Youngsters in the Army speak their mind on topics ranging from letters from home to postwar plans

"We're Just Kids, But . . ." 

E. E. LEWIS

WE ARE the new army—the 18- and 19-year-old boys. There are about a million of us.

Less than a year ago three-fourths of us were in school. We were carefree, scatter-brained adolescents. We slept late, drank cokes and ate hot dogs, did a few chores around the house, pretended to study a little, had frequent drug store dates, drove dad's car or some old jalopy, sat and stood around for hours in "bull" sessions, and in other ways exercised our rights as American youth to worry our elders.

And did they worry!!

But "we're in the Army now." We get "$50 a day once a month." We get "life insurance wholesale." We do what we're told to do. We do it when, and as, we are told to do it—and like it. Like every soldier in every army, we obey. Our slogan is "hurry up and wait."

"So much has been said against today's youngsters," writes E. E. Lewis, Professor of Education at Ohio State University, Columbus, in submitting this article, "that perhaps it would be good to repeat a few compliments in their behalf. They are doing a magnificent job, and what they are doing and the way they are doing it is to me a vindication of their bringing up." Mr. Lewis, through personal interviews, has come to know many boys in the Army—an experience which has intensified his inherent sympathy with young people and his understanding of their viewpoints.

We crawl out in the dark and work straight to dark—seven days a week. It's called "going to school," but it's not like what we did at home. It's the packing, pounding, yelling method. What we used to groan about learning in eighteen weeks is hammered home in six.

Boy! can we learn fast when it's life or death!!

Drill! Inspection! Tactics! How to kill! How to perform six hundred and fifty trades essential to military success! These we learn in streamline fashion.

Most of us are heavier and healthier than we were before. We're growing up fast. We are becoming experts in two or three trades. Few of us will become generals and admirals but all of us will come out of the Army trained to do something useful.

The novelist calls us the "flower of the nation"—the Army calls us "boots" or "gun fodder."

Neither of them is right. We're not "flowers" nor are we "fodder."

We're just kids—going places, seeing things, working hard, learning a lot, having some fun, traveling anywhere, everywhere. We're the most traveled army the world has ever seen. We are proud of our uniforms. We are Uncle Sam's best dressed men—junior size. We need a few things—mostly more sugar reports. We'd rather get letters than eat.

We hate HATE.
We hate WAR.
But even more we hate ENSLAVEMENT.

We don't like to be pushed around by crazy guys like Hitler and Tojo. And we don't like to see these savage gangsters dominate the little folks of the earth.

We know what we are fighting for—shucks! We've enjoyed all the privileges of freedom for years. And do we miss them now!

We are determined to enjoy them again.

We are determined to help the little folks of the earth to enjoy them also.

Please—you folks at home—don't worry about us. We are well cared for and most of us will be back when it's over. We're not worrying about that. There's just one thing we want above all else. We want you to see to it that all this fighting isn't wasted.

We want to bring our children up knowing that they won't have to die to re-win a war their fathers won as we are now re-winning a war our fathers won.

Please—you who make the peace—make a just and lasting peace. We know there'll always be wars—but make them fewer and less world-wide in scope.

We realize that winning the peace is a many times longer and harder battle than winning the war. But surely a just and lasting peace is possible. Don't let any gangsters fool you again. There'll always be gangsters who will try to run the world. Let's be ready for them next time. Let's follow the lead of the Billy Mitchells of the future and stay far ahead of the others. Let's live in a practical manner with the big and little folk of the earth.

You at home should read, study, discuss, plan, and evolve sound practical plans that will make such world-wide and devastating wars impossible in the future. To do this is, to us, the big battle of the future.

We know we're just kids and should not talk this way to our elders, but—

"I'm Proud of This Generation"

THE AMERICAN is an adaptable cuss, says Lt. General George Churchill Kenny. Hardly any of our men had first-hand experience of jungle or high mountains. Most of them had grown up in towns or cities where they were never more than ten minutes away from a drugstore juke box or a movie. But when put down in New Guinea, they ... pulled off their shirts and went to work. It made no difference whether they came from the Bronx, South Boston or an Indiana farm, ... I'm proud of this generation.—Forrest Davis, "I'm Proud of This Generation," The Saturday Evening Post, June 19, 1943. Reprinted by special permission of The Saturday Evening Post, copyright 1943 by The Curtis Publishing Company.