

THE LIFE OF THE COMMON SOLDIER
IN THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

by

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A THESIS

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THE LIFE OF THE COMMON SOLDIER
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A THESIS

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Sam Houston State Teachers College
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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MASTER OF ARTS

by

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The men responsible for the success of the Spanish-American War were the common soldiers and their immediate company commanders. Today only a few veterans survive who endured the hardships of that conflict. The author is extremely grateful to one group of these American soldiers who graciously granted him the privilege of using their experiences in the writing of this thesis. Therefore, special recognition should be given to the United Spanish War Veterans, Department of Texas, and if a dedication be in order, the study is dedicated here--to the volunteers of 1898.

EDWIN E. LEHR

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Purpose

It was the purpose of this study to describe the life of the common American soldier in the Spanish-American War. It was told not as seen through statistics, military strategy, or the press, but as it was experienced by the participants themselves. The study encompassed the background for the war, the enlistment of the soldier, his camp life, the fighting in Cuba, the seige of Santiago, the soldier's return home, and his discharge. Rather than just sketching events of the war the investigation considered mainly the physical living conditions and environment of the soldier, as well as his attitudes and reactions to circumstances he faced.

Methods

The methods used to obtain information for this study were (1) interviews of veterans of the Spanish-American War, (2) the examination of periodicals, contemporary and current, letters of participants, books written by participants, government documents and reports, published reminiscences, general histories, newspaper articles, and published and unpublished diaries, and (3) correspondence with veterans of that war and their organization.

Findings

From the evidence presented in this study the following evaluations appear to be in order:

1. While the Spanish-American War lasted only a short time, it was responsible for many changes made in foreign and military affairs of the United States.

2. The causes for the conflict go much deeper than the sinking of the Maine. The United States actually wanted a war that could have been avoided. Little consideration for preparedness was given by the government or the public. The war was not incited by conservative commercial interests but was considered a popular crusade to end Spanish misrule in Cuba.

3. Enlistment was a simple but colorful event for a soldier. A variety of methods were used to entice enlistment, but patriotic appeal to answer his country's call was the main inducement.

4. The training camps were poorly situated and posed hardships of climate and inadequate water supply in most of them. The soldier had to make a difficult adjustment to the routine, training, and manner of living in a regimented environment, but the training proved to be insufficient and outmoded.

5. The soldier's equipment was found to be inadequate, particularly his clothing and firearms. The

Volunteers came to camp with hardly any serviceable equipment, which caused a great deal of confusion, since it was supposed by the government that the National Guard and the Volunteers would have their essentials.

6. Many hardships befell the soldiers. Their food was often poorly prepared and monotonous. Again the Guardsmen were worse off than the regular army, and had to subsist on hardtack, beans, coffee, canned tomatoes, and canned beef. Worse than poor food were the epidemics of typhoid and dysentery that struck the camps during the summer months claiming many lives. The camp hospitals were appalling to the public and many camps were disbanded because of the terrible conditions which resulted.

7. The embarkation port of Tampa was a scene of mass confusion and hard work. Life aboard the crowded transports was trying to the troopers who were irked at the delays and conditions, but they did not complain because they wanted to be in the fighting. Once enroute most enjoyed the voyage.

8. The trooper's reactions under fire differed from what he thought they would be, and many found battle was not so glorious. The lack of preparation on the part of the government was displayed then more vividly than at any other time during the war. The soldiers faced an enemy that was well armed and experienced. The Americans had very little food, black powder ammunition exposed their positions, their

artillery was of little help, and many errors in strategy increased unnecessarily the loss of life.

9. The problems of lack of supplies worked many hardships on the army during combat and during the seige which followed.

10. The living conditions of the men in the trenches were extremely unsanitary, and greatly weakened the entire army. The surrender of the Spanish saved the invaders from military disaster, because the army was so weakened by disease that it could not have withstood a severe counter-attack.

11. The sick and wounded soldiers were left to their own care while the others were relieved and sent home. Later hospital ships (converted cattle boats) were sent to pick them up.

12. The spirit of individual self-reliance was one of the most outstanding characteristics of the soldier of this war.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A great amount of writing has been produced on the glorious and colorful aspects of the Spanish-American War, particularly about its leaders. Some good works have been published on the strategy and politics of the struggle, and a few historians, such as Walter Millis, have attempted the extremely difficult task of writing a complete history of the conflict. Now, more than a half century after this "splendid little war," as it was called, only the most dramatic aspects of the war, such as the charge up San Juan Hill and Admiral Dewey's victory at Manila, are generally remembered. Because of the passage of time, the neglect of narrators, and perhaps the tendency of humanity to remember the glamorous and the spectacular more than the commonplace, facts have degenerated to legends. Realities, particularly the less attractive ones, have become obscured or ignored. One result of this neglect is that the men responsible for the success of the entire venture have not been given the attention they deserve.

Relatively little has been written of the men who lived on hardtack, "sowbelly," and hard beans in the trenches around Santiago, Cuba. History has made the common soldier appear as a mere straightman in a poorly written melodrama. There can be wars with poor leadership, as this

was, but there can be no war without an army. The common soldier is the army.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the life of the common American soldier in the Spanish-American War. It is told, not as seen through statistics and military strategy, but as it was actually experienced. It is hoped that, presented in this manner, the soldier would be appreciated more, and the war better understood. This study is concerned with the life of the participant from his enlistment until time of discharge. More than merely tracing events, the investigation attempts to describe the psychological trappings of the soldier as well as his physical environment --in short, to tell as much as possible about his feelings, attitudes, and reactions to situations he encountered, as well as his physical living conditions. The questions posed dealing with soldier life are legion, and defy ready enumeration.

Limitations of the Study

This work is limited to the American soldier who fought in Cuba, and mention is made to those participating in the fighting elsewhere only for comparative purposes, or for illustration of universal qualities. Generally-known history is used for the sake of providing a background and

setting for the common soldier's experiences, and is not intended to represent a complete study of all aspects of the war. The term common soldier, as used in this study, is interpreted to mean the enlisted soldier, both regular and volunteer.

Sources of the Study

To answer the many questions implied by the general question, "What was the life of the American soldier like in this war?," many different approaches became necessary. The following sources were used in obtaining data for this study: (1) periodicals, contemporary and current; (2) published and unpublished diaries; (3) letters of participants; (4) interviews of veterans; (5) books written by participants, and others; (6) government documents and reports; (7) published reminiscences; and (8) newspaper articles.

Because of the scarcity of related works, interviews and published reminiscences were relied on to a great extent. Very little was found in archives, either state or national, but the archives of the Barker Historical Center in Austin, Texas, contributed the extremely useful Willrich Papers. The Estill Library at Sam Houston provided the basic secondary materials such as The Splendid Little War, by Frank Freidel; Walter Millis' excellent reference, The Martial Spirit; and Clifford B. Westermeier's Who Rush To Glory.

The Library of Congress was the source for the papers of Roswell R. Hoes, the Journal of Percival C. Pope, and the Asher C. Hinds diary. It also furnished the excellent source books, The Campaign of Santiago De Cuba by H. H. Sargent, and The Spanish War Journal, a six volume work edited by L. C. Dyer. Also found here was the Report of the Commission Appointed by the President to Investigate the Conduct of the War Department in the War with Spain; Reminiscences of the Santiago Campaign written by John Bigelow, Jr.; and copies of the Cosmopolitan and Munsey's magazines of the period.

The United Spanish War Veterans Organization was an indispensable aid in locating veterans. This group of men [at the time of this writing, averaged eighty-four years of age] attended a picnic held in Houston, Texas. This occasion aided immensely in the location of veterans to be interviewed, both as individuals and as a group. They answered all correspondence directed to them with dispatch and in the spirit of cooperation. They demonstrated great accuracy in remembering dates, places, and names. The descriptions they gave of their food, clothing, and equipment while soldiers were very precise. Since their organization is composed entirely of veterans of that war, its ranks are never replenished by new blood as are other similar organizations. Its files are thinning rapidly and as a source it will be gone within a few years.

Related Studies

Investigation revealed no directly related studies at the Doctoral or Master's thesis level. The Little War of Private Post, by Charles Johnson Post, gave a very vivid account of one man's experiences. Who Rush to Glory dealt with all the aspects of the three Cowboy Cavalry units in the war and used newspaper accounts exclusively. Published reminiscences were probably the most pertinent related works, but most were found limited in scope and not readily accessible to the public, since there are few published. The Library of Congress was the best source for accounts of this nature.

CHAPTER II

THE CALL TO ARMS

The Spanish-American War was of short duration, lasting only one hundred and fifteen days, but the results of this war are far greater than the brevity of the conflict would indicate. Because of its short duration, the lack of preparedness, ridiculous quarrels as to who should receive credit for victories, and the fact that more soldiers died from illness than bullets, this war has been given less attention than the more destructive military struggles. Some aspects of the War with Spain are well remembered and others are not, but there are many things about the war that should be considered before evaluating this contest of arms. It has been responsible for many changes made in the domestic, humanitarian, military, and foreign affairs of America since that time.

The effects of the struggle on American military establishments and maintenance were extensive. It provided a training ground for commanders in World War I, and demonstrated the need for modernization of the United States Army so dramatically that subsequent changes made in the War Department caused the nation to be much better prepared for its entrance into World War I. Forty-two per cent of the Spanish-American War veterans saw service in that war. The losses in death from all causes [four and three-tenths per

cent] were greater than in World War I [seven-tenths of one per cent]. As a result the National Defense Act was passed and a school for training officers in the latest developments in warfare was established. And if the fighting against the rebels in the Philippines is considered an extension of the war [considered so by the federal government for pension purposes] it actually lasted four years and two months--a period longer than most American wars. Also of consequence was the journey of the battleship Oregon from America's West Coast around Cape Horn to Cuba. This trip demonstrated the military or defensive need of an isthmian canal, which was later built.¹

The Spanish-American War marked the entrance of the United States into world affairs as a leading nation, and opened many new areas to American trade. This war healed much of the bitterness and disunity which had resulted from the Civil War and Reconstruction. It drove the last great absolute monarchy from this hemisphere and freed Cuba of foreign rule. It brought America into Far Eastern affairs and directly raised the standard of living of millions of people in the Philippines and the Caribbean areas. The presence of American troops in Cuba resulted in the conquest of yellow fever and some kindred diseases, an accomplishment

¹ Leonard C. Packard, "The Flag of Destiny," brochure published at Fort Smith, Arkansas; no date given.

which benefited all mankind. An empire and property valued at billions of dollars were added to the United States, yet the war cost only one billion eight hundred million dollars, an amount far less than the cost of the Civil War or any other subsequent American wars. These involvements caused the policy of strict isolation, which had been a factor in causing the struggle, to be abandoned.²

Near the end of the nineteenth century the United States was relatively inexperienced in foreign affairs and wars fought outside the continent, but at this time a change began to take place. Previously all the nation's foreign policy had been designed to keep out of European affairs which might slow the conquest of this continent. As the frontier disappeared, the United States became less self-centered and introspective, and attention shifted more towards the whole world. From the Civil War until the Harrison administration, American diplomacy was episodic and of little vigor. Attention was then drawn toward foreign affairs by the fur-seal controversy in Pribilof Islands, and events in Hawaii, Samoa, Chile, Venezuela, and Cuba. It was the events centering around Cuba that led to the greatest involvement for the now full grown United States.³

² Ibid.

³ John D. Hicks, The American Nation, 299-307.

The United States had long had an interest in the affairs of Cuba. This island neighbor, less than one hundred miles from its shores, has been of concern to America since at least 1820. Southern expansionists before the Civil War had desired the island, and after the war Cuban rebels sought to involve the United States in their repeated attempts to be free of their Spanish masters.⁴ A ten year revolt which was begun in 1868 caused very strained relations between Spain and the United States. Danger of war was greatest in 1873 when an American ship, the Virginius, was captured and the crew executed for aiding the Cuban insurgents.⁵

In 1895 another insurrection broke out under Maximo Gomez, and within a year the rebels had control of almost half the island. The struggle developed into a situation where the rebels were not strong enough to win without aid, and Spain was too weak to crush them. The island was ravaged by war and new accounts of terror and destruction aroused great sympathy in the United States.

When McKinley took office he, like Cleveland before him, tried to settle the controversy without resorting to war. His efforts brought about the removal of General

⁴ Harry Hansen (ed.), The World Almanac, 1961, 202.

⁵ Hicks, American Nation, 307-308.

Valeriano "Butcher" Weyler and abandonment of his cruel policies of suppression. This action temporarily offered a chance for peaceful settlement, but the explosion of the American battleship Maine in Havana Harbor greatly lessened the chances for a settlement short of war. McKinley did not take as firm a stand for peace as a strong President would have done. On April 11, 1898, after American diplomats had obtained all the concessions asked of Spain, McKinley allowed himself to be pressured into asking for authority to intervene in Cuba. The American ambassador in Madrid had already cabled that Spain would give in to the demands of the United States, but Congress voted permission to use force to drive Spain from Cuba. The war came on April 24, 1898 in spite of diplomatic success.⁶ This, in essence, meant that war could have been avoided had the Americans been willing to accept reasonable concessions.

In the Spring of 1898 the United States wanted war.⁷ The editor of the Atlantic Monthly stated in an article, dated June, 1898, that regardless of the long background of crises and concern over Cuba these "could not have driven us to war if we had not been willing . . ."⁸

⁶Ibid., 307-313.

⁷Walter Millis, The Martial Spirit, 35.

⁸W. H. Page, "The War With Spain, and After," Atlantic Monthly, 81:724.

The causes of the war were wrapped in a peculiar psychological background. Perhaps it was the time at which this particular crisis came, or perhaps it was the mood of the people in the United States. Most Americans felt that the war was unavoidable and the result of a long series of incidents over Cuba, but if a prediction of war had been made six months before, it would have been considered jingoistic.⁹ The war was not caused by conservative commercial interests, as is sometimes supposed. McKinley and other more conservative leaders fought to preserve peace until it became a political impossibility, not just a political liability, to oppose it.¹⁰ The minority opinion was well expressed by the conservative Atlantic Monthly when it said the war may have been caused by:

Newspapers conducted by lost souls that make merchandise of all things that influence man's worst passions. A congress with no attractive political programs for the next election, and a spirit of unrest among those classes of people who had not wholly recovered from the riot in false hopes that inspired the followers of Mr. Bryan in 1896. . . .¹¹

Many agree that the explosion of the Maine was the factor that precipitated our entrance into the war. It

⁹ Ibid., 721-723.

¹⁰ Frank Freidel, The Splendid Little War, 5-6. See also Hicks, American Nation, 310-312, and Harvey Wish, Contemporary America, 96-97.

¹¹ Page, "War With Spain," 724.

still has not been proven that the Spanish sank the warship. In fact, it definitely would have been to the advantage of the rebels in Cuba, who deliberately burned American owned cane fields to get support from the public in the United States, to sink the ship.¹² Whether the explosion was caused by accident, treachery, or shrewd political maneuvering, it caused public anger to become inflamed.

Discussions of Spain, its history, ideas, government, and character became the topics of the day. Public excitement was aroused through nearly every medium of communication. Rumors of Spanish atrocities in Cuba were accepted without question. Newspapers carried articles on Spain in the women's pages and other sections not ordinarily devoted to international affairs.

Some of the ways of exciting patriotic fervor were spectacular, such as the San Jacinto Day celebration at the famed battleground. As advertised in The Houston Post for a week before April 21, 1898, a "reincarnation" of the Maine over one hundred feet long was blown up amidst a great display of fireworks, and a United States flag, sixty by two hundred feet, was sent up by balloons. Speeches damning Spain dominated the dedication.¹³

¹² Millis, Martial Spirit, 36.

¹³ The Houston Post, April 22, 1898.

Although William Randolph Hearst claims to have created the war, basically "it was a popular crusade to stop a seemingly endless revolution which was shattering Cuba."¹⁴ Most veterans one meets today seem to think that Spanish cruelty and accounts of atrocities they had read or heard were responsible for bringing them into the war rather than just the sinking of the Maine. They felt Spain was responsible for the ship being sent to Havana in the first place even though the Spanish might not have sunk it. Their feelings were unchanged even after they had fought the war in Cuba.¹⁵

Some persons were overly enthusiastic about war with Spain. Predictions were made that there would be war, even while the President was trying for peace. Such was the talk at the United Confederate Veterans encampment held at Wimberly Lake, Texas. Colonel Washington Jones of Bastrop uttered the thoughts of most people of the day when he said, "I believe we will have war . . . I favor it . . . it is the only war I ever favored."¹⁶ Many National Guard units were called to duty prematurely; others were making hasty preparations for mobilization. Any movement of troops, no

¹⁴Freidel, Splendid Little War, 5.

¹⁵Opinions expressed by veterans interviewed at John F. Alber's home in Houston. Permission to quote secured.

¹⁶The Houston Post, April 17, 1898.

matter how insignificant, made news, and daily reports of readiness were made by Guard units in nearly every community. A regular army enlistment station in Dallas, besieged by early volunteers, turned men away on April 17, 1898, because war had not "yet been declared."¹⁷

Each headline left the impression that war was inevitable and would be declared any moment. Conservative Republicans and McKinley, the jingoist papers said, were all that stood in the way. These leaders were attacked daily after the resolution to intervene had been adopted by Congress on April 11, 1898. Congress and the press hammered relentlessly until the administration could hold back no longer.¹⁸ When war did come on April 24, 1898, the public was emotionally ready, even if the government was not. As the clerk to the Speaker of the House wrote: "I have had a feeling that we are embarking on an unknown sea."¹⁹

The Navy was better prepared than the Army, because of the efforts of Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, and Secretary of the Navy, John D. Long. Earlier Secretaries of the Navy had helped build the Navy up from an embryonic state. Beginning in 1885, under William P.

¹⁷ Ibid., April 23, 1898.

¹⁸ Harvey Wish, Contemporary America, 96-97.

¹⁹ Asher C. Hinds' diary, entry dated April 13, 1898, manuscripts located at the Library of Congress.

Whitney, the Navy Department improved its administration and increased its capacity to wage war. During the period 1885-1898, the United States Navy rose from an unranked position among the navies of the world to sixth place behind Great Britain, the standard by which all navies were judged. At the outbreak of war the United States had roughly seventeen per cent of the naval strength of Britain. Spain was seventh with approximately two-thirds the naval power of the United States.²⁰

If our Navy was considered ready, our War Department was not, since it had only about 26,000 men.²¹ The troops were scattered throughout the United States, most of them in the West, and seldom, if ever, in peacetime, had as much as a regiment been assembled in one place. A large army for occupation or invasion had not been planned or prepared. It simply had been assumed that we had an adequate army, or would soon get one. There was no organization to take care of the number of men needed, nor had much thought been given to the technical matters of conducting such a war.

The National Guard forces were another factor in the confusion of mobilization. They were much greater in number than the regulars, but less well trained and equipped.

²⁰ Trumbull White, The United States in War With Spain, 331-335.

²¹ Freidel, Splendid Little War, 10.

They were not under the Army, but under state governors, and not as well supervised. Local politics often decided who the officers were and what a unit did in the war.²² McKinley's call for volunteers caused a swift filling of the ranks of all branches of service beyond the actual number that could ever be handled by the existing organization.

The Army, National Guard, and Volunteer regiments were all deficient in training, using generally long outdated methods of maneuvers and strategy. Equipment was another problem. The National Guard was still without smokeless powder, as were all artillery units that fought in Cuba.²³ The shoddy and woolen uniforms were inadequate and in short supply. This lack of preparedness, reflected in our army's equipment, planning, training, and efficiency, was to take a serious toll in lives and increase the discomforts of the troops.

The men of America responded enthusiastically to the President's call. The army swelled in size but not without trouble and deficiencies.

In describing the way he got into war, Arthur R. Fern of the 71st New York Infantry, stated that his commanding officer drew a line down the floor of his armory and said,

²² Millis, Martial Spirit, 150-160.

²³ Franklin Matthews, "An American Army Maneuvers," Harper's, 96:493-498.

"All those that want to go to Cuba, step across."²⁴ Private Fern stepped over; he was in. All enlistments and decisions to fight were not as dramatic or as simple as this, but many were similar in the National Guard and Volunteer groups.

D. N. Scott, of Houston, had a similar experience. The City Sanitation Officer, J. B. Massey, was told that if he could get one hundred men he would be made a Captain. He accomplished this task and thus the Second U. S. Volunteer Infantry, Company "H" was formed. The men were assembled downtown, and drill was begun.²⁵

With the regular army the procedure was somewhat the same except that the officers were regulars. Many a volunteer read a poster on the street, and then sought information from a regular soldier standing nearby. If interested, he went inside the recruiting office, and made out his enlistment papers. Next he was given a physical examination and took an oath. He then drew his uniform, or in some instances, was compelled to wait until supplied one.²⁶

Enlistment in the United States has never been like this since that time. Enlistment stations were everywhere,

²⁴Statement by Arthur Fern, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

²⁵Statement by D. N. Scott, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

²⁶Description by veterans interviewed at John Alber's home in Houston on June 24, 1961. Permission to quote secured.

and all one had to do was pick his regiment. Every shop-keeper in the larger towns was some sort of recruiter. Tables were set up on sidewalks and in parks to take men into the service. Many kinds of inducements were used. Upon enlistment a person got free drinks in almost every bar, and bartenders became on-the-spot recruiters. Enlistment in some cities also entitled one to a red flannel "bellyband," made by a number of patriotic young ladies. Many prominent citizens accosted men on the street urging them to enlist in some military unit. Every store seemed intent on organizing a regiment.²⁷ Many persons organizing volunteer regiments had political motives and used inside political connections to get their unit accepted. It became increasingly difficult to get a unit to Tampa, to enable it to be sent to Cuba.²⁸

The ordinary soldier enlisted for a variety of reasons, but mostly to fight the hated Spaniards. Many enlisted for the excitement or adventure, and all enlisted for only the duration of the war--a situation that was to lead to trouble later when Spain surrendered and troops were still needed for occupation of the Philippine Islands.

To be eligible for service one was supposed to be

²⁷ Charles Johnson Post, The Little War of Private Post, 13-15.

²⁸ Hicks, American Nation, 316-318, 323.

between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, and unmarried. As an exception, one could enlist as a musician at age sixteen with consent of his father or guardian. Married men could enlist with the consent of the commanding officer of the unit to which they aspired to belong.²⁹ Only a few weeks before the war started, the recruiter in Dallas had complained that too many "bums" and alcoholics were trying to get into the army. A special ad, signed by Lt. Taubeck and placed in a Dallas newspaper, said he had accepted only twenty of two hundred and forty who applied the day before; he wanted nothing but "physically perfect men with good reputations."³⁰

A great many of the men were young, under twenty-one years of age, in the volunteer organizations. The regulars on the average were older, as were, naturally, the officers and the non-commissioned officers. There were some exceptions to the age limits that apparently got by the recruiters. Benjamin A. Bowman, a Graves Registrar for the United Spanish War Veterans organization, wrote that his company had a Comrade Doyle who was sixty-two years of age and claimed to have been with Grant at Vicksburg. At the opposite extreme, there was a lad, in the company commanded by

²⁹ The Dallas Morning News, May 10, 1898.

³⁰ Ibid., April 1, 1898.

Captain Henry Bankhead of Mississippi, who said he was only thirteen years of age.³¹

The volunteers were from every walk of life. Some were extremely wealthy and well-known men, such as young Hamilton Fish, and others who were poor and unknown. Both white and colored, the men came from all sections and from all occupations.³² The bulk of the volunteer cavalry units had been miners, lumberjacks, or cowboys before entering the service, and thus were a slight exception to the cross sections usually found in other units.³³ Zogbaum describes the enlisted men in this manner: "Some fall by the wayside . . . unworthy of any calling . . . but by far the great mass are bright-eyed, vigorous, clean, manly . . . 'first class fighting men'."³⁴

The enthusiasm for the war did not make all people surrender their prejudices to the good of the cause. At least one group refused to serve with other common soldiers. This was the famous Seventh Regiment of the New York National Guard, noted for its efficiency and traditions. It had a

³¹ Letter from Benjamin A. Bowman to the author. Permission to quote secured.

³² Rufus F. Zogbaum, "Honor to Whom Honor is Due," Harper's, 98:803.

³³ Clifford P. Westermeyer, Who Rush to Glory, 117-118.

³⁴ Zogbaum, "Honor to Whom Honor is Due," 803.

large number of wealthy and prominent people in its ranks. This regiment would not serve with every "Tom, Dick, and Harry" in the Federal Army. It was not allowed to leave the state because it had become so unpopular. The people of New York demonstrated their resentment at a parade a short time later. A regular army artillery unit that bore the same number was mistaken for this unpopular group. Seeing the number "seven" on the marching soldiers' canteens brought boos and hisses from the crowd, until the true identity of the unit became known. At least one person was mobbed because he closed his shop, protesting America's descent to the "barbarity of war," and the Governor of Kansas reorganized his regiments to prevent federal officers from commanding them.³⁵ These dissenters were in a small minority.

Most of the participants were seeking adventure and nursing a desire to punish the Spaniards. This was all a part of becoming a man. Such was the case of Pvt. John F. Alber, whose mother did not approve of her nineteen-year-old son hurrying off to chastise the "evil" Spaniards. However, his uncle and father approved as they thought it would be a good experience for him. He enlisted in St. Louis and soon left for camp.³⁶ Others felt the "blood of their ancestors

³⁵ Millis, Martial Spirit, 158-161.

³⁶ Statements by John Alber, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

rise in their veins" and wanted to get into the fighting, in spite of protests by their mothers.³⁷

The titles given the different units sometimes reflected the manner in which they were expected to fight, the locality from which they came, the name of a famous individual in their unit, or some other identifying characteristic. The cavalry unit organized by Teddy Roosevelt was given more names than any other regiment, but several others were given nearly as many. Some of the names given to Roosevelt's regiment were:

Teddy's Rough Riders, Roosevelt's Rough Riders, Teddy's Terrors, Teddy's Holy Terrors, Roosevelt's Rough 'uns, Teddy's Gilded Gang, Roosevelt's Wild West, Teddy's Texas Tarantulas, Teddy's Cowboy Contingent, Teddy's Riotous Rounders, Fighting Cowboys, Cowboy Volunteers, Roosevelt's Regiment, Teddy's Canvasbacks, and Uncle Sam's Brownies.³⁸

In April and May, 1898, patriotic and excited crowds gathered wherever troops were moving. ". . . Everywhere over this good, fair land, flags were flying . . . at the stations, crowds gathered to hurrah for the soldiers, and to throw hats into the air, and to unfurl flags."³⁹ The music of "Dixie" and "The Star Spangled Banner" blended together, as the boys of the "blue" and the "gray" marched together

³⁷Willrich to his mother, George Willrich Papers, University of Texas.

³⁸Westermeyer, Rush to Glory, 34.

³⁹Quoted by Frank Freidel, Splendid Little War, 33.

for the first time since the Civil War. An ex-confederate general, Joseph Wheeler, was given an important job under the "Yankee" Shafter. The new spirit of cooperation showed that most of the old bitterness had faded.

Troops marching in New York were given a grand departure. With crowds cheering, they marched downtown, to a ferry, and then on to Long Island. Trains were bedecked with banners carrying the words "Remember the Maine" and other mottoes. Popular songs such as "Good-bye, My Lover, Good-bye" were sung in many places.⁴⁰ Lavish displays of fireworks were sometimes shown, as when the New York troops received news of Dewey's victory at Manila. Parties honoring young men going to war were given in many cities.

One such affair was the garden party given in San Antonio honoring the volunteers. Among those honored were Lewis and George Maverick.⁴¹ Lewis, nicknamed the "Infant Warrior" by his friends, became a member of the Rough Riders and served the duration of the war with them.⁴²

The procedure for sending men forth to war was much the same all over the country. A few exceptions were in the West. Here volunteer units could assemble at their

⁴⁰Westermeyer, Rush to Glory, 55-60.

⁴¹San Antonio Daily Express, May 15, 1898.

⁴²Athletic Association of the University of Texas, The Cactus, 138.

respective state capitols, listen to speeches presented by the governor and other dignitaries, and depart for camp. Elsewhere men were sent to some assembly point, issued uniforms, were read the Articles of War, given an oath, and drilled. Then they were placed on a train, or ship, and sent to one of the seven camps set up by the Federal Government for training. Some men paid their own expenses to the assembly points in the West in order to join the unit of their choice.

The soldiers were usually burdened with not only their military equipment, but a variety of cakes, lunches, whiskey, and other gifts from friends. Many made themselves sick on these delicacies. So great was the problem that it was suggested by a newspaper that the government issue a list of those things acceptable as gifts to soldiers.⁴³ These patriotic efforts to help the soldiers did serve a useful purpose to supplement the poor accommodations on some troop trains.

There was some concern, at least in the beginning, about sending troops in blue uniforms into the South. Actually, the uniforms proved more embarrassing to the War Department than to the Southerners. The whole train of the 71st New York was sent out of the way to bypass Richmond,

⁴³ Westermeyer, Rush to Glory, 140-143.

Virginia, because they feared a show of resentment. The actual case was that the citizens of Richmond had planned a huge reception. Mountains of sandwiches, hundreds of fried chickens, baked hams, pies, cakes, and tables of reserve supplies were waiting for the troops. The welcoming group even included a band, a choir, and a delegation of Confederate Veterans, all of whom had been waiting since dawn to welcome the troops. The train passed a disappointing six miles away from the station. At one crossroads point in Georgia a local citizen had prepared barrels for the troops to use for bathing in his front yard.⁴⁴

There was at least one incident of tragedy that marred the transportation of troops to camp. In a series of wrecks and accidents, seven troopers of Torrey's Terrors were killed en route to their Jacksonville, Florida campsite from Cheyenne, Wyoming.⁴⁵

All was not tragedy or simple joviality, as Private Post narrates:

Here and there a woman sobbed and her husband led her away, his arms around her. They were plain, worn, homespun people; the people who furnish the cannon fodder and give three cheers that any Yank can lick his weight in Chink wildcats or limejuicers. Here and there a soldier was sick with too much whiskey; or drunk as Billy-be-damn, began to shout

⁴⁴Post, War of Private Post, 33-38.

⁴⁵Westermeier, Rush to Glory, 124-134.

some bawdy song or the obscene words to a bugle march--and was promptly fought into mumbling lethargy by his car mates. Here and there in the troop cars, some young chap would cautiously do his beads or read a prayer book that had just been thrust upon him by some missionary peddler or fond mother.⁴⁶

It was a wonder that a soldier had any brass buttons left on his uniform when he got to camp. The girls in every town seemed to want them as souvenirs. A brass insignia from one's hat could bring a kiss. "It was a gay time. War--war itself was on. War had begun!"⁴⁷

The American soldier was "raring" for a fight in 1898. Unprepared though he was and with somewhat confused motives, he rushed off to war. The "send off" given him did little to dispel the glowing image created by the excitement of war. Disenchantment was to come quickly to some, more quickly than was expected. The trooper that did not have this spell broken during encampment, had it broken when he went to Cuba.

⁴⁶ Post, War of Private Post, 28.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER III

CAMP LIFE

When troops arrived at the camps they were, in the main, amateurs, and the war did not last long enough to dispel all of these characteristics. The soldiers had to be very adaptable persons to adjust to their tents, routine, training, hardships, society, and disappointments. The prospects of being left behind or standing up to the enemy had to be faced.

In early May, 1898, the peaceful repose of several Southern cities was broken by the tramp and bustle of an army. The volunteer troops began to pour into special camps set up by the government to mobilize them into the national army. Before war had been declared, the regulars had been concentrating in Tampa, Mobile, and New Orleans.

The volunteers were assembled at Camp Thomas [Chickamauga National Park], Georgia; Camp Alger, Falls Church, Virginia; Mobile, Alabama; San Francisco, California; and Tampa, Florida.¹ Later, other encampments were quickly established but sometimes only to be as rapidly dispersed. It seemed as if no one really knew where a camp would be set up or how long it would be there.² There were innumerable

¹Freidel, Splendid Little War, 34.

²Millis, Martial Spirit, 208, 212-213.

delays and confusing orders, but this did not diminish the enthusiasm of the troops.

The regulars attempted to keep some manner of order, but as more and more troops came in, more confusion resulted. The men were generally supplied with tents, but often had to sleep on the ground, because of the shortage of cots. Typical of the exaggerated writing by correspondents of the day was this description of the enlisted men's tents and conditions at Camp Thomas:

. . . Their bedding and blankets were good and they were as comfortable as soldiers could hope to be in the field. Some of the regiments from the remote Northwest had the Sibley conical tent, which has no wall, but which has a small sheet iron stove. These were more than appreciated during the cold, rainy weather that prevailed at Camp Thomas.

The mess tents and cookhouses are about alike in all the arms of the service. The "cuddybunk" oven, made of sheet iron, bakes well and looks like two iron pans fastened together, one upon the top of the other. Men detailed as cooks and waiters, or "kitchen police", as they are denominated in the posts, attended to the preparation and serving of the meals, and the soldiers lived well, indeed. Field rations were used when in transit from point to point, but when in camp the company or troop mess purchased fresh meats, vegetables, eggs, fruits, etc., and lived high.³

Contrasted to this flowing description, was that given by a private in a letter to his mother on June 24:

³Trumbull White, The United States in War, 350.

. . . We have been sleeping on straw. But last night they ordered us to burn it, so we are now compelled to sleep on the ground. If we all are sent to Cuba, we shall be hardened to almost anything, and it will be a good thing.⁴

The establishment of a camp was much like the rush to the Klondike which occurred that same year. Everything had to be brought in by wagon and train. Each regiment was more or less dependent on itself, and in turn the soldiers had to rely on their own resources. The problems of the camps varied somewhat, since they were established in different areas. At Camp Thomas, the problems of insufficient water supply and heavy rains were of major consequence, while at Tampa the major obstacles seemed to be the heat, mosquitoes, and sand.

Wherever the camps were set up they became acres of tents with narrow dirt streets that had to be kept clean. This job was usually done by the men who needed discipline or by the whole unit after roll call. As Private Post relates, this was "literally, sweeping the streets" clean of every piece of paper, cigarette butt, and dried twig.⁵ Carelessness in this duty meant the immediate incurrence of the wrath of a sharp-eyed color-sergeant.

Water supply problems were faced by most camps, and

⁴"War History in Private Letters," Outlook, 58:919.

⁵Post, War of Private Post, 17.

sanitation was nonexistent for some time. At Camp Thomas water had to be hauled seven miles in barrels on mule drawn wagons. Sergeant Tom Driscoll of the 3rd Division, First Army Corps, related that many polluted water holes had to be guarded to keep the troops from becoming ill, and sewage was disposed of by covering the latrines each day with a thin layer of lime, a precaution that did not seem to be effective. Later, pipes were run to the creeks to get more water, but this was done after the fighting in Cuba was over, and until then only a few camps had hydrant water.⁶

There were, of course, some exceptions, as not all camps faced these problems. A private in the 1st Regiment, New York Volunteers, wrote from Camp Townsend, Peeksville, New York:

. . . There is very good water, a shower bath; tents dry as toast. We take our meals in a large wooden building, eat from china plates and drink out of tumblers. Our streets are lighted with electric lights, and the officers have the lights in their tents. We have a Y.M.C.A. tent with a piano, library, games and a writing table.⁷

The Guardsmen and Volunteers generally fared well in their own state encampments, but when at one of the major camps, the regulars fared better and were not as

⁶ Statement made by Tom Driscoll, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁷ "War Letters," Outlook, 921.

inconvenienced.⁸ The camps were destined to become hated by nearly all, as diseases became rampant in them.

The adjustment to army life was very difficult for most recruits. The glamorous aspects of war had to be put aside; since the daily routine was anything but what they had imagined. A Kansas boy wrote on July 2, from Chattanooga:

. . . Flashing sabers and charging horses are very inspiring to look at, but an hour's saber drill with the thermometer of 105 degrees and riding horses bareback in a blinding dust three miles to water is great deal more practical. This regiment . . . will be paid today . . . consequently every call to 'fall in' today has been answered on the 'double quick'. If anyone who reads this thinks army life is all dress parade and enthusiasm, he must remember that there is fatigue, police, and kitchen duty to perform. . . .⁹

The soldier's day usually started early and it ended none too soon. Reveille was sounded at 5:30 A.M., and the troops were fed at 6:00 A.M. The officers ate an hour later. Drill usually lasted from 7 o'clock to 9:30 o'clock in the morning. Long enough, so far as many were concerned, because the weather was extremely hot and the wool uniforms certainly did not make drilling any easier.¹⁰

Describing a typical day of a soldier is very

⁸ Bigelow, Reminiscences of the Santiago Campaign, 42-43.

⁹ "War Letters," Outlook, 919.

¹⁰ Irving Bacheller, "With the Waiting Army," Cosmopolitan, 26:315.

difficult because each camp had a different routine, and the times and kinds of drill varied with the type of unit of which the soldier was a member. The only routine of which a soldier could be sure was that he was going to arise early and drill hard. Some units drilled several times a day, others only in the morning. The drill at Tampa usually stopped about 9:30 in the morning and though the men were considered to be on duty they were free within the bounds of the camp, to do as they wished. The cavalry drilled more frequently, but the infantry and artillery did most of the loading and unloading of supplies--a job that was just as essential as drill, and lasted longer than the marching.

Private Post described how his day began at Camp Black, Hempstead Plains, Long Island. He was aroused to consciousness by the rhythmical cadence of forty drums beating out the top-of-the-morning, accompanied by twelve fifes. This lasted for ten minutes, then the bugles sounded reveille. On the last note of reveille the troops were to be fully clothed and outside for roll call. He thought the whole experience pleasurable.¹¹

There were others who did not enjoy arising so early. The cooks and the buglers had to be up before the other troops. One young member of the 3rd Regiment at Camp Thomas failed to get up one morning to play reveille and was "given

¹¹ Post, War of Private Post, 17.

three hours police duty . . . as punishment . . . had to dig trenches, carry dirt and rocks and everything else."¹²

Often the routine was broken suddenly, as when moving to another camp, or when taking a long march, called a "hike," and sometimes it was broken for an inspection of the camp. Apparently getting ready for inspection entailed some very hard work. Wrote the bugler who had overslept:

Today is a busy day for us all over the camp. We are all cleaning up for inspection. I have been digging a trench back of our mess hall . . . my fingers and hands were full of blisters, but it gave me a good appetite . . . Our band is excused from that work on account of our hands getting sore so that we couldn't play.¹³

At times the recruit was not settled before one of these rude breaks came. Such was the case for the men of the 3rd New York Volunteer Infantry. A "hiker," as the troops called themselves, of this New York group described such a situation. He wrote: "We had been in camp scarcely an hour when we were told that our entire regiment . . . was to start at six o'clock the next morning on a twelve mile march."¹⁴

There is little wonder why some fell out from exhaustion. On such "hikes," each man carried about sixty pounds

¹² "War Letters," Outlook, 921.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 920.

of equipment, including three days rations, blanket, poncho (a type of raincoat), overcoat, half-tent, canteen and rifle.¹⁵

The methods of drill were long outdated and inadequate. Commands were given by bugle call and by shouting such commands as "Fours right--march!"; "Fours left--march!"; "Right front into the line!"; "On right into line!"; "Right by file!"; "Fours right about!." These commands had not been changed since the Civil War.¹⁶ "Since the Civil War, or in the last thirty-two years," wrote Captain Bigelow, of the Tenth Cavalry, "we have made but two changes of drill regulations, but I shall not attempt to state the number of changes that have been made in our uniforms."¹⁷

Some of the officers of the National Guard and Volunteer units were incompetent. The greatest possible exceptions to this were the Volunteer Cavalry Regiments. These had good leadership but their usefulness as cavalry in the type of campaign fought is doubtful. The spectacular charges practiced in drills could not have been a practical method of fighting in Cuba.¹⁸ Camp Thomas was a

¹⁵ ibid.

¹⁶ Post, War of Private Post, 17.

¹⁷ Bigelow, Reminiscences, 20.

¹⁸ Millis, Martial Spirit, 214-215.

disappointment to many officers who were disgusted with the whole affair. Captain Bigelow wrote that there was "no instruction in offense or defense--only a few company drills."¹⁹

The greatest benefit derived from drilling the troops was a hardening of the men for the trials they would endure in Cuba. Scarcely anybody had fired their weapons before they went into combat. In July one trooper wrote an old friend:

We have fifty Springfield rifles, carried by the company in the National Guard; the balance are Springfields of the earlier '73 model, with condemned sights, and every one has been condemned since for pulling off at half cock . . . No ammunition has been issued and not a bit of target practice have we had.²⁰

Problems of equipping the troops were great. The War Department knew they were short on medical supplies, uniforms, and good officers, but expected the Guardsmen to have most of the necessary battle equipment. It was soon discovered that the National Guard had the material but that it was not fit for service.²¹ The "hiker" accepted these deficiencies for the time being without too many gripes. He was becoming used to the idea of caring for himself. The

¹⁹ Bigelow, Reminiscences, 20.

²⁰ "War Letters," Outlook, 972.

²¹ Millis, Martial Spirit, 213-214.

uniforms were discolored, and did not fit. All uniforms, except those of the Rough Riders, were woolen; suitable for duty in Alaska, but not in Cuba. Underclothes were in extremely short supply as was just about everything else from socks to smokeless powder.

One trooper expressed the paradoxical situation in a letter to a friend. He wrote, ". . . Many regiments are as badly off for equipment as we are. Only one shirt has been issued, and we are expected to keep that one clean and washed and have it on all the time; this is a problem."²² The same recruit expressed the feelings of many when he also stated: "I don't criticise, wonder or worry very much about this shooting match; nor regret anything connected with it except that my name is not Hobson . . . [a hero of the Navy]."²³

So far as dress was concerned, the "hiker" was anything but what was envisioned by those in the War Department. He was supposed to have a box-type cap similar to those commonly worn by Union troops in the Civil War, and for fatigue purposes, a campaign hat that resembled the western gentleman rancher's hat of today, except that the brim was flattened. The trooper's coat was to be one of the type with

²²"War Letters," Outlook, 971.

²³Ibid.

brass buttons down the front having a high collar with collar-flaps rounded on the edges. His trousers were to be of cerulean-blue with a broad deep blue stripe down both sides. The low quarter black shoes he wore were to be covered partially by brown canvas leggings. His shirts were to be navy blue. The real soldier was only a shadow of what was intended. All the uniform was supposed to be blue, but they were so poorly dyed that a trooper might have a coat with many shades of color, ranging from green to purple, in the same coat.²⁴ The Rough Riders' uniform was so faded that brown and gray dominated. This resulted in their being given the title "Teddy's Brownies."²⁵ Wrote one trainee:

You ask how much has been issued to us as well as what we lack. We have one pair of shoes, one pair of heavy trousers, one heavy shirt; two pairs of heavy socks, very harsh; one company hat, all shoddy; two sets of underwear; one blouse. I can literally wring the perspiration from my heavy blue trousers after a long drill.²⁶

One private solved the problem of oversized shoes by folding newspapers and inserting them into the toes and around the inside of the heel.²⁷ The problem of overcoats that were not needed was easily solved by selling them or

²⁴ Millis, Martial Spirit, 215.

²⁵ Westermeier, Rush to Glory, 76-77.

²⁶ "War Letters," Outlook, 972.

²⁷ Statement by John Alber, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

discarding them as soon as possible. Some of the other equipment was just as burdensome but not as easy to be rid of. The Merriam pack was an item of this nature.

The Merriam pack, used at the beginning of the war, was simply a canvas box with two hickory sticks at each side, and fastened to the two upper corners of the pack. The other end was fitted into the end pockets of a half-belt, which rested slightly below one's kidneys. This pack took the load off one's shoulders and put it on the kidneys. Later, immediately before the invasion of Cuba, it was replaced by the horse collar roll used in the Civil War.²⁸ The horse collar roll was much the same as the one used now except that it was slung across the left shoulder, slanting across the chest and back to the right side of the body by a strap, leaving it much in the shape of a horse collar through which the soldier slipped his head. The half-tent was rolled the same way and tied to the blanket roll, thus serving as a liner to the "horse collar." One end of the roll contained the tent pegs and sectional poles, and the other personal items. The roll was made loose in the middle because, although it did not look as good, it was more comfortable to carry.²⁹

²⁸ Post, War of Private Post, 27.

²⁹ Ibid., 60.

To complete the regalia of the marching soldier he also had a haversack, a canvas bag with a long strap, in which he carried rations, extra ammunition, and other necessary items. Sometimes attached to this was a coffee pot or large cup. This, and his canteen, were slung across the right shoulder onto the left side. Around his middle was a loaded cartridge belt to accommodate the rifle carried at right shoulder arms.

Ammunition for the cartridge belt was heavy. Each cartridge was as big as the finger, with a .45 caliber slug at the front end. The shell casing was loaded with seventy grains of old-fashioned black powder that, when discharged, issued "a cloud of white smoke about the size of a cow."³⁰

Before typhoid and other diseases invaded the camps, the biggest problem was that of getting good food. The problem in camps most of the time was not that of having food but of getting people who were reasonably trained cooks to prepare it, and sometimes getting through "red tape" to issue it to the troops.³¹ The Guard units came to camp without trained cooking personnel and had to live on hard-tack until they could unload supplies and seek out a person who might have the culinary skills. "Cooks went down in

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Statement by Tom Driscoll, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

defeat before the rations and cooking equipment with which they were confronted. . . ."32

In contrast to the poor foods and the haphazard way enlisted men had to eat was the way many officers ate, as described by a correspondent in a leading magazine:

The officers lived well and were very comfortably quartered. Their dinner menu generally included roast beef, vegetable, lettuce salad, bread or biscuit and butter, strawberries and coffee. The officers of the Second Cavalry had a club in a big tent and they all messed at the same table signing their checks as one would do in a city club.³³

One of the greatest controversies of the war was over how well the men were fed. In many cases the food was nearby, but not available to the troops. For months in the field and in camps men had to live on canned tomatoes, canned beef, boiled meat and potatoes, hardtack, bacon, beans and coffee. The soldiers reacted in different ways to this type of food, but most agreed that when hungry enough, they were quite satisfactory.

"Hardtack," described one veteran, "was a flat biscuit-like substance about a half inch thick, and as hard as a brick."³⁴ This was the staple food of the Guardsmen

³² Hicks, American Nation, 323.

³³ Bacheller, "With the Army," 318.

³⁴ Description by Arthur Fern, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

for many weeks. The "hiker's" individual initiative was exercised in making many different dishes from this tasteless little "brick." They found it very filling by chipping it into a stew, or boiled tomatoes, or "anything that was liquid."³⁵

The beans were usually very edible, at least those served in camps, but even in Cuba where they could not be so well prepared, the combatants enjoyed them. In camps there were two major complaints about beans. The New Yorkers felt they were served too often and the recruits from Massachusetts complained that the servings were too small.³⁶ At any rate beans were served three meals a day at times.

The coffee is difficult to describe because it varied so much from day to day and from camp to camp. It ranged in color from "palish amber" to a "full-blooded deep brown." But as one cook suggested it always tasted "lak hell," and no wonder, since it was made by boiling in a wash boiler.³⁷

Army bacon was given the apt title of "sowbelly." Private Post gives perhaps the most vivid description of this staple of the army diet:

Sowbelly is exactly what its name implies, the belly of a very adult lady pig, faucets and all.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Richard Harding Davis, "The Rocking Chair Period of the War," Scribners, 24:137.

³⁷Post, War of Private Post, 19.

It comes from about two to three inches in thickness, and the plastron of sowbelly is the full size intact of its original owner. On one side is the meat; on the other, the leather. And no one but an old Army sergeant or a leather fancier can tell one from the other . . . Later in the campaign, when hunger bested us, it was a nicely balanced question whether to fry our shirt or our sowbelly.³⁸

The soldiers had some opportunity to eat better food and food of more variety. At Camp Thomas, food vendors were a constant problem to the camp and eventually they were forbidden to come on the camp grounds. Not to be denied, the vendors set up shops outside the post, which were still accessible to the soldiers.³⁹

The greatest hardships of those in camp came with the rains of July and August. The hardest hit camp was Camp Thomas where two dread diseases, typhoid and dysentery, inflicted heavy casualties. The camp was located in a forest where shade prevented the rapid drying of the ground. The camps were often flooded, making good sanitary conditions impossible to maintain. Latrines were uncovered by the water, mosquitoes and flies swarmed, meats quickly spoiled, and as a consequence the death rate climbed. Some of the troops had no cots, no mosquito bars, and mostly unsuitable clothing for the climate.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., 20.

³⁹ Chattanooga Times, August 10, 1898.

⁴⁰ Statements made by Tom Driscoll, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

Reports of the sickness were suppressed for a while, but with a coming realization that the soldiers were not going to get into the fighting, they wrote and talked more freely of their ailments. From that time on gruesome stories flourished. The Chattanooga Times ran articles on death in the camps that told many morbid details. An example of the description is this:

. . . The men are said to die from disease. I say they are being murdered by this wretched system. I have seen fever patients with their dry tongues hanging from their mouths, with flies swarming over their faces, with maggots in their bedsores, with no medical attention, with no water fit to drink, with no milk, with no stimulant-- simply left to die, and then lie dead for hours alongside of other sufferers.⁴¹

Some still wanting to go to Cuba felt it could be no worse there than in the South, and attributed their escape to good health and clean living. Writes Captain George Willrich:

Miami and Jacksonville were far worse than Cuba can be. In Jacksonville we had the dread disease, typhoid fever. I did not catch that. I don't drink, I don't use tobacco. I am strong and hard as an oak tree. I never get tired. . . . I am well and will return well. I must go to Cuba. There is no telling what good fortune awaits me there.⁴²

The situation would have become much worse, if the camps had not been broken up quickly and furloughs given

⁴¹ Chattanooga Times, August 30, 1898.

⁴² Letter to his mother, George Willrich Papers.

many units. "Total deaths for the war amounted to about five thousand, but only three hundred and seventy-nine died in battle or of battle wounds."⁴³

The enlistee had to make other adjustments that were important to him in his new society. It was difficult for some to realize that they were in the Army. Two privates who were plumbers in civilian life demanded union wages for installing water pipes at Camp Black, New York.⁴⁴ Needless to say, they did not get their demands, and were reminded that they were soldiers, not plumbers, and would do as they were told.

Most officers had the approval of the men but some non-commissioned officers did not. ". . . Our officers are mainly very clever fellows," wrote one recruit, "and with slight exceptions are courteous and tolerable. Some of the 'non-coms' are pretty cocky."⁴⁵ However, there were exceptions. A Friend wrote a Texas officer that his enlisted friend had "cursed the officer in charge of the mess hall, on which account he was reduced to ranks."⁴⁶

As the men got to know each other better some of their views changed. Wrote one private:

⁴³Hicks, American Nation, 329.

⁴⁴Post, War of Private Post, 21.

⁴⁵"War Letters," Outlook, 971.

⁴⁶Letter from friend, George Willrich Papers.

Some of the men I liked best at first, I like least now, and I find redeeming qualities to predominate in the men I did not like at first . . . You know how weary of camplife soldiers become after the novelty is worn off. If a man has a mean trait it comes out, and the hypocrite can no more keep on his disguise here than he can in Swedenborg's heaven.⁴⁷

Life was not always dreary in the camps. As soon as the camp was settled and a few adjustments made the "hiker" usually found some means of diversion, some of them mild and others riotous. In the earlier days of the encampments, many enjoyed life thoroughly, even if the food was not as it was prepared at home. There was no formal entertainment presented to the troops as in later wars, and there were no servicemen's organization to attend for recreation. The Red Cross and Young Men's Christian Association did in some instances provide facilities for writing letters and furnish supplies for this purpose. Letter writing was not the usual form of recreation, and most of the rank and file "shied at the pen and rarely wrote letters."⁴⁸

During the daylight hours there was little time for organized recreation. The clothes had to be washed, baths taken, and many details to be taken care of, but sometimes the men found time for blanket tossing, reading, or story telling. Almost every tent had its "gold brick" lying about

⁴⁷"War Letters," Outlook, 971.

⁴⁸Irving Bacheller, "With the Army," 319.

as if he had been tossed in by his heels, while some others rested or napped under trees.⁴⁹ Blanket tossing was the "hiker's" trampoline, and only a little less conservative form of entertainment than that provided by the mechanical structure of today. This sport usually required eight men to hold a blanket taut while a ninth man (the one to be tossed) lay or stood in the middle of the stretched blanket. Those holding the blanket would then raise the blanket and toss its contents into the air, repeating this a number of times until the person's time was up.⁵⁰

Only occasionally did the troops enjoy music produced by professionals. The bands of the various regiments provided the nearest thing to formal music, and in some camps played everyday. Judging from what one trooper wrote, the band had as much occasion to enjoy playing as the soldiers to listening. One young band member wrote, "The colonel said if the band would give extra concerts he would not compel us to handle a pick and shovel. You can bet it did not take us long to tell him that we would give the extra concerts."⁵¹

The evenings were the times when most of the troops

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Freidel, Splendid Little War, 37.

⁵¹ "War Letters," Outlook, 919.

found the liveliest entertainment. Groups of men would gather in some favorite tent to drink, and tell tall tales, or play poker and sing. Some troopers' tents became the entertainment spots of the camps, where those endowed with some talent would be the main performers each night. Whether they had a good voice for singing, pantomining, or telling jokes, they were a delight to the troops.

Many of the songs sung were the popular ones of the time. A number are heard occasionally today. A few songs were bawdy or at least a little risqué. Ranking among the more popular songs were: "Comrades," "Little Annie Rooney," "Sweet Marie," "Hot Time in the Old Town," "Goodbye, Nellie Gray," "There Were Three Flies in Our Town," and "The Old Gray Mare." Some of the quasi-Negro songs were popular like, "I Don't Like No Cheap Man," "Bill Bailey," and "She's Not Colored, She Was Bawn That Way."⁵² Many troops made up patriotic lyrics to the tune of songs like "Marching Through Georgia," and "Goodbye, My Lover, Goodbye." One of the most popular was the "Cuba Libre Song" sung to the tune of "Marching Through Georgia":

Come on, boys, and all join hands,
and proudly we will sing,
Just to let the people know,
That we're the proper thing;
We're among the terrors
That's first to Cuba go,
To face the dirty Spaniards
Under Blanco.

⁵²Post, War of Private Post, 22.

Chorus:

Hurrah! Hurrah!
 Now shout and let all see
 That we are bound that
 Cuba shall be free.
 Shout and raise your voices, boys,
 And raise them once again,
 While we go forward
 To Cuba.⁵³

The song fests usually ended with the sentimental "Tenting Tonight." The troops must have retired feeling nostalgic and thinking less harshly of the army. It must have been "a wonderful place to spend an evening."⁵⁴

Whip duels were a fascinating form of entertainment for the teamsters and those who watched. Each participant used a long blacksnake whip and wore high-topped leather boots for protection. The object was to try to lash the opponent below the knees and to avoid being hit in return by jumping. The whips could inflict very serious wounds if they landed anywhere else but on the thick boots.⁵⁵

Gambling was a favorite type of recreation among the soldiers, and was engaged in quite frequently. Cards, dice, and tossing coins were predominant. Poker was the staple card game played by troops. The Westerners and serious enthusiasts liked to play stud, while the Easterners and

⁵³Westermeier, Rush to Glory, 148.

⁵⁴Post, War of Private Post, 22.

⁵⁵Ibid., 43.

amateurs played draw. Most of the time poker was played for diversion but occasionally it was played strictly for financial gain and caused some heated arguments to ensue. Payday was the time when poker dominated the card playing. On paydays the tents were darkened by ponchos pinned around the inside. At times the playing lasted well beyond the lights out time, even continuing into the next morning. Occasionally there was some cheating but this did not stop the playing of the game.⁵⁶ Most troops were familiar with dice, but Yankees were introduced to the Southern version, called "craps," by the colored teamsters. The usual spread blanket surrounded by eager enthusiasts pleading with the dice for good fortune, became a common scene in the Florida camps.⁵⁷

Bars and drinking occupied some of the less pious troops of a reveling nature, and were sometimes a source for trouble. Usually finding liquor was easy for those who sought it. Liquor was a factor in many a fracas which took place in camps or nearby cities. The troops came near rioting in New Orleans when a caustic editorial appeared in the New Orleans Evening Item criticizing the Texas Immunes for

⁵⁶ From statements by Tom Driscoll, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁵⁷ Post, War of Private Post, 43.

their behavior.⁵⁸ Several incidents occurred at Camp Thomas that attracted national attention. One of these instances resulted when about fifty of Grisby's Cowboys were refused admission to the Camp Thomas Theater. Fists and clubs were soon swinging. The provost guard of the First Missouri and the First Illinois Cavalry broke up the mob and dispersed them after an hour of fighting involving bayonets and pistols. At least two of the cowboys were seriously wounded.⁵⁹

Another such incident involved strong beverages more directly. Once a New York Regiment stole a carload of beer from a Kentucky unit, and a general search reaching the proportion of a riot ensued. All joined in to help find the missing beer and "get it back to its owners." The question of "Who stole the beer?" brought laughter among the veterans for years.⁶⁰

At Lakeland, Florida, where local option had been exercised, the obtaining of strong spirits was a little more difficult. Soda fountains served liquor in back of the store and used names of soft drinks to disguise their menu. Such drinks as a "General Miles Milk Shake," or a "General

⁵⁸ Galveston News, April 11, 1942, 16. Immune regiments were made up largely of men from Southern States. There were ten regiments of these men thought to be immune to yellow fever.

⁵⁹ Westermeyer, Rush to Glory, 219-220.

⁶⁰ From personal interview with Tom Driscoll. Permission to quote secured.

Lee Ice Cream Soda" had the same effects and tasted surprisingly like the "highball" found in a Northern bar.⁶¹

In Tampa, only a short distance from Lakeland, the acquisition of alcohol and other forms of revelry took a slightly different form, and in many other respects differed from other encampments. Since this place was designated as the point for embarking an invasion force, everything seemed of a temporary nature.

The intense heat at Tampa and its sandy beaches offered a difficult time for the trainees. The confused situation in the War Department did not make life any easier. Most men arrived hungry and dirty, and were required to train without breakfast. Sometimes meals were thirty-six hours apart! A large quantity of the food stored on trains was wasted by being crushed under heavy piles of other materials or ruined while officers fought the red tape to get their men fed.⁶² Regiments drilling in the extreme heat, on the soft, sandy beaches and in the heavy woods nearby were completely exhausted after only a few hours of drill in the mornings and afternoon.

The Army drilled and waited for news that the Spanish fleet had been located. Rumors of the coming invasion

⁶¹ Post, War of Private Post, 48-50.

⁶² Bigelow, Reminiscences, 44-45.

enlivened the spirits of the men but the delays were taxing their patience. Transports, supplies, and troops continued to arrive at Tampa throughout the months of May and June. As the army drilled and waited, the tents of the chaplains were frequented more often as all sensed the time for departure to Cuba was drawing near.

CHAPTER IV

ENGAGING THE ENEMY

Secretary of War Russell A. Alger had promised that he could have an American Army in Havana within ten days after a declaration of war on Spain.¹ Actually, it took him more than two months. All through the month of May, Tampa was seething with rumors that the army would depart for Cuba at any moment. General William R. Shafter was placed in charge of the army in Tampa, which was now called the Fifth Army Corps. Shafter was expected to have his army ready to leave within a day after receiving orders. The War Department had made such poor arrangements that this was an impossibility. Tampa was a poor choice for an embarkation point, since it had only a single track railway coming to the port from the city, and a narrow channel along a neck of land that served as a pier. The army demonstrated the unique ability of its men to rely on their own resources in spite of handicaps. The soldiers hastily laid track out onto the pier and quickly built as many extra docks as possible. Yet only two transports could be loaded at a time, and this only with the hard labor of those who had to carry articles on their backs across fifty feet of sand and up a ramp into the ships. Much to the disgust of the army a

¹ Millis, Martial Spirit, 127.

Tampa promoter continued to run sight-seeing tours from special trains and boats. The tourists hindered the work of the troops when freight cars were being unloaded as well as when ships were being anchored. The ships were in no condition to carry troops and had to be converted by the army to carry the expected 25,000 men. The loading of weapons, aboard the transports, was hampered by parts of the guns being located in different trains, and fuses for the projectiles were still missing. The bills of lading and invoices had not been received, making it necessary to break into every car and search for the items needed. There was such confusion that the three hundred pound Shafter had to supervise loading some of the ships himself.²

The dockside beach at Tampa provided some means of relief for the hungry soldier, but furnished nothing but liquor to drink. It was labeled the "sporting sand bar" by the troops, since many of the vendors had more than just food and whiskey to sell. These establishments were generally small tents with a canopy and table in front. Usually a girl stood in the doorway. The tents and the newly constructed, small, unpainted houses nearby gave the whole scene an atmosphere of transience. A thin disguise was put on one newly built two story affair that bore a large sign

²Freidel, Splendid Little War, 59-65.

over the front that read "Restaurant." One sick and hungry soldier took the sign literally and rushed around a line of about two dozen men to get through the front door of the building, only to come out immediately, red faced and to be roundly jeered by his fellow troopers.³

Shafter received orders on the 31st of May asking him to get ready to leave but it was June 6th before the regiments received word that they should get aboard ship. It was soon learned that only about 18,000 men would be taken instead of the anticipated 25,000, and that the cavalry units would have to leave their horses. A mad rush for the ships began, because the troops feared they might be the ones left behind. Camps were broken in record time, and the race for the ships commenced. Men slept in box cars, cattle cars, on the beach and on docks the night before in order to be in line for a ship the next day. There was no real provision for feeding them and many men went without food for as much as thirty-six hours. Captain Bigelow's colored 10th Cavalry was not served at all, but they did have a nice train in which to sleep.⁴

The next day troops began to board the vessels. It was found by the 71st New York Regiment that the ship

³ Post, War of Private Post, 65.

⁴ Bigelow, Reminiscences, 44.

intended for them had been taken over by Theodore Roosevelt and some of his men. An officer of the 71st protested but was unable to dislodge Teddy, and that night the 71st slept in a train. The next day they took over the "largest and best boat, that held over 800 men, the Vigilancia."⁵ The would-be voyagers stayed on board the ships most of the time for fear that they would miss the boat to Cuba and would be left behind. The army stewed and waited in Tampa Bay for a week, before they got orders to sail. On the 10th of July they cast off and again anchored out in the bay not far from the wharf and stayed until the 13th. Then they moved a few miles down the bay and cast anchor once more. It was the 14th, a week after their embarkation, before they finally started for the lower bay. There was much confusion, changing of transports, and unnecessary time wasted, while many waited for days on the docks to be picked up by the transports. One Captain recalled: "Such occurrences tended to shake our confidence in the officers who regulated our movements and might hold our lives in their hands."⁶

The thirty-two transports carried 819 officers, 15,058 enlisted men, 30 civilian clerks, 272 teamsters and

⁵Statement by Arthur R. Fern, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁶Bigelow, Reminiscences, 68.

packers, and 107 stevedores. There were 2,295 horses and mules, 114 six-mule army wagons, 81 escort wagons, and seven ambulances. The artillery consisted of 16 light guns, four seven inch howitzers, four five inch seige guns, one Hotchkiss revolving cannon, one pneumatic dynamite gun, eight 3.6 field mortars, and four Gatling machine guns. As the Rough Riders and other cavalry units had to leave their horses behind, they became dismounted cavalry groups.⁷

The stay in Tampa Bay although uncomfortable, was very likely fortunate for the army, since there were no general medical supplies on board at the time, and the delay allowed time for the stocking of these essential supplies. The waiting, however, was disheartening to the troops, and expensive to the government. The transports, steamed up all the time, cost the government approximately \$1,000 a day during the delay, and the soldiers could not even take a turn in the bay for fresh air. Life on board the ships was monotonous, and cool only at night, if one slept on the deck. The food was not the best and the water was foul, since the water had been loaded six weeks before and placed in barrels that had contained anything "from pickeled fish to kerosene or worse." The men were sometimes forced to purchase decent water from the stewards or crew. Coffee and

⁷Freidel, Splendid Little War, 68-70.

food was made by each company in the same wash boiler, alternating between having coffee or corned beef hash. As the ships upped anchor and cast off, the men must have been wondering if they would ever return and what might be their fate in Cuba. Most of them had written last minute letters home and had their photographs taken in one of the local shops before their departure, but their spirits must have been lifted by the very fact that they were now underway. It was perhaps as Private Post said, "No one could be really mad . . . we were off to Cuba, weren't we?"⁸

The trip to Cuba was quite pleasant to those who were enjoying their first ocean voyage. Nearly all who wrote home then or talked about it later mentioned the beauty of the sky and water and the novelty of the flying fish and dolphins. Sleeping on deck was more comfortable than sleeping in the cramped quarters below deck on the hard bunks. While officers were fed hot meals, the soldiers had to do the best they could on tasteless canned beef and tomatoes. All "hikers" were very much relieved to see the land in Cuba and longed to land on the beaches. A letter written home by a soldier who was to die in the battle for Santiago is typical of the feelings of many aboard the transports:

There were but few seasick, and I was not of the number. The sea was exactly the color of a tub of water fixed with bluing for clothes when you wash--

⁸ Post, War of Private Post, 66.

the deepest, darkest blue you can imagine. We saw great numbers of flying fish, dolphins, and sharks. When we came in sight of the island, we could see the Capiah Mountains like a hank of clouds on the horizon. "Just like Arizona", the old soldiers said. But when we got closer to land we could see how green and pretty the mountains were--very, very beautiful. We could smell the flowers in the breeze, and Cuba looked the prettiest place I ever saw . . . You have no idea how crowded the boats were. There were 1300 on some, and so very hot and filthy have the boats become that it is terrible. We are living on three to six hardtacks at a meal, a cup of coffee, and canned meat that has remained in the hold until it is putrid. There is little sign of getting ashore today and here it is the eighteenth day we have been on boat.⁹

It was the 20th of June before the convoy neared the coast of Cuba. The fleet remained off the coast of Cuba just outside Santiago for two more days while preparations were made for bombardment of the areas where the combatants were to land. At just about dark on the night of June 22 the landing force was given orders to land the next morning. The soldiers were a happy group of men to get on land, and demonstrated it by the noise that they made when they got to the beaches. The Rough Riders and the 6th Infantry landed at Daiquiri on June 23 at 10:20 A.M., and that afternoon the bombardment of Siboney, a small coastal town, was begun. The troops were marched the ten miles from Daiquiri to Siboney the next morning, where more troops were landed all

⁹"War Letters," Outlook, 922.

that day and on into the next night.¹⁰ The men were soaked through to the waist and the first night ashore built fires to dry out. The men were so happy to be ashore that they apparently showed little concern over the possibility of a Spanish attack that could drive them into the sea. "[We were] Open to that--nothing happened," admitted Private Fern of the 71st New York, "Rather foolhardy, but at the same time [we had] a good fire."¹¹

The next morning, June 24, 1898, the first contact with the enemy was made, and the men got their baptism of fire. General Joseph Wheeler sent the First and Tenth Cavalry along with the Rough Riders to take Las Guasimas, a village that controlled the road to Santiago. The climb up the steep bluffs and into the jungle was quite exhausting to most of the men who were not adjusted to the climate, terrain or long marches. They met strong resistance which stirred different reactions among the men under fire for the first time.

"Load magazines" sent a quiver up my back, and down my arms to set my fingers twitching. It seemed as when you had winded your game and were preparing to do him to the death. We were surprised so few were hit . . . I found myself observing one of the battery mules scratching its neck against a small

¹⁰Allen Gray, "Story of Fighting Before Santiago," The State, (Columbia, S. C.) September 9, 1898.

¹¹Statement by Arthur R. Fern, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

tree, and noting how indifferent it appeared to the frightful racket. [It] Appeared after all that marching and climbing that actual fighting was the least part of war.¹²

A private in Colonel Roosevelt's Rough Riders, a banker's son, wrote from Siboney to his mother in New York describing his view of the fight.

We left this town about 6:00 A.M. and started for Santiago. About three and one-half miles from here we came to a sudden halt, and the troops in our front opened fire on the enemy. We remained quiet for about ten minutes, when the order came for troop B and our troop (E) to deploy out to the left flank. On leaving the trail to deploy, we came immediately under Spanish fire, but kept right on, and I can tell you it made me think twice while those bullets were humming around me, cutting twigs and grass; but we kept going on. After reaching our position we halted for a few seconds, and then orders came to move forward, and we couldn't see, as they were all intrenched and used smokeless powder. It seemed strange to be fired on without being able to return it, but we kept on going just the same . . . It was quite interesting, I can assure you. . . .¹³

A walk along the trail leading to the battle site revealed one of the saddest pictures of the war. The rocks on either side of the trail were splattered with blood. Blankets and canteens, haversacks, and extra equipment had been scattered along the way. Nothing could be heard but the scurrying land crabs and the whine of mauser bullets in an unearthly silence, until some wounded man was heard

¹² Caspar Whitney, "The Santiago Campaign," Harper's, 97:797-804.

¹³ "War Letters," Outlook, 921.

screaming to the men helping him: "They've killed my Captain. You're taking me to the front, aren't you? They've killed my Captain . . . The _____ Mexicans! They've killed my Captain."¹⁴

Unlike the stories of battles where the soldiers, when shot, stagger, roll, toss, scream, and flip, these wounded men were not so demonstrative. Edward Marshall, who himself was wounded in this engagement, gives this description:

I saw many men shot. Every one went down in a lump without cries, without jumping up in the air, without throwing up hands. They just went down like clods in the grass. It seemed to me that the terrible thud with which they struck the earth was more penetrating than the sound of guns. Some were only wounded; some were dead.

There is much that is awe-inspiring about the death of a soldier on the battle-field. Almost all of us have seen men or women die but they have died in their carefully arranged beds with doctors daintily hoarding the flickering spark; with loved ones gathered about. But death from disease is less awful than death from bullets. On the battle-field there are no delicate scientific problems of strange microbes to be solved. There is no petting, no coddling--nothing, nothing, nothing but death. The man lives, he is strong . . . "chug", he is dead. That "chug" of the bullets striking flesh is nearly always plainly audible. But bullets . . . do not sing on their way . . . I did not hear the bullet shriek which struck me.¹⁵

¹⁴ Richard Harding Davis and Edward Marshall, "Stories of Two War Correspondents at Guasimas," The Literary Digest, 17:325-326.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The wounded that could walk, carry someone else, or at least help others, started on the trail back to Siboney. Those that were too seriously wounded to make the trip were placed under a large mango tree that served as a temporary field hospital. The wounded that lay under this tree sang patriotic songs to help keep up their spirits, and some died while singing.¹⁶ Caring for these men was a tremendous task for the only doctor, since the wounded amounted to about fifty-two and those who died numbered sixteen more. The number who died was startlingly small considering the fact that almost all the Rough Riders were hit, either on their person or on their clothing, and the wounded simply had to crawl out of the way to lie and wait until someone could get to them.¹⁷

Post records a conversation that demonstrates how, in the excitement of battle, pains can be forgotten to a point.

"They took something and poked a rag in one hole and out the other," he explained. "Then they pulled it out and stuck in another--and pulled it back and forth. And Jee-sus, did it hurt! Don't hurt now though, much. Then they asked me if I had anything else. I said no. But they made me take off my clothes and damned if they didn't find I'd been shot in the backside, too. They fixed that up and I'm walking around--can't sit down, though. They stuck a rag in that too. Think of that--a feller gets hit twice and only knows about one."¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Freidel, Splendid Little War, 112-114.

¹⁸ Post, War of Private Post, 96.

Men were detailed to bury the dead as rapidly as possible in order to prevent mutilation by the loathsome land crabs and vultures which infested the island. Those who were killed at Las Guasimas were buried in a common trench grave with no preparation of the bodies. Sergeant Hamilton Fish, one of the first to fall, was placed in one end of the Rough Riders' single grave, along with six others. Some of the bodies were already showing signs of mutilation by the land crabs when they were buried--buried without definite markings.¹⁹

The callous attitude of men toward the dead aroused the resentment of some of the soldiers who felt that the dead should be treated with more respect, and they could not understand how men sitting next to the bodies could talk and tell jokes. Of course, the leaders regretted the death of their comrades and men, but could not afford to show emotion at the time.²⁰ Men were becoming callous to the idea of death.

The fight at Las Guasimas was responsible for many exaggerated stories which spread among the troops and back to the United States. The battle deserves study and consideration to determine what actually happened. It was rumored

¹⁹Freidel, Splendid Little War, 114.

²⁰Ibid., 112.

that the Rough Riders were ambushed and had to be rescued by the Negro 10th Cavalry. Later this story was in some manner connected with San Juan Hill and led to the assumption that Roosevelt was not even in the fight. One account maintained that he had been intoxicated and led his men into a trap. Wounded soldiers coming back along the trail to Siboney were largely responsible for the origin of the ambush story. General Wheeler, Richard Harding Davis, Colonel Wood and Colonel Roosevelt all wrote that there had been no such instance. The battle was planned and the Rough Riders happened to be at the point of the hottest firing. Richard Harding Davis credits most of the victory to the Rough Riders.²¹ Colonel Wood had shouted, "Don't swear--shoot!" when the men were loudly cursing the enemy who raked them from an unseen position. With these words ringing in their ears, the Rough Riders had driven the Spaniards back and took this strategic village.

Wheeler's troops had opposed about 1500 Spaniards behind fortifications with 900 men and had only sixteen men killed and fifty-two wounded. General Wheeler had not disobeyed orders when attacking because he was in command while Shafter was still aboard ship. The battle gave the

²¹Richard Harding Davis, "The Landing of the Army," Scribners, 24:260. See also, Theodore Roosevelt's "The Rough Riders," Scribners, 25:262.

Americans command of the road to Santiago.²²

Bravery is expected of American soldiers, but his troops had fought notably well, though practically none of them had been under fire before, and the Rough Riders had never fired a Krag-Jorgensen rifle until that day, having received their guns only just before they left Tampa.²³

At least six more days elapsed before any more serious fighting occurred. General Shafter had issued orders that the positions were to be held and pickets set up to prevent Spanish infiltration. General Shafter was criticized heavily by correspondents and others for this delay, but the General had his reasons for holding up a further advance. Shafter was more concerned with winning the campaign than precipitating battles, and for the welfare of his troops rather than with glory. Shafter was also criticized for his tactics during the campaign, but there was little criticism afterward because his actions had been justified. On June 22nd, he had written to Admiral Sampson:

I shall commence landing this morning. It is my intention to proceed from Dariquis [sic] to Santiago as rapidly as I can . . . I may not get far today.²⁴

He was faced with the problems of landing supplies and

²²Freidel, Splendid Little War, 114-115.

²³R. H. Titherington, "Our War With Spain," Munsey's Magazine, 20:46.

²⁴William R. Shafter, "The Capture of Santiago De Cuba," Century Magazine, 35:619.

getting the remainder of the troops on shore. He considered adequate supplies to be of more importance than attacking the Spaniards. The prospects of a hurricane driving the ships away and leaving the men stranded without supplies weighed heavily in his decision to concentrate on unloading the ships before attacking the Spanish who had retreated to the opposite bank of the San Juan River. When it is considered that he issued over 40,000 rations daily (5,000 Cubans, 18,000 refugees, 17,000 troops) his decision seem justified.²⁵

In the next six days the corps gradually pushed forward and occupied the hilly, wooded country about Sevilla, as far as El Pozo. For several days the troops lived "hand to mouth" because provisions were consumed as fast as they were unloaded, and two weeks passed before the army had three days rations in advance.²⁶ The wounded had been taken to the hospital ship Olivetti. The soldiers were largely occupied with picket duty. The shooting started once more but this time at a different kind of enemy. Cuba was infested with land crabs that moved at night in large bodies toward the ocean. Their shuttling through the leaves and over each other sounded much like an enemy scrambling

²⁵ Ibid., 612-630.

²⁶ Titherington, "Our War," Munsey's, 49-50.

through the underbrush. To a scared "rookie" there was no difference. The crabs sounded like "battalions of Spaniards hell bent on surprise and massacre."²⁷

The rough terrain interlaced with many little creeks and rivers offered a formidable problem for the engineers whose job it was to build a road to bring supplies. General Shafter wrote "I had never seen a good road in a Spanish country and Santiago did not disappoint my expectations."²⁸ The roads were washed out as quickly as they were built. The task of supplying the troops at the front was tremendous and the troops would have received far less food and supplies had it not been for the mule packers who worked sixteen to twenty hours a day moving supplies to the front. Wagons proved of less value than expected since many overturned on the steep muddy grades. More work devolved upon the packers.

I saw nothing of the kind equal to it during the campaign. I have never seen such extraordinary efforts anywhere by men and mules. Literally, the army would have starved but for the indefatigable labors of those packers--and the only reward I heard of their receiving was curses from headquarters and fever from exposure and overexertion.²⁹

²⁷ "A Little War With a Big Result," Life, 45:55.

²⁸ Shafter, "Capture of Santiago," Century, 35:613.

²⁹ Whitney, "The Santiago Campaign," Harper's,

Private Allen Gray described the situation and routine in this manner:

My company was to do picket duty that day, Wednesday, June 29th. We went on ahead about a mile from camp and found the picket line, and on the next day when we returned to our company we were played out, as we had had nothing to eat and not a mouthful of water for 14 hours. We reached camp about 11 o'clock June 29th and when we reached camp, we were not allowed to make any fires and we had nothing to eat buthardtack and bacon, and we were glad to get it.³⁰

The soldier had little luck at foraging since the Spaniards had taken nearly all the animals or they had been consumed during the previous revolt. "Not a chicken, hog, or cow did we see, the land seemed to be extremely poor."³¹ The troops made out as well as they could. In the meantime the Spaniards were not idle. They drilled, dug trenches, and made preparations for the attack by the Americans. The Americans watched and waited as "a long, yellow pit opened [before them] in the hillside of San Juan."³²

Finally, on June 30, the army received orders from General Shafter to prepare for an assault on San Juan. The soldiers had suffered unbelievable discomforts, had fought one battle already and now moved forward without complaint

³⁰ Gray, "Story of Fighting," The State, September 9, 1898.

³¹ John F. Alber, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

³² Davis, "The Battle of San Juan," 394.

to be put into action. The general plan of attack was adopted. One small group, the Eighth and the Twenty Second Infantry, supported by the Second Massachusetts, were to capture El Caney, a Spanish outpost about three miles to the right of Shafter's headquarters. The main body of the army was to advance on San Juan, which was only a mile and a half away.³³

Late in the afternoon on June 30, until half past one the next morning, the men lined up and drew rations. They were issued two handfuls of loose, unroasted coffee, a double handful of dry navy beans, and a handful of sugar. This was dumped into the haversack--all in together if one did not have a spare sock to use as a container. After this came loose salt and pepper, perhaps dumped together in an envelope with a letter from home. Then came an armful of hardtack, a "chunk" of sowbelly, and one can of "Alger's Embalmed Beef." The beef was given to every two men, with instructions to share the ration with a "bunkie" [the hiker's" equivalent of "buddy"]. This issue constituted five days rations.³⁴

The night before the battle the troops could see the fires of the enemy across the valley and hear their bugle

³³Trumbull White, The United States in War With Spain, 472-473.

³⁴Post, War of Private Post, 111.

calls. When reville sounded on the morning of July 1, the beauty of the country could not be seen, for the valley had become a basin shrouded in mist. The trails leading through the jungle valley had been turned to mud by recent rains. Columns of troops soon crowded the one trail that led to San Juan. So crowded was the trail and heavy the enemy resistance that troops moving forward from sunrise had covered only a mile and a half by noon. At 6:45 A.M. the silence of the jungle was broken by the dull boom of Captain Allyn M. Capron's battery firing on the El Caney fortress. The battle had begun. Little did the men realize that every sixth man would be killed or wounded before the day was over. The command at the top soon disintegrated and it devolved upon the individual soldier and his immediate commander to carry the fighting to a victorious climax.³⁵

The assault was marred by many errors in strategy, but the most unfortunate of all was the use of an observation balloon which marked the range for the Spanish artillery and sharp shooters. Pvt. Allen Gray of Company "H," Sixth U. S. Infantry, was right in front of the long columns that were streaming through the woods:

We had no more than gotten on our feet when the Spanish artillery saw this balloon and opened fire on us, and the first shell that was fired struck

³⁵Davis, "The Battle of San Juan," Scribners, 24:394-398.

right into the head of our regiment A private in Company "A" was the first soldier to be killed in the battle of San Juan They began to shell us heavily then, and at the time we had not moved from where we were standing Grimes battery was opened up and was silenced in less than four shots At last the enemy had destroyed that Jonah, as we named it afterwards, the balloon.³⁶

The observers in the balloon had discovered one thing they thought would be useful--a trail leading off the main trail and crossing the San Juan River a few hundred yards to the left of the entrance to the main trail. A large portion of the 71st New York was diverted into this trail, and thus the main attacking force was robbed of its support. The "green" troops of the 71st were pinned in this narrow, uncharted trail called the "chute of death," and as there was no escape but forward, they crouched and then moved forward. There were three regiments crowded into a trail that could accommodate at most points only a single file of men. Of all things, a regimental band, complete with instruments, was crowded in there also. Half the bandsmen had discarded their instruments and taken a dead or wounded soldier's rifle and cartridge belt.³⁷ The enemy could not be seen to return the fire, and even if they could have seen the enemy the Americans would have been marked by their black powder. Groups of the 71st did get through to take part in the

³⁶ Gray, "Story of Fighting," The State, Sept. 9, 1898.

³⁷ Post, War of Private Post, 113-137.

attack on the San Juan Blockhouse, but many others sat waiting their turn on the trail. That the 71st faced heavy fire is evidenced "from the fact that within half an hour, between twelve and one o'clock, the brigade had four commanders." Colonel Wikoff was killed and Lt. Col. Worth fell five minutes later, severely wounded; in another five minutes Lt. Col. Listrom, next in command, was wounded.³⁸

The Sixth and the Sixteenth Infantry had gone on down the Aguadores road and crossed the San Juan River under heavy fire; they were pinned down for four or five hours.

We were lying there thinking that the enemy was down on a level, and we were running about getting the best protection that we could in the underbrush. Some of our men happened to gain the other side of the creek (this was about 7 o'clock) and saw the enemy's blockhouses and trenches and then we were ordered to the other side of the creek, under a galling fire. That was the first time we were ordered to fire. After four or five hours of the hottest firing we managed to gain about 50 yards with very heavy losses on the other side of the creek. About 2 P.M. the enemy had gotten too hot for us and we would have lost our position, on our right . . . The 16th Infantry had at this time gotten their Gatling gun into position right beside the wagon load of ammunition, and opened up and after they had gotten the range of the enemy's trenches they caused the enemy to cease fire fully 15 minutes. And gave us time to gain the openings which were only about 1,000 yards away. The range we were firing to the top of the hill.

We had gained the opening and then we were ordered to charge. Directly in the middle of the field was the Spanish wire fence which they had in block with the wire running in squares and in most of the places was not more than a foot off the ground. It took us

³⁸ Titherington, "Our War," Munsey's, 54.

fully ten minutes to get through this. Tearing it down with our bayonets. We lost heavily at the wire fence and when we gained the other side of this fence, we stopped and cheered fully three or four times.³⁹

The Rough Riders were at breakfast when Grimes' battery opened fire on the Spanish. The enemy answered immediately with a shell that exploded right in their midst. The troopers scattered and, after recovering from this shock, regrouped. Many regiments marched past them toward the front. After two hours they began to move forward also, and again they took to the narrow, muddy trail leading through the jungle underbrush. A short time later they were under Spanish rifle fire. The air was seething with bullets and men dropped all about. Roosevelt, hit by a falling shell fragment, pushed his men forward. They were pinned down while crossing a stream, and, once out of this, they shifted to their right and waited, under fire, in a nearby wood for orders to advance. It became obvious that General Shafter had no control; communication with him was interrupted and inaccurate. Roosevelt led his men past the stalled troops of the Ninth Regiment and escaped the disaster of being marked by the balloon. The Ninth and two companies of the 71st New York soon followed their lead. By this time Roosevelt had realized that to retreat meant

³⁹Gray, "Story of Fighting," The State, September 9, 1898.

disaster, and if the objective was to be taken it had to be done by an assault on their own. The Rough Riders advanced on "Kettle Hill," [given its name because of the number of refining vats on its crest], the only hill between them and San Juan. It is here that the Rough Riders suffered most of their casualties. Their advance up the hill [it was hardly a charge] drove the Spaniards from it. In struggling groups of one and two they stumbled, fell, climbed and crawled their way to the top and continued in pursuit of the retreating Spaniards.⁴⁰

Almost simultaneously Lt. John H. Parker and his "coffee grinders" [Gatling machine guns] opened fire on the Spanish trenches. This raking fire pinned down the Spaniards, and inflicted heavy casualties.⁴¹ Thus the chance came to the American soldiers to advance and drive the Spaniards out. The decision by all commanders to charge, came at the same moment as the "coffee grinders" began to fire, and seems not to have been because of it, but more because they could not retreat. There was "no escape except by taking the enemy who held it by the throat, and driving him out, and beating him down."⁴²

⁴⁰ Roosevelt, "The Rough Riders," Scribners, 25:424-434.

⁴¹ John H. Parker, "The Gatlings at Santiago," Munsey's, 20:161.

⁴² Davis, "Battle of San Juan," Scribners, 402.

Lt. Jules G. Ord led the men of the Sixth and Sixteenth Infantry up San Juan Hill. They were the first to break forth from their jungle prison--dash for the red tiled roof that commanded San Juan hill--and drive the Spanish from their trenches. The chargers cheered. It was a cheer of release and although weak in volume at first, the yell increased in intensity as they advanced. Roosevelt reorganized all the men he could [many were not Rough Riders] and led the charge from Kettle Hill across the trenches among the ranch houses, through a line of fallen trees to the crest of the chain of hills. Now the 71st which had been pinned down moved out of "bloody ford" and on up the hill, marked by a cloud of smoke with every shot that they fired.⁴³

The charge up the hill was not a mass charge led from neatly formed ranks as many artists have pictured.

When our men came from cover . . . there were so few. It seemed as if someone had made an awful and terrible mistake . . . You felt that someone had blundered . . . It was not heroic then, it seemed merely pathetic. The pity of it, the folly of such a sacrifice was what held you.⁴⁴

Spanish fire rent the air over the crest as sheets of hail in a wind, and although American forces held the hill and its trenches it was unsafe to go over the crest. The

⁴³ Post, War of Private Post, 125-130.

⁴⁴ Davis, "Battle of San Juan," Scribners, 402.

soldiers had won a very gallant victory, but the situation was one of anxiety. A thousand men had been killed or wounded. Many others were detailed to find and bury the dead and to carry the injured to the rear. All were exhausted and had thrown away everything but guns and ammunition. Few had food with them and still fewer had their coats and blankets. The greatest danger was the thinness of the American line at such a great distance from its support and being so vulnerable to a counterattack.⁴⁵

At the rear position, the sufferings of the wounded were shocking. The journey from the chief emergency station was a terrible ordeal. The corps had only seven ambulances and a limited number of wagons--springless vehicles with bare and splintered boards that caused additional agony to the ghastly freight they bore over the rough jungle trails. Captain Bigelow relates an incident that happened during his ride back to Siboney:

On ride to the general hospital . . . stopped and picked up one wounded man, who before we got the nine mile distance, asked to be let out. He preferred to walk.⁴⁶

The ambulances and wagons carried only those who they thought could not make the trip on foot because so many were wounded and so few doctors were at the front. Private W. F. Apitz,

⁴⁵Titherington, "Our War," Munsey's, 58.

⁴⁶Bigelow, Reminiscences, 133.

Company C, 6th U.S. Infantry, whose company had 520 men when it landed in Cuba and returned with only eighty-two because of fighting and fever, describes his condition vividly:

. . . Four or five doctors and ten or twelve hospital corps men, and it looked as though there were 400 or 500 wounded that required attention. After . . . night had come, I managed to see one of the doctors. He informed me, after putting a bandage on my hand, that I would have to go to the next hospital, at Siboney, which was about nine or ten miles away. It being impossible to move at night on account of the sharpshooters, I was compelled to stay until daylight. Then it commenced raining and we had no shelter, but had to lie there and make the best of it. That night . . . one of the doctors was killed.⁴⁷

There were not enough coverings for the wounded at the hospital, not enough surgeons, not nearly enough nurses, and no better food than canned meat and hardtack. A heavy penalty was being paid for the failure to bring proper hospital equipment from Tampa, but it was not being paid by those responsible for the failure. At the division hospital men were lined up waiting for their turn on the operating table. The table was covered with white oil cloth. It was sponged off after each man was treated and the sponge "thrown in a bucket of bloody water." Men had to share rations with the wounded so that they would not starve. The hospital had no mattresses and few blankets to use on the cold nights. As there was no provision for toilets, tomato cans were used. Soldiers waited on themselves. "Red Cross

⁴⁷L. C. Dyer (ed.), The Spanish War Journal, I, 6.

nurses, with their neat white caps and aprons, flitting past our tent made the situation the more trying. They seemed busy," related Captain Bigelow, "and I suppose, could not attend to us."⁴⁸

Those in the trenches at the front were doing no better than those in the rear area. Fighting continued and more men died before the sun went down. The Spaniards continued to shell the hill with their artillery and with guns from Admiral Cevera's fleet in the bay. "We had gotten used to the small bullets," wrote Private Gray, "but we could never get used to the eight and ten inch shells from the harbor, which, when they came near you, gave you a weary feeling."⁴⁹

At least there was a brief pause from marching, and the trenches and the crest of the hill afforded protection from the steady rain of bullets over them. Many a curious soldier peeped over the embankment only to tumble back, dead or wounded. Artillery was brought up in front of the lines to shell the Spanish entrenchments. Marked by the clouds of black powder, the artillery caught an immediate reply in kind and the crews dashed for the trenches. Horses were scarce and could not be risked to remove the guns so the

⁴⁸ Bigelow, Reminiscences, 133-134.

⁴⁹ Gray, "Story of Fighting," The State, September 9, 1898.

71st used two companies of infantry to provide cover for the gun crews while they withdrew the artillery by hand. In a shoulder to shoulder line the two companies fired their .45-70 Springfields and covered the front with a white cloud of smoke. They fired for several minutes through the haze. The infantry suffered one killed and nine wounded in one company and four killed and ten wounded in the other--twenty per cent casualties. The artillery, withdrawing, lost one man. The firing continued until dark. In the meantime, units were regrouping and the dead were being buried in the Spanish trenches. Details were sent back for water and an emergency station was set up, just behind the trenches. More ammunition was brought up, but no shovels. The troops had to dig trenches with what they had. The line lengthened and spread over the next two days until it was a full five miles in length.⁵⁰

Stragglers also were beginning to make their appearance. In many companies along the front such a conversation as this could have been heard:

"Well", he demanded, "where you been?"
 "We been in the fighting, Captain."
 "Yessir!" said the other.
 "Where?" asked the Captain.
 "Over there, Captain, over there", . . . pointed to the blockhouses on the left.
 "We was with the Rough Riders!" said the first.
 ". . . We just left them . . ."

⁵⁰

Post, War of Private Post, 131-142.

"You lying b ~~ut~~," he said. "The Rough Riders are on our right."⁵¹

The whole company line would break into a jeer, for they knew that these men had been skulking in the bushes back in the trail.

The three regiments that were engaged at El Caney were unable to dislodge the enemy as soon as was thought. General Shafter considered this village as a mere outpost and did not want to expend too much energy to capture it. From 9 o'clock to 10 o'clock, July 1, the firing was continuous, the Spanish were putting up a determined fight (in two blockhouses and behind loopholed walls). The third regiment, the Second Massachusetts, took little part in the battle. Like all the volunteers except the Rough Riders, they were armed with the old Springfield rifles firing black powder cartridges. Their first volley drew so heavy a return that they were ordered to the rear, after losing five men killed and forty wounded. The artillery faced similar problems but El Caney had little artillery with which to reply. Lieutenant Dwight D. Aultman, an artillery officer, described one of their problems: "Our fire was unaimed, and the results could neither be observed nor ascertained, as our view was absolutely obscured by our own smoke."⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid., 141.

⁵² H. H. Sargent, The Campaign of Santiago De Cuba, II, 126.

One of those wounded at El Caney gives an insight into a soldier's reactions to battlefield conditions. In a letter dated July 11, 1898 this volunteer wrote from a hospital in Tampa:

At about a quarter of six a shot from the cannon flew over our heads; then we knew the battle had begun. We then went forward on the double-quick, marched through woods and fields. We had to cut barbed wire fences and cut down wooden ones, till we got to the road; then we were near the town. All at once a volley came over our heads, and we ducked and got up laughing. We then took off our rolls (blankets and tents) and left S_____ to look after them. We then cut the barbed wire fence on our left, climbed the bank, for the road was about six feet below the fields. We then went out on skirmish line, each man going forward and each about five feet apart. The bullets were flying all around us, but the first volley seemed to take all the fright out of us for no one held back but wanted to try to get in the fight first. It was not long before a man would fall here and there; but we did not stop. We would run like time, then lie down, get the order "forward" get up and run forward, then drop down in the grass. The bullets would throw the dirt up in our faces all around us. Zip, zip-plunk-that was the way, yet all the time and hundreds-just one string of singing bullets. It was during one of these rushes that a bullet hit me. I was on my hands and knees. I fell over and lay there. Then the boys began to fire. I got up on my knees to shoot-but all I could do was put the cartridge in. I was so weak I fell over. I then called two of the boys to carry me to the rear. They carried me about a hundred yards and laid me down behind a large cactus plant. They tried to tie up the wound, but the bullets were so thick I told them to lie flat. About five minutes later the bullets stopped and they started to put on some bandages but a volley came and the boy from E Company was hit in the hip and C_____ was hit in the right shoulder. I told them to crawl away if they could and they did so. I then got out two handkerchiefs and held them on the holes for an hour and a half. Every once in a while pieces of the cactus plant would drop down, cut off by the bullets. It was awful lying there,

listening to the cries of the wounded and the dying, the singing of the bullets, and the explosion of the shells. But the firing then went to the left, so the boys came back after the killed and wounded and carried me down to the road. There I lay for another half hour until the doctor came around.⁵³

The Americans pushed closer and closer to El Caney employing all available reserves until they were at the foot of the hill outside the town. By 2:30 o'clock they received word from Shafter to retreat and help at San Juan, but they were too close to victory and it would have been costly to withdraw. They fought on until about four in the afternoon when the Spanish fire slackened because of their lack of ammunition. Then the Americans pressed on victoriously. The defending commander, General Vara Del Rey, was killed as he was being carried off on a stretcher. Two of his sons were also killed. The Spaniards suffered about 335 killed and wounded.⁵⁴ The American army, under General Lawton, then attempted to push onward towards San Juan, but it was getting dark. Instead, he marched his men back down the road to El Pozo and thence to San Juan arriving there about noon on July 2. His men were tired; they had marched and fought for thirty hours with only four hours sleep the previous night and without provisions. They were an exhausted

⁵³"War Letters," Outlook, 921.

⁵⁴Titherington, "Our War," Munsey's, 51-52.

group of men when they took their places in the trenches before Santiago.⁵⁵

That same night, July 2, 1898, there was great fear of a counterattack by the Spaniards. Firing broke out, but after an hour was stopped by officers on both sides. Lieutenant Parker tells how two officers, near his position, tried to stop the waste of ammunition in the dark. Lieutenant Colonel Roosevelt strode along the trenches in front of the Rough Riders and told them that "he thought cowboys were men who shot only when they could see the whites of the other fellow's eyes." Captain Ayers, who had replaced the wounded Captain Bigelow of the Tenth Cavalry, called to his Negro troopers that they were "no better than the Cubans," upon which the men laughed and ceased their wild firing.⁵⁶ Whether an actual counterattack was stopped or not has not been determined but no further counterattack was attempted. Only desultory firing was made the remainder of the time, as the Americans extended their lines and improved their trenches for the coming seige.

On July 14, a private in the 71st New York wrote this descriptive letter demonstrating the mixed feelings of the soldiers in the trenches:

⁵⁵ Millis, Martial Spirit, 291-292.

⁵⁶ Parker, "Gatlings," Munsey's, 20:161.

. . . We were under the fire of a thousand sharpshooters who had taken the surrounding trees and our men were picked off going and coming; we kept flat for two days trying to avoid their fire. By this time the dead had decayed and stench was horrible in the hot sun and drenching rain. Then the firing eased up and the dead were put underground-I saw afterward a grave with an arm protruding from the top of it. We have slept on our arms for three weeks, clothes, shoes, etc., all on; on the ground, of course, and in rain and sunshine; never leaving our entrenchments . . . Each man cooks his own pork and hardtack; and we have mangoes and coconuts regularly. The water supply is two miles off and the roads are halfway to the knee in mud. . . . We have had four battles in all, and I can truly say that war is a terrible thing . . . I do not know how I could go back on my country's call, but I hope it will never need to call again . . . but one soon gets used to war and the song of the shell and bullet, and I think I might form a taste for it. . . .⁵⁷

A private in the Second Massachusetts, the unit that had fought all day at El Caney, then marched until noon the next day to arrive at the trenches, wrote thus:

. . . The dense underbrush retarded our progress, also the heavy grass, the matted vines, and wild cacti--no small items when one is loaded with a ten pound gun, cartridges amounting to about 13 pounds, half a shelter tent, woolen and rubber blankets, haversack, canteen, and what clothing and sundries we choose to carry. . . . Digging trenches with Jack knives, spoons, sticks, tin plates, and bare hands is not very inspiring work, and today it makes the third day's work on the trenches.

We are not alarmingly fat; some of our men have lost from twenty to forty pounds; our Captain among them. When short of rations, some fabulous sums

⁵⁷"War Letters," Outlook, 969.

have been offered for food. A tobacco vendor could have had it all his own way and made a fortune in an hour.⁵⁸

Besides food, one of the greatest shortages was that of tobacco. After leaving Siboney, the soldiers paid two dollars for a plug of tobacco which usually cost eight cents. Those who could not get tobacco smoked dried grass, roots and dry manure. Transportation was at a premium. Donkeys could not be rented for \$150. A match in trenches was a precious possession. Writing paper also was scarce and postage stamps were unknown; and those who could not write "soldier's letter" on their envelopes had to give up writing. Writing paper at one time was so scarce that orders and requisitions were made out on the margins of newspapers and on scraps torn from notebooks and on the insides of old envelopes. Personal hygiene was another major problem, but most of the soldiers kept a toothbrush tucked in their hatband. In the trenches there was no real chance for a bath. The water holes to the rear were polluted and the rains sometimes did not last long enough to rinse off all the soap. Fresh clothing was unheard of. Richard H. Davis relates that he had lost a saddle bag which when returned, still contained fifty dollars, but his fresh undershirts were gone. Shortages were also reflected in the

⁵⁸
Ibid., 970.

officers equipment. General Wheeler's stars were cut out of a tin cup and Roosevelt's "acorns" from a lead spoon.⁵⁹

Some soldiers were more concerned about the gaining of glory than they were about illness. The following breezy letter was written by a Washington youth on July 7, in the trenches around Santiago:

I was upset by a shell back of Grimes' battery July 1, which killed some people. Very miraculous. Only I didn't get a scratch to show for it, and although I most conscientiously wished for a bullet-hole, didn't get one the rest of the fight. I overdid the business a little, rode to the rear twice that day and back, and then walked after they shot my mule. Well, anyway . . . the fever came on July 3rd, and . . . if anything does happen to me, I'll feel like such an ass for not being bowled over like a gentleman in the battle last week. . . .⁶⁰

A break in the routine which came on July 3 offered the troopers a chance to stretch and relax for a while. General Shafter had requested a truce while he sent the Spanish an ultimatum demanding surrender. It read:

I shall be obliged, unless you surrender, to shell Santiago de Cuba. Please inform the citizens of foreign countries, and all women and children, that they should leave the city before 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

William R. Shafter,
Major-General, U.S.V.⁶¹

⁵⁹Richard H. Davis, "The Battle of San Juan," Scribners, 24:387-403; "In the Rifle Pits," Scribners, 24:652-654.

⁶⁰Trumbull White, The United States in War, 538-539.

⁶¹Shafter, "Capture of Santiago," Century, 624.

Without shelter the army was alternately drenched by rain and scorched by the sun. The trail to the rear had become almost impassable and so little food could be brought up that semi-starvation was added to physical exhaustion. Many other hardships were to follow that were to be of more danger and inconvenience to the campaigner than the Spaniards. It became a contest of two armies to see which would starve first.

The days following the receipt of news that the Spanish fleet had been destroyed became days of truces and exchanges of messages between the Spanish General Toral and General Shafter, the former stalling for time and the latter bluffing. The men who had put their regimental flags in front of their trenches as a dare to the enemy did not understand the truce negotiations and resented them. One of the regulars said, "I can't make out this flag of truce gag. It reminds me of two kids in a street fight, stopping after every punch to ask the other fellow if he's had enough."⁶²

On July 10, the truce was broken and a symbolic bombardment of Santiago was begun. The bombardment was necessary to salve the conscience of General Toral who could say he surrendered under fire, but the presence of General Miles and his thousands of troops waiting aboard transports off Siboney was more likely a large factor in speeding up the

⁶²Davis, "In the Rifle Pits," Scribners, 650-651.

negotiations. As long as our artillery bombarded and hit nothing the Spanish reply was just as inaccurate, but when "accidentally" an American shell hit a building the Spanish fire would suddenly improve. The Spanish rifle fire was easily stopped by sharpshooters but little could be done with the enemy artillery. "We could not be kept under cover in the trenches. We wanted to see," wrote Private Post, "No gunner in that battery ever hit anything, that day or the next. But with the Captain [Capron] laying a gun there was results."⁶³

Four days later Toral and Shafter rode out and met in the field before the trenches, where Toral officially surrendered for the Spanish forces. The American General officers, accompanied by the Sixth Cavalry, rode into Santiago. Past the barbed wire and concrete barriers, they went to the front of the Governor's palace. Then with the playing of "Hail Columbia" the Spanish flag was lowered and up went the Stars and Stripes. "As the flag went over the palace there was a feeling of sadness," wrote James F. J. Archibald, "for all about us were pinched worn faces of hungry citizens and the sorrowful faces of the defeated officers, who covered heavy hearts with gracious manner to the foe."⁶⁴

⁶³ Post, War of Private Post, 152-166.

⁶⁴ James F. J. Archibald, "The Day of the Surrender of Santiago," Scribners, 25:413-416.

The reaction of the American troops in the rifle pits was jubilant.

. . . With the first gun fired in salute over the surrender of Santiago, we mounted the parapet of our trench and gave three cheers. Capron's battery had been named for the honor of firing the twenty-one guns of victory. Far down on either side of us stretched the trenches, on back to the blockhouse, Roosevelt's men, and beyond them. On our right they began the encirclement of the Bay of Santiago, and at our extreme right were the Cuban troops in their trenches. Miles of men in tattered and ragged blue; sick and well, waving and cheering and shaking hands.⁶⁵

With the words "I surrender the Spanish troops under my command and this place" Toral had surrendered Santiago without another massive bloodletting.⁶⁶ The American officers were thankful that they did not have to charge the impregnable defenses of the city, and the common soldier, who had thought very little of the dangers of an assault and had suffered so much, was concerned only with getting home. The army had won one fight, but still had to face another enemy--disease.

⁶⁵ Post, War of Private Post, 166.

⁶⁶ Shafter, "Capture of Santiago," Century, 624.

CHAPTER V

SOLDIER'S REWARD

The war in Cuba was over, as far as the Fifth Army Corps was concerned, and the men wanted to go home. General Toral had surrendered just in time, for the American forces that surrounded the city of Santiago began to collapse. The brave men who had held the trenches under heavy fire in the scorching sun and drenching rains now were sicker and weaker than they realized. They were still confined to the muddy trenches, and the tents which had afforded some protection from the rains in days past were now disintegrating as rapidly as the health of the troops. "The term shelter-tent is a misnomer, as it affords no protection against the tropical down-pours," wrote one soldier.¹ Soldiers spread their peeling rubber-coated ponchos over the ridge of their "dog tents" to obtain some protection from the rain. The soldiers remained confined to the trenches and the surrounding area most of the time, and only small details were allowed in the city. Although the supply routes were changed somewhat the conditions did not improve materially.

The troops still had to go to the river over a mile away to obtain water that they had to boil before drinking. The rivers were muddied by pack trains crossing them and the

¹ "War Letters," Outlook, 970.

main water hole in back of the trenches was polluted. The water from the filthy trenches, campsites and graves drained into it. In spite of the rumors that the bodies of a couple of Spanish soldiers were still in this pond, a few soldiers risked a bath in the pond.² Some yellow soap [one cubic inch in size] was issued to the men, who by now were infested with lice. The "hiker" named the louse the "Rough Rider." The yellow soap did no good and other techniques were tried as a means of getting rid of this pest. The "hiker" tried this method:

. . . We heard that ants are great fighters and ferocious against intrusion. So we would lay our clothes on an ant heap and stand there, naked, hoping for results. An almost complete area of sunburn or tan over our dermal exteriors was the sole result. But miles of naked men, studiously peering at their favorite ant hill, absorbed in the search for entomological truth, is a tribute to our American eagerness for exact knowledge.³

Food was now brought by mule pack trains and wagons from Santiago. The rations were the same--beans, unroasted coffee, hardtack, and sowbelly. Once some fresh beef arrived and was dumped under a tree [that had been used for a stable]; this made good stew. Later the Red Cross sent up some cornmeal and flour, items greatly appreciated by the men.⁴

²Freidel, Splendid War, 249-250.

³Post, War of Private Post, 171.

⁴Ibid., 167-168.

Occasionally cans of beef would arrive and a gaseous sound could be heard when they were opened. These cans of beef were given the apt titles of "Japanese Coolie Beef" and "Alger's Embalmed Beef," because the cans were intended for use by the Japanese in their war against China a few years before, and the age and taste of the food was logically connected with the Secretary of War. Mangoes, limes, and green coconuts supplemented their diet, but only caused dysentery among the men. This diet, according to an army surgeon, resulted in lower weight and resistance to disease. The men lost from ten to fifteen pounds each--over five tons a regiment.⁵ Private John F. Alber weighed 162 pounds when entering service and only weighed 128 pounds upon discharge as a result of dysentery, fever and an inadequate diet.⁶

Mr. Frederick Remington had written:

I was unable to decide whether sleeping in a mud puddle, confinement of a troopship, or being shot at is worst. They are all initiating, and when done on an empty stomach . . . they are extravagantly expensive.⁷

But there were to be other hardships that were more "expensive," the Fifth Corps lost 296 enlisted men because of

⁵Louis L. Seaman, "The U.S. Army Ration in the Tropics," Century, 35:633-634.

⁶Statement by John F. Alber, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁷Frederick Remington, "With the Fifth Corps," Harper's, 97:964.

disease while in Cuba.⁸ The men measured time by their chills and fever. Siboney had been burned to thwart the outbreak of yellow fever before it could reach the trenches. Burning would not be the solution when yellow fever got into the trenches. Many officers pleaded to have the men moved to the mountains, but they would have starved there for lack of supplies. Medicines were extremely scarce and in many instances ineffective. Alternating between doses of iodine and quinine, the scant supplies were fast being depleted. Malarial fever had long since made its appearance and yellow jack was becoming more prevalent. Taps and the firing of a volley was the signal that another burial detail was finished with its work. The epidemic intensified. The volleys became more frequent and one bugle call followed another throughout the day, as if they were echoes of each other. The 71st New York sick list showed 400 men, out of 900 remaining, fit for duty. Post recalls that:

. . . One morning there were no more volleys. No more taps. But the little files of men with picks and shovels, a stretcher covered with a blanket or poncho, and a chaplain showed that the burials kept on. Volleys and taps had been stopped by official order from headquarters lest their frequency might demoralize us! Soldiers were buried in silence but for the chaplain.⁹

⁸ Shafter, "Capture of Santiago," Century, 615.

⁹ Post, War of Private Post, 174.

The sick had to shift for themselves or depend on a "bunkie." There still was no adequate hospital service. A portion of the battlefield was used.¹⁰ If a soldier was strong enough to report to sick call, he was strong enough for guard duty and had to do his turn. The men had drilled for a week after the surrender but then drill was cancelled by a general order.¹¹

Under these dire circumstances something had to be done. Personal pleas were tried and the officers appealed to the War Department to have the corps moved. A "round robin" letter was formulated by Theodore Roosevelt; it was signed by three major generals and four brigadier generals, and endorsed to General Shafter, who gave his approval. The letter described the conditions and stated that the army had to be moved at once or it would be unable to move itself. The expense of sending the letter to Washington in time to save the troops was a big problem. It would have cost \$1500 to send it by cable. The letter was conveniently left on a table in a tent where an Associated Press Correspondent "found" it and sent it on its way, at a cost of \$1700.¹²

¹⁰ Statement by Arthur Fern, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

¹¹ Post, War of Private Post, 175.

¹² Westermeyer, Who Rush to Glory, 236-248.

General Lawton wrote the following explanation to General Shafter about his signature on the letter:

In signing the above letter, I do so with the understanding it has been seen and approved by the Commanding General. I desire to express it as my strong opinion that "the best medical authorities of the island" and "all the surgeons of the command" be also required to sign the paper,--at least the Chief Surgeon of the army and each division. I desire also to express the opinion that the mandatory language used in the letter is impolitic and unnecessary. Milder expressions to those in authority generally accomplish just as much. It is also my opinion that much of the fatal illness is due to homesickness and other depressing influences.¹³

General Lawton proved to be an accurate prophet in some respects. Secretary Alger had already ordered that the troops be moved to Montauk Point, Long Island, but the news reached the press at about the same time as the "round robin" letter and it appeared that Theodore Roosevelt had once more been the hero of an action.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the soldiers waited and talked (it was the only form of diversion) and struggled to maintain life. Theirs was a primitive and oversimplified existence. At night the men would gather in small groups and sit on the parapets of their trenches and talk. They talked about the war but not with the frenzied outlook they had had at its outset. They talked of the incidents that had affected

¹³ Sargent, Campaign of Santiago De Cuba, III, 48.

¹⁴ Freidel, Splendid War, 296.

their lives. After July 2, they cursed very little and on not one of those nights after the surrender was a dirty story told. They were beyond the point where that kind of entertainment had any appeal, and they no longer had to pretend toughness, through cursing; they were already tough. Homesickness was expressed by some, but not to the extent that it was dominant in their conversation. They talked of man and war; they had already evaluated most of their officers and each other. For some there was the feeling of brotherhood from having been in battle together, for others they felt only hatred. Good officers demanded and held the respect of the men, but some were disgraceful. Most of the chaplains knew their duty and performed well but one chaplain who took over the Young Men's Christian Association tent belonged to the tea table set and not in the army. He discriminated against the enlisted men and was selfish in relations with fellow officers. However, instances of selfishness were rare and as the sick lists grew so did the spirit of brotherhood.¹⁵

There were few occasions where the Americans met the Spanish face to face. But the Spanish proved to be just as hard up as the Americans. There was a certain mutual

¹⁵Post, War of Private Post, 171-173. Also statements made by Arthur R. Fern and John F. Alber, personal interviews. Permission to quote secured.

respect between men who had faced each other over rifles, but fraternization was kept at a minimum.¹⁶ The last week before their departure for home the troops received more food and of greater variety but the sickness struck deeper until over 4000 men were on the sick list. The company of Private Charles Post was selected to go into Santiago and get more supplies from the ship Vigilancia. To do so meant meeting the Spaniards. The strongest men were selected (twelve of them) and cautioned that they had the reputations of the United States Army on their shoulders. Post noted on the back of one of his paintings: "Ragged victors, men of the 71st New York, march into Santiago wearing the Cuban campaign badge--a toothbrush stuck in the hatband." He described himself thus: "I was . . . fragrant from sowbelly grease and rancid onions. But one thing, we did look tough."¹⁷ They traded souvenirs with the Spanish. The Spanish wanted theirhardtack and sowbelly; they wanted the straw hats and insignias.

By this time the replacements from the mainland had arrived, were taking over the occupation duties and receiving the surrendered Spanish troops. They found the country

¹⁶ From statements made by John F. Alber, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

¹⁷ "Little War With Big Results," Life, 45:61.

beautiful and the conditions a little better. Page Ligon of the Houston Post Rifles described the scene thus:

. . . The poor class of people are almost starved. They come around and beg for scraps to eat. Cuba is the richest land I have ever seen; pretty shade trees and everything that it takes to make a country look fine. . . . We only have to drill one hour a day here . . . Colonel Hood has water boiled every night and next morning we put ice in it to drink. . . .¹⁸

The new army had been vaccinated twice while on the way over and thus did not suffer from some of the diseases the Fifth Corps had, but even they soon found that they were not properly equipped. They took hammocks off their ship and slept better than the men in the trenches.¹⁹ The presence of these relief units of the occupational forces heartened the veterans of the campaign, for they now had higher hopes of returning home. The ragged troops of the Fifth Corps must have incited the curiosity and sympathy of the newcomers, who saw the numerous stretchers bearing the sick.

On August 6, the transports were loaded with the gaunt shadows of men. Those who could make the trip to the dock were issued fresh khaki uniforms, the first change in clothes they had had for weeks. The following days the loading of regiments continued, but the sick were left

¹⁸ Trumbull White, The United States in War, 540.

¹⁹ Statement by D. N. Scott, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

behind, waiting for a hospital ship. John F. Alber described their situation:

The sick were left to shift for themselves. We were left a few rifles and some ammunition and a little medicine--quinine. The sick and wounded were left on the field and had to take turns at guarding the supplies to prevent theft by the Cubans. When the ship did arrive it was a converted cattle boat. The odor was still there, although the stalls had been whitewashed. We strung our hammocks across the stalls. Nine men died on the trip back.²⁰

There were no facilities for the sick to use for bathing. No underwear or means to change, wash and dry their clothes was available. One hospital ship, the Cherokee, was fired on by an American vessel mistaking it for a Spanish destroyer.²¹ The transports were crowded five to a cabin with only one latrine for the enlisted men. The sick were everywhere and death on board ship was not infrequent. Over 250 men died on the transports or at Montauk Point.²²

As the transports hoisted anchor and started engines, the band played "Home Sweet Home" and then "Hail Columbia." The ships gathered steam and headed for the channel that led to the sea. The red tiled roofs of San Juan and Santiago slowly faded into the distance. The ships sailed past the

²⁰ Statement by John F. Alber, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

²¹ Bigelow, Reminiscences, 133-144.

²² Freidel, Splendid War, 298.

sunken ship Merrimac and Morro Castle at the entrance of the bay and turned eastward in the Caribbean toward Cape Maisi and then northward for home. They arrived nine days later off Montauk Point, New York.

The entire army was placed in quarantine in detention camps on Long Island. Although, in a sense, it was a national showplace, visited by the Secretary of War, Alger, and President McKinley, it was a place of death for many soldiers. Private Post and Private Alber agree that there was little actual care given the sick who were isolated at one end of the island in tents. The men were allowed to leave as soon as they thought themselves able. The sick had to walk to a cook shack to be fed. An elderly volunteer nurse [male] tried to bring food to the hundred sick men on his street. Working patiently and steadily, he was the only one that this group of bedridden soldiers could depend on.²³

Secretary Alger visited the camp and conditions improved thereafter. Those who had gathered enough strength to walk the mile to the railroad station could get a pass. Once in town they were welcomed by the citizens and given aid; even sent to a local hospital. Those who were well marched in a parade down Fifth Avenue. The healthy of the 71st New York marched to their armory and stacked their

²³ Post, War of Private Post, 201-215.

arms. Upon leaving the detention camp overcoats and sometimes complete new uniforms were issued the troops--"a donation by Helen Gould."²⁴

Upon being mustered out the soldiers received their pay. A private earned \$13.00 a month, and received an extra bonus of \$5.50 for being in the Cuban Campaign. Many drew their \$31.50 along with their discharge. The discharges were of two main types--those that were incomplete and those complete. Each discharge originally had a section at the bottom for character reference to be given by the commanding officer. Good or excellent was written in this section, but if the record was doubtful, this section was torn off. The discharges with the section missing were called "bobtailed" discharges and the inference made by the absence of the character reference was obvious.²⁵

For the men of the Fifth Army Corps the war was over, but the volunteer spirit still prevailed in many of the men who stayed in the army or volunteered for service in the Philippines. Spain did not capitulate fast enough to save all her other territories. Puerto Rico was invaded and taken in a relatively bloodless assault, and the city of Manila had fallen two days after the armistice had been

²⁴ Post, War of Private Post, 215.

²⁵ Description given by John F. Alber, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

signed. Colonel John Jacob Astors' artillery had been sent to the Philippines and was used by General Arthur MacArthur and General Wesley Merritt in driving the Spanish from Manila.²⁶ The accounts of disease in the army camps were causing many volunteer units to disband. The restless spirit of some of these civilian soldiers was causing trouble in several cities. Many volunteers felt that since Spain had surrendered they did not have to fight insurrectionists and pressed for discharge.²⁷ For those in the occupation forces headed to Cuba there awaited the dread enemy, yellow fever, that was to take more lives than Spanish bullets. So great became the problem that the officers at Columbia Barracks outside Havana were to drink to this gruesome toast:

Here's to the ones who have gone.
Here's to the next one to go.²⁸

Returning heroes began to replace Civil War veterans in public office and places of prominence in the communities.²⁹ An investigation of the War Department was begun but came to very few conclusions as to who to blame for the

²⁶ Peyton March, "Mr. Astor Outfits the Army," Saturday Evening Post, 231:24-25, 53-55.

²⁷ Westermeyer, Rush to Glory, 240-242.

²⁸ Philip S. Hench, "Conquerors of Yellow Fever," Hygeia, 20:781.

²⁹ William A. White, Autobiography of William Allen White, 327-329.

inefficiency and undue suffering of our soldiers.³⁰ On January 9, 1899, General Shafter was told that the House of Representatives was "bigger than any major general who ever lived" and he was refused the honor that was accorded General MacArthur's son two generations later.³¹ Those still seeking excitement could easily find it by going to the Philippines. In 1900 Senator Albert J. Beveridge was still lauding the men who would "put a tooth-brush through their hat-band and charge with a smile straight to hell, if necessary." "The splendid war" as Secretary of State John Hay had called it, began to fade and become an almost forgotten war as the United States proceeded to meet the new challenges of the twentieth century.

Three score years and three wars later the editor of the National Tribune, in paying tribute to the volunteers of 1898, voiced an axiom that should be remembered: "No country can be great if there are not men to fight for it--men willing to answer their country's call--men who make their country's history."³² Only a handful of gallant old men still remember the suffering they endured, without

³⁰Report of the Commission Appointed by the President to Investigate the Conduct of the War Department in the War With Spain, 8 Vols.

³¹Asher C. Hinds, diary, entry dated January 9, 1899.

³²"Remember the Maine?," National Tribune, February 15, 1958.

complaint, on San Juan Hill and the greater lessons they learned from each other on the battlefield. A past historian of the United Spanish War Veterans in Texas, who recently answered the last call, told a reporter in 1958 a greater truth all men in combat learn:

You've got a deeper brotherhood with a man you have been under fire with. Only death will break the bond.³³

³³"Sixty Years Ago Today He Stood on San Juan Hill," The Houston Chronicle, July 4, 1958. Statement by Arthur R. Fern.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Spanish-American War was of short duration, lasting only one hundred and fifteen days, but the results of this war were far greater than the brevity of the conflict would indicate. It was responsible for many changes made in the domestic, humanitarian, military, and foreign affairs of America.

Near the end of the nineteenth century the United States was relatively inexperienced in foreign affairs and wars fought outside the continent. The United States had become interested in many areas of the world by 1898, but attention was largely focused on Cuba, an island in which the nation had long had an interest. Stories of Spanish atrocities committed in Cuba and Cuban virtues, during the many revolutions there, were told in an exaggerated manner by the jingoist newspapers. These misleading one-sided accounts aroused great American interest in Cuban affairs. Strained relations with Spain were made considerably worse when the American warship Maine was sunk in Havana harbor. Relations between the United States and Spain grew steadily worse until a declaration of war was made by Spain on April 24, 1898. President McKinley issued two calls for volunteers for military service. The country was enthusiastic in its support and demanded war.

Enlistment in the army required small effort and volunteers eagerly sought a unit in which to serve. The government, however, was not as enthusiastic for war as the public and was not prepared to mobilize and equip an army as rapidly as expected. The Navy was much better prepared than the Army through the efforts of the preceding administrations. The common soldier was to suffer many hardships because of this unpreparedness. The National Guard forces suffered more than the Regular Army because of improperly trained personnel and outmoded equipment. With the support of excited and admiring crowds, the common soldier departed for camp.

The war did not last long enough to completely destroy the enlistee's idealistic image of soldier life, but the training camps began the process. These camps were not well situated and added the hardships of poor food and inadequate equipment to normal problems of disease and discomfort when large numbers of men are crowded together. In spite of these handicaps the soldier adjusted quickly to his new environment, and soon found many diversions from the routine through card playing, letter writing, song fests, drinking, and other types of informal entertainment. The soldiers wanted to immediately smite the Spaniards and were disappointed by the delay of the training period. Most of the enlistees had joined the ranks of the military to

chastise the Spaniards, and were seeking the excitement of fighting for their country. Many men found camp life boring and hard. When it became obvious that the Spaniards were defeated and most of them would not get into combat, the troops, suffering from disease, were disheartened and sought to have their organizations deactivated.

The stay in Tampa was difficult. Many units lacked necessary supplies and facilities for camping. The confusion in loading the transports and the long waiting period endured aboard crowded ships in Tampa Bay discouraged many soldiers, but their hopes for excitement were raised when the ships steamed out of the bay and sailed to Cuba. For most of the troops this was their first ocean voyage and they enjoyed the trip despite some discomfort. The soldiers were happy, however, when they saw the island of Cuba, and displayed great lightheartedness upon reaching the beaches at Daiquiri and Siboney, Cuba. At this point they had scant respect for the Spaniards and expected an easy victory over them.

At Las Guasimas the soldiers received their first baptism of fire and demonstrated the courage that was to be a determining factor in the outcome of the Cuban campaign. The invaders experienced their first contacts with death and wounds on the battlefield, and found these things were not anything like they had expected. After several trying days

of waiting, the army advanced to the Spanish defenses in the hills outside Santiago. On July 1, 1898, two major and decisive battles were fought, one at El Caney and the other at San Juan Hill. After the rush up San Juan Hill, the apex of the Spanish defenses, a period of seige ensued as the American lines were extended around Santiago. The army endured great hardships and privations because of the inadequate supply of food, ammunition and equipment. The wounded suffered greatly because of the lack of sufficient medical supplies, ambulances, doctors, and emergency equipment. Some units were handicapped in the fighting because of inadequate arms. The volunteer regiments and artillery had nonsmokeless powder which marked them for the enemy sharpshooters. Only the regular units and Rough Riders were equipped with modern Krag-Jorgensen rifles and smokeless cartridges.

Conditions in the trenches during the seige made life uncomfortable for the soldiers. Their personal equipment such as tents, rainwear, blankets, and uniforms were not suited to the climate encountered. The absence of sanitary facilities and drinking water, coupled with an improper diet, led to a disastrous outbreak of disease. The entire army was considerably weakened by these conditions, and only the quick Spanish surrender saved the American army from military disaster. The campaigners held their lines and

waited for relief with sickness striking deeper, until at one point fifty per cent of the soldiers were incapacitated. The death rate increased until action was taken by the government to move the troops from Cuba to Montauk Point, Long Island. Here, after a period of detention, the units were disbanded and those that were well enough were allowed to go home.

The dying and suffering in other sections of the American army did not cease immediately since they were used as occupation forces in other disease-ridden areas ceded by Spain. Even then, the fighting was not ended with the surrender of Spain, since many soldiers were sent to the Philippines to fight insurgents there until 1902.

The common soldier of the Spanish-American War was the main instrument through which many changes were made on the American scene. He possessed a spirit of individualism which rendered him able to cope with many trying situations. This individualism is further shown through the fact that all soldiers of this war were true volunteers and conscription did not become necessary. He did not enlist for money. The pay of the soldier was too small to provide much incentive. A sense of duty, patriotism, and a mission were the motivating forces of his enlistment. The service man of that period came from all sections of the country, and thus served a purpose of healing sectional strife. The trials

and hardships he endured made future soldier life easier for his countrymen. The "hiker" considered the Cuban invasion as an experiment in foreign wars, and complained little except about the things he considered unnecessary. The lessons he learned about tropical fighting were invaluable to future American armies. The "hiker" took part in the first war fought by an American army outside this continent. The problems of transportation and landing an invading force were dramatically brought to the attention of American military leaders. The equipment the soldier used was unsuitable for the climate and conditions, his food was poor, his weapons antiquated, his leaders were confused, yet he grappled with a better equipped, better led, more experienced army and won. He gained victory because of sheer determination, courage, and initiative. Although having only contempt for the enemy while fighting, he treated the conquered foe kindly after the war was ended. The campaigner's struggle with the tropical diseases resulted in the control of many of these enemies of man and benefited all humanity. The military hospitals the trooper entered revealed great shortcomings and were later improved because the need became so generally known. His environment and experiences were a severe test; the fighting man's attitude matured from what it had been upon enlistment, but he considered his job well done. Millions of Americans had served before him and

millions followed him, yet the world has failed to produce any better soldier. As long as America has men of this spirit, she need "have no fear that another thousand years of mediaeval night will fall upon the western world."¹

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APPENDIX

Veterans Cited

John F. Alber, 407 John Alber Road, Houston, Texas.

Benjamin A. Bowman, 1121 W. Mistletoe Avenue, San Antonio,
Texas.

Thomas E. Driscoll, Houston, Texas.

Arthur R. Fern, #630 Irvington Courts, Houston, Texas.

A. G. Meyer, Box 55, League City, Texas.

D. N. Scott, 1019 Chicago Avenue, San Antonio, Texas.

NOTE: Some fifteen other veterans were interviewed as a group in round table discussion at Mr. John F. Alber's home in Houston, Texas, on June 24, 1961. This provided some of the descriptions used, and was cited as "group of veterans interviewed."

Vita was removed during scanning