

HISTORY OF CAMP MURPHY

Primum militiae vinculum est religio et signorum amor.

Seneca

Epistulae ad Luciliuin

The name of Camp Murphy links devotion and heroism of the past with current history as it is being written in the achievements of officers and men who have received training here. Colonel William H. Murphy, soldier and scientist, was killed in action not long after the outrage at Pearl Harbor. Of this gentleman, and of the Service to which he contributed so much, the noted author Damon Runyon wrote:

"One of the first men killed at Bataan was a Lieutenant Colonel of the Signal Corps. I believe that until the fall of Bataan he was the highest commissioned officer killed in action in the American Army in World War II. This calls to my mind the fact that in all our wars since '61, the men of the Signal Corps have left a record of imperishable glory. It is one of the most hazardous of all branches of the Service, yet little exploited or glamorized. For 80 years the red and white banner of the Signal Corps has moved with the vanguard of our fighting columns."

Those who built Camp Murphy have been mindful of the privilege and responsibility of inheriting this tradition. Colonel Hugh Mitchell, the camp's first commander and School Commandant, friend and former superior of the heroic Lieutenant Colonel Murphy, now is serving in the South Sea Islands with General MacArthur. During three years of service in the Philippines from 1932 to 1934, inclusive, the present Commandant and Post Commander, Colonel James W. Green, Jr., installed some of the radio equipment that was used in Bataan and Corregidor in the days of its heroic resistance to the Japanese in 1942.

It was Colonel Green, then a Major, who selected the site of the present Camp Murphy. As chairman of a board of officers he was appointed to this task in December, 1941, by the Adjutant General. He picked a tract of land south of Hobe Sound and about 20 miles north of Palm Beach. The ground renders itself admirably for the purpose, since the school is built along camouflaged lines, and natural camouflage in the form of vegetation makes the center of post and school activities practically invisible from both the air and the ground. Great care was taken in clearing the jungle on the fringe of the Everglades upon which the camp rests in order that none of the dense, semi-tropical growth of cabbage palmetto, swamp maple, Australian pine, palm, live oak, cactus, mangrove or other shrubbery was removed unnecessarily. All buildings were painted a dull green to blend with the surrounding landscape. Instead of making a large clearing and arranging buildings along company streets, as in most army camps, Camp Murphy is laid

out in an irregular pattern over nine miles, with streets and buildings facing in every direction. Captain William W. Sullivan and Mr. A. McSpadden of the Corps of Engineers collaborated with Major Green and the construction was done in such a manner that the natural protection offered by the surrounding foliage and terrain was utilized to the utmost.

On February 4, 1942, a letter from the Adjutant General to the Corps of Engineers authorized the construction and necessary expenditures and approved the site which had been selected at Hobe Sound. On February 15, Captain John A. Ord, Signal Corps (now Lieutenant Colonel), arrived at West Palm Beach, Florida, from Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, as a representative of the Signal Corps, and very shortly thereafter Colonel A. G. Viney, District Engineer, and Mr. A. McSpadden, Area Engineer (now Major McSpadden), and Captain Ord visited the proposed camp area and selected the actual site. Colonel Viney, Colonel Mitchell and Lieutenant Colonel Green met in Washington, D. C., and approved this layout.

In the early part of March, 1942, the 801st Signal Regiment, under the temporary command of Captain John A. Ord, was activated, with the exception of Companies A and B, which were held at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. On March 13, 1942, the ground was broken for what is now one of the most important Signal Corps installations in the United States Army. Meanwhile, the organization of the school and camp had to be initiated and on March 23 the leases of warehouses at the Merchants and Miners Pier in Riviera, Florida, were approved for a period of four months. From this site sprang the actual beginning of Camp Murphy. Colonel Hugh Mitchell was relieved from duty in the office of the Chief Signal Officer on March 27, 1942, and assigned to the post of Commandant of the Signal Corps School, Hobe Sound, Florida.

Then, on April 1, 1942, Headquarters and Headquarters Company was activated at Riviera and the first morning report for that date showed two officers and 14 enlisted men as the nucleus for the school. On April 4, First Lieutenant Tommy E. King (now Major) was assigned as Post Signal Property Officer and much credit goes to him for the fine work in organizing the equipment and supplies that were necessary for the proper maintenance of the camp. The following week First Lieutenant Albert A. Smith (now Captain) took over command of Headquarters and Headquarters Company administration.

From this point on, through the month of April, various

other officers and men came to Camp Murphy. Colonel Albert Brooks Cox, Signal Corps, became Commanding Officer of the 801st Signal Training Regiment and immediately following him, came Lieutenant Colonel Arthur W. Wehr, who took over the post of Executive Officer of Camp Murphy. Shortly thereafter the first school equipment began to arrive. On April 25, Lieutenant General B. H. Somervell, Chief of the Services of Supply, Major General Dawson Olmstead, Chief Signal Officer, and Brigadier General Clarence R. Huebner, General Staff Corps, inspected the site at Riviera and also that at Camp Murphy.

Major Earl S. Montgomery (now Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery) assumed the duties of Camp Quartermaster late in April, and on May 6, 1942, our present Commandant, Lieutenant Colonel James W. Green, Jr., reported for duty and was assigned Assistant Commandant, Aircraft Warning School.

On May 19, 1942, the first court martial was appointed at Camp Murphy, and on the same date the Officers Signal Corps Replacement Pool was formed. In the first week of June the Corps of Military Police was activated and Company D of the SO 1st Signal Service Regiment moved to Camp Murphy and relieved the guard of Headquarters and Headquarters Company. Also, a medical detachment of 77 men arrived from Camp Blanding and Company B arrived from Fort Monmouth.

Then, on June 6, temporary headquarters at Riviera were disbanded and Camp Murphy at last was truly occupied. On June 9, 1942, the following officers met for the purpose of organizing an Officers Mess:

Colonel Hugh Mitchell, President; Lieutenant Colonel James W. Green, Jr., First Vice-President; Captain J. B. Guinness, Second Vice-President; Captain Alan M. Gump, Secretary-Treasurer; Board of Governors - Chairman:

Colonel A. B. Cox; Members: Captain John A. Ord, Captain J. V. Reed, First Lieutenant L. Tosch, Second Lieutenant R. G. Tindall.

At about the same time, Captain J. V. Reed, Special Services Officer, announced that the officers at the camp would have the privilege of using the elaborate and spacious facilities offered by the Jupiter Island Club.

Captain Reed also announced the opening of the Camp Theatre, and on July 5, 1942, dedication exercises were held at the theatre, with many notable members of the Signal Corps present for the occasion.

At these dedicatory exercises Brigadier General C. M. Milliken, Director of Field Service, Office of the Chief Signal Officer, and Colonel David Sarnoff, President of the Radio Corporation of America and Chairman of the board of the National Broadcasting Company, were among the speakers. General Milliken presented diplomas to the 50 men who comprised the first graduating class. Colonel A. G. Viney, Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, presented the key to Camp Murphy to Colonel Mitchell. Colonel A. B. Cox was presiding officer. The first portion of this program was carried over a Florida state network, while General Milliken, Colonel Mitchell

and Colonel Sarnoff were heard over the world-wide hookup which carried the Army Hour.

From here on the credit for the actual construction and planning of the camp must go to our Post Engineers, under the supervision of Major O. M. Lanham. To Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery, Quartermaster goes the credit for a masterful job of supplying not only the wants of Camp Murphy but those of other camps in the immediate vicinity.

On August 1, 1942, Major William T. Hammond (now Lieutenant Colonel) of the Adjutant General's Department, reported and was assigned to duty as Camp Adjutant. On August 9, 1942, there was a reception given by the officers of Camp Murphy at Jupiter Island in observance of Colonel Mitchell's birthday.

In succeeding months, buildings took shape and roads were constructed and the work of the Signal Corps School went on as if the camp had been in operation for years.

In October, 1942, Colonel L. S. S. Berry assumed command of the Post, but actual command of the School remained under Colonel Mitchell. This split in command was in accordance with a directive of 25 September 1942 from the Adjutant General by which the Station Complement of Camp Murphy was transferred from the Chief Signal Officer to the Commanding General, Fourth Service Command, by order of the Secretary of War.

Colonel Green was designated Commandant of the School in May, upon Colonel Mitchell's assignment to the Southwest Pacific to serve with General MacArthur.

In accordance with ASF Circular 2S, dated 12 May 1943, Camp Murphy became a Class IV installation under jurisdiction of the Chief Signal Officer. The command was again united, with Colonel Green as School Commandant, now assuming command of the Post, relieving Colonel Berry, who was named Commander of the Third WAC Training Center at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

That Camp Murphy was destined to play a vital role in the war plans of the United States by training radio technicians for important tasks, is noted in the official War Department release announcing the formal opening on Sunday, 5 July 1942, of Camp Murphy, the new Signal Corps Center to be devoted exclusively to such training.

Referring to the course of training at Camp Murphy, the War Department release says in conclusion: "The course of training is designed so that each man may reach a level of skill measured by his own skill and effort. A large proportion of the men in these units will rate as technicians and non-commissioned officers."

Our story thus far has been the history of Camp Murphy's beginning. Its future is in the hands of its sons, the thousands upon thousands of intrepid Signal Corps men who are carrying its training and traditions with them to the far corners of the earth wherever the war is being fought. When the war has been won, and only then, will the full history of Camp Murphy and its glorious achievements be written.