

AS WE SEE IT . . .



NEVER a month has passed in eight years of this magazine's publication, that we have not reported some kind of public service by some National Guard unit, somewhere in the United States. Some months, it's been succor to people isolated by blizzard; some months, floods, or tornadoes, forest fires, or earthquakes; in quiet months, it may have been only flying an iron lung to a polio sufferer, or a search for a lost tot.

BUT THE SIGNIFICANT THING ALWAYS HAS BEEN THAT DOWN AT COMMUNITY LEVEL, THE NATIONAL GUARD HAS BEEN THE ONE AND ONLY WELL-ORGANIZED, DISCIPLINED MILITARY FORCE, QUICKLY AVAILABLE TO PERFORM VIRTUALLY ANY KIND OF EMERGENCY SERVICE WHEN HELP HAS BEEN NEEDED BADLY.

It catches us by surprise to discover that we are so accustomed to telling this story, month after month, that we have come to regard it almost as routine—a matter of no great public significance.

And it is refreshing to be jolted into a renewed realization of what a tremendous job this National Guard of ours has been doing year after year, and is doing today. The jolt has come in the form of the almost incredible story of service performed in the horribly devastating August floods in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania.

Scattered through the newspaper stories and the radio reports have been accounts of National Guard performance; Guardsmen in action have been glimpsed in television and newsreel shots of raging waters, twisted wreckage. Elsewhere in this issue, we spotlight some high points of the National Guard's service.

But we have to dig deep to find what is the *real* significance of this performance. It is that the Guard more forcibly than ever has demonstrated its unique qualification to serve *both* as a military force and as a disaster relief agency; that the two roles are complementary rather than contradictory; that it is ridiculous to propose a new Civil Defense or Home Guard concept of organization, equipment and training of the Guard in place of the time-honored emphasis on combat training.

That is a point which many Pentagon pundits seem unable to comprehend. So, it is all the more refreshing that one of the first to spot the relationship between purely military training, and disaster relief service, was Pennsylvania's Adj Gen A J Drexel Biddle, Jr, himself only a few months removed from the Pentagon. His troops were pulled away from field training to serve in the ravaged Stroudsburg area but they went

right ahead with the kind of duties they would have been performing at camp: staffs handled administration, maintenance, supply and transportation of the troops; Engineers built roads and bridges; MPs handled traffic control and security; Infantrymen conducted patrols, selected Command Posts, and performed guard duty; Transportation Truck outfits hauled troops, supplies, equipment and rations.

"The fine spirit of dedication, as well as the efficiency which has marked their performance of duty, reflects handsomely upon the unit training under the National Guard system," commented General Biddle. "Under this unit training system, the men know their officers, noncommissioned officers and their equipment. This makes for swift, intelligent action, both in peacetime disasters and wartime emergency."

What the Guard meant to ravaged Connecticut was told by Governor Abraham Ribicoff in a letter to Adj Gen Frederick G Reincke: it was, he said, "a beacon of strength and hope during one of the darkest hours in Connecticut history."

"These modern day Minute Men were called from their homes during the middle of the night," he wrote. "Many of them had to leave their families, who lived in the flood areas. Their acts of heroism, of sacrifice, and of gruelling duty were many. They saved lives, they helped bring in food and medical supplies, they brought order out of chaos. They were a crutch on which a crippled Connecticut learned."

Discount those glowing tributes somewhat, on the grounds that they came from people who were intimately involved? Well, let's see what was said by one "outsider," Major George Fielding Eliot. This famed writer has been around for a long time; he's seen decades of service, and all kinds of troops. He came back from a trip into ravaged Connecticut to write in *Army Times*, in part: "As for the National Guard, they behaved as we've learned to expect our citizen soldiers to behave. The ribbons and service stripes on the uniforms were the mark of veterans; one was reminded again that this is a wasting asset, that unless these veterans are used to train others and keep constantly renewing their legacy of fitness by passing it on to successive generations of recruits, one day—in disaster or in war—we shall again find ourselves unready."

The National Guard has proved itself as a military force in one war after another. It has proved itself again in extraordinary disaster relief service. What more do the theorists need to convince them we have a system that beats anything the Fancy Dans of the Pentagon can dream up?

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dear guardsman:

Rounding-out her half-anniversary with the Circulation Dept of THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN is attractive, energetic Mrs Beatrice Zienkosky. Wife of a Marine



Corps electronics technician at the Quantico, Va, Base, Bea came to the staff 1 April via Decatur, Ill, where she had been working as a cosmetics demonstrator.

Until she met her husband in Decatur (and she's only been married since past New Year's) Bea, Hoosier-born and educated at the Richmond, Ind, High School, had hopes of some day becoming a cosmetician.

A proficient address stencil cutter for the magazine, Mrs Zienkosky and her husband spend as much of their spare time as possible in attending sports events. And both are enthusiastic baseball, football, and basketball fans.

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Judith Dunkle	Inside Back Cover

our cover

Pennsylvania National Guardsmen, forced to detour 25 miles on their way to help at flood-ravaged Stroudsburg and East Stroudsburg, pick their way across what was a railroad line to enter the area. Huge rocks in foreground were dashed through rail trestle by torrential waters of normally quiet Broadhead Creek. (Wide World Photos, Inc.)