

ALEUTIAN MEDIC
By **ROBERT LYNCH**

WE ARRIVED IN ADAK HARBOR ABOARD THE "PRESIDENT MCKINLEY" IN OCTOBER OF 1942, 19 DAYS OUT OF SEWARD, WITH A FIVE DAY LAYOVER AT DUTCH HARBOR. THOSE FIVE DAYS WERE SPENT IN SLEEPING BAGS OR IN OUR BUNKS. WE WERE A CADRE OF MEDICS ASSIGNED TO THE STATION HOSPITAL ON ADAK WITH LT. COL. JOSEPH E. CANNON AS THE SURGEON. THE 400 BED HOSPITAL WAS STILL CARGO IN THE HOLD OF THE SHIP SOMEWHERE, OR IN CRATES ON THE BEACH. THE MANPOWER, WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN SUPPLIED BY ENGINEERS WAS NOT AVAILABLE BECAUSE THEY WERE BEING USED ELSEWHERE. IF YOUR PARTICULAR HOSPITAL SPECIALTY DIDN'T HAVE A FACILITY IN WHICH TO WORK, YOU BECAME A YARDBIRD, REGARDLESS OF RANK.

AS TIME WENT BY THINGS DID IMPROVE. TENT CAPACITIES DROPPED FROM 12 DOWN TO 6 AND EVENTUALLY HUTS WERE PUT UP SO THE PATIENTS COULD BE HOUSED. SOME WOUNDED WERE RECEIVED FROM THE CRUISER "SALT LAKE CITY".

ABOUT SIX WEEKS AFTER OUR ARRIVAL, LATRINE GOSSIP SAID THAT THERE WAS ANOTHER HOSPITAL (EQUIPMENT) ABOARD A SHIP IN THE HARBOR. SURE ENOUGH ANOTHER 400 BED HOSPITAL ARRIVED COMPLETE WITH ALL THE TE's, TBA's AND 160 ADDITIONAL MEDICS UNDER THE COMMAND OF LT. COL. BINGHAM BOYER. THEY WERE ALL FROM BOSTON. WHEN THE CRATES WERE PUT ASHORE SOMEONE DECIDED IF WE WERE TO PROTECT THIS MOUNTAIN OF EQUIPMENT IT SHOULD BE PUT UNDER A "THREE RING CIRCUS" TYPE TENT. BELIEVE IT OR NOT AMONG THE HOSPITAL TALENT THERE WAS AN "EX" CIRCUS ROUSTABOUT. THREE DAYS AFTER THE PROTECTIVE TENT WAS PUT UP A WILLIWAW BLEW IT DOWN! THE TENT WAS STILL DOWN WHEN I LEFT FOR SHEMYA IN JUNE OF 1943 ABOARD THE HOSPITAL SHIP U.S.S MIHIEL. SIX JAPANESE PRISONERS WENT THROUGH OUR SLEEPING COMPARTMENT ON THE WAY TO THE SHOWERS. THAT WAS THE ONLY TIME I EVER SAW THE ENEMY.

SOME OF THE MEDICAL SUPPLIES WERE USED FOR OTHER THAN THERAPEUTIC PURPOSES. CERTAIN PEOPLE COULD CONVERT FRUIT JUICE, SUGAR AND COPPER TUBING INTO COMFORTING BEVERAGE. SHIPMENTS OF MEDICINAL ALCOHOL WERE ALWAYS DISTINGUISHED WITH Q.M. OR OTHER COLOR CODES. MEDICAL SUPPLIES NORMALLY HAD MAROON CODING. IF THE ALCOHOL DID REACH THE PROPER DESTINATION, THE 5 AND 55 GALLON CONTAINERS HAD MYSTERIOUSLY TURNED INTO WATER.

(ED. NOTE: BOB WAS SERGEANT/MAJOR IN THE SHEMYA HOSPITAL FROM JUNE 1943 TO JANUARY 1944)

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