

THE "TIMES" PRIZE-WINNING COLUMN



From ALMAR FARM In Transylvania BY CAL CARPENTER

My brother-in-law, Kagues Smathers who lived in West Asheville, died February 28th. He was the second brother-in-law I've lost this year, for Fred Pressley, who lived in Canton, passed on in January. Time, it seems, is thinning my family just as it does with families, and we must accept this as the way of life.

Perhaps another time I'll write something of my brother-in-law Fred Pressley's story, for he had an interesting and full life before leaving us at the age of 72. But in this column, I'd like to tell a little of Kagues William Smathers' story, a man who gave his life and more for his country.

Kagues died at 67, finally victim to World War II injuries that had crippled him for 30 years and kept him bedfast for the last 12 years. His going must have been a relief, for as I've written before in these columns; death is not always tragic but suffering is.

And Kagues, although almost completely paralyzed for a long time must have suffered; if nothing more, from a terrible mental anguish. For he had been a strong, outdoor man, a steel rigger. To lie helpless in bed for years after the airy freedom of this dare-devil work, could have only been deeper than most of us can imagine.

But he never complained. He was cheerful with a deep and abiding religious faith. As a helpless bedfast in his home he served, as the minister conducting his funeral service said, as an inspiration to many people by his acceptance and lack of bitterness.

Kagues Smathers, as a Staff Sergeant, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, received his terrible injuries in an incident of the last great war that is now history. He was on the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, Germany, when it collapsed into the waters of the Rhine River shortly after General Patton's American tanks had made the first invasion of Germany.

There have been books written on this fabled incident. I can only give a brief background here.

The long, steel-truss bridge had been mined with explosives to deny Allied Armies an easy crossing of the river. But before the arrival of the American tanks on the west bank of the Rhine, the high quality, powerful explosives already wired onto the bridge, had been removed for more pressing needs and replaced with less powerful charges. When these charges were detonated, just before the American tanks reached the bridge, it was badly damaged but did not fall. The tanks and trucks, chancing the

weakened structure, went on across.

The story has been told that the German Captain of Engineers who was charged with destroying the bridge, was taken back to Berlin and shot for the failure, on Hitler's orders; although with his best explosives taken from him, he was obviously not at fault.

For some two days and nights, the American forces poured into Germany across the weakened bridge. In the meantime, American engineers had been put to work repairing the bridge, for it certainly had been badly damaged. Staff Sergeant Kagues Smathers was one of these men.

From my conversations with him, Kagues did not know — nor, it seems is anyone else sure — what finally made the bridge collapse. There was, he said, artillery fire and sporadic bombing by German aircraft going on the whole two days. Maybe it was nothing more than the heavy traffic over the weakened structure. All he remembered was working on top of the truss, some 200 ft. above the water; then waking up in a hospital in England.

From fellow engineers who survived, Kagues heard something of his personal story after he fell. He was dragged from the water, unconscious, by a fellow engineer, a man who faithfully made long trips to visit him over the long years from the end of the war until he died. When dragged from the river he was considered to be dying. He was kept in a front line medical station for some 72 hours, then evacuated to the hospital in England.

He came out of a series of Army hospitals with a silver plate in his skull and heavy braces on his back, but was finally discharged and returned home.

For several years he worked — outdoors in construction. Then he began having blackouts and could no longer safely operate heavy machinery. He refused the Veterans Administration offer of training for the sedentary job of watchmaking because, he said, he could never stand to stay indoors.

He finally had to stay indoors, for he slowly began to lose control of his legs. Never discouraged, he continued to drag himself outside on crutches and do what he could.

Before he reached the point where he was shut in, he built several houses, including the home he died in.

The VA did all it could. He received a full disability pension, medicines, and special sick room equipment; but the time came, about 12 years ago, when he was

Nursing Home? Consult Doctor: Make A Visit

PART II

The nursing home business in the United States recently received much criticism for the alleged abuse and general treatment of patients in such facilities.

North Carolina has 153 facilities of this type. While this state has strict licensure standards as well as rules and regulations which must be followed in the care of a patient, it is impossible to monitor each patient closely enough to ever prevent abuse.

There are, however, certain precautions which you can take should a relative or friend have to be placed in such a facility.

Before making any decisions, consult a physician. Let him aid you in determining what type of facility the patient needs — a family care home, a home for the aged, an intermediate care facility, or a skilled nursing home.

Find out whether the facility falls under Medicare-Medicaid eligibility provisions. Deciding upon these two factors will narrow your choices considerably in selecting a home.

Ernest Phillips, assistant director of the Division of facility services of the N. C. Department of Human Resources, suggests checking the following when it is actually time to visit a home:

- Read the brochures concerning each home.

- Personally visit several homes.

- Check the location — is it close to a hospital or doctor and is it convenient for visits from friends and relatives?

- Talk to the head nurse in each facility (if the homes require one) as well as the administrator. Note their attitude toward patients, visitors and staff. Are they available to answer questions, hear complaints or discuss problems?

- Do not notify the facility in advance that you are coming — this will give you a chance to view everyday operations as they actually occur.

- Take a walking tour of the facility and the grounds. Note the cleanliness of the home and whether it complies with Medicare-Medicaid sanitation standards.

bedfast. He refused VA hospitalization even then and stayed at home, cared for around the clock by his sister, Lois. He lived to see his and Lois's only child, Anita, born early in the war, educated and happily married — she's now a social worker in California.

But finally, after 12 years of slowly dying, he was mercifully, quickly taken by pneumonia. He was laid to rest the 3rd of March, a man who had given 30 years of suffering and, lastly, his life, in defense of his country.

May this country always have such men when it needs them. And may Kagues Smathers rest in peace.

- Check the safety measures taken by the facility such as lighting, sturdiness of chairs, handrails in hallways and bathrooms, etc. One particular measure to note is whether the home meets Federal and or state fire safety codes such as clearly marked and unobstructed exits.

- Time your visit during a meal so that you can see how the residents are fed. Talk with the dietician at the facility. Note whether the residents are eating hot, nutritious meals and whether the food is properly prepared according to a doctor's specifications (if any).

Find out what type of activity programs are offered by the facility such as church services, transportation to and from town for shopping trips, etc.

- Talk to the patients, check their alertness, freedom to communicate, happiness, etc.

- Finally do not be pressured into making a snap decision as to which facility best suits your needs. Consider carefully the advantages and disadvantages of each home and select one accordingly.

These suggestions will aid you as well as the state in

Olin Will Compete In Safety Contest

Olin Corporation's cellophane plant here has been picked to compete in Olin's first annual safety contest to determine, safety-wise, the best plant in the company.

Garza Baldwin, Jr., President of the Fine Paper and Film Group, said that the Film Division plant here was chosen on basis of its overall excellence in safety to represent the group in forthcoming competition with those plants selected by other Olin groups. The winner will be awarded the new Best in Corporation Safety Award.

Safety-conscious Olin is seeking even further improvements over the gains shown in 1974, "A year of outstanding improvement," he said.

Baldwin complimented the entire Fine Paper and Film Group for its achievements in seeing that patients receive proper care. Should abuse be noted, talk with the facility administrator.

If this brings no satisfaction, contact:

Division of Facility Services Licensure and Certification Section P. O. Box 12200 Raleigh, North Carolina 27605 Telephone: 919-829-7461

1974 and asked for "continued involvement of all management and labor in the future to cause our operations to operate at the highest possible level of safety."

"Good management and responsible labor can do no less," he said.

Selection of the group's best plant was made extremely difficult because of the impressive safety improvement throughout, he said.

"My hope is that your sustained efforts and continued improvement will make it more difficult in the future. I am satisfied that any of the three group plants could represent the group with distinction and place well in any final decision at the corporate level."

John D. Link, Film Division's Vice President and General Manager, and "his large delegation of safety disciples" will be presented soon with an appropriate group trophy and plaque. The winning plant will retain the plaque awarded each year. The trophy, however, will travel each year to the winning plant, to become retired and retained permanently by the plant being judged the Group's best for three consecutive years.

The announcement of the

cellophane plant's selection included the following:

"Most of you are aware of the intense effort and interest directed to employee safety in the Fine Paper and Film Group in 1974. This was not only true in our group but all across the Olin Corporation. Both for our group and the corporation it was a year of outstanding improvement. The payoff was in terms of greatly reduced human suffering and conservation of our human resources.

"Our congratulations go to the people in the Film Division's Pisgah Forest plant, and we wish them success as they compete against the other Olin plants for the corporate award."

Seventeen qualifications, ranging from safety policy to incidents of off-the-job ac-

cidents, were used by all groups to assess and rate the plants for selection of each group's nominee for corporate competition. These 17 criteria also will be basis for determining the best in the company.

Simon Sees Government As 'Clumsy Giant'

Although government can serve many worthy purpose it is now almost out of control, warned Secretary of Treasury William Simon at recent meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers. "It comes neatly packaged in the guise of handouts and subsidies and protection from competition, but beneath its ribbons and bows is a lumbering, clumsy giant that is threatening the liberties and smothering the spirit which were on the foundation of America greatness."

Morris Pharmacy advertisement with illustration of a person at a desk and text: "after you see your doctor, bring your prescription to Morris Pharmacy M&T 11-18-tfc"

Community Cash advertisement for a food sale. Includes "COMMUNITY CASH COUNTRY IS just wonderful... FOODS FOR LESS" and lists items like EGGS 65¢, STEAK 99¢, BEANS 51¢, FLOUR 88¢, BREAD 3\$1, TURKEY 49¢, and various produce and frozen foods.

DANCE! DANCE! DANCE! TO THE CONTEMPOS At The V.F.W. Post SAT. NITE, MARCH 22nd 9:00 P.M. Till 1:00 A.M. Admission — \$5.00 Per Couple