

BY CABLE FROM AUSTRALIA.—The Japs were hammering our front lines in Bataan. Six twin-motored Mitsubishi bombers had just dumped their bundles of death near the Baguio nerve center of our field telephone system.

Private Weaver, a tall skinny youth, tensely cranked the handle of his switchboard to break the bad news. Jap bombs had rocked his frail sandbagged shack, hidden a quarter of a mile off the road amid heavy tropical foliage. The nearest bomb hadn't gone off, and only time would tell whether it was a dud or a delayed-action bomb. But he got the message through.

"Those yellow devils did it again," he phoned to Sergeant Wilson. "Every damned line's out but the ones to 'Jockey' and 'Bat'." (Bat was code for the Fort Mills Exchange on Corregidor; Jockey was the signal company's base camp).

Sergeant Wilson hurriedly summoned all available Signal Corps line crews for emergency duty. Some officers and men had been up half the night repairing the previous day's damage, but it wasn't necessary to waken anyone. The whole camp, from the major in command to the Filipino mess attendant, had dived into the fox holes en masse when the bombs hit.

Three trucks with mixed American and Filipino crews swiftly roared out, hunting for the fallen lines.

Within half an hour General MacArthur was again able to talk to his key commanders. Before sundown all the most important lines were functioning. But it wasn't until the wee hours of the morning that the last dog-tired line-man returned to base camp and a hard bamboo bunk, and Sergeant Wilson informed the major, "Every circuit is now in, sir."

This was an actual and somewhat typical day for the U. S. Signal Corps personnel, whose work drew General MacArthur's recommendation that the War Department cite the complete organization. The boys with the crossed flags insignia stuck to their switchboards till the bitter end. Many fell from wounds or sickness. During those last dreadful days of Bataan I saw undernourished men suffering from malaria go out to repair lines when they should have gone to hospitals.

The war started only a few days after aggressive, hard-driving Brig. Gen. Spencer B. Akin, handpicked by MacArthur as Signal Officer of the Philippines, had been rushed to the scene by Clipper. He doubled the Signal Corps' strength by taking men from the Infantry and Air Corps, Filipino and American civilians with telephone, telegraph or radio experience, willing but green Philippine Army conscripts, and a few borrowed Navy and Marine technicians.

"They were the strangest collection in Signal Corps history, but they did their job in a highly creditable manner," General Akin told me. For instance, Photographer Staff Sergeant Avon Sherman received the Distinguished Service Cross for grabbing an abandoned machine gun and helping check a Jap advance.

Capt. Roland "Frenchy" Saulnier didn't get a medal but he made American military history by jumping almost overnight from a private, first class, to a captain while he was still technically A.W.O.L. from his unit. "Frenchy" started the war as nursemaid for a few carrier pigeons. After a trip to southern Luzon where he freed his birds with messages for headquarters, he was out of a job. He attached himself to a Filipino division. By the time it reached Bataan, he was commanding a battalion through sheer nerve and qualities of leadership. After "Frenchy" performed a few more unorthodox but effective maneuvers, Lieutenant General Wainwright ruled that Private Saulnier, though untrained to be an officer, should have the rank which went with his job.

BATAAN CALLING

By Frank Hewlett

U. S. Correspondent

An untold story of Signal Corps heroes.
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General MacArthur awarded General Akin the Distinguished Service Cross. Akin is now continuing his tireless work with MacArthur in Australia, where communications are likewise a knotty problem being solved in an ingeniously American way. The press has already reported a typical instance where, in a new camp, it looked as if it would take days to lay the vital telephone lines. Instead, a jeep dragged a plow across the bare fields ahead of a truck unrolling wire, which was promptly covered over by the soldiers as the Australian residents looked on in admiring astonishment.

They had little to work with in the Philippines. The Corregidor radio station was salvaged from commercial stations and from bombed Fort McKinley near Manila. Shells and bombs often knocked down antennae. One operator died with his headphones on. One early April morning I myself saw the Signal Corps crew brave heavy bombing, working feverishly against time to repair the damaged antennae on Corregidor.

The last official report from Bataan's radio, late on the night of April 9, said it must signal off by order of the Japanese Army. The undaunted operator signed off by telling his Corregidor comrades, "See you in the states."

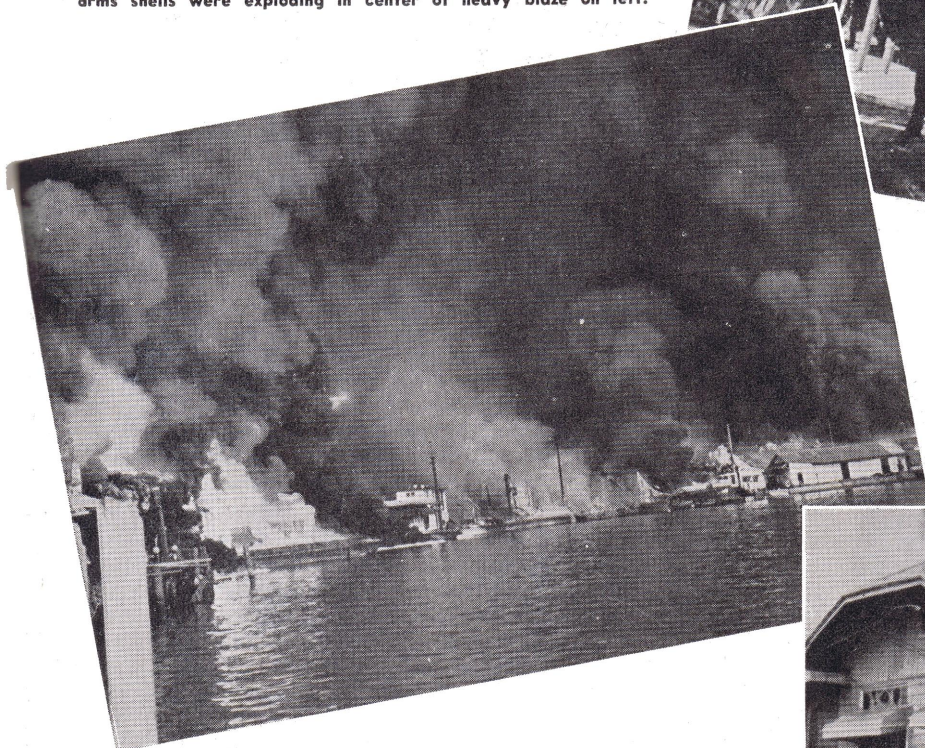
In the last message from Corregidor, Sgt. Irving Strobinger of Brooklyn emphasized how the men didn't want to surrender but preferred fighting to the finish. "We will be waiting for you guys to help," he radioed, and told his brother Joe, who was also in the Army, "Give 'em hell for us."

**The SIGNAL CORPS
"Gets the Message Through"**

(RIGHT PHOTO): Refugees ready to leave Rosales, Pangasinan, P. I., December 24, 1941.



(BELOW): Photograph taken at Cavite Navy Yards, Philippine Islands December 10, 1941. Barge, right center, is loaded with burning torpedoes. At the time this picture was taken, small arms shells were exploding in center of heavy blaze on left.



(BELOW): American soldiers viewing the damage done in Paranaque, P. I., during the Japanese raid December 13, 1941.



(ABOVE): Crater near PAA Radio Station where a Japanese bomb hit in raid on Philippine Islands December 9, 1941.

(RIGHT): CORP. ROY ("SLATS") SPENCER, motorcycle dispatch rider, was photographed cat-napping on the Bataan Peninsula. Notice the ever-ready weapons near him.

