

Caissons in Zambales

By Ben Revilla

THE OFFICIAL march song for the U. S. Army will be easily recognized by any G.I. as the old Field Artillery number, "As the Caissons Go Rolling Along." What few will remember, however, is that the original was written by an artillery lieutenant in the Philippines, in 1908—the late Brig. Gen. Edmund L. "Snitz" Gruber.

He was known as "Snitzer, the Flying Dutchman" at West Point simply because he was the son of a German immigrant. The nickname was far from being derogatory; no man could have been loved more than this young violinist who wrote all the music for the undergraduate shows.

When the First Battalion of the Fifth Field Artillery arrived in the Philippines in 1908, regimental officers felt they needed a marching song to hold

the men together. The order came down to Gruber.

While he searched for a catchy title, he recalled a difficult march across the Zambales mountains. He had been sent ahead with a scout sergeant to a high peak from which to view the terrain and the battalion's movements. The countryside for miles was rolling and green. "Listening closely," he said, "we heard the distant rumble of the carriages, punctuated by shouts and commands echoing up the valleys as the men urged their teams along. The sergeant said, 'They'll be all right, Lieutenant, if they keep 'em rolling. 'Later I again heard a chief of section call out to his drivers, 'Come on, keep 'em rolling.'"

There was the expression that characterized the battalion's determination to push on in spite of obstacles. "At a des-

pedida given at Stotsenburg before our battalion sailed home, we sang the Field Artillery song for the first time. I had no idea it would become popular."

AFTER Gruber failed to copy-right his song, he was amazed to hear it played often but attributed to John Philip Sousa. Nevertheless, the man who had learned so much about hospitality campaigning among the Filipinos refused to quarrel over the credit due him. He was pleased that his song gave courage to American troops during World War I and asked no more.

He continued his duties as staff officer (eventually a

camp in Texas was named after him): in 1933 he conducted one of the first experiments in transporting artillery by air. And he went on entertaining his growing children at home "concerts." When he was asked to compete for a \$1000 prize in an Air Force song contest, he declined, saying, "Soldiers' songs grow up where soldiers gather. When that song comes, it will be written by a young flier who's got the feel of flying in his bones."

It took a bill by Congress to compensate Gruber's widow for her husband's contributions, after his death in 1941 while commanding Fort Leavenworth in Kansas.

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Bottled Light

Latest hillbilly story concerns the poor fellow who had to spend a night in Little Rock and saw an electric light for the first time in his life. Returned to his mountain shack, he sank into his favorite chair and told his wife, "Don't know how them city folk catch any sleep. There was a big light burning in my room right through the night."

"Why didn't you blow it out?" asked the wife.

"Gol dang it — I couldn't," grumbled the hillbilly. "It was in a bottle!"

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