10

ARMY LIFE: TIME IN THE US
1943 to 1944

José left Philadelphia to enter active duty in the US Army Medical Corps on April 8, 1943. He left by train from Philadelphia's Reading Terminal for Camp Meade, Maryland. As he was waiting to board the train at the Reading Terminal, who should happen to walk by on his way to work but Aunt Jennie's oldest son, Moishe Garber. Moishe and José had never become very close but, on this particular morning, Moishe, seeing José in the station and understanding the circumstances, rushed over to a candy stand close by and bought José a large bar of chocolate before leaving to continue on to his job.

José remained in Camp Meade for a while before they sent him to Camp

Pickett, also in Maryland. It was at Camp Meade that José, early on, began to learn about fending for himself in the army. Many of the troops there were civilians who had recently been released from jail. The government had made a deal with these convicts, permitting them to serve their sentence time in the military. Thus, it was a rough bunch that José encountered at the start of his army career.

Meals at Camp Meade would be served at long narrow tables which seated about twelve people each. Here, platters of food were delivered to the person at each end of the table. This soldier, receiving the food, was expected to help himself and, then, to pass the platter along to the others. What often happened, though, was that the first person would help himself to enormous heapings of the food, leaving very little or, sometimes, none for anyone else. It was quite common for the first couple of fellows, for example, to take five or six porkchops apiece for themselves before passing the platter on to the next person. Sometimes, they would not even pass the platter along at all. Thus, there were times when only three or four of the twelve soldiers at a table got anything to eat. Not only the men seated at the opposite end of the table, but those in the middle, as well, were often left with nothing to eat. Soon, José learned how to protect himself from this predicament. Upon entering the dining room, he would quickly try to gain a seat at one end of a table. If he was at the proper end, he could be assured of getting at least one reasonable helping of food before passing the platter along. When it was the person at the opposite end of the table, however, who first received the main dish, it would then be José who would get the dessert platter first . In this way, he was able to negotiate so that a fair exchange could be made. Trading pork chops for dessert became almost a measure for survival.

Even when food would be presented cafeteria style in the army, José learned to maneuver. Later, when he would be stationed in Atlanta, Georgia, the custom there was that everyone line up in alphabetical order, by last name, before presenting themselves for meals. This was done in order to avoid having any one person replace another in line and, also, to determine if anybody was missing. José's place always fell directly in line behind a swarthy fellow named Rabinet. Though the army was racially segregated in those days, José suspected that Rabinet was partially black, and he noticed that some of the other soldiers regarded Rabinet with suspicion. Rabinet was a Seventh-day Adventist and a vegetarian. The attendants behind the counter refused to dispense anything but identical quantities of each food and, always, impartially in the same amounts, to everybody. Thus, Rabinet would skip the meat and pick up only his allotment of veg-

etables, which could be no bigger than anyone else's, even though Rabinet asked for nothing but these. José soon suggested to Rabinet that, since they would always be standing next to one another in line, they should each take their total allotted portions of all foods and, then, give to the other anything that they themselves didn't want. In this way, José was able to get extra meat for himself, while Rabinet got enough vegetables to make up a full meal.

Once, a rabbi arrived for a visit during José's first days at Camp Meade. Calling all of the Jewish troops together, the rabbi gave them several lectures, one a short talk on food. "You are now in the army," he declared, "and, during your time in service, some of you may find yourselves in situations where no kosher food is available. You may occasionally even have no option but to eat pork or bacon. If that should happen to you, I am now explaining to you that you have a special dispensation, for nutritional reasons and for maintaining life. This will hold throughout the war. If you have no choice, and you *do* have to eat pork, bacon, or any unkosher food, that's all right, but only upon one condition. You may not lick your fingers in enjoyment afterwards!"

Everywhere that he was stationed and, indeed, even after his army days, José learned to become friendly with the cooks. He was sometimes able to get more and better food this way. It also gave him the opportunity to learn some of the chefs' cooking secrets and to improve his own knowledge and, later, his expertise in preparing certain foods. Such personal contacts also helped him to obtain additional information and gain insights about many other events happening outside of his own circle of acquaintances.

Two fellows whom José had known from Philadelphia College of Pharmacy were also stationed at Camp Meade with him. One was Bill Ball, a very stiff and formal chap who would later serve in other locations with José, at Camp Pickett and, then, after that, at General Lawson Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. The second fellow was a chap named Leonard Lazarick. Leonard was the one who, during their college days, used to entertain the waiting crowds just before the curtain went up at the PCP shows. (He would come out into the aisles there wearing nothing but long-johns, chatting amiably with everybody to help warm the audience's mood.)

After Camp Meade, José was sent to Camp Pickett, Maryland, his second army station. It was here that he got chicken pox, and was put into an army medical unit where he remained hospitalized for three or four days. The training at Camp Pickett was quite rough. Often, in the middle of the night, the soldiers were

awakened and told that the enemy was attacking. They were rushed outside to a field where they could hear records being played, records with noises simulating bombs exploding and planes flying overhead. Each soldier had to crawl near a field full of little potatoes. Inside the potatoes, there had been wedged a very small amount of explosive, which would suddenly burst. The intent was to scare the soldiers and, at the same time, to teach them to maintain control of themselves during battle conditions. José once had a small accident there while on maneuvers. During a simulated air raid, he fell and had to crawl for a short distance. During this foray, a stick from a small bush suddenly pierced his lower left eyelid but, fortunately, it didn't hit his eye. There was some bleeding, though when he later went to be examined, the first-aid people did not judge the wound to be serious.

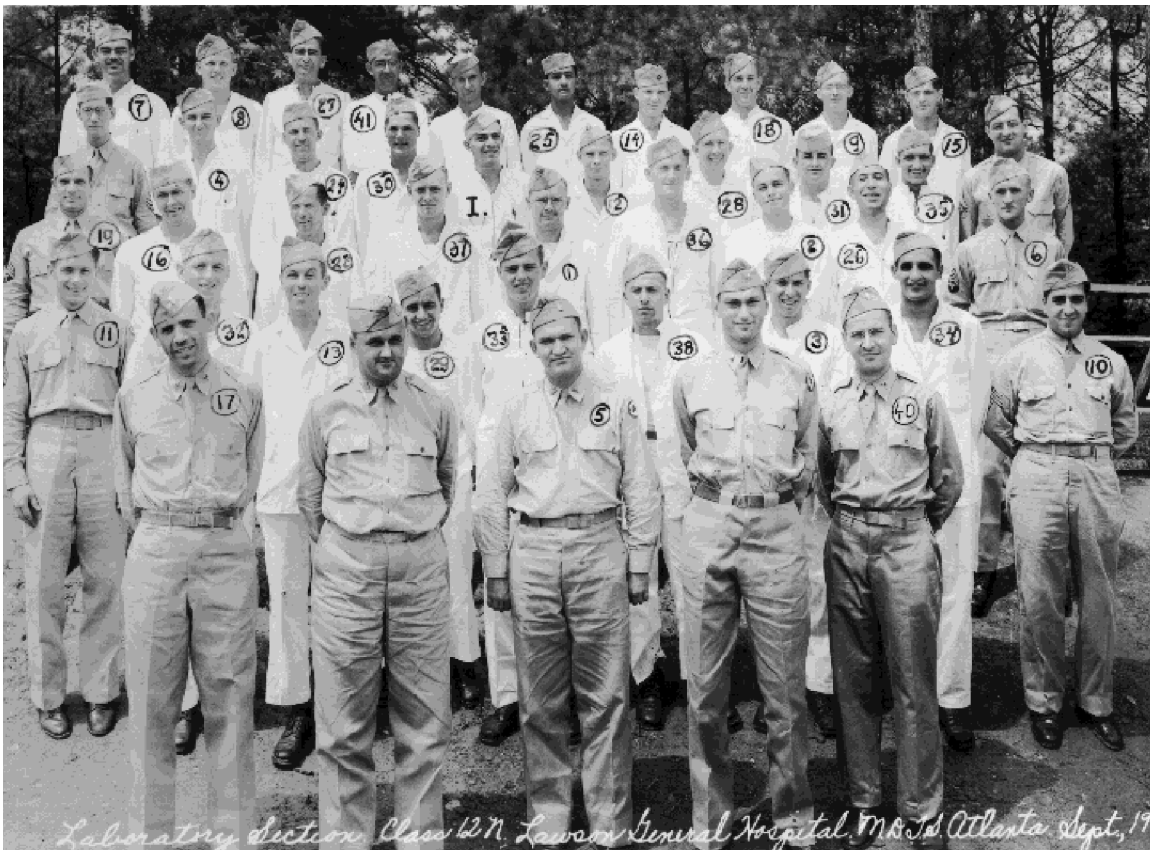
It was for about three months that he was stationed in Camp Pickett. Then, they shipped him to Atlanta. José soon got promoted to the rank of corporal, and then he was enrolled for training as a laboratory technician in Lawson General Hospital. Here, in addition to his regular duties, he would receive special privileges for teaching and tutoring groups of soldiers. He already had had some previous teaching experience in the past. During his first year in high school in Mexico, he had been a laboratory assistant in the botany class. At that time, immediately before laboratory sessions began, he had been asked to prepare solutions for the experiments which the students would then conduct. (By paying a lab assistant to do all of this before class, a professor would be able to organize everything so that the students would be able to complete the entire experiment within the time allotted.) Even by the time that Professor Maximo Morales had hired José to grade papers for him, José had already had some experience along these lines. Then, again, in Nueveo Laredo, while he had been waiting at the Mexican border for entry into the United States, he had been able to earn some extra money in this capacity. Thus, by the time that he arrived in Atlanta, José was well-qualified for this extra assignment. At the end of the course, there was a small ceremony, and José completed the program as a laboratory technician for the medical staff with an efficiency rating of superior.

There were many things that José enjoyed in Atlanta. First, he had the occasional use of a jeep. This gave him mobility and a chance to see many aspects of the city, which he otherwise would probably have missed. Although José had been told, early on in his army life, never to volunteer for anything, when he was asked to volunteer to go to the Country Club of Oglethorpe, he agreed. He was

surprised that this turned out to be, not a work detail but, instead, a treat. Several visits to the country club gave him access to entertainment, a social life outside of the army, and an additional insight into the local atmosphere of Georgia.

Perhaps what José enjoyed most about Atlanta, however, was the army food that he ate there. Generals in the military were entitled to have their own personal cooks, and Oglethorpe was where these cooks received their training. Thus, the food served at Oglethorpe generally turned out to be superior. The menu varied nightly, featuring steak, lobster, chicken, turkey, mixed grill, fish, and the most elegant of cuisines. Despite this, José heard constant objections from many of the other soldiers.

"Why is this always so predictable?" complained one. "We always have steak on Tuesday nights! You can always tell what's coming by the day of the



Atlanta army group (José is 5th from the left in the 3rd row).

week!" groaned another.

"Gee! The same old stuff over and over again! Aren't you sick of it?" he would hear. José often wondered how these complainers would react, later on, when they would find themselves on a battlefield with little or nothing to eat.

During the summer of 1943, José and many of his fellow soldiers were transferred from Atlanta to New Orleans. They made the trip by train, and it was one ride that José would long remember. For some reason, (perhaps because he happened to be a college graduate or, perhaps, because he had completed the laboratory technicians' course with a superior efficiency rating), he was placed in charge of all the soldiers traveling on this civilian train. He was only nineteen years old at this time, one of the youngest in the group, and the responsibility proved almost too much for him. About one hundred men were traveling under his command and, of necessity, they were divided among several different railroad cars. Many of them got excessively rowdy. José got complaints from the conductor of the train, and from numerous passengers, as well, with demands to keep his men under control. A couple of the soldiers even found their way into the sleeping compartments of some of the other passengers. It was with enormous relief that José finally arrived, with all of his soldiers accounted for and intact, at the New Orleans train depot two days later.

Previously, in Atlanta and, then again, when he was stationed in New Orleans, one of the jobs that José held was to accompany the MPs into different bars and bordellos. (This was why he had the use of a jeep.) The purpose for these visits was to find the soldiers and, sometimes, the women in these "out-of-bounds" places and, then, to take them to the hospital where they could be tested for venereal diseases. José found one soldier who had four different venereal diseases at the same time—syphilis, gonorrhea, lymphogranuloma inguinali (otherwise known as blueballs because bluish swellings formed on both sides of the groin), and chancroid. Because of this part of his assignment, the nickname by which some of the soldiers commonly referred to him at the time was "chanker mechanic." Another reason that José was sent to accompany the MPs was to help determine where the different infected soldiers had contracted their diseases. The most notorious of the places he found turned out to be one called *The Pigpen* in New Orleans. Here, most of the woman tested had *both* syphilis and gonorrhea.

In Louisiana, one of the obligatory army exercises that the troops had to endure involved a trip to a village called Slidell. This town was located at the other end of Lake Ponchartrain, across from New Orleans. The army decided that

all troops would travel to Slidell directly over the water on giant rafts. These were barges that had been constructed from planks of wood which had been hammered together. The barges had no sides, and each accommodated about one hundred soldiers at a time. About eight of these rafts (two rows, four in each row) were strapped to one another with ropes. Then, the whole group of barges was pulled along by a single tugboat.

The trip across the lake took roughly sixty minutes. Then, at the other end, on the outskirts of Slidell, the troops would find trenches already dug. The men would have to crawl under machine-gun fire through an infiltration course where barbed wire covered the area. This crawling continued for about half a mile towards the machine guns and through fields where potatoes, containing explosives, were strewn. At the end of the crawl, the soldiers would find trenches, directly under the machine guns, through which they could make their exit out of the area. Several people got hurt because they lifted their heads or their buttocks while crawling. Sometimes, they experienced an accidental tear by barbed wire, or an exploding potato would hit them. Occasionally, there were deaths, these usually due to malfunctioning guns or bullets that had not been fully loaded and which, instead of flying to the opposite end of the field as intended, would come falling down on the soldiers. These crawlings were always planned so that they would occur late in the day, and so that it would be partially dark during the exercises. Any soldier who had defecated in his uniform while going through the course (and it happened repeatedly) was automatically sent for a psychiatric examination. There would be one or two of these per day.

A very unusual incident occurred several days after José had returned from his own turn at this exercise. A very large group of soldiers was loaded onto the wooden platforms to make the trip to Slidell. A tugboat began to pull them off the shore onto the lake. Then, suddenly, out of nowhere, a severe storm arose and heavy rain developed, tilting all of the pontoons and sweeping the soldiers on them into the churning waters of the lake. For this particular trip, all of the soldiers had been carrying full packs and rifles. Since it had been drizzling when they started out, many of them also had raincoats on over their uniforms and, in addition, a great number were laden down with steel helmets. The heavily encumbered men had little chance of saving themselves in this disastrous situation.

Immediately, those available from nearby hospitals were rushed to the shore of the lake. Here, in the ongoing pandemonium, they tried to take as many

of the near-drowned (and the already dead) into their ambulances. The next day, the New Orleans papers reported that eighty-nine soldiers had drowned, and they fully described the circumstances. In the days that followed, however, the whole incident was suddenly declared secret, and no public mention was ever made of it again. After this, soldiers were no longer permitted to go to Slidell by barge. Instead, they were required to make a very lengthy and difficult trip that involved both trucks and railroad cars. It took one full day for them to arrive at Slidell and spend the night in the fields, then, another entire day to return to New Orleans after the exercises.

It was around this time that José was given a one-week furlough. He used this time to travel back to Philadelphia, where he stayed with his Uncle Nathan and Aunt Jennie Rubin Garber. In the past few months, his father had given up his job as a cutter in the garment industry and had gone to work for Kaiser Shipbuilders. (It was war-time, and the pay was more lucrative in defense industries.) Shortly after José had left to go into military service, Laib had been transferred, along with all other workers in the Kaiser factory, from Philadelphia to Vancouver, Washington. Rachel and Mario had followed Laib there shortly thereafter, and all of them were already gone from Philadelphia by the time that José arrived there for his furlough.

José got to see almost everyone else that he knew in the Philadelphia area. He spent the week visiting with his many friends and relatives there, and it was at this time that he and Josy agreed to write to each other every day once José would return to his army post. When José, on his way to meet Josy in Center City for the last time before returning to his army post, stopped by at the house to say good-bye to her mother, Mrs. Feldmark gave him a whole chicken that she had cooked especially for him to carry back on the train with him to New Orleans. He and Josy had to store it temporarily, along with all of his luggage, in a locker at the Broad Street Railroad Station so that they would be able to walk around together unencumbered for a couple of hours before he boarded the train back to New Orleans.

José also fondly recalls the kindness with which, during this visit to Philadelphia, Oscar Waldman treated him. Oscar was a very close friend of the family; perhaps his wife Ruhel was even distantly related to José's mother, Rachel, although this was never fully ascertained. Oscar had a kosher butcher

[1] Much later, during her old age, the title of "National Treasure" would be bestowed by the United States government upon Barbara Stanwyck.

shop at Thirty-second and Montgomery Avenue at the time. José clearly remembers how, on this particular occasion, Oscar (deliberately ignoring the rationing requirement for meat in effect during the war years) pulled out the largest and finest steak that he could find in his butcher shop, and cooked it for José to eat. "You're a soldier!" he reminded José. "If anyone says anything, I'm doing my patriotic duty. It's a *mitzvah* (blessing)!"

José had originally arrived in New Orleans as a corporal and now, several months later, he was promoted to sergeant. The army sent him to Tulane University to pick up some additional training. Here, José was taught how to do mosquito dissections, removing the salivary glands of the insect. He was also taught how to identify the species of parasites in the insect's glands. In addition, he was given further training in the study of several tropical diseases. (Previously, in Atlanta, at the Fourth Service Command, he had also received some preparation in this field.) Now included, as well, in his instruction at New Orleans, were visits to leprosariums located immediately outside the city. Here, José was required to actually handle some of the patients as part of his training.

José remembers how shocked he had been once, previously, when, in some of the rooms at the Fourth Army Service Command Headquarters in Atlanta, he had happened to see maps on the wall indicating where the future military landings would be made in Italy, and which typhus areas were to be avoided there once the landings would occur. (This had been at least about one full year before the actual invasions ever took place.)

On one occasion, during an evening's leave from the post, José decided to treat himself to dinner at the famous New Orleans restaurant, Antoine's. There the waiter, after first checking with and receiving approval from the occupant of a small table, seated José with the man who was eating there alone. He was a young Argentinean naval ensign who introduced himself to José as Oscar Sagastural. Since both he and José spoke Spanish, they quickly grew rather friendly over dinner. After leaving the restaurant, they agreed to stroll together through the French Quarter of the city and, then, José suggested that they stop at the Roosevelt Hotel nearby to have a drink. This was a posh night spot, considered at

[2] It was not until much later, when José had already been stationed in Burma for quite some time, that he, one day, received a letter from Isenberg. The letter was most derogatory in tone. Without preamble or courtesy, Isenberg imperially demanded that José promptly send him the address of Racine, which José didn't happen to have. After that, José never heard from Isenberg again.

the time as *the* place to be seen in New Orleans. José and Oscar chose a small table and ordered sazerac, a cocktail made from Pernod, rye, and bitters, very popular in Louisiana. As they relaxed together, chatting, who should walk in but the popular movie idol, Robert Taylor! He was an extremely handsome man, far taller than José would have guessed from his films. The waiter seated the actor alone at a nearby table facing the entrance.

After a few moments, Robert Taylor glanced over at José and Oscar, both dressed in military uniform, and struck up a conversation with them. He turned out to be an exceptionally gracious person, and he invited the two of them to have a drink with him. Taylor explained that his wife, the well-known film star Barbara Stanwyck,[1] was, at the moment, on location somewhere in Texas, making a film. As they chatted, many people stopped by Robert Taylor's table to ask him for his autograph and, in all cases, he complied most pleasantly. José noticed that, throughout the evening, the actor chain-smoked without stopping. Finally, about an hour later, Robert Taylor stood up, said good-bye to José and Oscar, and departed. Several years later, José read in the papers that Robert Taylor had died of lung cancer. José never forgot how charming the man had been, and how graciously he had behaved to everybody during that entire evening at the Roosevelt Hotel Lounge.

In New Orleans, José met a fellow from Philadelphia whom he recognized as the cousin of Josephine Morein, his former neighbor on Dakota Street in Strawberry Mansion. This man was a private with torn stripes. This meant that, somewhere along the line, he must have been demoted for misconduct. He seemed bitter at the world and out to insult whomever he could. When José, recognizing him, approached the fellow and, delighted to encounter a familiar face in a spot so far from home, asked him, "Aren't you the cousin of Josephine Morein from Philadelphia?" the other snapped back, "What's it to you?" He seemed to be a very rebellious person and, then, he let José know, in no uncertain terms, that he wanted nothing to do with sergeants.

"You probably cook at night," he scowled, spotting the stripes on José's uniform, "and *that's* why they must have made you a sergeant!"

Another unpleasant incident that José recalls also occurred in New Orleans. He happened to be sitting in a USO lounge there one evening, reading magazines, when two soldiers, whom he never met before, threw themselves onto a sofa across the room from him.

"Hey, Buddy," one of them called out to him "It's boring here, ain't it?

What do you say we go out and beat up a couple of Jews?"

"I'm Jewish!" José told them quietly. With a shocked glance at one another, the two of them hurriedly got up and disappeared.

One of the most colorful characters that José ever encountered was Leon Racine. Although his papers listed him as Laib, Racine always went by the first name of Leon. He and another soldier, Frank Isenberg, both of whom had been stationed with José in Atlanta as well as in New Orleans, each remained a private first class (Pfc) for as long as he knew them. José's promotion to the rank of sergeant now caused continual problems in his relationships with both men.

Frank Isenberg, constantly in trouble, was extremely arrogant and obnoxious. He was always borrowing money, generally to spend on women and drinking, a fact about which he bragged continuously. Isenberg was also constantly begging someone to lend him additional money so that he could gamble. It was usually Racine who would oblige. All of this placed José in a very difficult position for, although he was a sergeant, he was also younger than the other two and, thus, in a tenuous position about enforcing his authority. José knew very well that Racine, who was extremely temperamental and unpredictable, could (and would), with the important connections that he had, go over José's head to get his own way, if need be. For this reason, José tried to look the other way as often as possible, especially whenever either of these two became involved in their shenanigans.[2] It was, especially, the numerous escapades of Racine which would continue to place an extra burden upon José during the entire time that they were stationed together.

Racine was a Frenchman. Earlier, he had been captured by the Germans in France. He told José how, in the prisoner-of-war camp, he had been allotted only one slice of bread and one can of sardines a day, but that his father would soon arrange for his escape. Racine's father, partly because he had once been the Economic Attaché of the French Embassy in Moscow and, partly, undoubtedly, because of his wealth and contacts, wielded influence in Washington. Racine was extremely proud of his father, especially of his accomplishments in outmaneuvering others through the use of both his wealth and his cunning. Racine once related to José an incident that graphically illustrating his father's wiliness.

In the early 1930's, it seemed that Racine's father had been enjoying himself in an elegant Parisian night-club where he happened to be sitting next to a table at which an interesting conversation was going on. The man at the next table, obviously a millionaire, was expressing, to his companion, his desire to own a home in Salonica, Greece. The home, the speaker explained, would have to be

large and beautiful, and face the sea. A moment later, Racine's father got up, casually approached the table, and introduced himself. He had, he explained, accidentally overheard the conversation and, as fate would have it, he himself happened to own just such a villa in Salonica as they had been discussing. Amazed, the others invited him to join them, and they all chatted amiably for a while over drinks. Finally, when the millionaire was getting rather intoxicated, Racine's father, promising to take care of the details immediately, managed to obtain a deposit from him. The next morning, Monsieur Racine made numerous long-distance telephone calls, both to the French Embassy in Athens and to the Consul in the area. He quickly bought a house facing the sea in Salonica, the complete sale of which he finalized later on and, that very afternoon, he and the millionaire from the evening before completed their negotiations.

"This is what a bear market is!" Racine exclaimed proudly "You sell what you don't have and, then, you buy it at a cheaper price than you sell it for!"

Racine's family was involved in the textile industry in Tunisia and Algeria. They also handled numerous money matters for many politicians. Early during World War II, the family escaped from France to the United States, where they obtained papers for United States citizenship. Soon after that, Leon went into the American army.

Racine's wife was a pert Frenchwoman named Simone. Wherever Leon was stationed, Simone always took an apartment close to the barracks, always, amazingly, *before* his arrival. (This happened at Pickett, Atlanta and New Orleans.) Simone would often sun herself outdoors on a beach chair, wearing only a brief halter top and shorts, much to the distraction of the soldiers in José's unit who were drilling there. Simone and Racine delighted in torturing each other with anecdotes designed to cause fits of jealous rage. Simone once told him, Leon recounted to José, about her girlfriend who was married. This girlfriend, according to Simone's story, then met another man who became her lover. It was never very clear whether the woman involved was really Simone's girlfriend or Simone, herself. Once, Simone "accidentally" sent letters to Leon, explicitly describing orgies with a lover. Racine's response was that his own previous amorous adventures were, by far, more extraordinary than any of those which she had described on paper. These letters were circulated throughout the camp, much to the delight of everyone and, for quite a while, they proved the source of great entertainment for the troops stationed there.

One thing that Racine was mortally afraid of was climbing telephone poles

and, then, splicing into the wires so that, from there, he could overhear conversations and telegraph impulses. (A friend of his had been accidentally killed in this very way during the war in France, and Racine had then been ordered, by the French army shortly afterwards, to perform exactly the same type of work. Somehow, he had managed to avoid doing so.) Shortly thereafter, Racine had been captured by the Germans. His family immediately made the proper contacts with the Free French to have him rescued.

The rescue occurred during a performance given by the French actor-singer, Maurice Chevalier, at the German prisoner-of-war camp. It was while Chevalier was singing that a minor explosion occurred. This momentarily diverted the attention of the German soldiers and, during these few moments, a Free French officer in the camp led Leon to the rear, where a waiting vehicle was parked, ready to carry him off to safety and freedom. This had cost the family, Racine told José, close to ten thousand dollars. (The amount would vary with the amount of drink that Leon had imbibed whenever he told the story.) For this reason, when Leon later volunteered that his family would be willing to pay up to thirty-five thousand dollars to the right person to eventually get him dismissed from José's unit in 1944, nobody doubted this claim.

Racine spoke fluent French, Russian, and German, as well as English. He was an extremely pampered and spoiled individual, and he bought his way through every crisis that he could. At all times, Leon carried, rolled up in his socks, several one-hundred-dollar bills for emergencies. He would pay other soldiers to stand guard for him, to make his bed, to take over his latrine duty and his KP patrol and, even, to stand up for him at early morning roll-call so that Racine could sleep late after a night of heavy drinking or carousing. On these late nights, Racine would invariably bribe somebody to allow him to sneak back into the camp after hours. When José, as his sergeant, upbraided him for all of this, even trying to reason with him, Racine would shrug it off.

"What do you want?" he would counter. "The KP, the latrine duty, everything – the job's getting done, isn't it?" He remained deaf to all explanations of how it wasn't the work, itself, here that was important but, rather, the training and skills that Leon would acquire from the work. These skills, José tried to make it clear, could prove essential to his welfare some day, and might even save his life.

"What will you do when you're on the battlefield?" José would demand in exasperation.

"I won't go!" was Racine's answer. And he turned out to be right.
When Leon found out the exact day that the troops would be departing

from New Orleans on their way overseas, he told nobody, but instead announced that Simone suddenly needed to return to New York City because of some urgent business. He asked if José could drive them both to the train station in the outfit's jeep. José willingly complied. At the station, he was forced to witness a tender scene of farewell, complete with tears, kisses, and protestations of undying love between Racine and Simone in both English and French.

No sooner had the train pulled out of the station with Simone on it, than Racine turned to José and suggested, "Why don't we stop off at the local bordello on the way back to camp?" Despite José's shock, upon Racine's insistence he drove Leon to the requested destination. Then, while he waited for Leon in the jeep, Racine went inside for a quick visit. After that, they both returned to camp.

Late in March of 1944, Racine came to see José one day. "I'm here to make sure I say good-bye to you," he announced. Responding to José's astonished stare, he continued. "You'll be shipping out to India soon, or maybe Burma," he informed José. "I won't be going with you! I don't want to be there!" Leon revealed that, instead, he was going to Camp Ritchie, a super-secret OSS camp which was kept tucked away somewhere in the mountains of Maryland and used for training spies.

The next day, as José and his unit were marching to the railroad station in New Orleans, wearing steel helmets and carrying their duffel bags and full packs en route to Los Angeles, where they would board ships for destinations still officially unknown to them, a jeep suddenly roared up to the head of the advancing line. An officer jumped out, calling Racine's name. Leon stepped out of his place in the line where he had been marching next to José, got into the jeep, and disappeared.

The next time that José ever saw him was twenty-six years later. This was in 1960, on the streets of Manhattan, New York, where José happened to be visiting a relative, and bumped into Leon accidentally outside the St. Moritz Hotel. By this time, Racine would have grown to be twice as stout as José remembered him. Leon was now divorced from Simone, and he told José that he had never returned to school, as so many World War II veterans had done at government expense after the war was over. Leon now lived in Greenwich Village, where he was involved in art imports. He seemed to have become even more snobbish than he had been in the army. He now considered himself an aristocrat. After this chance encounter, José never saw him again. Racine never seemed to care about resuming or maintaining personal contact, which somewhat saddened José, who felt

that they grown rather close during the days that they had spent together in Atlanta and New Orleans, despite Leon's erratic behavior and the many difficulties he had caused.

* * *