

## An Historical Sketch of the Black Soldier in the Signal Corps



The black soldier has a heritage in the Signal Corps that he can be proud of. True, the black soldier has not always been a member of the Signal Corps, particularly in the earlier years of its history. But ever since the black soldier has been a member of the Signal Corps, he has left behind a continuous record of loyalty and service to his country that merits recognition.

The first signal organization and forerunner of the present-day U.S. Army Signal Corps—The Army Signal Department—was established in 1860. Only a few blacks served in the Army at that time, and they served primarily in all-black cavalry units on the Western Frontier. It was not until 1884 that the first black soldier became an official member of the Signal Corps, and it was not until 1918 that the Army fielded its first black signal unit.

### CIVIL WAR ERA

Blacks had previously served as spies in the American Revolution and the War of 1812. In the Civil War, they served behind Confederate lines, reporting troop emplacements, troop movements, and troop activities. Though they were not signalmen and were not a part of the Signal Corps, they provided valuable signal-type services for the Army. The Signal Corps was established as a separate Branch of Service during the Civil War (3 March 1863).

### TELEGRAPH IN THE WEST

Well into the Reconstruction Era following the Civil War and afterwards, black troops in the Regular Army were restricted to four regiments: the 24th and 25th Infantries, and the 9th and 10th Cavalries. Most of these black units served mainly on the Western Frontier between 1870 and 1896, where they fought Indians and outlaws, protected settlers, and built forts and roads.

In addition to other duties, black troopers constructed many miles of telegraph wires across the Western Frontier. For a 10-year period starting in 1871, the 25th Infantry Regiment spent much of its time repairing roads and telegraph lines in Texas. The men of the 10th Cavalry spent much of their time in the same manner working on telegraph line projects in Texas and Arizona.

None of the black troopers working on the telegraph lines were signalmen, but the work they did certainly did qualify as signal-type work. Accordingly to COL John W. Lutsch, current chief of the Plans and Resources Division, U.S. Army Communications Command, Fort Huachuca, AZ, all Army troops west of the Mississippi participated in the construction of telegraph lines during

# We, Too, Serve Proudly

by  
SFC Samuel A. Barnes

this period. This work was undoubtedly done under the direction of the Chief Signal Officer and under the auspices of the Signal Corps. Myer's "wigwag" flag signaling system was in use on the Western Frontier at the time, but there is no evidence it was used by these black outfits. \*

### FIRST BLACK SIGNALMEN

As the black troops served in virtual isolation in the West, progress was being made towards the removal of some of the racial barriers in the Army, particularly in the Signal Corps. In April of 1884, W. Hallett Greene, a Negro member of the graduating class of the College of the City of New York, tried to enlist in the Signal Corps. BG William B. Hazen, Chief Signal Officer of the Army at the time, turned down Greene's application, not on the grounds of prejudice, but upon the understanding that black soldiers were restricted by Congress to two regiments of infantry and two of cavalry. However, this negative response did not kill Greene's application.

For a period of time GEN Alexander S. Webb, president of the college, Robert T. Lincoln (son of President Lincoln), the Secretary of War, and GEN Hazen exchanged correspondence on the matter. In the end, Secretary Lincoln overruled Hazen's interpretation, and on 26 September 1884 Greene was enlisted in the Signal Corps by direct order of the Secretary of War.

In spite of the controversy that ensued, Greene's admittance to the Signal Corps opened the way for other blacks in the military. In 1885 blacks were accepted for the first time in the Hospital Corps, the Ordnance Corps, and the Commissary and Quartermaster Departments.

All four of the regular black combat regiments served with the American Expeditionary Forces in Cuba in 1898. The Signal Corps was present in both Cuba and the Philippines in the Spanish-American War, but no specific evidence can be found to indicate that black signalmen served in that "splendid little war," as Rough Rider Theodore Roosevelt called it.

### WORLD WAR I AND AFTER

The all-black 92d and 93d Divisions were the only two black divisions organized and

sent to France in World War I. Only one black signal unit served during the war, the 325th Field Signal Battalion of the 92d Division, which served in the U.S. First Army.

The 325th Signal Battalion disembarked at Breit, France, on 19 June 1918, and signaled its way across France. The 325th was the first and only black signal unit in the American Army during WWI. Except for its commander and two or three white line officers, all its members were black.

The men of the 325th were well-educated and well-trained. With few exceptions they were all college or high school graduates. Many of them were experts in radio and electrical engineering. During their stay in France, they strung miles of telegraph and telephone lines, many times while under fire.

In 1917 at the advent of WWI, blacks had attempted to gain entrance to the Army Air Corps. At this time, the Army Air Corps was a part of the Signal Corps. They were told that no "colored aero squadrons" were being formed at the time.

The period after WWI was one of uncertainty. The 1920's and 30's were difficult years for all Americans, black and



Black soldier doing field telephone service in France, c. 1918.

white alike. Among other things, America went through Prohibition and the great Depression. In 1933 the Civilian Conservation Corps was established as an attempt to provide meaningful employment for both black and white Americans.

### WARTIME DEVELOPMENTS

In the early 1940's, the War Department Organization and Training Division, G3, made an attempt to lessen some of the disparities that existed in the assignment and employment of black troops. G3 recommended that all arms and Services, "except Air Corps and Signal Corps," be required to accept blacks in "appropriate units" in "reasonable proportions." [NOTE—at this time the Army Air Forces

\*BG Albert J. Myer was "father of the Signal Corps." See our Summer 1976 issue, p. 8.



*Training on a telephone switchboard, 1941.*

was still a part of the Signal Corps, but the Army Air Corps had come into being—Ed.] The Personnel Section of the War Plans Division did not go along with this recommendation completely. They believed that the only limitations on the organization of black units should be limitations imposed by a "strict maintenance of equality between the qualifications" required for blacks and whites in similar units.

The Signal Corps believed it would be "difficult to obtain properly qualified personnel, or personnel who could be properly trained to function effectively in all-black signal units." Consistent with the times, it was felt that the integration of black signalmen into existing all-white signal units was not possible. The Signal Corps did leave room open for the possible organization and activation of black signal units in the event that "a Negro Division is ever organized." But it still felt that even then it would be difficult to obtain technically qualified men such as radio electricians, telephone technicians, and radio operators.

On 3 September 1940 the Selective Training and Service Act was passed. It stated in part, "there shall be no discrimination against any person on account of race or color."

In May 1941 the Signal Corps finally fielded its first black signal unit of the post-World War I era—the 275th Signal Construction Company—and sent it immediately to Panama. On 7 December 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and the U.S. entered World War II. At the end of 1941, most of the nearly 100,000 blacks in the Army were in combat arms. In the Air Corps, Medical Department, and Signal Corps, less than 2 percent of all enlisted men were black. The influx of blacks into the Engineer and Quartermaster Corps was so heavy that those Branches became almost all-black. On the other hand, the absorption rate of blacks into the Air and Signal Corps was so slow that black manpower in these Services declined to less than 1 percent of their total enlisted strength.

The manpower needs of World War II brought the question of the use of Negro units to a head. In support of the war effort, overseas communications facilities were being extended in every direction at a rapid rate. This required manpower, and the Signal Corps began to tap various pools of manpower, including Negroes. The Signal Corps troop basis for 1942 included Negro

units for the first time since WWI. Except for three construction battalions, all other black signal units activated in 1942 were Air Force units. These included 11 construction battalions, 2 aircraft warning companies, and 1 service group signal company.

Negroes in foreign theaters posed problems. Australia wanted none of them. They were not acceptable in China. In Africa, the economic status of the United States Negro bred discontent among native blacks. So it was limited where black troops could be stationed abroad.

There were of course problems in the United States as well: segregation in some states, and strong local prejudices in some areas, notably in the vicinity where Negro construction units trained.

Difficulties were also encountered in assigning black signal officers. Because of American racial attitudes of the period, there was a disbelief in the abilities of black officers to effectively serve in positions of leadership in combat. Suitable vacancies and positions for technically trained Negro officers were hard to find, once initial TOE vacancies were filled, many black signal officers ended up malassigned, some throughout the entire war.

## NOTABLE ORGANIZATIONS

**275th Signal Construction Company.** The first black signal unit deployed outside the continental United States in WWII was the 275th Signal Construction Company. The 275th was organized prior to World War II in answer to a request for black signal construction troops for use in the Canal Zone. GEN Daniel Van Voorhis of the Caribbean Defense Command thought black troops would be more durable than white troops in cutting through the rough and hot country of Panama to put up pole lines. The request was heeded, and the 275th was organized at Fort Leonard Wood, MO, and activated in May 1941. It arrived in Panama 8 December 1941, and commenced work on the pole line. However, the Panamanian Government declared the 275th unwelcome, and it was returned to the United States after completing its task.

**689th Signal Reporting Company (Aircraft Warning, Frontier).** The Army air services had tough initial screening methods for signalmen. This accounted for more highly qualified men than could generally be found in non-air service signal units. This also provided an automatic

safeguard against an overflow of less qualified men not actually needed. Signal units supporting the air services were generally trained by the Signal Corps and were considered to be Army Signal Corps units despite their air-type unit designations.

Many black units, like the 689th Signal Reporting Company (Aircraft Warning, Frontier) in the Summer of 1943, finished their training and grew stagnant and restless, for lack of actual overseas movement orders. Some of the men of the 689th had been trained in Signal Corps radio schools and in colleges as members of the Enlisted Reserve Corps. They were activated and sent through basic training, supposedly headed for further specialist training. Instead, after basic training they found themselves at Seymour Johnson Field, NC, performing squadron duty and menial labor with no prospect for further training.

**3d Signal Troop.** The 3d Signal Troop was another black unit left behind, bitter and disillusioned. When the 2d Cavalry Division shipped overseas in 1944, the disappointed and complaining men of the 3d Signal Troop were left behind and converted to signal construction troops. The remainder of the 2d Division, still wearing its combat designation, left for North Africa.

**1000th Signal Company, 96th Service Group.** Another black air type signal unit of this period was the 1000th Signal Company, 96th Service Group. The Army wanted the Signal Corps to train the men of the 1000th but found that the corps was not training blacks in the required specialties. So the Air Forces went outside the military in an effort to obtain men from civilian life that already had the required skills and experience. Some 6 weeks later the Army started training black signalmen in the specialties required by the 1000th. The Army experienced considerable problems in obtaining "qualified" black troops for some signal training and in finding "adequate" training facilities for them once they were selected.

**Black Signal Servicewomen.** The women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) came into being in May 1942, and black servicewomen were among its first recruits. The original concept behind organizing a corps of servicewomen was to train women to perform jobs that would "free men to fight." The Women's Auxiliary Army Corps became the Women's Army Corps (WAC) on 1 July 1943.

During this period, some black servicewomen were assigned to Signal Corps-type installations, and some even performed signal-type duties, but they were not considered a part of the Signal Corps. They were regarded solely as servicewomen and were generally assigned to all-women units.

Some black servicewomen were observed



*Black servicewomen receiving OJT as switchboard operators, c. 1942.*

performing jobs that could be classified as signal at several installations in the 1940's. Dr. Bruno J. Rolak, command historian, U.S. Army Communications Command, Fort Huachuca, AZ, said black servicewomen were performing duties as telephone operators and as message center personnel at Fort Huachuca in the early 1940's. These women were members of the all-black 32d and 33d WAAC companies, the first ever assigned to Fort Huachuca.

In 1943, one black servicewoman in the Army Air Corps served as a photographer in the post public relations office at Douglas Army Air Field, AZ. Black servicewomen were observed at other installations performing part-time as teletype operators and motion picture projectionists. It is known that the Signal Corps provided training for some qualified servicewomen in certain signal job specialties during the period, but it cannot be established that black servicewomen were among them. However, it is known that some black servicewomen did receive on-the-job signal training at some stations of assignment.

Many complaints were lodged with the War Department about the lack of black servicewomen in radio and other technical communications specialties. Those who lodged the complaints alleged that aptitude test results were being manipulated to exclude black servicewomen from certain technical jobs. The administrators and evaluators of the test retorted that the tests in reality did not show the alleged qualifications of the women for the jobs in question.

Generally, black servicewomen were not assigned to Signal Corps-type duties in WWII, neither at home nor abroad. The few hundred black servicewomen used overseas in WWII were employed largely in postal service work, not signal.

Thousands of servicewomen served during the Korean War and in Vietnam, but it was not until 1972 that they made their most dramatic breakthrough in the Signal Corps (see THE ARMY COMMUNICATOR, Spring 1977, pages 20-23.) For many years servicewomen were utilized only in the clerical, food service, and nursing fields. Today women may serve in most of the communications specialties.

The Signal Corps Inspection Agency. Black civilians also supported the Signal Corps wartime effort as employees of the Signal Corps Inspection Agency. The Signal Corps Inspection Agency was activated in

late summer 1942 to take care of Signal Corps equipment procurement and inspection, and other technical and logistical matters. In line with a national policy to conserve vital, limited, and rapidly shrinking manpower sources caused by the war effort, the agency performed tasks that freed Service personnel for the war effort. The Signal Corps Inspection Agency employed a high percentage of black workers, and women as well.

430th Heavy Signal Construction Company (Aviation). One black signal unit was employed in the China, Burma, and India (CBI) Theater during WWII. This was the 430th Heavy Signal Construction Company (Aviation). They began work on the Stillwell Road Overland Pole Line in mid-1943. Together with a group of quartermaster troops, a few native Indians, and the all-white 96th Signal Battalion, they pushed the pole line from Ledo, India, across rugged mountains and thick rain forests to its terminating end at Shingbwiyang in the Hukawng Valley of Northern Burma by 7 April 1944. Later in the war, the men of the 430th were transferred to the 445th Signal Construction Battalion.

The 93d in the South Pacific. A detachment from the all-black 93d Divisional Signal Company supported the 25th Regimental Combat Team (also black) when it arrived on Guadalcanal on 17 February 1944. The 93d Signal was among the third group of 93d Infantry Division troops to land on the Solomon Islands. Later that year, a team of five men from the 93d, under the sole direction of a sergeant, installed and operated a communications system on Pie Beach, Hollandia (in Netherlands New Guinea, now West New Guinea), for 5 weeks with a minimum of equipment and under adverse conditions.

42d in Both Theaters. The all-black 42d Signal Construction Battalion served in both the European and Pacific Theaters of operation in WWII.

The 42d shipped to Europe in November 1944, landing at Liverpool, England, a staging area for the Allied European Theater of Operations. In Europe, the 42d participated in three battle campaigns—Ardennes, Central Europe, and Rhineland. In July 1945 the 42d was withdrawn and sent to the Pacific. When the 42d landed on Luzon, the Philippines, the war was already drawing to an end. Operations were set up at

“Base R” near the town of Butangas, providing signal support as needed until it was returned to the States.

The Famous 40th. The all-black 40th Signal Construction Battalion was reported to have a morale problem late in 1943. Many black units suffered from morale problems as they waited and watched other units around them ship overseas. These units often engaged in useless work or work that they were not trained for. Meanwhile, the skills they had acquired in training grew dull, as they in turn grew more bitter.

But unlike the 3d Signal Troop and other units, the 40th finally found itself deployed intact and hard at work in the European Theater of operation supporting the initial lodgment and buildup in Normandy, France, after the D-Day landings on 6 July 1944. It remained and, along with other signal units, played a vital role in establishing and maintaining communications throughout the campaign.

## WORLD WAR II EPILOGUE

Other black signal outfits, most of them signal construction units, served overseas in World War II. The 25th, 29th, 37th, 41st, 44th, 83d, and 447th Signal Construction Battalions were some. Over 700,000 black troops served during World War II, and over 500,000 served overseas.

The transition period between WWII and the Korean conflict was a period of good progress for black Americans, in both the military and the civilian communities. On 26 July 1958 President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 which required equal opportunity and treatment in the Armed Forces, regardless of race. In 1949 Edward B. Howard became the first black signal officer to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy.

After WWII, most black signal units were disbanded. Most of the black signalmen were released from service after the war. A few of those who remained in service after the war were assigned to the 29th Signal



*Operating a message center in the South Pacific, c. 1944-45.*

Construction Battalion, one of the few signal units in the Army they could be assigned to.

Former ISGT George Keith, now retired and living in Augusta, GA, spent many of his earlier years of service in the 29th and other black signal units of the period.

George Keith joined the Regular Army after the end of WWII, enlisting in November 1945. He had served as a draftee with the 42d in WWII. He eventually found himself in Camp Jackson, SC, assigned to an all-black provisional training regiment of over 6,000 men. Keith, a cable splicer, was one of the few signalmen in the group during his stay with the regiment. Eventually Keith was assigned to the 29th Signal Battalion, which was moved to Fort Bliss, TX.

Keith relates that at Fort Bliss the 29th was billeted at Donna Anna Range Camp. Their duties consisted primarily of rehabilitating range pole lines and cable. Among other things, the 29th installed the first battalion exchange cable system for telephone subscribers in the newly-built family quarters at White Sands Missile Range, NM.

## TRAINING FOR KOREA

On 25 June 1950 the North Koreans invaded South Korea. The United States responded by sending air and sea forces to the aid of South Korea on June 27th and by landing ground forces on South Korean shores on June 30th.

The start of the Korean War necessitated the activation and training of additional American units, including black signal units. A total of 165 enlisted men and 5 officers were taken from the 29th Signal and formed into the 272d Signal Construction Company. Around August 1950 another signal construction company, the 261st, was activated at Fort Bliss, TX, in the same manner. Likewise, the initial cadre of the 261st came from the 29th. The 261st became a so-called "bastard" unit under the 29th.

On 16 September 1950 George Keith, along with approximately 100 other cadre, left the 29th at Fort Bliss and went to Camp Gordon, GA, where they activated the 40th Signal Construction Battalion. Later in the 1950's the 29th moved to Germany, and the 261st became a part of the newly activated replacement unit—the 41st Signal Construction Battalion at Fort Bliss. The 261st shared the same status under the 41st that it did under the 29th. The 41st was primarily a training unit for replacements for black signal units in Korea.

Meanwhile back at Camp Gordon, unskilled enlisted men, "fillers," were shipped into the 40th around the core of cadre from the 29th and trained. This included both basic and advanced individual training, much like the one-station training of today. In addition to being the Southeastern Signal School, Camp Gordon was then a Signal Corps replacement

training center, and this training concept was commonly referred to as "package training." A few select EM's were sent through the lineman's course at Gordon. SGM George Harris, then a private, presently stationed at Bad Tolz, Germany, was one of those students. Says SGM Harris, "We were trained in the same classroom with white soldiers, but had to sit at the rear of the room."



ISGT George Keith (ret.), left, and SGM George Harris served in all-black signal outfits prior to the integration of forces.

In October 1950 George Keith and several other men on loan from the 40th activated the 258th Signal Construction Company at Gordon. The 258th initially consisted of only three men: ISGT Keith; LT Niblock, the CO; and SGT Steven Early, the mess sergeant. Over a period of time, fillers came in and trained, and the unit eventually reached full strength.

Although the 40th was thoroughly trained and attained full strength, it did not go to Korea. Instead it found itself headed for Germany. In January 1952 the 40th sailed in 10 days from Hampton Roads, VA, to Bremerhaven, Germany, ending up in Kaufbeuren—near the Alps in southern Germany. When the 40th arrived at Kaufbeuren, the all-black 29th Signal Construction Battalion was already there. In fact, the 29th and the 40th Signal Battalions were the only two American units stationed in Kaufbeuren at the time. In March 1952 the 40th finally moved to Neureut Kaserne in Neureut, Germany, near Karlsruhe.

The unit insignia (crests) of all-black signal units were quite interesting. These crests usually sported two colors—black and orange. Black indicated an all-black unit, while orange identified the unit as signal. In addition, some unit crests included at least one pole with a crossarm which identified those units as signal construction units. The crests of some units even featured some symbol to indicate the unit's state of origin, such as a peach for the state of Georgia.

## POLES AND LINES TO GLORY

On the Korean battlefield, several all-black signal units moved at the call, as did the usual contingent of all-black fighting units: elements of three infantry regiments, a tank battalion, and a field artillery battalion. One of these units, the 272d Signal

Construction Company, "large base," went to Korea in 1950 during the invasion to support the 1st Marine and 1st Cavalry Divisions. The 272d was one of the so-called "separate" signal outfits. It operated independently of a mother signal battalion.

The all-black 403d Signal Construction Battalion was stationed at Camp Nara, Japan, when the Korean War started. The 403d went to Korea in the early 1950's in support of 8th Army Korea.

Two other black signal units active during the Korean War era were the 26th Signal Battalion and the 474th Signal Aviation Construction Company. The 26th served in Korea later, after the invasion, and the 474th was stationed in Japan.

## INTEGRATION OF FORCES

A significant change to come out of the Korean War was the integration of the Armed Forces. The initial integration of forces in Korea, however, was not the result of some great social experiment, nor was it an attempt to bring social and economic equality to blacks. Instead it was the most practical, economical, and effective way to utilize black manpower. Segregated units were awkward to administer in the rapid-moving combat situations of the Korean War. Segregation had to yield to the more important demands of combat.

Eighth Army personnel began to assign blacks to understrength white units in early 1951. Some black signalmen were infused into previously all-white signal units. Even though some initial frictions did occur, integrated troops performed better than segregated ones, and hostility and tension between whites and blacks did not reach the proportions previously feared.

Integration started at Fort Bliss with the activation of the 41st Signal Battalion. The 261st Signal Company became one of the first black signal units to completely integrate its ranks. Around June 1952, white soldiers were infused into the 261st around a core of about a dozen blacks who remained after most all the original members of the unit had been shipped to Korea or otherwise sent into formerly all-white units.

As the integration of forces continued in Korea, integration likewise proceeded in Europe. The 40th Signal Battalion started integrating in August 1952 at Neureut, Germany. Later, part of the all-white 315th Signal was brought into the 40th. One black

From left: MSG Herbert W. Denmark; 1LT Josephine Alexander; CSM Carl M. Holmes; BG Emmet Paige, Jr.; and COL Jimmy King.



officer assigned to the 40th in the 1950's was a young lieutenant named Emmett Paige, Jr. Other signal units in Germany attained integration in much the same manner that it was attained in Korea. Some signal units did not attain full integration until well after the end of the Korean War.

The Korean War officially ended on 27 July 1953 with the signing of the Armistice at Panmunjom. Korea marked a turning point for the black soldier in the Armed Forces, and from that point forward the lot of the black soldier progressively improved. LT Gerald W. Carprew, West Point Class of 1953, and the third black signal officer to graduate from the academy, served in the division signal office of the 9th Infantry Division in Korea after he graduated from the academy. Few blacks were assigned to division signal sections at that time. The Armed Forces finally attained full integration by 31 October 1954.

### FROM THE DELTA TO THE DMZ

Black communicators served from the Delta to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in Vietnam, mostly under the auspices of the 1st Signal Brigade, the dominant signal authority in Vietnam. Thanks to the lessons learned in Korea, the black soldier was fully and freely employed in Vietnam. He served as a member of every signal unit in Vietnam, and at nearly every level as well. In Vietnam, blacks and other American soldiers served side-by-side in a common bond of camaraderie, duty, mutual dependence, equality, and respect never experienced or observed before. But paradoxically, American soldiers in Vietnam were influenced by the very complex social, moral, and cultural conflicts occurring in the United States. These conflicts threatened to break the very fiber of the American effort in Vietnam, and threatened to offset the gains achieved by the mutual efforts of all American soldiers. But the Vietnam War is now history. The black soldier did serve there, and he is fiercely proud of his record, particularly as a communicator.

### WHO'S WHO

A list of noteworthy blacks in communications-electronics in today's Army sounds like a "who's who in the Signal Corps." MSG Herbert W. Denmark is an air traffic controller at Libby Field, Fort

Huachuca, AZ. 1LT Josephine Alexander is command information radio-TV officer for the Public Affairs Office, Fort Lee, VA. Incidentally, her videotape production "Women in the Military" won the TRADOC Golden Eye Award for excellence in television production. CSM Carl M. Holmes was recently command sergeant major of the 304th Signal Battalion at Kimpo, Korea, and is now assigned as CSM at the 1st Signal Training Brigade at Fort Gordon. COL Homer Pettitt, Jr., is chief of the Plans Division, Command and Control Technical Center, Defense Communications Agency, Washington, DC. 1SGT Leon Reynolds is first sergeant of the 201st Signal Support Company at Hoechst, Germany. COL James E. Wyatt is project manager, Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System (SINCGARS). CPT William B. Bradley is signal officer of the 197th Infantry Brigade, Fort Benning, GA.

BG Emmett Paige, Jr., made history on 24 March 1976 by becoming the first black general officer in the 116-year existence of the U.S. Army Signal Corps. BG Paige is presently commander of both the Army Communications Systems Agency and the Communications-Electronics Engineering Installation Agency at Fort Huachuca, AZ. (Clifford Alexander, although not signal, recently became the first black ever appointed as Secretary of the Army.)

The "Home of the Signal Corps" itself, the U.S. Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon, GA, is proud of its distinguished black communicators. COL Jimmy King, who served as School Brigade commander and director of the Signal School's Directorate of Training, has recently departed for the 5th Signal Command, Worms, Germany, where he is deputy chief of staff for logistics. CSM Willard E. Preddy is the School Brigade command sergeant major. COL Willie L. Davis was chief of the school's Materiel Systems Development Division, and was recently assigned to a TRADOC systems manager slot. CSM Ervin L. Spruill is command sergeant major for the Signal School. SGT Charleen Coleman is team chief of the Signal Corps Promotion Team, USASIGS, a traveling team that promotes the Signal Corps to high school and vocational school students all over the United States. SGM George Harris, former School Brigade S4, is now the school

commandant of the 7th Army Combined Army Training Center at Bad Tolz, Germany. The list could continue.

### SERVING PROUDLY

Every black signal unit that served is not featured here, nor is a full account of their actions and deeds presented. A more thorough investigation would most surely reveal a fuller account. The black soldier in the Signal Corps has come a long way from W. Hallett Greene to Emmett Paige, Jr., but the progress that he has achieved in doing so has been well worth the trip. Black communicators now serve in every Signal Military Occupational Specialty. They have proven themselves equal to any test, and they continue making strides in securing their human rights.

Black soldiers helped write Signal Corps history, and the rich heritage of the Signal Corps is their heritage too. They share in the great pride and esprit of the corps, and—like all other members of the Corps—they, too, serve proudly.



*SFC Samuel A. Barnes works as an illustrator and training material analyzer/writer at the Signal School's Directorate of Training Development. The 19-year career-long communicator is an award-winning artist and poet, and has held assignments in writing, designing, and illustrating military publications. He is instructor qualified and was selected to write the MOS proficiency test for his MOS 2 years straight. SFC Barnes holds MOS's 31Z411, 31M4H, and 81C40. He is a distinguished graduate of the 3d Army NCO Academy and of signal Advanced NCOES. He wrote the poem "I Am the Signal Corps" (TAC, Fall 1976), which is narrated by Mr. Harry Reasoner and included on a vinyl soundsheet in this issue. SFC Barnes received a B.A. degree in art through the Army Bootstrap Program, and he plans to pursue a master's degree upon his retirement from the Army.*

*THE ARMY COMMUNICATOR welcomes any additional information on the black signal soldier, including unit histories, personal experiences and achievements, photographs, and documents.*





*In our Summer 1977 issue on pages 44 and 45, several photographs were incorrectly identified. The individuals are, from left: CSM Carl M. Holmes; MSG Herbert W. Denmark; 1LT Josephine Alexander; COL Jimmy King; and BG Emmet Paige, Jr.*