



"Sightseeing Tour - 2043 A.D." originally appeared in "The Guinea Hen Cackle" published by the 339th Engineer Regiment (GS) during their stay at Milne Bay. It is the story of actual personalities of that organization as seen thru the eyes of the ever alert editor, Sgt. Frank B. Edwards. It is here reproduced so that all may have a copy to pass down to their grandchildren when in years to come, it might be said, "Now, when I was in Milne Bay, - -."

SIGHTSEEING TOUR -- 2043 A.D.
Written by Sgt. Frank B. Edwards, 1943
(With apologies to the Cook's Tour Dept. of Regt., Hq.)

NEW GUINEA

PART I

"Folks, you're on historic ground now. That's Jock McMillan Bay there on our right. It was here ... one hundred years ago during the Second World War ... that Cox's Army landed. They came ashore in barges from a stinking Dutch freighter, with Javanese music and the click of the ivories still ringing in their ears. Legend has it that they were as slap-happy a congregation of alleged officers and soldiers as ever was put together in any Army camp. There were down homers and up homers, drunks and teetotalers, hustlers and gold bricks, young ones and old ones...all kinds. Well, as I was staying, they came ashore in those barges, and the officers were straining their eyes looking through the coconut trees for the officers' barracks and the bar, and the enlisted men were doing the same...looking for the PX and a beer. Well, they got the surprise of their lives, because there wasn't anything like that here...just jungle. So, they bivouacked in their pup tents, and began on the strangest chapters in military history.

"Over there on the right, where you can still see unopened cans and debris, was what they called Regimental Supply. The name was a joke, of course, because nobody else in the outfit could ever get any supplies. Anyway, the story goes that they kept all their kleptomaniacs there. In fact, the place was often referred to as "ditchwater Sergeant Flaslager and his forty thieves."

"Now right across the road on the left here, where you see all those shells, was the Company F area. This outfit was known as "Hill's Bad Boys." Back in the States they were high in the regiment in court-martials and AWOL's and they won all the streamers for inspections and close order drill, but over here they went in for shooting. The boys went wild and it got so that almost every night they'd get lathered up on jungle juice and start sniping at tent ropes and mosquito bars. Everyone else started to steer clear of the area, and finally it was declared "off limits" for all officers and enlisted men. If you listen hard, you can still hear the echoes of the shots.

"On the left, just opposite us now up that little hill, was a small area known as Second Battalion Headquarters. You can still smell the fumes left there by a certain major, and if you want to risk it you can walk over there and see for yourself. What's that, Lady? Oh yes....he was a down-homer. Another thing about that spot...the natives say that if you get close enough you can still feel the earth shake a little from the snores of the Adjutant and the Sergeant Major. Their ancestors have passed on the story that it went on night and day.

"This next place on the left, where you see that huge mound of stone and gravel, was the Company E area, also known as the "Kingdom of Slapsie Maxie." They had a CAPTAIN there who dished out so much Company punishment...unloading trucks of gravel...that they ended by burying half the company. This Captain became as legendary and terrifying a figure in the Southwest Pacific as Captain Morgan, the pirate, did in the Caribbean. The road we're traveling along used to be a canal and he engineered it...or should I say, navigated it. It was known as "Lamb's Canal." And one of the funniest things that ever happened here was

when this captain fell off a barge into the bay and came up sputtering: "Take my watch! Take my watch! I'm a captain! I'm a captain!" How he happened to be on a barge, instead of cruising up and down the canal in a jeep, no one could ever figure out. Another story about this company was the PX they started exactly one hundred years ago today. Nobody could ever find out where the two truckloads of merchandise came from, because they burned the boxes. As far as that's concerned, though, the whole regiment became a bunch of second-story men and hijackers after they got over here. They say all you used to hear up and down this bay was: "Put it back, put it back."

"Now we're just about opposite what was the Company D area, stretching back up into one end of that rubber plantation. Down here near the canal this company ran what was cynically and jokingly called a PX. That's supposed to mean post exchange, you know, but it's still unknown how badly they took the rest of the regiment to the cleaners and who pocketed the take. However, the rumor goes that there was a hell of a lot of money spent after the war in Oshkosh, Wis., and Uniontown, Pa. It also was in this company that a plump mail orderly and an acting first sergeant spent the entire war alternately fighting and brooding in the CP. The mail orderly was waiting for his call to be the Chaplain's assistant, and the acting first sergeant was waiting for his rating to come through. They say that when the two of them got on the boat to go home, they were still arguing, brooding...and waiting.

"Well, folks, we'll stop here for lunch, and this afternoon we'll continue on and see the hallowed ground occupied by H & S Co., the First Battalion, Regimental Headquarters and on up the line."

PART II

"All right, folks, hop in and we'll continue along this historic highway. All set? O.K., let's go. Now this next area, on the left, was taken up by H & S company and the Regimental Motor Pool. "Pool" was the right name for it, all right, because it was just about the muddiest spot in New Guinea. Then it would dry up occasionally after a wet spell they would find jeeps, heavy equipment and parts (pronounced "pahts" in those days) that they had forgotten all about, and before they finally got around to putting in a stone walk, men who tried to make it to the company latrine at night would end up getting lost in the mud and marked A.W.O.L. for two or three days. This latrine, incidentally, was very handy to a canal-side tavern built down here by the natives, but not so handy for such characters as the company clerk, who was known as "Jungle Juice Joe". Another one they talk about was the company carpenter, who worked in a shop down here along side the canal. He spent the entire war waiting for a discharge and the banana boat to take him home, but he kept himself occupied cutting hair, building private latrines for officers, and writing letters to Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, Chou-Kai-Shek and Charlie McCarthy about his discharge. This whole area was known as "Wyatt's Labyrinth". See all those strange earth formations heading up toward that rubber plantation. Those were left by this company's road buildings. They went nuts on roads, and "Spinella" Zanella and his drivers tried to outdo one another in pushing through a new set of ruts up to the company. Now, look way up there toward the left end of the

rubber plantation, near the Company D boundary. See that big mound of earth? That's where the first sergeant dashed—who has been called the "Sergeant" York of the Second World War - built his bomb shelter. They say he went 10 or 12 feet deep, interrupting his digging only for frequent and anxious inquiries. "Are they coming over?" or "So they'll be over tonight?" He finished it up on top with six or eight feet of logs and sandbags, and after that he came out of the shelter only long enough to make out the morning report each day. One more thing about this company - it was not until the day before Japan surrendered that they finally decided, after months of experimentation that drove most of the company into the hills, just how they wanted the mosquito bars and blankets folded on the cots. Folks, I could talk all day on the strange and unbelievable goings-on in this area, but we'd better drive up the road and see some more of the landmarks.

"These two streams we're approaching were quite a problem back in those days. One day, this first one, Slapsie Maxie's boys built what was intended to be a bridge, and by nightfall it was almost completed. Everybody was overjoyed and looking forward to easier cruising the next day. But, lo and behold, the next morning the "dream bridge" had disappeared and no one has ever found out what has happened to it. Later on, Slapsie Maxie decided to attack these streams again, so he had his "life-terminers" build dams of big boulders. He succeeded in creating an artificial lake which completely obliterated the canal. In fact, lots of people got the impression that everything he did to the canal was intended to scare off or drive out anyone who tried to sail on it.

"This next area, on both sides on the canal, was occupied for a while by Company C, but later on it took on the character of a ghost camp. One morning the Regiment awoke and found that this company had moved out. You can still see some of the traces they left - those old stone walks, those piles of yellowed courts-martial papers, and those rooms of countless mess halls. You see, this company was very snooty about who ate with whom, and they had separate mess halls for officers, sergeants, corporals, technicians, Pfc's, privates, Aryans, Nordics, Anglo-Saxons, Latin and several other categories. Well, anyway, they finally found this company - campaign hat, pipe and all - up near the Cameron Plateau, moving from place to place and muttering to themselves: "We want to be alone." They left one reminder here, however, and it still stands today. See that cute little building over there on the right by the beach? That was, and is, the Company C latrine - A three seater with A palm roof. It was a veritable company shrine in those days, and under the middle seat was a plaintive, pleading little sign: "Officers Hole Only". When he left the island the youthful, bespectacles company commander stipulated that the shrine must always be kept inviolate. So, to this date, one of the native families has through the generations kept the sign painted and kept an eye on the middle hole.

"Over there on the left was Company B, which was commanded for a while by a bearded eccentric who preferred to putter around small boats rather than continue his efforts to keep his first sergeant awake, and who then raged and complained when he was finally transferred to his chosen branch of service. This company was the frustrated group of men which went in for community romance and mass love-making. To a man they fell in love with "Guinea Belle", the New

Guinea Sadie Thompson who adorned the front page of a daily scandal sheet. They used to gather around the Orderly Room at night, singing "My Silent Love" and "My Devotion" and from far back in the jungle - from the Company B shrine - would come the contributing harmony of the company clerk, who went there every morning to stay until long after dark.

"Well, folks, we didn't get as far as I expected this afternoon. We'll get a T S ticket and bivouac here where the Chaplain's tent stood one hundred years ago. Then we'll finish up the tour tomorrow morning - Regt'l Headquarters and on up the line."

PART III

"All right, folks, let's get going 'cause we've got to finish this damned tour today. Before we move on I want to tell you a little about this chaplain who occupied this very spot a hundred years ago. They say he was not only a man of God but also a jack-of-all-trades, and he had a particular flare for heavy equipment. He was sometimes called "Greaser" Helsel. He developed such a craving for tools and machine parts that finally they had to move all the bibles and prayer books out of the tent, to make room for machetes, picks, axes shovel booms and bulldozer blades. Between repair and maintenance jobs, the chaplain and the boys with tickets would play the organ or pour over army regulations and longevity pay tables dreaming up a possible majority for the chaplain. This delightful fellow also had a secret passion for goldbricking, and often he would be discovered with kindred souls off in some obscure place - usually Special Service or Regimental Supply.

"This next area on the right was the prize of them all - the Regimental Area. They say there were more peculiar, bewildered and jungle-happy inmates per square inch here than in New York City's Bellevue Hospital. Out of this area came some of the most dastardly plots ever hatched to torture enlisted men in a war zone - close order drill, inspections, saluting, uniformity of uniforms, and many others. There also were countless-starry-eyed ventures such as fish ponds, victory gardens, flower gardens, steam-heated bomb shelters and fur-lined private latrines. The head man of the outfit loved Liberty ships and always preferred their meals to those served in the Regimental Mess. This fellow went in for six-foot road crews and he hated telephones. Whenever calls came through from Roosevelt, Marshall, MacArthur, Stimson or Kruger, and a messenger would inform him of the call, he would look up very annoyed and say: "Haven't I told you up there to take those messages?" The Number 2 man, a wide-eyed young major who wore a fatigue hat from one end of the war to the other, was just the opposite. He loved telephones, and he would slouch in wonderment at a desk in headquarters, like a boy with a dazzling new toy - talking, talking, talking - while the switchboard operators tore their hair in a nearby tent. All this gave rise to two persistent rumors: One, that he had never seen a telephone before, and, on the other, that he had not been allowed to use the telephone at home.

"This same tent where the young major would tie up the phones all day had four more prize characters. The first was a gentle adjutant, very much in love,

who worked quietly and patiently throughout the war, waiting for a majority to come through and tolerantly putting up with the riff-raff and rabble who streamed in and out of the tent. The assistant adjutant had been brought along, for a laugh, as personnel officer and postal officer. He dabbled for awhile in the native labor racket until the authorities caught up with him, and then he spent the rest of the war smoking cigars and editing that scoundrel sheet I mentioned yesterday. A born agitator and troublemaker, he would drive his editorial staff to the very limits of libel. He always went after the radio news himself, except on the night when there was a movie. On these occasions he invariably sent an exploited clerk who was known as "The Baltimore Talking Machine" or "The Broken Record." The personnel officer's contact with personnel work consisted of staring across the tent at the personnel sergeant. He attended to his postal duties by asking the same question each day; as the regimental mail orderly would come stumbling in under three or four sacks of mail he would invariably say: "Did you get any mail today?"

"The other two inmates of this tent were a Mutt and Jeff pair - a long, lean sergeant-major and a short, banjo-eyed personnel sergeant. The sergeant-major spent most of his time frantically tip-toeing through the area, trying to locate lost trash details and numbling to himself, as he waved his hands; "Ah Swah, Ah Swah" and "Oh, the bum shelter - we forgot about the bum shelter." This sergeant-major had O. D. trouble, flashlight trouble, first sergeant trouble and all kinds of trouble, but he never really hit his stride until he unknowingly got into the laundry business on a big scale. Every day he would boil up a batch of clothes, and then when he took them out for rinsing, he would discover that there were no stripes on the sleeves. This went on and on, and he never found out where his clothes were disappearing to, or whose clothes he was washing. When the outfit finally pulled out of here, there was the tall, lean sergeant-major on the beach boiling up another batch of clothes and waiting for his trash detail to show up.

"This personnel sergeant I mention was of Italian descent, but when he got over here he began to look more and more like Hitler. He got very cocky over here and he had the time of his life throughout the war-cracking down on officers and men alike, pointing out the construction errors of the "engineers", and brow-beating the sergeant-major. When people would come in looking for this personnel sergeant they would say, "Where is that sergeant?" and then they would hold one hand about four feet off the ground. Everyone would know who they meant and the answer would usually be either "He's out hiding from Vandygrift and Emanuel the Barber" or "He's down at Sixth Army Headquarters laying down the law to General Kruger." As the outfit was all ready to pull out of here he stood with his foot apart and his hands defiantly on his hips, spouting: "To hell with 'em! Let 'em bust me!"

"Damn it, folks, it's lunch time and we haven't even finished this regimental area. Let's have lunch at this government rest house, built on the site of Ulery's Corn Willie Palace, and I'll show you some more this afternoon."

PART IV

"That was one hell of a lunch, wasn't it, folks? Well, you can blame that on this mythical character, Ulery, who established the eating traditions for this spot 100 years ago. This fellow on the few occasions when people caught fleeting glimpses of him, hung around a native shack which stood right over there in that mud pool. This shack had an amusing sign on it which read "Special Service." To this day no one has ever been able to figure out what "service" stood for, let alone the "special." This apparition - this wraith-like figure called Ulery - would flit into this area after two or three months of mysterious absence. Then there would be short, sharp scenes with the adjutant and the assistant adjutant, and the vision would recede into the jungle. At night in this area you can still hear the parrotts and other creatures of the jungle softly wailing: "Where's Ulery? Where's Ulery?" They learned that one hundred years ago from Cox's Army. This socalled special service officer also had two assistants cluttering up the area. One of them, an ex-waiter and broken down chaplain's assistant, was a lovable, tactful character who wanted so bad to be a sergeant. To accomplish this he assumed the character of a male Florence Nightingale - a masculine "Angel of Mercy" - blubbering all over the place about the plight of the patients in "Doughnut" Rowe's hospital. The other one was a slicker from the Windy City. He had a line of bull that he got all fouled up in himself, and he passed himself off as a pre-war photographer. This guy outdid even the Company D PX in fleecing the boys on what they naively accepted as photographic art. The story goes that he also pulled in a little blackmail dough on the side, by virtue of some juicy negatives in his files, and that he never again worked after the war.

Lets stroll up this path now - toward the canal. On the right here, directly opposite the major's telephone hangout, where you see all those dynanite caps, tripods and surveying instruments, was an elaborate native style lounge which housed S-3. The idle occupants of this palace muddled through the war thinking of themselves as "engineers" and as the "brains" of Cox's Army". Yet when they built this very same building, for themselves, the hell-raising personnel sergeant across the way had to call their attention to the cockeyed foundations. Headman in this department (he said that if he was S-3 he wanted to Be S-3) was a boyish CAPTAIN, and don't forget that's one more bar than a first lieutenant! Sometimes called "The Flying Eagle," this youthful CAPTAIN was an expert in the use of fire-crackers and of dynanite for fishing purposes. It is said that after the war, when he returned to some obscure, crossroads town in Alabama, he would sat around the stove in the general store and awe the sharecroppers with tales of how he lost that finger demolishing a Jap pillbox after three days of mud and blood in a New Guinea foxhole. With this young captain, as assistant in the alleged engineer section, was a swaggering, swashbuckling, overbearing second lieutenant who rode around in command cars and bullied soldiers and natives alike. The story goes that because of his unruly disposition and offensive manner, he spent his entire military career waiting for a silver one instead of the gold one. Also associated with this brain trust, according to rumor, was a professional Texan - a pint-sized Will Rogers in Khaki. This little guy, true to his background, went cowboy

with a vengeance when he got over here - in dress, in speech and in actions. "Tex", as they called him, used to drive the boys to cover up and down the length of the canal as he came tearing along riding herd with a jeep, waving his hat and a .45 in the air looking in all directions, and singing, "The Last Round Up" and "Hone on the Range."

Working under these three officers was a whole crew of stripe-happy office boys. They say that when this confused bunch started out on a job it looked like a flock of zebras trying to crowd into two command cars. Nobody ever got it straight as to who bossed whom, and right up to the end of the war this section was trying to get two or three more master ratings, five or six techs and so on down the ladder. The jungle really got the best of one of their six-striper-though. This fellow looked harmless but over here he got to mumbling continually about his ten years experience as an "engineer." Along with that he developed delusions of grandeur regarding his indispensability. Finally he started sucking his pipe harder and harder and saying over and over: "I won't play unless I can be an officer!" This guy fought the entire war on the slogan "Either a bar or a discharge, and everybody finally got the idea that he was talking about Section 8. Then they had another six-striper, a left-handed ITALIAN with an Irish name, who used to pass among the soldiers singing psalms and thumping the drum for the virtuous life. This guy began to dream up a bar for himself too, and before he got through he had the brass hats believing that he almost single-handedly built the Holland Tunnel, the Golden Gate Bridge and the Burma Road. This department also had a couple of two-ton surveyors with southern accents. If they were both going in the same direction, one mobile crane could do the job, but otherwise it took two. At one time one of these surveyors was in confinement in "Doughnut" Rowe's hospital, and when he got out the local scandal sheet kindly offered a prize for the best names for the litter of seven.

To fill up all those ratings they also had a bunch of demented draftsmen, and such a motley crew of T-square technicians you never did see! In order to keep these oafs busy and prevent the embarrassment which would result if they were called upon to do anything technical, they were set to work drawing scandalous trollopes for the local scandal sheet. They would sit there all day leering and winking at their drawing boards and getting acquainted with their colleagues' work. One of these colts, a professional Russian known as a "Bit of Moscow," was an ex-house painter who passed himself off as "The Poor Man's Da Vinci." A camoufleur on the bun, he would pause noodily in his harmonica playing and say: "Czarist or Marxist, id is sdill Rahssian." Another of these drawing board boors was a chubby little moon-faced fellow who would sit by the hour, like a cat who has swallowed a mouse, chuckling to himself in a low mono-tone voice, trying not to bother anyone. Then, every once in a while, he would get alive and say: "Watch that Mulligan sh--stuff." To finish out this menagerie, there was a ruffian Georgia cracker with a combination English-Southern accent. A regular bull in a China Shop, this bug tried to vie with the second lieutenant in bullying natives and seeing how much beast the jungle could bring out in him. He also loved to hunt "rabbits."

According to the stories there also were numerous henchmen and loiterers always hanging around. To cut stencils, empty waste baskets and fill in for the born-tired draftsmen, they had a 20 year old seed merchant who got fatter and fatter as the war went on. For a driver they had a broken down fireman from Camp Butner. And for a carpenter they had a hustler who could build as many as two waste baskets in a day.

"You can get an idea of how this crew operated by the fact that the only way any of them could get to the latrine was for the whole bunch to come out - with tripods, surveying instruments, lines and stakes - and wig-wag the customer down there and back."

"Well, folks, here it is getting dark on us again. Get out your shelter halves and hardtack, and we'll continue in the morning."

PART V

Well, folks, I guess you didn't get much sleep last night, did you - with all those damned parrots inquiring about Ulery? Before we move on I'll tell you a little about some of the small fry that used to stumble around the regimental area. Now see there on the left - the faint remains of the Y-shaped path went to a tent occupied by four jerks - I mean clerks. These credulous young boys were shanghaied all the way across the Pacific with the bait that all they would ^{NEED TO BE} over here would be a little pencil pushing. Well, after they got over here this adjutant and his stooges, Long John and Banjo Eyes, would seldom let the poor kids stay in their tent. These jerks spent the entire war hauling trash, digging fish ponds, burning officer's latrines, drying out "bum" shelters, spreading gravel and scouring the jungle for exotic flowers and shrubbery. The story goes that three of them damn near lost the power of speech because throughout the war they never could get a word in edgewise. The fourth jerk, a penny-pinching newsboy from Baltimore, conducted a one-man filibuster, hawking extras and free insurance policies for some Hearst rag back home.

"The right fork there led to what was the hangout for all the goldbricks, crackpots and misfits of the regiment. It was there that a simple-minded sergeant, crazed by the absence of PX beer and pretzels, and lacking enough messages and sense to keep out of mischief, contributed inane attempts at humor to the local scandal sheet. This broken down writer of newspaper obituaries spent the rest of his time standing guard over his pigeon holes or sleeping on the mail bags which littered the tent. (It may not be good, but are you happier now, Sgt. Lackey?) In this same tent, night and day, a Swedish smelt fisherman from the Great Lakes, a Norwegian plough jockey from Minnesota, an Irish sheepherder from Colorado and a German designer of 3000-room pigeon coops took turns swearing at the telephone traffic and numbling over and over: "Boston operator, waiting, waiting, waiting." Nobody ever knew how many generals and colonels they swore at or what the hell they were waiting for. The prize occupant of this tent, however, was a volunteer fireman from a Philadelphia suburb who brought the boys mail about once or twice a month and threw the rest in the bay. This poor guy went through the entire war afraid to take a day off for fear his first sergeant would put him on KP or make him shovel gravel. The sight of a shovel or a

truckload of gravel terrified this ex-football star, and he frequently would stay down here in the evening, calling up the company every hour or so until the coast was clear. This nursemaid to a bunch of mail bags also had been quite a love man back in the States, and he used to moon around about five or six girls, each of whom he had known for all of 15 or 30 minutes. This crew had for a driver an 80 year old man who was literally a bum. He spent most of his time arguing with the mail orderly or hauling all the tenderfooted pencil pushers back and forth over the streams. Completing the slap-happy cast in this mud hole was a Mexican Hairless runner who had a habit of gumming up the works for the regimental thieves. A mysterious call would come through from the rightful thief and the dope would give the message to RSO instead of the rightful thief's company. This would end up in a race between Elslager's thieves and the others. Then the nervous regimental supply officer ("My name is Thomas, I'm from Texas") would start going around in circles, and there would follow a day or two of squabbling and loading and unloading of trucks.

"This supply officer, a professional Texan who once appeared on the "We The People" radio program, was occasionally seen around a small tent right here to the left of this walk. Most of the time, however, this social climber was down hobnobbing with Sixth Army Staff members. He was quite impressed with his contacts, blissfully ignoring the fact that colonels and majors were a dime a dozen at K. B. Mission. From the latter he skillfully concealed the fact that up here he had been ejected from the staff officers' tent because of his indolence and sloppy bed making. For an assistant this supply officer had a young boy from the hills of North Carolina - a downhomer who could do tricks with cards. This youth was harmless enough but he was a walking example of the old adage "you can take the boy out of the farm but you can never take the farm out of the boy." They say this young fellow made more money as a warrant officer during the war than he made the whole remainder of his life pitching hay and grinding out sorgum. The other occupant of this rest home was a Pfc who whiled away the war nibbling on the chocolate from stolen combat rations. This refugee from West Virginia never worried about stripes because he made more from his loaded dice and ~~mark~~ cards than the six-stripers did from fishing out their pay books each month. INSOL

"Now here on the right was a small area occupied by First Battalion Headquarters. In this small place was concentrated more sleeping, eating, griping and goldbricking than in all the other areas combined. There was a major here who was a nice guy but who apparently thought this whole show was a pleasure cruise with this place as the first stop. This fellow was the Number 1 chowhound of Ulery's Hash House, and when he had cleaned up down there he would trot right up here and dig into his own hoard of stolen edibles. Then he would hit the hay again, always being careful to close the tent flaps and shut himself off from the curious natives and the other tourists with nose trouble. On the few occasions when he was awake and walking, he would go fishing, piddle around with cameras, or hunt up some guerilla band in the hills and try to lend them half of the regiment's heavy equipment. And when someone would report that a certain project was half finished he had the habit of saying: "That? I didn't think we started that until tomorrow!" Assisting this major in his various activities was

an adjutant with a profile - an erect, athletic looking love man from way back. This fellow was the sin half of "Sin and Gin", a soft shoe team that used to work the North Carolina circuit. He found, however, that the tactics which had been so successful back at the Washington Duke and other big league pick-up palaces didn't go over so big with the native girls here. So, he struggled through the war, looking in the mirror, looking for the major and avoiding the sergeant-major. The latter was an overworked wretch who hated officers, first sergeants, Australia, New Guinea, North Carolina, the Army, the Navy, the Marines, troop trains, troop transports - in fact, he hated everything but his wife's cooking. When he wasn't raging around screaming "I'll show those first sergeants who's boss," he was dreaming up new recipes for after the war. "I'll have only the best in my kitchen," he would say, "and if the recipe calls for four eggs, by God I want four eggs, and if she tries to put in only two I'll beat her brains out!" It got so bad that the major, the adjutant and practically all the officers and men were afraid to go near the headquarters tent for fear of being insulted by this Long Island bear. Finally he quit going to the tent himself, and he sulked in a cave across the canal, mumbling to himself: "I just want to be a little fellow with a big seniority on the Long Island Railroad." After that about the only time anyone saw him was when he would sneak down to that cut-throat photographer to have his picture taken again. When the outfit finally pulled out of here, there he was on the beach, shaking his fist at the boat and muttering: "No, I don't like Long Island either, and you know what you can do with your bars and stripes too!"

"Well, folks, here it is lunchtime. I promise you that we shall finish up this afternoon with Company A, the Medics, the 198th and the docks."

PART VI

"Hop in the bus, folks, and we'll cruise up the canal on the last lap of this damned tour. We're out of rations and we were due back in Gili four days ago. This next area, on both sides of the canal, was where absent-mindedness reached an all time high in Cox's Army. It was occupied by Company A. For a long time this outfit was more or less of an unknown quantity. Nobody seemed to know anything good or bad about them, why they were here or what they were doing. Finally, however, they decided to get a little notoriety, so they muscled in on Company F up at the docks. This company was commanded by an old salt known as "The Gar Wood of New Guinea." He was unorthodox, it is true, but very handy in pulling a boat up to a dock as neat as a pin. This fellow also had chronic servant trouble, especially with cooks. He could never keep any for very long, and he had to spend most of his time watching the kitchen to prevent his potmaine mixers from burning it down. All this made him absent-minded in other matters. They say he used to sit down and very carefully print the addresses and return addresses on both sides of V-mail stationery. Then he would gayly send it off without writing the letter itself, and eventually he would receive a letter from the censor. This went on and on until a beautiful correspondence developed between him and the censor. This fellow also had a little barber trouble, similar to the carpenter trouble in H & S company."

As bad as he was for absent-mindedness, though, he was a piker compared with a young lieutenant known as "Jungle Jim" and "The Boy Wonder." A lot of people who didn't know him thought he was somebody's kid brother who tagged along for the ride, and they would unwittingly offer him lollypops and hunks of coconut as he dreamed his way along the canal. Others figured he was another one of those twelve or fourteen-year-olds who lied about their age and got away with it. This child prodigy walked and talked ten years off his life trying to construct jetties, get a mess hall built by the first sergeant and the company clerk, and get some flood control work out of the mail orderly and a one-armed man. From day to day, however, he couldn't remember previous orders he had given, and it would end up with the first sergeant and the one-armed man trying to dig the mess hall, and the company clerk and mail orderly trying to build drainage ditches.

"Here on the right now, where you see remains of cigarette cartons and all kinds of rations, camped the most ruthless and accomplished gang of chow hounds and hijackers in the Southwest Pacific. They were laughingly called Medics and more seriously described as pill rollers, but their main activities in this field consisted of amputating parrot's legs and giving the men shots with sharpened drift pins. Those Army posters showing devoted, idealistic medical corps men kneeling beside wounded soldiers were a sure laugh around here in those days. Going to this outfit's hospital was like venturing into Texas Guinan's prohibition era night club - "Hi, sucker!" If they had to choose between sending an ambulance after the latest tip on stealable rations or after a guy with a broken leg, the latter had to wait until they had brought in the loot, divided it up and stuffed in down their gullets. All this was accomplished by about forty "Dead-End Kids" and five leaders who came into the army after they lost their licenses as chiropractors. One of them, the head man, spent most of his time keeping a weather eye open for any stray doughnuts or candy that anyone might be foolish enough to bring in for patients. Another occupied himself dreaming of Michigan Avenue and lamenting the deadliness of the female of the species. A third, a New Yorker who picked up an English accent along the way, whiled away the war practicing his diction. The other two, a southern jitterbug and a g-g man who was a card, took a stab at dentistry but were finally put out in the field on Barco Hammers. Top man among the bed pan emptiers was a stripe-happy go-getter who had started to sit at the cadre table way back when he was a private at Camp Butner.

"Across the way, on the left here, was an outfit which gave someone a hard luck story on the boat coming over, so they were brought along just to keep them out of the Australian breadlines and casual detachments. There had been vague promises of dump trucks in exchange for coffee and-, " but over here they appeared to be saving the trucks for the junior prom. They started to bite the hand that fed them, and soon they were running the Medics a close second on "casing the joint" and "making the heist." They had a habit, whenever the whim possessed them, of stopping in at any quartermaster, ordnance or engineer supply dump that struck their fancy and handing out a story that they had been authorized this or that. They ended up with a collection of everything from bazookas and tank destroyers to land mines, and flame throwers. The story goes that this outfit

was virtually a closed corporation. If you weren't an ex-shepherd from Montana, and particularly from one certain hitching post that isn't even on the map, you didn't have a chance for anything but K.P., latrine duty and emptying crank cases. Nobody could figure out how such a tank town could turn out anyone knowing the difference between a carburetor and an incubator, and many countered that it didn't.

"Now over here on the right on the beach, where you see those old pilings, was where they built some docks. It was here that a fabulous ringmaster called the Big Chief from Iron Mountain cracked the whip and conducted a one-man three-ring circus. When he would jump into the seat of the pile driver it was every man for himself. He would scold and curse at officers and men alike - "Now listen youse guys, I'm taking signals from only one jackass at a time, and clear out of my way!" - and then he would start swinging. The air would be filled with piling, stringers, and flooring flying in every direction. Booms and cables would swing up and down, right and left. The hammer would bang again. Shavetails and privates would be ducking, falling flat, jumping into the bay or beating it for their company area. The chief would yell, wave his arms and keep on swinging and hammering. The chief's stooge, a Wisconsin krauthead who later ended up in the Navy, would stand by laughing, eating and keeping score: "One private in the bay - missed a lieutenant - a sergeant in the head - near miss on a T/5". And through it all, in the prone positions they had assumed to sight and line up the piling, would be sleeping the engineers from S-3.

"Well, folks, that's all. From all I've told you about Cox's Army you probably gather that the government must have given the outfit a blanket Section VIII discharge - or loaded them back on the Cremer, towed it out in the Coral Sea and told the Japs to come and get it - but it didn't go just that way. After the war the officers went back to their jobs as cookie salesmen and floor-walkers, and the enlisted men went back to picking up coal along the railroad tracks, and they all were able to say: "We built everything they threw at us - roads, docks, depots and what have you - but we had a hell of a good time doing it."

(This hack writer will now take a week's vacation)
