

# FROM PILLAR TO POST

By Mrs. T. M. B. Hicks, Jr.

A great many women, inspired by the worthiest of motives, are going about in a haze of patriotism, stirring up useless little eddies in their communities and becoming inextricably involved in meeting after meeting, with no clear conception of the ultimate destination. The net result, in a great many instances, is the precious woman-hours are a total loss.

It may not be as thrilling to don a kitchen apron as a well-tailored uniform, but the rewards in the long run are greater in health and strength and general well-being. There is a desperate need at present for every woman to set her own house in order. With the ever-increasing burden of household management due to lack of service, the curtailment of items which we once considered essential and the consequent necessity for the employment of unwelcome substitutes, women have a very real job cut out for them, a job which can not be satisfactorily delegated to lesser and inexperienced hands.

The members of a growing family must be fed, fed adequately, fed wholesomely, and if possible fed pleasantly and painlessly. It is going to be difficult to sell the average spoiled American family a bill of goods. It will take much more time and I may add a much greater outlay of money at this season of the year to satisfy the appetites of a lusty family with starches, and cereals correctly balanced by out-of-season vegetables than it would to satisfy them with starches correctly balanced by canned or dried vegetables and fruits. The can-opener is about to bow itself out of the picture through one door while the pressure cooker and the steamer enter by the other.

The unfortunate combination of a cold-wave which froze truck gardens as far south as the Gulf of Mexico and down into Florida and the nation-wide freeze-up of canned and dried foods has left us all out in the cold in a big way.

But if you suffer when you march grimly past the shelves of canned goods labeled conspicuously "Hands Off, This Means You," consider the plight of the grocer. For months he has been obliged to limit sales of butter and coffee and the scarcer canned products.

Now he must not only re-mark every rationed item on his shelves with a point system pamphlet as a guide, he must absorb a staggering loss in merchandise which he is not allowed to sell at any price, items which the government has frozen to a sub-zero temperature not likely to do any considerable amount of thawing for some time to come. He must consign to temporary limbo his supplies of canned fish and meats. He must pacify the outraged customer with one hand while taking from her basket with the other the forbidden dried beans and prunes. He must bite off his tongue to keep himself from asking his embattled

customers why they do not read the newspapers. He must turn aside with fair and gentle speech the acid comments of the irate lady who wishes to know, upon being deprived of her can of peaches, why the Sam Hill he does not put signs on all the frozen items so that customers will not make mistakes. After all, she says, he has nothing else to do.

One such manager retired behind the soap counter to mop his perspiring brow and give his overworked ear a rest. Noting my sympathetic grin, he gave tongue. He wanted to know if I read the newspapers. I assured him that I frequently did so, that I was up on the rationing question, and that all I wanted was a bunch of carrots and a loaf of bread.

He relaxed and aired his woes. It seemed that a store manager led a tough life, none tougher. Not only did he work for weeks on end, making endless preparations for a drastic government order, but he sits all Saturday night getting his store ready for the famine. Then he goes to the bank to deposit the contents of the cash registers in the revolving cylinder that takes it in but does not give it out. And then he gets shot.

It seemed to the manager that this was the final insult, to get shot on Saturday night after the bulk of the work had been done. That it might have been easier to take on Tuesday or Wednesday.

When rationing actually gets under way, with customers and grocers alike perspiring over the coupons which must be surrendered along with the cash, marketing is going to look like a career, with the line forming on the right and proceeding at a snail's pace through the checking counter.

There are some women who are sitting pretty, allowing the turmoil to go on about them, but totally undisturbed by the clamor. These women are reflecting complacently upon their foresightedness in growing and canning their own vegetables last summer. Families with several hundred jars of home-canned fruits and vegetables lining the shelves in the basement may well think with detachment about the limited supply on the grocers' shelves.

A goodly number of families, including our own, are about to see the light.

In this same issue we are advertising for a load of manure, and we are about to make the neighborhood hideous with the aroma of the barnyard, always supposing that some kind soul is willing to part, for a moderate consideration, with what it takes to make a garden grow.

## Methodists Answer War Need In Three-Fold Dedication



Across the nation in 42,000 Methodist churches during the Week of Dedication, February 22 to March 7, eight million members of the denomination will be called by their bishops and pastors to rededication of "self, service and substance." Spiritual emphasis will be climaxed in a sacrificial offering on Sunday, March 7, which will be used to meet emergency war needs of providing Christian ministry or financial aid to men of the armed forces, "uprooted families" in industrial defense areas, refugees in war-torn countries, evacuated foreign missionaries, churches and schools in Latin America, and other projects created by wartime conditions.

### Col. Smith Relates Experiences At Dieppe

(Continued from Page 1)

They would not let him come back on an army transport plane because he was twenty pounds too heavy and since there was plenty of room on the returning boats, Norm decided to bring the stuff along, though how he brought all the impedimenta from New York to Huntsville is still a mystery to himself and his wife who looked with fastidious horror at the three sheets from the blanket roll when she unrolled them at O'Malia's Laundry. "If I'd known they were as dirty as this," she said with housewifely concern. "I'd have never brought them here. They are just back from North Africa."

And Norm looked on sheepishly as though there might be something wrong after all with a man who returned with three sheets soiled by the Algerian mud—sheets that were used only once or twice for the luxury of sheets is denied men who spend most of their nights in foxholes.

But soiled linen must be trivial matters to one who was stationed among the blitzed buildings of England for more than six months and who has the greatest admiration for the way the English public is "carrying on." He pays tribute to the English housewife who after work in a war plant stands for hours in line to procure her rationed foodstuffs. Sometimes she pays a child to hold her place—and the youngsters standing patiently, love it, because they are doing their bit to win the war. Col. Smith chuckled when he compared gasoline rationing here with that in England. "There are no automobiles in England." Even the clothing of modish women is now becoming shabby—there is no such thing as style. Many of the English wear canvas-topped wooden soled shoes—and they don't seem to mind it.

During all the time he was in England Col. Smith had only one glass of milk. He loves milk and used to carry a gallon thermos bottle filled with it every day he went to the Seminary.

Speaking of the bombings and the effects of the blitz on English towns, Col. Smith said that despite all of the publicity in the American press he was unprepared for what he saw. "There is hardly a block in London without a destroyed building and Coventry is beyond the imagination—if there ever was a Hell on earth it must have been those nights during the bombing of the English industrial city. It is a forsaken community—the inhabitants have all moved out."

"You hear Americans talk about the British, but let me tell you, Americans don't know what war is—the British do—and I can only hope that the average American can take it as the British have." Col. Smith has no sympathy for American griping.

#### The Dieppe Raid

But it is when he talks of the costly dawn at Dieppe that Col.

Smith's soft eyes snap. 7,500 men participated in that raid on the French coast on August 19, 1942 and he was one of them. He was among the small group of American Rangers who held the center position in the fleet of barges flanked to the north by Canadians and to the south by British Commandos. There were many who did not come back.

Col. Smith is convinced that the raid was not an attempted invasion because all of the men were given instructions on the signals that would mark their return to the landing barges. He believes the raid was a feint or a thrust to teach officers lessons needed for the later African invasion.

Covered by darkness that was beginning to turn gray with dawn, huddling in scores of landing crafts the attackers began moving toward the beaches. They were in three groups spread out along the Channel. As they approached the French shore, American barges ran into a German tanker escorted by a dilapidated destroyer. Despite all the careful planning this was the fateful turn that destroyed the surprise attack and resulted in the loss of more than 3,500 of the 5,000 Canadians participating. As soon as the German ships discovered the approach, their lights flooded the area and gunners in German shore batteries opened up. The Canadians to the north were decimated before they had a chance to reach their objective and spike the guns.

Only one landing craft, containing twenty men, reached the beach. To the south the English were more successful. They had spiked the guns, in their salient but the plans required the spiking of all three shore batteries. Two never were put out of action because of the warning sent up by the German convoy.

Col. Smith's barge reached shore but not before it and two others had been overturned by the bursts of gun fire. Later the men were picked up by British destroyers.

Not every man in that expedition knew when he started out on that fateful dawn that he was bound for the French shore. There had been scores of previous similar training excursions on dark nights, but this was the real thing. Col. Smith paid tribute to the courage of the Commandos and Rangers. "They are the pick of the regiments," he said, "All volunteers. You know how it is on a football team, you'll have a couple of men who stand out, seem to be born football players—that's the way it is with soldiers. A commander will have two or three outstanding men in his outfit—not always the toughest or hardboiled but ones who seem born to the job. If he recommends them they can become Rangers or Commandos."

During all of the time he was in England, Col. Smith never was on leave. He complimented English weather ironically, by saying that "summer just lasted one day—that is what you would really call a summer day in America." He spoke of the English victory gardens planted on every available spot of land and

of the victory gardens grown in the vicinity of army camps by the soldiers themselves.

#### North Africa

Though he enjoyed the rank of major, Col. Smith was unaware of his destination when with thousands of other troops he embarked one fall night from an English port. There had been no forewarning of a big troop movement.

Although the troops had been issued tropical equipment only a few days before embarkation, speculation was rife when they boarded ship that they would probably sail around the tip of Africa and through the Suez Canal to aid the British Eighth Army. Few dreamed that the convoy was headed for the Straits of Gibraltar where lurking submarines were believed to make passage next to impossible. Several nights later shore lights were observed toward the left and on inquiry the ship's captain told the men that it was the coast of Algeria.

Col. Smith was in the first six ships protected by units of the British navy that pulled up off the harbor of Oran. French shore batteries manned by French marines gave the greatest resistance. The superstructure and all of the guns of the big British escort vessel was destroyed with a well placed shell that must have killed hundreds of British sailors. While troop ships waited at a distance for the navy to clear the way every soldier was handed a little printed blue book explaining the geography of Africa, its diseases, and manners and customs of the natives. Only then was it clear what was up.

Because a French vessel had been destroyed at a point near the shore where his men had planned to land, another landing was found further up the beach. This proved later to be a better disembarking spot than the first and succeeding troop ships unloaded there. A number of men were killed in the landings which went off with clocklike precision.

Col. Smith spoke with admiration of certain crack troops that had months of training in landing. These troops he said "reached the beach and were in the center of town encamped in the city park before natives were aware of what was happening—and that was accomplished without the loss of a man—which proves that training has a lot to do with casualties."

For the most part the natives took an indifferent attitude toward the American troops—"just gawking as they went by."

There were few details in Col. Smith's story. His narrative was confined to impressions of the country and the climate which is as pleasant as that of England.

All of the countries had been drained of foodstuffs by the Germans and their French allies to the extent that in spite of German demands for more production most natives had refused to plant their farms during October and November. After the arrival of the Americans, these farmers went to work and put in late plantings with excellent results because North Africa has experienced one of the wettest seasons in years and growth is luxuriant giving rise to the belief that bumper crops will be harvested.

Col. Smith said American troops get along well with the Arabs, probably because of the advice in the little blue books. The deportment of the American soldier is good.

He observed that baptism by fire is a great leveler even in the army. "It is surprising how the big shots and the loudtalkers come down off their high horses and how the meek fellows—chaps you thought might not stand up—rise to great heights."

"It's kinda funny seeing men stand in line for food. Here a general or a colonel with his mess kit, back of him a private or a sergeant and then a major or maybe another general waiting his turn."

After the Americans had moved inland to meet Rommel, Col. Smith was stationed at Sidi Bouzid in Morocco, a town now occupied by the Germans. "We had every thing in order when I left there four weeks ago—ammunition and fuel dumps and a nice little American Cemetery. It doesn't seem possible that we were pushed so far out of that town."

Among his other duties Col. Smith acted as grave registrar in Sidi Bouzid. He recorded the graves of 12 American aviators buried there and said that preparations were being made for the burial of several other aviators from the same bombardment squadron when he left.

#### Arab Customs

Being a grave registrar requires considerable tact when there are poverty stricken Arabs around. The day after the burial, some of the soldiers observed natives wearing American aviators' uniforms. Investigation revealed that the Arabs had an explanation. According to their ritual, the dead are buried unclothed. Thoroughly friendly to the

Americans, they believed that in its haste the American burial party had forgotten to disrobe the bodies. At night the Arabs had stolen back into the cemetery, dug up the bodies, and reverently replaced them in the graves, albeit with practical turn of mind they appropriated the clothing to their own use.

American soldiers are given explicit and detailed instructions on how to deal with Arab traditions and customs. "Never smoke or spit in front of a mosque," "keep silent when Moslems are praying and do not stare"; "Discuss something else, never religion or women with the Moslems"; "Always break bread with your fingers—never cut it"; "Follow the rule of your host, and if he takes off his shoes on entering the house, do the same." There are scores of these admonitions in the little blue book.

Life on the African desert is considerably different from life in the Back Mountain country. It is difficult for us at home who still go to the movies, have "a little butter for our bread" and find our greatest hardship in discriminating between necessary and unnecessary driving to appreciate the hardships endured by the soldiers on the desert. In spite of newspaper and radio accounts the war in Africa is still a drama for our entertainment with make believe characters.

Col. Smith is amazed that the American people honor the high-paid American defense worker whose greatest sacrifice is overtime work at double-time pay and at the same time are so indifferent to the problems of the soldiers in the lines; that they feel no sacrifice at home is really necessary.

During most of his stay in Africa, especially after the soldiers had moved up to the front, the men lived in fox holes. Fox holes, in case you don't know are burrowed into the ground, just large enough for a man to crouch below the level of the surrounding area. Col. Smith was always slower than his companions in completing his. He is a big man and required a bigger hole for concealment. Troops are instructed to stay in their fox holes during air and tank attacks and since both were frequent, the men always slept in fox holes at night. Every time the troops moved forward, new fox holes had to be dug. That meant a new fox hole each day. Biggest trouble with foxholes was hiding the earth thrown up in the excavation so that it would not reveal the location. The other problem was the African hardpan lying just below the surface sands.

Col. Smith spoke with affection of the iron rations which the men lived on for weeks on end. A chocolate ration bar and a small tin of stew or tin containing four dry biscuits and a spot of coffee were what they received at the front. "Christmas dinner was rather sad, because all we could do was pool our iron rations and pretend it was a feast." Evidently the much vaunted Army food with "butter to waste and coffee to burn" didn't reach the men in North Africa.

He told how French patrols worked out through the desert in single file, each man carrying his bundle of equipment under his

arms and how these patrols returned days later without a single prisoner. The French don't take German prisoners... not alive. The Americans do. Of those he saw, Col. Smith said the older German prisoners were not hard to handle, but the younger men, trained in the Nazi philosophy, were arrogant and completely imbued with a doctrine that apparently only death or starvation could subdue.

Col. Smith thinks he is the luckiest man in the world to have been returned to the United States with only two slight wounds. "When they told me I was to come back as a Lieut. Colonel to train Rangers, I told the General I didn't think it was right—that I should stay with the rest of the men, but he said—"just let 'em give me the chance to go back." Orders are orders in the army and that's why many of the most thrilling things Col. Smith told us of hardships, suffering, and death can't be put in this story.

(Editor's Note: This week after seven days with his family at Huntsville, Col. Smith left for his new post at Lexington, Ky. Mrs. Smith accompanied him as far as New York City. This is what he said on leaving her. "If the boys in Africa could see the light-hearted way the folks at home are taking this war I don't believe they'd have the spirit to continue. I wish I were back there with them."

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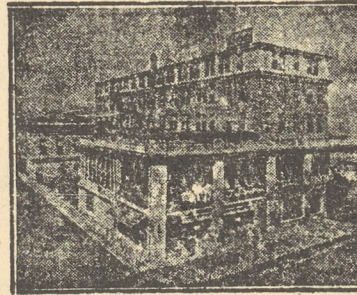
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CIRCULATED UNDER NAZI NOSES by underground groups, this cartoon has been spread throughout occupied Belgium. Translated, the caption reads: "Running away is only the beginning—you can't escape my scalping you." This is typical of countless devices employed by patriots of Belgium and the other occupied countries of the United Nations to harass Axis authorities and troops.

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