

THE STORY OF DEATH VALLEY

Trapped in the mountains round the Chosin reservoir, 20,000 British and American troops are located in isolated pockets by scouting aircraft. Below is Hagaru where 6,000 Marines are without supplies. Destroying all behind them they prepare to fight through to Koteri, 10 miles away, with 50,000 Reds lining the route. At Koteri 5,000 Marines are in camp under enemy fire, battle-worn and short of supplies. During the days they've hacked out a landing strip, exhausted though they are. They're hungry, too, and thirsty enough to eat snow. By night they fight off Chinese attacks, as the enemy raids from the mountains. Koteri must be held. It's the rallying point for the break-out. From Japan MacArthur turns on the whole air-arm to fly in supplies and fly out the wounded. Only by air can supplies reach the trapped 20,000.

Back at Hagaru mortar batteries shell the enemy to hold a small airstrip newly hacked out to fly out wounded.

And on the radioed c.k. the first Marine plane flies in, and behind it follows a giant flying boxcar with supplies. Food and ammunition! Now the Marines can hold on at Panicky Pocket till the 1,500 wounded are all flown out. That makes the break-out easier. The Marines always bring out their wounded and dead, even if they have to carry them all the way.

To and from the tiny strip within range of enemy guns the little planes shuttle, their runway just a short length of road. Sometimes it's too short and there's near tragedy.

At Koteri, Dakotas can now land with supplies and fly out wounded. 7,000 casualties the Marines suffered in the break-out. Frost-bitten faces and limbs there were in plenty in the sub-zero weather. Nights spent silent and watchful in the snow took as big a toll as enemy fire.

Now there's warmth and food and life looks different. Just so little it takes to make men cheerful. Ahead there is a hard, bitter fight to safety, but now, relaxed, they can sleep. It's strangely quiet here, only the wail of the icy wind, nothing to disturb them but our cameraman.

Now they line up their 300 Chinese prisoners. The great march begins soon. The men from Hagaru are on their way. But they're held up by a river and C-199s fly in with parts of a 10-ton footbridge. It's a tricky drop, with the Marines confined to a narrow road-strip and the hills full of Chinese.

The Hagaru column is through. So we tell the story of the 6,000. No cameraman was allowed to make the march with them. We could only welcome them to Kotori - and another long, fighting march on the morrow. Among them are men of the 41st Royal Marine Commando, for whom the Americans have no praise high enough.

A blizzard sweeps Kotori, against which man can barely stand, as the Marines, now united, line up for the last break-through. A bare night's rest behind them, and Death Valley ahead between them and safety. There'll be no air cover today as the narrow road winds through the hills. Every few hundred yards they'll have to de-bus, fan out and drive the enemy from danger spots. They're not much to look at, these men from the Chosin trap: not much like America's crack fighters and our own Royals. They're almost out on their feet. But the spirit is there. The spirit of the undefeated that makes "man" God's greatest creation; the fire within that burns brightest when man stands alone on his courage and falls only in death.