



HEADQUARTERS HAPPENINGS

HQ 77th USARCOM

Ft. Totten, N.Y. 11359

Spring/Summer, 1982

To Be Dedicated April, '83

Center to Be Named for Ernie Pyle

The 77th ARCOM USAR Center under construction at Fort Totten will be named in honor of an American civilian.

But this man was not an ordinary man-in-the-street to American fighting men of World War II or members of the 77th Infantry Division. Ernie Pyle, a war correspondent for the Scripps-Howard chain of newspapers, travelled with and wrote about footsoldiers from North Africa to the Orient. The 77th Division, now the 77th ARCOM, has held special memories of him because he died during their struggle to take the small Pacific island of Ie Shima.

MG William F. Ward submitted a request to FORSCOM in January, citing Pyle's compassionate portrayal of soldiers in his columns and his willingness to endure hardships to follow them from battle to battle. "Ernie Pyle spoke for all the fighting men of World War II," Ward said. "American soldiers on every front loved 'The Little Guy.'"

First Taste of War

Born in Indiana in 1900, Pyle's newspaper columns before the war concentrated on ordinary people: farmers, friends and people just doing everyday jobs. During the winter of 1940-41, he visited England during the height of the German bombing raids. This taste of war made writing about peacetime pursuits seem trivial to him. Although he hated



Ernie Pyle

war, he was willing to accompany troops at the Allied invasion of North Africa in 1942 to write about "the tiny percentage of our vast Army who are actually up there doing the dying."

Combat Celebrity

Two of his books, *Here is Your War* (1943) and *Brave Men* (1944) became wartime best sellers in America. To families back home, his columns from the front were like letters from sons and husbands. Pyle found himself a celebrity and the subject of a movie, *The Story of GI Joe*, which went into production in 1944 with Burgess Meredith portraying him.

Tragedy on Ie Shima

Toward the end of the war, Pyle visited Pacific campaigns with the Marine Corps and the Army. During the spring of 1945, he joined the men of the 77th Infantry Division at Ie Shima, a

small island west of Okinawa. On April 18, as he accompanied Lt. Col. Joseph Coolidge, commander of the 305th Regiment, their jeep was attacked by a Japanese sniper using a machine gun. The men jumped into a ditch. Pyle was shot in the head and died instantly as he looked up to see if anyone had been hurt.

A Lasting Tribute

The soldiers of the 77th Division erected a painted wooden sign on the spot where he died, and later replaced it with a permanent marked emblazoned with the "Liberty Patch." Although he was buried on Ie Shima, his body was later transferred to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific near Honolulu.

On April 18, on the 37th anniversary of his death, the press was notified that Fort Totten's new Center would bear Pyle's name. Newspapers from Las Vegas to Wyoming to Arkansas have spread the word, and MG Ward's office has received enthusiastic letters from people who knew and loved the 110-pound "infantryman's buddy."

The \$12 million USAR center will be completed next spring. MG Ward is planning for the dedication ceremony to be held on April 18, the next anniversary of Pyle's death. The Center will house books by and about Pyle, as well as memorabilia collected from around the country.

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A Fine "Mess" For Lunch

Luncheon for 77th ARCOM headquarters personnel was 'al fresco' April 24-25. Under the direction of 301st Support Group's MAJ Henry C. Seekamp and WO1 John Smith, food service personnel from major subordinate commands set up mess tents on the Fort Totten parade ground. The Army's new Class "B" rations in the form of spaghetti and ham dinners were served. "Our aim was to provide noon meals in a non-tactical field environment for 300 to 500 troops," MAJ Seekamp explained. This was the first such large-scale "field mess" conducted by the 77th ARCOM. "It proceeded even better than we anticipated," he added. "We hope to do it again in the future."



Members of the 220th Transportation Co. and 8th Medical Brigade assemble a mess tent on the parade ground.

Reserve Center

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Soldiers' Friend

Shortly after Pyle's death, cartoonist Bill Mauldin said, "The only difference between Er-

nie's death and the death of any other good guy is that the other guy is mourned by his company. Ernie is mourned by the Army." In President Truman's words, "He deserves the gratitude of all

his countrymen." The new USAR Center at Fort Totten will be a lasting tribute to this little man who made such a big impact on the hearts of American soldiers everywhere.



As of May 1, the new Reserve Center was more than 60% complete.