

...John Detz & the Lancaster Association for the Blind

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notable part of his life, of which he is justifiably proud.

"That house," he said of his boyhood home on Front Street, "was the only house in Marietta that had six boys in the service during World War II, five who served overseas." John came through the war with living memories, five battle stars on his campaign ribbons and two souvenirs that are especially meaningful to him. One is a first edition of Hitler's "Mein Kampf" in the original German language. The other is the fourragere presented to him by the Belgian government for his action during the Battle of the Bulge. The fourragere, which is a heavy chain of braided silk cord, is made to be worn over the shoulder of a uniform. The awarding of it was noted on his discharge papers, but he didn't actually receive it till January of '77. That he finally got it is a tribute to his persistence in writing letters over the years to the Defense Department and his Congressmen. Ed Eshleman, while he was still in the Congress, was able to accomplish the task of obtaining for him the actual article symbolizing the honor he won more than thirty years before.

The action that won/him this recognition was the performance of his duty as a radio operator in the Army Air Corps radar unit, attached to the First Infantry Division. At that time he was a 36 year old corporal who, with members of the 327th Fighter Control Squadron, followed the action of the prolonged mid-winter battle, moving between Berviers and Liege, Belgium, sleeping in unheated bombed-out barns, eating unheated rations, dedicated selflessly to keeping the First Infantry Division informed of enemy air activity.

His interest in radio has been important all his life, now more than ever. It now is his window on an otherwise sightless world. "No money could buy this from me," he exclaimed, indicating the RTL radio in close proximity to his right hand. "With this I feel like I'm sitting on top of the world."

RTL, the call letters of the radio station for the blind and partially sighted, stands for "Radio Talking Library." It is a closed circuit broadcast emanating from the present Association building and is on the air from 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. daily, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Only radios preset to receive its signal can do so, because it utilizes a special frequency licensed by the FCC, a sub-channel of WLAN-FM.

The sets are provided to anyone in the county who is blind or partially sighted. A small rental fee of \$10 a year is requested of those who can afford to pay, otherwise the sets are provided rent-free, and may be procured at the 506 West Walnut Street address.

"There's only one problem," John Detz continued. Not enough people know about it. I've introduced it to dozens of people myself. And I've told people all over the country about it."

"We turn on the radio as soon as it comes on in the morning," Mrs. Detz continued enthusiastically. "We love it. We like the sign-on, the 'Daily Word,' and the hymns, especially when they play the bells. And we keep it on until it goes off in the evening."

When RTL goes off the air, Detz enjoys other radio facilities. He may tune in his short wave to reach far distant locations, or he "scanner" for local fire, ambulance and police calls. A new addition to the equipment which keeps the his fingertips is a citizen's band base station.

His experience with radio, so important during the war, continued in modified form via car telephone while he served after the war as assistant superintendent of the State Highway Department.

He makes use of his quick perception and wit, often coining words that are expressive, pointed, and funny, preceding such comments with, "I have a word for that!"

He was born May 17, 1908, in the "only stone house in Marietta" at 30 East Front Street. He was eldest of nine children, seven boys and two girls, born to Vernon and Elsie Hewitt Detz. His father was an electrician who learned the trade with General Electric in Schenectady, New York.

As a youngster he carried 11 newspapers in the little community, dailies from Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Lancaster, and the "Grit." Sundays, he had two routes in Marietta, then he'd rent a rowboat for 15, load his bicycle on it and row across the river to Accomac to deliver Sunday papers to the cottages on the York side.

For 23 years before the war, he sold fishing and hunting licenses from his home on Front Street. He remembers shad fishing in the river, from a "battery" in mid-stream gradually built up over the years by fishermen who carried stones out there from the shore for that purpose. He remembers the canal boats and the names of their captains. "There were 28 hotels on Front Street in canal days," he remarks.

"Our house was one of them, the 'Perry House.' He explained that the rooms in it and in the houses next to it interconnect in a most remarkable way. Rooms that, from the front, seem to belong to one of the three houses actually are part of another.

The Detzs lived in one of the three sections of the "Perry House" for ten years after their marriage in 1948 and never had a "drop of water in the cellar," although John well remembers the flood of '36. He and his wife moved away from the riverfront in 1948 to their new home well above the highest water-mark, renting the house they left until after the flood of 1972 when it was sold. They suffered the effects of the flood, having the house to salvage and repair. This was the year John lost his sight, so they decided to sell their section of the old hotel. John's sister, Mary Detz, still owns and lives in the original section at 30 East Front.

"We were married in 1948," Mrs. Detz laughed. "John was 40 and I was 30. It was the first marriage for both of us. Maybe that's why it's lasted so long."

"Cora has been very, very good to me since this thing happened. I couldn't have made it without her," John said. Mrs. Detz commented quietly, "Well, when you're married, it affects you, too."

Asked if they could suggest any reasons why people are so often reluctant to acknowledge that they are losing their sight, Cora replied, "Perhaps it's pride."

"No I don't think so," John corrected her quietly. "I think it's because they don't like to think about it, don't like to be reminded. It's not the end of life. Life can still be good. It all depends on what you make of it. One thing I regret," he said in a semi-serious tone, with humor alive in his face, "I'll probably never get back to Scotland to find the Loch Ness Monster. I rented a boat while I was there and rowed and looked for him for hours. Couldn't find him then. I don't suppose there's much use in trying to find him now!"

It's hard to find a subject that doesn't interest him. He is very interested in Marietta's restoration and is a mine of information about old houses and the people who lived in them in earlier times. He and his wife had perceptive comments to make about education, young people, politics, and the world.

John cannot drive, of

course, and he is troubled with "seeing" his world spinning, first one way then the other, which affects his balance and ability to walk. Nevertheless, they travel about, Cora at the wheel, visiting locations they remember from the past or are, perhaps, mentioned in a news story. His incapacity has strengthened their already strong ties.

John Detz and the more than 350 other blind and partially sighted who depend on the Association's radio station, will find they have better radio service available to them when the Lancaster County Association for the Blind moves into its new headquarters building at 244 North Queen Street in December 1978 if pre-

CPR course at Donegal-Conoy Health Center

St. Joseph Hospital and Health Care Center will sponsor a Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Program to be held at the Donegal-Conoy Family Health Center located on the corner of Route 441 and Bank Street in Marietta beginning this summer and continuing upon demand.

Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation is a life saving technique used to restore breathing and the circulation of blood to a person who is in a life threatening situation.

A certified CPR instructor will be provided by St. Joseph Hospital assisted by other representatives from the hospital and members of the local ambulance associations and fire companies.

Costs per participant are limited to less than \$4.00.

This program could be offered on three consecutive Tuesday evenings or on Saturdays, all day, and

DHS band places 3d at Niagara

The Donegal Marching Band Brought home third place award from its recent trip to Niagara Falls, Canada, where it participated in the Niagara Falls Blossom Festival Parade. One of fourteen bands from all over the United States and Canada, Donegal has participated for the second time in this Festival. Under the direction of Glen Leib, the band also presented a concert enroute at the Athens Middle School, Athens, Pa.

sent plans prevail. Formerly the Eshelman Feed Company, it was purchased in 1977 with money left them in the will of a Williamsport man whose mother and wife had been helped by the Association years before. The extensive modification and renovation necessary to bring the facility to full compliance with government regulations, as well as to present the best possible service to the blind, partially sighted, and sighted of Lancaster County, will cost \$1.5 million.

At present, a building fund drive to raise that amount is being conducted...the first in the agency's 52 year history, even though it has never received funding from

time will be provided for open discussion and comments.

Those who are interested in participating in this program are asked to write to the Donegal-Conoy Family Health Center, Rte. 441 and Bank Street, Marietta, 17547 or call at 426-1131 and provide name, address and telephone number.

Scheduling will follow and participants will be notified.

federal or state subsidy. This campaign drive began in early April. Upon its success depends the new eye clinic (the first in the state to be housed in an agency for the blind and partially sighted), expanded sheltered workshop and other vocational facilities, improved rehabilitation facilities, rooms for social activities, counseling and therapy, and, most interesting to the Detzes... a greatly expanded radio broadcasting station.

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