



A LEGION 50th ANNIVERSARY FEATURE

HOW THE FIRST GI BILL WAS WRITTEN..

(PART II)

THIS IS THE SECOND of two articles on the exciting story of the writing and passage of the WW2 GI Bill of Rights in 1943-44. Last month's installment told how, in the midst of WW2, the Legion had drafted and was trying to secure enactment of the then revolutionary GI Bill. It was the first law in our history to help all veterans get on their feet after a war.

Essentially, what follows is the word-for-word eyewitness story that the late David Camelon wrote for this magazine in 1949. It has been somewhat edited and condensed—and in some places updated. In addition, some material edited out of Mr. Camelon's story in 1949 has been included here. Mr. Camelon was one of three writers whom the

Hearst newspapers assigned to work with the Legion's special GI Bill Committee in 1943-44.

Today, the GI Bills have proved themselves beyond all measure. Back then there was tremendous support for the idea. But opposition also gathered rapidly after the original GI Bill was introduced in Congress early in January 1944. On Feb. 16, four other veterans organizations issued a joint, open letter, opposing the GI Bill. This final installment picks up the story at that point.

WE HELD OUR COUNCIL of war early that afternoon of February 17, 1944—the daily meeting of the Legion's board of strategy on how to get the GI Bill of Rights passed.

John Stelle, ex-Illinois Governor and chairman of The American Legion's special GI Bill Committee, had just re-

turned from a conference at the Capitol with Senator Bennett Champ Clark of Missouri, a founder of the Legion, and one of the GI Bill's staunchest advocates in Congress.

The Washington representatives of four smaller veterans organizations—Omar B. Ketchum of the Veterans of Foreign Wars; Millard W. Rice of the Disabled American Veterans; Frank Haley of the Military Order of the Purple Heart; and W. M. Floyd, National Commander of the Regular Veterans Organization—had sent a letter to every member of Congress, opposing the GI Bill.

"Everything that glitters is not gold," they said. They had called upon Congress "not to be stampeded into hasty and possibly unwise legislation." They attacked the proposed educational aids that were to be by far the most beneficial part of the GI Bill, once it was passed.

John Stelle was concerned. "The letter is embarrassing to our friends in the Congress," he said. "People don't know the relative strength of the

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES WATERHOUSE



At Jacksonville airport, Rep. John Gibson races to plane for last lap of journey to reach Washington in time to save GI Bill.

A Wild Ride From Georgia

various veterans organizations. (The fact was that the four smaller organizations claimed a combined membership of 555,000—little more than a third of the Legion's membership.)

"The letter can't beat the GI Bill. But Senator Clark asked me to get those other organizations off his neck, if we can. They offer a wonderful excuse for some members of Congress to oppose the bill."

John looked inquiringly at the other members of his committee who were present. They nodded. Something had to be done.

"John," I said, "it would be difficult for a Legionnaire to approach these other organizations. But I'm an outsider. I know Omar Ketchum and Millard Rice. If you want me to, I'll see what I can do." I was a Hearst correspondent reporting the Legion's fight to put over the GI Bill.

John nodded.

"Yes," he said. "Go ahead and try."

Of the four opposing veterans organizations, the Veterans of Foreign Wars was the largest. It cannot be said today that the VFW members generally agreed with their leadership. That same day a

VFW member brought us an internal VFW memorandum to warn us of what was going on. The memo urged VFW state and local officers to ignore the GI Bill, calling it "spout and fizzle, fizzle and spout." Not only did individual VFW members continue to support the GI Bill and keep us advised, but Rep. Pat

Kearney of New York, who was both a Legionnaire and a Past National Commander of the VFW, worked intimately with the Legion on the internal political dilemmas the bill faced in Congress. As you'll see, in the end he tipped the Legion off to what had to be done at the last minute to save the whole bill from final defeat.

But what Congress was hearing was the VFW's top-level opposition to the bill.

I was sure that the VFW leaders really wanted to share the credit. In his internal memo, VFW legislative director Ketchum had dwelt upon "prestige," "credit" and "the spotlight."

I went to Omar Ketchum's office, and talked to him for more than an hour. At last he said:

"My legislative committee is in Washington. Let's talk to them."

We had lunch at the Ambassador Hotel with the committee, headed by Past National VFW Commander Paul G. Wolman of Baltimore. They agreed to cooperate if the Legion would meet with them. (Turn to next page)



Gibson leaves plane after nightlong trip from his Georgia home. His vote broke House deadlock, assured bill's passage.

How the First GI Bill was written

I helped to arrange a meeting at the Statler Hotel between Stelle's committee and the Wolman group. The VFW agreed formally to support the bill, and Wolman said:

"I think that, in uniting the forces of these two great organizations, we have made history here."

A few suggestions were made by the VFW, and accepted by the Legion. Chief among them was the insertion of the figure \$500,000,000 in that section of the bill authorizing the Veterans Administration to proceed with an adequate hospitalization program.

The Legion had avoided any specific figure when the GI Bill was drafted. It sought adequate hospitalization for the WW2 battle casualties, at whatever cost, without delay.

Omar Ketchum went before the Senate and House Committees to voice support of the bill, although later he joshed us in the closing days of the battle, when it seemed that the GI Bill of Rights might be lost.

appropriately described as 'ominous.'

He bitterly attacked the unemployment compensation provisions of the bill, which were soon to benefit over eight million veterans, saying:

"The lazy and 'chisely' types of veterans would get the most benefits, whereas the resourceful, industrious and conscientious veterans would get the least benefits, if any."

We read that sentence with amazement. We didn't know it would soon haunt us from other sources as well. The GI Bill provided \$20 a week for a maximum of 52 weeks in unemployment benefits for any veteran of WW2 who, while looking for work, couldn't find it.

The assumption of Rice and others was that too many WW2 veterans would sit back on their rumps for a solid year to draw the \$20 a week before stirring themselves.

The Legion felt that this benefit, which earned the nickname "52-20," was absolutely essential. It was confident that millions of veterans would use 52-20 for a few critical weeks before going to college or taking job-training, that many more would take advantage of their rights to return to their former jobs immediately. (And of course they did, in more millions than anyone then guessed.) The Legion had not the slightest doubt that some would, indeed, "take a rest" on 52-20, by getting local authorities to wink at the "you must be looking for work" provision. It was even prepared to debate that the men who had gone from Guadalcanal to Okinawa, from Normandy to the heart of Germany, with no weekends or holidays, were entitled to a rest.

But that wasn't the point.

The 52-20 provision was tailored to see that the veteran who was out of a job and looking for work wouldn't be reduced to beggarmdom—the old, old story. Others could talk about the "lazy" and "chiseling" veterans all they wanted, the Legion focused on the man who was discharged, perhaps with a wife and children, who wouldn't have the wherewithal to buy bread until he found a job. (In the postwar housing shortage that followed, many of these were even without homes for months, but 52-20 assured them of bread and milk.) With the help of Stan Rector, the 52-20 provisions had been based on the soundest state unemployment benefit laws then in existence. And in the end the WW2 vets didn't use half of their 52-20 entitlement, while a bare handful took the whole 52 weeks. Millions of them never used any of 52-20.

The Legion felt that 52-20 was as important for the country as for the vet-

erans. We would have more than 16 million veterans to discharge. On the day of discharge they would *all* be unemployed. For longer or shorter periods, if they had no income, the nation would lose the buying power of 16 million people. In this were the seeds of a postwar recession that would reflect back from merchants who were not selling to out-of-work veterans, to manufacturers and farmers faced with layoffs because, for varying lengths of time, 16 million of the country's adults would lack funds to buy their minimum needs.

The later complete proof of this was not yet visible. In 1944 the logic of 52-20 made not a dent in those who felt that the servicemen were by nature heroes overseas but bums at home.

Harry Colmery, of the Legion's GI Bill Committee, warned, in effect, that the opposition might *make* bums of some of them, by denying them a chance to get a fresh start.

"These men will be a potent force for good or evil in the years to come," he said. "They can make our country, or break it."

They would make America great, the Legion knew, if they were not engulfed in disillusion, if the courage and confidence with which they went to war were preserved on their return. Their need could not be sacrificed because a small minority might misuse the opportunities the GI Bill contained.

The opponents of the bill, on the other hand, apparently thought only of the minority who might abuse it—magnifying the danger of abuse out of all proportion.

I, and others, tried to get Millard Rice to have the Disabled American Veterans recede from the position he had taken, to no avail. His letter had its effect. It furnished an excuse for those in Congress who were opposing enactment of the GI Bill—or who wished to change or weaken the benefits it provided. I doubt whether, without that encouragement, one of the key members of Congress would have undertaken—as he later did—to denounce the GI Bill of Rights on the floor of the House as "half-baked legislation."

Meanwhile, the bill was picking up speed in the Senate, where Senator Bennett Clark was rallying almost unanimous support for it. He, National Commander Atherton, John Stelle, and Senator Scott W. Lucas, former National Judge Advocate of the Legion, had already conferred with President Roosevelt at the White House.

Bennett Clark helped the Legion to come to an agreement with Senate leaders in three important instances.

Senator Wagner of New York had introduced a bill covering veterans employment. The Senate Education Committee, led by Chairman Elbert Thomas of Utah, and Robert La Follette of Wis-



Francis M. Sullivan, Legion's Acting wartime Nat'l Legislative Director, surrounded by petitions endorsing GI Bill.

While the VFW withdrew its opposition, Millard Rice of the Disabled American Veterans would not yield. On the 22nd, he addressed a new letter to Senator Walter F. George, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, renewing his attack.

"Your cautiousness in resisting the 'blitz' methods used by an ill-advised group in its attempt to put across the 'GI Bill of Rights' . . . is indeed appreciated by those—America's disabled war veterans—whose future welfare would thereby very probably be unfavorably affected," he wrote.

Senator George didn't want any such "credit." He had co-sponsored the GI Bill in the Senate and at no time "resisted" its passage.

"This bill," Rice continued, "referred to as an Omnibus Bill, has been more

AN OPEN LETTER TO:

Washington, D. C.
February 16, 1944.

Senator Bennett C. Clark, Chairman,
Veterans' Sub-Committee to
Senate Finance Committee,
Senate Office Building,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Clark:

Everything that glitters is not necessarily gold!

Pressure is being brought to bear on the Congress to force immediate enactment of the so-called G-I Bill of Rights for the returning service men and women of World War II, identified as S. 1617, with amendments, now before your Committee.

Your Committee and the Congress may be interested to know that there is a serious question in the minds of some veteran groups as to whether this so-called G-I Bill of Rights, in its entirety, is a sound and equitable solution to the problems and needs of World War II veterans. Certain features of the bill, notably the Title on Educational Aid, are so broad in scope and potential cost, that its enactment would, in our opinion, probably not only prevent any consideration of several other more equitable proposals to solve such problems, but might also subsequently jeopardize the entire structure of veteran benefits and provoke another Economy Act.

Our nation's first responsibility should be to those who have suffered physical and/or mental handicap by reason of military or naval service. Any legislation which grants entitlement to four years of college training at government expense to any able-bodied veteran who had ninety days service should be carefully examined in the light of our tremendous war debt and the ability of the nation adequately to care for its war disabled.

The undersigned representatives of national veteran organizations, embracing some 550,000 members, most of whom have had, or are having, combat service--many with combat disabilities--urge your Committee carefully to consider all proposals as to post-war veteran adjustments now before the Congress, and not to be stampeded into hasty and possibly unwise legislation.

Let us not have another example of "act in haste and repent in leisure".

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Omar B. Ketchum

MILITARY ORDER OF PURPLE HEART

Frank Haley
National Representative

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Willard W. Rice

REGULAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Wm Lloyd
National Commander



Bennett Clark was the means of getting those names. The Legion's committee worked with him—and one afternoon John Stelle came hurrying into Legion headquarters, waving a copy of the bill, and crying:

"By God, I got Alben Barkley, the majority leader, to sign it in his own handwriting!"

Fifty Senators were on the floor of the Senate when the bill came up for a vote. Senator Clark read the names of all the sponsors—and other Senators later asked that they be included. In the end, all but two members of the Senate endorsed the bill.

Passage by the Senate was unanimous.

There was jubilation at Legion headquarters after the Senate action. We were sure that the House would act at once, and that within a matter of days, a week or two at the most, the GI Bill would finally be enacted into law.

John Stelle was host that night at the Embassy Room at the Statler for a victory dinner. It was a little premature. The bill had not yet passed the House of Representatives.

After the Senate passed it, John Rankin, chairman of the House veterans committee, promised swift consideration and action on the bill in the House of Representatives. Mr. Rankin himself was among those who now very openly opposed veterans unemployment compensation—or 52-20. But he did promise action.

Yet the days dragged on, the weeks passed, and still the GI Bill of Rights was held up in the House World War Veterans Committee.

Finally, a month later, Legion Legislative Director Frank Sullivan sent a telegram to all Department Commanders of the Legion.

"Delay has developed in the House World War Veterans Committee on reporting out our GI Bill," it read. "Program has been before it since January 11. You have done magnificent work, but would appreciate numerous telephone calls, telegrams or airmail letters to members of House insisting committee cease delay and report bill without substantial change. House membership anxious to act on it."

Sullivan's action had been precipitated by a disturbing development on the floor of the House. Representative Joseph W. Martin of Massachusetts, Republican leader, had asked when the GI Bill would reach the floor. Majority Leader John McCormack had been unable to answer.

Then Chairman Rankin rose, and said:

"This is the most far-reaching and most explosive bill ever to reach Congress. The committee is not going to be stampeded into bringing out a half-baked bill. . . ."

An open letter to Congress from four veterans organizations seeking to block passage of the bill. They were particularly opposed to bill's educational provisions.

consin, ranking Republican member, had reported its own version of veterans education; and Senators McFarland and Maybank had their own proposals in the matter of home loans and education.

It was necessary to win their approval to drop their separate versions and support the GI Bill of Rights, for all had important followings in the Senate. With the aid and leadership of Senator Clark, chairman of the 1919 Paris caucus at which the Legion was formed, various members of the Legion's committee and staff—John Stelle, Bob Sisson, Sam Rorex, Frank Sullivan, Maurice Devine (the Legion's Legislative Chairman) and others—had many meetings with those Senators. The Senators made valuable contributions to the bill, and all of them became its active supporters.

On March 13, 1944, Bennett Clark introduced a new version of the bill. There was no major change in its form or the benefits it offered. Harry Colmery had gone to work again to adapt his first draft to suit the ideas of those who had made constructive contributions to it and, in many instances, had improved it.

The bill was approved by the Senate Finance Committee, March 17, by a unanimous vote. And, in an unprecedented move, as a result of Bennett Clark's work, it was called up in the Senate with a total of 81 Senators as co-sponsors.

Never in the history of the Senate had so many Senators given their names to a piece of pending legislation. The bill's passage in the Senate was guaranteed before it reached the floor!

How the First GI Bill was written

Substantial opposition had developed, in particular, to the unemployment compensation provisions. One committee member, opposing that section said:

"This bill provides unemployment compensation which will not only cost five to six billion dollars, but will also drive a wedge into the ranks of the men now in service. It will discriminate against the men who go right back to work."

Thus, in the House Committee, the Disabled American Veterans' charge that the unemployment compensation provisions would make loafers out of the veterans was raised again.

Harry Colmery gave the Legion's reply to that:

"The American Legion has not lost faith in the veterans."

The *Army Times*, influential service publication, in an editorial demanded:

"Don't you think it's time to quit stalling? The GI Bill of Rights has been in committee since January."

The editorial pointed out that some members of Congress had said the bill should be rewritten to prevent "encouragement of idleness through over-liberal unemployment compensation provisions."

"What kind of people do you think are fighting and winning this war?" the *Army Times* asked. "The GI Bill of Rights is not charity. It merely provides a chance for service men and women to navigate under their own power. They have been taken from jobs, homes and futures to win a war. Certainly they deserve a little assistance in making their readjustments."

The Legion believed it should not retreat from its stand. It prepared for a new and final fight for the bill. National Commander Atherton had designated the Legion's birthday, March 15, as "national sign-up day" for petitions urging adoption of the bill. New petitions bearing more than a million names flooded the Washington headquarters; and James P. Ringley and Larry Fenlon of Chicago did an outstanding job in producing them. So did Legionnaires across the land.

Jack Cejnar, the Legion's Public Relations Director, feared a letdown of public interest in the protracted delay. He wrote to key Legionnaires throughout the country, calling on them to speak to their local editors and ask these editors to request full coverage on GI Bill developments from the news services—the Associated Press, United Press and International News Service.

There was even trouble here. The wartime situation had rationed newsprint, and many newspapers could get so little

paper that they were not giving much space to any one thing.

But the new drive bore fruit. In Maine, for instance, Legion Adjutant James Boyle had persuaded the Gannett chain of newspapers that paper shortage or no paper shortage, space must be found to back the GI Bill. Now, in cities and in towns in every state, editors began to demand more complete coverage of the bill. And, as a result, the people were informed when it began to appear that the GI Bill was being stalled. Once again the

Rankin's objections, something committees seldom do. He apparently had been willing to sacrifice the whole bill rather than grant the new veterans unemployment benefits. They voted and reported out a version of the bill that incorporated all the fundamental principles for which the Legion fought. The House passed the GI Bill on May 18, 1944, by a vote of 387 to 0. We celebrated that night.

But a tough fight was still ahead of us.

The bill, as the House passed it, differed in some details from the Senate version of the measure. On May 21 it was sent to a joint 14-man Senate-House conference to iron out the differences.

Protracted meetings of the conferees



On June 22, 1944, President Roosevelt signed the bill into law before a group of Congressmen and Legionnaires who had fought hard to get a GI Bill of Rights. It was not an easy fight but, today, the bill has proved itself beyond all measure.

Legion's Departments and Posts had gone to bat.

The National Executive Committee of the Legion met in Washington from April 26 to May 2, 1944, together with some thirty other national committees, commissions and boards. Their presence gave additional impetus to the demand for action.

It was a difficult time for the Legion's GI Bill Committee—and particularly for Harry Colmery. He spent many hours with members of the House Committee, seeking compromises and agreements to induce them to report out the bill—and many sleepless nights preparing new, tentative drafts of some sections of the bill.

Finally the House veterans committee members simply overrode Chairman

followed. It was reported that they were deadlocked, that they could not come to an agreement, that the GI Bill of Rights would be lost. It is an interesting comment that this can happen whenever a bill is passed, even unanimously, in both Senate and House. If the two versions differ ever so slightly, the whole bill will fail if a joint committee of the two houses fails to agree on every detail.

It was during those heartbreaking days that Sam Rorex and I again met Omar Ketchum, national legislative director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, at the Capitol. The three of us got into a cab to ride back downtown. Ketchum said:

"What are you fellows doing up here? You aren't still talking GI Bill of Rights, are you? That's dead and forgotten!"

(Continued on page 48)

MY GRASS GROWS WHERE OTHER GRASSES FAILED

By Mike Senkiw



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HOW THE FIRST GI BILL WAS WRITTEN: PART II

(Continued from page 26)

Sam smiled.

"Yes," he said, "we're talking about it, and we're going to get it passed."

Ketchum shook his head.

"You're crazy," he said.

Led by Stelle, the Legion's special committee dug in and fought. They marshaled every resource, every influence they could think of.

By Thursday, June 8, 1944 (two days after D-Day in Normandy), the House and Senate conferees had agreed on Section I, II and III of the bill, including the education and loan features. In the main, the Senate had yielded to the House versions. But they were deadlocked over Title IV—veterans job placement. The Senate members wanted its services left in the United States Employment Service, with control exercised by a board of which the Administrator of Veterans Affairs was chairman. The House members wanted to hand it over entirely to the Veterans Administration, creating a new and separate employment organization, duplicating and paralleling the USES and state systems.

The Legion backed the Senate position. It would give control to the VA, in keeping with the Legion's hard-learned lesson that veterans suffer when their affairs are in many hands. Yet it would utilize the set-up of USES and avoid the creation of a wasteful new agency within the VA.

Most likely the House members' insistence on creating an unnecessary new veterans employment service was a camouflage—a cover-up for the opposition to 52-20 which, having already

passed the House, was a dead issue in the conference.

Mr. Rankin, the bitter foe of 52-20 (though till now he'd been our friend in all else), led the new opposition in the conference. As House chairman he refused to cast the proxy vote of absent Rep. John Gibson of Georgia that would tip the scales for the Legion version.

There were seven Senators and seven Representatives on the conference committee. Under the rules a bill would die if a majority of the representatives from each house did not agree.

The seven Senators were in accord. But the House group was evenly divided—three voting to accept the Senate version, three opposing it. The seventh member of the House group was Gibson, at home in Georgia recovering from an acute illness.

THE DEADLOCK lasted through Friday, and into Friday evening. As the conference broke up that evening, Representative Pat Kearney of New York, a Legionnaire as well as a Past National Commander of the VFW and a staunch advocate of the Legion's desires, told John Stelle:

"John, we can't hold this thing together much longer. We've agreed to meet once more, at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. If we can't reach an agreement then, the conferees will vote to report back to each house that they are unable to agree. The bill will be lost."

"What can we do?" John asked.

"Get John Gibson up here from



"You'd better not. You're not in any shape to take a deep breath."

Georgia," Pat Kearney said. "He'll vote the right way. He's the only one who can save the bill."

We knew John Gibson was for us. He had sent his proxy to the conferees but the chairman of the House Committee refused to accept it.

Get Gibson to Washington by 10 o'clock the next morning?

We looked at our watches. It was already past 6 o'clock in the evening. We dashed from the Capitol and raced back to Legion headquarters.

John Stelle put in a call to Gibson's home in Douglas, Georgia.

"Sorry," the long distance operator said, "there is a delay of five to six hours

No answer! The Congressman was not at home.

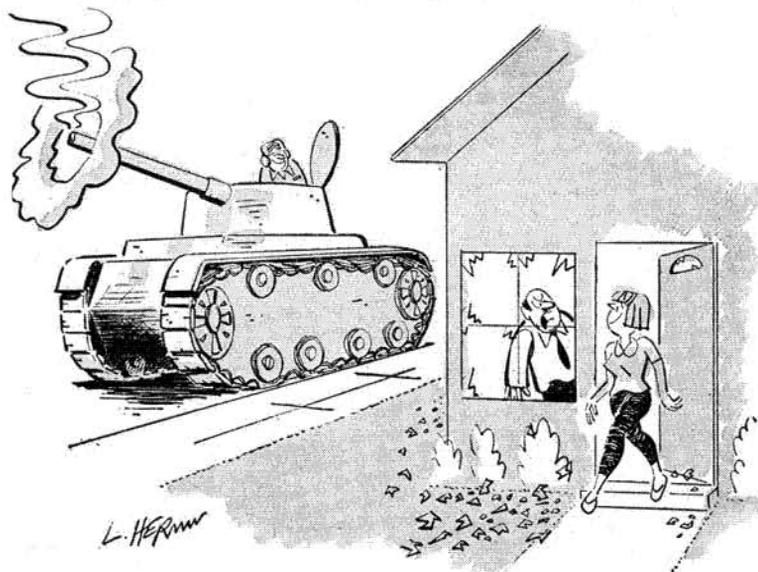
The Douglas telephone operator was told why we had to reach Gibson. Her attitude was like that of another telephone operator that night who said:

"My husband just landed in Normandy. I'm with you."

The Douglas operator said:

"I'll find him for you—some way or other!"

She began to telephone his friends. She learned that Gibson was supposed to be on the highway, some place between Valdosta and Douglas, 70 miles apart. She thought he was on his way home.



"Why can't he honk his horn, like other dates?"

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE

on all calls to Georgia." That was typical of wartime America. If you didn't have an official priority you might wait and wait to get a long distance call through.

The news was crushing. But Jack Cejnar said:

"The Atlanta Constitution is for us. They've written editorials asking their readers to call on Congress to pass it. They'll help."

We hadn't been able to get Douglas, Georgia, on our first meek try to crack the wartime telephone priorities. Now Stelle took a different tack. He got on the phone and refused to take no for an answer. He claimed to have a mysterious priority and finally talked an operator into connecting him with Atlanta. Dupont Wright, the night editor of the Constitution, and Rolfe Edmondson, rewrite man and a veteran of World War I, were on duty. They had a telephone priority they could use in an emergency. When the situation was explained to them, they decided this was certainly an emergency.

Edmondson called Gibson's home in Douglas.

"I'll ring him every five minutes until I get him," she said.

Time was racing by. It was 9 o'clock—10 o'clock—11.

If we did reach Gibson, how were we going to get him to Washington?

There was an Army Air Force Base at Waycross, forty miles away. Could we get an Army bomber?

I put in a call for a friend, Bill Westlake, chief of Air Force public relations. I heard he was in California. Where? No one available at that hour knew.

Using its news priority, I called the Los Angeles Examiner and explained the situation.

"We've got to talk to Westlake!" I said. "I can only tell you he's some place in California."

Within half an hour, the Examiner found him (don't ask me how)—and Bill Westlake was on the wire.

"I'll do anything I can to help," he said. "I'll telephone the commander at the Waycross base, and he'll be at your service."

He did. In a matter of minutes, the
(Continued on page 50)

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HOW THE FIRST GI BILL WAS WRITTEN: PART II

(Continued from page 49)

Waycross commandant telephoned us. "I haven't got a plane available," he said. "But there's an Eastern Airlines plane due to leave Jacksonville, Florida, at 2:20 a.m. If you can get Gibson here, I'll have a car ready to drive him to Jacksonville."

Meanwhile, Past National Commander Roane Waring of Tennessee had telephoned Judge Robert Patterson, Undersecretary of War, to get a top airplane priority for Gibson. The priority was granted.

In Georgia, two radio stations, WSB in Atlanta, and WGOV in Valdosta, were broadcasting repeated appeals:

"Anyone knowing whereabouts of Congressman John S. Gibson ask him to call Operator 2 in Washington immediately. Important he be contacted."

The Georgia State Police also pitched in and helped. Told how urgently he was needed, a police lieutenant said:

"You bet we'll find him."

POLICEMEN RACED over the highways Gibson might be traveling. There'd be the roar of a siren, and a policeman would wave a motorist to the side of the road.

"What—what do you want?" the motorist would say. "I wasn't speeding." "Are you Gibson? No? OK. Go on."

Down in Douglas, the hour had long passed the quitting time of the operator who was "sitting on Gibson's phone." But she didn't think of quitting.

Then, sometime after 11, she called Edmondson on the Constitution.

"I've got Congressman Gibson," she said.

Gibson was on the wire. He was told the situation.

"I thought it was important," he said. "I heard the phone ringing as I was driving in the yard. You bet I'll get to Washington. They promised to vote my proxy."

Dupont Wright got John Stelle on the wire in Washington. He relayed instructions between Stelle and Gibson—giving Gibson the number of his plane priority and other information.

Pat Kelley of Georgia was part of the Legion team in its Washington headquarters that night. He and Lyon ("Count") Brandon of Mississippi had been appointed to the committee—and had done yeomen's service. He managed somehow to phone Georgia's Legion Commander, Clark Luke, at Ocilla, Ga., got him out of bed, and told him to drive to Douglas, pick Gibson up—and take him to Waycross, where the Army car was waiting.

Meanwhile, in New York, the late Wiley Smith, editor of the Hearst wire, got Walter Sternberg, Eastern Airlines' traffic manager, out of bed, and told him what was needed. Eastern's plane had to be held at Jacksonville until Gibson could get there.

"Don't worry," said Sternberg, "we'll do it." He had no qualms. His boss, Eddie Rickenbacker, was an active Legionnaire and America's top flying ace in WWI.

Sternberg called Jacksonville with a single message:

"Bring Gibson to Washington on that plane if you have to wait all night."

Dupont Wright was given all this in-



"How do you like the way she 'corners'?"

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE



THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE

formation. He relayed it to Gibson. Suddenly Gibson said:

"I just remembered—I haven't got any cash on me!"

Wright began to cast about for an answer to that. But Gibson said:

"Never mind. There's always a poker game at the Elks Club on Friday night. I'll get some money from the boys."

Even as he spoke, he saw the headlights of an automobile turning into his yard.

"This must be Clark Luke now," he said. "I'm on my way. Goodbye!"

It was Clark Luke. Through a slashing thunderstorm they raced toward Waycross. Georgia police provided a motorcycle escort. Police were watching all crossroads to divert traffic. The road was clear all the way to Waycross—and to Jacksonville.

At Waycross, Gibson leaped from Luke's car into an Army car, driven by Corporal Jack Hunter, former Notre Dame track star, with Private First Class Nils Stevens of Warnock, Ohio, as relief driver.

Less than three hours were left when Gibson left his home at Douglas. And Jacksonville was 150 miles away!

The Army car leaped forward—raced through the storm at 90 miles an hour. Once disaster almost put an end to the trip.

The driver swung out to pass a truck.

Suddenly a sharp curve loomed ahead. The driver's hands tightened on the wheel. His foot found the brake. The car whipped into the turn, tires screaming. Two wheels left the road. It lurched and tilted sickeningly. But just when it seemed certain to overturn, Corporal Hunter fought it back into control.

"I thought my feet would go through the floor boards," Gibson said later.

Florida police waited at the state line to escort the car to the airport where the plane was waiting.

At 6:37 a.m., the plane landed at Washington National Airport—and the Legion's special committee greeted Gibson. He was fighting mad.

"There's supposed to be such a thing as Congressional courtesy," he said. "I can't understand why my proxy wasn't voted."

Sharply at 10 o'clock, as the conference committee went into session, Gibson strode in.

"Hello, John," someone said. "Have you got the opposition licked down in Georgia?"

"Yes," Gibson answered. "I've got it licked there. And now I've come up here to lick it. Americans are dying today in Normandy in the greatest invasion in all history. I'm going to hold a press conference after this meeting and castigate

anyone who dares to vote against this bill."

With the deadlock broken, the three negative voters from the House gave up and made it unanimous for the bill. The long seven months fight was won. The GI Bill of Rights was reported back to the House and Senate—in the form the Legion wanted it. The Senate approved its final form on June 12, and the House on June 13, 1944.

A FEW DAYS LATER, Sam Rorex had the pleasure of carrying the bill to the White House for the President's signature. Rorex was one of the two Arkansas men on the Legion's GI Bill committee and a friend of President Roosevelt. The President signed it on June 22, in the presence of John Stelle, Frank Sullivan, National Adjutant Donald G. Glascoff, Harry Colmery and Ralph Mitchell, aide to National Commander Warren Atherton.

The first GI Bill of Rights became the law of the land on the day that the final attack was launched across the Atlantic to secure Cherbourg, first major seaport objective of the Normandy invasion. In the Pacific, it was the fifth day of the Marianas invasion and the 4th Marine Division had just cut Saipan in two.

THE END

WILL YOU SMOKE MY NEW KIND OF PIPE 30 Days at My Risk?

By E. A. CAREY

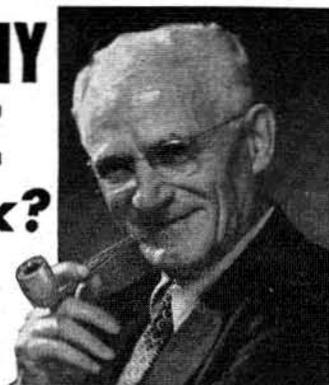
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My new pipe is not a new model, not a new style, not a new gadget, not an improvement on old style pipes. It is the first pipe in the world to use an ENTIRELY NEW PRINCIPLE for giving unadulterated pleasure to pipe smokers.

I've been a pipe smoker for 30 years—always looking for the ideal pipe—buying all the disappointing gadgets—never finding a single, solitary pipe that would smoke hour after hour, day after day, without bitterness, bite, or sludge.

With considerable doubt, I decided to work out something for myself. After months of experimenting and scores of disappointments, suddenly, almost by accident, I discovered how to harness four great natural laws to give me everything I wanted in a pipe. It didn't require any "breaking in". From the first puff it smoked cool—it smoked mild. It smoked right down to the last bit of tobacco without bite. It never has to be "rested". AND it never has to be cleaned! Yet it is utterly impossible for goo or sludge to reach your tongue, because my invention dissipates the goo as it forms!

You might expect all this to require a complicated mechanical gadget, but when you see it, the most surprising thing will be that I've done all this in a pipe that looks like any of the finest conventional pipes.



The claims I could make for this new principle in tobacco enjoyment are so spectacular that no pipe smoker would believe them. So, since "seeing is believing", I also say "Smoking is convincing" and I want to send you one Carey Pipe to smoke 30 days at my risk. At the end of that time, if you're willing to give up your Carey Pipe, simply break it to bits—and return it to me—the trial has cost you nothing.

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