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NEGRO VETERAN

By Luigi Creatore

This is a story of William Jesse Sanders. He was born in a small town in West Virginia shortly after the last war. When he was twenty-three years old Bill was inducted into the Army of the United States. He learned how to soldier and how to kill. He put his knowledge to use on battlefields thousands of miles from his little corner of the world.

Today, William Jesse Sanders asks, "Why?"

On January 28, 1919, in the small mining town of Pinehill, West Virginia—population 2,000—Mrs. Emmitt Sanders gave birth to her third son. Young William, after a normal period of bawling and spewing, learned to use his sturdy little legs. He played on sand lots with other youngsters; learned how to wrestle; hit a ball with a stick, to sidestep an uppercut.

One of Bill Sanders' outstanding memories was his first moving picture show. It was a Sunday afternoon when the entire family was told to keep their church-going clothes on because they were going to the movie. Bill sat breathless when giant images raced across the flickering screen, as the scenes changed so fast he couldn't keep up with the story.

On Monday, Bill was ready for the movies again. He knew he needed money to get into the theater and money was scarce in the Sander's household, so he was not unduly surprised when his mother said, "No movieshow for you today." But he was surprised when she added, "Even if I was to give you the money, you couldn't get in."

"Why?" asked young Bill. "Cause you can only get in on Sunday."

Show's open all week," Bill observed.

"I told you—you can't get in 'cept on Sunday."

"Why?"

"Cause you're black—and only White Folks can go to that movie on week days. Now stop askin' 'why' and go out and play."

Bill went out of the house and sat on the wooden stoop. He couldn't go to a movie 'cause he was black, but the white boys could go. He would give the lady at the theater money, same as the white boys. He would sit in only one seat and watch the screen, same as the white boys. Then why couldn't he go? The whole thing was silly.

Yet Bill knew his mother did not lie. He was learning that he would be stopped from going certain places and doing certain things all his life for one reason—the color of his skin.

Next year Bill started in school. He sat in the same room and had the same teacher as the boys from the first grade to the ninth. The town could afford only one school and that wasn't big enough to divide into classes. Only big enough to divide into White students and Colored students.

Just the same Bill liked school. He liked the smell of books. He liked finding out something new every day.

As he grew older, Bill took an interest in History, especially Negro History. On Saturday he went to the Library and read there things that were not taught in school. He learned some new facts about the start of his country, the United States of America.

He learned how the Colonies had formed a new nation and how the new nation had risen and fought against mighty England to make itself independent. Sitting on the hard library chair he read: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal—with certain unalienable Rights—Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happi-

ness." William Jesse Sanders remembered those words—remembered, too, what a strange meaning they held in that day of slavery.

He knew that Negro soldiers had died in that conflict. He learned that they had fought well side by side with white troops against the English. He read of a debate in Congress where two men, one from the North and one from the South, gave the verdict of that time on the value of the Negro in the Revolutionary War.

William Eustis of Massachusetts said: "The war over and peace restored, these men returned to their respective States, and who could have said to them on their return to civil life after having shed their blood in common with the whites in the defense of the liberties of their country, 'You are not to participate in the rights secured by the struggle or in the liberty for which you have been fighting?' Certainly no white man in Massachusetts."

Charles Pinckney of South Carolina said the Negroes, "Then were, as they still are, as valuable a part of our population to the Union as any other equal number of inhabitants. They were in numerous instances the pioneers and, in all, the laborers of your armies. To their hands were owing the erection of the greatest part of the fortifications raised for the protection of our country: some of which, particularly Fort Moultrie, gave at that early period of the inexperience and untried valor of our citizens, immortality to American arms; and, in the Northern States numerous bodies of them were enrolled into and fought by the sides of the whites, the battles of the Revolution."

In the little library in Pinehill where William Sanders sat reading the fine speeches, he could almost hear the words ringing in the dusty room. He wondered, "What made Negroes rise to battle, and then submit once more to the chains of slavery?"

Bill read of the War of 1812, where the Negro distinguished himself not only as a soldier but particularly as sailor. In the dispute concerning the impressment of American sailors which was one of the causes of the war, Negro sailors repeatedly figured when they were seized by England. They were claimed as cit-

izens by America, for whose rights the nation was apparently ready to go to war.

These indeed were strange events. The citizenship of Negroes was sought and defended by England and America at this time but a little later it was denied by the United States Supreme Court that Negroes could be citizens.

The number of Negro fighters in the War of 1812 was held down to a minimum at the beginning of the conflict. However, by 1814, the situation had grown increasingly precarious. The state of Maine was in British hands, the Capitol at Washington had been burned and Northern States like New York were recruiting and arming Negroes in large quantities. It was then that General Jackson issued a spirited appeal to the Negroes of Louisiana: "Through a mistaken policy, you have heretofore been deprived of a participation in the glorious struggle for national rights in which our country is engaged. This no longer shall exist.

"As sons of freedom, you are now called upon to defend our most inestimable blessings. As Americans, your country looks with confidence to her adopted children for a valorous support as a faithful return for the advantages enjoyed under her mild and equitable government. As fathers, husbands and brothers, you are summoned to rally around the standard of the Eagle to defend all which is dear in existence—"

"Your country, although calling for your exertions, does not wish you to engage in her cause without amply remunerating you for the services rendered. Your intelligent minds are not to be led away by false representations. Your love of honor would cause you to despise the man who would attempt to deceive you. In the sincerity of a soldier and the language of truth I address you—"

William Sanders wondered what "amply remunerating" meant in General Jackson's statement, because years after that war, black men were still slaves. "Was this their remuneration?" Bill Sanders wondered.

The only gains made by Negro soldiers that Bill Sanders could see, was the progress made in the War between the States, the war that resolved itself into the War

(Continued on page 4)



Veterans SERVICE BUREAU
EDITOR'S NOTE: This newspaper, through special arrangement with the Washington Bureau of Western Newspaper Union at 1616 Eye Street, N. W., Washington, D. C., is able to bring readers this weekly column on problems of the veteran and serviceman and his family. Questions may be addressed to the above Bureau and they will be answered in a subsequent column.

This office has received many letters asking whether or not once men get overseas their accumulation of discharge points stops. The answer from the war department invariably has been that men continue to earn discharge points so long as they are in service.

This question was brought to a head recently when Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson was surprised when informed by the army newspaper, Stars and Stripes, that point scoring stopped September 2.

The war department now declares that both are right. Men in service do continue to earn discharge points for their record for use when and if a new freezing date is established. They point out that the first freeze date was May 12 when the total for discharge was 85 points. A new freeze date was established for September 2 when the discharge point total was 70. However, since September 2, the war department has reduced the point score to 50, or 20 points down, which is more than the veteran would accumulate in the four-month period. In other words, while the veteran total is figured at the number of points he had accumulated up to September 2, 1945, his point total had been lowered since that date from 70 to 50, making all who had 50 points on September 2 eligible for discharge. Further lowering of the total points necessary for discharge are promised.

Questions and Answers

Q. Here's a question I've never seen or heard of being directly answered. Are there answers, or just evasive replies? Can the boys in service in Japan take up correspondence work or study in the U.S.A.F.I. if they have the time or ability? Our son is stationed in Osaka with a medical company. He wants to get started in a veterinarian course. Will he be watching closely for an answer.—Mrs. A. J. W., Neligh, Nebr.

A. Yes, men in Japan can take certain courses of study with the U.S.A.F.I. However, it is doubtful if such a specialized course as veterinary could be taken by correspondence. Would suggest that your son take the matter up with his company commander.

Q. Is the widow of a World War I veteran, now receiving a pension, entitled to any additional benefits above her pension for doctor's care if she is an invalid?—Mrs. G. H., Eureka Springs, Ark.

A. No, the veterans' administration says that only in some instances of advanced age are widows of World War I veterans entitled to increase in pension.

Q. My husband enlisted in the air corps in August, 1944, for the duration and six months. He is now overseas. Will he be discharged when his enlistment period is up or must he wait until he has enough points?—Mrs. R. S., Sunbury, Pa.

A. The war is not yet over and will not be until so proclaimed by the President or congress. He will remain in the service until he earns sufficient points.

Q. My husband has been in service since August 2, 1945. I am in very bad health. We have two small children and expecting another soon. Do you think I stand a chance of getting him out?—Mrs. J. R. B., Flat Lick, Ky.

A. I am afraid you stand little chance at the moment. When the third child is born, he will be eligible to make application for discharge.

Q. I was inducted into the army August 20, 1942. I received my honorable discharge May 10, 1943. Am I entitled to the \$200 mustering-out pay? All my service has been in the U. S. A. How do I go about getting it?—A. W., Scotland, S. D.

A. Yes. The war department advises that you write to the Chief of Finance, Enlisted Personnel, War department, Washington, D. C.

Q. I have a friend in the navy. He has been in service since July, 1944, and overseas since last October, 1944. He is single and 20 years old. How many points does he have?—Miss B. C., Section, Ala.

A. As of January 1 he has 27 points. Thirty-six are necessary for discharge. 35 on February 1

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