

DUNES

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FREE e-publication

EMAILS FROM A VET — PART I

Compiled by Libby

Being a US army Surgical Technician in North Africa during the second world war was a long way - literally and figuratively - from civilian life for Private First Class Ted Ward. Maybe that's why his memories of that time and place have stuck for more than 65 years. Here, in his own words, are some of them.

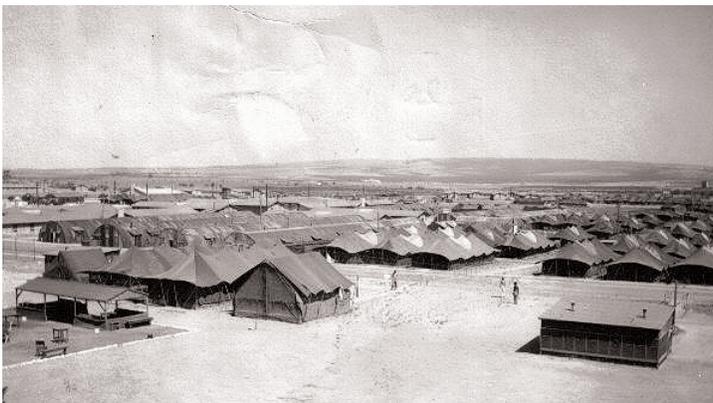
The Place

We lived in tents and the hospital was also under canvas and set up in a field about eight miles from the nearest city.

We slept under mosquito nets because it was a malaria area. But malaria was not really bad for us. We took Atabrine for medicine. It made you sick to your stomach and turned you yellow so a lot of guys didn't take their pill.

We all had sand fleas in our beds and clothing. Cure for that was to fill your bed full of DDT powder and sleep in it for a few days. Now they tell us that it's poison.

Of course the flies were plentiful too. The Arabs would sit there and let the flies crawl all over their face and just ignore them.



Hospital tents, North Africa. Photograph by Evert Tinker

The Locals

The Arabs didn't have much to live on. Once when I was on detached duty in the port of Arzew I saw one Arab clad in a two piece winter underwear, and working. This was in the summer and it was really hot.

Most of them were dressed in rags with no shoes, or in sandals made out of car tires. There was one Arab in Oran though who was all dressed up in Arab finery and who hung around the park. For a couple of cigarettes he would pose with you while you took a picture. I think by the end of a day he would have quite a collection of smokes.

We used to sell our cigarettes but never out in the open. I knew a French boy, about 12 years old, in Oran and when I had leave there he used to hang around with our group. If we had something to sell he would take it and go into the off-limits section of Oran and sell it for us. He always came back with the money and never took any for selling it. We always thought he got much more than we wanted so he kept it for his share.

The kids in Oran did not seem to go to school. Maybe there was none. Anyhow there seemed to be hordes of them all trying to make a living. Most of the G.I.s treated them fairly well, except sometimes when they got too pushy.

The kids on the street were all trying to make a living. In the bars they would sell salted almonds to the guys drinking—five for 10 francs. Other kids shined shoes—whether you wanted a shine or not. You could be standing there and suddenly you would have two kids shining your shoes, one on each shoe.

Special thanks to Ted Ward for sharing his memories. More recollections in future issues.



Ted Ward (left), and friend with Arab local.

Book Review

The Rat Patrol #4 in Two-Faced Enemy

by David King - Paperback Library Edition, Feb 1967

Reviewed by Libby



Shades of “The Holy War Raid” episode of the TV series is in evidence in this novel as Hauptmann Dietrich creates a fake Rat Patrol to spread alarm and despondency within an Allied-held town. It is a clever plan (naturally) and his ersatz Rats perform magnificently, causing turmoil in the town and driving the town’s Allied commander Colonel Wilson (reminiscent of Patton) almost to distraction. Meanwhile, the real Rat Patrol, out of radio contact, is busy doing the same within the enemy ‘camp’ -blowing up fuel, ammunition, and as much enemy armour as they can. They are (naturally) even better at their job than their fake counterparts.

The action in the novel is largely believable and well written, although in places technical details blurred the reviewer’s eyes. Of surprise to the reviewer was the amount of beer swilling the novel’s Rats did while on their mission. (Warm, well-shaken beer, anyone?) The Rats were certainly never in danger of dehydration, but seemed to have to go without sleep or food almost the entire time. The reviewer felt tired and hungry on their behalf and was relieved to read they were well fed eventually.

If you expect to read a lot about each of the men as individuals, you will be disappointed. As with the other David King novels, the story is essentially about Troy and Dietrich, and how they work to defeat the other. The other major player in this novel is the weather. This time it is not the blazing heat one expects in the desert, but rain - heavy, boot-filling, jeep-sinking rain. This sort of weather, so alien to the TV series, makes for a pleasant change and significantly impacts the story. It is too bad such inclement weather didn’t ever appear in the TV shows.

A few quotations from the novel that more or less say it all:

Dietrich, referring to the Rat Patrol: “And because it is logical, they will not do it.” (How well he knows them.)

Troy: “We always try to be at the right place at the right time.” (And they are-always!)

Dietrich, speaking of the Rat Patrol: “The patrol of the enemy responsible is emphatically extraordinary.” (We knew that all the time, didn’t we.)

David King has written a good story with plenty of what the Rat Patrol is known for - action and teamwork.

Recommended.



Movie Review

Sabara

Starring Humphrey Bogart

Reviewed by Val



Synopsis: Sergeant Joe Gunn (Humphrey Bogart) and his men, along with a few other Allied soldiers and their two prisoners, are headed to a desert fortress where they hope to find the water they desperately need. The problem is, a detachment of German soldiers had the same idea, and Gunn and his men decide to hold the fort while waiting for reinforcements to come.

Commentary :This movie was made in 1943, and it is obviously a war propaganda picture. The characters featured in the movie are not individuals, but the embodiment of the nations involved in the war, and stereotypically so. The American sergeant who leads the "good guys" is tough but fair, the driving force of his men, while the British soldiers are faithful (and obedient) allies. The Frenchman, nicknamed "Frenchie" with gentle disdain by the rest of the group, stands more as part of the decor than anything else. Among the Axis forces, the one German we see up close has the word "Nazi" written all over him, from the top of his blond hair to the tips of his jackboots, and the Italian officer is lost in a war he wants no part in (it is understandable since Italy had just surrendered when that picture came out). As for the Sudanese corporal, I had a feeling he was put in the movie for two reasons; because of his knowledge of the desert, and to give the nasty German an occasion to show how racist he is.

That being said, it is still reasonably enjoyable to watch this movie, once you set aside the stereotypes. There is a lot of action, brave and courageous soldiers fighting against impossible odds, an heroic (and suicidal) charge at the enemy... Besides, the interaction of the characters is interesting. Of course, the movie is badly biased against the Germans (overall, the soldiers fighting in Africa were actually pretty decent guys), but that's propaganda for you. But trying to find out the motivations behind each scene can be a lot of fun too.

Look out for the German pilot's peculiar haircut, it's rather funny.

Sabara

Director : Zoltan Korda

Writers : Philip McDonald (story)

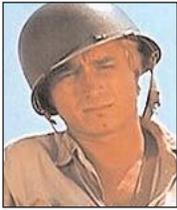
John Howard Lawson (screenplay)

Runtime : 97 minutes

Colour : Black and white

Company : Columbia Picture Corporation





LETTERS HOME by Barbo

Dear Ma,

I'm writing this letter by candle light. We just made camp for the night. It's really cold out right now. The days are scorching hot and we freeze at night.

It's Hitch's turn to do dinner, right now he's making coffee. Troy and Moffitt are going over some map or other. Seems like they do that a lot. I just do what I'm told. Both me and Hitch do. But, it's okay. Sarge is a good man. He respects us, so he gets it back from the rest of us.

I hurt my arm a few weeks ago. Don't worry though. It's healing really good. It hardly bothers me now.

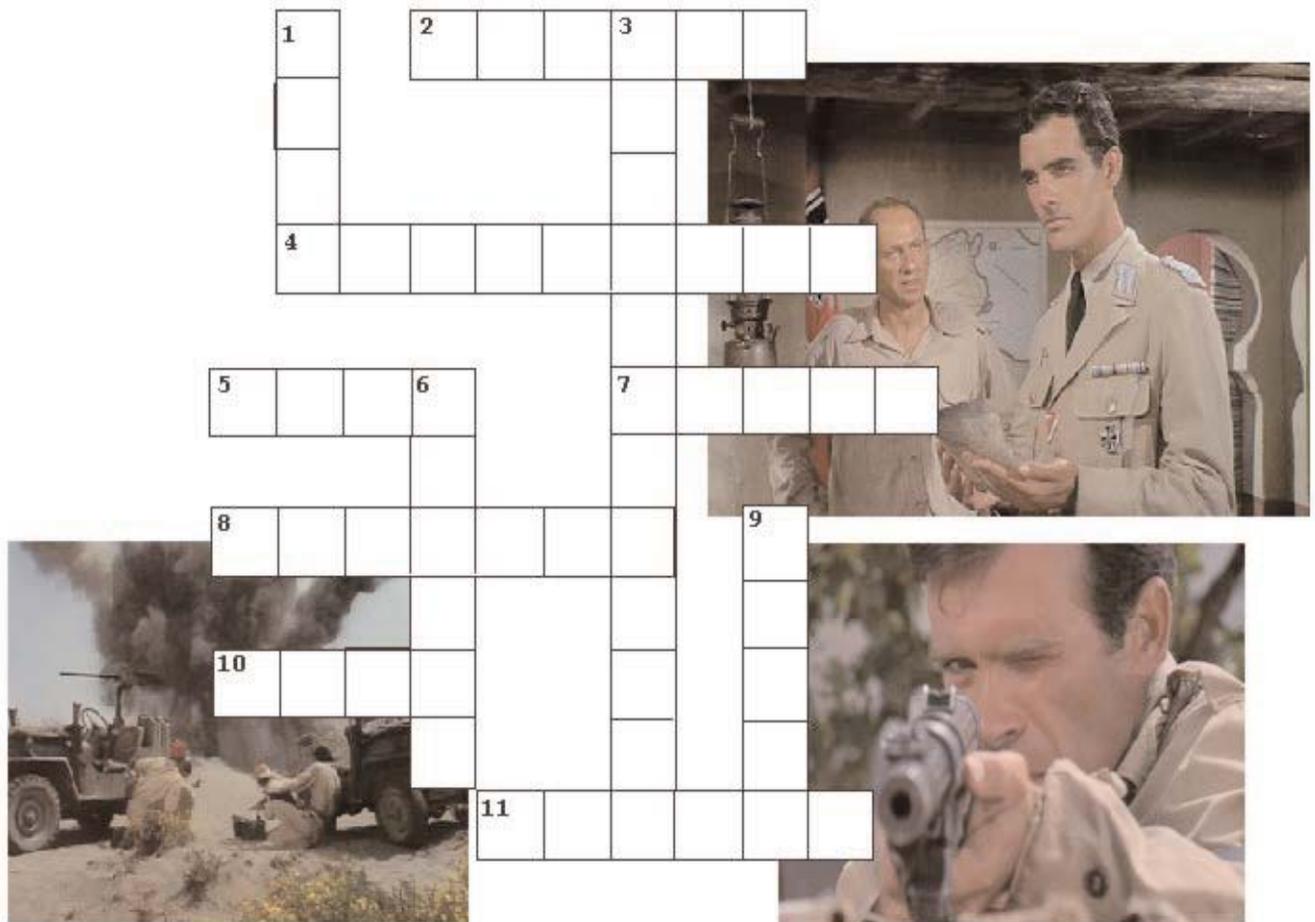
Everything else is okay. My life right now is exciting for sure. There's always lots to do and there's never a shortage of action and fighting. I think we are winning!

Say hello to everyone for me. How's that old hound dog of mine? I miss him. He's probably forgotten me by now. Take care and I'll write again soon. Tully.

P.S. Could you send me a couple boxes of matches. I hate the army ones.

RAT PUZZLE PAGES

KILL OR BE KILLED— crossword



Clues

ACROSS

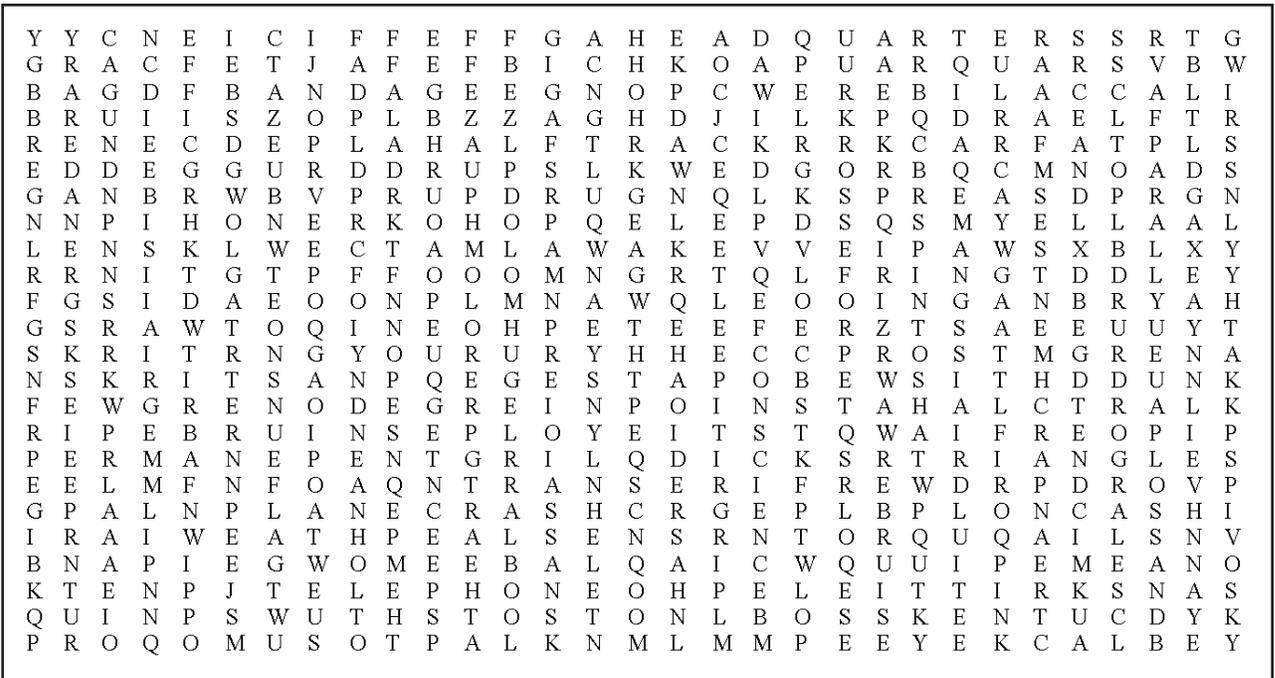
2. Moffitt said, "I could be hanging by my _ _ _ _ _."
4. Who directed this episode?
5. Where did the Bedouin find the valuable parchment?
7. Moffitt said, "Frankly, I prefer the thirty- _ _ _ _ _."
8. Troy said, "They send a convoy to _ _ _ _ _ every morning."
10. How many years was the German officer a military attache in London?
11. What were the two German soldiers fighting over?

DOWN

1. The officer said, "He could make out only two words - water and _ _ _ _ _."
3. What is the name of the actor who played the German officer?
6. What time every day did Bizerte call the German officer?
9. How many guards escorted Moffitt to the convoy?

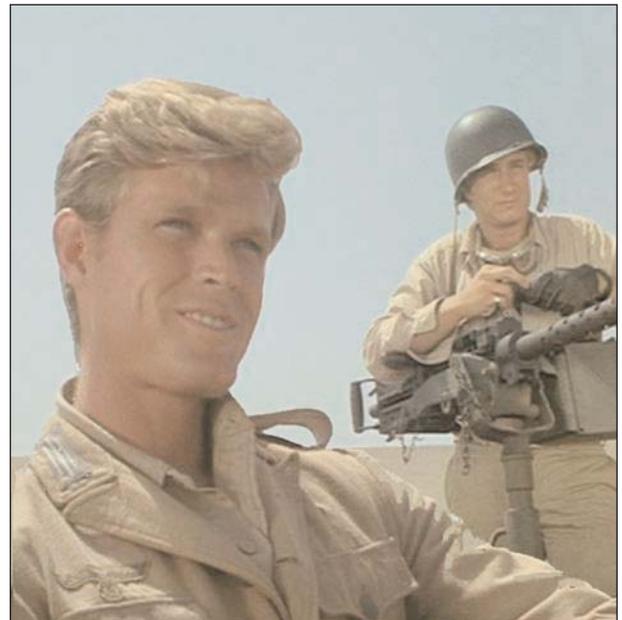
KILL OR BE KILLED— word find

by Janet Brayden



Find these words from “The Kill or Be Killed Raid”.

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|------------|------------|---------|---------|--------------|-------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Alley | Black Eye | Dawn | English | Flank | Grin | Map | Red | Sanskrit | Veil |
| Arab | Bruise | Drugged | Fez | Gestapo | Halftrack | Parchment | Ring | Tea | Water |
| Awake | Caliber | Drunk | Fire | Goats | Headquarters | Plane Crash | Rooftop | Telephone | Triangles |
| Bandage | Conscience | Efficiency | Flag | Grenade | Jeep | Professor | Sandbags | Well | White |



End of the Rope

By Lake

Tully pulled the helmet from his head and scrubbed at his sweaty hair. He watched Hitch frown at the back of the jeep.

"I've never seen him in a blacker mood," Hitch said, as he reached in to tackle the tangle.

"Easy on that gear," Tully said. "You're unstrapping it like it wants to jump up and run."

Hitch smiled. "Just taking my frustrations out on this instead of..." He stopped short of speaking any name out loud.

"Sarge knows fuel cans bust up. So his smokes got doused. Not your fault."

Tully knew that the flimsy got torn by shrapnel-better it than someone's head. But some stuff's better left unsaid, he thought, as he picked through their kit. No one wants gasoline-stinking gear, no matter how used anyone got to rough conditions. He tossed the fouled clothes to the sand and rolled them under his boot to absorb the odor.

"Dietrich's armor cuts off our route through the hills and you'd think cigarettes were all that mattered," Hitch said in little more than a grumble.

"He seen the whole mission go to hell in a handbasket," Tully replied; then thought, 'Little things matter.'

Tully looked to where Troy and Moffitt paced the rocky perimeter. "They're jumpy as cats, those two." One of Dietrich's abandoned half-tracks lay canted dinosaur-like in a wadi a short distance away; the only good result from the encounter.

"What's the next town?" Hitch's hopeful desperation rang clear.

Tully hesitated and said, "You know all they ever have is sissy French cigarettes. Sarge hates those. Cathouse smokes. Hates them worse than anything. He'd rather smoke old rope."

"Old rope! That we've got." Hitch smirked.

"Are you two going to quit bitching and get down to that wadi?" Troy bellowed. Tully couldn't miss the deep lines mapping Troy's face, even from this distance, even as Troy quickly turned to scan the horizon.

Tully swept the gear from the sand, shook it, dropped it in the jeep and snatched the AR from its holster. He was already four long strides ahead before Hitch got a move on.

Hitch was breathing heavily by the time he caught up to the vehicle where Tully crouched efficiently picking through the scattered debris. In the Germans' haste to escape, much had been abandoned, but it was hardly likely that they would find maps or documents worthy of note. The pair took papers for Moffitt to translate later and ransacked what was left. They rejected some boxes of ammo as being the wrong caliber.

"Hallelujah!" Hitch held out his hand and Tully saw three small cardboard boxes of cigarettes from an American ration pack. Hitch closed his hand on the booty and tucked them quickly into his shirt pocket. Another half dozen packs were still in the abandoned canvas bag at their feet, and Hitch grabbed them as well.

"You lucky stiff," Tully observed.

"More like Lucky Strikes," Hitch corrected with a grin.



Now is the Time for all Good "Men"...

by Jan Ward

The night was so dark as Hans Dietrich followed the crest of the dune that he was nearly upon Bachmann before the young sentry reacted. Dietrich heard the rattle of a rifle sling.

"Halt!"

"At ease, Private."

"*Herr Hauptmann!*" A sliver of cloud slid away from the moon, revealing dismay on Bachmann's face. The private lowered his rifle and snapped to attention.

"*Entschuldigung*, I didn't see *Herr Hauptmann*."

"Relax, Private, I wasn't checking up on you." Dietrich held out the mug he was carrying. "It's cold tonight; I thought you could use this."

Bachmann slid the rifle back up onto his shoulder. "*Danke, Herr Hauptmann*. I am cold," he admitted.

"And," Dietrich glanced down at the small form sitting at Bachmann's feet, "I also wanted to check on our newest recruit here." The dog grinned up at him and thumped her tail. He knelt on one knee and rubbed the soft ears as a wet tongue explored his fingers.

"How is she doing?"

"Very well, Herr Hauptmann. Usually, that is." The private faltered for a moment then added. "You see, normally she barks when she hears something. I can't understand why she didn't bark at you."

"I can." Dietrich scratched the dog's stubby chest. "She's a smart dog, she knows better than to bite the hand that feeds her."

Beneath his fingers, the dog tensed; slowly, she rose to her feet, ears pricked. Out in the darkness pebbles rattled somewhere and the dog growled deep in her chest. Dietrich put one hand over her muzzle; with the other he unsnapped his holster. "Get down," he hissed.

Bachmann dropped to a crouch beside him. "*Was ist los, Herr Hauptmann?*"

"Shine your light down there." Dietrich pointed; Bachmann unsnapped the torch from his belt and swept a beam across the sand. Suddenly the dog gave a deep bark, jerked free from Dietrich's grip, and hurtled down the dune.

++++++

"Damn it to hell." Troy swept off his hat and slapped it against his dusty thigh. "That's the second time tonight that dog screwed things up for us."

"It's not unheard of, you know." Moffitt replaced the unused explosives in the back of the jeep. "For a unit to employ dogs."

"Yeah, and trust Dietrich to lay his hands on a German Shepherd somewhere," Hitch grumbled as he slid behind the wheel of his jeep.

Tully snagged the camouflage netting off the other jeep. "Wasn't no German Shepherd."

"How do you know?" Hitch demanded.

"'Cause I got a good look at it. Like I said, that wasn't no German Shepherd. But it did look mighty familiar." Tully shot Troy a sideways glance and grinned. "Didn't it, Sarge?"

Troy's eyebrows lifted. "It did?"

Moffitt chuckled. "Well, you know the saying, Troy. No good deed..."

He winked.

For a moment Troy glared at Moffitt in silence, then snorted and swung into the jeep. He folded his arms across his chest. "Aw, let's get outta here," he growled.



The Real End

by Wendy Alger

"Put your pistol on the floor and kick it away," Dietrich demanded. Troy did, warily. "Very good, Sergeant."

"Listen-"

"I will speak," Dietrich snapped. "You are here for the spy!"

"I'm lost," Troy said. "I was looking for a beer and thought this was the tavern." He grinned at Dietrich, knowing it irritated him.

"You are looking for your contact. The man's face is unknown to you as is his name." Dietrich whispered, "The password is 'Come in from the Cold', is it not?"

Troy's jaw dropped. "You've captured him!"

"In a manner of speaking," Dietrich smiled. "I am he. I am your contact."

"What?" Troy shouted. "You liar. You've tortured that information out of him!"

He charged forward but Dietrich quickly raised his Luger, pointing it into his face.

"I knew you would be unreasonable," Dietrich sighed. "I specifically requested another escort."

"I know your dirty tricks," Troy said. "You think you're smart, trying to stay one step ahead of me."

"How do you think I always knew where you would be?" Dietrich smiled. "I'm always informed of your arrival to explode my supply trains, ammunition and petrol dumps! How did you think the Allies knew where those locations were? I told them! And then I allowed you and your bumbling men to destroy what I needed destroyed."

Troy choked, his body shaking. "You decided? My men are a crack team. You never allowed us anything!"

"Try to think, if you can," Dietrich laughed, "How do you explain why my German soldiers were never able to shoot you in those silly little jeeps? I constantly altered their gun sights!"

"We weren't hit because we moved fast!" Troy said. "We can sneak into any German camp!"

Dietrich snorted. "Without being seen even in broad daylight? And when I did catch you, just to keep up appearances, I let you go, though I've sustained numerous injuries!"

"I can't believe-" Troy said, twisting his hat. "You a spy for the Allies? Why?"

"I have been teaching at Harvard for a few years," Dietrich explained. "I was visiting relatives in Kiel when war was

continued on page 8

Tully's Absolution

by Tina Schlaile

Tully and Hitch watched as the two sergeants carried the wounded nurse down the rocky slope and into the German field hospital below. Less than an hour before, Troy had shot her, mistakenly thinking she was an enemy soldier. Now, her life depended on getting much needed medical aid.

"Think she'll make it?" Hitch asked.

"Don't know. Maybe...maybe not." Cocking his head towards Hitch, Tully continued. "Could you have done it?"

"Done what?"

"Killed her. Like Troy wanted Moffitt to do."

"I don't know." Sounding nervous, Hitch added "Killing men, enemy soldiers, that's one thing. Killing a woman, even though she's the enemy, that's another."

Tully gazed down towards the camp. Troy and Moffitt had just gone inside one of the tents, probably the surgical one. "Well, what if Troy had handed you the gun? Would you've shot her?" Tully asked, not satisfied with Hitch's answer.

Hitch hesitated before responding. "I don't think Sarge would have done that. So why are you so interested? Would you have shot her?"

"Well, since you're not gonna answer my question, I'll answer yours. Yeah...I would've shot her."

Hitch's mouth dropped open, his blue eyes showing just as much surprise. "Are you kidding? Just like that, you would have killed her?"

Tully grabbed the matchstick he had in his mouth and flicked it away. Stepping back slightly, he leaned up against a nearby rock. Cuddling the barrel of his Tommy gun, he let out a sigh and glanced up at the sky, his crescent eyes squinting from the sunlight.

"Isn't that what we've been trained to do? Kill 'em before they can kill you?"

Hitch dropped his head, his mouth turning into a frown as he closed it.

Tully glanced at him. Unaffected by Hitch's reaction, he asked, "Do you even know how many guys you've killed out here?"

"Do you!?" Hitch shot back.

"No, but that's exactly my point. They're not human, not supposed to be anyway - just targets. But the gal, she's different. At least to you, and everyone else. You can't make her into a target, because she's got a face...and a soul right behind it."

"And what's wrong with that?"

"If you can find a reason not to kill her, then maybe you won't kill someone else when you need to."

"Says you! I've never hesitated. If it were her or me, I'd shoot..." Hitch's voice trailed off and a look of desolation formed in his face. "We're all just cold-blooded killers, aren't we?"

"No, but I found out what I was today." Tully paused. "When I got here, and saw the war, and all the fightin', I decided on a plan - just do whatever I was told, even though I might hate it. I figure that's how I'll forgive myself later on. There's things here the folks at home would never understand. Shoot, I don't even understand 'em sometimes. I just hope it doesn't go on too much longer."

"Me neither, Tully."



Vignettes, cont'd

The Real End, cont'd

declared. The borders were sealed and I was trapped. I enlisted with the Wehrmacht before the authorities discovered my true citizenship, knowing I could leave the country with the army.

However it was not so easy to escape when they realized how intelligent and valuable I was. Because of my knowledge of Arabic I was assigned to the North Africa Campaign. When I was given my own unit, with limited freedoms, I managed to contact the Allies for assistance. Instead of escaping, they

insisted I continue as a spy. Unfortunately I couldn't always protect my men during your violent attacks, often sacrificing them to allow you to succeed in the missions I had planned with your officers."

"You planned?" Troy gasped, "You allowed me to succeed?" He ground his teeth as he stomped forward. "You'll just have to shoot me. You'll never convince me!"

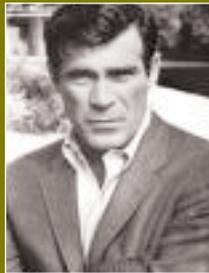
"Really?" Dietrich smiled again as he spun the pistol in his fingers, handing it butt first to an astonished Troy. "And now?"



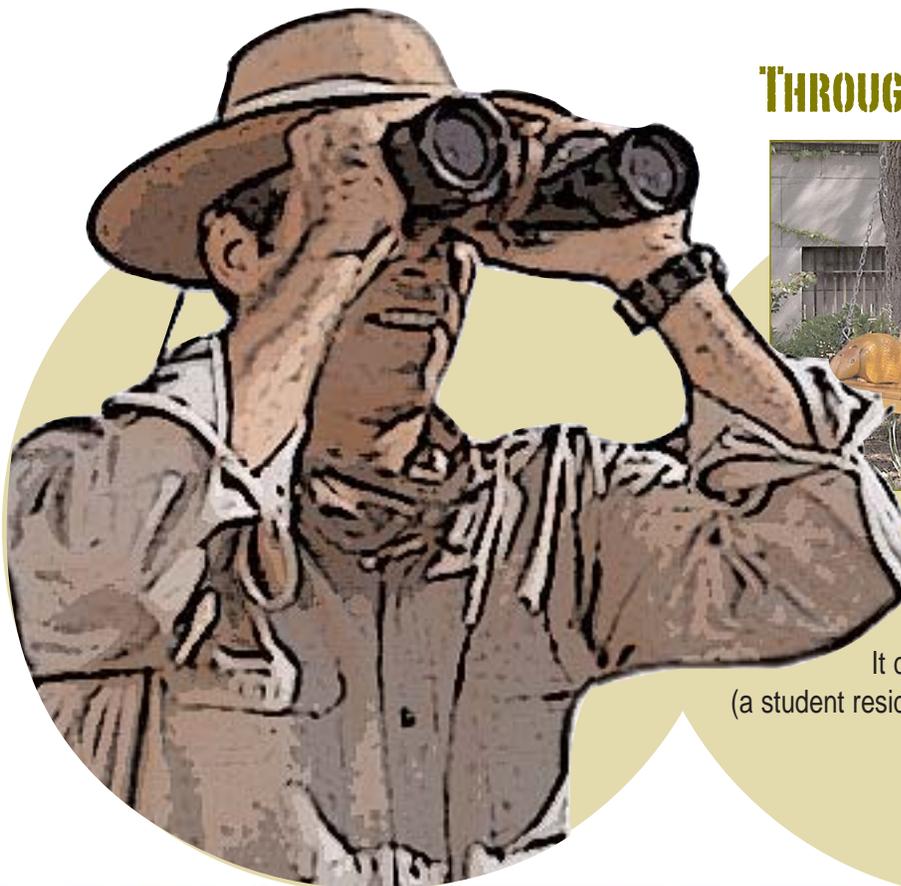
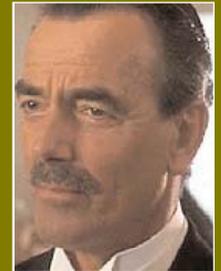
NOT ALWAYS A RAT

Pictures of the month

Christopher George as
"The Immortal". 1970



Eric Braeden/
Hans Gudegast as
John Jacob Astor
in "Titanic". 1997



THROUGH THE FIELD GLASSES



Hitch is sure to be pleased with "his" beautiful swing bench complete with armadillo armrests. It can be seen outside Hitchcock Hall (a student residence) at the University of Chicago

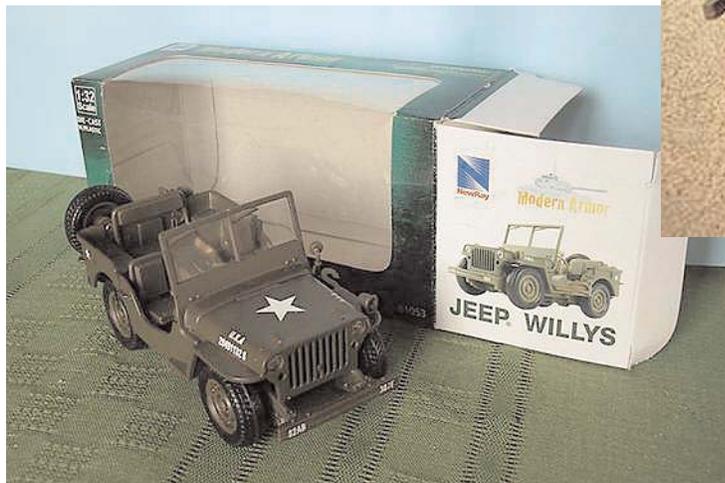
Photo by Judith

RAT HOBBIES

by Libby

This model is a prize item in Libby's Rat Patrol collection (it is a small collection), an authentic WWII jeep purchased at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, Ontario.

Sadly, it did not come with a machine gun mounted on the back.



RAT RECIPE — Tully's Mongoose Stew by Barbo

Back home in Kentucky, Tully often made squirrel stew for his bootleg buddies. Now fighting in the North African Desert, he often catches mongoose and prepares his famous stew for his unit mates.

2 mongoose	1 cup water
1/4 cup camel butter	2 tsps. cinnamon
3 wild onions	2 tsps. flour
3 wild sweet potatoes	1 tsp. salt
1 tin army ration consomme	pinch of sand (not optional)

Trap, skin and gut mongoose and cut meat into bite-sized pieces. Melt camel butter in pan and brown chopped onion and meat. Add chunks of sweet potato. Mix in flour to thicken. Add consomme and water and let simmer until meat and potatoes are tender. Add cinnamon and salt to taste. Serve with a smile.
NOTE: Left overs make great bait for next meal.



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