



DRAFT BOARD 119

Two Foxboro boys, just turned 18, report to Orell E. Clark, chief clerk of the Norwood Draft Board.

The guys who gave you your greetings are still on the job after five years, but most of them want out, too.

By Sgt. MARVIN SLEEPER

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NORWOOD, MASS.—When Michael Campiseno turned 18, he was pulled out of his senior class in Norwood High School and drafted. Mike was sore. He swore that if he ever returned, he'd throw his discharge papers on the desk of the board chairman and say: "Now, ya sonuvabitch, I hope you're satisfied!"

The other day, after three years' service, Mike walked up the flagstone steps of the Norwood Town Hall where his draft board keeps house. His discharge papers were tucked under one arm. He wore gray slacks, a white sport shirt and the old beat-up field jacket that had hardly been off his back during the 18 months in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany, as a 4th Division Combat Engineer.

But ex-Cpl. Campiseno had completely forgotten about eating out the board chairman. As a matter of fact, he'd forgotten what the chairman—or anyone else on Massachusetts Local Board No. 119—looked like. Mike was older and more experienced, but he was no longer sore or bitter—at least, not toward the men who had pulled his number out of the fishbowl.

So Mike just walked into the austere, wood-paneled executive chamber of the Town Hall and stepped up to the oak conference table where Orell E. Clark, the board's 53-year-old chief clerk, handles the 20 or 30 veterans reporting back every day since the Army and Navy discharge plans got going.

Mike, like the others, didn't spend much time with old man Clark. The chief clerk is a good, understanding guy. He has a regular spiel for all of them. The vets listen to what he has to say and shuffle out quietly.

Clark's kid, Philip, walked in a few weeks ago. With 58 missions as a Fifteenth Air Force aerial gunner, he had earned out with 92 points. His old man explained the setup to his 21-year-old son—just the way he explains to all the rest.

"It's a regular song I sing them," Clark says. "It answers all their questions."

First he tells them about the extra bonus of \$100 that every son of Massachusetts is entitled to. (Vermont, New Hampshire and some other states have one, too.) Then he asks the veterans if they are going back to their old job. He tries to talk them into applying for the job within 90 days of their discharge, as job insurance—even if they intend looking elsewhere.

About 90 percent of the men reporting back to the Norwood board do return to their old jobs. The other 10 percent are looking around for something better, or figure on taking advantage of the free schooling setup under the GI Bill of Rights. If a man intends going to school or taking off after a new job, Clark sends him downstairs to the offices of the Rehabilitation Committee for the Norwood area. The committee, which began planning two years ago, has worked out a pretty good deal for returning vets with health, employment or educational problems.

THERE'S one executive from every large business firm in Norwood, Foxboro and Sharon (the three towns that comprise Local Board No. 119's territory) on the Rehabilitation Committee's employment section. They know exactly what jobs are available in every business and plant in their territory.

Leading educators from the surrounding schools and colleges handle the schooling problems. If the veteran is interested in refresher courses, apprentice training, collegiate or professional study, he can get the necessary help.

All doctors in the towns comprise the Rehabilitation Committee's medical section. They are available for consultation and advise a veteran as to his rights in the treatment of any ailment.

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Clark says that there have been very few discharges who have returned with a problem that couldn't be solved, but he points out quickly that, so far, only 25 percent of the 2,103 men that No. 119 sent to war have returned. (Seventy-five men, killed in action, will never return.)

"We haven't had any extreme cases come in yet," he said. "Yes, there have been some who marched in here nervous and a bit uncertain of their place in civilian life, but that's to be expected of almost any man who has been away from civilian life for any length of time, whether or not he's been in combat."

It took Clark's kid a month to readjust himself. He was nervous and fidgety, but now he's okay.

"I don't see a helluva lot of him," Clark said. "He's out with the gang most of the time. In February he starts going to sheet-metal trade school—says he doesn't want to finish high school. Wants to learn something useful to make a living. That's the way most of the youngsters feel who are coming back these days."

Clark said the war took its heaviest physical toll among the older men drafted from Norwood. The fellows who were drafted when they were 30 or so return looking older, more sober. Even the men of the same age who were not drafted from Norwood, says Clark, have aged during the past four or five years. But young or old, every man returning to Norwood has matured mentally—much more so than if he'd remained a civilian, Clark thinks.

It was just a little more than five years ago that Massachusetts Local Board No. 119 opened for business. Nobody in Norwood, Foxboro or Sharon has any idea how the five members of the board were selected. But the choices for the voluntary jobs worked out pretty damn well—a situation not true of all U. S. draft boards.

MAYBE it was because the five who were chosen typified the 30,000 under the board's jurisdiction. Men like Russel McKenzie, who runs McKenzie Motor Sales and Service Company of Foxboro. In World War I he served overseas as an Army captain. McKenzie became board chairman in 1942, when the original chairman, Clifford B. Sanborn, a district court judge, died after a prolonged illness.

Then there is Ed Flaherty, who runs Norwood's largest haberdashery and serves as chairman of the local Board of Assessors. He was a chief petty officer in our 1917-18 Navy. Charles E. Houghton, a 62-year-old, hard-hitting attorney, served on Norwood's draft board in the last war; Gardner C. Derry, another World War I vet, is general manager for the General Electric Plant near Norwood; Henry Crosby, with a son in service, manages the Winslow Brothers and Smith Tannery in Norwood.

The five men received telegrams requesting their services from Leverett Saltonstall, then Governor of Massachusetts, on Oct. 9, 1940. "The way the telegram was worded," says Flaherty, "it just couldn't be turned down. It was like being drafted." None of the board members is paid for his services, but the full-time chief clerk, Clark, gets a salary.

On Oct. 14, 1940, the board met for the first time, and by noon on Oct. 16 the first of 5,577 men had registered with draft board No. 119.

Right from the start, the board men agreed to give everyone the squarest deal possible, and the citizens of the three communities will tell you that the board was a fair, smoothly operating organization. Yet behind the closed doors of the board's meeting room, there was plenty of haggling, name-calling and sometimes almost fist-fights, before the members arrived at unanimous votes that determined all policy questions.

The first problem was by far the most important that No. 119 ever handled during its five years. It was the question of drafting pre-Pearl Harbor fathers. No. 119 made—and stuck to—a very unusual ruling that was not typical of most of the nation's draft boards: Not one father in Norwood, Sharon or Foxboro was drafted away from his wife and pre-Pearl Harbor child. At first it was fairly easy to carry out this ruling, but, as the manpower barrel emptied, there were times when it looked bad for pre-Pearl Harbor fathers.

The board held long and tedious sessions,

THERE were other men in 119 whose patriotism or generosity exceeded their love of home and family. Like the story they tell about Alex Smith and his neighbor, Jim Kelly. Alex's number had come up. On Oct. 2, 1943, the eve of the day he was to report to his draft board for shipment to the Ft. Devens reception center, Alex's wife took seriously ill. Frantic, he tried to figure out some way to keep from leaving in the morning. But his name was already on the quota, and there was not much anyone could do about it.

Jim Kelly kept vigil with Alex at Mrs. Smith's bedside most of the night. When he returned to his house at 4 A.M., he couldn't sleep and tossed in bed, worrying about Alex's problem.

At 8 A.M. Alex pulled himself away from his wife's bedside, threw his toothbrush and a set of underwear into his overnight bag, and stepped out of his front door on his way to the Army. But that was about as far as he got.

Kelly was at the bottom of the steps. Jim had thought of a solution: He was going to substitute for Alex. Together they went to the draft board and explained the situation to Clark. The draft roster was revised. Jim Kelly went off to war and Alex Smith returned to his wife's bedside.

Most of the men classified 4-F were probably damned glad of it, but at least three 21-year-olds in 119's domain didn't take that attitude. As prescribed by Selective Service regulations, they were given 1-A classification cards before their physicals. When they came up for induction, one was ruled out with a punctured eardrum, the second had stomach ulcers, the third's feet were flat as a duck's. Back at the draft board they were handed new registration cards with 4-F ratings.

But the three youths wanted to fight. Tearing up their 4-F tickets and keeping only their obsolete 1-A cards, they traipsed around Boston, 18 miles from Norwood, bragging that though they were 1-A and not working in an essential war industry, their draft board still hadn't inducted them. Eventually they were picked up by the FBI, but instead of being inducted, as they'd hoped, they were bawled out for causing all the trouble of investigating to find out whether they were 4-F.

"We thought maybe you'd make us fight if we stirred up enough trouble," the three boys explained. Convinced that their scheme had failed, they compromised by taking jobs at the Bendix Aircraft Corporation's plant.

If they had been physically fit, defense jobs at Bendix would not have exempted them. Unlike many others, the Norwood board took the stand that very few men in industry were "essential," especially if they were youngsters or older men who had been working in a job for only six months or a year. No. 119 sat down with all the executives of industries in the surrounding territory and explained to them that they could expect their workers to be drafted at any time a quota had to be filled. It was 119's contention that the men who deserved to remain at home were those with responsibilities in the home—like those with widowed mothers or invalid fathers. They treated each potential soldier as a human being and not as a folder in a filing cabinet.

As chairman McKenzie said, "We realized that we were dealing with human lives, and our decisions would steer the course of every man and family we dealt with."

There was one man whose destiny was never influenced by draft board 119. Lawrence Fred Tilton, a powerful, broad-shouldered young man who stands 6 feet 7 inches, disappeared from Foxboro in July 1942. His parents did not hear from him again until a couple of months ago. Tilton was only 14 years old, rather big for his age. Changing the Tilton to Filton and his age from 14 to 18, he had enlisted in the Navy. A powerful swimmer, he volunteered to train with the Navy's Underwater Demolition Units.

Tilton invaded Europe as a bosn's mate 2d class two days before D-Day, a member of the detail that secretly crossed the English Channel on June 4. After placing markers in the Channel to guide the invasion fleet, he went ashore with the others and demolished two German guns and two pillboxes. On D-Day Tilton's ship was blocked by five mines. He swam through

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heavy enemy fire and cut the mines loose. For this Tilton was awarded the Silver Star. General De Gaulle gave him the Croix de Guerre.

When the Navy discovered Tilton's phony name and age, they changed his records, gave him an honorable discharge because of his exploits and sent him home to Foxboro.

Like the rest of the returning veterans, Tilton reported to 119 when he got back to Norwood. Old man Clark shooed him out:

"Sorry, son, you're not old enough to register. Come back when you're 18."

Another boy, who disappeared from Norwood about the same time as Tilton, had a somewhat different war record. Registering at the draft board, he said his name was Harold J. Cooney and he lived at 1401 Maple St. They gave him a registration card and in due course mailed his questionnaire. It was promptly returned to the draft board—but not filled out. As a matter of fact, the envelope had never been opened; a notation by the postman read, "No such address." "Cooney" had pulled a fast one; all he wanted was a registration card, as protection against being picked up as a dodger. The FBI is still looking for him.

That's the one real draft-dodging case on Board 119's record.

But many an irate mother or wife with a man in the service was positive that the boy next door was a draft dodger. Chairman McKenzie was deluged with anonymous letters and phone calls at all hours of the night from women demanding that So-and-So be inducted. One mysterious woman sent a whole series of letters reporting that a certain young man was dodging the draft. She said he hadn't been hanging around his old haunts any more and wasn't even coming home in daylight hours. But a check-up at the boy's home disclosed that he had enlisted three months before and had merely neglected to notify his draft board.

Incidents like that were just minor troubles for 119. Their only major gripe involved National Selective Service Headquarters. Boardman Charley Houghton still gets almost apoplectic when he recalls the headaches Washington caused the board.

"Regulations were changed so damned fast we couldn't keep up with them," Houghton says. "We would have our monthly quota just about filled and set to go when a change would come in and we'd have to eliminate three-quarters of the men we were about to send off."

He remembers vividly one time in early 1944 when three major changes were received in three successive days. The revisions eliminated all but eight of the 70 men No. 119 had planned to send that month.

"That was about as much as we could stand," Houghton declares. "We just went on strike and sent only those eight men."

All kinds of Army, Navy and Selective Service brass descended on 119 from the capital to whip the draft board back into line. Eventually they ended their strike and went to work again, but Washington, the board members say, has probably never been the same since.

THOSE hectic days are gone forever, and today the draft board runs very smoothly. No. 119 sends about eight 18-year-olds each month. When Clark addressed the Norwood High School senior class recently, he explained that most of them would have to join up when they reached their eighteenth birthday. Calling for a show of hands, he asked how many would have wanted to go if the war was still on; the "aye" vote was unanimous. Then he polled the class to see who wanted to enter the service now the war was over. Not more than six of the 100 youngsters responded. But the rest are not squawking very loudly; for the most part, they are resigned to their fate.

Apart from inducting youngsters, and worrying about rehabilitation of some of the returning veterans, 119's members don't have much to do nowadays. They do worry, though, especially when they receive postcards like the one that Ed Flaherty got in the mail the other day. "You put me in the Army," it said. "Why can't you put me in a job?"

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Flaherty and the others try to straighten out men like that one and help get them started in as civilians again before they get too bitter. The board members themselves, though, are a little tired of it all after five years and more. In their hearts they want out, just as do the soldiers whom they inducted.

And like the soldiers, they have done a job. Public Law 112, passed by Congress and signed by the President, authorizes a medal or insignia for members of the nation's selective service boards. No design has been chosen to date, but for the members of Massachusetts Local Board No. 119, the citizens of Norwood and their returning GIs can't think of anything more appropriate than one of those ruptured ducks. For honorable service.



Back in August 1942, Norwood sent off one of its biggest draft groups on the train to Fort Devens.

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