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In This Issue

	PAGE
The Pilgrims of 1948	71
Creation and Amendment of Records of Entry	72
Reminiscences of the Naturalization of Members of Our Armed Forces	77 ✓
News	79
Decisions	81



WATSON B. MILLER

Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization

RAYMOND F. FARRELL

Editor, Monthly Review

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Reminiscences of the Naturalization of Members of Our Armed Forces

By Henry B. Hazard

IT is a source of great pride and satisfaction to have been accorded the opportunity to participate in what might be called in military terminology—"Operation Citizenship." I regard it as the crowning event of a lifetime of career service with our Government.

The principal difficulty will be in trying to give, in a matter of minutes, an adequate description of a task which involved—

1. Nearly two years in time;
2. Covering all six continents—North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia;
3. Traveling about 100,000 miles (the equivalent of four times around the globe), averaging 1,200 miles weekly for 84 weeks—a distance approximately that from Washington to Kansas City;
4. Crossing the Arctic Circle four times, the International Date Line four times, and the Equator six times;
5. Working—
 - a. On a ship during a raging gale in the North Atlantic;
 - b. During a blizzard in frozen Iceland;
 - c. On great ships of the United States Navy;
 - d. In desert heat up to 130° in Egypt and Persia;
 - e. On blazing coral islands in the far Pacific; and
 - f. In the hot steaming jungles of the Solomons and New Guinea.

The law authorizing the naturalization of noncitizens overseas (Act of March 27, 1942) was entirely administrative—necessarily so as to be workable. It empowered the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization to designate representatives of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to grant citizenship—for the first time in our history—to members of our armed forces serving outside of this country.

The requisites were simple—honorable service in such forces; good character, residence in the United States at the time of enlistment or induction, and lawful entrance to the United States under the immigration law. Age was immaterial, and the exemptions included the declaration of intention, certificate of arrival, any period of residence in the United States or State, and any waiting period between filing the petition and naturalization. The proceedings were summary—I swore the petitioner and witnesses to the petition, interrogated the parties under oath, and if the case was favorable, administered the oath of allegiance and declared the judgment immediately. The proceedings were entirely voluntary, each applicant being asked specifically in advance if it

was his desire to become a citizen.

To make the work effectual, 100 percent cooperation of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps was essential. We had it in full measure. My personal contacts in the field with such ranking members of the staff as Generals Eisenhower, Devers, and MacArthur, and Admiral Nimitz, impressed me greatly. I found them to be not only great leaders in the world crisis, but intensely human and deeply concerned with the welfare and safety of the men and women under their supervision. And the enlisted personnel were also highly cooperative. A corporal traveled throughout the African and Middle East Theaters with me as a clerical assistant. A dozen majors and lieutenant colonels aided me in a rush in Algeria. Men and women (WACS) were assigned to help me in Australia. In the Pacific a warrant officer and a major were my assistants. My regret is that I am not of an age that would permit me to enlist today.

There was a total of 143,000 members of our armed forces naturalized during World War II—122,000 in the United States and 21,000 abroad. Of these latter, I had the honor of processing 6,574, in all the theaters except that of China-Burma-India. Those whom I naturalized came from 90 different countries or their principal geographical subdivisions. Among them were white, black, brown, yellow, and red. Of the number, 3,678 were naturalized on my first, or Eastern trip. In the Pacific were the remaining 2,896. I naturalized them on ships, in tents and Quonset huts, in hospitals, in a cork forest, and on the open beach.

The purpose of the legislation was the facilitation of national unity. There was a tremendous morale asset in the realization of "belonging to" the United States on the part of the noncitizens. There was, too, consideration of the risk which the members of our armed forces who technically were alien enemies took in going into battle as so many of them did willingly. In case of capture, they stood the chance of being shot or hanged as spies or traitors. So it was a tremendous boon to them to have the opportunity to fight as citizens of the country they were valiantly

From an address before the Naturalization Council, Kansas City, Missouri, October 28, 1948.

Henry B. Hazard is Assistant Commissioner, Research and Education Division, U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Department of Justice.

servicing. Their loyalty was proved before naturalization was accorded.

What was the caliber of these new citizens? Let me mention briefly the story of but one of many—that of Henry Mitchell, tail gunner. He was the son of a German father and a Filipino mother. When he appeared before me in central England and was naturalized, he had already shot down four German planes, had been wounded three times, and had been decorated four times. General Jacob L. Devers had come up from London to attend the naturalization ceremony honoring the new citizens. Henry was strangely missing. As all the naturalized persons were under orders to remain for the proceedings, it seemed incomprehensible that this brave soldier should be absent. When I returned to this country I learned the tragic reason. He had found an opportunity to go on another bombing mission during the interim and had been killed over Germany.

These ceremonies—which were held also in Iceland, Egypt, Persia, on board ships, on the bombing strips of islands of the Pacific and elsewhere, were deeply inspiring alike to the men and women in whose honor they were held, and to the interested observers. The commanding general, or the ship's captain, was usually present. One such ceremony, near Oran, North Africa, was particularly impressive. There was a military band and 10,000 troops which passed in review in honor of the several hundred soldiers and an army nurse who had just been made citizens. General Wilson, Commanding General of the Mediterranean Base Command, and General Larkin, now The Quartermaster General, Department of the Army, were present. The latter brought General Eisenhower's greetings. Many of these men had already participated in the Tunisian campaign, and two thousand soldiers a week were being sent from that depot to the front.

The naturalization proceedings were held wherever our forces were stationed and could be spared from their military duties. The fact that the enemy was in action in the vicinity was but an incident. The shooting down of an enemy plane in Iceland, the blitz in England, nightly bombings of Naples—guided by the smoking red cone of Vesuvius, and attacks upon Saipan and Biak (off New Guinea), did not halt the work. At Maffin Bay, Dutch New Guinea, with the Japanese perimeter but 300 yards distant and the noise of battle almost deafening, men came in from battle to be naturalized. They quickly took off their fighting gear, were granted the boon they had so eagerly awaited, then hurriedly resumed their equipment and returned to the battle line.

The countries which supplied the greatest

number of the armed forces whom I naturalized were as follows:

(1) Canada	1,462
(2) Philippine Islands	923
(3) Mexico	751
(4) Italy	541
(5) Germany	517
(6) Poland	281
(7) Scotland	220
(8) England	190
(9) Russia	148
(10) Irish Free State	146

I would be remiss if I did not call attention to the provisions which were made throughout all the areas I visited for the spiritual welfare and the recreational life of the members of our forces. It was my privilege to attend many services conducted by chaplains of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths. Indeed on my trip beyond the Arctic Circle, before a Jewish Rabbi had arrived in the Iceland Base Command, sincere members of that faith invited me to their services in a small hut.

The Red Cross provided a homelike atmosphere in its recreation huts, and numerous services which were about the nearest to those one might receive at home as were possible under wartime conditions. In Iceland a hobby and craft show was arranged at which were exhibited remarkably fine examples of artistic skill in the form of products created from such materials as discarded packing cases and empty metal containers. And these Red Cross girls certainly got about. One in charge of this exhibit in Iceland I found the next year about 50 miles up in the mountains from General Headquarters in Australia in charge of a recreation hut for soldiers and sailors on leave.

The U. S. O. gave a good account of itself too. The musicians, actors, and actresses, and other entertainers covered the various theaters and brought a much needed respite from the rigors of war. The regard in which they were held was evidenced when General F. B. Larkin, not so long ago, conferred the prized Medal of Freedom upon actress Madeleine Carroll for her service overseas.

One of the outstanding impressions gained from my experience during the war was that of the unity of purpose and effort demonstrated by the members of our forces no matter what their country of origin or background happened to be. Enemy bullets and shrapnel were impartial—they did not seek alone persons fortunate enough to have been born in the United States. If any one thing was demonstrated to my satisfaction, it was that courage and devotion to high ideals of duty did not depend upon country of origin or nationality.

I stood with bowed head and moist eyes in the little military cemetery of the Second Ma-

rine Division on bloody Tarawa. There was not a leaf nor blade of grass on the small mounds of glistening sand. Navy chains swinging between polished posts enclosed the plot. It was surrounded by beautiful white and pink phlox, and green plants were nodding in the breeze. The inscription so frequently encountered—"Unknown"—appeared upon a number of the white markers. On each of the others were the man's identification tag, the date he fell during that historic November of 1943, his rank and his name. What family origins far beyond the United States were reflected by some of those names? In addition to Smith, Brown, and Davis were Duffy, O'Boyle, McGhee, MacManus, Andrada, Olano, Pero, Svoboda, Schempf, Krieger, Lorenz, Jorgensen, Despierto, Gauireaux, Kubarski, and Cyminski. They had paid the price for unity. On a tablet at the entrance were these poignant words:

*So there let them rest.
On their sun-scorched atoll
The wind for their watcher
The waves for their shroud
Where palm and pandanus
Shall whisper forever
A requiem fitting
For heroes so proud.*

In these few minutes I have given a very inadequate cross-section of the various phases of the recent world struggle as they came within my view. Through it all there runs the thread of high purpose and deep consecration in the effort to prevent the collapse of civilization. It suggests the spirit with which to meet the future.

News

Attorney General and Commissioner Welcome Displaced Persons

On October 30, 1948 the Attorney General and Watson B. Miller, Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, greeted the first group of displaced persons on their arrival in the United States. The newcomers were greeted as "the Pilgrims of 1948" by the Attorney General, representing the President.

Miss Bern Berard of the Detention, Deportation and Parole Section of the Service, was also on hand to welcome the group.

Service Officers Win Shooting Laurels

On October 31, 1948 Harlan B. Carter, Acting Director of the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Border Patrol, and Immigrant Inspector William R. Lockett of El Paso, Texas won laurels in the Far Southwest Rifle Tournament at El Paso, Texas.

Lockett placed fourth in the matches and Carter won first place in three of the four matches comprising the shoot and lost the fourth by the margin of a nick in the inner V-ring of the bull's-eye. Carter fired a score of 245 out of a possible 250 with military of .30 calibre to sweep honors of the match. The score was made in rain, wind and driving sand but match officials believed it to be a new national record.

Officers Construct Headquarters Building

Communities in the southwest are complimenting the Service these days on the type of public servant it employs. They are making special reference to officers assigned to the El Centro and Indio, California and Yuma, Arizona stations. These officers not only solved their own housing problems but utilized their off-duty hours to design and construct headquarters stations and barracks for official use.

Bob Pierce Retires

On September 30, 1948 Bob Pierce of the El Paso, Texas office retired. His associates and their families, gathered together for the annual District picnic, applauded enthusiastically when Commissioner Miller complimented Mr. Pierce upon his splendid record and presented him with a watch, a gift from his fellow officers. Bob was an effective and a popular officer.

Service Commended

In a letter dated October 21, 1948 Colonel William W. Dick, Deputy Chief, International Refugee Organization, Geneva, Switzerland commended the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The Colonel said: "We take this opportunity to again express for General W. A. Wood, Jr., the Chief of the United States