

'Flying Parson' Col. Dean Hess To Address YMCA Banquet Monday

Famous for his work with Korean orphans and his skill as a flyer, Col. Dean Hess is now aiding the Torrance YMCA in its drive to expand youth activities. He will be the featured speaker at the YMCA banquet Monday, January 20, at 6:30 p.m. So that banquet-goers will know the man they will see and hear, the Press presents this background story as an introduction.

When fighting broke out in Korea in 1950, Colonel Dean Hess, then an Information and Education Officer in Korea, was assigned the mission of building a South Korean Air Force.

The "organization" at that time consisted of 10 inexperienced ROK pilots whose combat contribution was throwing hand bombs over the sides of liaison planes. Hess was given two officers, 20 enlisted men, no equipment and very little aid from allied commanders.

Putting through red tape, breaking what rules he found in good conscience, Hess scrounged equipment, constructed air fields in cow pastures and managed to talk the Fifth Air Force out of enough F-51 Mustang fighter-bombers to start the job. For Hess, training meant practical application.

"What's the use," he argued, "teaching a man flight procedures, navigation and gunnery in dry runs over rear areas when you can head him the other way and in five minutes he'll be learning the same things in action?"

But Hess did not send his "students" over enemy territory. He led them over. He flew eight missions a day combining combat instruction with tactical support of harried infantry units. He became known as "the one man air force." He finally organized the ROK unit into a lethal "vest pocket" air combat arm of the United Nations, at the same time flying 250 missions on his own.

THIRD MISSION
But it was not enough for the "flying parson," who had once been an ordained minister, to fight for the cause of Christian civilization. He was a humanitarian as well as a combat commander. He imposed upon himself a third mission which eventually brought him unsought fame.

As the see-saw battle for the thirty-eighth parallel created miles-long straggler lines, Hess noted a terrifying increase in orphaned children left to die along the roads. He discovered that the reds were sending North Korean women to infiltrate allied lines by sewing the clothes of dead mothers and using their children as "fronts" to make their way through allied territory. The purpose accomplished, the youngsters were left to fend for themselves.

With the aid of two chaplains Hess began caring for the orphans wherever he found them. He took up collections among his men and stretched the military mess to feed the children. He resided medical dumps to treat their wounds and diseases. By the time he had gathered 1000 youngsters in a makeshift orphanage near Seoul the allies were once again taking a beating.

As United Nations lines began to weaken the entire war effort was concentrated in evacuating bases to stronger rear positions. Every available craft on land, sea and in the air was used to carry troop personnel and equipment below the thirty-eighth parallel.

In the heat of battle Hess demanded and received from the Fifth Air Force enough C-47 planes to transport his 1000 orphans to comparative safety on Cheju Island where he had

commanded an old government agricultural building for the orphanage. For this he thanks General Earle Partridge.

BEGAN AS PRIVATE
This is the same man who refused a chaplain's commission in the Army at the beginning of World War II and enlisted as a private in the Air Force, saying, "It would be morally wrong for me to say to others,

"I believe in your cause but you do the fighting for me."

At that time Reverend Dean Hess was 23. He preached the Lord's word by flying his own light plane through northern Ohio, bringing the gospel to various tiny churches of the Disciples of Christ which dot the country-side around his native Marietta.

A year later, as a fighter pilot with the Ninth Air Force in Europe, he began a career of 63 missions through France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. While dive-bombing a German rail marshalling yard, the releasing device froze on one of his bombs. Just past the target it let go, and the bomb made a

direct hit on a building where the children of factory workers were cared for and schooled while parents were on the job. Many were killed by the lethal dose from the plane which carried the motto "By Faith I Fly."

Hess was terribly shaken by the tragic accident, but continued fighting. With his deep interest in the orphans of another war Hess' colleagues claim that the German experience was the psychological motivation. Of this the 38-year-old colonel says, "It was horrible, but if there is any subconscious connection between the incident and my love for those Korean kids I'm not aware of it. The fact is simply

that a man can't pass up any opportunity to help children who can't help themselves."

DEDICATED TO HUMANITY
Hess is a quiet, unassuming man with dark, steady eyes, a ready smile and a deep dedication to humanity and freedom. One of very few officers in U. S. combat forces who has been equally beloved by colleagues, enlisted men, foreign and domestic civilians and government leaders, as has come to be known to his thousands of Korean friends as "Mr. United States."

rope, Hess' fellow officers embarrased him by calling him "parson" and pointedly avoiding

profanity in his presence. But he had relentless drive in combat. (Continued on Page 6)

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