medical officers were of two types: reserve (trained physicians who were conscripted) and regular (those who were trained during their period of service). The medical troops were divided into two branches, those who provided first aid and casualty collection during marching and fighting, and the Line of Communication Hospital under the direct command of Army Headquarters. Field Hospitals, set up near the frontlines, could only perform minor surgeries, while the LOC handled patients with more serious conditions evacuated from field hospitals.

In addition to medical officers, orderlies received three to four months of training in wounds, dressings, medicines, and injections while receiving infantry training. Soldiers carried limited supplies, both those that they were issued and those that were “privately” procured. Special medical troops carried a more extensive array of medicines and field kits. A list of supplies carried by medical personnel would include peptic tablets, aspirin, morphine, tincture of iodine, iodoform, zinc oxide, atebri, quinine sulfate, quinine salt, benzoin, adhesive plaster, bandage, gauze, scissors, thermometer, boracic acid, rivanol solution syringe, absorbent cotton and sodium bicarbonate. All of these can be found among the artifacts in the collection, yet it was reported that these were rarely in full supply.
The War

World War II began on September 1, 1939. Japan formally entered the war against the Allied powers on December 7, 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In response, the United States joined the Allied powers on December 8, 1941.

When the war ended with the Japanese surrender on August 14, 1945, it was estimated that more than 17 million members of the armed forces on both sides perished in the conflict. The casualties were severe on both sides, but the Russian, Chinese, German, and Japanese counts were particularly high.

46th General Hospital

The 46th General Hospital had been on inactive status at the University of Oregon Medical School since WWI when it had functioned as Base Hospital 46. In the interim between the two World Wars, a considerable portion of the officer personnel of the 46th General Hospital and an individual training program organized with the cooperation of the Reserve Corps of the United States Army, had been maintained.

On March 11, 1940, Major General James C. Magee, Surgeon General of the United States Army, requested the University of Oregon Medical School to prepare for reactivation of the 46th General Hospital. The War Department appointed J. Guy Strohm, MD, Medical Reserve Unit Director during the organizational period and, in the event of mobilization, commanding officer. Colonel Strohm, during the twenty-eight month period between the time of the request and the time of activation, conducted a weekly training program for officer personnel. In addition to officer and nurse procurement, ninety-six enlisted reserve personnel were enrolled, including technicians and others essential to the various services for the operation of the Hospital.

Activation of the 46th General Hospital took place on July 15 at which time the officer and the nurse personnel were ordered to Fort Riley, Kansas. The enlisted reserve personnel were ordered to Fort Lewis for processing, thence to Fort Riley to join the unit. The unit was first ordered to North Africa, arriving in Oran on September 2, 1943. Colonel Strohm was appointed commanding officer of all installations in the area. Physicians were sent to all regions of the European, Pacific and Mediterranean fronts.

When the war ended and the troops were sent home, these same physicians sought permission to bring home items picked up on the battlefield or in abandoned medical facilities. Many of them first loaned the materials to what was then known as the Museum of Medical History at the University of Oregon Medical School. They subsequently donated them, making them part of the museum’s permanent collection.

The Medical Museum Collection

The Medical Museum Collection first began in the UOMS Library and was adopted as a special project by the Women’s Auxiliary to the State Medical Society. During and immediately following WWII both military and civilian physicians donated materials to the museum. Today this collection is an integral part of the Historical Collections & Archives. The collection continues to grow, and donations are still accepted.

Among the artifacts are the Japanese relics of World War II now displayed in this exhibit. In a 1943 UOMS campus newsletter, a plea was made to physicians to donate to the already burgeoning collection. Give a “Christmas gift to yourselves of articles that will record for the future some of the medical history of these difficult and historical times. It is so easy to pass by the present without thinking how soon it will become the past or realizing that whatever is to become a part of the heritage of the future must be saved… It is you who are physicians and it is your museum and assuredly it is you who know what is worth saving. Physicians in Military Service: Did some one pick up a Japanese medical kit on Attu? Does some one have a bit of equipment used in taking care of the first casualties from the first bitter landings in the islands of the Pacific?”

Military Medicine, 1939 to 1945

Many contemporary medical practices have developed as a result of the pressing needs of military medicine. In American history, each war has brought new technologies. Civil War physicians recognized the importance of sanitary conditions, and the Spanish-American War led to a cure for yellow fever. World War I introduced physicians to chemical weapons and the effects of shell shock and led to a cure for tetanus and advances in reconstructive surgery. World War II introduced the mass production of penicillin and new technologies for preserving and transporting plasma. Despite important medical advances, World War II also introduced physicians to unanticipated medical problems, including the results of the atomic bomb.

Japanese Medical Field Personnel

Based on an example from New Guinea (some of our artifacts were picked up in Bona Gona), Japanese