

In remembrance of Theodore G. Callas, WWII Veteran.
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Special Issue — Fighting the Good Fight

Hospitals Went Where War Went

Carol Stream Man's Journey Took Him to Philippines, Japan

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Former Staff Sgt. Ted Callas of Carol Stream fought a different kind of enemy during the war. As a member of the 71st Evacuation Hospital, Callas helped fight death and disease treating the wounded from both sides as well as natives of the South Pacific islands his unit serviced.

Callas was drafted into the Army in January, 1943 and entered basic training in Feb. 6, 1943 at Camp Grant just outside Rockford. He was asked to list three choices as to what field he would like to enter and listed anti-aircraft gunner as first, field artillery as second and the medical corps as third.

He was assigned to the medical corps.

"Probably because I had six months of pre-med," Callas said.

Once again he was asked to list three choices for service within the medical corps. He listed x-ray technician first, medical technician second and surgical technician. Maybe it was some kind of trend, but he was assigned as a medical technician.

Callas said he trained at O'Reilly General Hospital, Springfield, for his surgical training. He was assigned to the 71st Evacuation Hospital, "The Bushmasters."

His training as a surgery



Courtesy of Ted Callas
Squeaker, one of Ted's pet monkey's poses with his temporary owner.

technician included eight weeks training on nursing techniques but the Army didn't make any exceptions in its physical training requirements for the medical workers.

"For a bunch of pill rollers we came in like real soldiers," said Callas.

Evacuation hospitals of World War II were similar to today's M.A.S.H. units, said Callas, but on a much larger scale. During his tour of duty, he became all too familiar with the procedures for setting up a field hospital and assisted in countless surgeries

as a surgical technician. "We assisted the doctors in surgery, handed them the instruments and all, everything a nurse would do," he said.

Despite having to deal with all the wounded, Callas said the pain and suffering was not something he generally had to deal with. "When we got them they were already under anesthesia. We operated on them and they were out — we never really saw them after that."

Although the 71st had its own female nurses stateside, Callas said for some reason the 71st commanding officer, Colonel John E. Granade, would not allow the women to accompany the unit once they were assigned to the South Pacific. He speculated it had something to do with Granade's reputation as an old, "regular Army" doctor.

According to a document from the Commanding General of the Sixth Army, "Despite the many obstacles encountered, including enemy air raids, shortage of personnel, long hours of work, and inclement weather, the officers and men of this unit (the 71st) have displayed the most exemplary initiative, energy and devotion to duty."

Within two days of landing on Noemfoor, they were running a 400-bed facility. They treated American casualties

along with Japanese prisoners of war from Formosa and Java who had been forced into building Japanese airstrips and Japanese wounded. Of the 2,952 patients the 71st treated in three months, the mortality rate was only three-tenths of one percent.

By February 7, 1945 the 71st had arrived outside Manila. When they came to the bridge to cross into Manila they were stopped by an M.P. who told them they couldn't enter the city because the infantry had not arrived yet. Callas said they set up their hospital in what had been a tannery on the outskirts of Manila.

"The Japanese could legally have bombed us, we had cannons in front of the hospital shelling into Manila for three days" Callas said. "When the big push [of wounded] came in we worked around the clock, nearly 24 hours a day treating belly wounds, head wounds and performing amputations. We had 27 head cases in the battle of Manila and lost only 2."

Callas credited the skill of his unit's physicians most of whom were not regular army doctors. One exception was Granade, the commanding officer of the unit. "We always thought he couldn't operate," said Callas, "then one day he came in and did an appendix operation in 15 minutes."



Callas said Granade surveyed the men who assisted him and asked, "Did I make a believer out of you fellows?" "He made believer of us," said Callas.

Callas said there was little time for recreation. "Free time was going to unload ships," he said. On the rare occasions when they were able to grab a little time, to unwind they usually spent it playing volleyball on the beaches.

Three monkeys he acquired in trade for candy bars kept him company during his tour of duty. The monkeys, Squeaky, Gabby and Ivan were fed a diet of bananas which Callas again acquired in trade for candy bars. Although Callas said the bananas in the Philippines were the best he's ever tasted, he did relent and shared them with his simian friends.

The monkeys were kept on leashes "unless someone had a little too much to drink and let them go." Once free they did what monkeys do best, they got into mischief, tearing apart everyone's belongings to get at their favorite treat — toothpaste.

The 71st was to have provided support again for the 158th during a planned invasion of Japan. "We were told they expected 90 percent casualties before hitting the

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main island of Japan," Callas said.

On August 6, however, they received news that the atomic bomb had been dropped and the Japanese surrendered before the planned invasion began.

On Sept. 13, 1945 they entered Tokyo setting up camp in a bombed out school building. It was in Tokyo that he finally had to part with his beloved monkeys. He had kept the monkeys for nearly a year but was forced to part with them because the Army would not allow him to bring them back to the States. Callas said they were left them to a good home — a Tokyo zoo.

It was while in Tokyo, on a

visit to the former executive officer of the 71st, Lt. Col. Richard Reynolds, that Callas found out that Japanese Premier Hideki Tojo had been admitted to the 98th Evacuation Hospital, which Reynolds now commanded.

In a handwritten document that later became part of the 71st written history, the Chaplain of the 71st, Rev. Leonard DeMoor described the circumstances by which Tojo came to be admitted to the hospital:

"The man who first circled on his desk calendar the infamous date of December 7, 1941 [the date of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor] was registered at the 98th in the evening of September 11, 1945...diagnosis: Gun shot wounds — attempted suicide. Suicide, not in the approved

manner of Japanese militaries who snafu assignments given them, but with an American .38 caliber Colt automatic revolver.

While in Tokyo, in a semi-conscious condition, he refused to allow Japanese physicians to attend him after he was shot, but was docile while being treated by his former enemies..."

Peering into the room where Tojo lay after being admitted for gunshot wounds to the head following a botched suicide attempt may have seemed like poetic justice to Callas. "Tojo tried to commit suicide rather than face judgement," said Callas, "I saw him right in his bed, he was semi-conscious, but I could see that bald head, the moustache and those goo-goo eyes of his."