

GENERAL SCIENCE

# GI's Resented Privileges

It was not the individual officer but the Army system of special privileges given him that objections were aimed at. Surveys were made on this and other GI attitudes.

► RESENTMENT of the special privileges given to officers, especially those affecting the spending of leisure time, was widespread and deep in America's citizen Army of World War II.

It was greater in overseas areas away from the firing lines than it was in the United States.

Objections were not that individual officers took undue advantage of their rank. They were aimed at the Army—for approving and encouraging a system of special privilege.

The GI attitude is revealed by the publication of surveys made during the war by the Research Branch of the Army. **THE AMERICAN SOLDIER**, published in two big volumes by the Princeton University Press, was prepared by a team of scientists in the Research Branch: Drs. Samuel A. Stouffer, Edward A. Suchman, Leland G. DeVinney, Shirley A. Star and Robin M. Williams, Jr.

Both adjustment and training of the civilian soldiers was handicapped by the fact that the educational level of the new soldier was so much higher than that of the old regulars. Among selectees, nearly half (48%) had graduated from high school and a third of this 48% had gone to college. Among the regulars, only 23% had graduated from high school, of whom very few had gone any further.

Yet it was the regulars who had the seniority and were made non-commissioned officers. It was under their direction that the new citizen soldiers were supposed to get their training.

In actual combat, the GI was not so concerned about the privileges of his officers. He had other things to worry him. One of the deepest anxieties was due to the ever present threat to life and limb.

Less well appreciated by those who were not there, the report points out, is the degree of stress imposed by sheer physical discomfort.

"Many a soldier will remember the mud and the K-rations after the memory of danger has grown dim," it is observed. In a "quiet period" in combat 22% of infantrymen reported that they could not get food. Thirty percent didn't like the kind of food they had. An additional 10% just did not feel like eating.

In the same "quiet period" 31% reported getting less than four hours sleep in 24.

But hanging over all the feeling of physical discomfort—the lying cramped in a filthy foxhole, the hunger, the heat or the

cold, the irritation of swarms of insects, and the uncertainty about what was going on and what the future held—a fundamental source of strain was the impersonality of combat. Over all else hung the thought that "we are expendable." The GI, like all other Americans, resented being "treated as numbers." This was increased by the feeling, reported by 62% of infantrymen, that there was no end to the situation until they "broke" or were hit. This feeling was encouraged by the system of replacing personnel losses by individuals rather than by units. Rotation was introduced in an attempt to provide a partial solution to this problem, but the number of men rotated was relatively small.

Why did the American soldier go on fighting in the face of all these difficulties? This question is answered also by the GI himself. It was not to make a better

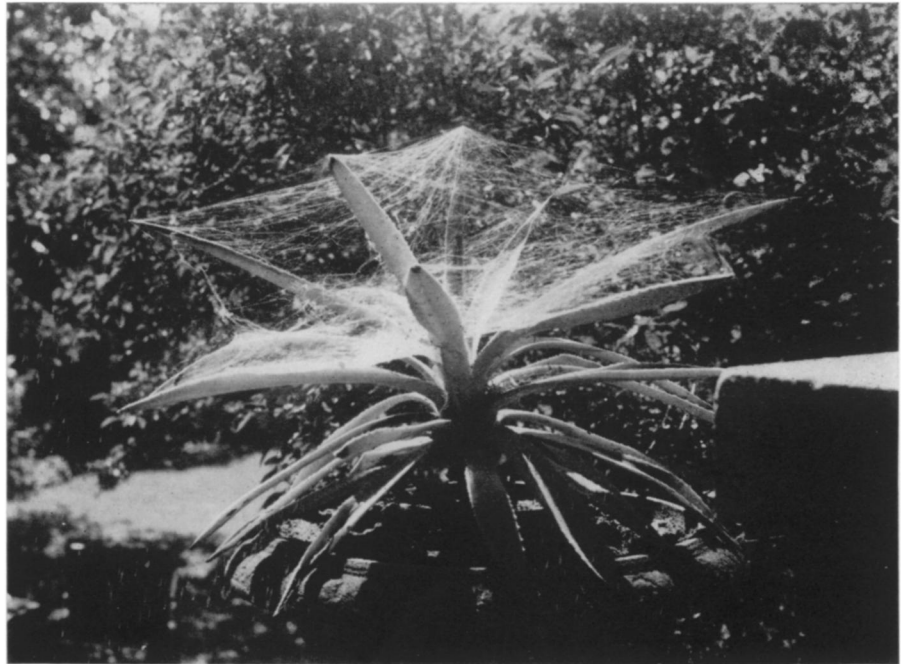
world; only five men out of a hundred gave idealistic reasons. Neither was it hatred of the enemy; only 2% were motivated by vindictiveness.

By far the largest proportion of soldiers were kept going in combat by the desire to get the war over and put an end to the job. Next in importance, named by 14%, was an unwillingness to let his buddies down. Ten percent were sustained by thoughts of home and loved ones, and 9% by a sense of duty and self-respect.

Fear in combat is universal. And in a survey of 277 wounded combat veterans in the European Theater of Operations, 65% reported that at least on one occasion their fear had been so intense that they were unable to perform adequately. The soldier is tolerant of those who "crack up" in the fear of combat; he thinks the man who cracks up should not be punished but be given medical treatment. But practically half (49%) reported that the sight of a man's nerves cracking up made them jittery, or made them feel like cracking up themselves.

Remedy, or preventive of combat fear, as seen by the men themselves, is more realistic training with live ammunition, and more training on enemy weapons and what they can do.

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**ARACHNE AS ENGINEER**—One spider, ambitious and tireless, covered the whole top of a century-plant with her web, in the yard of Harry D. Tiemann of Madison, Wis. He calls attention to the beautiful examples of suspension-cable engineering linking leaf and leaf, and especially the central spike of still-undeveloped leaves with the tips of the others. Anyone seeing this should be ready to credit the mythical Arachne, who according to Greek legend was ancestress of all spiders, not only with high skill as a weaver but with great ingenuity as an engineer.