

Laurel Becomes A Boom Town As Meade Men Flock To Buy

Drugstores, Bars And Taverns Do Big Business With Nearby Service Men

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Laurel, Md., March 22—The secret of Laurel's qualified success with the service men from Fort George G. Meade is arithmetical. A round-trip fare from Meade to Baltimore is 25 cents. The fare to Laurel is 25 cents.

Thus Laurel's booming business. It is admitted by merchants here, is a peculiar one. It is based upon the inaccessibility of service men. But volume counts.

The service men's attitude toward this small town on the Washington Boulevard, which offers the closest thing to entertainment to be had within a radius of almost twenty miles of Fort George G. Meade, was summed up tonight by Sergt. Harry Harnar, who observed that "as for amusements, anyone who can't bowl or shoot pool is out of luck."

300 Or 400 A Night

Laurel offers two bowling alleys and one poolroom to a nightly invasion of some 300 or 400 men from Meade.

Other establishments frequented by the Meade men here are a number of bars, taverns and restaurants, a few lunch wagons and diners and especially the drugstores.

The drugstores are where the service men meet, play pin-ball machines, drink soda pop and buy their razor blades, cough syrup and hand lotion.

The sale of cough syrup and hand lotions in Laurel has grown to sensational proportions, druggists report.

All Seem To Have Colds

"Everyone at Meade has a cold or a cough," Dr. J. V. Michael, pharmacist at one of Laurel's soda emporiums, said.

And, it was also revealed, the nation's fighting forces use hand lotions, and are not ashamed of it. Chapped hands is a major Meade ailment.

Laurel businessmen today admitted that business was very good in practically all lines, and that it was directly due to the nickels and dimes of innocent Meade service men. But:

"There have been no business miracles," said Nathan Levin, who operates a hotel, bar and package-goods store here.

Second Choice, He Says

Sergt. Robert Toler, of Battery E, One Hundred and Eleventh Field Artillery, described Laurel as "strictly

second choice" in the estimation of service men.

"But we're glad enough it's here," he said.

What the service men would like to do, he said, is go to dances here. A recently organized citizens' committee, headed by Miss Mary Jane Stanley, held an experimental tea dance here this afternoon, in the army. Approximately fifty girls attended, and their number was not quite matched by the service men.

"We heard about it too late," Sergeant Toler said. "A man from my battery was delegated to attend, in order to report to us on whether the things were worth going to."

It Makes A Hit

The report on the affair, Sergeant Toler said, was very brief. Practically all the Meade attendees consisted of delegates from the various batteries and companies, instructed to report on the proceedings.

"They all liked it," Sergeant Toler said. "Next time they won't have enough girls."

"Laurel's boom is no week-end affair, it was said here.

"On week ends the soldiers who can get leave all try to head for Baltimore or Washington, or home," one merchant declared. "We get the steady 250 and midnight leave business. That's because we're so close."

Laurel is within eight miles of the service of Fort Meade, and the bus service from the training center to Laurel is very good, service men said.

"If only there was more to do," they protested.

R. R. H.

War Brides' Life At Laurel Is Far From Being Glamorous

Army Wives Tell Of Grim Realities Of High Living Costs, Housing Shortage, Heat And Homesickness

SUN

BY JULIA EDWARDS AUG 16 1942

The role of a war bride is not as glamorous as it is cracked up to be. Ask the army wives in the city of war brides—Laurel, Md. They will tell you about the grim realities of high living costs, the housing shortage, heat and homesickness.

"We are here because we feel that the most important thing is to hang on to some thread of family life while we can," said Mrs. Irma Smith, who came to Laurel when her husband, a lieutenant, was ordered to nearby Fort Meade two months ago.

\$70 Monthly For Cabin

They pay \$70 a month for a bedroom, kitchen and bath in a brick tourist cabin. In the first three weeks she was at Laurel, Mrs. Smith covered a thirty-mile radius, while apartment hunting, from 5 to 5 every day.

"I found a few possibilities, but they wouldn't take us because we have a baby. My family was opposed to my coming here. But at least we are together. We are thankful for that," she said.

Despite living conditions, the morale of the young wives is high, in the opinion of Mrs. Albert A. Myers, who has moved four times since she arrived at Laurel on May 12. She now has a two-room apartment in a converted house on shady Second street.

"The girls are very brave," she said. "They never say anything about being worried or homesick in front of their husbands. Everyone is in the same boat, and all make the best of it."

Meats Soup In Frying Pan

Lieutenant and Mrs. Myers were "just getting nicely settled" after two months of married life in Haldrige, Neb., when he was mobilized with the National Guard in December, 1940. Since then they have been stationed at Little Rock, Ark.; Detroit, Philadelphia, Camp San Luis Obispo, California; Little Rock again and Fort Meade.

"We have never been in one spot long enough even to buy furniture," she laughed, recounting her experience with making soup in a frying pan and straining coffee boiled in a pan through a handkerchief for want of a sieve.

Mrs. Christine Crow, who has been married less than a year, came all the way from Monroe, La., to join her husband, Sergt. Avimer

K. Crow. She found a room in an old Colonial house at 122 Lafayette street, which has a flower garden that reminds her of home.

Acquires Many Friends

Only 21 years old, she has learned to crochet and cook since she came to Laurel in June and has acquired "as many friends as I had at home."

Mrs. Crow is one of a group of young soldier's wives who have banded together as the War Brides of America. Since they organized a week ago they have received queries from army wives all over the country and hope to launch a nationwide program.

Selling war bonds, sponsoring a canteen at Fort Meade and sending phonograph transmissions to soldiers overseas are some of the ways they plan to do to help the soldiers.

Nurse Marries Captain

All women married to soldiers are eligible in membership. Unless they can find a clubhouse of their own they have been given the facilities of a service club at the fort.

Most of the wives would have plenty of time to help, she said, as few of them attempt to do much housekeeping.

A former army nurse, Mrs. Henry A. Silverman, met her husband, a captain, when they were both stationed at Camp Bowie, Texas. In the nine months since they were married, he has been moved from Camp Bowie to Camp Blanding, Fla. to Fort Benning, Ga. and is now at Fort Meade.

Cares For Friend's Baby

They share a house with Captain and Mrs. Edward Grubin, at 209 Second street. Trips to Baltimore and Washington and social gatherings at the fort break the monotony of craning house, buying groceries and planning meals. If her husband is sent overseas, Mrs. Silverman intends to go back into the army as a nurse.

Her nursing training has stood her in good stead in helping to care for Mrs. Grubin's 5-month-old baby. It is practically impossible, Mrs. Grubin said, to find anyone in Laurel to tend the child. The young girls have all taken jobs in war industries or work in stores that cater to the soldiers.

Heat Her One Complaint

Mrs. Sol Sulzkoewich came down from Lewiston, Maine, with her