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## "We're in The Army Now"

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# "We're In The Army Now"

*Jeannette Pickford tells of the life of Iowa  
State army dietitians who are located overseas*

IOWA STATE dietitians writing from scattered world outposts give vivid accounts of army life from the woman's point of view. Letters which have come to the office of Dean P. Mabel Nelson from army dietitians tell of their activities in army station hospitals in New Guinea, Alaska, England, Panama, Italy and India.

Lieutenant Kay Louise Johnson, '39, stationed somewhere in New Guinea, writes of her work in the "ultra of hospitals in this area." Instead of the usual separated wards made of grass huts and tents, her unit is built of a prefabricated material combined with tin, two-by-fours and screening. Cement floors cover the ground and connect the various wards, facilitating the use of the heavy mobile food carts. Formerly they used a make-shift combination of surgery cart and food tray. The dietitians found a small, unused tractor and attached it to a cart containing spaces for hot and cold food units. This increased the speed of delivery from mess hall to hospital ward.

Sun-tan cotton slacks and shirt are described by Lieutenant Evelyn Hollen, '34, as the official uniform of the dietitian in New Guinea. Woolen slack suits, issued before leaving the States, are too warm to be practical but green fatigue outfits similar to the men's are often worn. The only clothes issued to the dietitians in the United States which can still be worn are their woolen anklets, heavy fatigue shoes, and rain-coats. Lieutenant Hollen spends much of her time cleaning her shoes, washing clothes and waiting for them to dry in the hot, damp climate. After a rain it is "nothing unusual to sink into mud up to the knees or hips."

Women are confined to the barracks unless accompanied by an officer escort and the barracks are surrounded by a stockade which is kept under continual guard. Although they are unable to go into the jungle, the Army women see many of the Fuzzy-Wuzzies who come to the hospital to work. To leave the post at night a dietitian must be accompanied by at least one other woman and two officers armed with pistols.

The women's barracks are long and open and are furnished only with beds and mattresses. A canvas

hand case is hung on the wall for a wardrobe and the tray of a foot locker serves as a dresser. All clothes and bedding rolls have to be aired regularly to prevent the formation of a green mold common to the region.

At the end of six months in the New Guinea theater the dietitians receive a short furlough in Australia. Several Iowa State graduates plan to visit the Australian colleges of domestic science while on this leave.

Food is the greatest problem of the dietitians stationed abroad. Although most New Guinea staples come from Australia, some canned foods are shipped from the United States. Lieutenant Johnson tells of opening a shipment of spinach bearing the label of an Iowa canning company. Corned beef and dried eggs are abundant at the station hospitals and canned cabbage, beet tops, carrots and peas are usually available. Canned pineapple, grapefruit juice and orange juice are the only fruits which can be obtained. Occasionally they have fresh butter but a substitute is generally used which sticks to the roof of the mouth. Powdered whole milk is scarce but the dietitians have an abundance of the sweetened condensed variety which is used as cereal milk, in chocolate milk drinks and in diluting coffee. Cloves, allspice and black pepper are plentiful but sugar and baking powder are difficult to obtain and vanilla is non-existent. Six ounces of bread per person per day, or enough for two meals daily, is baked by an army kitchen unit near the hospital. Many varieties of jam help cover up the sticky butter.

At a New Guinea base hospital, Lieutenant Nell Henningsen, '39, reports that they get fresh meat often, eggs and fresh butter frequently and fresh fruit occasionally. The problem of transporting supplies is not as great at the larger centers.

In Alaska the main problem is a limited amount of fresh foods, according to Lieutenant Doris Williams, '37, who is stationed at Fort Richardson, near Anchorage. Fresh milk and a small quantity of fresh eggs are obtained daily for hospital patients and fresh vegetables and berries are grown in the surrounding territory in the summer and fall. During the remainder of the year the fruit and vegetable supply is dependent upon shipment from the States. Sometimes there is an over-abundance of stores and such foods as lettuce and cabbage must be served twice daily. For a period of two to six weeks there may be no supply of fresh vegetables. Powdered milk and eggs are used in the hospital for baking purposes and in the diet of the regular field personnel at the base.

Lieutenant Ruth Nesler, '41, stationed in the Atlantic theater, writes of receiving dehydrated cabbage, carrots and potatoes, fresh green onions and radishes regularly at her base.

Living in a former monastery in Italy, Lieutenant Mary Kirkpatrick, '39, tells of working with the varied types of buildings and tents used for a hospital and for the staff. Before moving into the monastery, she was stationed in a villa near the Mediterranean.

*Army dietitians overseas will welcome the letters from family and friends delivered by these Red Cross Recreation Workers*

