at the Ernsts, and the joy I knew in receiving the beautiful bouquet. As I turn the pages in memory's tablet, in my mind's eye, I see again the boys who so gallantly served with us in old Rouen.

My flowers and I hope to leave the hospital Wednesday. Thanks and best wishes for all. Long live Rouen Post 242.

Dolly Belle Schmidt Proctor.

The foregoing letter from Mrs. Proctor was received by Dr. Ernst following the Rouen Post party at his home last November. Mrs. Proctor was a patient at Barnes Hospital at that time.
Am in the prison hospital on night duty, and right now I'm so full of cove oyster soup, I'm about to pop. We had peas and spinach and vienna sausages just out of cans for midnight supper, could hardly eat the darn stuff. Our cooks have absolutely no imagination, just open cans and half-way heat things; it never occurs to them to season anything. So the boys on duty here with us (there are 3 nurses) made us some oyster stew, and it was good. How anyone can eat down here is more than I can understand. We have 31 typhoid and dysentery cases (one amoebic dysentery died today), all jammed together in one end of one of the wards. This place is such a rat race, that the doctors just can't get around to everything as fast as they should, or would like to. In spite of it all though, I like working down here, never a dull moment, always something unexpected coming up. You should hear me talk German to the boys, though now most of our patients are Italian, so I've picked up a little Italian. They really are funny, those that are not too sick to know what it's all about. The Germans spend most of their time in the evenings singing and they really are good; then in another hut the Italians will give them competition. One of the German boys, has an accordion that he's dragged all through the war, and it surely is a beaten up thing, nearly every fold of the bellows is patched with adhesive and it's all dented and scratched, but the kid sits up on his cot and plays it for all he's worth. A couple of nights Kittie and I went in to listen to him, and the crowd gathered and really gave us a concert — even those in beds down the line were helping to sing. Any two Dutchmen are a singing society, you know, so you ought to hear a chorus of about 50. You would be surprised at the appearance of these prisoner patients — they are not in here very long until they are shined up and clean as a whistle, they keep their hands and nails spotless, shave every day and cut each other's hair when necessary. Right now we have quite a number of older Italian high officials, and they and all the Germans are so clean. They are nearly all well fed looking, and their morale is good (I'm not including the sick typhoids and dysenteries in that last statement).

We have a German Catholic chaplain — a prisoner also, and this month they are having services of some sort every night. The Germans and Italians are still very good friends — our Italian interpreter now is allowed to sleep in a tent outside the stockade and he insisted he'd be responsible for one of the German interpreters, if we would allow him to share the "free" tent with him. They had lived together inside the stockade before. Leetz is an unusually fine person — spent some time in a Nazi concentration camp before he was allowed the "privilege of serving in the German army." He can be trusted, so he is living with Ferrando outside the stockade. When I was down here before, we had American guards — now we have Arab guards, and are we burned up. We are not afraid of the prisoners, but these Arabs scare the daylights out of us. One of them accidentally discharged his gun some nights ago. They are a mess. The Italians are quite upset lately about the bombing and fighting in Naples. They ask every night for a copy of the Stars and Stripes to see how the war is coming along.

Somewhere in the C.B.I. Theatre

October 21. Am recovering from a broken arm and a three-months-case of malaria. We are in the jungle working seven days a week. The mud is three feet deep in front of the camp. Season's greetings to all the gang.