



Medics Are Tough In New Guinea

Thirty yards from the Jap lines in New Guinea, Pvt. James Windle is shown above dressing the shrapnel wounds of Cpl. Henry Jeske. "Twenty minutes later Jeske was hit again and Windle repeated the job," writes YANK's Sgt. Dave Richardson, who took the picture and sent it back with this report of the work of medical men in his area.

WITH AMERICAN FORCES IN NEW GUINEA—With tensed, grim faces a patrol of American infantrymen hopped out of its forward outpost and headed toward the Jap positions. The bomb- and bullet-shattered coconut grove was as silent as the sea before a storm. We watched the green-clothed, bearded Yanks as they walked, cocked rifles at ready port, in hunched fashion toward what might be sudden death.

Then it happened. From Jap pillboxes buried under palm fronds came a withering hail of machine-gun fire. Our CO gave the word and our machine guns began to stutter tracer bullets into the pillboxes. The patrol, out in the middle of the fire, hit the mud. The men continued toward the Japs on their bellies. Two quit moving, and we knew they'd been hit.

Up from the mud, in the midst of the patrol, scrambled an unarmed soldier. He raced through the two-way machine-gun fire and dropped beside one of the men who had quit moving. He turned the man over, took one look and grabbed for the pouches at his side. There, in the heat of battle, he dressed and bandaged the wound. Then he raced to the next one and to other wounded men in the patrol.

When other Yanks swept through to charge and mop up the pillboxes from which the patrol had drawn fire, I learned the identity of the man with the pouches who had cared for the wounded. He was Pvt. James Windle of Powell, Wyo., who left high school to join the Army and held one of the most dangerous of noncombatant jobs.

He was a company aid man. He and other company aid men move out with every patrol into Jap territory. They sit in advance outposts that may be encircled by Jap infiltration. They run

Medics In New Guinea

along with bayonet charges. Wherever there's danger at the front, there's a company aid man.

Pfc. Ray Hackney, a buddy of Windle's who used to be a machinist in Chatfield, Ohio, and who is also a company aid man, was with an American company that battered its way through Buna Mission in one of the heaviest battles of the New Guinea campaign. For his work under constant mortar, machine-gun and rifle fire, Hackney was recommended for a decoration.

In another battle S/Sgt. Bill Frunsek, an aid man from Milwaukee, formerly a road-construction worker, raced out into the open between the Japs and the Yanks, where it was even considered too dangerous for patrols to venture, and got to a scout who had been wounded within 25 feet of a pillbox. He dressed the scout, then lugged him to safety as Japs sprayed bullets all around him.

In the Sanananda battle Cpl. James V. (Doc) Bay of Seattle, Wash., belied the fact that officers had taken him out of a rifle platoon and transferred him to the Medics because he was over 40. He waded through swamps day and night to patch up and rescue infantrymen who were so far into Jap positions they had been given up for dead.

"I may have been only a janitor in a Seattle hospital," he said when fellow infantrymen shook hands with him after the battle, "but by gum I've showed 'em here why I want to be called Doc, even if I ain't got an MD degree."

Unarmed and constantly exposed to fire, company aid men have been wounded and killed in action. Windle considers himself luckiest of them all; a Jap bullet ripped clear through his aid pouch without touching him.

Every company aid man with whom I talked at the front stressed that his job is only to apply temporary dressings and keep advancing with his outfit. Battalion aid men—litter bearers—take the men back to portable hospitals afterward.

"Listen," a battle-hardened infantryman told me, "put in your story that any of us front-line guys will smack anybody in the face if he ever calls the Medics 'pillrollers'. Most of them have a helluva lot more guts than we've got."

Maybe that's why Windle, Hackney, Frunsek, Bay and the rest of them are the most popular men in their companies these days.

YANK

OldMagazineArticles.com