

The Amazing Bottcher

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San Franciscan 'Smelled Japs,' Mortarmen Say

By GEORGE WELLER

Special Radio

SOMEWHERE IN NEW GUINEA, March 15—The most remarkable officer the (American) Midwestern troops who took Buna had was Noncommissioned Sergeant Herman Bottcher of San Francisco, according to several expert mortarmen now resting in more comfortable quarters than their erstwhile swamp homes.

German-born Bottcher, who fought for democracy first in the Spanish civil war, used to walk among his men helmetless and, before an attack, encourage them by saying, "All it takes is a little guts, boys," mortarmen in a rest camp told your correspondent today.

Among those who, using aircraft maps, breached the Jap lines were Captain Omar Crocker of Madison, Wis., and Lieutenant Herbert Ewing of Cairo, Ill. Their advance observer was frequently Robert Luebke of Baraboo, Wis.

"We used often to be attacked by Japs at night after we had shelled them by day," Crocker told your correspondent a couple of days ago as we lay together under the palms beside a lonely beach.

"But Bottcher had a way of smelling where the Japs were and would describe accurately where we should fire and then say:

"Better drop a few in there."

"We would and night counter-attacks began to diminish."

Bottcher, who, thanks to being commissioned overnight by Lieutenant General Robert F. Eichelberg, became a Captain, is recovering from a wound in an Australian hospital.

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HERMAN BOTTCHER
"Sgt. York of the Pacific"

Captain Bottcher— A Boy From San Francisco

Captain Herman Bottcher is a San Francisco boy who was born in Germany, and came to the United States via Australia. His military career began when he joined the International Brigade in the Spanish civil war as a private and came out a captain. After that war he returned to San Francisco, worked at the Emporium as a cabinet maker and went to San Francisco State College, where he made a brilliant record. The day after the Japs attacked Pearl Harbor he enlisted, has seen action in the Southwest Pacific and in North Africa and has received the Distinguished Service Cross.