

Hostage for Lend-Lease

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Hostage for Lend-Lease

An Elaboration on the Diary of a World War II Adviser to the Chinese Central Government

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Prologue

Soon after the first of the year (1941), personal word was received from Col. Raymond Kelsner, Chief of Veterinary Division, Surgeon General's Office, Washington, D. C., advising that I would be called up for one year's active duty as a Reserve Officer within a few weeks to come. The preliminary

word was to give me time to make necessary arrangements. Final orders would be forthcoming in about six weeks. This was somewhat, but not too great, of a surprise. This country was in a deplorable state of unpreparedness for participation in the war in Europe. We should be ready were we to become involved ultimately. Germany's progress across the face of the European continent seemed to be uninhibited.

(Col. Raymond Kelsner: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/science/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/kelsner-raymond-alexander>.)

The US War Department began a feverish rush of training and procurement of all things that it takes to wage war. Reserve Officers were being called up for a period of training, and I was one of them. I had served during World War I and retained my commission in the Reserve Corps, dated December 1918 and throughout the years had advanced to the ranks of major in the Veterinary Corps. At the time of this notice I had completed all the requirements in extension studies, time served in grade of Major, etc. for advancement to Lieutenant Colonel. Would the coming active duty lead to the promotion?

This forthcoming change in life's activities, and it was to prove to be a big one, came on my forty-fourth year of age and my twelfth year on the staff of Lederle Laboratories for whom I had served as Department Head, Director of Veterinary Research, and Assistant Director of Veterinary Division. The laboratories were involved in government orders essential to the war effort; therefore, there was sufficient reason to apply for my deferment from Army duty. Our laboratory stated the deferment without my knowledge. I refused it. Why? I do not know. Perhaps I felt it was my duty to go. I had no desire to leave my wife and two daughters of high school age and, more importantly, to take a year out of my gradually ascending career. It would be impossible to take up where I left off upon returning from one year's duty. Business politics could cause many changes during such absence. Then, under the date of March 18, 1941, came the inevitable order:

By direction of the President under authority contained in Public Resolution No. 96, 76th Congress, approved August 27, 1940, and in accordance with AG 210.312 Vet. Res., (1-1141), War Department, dated February 19, 1941, Major Norman J. Pyle, Vet. Res., 0-143418, (D), North Middletown Road, Pearl River, New York, is ordered to active duty effective March 31, 1941. On that date, he will proceed without delay to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, reporting on arrival for duty with the Second Medical Laboratory. Date of rank: March 17, 1941. He will be relieved from duty in time to enable him to arrive at his home March 30, 1942, on which date he will revert to inactive status.

My arrival at Headquarters, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, to report for duty on April 1, 1941, was the usual performance, I presume, of the newly arriving "raw" reserve officer. My orders were processed in a most impersonal manner—that is, with official tolerance and void of courtesy by a noncommissioned officer. When asked for directions to my second Medical Laboratory location, it was given me without mentioning its great distance from Headquarters. Fort Sam, even in those days were by no means a small post. I started to walk it. After a short distance, I realized I was a long way from my destination. I returned to Headquarters and requested of the noncommissioned officer, in a firm tone, that I desired motor transportation. It was provided promptly. This was my first error. The second was more embarrassing and frustrating.

The second Medical Laboratory was a new military organization being tried out for the first time. It was a laboratory on wheels (motorized) attached to Division Headquarters and, of course, completely mobile following the division in the field. The personnel consisted of eleven officers

and approximately one hundred enlisted men. No equipment was available here for training. For laboratory practice the men were assigned to duty at the Post General Hospital. The Commanding Officer at the time of my arrival was a reserve officer, Captain, Medical Corps. He welcomed me with open arms, turning over the command duties, seemingly for no other purpose than I outranked him. However, he was seeking a transfer to some post where he could obtain experience in aviation medicine.

I took over the command with enthusiasm and began a training program of sorts. This continued for a short while and despite complications progress was being made through lectures, laboratory training, field exercises, etc. Then it was brought to my attention that according to army regulations I was not eligible for the command. This, of course, should be given immediate attention and a conference was arranged with a Colonel Williams, Medical Corps, regular Army, Commanding Surgeon of the Post. He read me the regulation governing the command of such medical units. He, himself, had been its author. Briefly, in this or any other organization with the care of the human patient, the Commanding Officer shall be the senior ranking Medical Corps officer presently on duty. Accordingly, I turned over all responsibility to the only qualified individual—a young Lieutenant of the Medical Corps just out of college. Within a short time, through urgent orders, he was replaced by a Captain, Medical Corps, Regular Army, recalled from duty in Panama.

About this time there came to my attention that a graduate course of study was to open June 2, 1941, at Army Medical Center, Washington, D. C. I made application and was accepted for the school. Orders came through to report at Army Medical Center on or about June 2 on temporary duty for a period of approximately three months for the purpose of pursuing a course of instruction at the Army Veterinary School and, upon completion of the course, return to my proper station (back to Fort Sam Houston).

This was an ideal assignment. Excellent quarters were obtained off the Post in a private home with garage. The laboratory studies became intensive, particularly in food chemistry; otherwise, much of it proved to be a refresher course with Army modifications. Soon, however, it drew to a close. September was just ahead, and I was due to return to my post at Fort Sam Houston, there to proceed to Lake Charles, Louisiana, where the second Medical Laboratory was participating in field maneuvers. My background and experience had done me in good stead here, and there had been a growing rapport with Lieutenant Colonel Randall, the laboratory director. He had expressed his pleasure in the association and was sorry that it was to end soon. The temptation was great, again, to ask for a transfer. Finally, the decision was made to do so, regardless of the possibility of causing ill will in the Surgeon General's Office. I was agreeably surprised and pleased when orders were received assigning me to the Army Veterinary School as of September 1, 1941. This was exclusively a regular army post. How long would reserve officer last here? Time would tell.

It would seem that the few months left of my one year's tour of duty would be an assurance that no further moves might be made. I now became, more or less officially, Assistant Director of the Laboratories under Lieutenant Colonel Randall. Two or three months passed quickly and most interestingly.

I was able to make several contributions to the routine and regulatory work. These brought me some commendation through Colonel Randall's report directly to Co. Calendar, Assistant Commander of the Army medical center.

As in all army posts, rumors were rife. One had it that Colonel Randall would soon receive orders for duty out of the country. Actually, the time came. As he was leaving he directed me to carry on in his absence. He gave no indication as to whether this change was permanent or temporary. A few days later, the Director of the Veterinary School, while on an inspection, asked why I had not taken

over Colonel Randall's desk and office and ordered me to do so. Thus, for a few weeks I had the honor of being Acting Director of Laboratories. It was temporary only. Colonel Randall returned unannounced.

It was Sunday afternoon, 2:00 p.m. on December 7, 1941, a day not to be forgotten. I was half-asleep listening to my radio. Then came the announcement that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. In just another few weeks I would be going back to my old laboratory, my comfortable home, my very good family. Not now. That would not be for a long time to come. We were at war.

Part

1

1

The Mission

In late February (1942) Col. R. A. Kesler (later Brigadier General), Chief, Veterinary Corps, Surgeon General's Office, called me to his office and, preliminary to stating what he had in mind, showed me a letter written on the letterhead of the President of the United States. This was signed by Dr. Lauchlin Currie, the President's assistant in charge of Lend-Lease to China. Briefly, the communication stated that, should the Burma Road fall to the Japanese the only practicable, alternate route over which supplies could be brought into China would be the ancient Red Caravan Trail extending from the Russian-Chinese border across Northwest China to Lanchow in Kansu Province. Since the transport animals, principally camels, used on this route were dying from disease or diseases unknown it was imperative that a well-qualified veterinary officer with assistants be sent to the region at the utmost dispatch, there to investigate the cause or causes of the severe mortality a treat or recommend treatment. Colonel Kesler then explained that he had gone over his list of officers who were capable of understanding the mission and my name headed the list. This was flattering, but the colonel had an assignment to fill. I had known him for many years. My orders would be issued at once.

(Link to Dr. Lauchlin Currie <http://documentstalk.com/wp/currie-lauchlin-bernard-1902-1993/>.)

It took some time to digest this bit of news. I had hoped I could remain at the Army Veterinary School, at least for some time to come. Now I was off to an unknown spot in distant China.

The orders duly arrived and were dated February 24, 1942. They are quoted briefly as follows: The Secretary of War directs as necessary in the military service that Major Norman J. Pyle, 0143418 VC, is relieved from his present assignment and duty at the Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C., and is assigned to permanent station outside the continental limits of the United States, shipment 8925. He will proceed from Washington, D.C., to New York, N.Y., and (or Miami), via the South Atlantic route to British Gold Coast, West Africa; Anglo-Egyptian Sudan; Cairo, Egypt; Iraq, Iran, Arabia, thence to Calcutta, India, and or Rangoon, and or San Francisco, California, Hawaii, Fiji Islands, New Caledonia, Samoa Islands, and or any other islands in the Netherland Indies to destination. Upon arrival at destination on Major Pyle will be detailed for duty with the Northwest Epizootic Prevention Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lanchow, Kansu Province, China for the purpose of rendering assistance to that Bureau in the control of animal diseases. Authority is granted to make such variation in the above itinerary and to proceed to such additional places, including belligerent countries deemed necessary in the performance of

this mission. The duties to be performed in compliance with these orders being exceptional will require more than seventy-two hours for their performance, a delay of not to exceed thirty days at any place where the exigencies of the service necessitate. Travel by military and commercial aircraft (Sec. IV Cir 21 WD1942), outside the Continental limits of the United States, commercial steamship, belligerent vessel or aircraft and rail is directed. The following inoculations are required before leaving America: cholera, tetanus, typhus and yellow fever. If possible the following should be completed before departure; diphtheria, dysentery, scarlet fever, typhoid and paratyphoid.

Similar orders dated February 26, 1942, covering S.Sgts. Carl E. Runkel, 13019264 (trained in handling small experimental animals) and Joseph F. Stahl, 32065017 (experienced in handling horses in Veterinary Dept., Fort Meyer, Virginia), both of whom were to accompany me on the mission, were issued simultaneously with mine. All orders were classified secret. Both of these boys knew nothing whatsoever regarding the destination or the nature of their mission. They were not to be told until they were on board the transport leaving these shores.

The orders, also, were designated "Immediate Action." Now begun an entirely too short a period of preparation. Passports had to be obtained, air travel priorities had to be arranged, home affairs discussed and planned all over for the second or third time, immunizations begun and finished in one-half to one-third the usual time, and a dozen or more less important things taken care of. Was this mission so greatly important? We were to find out.

I wonder how many people would read these orders carefully and with understanding. To begin with, there was only one way to get into China. That was through the southern borer—Burma or India's northeast. And how would one get there? That was the big problem. It could not be via the North Atlantic, thence the Mediterranean. The war was completely blockading that route. The only alternative was South America, across the South Atlantic Ocean, then the African continent to Khartoum, Cairo, Middle East, etc. The latter was the primary route outlined in the official orders. It was all the way as far as Cairo, Egypt, via Pan American Airways. I would have felt so much better about this, the first step of the venture, had I known this was the route taken by Stillwell's staff just a short while previous to our takeoff. I learned that only after having made the trip. Alternate routes were mentioned for our use if necessary. One thing only seemed to be important. We had to get there any way possible and quickly. To some extent I became my own navigator and our own Finance Officer being provided with a stack of \$500 US Treasury checks. What an important mission. There were do-or-die preparations. It was a presidential mission on presidential orders.

2

United States—Cairo

Finally, after several postponements because of changes in air priority travel, we left Washington, D. C., at 3:00 p.m. on March 5, 1942, via Pennsylvania Railroad and arrived in New York City at 7:00 p.m. Information obtained at the Pan American Airways office indicated that our plane would take off the next morning from LaGuardia Airport. We checked in at the Hotel Commodore close by and had dinner before making any further plans.

Later, Sergeant Stahl crossed the river to New Jersey and his home to say a last good-bye. This, perhaps, should not have been permitted; but I just couldn't refuse. Sergeant Runkel set out on a tour of the stores hoping to pick up barber's tools. His experience in cutting hair will prove to be valuable to our small detachment.

About midnight a call was received from Pan American Airways to the effect that our plane departure would be delayed about twenty-four hours. We had breakfast together in the morning after which the boys started out to tour the city. I visited some former associates at 30 Rockefeller Plaza and had lunch with them.

Today is the day (March 7). We leave these shores with some anticipation but yet with a great deal of reluctance. Who can foretell what may be ahead of us. The sergeants have been warned repeatedly not to disclose any details regarding the mission. Up to this minute they had not the least idea where we were going and for what purpose. Even their passports had been in my keeping.

Just before boarding the plane, I traced our destination on a map laid out in front of them and described the nature of our mission, as far as I knew it, in Northwest China. It is impossible to describe the look on the faces of these two chaps when they realized what was ahead of them. I shall never know what they actually felt. I did get the impression we were three as one; neither sergeant would let me down. They proved to be all one would hope for before we were parted.

We left LaGuardia airport at 11:00 a.m. March 7, 1942. The plane was a large Pan-American trans-Atlantic clipper capable of carrying seventy-two passengers. The weather was fine, and the air smooth until we arrived off Jacksonville, Florida, when it became very bumpy. Several of the passengers were airsick. Why I did not succumb is not understood. Apparently, I can take it in the air but not on the water. The clipper arrived at Miami about 9:30 p.m. and took off at midnight instead of remaining there overnight as previously announced. We slept in the plane sitting up. Berths were not made up, presumably because there was not room for all on board to lie down. Several compartments had been torn down to permit more space.

Among the passengers were three US Army officers: myself, a Captain, and a Lieutenant, Air Corps. With the latter is a detachment of ten enlisted men going to a post somewhere in Africa. Others include vice-consuls, clerks, etc. going to foreign assignments. There also is a Colonel of the Free French forces. Supposedly he is Belgian and is taking his post as Governor-General of the Belgian Congo.

After a fairly comfortable night, we landed at San Juan, Puerto Rico, 9:00 a.m., March 8, intending to remain only sufficient time to refuel and have breakfast. However, because of a delay due to difficulty in taking off, we have registered at Hotel Condado and will stay overnight, leaving from Trinidad early Monday morning, March 9.

San Juan seems to be poorly prepared for an invasion, should it come. There are a few troops here and only a few outmoded planes. As we approached the city, we saw from the plane two large coastal batteries and several hidden antiaircraft placements. These are manned by the Thirty-First Coast Artillery.

This hotel, situated in the resort section of San Juan, presented a real American menu for dinner. Maryland turkey was offered as the main course. Wherever the fowl originated, it was delicious. However, the lima beans were terrible and the shrimp cocktail worse. We took no chances on the coffee. For dessert, we were served "tropical sherbet." It must have been a by-product of the Standard Oil Company. It smelled and tasted of gasoline. Water goblets, after we finished with them, were dried and polished. This was also the procedure with unsoiled plates.

We were up at 3:45 a.m. in preparation for an early start—a takeoff for Port au Spain, Trinidad. Just as I was about to shave, the air raid alarm sounded and off went the lights in the room. It was a trial blackout lasting but a few minutes. In the rush, we left behind several articles. These will not be the last articles left behind, or lost, or even necessarily cast aside.

Even though we are permitted to carry some seventy-seven pounds of excess baggage, including a small folding microscope and other small but very essential laboratory items, because of heavy or crowded plane conditions, we may have to discard some things. We must travel light with very little extra clothing. A footlocker and barracks bags are following us, we hope, by sea transport. We expect laboratory equipment to reach us ultimately by the same route. A considerable quantity is to be shipped from Charleston. The boxes for identification will be marked 8925-G-Vet.

San Juan was left behind at 6:00 a.m. We arrived at Port au Spain, Trinidad, five hours later, 11:00 a.m., March 9. Here we communicated with Major Dean Walker, M. C., friend of Colonel Kelsler, and a Captain Carl, V. V. on duty here. No time was permitted to leave the wharf. After refueling we left at 12:45 p.m. for Belem, Brazil. The subsequent flight over the Brazilian jungles showed its wide expanse and the hopelessness of being found after a forced landing. We arrived here late at night (11:15 p.m.) and checked in at Hotel Grande for a short rest and a bath. Then at 4:00 a.m., March 10, our clipper jumped off on the last hop on this side of the Atlantic for Natal, Brazil, arriving at 11:30 a.m.

We left Natal at 2:15 p.m. for the long South Atlantic crossing. The flight was made during wet, foggy weather. At approximately 7:30 a.m. the next day, March 11, 1942, we came in sight of the African coast and sat down on Fisherman's Lake, Liberia. Here we refueled while still in the plane and left off two passengers, a Captain, Air Corps, and a Pan American Airlines clerk. This was, indeed, a wild place.

We took off at 9:45 a.m. arriving at Lagos 6:00 p.m. All military personnel were taken for the night to the South African Army Officers' Transit Camp. Here we ran into quite a snafu. Under no condition would they admit my two staff Sergeants. I would be admitted unquestionably, but no enlisted men. This was the first time I have experienced this degree of difference in military rank. I was in no mood to accept this ridiculous decision, and I blew my top. The boys were admitted.

The South Africans and other territorials, particularly the Australians, are not as "stuffy" regarding rank distinction as are the British. According to reports, I am going to have considerable difficulty keeping the boys with me from Cairo into India. We shall meet it as it comes.

At this transit camp, where the officers await assignment or are on their way to units, we were each given a thatched-roofed hut with a cot covered by a mosquito bar. The boys were similarly cared for. It was insufferably hot and humid. A houseboy (native Nigerian) was assigned me as a bearer. He prepared a bath in a large glorified basin, laid out clean clothing, and fascinatingly watched me shave. This was accomplished by 9:00 p.m. when dinner was served in the mess hall. At dinner I greatly enjoyed the company of two young South African officers.

I was not a camera buff at this time, but I am now, some thirty years later, as I elaborate on this diary. What a loss because I did not have a camera on this trip. I have lamented this so many times during the ensuing years. But, it was verboten, particularly later on in the mission. Those that might have had them were compelled to hand them over to a plane officer as we hopped off, and they were kept locked up during each flight. No opportunity is given to photograph harbors, fortifications, etc. from aloft. As each point of landing is approached, the plane is blacked out by pulling green curtains over the windows. On arriving at Lagos, all settlement lights were out, as were those also at the Officer's Transit Camp. It appears as though we are in for blackouts every night from now on.

We hopped off from Lagos at 10:30 a.m., March 12, beginning the long flight across the African continent to Cairo, Egypt. Before leaving this point, we met a Captain, Medical Corps, just recently out from Army Medical Center, and a Major, Air Corps, on duty here with the Ferry Command. They did not seem to be enjoying their assignments.

Before we go further into this writing many years subsequent to the trans-Atlantic flight taken, I should call to the attention of all possible readers of these words the fact that the entire geography of this area has changed during the intervening years. It is the old Africa of 1942 that is here being described.

The plane used on this hop was disappointing. All seats had been removed and replaced with benches along the sides. Considerable freight was carried aboard. There was no comparison with the comforts we enjoyed on the clipper. However, by now we believe we may be on the way to becoming seasoned travelers. There will be greater discomfort ahead.

We arrived at Kano in North Central Nigeria at 11:30 a.m. This stop was for refueling only. We were then transported by bus from the airport to a British (South Africa) Post of the Royal Air Force, where we had lunch in the Officer's Club. Two stuffy British officers present tolerated us until we left.

We left Kano airport at 3:20 p.m. and set down at Maiduguri in the extreme northeast of Nigeria at 5:23 p.m. From this airport, we were taken to an overnight camp set up by Pan American. Apparently, they do little overnight flying. At this camp, we slept out in the open, but on a fairly comfortable cot covered by a mosquito bar. It wasn't very pleasant separating one's clothes from the deep sand and dust that was everywhere. However, it was managed and we had a good night's rest.

Staff Sergeant Stahl has developed a bad head cold, and Staff Sergeant Runkel is just recovering from one which he brought with him from the States. While awaiting the evening meal at the Maiduguri Pan American overnight camp, we were much amused by native traders who had spread their wares upon the sand in front of our outdoor living quarters. Knives, snake skins, leather goods, etc. were offered for sale at fabulous prices. What few purchases were made were done so at about one-half the originally asked price.

During the evening, we became acquainted with three Chinese on their way to New York and Washington. One was an Admiral in the Free Chinese Navy. With him was an aide, a Lieutenant Commander. The third was a much younger man, a Captain in the Chinese Army. He is to prepare for entrance to West Point. The two naval officers are assigned at Washington to help the US Navy. The Lieutenant Commander, on arrival in Washington, will write to Audrey informing her he had met me out on the Sahara Desert. We enjoyed each other's company for an evening. What a thrill it will give her. It would be impossible for him to carry a letter from me. It very likely would be confiscated at either customs or the censor.

Mention should be made at this point that my two sergeants are all that could be hoped for. They have proved themselves to be gentlemen in every respect. Their conduct and manner on the clipper was remarked upon, and on several occasions, they received handouts from the steward. They went our Chinese friends one better in politeness.

After breakfast at Maidugari, we left for the airport and took off at 6:00 a.m. Now, in the air, the wide expanse of the desert became apparent. At 11:25 a.m. we sat down at El-Fasher in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. We had lunch at another RAF mess hall and here again were confronted with disgusting actions of two British Air Force officers. Food was lacking because of the large numbers that were to be fed upon a moment's notice. Because the service by the native waiters was not good—it could not have been under the circumstances—the officers severely berated the waiters in loud, uncouth voice. The two were in command of an air group that had just arrived at the field. I certainly am not gaining much of an appreciation of the British officer. Such arrogance is inexcusable among those assuming leadership. As for ourselves, we received very little to eat and we had appetites.

Pan American Airways, apparently, are just pioneering this African route. As yet they offer very little accommodations and seem to care less. Oh yes, we all know we are at war. The contrast is great when we think of the pleasant hours on the clipper from New York to Lagos. Perhaps I am just another reserve officer becoming acclimated to wartime conditions. On second thought, there is no question about it.

El-Fasher was left behind at 12:30 p.m. We arrived at Khartoum, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, on the Nile near its source, at 5:00 p.m. Here we were quartered for the night in dormitories of an agricultural school that had been taken over by the RAF as a flying school.

Dinner in the evening was a thoroughly enjoyable affair. I ate in the British Officers' Club with several RAF officers, and the boys found similar accommodations with RAF noncommissioned officers. In the lounge afterwards, I was approached by an elderly Australian officer who remarked, "God bless you, Americans. We love you better than our mother country." This seems to be quite typical. Territorials appear to be our friends and have little love for Britain.

We took off from Khartoum at 7:45 a.m. for Cairo. The flight was a memorable one. It was all over desert land except for a few hundred miles in the Nile River valley, where irrigation had been possible. This valley was beautiful, and what a contrast it offered to the desert wastes laterally. At one point, we ran into a severe sandstorm that was so high we could not fly over it. As the approach to Cairo, was made we saw several of the pyramids.

We arrived at Cairo 2:30 p.m. It was Saturday, March 14, 1942, just seven days and 10,124 miles via the route we took away from home. Here we leave Pan American Airways. The British Overseas Aviation Corporation will fly us from here to Calcutta.

3

Cairo

Arriving in Cairo on a Saturday afternoon was not conducive to obtaining living quarters on short notice. It had been impossible, of course, to make reservations. This city was a popular spot for the British from Friday evening to Monday morning. Nothing could stay this ingress. It was told, facetiously, that no matter how serious the war to the west of Alexandria, after the whistle was blown at retreat Friday evening, all British officers rushed southward for the weekend in Cairo.

The famed Shepherd's Hotel was retained exclusively for the British, no Americans allowed—at least I was refused, even being warned before I entered the lobby. Finally, through the assistance of Mr. Snow of Pan American Airways offices in Cairo, we found a large dormitory room containing three beds at the Croydon House, Le Caire, 181 Rue Emad El Dine. It was most comfortable and quite adequate. Breakfast served in the morning. Other meals were obtained at restaurants. We were together, most fortunately indeed. What a time we had convincing the woman manager that an officer and two enlisted men should room together. Such would ruin the reputation of her place, no longer would she be able to obtain British tenants. Finally, our arguments prevailed.

It was now growing late in the afternoon, but leaving the boys in our room, I made an attempt to get some idea when we could continue our journey. From here on it would be up to us, no governmental assistance. Pan American had brought us to this point on reservations made in the States by the War Department. I was able to find the offices of the American Legation and there contacted a Colonel Oliver, military attaché. Through him and a Major Tower of the Ferry Command first steps were taken to obtain passage on to Calcutta via British Airways. There was some reason to believe we would get away early Wednesday morning, March 18, but nothing

could be done until Monday.

The boys and I had dinner at the St. James, popularly known as Jimmy's. The meal was excellent, a steak dinner. Afterwards, we took a short walk along Cairo's narrow blacked-out streets, then to bed; and it looks like a comfortable one.

Sunday morning arrived, perhaps too soon. We needed the rest. Our trials up to this time had not been great, but they had been bothersome, both physically and mentally. The breakfast in our rooms was a happy affair—cornflakes, grapefruit, bacon, eggs, and something called coffee. Having finished that we walked over to the offices of the British Airways (BOAC). Nothing was known as to when we might leave for Calcutta.

I had my first haircut this morning since leaving Washington. It had been needed for a couple of weeks. It was Staff Sergeant Runkel's handiwork and a mighty fine job it was. He has had five years' experience at home as a barber, at which occupation he worked his was though college.

We were able to relax this afternoon. I did some sewing on a ripped pair of trousers. Must be very conservative. Only forty-four pounds of clothing carried with us permits very little in reserve. We hope to acquire a few things at Headquarters in China. Some time was spent in bringing this diary up to date. It is hoped that from time to time it will be possible to catalog all daily events. We also enjoyed a three-hour nap, popularly known as bunk fatigue.

While writing in this journal, there is in session a large building across the street. A British religious service. The hymn sing is nostalgic.

There is some concern at present as to how we may keep in touch with a base after reaching our destination. The American Legation informs me that General Stilwell may have left Chungking and removed to a point in India, which will be his base. Wherever he is, I must contact him before going on to my destination. Arrangements must be made for contact with a Finance Officer, for supplies, mail, reports, etc. Perhaps these difficulties can be cleared up before we leave Cairo.

Again, we enjoyed the breakfast served in our room. It is nearly as American as a meal can be out here. The first thing on the agenda this Monday morning was a visit to the United States Military North African Mission located at the American Legation. Their assistance was needed to get us on our way to Calcutta. They determined for us that there still is no definite news.

The British Consul was visited next. There, all papers, documents, etc. were censored and sealed so that they could be cleared through Egyptian and Indian customs. Rumor has it that these papers are likely to be examined closely, and possibly confiscated. What a mess this mission might turn out to be. We shall have to play each small bit of it by ear.

Since my gold watch is now out of order and my wristwatch is an unpredictable timepiece, I thought it best to purchase another while in Cairo. This will be the last opportunity. For ten pounds Sterling (\$50), I was able to buy an excellent Swiss movement with luminous dial, water-and-shock proof, and automatic winding. In the afternoon, we saw the cinema Philadelphia Story at Cairo's metro theater, a modern picture house in every detail including air conditioning and smoking in the balcony.

The American uniform is readily recognized here, despite the fact that there are only a few of us in the city. It is disdained, apparently by the British. At least there is nothing more than attitude of tolerance. Australian and Scottish troops give a greeting and a smile. The latter always come to a snappy salute.

Today's English newspaper published here in Cairo carries the story of a crash of one of the Chinese National Airways planes on which were several members of General Magruder's China Mission. (On reaching Chungking, we learned that Lieutenant Otto lost his life in this crash.) The news also stated that General Stilwell has made reconnaissance of the Burma Road defense in company with a Chinese general officer. Apparently, General Stilwell is still in China and has not set up base as presumed in India.

Upon contacting Major O'Dell, the Finance Officer here, I learned that my orders may be interpreted to authorize the payment of \$6.00 per diem only while I am actually traveling by plane, or otherwise outside the continental limits of the United States. In other words, while staying here in Cairo, awaiting transportation, I do not draw such allowance. The boys, however, do get it. They were paid \$6.00 per diem in advance for thirty days before leaving the States. However, I believe the Finance Officer will assume responsibility of making the payment. Why not? Certainly, if the boys were to receive per diem while awaiting transportation, why not I also? Further, per diem is more greatly needed while grounded and waiting than travel, especially via air. This Finance Officer is not unlike all others; none is going to assume responsibility if in doubt.

There should be some comment here about the climate in Cairo. The evenings are cool. During the day, it is relatively warm. We are making this trip at an ideal time. In another few weeks, the weather here and on through India will be very warm and humid in spots. Unfortunately, our room is so located that the sun never penetrates it. It is too cold to live in, and we spend much of our time inside. No type of heat is available. Both of the boys developed head colds after leaving the States, and the climate has not helped in its alleviation. In central Africa, we changed from winter to summer clothing. Now we are back in woolens again.

It is now Tuesday, March 17. The rate of currency exchange has given us little or no concern thus far during the trip. In each country where there is some layover it has been necessary to exchange American money into local currency. Here in Cairo, however, the American dollar is worth anywhere from 21.5 to 24 piasters. The piaster is the approximate equivalent of the American nickel.

Today marks the completion of one year's active duty in my present grade of Major, and over eight years in this grade has a reserve officer. I am now eligible for a certificate of capacity. Will a promotion come though? Our administrative headquarters in China, or wherever it may be, will probably be too busy to give consideration to the advancement of an officer not directly associated with it. We shall easily be forgotten while on duty one thousand miles further on. It is interesting to note that rapid advancements have been given to a large number of Air Corps Officers here in the USMNA Mission. Some have been raised two grades in a matter of a few weeks. Our Finance Officer jumped from Captain to Lieutenant Colonel.

Again, we called at Ferry Command (Major Tower) with regard to passing on to Calcutta. This time it is bad news. We may have to layover here in Cairo for another week to ten days.

Sir Stafford Cripps, Special Envoy to India, is coming though and will require the next two planes for his staff and freight. The British Overseas Airway Corporation operates only two planes weekly from Cairo to Calcutta, one on Wednesday the other on Sunday. I have obtained letters from the American and British authorities in explanation of why we are being held up. These will be my defense for having to sit down here so long—if a defense is required. There is no alternative.

The afternoon of this day was spent in visiting the pyramids. Little did we think we would have such an opportunity. As our guide, Major Tower of the Ferry Command recommended Dragaman 335 who was contacted at Mena House Hotel at the foot of the pyramids. Otherwise, he was known as Sheik Abdalla Raslan with the address of Mena, Egypt. Mena is a small Arabian village a few

miles from Cairo located at the foot of the three major pyramids and the Sphinx. It is also the home of Mena House, a famed hotel.

The largest of the three pyramids in the group is 481 feet high. It is massive indeed and is built solely of huge stones rolled overland eight miles from a quarry near the Citadel in Cairo. At the time, it was built, the task was facilitated somewhat by barges on the Nile River, which has receded since that time. It was built entirely by slave labor at no cost to the reigning king. The other two pyramids, smaller in size, were not constructed by such labor.

We also visited smaller tombs, which have been excavated during the past seventeen years by Harvard Egyptologists. These men were still at work, but in a much smaller capacity because of the war. In the smaller tombs, we saw well-preserved hieroglyphics in colors that are vivid after thousands of years. These, during the intervening times, have been buried deep by sand. In one such tomb, we crawled down a narrow underground passageway and saw the skeletal remains. All valuables buried with the nobles have been removed to British and Egyptian museums, one of which is located here in Cairo.

The largest pyramid, or tomb, was that of a monarch who reigned approximately five thousand years ago during the Second Dynasty. We crawled inside through a low-level entrance and up a long ramp to the exact center 240 feet high. Here we entered the king's tomb or chamber. The tomb in which the king was laid to rest is carved out of a solid mass of black granite. The chamber is of the same type of stone. Each stone comprising the walls of the chamber, weighing approximately twenty-five tons each, are fitted together most accurately. It is an engineering feat, so they say, that puts to shame some of our modern construction. Below the king's chamber is that of his queen. The stairway or ramp leading to the chambers is of great interest. Up it was hauled the heavy casket. At intervals are seen holes in the ramp where the casket was blocked with inserted stops while the laborers rested. *

After serving in World War I he retained his commission in the Reserve Corps as a Major. Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered him to active duty March 31, 1941, to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, with the Second Medical Laboratory. After Pearl Harbor, the China Lend-Leases program ensued. Dr. Pyle was needed in the event that the Burma Road fell to the Japanese. The only alternative route over which supplies could be brought into China would be the Red Caravan Trail extending from the Russian Chinese Border across Northwest China to Lanchow into Kansu Province. Since transport animals were dying from diseases unknown, a well-qualified veterinary officer with assistants were needed immediately. But the real reason was something else. It was for the research and development of biological weapons to be tested and later used in warfare.

This journal is about Dr. Pyle's journey and crossing paths with the following persons:

Brig. Gen. John MacGruder, Head of American Military Mission to China

Mr. Frank Liu, Head of the Epizootic Prevention Bureau

Dr. T. V. Soong

General Ho, Minister of War

General Stillwell

General Hsu

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