

Y. F. Signal Corps

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WHY YOU ARE HERE

[A Message for the
Signal Corps Soldier]



Eastern Signal Corps Schools
United States Army
Fort Monmouth, N. J.
1943

WHY YOU ARE HERE



The American people pride themselves upon their initiative and resourcefulness. They expect those normal qualities of the American citizen in our American citizen army. But no man can be expected to show initiative and resourcefulness unless he understands what he is doing and why he is doing it. You are an American soldier and, I believe, an above average soldier. You must understand what you are about to do and why you do it, if you are to make a good job of it. We know that you will try, but your efforts will be much more successful if you see the why's and wherefore's.

You have entered the Signal Corps School. This is one of the older schools of the United States Army. It has an enviable record. Many officers from other armies have come here to study our methods. You will be in this school anywhere from three to eight months, depending upon the course in which you are enrolled. What you do in this time will determine later on how much you contribute to winning the war. If you do a good job, you will graduate, able to save your own life if you have to, and able to assist in saving the lives of many by giving the Army good signal communication. Let us see what you are going to do while at school and why you are going to do it.

When you were transferred here you were promoted. You were paid in advance for the work you were about to do. This is like a scholarship in a college or university. You get the money so long as your marks and work are good. If your work does not hold up and you can't complete the course successfully, you will lose your scholarship. That is, you will be reduced to the grade of private. There is no stigma attached to this reduction. It is just as much an administrative reduction as your promotion upon coming here was administrative. What we are after is successful graduates and everyone in the School will be happy if you complete your work successfully and hold the grade or rating you now have.

The biggest part of your job is to learn the specialty to which you are assigned. That may be cable splicer, radio repairman, radio operator, wire chief, or any one of a dozen more specialties. To learn your job, you will go to school six hours a day. In most of the courses, that is not enough time to learn your work, unless you are already experienced or unless you are exceptionally quick. To offer you an opportunity for additional study, each company sets aside a period of an hour and a half for you, when you may study if you wish. No one will compel you to unless you are getting behind in your work. You will know, yourself,

whether you need this time for study or whether you can go off to the PX instead. Signal Corps men must do their jobs many a time without much supervision. They learn to stay on the job until they "get the message through." Using this time to study if you need it is a beginning of that training to stick to your job until it's done, regardless of whether you are watched or not.

No matter how good you might be at your specialty, you wouldn't be much good to the Army if you ended your school work with your muscles soft. All school work may be fine for a bookworm, but it doesn't make a soldier of the kind it takes to beat Japs and Heinies. They are tough and we must be too. In the field officers and soldiers often have to work twice around the clock without rest. You must be fit to do that. So to keep you in physical trim and to even improve your condition, there is physical and military training—two and a half hours a day of it. You will come out of this course feeling better and tougher than you have ever felt in your life.

That two and a half hours a day could be spent foolishly, in just going through the motions. But it won't be spent that way. Everything you do in those periods has a purpose. For example, there are times when a Signal Corps soldier must defend himself. I saw regular army Signal Corps men with pistols at their sides captured in a maneuver by a few halted tanks. *It didn't occur to those soldiers to fight back and that a halted tank is fair game for armed men on foot.* That must never happen to you. You aren't being taught to fight with any idea that you will replace the infantry, but so that you will have confidence in yourself and in your weapon . . . so you won't give up if a Jap sets off a fire cracker near you. It's a hundred to one that you may never need this training, but the hundredth man is dead meat if he hasn't had this training or hasn't profited by it.

To harden you physically, there are calisthenics, runs through the obstacle courses, and hikes. Like your school work, you'll get out of these what you put into them. If you make an honest try every time on the obstacle course, you will find it getting easier day by day and you will be proud of yourself. It is excellent training for work as a second storyman if nothing else. The hikes can be fun when you are singing. They won't be so much fun when you are wearing a gas mask. But you'd better get used to that gas mask. In battle when your life is at stake is a poor time to start learning all about it.

You must learn about taking care of yourself in the field. Many things that the untrained man does in the field can end his life just as neatly as an enemy bullet. You must know how to keep yourself clean and to tidy up your camp, or disease will lay you by the heels just as surely as it has always done in the past. In every war of history more men died of disease than died in battle. We aim to do a lot better this time—we are doing better. You can keep yourself from becoming a needless casualty to disease if you learn now the simple rules of field soldiering.

There are some parades and close order drill. These develop in men a solidarity of feeling, an ability to act promptly together. Your basic training lasted only a month. It isn't something to be done and forgotten. These brief drills help to keep alive the snap and precision that a good soldier needs. They help to inculcate in everyone the spirit of loyal, unquestioning obedience. That is very necessary for there are many times when we must obey blindly, promptly, and without questioning.

The military courtesy that you had in your basic training is also kept alive by short periods of instruction. Think for a moment about the time when you fail to salute an officer. Why does he correct you? Because he wants to be saluted? Not likely—for he has to do a lot more saluting than you do. Indeed, it takes his time to stop and correct you. It is a great temptation to every officer just to ignore the fact that one of you has failed to salute him. But the fact that you didn't salute shows that you weren't wide awake, alert. If you can't learn to keep your head up and your eyes open now, you'll be the one who kicks off the trip wire of a booby trap.

All of these things are equally important in your training. If you put your heart into this school training, you will emerge a fine Signal Corps soldier. And a soldier of the Signal Corps has every right to feel proud of himself. The generals, the colonels, all the officers depend upon the Signal Corps to "get the message through." If we fall down, the general can't command his division. We are always working directly for the top people; without us there would be no issuing orders because no one would ever get them. We have a big responsibility and to do our jobs we have to be good. Don't waste your time while you are here. The American Army is depending on the Signal Corps to deliver the goods. You are an important part of the Signal Corps. Don't fall down on the job. Be proud that you have a tough job to do and be proud that you are man enough to do it.

W. O. REEDER,
Brigadier General, U. S. Army,
Commandant.

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