

*Uncorrected  
for typo errors.*

hotchkiss

NAPLES, March 25, 1944

It was just a few weeks ago that the surgeons in one of the Army's big base hospitals here asked for the impossible.....and got it.

The impossible was a dermatome - a delicate precision instrument which slices living human tissue for skin grafts in ~~layers~~ tissue-tin layers of pre-determined thickness. The surgeons needed it urgently. To cable the States and wait for its arrival - even by air - meant the loss of time; time precious to the speedy healing of burned and scarred American soldiers.

There were no dermatomes to be bought or borrowed. If one were to be had at all, it must be made, and quickly. And it was. With a worn-out instrument for a model and brass from a shell case as raw material, Lieutenant Thomas R. Vermillion, of Williamsburg, Va., and T/5 Joe Watkins, of Swannanoa, N.C., deftly designed and machined out a finished instrument in a matter of hours.

And, because he saw certain faults in the original, Lieutenant Vermillion made several basic improvements that may well become standard from here on.

Neither Vermillion nor ~~XX~~ Watkins had ever seen, or even heard of a dermatome before, but they made it in keeping with the tradition of their outfit - "It couldn't be done 'till we did it."

At present, this outfit is sprawled over several acres of ground on the outskirts of this city. It goes by the Army name of Base Ordnance Shop No. 1, Peninsular Base Section, Army Service Forces. But wide-eyed visitors say it might better be called "Little Detroit".

Little Detroit is a wonderland, a house of magic, and a busy, ingenuity at war.  
ant on foreign soil to the driving force of American //