Article Title: Nebraska Correspondents

Full Citation: "Nebraska Correspondents," *Nebraska History* 25 (1944): 55-72

URL of article: http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1944Correspondents.pdf

Date: 9/06/2017

Article Contents: The Sinking of the Hornet
How the Eighth Army Did It
A War Correspondent Writes to His Mother
McGaffin on the Air
Broadcasting Battles in Italy
War Correspondents in Person

Scroll Down for complete article.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Bernard Montgomery, Seth Parker

Correspondents Quoted: Charles P Arnot, Grant Parr, Walter G Rundle, William McGaffin, Don Hollenbeck

Place Names: Santa Cruz [Islands], Solomon Islands; Mareth, Tunisia; Salerno and Naples, Italy

Keywords: *Hornet*, First Armored Division

Photographs / Images: Hollenbeck; McGaffin; Arnot; Parr; Rundle; Hollenbeck at Seth Parker transmitter, Naples; James M McGaffin Jr

FIVE OF NEBRASKA'S WAR CORRESPONDENTS

TOP (Reading left to right): Don Hollenbeck, William McGaffin, Charles Arnot.

BOTTOM: Grant Parr, Walter G. Rundle.

Nebraska's War Correspondents

In these pages, from time to time, we aim to present leading figures among war correspondents who first saw light of day in this state: their faces, a glimpse of their lives, a character-revealing letter, or some illustrative selection from their work.

This is not alone for sake of the historical record. It is based on the belief that comparatively few readers are familiar with the man behind the dispatch: his native state, his personality, his career. Rarely indeed does his name appear even when he attains the dignity of a by-line; even then, what do his readers know about him? He is just one of the wheels in the UP or AP machine.

Yet this one state has given probably a score of outstanding correspondents who are now overseas in the very midst of the fight, sharing every danger that the strict rules of war allow. True, that is the assignment requested, but in its discharge they show a fine eager spirit. These are Nebraska's own boys from home, with roots striking deep in Nebraska soil. Boys who drew their strength from Nebraska sunshine, their ideals from contemplation of Nebraska stars — those brilliant stars that shine above the Plains. We cannot fully appreciate their work until we know them better. And even when their stories are written around just one gallant soldier, they picture the fields in which thousands of other Nebraska boys are fighting, and the splendid spirit, the incredible courage, with which they fight. Thus, viewing a part, imagination grasps the whole. Better than anyone else can do it, our correspondents on the battle-front are writing the historical record of the war, day by day.

A year ago *The Schuyler Sun* published a vivid eye-witness account of the battle of Santa Cruz — that decisive battle off the Solomons in which the United States lost eleven warships but wrested ten from the Japs, possibly a big carrier, and over a hundred planes. It was written by Charles P. Arnot of the United Press, whose father was once superintendent of schools at Schuyler. From the deck of a battleship he watched the great fight and wrote the following dispatch for which we are indebted to *The Sun:*

The Sinking of The Hornet

A seaman, lying on the blistering deck of the crippled aircraft carrier *Hornet* as enemy planes shrieked down, tried to climb off his stretcher "to have another shot at the Japs."

A man with a broken back tried to refuse a surgeon's care so his buddy could be treated first. Four men ran to throw a blazing, bone-searing incendiary bomb off the deck. Men rammed powder into almost red-hot guns with their bare hands when the automatic controls were knocked off.

From a battleship which alone shot down thirty-two planes I watched the battle of Santa Cruz October 26 in which the *Hornet* was the victim of a mad aerial attack. Our destroyers sank her after two Japanese attacks had riddled her with bombs.

From my observation post I saw the Japanese planes shriek down. The *Hornet* had sent out its planes to bomb a Japanese task-force 100-odd miles to the north. They heavily damaged at least two cruisers and three destroyers in addition to planting four to six thousand-pound bombs on a new aircraft carrier of the Zuikaku class, 17,000 tons or larger. It was a raging furnace when they left it.

But the Japanese were sending wave upon wave of dive bombers and torpedo planes against the *Hornet* and its escort. American fighter planes and the anti-aircraft guns shot down many of them, but the remainder dived on through a hell of fire.

Our ship was several thousand yards from the *Hornet.* It was 9:55 a.m. Singly, in pairs, in threes and fours, at least forty Japanese planes hurtled down on the *Hornet,* coming out of the sun through low scattered clouds. They were almost on the ship before the gunners could spot them. The *Hornet* twisted, circled, to no avail.

I saw a sudden flash and a cloud of smoke.

"There goes the *Hornet,*" an officer said.

I told him he was too pessimistic. But the big carrier began spouting heavy black smoke. We were not yet under attack, but we had to protect another of our carriers, and we steamed away at high speed from the *Hornet* and its escorts.

As we left I saw a Japanese plane on the *Hornet's* flight deck. Two others crashed later. I saw the *Hornet,* listing to port, smoking fiercely. One bomb had landed near its stack and its power supply was diminishing rapidly. I knew the ship had suffered badly, but my hopes rose during the afternoon when I was told it would be able to receive some of its own planes, which had been out fighting.

There was hope the *Hornet* could get entirely out of the combat zone, but the Japanese planes came back — horizontal bombers and torpedo planes. Torpedoes hit. The *Hornet* was past salvage. Despite the fatal damage, casualties were relatively light, and many of her officers and men watched as our destroyers steamed up and shelled the ship to death.

How the Eighth Army Did It

Grant Parr, whose home is at Minden, contributed an article to October *Harper's* which, with its nine pages and map, makes a highly important contribution to the history of this war. There the student will learn just how Montgomery wrung titanic victory out of a heavy defeat at Mareth in Africa. We quote a part of the descriptive, narrative passages.

I want to tell the story of the Eighth Army as I saw it rolling on in the last great days of its African conquest — at the end of the longest advance in the history of warfare. Our imaginations have been too much peopled with the blitzkrieg feats of gray-clad hordes. Montgomery's lightning war was spelled in English, fought in khaki.

With equipment built in the United States, Britain, Canada, India and Australia, men from the four corners of the globe fought as a unit, a well-oiled machine which swept the Axis out of half of North Africa. . .

After the repulse at Mareth, due to the mistake of two field officers, General Bernard Montgomery faced a situation that might have stumped lesser men. Many thoroughly competent generals would have settled back to reorganize, thus throwing the African timetable off schedule. Others would have hammered blindly at the barrier, succeeded at a high price in lives, and lost equipment or failed once more.

Montgomery did not hesitate. His right-hand blow had not broken the enemy's jaw, therefore he would hit with his left. But war being no Marquis of Queensberry affair, Monty determined to weight that left with steel knuckles. . . .

The First Armored Division didn't leave the Mareth area until March 21st, the day the Nazis used the last-gasp strength of their Fifteenth Panzer Division to force the Fiftieth Division to pull back. . . . The trek that ensued made the old covered-wagon migrations seem picayune. From start to finish the desert tracks looked like great winding snakes as the endless stream of trucks came on.

I made the journey through the desert in the foremost part of the transport section and I have never spent two more unpleasant days. The trucks were rickety affairs, having crossed myriad miles of desert in more than one campaign. Precious water boiled out of our radiators and we were limited to half a gallon per day for washing and drinking. In actual practice we didn't wash. "Shan" Sedgwick of the *New York Times* said, "European peasants get so dirty that eventually they become clean, like a tree." That was the state we attempted to gain, but when we finally reached water at El Hamma we were still dirty. The white dust was the worst. Men who rode got their faces plastered with it until

they looked like weird clowns. There was no water to wash it off with so they just retained their strange complexion.

While the Mareth battle was swinging in favor of the Nazis, the New Zealanders attacked the center of their defenses and drove in a wedge. . . . But the Nazis still held an observation post which enabled them to shell unmercifully. The Maoris got the job of taking this post.

These little brown warriors hate the Germans and love the bayonet. In the last war at Gallipoli they were said to have fought uphill with bayonets alone, and because they are short and stocky they tossed skewered Turks back over their shoulders and fought on up. The Germans never bring things to such a pass if they can help it. Soon the Maoris had their observation point and the Kiwi line was straight and tenable. Then General Freyberg brought up his artillery and hid his tanks in the wadis. The stage was set for battle.

From a hill in the Gebel Melab, six days after the first attack on Mareth, I peered through a swirling veil of dust to watch part of the decisive caravan as it unfolded itself in the great flat plain below me. . . .

Strung out along its expanse and just approaching the first hill crests was a sight calling to mind the Biblical connotations of the word host. In the midst of a pall of dust rumbled thousands of vehicles of every description — tanks, Bren carriers, armored cars, jeeps, troop-transporters, gun lorries and limbers, gasoline trucks, infantry-bearing trucks. Inexorably the host rumbled forward; it was literally hours before the vast parade had moved past our vantage point.

As reconstructed from the account of General Freyberg himself, the attack looked something like this to the enemy. Waiting in his defensive trenches about 3:30 p.m., Fritz scanned the skies as he heard the drone of airplane motors. Then he spotted them, eighteen dim shapes in the dusty sky, and a moment later bombs fell all around him. Cowering in his slit trench, he heard the sickening thud and zoompfh as the Bostons continued to rain destruction. . . . Then it was the diving Kittybombers which made him press his face to the dusty earth. All during the battle the Allied air forces furnished bombers at the rate of three squadrons an hour to make the first zone of the barrage. Fritz never got out of his slit trench at all, for shells were soon falling all around him. It was a creeping barrage many yards deep, with the Long Toms laying down the first line, howitzers churning up the middle, and 25-pounder bursts preceding the tanks.

When his instincts told him the tanks were coming, Fritz stuck his green helmet out of the trench and tried to man his gun. But he found that he was little better than a blind man. The strong southwest wind was whipping dust into his face in thick white clouds, murkier than any smoke screen. When the dust cleared for a moment the setting sun was in his eyes.

Some of Fritz's companions didn't believe there were tanks coming

because they were so sure that the British attacked only at night. Freyberg had counted on that as an element of surprise.

Then the British tanks opened fire. . . . It was about this time that Fritz threw in his hand. The barrage alone was usually enough for the Italians.

The New Zealand infantry — gallant veterans of Greece, Crete, and El Alamein and probably at that moment the best troops, man for man, in the world — went in with the British Crusaders to dispatch recalcitrant Huns and take prisoners. The whole attack went on schedule and desired objectives were taken.

I saw prisoners marching back the next day, dusty, thirsty, and woebegone. The Germans were silent and miserable; the Italians were voluble about the injustice of their thirst, the foolishness of the war, and the sad fate which had forced them to fight in the first place.

The New Zealanders believe it was the sight of the First Armored host coming over the horizon on the heels of their own crushing attack which finally convinced the Nazis that it was hopeless to hold out longer. The job of the First Armored was to break through, and, as one British officer put it, "run like a scalded cat for El Hamma." The division started its run as the moon came up around midnight after the battle. It turned once, even as a cat will do, and clawed up the German tank units when they attacked its rear, then it sped on.

In thus driving entirely through the Twenty-first Panzer Division in a moonlight advance, the First Armored made mechanized-warfare history. The Germans had mounted many anti-tank guns in the wadis, but in the dim light the gunmen did not see what was happening until too late. . . .

French General Le Clerc came to congratulate Freyberg, who was even then standing beside the American light tank in which he travels. The New Zealander was directing operations over the field-telephone system which the almost miraculous work of the signals section always provided a few hours after any unit reached a new location. General Le Clerc, slight and weather-beaten, simply dressed in olive drill, somehow seemed close kin to big, bluff, powerful Bernard Freyberg. They were, after all, both great warriors, superbly tough. . . .

El Hamma was the usual sort of Arab village with numerous palms and buildings of whitewashed mud or stone, but it was as welcome to the thirsty British troops as the troops were to its French population. After days on half a gallon of water per man, the soldiers were quick to strip and plunge into the cool waters of a shallow little stream near the village or to take dips in the hot sulphur spring for which the town enjoyed local fame. . . .

The Eighth Army now underwent a brief period of consolidation while supplies were brought up and men rested. The Germans made feeble attempts to upset Montgomery's preparations, but they could muster

only a few bombers. . . .Meanwhile our planes were still going over, and tankbusters continued to pare enemy armor. The Luftwaffe's attempt to hit back was pitiful.

On the morning of April 6th, Montgomery struck again, . . . but the Germans never fought long. As we drove northward later we saw little sign of them save rows of white crosses among the fields of daisies and poppies that disguised the brownish, semi-desert prairie. . . .

The Eighth Army fought no more until it reached Enfidaville on the south of the "Tunis shell." Its long trek of sixteen hundred miles, the longest advance in history, was virtually over. . . .

What then of the men who composed this army? They came from all over the world, though most of them were English. English, yes, tough, uncomplaining, indomitable Englishmen. They were shy, soft-spoken, drawling lads with straw-colored hair, straight from the vales and moors of Yorkshire; and small, tough, desert-blackened Cockneys who had learned to take care of themselves on the sidewalks of London. Officers too, of course, but leaders who not only were free of "the old school tie" but wore no tie at all. The Eighth Army was a democratic army in manner and in dress — spit-and-polish had been forgotten long before in the press of important matters like fighting the enemy.

The Scots didn't wear kilts in the desert but some kept them in their bed rolls for special occasions. They still spoke with the rough brogue of the uplands, and the hearts that made their forefathers the living emblems of courage beat again in every unit of the Highland Division.

The New Zealanders are men much like those you meet on the dairy farms of Wisconsin, the grain and cattle farms of Iowa and Nebraska. They are simple, unspoiled men with a great sense of democracy and apparently no fear whatever. . . .

The Indians wore a dozen faces — Punjabis, Sikhs and the rest, but all fought magnificently when their peculiar specialties were required. The South Africans, like the Australians, were absent at the last except for some technical units and their fliers, those tireless young men who flew the Bostons hundreds of times across the Mareth line and the Gap. South African Negro troops were excellent as drivers and supply men.

There were never any Americans in the ground army proper, but American airmen flew the Mitchells . . . and our heavy bombers played their part. . . . The Allied air forces are of course a story in themselves. Their greatness and the greatness of the Eighth Army stemmed from the perfect co-operation between the two.

A War Correspondent Writes to His Mother

Walter G. Rundle has been a correspondent of the United Press for a number of years — first in Lincoln, then New York, and now in various fields of action overseas where his present assignment is "Somewhere in China." Supplementing the soldiers' "Letters Home" printed in earlier pages of ths issue, we are fortunate in having permission to quote from two written by Mr. Rundle during the Christmas season.

Mother, darling:

Your two V-mail letters, dated November 27 and December 3, reached me yesterday to brighten these days immeasurably. They were the first news from anyone at home I've had since leaving London, nearly two months ago. Nothing that could have reached me could possibly be more welcome or cheering for Christmas. . . .

Your letter broke the news to me that I'm an uncle, and am very anxious to know your reactions. I want to caution you that you'll probably react quite typically and do your utmost to spoil this first grandchild, so I'm passing along the crack Hartzell Spence made to the grandmothers of their new offspring: "Damn it, I didn't interfere with the upbringing of your children, so please don't interfere with the upbringing of mine!" But, Mother, I know your wisdom.

. . . I'm "headquartering" in a lovely, mountain-rimmed valley that reminds me very much of the region around Santa Fe. The view is quite similar to that from Adele's Pojaque home. And the valley, with its adobe houses and checkerboard fields of red earth and green truck farms, is also very like many I have seen in New Mexico. The climate too is much like that I have always so much enjoyed in the Southwest.

I've spent a part of my first few days here swinging around the area I'll be covering, and that too is colorful and interesting country. The Chinese are a friendly, cheerful race, generally cleaner than the Indians, and I think I shall like it better here. The food is good and living conditions, while a bit on the rugged side, are comfortable enough. . . .

In the course of my trip out I had a couple of hours' visit to the Taj Mahal. Like the Pyramids, it impressed me far more than I had expected. It is dazzling with its white marble and alabaster against its setting of green gardens and red sandstone walls. Its mosaics of semi-precious stones are lovely — the most delicate work of the type I've ever seen. . . .

Ever since leaving Britain I've been favored by almost continuously warm and sunny weather. It is a grand time to travel, and after being sun-starved for several months I've been luxuriating. . . .

Christmas Eve I was invited to a party given by the military for the

local gee-eyes . . . a pleasant diversion. This was followed by Christmas Mass, and today the mess hall of the hostel where I'm staying came through with a bountiful, thoroughly American dinner. . . . There was even a tree with some rather well improvised decorations. . . . The party wound up with the singing of Christmas hymns and patriotic songs by the crowd — somehow very touching in such a setting. . .

But there's no substitute for family, friends, and the excitement of opening Christmas packages. . . . This season has been one of fond remembrance for me as well. I am ever conscious of the gifts of good health, an alert mind, a sound philosophy and a sense of humor for which my chilhood home and influences are responsible. Those are things that never can be put into fine packages or hung upon a tree. Yet they are the most valuable of all possessions and I am ever grateful to you for your part in making them mine. . . .

Mother, I do sincerely wish you a happy New Year and send you my very special and constant love. . . .

On January 2 Mr. Rundle wrote again:

This is a beautiful starlit night, and from my window I can see the dark outline of the surrounding mountains silhouetted in the light of a bright half-moon. It's still hard to believe that it is midwinter. . . . A coat is unnecessary except when driving in an open jeep at night.

The hostels are simply but adequately furnished in unfinished pine, and each one is equipped with a shower room. Meals are served in a nearby mess hall and are nourishing and reasonably well prepared. I travel about the headquarters base (which spreads over a good many square miles) by hitchhiking on army vehicles, and I get around between the various bases in this area by similar use of a thumb with the pilots. I'm out of doors a great deal and should become healthy as a horse with all this exercise. . . .

This has been a new and quite different experience — adjusting myself to life in this army hostel: or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, getting myself accepted. Darrell Berrigan, whom I succeeded, was an affable, voluble Irishman and exceptionally well liked. The personnel reserved judgment on his replacement, and for several days I was an outsider while they made up their minds. But I've passed muster now, and am regularly invited to share packages from home and bottles brought in from India or farther away. I haven't encountered anything like my first week here since Fraternity House days.

There is a reasonable amount of excitement in this assignment, I guess. Much of it is new and vastly interesting to me. The difficulty for the present is that action here is overshadowed completely by the events in Europe; but it stands to reason that there'll be a day when news from here comes into its own. Guess I'll have to content myself with the crumbs until then. . . .

An unidentified, undated clipping, "Delayed," from New Delhi may close the section from this correspondent. To the United Press he wrote:

Because Lts. Roy E. Thomas of Buffalo New York, and Cecil A. Gibson of Columbus Georgia, knew a lot of guys in China would be disappointed if the mail didn't come through, they stuck to their plane and landed five thousand pounds of letters January 16 after trying to fly through the top of a mountain.

They were within sight of their base when they saw what appeared to be a scudding cloud.

"Suddenly we saw a ragged edge nosed up, — and then, Boom! The damned cloud had a rock in it," complained Thomas, the pilot. "We thought that was the end and expected to spin. Instead we gained a little altitude.

"If we had known then the tail was gone, we would have followed the crew in bailing out. When I saw the condition of the ship, I decided to go into the rabbit's foot business in Columbus after the war. A guy with that much luck has got enough to spread around."

McGaffin on the Air

This Nebraskan, who at the age of five learned to set type in his father's shop in Polk, now war correspondent for The Associated Press, has had exceptional opportunities for reporting from far-separated battle fronts. Some of these experiences were related in a February Forum interview with Ray Clark, chief newscaster of WOW in Omaha, to whom we are indebted for the transcript.

To the question "What over-all picture did you get of your escape from France?" Mr. William McGaffin replied:

"It was such a tragic thing! France was not ready for the war when it began, and would not have been ready if it had been delayed another twenty years. France never really recovered from the last war — she has been suffering from a mortal wound ever since. One of the evidences of this is apparent in their internal dissension, and there was no patriotism. One government would no sooner get into power than another group of politicians would try to overthrow it. Every man was for himself. Some were so selfish that they even sided with the Germans because it was temporarily profitable for them to do so."

"Then you who were over there could pretty nearly see what the end would be long before it came?"

"Yes, we did. I recall the day war was declared. We sat in a sidewalk cafe in Paris and all of us were pretty pessimstic because we thought we saw the handwriting on the wall even then. We tried to talk ourselves out of it, tried to think it would not be so bad, but actually it turned out to be worse."

"There has been considerable discussion on one point — whether or not France actually fought."

"Yes, I am sure the French did fight, and fight very well. Certainly my information is all to that effect."

". . . . So when you went into Britain I imagine you thought it was all over?"

"Not exactly. I admit that while we were waiting in Bordeaux I did think that if we didn't reach London quickly we'd not be in time to see the Armistice signed. We were feeling just that low. But when we got into England we saw that the British didn't even know they had been defeated, and with this spirit and the grace of God and a bit of luck they carried on. Probably one of the amazing records of history will be how close they came to defeat. And the thing that impressed us so was that if they had gone under we would have been bearing this fight alone. It probably would have meant a land invasion of America. Certainly it wouldn't have been jolly."

"It was pretty definite, after you had been there a few weeks, that no end of the war was in sight?"

"Oh, very definite! It was an exciting place in those days. Our plane came down on the south coast of England, and on our first night we went into a bar. There were young men in uniform having dates with their girls as usual, but they came in with their rifles strapped on their backs. They were actually ready by the minute to repel the invasion if it came, to fight 'street by street,' as Churchill said."

"It is an amazing story, and more so to you as you saw it unfold from the beginning."

"Yes. . . . Since I came back, some of my friends are saying, 'The war began while you were gone this time.' But as I think back to 1939 when the war began for the French and the

British, it makes me feel like the Old Man of the Mountain."

In closing, McGaffin said he has to get back to Nebraska now and then to maintain his sanity. "It is a good, solid place to come back to. The people are the finest in the world. They're honest, sincere and straightforward, and you always know where you stand with them."

Broadcasting Battles in Italy

Don Hollenbeck is a Lincoln boy who began reporting news while in the University of Nebraska. His first assignment was to the *Nebraska State Journal* in 1926; his last, to the foreign staff of NBC in London in March 1943. Thence he was sent to Algiers just in time to take a place with the British troops making the landings at Salerno. He went in with the second wave — the assault wave which took the full force of German shells, and later made a number of battle-action recordings which were broadcast to the United States.

During the conquest of southern Italy Hollenbeck moved northward with the troops and was one of the first correspondents to begin broadcasting from Naples when the Army Signal Corps set up transmitters for the correspondents. But at Salerno he was stricken with malaria, then with jaundice, and ordered back home. In Omaha early in February this year, he appeared on the Forum program of WOW; from this, through the courtesy of Ray Clark, the following extracts are taken.

"The first big event for me in covering the news over there was at Salerno, just south of the town. I'll never forget it! We were on a headquarters ship and had put the commanding officer ashore, then for awhile feared we couldn't get the rest of the people off. We were under heavy fire, so had to back off and spend that morning shuttling back and forth in the bay with German aircraft overhead and German '88' guns on shore, and behind us our own destroyers and cruisers bombarding the shore positions, so it was not a very pleasant cruise we had around the gulf of Salerno. . . . I had a wire recorder with me and was on top of the landing craft trying to make some records at the time."

Asked what kind of protection there is after these forces have landed, Mr. Hollenbeck replied:

"You hope there is air cover. We had difficulty that way because our forces were based in Sicily. They had to fly all the way, and it didn't give them very much gas to spend over our heads. We looked for those planes most of the time."

"How long were you on the beachhead in that precarious situation?" asked Mr. Clark.

"Two days, then we moved north. By that time it was pretty well secured. The Americans caught the brunt of it, of course. I didn't see that fight, but it was due to the gallant efforts of the Americans that they stopped that German advance. The battle was a touch-and-go and we were extremely lucky to win it. You have to give full credit to the American divisions to

HOLLENBECK AT SETH PARKER TRANSMITTER
Naples

the south. We didn't get into the real trouble where I was — but it was close enough for me."

"You were in uniform, were you, without any guns?"

"No guns! You can't shoot back. If a correspondent is armed when captured he is shot at once. Otherwise he gets the consideration of a captain as a prisoner of war. . . ."

"You got some reports out from some of the other activities — the Ranger activity?"

"That's right. I made a recording of the battle up there."

"What about your general impressions of the war? You have been studying news for quite awhile — how does it look to you, on the whole?"

"It looks like a long war yet to me, Ray. I can't be optimistic, as a lot of people are. Even on the European side. The Germans are a tough and bitter enemy. They have lots of resources yet, and I think they will hold on just as long as they can."

There was an arresting item in *Stars and Stripes* last September 20th:

"Don Hollenbeck of NBC sent back from Italy one of the most dramatic recordings we've ever heard. Against a backdrop of gunfire Don gave a vivid description of the bitter battle raging about him as he stood on the shore with microphone in hand and a portable recorder on his back. Interviews with the boys engaged in the fight were outstanding."

A wire recorder was used for this broadcast from the beach at Salerno. On the hair-fine thread of steel wound on that small spool every sound of battle was inscribed, then relayed to Algiers and short-waved to the United States on September 17th. In such fashion history is chronicled today with complete fidelity even while in the making, and that in itself is history.

There's history, too, in the transmitter Don Hollenbeck later used at Naples. It was Seth Parker's old transmitter, made memorable by his broadcasts from a yacht in the South Seas. Indeed, it went around the world with him, and it gave to the world the story of the sun's eclipse from the South Pacific. Engineers of the Signal Corps patched it up with bits of Italian equipment discarded in the Axis stations at Syracuse and Bari, and it found fitting resurrection and a voice that went around the world again over NBC, CBS and the Blue networks

on Sunday the 14th day of November from a room in Naples so small that Red Mueller had to sit on the knee of Hollenbeck, who divided NBC time with him. The BBC was also represented in that little room — the first station opened by the Allies in liberated Europe.

War Correspondents In Person

The McGaffins and the Press

Some fifty years ago William H. McGaffin founded *The Gazette* at Bellwood, as well as a family of sons who have carried on his work — for when printers' ink really gets into a man's blood there seems to be no known eradicator. Especially when that blood is of the pioneer Nebraska strain and Irish to boot.

These sons are three: William H., Jr., who owned and edited the newspaper at Brainard; Hugh M., owner and editor of the *Polk Progress*, and James M., for nine years with *The People's Banner* at David City, both now living in Omaha.

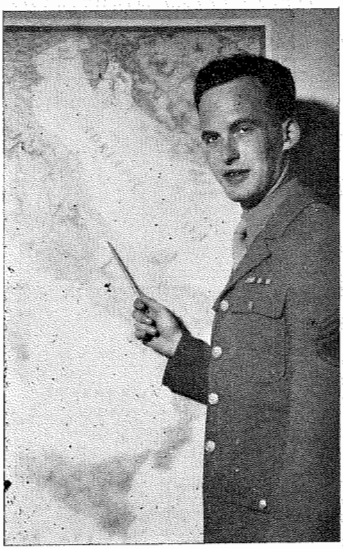
The grandsons also are three, each of whom is conspicuous in the world's news and two in the war news. They are James Marr McGaffin, son of William H. Jr., who is Washington correspondent for the *Des Moines Register-Tribune*; William, son of Hugh M., roving reporter and war correspondent for The Associated Press; and James M. Jr., the son of his father, now in Africa. The two latter belong on these pages.

WILLIAM MCGAFFIN of Polk (whom everybody calls "Bill") was managing editor of the student paper while at the University of Nebraska and worked nights on the *Lincoln State Journal*. After graduating in 1932 he worked on the *Lincoln Daily Star* and then went to the *Omaha World-Herald* and *The Telegram* published at Columbus, near the old home town. In 1934 he won the Gilbert M. Hitchcock scholarship to the School of Journalism at Columbia University; in 1935 joined The Associated Press in New York and two years later went abroad as a feature writer, assigned to "the human side of European life." This laid the foundation for his reports from North Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, India, Russia and China.

A few years ago Mr. McGaffin collaborated with Oliver Gramling in "Free Men are Fighting" — a dramatic narrative woven around the lives of men in the thick of battle as only a war correspondent can tell it. An interview with General Joseph Stillwell right after the Allied retreat from Burma, with his salty comment — "We got one hell of a beating!" — was among the news beats scored by McGaffin. After covering the Cairo conference he returned to New York where he gave a few broadcasts. Then, back home for the first time in three years, he made a brief lecture tour before returning to the war front.

JAMES M. MCGAFFIN JR. of Omaha and Edgar W. Parker Jr. of Florida, both staff sergeants, have the honor of setting up a bureau keyed to the needs of modern warfare. Always before the men who were fighting waited many weeks for news, whether from the war front or the home front; now they get it hot off the griddle of a complex radio network. Three times a day they get it, from the seven stations of the AEF that reach all the way from Casablanca to a mobile unit that serves the Fifth Army in Italy, besides hourly bulletins, regular newscasts every quarter-hour, and occasional news-flashes for any event of special moment.

The nerve center of this network is in Algiers, where the boys operate on a schedule of twenty-four hours a day. Thus the complete output of the Army News Service, the OWI, the Signal Corps, the newfangled branch of Psychological Warfare, and the Public Relations offices of Army and Navy, is made available to experienced correspondents by the long hours of arduous work done by the eager boys of this bureau who have "a nose for news." In addition, each station of the AEF has its own news editor to supplement the central service. All troops in the Mediterranean Theater are further served by three weekly programs prepared by this indefatigable Parker-McGaffin team: There is a Tuesday evening broadcast to round up the highlights of the week for sports-minded soldiers and sailors. There is a Wednesday night feature "For and About You Men and Women in the Armed Forces and the War You Are Fighting." It is designed to keep the troops informed about new weapons, medical discoveries, legislation affecting troops; and explains some phase of the war. And Sunday nights Major Andre Baruch, in charge of the AEF Stations, reads "The Week in Review" — a summary of all the week's news on the front and at home.



The Other Reporters

DON HOLLENBECK (born in Lincoln in 1905) writes that when pledged to Phi Kappa Psi he was exhorted to try for PBK "and responded by flunking almost all courses in the last semester except orchestra, where I finally achieved first violin section. Some of my happiest memories are practice sessions with Billy Quick and my studies under Carl Frederic Steckelberg along with Koby Sirinsky and Leland Wood, who were *good*.

Also, dreading military drill so much, I took up the clarinet — and then had to march with the High School and University bands! Neither clarinet nor violin figure in my career now, but am an avid collector of classical records.

"In 1927 went to Omaha to work for the *Bee-News*. Its sale in 1937 led me to both New York and San Francisco as photo editor for Associated Press. In 1940 returned to New York for work in news room of NBC, then was in at the launching of the daily *PM* — the most hectic experience of my journalistic career, but also the most fun. Then, in the Publications Division of OWI, was sent to London in 1942. That trip brings me almost one of my most harrowing war-memories — being confined on a clipper plane with Al Jolson, Merle Oberon and other stars, and Jolson insisted on singing.

"Rejoined NBC in London in 1943 and in August went to North Africa. Visited Sicily and was duly disappointed in ancient ruins. Syracuse had been a city of my dreams, and to find a cement mixer in Arethusa's fountain and the Temple of Apollo used as a w.c. by Syracusans was something of a shock.

"My first (and, I hope, my last) taste of battle was at Salerno, where I accompanied the British section of the Fifth Army. In January was ordered home. No immediate plans for going overseas again."

GRANT PARR is a Nebraska boy even though born in Texas in 1913. From earliest kindergarten days and on through the University he drew his inspiration from Nebraska air, gained his education from Nebraska schools. This is told by A. J. Schneider, himself a member of the *World-Herald* family some years ago; now assistant manager of News and Special Events for the National Broadcasting Company at New York. His account (written with the one thought of being helpful) is too graphic to allow any changes.

"Grant's family moved to Minden in 1916. He went through the grade and high schools there; attended Nebraska Wesleyan for two years, graduating from the School of Journalism. For three years while in college he worked on the *Nebraska State Journal*; came to Columbia University for his Master's degree in journalism; then went traveling. In Egypt in 1939 he wound up in Cairo, where for three years he taught Journalism, English and History at the American University.

"In 1942, when the Germans were pushing British forces back towards Egypt, Grant joined the NBC staff of foreign reporters. He covered the whole North African campaign, going out to the front lines, making various plane trips over the battlefields, then going back to Cairo for broadcasts.

"When General Montgomery opened up the offensive in late November of 1942 — the campaign that eventually drove Marshal Rommel all the way across North Africa to Tunisia — Parr moved right along with the British Eighth Army, with occasional flights back to Cairo for a quick report to NBC and then back to the front again. When Mont-

gomery got to Tunisia and joined forces with General Eisenhower, Parr moved over to Algiers. It was from there that he was the first radio reporter to broadcast the fall of Tunis, which, as you know, was practically the end of the whole North African campaign.

"In addition to his work as a radio newsman he has been contributing to the *New York Times* and various magazines. His account of the march of the British Eighth Army across North Africa for *Harper's* was one of the best reporting jobs that has been done on any campaign by any reporter."

WALTER GORDON RUNDLE is another war correspondent who turned "native Nebraskan" in the kindergarten, so to speak. Born in Denver in 1907, his father, Dr. W. G. Rundle, brought the family to Orleans in 1913. Following high school he took journalistic training at the University of Nebraska; his first work was for the *State Journal*; then was on the staff of *McCook Gazette,* and joined the United Press Associations in Lincoln in 1929, serving as bureau manager here and in Des Moines and Minneapolis. Later he was sent to Kansas City, Chicago and New York, thence to the radio department where he prepared and presented the program known as "Soldiers of the Press." In August last he went overseas, reporting first from England, then from Cairo during that historic conference, and later from India. His present assignment is in China. Lincoln is his home.

CHARLES P. ARNOT, correspondent of the United Press, has written some of the most dramatic stories of the war in the Southwest Pacific.

From the bridge of a warship Arnot saw the Japanese aerial assault which sank the Aircraft Carrier *Hornet* in the battle of the Santa Cruz Islands in October 1942. He was the only correspondent who eye-witnessed that fierce naval and aerial encounter which turned back a Japanese invasion fleet seeking to smash the American hold on the Solomons.

Later Arnot spent several weeks on Guadalcanal during the crucial phases of the battle for that strategic island. More recently he has flown with bombing planes on raids against Japanese island bases in the Pacific. He was accredited to the Pacific Fleet early in 1942. Almost from the date of his arrival in Hawaii he has been on active assignments with naval task forces.

Arnot was born in Scribner in 1917. He became interested in journalism while in grade school. While still in college he joined the staff of the *Fremont Tribune.* He won the award of the Nebraska Press Association for the year's best news story in 1938, and with it a number of offers of employment. One of these led him to join the United Press staff in Lincoln; a year later he became manager of the Lincoln bureau, and was transferred to the cable desk in New York shortly after Germany invaded Poland. From that desk he won his assignment as correspondent attached to the Pacific fleet.