

As You Were

Where fond military memories fall in

Dream Date

IN 1944, as an 18-year-old radioman aboard LSM 372, I was given liberty just before shipping out from San Pedro, California.

A number of us sailors went to see Hollywood and the movie studios. Having very little money, we wandered into the famous Hollywood Canteen to see some movie stars and dance with the young ladies.

A lottery drawing was held, and I was the lucky sailor who held the winning number. The prizes were a \$50 war bond and a date with beautiful movie starlet Trina Lowe.

The rest of the night is a blur, although I remember I was one happy sailor. The next day, we shipped out. Like Cinderella, this beautiful girl was in my dreams for a long time, but I never heard from her again.

—Jim Tusing, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

I'll Meet You Halfway (Around the World)

AT CHICAGO TULEY High School, my best friend, Alfred H. Dohm, and I were inseparable. However, within weeks of our graduation, in 1943, Al shuttled off to the Navy and I to the Army.

I was assigned to Hamilton Field, California in September 1945 as an airborne radio operator on C-54 transports. I had Al's Fleet Post

Office number, but no way to find him.

My first flight was to Atsugi, Japan, with our half-day stops including one on Guam, where Al was stationed. We landed temporarily on the southern end of the island to wait for the main runway to clear. I noticed “FPO” on the roof of a shack near the field and dashed there to get Al’s Quonset hut number.

After we landed at the main airfield, I thumbed rides on several jeeps 40 miles back to look for Al, eventually finding his barracks. No one was there, but I saw a familiar picture on a nightstand—one showing Al’s mother and father.

Exhausted, I collapsed on Al’s bunk and was roused later when an angry but familiar voice sputtered, “Who the devil is lying on my sack?” It was worth the trip to see Al’s astonished face when he asked, “How did you get here?”

We never stopped talking the whole time. In the evening, Al commandeered a jeep and I got back by midnight for my flight to Japan. I got no rest at all, but catching up with one another was worth losing a night’s sleep. And we two octogenarians are still in contact.

—Bill Simenson, Vienna, Virginia

Not So Bad, After All

IN 1943, 57 members of the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps left Casablanca by rail on a 3-day journey to join Gen. Mark Clark and his 5th Army in Mostaganem, North Africa.

We soon found out, much to our surprise and disgust, that

traveling “by rail” meant “by boxcar.” We settled onto our barracks bags on wooden floors and watched, with envy, a contingent of nurses come by our car. They snickered as they made their way to coaches with upholstered seats.

During the day, the boxcar’s sliding doors were left open. Coal dust coated our faces, our nostrils becoming pink holes rimmed with soot. The whites of our eyes sparkled, and our teeth shone like pearls against our black faces.

Sometimes, we got to laughing so hard at the sight of each other that tears ran down our cheeks, creating pink rivulets in the grime—a cause for even more laughter.

The first time the train stopped for water and for us to get out and exercise, we saw the nurses again. They were outside their cushy coach, scratching and shaking their clothes. We heard one nurse shout, “It’s bedbugs! That blasted coach is infested with bedbugs!”

They had no choice but to return to the coach or stay behind in the desert. Our boxcar accommodations suddenly became highly desirable.

—Dorothy Millard Weirick, San Clemente, California

Gung-Ho “Recruiter”

ALONG WITH five other 1956 grads from Alvirne High School in Hudson, New Hampshire, I was lured to join the Marines by a fellow classmate.

When we arrived at the recruiting station to sign up, that classmate was nowhere to be found. The recruiter assured us that he would be coming soon and that we should “just sign the papers.” We fell for it.

We later found out that he had chickened out and joined the Air Force instead. Of course, as we were going through boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, Roger was on our mind, and not too favorably.

But fate has a way of stepping in. Plane trouble forced an interim stop at an Air Force base in Indiana. Guess who just happened to be stationed there? After being fed, we looked up our recruiter classmate and helped him understand that we were not very happy about what he did.

I spent 6 great years in the Marine Corps Reserve and am proud of every one of them. Funny, as tough as it was in the corps, we remember the good times.

—Bradley Ford, Gilmanton, New Hampshire