

MY WAR MEMOIR

1942-1946

By

Bernard A. Weisberger

A PRIVATE MEMOIR OF WORLD WAR II

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MASTER COPY, CORRECTED

I'm setting down this memoir of my service in World War II mostly to have it on the record before I move along into the Great Whatever myself. It's for the family, for whomsoever among my friends cares to read it and for anyone interested in collecting accounts of what life was like for each individual member of the generation of World War II veterans that will soon be gone. I began working on it at infrequent intervals in 2004, and got serious about finishing it in February of 2008, making small additions fairly frequently until this date. It contains many gaps caused by lapses of memory. I saved virtually no papers from that period of my life, and only once in a while have gone to outside sources to verify my recollections, particularly of events happening outside my immediate circle of experience. This is simply how I remember it and as I composed this, I found myself writing "to the best of my recollection" so often that it became redundant and monotonous. So I have for the most part dispensed with those qualifiers and warn any future reader who might use this as an historical source that he or she proceeds at their own risk. I vouch for the overall authenticity of the story, but not for precision in detail.

So first, a few generalized cautions

One, don't romanticize my service, such as it was. It's understandable that two generations or more after 1945, young people assume that any veteran was a "warrior" like those who populate the TV screens. I had the same feeling myself about the white-haired Civil War vet who, dressed in a splendid uniform, was paraded in an open car down the main thoroughfare of Hudson, New York, every Memorial Day in the early thirties, though I have no idea of what he actually did. I want to make it clear at the start that I was never anywhere near an armed enemy. I performed my duties at a minimum of several hundred miles away from the front lines, sitting at a desk in a clean uniform, and each night slept safely in a clean bed.

I can't imagine the thoughts or feelings of those who were in actual combat. Of crew members in bombers, tanks and naval vessels thinking that at any moment they could be incinerated in gasoline fires or drowned like trapped animals in their own sinking ships. Or infantrymen already driven to the extremes of physical misery and exhaustion, trying to suppress the terror of knowing that they might be the next to take a bullet or worse, be eviscerated or dismembered by a shell burst. These are the realities of torn and charred flesh, extruded guts and spattered brains, bloodied stumps and splintered bone behind the pretty phrases about "giving one's life for one's country," or "making the supreme sacrifice." These are the true images of what Walt Whitman, writing of the Civil War in 1871 called, "the real war that will never get into the books." Well, it's gotten into a few books now, but it was not that war that I knew and is as remote to me (except through the memoirs of others) as it is to you who read my words all these decades later. If there is any meaning to the label of "hero" it belongs to all the men who could endure these horrors and go on doing whatever jobs they were trained for

But now I have to make another point clear. Six or seven out of eight veterans were like me, not them. I don't know how it

works now, but the huge conscript armies of World War II required enormous establishments of men (almost entirely men back then) in logistical and support services-- men who drove trucks, forecast weather, drew maps, built roads and bridges, strung wires, stockpiled and issued supplies, repaired every kind of mechanical or electronic device used by the military--from tanks to typewriters-- registered and buried the dead and paid the living, and among other things intercepted enemy radio communications, then decoded and translated them for intelligence analysis--the translating part being my job.

They were all important. They all helped win the war. And of course, some "support" jobs like combat engineers and medics brought those who performed them under fire. But I repeat that millions of us underwent no sustained risk to life and limb, and I insist on putting the combat veterans first if you're inclined to hand out merit badges to the alleged "greatest generation," a label that in any case I firmly reject.

And a third caution--take the stars out of your eyes if you think of us as pumped full of noble sentiments about defending freedom. I'm thinking of the kind of beautification that Stephen Ambrose undertook in his books about us citizen-soldiers. "They'd rather have been tossing baseballs than grenades," (I'm paraphrasing) "but they knew something evil was loose in the world and it fell on their shoulders to confront it." That sort of thing.

Says who? I didn't do any scientific polling, but I think I have a fairly good idea of how the rank and file soldier in the rear areas responded to the "Why We Fight" propaganda films that we were regularly subjected to in what they called the "Troop Information and Education" program. Government-issue bullshit--part of the routine you had to endure like the monthly "short arm" exams to see if you had venereal disease. (The upside was that it

was an hour off from duty, and in a darkened auditorium you might get away with a nap.) I am not saying that all of us thought that all of it was bullshit--that's both too cynical and not quite accurate. A more nuanced view would be something like this. Of course we all believed that the United States simply had to win the war--especially against Japan, which had attacked us. That's simple nationalism at work. In addition, those of us who paid much attention to politics and had followed the news closely for years were, for the most part anti-fascist and especially anti-Hitler, with compound interest if we were Jewish. We had a hunch that life, even in America, might be pretty awful in an Axis-dominated world. People who shared these feelings were often voluntary enlistees--partly out of principle and partly to get a choice of services and specialties or a head start on promotions that would be inevitable as the armies expanded. But the huge majority of the twelve million or so who served in the armed forces for all or part of the period from 1940 to 1945 were conscripted. That doesn't mean they were dragged in by might and main. They knew that they would be called up sooner or later and they simply weren't in a hurry to get to the head of the line. Not precisely captive warriors, or even reluctant warriors--but not crusaders by any means.

And they--we--were genuine examples of American thinking. The country was heavily isolationist before the summer of 1940, when Hitler's armies overran France and drove the British off the continent of Europe in a few weeks, forcing us to start our own crash programs of rearmament. Even in the year and a half between the fall of Paris and Pearl Harbor there was no wide consensus for a rush towards war. The draft enacted in 1940 was only for a year, and Congress barely extended it by a handful of votes only a few weeks before those Honolulu-bound Japanese planes took off from their carriers. Roosevelt's emergency measures to help Great Britain--the transfer of "surplus" stocks of arms and "over-age" destroyers, the participation of the U.S. Navy

in escorting convoys halfway across the Atlantic and firing back at attacking German submarines in "self-defense"--were executive, and sometimes secret decisions. The Lend-Lease programs of "loans" of war supplies to Hitler's enemies, enacted in March of 1941, won Congressional approval only with the understanding that such "borrowing" would make it unnecessary for the United States to send over armies of our own. We had faith--or perhaps pretended to have faith--in Winston Churchill's promise: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job." On the whole, American public opinion was willing for us to become the "arsenal of democracy," but we'd have preferred that other nations do the actual fighting. The December 7th, 1941 attack on Hawaii, followed by Hitler's declaration of war on us (not the other way around) destroyed that hope. But the underlying sentiment of resistance to American entry into the war, which we of military age widely shared, did not disappear overnight.

And so we citizen-soldiers basically did what we had to do but had hoped to avoid. We all knew that we were on the right side. Our war was not only the last one officially declared by Congress but the last about which there was virtually no dissent once the Japanese naval air arm bombed us into it. Except for principled pacifists and a very few native fascists, nobody doubted that we were lined up with the angels, who of course were pro-American and would help us win. But as for saving the rest of the world from the curse of fascism, most Americans didn't think or know much about the world back then in spite of the efforts of some first-class foreign correspondents and sympathetic editors to educate us.

It's possible that at this moment I'm projecting backward my distaste for the "idealistic" bilge that is now emitted in defense of our war in Iraq. That's always the risk of the retrospective view. But on balance I still think that the image of the "Good War" in which we all resolutely and consciously marched off to keep the

world free is somewhat prettied up. Ambrose is partly right--we'd rather have been doing something else. But what we had to do was simply win the war for our country. The noble sentiments were for politicians and speechmakers and make-believe /soldiers in the wartime patriotic movies Conquer an evil let loose on the world? Too abstract a proposition to give our lives for. We didn't even know how deep the evil ran until Germany was overrun and Hitler's extermination camps were revealed in all their overpowering detail.

Off the soapbox then, and back to December of 1941. I am nineteen years and three months old, and in my fifth semester at dear old Columbia College in the City of New York.//

Pearl Harbor is the logical starting point No one who was old enough to have some awareness of what went on in the world--say, of high school age and up)--is likely to forget how and where they heard the news on that lazy December Sunday. My mother, stepfather and I lived in an apartment in Queens, part of a neighborhood named Sunnyside, the kind of label beloved of real estate developers. It was about twenty-five minutes by subway from midtown Manhattan, a point of significance in my story. As an annually renewed gift from my parents I had a season subscription to the concerts of the New York Philharmonic Society's orchestra, and was due in Carnegie Hall at two PM . Around one-fifteen, I was getting into my coat to walk ten minutes to the IRT stop for the train that would take me to Manhattan. My parents were reading the massive and sober New York Times and I asked them if I might flip on the radio for a moment to hear the score of the New York Giants football game in progress. I don't remember how long it had been playing before the voice of John Daly, a well-known CBS newscaster, cut in with the radio's alert

for hot news: "We interrupt this program for a special bulletin,!" We pricked up our ears and heard Daly continue: "The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii" He gave it was then said to be the proper official pronunciation with a "v" instead of the "w." That was all. The three of us looked at each other in disbelief and then my mother said what must have been said by millions of others hearing the same bulletin at the same moment "There must be a mistake."

It wasn't that war was unexpected. For a long time the United States and the Japanese governments had been on chilly terms, and the latest episode had been an American cut-off of oil exports to Japan which was designed to force them into ending their four-year-long war with China and evacuate its captured major cities, plus abandoning any plans to grab the British, Dutch and French empires in Southeast Asia, all of them indefensible once Germany had beaten France and the Netherlands a year earlier and had the British on the ropes, barely able to defend themselves much less their overseas possessions. Besides that, the threat posed by Japan to the Philippine Islands had been a constant source of tension for the preceding few years during which we'd been in a naval arms race with the Japanese Empire. So if the bulletin had announced the surprise bombing of Manila (which would in fact take place later the same day) we would not have been shocked. But Hawaii? On our side of the Pacific and guarded by the whole United States Pacific Fleet,? No, it had to be a mistake. And "everybody knew," anyway, that the Japanese were funny little slant-eyed people who might be a match for the funny little slant-eyed Chinese, but not for an advanced country like the U.S. Their warships and planes were cheap copies of ours, made from designs and photographs stolen by their spies, posing as innocent tourists with cameras. They certainly could not have done much damage, nor been fools enough to invite our awesome retaliation. "Tomorrow," said my mother only half-jokingly, "they'll apologize."

With this single announcement as my only information, I went ahead with my subway trip. People were snoozing or chatting or reading, obviously unaware of what I had just heard--the only kind of "portable" radio then available was one with vacuum tubes, small enough to be carried from room to room. The streets outside of Carnegie Hall looked as they did on any Sunday three weeks before Christmas--full of shoppers intent on completing their lists. As I got inside just before the opening number, it was clear from the way in which the audience was still turning program pages, greeting friends, laughing and looking expectantly at the stage where the orchestra was making the usual tune-up noises, that they knew of nothing amiss either. It was an odd feeling for me, thinking that I might be the only person in that entire auditorium who was "in the know," and of course I was still innocent myself of how devastating a hit we had taken.

I don't recall exactly when the Concert Manager came out on stage to say: "Ladies and gentlemen, the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. All service personnel in the audience are requested to return to their units immediately." There was the expected gasp and then if I recall correctly a general rush toward the aisles of uniformed soldiers and sailors plus a probable number of servicemen in off-duty civilian dress, which I think was still allowed at the time. I know that the orchestra played the entire program, the machinery of the Sunday concert clanking along on inertia. The Times' review of the concert next day, which I have checked, only says that Arthur Rubinstein ended it with the Brahms Second Piano Concerto, and that after the applause died down someone came out on stage to "verify the rumor circulating at intermission that the Japanese had attacked the Philippines," following which the orchestra played the Star Spangled Banner as it had at the beginning of the concert and all joined in. That's not in my memory bank, but it wouldn't be the last occasion on which the Times and I have disagreed about the facts. In any case

I left along with the crowd, headed for home where we'd all spend the evening glued to the radio, thinking what other millions of other healthy young American males were thinking at the moment: "Well! We're in the war, finally, and I am certain to be a soldier. How strange!"

The next day, Monday, was passed in soaking up the bad news from Hawaii and listening to Roosevelt's "day of infamy" speech and Congress's immediate declaration of war. When classes were resumed not much transpired in them. I only recall our economics professor, last name of Carey, telling us that we young men would now have "the privilege of serving our country." He was, I believe, a World War I veteran himself, hardly a surprise since most of the young men who went to France in 1917-18 would still have been only in their forties. The two veterans whom I knew in my family were typical. My father (in training with an air unit which did not get overseas) was born in 1894 and my Uncle Ernie on my mother's side (who did reach France in some non-combat role) was just four years younger. I didn't know any uncles on Dad's side, the divorce from my mother having taken place when I was very small.

A special assembly of Columbia College students was convened some time during the week. The main portion of it was an address by Dean Herbert Hawkes, the burden of which was that we college-educated young men should not rush to the recruiting stations and interrupt our educations. The government would find niches in which our talents could be put to the best use, and establish programs to direct us towards them. I remember that he literally said "keep your nether garments in situ"-- academic jargon for "keep your pants on." The Dean, gray-haired and gray-moustached, and always soberly dressed in gray three piece suits, cut a quaint academic figure himself. He looked as if he belonged

in a college musical, where the students broke spontaneously into song and dance and called the university president "Prexy."

For a long time I have recalled this speech as a rather melancholy piece of elitism, a hint that we should recognize our military destiny as being something higher and safer than cannon fodder, of which plenty would be available from the majority (back in those days) of youngsters of our age who were not college students. On reflection as I write this, my judgment is a little softer. Hawkes certainly did assume that most of us with some "higher education" were more likely to become officers than privates, but so did the armed services. And the on-campus programs for naval deck officers and aviators (V-7 and V-5,) the first of which took effect at Columbia almost immediately, as well as others that may have been set up after I left, certainly produced a goodly share of commissioned graduates who served in combat and were wounded or killed. Moreover Columbia, while not having an ROTC program, did--even in 1939, when I entered the college--have some kind of program that offered enrollment as Marine reservists, with summer training leading to a commission on graduation. I know for certain that some fellow undergraduates were in it, and I assume that they were promptly called to active duty and saw plenty of brutal action.

So good old Dean Hawkes wasn't necessarily telling us to save our hides or that we were too good to get killed, and I am less inclined in the mellowness of age to feel irritated by my recollection of that assembly. And as it happened, I became one of those who did decide to wait at least until the end of my junior year before enlisting, and so wound up in highly specialized training. I don't recall the chronology--alas, I saved no diaries or letters from this period--but some time in January, I believe, the word went out

that the armed services were seriously short of Japanese translators. The language was not widely taught or studied back then, and as for the thousands of military-age Americans born to Japanese parents, they could not be "cleared" for secret intelligence work, which was where the bulk of the demand fell, and in June of 1942 those of them living on the West Coast would all be hustled off to prison compounds--I refuse to use the euphemism of "internment camps" because I still seethe at the injustice of it. (Later on, many were released for military service which they performed bravely and well--treating their country a hell of a lot better than it deserved.)

Columbia happened to be one of the universities which did have programs in Japanese history and art and if it did not already offer undergraduate instruction in the language, was in a good position to do so.

I have gotten fuzzy about the chronology of the few weeks following December 8th. At that time, Columbia closed down for the holiday break about a week or so before Christmas. Fall semester classes resumed for a few days after New Year's Day, ran only for a week or so, and then were suspended for a "reading period" prior to exams at the end of January. The Spring semester began in February. I suspect that during that time my mind was occupied with a girl whom I was seeing in Hudson, New York, my grandparents' home and where I spent most of the Winter break, and with end-of-term grades rather than with my long term future. But the world outside could not be ignored. Every day the news grew more dismaying. By mid-February of 1942 the Japanese had captured Manila and Corregidor and most of the Philippine Islands, (and our outnumbered defense forces along with them,)I likewise nearly all of the Netherlands East Indies and most of the Malay Peninsula. Singapore would either fall soon or had already done so and two supposedly invincible British battleships, the pride of their fleet had been sunk by aerial attackers. Our own naval and air

forces in the region were virtually no longer existent. The invasion of Burma had begun. It was clear that we were in for a long hard war.

I don't know when the announcement was made that elementary Japanese classes were either being enlarged or created anew, or whether there was a formal request for students with good records in language study to join--or when I myself made the decision to enroll. Enough to say that when the new semester opened, I was one of a couple of dozen members in a class taught by Hugh Borton and a "Mr." Henderson whose first name has vanished from my memory. Of them more in a moment but I remember well the current of excitement that our first encounter with the language sparked. Our text was a large paperback with plain gray covers announcing that it was created by Harvard professors Edwin O. Reischauer and Serge Elisèef. The opening assignment in it was to master the *kana*. Japanese is written using the same pictorial symbols (ideographs,) each one standing for an object, action or concept, as Chinese. But these Chinese characters, or *kanji*, are inflected in spoken Japanese by monosyllables or combinations of monosyllables represented in writing by marks that only represent sounds--like the letters of our alphabet. These are the *kana* I'm talking about. I'm taking a momentary side excursion here because it has a bearing on the work I wound up doing as well as on the limits of my Japanese skills. Here's one example. The possessive case is created by adding the syllable *no* to the possessor, followed by the word for the object possessed. "The American army, " for example would be *beikoku no rikugun*, "the army of the United States." Nothing unusual about that--but as written, *beikoku* and *rikugun* would be expressed in little pictures, each of which had to be memorized separately, whereas *no* simply looks like our figure 9, is instantly recognizable and easy to keep in mind. There are two varieties of *kana* but I will spare the reader further details. Each one has only twenty-odd such syllable indicators--and they could be learned in a

single night of study, being more systematically arranged than the letters of our own Arabic alphabet. So to walk into class with them under your belt next morning gave you the feeling that you were penetrating a mystery that only few understood--that you were already part of an elite, since the general conception then was that Japanese was too fiendishly difficult for the average Occidental mind to grasp.

Not everyone in the class was an undergraduate. I don't remember any women, but we had at least two middle-aged men, perhaps more. Those of us of draft age, however, realized that we were in preparatory training for the armed services as much as our friends in the V-7 Midshipman's school on campus. They were already in uniform, marching back and forth to classes, learning to speak of the rooms in John Jay Hall where they were quartered as being on the third or fourth "deck," and enjoying a commanding lead in attracting the interest of girls. We, still in civvies, could not do much about that but we had the private consolation of feeling that we were playing around the edges of something important and secret--maybe enemy spies wanted to know who was learning Japanese? Dared we keep our books open on our laps while studying in the subway? Should we be open with families and friends about what we were up to? I think that after a short while we all decided that confidentiality was unnecessary, and began to enjoy bragging a little about our undertaking, but at least in those early weeks I recall a kind of inner satisfaction at being an "insider," a fore-runner of what I experienced when later initiated into truly secret work. My happiness overflowed into my other work and got me A grades in French Romantic Literature with William Frohock and European Thought and Culture in the 19th Century with Jacques Barzun. I don't recall what else I took that Spring: possibly an English-language course in Classical Civilization with the incomparable Gilbert Highet. But it was the novel experience of the Japanese classroom and what it might lead

me to that was the driving wheel behind my unusual attention to study that Spring.

Given that, I'm surprised at how little I recall of what we actually did in class or of which new friends I made there. But fragments and special scenes stick in my mind. Professor Borton tended to show up garbed in the professorial style of the day a dark-colored three-piece suit and he taught us with the formality that befitted a man whose mind was also wearing a three-piece suit. Henderson *san* as we learned to call our instructors was different. He might have been an academic, but was also a possible recruit from the ranks of businessmen and missionaries who had lived in Japan, learned the tongue, and were now summoned from retirement to shovel it as rapidly as possible into us. Henderson *san* wore glasses, spoke with deliberation in a deep voice, and had a rather large head, which he would throw back to emphasize a point. I recall his looking up at the ceiling as he explained that the syllable *ga* which, following a noun, indicated that it was the subject of the following verb. It was pronounced somewhat nasally. "*Nga!*" he snapped sharply at the overhead light fixture. "*Nga! Nga!*" which we all faithfully recorded in our notebooks. On the whole, Henderson *san* seemed to take neither the job nor himself too seriously and was fun..

There was one older classmate notable for a large moustache and a heavy genteel-British accent. He would read aloud the sentences we had to translate from our exercise books in a way that made him sound as if he were doing a Noel Coward play in Japanese. He was a genial fellow. I never got, or at least couldn't remember his name and thought of him simply as "the Friendly Brit." He proceeded to the summer class that followed our introductory course. Two study-buddies were Bill Voelcker, a very bright and cheerful academic achiever and Gordon Cotler, a redhead who was on the staff of Jester, the college humor magazine and went on to a career as a writer of mysteries and TV

scripts. We would sit together in the library, swapping mnemonics for nailing down the *kanji* we were acquiring in order to read simple sentences. Our Bibles were two dictionaries--a doorstop-sized volume simply known to us as *Kenkyusha*, which I thought was the name of the compiler until I discovered that the word simply meant "researcher"--e.g., The Researcher's Dictionary--and a smaller, blue-bound one especially designed for looking up *kanji*, a more complicated process than hunting for words in *romaji*, the letters used in Western languages. We called it by the name of the author, "the Rose-Innes," but whether "Rose-Innes" was one hyphenated person or two separate compilers I don't remember if I ever knew.

By May, the first of the military recruiters had made contact with us, and inflicted on me the biggest disappointment of my young life. We were notified that a "Commander Hindmarsh," USN would be conducting interviews in a Manhattan hotel for entry into the Navy school of languages then situated on the campus of the University of Colorado in Boulder where it had been moved from California, I presume to shelter their Nisei instructors from the forced "relocation." of Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast. I remember absolutely nothing of the interview itself, possibly because I'm repressing the whole painful episode, because some time shortly afterwards, the letters of acceptance and further instructions arrived for those who had made the cut, and what I got was the information that I would not be joining the great majority of my classmates proceeding to Boulder to be formally enrolled and begin training. I'd never experienced rejection up until then, and of course I was eager to get into the war and my heartbreak was not assuaged by the official explanation furnished, either in the letter or on further inquiry, which was that the training was a year-long program culminating in graduation with a commission as Ensign, and that since I would still lack two months of becoming twenty-one in June of 1943--my birthday is August 15th--I would be ineligible. There was no specific invitation to re-apply later, I

suspect that if the Navy had been interested enough I could have been held for a while in enlisted status, and this may possibly have happened later on as all the services softened up their requirements in order to get more bodies. I considered the possibility that the Navy, well known for the fact that its peacetime officer corps was generally WASP-genteel, had simply filled its quota of Jews for that particular class, because I knew that at least one other Jew had been accepted. But in the absence of specific proof of intent I prefer not to accept anti-Semitism as an explanation for any setbacks in my life. Perhaps I had just run into a wall of bureaucratic immobility.

In an case, the setback wasn't for very long, because less than four months after the Navy had turned me down I was in the Army, but that gets me ahead of the story. In that merry May I was as crushed as only a frustrated nineteen-year-old can be, and I writhed in jealous torment when some of my pals later sent me franked letters (postage was free for servicemen during the war) bearing the return address of Y2c, USNR and the official unit name of the student body. It was my mother who finally told me testily to stop whining and get it behind me, which was probably good advice though I didn't think so then.

My pain was also assuaged by the fact that, needless to say I was still a valuable potential asset to the military, and my worth would be improved by a consolation prize--a full scholarship, provided by the American Council of Learned Societies, to cover an intensive ten or twelve week summer course on campus which would continue enlarging what we'd already learned. I don't even believe we applied. It was all virtually automatic, since the country was really hungering for the likes of us. And so I was soon in the midst of what I recall as a very pleasant summer.

I only recently finished a re-reading of Samuel Hynes's wonderful book, Flights of Passage , about his career as a World

War II Marine aviator, and was struck by a passage describing how he enjoyed one period of his training, when his only responsibility was to learn new flying skills and practice them, which he enjoyed. While not quite as dramatic as doing aerobatics and target practice a mile high in the sky, my 10 or 12 weeks of intensive Japanese had the same effect on me. I don't think we got a stipend, but there was no tuition to pay, nor any concerns about putting aside money for next year's college costs because it was clear there wasn't going to be a next year at Columbia. Every morning I hopped on to the IRT subway at the stop nearest our apartment in Queens, dressed lightly for a New York July and August and carrying a couple of textbooks and a brownbag lunch. An hour later I would be seated around a large table with another dozen and a half or so aspiring translators like myself--almost all of us youthful and male except for the Friendly Brit and at least two other older men, one of whom was Arthur Loesser. He was a well-known classical pianist whom I had heard play as part of a duo-piano team with Beryl Rubinstein. He was also, I have since learned, a half brother to the musical comedy composer Frank Loesser--and he, too, wound up using his Japanese in the Army in a different branch and at a more exalted rank than I would achieve. It strikes me as curious now that I can't recall anyone else in that particular class winding up where I did, though of course that doesn't mean it didn't happen. The possible exceptions may have been Frank Tenny, whom I believe I met there. His draft board plucked him out before the course was over, leaving him to arm-wrestle the military authorities for a while before getting to his proper slot as a translator. The interruption was not much of a setback for him, because he had spent part of his childhood with parents in Japan, and he already had a head start.

We spent the mornings reading and translating Japanese sentences, grabbed lunch on or around the campus--I sometimes took my sandwich a couple of blocks west to Riverside Drive, and

ate it on a bench, watching the lordly Hudson roll its way seaward--and returned for an afternoon of more instruction. Around four o'clock we were finished for the day, free as the breeze except for homework, which didn't weigh on us much because I don't believe we had any exams except to check our progress. Grades would have had little motivational purpose. Everyone in the class was a volunteer and a survivor of the beginners' courses of the preceding Spring and we knew what we were getting into when we signed on to continue --namely that in the end there would be serious business and we all wanted to be ready for serious business. Perhaps time has gilded my recollection, but I am certain that even on the balmiest days I never had the urge to cut class and I never was bored, much less anxious about how I was doing. By going straight home after hours every day I probably missed out on some of the post-class socializing among those who lived on or near the campus, but I'd been doing that for the entire three years of my undergraduate life and you don't miss what you don't know.

Our two instructors for this round were Japanese-Americans who had escaped internment, which applied only to those living in the states of the Pacific Coast. They seemed young to me, and perhaps were graduate students. In any case, Mr. Shimizu was round, short, good-natured, encouraging and quick to pick up our names and peculiarities. He welded us into a congenial group with his continuous flattering banter. Mr. Shirato was taller, hollow-cheeked and stand-offish. He was our teacher, not our buddy, and he always looked as if he would have preferred to be somewhere else, which was quite possibly the case. Between the two of them, assisted by our own efforts, I think we were at the point at summer's end where we could handle simple Japanese texts, form coherent if brief and commonplace sentences, and could move on towards our ultimate wartime destinations. By then we had chances to choose among them as new recruiters showed up to woo us.

Commander Hindmarsh did not come back during the summer. Nor did anyone from what I later learned was the army's regular Military Intelligence service which ran a language school in Fort Snelling, Minnesota. But we did get a recruiting visit and interview with Bertram B. Fahs, of the very mysterious Office of Strategic Services. I remember him as a pleasant type, who was pretty straightforward in giving me a picture of what I would do if I signed up with OSS--work in Washington as a civilian, translating various books, periodicals and other documents--some already outdated--that would help in building up a general assessment of Japan's economic and strategic strengths and vulnerabilities. I'd be a civilian until drafted, and then, presumably, I'd be reassigned to the same work in uniform. I didn't want any part of that--I was just about to turn twenty years old and I wanted to be a warrior, even if not an arms-bearing one. In retrospect, knowing what I know now about some of the more bizarre missions that OSS teams carried out around the world, I might have seen more of the "real" war had I gone that route, but in sober retrospect I am fairly sure that Mr. Fah's prognosis of a martial career spent entirely at a Washington desk was the more likely.

And then came Major Swensson

Some time in July or August, once again we were informed that a high military officer would be in the city to interview potential enlistees in a midtown hotel room. This time it was the army calling in the person of a Major Swensson. I remember little about him except for a kind of comic dialogue between us. I was then under the impression that somehow, as a trained Japanese translator, I would be up front with an intelligence and reconnaissance company or platoon, interrogating prisoners captured moments earlier or scanning the contents of their pockets, little knowing how much actual and lengthy preparation

would actually be needed for that kind of work. So I kept asking the good Major exactly what it was that I would be doing in the unit for which he was recruiting, to wit the "signal intelligence service." The Major couldn't be specific because the secret backroom battles between code writers and code breakers for both sides was one of the most jealously hidden operations of the war. So he kept explaining calmly that I would be doing work "of great importance in the war effort," which was entirely true; that it would involve my knowledge of Japanese, and that it might take place anywhere that the U.S. Army felt it to be important. He did not mention the overwhelming likelihood that it would actually be in Arlington Hall Station, just outside the District of Columbia. Knowing myself, I'm sure I didn't press him hard, and if I had said point-blank that I wanted to be close to the fighting line I'm sure he would have found some way of giving me a guarded but not discouraging answer. But I am sure I wasn't persistent--I never have been good at pushing people to say things they didn't want to say, which is why, although I yearned to be a journalist when I was in, high school I would have made a lousy reporter. In any case the Major was persuasive enough to get me to put my name on the list of "sign-me-up" volunteers which he would submit to the proper authorities.

It may occur to some of you who read this: why "sell" any military program when the draft was in effect? Sooner or later, all of us who were eligible would be inducted. Our language training would be on our records, and the army could easily collar us from the ranks whenever it chose to. In fact that happened with some of the recruits to the various language programs sprouting up at universities around the country. But when you are ingesting millions of men in a hurry and your tools for sorting and categorizing information are IBM punch-cards, it's easy to lose track of individual records and it made more sense to round us up as a group before, by choice or accident, we vanished into the ranks.

I've always felt a certain amount of discomfort that in choosing signal intelligence service I was in fact making certain that I would almost never get close to any front. Once we were initiated into the secret that we were working on Japanese codes that had actually been solved, it was axiomatic that we were never to be sent anywhere where there might be danger of our capture. I'd gotten myself into a virtually bombproof job. Not quite literally--German translators and code breakers sent to England's cryptanalytic headquarters at Bletchley Park dodged Luftwaffe raids and buzz-bombs along with the rest of London's civilians. Also, a detachment from Arlington Hall sent out to India via the Mediterranean, rather than by the trans-Pacific route which I eventually traveled, was caught in a convoy under heavy air attack, during which a troopship near theirs was sunk with a huge loss of life. But even had I been a military translator who did not have Top Secret clearance I'd have not gotten very far forward. Prisoner interrogation wasn't for the likes of us with less than a year of study and no experience in the culture. Japanese prisoners would be speaking in a mixture of local dialects and accents laced with soldier slang that would have been far too much for us to handle. As for reading orders, letters, diaries and other documents taken from a prisoner in the midst of action, once again, we weren't sharp enough to decipher various handwritings, abbreviations, familiar idioms and the like in a huge hurry. That sort of material may have been quickly scanned by Nisei or Americans who had spent enough time in Japan to be truly fluent. But it would then be passed on back to some rear headquarters where it was processed, made more legible, and translated at greater leisure by those trained quickly at other military language schools. There may have been exceptions. I once learned from my Columbia alumni magazine that Theodore de Bary, Class of 1941, spent some time with Marine regiments fighting in what he describes as "the Central Pacific" after emerging from the Navy's school at Boulder, but he's probably not a routine case. He was good enough as a

translator to return to Columbia afterwards and enjoy a career there as a professor of Far Eastern history and literature

In any case, unaware of what I was getting into, I signed on with the major and was told that in short order I would hear something, which I did--a letter requesting me to be in Washington on Monday morning, September 14, 1942, at the Army recruiting station at Twelfth Street and New York Avenues for enlistment. The letter came around the time of my birthday, a month before, and produced an interesting and anxious few week. Classes ended some time in the last week or so of August and my last days of civilian life for three and a half years were free of obligation and would have been pleasant if I had not taken too seriously the instructions to bring a release from my draft board with me. But the board would not convene again until mid-September.. I had visions of being turned away at the recruiting station and crawling ignominiously back to New York to wait indefinitely for the Major Swensson's next roundup, losing touch altogether with my group that was about to begin service, and condemned to spend more months as a civilian. "Look," I pleaded over the phone to some secretary "can't they just send me a release without an official meeting? I'm trying to get into the army, damn it. Aren't you supposed to be furnishing men to the armed forces?" No, she insisted, the regulations did not provide any speed lane on the road to filling the next quota of warm bodies. She spoke the eternal language of bureaucracy and it was, as usual, nonsense. When I actually got to the station and confessed in fear and trembling to the sergeant typing up my papers that I had not been released by my board, he grunted, without looking up from the keyboard: "OK, we'll get it later," and I never heard another word on the subject. I have no recollection of taking a mass physical exam prior to signing the enlistment form, either. Somehow I either escaped standing naked for hours in some drafty arena amid long

lines shuffling past rows of doctors submitting us to assorted indignities, or I have banished the memory of the experience.

Getting to Washington itself, where I had never been, was a thrill. I went down on the last possible Sunday evening train, which left around midnight. My mother and stepfather accompanied me to Pennsylvania Station, he looking solemn and she trying not to cry, though I kept reassuring her that I was not going to be anywhere dangerous for at least a long training period, and would be close enough for easy visits home when permitted. They hugged me, I climbed aboard the train, looked out the window to see my mother waving and dabbing her eyes, and was off to war. It was a four hour trip during which I dozed, tried to read a book and was too excited, to concentrate, and ended up in Union Station around 3 or 4 A.M. to sprawl on a waiting room bench and wait until something opened up for breakfast. What I do remember most vividly is walking into the vast and still mostly empty space of the waiting room (which I would get to know well in the next year) and seeing, through the front door, the dome of the Capitol by the light of the moon on a clear night. It took my breath away --I think I reacted like Jimmy Stewart in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington with a kind of wonder and a surge of patriotic feeling (which time has long since seasoned with realism.) But even if I had not been awed by the fact that I was there, actually looking at where the laws that governed us were made by the men and then-minuscule group of women whom we elected, there was also the simple astonishment of seeing all those picture postcards and textbook illustrations suddenly manifested in actual stone. (I remember getting the same shiver a good thirty years afterwards, driving into Athens on a vacation trip. I looked out of the taxi window and saw the Parthenon and thought: "My God, it's real. It isn't something they made up and put in picture books. It really exists. Socrates used to look at it on his way to the Academy every morning and now I'm looking at it too.")

The station began to fill with morning commuters from the suburbs, street noises penetrated the station, I stretched, yawned, found someplace for a cup of coffee and was directed by a friendly soul to 12th Street and New York Avenue, where I found a small crew of other military translators-to-be. Almost all of them were from Harvard. I can't remember whether anyone who had been in my Spring or summer classes was present that morning, though it's likely. The only Columbia College classmate whom I recollect for sure as a member of our gang that September morn was Maxwell Warschauer, who made almost no impression on me. That batch of us who had enrolled in the Spring of 1942 had been pretty much snapped up by the Navy. I never kept track of them all. The group really didn't begin to cohere for me until we were together in one barracks--but I am getting ahead of my story. We spent a couple of hours while clerk-typists filled out forms for each of us, and finally raised our hands, swore to support and defend the United States against her enemies, and duly became enlisted members of the Army of the United States--that is, the temporary army created for the duration of the war, in contrast to the permanent and regular United States Army. Whereupon we were led out, placed aboard a bus--a civilian one on a routine run--and started on our way to the reception center at Camp Lee in Petersburg, Virginia, some ninety miles away. We spent the two hours or so that the trip took getting acquainted, looking out the windows, and wondering in our separate ways what exactly lay ahead of us.

And there at the reception center we were introduced to what would be the basic framework of our lives for the months and years ahead. You are quickly made aware that you are not a free agent. You are owned by the military, you will do things at command and in the prescribed fashion, without discussion or argument; you will learn to recognize and obey ranks above you; you will come to expect and to follow orders that seem wholly ridiculous and unreasonable, and in the words of one of our

"welcoming" noncoms, "Your soul belongs to God, your heart belongs to your wife or sweetheart, but your ass belongs to us." This is not a lament--it is the way an army has to work (or at least the way it did in 1942-45)--the petty harassments of a hierarchical fixed order are lumped together under the descriptive term "chickenshit" and one learns to live with it. For some, it was really hard to endure. For most of us, it was just the way things were, and there were those who actually seemed to enjoy the regularity, orderliness and freedom from decision-making about minor details of getting through a day--in general, the freedom from independent responsibility--of army life. One of the fellow trainees I met a few months later came from a well-known and respected "old" Cincinnati family and was expected in time to take on the duties and demands of good citizenship and tradition. "This is a vacation for me," he said (or words to that effect.) I don't have to think about anything." On the whole I felt somewhat the same way. Though I joined in the routine and sociable bitching of my fellow enlistees, I neither resented the system deeply nor spent time figuring out how to beat it. It was a pain in the ass--the same ass that now belonged completely to Uncle Sam-- but I had signed up to do a job, and now I was either learning more about how to do it or actually doing it, and someone else had to worry about whether my basic daily needs were taken care of. If I had to rise and retire, eat on a schedule from a menu over which I had no control, and go hither and yon only with permission it didn't matter much. In the first few months I even felt in an almost adolescent way--I was still barely out of my teens--that it was fun, like being part of one of those neat, "hey, war's a joke" films popular at the time, with Abbott and Costello clowning and the Andrews Sisters boogying. I think that the only time I felt dismay was later on when I came to the realization that even within the framework of being an enlisted or eventually a commissioned translator, I really had no power of choice over what I would work on or when and where I would get to work on it, that I felt the collar a little tight. By the time of my discharge 42 months later, I was as glad to leave as the most

rebellious individualist. But that, too, was part of a long term development that was only beginning when I took the oath.

We not only learned the official rules in an array of training movies that we sat through almost without interruption those first days; we acquired certain expectations that would become ingrained. One was, of course, waiting in line. I don't remember the sequence of events that first day, but we stood in a long file that shuffled past counter after counter where quartermaster soldiers handed us the various items of equipment and clothing for which we were responsible, catalogued in military terms. "Socks, wool, olive-drab, 2 pair; trousers, wool; 2 pair ; trousers, khaki, 2 pair; belt, web, 1; shoelaces, russet, 2 pair " and so on. We were taken someplace to change, and then we stood in line to mail home the civilian clothes which we would not wear again for a long time (because, unlike in peacetime, wearing "civvies" even off duty, or on furlough was forbidden) We stood in line for up to half an hour or more--to get our dinners, served in mess kits (two oval shaped tins, one, the cover, to hold the main course, the other compartmented for side dishes, the two hinged and kept together by a bar that swung open and became a handle over which a knife, fork and spoon with perforated handles could be fitted so that, on filing out of the mess hall, the two halves of the kit and the cutlery could be plunged by the handle into a barrel of boiling soapy water and then two successive barrels of boiling rinse water, all three barrels over open pit fires. After that we had to re-assemble the whole thing. I may be running some memories together here; it's possible that we ate off dishes at Camp Lee and later at Arlington Hall (see below) but somewhere I certainly used and washed mess kits and the accompanying kidney-shaped canteen cups with their own folding handles enough times to brand the procedure on my memory. The "chow line" was my first such encounter. Later on, standing in line for mail, for physical inspections, for almost anything I can remember, was just part of the experience--so much so that for decades after getting my

discharge I would not stand in line for a movie and still will not do so except under duress.

Eventually, uniformed and fed, we probably began the reception center sequence of classes and tests, to all of which we were trucked or marched in pretty straggly-looking formations but formations nevertheless--another enduring memory of army life. Trucks occasionally rolled past us full of "old timers" who had already been in the service or a week or more, jeering "You'll be sorreeeee!" as we tramped along asphalt roads between rows of two-story yellow wooden barracks buildings. They themselves may have been fairly new. Long-established army posts sometimes had brick barracks, and I have no idea how long Camp Lee had been around. In any case, when we were finally taken to our quarters they turned out to be tents set up on wooden platforms. We went to bed at lights-out time, and early the next morning were introduced to the other memorably characteristic feature of army life, the relentless and all-embracing profanity.

It was cool and dark, a late-September northern Virginia morning like those to which thousands of Civil War soldiers on the nearby battlefields must have awakened many times seventy-eight years earlier. And into my slumbering ears someone was screaming **DROP YOUR COCK AND GRAB YOUR SOCK!!!** Loudspeakers throughout the camp were blasting live or recorded notes of reveille, and reception center personnel in charge of groups of brand new "soldiers" were moving through their areas of authority supplementing the music with their personal summonses. Our boss was a private, first-class, PFC, the second lowest rank in the army. The holders of the title were often mockingly referred to as "drunk with power." Still confused and sleepy, not even sure that it wasn't all a dream, I didn't even realize the meaning of what I was hearing. This memoir will not contain a record of my sexual activities, or rather lack of them, during my

service time, but suffice it to say that I had not yet personally discovered masturbation during adolescence. Not that I didn't know what it was or had not heard plenty of jokes about it in my all-male high school and college, so that as I slowly became conscious and pulled on my sock as per command, I began to catch on, then to be startled, and after that to laugh as we shuffled to the latrines to stand in single files in front of the urinals (waiting lines yet again !) I've told the whole story to make the point, I guess, that the third word I heard on my first full day in the military was "cock." Soldier talk was dirty talk, perhaps always has been without polite society acknowledging it, but in the uninhibited age in which we now live enough uncensored war novels, memoirs, movies and plays have appeared to spare me from going into detail. Still, I have to remind those who read me that in 1942 it came as a shock to a nice, relatively sheltered middle-class boy like me.

Suffice it to say that the "F" word in all its possible grammatical permutations, was dominant but there were also many, many other excretory and sexual organs and functions of both genders, described and used in ways that would put Cleopatra's infinite variety into the shade. Some were funny, some original-sounding (to describe a scolding from authority as "having your ass chewed" still strikes me as an inventive description of how you feel, even if it's a curious image of the act itself.) Some were especially monotonous, thanks to eternal repetition. Some, cleaned up as "chewed out," or "browned" (originally "pissed") off, or "snafu" (situation normal, all fucked up) escaped into respectability even back then, and all of them, unless you made conscious exertions to avoid it, became habit-forming in your own speech. The army made me a free and almost innocently unthinking user of cuss words for the rest of my life and I had some problems in restraining my swearing propensity around my children as they grew up. They tell me I didn't succeed very well. I've tried harder with my grandchildren--no report from them yet.

We spent about five days in the reception center most of them passed in taking tests or watching films on military courtesy and kindred subjects. For most of the new inductees it was a suspenseful time as they waited to see what branch of the service they would be shipped off to for basic training. We were aware that we were already earmarked--though knowing what I came to know later about the army I would have worried more about our being broken up, shipped to different far-flung camps, and only reassembled later, one at a time, at our Washington destination. But during our short stay at Camp Lee, there was time for an introduction to the routine of "work details," jobs around camp that idle soldiers were assigned to do. There was usually some useful purpose to be served, but sometimes the details were mere make-work, or, as in the case when I was sent out with a number of new hands in our fresh, green fatigue uniforms, twenty men were assigned to a job that required only ten. The only one that I recall well was some kind of road-mending work during which I stood around with a shovel waiting to be told what to do for intervals, considerably longer than actual periods of digging. I remember vividly going into my first Post Exchange, a kind of general store, snack bar and saloon meant for after-hours diversion, and writing my first letter that simply required me to write "Free" in the space for the stamp. Also going to a couple of movies--in particular, "Holiday Inn" which introduced the song *White Christmas*. I felt very soldierly and far from my home, although it was actually only five hours away by bus and train. I wonder, at this distance removed, what message I put on that first letter or card under my new identity, Pvt Bernard Weisberger, 13106166--I've never forgotten the serial number, and my experience has been that most veterans also recall theirs.

And finally, the dozen or so of us who had signed up in Washington on the 12th were dispatched to our duty station, the

Second Signal Service Battalion at Arlington Hall, Virginia, a former girls' school whose generous tract of suburban land had been acquired by the Army. And there, awaiting us, were some newly constructed single-story wooden barracks, one of which was to be ours to share with a few more enlisted men earmarked for the language school. Some distance away was a storage building containing piles of mattresses, blankets, pillows and sheets, and possibly footlockers and bedsteads. Into line we fell in our fatigues as ordered, and formed a kind of bucket brigade, picking up the furniture of our collective bedroom, carrying it down to the barracks, dropping it off to redistribution teams, then circling back for the next load. We shared this work with other teams of enlisted specialists moving in, and I am pretty sure I made myself a pain in the butt, along with Max Warschauer by gung-ho shouts to each other as we struggled along like "On the ball, boy!" or "Shape up there, soldier."

The two of us were particularly naïve and enjoyed the idea of playing soldier. What we did not realize was that for many of the others in the antlike columns it was a dismal day. These were men who had already been part of the signal intelligence service, SIS, for as much as a year (in some cases as civilians up until they were drafted) when it was still headquartered in the Munitions Building on Constitution Avenue. With no living quarters prepared for them, they had simply been given allowances and permitted to find lodgings off post. There they were blissfully free of the disciplined routines of a military installation. But their liberty was temporary. When the expanded program clearly overflowed the old space, Arlington Hall, a private girls' school across the Potomac, was taken over by the military, construction of new office buildings and living quarters for the enlisted men began and it was almost completed in that September of 1942, whereupon the enlisted personnel were commanded to move back to the post. There were no officers' quarters at "the Hall," and I assume they were put up in nearby larger installations in Virginia or Maryland. In any case,

happy as I was personally to be sharing the living conditions of all us millions of temporary warriors, I doubt that I endeared myself to the men forced into relocation that afternoon. I had a lot to learn.

And now began a period of my service lasting just about a year--from the last week of September 1942 to mid-August of 1943 that I remember rather fondly, when life moved on two tracks. There was the important avenue that led through intensive training to become a translator of Japanese wireless decodes and on into the actual operational work itself. And then there was the bumpy and often comical road to becoming "soldiers," down which the army insisted on herding each and every one of us, however un-martial our actual tasks. That is the common experience which linked all of us millions, wherever and however we served together. That's the passage from one life to another--and, given how young we generally were, for many of us the pathway to adulthood--that we like to recall at our increasingly rare reunions. That's what I'm describing here for the benefit of you who read this. Intensely personal for each of us, and yet enormously binding and equalizing as a collective journey. I always recall Stephen Crane's description in *The Red Badge of Courage* of the Union Army as a "vast blue demonstration" that absorbed Private Henry Fleming into its ranks. So let me deal first, though it is the less important part of the story, of my melting into the "vast olive-drab demonstration" of 1941-45. Actually it was olive drab wool in the winter and suntan cotton in summertime, the only two seasons officially recognized by regulations.

I can't remember the layout of the post itself. I've seen a recent picture of it and was actually there once more in 1988. It's still an active installation, and when I was working at the Library of Congress on my book about Robert LaFollette, an army pal from those days who had continued after the war to work as a civilian in the National Security Agency took me back to the Hall to hear a lecture. I didn't recognize anything except the main

building which had been the central point of the girls' school. It was two or three stories high, of brick with a stone neo-classical pillared façade. In 1942 it housed the administrative offices and possibly the communications and analysis center. I never worked in it, though our language classroom possibly met there--it's all a little blurred to me now. Behind it was a large, plain "temporary" building to which we went when we finished our training and became operational. Inside the gates there was, at some slight distance from the Operations area, a cluster of new wooden buildings--barracks, a latrine with sinks, water closets and showers, there was a mess hall and a recreation building where we amused ourselves with games (especially ping-pong,) reading, jukebox listening and other such distractions according to our tastes. The "rec hall" may also have shared space with the headquarters office for our growing battalion, and may also have been the place where we saw the training films that taught us how to salute properly and avoid venereal disease, and where we scanned the bulletin boards for official postings that advised us of our responsibilities and shortcomings. Our minuscule Post Exchange may or may not have had its own building Somewhere within the perimeter of the post was the large open field on which we did our drilling. Everything about these places suggested how hasty the conversion from a "ladies' seminary" had been, and I was either told or learned by experience that some of the bathrooms in the main building still had pretty curtains on the windows and lacked male urinals. '

Although Arlington Hall housed some of the biggest secrets of the entire war its location was hardly isolated. Right across the road from the main gate on Glebe Road was a neighborhood called Buckingham that hosted some suburban business establishments. There was a small restaurant that served beer and wine, a drug store and a laundry-cleaners to which I remember taking clothes, which puzzles me at this late date because I am not certain of the on-post laundry arrangements. I think that we were issued clean

bedding at regular intervals, and were on our own about laundering uniforms but such details are long faded beyond recognition. So many of the Hall's personnel frequented these locations that an eavesdropping spy could have learned plenty by hanging out in any gathering place of the mini-town, although we were under the most excruciatingly strict regulations about never, ever, discussing our work anywhere outside our restricted areas.

It was learning to fit the Army's definition of a soldier that provided the most novel experiences. Barracks 311, where I lived, was long enough to accommodate two rows of single beds placed with heads against the windows and feet facing a center aisle--perhaps fifteen or twenty on each side. Later the single beds were replaced by double deckers. There was nothing between the floor and the ground underneath and the floorboards were ungodly cold on Winter mornings. Heating was supplied by three or four potbellied stoves spaced down the center aisle, fed by coal kept in a bin outside. The coals were banked at night and the draft opened in the morning at 5:30 A.M. reveille and we huddled in clusters around them soaking up a little warmth before we lined up outdoors to proceed to the exercise and drill area. Colorful griping filled the air, each of us sounding off in his individual way. I recall Ernie Dawn, already a graduate student, and after the war a professor of classics, deliberately falling into a hillbilly drawl and complaining to no one in particular "Shit, Ah ain't gittin' enough sleep!" Good-natured Norman Wallach's "Boy, oh, boy it's **freezing** in here, haw, haw." Hugh Staples bypassing the weather issue in order to attack a more fundamental complaint and breaking us up with shouts of "I need ass!!" And Harold Stern's Bronx intonation (though at work he was a superb linguist) providing comic substance to his curious combination of profanity and baby talk as in; "Oooh, today's a fuckin' coldie," all his adjectives being turned into diminutive nouns.

Among our first lessons was Army housekeeping. Adjacent to the head of each bed was a metal cabinet for hanging uniforms and placing shoes, both of which had to be in a precise order. At the bed's other end was a foot-locker, a wooden chest with a top tray in which other items of clothing and gear were kept, likewise in a prescribed fashion. There was a small shelf in the cabinet for personal items if neatly arranged. We had to make up our beds in the morning, stretching the sheets and one of our olive drab blankets (one for the bed, one neatly folded at the foot) tightly enough in theory so that the inspecting officer could bounce a quarter off it, though I never actually saw that done. For most of us bed making itself was a new skill, but there was more to learn as well. Every Friday night prior to a weekly inspection the floor had to be scrubbed and mopped, the windows washed, every available surface dusted. These homely and familiar details may seem boring but they fit into that pattern of a tightly disciplined around-the-clock life that was a revelation to almost all of us. On Friday nights we all took part in a so-called "barracks party" when we scrubbed, mopped, dusted and washed everything in sight except each other, and rose on Saturday to wait nervously for the weekly inspecting officer and his accompanying sergeant to show up at the door. When he did, the man nearest to it shouted TEN-SHUN! And we'd all hit a rigid pose and held it as he made his way down the aisle, looking critically right and left for a smudge, a garment out of line, a missed dust-bunny. Our freedom for the next forty-eight hours hung on his approval because a "gig" for some failure might mean the cancellation of a week-end pass. It concentrated the mind wonderfully. Sometimes there was only a brief reprimand and a "fix that up now" before Authority passed on to the next potential sinner. Much depended on who was inspecting. In between these Saturday climaxes, however, were normal evenings of shining shoes and polishing brass buttons and insignia with something one bought at the PX called a "Bliz" cloth, some kind of chemically impregnated piece of flannel which I've never seen anywhere else though it was a commercial product.

Although we wore fatigue uniforms much of the time so that bright buttons were not a constant issue, you could be stopped by an officer any time and anywhere and gigged for an improperly shined one--or for a dirty shoe, or for any violation of the uniform code, meaning almost anything--an overseas cap tilted at the wrong angle, a crossed-signal-flag insignia too close to the edge of the lapel, an opened shirt button that had unaccountably been skipped over in dressing--chickenshit in all its smelly fullness. It gave petty martinets a chance to harass those lesser in rank, and it even became an adjective to describe an officer or noncom especially strict in these matters, as in "he's a chickenshit s.o.b." It didn't crush our spirits or reduce us to permanent anxiety but it was a nuisance. It was, however, part of the process of melting us into uniformity and I suspect that it's well remembered by all veterans, at least those of my vintage. At times it verged towards the dehumanizing, in small ways such as the fact that the "thrones" in the latrines were not separated by partitions, so that you defecated in company (one of our shy barracks-mates managed for a while at least to time his visits to the latrine so that they fell in late night or very early morning hours) or that in the monthly pre-payday exams for venereal disease there was no privacy as you filed past the medical orderly and obediently squeezed your penis at the base and ran your fingers down to the head to see if there was any gonorrheal discharge. But these were, for most of us, small embarrassments the first time and hardly noticeable routine thereafter.

It was on the exercise field, however, that we literally took the first steps towards being welded into a unit by hours of practice at "close order drill," to wit marching and maneuvering in formations after the fashion of eighteenth and nineteenth century armies getting into battlefield firing positions, even though such tactics had become totally obsolete by the start of the twentieth.

Useless as it was for the most part, I enjoyed the drilling, because it was rhythmic and, when done properly, challenging. To be in a marching column that turned as one man to the right, left, or rear at the proper command was something much like line dancing, and one of the exercises I especially liked was turning a column of threes into a single column broken into three slightly separated portions and then reuniting them by properly timed successive commands of “to the rear, march!” issued to each squad. I’m not sure my opinion was widely shared; we did our drilling first thing in the morning, preceded by calisthenics in the chilly dawns of Autumn and Winter 1942-43 which didn’t precisely give it a head start in claiming anyone’s affection, but I’ve always had the luck to be a “morning person.” Since we carried no weapons, we did not have to master the manual of arms, which looks even prettier when precisely done. On the whole, the Second Signal Service Battalion’s drills were probably not things of beauty despite the efforts of the two officers whom I recall as our drill instructors. One of them, Lieutenant (later Captain) Peter Bove, was especially frustrated. He was an infantry officer, and obviously wanted a more warlike assignment that would look better on his record, but he did not have the personality of a martinet and he regarded our efforts more in sorrow than in anger. The odds were against him. Most of the higher officers on the post were involved in the running of the cryptographic and cryptanalytic operations, and sensibly looked on the mandatory military games as a distraction that took uniformed personnel away from their basic jobs. If, in the occasional formal reviews conducted on the parade ground we looked ragged as we passed in review before them, it was not important to them, though I suppose there were exceptions. In any case I don’t recall group punishments arising out of our drills—not even when, on one memorable day when we had all lined up and been reported as present or accounted for, the moment arrived for the music to begin. There was no band; we got marches piped through a PA system from records. On this particular morning what emerged

from the speakers was not Sousa but Strauss—the Emperor Waltz. Nobody, including the brass, could keep from laughing. Of course we all stood still for the minute or so it took until the waltz stopped, and after a moment, we got the proper tune for the “Forward, March!” command. It was clearly a prank, and I never did learn whether the perpetrator was caught.

In the working offices that had officers, enlisted men and civilians toiling side by side—with the enlisted men often the most versed in what they were doing---the formalities of rank weren't strictly observed. Outside, perfunctory salutes to officers you worked with were usually acceptable; they were citizen-soldiers, too, who knew that nobody was going to die if we didn't follow unexplained orders fully and immediately. The most notable officer-rebel, however was our post surgeon, Dr. Hyman Castleman, a middle-aged medical “conscript.” I believe that medical associations cooperated with the government in compelling doctors who didn't voluntarily enter the services to do so. The story was that he was a gynecologist—who knew?--but whatever his specialty, his job was boring---mainly dealing with minor ailments, giving us “short arm” (i.e., VD) inspections, and referring any interesting or serious cases to the Fort Myer post hospital. He was occasionally to be seen walking about with his overcoat unbuttoned and a cigarette dangling from his lips. When we threw him our prescribed salutes, he would wave his hand somewhere in the general vicinity of his visor in a gesture that could have been a return salute or more likely a “cut the nonsense” wave-off, because it was sometimes accompanied with a comment of “Boys, boys!” How he fared with his own superior officers I don't know. Maybe that was what got him assigned to such a lowly billet^L

There were lots of training films to watch in the “soldiering” part of our school days. We learned military customs, ceremonies,

and ranks, how to salute, and other such niceties. I enjoyed some of it—especially “Retreat” and “To the Colors.” We weren’t pulled out of our classrooms to stand formation at the lowering of the flag, but if we happened to be outdoors we stopped, faced in the flag's direction and saluted while the national anthem was played. A nice little taste of tradition.

I only dimly remember two other pieces of instruction that came closer to what actual battlefield troops might need to know. One was a class in identifying enemy aircraft, which I only hold in mind now because the key was recognition by the shape and number of the plane’s wings, engine(s,) fuselage and tail, WEFT—for which our GI mnemonic was Wrong Every Fuckin’ Time. The other martial moment was more frightening. It was a lesson in how to respond quickly to a poison gas attack, how to identify the agent by smell (one=Lewisite, I believe--smelled like geraniums, and since all flowers smell alike to me I’d have been terrified crossing any meadow) and how to have confidence in your gas mask. This last involved going in small groups, wearing the masks, into a hut where they closed the door behind you and pumped in some gas---whether truly lethal or not I never knew, but it was assumed to be. You were supposed to take the mask off while holding your breath, then replace it, clear it of accumulated gas by blocking the regular exhaust vent and blowing so that the gas was forced out of the mask where it joined your skin—it made a kind of rubbery noise like a Bronx cheer—and then breathing through it normally in the midst of the deadly air. I was glad to do it only once.

Our physical training didn’t include running an obstacle course only because one wasn’t built on the post until the summer of 1943 just before I shipped out. I did run it once, could not manage the right timing to swing across a pool of water while clinging to a rope suspended overhead, and got dunked three times

before a supervising noncom took pity and waved me on to the next obstacle. The only risk there was of sprains, bruises and broken bones from falls, and I later heard that they were plentiful and that the obstacle course was resented by the operational brass because so many key personnel, out of shape from long hours of sedentary work despite the calisthenics, were spending time in the hospital. An unverified rumor that reached me overseas was that the course had even been abandoned at the insistence of the Arlington Hall high command.

The capstone of our make-believe soldiering experience was an overnight bivouac at Occoquan, Virginia, that came some time in the early Autumn or Spring. I think so because I recall the weather as tolerable. It was a week-end affair. We were temporarily issued packs for the exercise and taught how prepare them by wrapping a blanket and a shelter half (half a pup tent) into a neat, tight roll and strapping that into a kind of harness with flaps, many pockets, and shoulder straps. Possibly we carried gas masks as well. We wore web belts with canteen and first aid pack attached, but unlike genuine infantrymen, no ammunition pouches and entrenching tools. We also had on canvas leggings and full helmets. The helmet consisted of two pieces, a plastic liner over which the steel shell, the business part, went. Troops in the field turned it upside down to use as an all-purpose container when not actually under fire. Everyone got one with his first issue of uniforms and equipment, but as they were ungodly heavy when complete, the metal carapace was only required to be worn by the likes of us on rare occasions. The usual uniform for drill was leggings, liners and fatigues. At work, in class or on leave we wore dress uniforms with fore-and-aft caps. Accoutered in our bivouac get-up we set out and marched along Virginia highways in the appropriate route march pattern, no fixed number of steps-per-minute, at the side of the road, separated by several yards each to avoid making a larger target and to clear the road for wheeled traffic. Captain Bove was in his glory. Some of us were enjoying

it, too. It was fun, when we neared a crossroad, to be designated as a crossing guard, and trot out in your warlike gear to the middle of the intersection, raising an imperious hand to stop approaching vehicles and let us heroic defenders of the nation pass. Or at the requisite ten-minute breaks every hour, to fall out, swig from a canteen, light a cigarette (not me; I was then a nonsmoker) and enjoy the curious looks from passing cars. I don't know how far away from the post the bivouac area was located—it couldn't have been much of a distance because we only marched for some four to six hours at a pace that couldn't have exceeded three miles an hour. But we finally got there and did all the by-the-book tasks for setting up a nineteenth-century encampment--pacing out a company street, lining up our pup tents on it, eating field-kitchen chow from our mess kits, and using a freshly dug slit trench as a common latrine.

After dark, Captain Bove ordered us to do a field exercise. Half of us were sent to the top of a hill to set up a perimeter, and the other half was to sneak up on them and take them by surprise, signified by getting behind them and tagging them. I was one of the infiltrators, and dutifully made my way in the darkness up a fairly gentle track, trying not to trip, make a noise, or sneeze and feeling like a high school cast member of The Last of the Mohicans. Where Bove was stationed to observe all this I didn't know, but somehow I got to the rendezvous point inside the perimeter without being encountered, probably because the sentinel had gone to the latrine or wandered off somewhere—none of us, so far as I know, were taking this very seriously. From time to time there was a yell of "Halt" followed by laughter, meaning that a "defender" and an "attacker" had seen each other and made a snap decision as to who would be the fall guy—the invader who was seen and captured or the guard who was eluded. When enough time had elapsed, Captain Bove appeared, counted those of us inside the circle, and awarded us the "victory." Then we all marched back downhill, and slept in our pup tents which I gather

were never used by frontline troops dug into foxholes because they made such visible targets. All the same, I found that I enjoyed open-air sleeping under canvas—my first such experience—and it stood me in good stead when, later on in life, I became a vacation-time camper.

Next morning we packed up and fell into formation to leave. The ranking officer was not Captain Bove, but Colonel Lewis, from the operations side. Captain Bove now turned a hopeful face towards the Colonel and, proud as a trainer showing off his seals, said: “Sir, would you like to critique the exercise?” Lewis gave him a look of sheer disbelief, then composed his face a bit and simply said: “No, let’s get going!” Rarely have I seen anyone so crestfallen as Bove who, as I have said, was not mean and harsh, simply futile and out of his element. I almost felt sorry for him.

As for the rest of my “warrior” life, my experiences were pretty much those of the other millions of us in the service when in training camp. The evening meal was over by 6 or so, lights in the barracks were turned off at 10 sharp. In the four hours of leisure, I occasionally went and listened to the juke box, or I would go to the day room and find a quiet spot to write letters, and sometimes I would simply stick around the barracks to read, shine shoes and polish brass, and of course study. Our post was too small to have a movie theater as I remember it, but there may have been transportation to Fort Myer where one or more was available. I don’t recall seeing a single film during that first Fall and Winter. We were usually free to go off post provided we were back by curfew time, and occasionally I went into the nearby town just across the road from the camp--Arlington? Buckingham? for snacks. We could also, within the same time limits, catch buses to Washington, and I occasionally joined buddies on excursions to hear concerts by the National Symphony Orchestra (admission free to us,) or pass time at a big USO Center.—Once I remember going

to the campus of Catholic University to see a dramatic presentation, and once taking a long trip to get to Walter Reed hospital where a grade-school friend now in the army was recovering from sickness or surgery. I also may have done some sightseeing or dining out on weekends when we were on leave and I didn't go home to New York. I did that I did about once a month, and my recollection of the trip on both ends—going up Saturday afternoon and returning Sunday evening—is of Union Station in Washington and Pennsylvania Station in New York being jammed wall to wall with men in uniform, and a mad scramble to get seats the moment the gates to a departure track were open. (If you were unlucky, you might have to stand for the whole three hours and forty to fifty minutes that it took.) The Sunday evening departures were rather poignant, because the mob at the station would include wives and girl friends and sometimes little children saying goodbye to their menfolk for indefinite periods, and their pathetic wailing was hugely magnified by the acoustics of the waiting rooms, so that while waiting for your train to be called you stood shoulder to shoulder amid a giant Greek chorus of woe.

I have mentioned that I wasn't drinking yet, but some time in the Spring of 1943 my innocence of the Demon Rum ended painfully. I went into Arlington with a buddy, determined to end my voluntary abstinence program. The night was warm, we bought a half gallon jug of cheap sweet wine (Muscatel) to share, and like most beginners, I drank enough to get truly blotto. My pals got me past the guards at the gate all right, and I remember little else except for a lot of puking and the expected hangover next day. Happily, it did not make me a teetotaler for life, though I didn't immediately commence extensive social drinking and at that point I still thought of beer as unpleasant tasting.

Though I lost my alcoholic virginity in the army, so to speak, I did not, despite my primal urges, impair my status as a non-initiate into sex, and that is the final word on the subject in this memoir. It was not for lack of trying. I got close from time to time but truthfully just didn't know where to begin or whether I was reading the signals correctly, having only the vaguest idea, gathered mostly from romantic poetry and Hollywood films, of why and how girls decided to say "yes," much less any notion of whether they enjoyed the process or not. I made the mistake of letting that particular cat out of the bag in the barracks one Saturday night when returning from a date—for dates I did have—when asked how I made out. Not having lived in the round-the-clock company of young males either in summer camps or dormitories I didn't know that the answer should be an outright lie, or a knowing smile and a wisecrack. Instead, I blurted out that indeed I had not scored, neither on that night nor on any previous one in my life. Needless to say, I had a hard time living that down. But yes, we met girls at the USO, and sometimes we were invited to dinner in the homes of local residents and were introduced to their daughters, and there were some movies attended together and a certain amount of smooching, greatly enjoyable even if limited in scope and leaving me in a state of painful turgidity. None of these encounters, in my case, led to any kind of attachment.

But before I leave the general topic of army life I have to add a footnote that my first months of army life spent in Arlington Hall were memorable for the abundance of the food. The rumor we heard was that while the Second Signal Service Battalion had not yet reached full strength, it was drawing rations as if it had. The "chow" was built around meat, including not only chicken and beef but enormous quantities of pork and ham. How really observant Jews dealt with this and the associated problems of

separating dishes and cutlery used for milk and meat I don't know ---rabbinical dispensation? I don't recall any expressions of concern by my fellow Jewish GIs ("Government Issue," the generic term for us in World War II just, as "doughboys" had been in our fathers' 1917-18 war.) There were far fewer young orthodox Jews back then than there are nowadays. We got vegetables, too, but they were hardly an inspiration to convert to vegetarianism-almost unknown in the general population back then. Usually they were overcooked or canned, bland, and slapped onto the plate mingled with uninspired mashed potatoes.

The only lunch and supper menus that I remember which did not feature some kind of cooked flesh were Sunday suppers, when the fare was almost always cold cuts. Many of our breakfasts featured creamed chipped beef on toast, known to all of us as SOS—shit on a shingle. Overall, there was certainly no evidence of the rationing that civilians had to follow. My major retained image is of general abundance- not only of well filled plates, but pitchers brimming with coffee and evaporated milk, mini-mountains of sliced white bread, full crocks and jars of peanut butter (it tickled me to hear the Southern boys call it "goober jam.") butter and preserves, and the constant passing of these shared items up and down the tables amid the roar of hundreds of men shouting at each other. It probably was familiar to those who had been in summer camps but that number didn't include me. Inasmuch as we were generally not doing as much physical work as those in basic training in other branches, we must have gained weight--I don't recall. Certainly the stories of kids whose families had starved during the Depression blossoming out when finally eating three squares a day must have been true. I was one of the lucky ones who didn't experience that. Our little household of mother, stepfather and myself always had decent amounts of food on the table. Nonetheless, the cornucopia of assorted calories provided by the mess hall in those first months continued to surprise and please me.

One last meal memory that lingers, and was possibly special to the Second Sigs of Autumn 1942, was Sunday breakfast, when no formations were stood and the pace was a little slower. (Those of us who were in the working offices, of course, were on 7-day-a-week schedules if we didn't get passes. I don't ever remember just hanging around the post idly on a weekend, but my recall is hazy on the point.) There were pancakes, biscuits, potatoes, grits, deluges of syrup, and also bacon, ham, sausage and eggs. The eggs were scrambled, but in the early days of the post when Sunday morning attendance at the mess hall was light it was sometimes possible to get them fried on request. Not all of these items were available to heap on our serving trays every Sunday but carry in mind a clear memory of our mess sergeant, Ezra Wile,(Weil?) sometimes coming out of the kitchen to yell: "I got seconds on eggs!" A story making the rounds was that he had actually been a cook in a first class hotel before the army collared him. Whether true or not he set a deceptive standard for Army grub never equaled in the rest of my experience.

For the first few months of my assignment at Arlington Hall, I and most of my fellow residents of Barracks 311 were back in school, completing our training in the special kind of Japanese we would be working with. I can't remember (how frequently that refrain sounds here!) how many hours a day were occupied by classes as opposed to the drilling and calisthenics and training films and inspections and work details that pounded us into something bearing a reasonable resemblance to soldiers. And I can't even recall whether we were marched to class or simply proceeded on our own to and from meals and formations, which was certainly the case once we actually were assigned to the Operations Building. There was nothing like a formal "graduation," nor grades, nor curricular calendars—nothing like Officer Candidate School, where an entire designated "class" enters on and ends its training on precise dates. The couple of

dozen of us who arrived on the post in September and filled just one of the newly completed barracks were the entire complement of Japanese language students at the time. By the time a second batch arrived and its members were assigned to another barracks, I think all of us pioneers were finished with school and at work. I certainly was not taught in any company but that of my first barracks mates.

What I do remember clearly, however, is that we had the best of all possible instructors, none other than Edwin O Reischauer, in peacetime a Harvard professor who had, with Serge Eliséf prepared the paperbound textbook we used. I still recall its gray cover with the information that it was prepared of, for, or by the Harvard-Yenching Institute. And of course, Reischauer went on to become the American ambassador to Japan some years after the war. He was flanked by two other teachers, whom we dutifully learned to refer to as Buchanan-san and Faust-san. (“Mister”) All three seemed to me to be middle-aged, at least through twenty-year-old eyes, and I do believe that Buchanan -san was a World War I veteran. They were all friendly and businesslike, and, as civilians, were not bound by military protocol, which made for easygoing communication. (Reischauer, who directed the entire program and very possibly other intelligence activities, eventually was commissioned as a major, the reason being, I gather, that it put him in a better position to deal with the brass in handling issues of resources and personnel. But that was after I was overseas.)

I remember just three aspects of the formal instruction. Most of it, understandably, consisted of translating sentences in Romaji which were either paraphrases of actual messages that had been sent over from the Operations offices after their contents had been forwarded to the proper intelligence authorities, or perhaps new ones especially created by our little faculty. After sixty-six years, odd phrases still filter into my consciousness. RAJIO HOSO NI YOREBA. (“according to a radio broadcast”,) or BO TAISHI

which I remember mistranslating as "Ambassador Bo" rather than correctly as "the late (recently died) ambassador." Such homework as we got consisted of translating "messages" like these outside of class and then having our efforts read, discussed and criticized in class time. I don't know that there were special study facilities set aside for us in the afternoons and evenings, or whether we were allowed to take materials back to the barracks with us, which I rather doubt, given the strict security rules under which we all labored. In any case I, who had never lived in any group setting, learned how to concentrate on whatever I was reading or writing even while surrounded by thirty or forty chattering buddies, and the lesson has been valuable to me ever since. We all took our assignments pretty seriously, though as always with students, some of us were more compulsive than others. I recall one mate during a temporary power outage in the barracks pulling a flashlight out of his pocket and continuing to plug away.

There were two other aspects of the training that were more interesting, if less immediately useful, than the drill in what I suppose I could call "wireless military Japanese." Our curriculum included some practice in spoken Japanese, though for us that was clearly not the focus of effort. Still, our three professors would converse among themselves for a bit, then question us—always in Japanese—about what we had heard and what we thought of it, with the answers to be supplied, of course, in our stumbling attempts to speak the tongue. Some of us were good at this—especially those who planned to dive deeper into the waters of Japanese life and culture—of which more a bit later—and others, myself included, had rough times with it. I am one of those people who have a much easier time reading than listening to a foreign language. My ears don't pick up unfamiliar sounds and separate them into intelligible phrases easily, and I don't catch inflections and tones of voice that contextualize what I'm hearing. It was true even when I was young, and at my current age,

increased hearing loss compounds the problem. Perhaps I'm too focused on what I myself am going to say to be listening with real concentration—a character trait, not a physical problem. So I stumbled and bumbled whenever the questioner turned to me and emitted a rapid squirt of sounds ending in “ka”, the language’s verbal question mark. As a fellow bumbler put it, it all sounded like: “So-and—so san, brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr ka?” But the hour or so of conversational drill was pleasant all the same. Nothing depended on your performance, and no one was scolded for failings—I suspect that Reischauer simply thought that our specialized education would be incomplete without this background.

That consideration probably lay behind another enjoyable part of the schoolwork, occasional trips from the post to some installation where we were exposed to Japanese films. They were not subtitled, so we were left to sink or swim in following the action, and I usually sank. But they gave us the first picture of what Japan looked like to the Japanese themselves that any of us had ever seen—they didn't all look as if they'd stepped out of a performance of The Mikado. Some wore western clothes and—surprise!-- had families and jobs and girlfriends and boyfriends and recreations, to say nothing of personal emotions, frustrations, and ambitions. Rather recently I was mentioning one “patriotic” movie we'd seen about the Sino-Japanese war that began in 1937, to my friend and barracks-mate Harold Stern now Rabbi Emeritus of a congregation in Skokie. Naturally the movie made the Japanese soldiers the good guys, and followed the career of one reservist who was killed in action, with cuts in and out to show his loving wife and kids waiting for news of him. Stern brightened up at once. Chocoretto to Heitai, he shouted—“Chocolate and Soldiers. Terrific movie.”

When we saw it originally, the movie had affected him deeply, and in fact it had reached me as well. I was full of pity for

the hero's widow and orphan. "How can you make war on a people like that?" I remember Harold's asking as we were driven back to the Hall. Someone came up with the answer which we all knew to be true—"We're not making war on them all we're making war against their !@#\$\$%^&& armed forces!" In view of the later firebombing raids and of course the two atomic bombs, that remark wasn't true either. As the war wound on, the civilian populations of warring nations became targets and remain so to this day so many years later. This bitter truth evokes quibbling about whether the intent of saturation bombing is to terrify and break the morale of the other side's home front, or whether the unlucky victims lived too close to military targets and were simply "collateral damage," the repulsive dehumanizing phrase that presumably erases all barriers between destroying people and property, and silences remorse and responsibility. But the films we saw, however palpably they were flag-waving enemy propaganda had the effect on some of us, of humanizing "the Japs" and were the first step, for me, in a process of clearing my own mind of the stereotypes on which wars depend.

I'm neither expecting nor demanding that frontline soldiers should wax sentimental over the differently uniformed men, sometimes only yards away, whom they must kill to avoid being killed themselves. War makes savages of those most closely engaged in the slaughtering. Even back then, I could afford a detachment that they could not. And in the end, my work was all about enabling "us" to kill more of "them." No credits can be posted to my moral bank account. We were all parts of the great killing machines that the warring powers deployed against each other.

And yet after these past sixty-odd years of witnessing (via the media) more killing and more flag-waving and hearing more

sonorous platitudes about lofty principles to be defended, I can't feel anything but that the pacifists have it right and until the millennium when we are all converted to their point of view, wars, even "necessary" (maybe?) and "just" (says who?), will continue and will be nothing more than glorified butchery. But that, I emphasize, is hindsight. Though I shared Harold's feelings, I knew—as did he—that nice Japanese daddies and brothers and husbands at home did appalling things once they were mobilized, not only on a battleground but in occupied civilian areas. Later on, I had a similar shakeup of my thoughts in India when the three or four of us who were translators in New Delhi were invited to visit the interrogation of a Japanese prisoner captured in the fighting around Kohima and Imphal, during a failed 1944 attempt by the Japanese to invade India from Burma and spark an anti-British uprising. What I saw instead of a savage warrior was a meek little guy with a shaven head, in a British POW outfit that looked like a gray sweat suit, who appeared to be about as harmless as a street sweeper. I confided this impression to my friend, Frank Tenny, who was also there. "He would have looked different when his division had just captured Singapore," said Frank unsentimentally.

As noted earlier, I can't remember the exact transition from going to class every day to actually starting to work in the Operations Building. I think it was near the start of 1943. Meanwhile, I had gotten to know a lot more about my comrades-in-arms (so to speak!) and the special nature of the Second Signal Service Battalion. As I noted earlier, cryptanalysis (and cryptography, that is the creation of the codes that the U.S. used,) required mathematical and linguistic aptitudes of a high order, and as a result the level of formal education (and high IQs) was, I presume, above the average for a unit of our size. That made itself evident in a number of ways. It was in an ordinary mess hall conversation one day that I first heard of the Skeats edition of

Chaucer's works, apparently the gold standard then and possibly still. The name was new to me because Chaucer had not made it onto the list of western classics that were required for the mandatory freshman Humanities course at Columbia (which, incidentally, I loved and the memory of which I still cherish.) Even more recondite was the case of the purloined Pindar. That one involved another barracks-mate and Japanese translator Curtis Bennett.

Bennett was one of the Harvard graduates who made up a goodly share of the population of our barracks. He seemed to me at the time almost a stock caricature of a "Harvard man" with big reading glasses, a somewhat high pitched voice and what seemed to me, in 1942, to be affected mannerisms. Once I recall a conversation against the background of a radio playing, when a familiar classical number came on. He stopped in mid-sentence, held up a hand to silence us all, made a noise that sounded something like "Hark!" and stood frozen, mouth slightly ajar and eyes with a far-off look, letting us all know of his infatuation with the Muses. He could read Greek, and apparently among the few books that we could keep in our limited space, carried a copy of the odes of Pindar, a poet of the 5th century B.C.E. --something I didn't know then. One Sunday night he came home from a weekend pass and found that his copy was missing, and went up and down the center aisle demanding to know who had taken it. I don't know if he ever recovered it and I can't imagine its presumed theft as anything but a practical joke, but the story says something about the tone of our off-hours lives, and also became memorable when it appeared in the New Yorker with location unspecified and no names --just, "Friend of ours reports" . . .) in the breezy style that characterized the magazine's "Talk of the Town ."

Security rules forbade any kind of conversation about ANYTHING that happened on the post that might contain a hint of what its personnel were up to. so giving out the tale was technically a security breach that could have gotten the source into deep trouble. Now it can be told--the source was Guy Henle, who became my best friend in the service, and he had passed it on, with appropriate cautions, to a New Yorker staff writer who had been a fellow student at Swarthmore.

In fairness I add that my judgment of Bennett, like all those I made at the time, was not final. Experience matured all of us, and I hate to think of what some of my later pals thought of me initially.

Our barracks had a highly academic tone--more degrees than a thermometer, as my wife likes to say. Almost all of us were recent BA graduates, but there were "old guys"--in their late twenties or early thirties!--who had, or were close to having, doctorates and were already teaching. I have a list of veterans from Barracks 311 (with some additional civilian names thrown in) compiled sometime between 1959 and 1963 when I was on the faculty at the University of Chicago, with addresses where known. Of 36 names that I can recall and whose owners I can still see in my mind's eye 10 provide departmental addresses at universities. Two at that time had returned to the mother ship, Harvard, where Ben Schwartz had a long and distinguished career as an historian of China, and Howard Hibbett, taught Japanese literature and published several translations. I recall him as already committed to that course, because he seemed forever to be copying and memorizing Japanese ideographs from his Rose-Innes dictionary long after the rest of us had settled comfortably into the much easier path of learning only new Romaji that we needed at work. David Nivison, of whom I remember little except his angular face

that seemed to be of plane surfaces joined together, was a professor of Chinese philosophy and literature at Stanford. The others were in departments of English . Drama, Germanic Languages, Music, Ancient History and United States History on the campuses of Columbia, Earlham College, Northwestern, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California at Davis, Lehigh University, and the University of Chicago--the last, namely me.

There are gaps in this list, and I have not made mention of at least two of our slightly older mates who were already lawyers and a couple of others who came from professional backgrounds. It was something like residence in a think tank, with much cruder accommodations, close-order drill and occasional KP. True, we learned soon enough not to put on academic airs but sometimes they broke through. One Friday night during the barracks cleanup for the next day's inspection I witnessed a dispute between two buddies. The issue was the necessity and proper order of steps to clean the floor. "You don't understand the theory of mopping," said Burdett Gardner, and proceeded in the best classroom manner, while on his knees with a dust rag, to explain how the wet, soapy mop put dust and dirt particles in suspended solution so that the damp mop immediately following could pick them up.

In listing those from my first barracks who went into the professoriate I pass over several others who later had distinguished careers in other fields. In early 1943, for reasons I can't remember, I was moved to a different barracks partly filled with recent Yale graduates, and I stood in chow lines with a future President of the Council on Foreign Relations (Bayless Manning) and a future chief of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department under Presidents Johnson and Kennedy (Burke Marshall.) The "Yalies," we old-timers who had already been in

the army six months called them. Peace to the ashes of those who have already passed on. And yet another salute to the GI Bill of Rights that made it easy for us to go to graduate and professional schools right after the war's end.

It was unusual company in which to grow up in the army, more homogeneous in terms of background and formal education than other units of its size. Yet as enlisted men we did share with the guards and cooks and drivers and other enlisted men of the maintenance personnel membership in the Class of the Powerless, ordered hither and yon without explanation or choice in ways that were sometimes palpably absurd. It was a good experience to have at that time in life especially if you took your middle and-upper-class privileges for granted. And while a few of us, particularly the older enlistees, had already matured beyond the point of horseplay, we who were still barely out of our teens behaved in the manner of most kids free of the restraints of home for the first time. We got drunk off-duty, bellowed bawdy songs that didn't even have the virtue of originality, rough-housed, quarreled, mocked our superiors behind their backs, generally complained (or, as we put it, "pissed and moaned") about our lot, and meanwhile accumulated the friends and memories of a time that would be like none other we would ever experience again in our lives.

I'm still in touch with only three of the men of Barracks 311. As I mentioned earlier, Harold Stern lives in nearby Skokie, and his wife (his second, the first having died) and mine are lifelong friends so we occasionally meet as a foursome. I have intermittent contact, usually professional, with Henry Graff, now Professor Emeritus of U.S. History from Columbia, and have written a couple of articles for an encyclopedic volume on the Presidents which he edits. Frank Tenny, who joined Guy Henle and me as a

translator some months after we arrived in New Delhi, lives in a New Hampshire retirement home near Concord, with his wife, and I saw him twice last year. Guy died some ten or twelve years ago. For a while I was part of a small group of veterans who worked in signal intelligence in the China-Burma-India theater and called themselves "The Black Chamber of New Delhi." We met annually in different cities where we lived. Our numbers gradually dwindled until recently, when the reunions were suspended because it was increasingly difficult for more than a handful of us to travel very far. But other than Frank I had met none of them at Arlington Hall before going overseas and don't know to this day which ones worked on deciphering enemy codes and which on providing our side with them. I exchange e-mails with a few of them now and then.

Shortly after 1942 ended I was considered skilled enough to be sent over to the new Operations Building. It had the usual barren exterior look of hastily built "temporary" office structures that sprang up like weeds in wartime Washington. How shall I describe what I did there? I suppose it's best to start with as elementary a primer as I can on codes and ciphers. I assume that whoever reads this begins, as I did, as a total novice. In my case, so far as the code-breaking end of things goes, I never did get far beyond the rudiments. Anyone interested in the subject can find plenty of books on the history and methodology of communications intelligence from the wars of ancient Greece and Rome, right up to the current moment--at least so far as contemporary secrecy allows. Many will furnish details of how what was a small Signal Corps operation within the War Department around the time of World War I (called the "Black Chamber" in a now-it-can-be-told book by a former member) grew and grew by degrees until it became the all-encompassing worldwide vacuum cleaner sucking messages from the airwaves now known as the National Security Agency. Originally housed in an office in the Munitions Building on Constitution Avenue, it

overflowed to Arlington Hall during World War II , and that was only one of several way stops on the way to a huge facility housed at Fort Meade, Maryland today.

So that he (or she) who runs may read, here are the facts as I understood them. If I sound elementary it's because that's the level of my own comprehension and isn't meant to insult the reader's intelligence. Since ancient times, when letters could be stolen in transit, soldiers, merchants and diplomats have used codes and ciphers to keep information private. A code is simply a special language in which the "plain text" or "clear text" of a message has secret meanings known only to the sender and receiver who possess the codebook or other keys needed to make the real intent clear. A cipher, among several other meanings, is a letter, number or symbol that substitutes for another in a pre-determined pattern, also established by a key known to the sender and receiver. The terms tended to get used rather loosely and almost interchangeably. We talked "in house" of working on shipping or diplomatic codes, but often the encoded messages were also enciphered, sometimes more than once. That is, the text was converted to other letters or numbers, those were further disguised by adding still other numbers to them taken from lists of "additives" in a pre-set pattern -- also determined by keys that changed frequently and were incorporated into the headings of the messages-- and eventually a text emerged that seemed to be an apparently random series of letters. The completed message was copied and passed on to radio operators for transmission over the air. On the other end a receiving operator handed it to a code clerk who, after finding the appropriate keys in the heading reversed the entire process to arrive at the original text which he copied out to hand to the final recipient. Naturally the messages , especially those written from forward military headquarters, were on the terse side most of the time.

If it sounds absolutely fiendish, it was, and I could not comprehend by any stretch of the imagination how anyone could ever penetrate the mystery. The post did offer after-hours courses in cryptanalysis but a mere look at them frightened me off. ("The word "cryptanalysis," like "cryptography," "cryptology," "encrypt," "decrypt" and "cryptogram,"--all variations on the basic meaning, i.e., secret writing, were, according to what I have heard, the inventions of Colonel Albert Friedman. He was the genius who, with the assistance of Colonel Frank Rowlett, directed research at Arlington Hall. I had never realized until I checked recently that we were all in the presence of two of the fathers of 20th century U.S. cryptanalysis (though in fact I rarely saw Colonel Rowlett or Colonel Friedman, whose offices were far from those in which I and the other translators plugged away). It seems that early in the century cryptographers in some countries had figured out a way to encrypt messages by machines. What they did essentially was to connect a typewriter keyboard to a series of pre-set electric switches or a row of "rotors" that somehow mimicked a typewriter keyboard but printed a different letter after each keystroke, regardless of the letter on the depressed key. The sender set the machine up according to the day's "key," and typed, for example, the plain text word "ships" The "s" might come out as a "j," the "h" as a "q," the "i" as an "n," the "p" as an "r" and the second "s" as a different letter from "j," say "l." Thus JQNRL. And in addition, if the sender typed "ships" again later in the message it might come out as five altogether different letters. I think it all depended on the number of times a particular key had been struck.. In any case, the sending code clerk banged out his JQNRL, that's how it went out over the air, the receiving clerk set his machine according to the daily key, banged out his own JQNRL, and voila! Out came "ships", provided of course he had carefully and exactly duplicated the seeming gibberish he was copying.

The machine-assisted system, of course made it possible to send much longer messages more quickly, and was therefore reserved for communications only between the highest echelons of command.

By the nineteen-thirties, I gather, the Germans had invented such a machine to which they gave the name Enigma. But during British and Polish refugee mathematicians working at Bletchley Park--their equivalent of Arlington Hall-- had figured out how it worked and been able to duplicate it. (So much for jokes about "dumb Polacks.") The Japanese had likewise built a cipher machine which carried the name of "Purple," though whether that was their label originally or what we called it remains a mystery to me. In any case, Colonel Friedman and his associates had been able to duplicate the Purple machine . Once they could use it to break messages containing the periodic instructions for setting the switches, the door was open for reading the most sensitive communications of Japan's leaders.

We Americans developed a coding machine of our own (attributed to Colonel Rowlett, I believe) which carried the name SIGABA and was, like its Axis counterparts, the carrier of very high-level interchanges. I never saw one (or knew of their existence) in all my time in the service until I was stationed in Kunming China in 1945. Because Kunming was the headquarters of an entire "theater of war," or at least part of it--the Rear Echelon--it merited its own SIGABA, and for a brief period towards the very end of the war, I apparently possessed both the necessary security clearance and the typing skills to be its operator temporarily. I don't recall whether it was the only one in the entire HQ, or simply one of several , which had been assigned to our Signal Office. At any rate, it did not involve a lot of time and wasn't a burden except when a high priority message arrived in the middle of the night. Awakened by a messenger I would throw on assorted parts of a uniform, trot to the secure location of the

SIGABA in the Message Center , alongside whoever had summoned me, and, blinking away the sleep, set the rotors according to the day's schedule. Then I would type the five letter groups on the incoming message and marvel as, out of some orifice, a long strip of yellow tape gummed on one side unrolled itself carrying a lucid message which I fed into a gadget that let me paste it, cut it into strips on a paper form to be carried to a high-ranking recipient. I must have done the reverse as well, encoding the answering correspondence and turning it over for radio transmission, and all with the same utter incomprehension of what was going on inside the machine. It was a huge, boxy affair with the rotor basket on top, the electronic "innards" below and a typewriter keyboard. It was different from a regular manual typewriter of the kind we used then.

I realize that my grandchildren and their contemporaries have probably never seen an office or home typewriter, so I will explain. Depressing a key swung a thin metal bar with a raised letter on its end that hit an inked ribbon and impressed itself on a piece of paper being fed through the typewriter on a roller (called a platen) that moved from right to left on a carriage, one space for each stroke. It made a very satisfying "smack!" and a good typist could hit fifty or sixty or more words , meaning several hundred keystrokes and letters a minute, setting up a very rapid and businesslike clickety-clack. In offices where several typists were working at the same time, there was a continuous machine-gun - like clatter, (much louder than the soft , civil tickety-tick of computer keys,) punctuated by the ringing of bells, which meant that the end of a line had been reached, whereupon you grabbed a protruding lever on the left end of the carriage, pushed the carriage back right as far as it would go which automatically rolled the platen and paper up one or two spaces to start a new line, and continued clacking along with your eyes fixed on the text you were copying or composing as mechanically as if you were part of the machine itself. You didn't need to look at the keyboard; it was

easy to memorize, though there were some old-timers who worked up a pretty good velocity using a method whose name is self-explanatory, "hunt and peck."

Not so the SIGABA, which was like a modern computer, only slower, because pressing a key set electro-mechanical components in motion, which you could hear grinding away, so that the best technique was a steady, rhythmic motion of the fingers. Since, unlike a computer, it did not have a screen to show you what you were typing (which would have done no good anyway, because the letter that would have appeared bore no relation to the one on the key you pressed) you had to be very careful to transcribe accurately. When you didn't, what came out would be a misprint or a "garble," usually but not always easy to figure out.

Though it made me feel important to be called on for a priority message in the dead of the night, I don't remember ever decoding one that couldn't have waited until morning. In any case, my brief career as a SIGABA operator took place long after I had seen the product of a coding machine but never such a device itself.

The lesson that was impressed on us --or rather reinforced most powerfully the moment we walked into the operations building and especially into the area where Purple messages were being processed-- was the total and overwhelming importance of secrecy, especially because we were "current" in Purple. The working assumption of all cryptographers and cryptanalysts is that any code which ingenious humans may devise can eventually be solved by other ingenious humans. Every language has characteristic patterns of commonly used words or combinations of letters within words which, however hidden within a code, will reveal themselves, provided that enough examples can be furnished. That's the reason why nations with the technical capacity, both in wartime

and peacetime constantly monitor the airwaves to intercept the radio traffic of actual or potential enemies. The millions of code groups collected are sorted and analyzed in search of telltale similarities and other indications of linguistic identification and in ways mysterious to me, clusters of letters emerge that could be part of a message. In the 1940s the sorting was done by IBM machines. Nowadays, I assume that both the compiling and analysis of codes involves computers and I blanch at the thought of how many options for disguising a text must exist. Anyway, back then and today, too for all I know, the cryptanalysts didn't even need to know the meanings of what they were extracting, simply their consistency with the encoded language. One of our jobs as translators was to look at a string of syllables shown to us by a cryptanalyst and see if we could find a Japanese word imbedded somewhere in it. We sent them away, either disappointed or delighted, by our answers, to the slow and grinding work of recovering "clear text."

But to steer closer to the point, since the working hypothesis was that any code could eventually be broken, the remedy was to change codes frequently in order to delay as long as possible the arrival of "eventually." When a change took place, all the work done up to that point on solving the old code was suddenly worthless or of limited value. Actually work on the expired code continued, and in at least some cases that I knew of, resulted in almost complete solutions. Then all the "back traffic" was translated and yielded a good deal of general and useful information on the economy, morale, internal power struggles, international standing and public health of the enemy. Still, nothing could quite equal the impact of knowing what the other side was up to at the very moment that its leaders did, which was possible if you had the keys to a code they were still using.

That was rarely the case precisely because of the intermittent code changes designed to prevent it. However, in the

case of the Purple machine, the Japanese continued to use it, unaware that our side had constructed a duplicate. The slightest hint that it was compromised would have led to a quick change that slammed the door on the daily flow of intelligence summaries based on our reading of Purple messages. It was one of the big secrets of the war, and preserving it was considered almost as vital as keeping the secret of the Manhattan Project that developed the first atomic bomb.

The luckier method of reading current traffic was to steal or capture an enemy's codebook without his realizing that it was gone. This was almost impossible because careful accounting was supposed to keep track of every one issued. But humans being what they are, a mistake could happen and in 1944, I was one of the beneficiaries of such a fumble that furnished us with the code in use by the Japanese Army in Burma. I'll come to that story in due time. But throughout the war and most especially in Arlington Hall where the most important work was going on, we lived in an atmosphere of constant concern about accidentally "breaking security." Fear of dropping a careless word within the hearing of a stranger, or in letters to friends and family was beaten into us incessantly by training films and lectures showing how the most innocent-sounding and random bits of information could become pieces in a puzzle that was being assembled by enemy spies. We were bound by solemn oaths to remain close-mouthed about our work not only during the war, but theoretically for the remainder of our lives until official declassification of our materials. The underlying idea was and remains that even in peacetime the secret battle between code makers and code breakers continues, and opening the door to what had worked for our cryptanalysts in the past could tip off their side on how to improve its defenses. But the mills of declassification grind with excruciating slowness and the archives still hold millions of page of "secrets" long since exposed in public.

It is not a surprise to most people who have dealt with Federal records that far too many items are classified and that declassification lags light-years behind the pace of classification, which has become a tool for many agencies and officeholders simply to escape embarrassment or political consequences. Even in the nineteen-forties that was apparent.

As I remember it, there were three grades of classification that were in use when I worked at Arlington Hall . The lowest was "Restricted," which seemed to be stamped on virtually any piece of paper about any in-house subject--new regulations, changes in assignment, virtually anything relating to the day-to-day administration of our work. Confidential, the next step up, covered internally generated messages confined to a somewhat smaller circle.. With "Secret," things were getting serious . It went on all the enemy-originated messages that we dealt with and any communications among ourselves that contained parts of or references to their content--or to the fact that they existed at all and were in our hands. Plus, of course, anything related to our own codes and ciphers. Top Secret was reserved for particularly sensitive items, especially our work product after it had been readied for handoff to the intelligence analysis experts who reported to higher authority. I can't remember how many Top Secret messages I saw in an average day. There were special code names for particular categories of intelligence --"Magic," for instance, being the label attached to the daily summary that went to the White House. But I never to my recollection saw a "Magic" document . I just knew it existed. Once I had finished translating a message and placed it in the Out Box it was picked up and taken off to some unknown destination--as if I were a dairy employee without a clue as to what happened to the milk after I had emptied the cow's udder into the bucket

Daily exposure to material that was classified--some clearly unnecessarily --did allow us a certain casualness among ourselves in making jokes on the subject, usually by inventing new categories of secrecy. One that I recall hearing was SUPER SECRET: SHOOT SELF AFTER READING. (Or perhaps I have just made that up; sometimes I can no longer tell.) But we truly did live in a climate of fear, however justified by the facts, and it preyed on us all in ways that sometimes broke through our "cool" attitudes. In the middle of one Sunday night I was roused in the barracks by murmurs from the bed across the aisle. They were coming from one of us who was having a full-scale panic attack because on returning from a weekend in New York that evening he had fallen into conversation with a stranger, and he had somehow awakened with a jolt, tortured by the absolute conviction that he had broken security and that the stranger was a counter-intelligence agent who would turn him in the next morning to face God only knew what punishment. He kept babbling, weeping and shivering, while Frank Tenny, whom all of us looked to as a calm and mature presence (though he was himself only 22) sat next to him on the bed with his arm around the poor fellow's shoulder, quietly gentling him down until he was able to fall asleep again from sheer exhaustion. He was fine by breakfast, but it was a graphic reminder of an inner weight of responsibility that we all carried.

Being the carrier of state secrets actually produced a curious schizophrenic state of mind. On the one hand, it made us feel properly important, which I suspect is the allure of it for everyone who handles heavily classified Nowadays that probably includes thousands of Federal officials in the military, intelligence and diplomatic services. The itch to be an informed insider, set aside from mere mortals who know only what goes on in front of the curtain, is probably universal. On the other hand, it does--or at least did for me--raise anxiety levels, for not only one life could be

destroyed by a mistake- as with a doctor's patient, a lawyer's client, a police suspect--but in our cases hundreds, even thousands if we unwittingly leaked something that let the enemy realize we had penetrated his own secrets. It was a lot to load upon the shoulders of very young men . Of course that is exactly what the war was doing to hundreds of thousands of "kids," in far more excruciating circumstances than ours at Arlington Hall-- "kids" who were commanders of rifle platoons and companies, or of bombers' and ships' crews, whose lives (their own included) depended on immediate decisions made in mortal danger. Maybe for some that very tension was a source of vitality that they never found anywhere else in the rest of their lives--perhaps what Civil War veteran Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr referred to as having his youthful heart "touched with fire." I'm not in a position to say. But even in my physically safe wartime environment, I was a wet-behind-the-ears twenty year old learning what heavy responsibility meant. So I, too, look back on the war as an overwhelming influence on my growing up. I suppose in that sense I am nostalgic, but not so much so as to change my present certainty that even at best, when it spurs men to acts of selfless courage and comradeship, my personal reaction to war is mainly one of disgust and horror. What animals other than homo sapiens kill each other in entire herds?

So, sobered by responsibility or by fear or both, there I was at the start of 1943 translating diplomatic messages--mostly from Berlin to Tokyo, originated by Baron Oshima, Japan's ambassador to Hitler, the most memorable being a long speculation about possible developments in Germany's strategy and how they would affect what help Hitler might give to or request from Japan. By then we had all been promoted in rank from private to T5, Technician 5th grade, equivalent to a corporal's rank in a line unit. In time we would ascend to T4 (buck

sergeant) and T3 (staff sergeant,) wearing the appropriate inverted V stripes with a T in the center. If you got to the exalted plateau of technical or master sergeant the T was dispensed with. I was totally contented, having no special yearning for rank, although I did believe the story of some of my fellow translators that we were supposed to have been commissioned on completion of our training (as were those of us who went to the Navy's language school in Colorado.) But certainly no such commitment had been made to me by Major Swensson, and in any case I didn't give a damn. What I wanted was to get overseas, closer to the war.

A number of civilians were working at Arlington Hall, possibly outnumbering the military. Among the most interesting were some older men who had lived in Japan, either as missionaries or businessmen, and knew the language a good deal better than those of us fresh out of our year of accelerated college courses and the quick polishing acquired at the hands of Reischauer and Company. I remember several in particular. Mr. Hurt and Mr. Nelson were both--well, like missionaries or businessmen--serious, hardworking, not too much interested in banter between desks, certainly not in off-color jokes or other ribaldries, or in adopting us as apprentices. They were always ready to answer questions, of which we had many (since the diplomatic messages used a more extensive vocabulary than we had yet absorbed) but in a brisk manner that suggested an underlying message of "here's what that phrase means now let's get back to work without wasting any more time." They weren't even like the cryptanalysts, who seemed to be having fun solving their puzzles, and if they had any reactions to the text they were translating--curiosity, excitement, whatever--it was not apparent in their behavior. I seem to remember one of them wearing an eyeshade and sleeve protectors like a clerk in a Dickens novel. Mr. Nelson had a soldier son, Richard, who was working on the post as an assistant to Captain Castleman, our reluctantly military doctor. Dick, as we all knew him, planned to go to medical school

after the war and had enlisted in the Medical Corps to log up some experience. At the time when I knew him it was somewhat limited and lent a special appropriateness to his nickname. At a previous post as well as ours, it consisted mostly of surveying a surfeit of penises for signs of gonorrhoea or syphilis.

But Hurt and Nelson were sharply and wonderfully offset by one of the businessmen whose name I would dearly love to recollect, but whom I'll call Mr. X for convenience. I say he was a businessman because I can't imagine him as a missionary. If he was, then he was a missionary in the way that young François Rabelais was a monk--full of an almost explosive laughter and zest for life which didn't promise advance in ecclesiastical circles. He was familiar with Japanese slang and loved to greet us with a huge smile at the start of the day with a loud cry of OOSSS! To which the answer seemed to be DOE-JAY. I have no idea what that signified, whether it was a common greeting among familiars like "How's tricks? --Doin' OK", or whether it was particularly localized to a district in Tokyo--like a Brooklyn accent --or, finally, whether it was fit to be used in polite company. Mr. X walked into the office where several of us had our desks one day, shaking with hilarity. It seems that the sending and receiving code clerks on a message he had just read were familiar with each other, and had exchanged personal remarks in clear text, a tremendous violation of regulations, because it provided an avenue of attack for the cryptanalysts. "How are you doing in Yoshiwara?" asked the one. When he could catch his breath, Mr. X explained that this was a red-light district in Tokyo. "I'm wearing the hair off it!" was the response.

We didn't get translations like that from anybody else.

I made other civilian friends, too, among the codebreakers and the intelligence analysts with whom we came into occasional, contact. They were mostly smart and funny people. Their names

have faded away, though I recollect one jolly and knowledgeable fellow, John Coddington, who loved to roll off his tongue the name of the king of Cambodia and his capital city: "King Sisavang Vong of Luang Prabang," It sounded like temple bells, he said, and it did. Another was named Donald Mugridge, and liked to warn us that he had a small private graveyard filled with the bones of people who addressed him as "Mug."

I never got very familiar with the civilian staff because my tenure at the Hall was really brief. I began work there around the end of January of 1943, and at the end of July--six months--was put on overseas orders, much to my delight, and immediately was given a furlough, then taken off duty and placed with other overseas-bound friends in a program of pre-departure training. Some of those who stayed in Washington longer or even for the entire war got to know them much better. I did, however, make one lifelong civilian friend in Donna Allen.

We met some time after I was assigned to a new task, working on messages in expired shipping codes that hadn't been completely broken, so that translators worked closely with cryptanalytic teams. She was a member of one of them, a recent enthusiastic trainee, one of many young women added to the Signal Intelligence Section's personnel for various clerical functions. Cryptanalysis lessons were available to them, and those who were good at it moved on into code-related operations--making ours, or breaking theirs. In either case, Donna stood out among the crowd. Chicago-born and raised, and recently graduated from Duke, she was outspoken, made no secret of her intelligence, independence or opinions, and especially her impatience with conventional assumptions about gender roles. Remember, this was sixty-five years ago, long before the "women's lib" movement got rolling. But she wasn't a one-note chorister; her curiosity was wide-ranging--she was a committed learner-- her conversation always engaging, and whatever the subject, she

approached it with energy and passion. Small talk was not her game, but her seriousness about life was leavened with an earthy sense of humor, a warm heart and a frequent smile that could melt glaciers. Neither I nor most of my fellow GIs had ever met women like that--particularly attractive young ones-- and several of us, myself included, were smitten with her. From the point of view of romantic pursuit, however she was off limits--happily married to Russell Allen, who was flying with a bomber crew in the Pacific.

I linger on her for a moment because our connection didn't end with the war, as it did with other civilian friends I made there. She returned to Chicago to pursue a master's degree in economics along with Russ. I wound up going to graduate school there and earning my doctorate in history. During the course of the years (1946-50) that I spent in that pursuit I became a close friend of their growing family. She went on to earn other advanced degrees and to forge a career as an activist on behalf of labor, women's rights, international peace, press freedom and other rightful causes. Altogether, one of the most remarkable spirits I met in the course of the war.

By the time Spring of 1943 began I was fairly established in the routine of everyday work in the "black chamber" of Arlington Hall. (The name is a shared in-joke. In the 1920s Herbert O. Yardley, a military cryptologist in World War I had written, much to the government's displeasure, an exposè entitled "Secrets of the Black Chamber." I don't recall anyone using the term at Arlington Hall, but for me it survives in the name of a shrinking "club" of those of us who served in India, named by its founder "The Black Chamber Society of New Delhi." The military routines of early morning calisthenics, weekend inspections and reviews, perhaps some close-order drill continued, and of course we remained bound by all the commandments of army regulations, with occasional exceptions for operating personnel. But most of our time was not spent in preparation for battlefields, but in the offices where for all

practical purposes we were indistinguishable from our civilian counterparts.

My work continued to be interesting, but I felt curiously detached from the war that was continuing on all fronts, and just beginning to turn in our favor that Spring of '43. In Europe the Russians had held at Stalingrad and the Germans had been driven out of almost all of North Africa; in the Pacific the Army and the Marines were re-taking parts of New Guinea and had completed the conquest of Guadalcanal while the Japanese Navy remained incapable of taking the offensive after its terrific losses at the Battle of Midway. I read and heard about all these developments, but they seemed remote from what I was doing, which was sitting at a table with other translators and cryptanalysts, either identifying Japanese phrases or slogging through old messages that particularized the contents of cargoes from Jakarta that had been unloaded at Nagasaki in the Autumn of 1941. My mind told me that this was the way of an all-out global war and that my work was one of a gigantic number of pieces assembled by generals and statesmen into an enormous whole, but I wanted to be closer to where my piece, joined to the others, was actually having some visible effect--if not at the actual fighting front, then at least nearer to it than Washington. So restlessness spoiled the pleasures of being on a physically undemanding assignment in the only major Allied capital guaranteed to be out of the range of enemy bombs. It was easy to bus into town after duty hours for a play or a concert of the National Symphony (free, like most such entertainments, to service personnel) or for a drink while listening to a band in the company of a few buddies. I don't remember what I drank. I wasn't yet a beer drinker and was wary of "hard stuff" after my ghastly initiation into alcohol. It was probably some mixture of blended whiskey and lots of ginger ale or 7-Up, the usual quaff of the non-sophisticates back then. I was still under 21 and would be until August but I don't recall my age being an issue. On weekends there was the whole range of Washington tourist

attractions to sample, and on many weekends when I was free I went back to New York.

Of these visits the most memorable was one in early June when I was able to attend my Columbia Commencement, with my mother and grandmother present. My poor stepfather, who would have been very proud of me, could not escape from his job as a sales manager in a retail store that sold household electrical appliances. Being there myself was something of a surprise to me, since I only completed my junior year on campus. But I had acquired a pile of extra credits through the Japanese courses I took, and the College faculty, in a burst of patriotism, decreed that serving in the armed forces for a year was in itself an educational experience worth a number of gift credits. Therefore my undergraduate record had already earned enough for me to graduate. I was, of course, in uniform rather than cap and gown, as were a number of other members of the class who were able to attend. There were about 400 members of my 1939 entering class, many already in the service and scattered throughout the country or overseas. Some had become casualties in the seventeen months of fighting since Pearl Harbor, enough to give the proceedings a kind of special solemnity not usual at such ceremonies. Three months later I myself was en route to the West Coast to board a ship bound across the Pacific.

The war was impinging on every aspect of life in Washington. Shortages of coffee, meat, gasoline and many other things were noticeable, and rationing had begun, though it did not apply to us. Yet it was all the rumble of distant drums. The reminders of wartime urgency were few in my case, except when I was assigned in rotation to swing and graveyard shifts in the Hall's around-the-clock labors. But there were attractive compensations. The collar of routine was loosened. On the 4 PM to midnight list, you were excused from early morning formations and left at liberty during the morning and early afternoon, and unless restricted to

post could visit Washington and sample its attractions when they tended to be less crowded. You came back to an early dinner at the mess hall and then a "work day" followed by a late bedtime. Since I've always enjoyed daytime frolics more than evening events, that suited me fine. The graveyard shift did not. We were allowed to return to barracks to sleep all day if we could, which came to me easily enough. After getting off, I'd stop for breakfast at the mess hall, then sleep until mid-afternoon. But by 11:30 P.M., even if I had done nothing more active than eating and reading in the previous eight hours, my internal clock was telling me that I wanted badly to be in bed.

But there were still positives in the enforced change in my Circadian rhythm, chiefly that atmosphere of cordial intimacy shared by people working together while the world sleeps. There was more chit-chat, more snacking, more pauses for coffee which was always brewing on someone's unofficial hot plate, and even background music from portable radios that were either allowed or overlooked. Colleagues neither reported nor objected to an occasional head-on-the-desk cat nap. The small groups into which we were broken often didn't have any kind of supervisor though occasionally someone with bars or oak leaves on his shoulder would make a round of inspections. That led to a memorable moment in my life, however. One night in the wee hours, several of us--including Donna Allen and one of my barracks mates, Robert Yampolsky--were taking a coffee break while the radio, tuned to a classical music station, was playing. Suddenly, through the open door, there appeared the frowning face of Major Leonard Bickwit, who would later be my commanding officer in India. "What's this?" he demanded. With no intention of being a smart-ass, but simply startled by the question, I promptly responded: "Tchaikowsky's Romeo and Juliet Overture, sir!" I was lucky that Bickwit, a lawyer in civil life, was not carried away by his temporary martial authority. He joined in the general laugh, snapped "Get back to work!" and disappeared.

So the weeks slipped by and I settled deeper into the pattern of a life partly military and partly civilian, knowing intellectually that what I was doing mattered, and that thousands of experts in dozens of fields were equally occupied with research and administrative jobs at Washington desks that would bear critically on our success in the front lines. All the same, my head and heart were not in the same place. I was bored, frustrated and depressed. I thought of asking for a transfer to some other branch but knew that I wouldn't have a prayer--that the answer would be, quite correctly: "We've spent months training you in a rare specialty, and we aren't going to let you waste it. And with the secrets you now possess, we're even less likely to approve of your escaping our supervision." There was no exit for me from the world of intercepts and decodes. The nearest I could hope for was a transfer to one of the offices maintained by Signal Intelligence overseas.

There was no sense in going back to Professor Reischauer, who had no military rank at that time. The go-to person with my request was our uniformed commander--the officer in charge of Japanese translations and translators. This was First Lieutenant Douglas Overton, a fine and gentlemanly person who may have already had some civilian background in the language--and who, in any case, helped to administer the occupation of Japan after 1945, then in 1951 or thereabouts became the Executive Director of the Japan Society of New York, and eventually a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. It was he who evaluated our work and assigned us accordingly, and whenever he spoke to us he observed the courtesies that would be shown by a young professor to graduate students who were not much younger than himself, and who were more like junior associates than pupils. I do remember

one out-of-the-office conversation with him. It was a Saturday night. I was staying on the post, and went into the neighborhood across the street from the entry gate to the Hall--for a bite. There at a table sat Lt. Overton, who beckoned me over to chat briefly and, setting rank aside for a moment, get better acquainted. Noting that we were both alone, he smiled and said: "Bernie, we're an unusual pair of soldiers not to be out on a date."

So it was to Lt. Overton that I went some time in that Spring and poured out my heart's desire. He made no commitments--he couldn't send anybody anywhere until his own superiors ordered it--but he gave me the polite little speech about how important it was to be doing what I did right there at the Hall, finishing, however with a promise to keep my feelings in mind. I thought of it as a little kindly-intentioned soft soap, but the good Lieutenant was true to his word. Some time near the beginning of August he sent for me. When I showed up at his desk he smiled and said quietly: "Bernie, I'm giving you a furlough to visit home. You're going on a long trip."

The sweetest words I had heard in the service up to then.

What began now was a long vacation--literally six months of it--from work. I turned in whatever I was working on at the moment and headed on leave for New York,. Thereafter I did not see a word of Japanese text again until settled in New Delhi around the first week of February 1944. Then I saw enough to make up for the layoff, a part of the story yet to come. For that half year interval, once again I was just another soldier being shuffled around in the mysterious and impenetrable ways required to get things done by an army of eight million men or more. For the most part I enjoyed it. I was part of a "casual" shipment--there were only twelve of us India-bound from the Hall via the Pacific,

although a larger contingent went out about the same time across the Atlantic and Mediterranean, where they survived a bombing attack on their convoy. I never knew why our particular dozen was separated. At any rate, the process of getting us from Washington to New Delhi would seem to have been simpler than what was required to move other, larger bodies of men and their equipment--say, an infantry division--a comparable distance. But it wasn't. The picayune scale of our shipment apparently made it harder to squeeze us in somewhere, but overall the delay and final resolution worked to our advantage. We traveled on a freighter, and therefore had far less supervision, less grunt work, less drill, overall less chickenshit than did the millions who got to the war zones on troopships.

I learned of our destination immediately from Lt. Overton, and of the small size of our shipment the minute we were assembled for the first time and ordered to stencil its identification, number which ended with the letters DD, on our barracks bags. Where we were headed was, of course, a secret that we were supposed to keep even from our buddies, but it didn't remain so for long. I remember Richard Wincor (in later life a distinguished New York intellectual property lawyer) bustling over to me at the mess hall and crying out in Japanese "You're going to Australia, aren't you?" I laid my finger on my lips, shook my head "no," then made the palms-up gesture with a shrug, meaning "I don't know." By the next morning, however, everyone in the barracks already knew, and Wincor said that, considering my barracks reputation for naiveté he was impressed that I had feigned so well. Had a presumable spy been present in the post exchange every night, it would not have taken him long to figure out why one particular group of GIs gathered around the juke box every night to play Tommy Dorsey's then-popular recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's "Song of India" in swing time.

My leave in New York was enjoyable. My mother wept and worried in spite of my assurances that while I couldn't say where I was going, it would be far from shot and shell. She pointed out that I would be crossing an ocean that was still a hunting ground for enemy submarines--true enough to make me feel moderately, if temporarily, heroic--and that she might not see me again for years which, to my twenty-one-year-old mind, did not seem to be much of a big deal. I don't remember farewell parties with any New York chums. I had very few who were not already away in the armed services. I journeyed out with my parents to say goodbye to my Aunt Charlotte, who lived in what I then considered a remote and distant part of the borough of Queens. My other aunt, Esther, was in the Women's Army Corps, and had beaten me overseas--she was working at Eisenhower's headquarters in Algiers. On the final weekend of the furlough we drove up to Hudson, New York, to visit my maternal grandparents. It was a memorable weekend for two contrasting moments typical of those taking place all around the country.

My grandfather's custom every summer was to rent a cottage on Lake Taghkanic, about twelve miles outside of town, where he would send his wife to escape the heat of the day, and to which he himself would drive after closing his shoe repair shop at 6 PM, two or three hours earlier than usual, arriving in time for what he called a "dunk" in the lake and then supper and a pre-bedtime cigar in the evening cool. There was a colony of Hudson's Jewish small businessmen out there, and I had spent the five summers from my thirteenth to eighteenth birthday in Grandpa's cottage, knocking around in happy idleness with a group boys and girls my own age.

I had fallen in love with one of those girls a couple of years earlier, but although she liked me and enjoyed my company, the ardor wasn't returned. She said she was happy to be a sister to me, and I took that as the best I could get, and whenever we parted,

settled for a decorous peck on the forehead. We only saw each other a few times a year--when I visited Hudson on Winter and Spring breaks, and on rare occasions when she came to New York to visit relatives and we would have friendly and enjoyable dates. Absence in my case made the heart grow fonder, but she went off to college in 1941 and there acquired a boy friend whom she would eventually marry.

On that last Saturday night at the cottage, I found that she was also there and we agreed on an after-dinner walk. We met late and strolled along a lakeside road that was virtually empty and bathed in moonlight. We held hands--we'd done that often before. This time it was different. Maybe there's something in a uniform after all. Or maybe, since I said I was going overseas but could neither tell her where nor what I'd be doing, she thought I was heading into the jaws of death and the mouth of Hell and deserved a parting gift. No matter. My dog tags kept jingling in an annoying way under my shirt as we walked. Suddenly she stopped and swung around to face me. She put her left hand on my shoulder, and her right directly over the dog tags with the other, pressing them against my breastbone. This brought our faces to within a couple of inches of each other, and I accepted the invitation, pulled her to me tightly and gave her a long, deliberate kiss, which not only met with no objection, but was greeted with warm return pressure.

This isn't a Hollywood romance. She did not melt and say that she was now mine forever, a hope that I'd already abandoned anyway. But she did make it clear by her actions that what she felt for me might not be love, but it most decidedly went well beyond sisterhood, as I might have found out if I'd had the nerve to try earlier. I didn't find the courage until that night, emboldened by my own role of soldier off to the wars. At any rate, we walked a bit further with our arms around each others' waists, until we reached the deserted pier that belonged to her father's cottage.

There we sat for what I judge to have been a very, very pleasant hour, multiplying the total of kisses. There was no indication of further invitation, and I tried for nothing more, but even with the physical discomfort of not collecting the grand prize, friendly embraces should not be disdained. Those were honeyed moments, especially so because all that day the realization had been growing on me that this was the last time I would be visiting the place as "the Eckstein kid, " as I was known in my grandfather's town. How long I would be away I didn't know of course, but it would certainly be for years and when I came back I and my pals would be different people, changed by added years of growth under the exceptional circumstances of the war . I walked the half mile or so home that night, thinking soberly that a pleasant chapter of my existence was closing, but also , bouncing, humming and brimming with self-confidence because I had enjoyed one hell of a farewell party provided by the girl I'd have chosen above all others for the role.

The obverse side hit me less than twelve hours later, as my stepfather pulled slowly away from the cottage at the start of the three-hour ride back to New York. My grandparents on my mother's side (the only ones I knew) were especially dear to me. After leaving my father, when I was around six or seven, my mother had decided to live and work in New York and raise me there, but twice she had to leave me in Hudson for up to a year, and I routinely spent every summer and school recess of more than a few days there with Grandma and Grandpa. They were wonderful surrogate parents, giving me a mixture of sensible control coupled with freedom and undemanding love that opened doors to a healthy growing-up experience They were also model citizens of their community, the several hundred predominantly eastern European Jewish immigrants of the city, and much of what I know about responsibility, charity, and decent social behavior I learned from their example.

My bond with them, then, was exceptionally strong. And as we were leaving they stood together, alone, on the porch facing the road, looking sad and suddenly old and vulnerable. The thought that flooded into my mind rushed out of my mouth: "I may never see them again," I said and I burst into tears, the only ones I shed at saying goodbye to anyone that summer. It may have been a premonition, for my grandfather died less than a year later. My grandmother, desperately lonely, hung on for some two months after my return from overseas in December of 1945. She had told my mother that she was only waiting for a last visit from me before letting go, and she kept that promise.

So there it was. Goodbye kisses and goodbye tears, all on a wartime weekend.

Soon after that I was back in Washington getting a taste of guns, one of those periodic reminders of what war was really all about, and enjoying it.. The army apparently demanded that everyone heading for a theater of war should have some weapons training. It may have made sense--there were cases in which headquarters were overrun by the enemy and cooks and clerks had to pick up rifles. But whether it did or not, it was mandatory and so, for at least part of a week we outward-bound members of the Second Signal Service Battalion were loaded into trucks and taken down to Fort Belvoir in the morning for our instruction. If I remember it correctly, at least one day was devoted to training films on marksmanship and instructions on how to clean, disassemble and reassemble the Springfield 1903 bolt-action rifles that we were issued temporarily. They were in process of being replaced with the Garand M-1, which ejected the used cartridge and shoved a fresh round into the chamber automatically. However, the soon-to-be-obsolete Springfields were considered good enough for learning purposes. I do remember the patches, gun oil and cleaning rods we used and holding the barrel up to the light to make sure its rifled insides were smooth and shiny. I don't

remember taking the Springfield apart, though it must have been part of the drill. Curiously, I definitely summon up the experience of learning to "break down" a Colt .45, the side-arm issued to officers and others who didn't carry a rifle, and being astonished at my own ability to do it and to put the thing back together again . You were supposed to be able to do it blindfolded, but thank God we weren't tested for that. And it's possible that the training with the Colt took place later, in a port of embarkation.

No matter. I enjoyed a holiday from using my higher intellectual faculties, such as they were, and likewise the plunge into a stage of training that millions of us were undergoing. I can't remember how many of us from Arlington Hall were trucked down to Ft Belvoir every day--there was a separate overseas shipment being processed at the same time. Once there, however, it was a simple matter of learning how to estimate and adjust the gun sight for distance and wind direction, center the bulls-eye in it, adjust the carrying sling so that in the firing position, kneeling, sitting or standing, it pushed the rifle butt firmly against your shoulder to absorb the recoil--nothing very challenging, though I could only imagine what it was like to be trying to do it while under fire. And when we finally got out on the range to shoot for score, I was excited to hear the commands that generations of soldiers before me, dating back as far as the Civil War for all I knew, had heard: "Ready on the right! Ready on the left! Ready on the firing line! With ball ammunition load and lock!" I also recall very vividly the first words of caution from our enlisted instructor against any horsing around with the guns: "Never point this at anyone," he said, holding up his own Springfield, "unless you intend to kill him."

After we had fired for the record, slow fire and rapid fire from various positions, I found it fun, as I still do in taking any test, to see how I had done--to watch the targets lowered and then raised, with the soldiers in the pits holding up markers on long

wands to show where your shots had hit and their point value, decreasing as you got further from the bull's eye, of course, and ending in zero with the ignominious waving red flag, by tradition known as "Maggie's Drawers" -, to show that you'd missed the target altogether. Then it was your turn to go into the pits, raising and lowering the paper targets and signaling the hits and misses. It was there that I found out what bullets passing overhead sound like-- they snap. ** When all those on the line let go with rapid fire simultaneously what we heard (or what I think I heard) was first what sounded like firecrackers popping, followed instantly by a higher pitched series of crackles, more like popping corn.

*(**Interpolation: I was happy to find this recollection confirmed in Marine veteran Eugene Sledge's wonderful book, With the Old Breed on Peleliu and Okinawa. In his case, of course the bullets were being fired at him, not above him.)*

Flinging modesty aside, I report that I scored high enough to be qualified as a "Marksman," the third layer of competence, below "Expert," the very top of the pyramid, and "Sharpshooter," the next down.

We were not burdened with many duties in the few days of August remaining between the weapons course and our actual exit. We ran the obstacle course, where I could manage everything except swinging on a rope across a water-filled trench. I couldn't get the timing of the jump-off right. Three times I fell short and got thoroughly soaked, until the GI supervising that jump took pity and just waved me on. There were physicals and shots to take from Captain (or Major) Castleman, equipment to turn in, and of course our barracks bags to pack. We had two, labeled A and B, into which everything except what was on our backs was folded

and crammed. Insofar as possible you tried to get the things you wouldn't need in transit (like dress uniforms) into one that you never opened. Together I suspect they weighed fifty to sixty pounds. They were usually moved, along with the owners, by truck (either a big one that we called a 6 by 6 or a smaller -capacity vehicle defined by the army as a weapons carrier) but when you had to move them any distance on your own the trick was to hoist one over your shoulder and carry the other in your free hand. More often than not I just dragged it along by the rope used to tie the mouth closed.

On the final weekend of the month we were moved into a separate barracks and given passes good until midnight Sunday but restricted to the District of Columbia. We rose on Monday with nothing to do but wait for transportation to Union Station where we would board a train destined for Los Angeles. We waited all day, during which I noted that one of the group, Jimmy Murphy, was sleeping through breakfast, through lunch, and well on into the afternoon, brushing off efforts to get him out of the sack for a meal. He was only nineteen, and from somewhere in Missouri, and he enjoyed playing the rube. When asked where he came from he liked to answer "Puckyhuddle," which for some reason sounded funny, and resulted in his being nicknamed "Pucky." It turned out from Pucky's narration when he finally regained consciousness that he had spent the weekend shacked up in a hotel with a girl (or perhaps more than one girl) engaging in frequent and possibly nonstop intercourse that ended only when he was totally drained. "I never thought," he told us, "that I'd be layin' next to a beautiful woman and my peter wouldn't get up." But such was the case, and while Pucky's long sleep undoubtedly restored his virility, it may have taken him a while to shake off the shock of discovery that there were limits to it.

There were only twelve of us in Double Dee, as we now called ourselves, with whom I got better acquainted as time went

on--and I don't recollect whether other personnel were with us on that transcontinental rail trip or not. We were definitely not on a troop train--these were often met at scheduled stops by platoons of Red Cross girls handing out doughnuts and coffee--and I have no mental image of that happening, nor of large numbers of GIs wandering the corridors, nor of any civilians, either. I was very excited about the trip, which took about three nights and ended on the fourth day, never having been west of the Hudson in my life. But it's a surprising blank spot. I remember waking up the first morning as we were rolling across Indiana en route to a layover in Chicago--and feeling disappointed that the leg which took us through the Rockies was accomplished at night, so there was nothing to see. But I had my nose glued to the window as we traversed the southwestern desert which looked just like the Westerns in the movie theater portrayed it. (Small wonder because many of them were shot there.) For the most part, though, none of the details on how we were fed and what we did to pass the time--reading and gabbing, I assume--registered very deeply on my mind. Except for Chicago!

These were the days when all cross-country passenger cars had to be transferred across the city in some way that meant a delay of several hours. We got into Chicago late in the afternoon, and were allowed to de-board , if we chose, and do what we liked before returning to the train. I can't imagine that we didn't have some kind of supervision with us but I recall none. The senior non-commissioned officer with us was Sergeant William Lutwiniak, who may have been technically in charge but certainly did not seem concerned with anyone deserting or getting lost. We had a commanding officer of a sort in Lt. Lowell Groves, a pleasant , soft-spoken man who was a good shepherd in getting us what we needed as our tiny shipment rattled around various parts of the machinery for getting huge numbers of troops headed for hundreds of trans-oceanic destinations onto the right ships at the right time. In that vastness, the danger of getting wrongly

assigned or lost in the shuffle was always present. We saw him numerous times in the weeks that ensued ,which took us on joyrides between two embarkation camps located in the vicinity of San Francisco and Los Angeles. Whether we needed his clearance to get into town or not--and we must have had something to show any curious Military Police that we were legitimately at large--several of us grabbed a taxi to the Loop, and bar-hopped our way around it.

I liked it right away Old Chicagoans tell me it was livelier then than now, but it seemed even to me ,a seasoned New Yorker, to have an energy I hadn't experienced anywhere in my home town, although I hadn't been anywhere in Manhattan comparable to the midtown nightlife area so the comparison is really unfair. Almost every other doorway , often at the end of a descending flight of steps, was brightly lit, pumping out the sounds of jazz and the indistinct roar of animated conversation. I suppose the magic was mostly in my young head, full of a sense excitement at going really far from home for the first time, and off to a theater of war and a future unknown. But I enjoyed my night in wartime Chicago, as, shortly afterwards, I would enjoy more such excursions in wartime San Francisco.

When we got back to the train, one of our gang, Hugh Myers, had a surprise waiting. He had acquired a bottle of Scotch--not easy in those wartime days--and was sharing some in the little conical paper cups that the train provided at drinking water fixtures. I'd never had any. "Whiskey" to me still meant neutral spirits blended with small amounts of straight whiskies--given flavor usually by mixing it with ginger ale. "What's it like?" I asked. "It's smoky," he said. I took a sip--made a doubtful face. Then a second sip, and something happened. I became aware that I had definitely been misled into believing that such brands as Four Roses or Seagram's VO were worth drinking. I won't say that there is a straight line from that initiation to my present love of single-

malt Macallan's and Lagavulin when I can afford them, but the seed was planted. I drank plenty of strange rotgut in the course of my martial career, and I am more than amenable to good Bourbon, tequila, rum and gin--all straight, with the exception of a dash of vermouth in my gin. And all, needless to say at this point in my life, in very modest quantities. But straight Scotch, preferably single-malt, is still the monarch, and I owe it all to Hugh, now long, long gone.

I was beginning to be aware of my fellow travelers in Double Dee as the miles rolled by--we would travel some 10,000 of them in each others' company--Washington to New Delhi via California, Tasmania and Ceylon--before merging back into the larger crowd at our final destination. I still have no idea of the logic behind the composition of the group. The train rolled on across prairie, mountain and desert--the great continental expanse of the nation we were serving-- it is still awe-inspiring to me, and how much more so must it have been to those who saw it in its first freshness--until we arrived, on a Friday afternoon, in Los Angeles. The date was September 3d, which happened to mark the end of four full years of world war.

Our ultimate destination was a port of embarkation some distance away, which required a transfer to a local train that left from another part of what seemed to be the imperial expanse of the LA terminal. The day was hot, and even in our summer suntans, we were soon soaked in sweat as we carried and dragged those cursed barracks bags through lengthy corridors and up and down several staircases, while passersby paid us virtually no attention. To them, we were an everyday wartime sight in that area, absolutely crammed with Navy, Army and Marine training and staging installations working at full blast. We finally were guided to the correct local, which may well have been salvaged from the set of The Great Train Robbery, filmed in 1903. We were happy when, after one last weary hefting of the barracks bags from

trainside to truck we were dumped into a barracks at Camp Anza, California.

The camp was one of those hastily constructed facilities that kept the war effort going at the frenzied pace of post-Pearl Harbor armed forces expansion. It had only been activated in December of 1942 and was, according to the record, a reception center, training base and staging area for troops on the move. Its buildings all looked as if they had been improvised on the spot. We expected to be there only a few days rather than the nine weeks it actually took before we became, in Transportation Corps lingo, waterborne. Approximately two of those weeks were spent in the neighborhood of San Francisco, in Camp Stoneman, whose nearest town was Pittsburg, without the final "h," possibly left off to avoid confusing the postal service into misdirecting its mail to Pennsylvania. It was on the Sacramento River near where that ran into the gigantic bay of San Francisco, and among other uses it was the holding site for thousands of westward-headed troops embarking from locations along the bay's coast, just as Camp Anza did the same for those who would sail from the San Diego area.

No one ever explained our visit to Stoneman to us, as no one ever explains anything to the lower ranks in an army, possibly because no explanation exists. One morning we were hurriedly summoned by Lt. Groves and told to pack up--there was apparently space for us on a ship leaving from San Francisco. Off we went, heavily laden, for another daylong train ride and a fresh routine of being dropped off, trucked to our new camp, led to a barracks with some empty beds for us, fed in the mess hall, finally let loose to find the PX and the Recreation Room. All of them were pretty much alike, fitted with ping pong tables, occasionally a piano, assorted games and other healthful pastimes to divert us from the bars and whorehouses in the nearby towns. And then we were left to sit as participants and victims in the old army game of

"hurry up and wait." I don't recall being assigned any duties--usually enlisted men in our situation were put on work details to keep them busy--nor any routines at all. The presumption apparently had been that we were only going to be in the camp a very short while before boarding. But day after day went by; each night men called home to say what might be the last goodbyes for a while to wives and sweethearts, each morning we were told not to stray far from our area of the camp, and each afternoon the suspense would end for a while when we were told that nothing would happen until at least next morning, when the cycle was renewed. At least we were allowed on some nights to go into San Francisco, and that certainly allayed the restlessness. It's a beautiful city even after dark, which was the only time we saw it. I had family there in the person of Aunt Elizabeth, the ex-wife of my Uncle Milton, my mother's youngest brother. There were two little cousins, Carl, who would then have been around twelve and Sarina, a girl of nine. I probably visited them at least once. I did not see Uncle Milton who was off somewhere on the globe, a senior engineer in the merchant marine, probably with a Naval Reserve officer's ranking. We were all so scattered around--my father had lived in Riverside, California, not that far from Camp Anza, prior to going overseas as an Army Air Forces dentist and was in New Guinea, so I did not see him either--nor his second wife and my nine-year-old half brother, Harry.

What I did on most of the nights on pass to San Francisco was what most of us did. We drifted in groups from bar to bar drinking and listening to a succession of tired-looking girls (and sometimes women well beyond girlhood)) crooning pop songs into a mike, backed by a piano, or a piano and a piano trio. They tried to sound seductive, even when they looked as if they had just come off a hard shift on their day job. Perhaps they had. There were women working two or more jobs, some of them soldiers' wives trying to fatten army pay to support kids or to build nest-eggs for when their particular Johnny came marching home.

Some GIs tried to pick them up, but I don't know what the percentage of success was. Others struck up acquaintances with apparently unattached women of indiscriminate sizes and shapes, and disappeared with them after a while, saying they'd see us back on the post later. I did none of the above, largely from timidity and inexperience, but likewise from honest lack of interest in one-night stands no matter how much I wanted to dive into the unaccustomed waters of sex. Two or three watered Scotches consumed in one or more places would do me, and then with one or two friends equally indisposed to trying their luck at the pickup game, I'd head for the bus or taxi back to camp. On one or two occasions the number of drinks passed sensible totals, and I'd stagger in, arm in arm with another member of Double D, weaving our way to the barracks. I always slept soundly afterward, but woke with horrible hangovers that discouraged me from frequent repeat performances.

Then, suddenly life by the Golden Gate ended.

We were informed one morning once again to pack our barracks bags in a hurry and prepare to board--no, not a ship, but a train bound back to Camp Anza. Apparently the vessel that had some room to wedge us in had miscalculated--or our space had been pre-empted by a group with a higher priority--or it had sailed before it got to Pittsburg or been diverted to another port, or--one simply never knew the answers to these riddles and it was not ours to reason why. So there was another long and boring train ride on which nothing noteworthy occurred, except that we had a routine examination for VD or other signs of delinquency almost immediately before our departure and after our arrival, without ever having been permitted to get off the train. "Jeez," someone muttered as we stood, peters out, in line to file past the examining medic, "they must think we're all Houdinis."

I don't know precisely when we got to Camp Anza for the second time, but we did not leave it until the first of November, and I suspect that we spent most of October there, because I do recall listening to broadcasts of the 1943 World Series and this was in the pre-playoff era when the regular season ended on September's last weekend and the Series began and usually ended little more than a week later. I took pleasure in the rare Yankee loss to the Cardinals, four games to one.

How did we pass those weeks? Not terribly strenuously. They were essentially an extended leave with daytime confinement to the post, but in truly gorgeous early Fall weather. Day after day offered almost without interruption, skies of cloudless blue that provided us with the wartime sound effects of airplane engines overhead, buzzing and whining up and down the scale as student pilots from nearby training fields put them through stalls, spins, dives, loops, rolls and recovery from all the above. They generally were too high to see them as more than specks, so we didn't spend time gawking at the maneuvers, but the sound was almost constantly audible during daylight hours.

Mornings were given over to various training films, drill and perhaps occasional work parties to do camp housekeeping. Details have long fled from my mind except for practicing descents into small craft via cargo nets--something as unlikely for us to do as to levitate ourselves en masse and fly across the ocean by flapping our arms. You climbed steps to a platform a few feet below the top of a wooden wall that represented a transport ship's side. A cargo net was slung over it. You straddled the wall and put one foot inside the mesh of the net, brought the other leg over, and then descended as if on a rope ladder, one of a long row of GIs doing the same, until the net ended a little above the ground, to which you then dropped, pretending that it was the interior of an LCI (Landing Craft Infantry.) I enjoyed it as harmless make-believe, but of course the wall wasn't rolling and pitching, the net wasn't

banging me into the "ship's side" as it swung out and back, the ground wasn't rising and falling on the swells and I wasn't carrying a pack, a rifle, entrenching tool, ammunition belt and other pieces of equipment guaranteeing that I would drown if I fell into the water. I liked it all the same, though I'd have gotten a lot more exercise if they had made us climb up the net as well as down.

Another Camp Anza reminder of the realities of war was the issue to us of chemically impregnated gas proof fatigues that were supposed to protect us against blistering agents. They were heavy, greasy and smelly, and luckily we did not have to wear them, but merely transport them overseas, where we happily turned them in.

Then there was the famous morning march when we were all scheduled for the routine monthly "short-arm" screening for syphilis and gonorrhea, with a possible pre-embarkation shot to protect us against diseases flourishing in India. To save time for the doctors we were commanded to strip naked except for shoes and socks in our barracks, and then marched, clad only in raincoats with our bare, hairy legs sticking out at the bottom, through a lengthy stretch of busy camp streets to get to the dispensary and back.

The afternoons I recall as surprisingly free and dedicated to unsupervised physical activity involving Double D and other GIs in the encampment. Some played games of softball, which I would have loved to join but I simply was too inept at it to be tolerated easily by the others. However we also had almost continuous games of volleyball going, and in those I could hold my own reasonably well. Informality prevailed, laughter, shouts and obscenities filled the air, and altogether waiting for our ship to arrive was a pleasant interlude, except for the constant uncertainty.

I, at least, took very little advantage of evenings when permission was granted to go into Los Angeles. For one thing, it was a long ride, accomplished by hitch-hiking, never one of my strong points--I hate to ask anybody for anything free. And with gas rationing, there wasn't an abundance of cars on the road and it was easy to get stuck. In addition, Los Angeles had no center where you could find the bright lights, the movie theaters, the bars, or the USO Center (if such was your bent) easily. In San Francisco you went to 5th and Mission (as, in New York you headed for Times Square or in Chicago, the Loop, or in Washington the area around 12th Street and New York Avenue, the scene of my enlistment.) But I never discerned--and still do not, many years and several visits later-- such a focal point in LA.

There were two experimental evenings, however, that left strong impressions.. On one of them I was hitch-hiking in with Guy Henle. We were picked up by an amiable-looking fellow who turned out to be either crazy, drunk, stoned, or a combination of the three. While chattering briskly about how he loved to do favors for "the boys," he was driving at breakneck speeds around curves and often visibly on the wrong side of the road. We exchanged glances and quickly made up a story at the first intersection where he stopped about a pre-arranged hookup with some buddies there, and got away, grateful to have escaped alive. The other foray gave me my first taste of how Los Angeles--at least those who could afford cars--computed distance. I had another California uncle on my mother's side, Chester Erskine (a tactical adaptation from the original Eckstein) who was in the movie business as a producer-director. We arranged a meeting by phone; he would host me at some elegant star-patronized restaurant on Wilshire Boulevard. I caught a ride from someone whose route into town would intersect Wilshire Boulevard, and who offered to drop me at that point,, assuring me that the place I was looking for was only "a little way down the road." He did as promised, pointed me in the right direction about half an hour early

for my appointment, and roared off. Thinking in my simple New York fashion that "a little way down the road" meant a few blocks, I set out to walk, ignoring a few possible lifts. There was also a bus line that was supposed to be in operation, but I had yet to learn that LA buses do not run frequently. After a full hour, when I had probably walked three miles--ten to fifteen minutes by car at city speeds, and in all fairness "a little way" down the Boulevard for motorists; I got to the right place. Los Angeles simply did not recognize the existence of pedestrians. Uncle Chester and his wife were forgiving, and he kept apologizing that he would ordinarily have been happy to drive me all the way back to camp, but had only an "A" gas coupon which compelled him to husband his expenditure of the precious fuel and hold it to truly necessary trips. He was a lovely man, whom I only saw once more in my lifetime on a visit to LA some twenty years later. And he did drive me to a busy crossing where I had no problem thumbing a ride home.

And so the easy but not-quite-relaxing days and evenings at Camp Anza slid by in waiting, waiting, waiting. But finally, for the last time, we were told to roll up our bunks, return any equipment issued to us temporarily, and totter under the weight of the barracks bags, now augmented by those foul-smelling gasproof clothes and our never-worn steel helmets, to a couple of trucks. They carried us through increasingly maritime-smelling neighborhoods (fish and damp salt air,) to a large dockyard full of cranes, fork lifts, stacked up boxes and bales, long open sheds, railroad tracks loading platforms and concrete wharves. There we saw at last our floating home for the next eight weeks, the Liberty ship **Cyrus T. Brady**.

She was a tub--almost literally. Guy Henle said exactly as much one night as we were in a small water taxi approaching her in the harbor of Colombo. It was the first time we had seen all of the ship as she lay at anchor in open water. "A big fuckin' iron

bathub" were his words. Liberty ships were a special class of ship whose major virtue was that they could be built quickly--so quickly that in a given period more cargo carriers could be produced than submarines--mainly German subs in the Atlantic in 1941 and 42--were sinking . They were broad in the beam, could carry some 9,200 tons of cargo at a speed of 11 knots, which equals 12.5 miles an hour, but in fact was often slower. The power came from a three cylinder steam engine that we were allowed to see at work, delivering 2500 horsepower. A single smokestack poked itself from the ships' middle, just behind the bridge, and three stubby masts held the tackle necessary to hoist cargo from dockside to hold At bow and stern, gun tubs held defense armament manned by navy crews--a 4-inch deck gun at the stern, and a small anti-aircraft cannon plus 20 and 40 millimeter AA machine guns in front. Along with life rafts and boats slung on the sides, they completed the destruction of any pretense to clean lines. It is recorded that when President Roosevelt was shown a sketch of what U.S. shipyards were being asked to build at a record rate, he dubbed the vessel "an ugly duckling." Ugly or not they seem to have done the job. Some 2500 were built in U.S shipyards between 1941 and 1945 and kept the worldwide armies of the U.S. and her allies supplied. After the war some may have remained in the active merchant marine, sold off to foreign-flag carriers. But by the nineteen-sixties great numbers of them were mothballed and rusting away in "reserve fleets," waiting for the possible next war, before being broken up for scrap There was one such cluster in the Hudson River just north of New York City that I remember passing on train trips upstate. There are apparently only two left in the United States now, preserved as museum pieces.

The **Cyrus T. Brady**, named to honor a now obscure far Western clergyman and popular historian, had a special feature -- shared by I don't know how many other Liberty ships--just for us. Two small shacks, one on each side, were on the boat deck ,

between the bridge and the smokestack. Each was just big enough to hold four three-tiered bunks, two on each side, separated by an aisle just big enough for two men to squeeze past each other, with an opening at each end. We called them "doghouses," and the term fit perfectly. I don't even recollect doors. We lived out of our barracks bags, stowed under the bottom bunks and did a lot of underwear-washing. Luckily, we were not confined to these minimal accommodations. We had the run of the ship, ate in the crew's small dining quarters which converted after meals into a recreation room, and also shared the crew's shower, laundry and toilet facilities, which decidedly did not endear us to them. And because the weather was beautiful most of the time as we steamed steadily southward and westward we passed the overwhelming majority of the daylight hours outdoors.

The presence of the doghouses seems to me in retrospect to explain why there were just twelve of us in Double D. Apparently the army transportation planners, in filling up a troopship, would have little parcels of human cargo left over to package and squeeze in elsewhere, and someone figured that two shipments of an even dozen each could be conveniently stowed in two small external cabins on the spare space of a Liberty ship's boat deck. The one opposite ours housed a dozen sailors, attached, they told us, attached to the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) a free-wheeling agency that among other things organized and helped the underground resistance in enemy-occupied territory through derring-do operations such as air drops of supplies and US instructors. It was the predecessor of the CIA, just as our own Signal Intelligence Service was the germ of the NSA, the National Security Agency that eavesdrops on electronic conversations everywhere on the globe. Naturally there was no discussion among us about our military specialties. There was, in fact, not much fraternizing of any kind that I am aware of between us and the Navy gunners and passengers, or perhaps I was unusually reclusive, especially in the evenings when poker games involving

sailors, soldiers and merchant crew took place. In any case, , the small passenger list of the **Cyrus T. Brady** seems to have consisted entirely of intelligence personnel or their support teams.

We were lucky. The army's special way of getting us across the Pacific spared us the discomforts of a troop carrier, and, as it turned out, some threatening moments. I have already noted that about the same time as we left the Hall, another India-bound detachment was sent down to Virginia, where they boarded a transport headed across the Atlantic, then through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and Red Sea, and finally across the Arabian Sea to Bombay. They were going through the Mediterranean in a convoy, when it came under attack from German bombers and at least one ship of the groups, near theirs I understand, was sunk with a heavy loss of life. I'm not sure I even knew about it when we all met up finally in New Delhi, but many years later, at a reunion of some of us who served in India, when the disaster was public knowledge, I asked one of the guys what it was like. He didn't discuss details (such as whether they were kept below decks where they could only hear the gunfire and explosions and wonder) but his description of what he was doing was short and vivid. He folded his hands together just as he must have done all those years ago, and said: "I was just praying and praying."

One other fact about the **Brady** was striking.. During the weeks of waiting in Camps Anza and Stoneman, when we got impatient someone was sure to joke that the !@#\$ authorities were waiting until a !@#\$%^ ship was built for us. That turned out to be literally the case. One of the boasts of Henry Kaiser, the prolific West Coast shipbuilder who got early contracts to deliver Liberties, was that by having separate parts of the vessel fabricated on different sites, then brought together to attach to the keel and ribs he could produce a complete ship in the unheard-of time of thirty days. The entryway to the engine compartment of our ship had a plaque giving the history of its creation. The keel had been

laid in one of the shipyards near San Francisco on September 1st or 2d ,while we were crossing the deserts and mountains of the American West. The launching had taken place on the 1st of October, followed by a period of sea trials completed some time early that month when we were playing make-believe war with the cargo nets. Then the **Cyrus T. Brady** was sailed from her birthplace down to Wilmington, California, loaded with her cargo and made ready to receive us. The great, worldwide clanking machinery of the war had finally dropped us and our conveyance into the same place at the same time. We got into our *al fresco* digs late in the afternoon of November 1st, 1943, as dusk was falling. We were fed, made our way to our unfamiliar beds, and when we woke the next morning, the engines were pounding away below decks, and the good old **Cyrus T. Brady** was already vibrating and beginning to roll beneath our inexperienced land legs as we headed into the vastness of the Pacific at a stodgy but steady pace somewhere between two and three hundred miles every twenty-four hours.

I was seasick the first few days as I think we all were, but my case at least was not severe and was more a sense of queasiness that gradually disappeared than a real bout with head hanging over the leeward railing puking into the water. And after those initial discomforts, I found that I enjoyed being at sea, even for long periods. It might have been different if we'd been traversing the stormy North Atlantic, but the Pacific lived up to its name. Day after day we awoke to cloudless skies, and a 360 degree view of a calm sea glittering in sunlight, a giant circle of blue across which our ship crawled, leaving behind a constantly vanishing white feather of a wake. For an astonishing number of miles from land we were followed by gulls and perhaps albatrosses--I never could really tell them apart--balancing on their wings without moving them for what seemed to be a quarter or even half an hour at a time. They were riding the updrafts of warm air from the ship, I suppose, and on their usual quest for food, particularly the kitchen

garbage that was left floating behind us after sailors had emptied tubs of it from the stern. I know now from my reading that at some point in the war the practice of open dumping was stopped because submarines could find the stuff and pick up the trail to a target. It was, instead, put in weighted bags and sunk, to the undoubted disappointment of the gulls who had to go back to their boring strictly fish diet. I wasn't sorry for them. Sometimes they hovered boldly so close to the deck that you could see their avian faces and their expressions struck me as simply stupid. Still it was possible to get hypnotized for long periods just keeping an eye on their graceful swoops and glides that created a kind of air show en route westward. There were other shows to watch too. I would look on with interest as some members of the Navy gun crew did their laundry in what to me was a novel way. They tied the clothes in a bundle, attached it to a line, and threw it over the stern. A short period of being whirled around in the turbulence behind the ship seemed to do the same thing that the agitation in a washing machine does--it loosened the dirt and then sloshed it away. I have no idea whether soap entered the process at any point, or whether dress uniforms got the same treatment, but I did see the shirts, dungarees and skivvies (Navy for underwear) sun-drying on improvised clotheslines and they looked fine as far as I could tell. As for other sea sights, we did pass through waters known to contain whales and porpoises, but I never saw one or heard of one being sighted. Still, even when nothing was going on, I enjoyed lying out on the deck by day, either shooting the breeze or reading, and looking outward now and then into that unbounded vista of water and air. We all passed a lot of time reading books we'd brought aboard, but the only one I recollect was War and Peace, probably because it took me the whole voyage to finish all 1200 or 1400 pages of the Modern Library Giant edition.

I'm not sure I could have gotten through it if there had been many other alternatives during the first four weeks afloat. But as with other Russian novels, once you traversed the first couple of

hundred pages remembering all the characters and all their titles and variations on their given names (there was a helpful list in the front pages of my copy) it got more interesting. Eventually I got Natasha and her brother Nikolai and Pierre and Prince Andrei and others of the cast straightened out but I still thought of the book as one of those "classics" I had read but was glad to have behind me. (Footnote: On the recommendation of a friend some twenty years later, when I had a family of my own, I tried it again and loved it. So much for the open-mindedness of youth!)

Much of the time on my hands was spent getting to know my bunkmates better, willy-nilly in those close quarters. There is a hole in my mental picture of the group, like one of those photos of the Soviet Politburo from which a few faces of deposed or disgraced big shots have been erased. I feel sure that all twelve bunks in our doghouse were filled, but I can not produce more than nine remembered images of faces with names attached, my own included. I did not save any kind of corroborative documentation--not a letter home, nor a photo, not an order, and not even a copy of a two-page set of doggerel rhymes about each member that I and several collaborators produced at some point in our transit and managed to get mimeographed. Of eight remembered inhabitants of our doghouse besides myself, two stay with me most vividly--Guy Henle, because he became my best friend in the service, and Bill Lutwiniak because he was the most intriguing person I had met up until then.

It seems self-contradictory to say that for all of our inevitable squabbling, cooped up as we were for those long weeks at sea, we of Double D became a rather cohesive group--and then to add in the next breath that I can't remember three of us and that we never re-assembled as a group in New Delhi. But we did have a particular *esprit de corps* confirmed by the fact that with the consent of all we got away with stenciling on the back of our fatigues jackets, a silhouetted figure of a KrazyKat-like feline

capering alone on her hind legs against a background of some indefinite urban skyline. The cat was supposed to be Mehitabel, the free-loving and free-wheeling heroine of Don Marquis's poems collected under the title of Archy and Mehitabel. For those to whom the names have no meaning now, Archy was a cockroach who had in another life been a vers libre bard whose soul after death was transmuted into the roach's body. He crept into Marquis office every night in search of a snack of library paste, and composed free verse messages to his "boss," by jumping on the keys of Marquis' typewriter. The poems were all in lower case because Archy wasn't heavy enough to depress the Shift key. Mehitabel, his friend, had no owner and lived by foraging in garbage cans while dodging missives during her "singing" from backyard fences. She saw herself as an "artiste," who unfortunately kept getting "abducted" by gentlemen tomcats and stuck with kittens whom she soon abandoned. She insisted that in a prior life, she had been a goddess in Egypt, but despite the comedown, her reaction was "wotthehell, wottthehell," and her motto "toujours gai," which motto was also on the Double D logo. I think that Henle and I introduced her to the gang, and as enlisted men we all recognized a kindred spirit of rebellion. How we managed to escape official reproof for altering our government-issued uniforms I don't know, but supervision was almost nonexistent while we were in transit, and when we finally got to New Delhi and went to work in our offices, I doubt that we ever put on the fatigues again. (Besides which, many things were overlooked in actual theaters of war where, with exceptions, the emphasis was more on getting it done than looking like recruiting posters while doing it.)

Our logo was created and the stencil cut by Jim Giesemann, a gentlemanly Tennessean, if I recall aright, whom I believe was in the "supply side" of things--that is, furnishing codes to our units rather than breaking those of the Japanese. The other Southerner among us was Jimmy Murphy, whose sexual saturation bombing

the weekend of our departure from Washington I've already described. Paul Derthick, a cryptanalyst, was a rather morose Kentuckian, slightly older than our average. Though I do recall occasional laughter from him, my overall memory is that he always seemed to look as if he were suffering from indigestion. Bill Pickering, in contrast, smiled the easy smile of a guiltless hedonist. He smoked incessantly, loved to drink when we could get it and enjoyed talking about the pleasures of past sexual conquests. He carried in his wallet a proudly displayed photo of one of his female partners, a very nice-looking young woman posed with a scarf draped around her neck and shoulders and nothing else. He had little but disdain for most of the army's rules, which was true of most of us unwarlike citizens temporarily enrolled for military duty. He was also intelligent, well-read and argumentative, and in those long, dull hours and days, he and I often got into red-faced shouting matches over trivial questions that I've long forgotten. As the voyage stretched on and on, quarrels became more frequent, but they never came to blows and were mended as quickly as made. The conditions that made us cranky--long confinement together--also meant that we couldn't afford or maintain long periods of sulking.

Hugh Myers, who had introduced Scotch to my life on the westbound train, was a tall, lantern-jawed Pennsylvania Dutchman who spoke little, often in grunts, and seemed always to be compressing his lips. He was friendly if not exactly outgoing, and one of his distinguishing feats was an ability to emit long, noisy farts virtually at will, which he would often do to entertain us. Laughing at flatulence or jokes about it is puerile, but we all did it and I have to confess that I can't restrain myself from doing it still. Maybe because it's the great comic leveler that brings us all, beggars and kings, down to anal level. I mention "Old Hugh," or "Hugh-Pew" as we tended to call him, with considerable sadness as he was the only one of all the friends I had in the service to die in it. It happened after I had left New Delhi for Kunming, and as

reported to me, Hugh was on a train ride during a short leave of absence and unwisely bought something to eat from one of the vendors who would swarm around at station stops. Some hours later, severely ill, he was taken off the train and to an army hospital, where he quickly died of food poisoning. The details may be wrong; the core fact of his passing is not. I suppose that dying of a bellyache does not lend itself to platitudes about heroic self-sacrifice in battle, but Hugh wouldn't have been there if it hadn't been for the war, and as far as I am concerned he was as much a casualty as anyone killed in action.

The sixth member who I recall was Lee Poynter, from Sibley, Iowa. He may have been the oldest of us, for my recollection is of an already somewhat lined face and graying stubble. He was easygoing, good-natured and enjoyed the role of class clown. I did not get into the poker or crapshooting or other contests other than that diverted some of us, but I did join in almost daily, long games of Hearts, with no betting. Poynter played Hearts with smiles and zest. If someone rid himself of a card that Lee needed, he would grin triumphantly and intone: "THAT was a mistake!" as he scooped it in. Occasionally he would succeed in passing the Queen of Spades (never referred to by us except as The Old Bitch) to the player next to him. It carried a negative score and if you got stuck with it in your hand when the game ended and points were tallied, you were sure to lose. If you found yourself holding it you were supposed to pass it on while remaining deadpan, but it was impossible if you were sitting next to Lee, who could not resist exploding into whoops of laughter as soon as he had gotten rid of the card. He was a friendly tease. You could not really get angry at him. He had a golden opportunity when a couple of members of the group, on their last pre-embarkation exam turned out to have picked up "crabs," lice in the pubic hair. (They could have come from recently infected and unwashed bedding or from intimate body contact--I did not ask!) The treatment at that time required a shave of the infected area,

followed by a daily application of an insecticidal ointment, Cuprex, which our victims would usually apply while getting dressed in the morning , bitterly complaining all the while. Poynter, meanwhile, would sit on his bunk pretending to read out loud their letters home. "Dear Ma, I'm shaving in the strangest places," he would yell, and then haw-haw at the curses which were re-directed from the Cuprex to him.

And then there was Bill Lutwiniak, whose name may be familiar to crossword puzzle fans, since he composed many of them for the Washington Post in the postwar years, and edited a number of compilations which may be still in circulation. Bill was a natural-born cryptanalyst. While still in high school and only sixteen years old he had won a crptogram-solving contest sponsored by a newspaper in the New Jersey city on New York's outskirts where he lived. By the time he graduated he was apparently already well known in the limited circle of puzzle fanatics in the country. He did not go beyond twelfth grade, and some time before December of 1941, when he would just have turned twenty-two, he was already in Washington working as a civilian for the Signal Intelligence Service in the pre-Pentagon War Department offices on Constitution Avenue. At some point he was drafted and immediately returned to his former desk, decidedly unhappy with the change from civilian liberty to uniformed servitude. (He was, however, promoted through the enlisted ranks as rapidly as the system allowed. He came into our barracks as the sergeant in command, and passed along orders from on high dutifully and with manifest lack of enthusiasm.) He was highly regarded by his peers at Arlington Hall, and I am not sure why he was sent to India, which was a lesser theater of operations. When the war was over he put his civvies back on and continued to work for the successor organizations--Army Security Agency and then the National Security Agency--very successfully until his death in 1992.

Bill was a puzzle unsolved to me. He literally used "dems, dese and dose" in ordinary speech. He was fat, he drank beer steadily after hours and, when getting off the midnight shift, as I did with him a few times, had it with breakfast in town, spurning the mess hall. He swore that it went down very well with pancakes. He chain-smoked, he cursed a great deal even by our army standards, and he left a clear impression of openly seeking and getting sex with prostitutes or at least bar pickups when on pass. He was the walking image of a boastful blue-collar blowhard-- Archie Bunker years before there was an Archie Bunker. Working class and proud of it, and not ready to give an inch to anybody's pretensions to superiority.

Yet his gifts were clearly recognized in the world of cryptanalysts, populated with high-voltage academics and freelance intellectuals. And he was no idiot savant, He read widely, whether simply in search of more strange and rare words to add to his dazzling store, or for other pleasures I don't know. But when we would occasionally come in from an evening in town Bill, with a bellyful of beer, would head for the latrine, where lights were kept on all night and settle down with his back against the wall, a cigarette in his mouth, and a book propped on his knees. There we would find him, if we got up to empty our own full bladders in the small hours, until long after Taps.

We were not close in any way. I believe that at the outset he thought of me as one more college boy, wet behind the ears and a little prissy, which was probably right. And I thought of him-- well, that was my problem--I didn't quite know what to think of him. In the neat little world that had been constructed for me by my upbringing there were two kinds of young men. One type was studious and serious, not beyond occasional foolish pranks and scrapes or immune to the temptations of sin, but possessed of "nice" girl friends from families like their own, and headed reliably and responsibly towards business or profession, then marriage and

responsibility. On the other hand there were the louts who had no respect for their elders, hung out in the streets, gambled, drank and fornicated, and lacked visible ambitions to rise in life. You could tell the difference with special ease by their academic records. The good boys were smart and brought home top grades; the coarse slobs were, among other failings, simply dumb or lazy. They might surpass us on the playing fields or bully and beat us up out of sheer jealousy, but there was an unstated premise that revenge would be ours, because their kind would, if they worked at all, wind up working for us.

Stupid (and class-based) caricatures, of course, which I am exaggerating here, but which I tended to incorporate without question. I saw the world in very uncomplicated and ungenerous terms, I suspect --much like many other "nice Jewish boys" of my time and place. So there I was. Mr. Goody Two-Shoes himself. And here was Bill Lutwiniak, challenging the very foundations of my world view--clearly smarter in his fashion than anyone I had met thus far, unquestionably decent and fair in his dealings with all of us and highly serious about his work, but exhibiting all those deplorable "bad boy" behaviors that I saw as signposts on the road to a wasteful existence. It finally began to dawn on me that something was misfiring in my system of thought, but if that was so, what was the consequence? Was I too uptight? A namby-pamby? Should I begin to shift my own style to something more in conformity with his, which did seem to be a good deal more common among the others around me in this great world of olive drab and khaki that had so many more possibilities than I had ever imagined ?

It was Guy who broke the problem open with one of those statements so simple and obvious that you wonder how you could have missed it . One afternoon, shooting the breeze when we were on deck alone together, I confided my dilemma to him. He gave me a puzzled look that plainly showed his own surprise that I could

not see what was so obvious. "Well," he told me, "I admire Bill too, but that doesn't mean I have to be like him." A tremendous load was lifted off my mind. I had simply never thought of it that way before. I had read and enjoyed all the classic works that were on the freshman Humanities reading list at Columbia--the Greek dramas and the plays by Moliere and Shakespeare, St. Augustine and Dante, Montaigne and Swift, and the two fat volumes that we had to start on early because we read them in full, Don Quixote and Tom Jones. Those and many more, some in excerpts, some entirely. All of them suggested the richness, complexity and dilemmas of human existence--and much as I loved them it never occurred to me to apply that new awareness to my own life. It was wonderful, and it was all about Others. I'm not quite sure of the moral of the tale. It certainly is not that the reading of "the classics" is a waste of time. I still believe that they made up the best part of my three years at Columbia. But as for their making you a better, or fuller person: maybe yes and maybe no, but you have to be ready for the messages to take, and sometimes you don't reach that point until a long time after you've passed your last exam.

In any case, I am wandering far away from my recollections of the war of 1939-45, and into the terrain of autobiography, which wasn't my intention in starting. Certainly my own reactions to life in the wartime army were shaped by my own background, which was sheltered in many ways I didn't realize. But as I have said before, it was growing up time for us all, in very special circumstances and the service records and inner autobiographies can't be totally pried apart.

The first encounter I ever had with Guy, who had arrived at Arlington Hall before my group of enlistees, was when he was put in charge of a work detail to which I'd been assigned. He wore blue fatigues, meaning that he had been in the army longer than we had, since the color had been switched to green by the time of our

induction. They gave the wearer an air of experience and authority that he was sorry to lose when, soon afterwards, he had to turn them in. The first words he spoke were: "All right, you guys," followed by a crisp, clear statement of what we were going to do in a tone that was neither harsh nor good-natured but carried the clear implication that we were going to do it now and do it right. It was his signature opening in passing on any messages from authority, his equivalent of "Listen up!" and it got so familiar that one of our barracks 311 mates, Tony Kenosian, a popular joker of Armenian descent, used to amuse us--Guy included--with a first-rate imitation of it. Guy fit in easily with the others, groused and caroused with the rest of us but generally kept in his behavior, a note of control and precision that distanced him a little. In an idle hour in the port of embarkation we all collaborated in writing a set of limericks about each member of Double D, and the one for him (mostly of my composing) ran:

If your grammar slipped up it was Guy
Who corrected you with a cold eye
For his grammar was pure
As his dice game was sure
He'd not let a boner slip by

He was a year and eight months older than I, was a 1941 graduate of Swarthmore which until then I had never heard of, had gone through Columbia's School of Journalism and must have been swept from there almost directly into the Army. I did not recall him from any of my civilian Japanese classes, but there must have been several of them on other campuses that funneled students into intelligence branches of the service.

We did not hit it off immediately--certainly my fault as much as his, for I had a great deal to learn about living with a group, and my tendency to be outgoing, verbose, and attention-hogging must have been pretty off-putting. But the relationship warmed up a

little as we shared the ups and downs of enlisted life. We bonded more tightly once we got to New Delhi, because we were the only two translators in the group, and were constantly thrown together especially during a critical period that came in the Spring of 1944. Despite our different personalities we discovered a number of things that we held in common.

Guy's father, James Henle, was the owner (or possibly co-owner) of Vanguard Press, which was notable for having published James T. Farrell's novels, including Studs Lonigan, which was virtually required reading for anyone interested in modern American writing in the nineteen-thirties. Guy and I shared an interest in books and reading in general--both of us admirers of the New Yorker, which was then in a particularly flourishing period. Not only did it run first class short stories, but its compelling non-fiction articles during World War II remain, for me, absolutely the best journalism of the war. They were long pieces that didn't describe battles and leaders but rather focused on some small groups or individuals doing curious things in out-of-the-way theaters or the rear areas behind the major fronts. Many were by staff writers who had themselves been drafted or enlisted.

Both of us liked that style, and we shared other passions like baseball, baseball clichés and the musical parodies of Spike Jones. Both of us were hoping for careers in journalism. Guy had a head start, having edited the Swarthmore student newspaper, followed by his year in Columbia's School of Journalism. I could only match against that the editorship of my Stuyvesant High School literary magazine. For the record, we both made it, after a fashion, in the postwar period. Guy, following a stint as sales executive for Vanguard, became an editor at House Beautiful--he was himself a first-rate do-it-yourself maker of home furnishings-- and, later, Consumer Reports. I plunked two years as an Associate Editor at American Heritage into the latter part of my twenty-eight years of college teaching. Something in each of us found a

connection in the other. What appeared to me as his level-headed coolness balanced my own emotional hyperventilation. I'm not sure of how he saw our friendship, which is, I suppose, as hard to explain as love.

One of the questions I ask myself as I look back was how we kept ourselves sane over those long weeks in our isolated world where one day was exactly like another and we passengers had no duties. No newspapers, no radios, nowhere to go except to walk the perimeter of the deck looking at exactly the same vista. We created our own distractions from the boredom. There were card games and there were books that we circulated among ourselves after we had finished them. Then there was the great florin project that occupied some of us for a week or so after a twenty-four hour one-night break when the ship put in briefly at Hobart, Tasmania. If you took a florin, (a small coin replaced after the war by a twenty-cent piece when Australian currency went decimal) and hammered it lightly on its edge while holding it vertically and rotating it a bit at a time, eventually the rim would widen, leaving a depression on both sides of the coin. With a drill and various-sized round files borrowed, like the hammer, from the ship's carpenter, you drilled a hole in the center and then patiently using files of increasing diameter, widened that until you had a ring. Several members of our gang, and perhaps some of the sailors in their spare time, whiled away hours creating this curious piece of "jewelry." I chose not to, having at that moment fulfilled any taste for shop work in high school.

There were some memorable moments to lighten the monotony. One of them arrived when we crossed the equator. Almost all the merchant and Navy sailors aboard had already done so, and so were entitled, as "shellbacks," to haze us "polliwogs" for a day, culminating in our acceptance into the shellback fraternity. We were handed out our tasks for the day early in the morning. My instructions were, to "wear a sheet over no cloth" [sic] and

carry water for shellbacks." I finally figured out how to drape a bed sheet on my person in a way that wouldn't trip me as I walked around the deck with a pitcher in one hand and a cup in the other, crying my aquatic wares, pouring drinks when required, then going back to the galley for refills. Most of the shellbacks doing the hazing were the Navy gun crew; they were kids with a crude and unimaginative sense of humor, mostly scatological and sexual. For the actual initiation ceremony, we were blindfolded and led before King Neptune and his Queen, then commanded to kneel and "kiss the royal cock," which was thrust in front of our lips, and easily recognizable as a raw hot dog. There may have been a "royal pussy," too--memory mercifully fails me. Then we could remove the blindfolds to reveal the King and Queen, both wearing wigs fashioned from mops, sitting on upturned buckets. He had a fake beard, and "she" had a couple of oranges or melons thrust under "her" Navy tee-shirt to create very generous boobs. For our pains we got a mimeographed certificate of our elevated status, which I wish I had kept but didn't.

There were also lifeboat drills and on at least one occasion, firing practice for the gun crew, both reminders, like our rifle training, that the war in which we were engaged as remote supporting cast was ultimately and basically a matter of men trying to destroy each other. But in actuality the one practice we watched was more like an afternoon at the carnival. All hands were at assigned battle stations, and we passengers also had our mandated positions. I, along with others, was in the forward gun tub as an ammunition passer. It was the one with the Anti-Aircraft machine guns. Target balloons were released and then shot at, and since every fifth round was a tracer, the visual effect was that of a chain of small shiny globes, looking innocent and toylike as they almost floated skyward, rather than what they were--explosive bullets intended to turn an airplane into a pilot's fiery coffin.. We were even allowed to try our hands for a few rounds. You sat in a kind of sling chair attached to the gun, leaned back and tried to catch a

drifting balloon in the gun sight before pressing the triggers to launch a short burst. I don't recall any of us hitting anything.

Another short-term diversion was provided by a Navy signaler who taught a small group of volunteer students, myself included, the semaphore alphabet used for daylight communication between ships on radio silence by wig-wagging two signal flags . (Night communication was by shuttered high power lamps that blinked in Morse code.) We all played with that for a few days until the novelty wore off, but I am reminded that it was one of those odd things I learned that I could never have imagined myself capable of before the war. Two other such surprise acquirements were learning to disassemble and clean both a rifle and a forty-five caliber side arm, the first in pre-embarkation training and the second I forget where.

The first chance to reacquaint ourselves with land came on the first of December--after exactly thirty days at sea--when we made a 24-hour stopover at Hobart, Tasmania. We steamed in early in the morning, gazing at the view of a wide and beautiful bay and a distant background of what looked to be low mountains, like the Catskills I knew back home. The ships crew was divided into liberty parties that took turns going ashore, but we were simply set free with a stern reminder that the ship sailed at dawn the next day, and if we were not back on it, we would be in very, very serious trouble.

No clear impression of Hobart's looks outside of the dock area remain with me. More impressive than the local scenery was the overwhelming cordiality that was shown to us according to my own experience and what was reported by others the next morning. Cries of "Hi, Yank" from strangers at street corners. People in bars offering to buy us drinks. Girls encountered in public places who volunteered to show us the town and possibly proceed from there to broadening the acquaintance, depending on how the first steps

had gone. Smiles everywhere. You would have thought we had just liberated them from a Japanese occupation, except that this was a full year and a half since the Winter of 1942 when the Japanese had swept almost irresistibly through the southwest Pacific and seemed entirely capable of seizing Australian coastal cities. That threat had long ago vanished as the Allies began to push back the extreme frontiers of Tokyo's expanded empire, so relief from anxiety was clearly not one of the motives for the kindness. In part it was owing to the simple fact that the Aussies themselves really and indisputably were friendly folks. They had a good deal of the open-ness and genuine egalitarianism that characterized our own Far West a half century earlier. And on a minor note, Hobart appeared to be hit with a cigarette shortage and welcomed the packs that American visitors freely dispensed in exchange for courtesies received. Tobacco, by all the accounts I have read, was almost a universal currency during the war in the many areas deprived of it.

More importantly, they were happy to see healthy young males again. For Australians, the war was entering its fifth year. As one of the commonwealths of the British empire, their nation had been fighting since September 3, 1939. As in World War I, Australian armies had been sent from their gigantic island to fight in Europe and in North Africa. When the war came home to them in December 1941, many had already died abroad. When Britain's possessions in Southeast Asia, including supposedly impregnable Singapore fell, any Australian New Zealand troops (Anzacs) stationed there had been vanished into prison camps. So all the soldiers of and sailors of whatever nationality entering or passing through were reminders of what they were missing, and in some cases--at least mine--became hasty temporary surrogates for absent male family members.

I left the ship with one of my fellow Double D members, I have forgotten who, and as it was early morning, we decided to

head for someplace to get what we had heard of as a special Australian breakfast treat of "stye and iggs." We found a place recommended to us, that had a pretty dining room, and as we were happily cutting into our steaks we noticed a foursome at a nearby table looking at us and at each other--two men of what seemed to be middle age or older, and their wives. Presently one of them came over and introduced himself, told us how happy they were to see us, and invited us to join their table. It turned out that they were respectively the Ministers of Agriculture and of Mining for the province of Tasmania, and both had sons or other young relatives in the armed forces "abroad." They insisted on buying our breakfasts and offered to take us on a ride to see a bit of Hobart's attractive hinterland. There were spectacular views of the town and harbor from the surrounding heights. The details of the trip have gotten fuzzy, but the warmth of the conversation, as they asked us about our home towns, families, schooling and peacetime activities lingers. They brought us back to our starting point and went off to work with pleasant goodbyes on both sides. I have only met a few Australians since the war and have yet to run into one that I didn't like .

The rest of the day is something of a blur. I didn't feel very adventurous, and though I had at least one more meal and a couple of drinks, I neither got plastered nor picked up a girl, and I was back at the ship by early evening. I didn't get up at dawn to see if any last-minute revelers were staggering up the gangplank as it was lifted, and by the time we all emerged from the tiny mess and recreation hall below decks after our own morning meal, Hobart was already dropping below the horizon behind us.

The next leg of our run was from Hobart northwestward to Ceylon. It took three weeks, and was beautiful. Nights on deck were somewhat chilly, as we were now close to south polar latitudes, but all the same it was summer down there and the skies simply blazed with southern constellations clear night after clear

night. I don't know the distance from Hobart to Colombo and we may have been swinging further south before turning towards India to stay out of regular shipping lanes that might be hunting grounds for Japanese submarines, which would have lengthened the time it took. One night we became aware that the Cyrus T. Brady was shimmying. Whatever surface we touched sent a ripple through our fingers as if we were holding a vibrator. It went on for about two hours, then stopped. The story we heard later from the crew--and we could never know when they were pulling our legs--was that the bridge had been warned of a submarine in our vicinity and the captain had put on full speed to outrun a possible attacker. That was what had caused the vibration. What ended it, the report ran, was that the shake, rattle and roll of the hastily built ship was threatening to damage the ship and the captain thought it the better part of valor to slow down and take his chances with a sub. A rousing tale if true. We certainly were entering a part of the south Pacific still within the cruising range of their U-boats, but I have only recently learned from the Internet that Japanese naval doctrine considered the submarine a part of fleet operations--for scouting, locating and sinking enemy warships rather than for primary use in cutting the enemy's seaborne supply lines. The same source declares that in the entire war the Japanese sank only some 164 merchant vessels, compared to the many hundreds destroyed in the Atlantic and Mediterranean by the Germans. So we were not in that much danger. Our final leg up the Bay of Bengal to Calcutta, put us in range of Japanese air bases and was a different story.

On the 21st of December 1943, we steamed into the harbor of Colombo, and saw our first scar of actual war--a half submerged ship, sunk in a Japanese air raid in the early days of the fighting. Offsetting this somber new reminder was a large billboard atop a building on the shore that read KEEP YOUR PECKER UP WITH TEA. For any reader who doesn't get the joke immediately, it was a great example of the pitfalls of how different children of a

mother tongue employ her words. In the UK and at least parts of the empire "pecker" had been a popular term for courage or resolution since the middle of the nineteenth century. Over here it's one of countless slang terms for the penis. All these years later those two contrasting sights remain my dominant impression of Colombo.

What else we saw of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) was attractive. We were anchored out in the harbor, waiting for our convoy to form. Transportation to and from dockside was provided by hired water taxis run by Ceylonese boatmen. Setting foot on shore, we were surrounded immediately by various peddlers, who called us "Mahster," and offered us--just as old timers in the crew had foretold--not only an array of souvenirs, but "jig-jig" in infinite varieties. "Lovely girls, Mahster, you will see, European girls, many kinds girls, do whatever you ask, come look." Virgins were also featured on the bill of fare. I never heard personal verification of the persistent rumor that some of the pimps were teen-age boys selling the services of their sisters, but I don't doubt that it happened. What was surprising to me was the tale of one member of the group that as he kept trotting along rejecting offers of various kinds of women from the pursuing pimps, one of them played a new card by asking: "Want little boy, mahster?"

Once you escaped the initial assault, found a taxi and got to a bar or restaurant, however, things got better. Flowering bushes and trees of the most extraordinary variety of colors were everywhere, tropical birds fluttered in and out among their branches, and the warm ocean breezes invited hours of sitting in open-air cafes, sipping long, cool highballs and eating from abundant platters of seafood and fruits before we made our way back to the docks and argued with the boatmen about how many pennies we would pay to be taken out to the ship. It was my first taste of how imperialism worked for Europeans and Americans who were among the most ordinary of ordinary folks at home.

Here we were all "mahsters" thanks to our white skins, being waited on by low-paid, dark-complexioned "natives" in their own countries. I don't even remember doing any formal sightseeing in the parks and botanical gardens or at any other tourist spots among the fountains and white buildings. Loafing was the primary occupation of the hours we were allowed ashore.

On the **Cyrus T. Brady** herself routines were relaxed. At one point the crew rigged up a platform alongside the ship from which we could go swimming in our undershorts, although a few valiant souls dived from the deck without breaking their necks. I took the easy non-diving way and enjoyed the warm water. There seemed to be no dangerous marine life to worry about, but I was extra careful to keep my mouth closed and not swallow, certain as I was that the harbor might be the toilet of convenience for the boatmen.

It all seemed remote from the violence that had accounted for that wrecked ship in the harbor, like a skeleton hanging from the gallows in the middle of the Garden of Eden.

But when we left Colombo for the final days of the voyage in January of the new year the reminders of the war that brought us there were refreshed. Not only was the ship in convoy, but even we passengers were given duties in case of attack, mine once again to be an ammunition passer for the bow gun. We were also put on anti-sub watch, standing regular tours with the Navy personnel. Shaken out of bed at midnight or four A.M. I would pull on my uniform and shuffle down to the galley to draw a cup of coffee from the perpetually full pot--a great Navy custom, so far as I was concerned--and then make my way to the forward gun tub, where the lookout I was relieving would hand me the pair of binoculars hanging from his neck and take off. Ours was not a huge convoy, but looking out at even a few columns of ships, perhaps a couple of dozens in all, loaded with thousands of tons of

war materiel gave a sense of the power to produce that was the key to eventual victory. It was a little awesome. I got the same feeling at the war's end when, one day in China, I passed a vehicle park the size of two or three football fields, filled with nothing but trucks and weapons carriers, almost bumper to bumper in side by side rows with just enough space between them for drivers and maintenance crews to reach them. I've often wondered if they were left there and who eventually got hold of them. The Communist or Nationalist armies in China's 1945-1949 civil war? Black marketers? Provincial war lords, or even honest businesses? We could not only build these billions' worth of trucks and other military equipment of every kind and deliver them all over the globe, but could afford to leave many of them there as "surplus" because I presume it was cheaper (and better for the U.S. economy) than to ship them back home.

I doubt that I was a very efficient lookout. Even with the binoculars, through which I was dutifully sweeping my eyes from horizon to horizon, I don't think that I could have made out a periscope or the feather of foam in its wake at any distance. Or worse, the wake of a torpedo racing towards the hull under me. And it was hard not to doze off when the sea was calm and the only sound was the steady, monotonous, soporific throbbing of the engine. I played memory games with myself, setting up quizzes like: "Name ten first lines of books that you read in freshman Humanities," or "Write a five-sentence biography of all the characters in War and Peace." I summoned up snatches of poetry to recite, reeled off lists of significant dates in my head --and for the most part, helped by coffee, it worked. I daydreamed a lot, too, but that was almost as fatal to vigilance as falling asleep. At any rate, I did my duty, the convoy and our ship survived, and I was glad to have had the experience and even gladder to have it behind me.

I wasn't frightened, not because I am brave but because I am a blind optimist, constantly expecting, against all evidence, that things will turn out right. I have no doubt that in actual combat I'd have been terrified, and I have always hoped that I would do my duty even in that state of mind. It's a test I didn't have to face, luckily for me I suppose, though having been raised in a culture in which physical courage, especially in battle, is a mighty measure of manhood, the unresolved question will always nag me. At any rate there was only one scary moment. The ships in convoy communicated with each other by daytime semaphore and nighttime shuttered lanterns blinking Morse Code. But there were also some pre-arranged signals by blasts on the ship's steam whistles that sounded like the hoarse cry of a gigantic creature either wounded or in the middle of mating. So on this one night, we were in the small mess hall. A poker game was going on and I was simply hanging around and watching. There were probably a dozen or fourteen of us in the room. Suddenly the whistle cut loose with a long, long, ear-piercing blast and simultaneously the room was plunged into darkness. We had no idea what was happening, whether the signal was an alarm, why the lights were out, and what would come next. But after a few seconds that felt very long to me, the lights went on again and I saw Guy, who had been in the midst of dealing, still frozen in position, holding the deck in the palm of one hand and a single card between the thumb and forefinger of the other. Without a word he resumed the deal where he had left off and everyone exhaled. The signal didn't apparently have a sinister meaning, and the sudden blackout was probably due to some electrical glitch--a short circuit, a blown fuse, a mistakenly switched-off generator.

Other than that the trip was blissfully uneventful. And on a moonlit night in the third week of January, 1944, we turned into the Hooghly River on my watch, and suddenly, I was surrounded by the overwhelming first impact of India.

It was the unexpectedness of it that grabbed me first. In the gathering light I saw near the river's bank what seemed to be a great crowd of men wearing what looked like white togas standing waist deep in the water which they were splashing over themselves. The air smelled of something burning, and I saw columns of greasy smoke on shore around which people were gathered to watch files of approaching marchers carrying long and narrow objects wrapped in red. What I was seeing, I later learned, was devout Hindus ritually bathing themselves in the Hooghly, which is an outlet of the sacred Ganges River and on the bank, corpses being carried to Hindu funerals, in which the bodies of the dead are cremated on open pyres and the ashes afterwards scattered in the river. There seemed to be a lot of these in progress, and I found out why a day or two later, when some of us got into Calcutta on a pass from the camp on the city's outskirts where we waited for our transportation to New Delhi. On the way to a restaurant to which we'd been directed, we passed through reeking streets and sidewalks full of people of all ages--whole families squatting, sometimes under open-air "shelters" of cloth spread on sticks. These were their "homes," and among them were strewn what looked like bundles of laundry dropped haphazardly on the ground. Those, we were informed, were men and women dying or already dead of hunger because there was a famine in Bengal then in its second year.

The horror of it was that in the restaurant itself, there was abundant food--a menu full of fine Indian dishes, which I was too un-imaginative to try at that time, and of plenty of beef, pork, chicken and fish prepared in European style, plus rice, bread and sweet desserts in full measure. Granted that in the most aggravated economic distress, there will always be people who still have money to spend and establishments to serve them, it took away a good deal of my appetite.

There was no crop failure involved. The British-run government of India had adopted a wartime policy of "exporting" rice grown in Bengal to the more industrialized parts of India to feed the growing number of urban workers and military personnel. Meanwhile, important sources of imported rice were lost with the Japanese conquest of Burma a year earlier, during which the British had destroyed large stockpiles of rice to keep them out of Japan's hand., These curtailments in supply drove the price of Bengal rice upwards, beyond the means of ordinary Bengalis, especially those in rural areas without land on which to grow food of their own. They flocked to Calcutta hoping to find work or relief, and there they simply died. Some estimates, according to what I have read, run as high as four million victims. The situation only changed when a new governor-general arrived late in 1943 who successfully persuaded London to release stockpiles in other parts of India.

What I saw in those streets was shattering. I'd been a small child early in the Great Depression, and had seen, without really understanding it all, breadlines, as well as men in threadbare business suits standing on street corners selling apples in the Winter of 1931. As I grew older I saw news photos of whole families evicted from their homes or apartment houses, their pitiful worldly goods around them on the sidewalk. I read about farmers forced off their land by foreclosures when prices of wheat and cotton plummeted to below the cost of production. I went to high school with classmates who shivered in thin, worn clothing on bitterly cold days, and I walked in the city's parks where homeless men slept on benches., covered only with scavenged newspapers. Neither my pals nor I were strangers to the sights (and for some of them, the experience) of destitution. But I had never witnessed (nor smelled) human misery of this magnitude first hand. Sheet-wrapped cadavers lying ignored in the gutter like road kill were simply outside the boundaries of my imagination. Later on, in Old Delhi, I would see plenty of beggars and cripples

and more "street families," but not the wasted bodies of men and women literally perishing of hunger. That night I formed an impression of Calcutta as the asshole of the universe.

Nothing that happened in the transient camp where we waited several days for our transportation to New Delhi improved that opinion. The heat was damp, oppressive, and merciless. They gave us work details to keep us busy and distracted. One sweltering day I spent several hours on a truck loading and unloading portions of butchered animal carcasses for a couple of the mess halls. They were heavy, smelly and sticky and left bloodstains on the shoulders of my fatigue jacket and almost converted me to vegetarianism then and there. With the sweat pouring down my face and neck and my back hurting, I reminded myself of how lucky I was that I wasn't likely to wind up among those whose who had to do the grunt work of the world for most of their lives. My respect for them went up with every degree on the thermometers of that inferno.

The food was likewise terrible. Breakfast was powdered eggs and Spam. The eggs, when reconstituted with water and scrambled were a curdled yellow mess that could only be eaten by heavy salting. One morning, unaware that lukewarm salt water was an emetic, I ate some over which I had poured a shower of salt and washed it down with a swig of table water that had been standing for a while, then promptly ran outside and heaved it up. Spam is still a "processed" product made from the slaughterhouse trimmings of the hogs' carcasses, grinding them together with seasonings, and packing the result, encased in gelatin, into loaf-shaped cans. At least it was made so then. Sliced and fried, it was barely tolerable. Unprocessed and greasy in sandwiches (often served on Sunday nights in the mess halls) it tasted exactly like the dressed-up waste that it was. It had some nutritional value I presume, but its enjoyability rating was subterranean. Because it was easy to store carry and keep, we saw a great deal of it

overseas. At dinner, we often did get get regular meat of the kind that I had carried raw from truck to kitchen, but it was so gristly and tough that we could not believe it came from cattle raised for eating. Our collective guess was that it was the toughened flesh of water buffaloes that had died of overwork . Or goats dead of old age.

I am not angling for pity here. We all knew that any poor Indian, even in non-famine times, would have sold his soul for a single one of our meals, and that we were worlds better off than our fellow GIs in the field. But it was one more strike against Calcutta.

Redeeming features were few and small. We were re-united with our officer-in-charge, Lieutenant Lowell Groves--I have no idea how he got there--which meant that we were no longer orphans without an advocate, which could subject you to a great deal of trouble in the army. And we got bundles of mail that had been held for us, though possibly that particular blessing only descended after we finally arrived in New Delhi, APO (Army Post Office) 885, one of those numbers that , like my first serial number, has lodged itself permanently in my mind. When we finally left stinking, steamy, impoverished Calcutta I breathed a prayer of thanks that our final destination, the headquarters of the China-Burma-India Theater (CBI) were in the generally clean, relatively cool city of New Delhi, built around 1910 for the pukka sahibs who still ruled India in the name of God and King - Emperors Edward VII, who died that year, and his successor George.V

Whether it was in Calcutta or New Delhi that we got that first welcome batch of mail, it was the occasion of the Great Commissioning Disappointment. I include it here as a curious

incident of the unusual circumstances that brought me into signal intelligence. As we sat in our beds in the quarters assigned to us, opening stacks of three-month-old letters, I suddenly heard a loud shout of "God DAMN!!" from Guy, and I looked around in time to see him, in sheer rage, pick up one of his heavy barracks bags and toss it several feet away from him like a crumpled piece of paper. He had just opened a letter from one of our Arlington Hall classmates and learned that they were almost all now second lieutenants. The background to the story was this. Apparently in recruiting volunteers for Arlington Hall from Japanese language students in various colleges (Yale, Harvard and Columbia were the only ones I knew of personally at that time)) officers like Major Swenson had told the candidates that they would either enter as, or quickly become, commissioned officers, which was the practice in the Navy's language school in Colorado. After several months, however, it became clear that neither alternative was in the offing or apparently even under consideration by the Pentagon.

It didn't bother me for I had never received any such promise to the best of my recall. Perhaps I'd missed it in the course of fencing with the Major to find out what I would actually be doing if I took up his offer. But a number of the other students--I seem to remember the Yale contingent in particular--were furious. They bitched about their perceived betrayal loud and long in the barracks and apparently some of them had connections in Washington to take up the cause. I gathered from later information that one of the Yale graduates, "Tunky" Saunders, whose actual first name I've long forgotten was the nephew of a member of Congress from Mississippi, and had gotten his fond uncle to work on the problem. Whatever and whoever was responsible, apparently wheels were set in motion somewhere in the Pentagon early in 1943. There seemed to be no automatic machinery in place to commission us on graduation, like those who finished flight school, for example. We had no graduation. Our special training under Reischauer and company was so new and more or less improvised on the spot,

without formal schedules, calendars or curriculum, that there was no end point on which to hang a ceremony and the pinning on of officers' gold bars. One solution would have been to send us in batches to the Signal Corps Officer Candidate School in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, but that was ruled out because we were too badly needed at our desks to be spared for the three month long course in communications which would be entirely useless to us.

Apparently Guy and I left too soon for the final resolution. While we were somewhere in the Pacific on the **Cyrus T Brady's** boat deck, some lofty being in the army's personnel division devised an answer to the riddle. For a defined period of time, perhaps ninety days or perhaps less--I never got the details in full--our mates in Washington would be put through an after-hours mini-OCS. I can't imagine them sitting through training films on field radios or organization tables of teletype repair companies after a full day of code-cracking and translating. But for certain they had to learn the spit-and-polish routines that were part of OCS program---shoes and brass shined to a mirror finish, caps at the precisely correct angle, trousers spotless and neatly creased at all times; in summation, chickenshit galore on the road to rank. They even, I learned, went through an interesting ritual in the final days of the training, in which each candidate ranked all the others in the order of how good an officer he believed the man would make. Anyone at or near the bottom of everyone's list was passed over for promotion, so that this savage popularity contest was genially known as "Fuck Your Buddy Week." I know of one who missed out altogether and remained an enlisted (and very talented) translator throughout the war, and another who did not make the cut but got his chance later, when he managed to get excused to go to the regulation Signal Corps OCS, from which he was successfully graduated and returned to Arlington. I'm preserving the anonymity of these two. What happened to new students in our training program after that episode or even how long and under what conditions it lasted I have never bothered to ask.

So our welcome to India--Guy's and mine--was the discovery that the translators at Arlington Hall were now in the rarified world of Officers Clubs and Officers Messes and Officers Quarters and Officers Latrines and God knows what other privileges, including of course better pay. Meanwhile we remained more or less among the military proletariat where, according to the rules, we could not fraternize with our old pals.

Truthfully, it was not a big issue with me, and I'm not sure how much it mattered to Guy, for we never talked about it for any length of time thereafter. The first and foremost in my case was the absence of any discussion of the issue with Major Swensson. I'm not even sure that I thoroughly grasped the full implications of the distinction in rank between officers and enlisted men. I knew that officers commanded and EM followed, but I didn't understand that there was a caste system dating from the days when officers were aristocrats, or "gentlemen" of some means, and the common soldier was either a feudal retainer, or an unlucky and uneducated commoner "pressed" into service, or a vagrant signed up in an alehouse or offered the army as an alternative to jail. Yet the preservation of those distinctions in the social separation of men and officers, while incongruous in an army of temporarily serving civilian-soldiers of a democracy, wasn't all that bothersome to me and I think, though am not sure, to most of us. We all accepted that too much familiarity between the ranks would weaken discipline and undercut the authority necessary to armies, but we certainly did not feel inferior to the officers who had the right to order us around-- all the less so if they were abusive, uncouth or clearly stupid. Those in my Arlington Hall barracks who were most vocal about the failure of the army's commissioning promises weren't looking for self-esteem of which some had an oversupply. They wanted the perks, pay and glamour of officer status, not excluding the much better opportunities to impress girls. None of that really mattered very much to me.

Besides, the army had been very good in jumping us quickly through the seven grades of enlisted rank, which starts with buck privates, at the bottom. We became T5s--that is, technicians in the fifth (corporals) rank almost immediately on starting school, were soon bumped to T4, and I am sure that by the time Guy and I shipped out we had made it to T3, the equivalent to a staff sergeant, a height whose achievement in just one year of service would have been unthinkable in the pre-war army. Within a short time we would both become Technical Sergeants--just one level before a climb to the Everest of Master Sergeant. So I had rank and pay a-plenty for my modest taste, which has never run to riches, and no responsibilities other than to do my work, which is also a very satisfactory situation to me. I don't pine for power to command others--quite the contrary, I like neither giving nor receiving orders.

As it happened, I did end the war as a second lieutenant and so did Guy, and when it happened I can't say I didn't enjoy the better living conditions and increased freedom, just as I have enjoyed temporary periods of prosperity in my working life without lamentation when my income was merely adequate. However, the story of my commissioning comes later.

Overall, New Delhi, where I would spend ten months, was a comfortable billet. To begin with, it had a special kind of good looks-- the government office buildings in the center of the city were a clean white that time and weather had not yet darkened--the oldest of them only dated back to the decade of the teens. They reminded me of Washington, as did the wide boulevards that linked them. Some of these had plantings in the center. On warm nights, especially just after a rainfall, the lovely flowers gave some real substance to the word "scented breezes." What I specially recall, though, is that--owing perhaps to gasoline shortages--local transportation was by *tonga*, a two wheeled carriage drawn by a

single horse and accommodating two passengers, the Indian driver perched either on a very small seat or on the shafts. The passengers faced aft, which was just as well because the forward view consisted mostly of the horse's behind, not an aesthetic treat, especially when the horse would, from time to time, raise his tail and noisily eject a stream of dungballs. With plenty of horses on the streets, even though they were cleaned frequently, there was a ripe, vegetarian aroma of fresh horse manure in the air, which mingled with the fragrant odors of jasmine and other flowering plants to create a special New Delhi smell that I, at least, found rather pleasant. I don't know if this kindly view is unique with me, but it's one of my central memories of the city. Of course if, of an evening, or on a day off, we wandered into or through the Old City, Delhi proper, it was a different story. More street families, though not as many or as near death's door as Calcutta's, more tiny shops and market stalls, more smoke from cooking fires, more aroma suggestive of human manure unmitigated by flowers. Yet Old Delhi itself was worth a visit to see the antiquities and get a sense of the real tumult and swarming of peoples that made up the India of Kipling, and also because nothing could have better illustrated the gulf between the rulers and the ruled more than the contrast between the old Delhi and the new.

New Delhi reminded me of Washington and it was, of course, India's "Washington," meaning that it had plenty of amenities for the high dignitaries and rulers who worked there, and some of them trickled downward. The "chow" in the mess halls was no great improvement on any we had known, but on nights off--and especially in the short-lived flush of prosperity after payday, some of us would go over to a great open plaza called Connaught Circus (I presume as in Circus Maximus) to eat at one of the fashionable restaurants--Davico's or Wenger's-- to be found there. The tablecloths and cutlery were spotless, and the Indian waiters quick, quiet and the epitome of deference as they served us what I suppose were dishes drawn from the peacetime menus of fine

eateries in London. Mostly, I think, we ordered steak. I didn't try Indian dishes. It wasn't because of caution, since anything cooked in those kitchens would have presumably been safe. It was simply that like most of us young Americans at the time, my gastronomic imagination was very limited. One group of my pals and I did eat fairly regularly on payday at a "Chinese" restaurant that seemed to have no hesitation in providing the "Japanese" dish, sukiyaki, a kind of beef-and-vegetable stew with, as I recall, an egg broken into it. I have never seen it on the menu of a Japanese restaurant so I now doubt its authenticity, but it was as near as I got to dining adventurism.

New Delhi had other delights as well. The city itself was a spectacle. First there were the people themselves in their infinite variety--politicians and businessmen, I thought, dressed in knee-length white jackets over white trousers or leggings could be seen on the same streets as beggars and low-caste workers in rags. Elegant women descended from tongas in brightly covered saris. Other women could be seen working surprisingly at manual labor jobs. Their dresses were plain, but some of them had an erect and almost aristocratic carriage when they walked, thanks to their practice in carrying burdens on their heads. A great many men wore beards, which I assumed to be a mark of religious faith rather than fashion, and there was a variety of head gear, from scarves on the women to white cotton pillboxes, skullcaps and soft head coverings shaped like overturned rowboats like the "overseas" caps worn with our uniforms. And turbans--the ones I most remember being on Sikh traffic cops stationed at busy intersections. They all seemed to be extra tall and I still have a snapshot of myself taken beside one who towers over me. Indian and British bureaucrats and businessmen dressed informally in that frying heat, usually in light trousers or shorts and open-necked shirts or bush jackets. But most males in that wartime year wore a rich array of uniforms decorated with shoulder patches and campaign ribbons. There was an entire kaleidoscope of Indian

skin colors from very light café au lait to deepest black. What a show!

I try to remember if I saw cows roaming the streets freely, as the Hindus permit them to do. I honestly can't, and it would not have been likely in well policed and urban New Delhi. There would have been a better chance of that in the Old City, though it, too, was not near any farms.

There were the conventional tourist sites, the centuries-old tombs of Indian rulers, the red-brick Old Fort in Delhi proper, temples and mosques decorated in intricate patterns--I've forgotten most of them but they were a feast for the eyes. The Army occasionally ran weekend truck excursions down to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, and so I saw that, too, and like practically every one of us who got there and plenty of tourists to this day, I had my picture taken in front of the long reflecting pool that stretches out in front of the entrance. I thought of it as an amazing adventure. In my twenty-one years, my only travel experience had been between New York City and Hudson, New York, 120 miles up the river and a 1939 visit to my divorced father in Augusta, Maine that included a two-day excursion to Quebec.

New Delhi also had movie theaters where I never saw a feature film that remains in my mind, but I distinctly do recall not only the blaring Movietone newsreels about the progress of the war and also propaganda "shorts" addressed to ordinary or lower-class Indians in simple grade-school English urging them to support the war effort in various ways, mostly conservation. I was also intrigued by the English custom of having a bar in the theater. There were some art galleries as well, at least one of which I visited on a date with a Red Cross girl who was definitely one of the amenities of the city, as well as symphonic concerts and dance recitals. I can't recall whether it was Uday or Ravi Shankar that I saw there one night, but it was one of the two, and it included

wonderful traditional Indian performers. Although I rarely acquire recordings of it, I have never actually gotten over taking pleasure in the insinuating, reedy and compelling rhythms and tones of Indian music.

Looking back, I wish of course that I had made some kind of effort to learn more about the culture and language of the country, and to meet with Indians themselves, or at least some of our British army counterparts. I'd like to have been as adventurous as a Lt. Pizurki who was with our unit for a time, and one night during a Hindu festival called "Holi", in which revelers in the street fling colored powder at each other, really got into cross-cultural communication. He went down to the Old City and joined the fun, then, at the risk of official reprimand, showed up back at the office with his sweaty face looking as if he'd come through an explosion in a paint store. We did get a handbook of Indian terms and phrases that the Army thought would be most useful. There were the Hindi names of commissioned and noncommissioned officers in the Indian Army that the British created to serve with them, so that we could politely address someone as "*subhadar* or *jemhadar*, and highly practical questions such as *tateeghar ka ha hai?* where is a toilet? Or *kitna paisa*, how much? We even got used to dealing in rupees, annas and pice, though if my memory is right "pice" were coins of such small value to us that if we got them in change we rarely bothered to count them. But seeking out instruction that would put us on any kind of conversational level was something that I, at least didn't do. I wasn't grown-up enough for that yet and, like most of us innocents abroad, preferred to pass free time with my buddies and spend much of that at the Red Cross Club (titled "Duration Den") where we could get coffee and snacks and have access to ping-pong tables, pop records and above all, the company of American women. The whole idea of such clubs, as well as USO facilities and traveling shows, was to duplicate American conditions as much as possible for the "boys," and by and large it worked. The only change in my cultural behavior that

I herewith record is learning to drink tea the British way, with milk and sugar, in the India Coffee House a short walk from our offices. Likewise, for an Anglo-Indian touch, to do it while nibbling on a plate of spiced nuts. I didn't even make any effort to learn Hindi beyond those basic phrases in the guidebooks. Even these were scarcely necessary in British India where even the least educated and lowliest servant had to master at least the rudiments of their occupiers' language.

Another advantage of army life in New Delhi was the plentifulness of servants. Our working quarters were as a matter of course kept clean by local male domestics, including low-caste sweepers who worked with traditional short-handled brooms that required them to do their jobs in a perpetual crouch. I hated to watch them. But I did partake of the glories of empire by sharing a "bearer" with three other enlisted soldiers in the barracks to which we moved after an initial period of being lodged in tents a short bicycle ride from headquarters on bikes provided by the army. My bearer, "Ganeshi" was named for a Hindu god with the head of an elephant. I think that the share of each of the four of us was the equivalent of ten bucks--perhaps thirty rupees-- a month out of our pay then ranging around fifty dollars, perhaps a bit more, perhaps less. When I enlisted it was thirty a month, a wartime bump from twenty-one. Officers, I believe, shared a bearer between only two of them for a proportionally much smaller bite out of their pay. For me and my fellow employers in the "other ranks" Ganeshi did all the clean-up and all the other scut work like bed-making that we performed in enlisted living quarters in the U.S., He ran errands for us, took our dirty uniforms to the *dhobi* (laundryman) for hand washing, laid out fresh ones, greeted us with tea when we got back from work, in other ways made himself useful, and fawned on us to boot. I see him in my mind's eye, small smiling, moustached, and with a shaven head which he often jerked backward over one shoulder in response to a question, saying "Ah, Sahib." It was, we

all discovered , a typical gesture of Indian servants meaning either "Yes," "No," "Maybe," "No Opinion," or all of the above.

Much as I enjoyed the irresponsibility, I formed the as-yet unshaken conviction then that imperialism was a racket that allowed one people to exploit another. I'm familiar with the arguments that after all, the Brits especially brought sanitation and improved health, humane values, labor-saving technology, and the beginnings of education for democracy to the Indians; likewise that Ganeshi's four rupees a day were a small fortune to him, probably twice what he could earn working for Indian bosses if working at all. I hear that case made even now to explain why United States companies that exploit men, women and children of "developing nations" by working them under miserable conditions for pittances that barely sustain life are really doing them a kindness since the alternative for them would be starvation and other forms of suffering. What our corporations pay may be paltry to us but is generous to them and sets their feet on the road to future gains. Thus the magic of the marketplace turns what appears to be selfishness into benevolence. Bilge! I am all for peoples everywhere acquiring what we think of as civilization and progress, but not as subjects of foreign conquerors or as profit sources for foreign capitalists.

We Americans freely enjoyed the benefits that life in an imperial capital had to offer. I once had a snapshot of myself, Guy and another GI lounging at poolside in the swanky Hotel Cecil, which I thought of labeling "War is Hell" but didn't. I often wondered how some of the British armed forces personnel we met felt about the curious reversal that saw them, in uniform, safe and snug while their cold and hungry families in a wartime England still under strict rationing were taking casualties from the Germans' V-1 and V-2 buzz-bombs and rockets. Without such possibly disturbing thoughts we had more liberty to accept our

good luck in assignment. But there were also some decided disadvantages.

The drawbacks, such as they were, all had a common root in the heat. For the first three and a half to four months--say, February midway through May--temperatures could actually climb as high as 100F or better, but there was little if any moisture. For those lucky enough to be working indoors, there was some relief in an intriguing kind of "air conditioning" system. Our single-story office building, as I recall it, was surrounded by an arcade that shaded the windows--as was our barracks. In the dry, hot season, some kind of fibrous matting--coconut, I think--was hung between the supporting columns, making the interior even a little darker, and workers went round and round splashing water on them. The slightest breeze sent cool, damp air into the corridors and open windows. I think the mats had the name of *khous-khous* but I may very well have that confused with the North African dish. In any case the heat was tolerable if you weren't outside. But around June, and lasting well into the early Autumn, it was hot and very, very wet. The monsoons arrived in June and lasted much of the summer, and to call a monsoon merely a rainstorm is like calling the Grand Canyon a mere sunken riverbed. At roughly the same time in mid-morning, it would cloud up, and almost without any time for preparation, the windows of the heavens were opened in a deluge fit to float Noah and his menagerie. I have a snapshot, of myself and another GI standing ankle deep in water, with our pants rolled up, the accumulation of only a short storm. The streets drained quickly enough, but everything and anything in sight was soaked, and throughout the remainder of the day and most of the night that the moisture simply hung in the air like an invisible fog. We didn't see any weather reports except for what appeared in an English-language Indian daily which I seldom read, or possibly the local army paper, the CBI Roundup. Almost everything we

touched was damp, including our own skin much of the time, leading to an epidemic of rashes. These were aggravated by the marking ink that the *dhobis* our laundrymen used. The medics took care of the inflammations by using gentian violet. It became almost commonplace to see fellow GI's with streaks of light purple on various parts of their anatomy. We were allowed to wear shorts (to Army specifications) and I have another snapshot of myself in a pair, cradling a pith helmet under one arm and mugging for the camera.

At all events, the steady, sticky heat over a long period of time, though we got used to it after a fashion, was enervating. Shortly after we arrived in New Delhi we were divided into groups which, in rotation, went off to weeklong (or possibly even two week long) stays at a rest camp in the cool and lovely hills of Kashmir. I was uncomfortable with the idea, since I was always conscious of how much easier I had it than the men on the line. "What do we chairborne infantry need with rest camp?" I asked myself. By September, however, I knew that the rest camp was an investment in restoring efficiency. Most of us were dragging ourselves to work, and when I got home my mother showed me a snapshot of myself that I had sent her, and indeed I looked haggard for a healthy 22-year-old, which I became that August of 1944. In addition to the almost constant heat rash, many of us had occasional episodes of "Delhi belly" (mild diarrhea up to serious dysentery) scrupulous as we might be about where and what we ate. I was hospitalized with an attack of it for two or three days and was far from alone in the experience.

The overall positives of the New Delhi experience far outweighed these inconveniences, but they were genuine. The hot weather did me an important favor, however, by broadening my alcoholic horizons. I had never been a beer drinker in college or in my first days in the army. My uneducated taste buds simply found it bitter. Beer was rationed--each of us got a punch card

entitling us to buy a dozen cans a month at the post exchange. I usually gave my card to one of my friends without asking any return favors. Ice chests were available in convenient locations around the barracks and there were supplies of clean water, though I've forgotten how it was provided--perhaps New Delhi had a reasonable facsimile of a public water supply, though I doubt it. Possibly there were Lister bags of purified water on hand. I did not drink soda in the post exchange because sweet soft drinks have always left me thirstier than when I started. But one steamy night when water seemed just too boring, a buddy offered me one of his cans of beer and , in a passion to drink anything cold, wet and not sugary, I took a couple of slugs and there was an awakening---this was something that had definitely been missing in my life! How could I not have realized it? On the next issuance of ration cards, my friends learned that they could no longer look to me as the fount of generosity--I wanted my dozen as ardently as they did, and from that day to this, I have never looked back on that "fatal glass of beer", celebrated in temperance literature as the first misstep toward ruin with anything other than gratitude.

So much for the externals of New Delhi life in the U.S. Army. I had been sent there to work, and so when Guy and I unpacked our barracks bags and reported to the office the first morning, we were assigned to our desks and then shot off daily for several hours to British Signal Intelligence headquarters in New Delhi, disguised behind the vague-sounding name of Wireless Experimental Center. We were put under the tutelage of a genial British major, supposedly to to be familiarized with the kind of material we would be dealing with in India, though whether there was any operational liaison between their codebreakers and ours I never knew.

Our tutorial at WEC was short and pleasant. The major, whose name I have long ago forgotten ,must have been from the regular Indian Army establishment, because he had a laid back

way of operating that suggested long, unruffled familiarity with the works and ways of British rule in that jewel in the Imperial crown. He reminded me of one of the stock "old boy" commanders in the movies of the thirties, usually played by an actor named C. Aubrey Smith. Our major's moustache even looked exactly like Smith's. After showing us around with various mildly deprecating remarks on the offices, the equipment, the Indians and the climate, he would say something like: "Well, then let's have a bash at some of this work, shall we?" The work did not appear to be anything like the decodes we had sweated over back in Washington, though it could have been the same type of ancient back traffic. Some of it may even have been less related to translating than to Traffic Analysis (of which neither Guy nor I knew much,) which assembled information based on changes in the volume of traffic between different points in enemy-occupied terrain, particularly if the signals could be identified by the unit transmitting them. That would give away possible changes in locations of various headquarters and helped in compiling a daily "Order of Battle," a description of what forces the Japanese had, in what strength and where. One interesting sidelight that sticks in mind is the Major's sitting us down with a recorded intercept of Japanese pilots' communications between their planes. We could make almost nothing of them, except for picking out a fugitive word here and there like koh-doh, altitude, and a metric number, but as often as not I suspect the rest of the terse message was in a specialized lingo that made no sense outside of a cockpit.

In any case, whatever we were working on, when the appropriate hour, morning or afternoon, struck an Indian bearing a tray would enter the office and the Major would cheerily announce: "Bugger the work! It's time for tea." I don't mean to make fun of him. For all I know he had served meritoriously in battle any time or anywhere in the preceding four and a half years, but he did give me a lot of amusement with his behavior that seemed to come straight out of Hollywood, which had only

recently produced hits like "Lives of a Bengal Lancer" and "Gunga Din. "

How long we were in the Major's informal instructorship I don't know--I would guess it was no more than a week or so in February. But by March we were back in our own workplace, wondering exactly what the high brass in the Pentagon and at Arlington Hall had been intending for us to do, when suddenly, the lightning struck. Overnight Guy and I and the entire unit were plunged into the most meaningful two or three months of the war for us, actively working at top speed to pour fresh battlefield information from the Japanese themselves into the G-2, our Intelligence section at CBI Headquarters. This was in the middle of a campaign to drive Japan out of North Burma. What made it possible was one of those accidents of war that prove lucky for one side and devastating for the other. Somebody, somewhere, I never learned how or who, had captured a Japanese Army Codebook in current use and the Japanese were unaware of it!

The timing couldn't have been better from the U.S. point of view. I don't know how or whether the capture impinged on operations in the Southwest Pacific, but as it happened, two simultaneous campaigns had begun in our theater at the start of 1944. A combined British, American and Chinese force was pushing its bloody way into northern Burma, in order to clear the area for U.S. engineers who were completing a new highway, the Ledo Road, that would link China to India again. The old connection, the Burma Road, had been severed when the Japanese occupied that country in the Spring of 1942 isolating China almost completely from her allies in the West. Outside help could come only via a severely limited aerial supply line over the rugged mountains between northeastern India and southwestern China, collectively known to Americans as "the Hump." Breaking China's isolation was vital to keeping her in the war. Her exhausted and under-supplied army was powerless to push back the Japanese who

controlled much if not most of the country, its mere existence pinned down a million or more Japanese occupying troops that couldn't be used against us elsewhere. So the campaign to retake Burma, small scale and remote as it was, had real importance.

Meanwhile, in March of 1944 the Japanese launched their own big move in the area, an invasion of India from Burma. They were using some of their own scarce manpower but also units of something they called the Indian National Army, recruited from turncoat members of Britain's own Indian Army taken prisoner during Japan's early conquests of British colonies. They were promised "independence" if they helped to kick the British out of India and replace them with a Japanese puppet ruler. Tokyo believed that most Indians, clearly weary of foreign rule, would rise en masse to support the INA. But although the Empire was actually within a few years of its end, very few of the politicians who'd been working for years for India's freedom had any illusions that the way to get there was through a Japanese protectorate. The (British) Indian Army and Indian Civil Service remained loyal, and the invasion of India was beaten back, with big losses on both sides, by the end of summer.

In any case we'd hardly gotten unpacked before we were in the middle of intelligence support for two crucial campaigns in our otherwise undramatic and sometimes sleepy theater of war. For us Yanks of course it was the Burma campaign that was of course dominant. Early on I recall dealing with messages that dealt with IMPAARU and KOHIMA, Imphal and Kohima, two places that were objectives of the Japanese assault. I presume they were forwarded promptly to our British counterparts. But after a while almost everything I translated related only to Burma. I presume that there was some division of labor between us and their Wireless Experimental Center but I am not certain--not even of whether the U.S. shared the codebook with the British. Those matters were dealt with far above our enlisted mens' heads. We

were the stable hands who milked the cows. We squeezed the information into the bucket, the dairymen took it away, and how much of it and in what proportions it became table milk, butter and cheese we never knew.

At any rate, there we were at the start of March 1944, with the whole apparatus of interception and decipherment steadily pumping out hundreds of messages for which the theater commander, General Joseph Stilwell, who preferred to be up front with the infantry, was eager. And for a brief but memorable period, Guy and I were struggling to stay afloat in the flood. There was a third officer-translator, Lt. Harold Klein, later a good postwar friend. But he had somehow fallen afoul of our chief, Major Leonard Bickwit, who kept him out of the way by dispatching him on an apparently endless round of temporary duty postings far from New Delhi.

Hour by hour, a parade of our messengers from the cryptanalysis offices entered our little sanctum to dump a pile of decodes into the "In" basket and remove what we had managed to finish that far. It wasn't always quick work, as we often struggled with unfamiliar terms and garbles. The messages came to us on forms with the recovered *romaji* syllables written in the decoders' pencils under the codebook numbers, and a space underneath, if my memory is correct, for us to pencil in our translations. Pencil was used to allow for erasures as initial stabs at meaning sometimes changed after further reading. We were not, unfortunately, keeping up with the steadily growing "In" piles. At the start both of us took turns running over to the mess hall for meals and together kept going late into the night, but after a while we worked out on our own a system of coverage that was pretty close to 'round-the-clock. One of us would cycle on our Government Issue gearless bikes the short distance out to the tent camp where we were still billeted and grab a few hours of sleep, then come back and let the other do so. We didn't co-ordinate it to

the minute, and there were a few times when both of us were in the sack, but neither of us got a lot more than 4 or 5 hours at any one stretch if my memory isn't overdramatizing things. Because we weren't informed enough of the general situation or skilled enough to estimate the contents of an intercept at a glance, there was no system of triage that would let us skim a pile of incoming traffic and decide what needed to be put on top. We just kept plugging away, taking the messages as they arrived, more or less bailing frantically just to keep afloat. Days and nights simply followed each other without much sense of distinction between them.

It was stressful but we two weren't working any harder than the decoders, and all of us in the unit knew that what we were doing counted for something. It's a feeling that you can too easily lose when you're in the Army and often put to work doing something palpably dumb, but I suppose gigantic bureaucracies of any kind are equally guilty. But temporarily overworking on something meaningful was and is an exhilarating experience. Like a soldier who is on garrison duty for most of a war but is in one battle that he will always remember, I look upon that Spring 1944, perhaps two or three months of the forty-two I served, as my moment of genuine participation in the war.

It didn't take long for Major (later Lt. Col) Bickwit to signal Washington for help. From what little I could observe, he was a good officer who kept an eye on things but did not interfere in small details so long as the stream of information kept flowing from our offices. He was a lawyer in peacetime and also the officer who had memorably caught me listening to the radio on the midnight shift back at Arlington Hall. His plea was answered fairly quickly in the person of a fresh translator, our barracks buddy Frank Tenny in all the majesty of his new second lieutenant's rank which he happily refused to flaunt. He was dispatched out to us with a top priority via the Air Transport Command. His arrival was unforgettable. The only way you

could fly to India at that moment was to go south to somewhere in Brazil--Belem, I think-- on the coast of its eastward bulge into the Atlantic closest to Dakar on the westernmost coast of Africa. Even that relatively narrow trans-oceanic passage was beyond the nonstop range of the planes then in use by the ATC. There was a mandatory refueling stop at Ascension Island, then the hop to Dakar, and from there Frank proceeded to Cairo, I think, and from there eventually to New Delhi. I don't know how many landings and takeoffs altogether were involved, but it turned out that Frank was more or less steadily in the air for 72 hours or more, in the slower planes of those days, with no soundproofing to shut out the steady drone of the engines. I don't think he had many opportunities between legs of his journey to stretch out and grab some sleep while lying down, and God knows how confused his body-clock must have been. He got into the office half-deaf and with a dazed look on his face, was enthusiastically greeted by the two of us, and immediately seated in front of a pile of messages, which he valiantly translated before gratefully staggering off into a jeep that took him and his bags to officers' quarters.

That considerably eased the strain, though even with three of us working, we pretty much had our hands full. But Frank was soon joined by at least one other, and possibly a second reinforcement, previously unknown to us. And after the fashion of armies (see above under "bureaucracies") more personnel meant more clout and more internal promotions, so more translators were later added who arrived after the great bonanza of the captured codebook had expired. By summertime we had more than in my judgment we needed. At least there many more long coffee breaks taken at the India Coffee House.

At the peak of the top-speed pressure period, we received the nearest thing to a unit commendation that we would get--a message from Major Bickwit saying that either General Stilwell or more likely his head of Intelligence (G-2) General Daniel Sultan, had

thanked us all for our work and told us to "keep it coming." The Major added a little homily about how it was an order he was sure we all were glad to obey, and for most of us, I'm pretty sure, it was true. It was not as if we were being sent out on more combat patrols or bombing missions. We only had to work harder, and the extra urgency easily beat the boredom of routine.

A natural question that I ask myself as I rummage in memories of sixty-five years ago is: "What were all those translations actually saying?" My answer, surprising to myself is: "I don't really remember."

That is, of course, I don't remember specific details, only the general categories of messages. All were short, for the most part--the art of preserving radio security is to be on the air as briefly as possible, to change frequencies often, to avoid stilted or repetitive phrases and patterns that can easily be decrypted, and generally not to waste words and time. A major group, and I presume those most eagerly awaited by G-2, were location statements--either positions that they were now holding, or that were occupied by the enemy (that was us.) Most of the names were totally unfamiliar to those of us handling the intercepts, and we frequently consulted a wall map to locate villages in northern Burma --Bhamo, Lashio, Myitkina, Mogaung Shadazup and Warazup, Taipha Ga, that first appeared to us in their Japanese pronunciation. We would waste time, thinking that they were ordinary words we didn't know, and trying to find them in specialized dictionaries before we smartened up and tried looking for map matches first. Occasionally a book about the war will bring some of the names back. I sound them out to myself again and remember Hemingway's passage in A Farewell to Arms about how, after listening to the windy and patriotic speeches that politicians made to the troops, words like "sacrifice" and "honor" were drained of meaning and only the names of places had dignity. It was hard for us back in New Delhi and hearing only sketchy reports of the actual fighting to think of those

collections of odd syllables spelling out place names in a minor and forgotten theater as having any character or special quality at all. We mangled them and made fun of them. But they were, as much as Anzio and Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima and Bastogne, places that became the last ever seen by young men who died violently doing their perceived duty. I think of them now with respect.

Another category of messages consisted of brief and routine personnel transfers generally easy to translate and, I suspect, of little value. More important were strength reports, which revealed the extent of the Japanese losses, and associated with these were increasingly urgent requests for fuel, ammunition and rations. As they did in almost every other campaign of the war, Japanese soldiers in the CBI theater fought hard and exacted a bloody price for every foot of ground the Americans, British and Chinese won. But our continually growing aerial and submarine assaults on their supply lines left them with steadily shrinking stockpiles of everything, including rations and medical supplies. By the end of 1944 most of north and central Burma was under allied control. But as early as midsummer there was every sign that huge numbers of Japanese soldiers were either sick or starving. I certainly didn't feel any sympathy for them then, and I know that as occupiers in Burma and elsewhere in their conquests the Japanese brutally exploited native workers and especially women, who were often forced to become sex slaves. Nor did I fail to join the cheers with every bit of good news about our own steady advances. Each day of them brought us closer to the glorious goal of finishing the war and getting us the hell home. But at this distance the overall tragedy of war is foremost in my mind and I feel sorry for those poor conscripts and volunteers, too, forced or misled by their leaders into meeting inglorious deaths by disease and hunger in faraway jungles.

War has its comical moments, too the trivial and the significant often mix promiscuously. One such was the occasional receipt of a "service message." Each message contained a key that indicated to the receiving code clerk the exact page, column and line in a jointly held book of "additives," where the sender had added numbers to the already enciphered text to further disguise it. If the key was garbled beyond the power of the sweating and probably half naked Japanese code clerk in the jungle to figure out exactly where and how, he had no choice but to send back a request for a repeat, a black mark on his record because of the extra time it took and the increased risks of a mistake that would compromise the code. Sometimes the cryptanalysts who brought us these messages were laughing because they themselves had been successful in figuring out the the key. Jokes were made about "putting the poor bastard out of his misery" and sending him the answer before his own superiors gave him hell. These little incidents humanized the other side for us--showed us a picture of a puzzled individual and not a faceless opponent. I was told that the intercept operators could recognize some Japanese transmitters by the distinctive way in which they rapped out the Morse Code,--their "fists" was the term used--and that they gave them nicknames and more or less came to think of them as acquaintances.

Guy and Frank and I--but especially Guy and I in those first days when we had no other translators with whom to consult--had our own problems, of course. From time to time we got a message containing passages that were just beyond us, with words that weren't in our dictionaries and with no context that offered help in doping them out. We had no choice then but to leave out chunks of the translation , inserting parentheses framing the words MEANING UNCLEAR and hoping that no higher-up from headquarters would come storming across to our offices shouting: "Figure this out quickly, you punks, or we're going to lose a whole god damn battalion!!!" or something equally frantic. Once in a while we did unravel a tangle and sometimes laugh at ourselves for

a pair of fools, and I have still not forgotten one such incident. Occasionally we would find inserted in the romaji text a reference to a non-secret Chinese Telegraphic Code book, containing numbered Chinese characters--this would occur when several different characters might have the same romaji spelling and it was not immediately clear from context which one applied. One night a message came through indicating that something identified in Chinese characters as "a little bell," was to be transferred from one place to another. For half an hour we swapped guesses back and forth about what could be meant and whether it was a hot item that simply had to be dealt with in a hurry. Finally, Guy began to sound out the Japanese for "little bell." "SUZU," he pronounced like an elocution teacher, and then "KI." "SUZU," I responded mechanically, "SUZU KI," at which we both simultaneously howled "SUZUKI" and looked again at the message where, in our concentration, we had not noticed that the word was preceded by a military rank. The light flashed! Suzuki is a very common name in Japan; we had been struggling over a routine re-assignment of some Japanese soldier named Suzuki. Since those same syllables might be the vocalization of other Chinese characters, the sender had to indicate which Suzuki he was talking about by displaying the correct ones. It was a small and trivial moment that illustrated as nothing else could, how inexperienced we were for all our hasty training at Columbia and in Professor Reischauer's mini-academy, and I still remember it as a standout moment in all those crowded days and nights.

And finally, there was the one message that we translated that still excites me when I think of it.

It was on a late night when Guy and I were both on the burning deck, so to speak. I plucked a message out of my "In" basket like none we had been translating up to then. It said that enemy GU-RA-I-DA aircraft had been observed descending towards apparent landing spots well behind the Japanese lines.

GURAI DA was easy enough; it was the Japanese way of pronouncing "glider," but what was this all about? I skimmed further. The message identified the powerless 'guraida' planes towed by regular transport planes and released over a target landing site as part of a force under Colonel FU-RI-PU-KA-KU-RA-NU. I sounded out FU-RI-PU quickly, and came up with "Flip" and exclaimed: "Oh, my God, Flip Corkin!! "Flip Corkin" was a character in the popular comic strip Terry and the Pirates, of which I had been an intrigued reader for at least half a dozen years. Its creator, Milt Caniff, had set the story originally in China, which remained the scene after we entered the war. "Flip Corkin" was a bold and daring, wisecracking, savvy fighter pilot modeled on a real-life college friend of Caniff's, Colonel Philip Cochrane (hence KA-KU-RA-NU) who was already making a name for himself in the Army Air Forces. I knew that much. But what was he doing in my message from Japanese army headquarters in Burma?

The answer was "plenty!" Cochrane had been chosen to undertake a breathtaking gamble as the leader of a group of what can best be called "air commandos." It consisted of a force of gliders, fighter planes, bombers and transports whose mission was to build and protect an air base inside Burma big enough to support and expand the operations of a specially trained long-range penetration force of British commandos nicknamed "Chindits" under the command of General Orde Wingate. These troops had already infiltrated the Japanese lines and their hit-and-run attacks against isolated garrisons, supply dumps, railroads, bridges and telegraph lines were sabotaging Japanese defenses. But creating an airfield is not exactly a hit-and-run operation. What was planned and executed was first, by aerial and ground reconnaissance, to find clearings in the jungle big enough for equipment carrying gliders towed by transports to the site and released to land--a process filled with crashes and casualties-- but ultimately getting down enough machinery and construction troops to do the impossible and build a complete facility. The impossible

was achieved and the base deep inside the Japanese rear area carried the code name of Broadway and hugely increased the viability of Wingate's and cooperating forces.

What Guy and I were looking at was the first Japanese discovery reaction to their realization of what was going on.

It was good for our people to know that in planning their next move. But more importantly, the message had the general location of where some of the planes had come down, some to crash landings with possible injuries and some in places isolated from the main body. Given that knowledge it would have been possible to extract some of the personnel who had missed the drop zone and were at high risk of capture.. Helicopters--early models with limited carrying capacity-- for that purpose were apparently available in the theater. We were in fact told later on that such rescue operations had been undertaken successfully, though not where. But I like to think, to this day, that maybe I helped to save some lives.

There was an added element of significance--how did the Japanese know that Colonel Cochrane was in command? That knowledge might have been a clue to a security failure on the Allied side that needed to be addressed. Were there spies among the various servants who worked around headquarters? Were the Japanese, unthinkably, reading our messages as we were reading theirs? It turned out that trying to answer that last question occupied my final weeks in the China theater a year and a half later. The bottom line was and remains that of all the messages that passed through my hands during the war, this was the only one of genuine and immediate significance--my personal and identifiable contribution to the war effort, shared of course with Guy and the rest of the section.

It was the high point of "my" war, the culmination of those months of learning in Columbia classrooms and Arlington Hall offices. Guy later wrote the story up in very brief form many years later, when we were ourselves in our sixties, for Modern Maturity, the official magazine of the AARP, taking note of our indebtedness to "Terry and the Pirates." I can hardly call those few months of deep involvement in the work idyllic, but when the code finally changed and we returned to plowing our way through accumulated back traffic, now reinforced by an expanded contingent of translators sent out from Washington so that there was no longer the tough but stimulating pressure of being overworked I experienced a decided letdown.

What was colorful in New Delhi had become commonplace and I lacked the energy or rather the maturity to study up on India's history and culture in order to open my eyes to further discovery. I'd seen the local sights and sampled all the restaurants popular with fellow GIs and gotten used to the novelty of New Delhi movie houses. I wasn't interested in the occasional traveling USO (United Service Organization) entertainments that the Army provided for us, and concerts of Indian music and dance were only in town at long intervals. I didn't care especially for the pop programs offered by the local Armed Services Radio station although two of its announcers were barracks neighbors and friends. After hours activities outside of the post exchange and the Red Cross club were limited. We weren't part of the social life of the British or upper class Indian communities. I was, after only six months, tired of the heat, the itches, the bellyaches, and the odd alternations between servility and sullenness of the Indian bearers, small shopkeepers, *dhobis* (laundrymen,) waiters, tonga drivers and other Indians of the class with which we had the most frequent contact. Though we supplemented their incomes with our purchases and tips, I think they were tired of us, too, and looking forward to the war's end when India would be free, though I don't know what they expected its independence would do for them

Moreover, I spent part of June deeply depressed by the news that my grandfather, as I had feared, had died around Memorial Day and I would never see him again. But there were lighter moments of that summer that stand out. Reading the heartening news of the Normandy landings on June 6th in the CBI Roundup . A USO show featuring a popular, sexy movie star named Ann Sheridan, good for a few days of lewd jokes before and after its brief appearance. A message translated by Frank Tenny as the Japanese were driven from MytKyina, reporting that the commanding officer was last seen going down the river on a barge with two "comfort women, " the Burmese girls forced into sex slavery by the Japanese. It certainly wasn't funny from a humanitarian point of view, but we couldn't help laughing at the idea of an especially lusty general taking full advantage of the privileges of rank by providing himself with a spare. That weekend recreational trip under Army auspices to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, which was all it was advertised to be when seen in the moonlight. And an comic interlude of chickenshit, of which there was ordinarily blissfully little.

We had some kind of supervisory military officer not connected with operations who, like Captain Bove back at Arlington Hall, wanted us to behave like soldiers. Mostly his orders related to proper uniforms and military courtesy. But once, to imbue us with unit pride, he had the enlisted members of the headquarters company stand in formation in the hot sunshine (taking us away from work) while he personally pinned on each of us the Good Conduct Medal. The medal itself was meaningless, a hangover from the peacetime days of the rough-and-tough Regular Army, which old-timers told us came almost automatically if, for a year, you didn't get "busted" for some infraction of discipline, or didn't catch syphilis or gonorrhea. For us civilian temporary soldiers that included practically everyone. Nonetheless the Major had his little ceremony, and we got a measure of revenge. He moved down the ranks with a noncom holding a box of the red-

and-white vertically striped ribbons at his side, pinned them one by one on our suntan summer shirts (with dark brown tie neatly tucked between second and third buttons) and then shook our hands. By instinct rather than plan, each of us gave as firm a squeeze as we could get away with us. By the time he reached the rear ranks, where I happened to be, his hand was swollen, red, and wringing wet . To give him credit, he stuck it out till the last man was decorated and maintained a somewhat frozen smile as he murmured "congratulations" during each handshake.

Finally, however, came brief but memorable deliverance for two weeks in September, when my turn to go to rest camp at Khanspur arrived. I have just looked for it on my Rand McNally atlas map of Pakistan (which didn't exist in 1944) but can't find it, possibly because I've misspelled the name, possibly because it is too small for a map on that particular scale. No matter--I know that it was only a couple of hours by truck--mostly on serpentine roads up a mountainside--from Rawalpindi, now in Pakistan and very close to Islamabad, Pakistan's capital. My hunch is that from Rawalpindi we traveled northeast towards Kashmir and its beautiful lakes and mountains. It's officially part of India today, but very much in dispute between India and Pakistan since it has a substantial Muslim population, possibly a majority. In any case, it is in cool and mountainous country, not far from the Karakoram range of mountains in one direction--and Afghanistan, guarded by the Hindu Kush mountains in the other. It was a revelation to me, since all I had seen of India thus far was Calcutta, hot and flat, and Delhi, slightly--but only slightly in my experience--less so. The cool, dry, mountain air was the perfect restorative, and as a rest camp site it had been well chosen, presumably for just that purpose. British officials, in fact, and perhaps affluent and Anglicized Indians, often took vacations in nearby Srinagar, where they rented houseboats on the lake of the same name. It may be that American "brass" did so, too. We "other ranks" did

not rate quite such luxury, but even in our barracks in Khanspur, the weather alone made conditions superb.

But getting there was decidedly not half the fun, even though a unique experience for us--a full day and a half or perhaps two and a half in an Indian Third Class railroad coach.

Maybe it wasn't Third Class; it may have been Second, but in that case I truly pity the Third Class riders. The seating arrangements were transverse benches without backs and the sleeping accommodations essentially shelves that folded up against the wall and were let down at night, suspended by chains. I may be reporting these details inaccurately but the toilet was unforgettable. It consisted of a screened-off corner of the car with a hole in the floor and a pair of corrugated footprints on either side to indicate the best placement for one's feet. There were not even grab bars on the wall at a height convenient for clutching from a squatting position in case a sudden lurch threatened to dump you on your behind during an evacuation. The cars swayed so much that the area around the hole was well supplied with puddles to avoid, but luckily nothing else during our occupancy of the car. We traveling Yankee soldiers had a group of cars to ourselves -- I can not recall how many to a car--and were careful in our western way to position ourselves carefully over the hole. I have gathered from other sources that Indian passengers were less precise. The waste did not go into a tank, but fell directly between the tracks to the further detriment of local sanitary systems.

Mattresses were not provided with the let-down bunks. We slept on blankets pulled from our single sleeping bags. After a while the cars resembled particularly messy dormitories, with barracks bags piled on the floor miscellaneously and various pieces of clothing and equipment strewn around. I have snapshots of the outside of the train, but no interior shots. My old fashioned

bellows camera, given to me by my grandfather, could do nothing in indoor light.

We were issued enough K-rations to last through the trip, since there were no mess facilities and we were warned not to buy anything from the vendors who swarmed around at the stations. Each meal came in a rectangular cardboard box, waterproofed I believe, about 10x6x3 inches. It consisted of a can of cheese, or some kind of egg product, or processed meat, plus some biscuits, candy and packets of powdered lemonade and coffee which would only work if you were able to get clean or hot water. If you had that, you could also make a decent imitation of cocoa by scraping curls of chocolate from the bar provided in some K-ration packages into a filled canteen cup, using your mess kit knife. The bar itself was OK to eat if you could do so without breaking a tooth. It was that hard.

It was an amazing journey, however long or short. At stops where we could get out and stretch our legs we could see how crowded the other coaches were, with some passengers clinging to window frames while standing on external footboards, and some actually on the roofs. Looking out the window we saw a constant panorama of people, mostly dressed in white clothing, some of them holding up objects for sale or simply extending begging hands, some pushing carts, some leading animals and some, yes indeed, squatting by the tracks and relieving themselves. I do remember one stop called Meerut Cantonment, at which the smell of shit was simply overpowering so much so that I can't believe it all came from humans--there must have been some kind of manure collecting or processing plant in the vicinity. Whichever it was, we were all glad to get out of there. Any taste I had for sharing the actual living conditions of lower-class Indians just for an experiment was fully saturated in a very short time. But it is one of those "never again" experiences that I am glad I had.

I have to record a mystery at this point, however. While I remember the comparatively short trip to Khanspur vividly, I have no concept of how we were first brought to New Delhi from Calcutta. I know we didn't fly, because I am positive that my first experience of flight for more than a few minutes during childhood came at the end of 1944 when I was transferred to China. It baffles me that I would not remember an earlier train trip given how strongly the one I've described impressed me. A truck trip that long certainly would have stuck in my mind, too. I doubt that I will ever know. The few members of our headquarters team with whom I still connect shipped out of an eastern U.S. port and arrived in India via Bombay. I have no contact with any of my traveling companions on the Cyrus T. Brady and may even possibly be the last survivor of the group.

At Rawalpindi we were met by trucks that took us on a ride of what I estimated as a long couple of hours. As we climbed higher and higher the scenery became more spectacular, but the constant hairpin turns kept jolting us from side to side on our benches and made almost all of us dizzy and nauseated from a combination of motion and altitude sickness. When we finally pulled into the camp after those days on the rails and stomach-turning ride we all felt fairly well beaten up. And that, alas, led me to one of those small spur-of-the-moment decisions that we make in life and regret forever afterward.

We had just gotten into our barracks and were sitting on our beds waiting for supper when one of the camp staff came in with a loud announcement. "There's a British outfit that's going out to open up the Khyber Pass. It'll take a couple of days and they've got room for a few of you guys. Anybody interested?"

The Khyber Pass! The gateway to Afghanistan, the Northwest frontier. Shades of Kim and "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet," of the Great Game between

Czarist Russia and Queen Victoria's Empire for control of the region ,of Pathan tribesmen and the "snick of breech bolts" heralding an ambush. If you had read English literature and especially if you enjoyed Kipling, as I still do whatever its now archaic imperialist nonsense--if you were saturated in Hollywood's ludicrous and racist version of India on display in movies like Gunga Din and Lives of a Bengal Lancer, just those two words "Khyber Pass" were full of magic for you. I had no idea what "opening the pass" meant. I gather it was going around by truck to relieve the troops posted to keep the gates shut during the season when it was closed. But merely to tread that storied ground and to experience what life was like for the ordinary British soldier serving in India long after the disappearance of red coats and cavalry parades offered a delicious and almost irresistible prospect.

And I resisted it!!

I was bone-tired, anxious to start enjoying the amenities of the rest camp that began with almost total respite from duties and schedules, and repelled by the thought of climbing into a truck again for more hours of swinging and swaying. I did not take up the offer and I am not sure that any of us new arrivals in the camp did. But oh, how I wish I could have that moment back. Even if it had been a gigantic bore, just to have held on to it as a memory would have been great. But at least it taught me a lesson, namely never to pass up a one-time chance at breaking out of routine in search of a new and rare experience, and from time to time in these intervening sixty-four years I have done exactly that. So still another piece in the jigsaw puzzle of my personality was slipped into place by the accidents of war.

The two weeks in Khanspur were delectable. The camp was serviced by an all-Indian staff and run by U.S. morale officers, including non-commissioned authorities like corporals and sergeants. Rules and obligations were few. I did join a guided

hike and perhaps other organized excursions, and I also took advantage once and only once of a program of horseback rides. I had never ridden before. My horse was very small--more the size of a burro--and once it was clear that I was a beginner, he was led on a gentle walk up and down a mountainside trail by a young Indian servant. I don't even think I had reins, but held on to the horn of the saddle. It would have been nice to discover that I had a natural aptitude for equestrianism, but that was decidedly not the case. I was uncomfortable to start with, bouncing around in the saddle, especially when, looking down to one side of the narrow bridle path, all I could see was a huge drop to the floor of the valley below. My peace of mind wasn't improved by the fact that loose stones kept sliding and rolling under the horse's feet, making the ride erratic and jerky. My guide took a look at me and said kindly: "No worry, sahib, this is a good *ghora* (horse); he will not fall." "I can't say the same for myself," I answered, but my lame attempt at humor was lost on him. I was glad to get back to the stable and stability, and that was the end of my fantasies of riding along with all those strong and silent cowboy heroes of the silver screen. For good or experienced riders, though, I suspect that long treks through the forested hills must have been a treat.

Mostly I sat around at various outdoor tables provided for our accommodation, enjoying the cool, dry weather and chewing the fat with my buddies. I read now-forgotten books from the Red Cross library, and drank lots of Murree Beer bought at the Post Exchange. It came from a nearby brewery in Rawalpindi which seems to be still in business, though struggling with Muslim prohibition laws and relying on exports for success. . It is not apparently distributed in the U.S. I have asked for it in Indian restaurants without success. It seemed to me to be the best I had ever tasted, but that may just have been the result of the surroundings and circumstances. Being pampered in idleness that way made everything taste wonderful.

In the evenings the Red Cross club staged ping-pong tournaments and amateur hours, and provided tables for the card players, It also offered recorded music and the companionship of American women. Those of us from New Delhi already enjoyed that in the Red Cross club we knew as "Duration Den," but for some of the campers who were stuck in remote truck stops or airfields or were serving as trainers with Chinese forces at the front it was a special treat. It didn't lack charm for us, either. One Red Cross "girl" I remember in particular was a cheerful lady named Mary Condon. When she introduced herself to a small group of us, a couple of wide eyed campers asked: "Are you related to Eddie Condon?" and when she answered with a nod, they acted as if in the presence of Hollywood royalty. I didn't, simply because at that time I had never listened to any jazz and had not the remotest idea that Condon, who played guitar and banjo, was a rising star in the jazz world. Innocently I piped up: "Who's Eddie Condon?" Mary grinned widely, threw her arms around me and gave me a big squeeze. I didn't know what I had done to earn that enjoyable moment until she said that she was happy now and then to meet someone to whom she would not thereafter be known simply as "Eddie Condon's sister." I was surely not the only soldier she met who had never heard of Condon, but I might have been among a few innocent or maladroit enough to advertise their ignorance among a group of his fans.

Anyway, that was among the outstanding vignettes of a glorious two weeks at Khanspur and at the last dinner there I acquired a new taste. It was an outdoor picnic, and the main component was an entire pig, spitted and roasted all the previous night over a wood fire, lovingly and continually basted with barbecue sauce of his own making by a GI cook who gave up a night's sleep to accomplish the job. He followed through by hand-slicing exactly enough for sandwiches for the entire contingent departing next day. I ate no pig-meat whatsoever before joining the colors, and the overcooked pork of the mess halls hadn't given

me any cause to regret it. But good barbecue was swine flesh transformed into something far superior to its humble origins in the sty. For the first time I understood Charles Lamb's essay "A Dissertaion on Roast Pork" which had been required reading in an English literature course in Stuyvesant High School. I honestly don't know which of many competing regional variations of barbecue that military chef prepared, but the taste lingered in my mouth all the way through the next morning's breakfast and the truck ride down to the Rawalpindi station. I eat meat rarely nowadays, and even more rarely when it is barbecued. My judgment is therefore limited. But an occasional slab of ribs reminds me that nothing I have gnawed off a bone has come near the perfection of those thin slices, crusty and tangy on the outside, pink and juicy on the inside, served on an army-baked bun on that cool, starry night in the vale of Kashmir long ago.

Returning to duty compounded my earlier sense of letdown. The work remained less interesting and urgent and the delights of Delhi had become familiar. There was more time spent schmoozing with new and old friends and a tendency to take lengthier breaks at the India Coffee House when we could get away with it. Occasionally some odd incident of army life broke the monotony. One day we all paused to watch a demonstration behind our office building. Something had gotten the Pentagon freshly worried about the security of our own star coding machine, the SIGABA. It was standing orders of course that in any danger of imminent capture of a message center, all code machines that could not be quickly removed in a retreat should be immediately and thoroughly destroyed. Apparently unsatisfied with the speed of available methods (perhaps sledgehammers and crowbars? I never knew) Washington sent out to us for testing a kind of incendiary bomb--a device that was supposed to reduce a working code machine to a pile of hot junk metal in minutes. It was hard to take

the experiment very seriously, since the chances of New Delhi being overrun by an enemy were slightly less than those of its being hit by an asteroid. But orders are orders, and the proceedings began.

Of course a genuine SIGABA was too valuable to destroy so a pile of odd, discarded metal parts similar in size to the real article had been created on the cement floor of the outdoor test site. The ignition device, which was square and almost flat and from the outside looked like a package used for shipping reels of film, was set on top of the pyre. We all stepped back to avoid heat and sparks, the technician pressed a gadget attached at his end, and absolutely nothing happened! Not a sputter, not a spark. Long huddles among the "experts" followed, then another trial and perhaps a third or more with a different "bomb," and the show simply did not go on. The make-believe SIGABA remained in pristine condition while the imaginary enemy was getting closer every minute. God help the poor commander who would have had to make a decision on what to do. We went back to work, and I suppose that the War Department sent the demolition specialist back to the drawing board. Only in the Army!!

Such were the rare interludes of diversion that seasoned our bland daily routines. Changes had meanwhile taken place in the theater of operations. The invasion of India had been repelled and Japanese occupiers driven out of north and central Burma. General Stilwell had gone home, and China had been amputated administratively from Burma and India and created as a separate theater under the command of General A.C. Wedemeyer. Its forward headquarters would remain in Chungking, also the capital of Nationalist China, and a rear echelon HQ was to be in Kunming. It had a very small signal intelligence office that now requested a translator. Perhaps because I had let word get around among my superiors that I would like to move nearer to the action, or else by the pure dumb luck, good and bad, that I sometimes think rules our

lives, I was chosen to be the one. I was delighted. Some time around the end of November, right after Thanksgiving and festive canned turkey and pumpkin pie in the mess halls I was on my way to China.

I was enormously excited. What I would do in Kunming I didn't know--but to get there I would have to fly the Hump. The mere idea of flying anywhere set me off like a ten-year-old turned loose in a candy store. To begin with, the prospect of flying in itself was exciting. I had grown up on a diet of films like Dawn Patrol and Wings, all about World War I pilots, and supplemented my fascination with heavy reading in pulp magazines like War Birds and Flying Aces. If I had thought there was a prayer of getting into a flight training program I'd have been applying to both the army and navy (there was no independent Air Force as yet) long before I signed up for anything else. But 20-20 eyesight uncorrected was then the unbreakable minimum for military pilots, and I had been 20/40 or worse and an eyeglass wearer since I was fourteen. (It's another of my lifetime regrets that I didn't learn to fly as a civilian at some point after the war.)

My only previous taste of flight had been when I was possibly nine or ten years old--perhaps younger. My maternal Uncle Chester was in New York and he and his wife, Sally--and perhaps my mother, too--were with me somehow at a fairgrounds of some kind where rides in a Ford trimotor "tin goose," then the mainstay of a very small fleet of commercial passenger aircraft, were being offered at five, ten or fifteen dollars for a few airborne minutes. Big money then. Uncle Chester was a sport, and in response to my clearly demonstrated longing, bought two tickets and sent me up with Sally as accompanying adult. I still remember sitting in a lightweight wicker seat, pressing my small nose against a window in that narrow cabin and watching the landing wheel roll faster and faster as the roar of the engines continued to crescendo, until that incredible moment when it left the ground and

we were actually in the sky, bouncing, swaying, and tipping, balanced on invisible currents and swirls of air. You knew you were flying in those old ships. I didn't have the brass to ask for a second helping when we returned after circling the field but I knew I couldn't wait until it happened again.

And now, in 1944, it did!. I was driven out, around ten o'clock at night, to the New Delhi airport. Nowadays it carries Indira Gandhi's name. Back then its name was Willingdon, honoring some Briton. Times change. I was listed for a multi-stop flight to Chabua, in the province of Assam, the Hump's takeoff point. The Air Transport Command had it organized like any passenger airline, except that what you presented to the enlisted clerk handling the flight was a copy of your orders instead of a ticket. You put your barracks bags in a pile that would be transferred to the cargo bay later. Then you simply waited until called. There were no reserved seats. You boarded in order of rank, so as one of the last to get on in my enlisted status, I walked down the slanting aisle towards the last row, for this was one of those old-fashioned aircraft that had a tail rather than a nose wheel and when at rest on the ground pointed skyward instead of straight ahead. It was a C-47, the military version of the 21-passenger DC-3, the mainstay of the commercial airlines at the start of the war. It hung onto that workhorse role not only in our army but in a number of Allied air forces.. This one was painted brown with the blue and white Army Air Force insignia on the fuselage and wings, and had double seats covered in some kind of drab leather at each window. When we took off I could not, from my position far back, see much of the ground but I could feel the tail rising with the acceleration, and the thrill of flight had not been lost. I can't remember how many stops we made en route to Chabua before arriving there by the next morning's light, or how long we were permitted to linger at each stop. I was carrying some kind of classified package to my next commanding officer and I remember fretting about whether I could leave it on the plane when I got off

at one landing place to eat and visit the latrine. This greatly annoyed the single GI flight attendant, whose duties were a mystery to me--they certainly did not include serving us snacks and beverages. He spent all his time talking to two civilian passengers, both major league baseball players who were going around in the off-season under USO auspices, giving talks to the boys and signing autographs.. Though I knew who they were--Dixie Walker and Paul Waner, both then near the end of their careers --and I was a great admirer of Walker as a member of my own favorite team, the Brooklyn Dodgers, I did not approach them. I have never been excited by accidental nearness to celebrities.

Chabua was a busy place, constantly filled with transients in both directions and Air Transport Command personnel charged with the care and feeding of the C-47 and C-46 aircraft that were, in December of 1944, the two models used in Hump flights. The C-47s I have already described. The C-46s were deeper-bellied and stubby looking, and according to the pilots' gossip, as much of a nuisance to fly as the C-47s were a pleasure because the latter were more maneuverable, more forgiving of landing errors, more stable in the air and gradual in descent. The nickname of the 46's in the American army at least was "Dumbo," from a popular Disney cartoon character, an elephant who flew using his big floppy ears as wings. "Dumbo himself was cute; "Dumbo" the plane apparently was anything but.

The flight itself was somewhat more dangerous than routine transport hops. It was necessary to fly at high altitudes to clear the mountains and the engines of the heavily loaded planes had to work harder in the thin air which made them more failure-prone. The weather was volatile and could produce sudden unforeseen snows, fogs and high winds. Instrument navigation was hard because there were few ground stations sending out orientation signals, and finally, much of the area to be crossed was rugged and barren, or jungle-covered, with some of it in the hands of

inhospitable local tribes or those of the Japanese so that bailing out in an emergency was not a promise of a safe outcome. In short being taken over the Hump was not a trip on which to sit back and enjoy the ride. But I don't want to exaggerate the personal perils. In 1942 and 1943, when the route had been opened, the accident rate was very high. By the end of 1944, however, more powerful supercharged engines, more familiarity and experience with the danger spots, and improved navigation and weather forecasting equipment had considerably reduced the casualties. By mid-1945, close to the war's end, much safer four-engined C-54s (Douglas DC-4s in civilian life) were on the job, but I didn't get one of those during my later two crossings in April and May of that year when I was temporarily sent back to New Delhi.

I don't know how long we lingered in Chabua, possibly a day or possibly two or three--the army way was to get travelers to the departure point well in advance of the equipment itself, the shorthand description of which was "hurry up and wait." You hung around the PX, read books, shot the breeze, drank beer, and slept a lot by day because you weren't sure of whether you'd enjoy uninterrupted nights. They could jerk you out of the sack before dawn, to be trucked to the airstrip and sit there for another several hours. Details from my three stays at Chabua have gotten mixed in my mind, though retrievable fragments float around, mostly funny. We transients were put up in tents and were served by outdoor latrines that emptied into some type of bucket or container. A "honey wagon" with an Indian driver and collecting crew would go around daily gathering them for emptying somewhere, possibly on farmers' fields. The Hindi word for one who deals in or serves out a commodity is *wallah*, as in *panee-wallah*, "water bearer," or *chai wallah*, "tea-server. One early morning still half asleep, I heard the sound of the collecting truck going by, and then a roar from a couple of tents away: "HEY, SHIT-WALLAH, COME BACK HERE--YOU MISSED US!"

If I dwell on the scatological and obscene side of our humor unduly, I apologize. While it was generally boring in its repetition, when it now and then struck me as funny it made a lasting impression. I've never forgotten the picturesque image of "Delhi Belly" that a fellow sufferer used: "I lost the pucker string to my asshole." Or of someone so dumb that he couldn't find his ass with both hands. Back then, and for a long time afterwards, one of the hallmarks of being in all-male company was the freedom to talk freely in such terms, especially because you really were not supposed to do it within female hearing.

Eventually my turn came to board a C-47. While we were clustered near the cabin door but not yet inside, the pilot himself descended, zipped open his fly, and urinated on the tarmac, bidding us to do likewise if we were so inclined. I joined in the general round of pissing. It certainly beat waiting in line to use the toilet aboard (if there was one in the military version of the DC-3. I don't remember.) A pile of parachutes was near the entry and we were given a quick course in adjusting them. Long straps went over the back, around the waist, and around the the thighs as well, so that the pack dangled over my rear end. Inside the cabin the seating consisted of two facing rows of "bucket seats," single metal benches with shallow indentations into which the chute fitted like a cushion. The flight attendant gave a brief talk that definitely held our attention. He said he would alert us when we had to go on oxygen (somewhere above 10,000 feet) and if there was an emergency--I keep feeling that he said "when," not "if," just to cheer us up--then an alarm bell would ring and he would proceed to open and jettison the cabin door. We would then file back at his command as quickly as possible, dive unhesitatingly out the doorway and not forget to count off a few seconds before pulling the ripcord on our chests. While we digested this, the pilot revved up each of the two engines to the proper manifold pressure, then gunned the ship down the runway and took off in an east-

northeasterly direction towards the mountains that we had seen from the camp.

At first there were green and brown fields under the wings. Then we started to climb--and climb. We saw the bare tops of peaks , rocky, and slate blue-gray at first, then more often snow-coated. After a while longer we got above the cloud cover and most of the time saw nothing of the earth below. It was strange to think that somewhere down there were our own engineers, blasting and dumping and grading their way eastward as they built the Ledo Road that would link China and India together again. And further along, soldiers of four armies--U.S., British, Chinese and Japanese-- were hunting and killing each other. The ride was bumpy--not frighteningly so, in the way that it could get when you were being bounced around in a thunderstorm that the pilots couldn't avoid, which was a common experience of air travel at lower, pre-jet-age altitudes than it would be today. I don't remember anyone being airsick, but I myself was skirting the edge. Trying to read seemed to make it a little worse. When we went on oxygen the green rubber masks, fed from tanks somewhere in the plane, were heavy, wet with condensation on the inside, and pretty effective in killing conversation. So most of the time the experience of flying the Hump consisted of staring at the eyes of the men on the opposite side of the cabin who were staring back at you. There was nothing much to do except doze if you could, which was hard given the circumstances.

Some time after dark we landed in Kunming and taxied for a long time through lanes of blue and yellow lights and direction signs before halting somewhere, from which point trucks took us to a mess hall for dinner. The airfield was full of vehicles moving around briskly and purposefully amid the constant roar of engines rising to takeoff speed. It was clearly a very busy and businesslike place. In the midst of the hubbub I showed my orders, and was

driven through a series of disorienting scenes, my usual experience during a night arrival at a new place, until we reached my home for the next nine months, Hostel One, Rear Echelon Headquarters, U.S. Forces, China Theater A.P.O. 627. I was processed in, drew my bedding, was shown to a bunk somewhere, in a permanent building whose form I couldn't make out and went to sleep. Daylight revealed that HQ occupied what had been the campus of a university. A large, open field was surrounded by structures, some of them the original offices, labs, classrooms and dormitories, now converted to military use, plus a number of temporary additions by our army. Outside of the rectangle was the motor pool, which opened on to a main road leading to Kunming in one direction and in the other, to destinations unknown to me somewhere in the midst of attractive-looking blue hills.

It was a completely different experience from New Delhi. There I had been in a fairly modern European-style capital built for imperial administrators, and walled off from the poverty of the older Indian town adjacent. New Delhi itself was relatively prosperous and secure, however precarious the livelihoods of its servant classes. But Kunming was another story. What it had been before 1937 I did not know, but China was now in the eighth year of a devastating war that had seen most of its territory, including its industrial base, its major cities and its seaports lost to the Japanese. Kunming was swollen with a population of dispossessed refugees struggling to survive. Many had already lost family members to the war, others were either unqualified or overqualified for whatever jobs were open but somehow scraped along in low-level occupations and businesses. Virtually all of them looked underfed. What was more, at the time of my arrival at the end of 1944, the war's cruelty seemed to have caught up with them again. Kunming was suddenly within range of Japanese bombing planes.. This was new. Chungking, hundreds of miles to the northeast and the seat of the Nationalist government and our

own Forward Echelon Headquarters, had been savagely bombed for years. But the military actions of the preceding summer and Fall had now made Kunming a reachable air raid target and even threatened it with capture.

I happened to get to Kunming near the conclusion of a Japanese campaign to remove what was to them a nuisance, U.S bomber bases in the part of China that the million-man Japanese army of occupation had previously left untouched. By 1941 they already controlled all of China's seaports, its industrial centers, and its resource-rich areas. But they had not found it worth the effort to push further west and so a good portion of the central and southwestern mainland remained under the nominal control of Chiang-Kai Shek's Nationalist armies. (Mao's Communist forces held the north central and northwest areas. Both he and Chiang anticipated their coming civil war, but in the meantime U.S. diplomats were struggling to keep them cooperating in fighting the common enemy, the Japanese.) In those parts of China still in Chiang's hands we had built a number of air bases from which our bombers could attack Japanese targets. In the Spring of 1944 the Japanese decided to take them out. Nothing in the way of ground troops, either Chinese or American was able to stop them. Moving more or less at will, they advanced towards the Indo-China and Burma borders, picking off Haining, Keeling, Litchi and Manning one by one. By December they were in position to take Keying, which was on the main route between Cumming, some 200 miles southward and Chunking. They could finish the job by going on to take Cumming, eliminate the Fourteenth Air Force base there, and even better for them, once more isolate China from India. No more Hump flights and no more use for the Ledo/Burma Road, which was on the very verge of completion into Kunming.

The expectation was that they would do exactly that. At the moment my flight touched down the informal advice being given to us was to figure on only a short stay. Kweiyang would soon

fall, and then Japanese tanks, trucks and troops would barrel down the road to Kunming and force our evacuation. In fact, packing for departure would have to begin soon to allow time for all of us and as much materiel as could be brought along to relocate somewhere as yet undecided

None of this affected our immediate daily work or particularly frightened us; we all counted on a decent interval to escape before the city's fall. But it did mean that for only the second brief time in my service--the first being the Indian Ocean trip from Ceylon to Calcutta-- the group to which I was assigned was in range of enemy aircraft. This time they came, and I experienced a few air raids; in Chinese, *jing bao*.

The mere statement sounds far more dramatic and perilous than it was. I never heard the sound of an explosion or the drone of a propeller, I never saw a searchlight piercing the sky or the smoke of an exploding anti-aircraft round. This was not the London blitz, and I doubt that Kunming even had any anti-aircraft defenses. I suspect it didn't even have sirens. At Hostel One the warning was a repeated clanging of a big gong somewhere that I never saw. I am making the assumption that a Chinese soldier or servant was sent out to hammer away at it when warning of approaching hostile aircraft was phoned or radioed in by Fourteenth Air Force radar.

The raids--all at night--were apparently conducted by a very small force of bombers--perhaps only one or two--and were aimed at the Fourteenth Air Force base which was some distance away from the town itself and also from Hostel One. The only chance of our being hit would have been by a bomb released accidentally, or jettisoned during a chase, or aimed by a member of the Japanese Air Force at the bottom of the class in bombardier training--odds considerably higher than those in favor of my being hit by

lightning. I only bring the whole subject up here because it was part of the whole wartime "adventure," and once more a faint reminder that war was armed conflict, and the end product of all the work of us behind-the-lines millions in uniform on all sides was to help those on the killing fields.

Nonetheless, however un-imperiled we were at Hostel One, the regulation precautions had to be taken. The entire Kunming area was a potential target, so all of us were routed from our beds and sent to an outdoor "dispersal area," a cemetery as I recall it, which led to a good deal of joking. There were no underground shelters. At least we did not have to dig foxholes. I think we just sat around in separate clusters, moaning and cursing and shivering. Kunming is on a plateau, about six or seven thousand feet high, and though there wasn't any noteworthy snow, the temperature was chilly by day and really biting at night. Our barracks were heated by coal stoves, but the coal was rationed to a limited number of "catties" per stove per night--a "catty" being defined in my Webster's as an Asian measure generally about 1.33 pounds. The ration didn't go very far, so the fires were banked early in the evening in order to save a bit of heat for the hour of reveille. In the interim the barracks were ice-cold. When the alarms rang, we had to hurry out from under our blankets, throw on uniforms, sweaters, field jackets and whatever we had in the way of gloves or warm caps, and head for the surrounding hills. We'd sit there for periods of up to an hour until either the "all clear" gong rang or a messenger told us to return and get what sleep we could before breakfast time. Unlike round-the-clock guard duty against real possibilities at our headquarters, say, unauthorized entry for purposes of theft, espionage or sabotage--the *jing bao* interruptions seemed truly needless.. I pulled night guard duty at least once, remaining inside our offices to keep watch over our classified materiel. It was easy work, only requiring me to stay awake. It became a little unnerving during a period when blackouts were required, and in the darkness I could hear the scratching of rats

searching for garbage under the floorboards of our temporary buildings.

Those Kunming air raids of the last half of December 1945 simply were nuisances rather than threats. The Japanese may even have planned things that way, for the raids seemed suspiciously timed to coincide with our holiday festivities such as they were, and they stopped altogether shortly after New Year's Day. But in retrospect it seems to have been mere coincidence because as 1945 dawned, the expected assaults on Kweiyang and then Kunming never took place. That successful summer of 1944 was actually the last offensive gasp of the mighty Japanese forces in China. By the year's end, they were literally running out of gas, thanks to U.S. air and sea attacks against tankers carrying East Indian crude oil to the homeland, plus raids on the refineries that processed the petroleum there, and on the transportation networks that got the fuel back to the fighting fronts. They were short of other supplies as well, and increasingly hard put to find replacements for their casualties, and though they could draft civilians in occupied areas to provide labor and could commandeer food, fuel and other subsistence requirements from the countryside (indifferent to the harm done to the inhabitants) they had all they could handle simply sustaining a major presence in so large an area.

The summer campaign did not even succeed in eliminating the American air bases for good. They simply were moved further westward to points within the Chinese lines but still within range of the coast. The *jing baos* that sent us scurrying out into the cold nights didn't even disturb the operations of our Kunming neighbors at the Fourteenth Air Force base. The word we got from there was that the "bombardments" were never carried out in force, destroyed nothing of importance on the ground nor caused casualties, and that at most they succeeded in dropping a bomb here and there that blew a hole in a runway. Heavy repair machinery was scarce, but that hardly mattered. By the next morning's light, the one resource

that China always had in overflowing measure--labor power--was brought into play. Hundreds of Chinese coolies--I suppose the term is offensive now, so I will properly say very low-paid construction crews--would be set to work carrying baskets of earth to the hole and rapidly filling it in. Huge, water-filled rollers, also pulled by hundreds of grunting and sweating Chinese would smooth it out, and then asphalt or whatever the top covering in use was applied and the strip was back in business as soon as it hardened.

In a broader sense the 1944 offensive had one positive impact on the war that affected us. Any possible ideas that the Allied planners might have nursed for near-future ground operations in China were clearly illusory. The Japanese army of occupation might no longer be able to gain new territory to garrison but neither could the United States, without a heavy commitment of American ground troops, expect to help the Chinese liberate their country. No such quixotic effort deserved any priority over the final push the U.S. was planning in the Pacific. The bombardment and invasion of the Japanese homeland, would come first and the suicidal resistance of Japanese troops up to then foretold long and bloody struggles. If we succeeded in subduing Japan's home islands, her army in China might hold out against surrender and take years to defeat, a plausible scenario considering the available evidence. Those of us in China in December of 1944 were resigned to a lengthy stay. "The Golden Gate in Forty-Eight" was the popular shorthand for the concept.

Which meant in turn that even if we had still been reading current traffic of the Japanese army the work would have lacked any important immediate impact. I don't know what was the original idea behind having a translator in Kunming in the first place, but what I worked on there was old shipping traffic in an expired code. Sometimes I got a look at intercepted talk "in the clear" between Japanese pilots and ground control, out of which I

could make little sense. Nor could Frank Tenny, or a third translator sent up later from New Delhi to handle the shipping messages and whatever additional traffic we could read.

In spite of the military insignificance of the work, the year I would spend in China was the most interesting of the war for me personally. Likewise, allowing for the circumstances, the most enjoyable.

To begin with, I simply liked the surroundings better, starting with the Chinese people themselves. At the start, like most enlisted men, I only saw people whose job was to serve us---office sweepers, waiters in the mess hall and restaurants in town, ricksha pullers, souvenir sellers and others in that category. Later, when I had become an officer and was in Shanghai at the war's end, I met Nationalist Chinese counterpartss with better educations, status and incomes. But from top to bottom they appeared to share an admirable kind of buoyancy and humor --or at least the ability to laugh--in the midst of terrible conditions. It may be the secret of how they have survived so many disasters. Their relationship to us was different from that of the Indians I'd encountered, all of whom associated us with British rule, and were clearly waiting for the end of the war when we Americans would certainly be leaving and, it was already clear, would soon be followed by the British themselves except for those who chose to stay in their jobs as employees of a free Indian government.

But for the Chinese we were nothing but allies against the Japanese, whom they hated with plenty of good reason. China's history was different from India's as well. China had never endured the complete humiliation of complete rule by outsiders,

but had remained an independent and unified nation even when Westerners, behind their gunboats, forced open her ports, compelled a succession of powerless Chinese governments to grant their businessmen and missionaries zones of immunity from Chinese laws, and punished resistance with "indemnities" and further concessions. free trade ports and special-privilege zones of immunity from Chinese laws for themselves during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and burdened a succession of powerless Chinese governments with indemnities and "concessions" for their businessmen and missionaries. The United States had been a player in the game but seemingly less aggressively than others and had resisted a final carving up of the entire country into "spheres of interest." The motive may have been self-interest, but it gave us Americans a somewhat improved status in Chinese eyes, which was hugely reinforced now that American soldiers and airmen were actually on the scene taking part in the fight against Japan.

Unlike the Indians whom I encountered, the self-esteem of the Chinese themselves remained high. China might in fact be subjugated and exploited by foreigners, but its nominal sovereignty was respected, and being robbed under one's own flag is at least a notch higher than under someone else's.

Even the most ordinary Chinese appeared to share the feeling that our nation and theirs were partners, and if we had the edge in technology,--which they could catch up with--their culture was in no way inferior. If anything, they thought of us as innocent barbarians who didn't even know that their rude habits were rude. The youngster who swept out our office in the morning was often given a cigarette by someone, which he would accept and then ceremoniously acknowledge by turning to each of us with a small bow, palms together and a smile. We were not called "Sahib," or "Master," in China as we had been in India and Ceylon. If addressed personally at all--say, by a rickshaw puller who wanted

to argue over price with us-- as "Johnny." I don't even remember so much as a "Sir."

And they laughed a lot--it's one of the most characteristic things that I noticed. Conversations among Chinese themselves, unintelligible to my ears, seemed to be punctuated with a lot of laughter, and I once saw in Cumming a man riding a bicycle lose control of it and careen helplessly off the road and down a small slope to a canal, into which he flopped, bike and all.. When he came up, pushing the bike, he was dripping but also guffawing.

I have read, then and now, a great deal of mumbo-jumbo about how important it was for Chinese not to "lose face," but I saw no evidence of unwillingness to laugh at themselves in public, which I don't think of as showing an excessive concern about how you appear to others. So the importance of "face" to the Chinese may just be one more of those myths about the "inscrutable Orientals" that I grew up with in the America of the nineteen-thirties. Perhaps "losing face" meant being ashamed of showing bad manners, in which case I wish more Americans worried about it. But even Chinese formal courtesy may be another exaggerated legend. I certainly encountered a lot of it when dealing officially with Chinese officers in Shanghai. But I also saw in that city many a scene of Chinese crowds trying to board a streetcar. There was no polite queuing up, but instead a mad scramble ,with a lot of pushing and shoving, and in one case a solemn-looking elderly fellow in a long scholar's gown vigorously swinging an umbrella around as a weapon to swat others out of his path. And one more stereotype that I heard as late as the Vietnam War from the very lips of our commander there, General Westmoreland, was that "Orientals" did not have the same regard for individual human lives as we did. But one day I heard raised Chinese voices coming from the road just outside our camp, and when I went to

investigate I saw a heartbreaking sight. One of our trucks was stopped in mid-road; behind it lay a small, blanket-covered human form, evidently just run over, and around it were several kneeling Chinese crying their hearts out. China's modern history might have made her people accustomed --or rather resigned-- to death on a large scale, but it had not made them indifferent to it.

I wish I could say that most of my fellow GIs shared my positive feelings but alas, no. The enlisted men that I knew hated being stuck near a town which offered few American-style amenities, surrounded by a pretty and yet undeveloped countryside. They took out their their homesickness, their frustration with the army, and their weariness with the war itself on the Chinese, "the fuckin' Slopies," --a variation on "slant-eyes." I'd never heard it before. The derogatory term in Hudson, New York and New York City, the two places where I grew up, was "Chink.

Far too many uniformed Americans abroad made no secret of their distrust and disdain for the people whose countries they were supposedly liberating, and who were apparently supposed to be overwhelmed with gratitude even though they had often been fighting far longer and harder and with fewer resources than we brought to the field. I was painfully aware that while our purchases and jobs were helping to sustain Cumming's economy, the free spending ways made possible by our much higher salaries led to cruelly inflated prices for the locals. And the public behavior of many Yanks abroad was an embarrassment--I remember wanting to crawl under the table one night at a Chinese restaurant with several older officers, one of whom, using his version of pidgin English reinforced by sign language, asked our waitress, who seemed to part of the owner's family, if she would take off her clothes and dance naked for our amusement. She stammered out an embarrassed refusal, but the pain in her face over the insult was clearly evident. I wish that she had dumped a dish of sizzling-hot food over his head. She may have considered

it and decided that she couldn't afford the loss of our table full of high rollers. And I in my turn--a very junior second lieutenant and he a major--lacked the guts to say anything. Perhaps I was like her in being unable to face the possible consequences.

At this point, breaking a personal resolution not to color this memoir with hindsight, I have to insert a short digression. In the interests of objectivity I must say that whatever abuses we Americans inflicted on lower-class Chinese were far exceeded by those coming from rich and powerful Chinese themselves. That may be one source of the belief that the Chinese set a lower valuation on human life than we did. Certainly various Chinese lords and masters over many centuries, right down to Mao's Cultural Revolution of the nineteen-sixties and seventies, have been pitiless in killing or enslaving millions under their rule. The Chinese Nationalist Army that we were assisting in 1945 was thoroughly corrupt. Many of its officers stole the pay of their men; many of their quartermasters sold rations and materiel on the black market. Thanks to such swinish behavior the Chinese "G.I. Joe" not only was broke but hungry, barefoot, cold, sick, and burdened with obsolete or defective weapons and ammunition in battle. During the summer that I spent there I could plainly see that the men looked skinny and hollow-eyed. Once, looking out of my office window, I saw a soldier squatting with his pants down, defecating on the ground, and what struck me about it was not the act itself but that he was obviously suffering from serious diarrhea.

The elites --military, economic, social, hereditary or chosen, simply seemed to regard the poor as a lower species of life. I suppose it was one of the factors that drove Chinese peasants and workers into the arms of the Communists. And so the Communists triumphed, and their new, ideologically driven party elites proved in many cases to be thoroughly as murderous if not more so than the capitalist masters they had swept aside.

Believe me, then, that I was not starry-eyed and deluded into thinking that the Chinese populace did not and does not contain the normal proportions of swine to saints . But that made their resilience and courage all the more admirable to me. I've allowed myself this side trip because my memoir is about how World War II was a life-changing experience for me, and my eleven months in wartime Kunming gave me a permanent affection and respect for Chinese people in general, if not always for their governments.

Now, back to late January and early February 1945. From what I have written here it might seem logical to assume that I went out of my way to mingle with people in contrast to staying within the bounds of the mini-Americas that were created in our military installations overseas, which was what I did in India. It's a supposition only partly true. I did attend a few classes in Chinese offered by one of the civilians working on the post. But it was a rocky excursion. Though I am not bad at languages the four tones used in Mandarin Chinese threw me completely. My ears couldn't distinguish among them, and I could get nowhere trying to imitate them. As a footnote, in preparation for my 2005 visit I had another whack at it with audiotapes in my home and found the tongue even more impenetrable. There were also some events in Kunming--lectures mainly--that tried to bring in mixed audiences of Americans and Chinese. I could have gone to those, and the language barrier would have been only a small problem since so many educated Chinese, even then, spoke English. But these gatherings were not, like comparable ones in New Delhi, either within walking distance or at least quickly reachable by tonga. When I did go into Kunming , it was usually in a group riding a truck provided by the morale and recreation officer.

There was not much to go into town for. What I recall of the city is narrow, crowded, noisy streets, and unusual sights,

including Chinese women carrying their infants and very young children of both sexes who were dressed in clothing with split crotches, so that when they needed to evacuate they simply let go into the gutters. Rather hard to forget something that unusual. Lots of chatter, traffic jams involving carts, military vehicles, bikes and rickshas, lots of refuse in the streets, lots of smells from different sources including cookstoves. I didn't find much reason to visit, with two interesting exceptions--one, to exchange money on the currency black market, the other for an occasional change of diet in a restaurant.

The first was dictated by a peculiar situation. The currency of Nationalist China--also called the dollar as I recollect it, or possibly just CNC (Chinese National Currency) -- was tremendously overvalued at the official rate recognized by the U.S. government. I can't even remember what that figure was, perhaps something like 40 CNC to one U.S. dollar. In actuality the ratio was much more like something between four hundred and six hundred to one, perhaps more. In India we had been paid in rupees at the official rate--about 3 rupees to the dollar. To do that in China would simply have left us virtually empty-handed--a private's pay of, say, \$30 a month would have translated into \$1200 CNC or something between two and three bucks in purchasing power. So we got our pay in dollars, which we were theoretically expected to change at some officially sanctioned source at the "correct" rate, and which everyone knew we would take into town and there shop around for the best we could get. As we walked the streets, Chinese men would emerge from shadowy alleys whispering numbers, ("five," "seven," "six-fifty") or perhaps even mutely holding up fingers. You heard a number you liked (or were tipped off by a buddy where to look for the right vendor,) stepped into some private recess, handed over your greenbacks and received a thick wad of notes in return. A hurried count on both sides--and off you went, transaction completed in minutes. The profit in it for the black marketeers was simply that

they could sell those precious, stable, trusted dollars that businessmen desperately needed in place of the official toilet paper, at a fancy mark-up from what they paid us. The risks for them, however, were far greater because they could be arrested and severely punished by the Chinese authorities, who had no such power over us. Our government simply winked at the practice so long as it was not conducted openly. In that way, the fiction of respecting Chinese sovereignty was kept alive. (There were tales told in India of Hump pilots who would bring rupees into China, swap them for large quantities of CNC, then return and exchange the CNC for dollars at the official, far higher valuation, but that the British and U.S. fiscal regulators soon caught on to the scam and put an end to it.) At all events, the experience was an interesting dip into how the world of currency trading worked in theory and in practice. But my participation in the game was totally involuntary and lasted no longer than my stay at Hostel One.

So far as the commercial cuisine available in Kunming goes, it was a notch or two above what the mess hall served, and probably for much the same reason, a shortage of supplies. Our army's arrangement with the Nationalist government seems to have been that we would bring in a certain amount of canned supplies over the Hump--a small amount to be sure--and they would furnish fresh produce. Perhaps meat as well, though meat was scarce--they had their own army to feed, and limited areas of good farm land around Kunming for animal husbandry--and though local pork and beef may have appeared on our tables from time to time, Spam is what sticks in my memory. There was certainly very little fruit, if any; my memory is a blank on anything resembling salad, but to tell the truth, I think there was very little of it in the mess halls of the United States, either. I can see why, too--any kind of produce would be hard to buy, store, and ship in bulk--the canned version was much more stable and manageable, and the dietary gospel of the virtues of fiber and vitamins in fresh fruits and vegetables had not penetrated the thoughts of the dietitians who

planned our military menus. In any case, uncooked vegetables would have been tabooed in China where fields were fertilized with human excrement and food handlers, even under army supervision, could not be monitored closely enough to prevent bacterial contamination. All of which boils down to the fact that Kunming's army meals contained a repulsive amount of Spam , surrounded by boiled local vegetables . And that Winter of 1945 there must have been an abundant crop of turnips, because they showed up on our plates with dismaying frequency. There were some cooked greens, too, and of course rice, but the dominant note in my memories of Dinners Past at APO 627 is turnips, turnips, turnips and enough Spam to have catapulted Armour & Co's stockholders into capitalist heaven. Breakfasts were a lot better because dry cereal is hard to spoil and eggs did not appear to be scarce. I don't want to think of what the chickens probably got to eat, but it didn't affect the eggs. And such chicken as we got to eat was thoroughly cooked, usually fried, and pretty safe.

It was from this diet that we occasionally escaped in restaurant excursions. But the Kunming eateries were nothing like the elegant places frequented by the heavy hitters in New Delhi. The ones that I remember were dimly lit and smoky holes-in-the wall, with kitchens that all of us suspected were homes to a rat population scavenging among such scraps as were left over by hungry humans. I had never eaten in Chinese restaurants in the U.S.. so I was innocent of the possibilities of a good Chinese menu, though I'd taken tentative dips into egg foo yong, crisp noodles and fried rice in at least one place in New Delhi with a self-described "international" menu. Later on, in Shanghai, my range would be broadened. But poor old hard-pressed Kunming cooks could only offer pork dumplings, fried strips of pork (rarely beef) with both crisp and soft noodles, a couple of chicken dishes with vegetables, sometimes duck or local fresh water fish,-- pretty much the equivalent of Chinese home cooking for a family of modest means. I don't mean to slander them, may heaven rest their

souls, and their dishes were certainly a relief from turnips and Spam, but not of a kind that brought us, with tongues hanging out, into their restaurants as frequent customers.

By February of '45 things had settled into a routine that was not unpleasant, but boring in off-hours. Work continued on back traffic in a system no longer in current use, with our cryptanalysts slowly but steadily reconstructing the expired Japanese codebook, including the tables of numbers added to already enciphered text to disguise it further. These were called "additives" or "adder," and someone who had just successfully worked out a few would be sure to crow aloud: "'Tis a bright day that brings forth the adder," a quotation from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar that was a favorite *cliché* in their limited circle. Since both the unit and the office were small, we all became a somewhat clubby bunch and the work atmosphere was congenial. But there were no particularly sparkling moments for me, just a lot of dates, names of places and ships and cargo lists. Work ended at dinnertime--no swing or graveyard shift that I recall--and there wasn't a great deal to do afterwards.

A funny episode sticks in my memory, however--a small sidelight on the fighting in Burma. One night a new arrival--a private-- moved into an empty bunk in my barracks. He looked much older than the average GI--sort of weatherbeaten. He was a transient awaiting a flight somewhere. He never arose for formations, was invisible most of the day, and managed to show up at nights with a bottle of local wine from which he drank freely. He seemed immune to the threat of discipline and apparently was. What we learned, either from his own lips or from friends who saw his personnel records was that he had been "busted" in rank several times, but never court-martialed, much less sent to the stockade, for drunkenness, disobedience to orders, and general cussedness. He was, it turned out, a mule driver from somewhere in the

Ozarks. The Army discovered, both in the Italian and Burmese mountains, that a pack mule loaded with rations, spare parts, ammunition and other supplies, could negotiate narrow, steep trails impassable even to a jeep. So mules were procured and sent to these fronts, but the problem was that there were very few men available who could handle the beasts, the secret apparently being to be as obstinate and persistent as the mules. Those few draftees who could do so could not be spared, and our "guest" was not the only one who could apparently get away with murder. I do seem to recall his telling us that one way to subdue a mule to cooperation was to bite its ear. Or perhaps I read that somewhere. It was not, as a now-current joke has it, to get the animal's attention by hitting him with a two-by-four. Whatever! Our mule skinner disappeared as suddenly and noiselessly as he had appeared, I suppose and was off to make life hard for some other commanding officer and GI mules.

The Special Services section set up in headquarters to nurse our morale, did try to provide entertainments that would supplement the limited resources available for distraction. My own favorites were the Armed Services Edition paperbacks designed to fit in a fatigue jacket pocket, supplied abundantly by publishers without recompense to themselves or the authors. There was a small post theater that showed both movies and live performances, at one of which I gained a certain notoriety. It was a quiz show on the model of "Information Please," a weekly half-hour radio show back in the States. It had a well-known literary critic as the interlocutor, two respected newspaper columnists and a concert pianist as regular panelists and a fourth member from a changing list of guests. What they all had in common was a high degree of cultural literacy, encyclopedic memories, and a gift of quick-witted repartee. Listeners mailed in questions designed to stump the experts. When they did, they got (if I remember aright) an Encyclopedia Britannica for their reward. Whatever compensation the panelists collared for their part I don't know. I

am certain, though it was a charming thirty minutes on the air with no relationship at all to later imitations---- extravaganzas of glitz and greed --offered by television.

The Kunming 1945 version had a panel of volunteer officers and enlisted men, and as master of ceremonies a sergeant from the Special Services office who read aloud questions passed up to him from the audience (with a few of his own kept in reserve for dry spells.) It was a regular Sunday evening event. There were no prizes either for the panel or the audience members whose questions couldn't be answered. Flinging modesty to the winds, since I have always had a head stuffed like a spare closet with an assortment of trivia, I took part as a panelist one week and was so good at it that I became a week-in-week-out regular , along with a couple of other "stars." This constitutes what I hope will be the only outburst of bragging in all these pages.

Other Sunday highlights were recorded concerts of classical music, delivered with introductory comments to each piece by the Special Services enlisted man who arranged it or occasionally by a volunteer. There surely must have been jazz concerts, too--I would not have noticed back then. Movies were not frequent and most were forgettable though two stick in my mind. One was Wilson, a very high-minded and somewhat dull story of the likewise high-minded President who led us in the first World War, but could not persuade Congress to take America into the League of Nations afterwards. It was frankly propagandistic, reflecting Hollywood's (and probably the country's) state of mind in 1945. As Wilson was portrayed, he had been a prophet without honor, realizing that American isolationism would virtually guarantee another war and here we were in the midst of that very war, proving his point. We must not make that mistake again.

The other film that remains in my head was Rhapsody in Blue. It traced the career of George Gershwin (played by Robert

Alda, Alan Alda's father) and was a pleasure despite a sappy plot because of the liberal helpings of Gershwin that made up most of the score.

Even watching film clunkers was fun amid an audience of GIs because there were positively no civilian-like inhibitions about voicing opinions. Love scenes brought cheers, foot stamps and whistles of approval and envy. And prettied up Hollywood heroics produced torrents of jeers, raspberries, and obscenities. On the whole, we really didn't take movies very seriously, not even at home where our rowdy critiques would have gotten us kicked out of the theater. They were just "the movies" or "the pictures," not "film." There were far fewer college and graduate school classes in film, or "art film" houses attended by sincere students who would retire immediately afterwards to coffee shops to discuss and analyze them. Ninety per cent of the movies we saw overseas, the same ones that were playing back home. were for the most part, simplistic, flag-waving, unreal, shorn of any honest portrayals of relations between men and women, any depiction of ordinary working people, any issues that were not resolved at the final fadeout. They were studio projects churned out in a hurry, basically crap meant to entertain us, which they did very well. There were, of course, distinguished and honorable exceptions, but I cherish a kind of nostalgia for those old B movies with no aim higher than cash returns and no truth that would disturb a moral or political censor. Or perhaps merely for those which I saw in the freewheeling atmosphere of military posts.

The classical repertoire also got its due one night when the USO brought us singer Lily Pons and her husband, the conductor Andrew Kostelanetz. Pons had become a star in American flicks, always playing basically the same part--a cute French girl wiz ze accent--whose vocal talent and other attractions are discovered by an enterprising American hunk. She was dainty and good looking

in reality, a diva who could act as well as sing and she had long been a favorite with audiences at the New York Metropolitan Opera.. What she used in the movies were a few show-stoppers, including "The Bell Song" from Lakme, a challenging coloratura piece. For Hollywood she did it in a daring costume, a kind of harem get-up with a brief bra and panties under a long sheer skirt that showed plenty of slender leg, with enough space between top and bottom to expose her belly button--hot stuff in the days when movie producers, under heavy religious (especially Catholic) pressure went along with a "Production Code" of hyper-Victorian prudery.

What I remember best about the Pons-Kostelanetz evening is that the GIs loved it. I think she did her signature piece, the Bell Song --fully dressed--a couple of familiar arias, and possibly some pop tunes, to show how "regular" she was. Kostelanetz conducted a small, live orchestra through some familiar middle-of-the-road and classic numbers, but he was clearly the window dressing. The audience went wild after every Pons number, asking encore after encore until she begged off, clutching her throat and shaking her head to show that that she couldn't strain her voice any further that night.

My most unexpected off-duty activity, however, was participating in, of all things, the Protestant church choir of the post.

Perhaps that's not the accurate name for it, though what I recall is that the leader and director, an apple-cheeked, curly-haired enlisted man whose first name was Roger was the assistant to the Protestant chaplain at Hostel One. He was one of those perpetually cheery types whose eyes twinkled behind wire-rimmed Government-Issue eyeglasses, and if he didn't exactly say things like "Come on, fellows, singing for Jesus is fun," he always

sounded as if he might be on the verge. But he somehow escaped being obnoxious; the good humor was genuine, and though I rarely encountered him except when he was directing us from a little portable organ, he blended easily with the rest of us enlisted men, the army's proletariat.

It's because of his position that I think of the choir as officially religious, and among the songs we sang that linger in my head were "Beautiful Savior" and "In Joseph's Lovely Garden," the latter having some Christian motif that escapes me. But to match those two, I have an equally strong recall of "A Pretty Girl Is Like A Melody" and "Anchors Aweigh!" So we must have done some secular or partly secular recitals as well. The balance is tipped in favor of religion by the fact that when I dropped out we had just sung, on Easter Sunday, the "Hallelujah, Amen" chorus from Handel's oratorio Judas Maccabeus. But if it was officially and exclusively a church choir I'm not sure I'd have ventured to try out. I got into it via a notice posted somewhere announcing auditions, and though I had never done anything comparable before, I liked to sing and had at least a passable tenor voice so I showed up, even though I could not (and still can't) read vocal music. When Roger accepted me I did ask if there would be any problem for him with my Judaism and got an amused "Of course not" in response. I had yet to learn that it wasn't uncommon for congregations -- including Reformed Jewish congregations--that could afford professional singers to hire them without religious pre-requisites. I myself had no objection to lifting my voice in praise of Jesus, inasmuch as singing Christmas carols in class was one of the mandated activities in grade school in my childhood, and there was an informal consensus among us Jewish pre-teens, arrived at without adult input, that it was OK to take part if you soft-pedaled such loaded words as "Our Lord" and "Christ" and "Saviour" and concentrated on remembering that you didn't believe them. But I have not even a fleeting recall of any church services, not even on that Easter morning of Handel hallelujahs.

The rehearsals used up a number of spare hours very pleasantly. Making music with others is fun and wasn't hard. In spite of my inability to read a vocal score I could memorize the tunes easily enough, and still sticking with me is the memory of the untaken advice given me by a fellow chorister about what to do if I made a mistake in performance. "Don't worry about it," he advised. "Just turn your head towards the guy next to you and frown so the audience will notice."

There was no Jewish chaplain at Hostel One, but we did have a Passover Seder in 1945. It was held somewhere in Kunming and organized by the rabbi who served Jewish personnel for the entire area. There were matzos and other kosher-for-Pesach items provided by Jewish welfare associations -and it was all very homelike even though the rabbi jovially expressed his regret at not being able to teach the Chinese cooks to make fluffy matzo balls.

The major excitement of the Winter after the air raids was Hostel One's January reception of the first convoy to negotiate the full length of the just-completed Ledo Road, so named at first for its starting point in Assam. It re-opened vital land communication between India and China. It was later commonly called the Stilwell Road in honor of our theater commander, even though he had been kicked out of the position by Washington the preceding year for political reasons. Personally I liked the informal title used in some quarters, "Pick's Pike," for General Lewis A. Pick, its chief engineer.

It was truly a remarkable feat, almost five hundred miles long from Ledo to where it joined the old Burma Road. It was driven through mountain passes, jungles and swamps in almost entirely undeveloped regions under extreme weather conditions of heat and cold, blasted, graded and surfaced with only such equipment and supplies as could be flown or trucked up from India

over the completed sections. It required the bridging of sixteen major rivers and one hundred and fifty five small streams and these were only some of the engineering challenges presented by the ground conditions. Some 15,000 American military personnel--sixty per cent of them African-Americans--as well as 35,000 local laborers were involved.

Naturally, then, when the first convoy to drive the entire distance from Ledo arrived in Kunming, it was rightly considered an historic event. There were various official welcome ceremonies well covered by the public relations departments of the Chinese and U.S. governments. Ours at Hostel One was different.

A day or so before the convoy's arrival we were all summoned to a formation and were addressed by the commander of the post. He explained to us in a manner that clearly indicated his own regret, that some of the drivers and support personnel of the convoy were going to be among us presently and that --he all but said "unfortunately"--they would be eating in our mess hall for at least a day, and sleeping in our barracks. The problem was that they would be , and I don't recall whether he said "colored" or "Negro," the two polite terms then in use. This was still a segregated army, and our visitors would be from all-black units either in the Transportation Corps or Corps of Engineers, both of which required a lot of unskilled labor, and into which new African-American recruits were almost automatically shoved . We would have to accept the awkward situation, and he wanted no trouble from anybody. Listening, I gave him credit for carrying out his own orders to the letter, and the message struck home--there were no unseemly incidents, whatever the troops thought. I never took a poll. There were undoubtedly some who, like me, were actively pleased; there were , equally undoubtedly, others who hated the idea, and my hunch is that most of the soldiers were unenthusiastic but indifferent. It was not as if the entire unit was about to be desegregated--just something to deal with for a day. There was not

even a lot of conversation about it, though in my own office we had one otherwise reasonable Texan who, when I expressed my own already firm liberal opinion, denounced me and "all my filthy kind" as "nigger lovers." I didn't make a fighting issue of it and I let it rest there to keep peace and quiet in the narrow quarters in which, like it or not, we would be working together for the foreseeable future.

I had an agenda of my own when part of the convoy pulled in and our "guests" arrived, and that was not merely to show where I stood by mingling with them, but also to get some memento of the unique occasion in the way of a statement. My journalistic and historical instincts were already on the alert. This was like being present at the driving of the golden spike that completed the transcontinental railroad, or the end of the first transit of the Erie Canal, when a barrel of water from the Atlantic was poured ceremoniously into Lake Erie. So when we all got to the mess hall, I made my way to a table where the dozen or two black GIs had naturally clustered. There were a few empty spaces on the benches and I slipped into one of them next to a corporal in fatigues who had just set down his plate. I greeted him, he grunted acknowledgment, and set to work on his dinner. Then I said something to him to the effect of: "Hey, you've just finished a ride that's going to go into the history books your grandkids will be reading. You got any special thoughts about it?" There was a long silence while he was trying to figure out exactly what this weirdo was after. He speared a hunk of meat and chewed on it thoughtfully, then swallowed and, looking straight ahead said: "Long ride in a jeep's pretty hard on your ass."

Well, there it was --my first and last chance to interview a participant in a historic moment had come and gone. I had my quotation--not exactly up there with "We have met the enemy and he is ours"--Commodore Perry on winning the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813-- or "Lafayette, we are here"--General Pershing landing

with the first U.S. troops in France in 1917-- but certainly more spontaneous and genuine. Since my interviewee neither looked at me or said another word, I had a distinct feeling that he was not in the mood to make further contributions to history, so I resumed my own meal in silence and concluded that integration, when it happened, wasn't going to go smoothly for at least a while.

March of 1945 arrived in Kunming, and with it the moment for ruffles and flourishes for me. I became an officer. How the transformation took place is a story requiring a bit of background. For the most part the route to a commission was through an established school program like West Point itself or college ROTC or, once the war was on, through Officer Candidate Schools that turned selected enlisted men into second lieutenants in thirteen weeks. (Hence the term "ninety day wonder" for their graduates.) Commissions directly from civil life were rare and for very important or high-ranking specialists, like our own Professor Reischauer who became a Major in the latter part of the war or specialists like chaplains and doctors. Commissions directly from the ranks were only awarded (and very reasonably, too) to soldiers who had taken over leadership roles in combat situations when officers were killed. They were explicitly called "battlefield commissions" and some 25,000 of them were conferred during World War II--out of what I suppose were hundreds of thousands of officers.

For some reason that I never did learn, the rule was sufficiently relaxed in 1945 so that enlisted personnel with special qualifications, even in non-combat roles, could be commissioned. Apparently the application had to come from their own superiors. I certainly never initiated the proceedings, but one day our commander, Major Raymond McCurdy, told me that he had "put me in" for commissioning.

Why I was chosen for the honor I am not really certain. I used to say jokingly that the major had passed on to me the job of drafting the unit's monthly report of activity, though he was quite capable of doing it himself. It was not onerous work and consisted mainly of writing in bureaucratese and of making sure that we were officially seen as being very busy and, if anything, short-handed. Thus, if we arranged to send someone to the headquarters message center to drop off outgoing and pick up incoming traffic say, three times a day instead of twice, I might pen the following: "Frequency of contact with the message center was increased in order to expedite the flow of communications. Implementation required some addition to the duties of operating personnel," Buried in that gobbledygook was the hint that we might need an extra man to make up for the valuable work time of the specialist dispatched on that errand. Likewise embedded in the text like bits of fruit in flabby and flavorless Jell-O, were the actual numbers of lines recovered, messages translated, and other data that had some actual meaning.

In fact, I don't really remember whether I had that particular chore as an enlisted man or only was saddled with it after I was commissioned. In either case it would be the major who signed it. Perhaps McCurdy, an easygoing though efficient skipper, thought I should enjoy parity with a couple of officer-translators who would join us later in the year. Maybe he had heard the sad tale of how Guy and I had left Arlington Hall too early to be included in the general bestowal of commissions on our fellow linguists at Arlington Hall. Or, since some time after I made the change, he also procured the elevation of a second enlisted man, my friend Joe Loscalzo to commissioned rank, my opinion is now that he possibly was told that he had authority to grant up to two such commissions. Then, following any seasoned manager's dictum "Never turn down something offered even if you don't need it now because you may not get another chance when you do," he picked

Joe and me as most likely to pass the scrutiny of the higher authorities.

Whatever the reason, I was not especially thrilled when the Major tapped me for the honor. I was quite contented as a "two-rocker" Technical Sergeant, only one step below the highest enlisted grade. But accepting it wasn't presented to me as a choice, and if it had been I could hardly turn it down and expect any kindnesses from McCurdy from then on. So while the paperwork proceeded on its sluggish way I kept my mouth shut (at the Major's strong suggestion) did my daily work, asked no questions about the progress of the request, and only once was reminded that the wheels were grinding. I did have to appear before a small panel of officers to be quizzed. Properly polished, with glittering brass, shoes that were mirrors, and pants with razor-sharp creases (and absolutely no recall right now of how they were laundered or dry-cleaned) I stood at attention and answered questions that I've also long forgotten--presumably on military traditions and courtesy and the obligations of rank. When presented with the single one I recollect--"What is an officer's first responsibility?" I answered with what I thought was a pretty logical proposition: "To complete his assigned mission." But I was told that I'd flubbed that one--it was "to take care of his men." It occurred to me even as I stood there that a paradox was hidden in that answer, because in combat one knew damned well that taking any objective was going to get some men killed and wounded which wasn't much of a contribution to their well-being. However, I was not about to engage in a philosophical debate on the matter. (*"Well sir, isn't keeping them alive the best way of taking good care of them? Can you define your terms a little more precisely?"*) That approach didn't promise much for my own immediate welfare, so I looked appropriately apologetic, my questioner gave me a lift of the eyebrows that seemed to suggest I'd better take the lesson to heart, and we moved on. Some time around the start of April Lt. Jim Turner walked into the room

where I sat wrestling with the problem of what word might possibly plug a gap left by a garbled transmission, dropped a pair of gold bars--his gift-- on the desk and with a big smile on his ruddy face said: "Congratulations The orders just came through. You've been a second lieutenant since 10 A.M. this morning." It was that simple.

A short ceremony was scheduled almost immediately at the main headquarters office. I was formally discharged from the Army of the United States, and then sworn in anew on the strength of a piece of paper signed in facsimile by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It said that he trusted me to faithfully execute the duties of a second lieutenant in the army under his command. I received a copy of the commission at some point, which I've long since lost along with my discharge as an enlistee. Both are on file somewhere in the National Archives, I imagine. For a few seconds between the two transactions I was a free man once more, and I wondered, as had thousands before me who graduated from OCS, what would happen if in that blink of a moment, I had said that I was grateful for the honor, but preferred thereafter to do my bit as a civilian. I don't know that anyone ever tried it and I didn't want to be a show-off and go first. An official Signal Corps photographer came over and snapped a picture of me to be sent to my home town newspapers by the Public Relations Office. The shot shows me standing at attention with my eyes shut against the flash and a dopey grin on my face as someone pins a gold bar to the collar of the uniform I haven't yet changed. I'm gratified that the image almost certainly never graced a page, though it might have if I'd come from some small town with one daily. Promptly, one of the office clerks rushed over to throw me my first salute, which I returned, and, having been forewarned, dove into my pocket and handed him a dollar bill. Tradition, protocol and statute were all satisfied. I was re-born, Second Lieutenant Bernard A. Weisberger, AUS, 0-889960. Like my enlisted serial number, I've never forgotten it.

In a practical way, becoming an officer did not profoundly affect my work, though it certainly created a different working environment. The social stratification between an "officer and *gentleman*" and an "enlisted *man*," inherited from European armies was preserved in our own, and continued long after democracy and universal education had muddled or erased the distinction. I had to change where I ate and where I lived, the way I got paid and the amount, which of course was more.. I had to preserve a distance between myself and my former pals as the Major had to remind me several times. I was addressed as "Sir" by the enlisted men outside of our offices, where we dodged the issue as much as possible. My consent was needed for various activities when, as sometimes happened, I was the senior--or only --officer on hand at a given moment. Once, in particular, when I was in that role a small detachment of men under the command of a sergeant came through, en route to some other post. The sergeant explained to me that they had not been paid in a long time and were in urgent need of cash for a Kunming fling, but the Finance Office in our headquarters required a commissioned officer's signature on the payroll it drew up. I took the sergeant at his word, signed the authorization for a whacking sum, nervously aware that I could be held personally liable for any fraud or error. I spent a good deal of time for the next few days wondering if and when I would receive notice that I owed the United States several thousand bucks that would come out of my own paychecks.

Another occasion on which I had to exercise my new powers was less stressful and funnier. I had pulled Officer of the Day duty, meaning that it was my job to post guards at various locations and make periodic rounds to check on whether they were doing their duty to challenge anyone entering the area without official authorization. On this particular night I approached one sentinel

who said he had something to report. In what seemed to me to be a Hispanic-American accent he told me that an officer whom he recognized had gone past him with an unidentified woman, with whom he disappeared into one of the campus buildings. "I think, sir," he said very straight-facedly, "they went in there for to fuck." I was tickled to death by this somewhat poetic construction of a statement of purpose, which I had only encountered so far in Stephen Foster's song "O, Susanna" ("oh, don't you cry for me; I'm off to Loozianna my true love *for to* see.") So much so that I commended the guard for his alertness, decided that the odds were overwhelmingly in favor of the couple fucking as against committing sabotage or espionage, and took no further action.

Other duties were, to me, mere nuisances especially one that was unofficial but truly impossible to refuse. By custom it fell to the lot of the newest junior officer to keep the books for the Officers Club bar. It wasn't that hard, simply a matter of recording liquor purchases from some source I have forgotten and balancing them against cash receipts each month. In my several-months' tenure the income always exceeded expenditures by an amount that should have been equal to the cash on hand. (It was a great business, with virtually no overhead, ridiculously low prices, and nightly dozens of thirsty customers with no place else to go .) Somehow I was usually a little short on the night's receipts--not enough for me to suspect that the barkeeps were pocketing part of the intake, and well within my own oversized tendency to make mathematical errors, so I would dig into my pocket and make up the modest difference. I was happy when I could pass the job on to some other second lieutenant whose commission post-dated mine.

Most onerous of all from my point of view was having to take an occasional turn at censoring the mail of enlisted men to check for security breaches. I swept my eye over the typed or handwritten pages as quickly as possible, trying to blot everything

out of my mind except the search for a forbidden place name or work-related phrase. I never found one--the rules were plain and simple and fully understood by the writers. I just hated the invasion of privacy that I was committing, although I myself had not resented it especially in my enlisted days. You wrote your letter, left the envelope unsealed, and tossed it into a designated box without much thought--just part of the general parade of things that you had to do. But as officers, we didn't have to do it and I never got comfortable with the idea that Rank Has Its Privileges. I also hate giving orders as much as I do taking them. Luckily, however, except for one very brief interlude on the way back to the States after the war, I never had command responsibilities.

In spite of all these disclaimers, I enjoyed the ride in first class. Who wouldn't, after all? A little more living space--only two of us to a room, I think, or at maximum four--although even so, I recall the rooms as pretty barren of such niceties as a chair. We sat on our beds or footlockers to drink and chat. I think the food we got was pretty much the same as the enlisted men's, but the setting was more dining-room-like and we didn't stand in line. We had more freedom to come and go as we liked without getting special permissions, and we could, naturally, spend more on Kunming's limited variety of goods and services. This was impressed on me especially when, with the ink on my commission hardly dry, I was ordered back to New Delhi for two weeks of temporary duty. I don't recall now what it was that required my presence. I found the offices which I had left five or six months earlier now well supplied, possibly oversupplied, with commissioned translators, most of whom, it seemed, had gotten to Arlington Hall after I had left. I was glad to see my old pals, Frank and Guy. There were some limits to fraternizing with Guy after hours, but I'm happy to record that he, too, finally got commissioned later on.

I had my billet in a building that housed both British and American officers. Its official name had been Central Vista, which we transformed into Wistful Vista, the home address of a character on a popular radio comedy show, Fibber McGee and Molly. It had all the amenities of life among the sahibs, one bearer to every two lodgers, an officers' mess with quite decent food and plenty of available booze, and Indian waiters accustomed to prompt fulfillment of every Sahib's desire. I went out at least several nights of the fourteen I was there, and on one evening had a date with my favorite Red Cross "girl" though by that time she was engaged to a British officer, to the great disappointment of a large fan base among the American forces. I was a full member.

I regret that I can't think at the moment of a less diminishing synonym for "girl," hardly appropriate at best because the minimum age for the women who staffed the centers was 25. But "Red Cross woman," the pseudo-genteel "Red Cross lady," and the gender-neutral "Red Cross worker," or "club attendant" probably today's choices, would lack the flavor of the time. In 1945, "Red Cross girl" was the universal proper term.

The temporary duty in India involved two more crossings of the Hump, both of them uneventful, and neither would have any place whatever in my memory if not for the fact that the return trip from New Delhi took place on or immediately after V-E day, May 8th in Europe, when what was left of Germany's army surrendered soon after Hitler's suicide in a Berlin besieged and battered by the Soviet Army. It had been raining heavily in Chabua and we stood outside of our tents in mud over the shoe tops, listening to an Armed Forces Radio Broadcast of the great news. Great news it certainly was. I stood there recalling June 6, 1944, when we learned in New Delhi that US, British and Canadian troops had

established a beach head in Normandy. It had taken just eleven months almost to the day to finish off what Eisenhower called the "crusade in Europe" and rid the world of Hitler. Quite an astonishing timetable when you think of it, though it wouldn't have been possible without the struggles of the years following the end of 1941, when every square mile of the continent (except for the neutral nations and a slice of European Russia) was under the Nazi heel. But like everyone else in all the other theaters of war that day, our rejoicing was mixed with a hard-headed expectation that there was still a long, long way to go before Japan would be defeated.

Back in Kunming I settled into a relatively untaxing routine, broken only by the occasional visit of an officer from New Delhi, either en route to the forward HQ in Chungking or for temporary duty with us. We even made a few long term additions to the office personnel, including Frank Tenny and, he insists, Curtis Bennett from Arlington Hall days, though I don't recall him at all. None of the transients passing through made any lasting impression. We'd only see them for a night or two, which would pass pleasantly sitting around someone's room on our footlockers and very often passing around a bottle of some local alcoholic concoction.

There were two exceptions. The first was Lambros D.Callimahos, who was, before the war, a world-class flutist, and whom I myself had seen and heard at Carnegie Hall, at that time moustached and bearded, and playing gorgeously. I was unaware that at the time he was at the oldest thirty years of age. Now he appeared in his captain's uniform, shorn not only of the beard and moustache but likewise with closely cropped hair. He shook up yet another of my stereotypes. I wasn't entirely surprised to find him doing cryptanalysis; I think I had already heard of the affinity between love of music and mathematicians--or perhaps that's an afterthought. Most of the mathematicians and physicists whom I

got to know as an academic later in life were avid and knowledgeable concertgoers, and at least one still gave concerts on the piano. In any case, I believed that artistic souls hated discipline and authority imposed from the outside, and that Callimahos was merely doing his patriotic duty in Signal Intelligence and waiting to escape back into his concert career as soon as possible. Quite the contrary. How he felt about being in uniform I don't know, though he seemed perfectly comfortable in that tightly structured existence. But cryptanalysis was not a mere wartime interlude for him; it was a passion at which he excelled as much as he had in flute-performance. After the war he returned to Arlington Hall as a civilian and became an important aide to the Grand Sachem of the business, Colonel Friedman, assisting him in several important solutions. With Friedman he continued into the successor organization, the Army Security Agency and finally the National Security Agency where he remained until he retired in the 1970s. He simply abandoned a professional life in music. I have since learned that he was extraordinary in many ways--apparently one of those Renaissance men who can do brilliantly whatever he sets his mind to. Loving the flute as a kid, he simply made himself into a concert artist. Loving cryptanalysis, he became one of its respected experts. One wouldn't have guessed this from the evening I spent in his company in Kunming. He seemed to be, and apparently wanted to be, just another officer. So much for my stereotypes. That meeting with him was another part of my growing up in the service.

The other memory I retain from a series of evenings in the officers' quarters of Hostel One that has stuck with me is of an after-dinner moment when several of us were gathered in the company of another voyager, a red-headed and funny lieutenant, John O'Donnell. He had provided a bottle, picked up in his travels, of "Scotch" made in China. As we all hoisted a glass for initial tasting, the electricity in the former campus building suddenly cut out, leaving us in pitch darkness. "Nobody touch the Scotch!" he

shouted. "I just went blind!" The current was restored after a moment or two, and we all slugged some of the stuff. Our consensus was that it was "OK," but at that point we would have had the same opinion of anything alcoholic that wouldn't produce instant paralysis or death.

So in those immediate post-V-E weeks, there was a kind of tranquility in the air, a kind of collective sense that changes were going to come but in what form we couldn't guess and in no case any time soon. We went on with our work, taking it seriously but without any sense of tension or hurry, in a kind of between-crises letdown that was heading towards boredom, when I was called in by the Major one morning and dispatched on a trip that lasted some two to three weeks and was my other indelible wartime adventure, the first being the tumultuous period in the Spring of 1944 when we were funneling current material to the commanders of the U.S. campaign in Burma. This one was far less important, in fact operationally a failure, but provided me with some matchless personal experiences.

At this point I have some documentation to support me. I wrote a fifteen-page single-spaced letter to my Red Cross friend, Patricia Vincent (then Patricia Balz) describing the trip I have just introduced above. I have inserted it here verbatim. Now I realize that if I'd kept my letters home I could have interspersed them with my present memories and enriched the whole story with such flashbacks. This one is long, but it gives this memoir a flavor of reality as I experienced it at the time. It's the only such evidence in these pages. The other surviving document is an official report of activities in which I was involved in Shanghai in the months immediately following V-J day, which I will use as a prompt to my memory.

There are some small points where the letter differs from fact. Because of security at the time I could not identify where I was going or what I was doing. It was actually Nanning, some 500 miles to the southeast, very close to the sea and also to the border with what was then Indo-China, now Viet Nam. I made up the code name in the letter. Nanning had been one of the U.S. air bases taken by the Japanese the preceding year, and had now been abandoned by them as they shortened their lines. I was to contact the commander of the U.S. forces which would be coming in to re-establish the base, and get his permission to examine materiel and documents left behind by the Japanese, identify any cryptologic materiel, then try to arrange for it to be sequestered and eventually delivered to our Signal Intelligence authorities for study." Cryptologic materiel" would include any codebooks, code machines, code-related orders and suchlike, which the new occupiers, untrained in signal intelligence, in poking through any debris left by the Japanese, might simply see as worthless junk to be destroyed.

I should add that these instructions were couched in rather vague general terms, with no indication of any particular purpose. It did not bother me because such is the way of army life. I now believe that the errand was part of a larger and highly secret mission called TICOM, launched as the European war was nearing its end to learn as much as possible about German and Japanese code breaking operations against us and our allies, including and perhaps especially the Soviet Union. Today I do know for sure that I was part of TICOM in Shanghai, and will deal with the whole subject when I get to that point.

For now, it is still late June of 1945, and I am en route to Nanning with my Top Secret orders in my hand. This is where I pick up the story in the letter to Patty, written several weeks later. Just another couple of corrections are needed. I may have left the impression that I aborted the mission on my own but I actually

requested and was granted permission to do so. probably because it was self-evident that the army doesn't work that way. I may likewise have forgotten or confused a couple of details even then when the events were fresh in my mind. (For example, I don't really recall carrying a carbine but if I said so at the time, I guess I did--I didn't knowingly make up anything.) And the "small scar" on my thigh that I referred to did not disappear in weeks, but remained there for years as a minute but noticeable dimple in the skin There are other places where my memory and the statements in the letter don't coincide and there are some internal contradictions. Where I think it important I've noted them, but I've ignored a few.

Finally, my writer's pride compels me to add that I am deeply embarrassed by some of the purple prose in the original which I have cut out and marked by ellipses and bracketed insertions Some ellipses are in the original, intended to show God knows what--stream of consciousness? They are the ones after which insertions now appear. I was not yet 23, I was still learning how to write, and I was showing off more than a bit to impress the woman to whom I was writing and so may have overly dramatized the episode at the river crossing--but the facts are all there just as I remember them. But in the interest of historical accuracy, embarrassed or not I have left almost all of them verbatim. I have mended some errors in grammar and punctuation and corrected obvious typos that have nothing to do with the authenticity of my story and in a few cases, identifiable by enclosure in brackets, added a clarifying word where a term needs explanation or a sentence is incomprehensible without the addition of a missing word.

I have chosen a different typeface to differentiate this "live" account from the rest of my recollections.

S.I.S. China Theater
APO 627, c/o Postaster, N.Y.
22 July 1945

Dear Patty:

This is the story of a mission that failed. In spite of failure, it was interesting in its own way, and you might like to hear about it.

Some three weeks ago I was ordered to proceed to a certain base in China only recently abandoned by the Japanese. . . call it Yankee Stadium. Never mind what my mission was; the point is, I had to be there as soon as practicable after the enemy withdrawal. Two officers of a neighboring unit were going there in an Army Air Force jeep, and I secured a ride with them. With my orders in my pocket and a letter from a Colonel to the local commander [at Yankee Stadium] in which my name was misspelled and [my unit wrongly identified]. . . I set out on a rainy afternoon

Now, you must know that road travel in China is still full of irregularity. The roads wind through mountains and hills for miles on end with nothing but a few Chinese villages. . . At intervals our army has placed convoy camps, and one reckons his day's travel with oceangoing nicety, to extend between two of these camps, which generally consist of a number of tents, a motor pool, a dispatcher's shack, a mess hall [and minimal recreation room.] To meet the conditions for this type of travel, we carried a trailer with half-a-dozen five gallon cans of gasoline, one five-gallon can of water, and about five days' K rations for three men. Personally we each carried a bedroll and a musette bag with four or five changes of underwear and socks, flashlight soap, matches, toilet gear, sunglasses and a raincoat. A [web belt and] canteen. . . and [in my case] a carbine. For myself, I also brought along a camera with several rolls of film, and also a steel helmet, being slightly uncertain as to whether the Japanese had . . . [left] any artillery or snipers behind them as they recoiled from Yankee Stadium, and being of a prudent disposition to boot.

All of this personal gear, save for the bedrolls, was placed in the back of the jeep, which was my perch. It showed a remarkable tendency to collect around my feet most of the time. Also, I learned to know the ruts and boulders of China's unpaved roads with . . . painful intimacy as we bounced along.

For the first two days we traveled over a reasonably level road, a slippery red gash between green hills. We passed erratically wobbling Chinese peasant carts, convoys of 6 by 6 trucks lumbering along in an elephant's parade, and Chinese troops moving up, strung out along the bordering dishes; they wore some type of horsehair capes and broad coolie hats, but still they cringed under the periodic driving rains, as they footed along, with antiquated and new rifles, fragments of mortars, Bren guns, BARS and machine guns over their shoulders. They looked as uncomfortable and as patient as the small mules plodding beside them, and yet they, like every other stray farmer in his rice-paddy and snotty-nosed little boy or girl playing by the roadside. . .wherever we went. . .somehow managed to extend us a thumbs-up and a cry of "ding hao."

We slept the first night at a convoy camp half buried in layers of rusty, glutinous mud. . .our tent leaking like a sieve to help matters. Next morning we spent half an hour in the orderly tent of a truck company, while a captain patiently leafed through folders full of convoy reports and laboriously scratched red arrows on our map to indicate the route facilities to Yankee Stadium. That night we put up at a similar camp. . .this time the mud was gray. . . eating corned willy, potatoes, canned corn and peaches, and dark coffee in a small mess hall with two bearded lieutenants in muddy fatigues who kept up a running dialogue in which they complained to each other, to us, and to Heaven of the lack of spare parts, and the fact that after nearly two years in Iran, they had been "rotated" to China, which was understandably upsetting. At these camps you began to know what loneliness meant. . . movies and mail only when passing convoys brought them, the same faces and the greasy potatoes and the hard wooden benches in the mess hall days without end, the sputtering motors and slick, splashing wheels of the eternally rolling trucks, and no place to go except the squalid village and its one or two dirt-encrusted "restaurants," no-one to talk to except the other G.I.s

--nothing to listen to except the canned cheerfulness of the Army Radio Service broadcasts (when you had a radio) nothing to do but sit in the mud and wait. . . and sit, and sit.

The third day we struck mountain country, and the ride suddenly turned into a thing of scenic beauty. We climbed slowly, back and forth up the faces of the mountains over the switchbacks, digging for altitude by feet. In the distance, a row of mountains marched across the horizon with bowed, judicial dignity, robed in somber blue. Nearer to us were green slopes, patiently ribboned by sweating men and oxen into yellowish rice paddies. Sometimes you could look over a cliff deep into a valley half full of purple shadow, or over to the next rise to see a convoy, like a line of small beetles, twisting up the dusty white thread of road. It was beautiful, and there was danger in the beauty. Six by sixes, hurtling around the hairpin curves sometimes could not be turned in time. . . besides which it must be admitted that Chinese drivers habitually use the middle of the road and would often suddenly appear around one of these turns too late to be avoided except by a sudden swerve. From time to time we passed places from which we could see blackened carcasses of trucks, overturned at the bottom of a shallow draw or on the hillside, looking like some vanquished animal, with its claws pointing to the sky.

That night we came to a small encampment where an American training unit was working with a Chinese army group. After supper we wandered over to the rec hall. Inside, a class was just finishing. A group of Chinese in their yellow cotton uniforms squatted in a half circle, while a G.I. harangued them on his feet. He would bark out a sentence, and an interpreter would suddenly break out in a flood of singsong syllables as he translated. I heard him from a distance. . .

"An' if they git in close that's so much the better. You can use yo' bayonet on them. Don't be afraid to use that bay'net."

The class broke up, and the G.I. walked over to the door where I'd been standing and leaned against the jamb while he lit a cigarette. He looked up at me and smiled:

"Can't teach them sonsabitches nawthin!" he told me.

There was a movie that night. The boys swarmed in, spilled over the few benches, then dragged in footlockers, ammunition boxes, bedrolls and ration cases until the hall was full and stuffy. After they left, we set up our cots there, swallowed our nightly atabrine, and slept.

We should have had about three days' driving left to get to Yankee Stadium, but at four-thirty the next afternoon, we turned a bend in the road, and there before us was a line of 6 by 6's, parked at the roadside, with a couple of jeeps and weapons carriers sandwiched in. The bridge at the stream [ahead] was out. We walked down to the river (or rather, what we'd call a creek) to reconnoiter. It wasn't too deep, but on the other hand not shallow enough to drive a jeep over. And the current was swift; the water sucked and slobbered noisily in the tiny pebbles at the edge of the bank. A naked American stood up to his knees in the water, calmly rubbing soap on himself.

"You can't get over tonight," he called to us, "come on in and have a bath."

We declined this, and began to look around for a place to sleep. It had begun to rain. A few hundred yards back of the stream was a curious structure, consisting of three thatched walls, and a roof of the same material. The side facing the road was open; the floor was littered with what must have been straw. Three Chinese in ragged blue shirts and trousers huddled in a corner. It didn't look very promising, but the rain had begun to trickle down our collars now. Besides, one of the soldiers had come over to inform us in the easy comradeship of the road, that he had some extra cots in his truck. We dragged them over to the "hut," . . . nine of us, set them up and unrolled our bedding on them. We ate our K-rations quietly and not very happily. The straw crawled with insects; the high-pitched whine of mosquitoes filled the room. Off in the corner, the Chinese had secured a small chicken from a farmer, and were preparing to cook it over a small fire of sticks. A bitter smoke drifted through the enclosure, mingled with the smell of human excrement buried somewhere beneath the straw. . . we didn't care to look for it. Three G.I.s had cornered the farmer and were attempting to buy some more

chickens from him. Excited colloquies in Chinese were punctuated with cries of "Holy Christ, that's too ____ much, ya goddam slopie pirate" and similar protestations. A GI. In a pair of faded coveralls, with a sandy moustache, appeared with a china cup in his hand, came over and sat on my cot.

"Have some, lieutenant", he said, offering me the cup.

"What is it?"

"Jing bao juice. Take the enamel off'n your teeth."

I took a large gulp. It certainly did.

"You better have the rest of this, " I sputtered, handing it back.

"Hell, no. We've got a ten gallon jug of it in the truck."

He finally left me, to pass his potation on to the other guests. It turned out that their convoy was part of an air-drop unit, en route to Yankee Stadium to establish a new base. They were a seasoned crew, having been through the Salween campaign and their comments on the Chinese, the War Department, and various commanding generals had a unique piquancy.

We awoke in the morning, thoroughly chewed. At about nine the soldiers piled down to the creek and began placing flat rocks in the bed, to raise it sufficiently to accommodate the trucks. This work was accomplished by about noon, and I went down to watch. Some help was needed on the other side, and so I stripped and went in to swim. The water was icy cold and the current wrapped itself around the knees like a thrown lariat while the feet struggled to grip the irregular, rolling stones of the bottom. It was possible to wade most of the way, and the short swimming stretch carried me a good ways downstream, but it was not too difficult. While clambering up on the other bank I noticed a man further downstream, fording the creek on a horse and leading a mule behind him on a halter. That was my first glimpse of one of the finest men I ever met, although I didn't know it at the time.

At about two o'clock I went back to our jeep; the two other officers were engaged in a dicker to have the jeep taken aboard a six by six for the crossing. And then I noticed the man on horseback, standing by a weapons carrier. He had a magnificent, curly black beard that came down to his chest; it hid his mouth, but in the brown face gleamed a pair of warm and friendly blue eyes. He wore a sun helmet, a loose linen shirt a pair of knickers of the same material. On his bare, wiry legs, he wore a pair of loose Chinese sandals. As I stood there watching him he removed his hat politely and approached me.

"Parlez-vous Français, M'sieur?"

"Oui, mais pas facilement", I stammered.

Placing the helmet back on his curly hair, which clung close to his scalp he immediately opened a conversation. I found it easy to follow him and not too difficult to reply. Later on, we finally reached a charming working agreement . . .he would speak normally, and as for me, he suggested that I do exactly what he did, when I complained of my faulty grammar.

"What is that, Père Nenot", I asked him.

"I just forget it", he said

And I did. And he did. And we never had a bit of trouble, save when I stumbled about searching the recesses of a depleted vocabulary for a word. In these cases he would always wait tolerantly and gently, until I conveyed my idea to him, whereupon he would supply the word.

It appeared that he was a French Catholic priest who had a mission on a hill near the little village at the ford. When his villagers had told him that Americans were stuck on the other side of the creek, he had come down with his mule to see if he could help. He had brought along a basket of tomatoes from his own garden, and some bread from his own bakery, if we would care for some. And summoning over a Chinese boy, he produced three loaves of crusty,

flavorsome French bread. I broke a piece off with my still damp fingers and ate it. It was superb, and [*four*] of us finished two loaves in as many minutes. Afterwards, I continued the conversation with Père Nenot, as he introduced himself, until it was time for us to cross

The jeep was jockeyed and maneuvered onto a small rise of ground, and a truck backed up to it, to receive it. The truck grunted and snorted through the ford. I swam again. By the time we had unloaded on the other side and I had dried off in the sun and put my [fatigue] uniform on again, Père Nenot, on muleback, had returned and joined us. He now earnestly asked that the three of us [in our jeep] stay the night at his mission. It was four-thirty, and so we decided to accept. We drove on another mile or so, and then he bade us stop and pointed vaguely across the fields to a hill nearly a mile away. For a moment, the venture was in the balance; we couldn't leave the jeep [alone] until he explained that he would have one of his "people" sleep in the jeep all night.

So, slinging our carbines over our shoulders we followed him. It began to pour heavily; the trail was narrow snaking through rice-paddies, then to the banks of a little stream which we forded by leaping from rock to rock, and then struggled tortuously up the side of the hill. Père Nenot hopped along in front of us, chattering volubly to me, pointing out his fields of rice, of wheat (for his European bread), of tobacco. . . while we slipped and struggled up the hill he bounced nimbly from rock to rock, his calves glistening brown with the wetness. Just as the tempers of my companions began to show slight roughness (for myself I was enjoying the conversation) we turned into a flight of steps, at the top of which was a little square of white-walled buildings. And in another moment, Père Nenot conducted us, dripping like three poodles, into his own quarters.

It was not much. . .two bedrooms, and then what we would call the living room. And yet it was lovely. It was a little dark, and of course it was austere, yet not ascetic. There was a large table of dark, polished wood, and some straight-backed chairs to go with it. There were two great cupboards, one for linen, and one for dishes. . . . there were a couple of obviously home-made folding chairs, like the ones you see at the beach in the summer. A work table with a little kerosene lamp stood in the corner; there was a projector for showing

slides on it, and a small enamel statue of the Virgin. Behind was a bookcase full of books with sacred titles, and dictionaries. The floor was covered with linoleum. Somehow everything seemed neat, and clean, and right even to the colored pictures of some saints on the wall. It smelted simply and cleanly and sweetly of unostentatious Godliness. We peeled off our damp clothes and dried ourselves with towels brought us by two shy little Chinese boys.

We sat about drying off, and the Chinese boys brought us white metal bowls, full of a dark, thick, sweet coffee which was wonderful. Peer Neon explained that he was having them prepare "a little supper" for us. After a bit, he offered to show me the mission grounds. We walked out and I saw his chapel, simple and clean, built by the Chinese, with an oddly Oriental touch. There was a railing dividing off the front part of the chapel, where the altar was. And the posts of this were brightly, even gaudily painted in several colors. The mission was called Notre Dame of Lourdes, and there was a statue. . . a larger one this time. . . of her there. He showed me the small schoolroom where he taught the village children whom their parents would spare, Chinese. It appears that they normally speak only the local dialect, a sort of bastard Siamese. He had no nuns to help him, but he had educated several Chinese girls to work with children. He showed me his gardens, with tomatoes and beans and cabbages growing in colorful and orderly rows. He could plant almost anything in that . . . soil. He had had sweet potatoes, and once even tried pineapples, although the latter were "too much trouble"

We returned to the living quarters and there we ate the "little supper" he had had put on for us. It was amazing. There was a whole roast rabbit. There was a magnificent sort of fruit tart. There were string beans and crisp French-fried potatoes, and eggplant, and a brown crock of noodles. Abundance of that wonderful bread. And then with his own hands, Peer Neon carefully mixed vinegar, pepper and oil in a little bowl, and created for us a French dressing which was poured over a salad of garden-grown lettuce and tomatoes. It was the first salad we'd had since we left home. We kept up a lively conversation at the table, in spite of the delay caused by my having to translate for all parties.

Afterwards, the two others retired to the room, which simply contained two beds, one of them wide enough to accommodate two of us. It also had a small table with a lamp, a washstand with basin and pitcher, and another saint's picture. At Père Nenot's invitation I went out on his porch to sit with him in two of the beach chairs he had. We put our feet up on the long railing and he lit one of his fragrant, home-made cigars in his curious, hook-shaped holder, with his little French-made "briquette," as he called it. We talked and he told me about himself. How he had been a soldier in the Army of Occupation in the last war. . .he was only forty-five years old, though his beard made him appear older. He showed me pictures of himself as he was then. Of how he had come to China twenty-two years ago, and seen everything come and go--bandits, and warlords, and more bandits, and Communist armies and then the National Government's armies, and now the Americans. . . . he had been once, in 1935, to his home in Clermont-Ferrand. His mission was small. He had many converts, yes, but most of them backslid easily. Still, one did what one could for one's people. He had a dispensary, and enough medical knowledge to treat minor injuries and diseases. His two little servant boys he had found begging on the road, having walked from Canton after the evacuation of that port. Then there was the school, the garden, occasional trips to visit other French missionaries nearby.

"Do you not ever become lonely?", I asked.

He looked at me in honest surprise, and then his eyes lit merrily.

"Why", he answered, "I never have time."

He was by no means a hermit. He got a weekly mimeographed news-letter from a French Information Bureau in Kenning He read just a bit of English (as his dictionaries attested) and had been spending odd hours reading the Time magazine, left by another American. Many times American officers stopped to spend the night with him. Only a few spoke French, however. But the Americans were still all "bons garçons." The Chinese army, however, was "insupportable." The officers were arrogant, and requisitioned food and billets without asking questions. The soldiers were all thieves. Times were difficult; he had had to discontinue the school, because

they had taken most of his rice, and he could not support the children. Their families could not feed them and send them to school. But one managed. The war would be over soon although then there would be more fighting between the warlords and the Central Government. There was always fighting and thieving; one gave out medicine, and tried to give out food even when there was famine to bandit and peasant alike . .and brought up children and then watched them return to the village [and] to their own ways. But that was the way of life. Four good Chinese boys he had had. He had sent them to a seminary in China to become priests. And one had made it. He was glad to see the Americans. And he had seen many French, trekking up from Indo-China. The war should be over in another year. . .what was the San Francisco conference [establishing the UN]doing? Had anything been decided about the Middle East? So much trouble with colonies and Oriental peoples. The biggest problem was feeding these missions. But one had to be aware. They did not like foreigners. There was much trouble ahead in postwar China.

We sat there talking, looking into the slowly empurpling valley, with the crickets and the hills fading, and I knew perfect peace. And I thought of Andy Fraise, and Pat Pellici, and the kids who'd struggled through French 3-4 with me, and how they would have enjoyed it if they could have been there to see how it worked out. I thought of how you'd have liked it, even mentioned my "amie Americaine laquelle a voyagee en France comme enfante", among other things.

And we talked until night fell, and then by the light of the kerosene lamp, until late. Next morning we had a breakfast that was, incredibly the duplicate of the supper the night before, save that it had a whole roast duck as the *pièce de resistance*. Wishing desperately to do something to repay his kindness (we'd already given him money, over his protest, for the mission) we asked him if he would like a ride to the next town, where he had a confrere. Of course he would. And so, packing a small bag with a few cigars and an extra loaf of bread; a prayer book and some "petites gateaux" he'd had his cook make he clambered into the jeep with us (after our hike back) and we set off.

We didn't get far. It was Monday morning when we set out, and in only an hour, we came to the same tangled jumble of muddy green

vehicles. This time it was less of a joke. This was no creek. It was a broad river, of a dirty red color with the surface ripped and pitted by a vicious current. The only means of transportation normally was a Chinese ferry. .a scow, with deck planks over it and a railing, that could accommodate a couple of jeeps or a six by six. Normally, the Chinese poled it across, but [*now*] the current would have snatched it out of their hands in a minute.

And so all through that afternoon we waited. GI's ,bitching with the sarcastic humor that they seem to bring everywhere, wandered up and down the road, chewing K-rations, pitching stones into the stream, firing their weapons at floating pieces of wood until the hills reverberated with the echoes and one might have thought a battle was in progress. Late that afternoon, a fleet of engineer trucks pounded up and unloaded a number of assault boats [*for pontoons*] and some outboard motors. Everyone sighed with relief. A red-faced Lt. Colonel who had been angrily storming over the jammed stretch of road all day, giving instructions and scolding numerous soldiers, promptly drove his jeep onto the barge and ours followed. I had been in a small Chinese boat myself, trying to help a red-bearded lieutenant in a yellow sweatshirt and fatigue pants, [*along*] with a bunch of GIs, clear away a small cable that was stretched to the other bank. Later we were to regret moving this. At all events, I hopped aboard, and about 8 P.M., arrangements were complete. [*An*] assault boat. . .had been lashed to the barge The motor[started, and we chugged into mid-stream; then [*it*] wheezed, thrummed, hacked, grumbled;. .and we were across There was a thud as we nosed into the other bank, and then, I don't know how, someone got confused. Instead of being secured to the bank, the .. [*line at*] the forward end was released. Maybe it was . .[*because*] the red-faced Colonel was barking orders and the harassed interpreter gave the wrong one. Maybe in the darkness someone missed his footing. At all events there was a sudden shudder, and the ferry broke away into the racing stream. A frantic GI tumbled over the rail, disappeared into a motorboat, and spun the flywheel. The motor coughed twice....and died. We could see the lights on the sampans tied up at the landing point disappearing upstream, receding with horrible swiftness. The lights of the jeeps showed tangled foliage on the bank slipping by. And we heard the water pounding over the shallow rises of a rapids below. Not knowing whether to stay or jump we stayed where we

were....until a sudden terrific bump threw us all to the deck. We had crashed into a tangle of roots along the shore. Quickly three or four willing Chinese had slopped ashore, and tied us to a large tree. And at this point, someone yelled "Hey, bring a flashlight over here."

I started across the deck and suddenly felt. . .[*emptiness under*] my feet. . . . For a second I felt as if I were hanging in space, and then there was a . . . bump and my hip felt as if it had jumped up to my ribs. . . I was lying on my side and all around me was blackness. Then I realized I was wet, and for a moment I thought I was in the water. Then a flashlight shone down. The Chinese had lifted some of the deck planks to bail, and left a small hatchway down to the bilges about five feet below. Through this I had fallen in the darkness and struck my hip squarely on the edge of the opening.

They fished me out and got me on my feet. I limped around a minute. [*Leg*] still movable. But stinging and tight. "Come here," said some GI, and hauled me out into the puddle of light made by the jeep headlights. In the glare, surrounded by the rest, I let down my pants. A knotted red lump rose on my thigh, just below the hip; there was a small scratch with a few bright drops of blood beading it.

"Lemma feel and see if it's, broken," said the GI, and his fingers crept explanatorily around the bump. . . I felt my teeth .cutting into [*my lip*, the dots of sweat on my hairline.

"Jesus!"

"Sorry, sir. I don't think it's broken. Can you walk?"

I could walk, and after a few minutes, felt reasonably normal. It was now apparent that we would have to spend the night there.

The red-faced Colonel had a small portable stove, and he and the corporal with him now set about trying to boil some river water to make coffee. (All field rations carry packets of soluble coffee, you know.) However, after one smoky and vile-tasting attempt, the effort was abandoned. I suddenly felt filled with remorse for having invited Père Nenot on such a wild mission.

"We are sorry to have caused you this discomfort, Père Nenot."

"I am quite used to it. When one travels in China, one must accept all things philosophically. If we do not get there tomorrow, we will get there the next day."

"Yes, but you will have to sleep in the back of our jeep, instead of in your nice bed at home."

"So much the better There are fewer mosquitoes here."

And so he curled up in the back seat, the two officers with me disposed themselves in the front seat and under the jeep, and I crawled up on top of the trailer....the canvas [*cover*] was caked with dried mud and the gasoline cans underneath made the surface rough and uneven, but I found that the day's work in the boat had made me sleepier than I thought. I lost no time in dropping off.

Next morning found us still tied up downstream. We broke out our rations for breakfast, but had used up our water the day before. Although Père Nenot drank the river water, as he said, "by closing the eyes and opening the mouth", none of us cared to risk dysentery. His insides were toughened by years in China, ours weren't. Around noontime there was a. . . [*rustling of foliage*] and another missionary....an American one...appeared. He was also on the road, but he knew the country, had crossed the river in a small boat and gone around by back trails to bring us a five-gallon can of water. I must confess he was stodgy compared to Père Nenot, but we were grateful to him for it. Soon a large motorboat with a towrope appeared and new efforts were made to bring us [*back*] upstream.. And once again we came near disaster. The towrope broke, and we drifted, rudderless [*and*] motorless, into the current again. It was broad daylight, which somehow made me less frightened. Another Lieutenant Colonel, stripped to the waist, was in charge.

"Kick off your shoes and line up along the upstream rail", he bawled.

So we did. I looked down at the muddy, fretted water. It would not be too bad a swim. I did hate to lose my camera, [*which had*

belonged to my grandfather] however. A lean and sunburned engineer lieutenant was standing next to me. There was really no cause for fright....we had sent ashore the non-swimmers (including the "Père) before starting. ...and so we talked dispassionately of the efforts being made, and wherein they had failed. And just as we waited for the word to jump ship, we were swung into an inshore eddy once again, and the ferry [*plus vehicle and equipment*] was saved.

The rest of that day was nightmarish. We got her back upstream by the simple method of pulling her . . . *against the current.*] . . . [A] stout line was carried ahead on foot a couple of hundred yards and secured to a tree. And then coolies and soldiers alike got on the rope and pulled, "snubbing" her [*ahead to the improvised mooring post.*]. The sun was . . . unrelenting and the rope tore the skin of the palms easily. Once, we got ashore and floundered through a swamp, tripping on roots, unable to swat at the hundreds of gnats that swarmed in our eyes and nose and mouth, scratched by reeds. I have a lot of respect for those Chinese coolies now. They do a good job. At times when I felt as if an ax blade had been rammed between my shoulders I would attempt to adopt the "philosophical" view of Père Nenot.....after all, this was a little incident in a big war, and I a mere dot in the mosaic of that war...but when we finally had her back to the starting side, tied up to the shore I was more than slightly weary. As we sat on the railing, the sweat drying on our backs in the evening breeze, it occurred to me that I should look at my leg. Cautiously I slipped out of my fatigue trousers and looked.....from the back of my knee, far up to the hip my leg was completely purple, and in the middle of that purple plain rose an ugly red mound. I scrambled ashore and wandered through the crowds of GIs sitting on logs, on the running boards of cars [*trucks?*] in ditches, hunched over -rations and impromptu board games,. . . [*as I look[ed] for a medic.*

Finally I found a captain who was attached to a Chinese unit pulled up behind our convoy. After the fashion of all doctors he peered at it and said "Hmmm." Finally he uttered his diagnosis: I had broken several blood vessels in the leg, causing a deep bruise. The lump was a clot. Nothing could be done at the moment, and would probably not be necessary.

"I'll tell you one thing," he said, wiping his hands on his pants. "You'll have a damn sore leg tomorrow."

Cheered by this prospect, I returned to the barge. What with the three of us, and "Père Nenot, and the corporal in the red-faced Colonel's jeep (the Colonel had proceeded across the river by small boat leaving the burden of the jeep to his man) we had a shantyboat family of five.

From that Tuesday night, until Friday morning, we remained on the barge in hopes that the engineers could complete their plan of stringing steel cables across the river and creating a pulley arrangement to guide her across. Gangs of coolies [*or perhaps they were Chinese soldiers*] labored through the day digging emplacements for the shore supports of the cables; swarthy, hairy, half-naked engineers slopped in and out of the current or skittered across the river in assault boats. Unfortunately, every officer of very stranded outfit felt it incumbent on himself to take a hand; lengthy conferences preceded each step, and the work dragged. We considered returning, but found that a large unit of Chinese had driven in behind us and thoroughly jammed the road, with trucks parked three abreast. We boiled the water from a nearby stream to drink. We grew animalish, bearded dirty; performed all the functions of life within a few hundred yards of our ferry. Fortunately, one of the engineers offered Père Nenot a berth in the back of his truck while we remained, but we slept either on deck, or, one rainy night, in the back of the jeep. And we ate K-rations while we had them. . . . ate them to the point of nausea. I remember the corporal with the jeep one night after he opened a supper ration. In one hand he held a package of biscuits. In the other, the roll of toilet paper which the Army thoughtfully includes in this meal. He regarded them both critically.

"I'll be goddamned, he announced, "if I don't think one would taste about as good as the other." Through all of this griping Père Nenot remained imperturbable; I would see his slight figure leaning on the rail, his head in an aura of cigar smoke, and his blue eyes looking patiently at the hills on the other side. He ate his K-rations [*that we shared with him*] and never complained. He had traveled often in China before, in wind and weather, and I suppose being encamped with the U.S Army was a pleasant novelty for him. Sometimes three or four G.I.s. . . a dark complected Brooklynite, an Italian boy from Pennsylvania, a couple of Wisconsin engineers would come aboard

to shoot the breeze. [*Yes, I know it sounds like a Hollywood cast, but it was really so.*] They liked Père Nenot and all called him "Padre." They would fire questions at me, and he would answer them rapid-fire, often straining me no little. His patience seemed to do us all good. He was also our go-between with the Chinese, since he spoke the local dialect fluently. And he also saved us from the unrelenting diet of K-rations. One night I saw the [*our*] captain approach, triumphantly holding two scrawny chickens by the neck. He and the Père had bought them from one of the farmers. . . [*A couple of empty, cut-down fuel drums*] were secured . . . [*and a fire made in one.*] The other was readied, with water. I fell to work plucking the chickens and at that point, Père Nenot calmly took over. With his pen knife he cleaned them. He then searched the ration boxes for ingredients, which he spread out on the hood of the jeep. He took a can of 10-in-one ration "butter "and cheese mixture. He borrowed a mess kit from one of the boys, put a little water into it, and melted some of the butter-cheese. He took a pinch of pepper which someone volunteered, and a bit of salt. . .all of which were obtained from different ration packages. Carefully he mixed his sauce. Into the can it went. With all the care of a good cook he rejected the water we had put in it. . .it had halazone in it. He fetched clear water from the [a] spring, popped the chickens in. It was dark now, and the leaping, hot glow of the gasoline fire lit up his eyes and his beard as he stooped over it. About ten G.I.'s had drifted aboard, and there was a quiet, reverent silence as we gathered in a circle around him. From time to time he would taste and demand pepper or salt. The Brooklynite suddenly volunteered that he had a "package 'a' noodles" sent from home. . . dried . Père Nenot's brows wrinkled.

"Il a du vermicelle" I explained.

"Ah, bien! Bien!" he cried and there was a scramble as the Brooklynite departed to fetch the noodles. More tasting and brewing. A threat of disaster. Numerous flies had been attracted to the fire, and fallen into the soup. Père Nenot ladled them out. . .well, most of them. And finally, he pulled out the chickens, deftly cut them up into twelve portions in a messkit. There wasn't enough to tell how . . . [*the chicken*]. . . tasted. But there was half a canteen cup full of soup per man, a superb, wonderful soup, tasting, as the Brooklynite put it, "like

it was made on a gaz range at home." Père Nenot could have been elected to replace [*General*] Marshall that night.

Another time, in desperation, we went to a true Chinese "restaurant" up the road. Père Nenot ordered our dishes from the cook, a fat, harelipped man who kept blowing his nose onto the dirt floor as he cooked. Puddles of grease lay on the table. I had to shoo a chicken out from between my legs. The bowls were sloshed through a pan of dirty water before being used. We ordered chicken, noodles, rice and candied peanuts. The noodles and rice were damp, clammy and clung to the inside of my mouth. We picked at the chicken and ate the peanuts. We didn't wish to use the chopsticks so the Padre quietly whittled us each a pair from some branches he tore off a nearby tree. . . .

The last two days I don't remember well, for the doctor's prediction came ominously true. . . [*My leg was very painful.*] . . . I could not move, but lay on the deck staring up at the sun and trying to think. Sometimes I would start to fall asleep and have curious dreams. . . I would imagine that I had fallen down into the river, and the green waters were closing over my head. I could see the sun fading in the distance, shrinking to the size of a coin, and dissolving around the edges. I could feel the cool, dark pressure of the water around me [*but with no sensation of drowning*] . . .and then something savage seized my leg and held it in serrated jaws. . . I was hanging head down and I could not see or breathe or feel anything except my leg. . .and then I'd wake with a start.

Père Nenot stayed with me, and through the afternoons we would just talk. He would tell me stories of bandit days in China. . . . of how he had once tricked three bandits into laying down their pistols when they came to demand three young women of the village from him. He had told them to write down their names. . .and when they put aside their weapons, he had pulled a revolver out from under his shirt and marched them out, hands high. Or the time a group of American officers had called at the mission shortly after the Japanese took Yankee Stadium and were sweeping toward his village. They [*the Americans*] came to gain information on the countryside from Père Nenot and to warn him to evacuate the mission, as [*the Japanese*] were expected there. Père Nenot, over the dinner table,

explained that he could not leave his village. And yet, he explained, the Japanese would undoubtedly loot his place. And he had in his cupboard a few remaining bottles of wine, brought from Bordeaux by a colleague coming over.

"Gentlemen" he asked, "shall we French and Americans leave this valuable prize to the enemy?"

"No, by thunder!" came the answer. And the wine vanished in a series of toasts to France and America and their eternal friendship.

By Friday morning our situation was bad. Rising flood waters had made the ferry [*still*] dangerous. Two cables had been gotten across after heartbreaking work, and then been snapped by a floating log. Our K-rations were gone, the farmers had no more eggs or chickens, and we had had to borrow a case of 10-in-1 [*rations*] from the engineers to last this far. Captain Lewis grunted Georgia grunt, said "Godamighty dam! I'm getting' outa hyeah!" and decided to try and squeeze through the traffic jam [*going off-road where possible.*] He did, after much bilingual cursing and ill will, and we began to beat our way back, to approach by a more circuitous route. As we came back to the mission, we bade goodbye to Père Nenot, whom we had never taken to his destination after all. But he explained that many times he had been on the road for days, on horse or afoot, wet with rain, living from the countryside and Chinese friends, and then arrived to find his friends gone. Before [*w*]e left he insisted on having food brought out from the home. There on the roadside we sat, until two coolies brought out. . . dear God!. . . a whole roast goose, and a loaf of bread. There was a basket of lettuce and tomatoes, a tiny vial of oil, and packets of salt, garlic and pepper. And once again Pere Nenot's deft hands performed miracles; with a messknife and mess kit he created a salad that transcended all earthly joys. We left him, standing there in a end of the road, still in his sun helmet and knickers, his black beard visible long after his features were a blur, waving to us. Of all the men of God I have met, he approaches nearest to perfection because he has not let it alter his humanity one jot. I intend to write him; may his shadow never grow less.

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I don't remember much about the ride back to what I will call Base X-Ray on the alternate route to Yankee Stadium. We passed little Chinese villages; a few dirty shacks, a dog that chased our wheels futilely. . .naked children waving and "ding how-ing", mothers sitting on a heap of dirty straw nursing babies. The jouncing of the jeep was acutely uncomfortable and at the stops I could only hobble from the mess hall to my bed.

At base X-Ray I limped into a dispensary. A T/5 with a shock of curly hair and glasses whistled softly, prodded my [*swollen and purple*] leg, and called the medic. [*i.e., the resident M.D.*] The medic's diagnosis was essentially the same as previously. [*big time subcutaneous hemorrhage*] He said I could go on, but there was a risk of infection [*and complications.*] It would be better if I could go to the infirmary for hot packs, and to have the blood removed from the tissues where it was lodged. I did not care to risk blood-poisoning, so I went.

The three-day hospital interlude was like all of them. The blue bathrobes, the shuffling down the hall. . . the whispered conversations under the white mosquito netting at night, comparing ailments and gripes. . . I lay on m side with a hot water bottle on my thigh, reading "The Sea Wolf" and "Coronet" And I lay face down on a table and discussed the relative demerits of C and K rations with the doctor, a balding, bespectacled 1st Lieutenant, while he drew syringes of gore from my leg.

Released, I thought the bulk of my trip was over. The time element conspired against my successfully accomplishing the mission at Yankee Stadium, so I decided to return. I went out to the local airstrip. Three L-5 planes sat parked nest to a tent marked "Operations." I went in. A man sat at a desk, naked to the waist, holding a large cigar in one hand and scratching his hairy chest with the other.

"Do something for ya?" he asked.

I asked about a ride to Kunming. It seemed none was available, until he bethought himself that "the Lieutenant" was flying down there on business that afternoon.

"Hey Lieutenant", he yelled to a figure lying on a cot near the wall, his back to us, "are you goin' to Kunming today?"

"Sure" he said.

A couple of hours later I tossed my bedroll into the tail and wedged myself, parachute and all, into the dinky seat behind the pilot. I could see[*only*] the nonchalant, cotton[*clad*] shoulders of Lt. Willilams. . .[*but*] to either side plexiglass windows gave me a clear view. Just before the propellor spun, he of the hairy chest. . .a sergeant,, . . .suddenly came out of the tent and approached me. He had put on sunglasses for this excursion.

"If your belly gets light", he shouted , putting his head in the window, "don't lean out the winda. Use your hat. [*i.e., my helmet on my lap.*]

"Thank you", I said weakly. The grasshopper rolled onto the strip. The motor popped, the plane skittered and skipped down the runway, bounced once, twice, and hurtled into the air. After a few moments I got used to the bouncing motion and settled down to watching the rice paddies and sharply jutting hills unrolling beneath us. However, the ride was a short one. After half an hour had passed we suddenly banked sharply and swung about."

"Can't make it", screamed Lt. Williams back at me. "Head wind too strong." And back we went, slithered into a landing. We sat in the plane cooling off, while Lt. Williams bitched eloquently to me about his failure to receive a promotion in sixteen months, and finally he invited me to come over and try again in the morning. There was a convoy camp on the other side of the strip, and I staggered over to that with my baggage.

After a wash and a supper of [*canned*] Vienna sausages I wandered into the billeting tent where a number of Armed Services editions lay stacked against a wall. A T/4 sat at the desk, with his feet propped up on it, calmly reading a comic book. As I looked through them, I suddenly gasped. . .there in front of me was a copy of

"The Crock of Gold." [A book highly recommended to me by Patty.] I quietly slipped it into my pocket and left.

Next morning found Lt. Williams incapacitated with the grippe, and dubious of being able to fly for two or three days. Accordingly, that afternoon I went to the dispatch office and was given a place in the cab of a six by six heading "down the line" towards Kunming. For four hours we jounced through thick, puffy clouds of powdery dust thrown up by the truck ahead of us. Tossed from side to side as I tried to balance myself on my bedroll, thrown across the metal seat of the cab, I wished the trip were over. We had supper at a camp. . . . the old refrain. . . . and then at eleven o'clock, in a thundering, snarling, violently splitting storm we left again.

The driver whom I was with was a dark-bearded man in his thirties, with heavy jowls. He came from Staunton, Virginia. He commenced to gripe as we rolled past the dispatch office and continued as we lumbered along, tentatively thrusting the beam of our headlights along the road, covered in places with water, or dropping abruptly off to nothingness at a sharp turn. I didn't mind his talking at all, for I got a kick out of listening to him. When he said

"I bin in this goddam Army too long. I want to git oat!"

it reminded me affectionately of an old first sergeant I knew in Washington who had the same kind of accent.]

We drove on through the night, with my friend alternately cursing the Army and then the Chinese drivers in the convoy. The wind howled . . . the rain staccatoed against the side-curtains, and more and more stretches of road were inundated. I must have dozed. I awoke with a jerk. The truck had stopped. My watch said 3:20. The glow of a flashlight outside lit the side-curtains. The driver took his down; below, stood a GI muffled to the ears in a raincoat.

"Got to stop" he bawled. "Landslide."

So we stopped. The driver crawled into the back of the truck. And I stretched out in the cab and fell asleep.

Daylight next day showed a scene similar to the one at the river. But these drivers were not as fortunately fixed as the others. They had no ten gallon jug of jing bao juice, which had kept the air-droppers happily and belligerently plastered through our stay at the river. They had no rations. And only what water was left in their canteens. Ahead, a sodden brown mass of earth lay on the road, with tangled tree roots protruding like fingers from it. Obviously, we would have to wait for bulldozers. I climbed out on the hood, opened "The Crock of Gold." In a little while I forgot the surroundings as I disappeared into the woods of Coilla Doraca. And like Caitilin, I could hear nothing for the sobbing melody of Pan's pipes.

I was brought out of it once at ten o'clock when Link (the driver) offered to share a can of meat and beans with me. I was happy to; we took out our pocket knives and fell to. There was a swig of water for each of us with it. And then I did not eat again until six o'clock when after much reading and a nap in the cab, I realized I was hungry. A few Chinese had built one of their smoky fires by the roadside, and were cooking some concoction which the Chinese drivers were eating heartily, amid grumbled complaints from the GIs about the stink of it. I observed that they had hardboiled some eggs. The driver and I managed to persuade them to part with two, for some biscuits left over from a K-ration (which we would eat only as a final desperate measure) and that was supper. The bulldozers arrived thereafter and we sat around glumly listening to their heavy, panting labors, and bitching about the China Theater. Later on they began to set off dynamite. There would be a muffled boom, a flash up the road, and the sudden heavy patter as dirt and small rock particles showered in a fine hail on the hoods and cabs.

I slept that night in the cab again. Next morning found us foodless, waterless, and irritated. Relief trucks were allegedly on the way from the next stop, but had not arrived. I finally discovered that one of the trucks stalled on the other side of the slide (which was traversable on foot) was going "back" . . . which was my direction. With a Chinese boy carrying my bedroll, I slopped through the mud and soon was bouncing down the road again.

My trials were almost but not quite over. One of the last rides I got was in a truck with two other GIs. The truck developed radiator

trouble a few miles out and kept overheating. And so we crawled along . . . Every ten minutes the radiator gauge would show "boiling", and we would scramble to lift the hood and curse as we emptied a five-gallon can of muddy water into it. And then we would stop at the next . . . [*available water hole*]. . . and belly down in the mud to fill the can for next time. After six hours the disgusted GIs probed with their greasy fingers under my flashlight beam, dismantled the radiator on the roadside, and threw a faulty thermostat device into the bushes . . . At midnight we stopped in a small Chinese village and I stepped out to find if there was an eating place. Suddenly a white man with curly hair a snub nose, dressed in a T-shirt and slacks stepped into the headlight beam and hailed me in an accent that dripped of borscht and Ivan the Terrible:

"Hey, lootenant, you go as far as _____? I like for to take ride with you. I have work before for ze American hengineers."

I thought it was a gag. . .but it was not. The man, who called himself Alex Mikhail, was a White Russian émigré who had lived in China for years and had indeed worked as an interpreter for our engineers. He was currently engaged in manufacturing vodka for use in American-occupied cities, and was full of his own product at the moment. He led us to an "In Bounds" restaurant [*OK'd by the military for us to use*] where I bought the boys fried chicken and passable fried potatoes. He then crawled into the back of our truck, and rode the rest of the way with us.

The last stage was uneventful. I tried to get an air ride, and was kept waiting in a stuffy, fly infested ATC (*Air Transport Command*) waiting room for 36 hour (with a break to sleep in their transient camp,) staring at a poster on the wall which cautioned all personnel not to toss heavy gasoline drums from planes as the fall damaged them, and reading an ancient copy of Air Forces magazine. (I had finished "The Crock of Gold" for the second time long before.) Finally in unhappy disgust, I learned of two GIs who were taking a weapons carrier down [*to Kunming*] to pick up mail; got a ride with them.

I arrived here completely filthy somewhat sleepless, and glad to be back. Yet at the same time I felt a great humility when I thought of

the men I had seen living in the mud and the grinding, corroding loneliness to keep the convoys to China's fronts rolling. And if I had failed in my mission, I brought back a large bundle of experience. Also a small scar on my right thigh which will still take weeks to heal.

And that, . . . is how . . . [*Lt. Weisberger*] voyaged to the wilds of southern China.

Do let me hear from you soon. Particularly if you are going home shortly.

Affectionately,

Returning to Kunming after those adventurous weeks on the road would have been an anticlimax in any case, but somehow in that summer of 1945 in China it seemed more so. I continued to work on whatever the machinery of interception and decoding extracted from Japanese messages of days gone by, and the amount of "recovered" text must have been increasing because I was now not the only translator. Frank Tenny had joined me, and he insists to this day that Curtis Bennett was there, too, though I have not the slightest recollection of ever seeing Bennett after I left Arlington Hall. It's one old-timer's memory against another's, and I leave the mystery unsolved. I do recall a brief period when another fellow "graduate" of the Hall, Bynum Green, was on hand, because another one of my time-killing activities was to help the "Entertainment and Information" sergeant attached to headquarters with a well-intentioned but lightly attended concert of recorded classical music on Sunday nights, to which I furnished a spoken commentary--and at least once definitely turned the job over to Green. But I filed that away in my memory under the heading of "Visitors on Temporary Duty."

But basically, even with an enlarged roster (possibly the result of our monthly reports almost routinely describing the office

as overtaxed and understaffed) there was an air of dull interregnum hanging in the air. The war in Europe was over; there were no new big offensives by either side on the Chinese mainland and the general presumption was that it would take many months to get the troops from Europe over here to begin to tackle the Japanese army there. We did know that our forces in the Pacific were closing in on the Japanese homeland itself but--and it was easy to forget later on-- during June of '45 the battle for Okinawa was still on, with every foot being contested and costing brutal casualties on both sides. So even though the media were reporting the devastation of Japan's air and naval forces and merchant marine, and the steady bombing of her cities, there was a sense that once Okinawa was secured there would be a lull until the next American wave of landing craft hit the beaches of Taiwan, Kyushu, or Honshu.

In these virtual doldrums of July and early August, the things I did for diversion took a larger part in my awareness (and now in my memory) than anything going on at work. One of these activities was a stab at beginning to learn Russian. A non-com at Hostel One--I can't recall if he was with our own unit-- was Nick Barzell, who in civilian life operated a group called Barzell's Ukrainian Dancers. Whether he was himself a dancer or merely a manager I never did know. But we somehow made contact across the class divide and as I expressed an interest in some day plunging into Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky in the original, we arranged a swap. He knew no French, and mine, while by no means great, was good enough to get him started.

Barzell actually produced a faded blue textbook from somewhere to lend to me; I learned the Cyrillic alphabet (a snap after *katakana*) and I remember acquiring a few words that I struggled hard to fit into demonstration sentences in the hours that we devoted to joint study. *Moy droogh* (my brother,) *spasibo* (thank you) and *pozhalista* (please), *mir* (peace) and a few others of pretty limited utility when I encountered White Russians in

Shanghai. What I gave Barzell in exchange for these nuggets was the same kind of simple vocabulary though without a book I simply scribbled practice sentences, with translations, on a pad and got him to pronounce them after me.

Meanwhile, still looking for after-hours pleasure and mental exercise, I took a dive into amateur theatrics. The education and entertainment non-com who ran the post quiz show circulated a handbill announcing a cast call for a production of The Man Who Came to Dinner to be mounted in Kunming by a drama club organized by some of the local civilian American residents of which there were a few probably dating back to peacetime days--businessmen, experts of one kind or another working for the Chinese government, missionaries and their families, nurses and perhaps doctors. They were glad to accept GIs from all the surrounding local units. So Sergeant Roy_____ (I've forgotten his last name) whose job was to keep the enlisted men of Hostel One happy and out of mischief (we officers presumably were responsible for our own emotional well-being) made his announcement and I showed up on the appointed evening, my exalted rank apparently being no barrier, and a weapons carrier buzzed us off to some setting in Kunming where a number of other would-be Barrymores were assembled to read for parts. I knew the play and delivered a reading for the part of Banjo, heavily influenced by what I recalled of the role as played in the movie version of the show by Jimmy Durante. The play, a long-running Broadway hit (and still occasionally revived, though badly dated,) was a comedy built around the character of a real-life celebrity, Alexander Woolcott. He was a popular critic whose word was powerful in the New York theatrical world, and a writer and broadcaster of essays on various subjects, distinguished for gooey sentimentality. He had a great many renowned friends, whom it was his pleasure to address with supposedly witty insults. (And for those who were not his friends he could be viciously demeaning without the compensating generosity.) He appears,

under the name of "Sheridan Whiteside" as the central character in the play, marooned in the home of his host family in a small Ohio town where he has broken his hip in a fall on an icy stoop after giving a lecture. During his convalescence he turns their lives upside down and has visits from a number of his pals, some of them modeled on then-recognizable stars. "Banjo" was apparently Harpo Marx in real life (not in his hilarious movie character as a mischievous mute in a blond wig and battered top hat.) Like his other Marx Brothers, Harpo in the flesh was a tough, wise-cracking New Yorker from a poor background who'd fought his way upward in show biz. I chose to read "Banjo" in that way, hardboiled but not cold-hearted. After the audition, Roy--who would direct--simply said to me "You're going to be good," and set up a rehearsal schedule. Of course I enjoyed the compliment, and it had a consequence twenty years later when, on the strength of it, I tried out for a part in a University of Rochester theater group production of Twelfth Night and launched a brief, happy career as a strictly amateur player.

But I did not make my debut in Kunming. If I attended more than one or two rehearsals I would be surprised because before we were fairly under way, and I had a chance strut the boards and also add to my scraps of Russian, the Great Unexpected came to pass. On the night of August 14th, after the USSR had entered the war on the 1st and the Red Army poured into Manchuria, and after the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and 9th, the Japanese surrendered. In less than two weeks, the war that we thought would endure for another year or two at the least, ended with stunning abruptness.

I say August 14th with a bit of uncertainty. Almanacs I have just consulted give that as the date of the Emperor's message of surrender, but if that's the day or evening it was heard in the United States it would have been the 15th on our side of the International Date Line, precisely on my 23d birthday. No matter! I consider it

Hirohito's personal gift to me either way. Some time that Tuesday or Wednesday evening (I have just checked a perpetual calendar) our Armed Forces Radio station gave out the news. I was in my shared bedroom in Officers' Quarters when I heard shouting in the corridor, first a couple of isolated voices, then a growing chorus as the word traveled and men burst out and began a frantic round of celebration that quickly escalated into pure pandemonium.

Outside, the offices were emptying out as well, and pretty quickly what I suspect was the entire U.S. personnel of Hostel One was milling around, shouting, laughing, cheering, hugging, slapping backs and creating a general uproar that left any work in progress abandoned for the night. This was confirmed quickly when, now, what seemed like an astonishing number of officers and men disappeared quickly into their dormitories and emerged with bottles saved for just this occasion. Perhaps the supplies of booze at the Officers and Enlisted Men's clubs were raided as well. Who knew? Who cared? The racket kept multiplying as bottles were passed from hand to hand and swig to swig, the snatches of song and impromptu snake dances grew wilder, and within a very short time, there was a khaki-clad riot scene, and what seemed to me an almost all-embracing drunkenness had taken over a large part of Hostel One. The tumult may have become exaggerated in my memory, but I did see some men near to passing out, staggering around supported by less intoxicated buddies, and I do vividly recall our own boss, Captain Seidenglanz, who had replaced Major McCurdy, puking outside the door to his office. There wasn't any firing of weapons into the air, probably because practically none of us was armed. My private joke was that if a Japanese commando squad determined on continued resistance had somehow managed to make its undetected way to Kunming that night they could have wiped out our entire command in about fifteen minutes.

But in cold fact, the bacchanale was only almost total. There were some who didn't choose to drink at all or were satisfied

with one or two, and so kept some awareness that while the war was over, there were still immediate responsibilities to be met. I was among that number. Gradually some kind of order began to be restored. On-duty officers who weren't far gone in drink themselves began to round up those of their men who were still functional and get them back to their duties at least nominally. The seriously plastered were coaxed, led or carried back to their quarters, and quiet took over among those still remaining on post. I assume that some of us got away and into Kunming itself, and have no idea what went on there.

My own reason for holding off after a couple of happy slugs from friendly bottles--and I'm sure it was shared by others--was mostly a sense that while celebration was entirely justified, it was also a very solemn moment. Also, because I was still sober, I knew that someone ought to be staying in our office guarding the classified files and equipment. I accepted that duty for myself, thereby liberating any officers who outranked me if they chose--which they did--and then, as monarch of all I surveyed, excusing whatever enlisted men had been at work when the news broke. One of them said that he would like to stay with me, and did, through the night. His name was O'Neill, and I recollect him as tall, with a moustache neatly trimmed to Army standards, and wearing the plain, round wire-rimmed eyeglasses that were standard Government Issue. Alone in the office, we just chatted together and he told me a tale that shows how times have changed. His family lived in Hollywood, Florida. He had just tossed a letter addressed to them in the Outgoing Mail box, and I noticed that he had the word "Florida" (this was pre-zip-codes) in a box, the box itself drawn in eye-catching red ink, the state's name in sharply contrasting blue, and the box itself triply underlined and followed by several exclamation points. I asked him wherefore? Hollywood, California was the center of the U.S. movie industry, then at the zenith of its glory. Its several large film companies made hundreds of movies each year, enough to fill thousands of

Depression-era movie houses that offered escape at \$0.25 a head. Most of them featured double bills, changed twice and sometimes three times a week. They were exported around the world, so that there was hardly a city on the globe, from busy capitals to tiny hamlets, that was unfamiliar with Hollywood "pictures," Hollywood stars, Hollywood glamour, Hollywood's magnetic appeal to hopeful young actors, Hollywood and its tinsel creations as the perfect twentieth century embodiment of American dreams, America's self-image.

By contrast, Hollywood, Florida, now the twelfth largest city in that state, part of the major metropolitan area around Miami and home to a huge population of retirees from elsewhere (my own parents included in the nineteen-sixties and seventies)-- Hollywood was, in 1945, an obscure small town, no more than twenty years old. Therefore, as Sergeant O'Neill explained to me, when busy post office clerks spied the word Hollywood on his envelopes, without further scrutiny or thought they tossed it into the California-bound bin for the sorting clerks out there to direct to its final destination. With luck, it would be set aside by them and then re-directed all the way back to the East coast, by rail, subject to the whims of crowded wartime time-tables, and with more luck would escape being sped towards California again by careless, confused or just plain dumb Post Office employees, most of them recent hires to replace experienced men and women who had been drafted or left for wartime jobs. Eventually, after many weeks, O'Neill's family would receive his letter.

After he told me this story and we exchanged other notes on the strange ways of wartime, we both fell silent. I kept thinking over and over that the killing was about to stop. In seventeen days the seventh anniversary of the war's start --September 1st 1939-- would be reached. Six years of devastation and slaughter, millions of dead, maimed, homeless human beings caught up in the gigantic meat-grinder of the biggest war the world had known up to then

(and I did not even know then about the full extent of the Holocaust, the enslaved laborers, the forced population transfers--all that would be revealed later.) And now it was at an end. My father had been a soldier (who never got to France) in what his generation called "the war to end wars" That had turned into a horrible joke after only twenty-one years of uneasy peace. But now this second enormous carnival of human savagery enhanced in its destructiveness by human ingenuity was over, too. All right, we had defeated the worst of the worst, but at what a price! And how had we gotten ourselves into the predicament that the latest slaughter was needed to correct? I did not feel triumphant, but simply empty, somber, exhausted. And yet also enormously grateful. Perhaps this time the peace would last. But even if it did not, there would at least be another interval of beating swords back into plowshares. Our crazy human race was getting another chance! Whoever, Whatever, had brought this to pass--at that time I thought it was God--deserved our gratitude. I say "at that time" because today, while I still attend synagogue for a number of good and sufficient reasons, I am not believer in any conventional Deity.

But that night, after being possessed by these thoughts for a while, and crying silently with my back turned to the desk at right angles to mine where O'Neill sat, I swung around and said: "Sergeant, if you don't mind I feel like saying a prayer out loud." "I'd like that, sir," he answered. Then he folded his hands and put his head, with eyes shut, down on them and waited for me. I had started out with the intention of something specifically Jewish--but I didn't know any memorial prayers, because with my parents and grandparents still alive up till the time I left the States, I didn't attend the memorial (Yizkor) services, and I hadn't ever bothered to memorize the words of the Kaddish, the traditional prayer of mourning and memorial for the dead (though in fact it really is a magnificat, a glorification of God's name and will, without a syllable concerning death and appears regularly in the liturgy frequently as a marker between sections, so that I had actually

recited it many times.) In any case, it seemed to me more appropriate to find words that both a Catholic and a Jew could embrace. So, although I cannot recall my exact wording, I said something brief and non-mawkish or stereotypically devotional, to the general effect of "Thank you, God, for the gift of peace, and please make us smart enough to keep it this time." After that there was more silence--then a few generalities exchanged, and since we had nothing much in common except for this singular experience of being together on this momentous moment in the world's life and our own, we each returned to writing letters--or dozing--or possibly reading.

That was how World War II officially ended for me. I have set down my memory of it as honestly and faithfully as I can recall. But there were six more months of military life ahead of me, including another highlight episode that, along with intelligence work on the Burma campaign and my foray into the Chinese back country, became one of the most interesting episodes of my war.

Two weeks and five days after that night--on September 2, 1945, the formalities of Japan's surrender were concluded on the deck of an American battleship in Tokyo Bay. And within a week or two after that, I was on my way to Shanghai.

. Did I feel any remorse or revulsion at the news of the two atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? The honest answer is "No," but once again, except for the fact that it was described in the news bulletins as a terrifying weapon, more powerful than any ever before used in warfare, and had almost wiped out the two cities and many, many thousands of civilians, the full consequences hadn't yet been reported nor had sunk into our consciousness. It was a bit like the Holocaust. With the liberation of the death camps in April the evidence of the ovens and the skeletons had been made public, but the full record wasn't yet revealed, and in any case the news was dominated by reports

of the rush of the Allied armies rushed on towards victory. And so it was with the bombs. They had ended the war, that was all we knew, and in that limited knowledge we rejoiced. Even though we rear echelon types didn't have as much cause for relief as the combat troops who were preparing to hit the beaches of Kyushu soon, with anticipated high casualties, we had suddenly been given the gift of an unexpected early departure for home, perhaps two years sooner than anticipated. That was plenty to be happy about and we didn't think much about the potential implications of a superweapon that could indiscriminately destroy so many innocent lives along with its military targets.

It wasn't an hour for reflection, especially because a big change in my circumstances took place very shortly.)

(Now, picking up the story again, I have some documentary help, from a declassified copy of Tenny's report of the entire Shanghai episode in my possession, plus recollections we both wrote fifty-six years later, prompted by an army historian under circumstances to be related in a post-script. There are, of course, differences in our records due to gaps and false recollections but I've dawn on both here, sometimes accepting his version when I wasn't sure of something, or sticking with mine when I was fairly positive about a memory.)

It was literally within a few days of the formal surrender on September 6th--possibly even earlier-- that Captain Seidenglanz, summoned Frank and me to inform us that, under top-down orders, he was dispatching us to Shanghai to learn everything that we possibly could about Japanese counterparts to our own signal intelligence operations including what successes they might have scored. This was basically the job I had been sent to do and never accomplished at Nanning and I'm certain now that it was part of a

larger operation to which Frank and I were being assigned and which I'll describe it in a post-script since we didn't learn about it until 2002. The Captain said nothing about the origin of the mission and perhaps he didn't know either. Our ignorance or innocence of the Big Picture made no difference in how we worked. What made the task unusually exciting was the curious situation that the abrupt end of the fighting created in China.

When the Emperor surrendered, the million-man Japanese army of occupation in China, the stuff of our nightmares, was still in full control of most of the country, as it had been since 1938, its weapons and equipment largely intact, though probably very short on fuel. The Chinese armies still in being were behind a line at least seven or eight hundred miles away from the coastal cities where the political and economic capitals of the nation were located. By diplomatic agreement, the Japanese would surrender to the Chinese, and not to us Americans, though we would of course maintain a presence in China for a while. It would take time for the Chinese forces in the West to be moved back to the places from which they had been driven and arrangements made for the detention of the Japanese forces until they were repatriated. In the meantime, the Japanese Army would remain administratively intact and in charge of local security functions (though I presume under Chinese direction, but am not sure.)

The result was that when Frank and I landed in Nanking after a few days' wait for an available C-47, since all ATC planes in China were busy flying personnel just like us eastward to set up a new headquarters for the U.S. China Theater in Shanghai, we rolled down the runway past neat rows of Japanese two-engine bombers parked alongside, looking ready for action in blue paint with the red "meatballs" painted on their wings,. For all we knew they were armed and with full gas tanks. I gather that we already had Army Air Force crews in place to service our ships, while

theirs were maintained by their own mechanics. No Chinese that I recall were in sight, though there may have been some token officers on hand even at that early date.

We headed towards the railroad station for a Shanghai-bound train in some kind of transportation from a provider --Japanese or American, I have now forgotten, and passed truckloads of Japanese troops, rifles slung over their shoulders, being moved we knew not whence nor whither. And at street intersections, directing traffic, stood Japanese MPs, wearing sabers as their side arms. We exchanged slightly nervous jokes about whether they had gotten word from Tokyo yet that the war was over, but in fact their discipline and behavior was flawless. There was no social interchange that I could see, but a good deal of mutual staring. Later on I heard that inevitably, there were American GIs who tried to buy sabers and other souvenirs from the MPs and sentinels posted outside Japanese headquarters.

We managed to board a jam -packed train and according to Tenny's recollection, stowed ourselves and our bags in a compartment which soon received a visit from an English-speaking Japanese soldier who told us that it was reserved for a Japanese general and we needed to vacate it. Frank replied that the United States had just won the war, and we would be happy to share the space with the General, but we weren't leaving. The message bearer, Frank says, vanished and never reappeared.) Finally arrived in Shanghai we found the skeleton U.S. headquarters already in operation and a billeting officer who put us up in temporary shelters for a few nights in a hotel called the Broadway Mansions, taken over by our forces..

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, we began to see fewer Japanese in the streets and other public settings. Frank also recalls going with some other Yanks to a lounge atop the Park Hotel very soon after our arrival, and getting into a crowded elevator whose

other passengers included several Japanese officers. Neither group exchanged a glance, and both looked steadfastly straight ahead. When the right floor was reached, a headwaiter expertly directed the Japanese towards waiting comrades, and us to a table far removed. But I have no such memory and in all the ensuing weeks I neither had nor saw any such unofficial encounters. The Japanese simply seemed to disappear into their own compounds as more and more Chinese and American personnel arrived in town and started to assume control. Even the MPs were quickly gone from the street intersections.

My single personal exchange with a Japanese officer has stayed in my mind for these nearly sixty-four years exactly because it was the only one, and it is haunting because it stirred up a conflict of emotions still unresolved. I was walking down the street towards our offices one morning when suddenly a middle-aged-looking man in a Japanese uniform that I didn't recognize stepped out of a doorway a few dozen paces ahead. The coat was green and had a lot of gold braid, and on his head was one of those cocked hats--pointed at both ends and rising to a high curve in between--like the kind worn by the ruler of the Queen's Nav-ee in HMS Pinafore. I suspected that he was an admiral, and have absolutely no doubt that he was far senior to me. I was, therefore, surprised when he suddenly brought his hand up in a salute. We had not been given any instructions on the possible exchange of courtesies with the former enemy, and I made an on-the-spot decision not to answer the salute. I marched resolutely forward, the "admiral" inclined himself forward and kept his eyes on mine, and as I got close and passed I could see an unmistakable look of mixed pain and sorrow on his face. He was offering me, plainly a junior in rank and age, the salute of an honorably defeated soldier to the victor, and by simply ignoring the gesture, as I might have passed by a street beggar, I had humiliated him. Every time the memory re-surfaces, as it is doing right now, I think: "What the

hell would it have cost me to throw the poor guy an answering salute?"

I confess to the complete irrationality of my reaction--very much like my reaction to the Japanese film which I had seen in training at Arlington Hall that for the first time in my experience put a human face on the enemy. In this instance, the guy whom I snubbed might have ordered the shelling of Chinese civilian neighborhoods--might have been in charge of an abusive prison camp--might have been responsible for any number of unforgivable things that the Japanese occupiers did to the hapless Chinese whom they seem generally to have despised. He might have been a prize bastard who deserved to have his militarist nose rubbed in the dirt of defeat.

Maybe. And all the same, I'm still bothered when I think about it.

If the Japanese were sheltering themselves from possibly embarrassing contacts with us by pulling back into their camps, they remained sovereign within them. Hence, the curious circumstances of our mission. The Japanese were theoretically the prisoners of the tiny but steadily growing number of Chinese army personnel--whom they could have wiped out in a twinkling so long as they maintained their arms. We Americans had to get the intervention of the Chinese in order to interview any member of the Japanese forces. But the Chinese either could not or would not behave in a peremptory fashion and simply command the presence of a Japanese "prisoner" at a designated time and place. They approached the Japanese commander and relayed the request to see Major or Colonel or General So-and-So at such-and-such a place and hour, and negotiations then ensued. By the time a satisfactory arrangement (including the provision of transportation to and from the site of the interrogation)was reached, many hours had been expended and innumerable cups of tea and cookies

consumed. Frank, the commander of our two-man team, set the ball rolling by going through channels and getting our own higher-ups' authorization to ask the Chinese to secure us a meeting with the chief Japanese signal officer in China or any of his deputies possibly involved in signal intelligence. We would work through a fine pair of Chinese Nationalist Army officers who were assigned as our liaison team but also cheerfully acted as general mentors. One was a Colonel Liu, and I do not remember the name of the other. They would take our request to the Japanese, who occasionally kept us waiting for days before acceding. Eventually Frank and I would get to see our man in a crowded setting. We'd be accompanied in many cases by curious American officers who controlled the limited supply of vehicles on which we depended and who came along for the ride, as well as our Chinese colonels and a party of Chinese officials who also wanted to observe. Then there would be our own Nisei interpreter, possibly an English-Chinese interpreter, and even a Chinese-Japanese interpreter, all to assist in the trilingual exchanges that advanced the process. If the Japanese interviewee was sufficiently high-ranking, as almost all of them were, he would have one or more members of his staff to assist him. When the Sino-American and Japanese groups finally made contact, there was a great deal of positioning and furniture moving, followed by the inevitable tea and snacks before we finally got down to business.

The biggest conclave was one in which the commanding general of all the Japanese forces in east China finally consented to be interviewed. He absolutely refused to have the session held anywhere but in his headquarters, disguising his resistance by the manifestly untruthful statement that he had no transportation available, an odd excuse for someone who had every Japanese army truck and automobile in the entire theater at his disposal. Actually, we sometimes were given rides from one interview to another in Japanese-provided vehicles. I distinctly recall one trip in the sidecar of a motorcycle driven by a Japanese enlisted man,

who whipped through traffic and around corners at high speed, totally heedless of the Chinese civilians who crowded the thoroughfares. That, in fact, was also the operating mode of the Chinese army's drivers. Once, I was in a Chinese army sedan when the driver mowed down one of their own soldiers who, crossing the street, did not move fast enough to get out of the way. Our chauffeur neither slowed down nor looked back after hearing the thump and watching the victim disappear under his wheels. I looked back through the rear window and saw the poor fellow on his back with blood already pooling under his head. Not a word was said by any of my fellow passengers. My sidecar ride more or less scared me out of my wits, but I managed to maintain an impassive face for the sake of our armed forces' honor.

Reflecting on it now, I suspect that our reluctant general himself was getting orders from Tokyo to show at least the appearance of co-operation with us with a minimum sacrifice of "face." We proceeded to his offices in a car provided by our Chinese friends, and there ensued a scene worthy of the Marx Brothers. Our delegation was seated in a conference room when a Japanese aide-de-camp appeared and suggested that we should stand up when His Generalship appeared. I don't know what the Chinese reaction was, but Frank had our interpreter pass the word that we Americans would remain seated. More animated trilingual discussions, several re-appearances of the aide, who finally returned with word that the interview had been transferred to a more commodious space. The place had two entry doors, and just as we walked into one, the general appeared with his retinue and walked into the other, and we all plopped our bottoms into chairs simultaneously. Honor was preserved!

Given the situation, the Japanese had no trouble in controlling the flow of information. Without exception not one of

our interviews ever produced any testimony of Japanese cryptanalytic attacks on our communications, not even of traffic analysis. It was inconceivable to us that absolutely no signal intelligence program of any kind whatever had been undertaken by an army and navy as sophisticated and modern as those which Japan had deployed with such success in the first months of its war against the Western powers. It's arguable that the overwhelming success of Japan against China's forces convinced her commanders there that there was not much payoff in spending time and resources snooping on Chinese military communications--or even those of American air forces, which didn't arrive in China in any strength until very late in the war. All the same, Frank and I remain convinced that the repeated denials by our subjects of any awareness even of discussions of "sigint" were lies. There had also been plenty of opportunity for the destruction of any documentary evidence between the formal date of surrender and our arrival.

Lies or not, our mission was a flop insofar as production of any useful information was concerned, and when we met up in Shanghai with fellow officers who had been sent on the same errand to Canton and Hanoi they reported the same lack of results. But those meetings were interesting for other reasons. The officer sent to Canton, Lt. Don Borrmann, became a good friend with whom I enjoyed many of the sights and recreations of Shanghai. Lt. John O'Donnell had the Hanoi mission. He was a genial storyteller, the very same one who had, during a visit to Kunming provided the locally-made "Scotch" that we were drinking when the lights went out. What he told us about Hanoi was even more memorable in the light of later events. He said first that it was a beautiful city with resemblances to Paris, not surprising in the capital of what had been for sixty years the capital of "French Indo-China." He also told us that he had been advised not to venture very far into the surrounding countryside, already controlled by the Viet Minh, Ho Chi Minh's guerrilla organization that had fought both the French and the Japanese to free Vietnam..

O'Donnell ignored the warning and went outside of Hanoi to look for possible Japanese prisoners. He found the Viet Minh commanders welcoming Americans. They were under the impression that we had come to help them win total independence, not to restore the French. Not all of them were Communists; what bound them all together was strong nationalism. And even the Communists were not yet enemies--we had just finished a war in which the Soviet Union was our ally.

O'Donnell's story made no impression on me in the Fall of 1945, but I would remember it sorrowfully when the United States threw away that good will by supporting the French attempt to reconquer Indo-China during the nine-year war that ended in France's defeat. I recalled it with even greater pain when we picked up where the French left off in 1954 and sank deeper and deeper into the quagmire. What a difference a triumphant and all-powerful America could have made by supporting a policy of de-colonization throughout the world back then.

But these are the reflections of age, and geopolitics was far from my twenty-three year old mind. Not even coming up dry with any useful information--what the hell, the war was over and maybe there'd never be another one!--could dampen the high spirits aroused by the pleasures of Shanghai.

Shanghai was hog heaven after Kunming. Wherever people of power gather, under any regime, they treat themselves handsomely. In the pre-war days of the International Settlement, the wealthy multi-national elite of the town had been the businessmen who managed the various international banking and trading houses whose offices and warehouses lined the Whangpoo river, a mouth of the Yangtze, which separated the foreigners from the much poorer Chinese neighborhoods like Chapei. The Settlement remained untouched when the Japanese occupied Shanghai in 1937, but they moved into it in December of 1941 when

they went to war with us and the other Western colonial powers. The Europeans who were interned, however, were replaced by Japanese military and civilian administrators, by officials of the puppet government that Japan installed in China, and finally by Japan's own businessmen supervising the exploitation of the Chinese economy. In a word, heavy hitters, who were catered to by the excellent restaurants, night clubs, hotels, theaters, specialty shops and department stores that had served the ousted elite in peacetime, and who saw to the maintenance of the parks and gardens that beautified the more elegant districts of the Settlement. Under both regimes all of these were either legally off-limits or totally unaffordable to the ordinary Chinese who crossed the river by ferry each day to service their masters.

Now they were open to a new crowd, the American servicemen who were arriving in steadily increasing numbers, with our military salaries so generous by local standards. Those of us from Kunming and even more so from U.S. installations in some of the remoter parts of the Chinese countryside where amenities were even scarcer, suddenly were in the midst of a big and bustling city like those at home but cheaper. If there was any lack of food, drink or merchandise it was quickly supplied by what appeared to be a thriving black market. I saw store windows displaying cameras, watches, radios, compasses, and items of clothing and footwear, many of them very plainly of U.S military issue. Luxury goods like toiletries and art objects also appeared to be plentiful. I still have on our living-room wall a Chinese scroll painting of a bird in a tree that I picked up for practically nothing. Foreign copyright laws either did not apply or had not been enforced in the International Settlement so pirated, cheaply printed editions of books in English--including slightly out-of-date best sellers and many classic works--could be had for pocket change

What's most memorable to me, however, was how, after months of turnips and Spam, we fell upon the ample fare of the first genuine

high-class Chinese restaurants that most of us had ever seen. I had never gone to one of any kind in the United States, and sampled at least one in New Delhi that left no impression on me. But in Shanghai, guided by our Chinese officer-guides or old U.S. army types who had been to China in peacetime, we found many places that provided us with the wonderful shellfish, chicken, duck, pork, beef and vegetable dishes devised by artful Shanghai cooks who were experienced in serving the carriage trade. We learned--some of us, at least--to master chopsticks by devices that evoked boisterous hilarity such as creating a "pot" in the center of the table into which you had to put money any time you dropped a morsel before getting it to your mouth. The hilarity came easily because midway through the meal we were often half-potted thanks to an abundance of first-rate Japanese beers whose names, like Asahi , Sapporo and Kirin had an exotic sound because they never appeared on an American menu back in the days before global free trade and jet-speed transportation internationalized the eating habits of millions of Americans.

Another introduction to genuine Chinese cuisine was via the official dinners which their higher-ups hosted for ours, to which we junior officers were sometimes invited. Ignorance trapped me into a social gaffe at the first one I attended. I was unaware that the elegance of a Chinese dinner offered to guests was shown in the variety and number of dishes provided. When a waiter presented the first fragrant plate of "whatever" to me, I either took or signaled for a generous helping because it smelled (and was) delicious. Hardly had I tasted it when another waiter appeared with a serving dish full of what I assumed was an accompaniment to the entrée of the evening. Undaunted, and with a youthful appetite, I took on another shovelful, unmindful of quizzical glances from more experienced diners. When a third and a fourth waiter appeared with fresh ammunition, I finally caught on to the system--which was to take a modest sample of each new offering and eat it before the plate was whisked away and a fresh challenge

was presented. I have forgotten the average number, and I did not attend enough of these Asian fiestas to offer an educated guess, but I carried the "many-plates-shared-by-the-whole-table" concept firmly in mind when I returned home and joined the happy ranks of diners "eating Chinese."

The official dinners were accompanied by a yellow wine of some kind, served hot in very small cups, which were constantly refilled. It was no problem for me to exercise restraint in consumption because I didn't like the taste of it. The trouble was that at very brief intervals, one of the senior Chinese officers who spoke English would rise and make a complimentary toast, followed by what I transliterate as "Gom Bei," in effect "Bottoms up" The literal translation is "Dry (or empty) glass." There were a lot of these toasts, and each one was diplomatically answered in kind. by an American officer. We drank to Chinese American friendship, to President Roosevelt and Chiang-Kai Shek, to the great armies of the Allied powers, to the local functionaries present, to the future of each others' people and so on in a seemingly endless round of flatteries, each demanding a "Gom Bei." Serious adherence to the rule would have had me under the table within half an hour, irreparably staining the honor of the American armed forces. I survived by ignoring the "Bottoms Up" mandate, taking a sip, and surreptitiously emptying the cup into an uneaten portion of the serving dish in front of me before it was cleared away to make room for the next challenge.

Colonel Liu and his associate took us to a Chinese opera for one of the strangest evenings of all in Shanghai. When we entered the theater the show was already in progress. We couldn't understand a word of course, and to my ears the vocal music simply sounded like a mass cat fight. Our hosts did try to explain the action of the masked and robed actors to us, but none of it seemed to have any relation to the onstage antics, which included dances and acrobatic stunts. Accustomed to the silent

decorousness of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, I was astonished to see vendors in the aisles selling tea, snacks, and dampened hot cloths for wiping our faces. The audience did follow the action with bursts of applause and cheers, but also seemed to spend a lot of time talking among themselves without apparently distracting the cast. It was like going to a baseball game. It went on and on endlessly, and when we finally got away, whether at our own initiative or the Colonel's, it was still continuing in at least a third consecutive hour without intermission.

I interpolate a footnote here to the effect that when I was on a tour of China in the Fall of 2005, the Beijing Opera was one of the stops. We were shown the backstage areas, observed students in training, saw the costume and mask shops, and learned that Chinese opera is in fact a combination of pageant, ballet, gymnastics, concert, and ritual featuring stock characters and re-enactment of well-known legends. A special shortened performance, with a story line in English furnished beforehand was put on for us and was really enjoyable. I wish I'd known more during that sudden totally bewildering first plunge sixty years earlier.

Another novel experience in Shanghai was a brief, unexpected stay aboard a U.S. Navy hospital ship. One morning I awoke in Broadway Mansions with my eyes half gummed together by mucus and my eyelids flaming red. I'd never experienced anything like it, and in fear and trembling made my way to the nearest Army doctor. He assured me that I was not about to go blind, and told me I had conjunctivitis, an infectious inflammation of the membranes lining the eyelids. It was easily arrested with medications that could best be administered in a hospital and he packed me off to the only one then available to the U.S. military in Shanghai. That was a Navy hospital ship at the riverside. I've forgotten its name but it was new, sparkling clean,

and provided with state-of-the-art operating theaters, dispensaries and rehabilitation equipment, plus a variety of therapeutic and recreational facilities for recuperating patients. It had been readied to stand offshore during a scheduled Autumn invasion of either Formosa (now Taiwan) or Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's three major islands and receive the wounded of the battle. I felt rather odd to be aboard this floating medical palace prepared to deal with horrible trauma, loafing around in a bathrobe waiting for my eye drops and attended by smiling young nurses offering to smooth my sheets, rub my back, read to me or bring me snacks and soft drinks. But I was typical of the ship's patient population of that moment, most of us with minor ailments or accidental injuries, getting attentions worthy of heroes and originally intended for them. The highlight of my three or four days of reading, shooting the breeze with fellow patients and dozing was listening to reports on the Cubs-Tigers World Series, over Armed Forces Radio.

I also had a first experience of hyper-inflation. The puppet Chinese government installed by the courtesy of Tokyo had issued currency from a "Central Reserve Bank" (CRB) which suddenly had absolutely no guarantor behind it. The Nationalist authorities who now took over called in this paper for redemption at an official exchange rate of many hundreds of puppet "dollars" to one Chinese National Currency dollar (CNC) by a fixed date after which it would no longer be legal tender. But in purchasing power the Chinese National dollar, as I noted earlier, was actually worth only a fraction of a U.S penny, which is why we were paid in U.S. money. The result was, of course, that the CRB notes that we had acquired one way or another for small daily transactions in our first days in Shanghai were almost literally not worth the paper on which they were printed. I think that a daily English-language newspaper that was available cost ten thousand or more CRB dollars, the equivalent of a couple of cents. You could really be a sport, hand the vendor a \$20,000 CRB note and say: "Keep the change." We all got rid of our junk money as fast as possible

before its official funeral. I wish I'd kept one bill as a souvenir. I believe that thereafter we either continued our black market deals in CNC, but pretty soon American money--with change delivered in American money--became a perfectly usable medium in the places that we frequented in Shanghai.

What the poor Chinese who had to live on the inflated paper did to stay alive I didn't know. And I never saw literally "poor" Chinese, the faceless multitudes who served us in various menial capacities, close up, or gave them a thought, with one exception. There were no taxis that I saw plying the streets, nor any horse-drawn vehicles. Instead the common mode of public conveyance was either by pedicab, the three-wheeled, multi-passenger contraption more or less powered by a bicyclist at the front end. The other choice was by jinricksha. One day I decided to try one. My "engine," a skinny little man of indeterminate age, who looked as if he might weigh ninety pounds soaking wet, waited until I climbed into the single seat, picked up the shafts, and broke into a brisk, barefoot trot, weaving his way through the busy streets. It was a warm day for Autumn and my destination involved climbing a couple of hills. Presently I could hear the man panting, and could see the rivulets of sweat running down his bare back, and it suddenly hit me that he was simply functioning as a two-legged draft animal. I didn't want to convert a fellow human being into a horse. I hated what I was doing and watching, and while I did complete the ride, I paid him twice what he had asked, got out of the jinricksha and swore that I would never take another, and that was one promise I kept, although I do have one posed photograph of myself lording it in a stationary jinricksha.

I'm well aware of a certain hollowness to my decision. I continued to use pedicabs, and of course hauling a carriage behind you with a few hundred pounds of human cargo is hard physical labor, too--especially when it is not done at a tourist site or on a boardwalk by a sun-helmeted young American earning generous

tips from vacationers, but by a supposedly independent dirt-poor worker struggling for a bare livelihood.. Somehow the mechanical advantage offered by a chain and pedals made it easier for my conscience to accept it as less exploitive. Under any system that creates great economic inequality it's impossible for the well intentioned well-off to behave with complete justice. But Shanghai taught me better than ever the appeal of Communism to Chinese in the lower depths. It's tragic that once he got into power, Mao's regime in its own way betrayed and brutalized so many millions of its followers, but I think I know what made them followers in the first place.

One other moment imprinted on my memory was a visit to an internment camp for British and American civilians. They were kept in some kind of warehouse or other storage building with entire families sharing limited cooking, bathing and sanitary facilities, separated from each other only by improvised curtains that were still in place even while the repatriation of these unlucky souls was under way. Their drastically limited food and medical supplies had been supplied by their jailers. They had survived this way for three years and nine months, keeping themselves from despair and self-destructive infighting ((but not from disease and debilitation) by organizing classes, church services, lectures, physical education and other group activities--much as had, I gather, our own Japanese- American internee-prisoners in the southwestern deserts where they were held. Looking at the surroundings, which must have been rank and malodorous in hot weather and unbearable in cold, I could only wonder at the amazing resilience of some humans under duress, and the totally rotten way in which some humans could treat others. What a piece of work is a man!

I did not get to meet many civilians in the town. I was unaware that there was a sizeable colony of Jewish refugees from Germany who had escaped the persecutions in Germany prior to

1942 and the beginning of the "final solution," and then managed to endure under new hardships when Japan became Germany's ally. I wish I had known. Shanghai also had residing German and Italian civilians who, in a reversal of fortune, were now under arrest or surveillance by our authorities. Frank and I actually interviewed one English-speaking German, a Herr Habenicht, who had run a private intelligence bureau for Berlin. He told us nothing useful, but I do remember being amused at one bit of German pedantry when, in his narrative he said: "then Mr. Hitler gave an order"--paused, gave us a professorial look and explained: --"vich meant zat everybody had to obey" as if it were a revelation to insert, with underlining, in our student notebooks.

We weren't surprised to discover Habenicht, pointed out to us by the Chinese police authorities. Shanghai, especially the International Settlement, being neutral ground until the end of 1941 had been full of spies from every potential and actual combatant nation. It was the inspiration for books and movies about the city's glamorous shadowy underworld of spooks, crooks, and nests of sin.

I became friendly with a family of Russian exiles, one of many in the town, through the enjoyable process of dating one of its daughters. Several years ago I set down a brief chronicle of that experience, and set it down here pretty much as I committed it to paper then with only a few corrections.

Mila

Reading Alex Shoumatoff's Russian Blood last night I came across his description of the anti-Bolshevik Russian diaspora that followed Lenin's capture of the 1917 revolution. Some exiles, he said, went to Shanghai. They certainly did. I met a

few there and dated a young Russkaya during the couple of months that I was waiting to ship home.

Her name was Ludmilla Filipovna Rubtsova. She was eighteen, wore her hair in a high pompadour, and spoke mostly good, though accented English. I don't know where she learned it. Her father was a mild, slender, moustached man whose calling I never learned.. She had a sister who did some kind of clerical and translating work at U.S. Army headquarters. A buddy of mine, was going out with the sister and "Mila" and I initially were fixed up as half of a double date.

I didn't get to know the White Russians of Shanghai terribly well. Our arrival was good for them in one way--it provided lots of jobs and business opportunities. On the other hand we bid up the prices of everything in sight, which must have cruelly complicated their survival problems in the midst of an already raging inflation. I wish now, of course, that I'd tried to find out more about Mila's family. All that I remember is calling for her in a crowded little apartment and once being shown an album of youthful group photos by her grandmother, who kept pointing herself out. Etoh ya, she would say, "there I am." Brief encounters supplemented or reinforced few Russian words over and above the handful I had learned in those brief lessons with Nick Barzell back in Kunming in August--spasibo (thank you,) pozhalista (please) and otchen khoroshoh (very good.)

Our dates were pretty simple and clean-cut. We'd eat somewhere and go to a club to dance--I wasn't very good at it but it was something to do which didn't require a lot of conversation.. We'd take pedicabs and Mila or sister Nina, when it was a foursome, would give the addresses in the pidgin Chinese they both knew. I recall two of them. Foch Avenue, in the French Quarter of the International Settlement, became "Foshy-loo" and Bubbling Well Road turned into "Bobby-loo."

Mila neither drank nor smoked, but she loved to chew American gum. Once, in a moment of stuffiness that overcame me for some reason, I said it didn't look good for her to be

chewing gum while we were dancing. "I think it's helluva nice," she shot back with spirit. "I'm gonna chew a gum right in the middle of the dance floor if I like."

Once we went to a show put on by a Russian amateur theatrical group. It was Victor Herbert's ancient chestnut, Rose Marie. The running dialogue was in Russian, but the lyrics were sung in English. "Oh, Rose Marie, I loff you," and so forth. Some Yanks must have been involved in the production as advisors, too, beause at least one bit of comic shtick had been inserted. It involved an onstage kiss which was broken up by someone, I suppose a pimp, tapping the man on the shoulder and saying: "Dot vill cost you fife bucks, buddy."

It was a nice time I didn't fall in love with Mila nor she with me so far as I could tell. Our physical relationship didn't get beyond goodnight kisses, which I readily accepted as the limit. She was only a kid and besides, those girls took their honor very seriously. I remember Nina giving me hell in a pedicab once when I thoughtlessly patted her knee. "You don't put your hands on a girls leg like that!" she snapped.

Of course I promised to write and of course I didn't. I feel bad about it still though I have no idea whether any letters would have gotten through in the chaos of civil war that followed. All the same, I regret my delinquency and also my failure to follow up on a promise to get her subscriptions to fashion magazines, the only American gift she asked for. But it's easy to forget good intentions when you're twenty-three and home again after two years overseas at war. I don't know what happened to the family Rubtsov when the Communists took over in 1949. More flight from the Communists? More suffering? Another uprooting for the family? I hope not but I've never tried to find out what happened to that entire White Russian colony under Mao--another sin of omission, not that I could have done much to help.

(end of interpolation)

Shanghai was the most interesting of the cities--the others being Washington, New Delhi and Kunming--where I did my work. Yet much as I was enjoying what had become virtual idleness there once our fruitless investigations were concluded, I was of course anxious to get home again. I had accumulated enough overseas points in the army's system for returning the longest-serving first so that I was fairly sure that by November I was getting close to repatriation. I passed up an opportunity offered by the Army to visit the Forbidden City of Peking on a week-end for fear of missing my orders when they came. I also waved off a possible chance to get a promotion and stay on in the army of occupation in Japan for a couple of years, which might have been interesting and useful in acquiring genuine spoken Japanese, but the thought of not returning to some kind of career preparation until the advanced age of twenty-five was just too daunting. Those were different days. And finally, I was placed on the homebound passenger list of the converted freighter, Adabelle Lykes, due to sail for San Francisco on the first of December.

That opened the terminal phase of my World War II service. It too had its educational moments.

To begin with, I received my first and, I am happy to say, my only "command." My orders required me to escort some two dozen SIGABAs all the way back to Arlington Hall. They were to be kept under twenty-four hour guard, although to this day I can't conceive of who might have stolen one in mid-Pacific, where he would have hidden it or what he might have afterwards done with it. No matter; the army was the army, and six enlisted men were assigned to me. I got them together on the morning of embarkation after all of us had "cleared the post"--turned in equipment, settled accounts, and suchlike--and taken a battery of booster shots in both arms to make sure that we carried no sinister micro-organisms back home with us. I set up a duty roster and told them that when not standing guard they were only answerable to

the general orders of the troopship commanders and to come to me with any problems. I was so genuinely uncomfortable at the mindless requirement that at first I inserted myself into the midnight to 4 A.M. slot to share the load but I was promptly persuaded by another officer whom I informed of the decision that this was a terrible idea and could make real trouble for me if discovered. "That's OK, lieutenant," they all said to me when I announced my withdrawal. I'm sure they thought I was crazy to suggest it in the first place. I did, however, dutifully get up myself in the middle of every night to go out and check on whether due vigilance was being maintained. The episode was a convincing demonstration to me that I could never be a competent line commander or in fact any kind of boss. I have read that Socrates served in battle in one of the Athenian wars as a common soldier and never sought higher rank. I think I would have liked that.

Watching the loading and unloading of the extremely heavy machines in their cases after they were trucked to the dockside provided a graphic demonstration more powerful than any textbook description of what the term "labor saving machinery." In Shanghai the SIGABAs were first hand unloaded from trucks, then carried, one by one, up a steep and narrow gangplank, both operations performed on the bent backs of barefoot Chinese laborers, before being secured somewhere on deck. It took around an hour or more. When we docked at San Francisco, a Port Security officer came aboard, I signed the machines over to his temporary custody, a cargo net was deployed to bring them down swiftly to be stacked on pallets and a forklift promptly wheeled over, lifted the enormously heavy pallets in one swoop, and carried them off to a secure warehouse in minutes.

The homebound trans-Pacific voyage in northern latitudes in December was cold, wet and windy, but I never heard a complaint. I shared a cabin with three other officers, a couple of OSS men and an Army Air Force colonel not much older than I

was who had been flying P-51 fighters. We didn't have much to say to each other. I read a good deal, counted the hours, attended movies that were shown in some below-decks location, and watched the deep, dark ocean roll by as China receded further behind. I do have one bright flash of memory of an unimportant but surprising vignette. that shows me an unexpected scene. One blustery weather morning, with the deck swaying and bouncing underfoot, I lurched into the washroom that officers and civilians shared and saw one of the missionaries whom we were bringing home, an elderly gentleman, standing at a sink, legs slightly apart and suspenders hanging down from his waist. He was imperturbably shaving himself with an old fashioned straight razor. I watched in horror, waiting for the blood to spurt but he did not miss a stroke even while giving me a morning greeting and actually trimming the hairline on the back of his neck by feel.. I was, and remain to this day, overcome with respect.

And so, finally, homecoming. The decks were thronged as we steamed under the Golden Gate Bridge, and I got a huge sentimental lump in my throat when I saw the message painted in gigantic white letters on a bayside rock: WELCOME HOME. WELL DONE! The unloading business was accomplished, I got billets arranged for my men and for myself, and then headed up the street towards the nearest drug store. There I proceeded to indulge myself in a king-sized chocolate malted milk shake. It's what I had missed a lot and promised myself to do the moment I set foot on United States soil again. I left the counter happy and bloated.

I didn't spend much time in San Francisco, but I was there long enough to visit the modest home of my Uncle Milton's divorced wife and their son Carl, then 15, and daughter Sabrina, a year and a half or so younger. Milton was my mother's youngest brother--thirty-five in 1945, and a Chief Engineer in the merchant marine, with a reserve officer's commission. He was still somewhere on the ocean, between visits to the children. Elizabeth, the ex-wife,

was a lovely, warm-hearted woman who welcomed an ex-in-law generously. kept contact with our family until her death around ten years ago. I brought presents picked up in China for all and enjoyed a very pleasant evening.

Then it was off on a train that the Transportation Officer at the Port had gotten for us--not an easy assignment with so many of us returnees clamoring for space. I suspect that the Sigabas were my ticket to priority. I saw them loaded onto the baggage car, where cots were set up for my little detachment, and went back to the Pullman car where I had a lower berth reserved. I gave it up when I met a middle-aged civilian, a traveling salesman, who had a back ailment and couldn't easily manage to hoist himself into an upper, so I traded with him.

The happy three-day trip to Washington was interesting in itself. It gave reality to a term that I had often heard, "smoking car story." The passengers included a goodly number of traveling salesmen who were forced off the highways by the gasoline shortages and back to their pre-automobile method of getting around the country. My Pullman car had a "smoking lounge" at one end, equipped with ashtrays and leather-covered wall benches, where they gathered. They were not readers for the most part, except possibly for short sessions with Time, the picture magazines Life and Look, and the Readers Digest's pre-shrunk snippets from other magazines. There were no transistor radios yet and the smallest usable sets that ran on vacuum tubes were not comfortably portable. In order to divert themselves they did what travelers had done since Abraham Lincoln and his fellow attorneys spent evenings in country inns as they followed the sessions of circuit courts around Illinois. They told stories--mainly jokes, and for the most part jokes that were old in the time of Aristophanes, ancient Greece's king of comedy, and funny stories. Stories of dumb strangers or foreigners being outwitted, of seduced farmers' daughters, deceived husbands and wives, identity mix-ups with

hilarious results and other perennial tales re-packaged by Chaucer, and Boccaccio and Shakespeare, and kept alive not only in print but by word of mouth. The salesmen went on mile after mile, hour after hour as newcomers drifted in for a cigar or cigarette and others left. They created a running stream of obscenity, business gossip, political debate, bromides of conventional "wisdom," racial, gender and ethnic stereotypes, all of it meat for caricature but I had a wonderful time just listening

We got to Washington, Arlington Hall was notified, and trucks and unloading equipment were soon there for us. I completed the formalities and said goodbye to my troops, who all seemed to be pleasant fellows with one exception. He had always seemed a little hostile, and on the first or second night on the train, while I was seated in the dining car, four MPs appeared carrying his unconscious body that reeked of booze and vomit to the baggage car. I followed the little procession back to his cot and saw to it that his pals got him covered up while he slept it off, meanwhile pacifying the MPs who were quite willing to put the matter behind them if I authorized it. Next morning I went up and found him sitting in his underwear fighting off a well-deserved hangover. My shyness about being a heavy-handed superior had vanished. I told him that the spectacle he had made of himself in front of a trainload of civilians had been a disgrace and was not to be repeated during the rest of the trip. He raised his head from his hands and gave me the verbal equivalent of the uplifted middle finger. I then reminded him, with his buddies standing there, that he was still in the army and could get into plenty of hot water, starting immediately, if he did not shut his mouth and shape up. The others calmed him down, and he gave me no more trouble, but when we all parted he mumbled a very grudging goodbye that I did not acknowledge.

I hung around the Hall for a while, collected my papers for a thirty-day furlough due to us overseas returnees, and stood outside the Operations Building saying goodbye to a civilian friend and shivering. I hadn't bothered yet to buy an overcoat in China. Then I headed for Union Station and within a short while, having naturally alerted my mother to my impending arrival, was greeted by her at the door of the Queens apartment in which I had said goodbye almost exactly 27 months earlier. A hand-lettered sign hung from the ceiling, "Welcome Home, Billy" (my family nickname) and I was touched. My kindly stepfather was nowhere in evidence. He was in a Manhattan hospital recovering from an emergency appendectomy a couple of days earlier. He had stubbornly resisted the surgery, saying that he had to wait until I arrived home. The doctor answered that if he waited until the inflamed appendix ruptured and spread peritonitis, I might get back just in time for his funeral.

I saw him next day in a setting of bright sunshine, snow on the ground, and Christmas lights and garlands everywhere, as it was close to the 25th of December. It was of course, a very happy time, reconnecting with family members including my Aunt Esther, still in the Women's Army Corps but already back from North Africa for a year and a half. I met pals from pre-war days now also veterans returned from their own wartime adventures. We drank a lot and talked for hours; we had money and time to spare. There was a sad moment when I took the train to Hudson to see my grandmother, whose first words to me were: "You see, there is only one to greet you," and who then wept, something I had never before seen her do. The next time I saw her, some sixty days later, she was on her deathbed in the hospital where I had been born. My mother told me that she had announced her wish to die, but not before I came home and she had seen me. She kept her word.

The rest of the story of my war is short. I had no notion of where I would wind up at the expiration of my leave. I would be redundant at Arlington Hall, which had plenty of translators on hand to attend to any backlogs of still significant Japanese traffic. I might be retrained for a new signal intelligence job but that was unlikely given the certainty that all of us civilian-soldiers would soon be gone. For that reason I expected some makework job along with other short-timers at the Hall, or anywhere else in the United States that could briefly use a Signal Corps officer ignorant of anything relating to the operation of the Signal Corps. But I had not counted on the speed with which the armed services were demobilizing. One January morning a telegram was delivered to my parents' apartment where I was marking time, commanding me to present myself promptly at Fort Dix, New Jersey, to be separated from the Army of the United States. I lost no time in doing so, and spent forty-eight hours at the Separation Center being "processed." It was curious and moving to mingle with hundreds of other officers and men flooding in daily from all parts of the world, just as they had been sucked in from every corner of the United States during the years when Fort Dix was a Reception Center and started on their way to places all over the world. Now the process was being reversed as we were vacuumed to our final Army camps and sent back to the homes from which we'd been summoned. The sheer numbers of soldiers pouring through Fort Dix, as they were doing in other separation centers around the country, gave me an impressive notion of the massive scale of the historical earthquake in which we had played our individual minuscule parts.

I made only one error in those two days by electing to stay in the reserves, which was to cost me seventeen more months of active service in 1951-52 during the Korean War, though I spent all of it at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and in the Pentagon. I don't know why I did except that I am a sucker for a hard sell. Nonetheless, happy and innocent of what the years ahead held, I

left Fort Dix on a cold, sunny morning in February on "terminal leave" with the emblem of discharge--an eagle in a wreath, universally labeled "the ruptured duck" by those who wore it--sewn to my blouse. Thirty more days of paid holiday were coming, a separation bonus was in my pocket, the blessings of the GI Bill were mine to claim, and so the world was all before me where to choose my future.

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The story should rightly end here, but there is a postscript

Some time during the late Autumn of 2001 my phone rang. The caller identified himself as Sergeant Dobbie (pronounced dough-bee) Lambert who was part of the U.S. Army's Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Was I, he wanted to know, the former Second Lieutenant Bernard Weisberger who had been in China as part of TICOM? I answered that I was the man he was looking for but they must have me confused with someone else. I didn't know what in the world TICOM was and had never heard the name before. "Well," Sgt. Lambert said, "Donald Borrmann says that you and he both worked for it in Shanghai. "If he says so," I promptly answered, then I guess its true." Don had been a good friend and frequent companion on various evenings in Shanghai. But I was sure that it was not a lapse of memory. I truly had never heard the term TICOM from anyone and apparently neither had Frank, since his now declassified report on our mission, of which he'd sent me a copy, simply described us as a Signal Intelligence Team operating under a War Department Directive of August 1945.

Gradually, the facts emerged. As early as August of 1944 British and American intelligence higher-ups had conceived the idea of a serious effort to seize and exploit Axis cryptologic personnel and material in the wake of victory. It was to be

extremely secret, and so those taking part were designated simply as the Target Intelligence Committee. When the remnant of Hitler's armies surrendered in May of 1945, six TICOM teams of cryptologic experts and translators fanned out over Germany. Following Japan's unexpected capitulation a few months similar teams--Tenny and I and a couple of Nisei interpreters constituting one of them--were sent to Shanghai, Canton, Hanoi, and possibly important Japanese headquarters in Korea and, I presume, mainland Japan itself. It was all super-secret. All I know for sure is that that the magic word TICOM appeared nowhere in anything that Frank and I saw.

We in China came up dry. But one of the German teams apparently hit a gusher, unearthing a huge buried cache of German code-breaking documents and equipment of enormous value to those in Arlington Hall already working on Soviet codes during the incipient Cold War. The USSR, I am pretty sure, was neither informed of TICOM's existence nor invited to take part.

Sergeant Lambert's call was a request for help in completing a history of TICOM for the Intelligence and Security Command. I thought that everything connected with signal intelligence had, by 2001, been transferred to the National Security Agency located in Fort Meade, but perhaps now under civilian control. Yet here was the army's INSCOM knocking at my door. Still, I was glad to cooperate and freely answered any and all of Lambert's written and verbal questions. In due time he informed me that his job was done, and that INSCOM, in collaboration with an Arizona-based organization known as the Military Intelligence Corps was planning to honor us surviving members of the TICOM teams for our collective work.

And so it came to pass. I don't know how many men altogether worked in the dozen or so worldwide teams, but eleven of us, including Tenny and me, were still alive and hale enough to

travel to a luncheon and award ceremony at Fort Belvoir on April 24, 2002. It was rather nice. We were invited to bring spouses and guests, so Rita came with me as well as her brother-in-law by her first marriage, his wife--both of them Washington residents--and one of Rita's grandsons. First we all saw a little film describing what TICOM was and did, and then it was award time. The commanding general of INSCOM, in a camouflage battle outfit went down past the eleven of us, standing in a line. He looked very young for a general. He shook each of our hands and put into our palms a medallion two inches in diameter. One side has "Commanding General's Coin of Excellence" inscribed around the rim, and in the center three small heraldic devices, that include a flag with two stars, a globe, a key, a shield, a torch and a lightning bolt. The other side has a map of the continents, surrounded by the inscription "United States Army Intelligence and Security Command."

We were not through, however. A Master Sergeant passed down the line and gave us another medallion with a less crowded face and back, bearing the inscription "Presented by the INSCOM Command Sergeant Major for Excellence." So we had the blessing of the chief enlisted man, too. The Army seemed to have gotten more democratic in fifty-seven years. And in a final flourish we were called up one by one to another senior officer, this one in a conventional dress uniform--I can't explain the distinction in uniforms; my understanding was that battle dress was mandatory for all after 9/11. He hung around our necks, on a blue ribbon, the third medal, the Knowlton Award, presented For Excellence in Intelligence, as one side describes it. The other has an engraving of a Revolutionary War soldier holding a musket, whom I take to be Colonel Thomas Knowlton himself, and the year 1776. Colonel --or perhaps it was Major--Knowlton was in charge of a special unit created to penetrate the British lines during their successful landing and occupation of New York in the summer of '76, and bring back information to be passed on to General Washington.

Apparently they did so to good effect, helping the American forces to escape entrapment several times during a fighting withdrawal. It was Knowlton who sent Nathan Hale on his doomed mission. He himself was killed in action shortly afterwards.

The final event of this staged public-relations event was touching. We were considered for that morning as the pioneers of whatever INSCOM was up to. TICOM's collective success had been one more proof of the value of signal intelligence that had helped to win World War II, and the torch had been passed to the ensuing generations of signal intelligence workers, including the personnel of INSCOM seated before us. So we remained in line and all of those young soldiers present filed past us, shaking each of our hands and saying "Thank you, Sir." It was truly heartwarming, though I felt like Methusaleh.

I was a little puzzled as to how to respond--"You're welcome" didn't sound quite right, but other formulations ("It was nothing, really," or "Don't mention it," or the almost universally current version, "No problem!") were clearly wrong. "You're welcome" had to do, though I chose to add a direct look into their eyes, a smile and a friendly hand squeeze. It wasn't "regulation," but they could have been my grandsons.

So now I go into the records as a member of a decorated unit, to whose success I personally contributed nothing, with a medal on a blue ribbon hanging on my wall, next to a certificate that we were given describing TICOM's mission and that I had framed. And I got it fifty-six years after taking off my World War II uniform. A nice piece of irony. Something about this final official contact with the military regarding my World War II service typifies both the zaniness and the importance of those three and a half years as a soldier and tickles my fancy

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And with this afterthought I really do conclude. #####

