

STAND BY!

THE BATTLE OF JACOBS HILL IN WESTCHESTER

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S HARP at eight o'clock in the morning the order came, "Establish Division Headquarters at Jacobs Hill," and a scarce five minutes later the motor trucks, cars and motorcycles of the 101st Signal Battalion rolled out along the Annsville Creek. From the spinning reel on one of the trucks the telephone line dropped off along the road.

No, the United States has not declared war nor is there to be a memoir of the last great world disaster. This is the story of the 101st Signal Battalion in Camp Smith, near Peekskill, N. Y.

It is a fact that mobilization in a sparsely settled part of country or troop movements through hostile territory present telephone problems of considerable magnitude. And it is the necessity of working out these problems in advance that found the Signal Troops of the Second Corps and the Twenty-seventh Division busily engaged at camp during the latter part of June.

New York was threatened by an invading force, at least that's what they said when the troops took the field for their annual maneuvers and the routine drills of the first few days. The preliminary tactics all led up to the hour when the order was flashed to move and meet the enemy. And, as the opening sentence of the story asserts, the order came and the equipment of the 101st tore towards the foe.

Strung out behind the trucks came motorcycle men, who, as they sped along, with lance poles picked up the wire that the trucks played out and deftly tossed it off the road and into the hedges and lower branches that fringed the highway. At crossroads they stopped to throw the line up into trees or other overhead supports and then pressed on again. At wide crossings and over streams a gap was left in the wire and a squad dropped off a truck and stayed to bridge the opening with a splice. After them came linemen, looping up the loose wire to any convenient pole, tree, barn or fence. Thus the line



A testing line tied on a New York Telephone Company pole, on the road to Jacobs Hill

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grew, mile after mile, following highways and country roads through the rolling hills of picturesque Westchester.

While "A" Company was pushing out the wire, "B" Company, driving ahead, had reached Jacobs Hill and was setting up a forty-line switchboard in the basement of an old schoolhouse. And still further forward the 27th Signal Company was laying its lines through the woods toward two widely separated brigades.

Then, in the early afternoon, a dust covered lieutenant in the dugout under the schoolhouse picked up a hand set and called corps headquarters at Camp Smith. "Circuit to Division Headquarters O. K. at two P. M. Circuits to 53rd and 54th Brigades O. K. at two thirty." Then he leaned back with a sigh of relief and lit a cigarette.

Ten minutes later a motorcycle orderly dashed up with a message for Lieutenant Moran—at that moment smoking reflectively in the dugout. "Encircling movement threatens our left flank," he read, "Division Headquarters moves east to Scrub Oak."

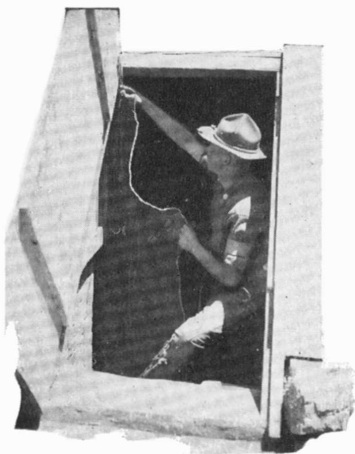
A few sharp commands and again the dugout swarmed with men. Out came the switchboard and off went the trucks, bending the line around toward the east.

The woods grew cool in the setting sun and then came night, the stars twinkling through the narrow opening in the trees above the trail. Men worked in the dark pushing the line forward until long after midnight and then took up the task again after a hasty breakfast in the early morning. Noon saw the switchboard set up at Scrub Oak and Lieutenant Moran praying that the enemy be held in check this time.

Then the umpires arrived and the problem was over.

"Mighty fine construction," observed Captain F. G. Miller, United States Army Inspector attached to the Division. "You laid eighty-three miles of wire in two days and that established a new record that is going to be awfully hard to beat."

That, after all, was what the guardsmen were striving for out in the dark-



The dug-out at Jacobs Hill

ness—a record, and praise from the Regular Army!

Back again in Camp Smith after the maneuvers Major Andrew C. Otto, Jr., Battalion Commander, reviewed the work of his men with pardonable pride. "We established a new record," he said "and the New York Telephone Company helped us do it. About 35 per cent of the outfit are employees of the company—you couldn't do this work with amateurs—and the company itself assisted. We used telephone poles along part of the way—just tied our line on with wire loops and didn't use any spikes or nails—and that helped a lot."

Eighty-three miles of wire in two days covers a great deal of territory, even speaking in the terminology of a purely telephone plant gang. The 101st Signal Battalion is proud of that record, as proud perhaps as the men who pushed through transcontinental cable lines. In addition to the telephone service the Battalion handles a field



the Commercial Department, takes everything else.

There are only two Signal Battalions in the United States—the 101st in the New York National Guard and another in the Regular Army. The men in the 101st are rightfully regarded as specialists, are paid accordingly and escape many of the routine jobs that fall to the lot of the soldier.

"Other outfits send sentries over to guard our camp," grinned an old sergeant," just as if we were all Generals."

Left—The Message Center. They're decoding messages at Corps Headquarters, Camp Smith



radio set—a receiving and sending unit that has a range of two hundred miles—all telegraph lines, and maintains the Message Center where all written communications are received, decoded and distributed. Its organization is not unlike that of the Telephone Company. Company "A" handles all construction, Company "B" is responsible for maintenance and operation and the Headquarters Company, like

Right, above—The "Telephone Girls" of Company B at Corps Headquarters

Below—Company A, 101st Signal Battalion, waits for orders to move forward

