

FRONT-LINE NURSE

WILLIAM STARRET

"Laura, look!" Jerry cried, pointing ahead. "That pond—it's not in our valley. We're in the wrong one. I remember, though, that the map showed a little pond not too far from our valley."

"How'll you get to our valley?" Laura asked. "Climb back up into the soup again," Jerry answered, "high enough to clear the top of the ridge, then let down quickly on the other side so we won't overshoot the valley. With that pond spotted, I can calculate pretty accurately though, so we should not miss this time."

Jerry banked the plane and circled around to cross the pond once more, then headed east, and climbing fast.

"I'm going up fast and steep and coming down the same way," Jerry told the others. "I want to get plenty of altitude to clear that ridge in the clouds, but I sure don't want to overshoot our valley."

A few wisps of fog passed their windows swiftly, and then suddenly they plunged into the gray blanket once more. They said nothing as they climbed steeply, Jerry keeping his eyes always on the altimeter.

After a few minutes of tenuity he said "Okay — I'm going downstairs, fast!"

The plane tipped and the sound of the motors eased off as they no longer pulled the craft away from the earth. Jerry cut them to an idle hum as the plane glided downward swiftly.

In less than two minutes they had broken through the cloud-bank again—and there was solid earth, more than two hundred feet below them. Jerry leveled off and banked the plane to the south.

Not one of them relaxed. They knew they were in their valley at last, but there was no time to reflect on the miracle of good navigation and luck which had brought them to it. The important thing right now was to find that pasture which had a landing field.

"Near the southern end of this valley," Jerry said, "according to the map. Remember the distinguishing features?"

"Sure," Laura said. "Three small trees just east of the center and a big rock near the northern end and a brook running across the southern end."

"Right," Doctor Overton agreed. "And the trees and the rock are moveable—the brook painted on the surface of the ground. I'm eager to see that. I can easily imagine the fake trees and a papier-mache rock which the supposed shepherds can move, but I want to see that brook!"

"There are the shepherds," Laura said. "And — they really have sheep! What about the sheep, Jerry?"

"Don't know," Jerry replied. "Can't land on a field full of sheep!"

"There are only eight or ten," Dr. Overton said.

"Enough to crack us up if we run into them on landing," Jerry muttered.

The three men on the field, near the small flock of sheep, had been staring up at them intently. Suddenly they waved their arms. Other men rushed onto the pasture from the nearby woods.

As Jerry circled the field in the south, so that he could come in against the wind, he saw two men pick up what appeared to be the big rock and carry it to the edge of the field. Others lifted the three trees and dragged them to one side. The three shepherds gathered up ropes to which the sheep had been tethered and drag them off the grassy space.

"The field's cleared!" Laura cried.

"Is it long enough?" Doctor Overton asked anxiously. "Can you make the landing?"

"I think so," Jerry said, "with a side-slip."

The plane was south of the pasture now, just completing its turn. Laura noted that Jerry did not bring it completely out of its turn as he approached the field, but kept it in a slight bank, gliding toward the right side of the field rather than toward the center. They were losing altitude rapidly and she felt that the landing wheels, which had just been lowered might well be touching the tops of the trees.

Almost before they cleared the last of the trees, Jerry let the craft slip sideways to the left. Just as if it skidded down a slippery path on the air, the plane slid toward the ground. In that maneuver, Jerry had dropped the plane more than ten feet closer to the ground with almost no forward motion. Straightening it out deftly, he headed it straight up the center of the pasture. With a bounce, the wheels touched the ground.

CHAPTER VIII

Laura Blake, army nurse, after active duty in New Guinea, is assigned to duty in North Africa in an ambulance plane. One day she meets her fiancé, Lt. Jerry Donaldson, who has asked to be transferred from the South Pacific to North Africa in the hopes of meeting Laura there. Jerry volunteers to fly an ambulance plane on a dangerous mission to enemy held territory, and tells the major who has asked for volunteers that he also has a volunteer nurse — Laura Blake. Laura accepts the assignment. They take off on

their mission. Through skillful navigation—and some luck—Jerry takes his plane through cloud banked mountain passes and lands it on a pasture in a valley—the right spot!

Laura realized that her left shoulder was sore where she had been bracing it against the door to the cockpit. She pulled away and sighed.

"That was wonderful, Jerry!" she said.

"I should say so!" agreed Doctor Overton. "But can we ever get off again with a full load?" "Depends on the wind," Jerry muttered. "And some luck. Another ten feet and we could be sure, but it will be tough. Anyway — let's cross that bridge when we get to it. Now there's work to be done!"

After Jerry had cut the ignition and released the safety belt, he briskly worked his way back through the plane and opened the door. Below on the ground stood three of the French guerrillas, beaming with such smiles that it seemed their faces could not express their pleasure.

Jerry grinned and saluted informally in answer to their well coming cries in French. He hopped to the ground and found himself embraced in the crushing three men — a giant with black curly beard, very pink cheeks and the chest of a gorilla.

But the sound of the plane's "Well come!" he cried in his cheers for his Americans.

"Thanks, folks," Jerry mumbled, releasing himself and turning to catch Laura as she jumped from the plane.

Doctor Overton quickly followed, and Jerry noted the mountaineer's great relief to hear fluent and easy French—not only fluent and easy, but with the particular accent of the men of the Haute Savoie.

"Ah—un homme des montagnes!" he cried, turning to his over this region all the time, look-companions, who so far had done

Jerry saw that other men were replacing the fake rock and trees in the center of the field. The sheep unconcernedly cropped the short grass near them.

"Look!" Laura cried, touching Jerry's arm and pointing. "What are those men doing?" Jerry saw half a dozen men dragging toward them long poles with fresh-cut branches of trees fastened to the ends.

"Don't know," he replied. "It is some sort of camouflage, Oh yes, for the plane of course."

Then he saw that Doctor Overton was getting back into the plane and that two of the first guerrillas were following him.

"Going to unload, I guess," Jerry said to Laura. "I'd better get up these too. You stay below and see that they handle things right down here."

The men with the long poles were now leaning them against the wings and fuselage of the plane, so that the branches fastened to the tips arched above the craft.

The three Frenchmen who had acted as shepherds snatched the ropes to which the sheep were tethered and dragged them toward the center of the field.

And then Laura heard it — the faint throbbing of an airplane motor in the skies overhead. She wrinkled her brows trying to see something at the spot from which the sound seemed to come.

"Still too high," she muttered to herself. "Wonder if he's coming down?"

"German plane?" Laura asked Jerry.

"Yes," he replied. "The French nothing but smile their greetings, say that observation planes are being for any clues as to concentration of the guerrillas. They're not out often on overcast days like this, though. Maybe they picked up the sound of our motors somewhere and are out looking for us. Maybe he won't dare come down out of the clouds."

"Tree motor had been growing louder as they spoke, and now Jerry clutched her arm and pointed, without saying a word. She followed the line of his finger and saw just breaking through the cloud bank, a small airplane.

As it came completely into view, Laura saw that it was a single-seater reconnaissance plane—one of the little craft with steep climb and slow landing speeds. The pasture would not be a problem to it at all, except for the strategically placed rock and trees.

Laura saw that the three shepherds were standing near to the sheep, which had settled down quickly after their mad dashes on to the field. It was as placid and bucolic a scene, she thought, as one could wish.

She suddenly wondered just how well the plane was camouflaged. Did those branches look unnaturally bunched? Or, if that same Nazi flier had been over the pasture before, would he recall that no clump of trees had jutted out just that way previously?

Obscured by bushes and overhanging branches through which they could not possibly be seen from the air, Laura, Jerry and Doctor Overton anxiously and silently watched the Nazi reconnaissance plane overhead.

The little craft made its way

straight up the pasture at an altitude just below the clouds, then—as it neared the end—started to climb. In a moment it had poked its nose into the cloud, and for a short space half a plane seemed suspended in the air.

Finally the gray fog swallowed all of the craft marked with the bold black cross, and Laura sighed with relief.

But she noticed that Jerry was still listening to the sound of the plane's motor, more intently than before. The shepherds on the field had made no move to remove the sheep or to come back to the plane. There was a queer silence everywhere, except for the dimming "put-put" of the little plane's engine.

Suddenly the sound ceased. At first Laura thought it had just passed beyond her range of hearing, but then she realized there was something strange about the way the motor's sound, faint as it was, had ended so quickly.

She looked up at Jerry questioning.

"A trick, all right," he snapped. "He was climbing more steeply than he needed to. Gained altitude, traveled some distance until he thought he was out of hearing, then cut his motor. I'll bet he's circling around with his motor off or idling."

"Why?" Laura asked.

"If there's anything funny on this field," Jerry explained quickly. "Anything going on here, he figures everybody will think he's gone and go back to whatever they were doing, so he's gliding back to have a peek."

"I guess the guerrillas are on to that trick," Doctor Overton said. They haven't moved."

"There!" Jerry exclaimed.

Laura saw the plane at the moment Jerry spoke. It slid in an evil, sneaking silence from the dirty gray cloud coming from the north, the direction in which it had disappeared. Jerry had been right. Laura heard a little noise from its engine, and saw that its propeller turned slowly, idling.

But in a moment there was a roar as the pilot gave the engine the gun, the propeller whirled with power and the plane pointed upward again, banking to the north once more as it went off into the clouds. The Nazi observer had seen just as it was on its first trip over, so he was satisfied.

In two minutes they were unloading the plane again, swiftly and seriously.

In a short while, they were all climbing a path that wound steeply up the Roc d'Enfer, toward the guerrilla's headquarters in the cave.

The smiling giant led the way, followed by his two lieutenants. Now cartridge belts were slung about their waists and rifles over their shoulders. And they carried boxes of ammunition heavier than Laura would have thought two men could lift. These men seemed partial to the boxes of ammunition above all other equipment that had been brought in the plane.

For some time after leaving the pasture, they walked along the path through the trees in silence, each one concentrating on carrying the heavy burden he had. Laura noticed that the leader maintained a slow steady pace, it was a steep climb, and she recalled that it was two miles from the pasture to the cave.

After fifteen minutes she was putting with the exertion. Laying forward to bear the weight on the pack more easily, she kept her eyes on the lead covered path at her feet. Suddenly she bumped into Jerry, stopped and looked up.

The leader had halted, with his head in the air. Then he whistled a clear whistle with a pleasant intonation. Ahead and to the right there was an answering whistle of the same kind. The leader dropped his hand and started forward once more, and the others followed him.

"Lookouts — snipers," Jerry muttered, half turning his head for Laura to hear. "They've got this hill guarded like the mint!"

Periodically the leader stopped and uttered his whistle. When the answer came the column proceeded. Laura saw a man among the trees. The lookouts were well concealed.

Suddenly Laura heard voices, excited voices, just ahead. Looking past Jerry's broad back, she saw the end of the trail, against a short steep precipice of solid rock.

In front of it stood half a dozen men, talking together, pointing, and waving their arms. Others joined them quickly, some of the woods nearby, others from the huge cave opening which Laura awoke the other guerrillas—in the snow discerned in the precipice.

Some of the men were dressed in ordinary but shabby clothes of these parts of the mountains, some were in military uniforms — one in that of the Free French Army and 4 in British or American Army uniforms.

They hurried down the path and began to take boxes and bundles from the marchers, talking and laughing all the time in their happiness in seeing the new arrivals.

Laura felt strong arms lift the pack from her back, and she smiled up at the grinning, unshaven face of an American.

"Heavy pack for a little gal," he said. "Boy! are we glad to see you. Figured that plane we heard might be yours. The Jerries don't have many two-motored jobs coming over this area."

Laura saw that the man was jimping badly as he strode up to the last twenty feet to the little clearing in front of the cave.

"Here!" she cried. "Give that pack back to me. You've got a bad heavy load."

"It's not so bad," the American said.

Then Laura saw that most of the others who had greeted them were wounded too. Some limped, two had arms in homemade slings, another's head was swathed in bandages.

There was now a milling crowd in front of the cave—a crowd of guerrillas and British and Americans.

Then Doctor Overton's voice cut through the jumble of noises. This quiet, mild-mannered man now spoke with authority, with command. Immediately everyone was silent, turning to the doctor.

He instructed Jerry to supervise the setting up of the big tent which they had brought with them to serve as an operating room.

Glancing up, Laura knew that overhanging branches from towering trees nearby would hide the tent from the sky.

Next Doctor Overton asked the leader of the guerrillas to have some of his men build a fire close to the entrance of the tent. But to this there was some objection.

"We build no fires!" the leader explained emphatically. "The smoke would reveal that people are here. Our cooked food has come from a few mountaineers' cabins not far away in these hills—places where the Nazis would not be surprised to see the smoke from fires."

"I must have a fire here!" Doctor Overton said. "No matter what the danger, I must have boiling water."

There was a silence of a few minutes as the leader thought seriously.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

N. C. War Bond Champs to Win Jeeps

GREENSBORO, May 28.—Model "Jeeps," exact 12-inch replicas of the famous war Jeep. Will be awarded as prizes throughout North Carolina for outstanding bond selling jobs in the state during Seventh War Loan Drive.

By arrangement with the United States Treasury Department to provide incentive in support of the campaign, the miniature Jeeps were made available to Clarence E. Leubach, chairman of North Carolina's war Finance Committee, by Ward M. Canaday, chairman of Willys-Overland Motors, Toledo, Ohio. Thousands of these Jeep trophies have been distributed throughout the nation by the automobile company.

The models, scale replicas of the Jeep manufactured by Willys for the Army and Navy, were built especially for use in the drive by wounded servicemen at Army convalescent centers. The Toledo company supplied the hospitals with cut-out parts, plastic wheels and transparent windshields, and paid the veterans for each model they produced.

The idea of using models as prizes in the war bond drive, said Mr. Canaday came as a result of thousands of letters from people all over the country expressing a desire to have a model of the famous scout car.



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College Buys Land

Under the provisions of AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, the Bronze Star Medal is awarded to the following: Staff Sergeant ERNEST R. CARPENTER, 34 609 426, Company D, 291st Infantry, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy on April 2, 1945, in Germany. Enemy artillery shelled a building in which the command post was located in Datteln. Several men were hit and cried out for help. Even though enemy shells were still falling, Sergeant CARPENTER disregarded his own safety, entered a room to aid a fellow soldier who was very seriously wounded, and succeeded in evacuating him to a place of safety. Entered military service from Cherryville, N. C.

Education Assn. Met June 15th & 16th

The Planning Commission of the North Carolina Education Association met at the Association offices in Raleigh on Friday and Saturday, June 15 and 16th. Established two years ago, the Commission has as its fundamental purpose the task of planning future progress in education along with other agencies of state and national scope. It is recognized that the next major advances are to be made in the improvement of the quality of education.

Guy B. Phillips, Chapel Hill, is chairman of the commission. Other members are: R. M. Wilson, Rocky Mount; J. Warren Smith, Raleigh; Annie Laurie Lawrence, Winston-Salem; E. A. Tomlinson, Waverly; Paul Reid, Raleigh; Madeleine McCain, High Point; James Bryan, Asheville; Florence Reid, Lexington; Dr. John R. Laddington, Raleigh; Dean D. B. Bryan, Wake Forest; J. P. Sifford, A. Bennett; C. W. McCartha, Gastonia; Dr. Franklin McNutt, of Greensboro; James Gorow, Burlington; J. H. Moore, Farmville, and Mrs. Annie Laurie McDonald, Hickory, President of the Association.

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CAUTION: USE ONLY AS DIRECTED

The leaves of good hay constituted in general farm work. Of the 489 prisoners of war in North Carolina, 189 are harvesting food and feed crops, 30 are in dairy work, and 270 are engaged in general farm work. Areas where trucks are urgently needed to prevent the impairment of farm production will be allocated reasonable quantities of surplus trucks, says the Department of Commerce and the WFA.

USE EAGLE A-6



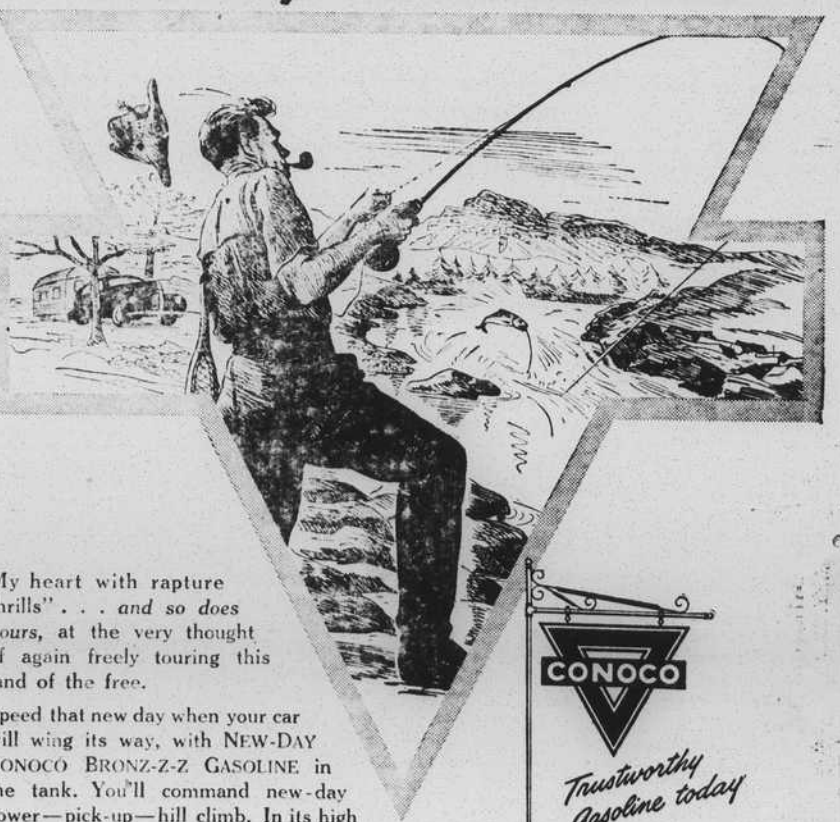
NOTICE DOG OWNERS

All dogs running at large after June 30th will be killed

Put your dog under leash.

POLICE DEPARTMENT.

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