

Short story: “What are you going to be?”

engineer

vet

nurse

fireman



policewoman

doctor

teacher

artist

The three friends were no different from any other six-year-old children of their day – or any day. They liked to dream about the future. “What are you going to be when you grow up?” the game began.

“I’m going to drive a train when I get big,” said Tommy Jones.

“I want to be an artist and draw beautiful pictures and sell them and get rich and wear fine clothes and live in a big house,” said his sister Margaret.

“Do you know what I’m going to do?” asked Jack Horne. “I’m going to go to Italy and eat all the spaghetti I want.”

“For breakfast, too?” asked Margaret.

“Yes! I love spaghetti!” exclaimed Jack.

“We are going to be rich and famous. We are not going to stay at home and do ordinary work,” they said. Of course their dreams of the future changed every day. Tommy, for example, wanted to be a train driver on Monday, a bank manager on Tuesday and a film actor on Wednesday. That was part of the game.

Tommy, Jack and Margaret had a fourth friend, Paul Gibbs, but Paul didn’t play their game. Paul was also six years old and always said the same thing: “I’m going to be a doctor.”

“Don’t you want to be anything but a doctor?” demanded Tommy.

“No.” replied Paul.

“Your dad is an engineer. That’s a good job.” suggested Margaret.

“I don’t want to be an engineer.” said Paul.

“Newspapermen have interesting work.” pointed out Jack.

“I’m going to be a doctor!” repeated Paul.

Paul did not change his answer. It was the same day after day, week after week. Tommy, Margaret and Jack changed their minds several times a day. However, Paul didn’t. So Tommy, Margaret and Jack concluded that Paul really wanted to be a doctor.

That was back in 1919. The years went by and the children grew older. Eventually, Paul began his study of medicine.

In 1939, the Second World War broke out.



Paul finished his studies and in 1943 he was sent to Italy and worked in a big army hospital. It was a difficult life but it was the life Dr Paul Gibbs had always wanted. He remembered his own words as a child “I’m going to be a doctor,” and a broad smile spread over his face. Now he was a doctor and he had lots of work to do.

One morning, two days after Paul arrived in Italy, there was a big battle and many soldiers were brought to the hospital. Paul worked hard all morning.

One soldier was injured in the leg and while Paul was taking care of him the injured soldier said “Hello, Dr Gibbs”. “Remember me?” “I’m your old friend, Tommy Jones.”

“Tommy!” exclaimed Paul.

“So you did become a doctor, Paul!”

*army doctors*



*army nurse*

“Yes, I finally did. Look, Tommy, as you can see, I’m really busy now, but this afternoon I’m going to come back to see you and we’re going to have a long talk.”

At four o’clock Paul went to see Tommy as he had promised. First he looked at the soldier’s leg. “It’s going to be all right” he said.

“Of course, Paul”. You’re my doctor!

“What are you doing in the army, Tommy?” Paul wanted to know.

“I’m driving a jeep.” Tommy laughed. “Do you remember? I was going to be a train driver.”



*Jeep driver*

“Where’s your sister, Margaret?” Is she an artist?

“Didn’t you know, Paul” She’s a nurse here in this hospital.”

“In this hospital? I only arrived two days ago, Tommy. I don’t really know anyone here.” explained Paul.

“She heard I was here and came to see me for a few minutes at lunch time. I told her about you. She’s going to come back. Oh! Here she is now.”

“Hello, Paul,” said a pretty young nurse, smiling.

“Margaret! Is it really you?”

“I know. I was going to be an artist or an actress or a teacher or a hundred other things – but finally, when the war started, I decided to become a nurse. And I’m glad I did. It’s a wonderful job and I really wanted to be useful and helpful.”

“I’m glad, too.” said Paul. “I’m going to be able to see you a lot here in the hospital.”



“Hey, did you know about Jack?” asked Tommy.

“Jack Horne? I remember that he wanted to come to Italy and eat spaghetti every day.”

“Yes, and for breakfast, too.” laughed Margaret.

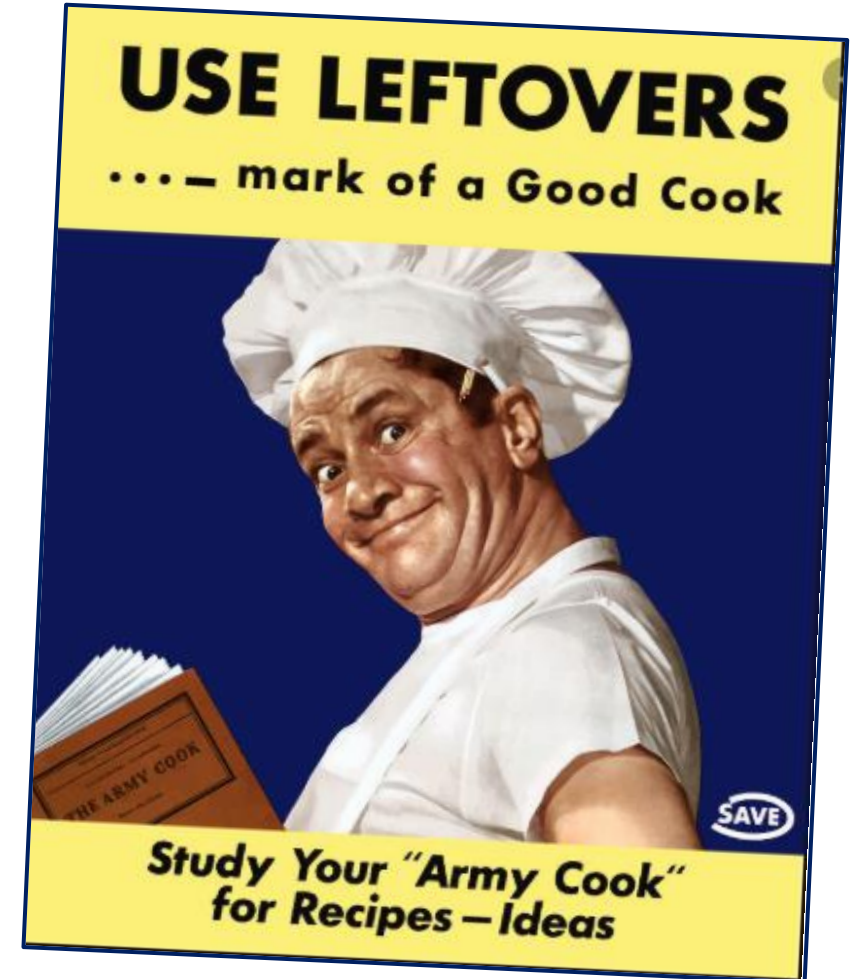
“He not only eats spaghetti, he cooks it!” Tommy said.

“He’s an army cook five miles from here. This evening I’m going to write him a letter and tell him we’re all here.”

“Please, ask him to make us a spaghetti dinner,” Paul said.

They all laughed.

army cook



The war ended in 1945, Paul returned to England and began his medical practice in Liverpool. In 1946, he married Margaret Jones and by 1949 they had two children.

Tommy and Jack, with their families, sometimes visit the Gibbs' home. The house is full of children then!

Paul, Margaret, Tommy and Jack smile and remember their own words as they listen to the children.

“I’m going to be an engineer when I grow up!”

“Not me. I’m going to act in the theatre.”

“I’m going to fly aeroplanes!”

“When I grow up I’m going to be ...”

