

# Just an Ordinary Soldier



“He was just an ordinary soldier....” So spoke Col. Nicamor Jimenez of a young, unassuming lad in his PEFTOK command in Korea. He had no flair for heroics, and he went about his tasks doing things the “Avenger” way. But when he found himself in a tight situation in the hands of the enemy, he displayed a selfless devotion to duty and an inspiring gallantry that thrilled every fighting heart in the entire United Nations Command.

It was late in the night of May 28, 1953. Private First Class Aquilino B. Agustin quietly sat in his bunker. Before him in the dark Korean night was No Man’s Land and beyond that the territory occupied by the Chinese and North Koreans. He tightened his boots, pulled on his tunic and stood up. He peered towards the

enemy lines as he took a few sips of warm, black coffee. Tonight, he said to himself, we are to go out there. How far into that inky darkness I do not know. We have a mission tonight. That mission was to take some communist prisoners for intelligence purposes.

He walked out of the bunker to rejoin the members of his patrol who would be with him on this night assignment. Together they slipped out into the darkness towards enemy-occupied territory. The patrol quickly lost itself in No Man’s Land. For several minutes it seemed nothing at all would happen. All was still around as the patrol moved stealthily through underbrush and ridges. Then, suddenly there was the enemy before them — a sizeable group of communists also on a nocturnal probing mission. There was no retreating now, or of tak-



*Pfc Aquilino Agustin, on his hospital bed, gets a warm handshake from Brig. Gen. P. D. Ginder of the 45th Division, US Army, after being awarded the Silver Star by the US Government for gallantry in action in Korea.*

ing cover and waiting to pounce upon them. The firefight started and the stillness of the night was broken by the grim staccato of roaring guns from both sides. Surprised and bewildered, the enemy force went down with many killed and wounded. It looks as if it is happy hunting for us tonight, mused Agustin as he held the warm barrel of his rifle close to his breast. Together with others of his patrol, he moved forward to take some of the less seriously wounded Reds.

But as suddenly as the fighting had died down, there appeared on the scene a new, fresh and bigger enemy contingent. Without warning, the new enemy force attacked the patrol and Agustin was separated from his comrades in the ensuing confusion. He found himself surrounded by Reds. He never thought the Korean ridge could be so full of communists. The enemy soldiers lost no time in pouncing upon him and attempted to drag him to their own lines.

Even in the tightest situation in which a soldier could find himself in a war, Agustin's thoughts ran true and clear. He knew that to be taken by the enemy meant certain death, perhaps long and shocking torture before death. He resisted the enemy soldiers who grabbed him from all sides, kicked and boxed them, and when he was able to free one of his hands from their strangle holds he grasped a grenade under his tunic. Before the enemy soldiers could take the grenade from him he pulled its pin and the little bomb exploded with screaming force in the midst of his captors, killing and seriously wounding many of them.

Himself grievously wounded, Agustin crawled painfully and slowly back to his patrol's position. The patrol disengaged with the enemy force and withdrew. And the Korean night was still and dark again . . . .

Pfc Agustin is just an ordinary soldier. But his feat that night was not an ordinary one. The story of his heroism in the hands of the enemy rang across the vales and ridges of the frontlines. In the hospital, a seriously wounded but still smiling Filipino soldier was awarded the Silver Star.

The award, according to his command-

ing officer, Col Nicanor Jimenez, was one of the fastest ever approved in the frontlines of Korea. Its accompanying citation recited the full story of Pfc Agustin's heroic feat, as follows:

#### AWARD OF THE SILVER STAR

By direction of the President, under the provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 9 July 1918 (WD Bul 43, 1918), and pursuant to authority in AR 600-45, and message, Department of the Army, 902633, 5 March 1952, the Silver Star for gallantry in action is awarded to:

Private First Class AQUILINO B AGUSTIN, 511 764, Infantry, Philippine Army. Private AGUSTIN, a member of the Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea, distinguished himself by gallantry in action against the enemy in the vicinity of Satae-ri, Korea. Late on the night of 28 May 1953, a patrol moved quietly from the friendly main line of resistance into enemy-occupied territory, intent upon capturing prisoners. Suddenly, the small band encountered a group of hostile troops. In the fierce firefight which ensued, many casualties were inflicted among the foe and Private AGUSTIN and several of his comrades moved forward to take the less seriously wounded hostile soldiers prisoner. Without warning, a fresh and numerically superior enemy force attacked. Separated from the rest of the patrol in the resultant confusion, Private AGUSTIN was seized by enemy troops who attempted to drag him back to their line. With the full realization that his action meant his almost certain death, Private AGUSTIN, without regard for his safety, twisted his body, grasped a grenade from within his tunic with his free hand, and pulled the pin. The explosion which followed killed or seriously wounded those of the enemy who were holding him. Although grievously injured himself, Private AGUSTIN, dragged himself back to the position held by his comrades who then disengaged the enemy force and withdrew. The selfless devotion to duty and inspiring gallantry displayed by Private AGUSTIN on this occasion reflect great credit on himself, the Philippine Army, and the entire United Nations Command.