

COMMUNICATIONS(The Messengers)

hotchkiss

WITH THE FIFTH ARMY, GARIGLIANO FRONT, April 21---Front line messengers up here have one of the finest stretches of highway in ~~XXXX~~ Southern Italy all to themselves and gasoline rationing hasn't anything to do with it.

Highway 7, the road to Rome, is straight and wide and smooth where it parallels the Garigliano River and then crosses that hard-won stream to enter Minturno, now occupied by our troops. Also Highway 7 is empty - so bare of traffic that a hound-dog could sleep peacefully in its center and hardly ever be disturbed.

The road is empty because it is under constant observation from the German lines on the heights beyond Minturno and Castelforte and well within range of the vicious 88s and 170s. If it were not for the messengers, the MPs in their sand-bagged dugouts along the route would scarcely see a vehicle the live-long day.

Only one regiment of the ~~XX~~ --th's infantry can be reached with any degree of safety by daylight and it is to this outfit that the messengers from division headquarters carry dispatches twice a day - morning and afternoon.

The run is less than 20 miles round-trip and normally takes two hours - 'normally' means when Jerry doesn't care to waste ammunition on a single jeep scooting over the landscape like a scorched rabbit. When he declares open season every other day or so, however, and whistles over some HE or air-bursts, the trip takes longer and the messengers come back showing signs of having lain in a ditch or in the rubble of a blasted farm house.