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**ANOTHER KARIOTIS  
 MAKES U.S. SKI TEAM**

Like his sister Ali before him, Belvedere's Jack Kariotis has been selected for the national squad.

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 ON INFRASTRUCTURE**

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memorial day: may 29

## 'Dear Folksies': Letters from a WWII MASH unit

*Belvedere resident honors late father with blog chronicling his service*



ELLIOT KARLAN PHOTOS / FOR THE ARK

Linda Bine of Belvedere pores over a treasure trove of letters and photos spread out on her dining room table. A large collection was sent home by her father when he was overseas during World War II, and now she's blogging about his experiences.

By **MATTHEW HOSE**  
 mhose@thearknewspaper.com

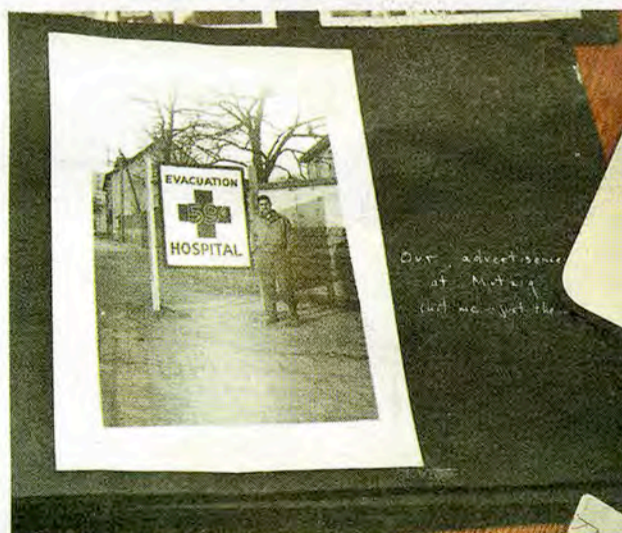
If computers had been around in 1942, Belvedere resident Linda Bine likes to think her dad would have been an avid blogger.

Throughout the three years René Bine Jr. spent with the 59th Evacuation Hospital treating wounded soldiers and prisoners of war during World War II, the young medical resident sent more than 200 letters back to his parents vividly describing his experiences in the war.

"He's telling a story that I think people can feel like they are there," Bine says. "He's very immediate. That's ... like a blog today. You get to know the person writing it. It's personal. ... It has that character, that freshness, that immediacy, that candor, that humor. That's pretty cool."

Now, 75 years after René first joined the ranks, Bine is bringing her father's letters back to life one-by-one with her

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René Bine Jr. stands next to a sign for the 59th Evacuation Hospital, with which he served as a medical resident during World War II. The photo was among the hundreds of letters he sent to his parents.

## Cost to manage anchorage will nearly double for Tiburon and Belvedere

Sausalito exits Richardson Bay agency

By **GRETCHEN LANG**  
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Sausalito has finalized its exit from the Richardson Bay Regional Agency, leaving remaining members like Tiburon and Belvedere to pay nearly twice as much in dues to manage the troubled anchorage.

Saying the agency had failed to stop the ever-increasing number of derelict boats on the bay, Sausalito representative Jill Hoffman, who sits on the Sausalito City Council, had given provisional notice in December that the city would withdraw from the agency and patrol its own waters using a Sausalito Police Department boat in cooperation with the Marin County Sheriff's Office.

That decision is now final: At the agency board's May

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## A match made in paradiso: Belvedere becomes friendship city with Italian village

By **MATTHEW HOSE**  
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Piloting into Portofino, Italy, from the open water of the Ligurian Sea, a sailor would see tree-covered hills that close in on a small, protected cove. On the starboard side, a row of pastel seaside houses hang just feet over the water, protruding from the edge of a steep cliff. Sailboats dot the harbor as villas rise high above the trees on the hills behind.

Belvedere Mayor James Campbell says the seaside entrance to Portofino looks strikingly similar to the frontage of his own city.

"What everyone is struck by, when you come into Bel-

See **FRIENDSHIP, PAGE 21**



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## Letters, *continued from page 1*

blog "Dear Folksies," titled after the heading René put on each letter.

The letters, which started as René began officer training school on April 11, 1942, will be posted on Bine's website at dearfolksies.com; the posting of each letter will correspond to the day it was originally written.

Over three years, the letters will cover René's journey, including training in the U.S.; landing in North Africa; voyaging to the south of France; heading close to the frontlines near the French-German border; and following the Sixth Army Group into Germany. There, he was one of the first doctors to arrive at the liberated Dachau concentration camp.

Bine says the project brings a fresh perspective to the dense volumes of history on World War II — the perspective of a doctor uninvolved in combat but who cared deeply for his patients and fellow soldiers and who had a penchant for writing crisply and with subversive humor.

"It's not a recollection, it's not a history," Bine says of her dad's correspondence. "It's an in-the-moment journal of what happened."

Bine inherited the correspondence after her father passed away in 1988. He had always wanted to make a book out of the letters, but working in a private practice for 40 years after the war kept him busy and he never got the chance.

As she pages through the 1,000-plus pages of letters and 12 photo albums that René kept meticulously organized, Linda says she thinks her father would have been excited to know the letters will be turned into a blog.

"He'd love it. He was always into technology, the latest things," she says.

### Joining the ranks

Bine says her father was always a doctor first and a lieutenant second. Those priorities are clear in his letters, where he doesn't shy away from playfully deriding what he sees as the absurd and humorous aspects of the strictly hierarchical military.

"Incidentally, army regulations seem to change daily — one day they tell us one thing and then the next the exact opposite order is given," René notes in a letter from April 15, 1942, at Fort Lewis in Washington. "Well, such is life."

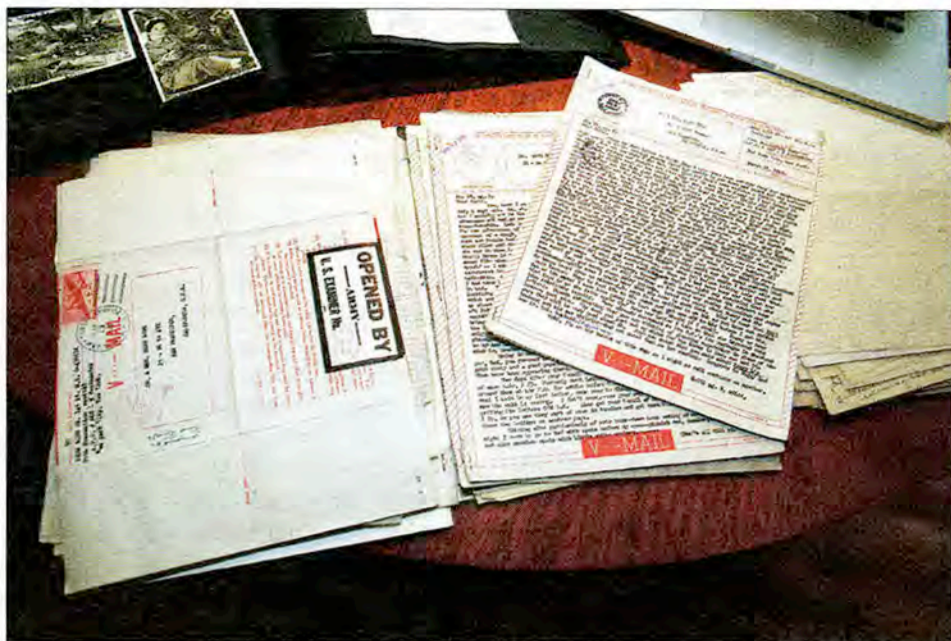
He also describes the demerits trainees receive for wearing the wrong clothes or putting their hands in their pockets. He notes they are "being treated just like boarding-school students" but ultimately says, "It's good for us."

No detail is too small in the letters home, including the insight that army-issued underwear, when worn for a while, "doesn't really tickle."

Bine says her father used to tell her about an enlisted man in his company who would dress up as Brazilian singer Carmen Miranda.

If that sounds at all like the character Klinger from the hit 1980's TV show "M.A.S.H.," a comedy set at an Army hospital during the Korean War, Bine says that's an apt comparison.

"It was the World War II version of that (show)," Bine says. "They were bucking the



ELLIOT KARLAN / FOR THE ARK

**Throughout the three years René Bine Jr. spent with the 59th Evacuation Hospital treating wounded soldiers and prisoners of war during World War II, the young medical resident sent more than 200 letters back to his parents vividly describing his experiences in the war.**

authority, because they were coming at this from a different perspective — caring for their patients."

In one letter later on, René describes his own D-Day — a vastly different one from the allied invasion of Normandy.

When he arrives, soaking wet, on the shore along the southern coast of France, René describes his unit as "a funny looking bunch, pants sagging below the knees where they had beaucoup water ballooning them out as they went into our boots."

They disrobed near the beach to dry their clothes, and while they were standing in their underwear, "along came a couple of generals and it made quite a picture — our saluting them while almost au-naturel along the side of the road."

The unit then spent the evening drinking wine and playing bridge on a French hillside.

While other veterans were traumatized by the war, Bine says it was a transformative experience for René as the 26-year-old doctor took his first airplane ride, raced across the Mediterranean Sea and learned how to drive large trucks on the fly.

"He had this sense of wonder about it all, and I think that comes through in the letters," Bine says. "Yes, it was a terrible thing, and there are parts of it that he talks about that, but it also was a very interesting time."

### Casualties increase in France, Germany

Humor aside, Bine says she thinks the war became real for her father when his unit disembarked in Casablanca, Morocco, in December 1942, shortly after the Western Task Force began its campaign to take North Africa.

"Once they went overseas and were in this very foreign place in Casablanca, (that was) unlike anything any of them had seen — that was real," Bine says. "While this unit fortunately didn't have to fight and kill people, they had to deal with the casualties of war."

At the time, René wrote letters with a portable Remington typewriter while keeping a detailed log of the number of patients they saw at the hospital, which were mostly prisoners of war and convalescent stays at

the time.

His unit traveled from Morocco throughout the north coast of Africa, and eventually landed in Sicily in August 1943, where battle casualties at the hospital began increasing during the invasion of the island, dubbed Operation Husky.

After remaining there for more than nine months, René's group then tailed the Seventh Army as it rapidly advanced from the south of France northward, according to the World War II U.S. Medical Research Center. The medical unit arrived in Épinal, France, in October 1944.

There, troops encountered intense resistance as they attempted to push to the Rhine River and into Germany, with the 59th Evacuation Hospital stationed just 15 miles from the frontlines.

From statistics René gathered, it becomes clear what he saw there.

While in Casablanca, the 59th encountered about 833 patients. It took in 2,078 patients over the course of almost a year in Palermo. In just one month in Épinal, the 59th Evacuation Hospital saw 3,371 cases, for a total of 58 patients per day, according to René's records.

As troops pushed across the Rhine into Germany, René's unit lingered in France but eventually was transferred into southern Germany, where it bounced around for several months until, in May, the leader of the 59th was assigned as a surgeon for the Dachau concentration camp, the first Nazi concentration camp opened in Germany.

A little more than a week after the camp had been liberated, René went to serve as an officer at a convalescent hospital at the camp.

There, he saw two of the patients who had been subjected to the infamous Nazi freezing experiments at Dachau.

"He may not have even wrapped his head around it at the time," Bine says. "I think in the moment, you just deal with it. But nobody could have seen that in real time without being affected."

Bine is mum about how her father describes his experience in the camp. For one, she hasn't read that far through his letters in more than 25 years. She says she's so busy curating each blog post that she can't get much more than two months ahead of

## on the web

Visit [dearfolksies.com](http://dearfolksies.com) to read René Bine Jr.'s letters home from North Africa and Europe during his time with the 59th Evacuation Hospital during World War II. To sign up for email notifications each time a new letter is posted on the blog, visit [arkn.ws/ReneBine](http://arkn.ws/ReneBine).

the story.

"We'll have to find out" how he describes the camps, she says.

But it is clear that the concentration camps were an intense personal experience for René. One of his closest cousins, Yvette Farnoux, was a famous French resistance fighter who was imprisoned at Auschwitz.

In September 1945, after the war ended, Bine recounted in a letter to his parents the story Farnoux told him about her experience. In the letter, which is kept on file at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, he recounts her description of her room at Ravensbruck concentration camp, where she could see flames coming out of a crematorium chimney and hear the screams of people being brought there. He added that when someone would lag behind while walking to one of the concentration camps, German citizens would cheer SS soldiers on to kill them.

"Little wonder that Yvette feels that all the Germans should be exterminated and that she would love to do it herself," Bine opines in his letter.

### Bine relives father's 'love for life'

And yet, despite his own experience seeing patients at Dachau and listening to his cousin's experiences, Bine says her father never lost his love for life.

"I think (the war) was a foundation for his whole life," Bine says. "He was a very optimistic person — he was a person who, if there was a problem, you figured out how to deal with it. Maybe that was his nature, but I think that the experiences he had in those 3½ years, he learned a lot."

After the war, Bine would go on to establish a medical practice in San Francisco and work on the attending staff at Mount Zion Hospital while also volunteering for 30 years with the American Heart Association.

"He was very warm and very reassuring," Bine says. "Somehow he didn't get ruffled about things — maybe that was from that experience, I don't know. I don't know if when you've been through that, the stuff that you see in daily practice back in San Francisco, it's all manageable."

Bine says documenting her father's journey on the blog has been a journey for her, too.

"Even if nobody read it, I would be having fun," Bine says.

And that's largely because she gets to hear her father's voice in each letter she reads.

"I'm really enjoying it, because I get to spend time with my dad," she says. "These letters sound like my father, just younger. When you write, you have a voice, and it just is his voice."

*Reporter Matthew Hose covers the city of Belvedere, as well as crime, courts and public safety issues on the Tiburon Peninsula. Reach him at 415-944-4627 and on Twitter at @matt\_hose.*

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