

HE HAD 12 MEN--AND THE JAPS ATTACKED IN FO Fighting Fool From S. F. Shows Japs

By E. R. NODERER

WITH AMERICAN TROOPS ON THE BUNA FRONT, Dec. 9 (Delayed)—A full-bearded San Francisco whirlwind with a wild look in his eye—Sergeant Herman Bottcher by name—has been causing the Japs more trouble on the Buna front than they thought they were going to have all together when they started this war a year ago.

Called "a fighting fool" by his commanding officer, Bottcher learned how to make war with the International Brigade in Spain, where he rose from private to Captain during the Spanish civil war.

In Saturday's attack on Buna village, the heaviest that has been made so far, he took a handful of men and fought his way against heavy machine gun fire through the jungle to the beach between the village and Buna Mission, reaching a point which has been the Allied objective for some days.

How Herman Bottcher Learned to Fight

Herman Bottcher is a German boy and a San Francisco boy.

His father was killed fighting for Kaiser Wilhelm in World War I.

Bottcher was born in Landsberg, Germany, near Berlin, in 1909. He spent a couple of years in Australia while awaiting an opportunity to enter the United States, which came in 1931.

He came out of the Spanish civil war a Loyalist Captain, after

enlisting as a private in the International Brigade, leaving from San Francisco. He returned to San Francisco after that war.

Here, he had worked at The Emporium as a cabinet maker and had gone to San Francisco State College, where he made a brilliant record.

On December 7, 1941, the Japs attacked Pearl Harbor.

On December 8, 1941, Herman

Bottcher enlisted to fight America's enemies. How well, is told in this story, exclusive to The Chronicle.

He has only three relatives in the world. They are Mrs. Alice Bottcher, 239 Ramsell street, the widow of his uncle; Evelyn, his cousin, who is 11 years old; and AMERICA which in 10 short years inspired him to become a "Fighting Fool."

At 5 o'clock Sunday morning, the Japs launched a counter-attack along the beach from both directions, one force coming from Buna village and the other from Buna Mission.

Coolly directing the fire of his 12 men, Bottcher stopped both attacks cold, and when the noise and the tumult died down, the beach was littered with the bodies

of 40 Japs. It was estimated that the enemy dragged at least 30 more dead away with him as he retreated.

The numerically superior enemy retired in confusion.

Bottcher was wounded in the hand, but after receiving first aid, he returned to the fray. As night fell, he still held the beach head—important to the Ameri-

cans because it prevented the Japs from shifting reinforcements back and forth between Buna village and Buna Mission, their two strong points on the Buna front, separated by 500 yards of beach.

During the day, the sergeant's marksmen picked off six Japs from the ridge on the Mission side of his front.

RCE FROM TWO DIRECTIONS How to Hold a Beach-head

Sunday night, Bottcher decided to do something about a machine gun nest on the edge of the village, which had been causing his small force some trouble.

Stuffing his pockets with hand grenades, he wriggled silently through the jungle on his belly, found the gun position, and with a few well placed grenades, put it out of business.

Saturday afternoon, when the air was full of singing bullets which were clipping the limbs off trees and plunking into the mud, the bearded Bottcher stalked into our advanced observation post. There he filled a captured Jap water bucket, grabbed some first aid supplies, and shoved off to lead his men to the beach.

It might be well to note that there was more rank in the firing line in Saturday's attack on Buna than I ever saw or heard of in three years of covering this war. As Bottcher was filling his water bucket, one General 10 feet away was firing a Tommy

gun at a sniper in a tree, and another was standing in an exposed position showing a mortar crew where to place its bombs.

A little later, a Captain, due to great personal bravery, was wounded when he interposed his body between one of the Generals and the Japs. Several times I noticed the Captain unhesitatingly move into a position where he could protect his superior who repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire.

A Colonel who knocked two Jap snipers out of trees with a Tommy gun has a welt on the side of his neck where a Jap bullet creased him. Three other Colonels who fought in the front line with their soldiers escaped injury.

The Captain and Bottcher are in line for decorations. Bottcher, who technically lost his citizenship when he enlisted with the Spanish forces, will be granted a commission just as soon as Army

red tape permits, his superiors say.

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(Second dispatch)

By E. R. NODERER

WITH AMERICAN TROOPS IN PAPUA, Dec. 9 (Delayed)—Sergeant Herman Bottcher, that fighting man from San Francisco, did it again.

Last night the Japs began throwing mortar bombs into the small beach head area which Bottcher and the remnants of his platoon hold just outside of Buna village.

Sending up a flare, Bottcher looked toward the village and beheld a force of Jap soldiers attempting to sneak up on him. Looking the other way, up the beach toward Buna mission, he saw another enemy detachment coming from that direction.

The Sergeant wasted no more time. Opening up with machine guns, he put both forces to flight, and when dawn broke he picked up two Jap machine guns and counted seven bodies which the enemy hadn't carried away.



SERGEANT BOTTCHER
The enemy retired

Now Bottcher's men have three Jap machine guns, having captured one several nights ago.

This is the second two-way attack on their beach head which this group of a dozen men have repulsed since they cut through to the sea in Saturday's attack.

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