

# 'Legendary' Bottcher Died a Hero

German-born Captain Herman Bottcher is a dead American hero.

During the years he fought for the land of his adoption, he became a legend in the South Pacific and a symbol of the best in American fighting manhood.

He has been called "The Fighting Fool from San Francisco" and the "One-man Army of Buna."

Captain Bottcher was killed last New Year's Eve by Japanese mortar fire on Leyte as he led his small reconnaissance force in operations far behind enemy lines.

The story of his death was told last week by a man who fought under him on his last mission—Technician Fourth Grade David Bindman, USA.

"We had been out on our own behind the Jap lines for 48 days and were just about to rejoin the division when it happened," Bindman related.

"It was one of those tricks of fate. We were on a ridge about a mile from where part of the outfit was. All during the patrol, we had been running into Japs. We had killed 75 and sent in 12 prisoners, including a captain."

That day as they were making their way back to their lines they were surrounded by a superior force of Japanese.

Bindman continued, "Captain Bottcher went to the men on the firing line to tell them we were going to pull out. Just as he got there, a mortar shell bounced right under him and exploded.

"When we got to him, he said, 'tie a tourniquet on me. They blew my leg off.'

"He was calm. He even asked us to leave him so we could get out faster. Not a one of us would have stood for that. He's the kind of soldier you'd die for."

Four hours later, Captain Bottcher died of his wounds.

His decorations include the Silver Star, Distinguished Service Cross with one Oak Leaf Cluster and the Purple Heart with two clusters.