

THE VOICE

A NEGRO WEEKLY

"Dedicated to the promotion of the cultural, social and spiritual life of a great people"

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Soldiers' Dream

By Lynnwood Parker

As a former infantry officer in the army, I had the unique experience of commanding both White and Negro troops. In the lines to follow I shall try to tell you some of the things he learned. I cannot honestly say that he learned very much, I do know he has changed very little.

He may have learned that a man's color, which didn't mean anything on the front line, means something in South Carolina, where a former soldier's eyes were gouged out by a policeman's club because he was guilty of being born black.

Maybe after fighting "to make the world safe for democracy" he thought it should be practiced in his own back yard—maybe that is why he took things in his own hands in Athens, Tennessee.

Maybe he cannot understand why a country which can capture the atom to make atom bombs and level hundreds of miles for airfields, cannot capture the free spirit of its people and level slums or build houses for veterans, who do not have a place to live.

He learned how to pitch a tent, sleep on the ground, kill a man. He learned that men have the same desires and feel the same agony and pain when wounded; that every man is alike though each man is different. He learned the ache of loneliness and the pain of exhaustion. From the very beginning he wanted to go home.

He may have been white or black or yellow, if he was on the front line it didn't make much difference because a soldier on the front line was so dirty you couldn't tell his color anyway.

Sometimes he prayed to get hit (but not killed) so that he could

go to the hospital—home. He may not have fought at all. He may have cooked in an Officer Candidate School mess in Georgia or mowed the lawns in Fort Crook or Fort Omaha; still wanting to go home.

Daily routine work often bored him; the roar of big guns often scared him; bravery was a matter of the soul.

He may have been young, like 24 year-old Henry (Hank) McWilliams, who landed at Normandy and traveled all the countries of Europe. Or maybe he wasn't so young, like Bud Turner, 44 year-old, who said: "Everywhere the army sends me the place looks like Nebraska."

He may be a memory in the photograph book that ever keeps him alive, or he may be beneath that rusty dogtag on the cross of wood marking an historic battle.

It may be that he came through alright—that nothing ever happened to him. He may have even wondered why he was in the army. John Hanly, an Air Corps man said: "Darn it, I always wanted to take a poke at that Hitler guy."

He was a part of an army that left its bomb craters on the continents of the world, a hundred islands of the sea. Together, with the allies, he saved the world and hoped he'd never have to repeat the performance.

He had learned the ache of loneliness and the pain of exhaustion. He had learned how to pitch a tent, sleep on the ground, kill a man.

Having learned all this, if he pulled through all-right, he came home and took off his uniform and started life anew—again.

When he hears statements like "A third world war is not imminent but inevitable," a cool feeling comes over him. He may feel like my 1st sergeant, John Bibbs, who said: "I served in the last war. I'm serving in this war. I want to go home and stay there."

Births



Mr. and Mrs. Sam Kimbrough have announced the birth of a son, Keith Rodger, born at St. Elizabeth Hospital Friday, November 22.

Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy.—Emerson

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