Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Kallman - 343-3173
For Immediate Release: February 1, 1967
Print PDF

Ernest Childers, an Oklahoma Indian who holds the Congressional Medal of Honor for Valor in World War II, has joined the Department of the Interior's Job Corps staff as a regional coordinator, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced today.

"Colonel Childers is a member of a very select society--those who have won the Nation's highest military decoration and have lived to tell about it." Secretary Udall said. "Having come up from an underdog start in life, and having worked with all kinds of people the world over, under all kinds of conditions, he is superbly qualified for his new position, which relates conservation to people."

He will be one of three regional coordinator-administrators who will represent the Department in Job Corps contacts with the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Forest Service and other Federal agencies at the field level. Childers' zone runs generally from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Coast, within which there soon will be 14 corps conservation centers operated by Interior's National Park Service, and Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

Childers, who will work out of Washington, D. C., retired from the Army as Lieutenant colonel in 1965. His last five years in military service were spent supervising Fifth Army ROTC reserves and components from Fort Riley, Kansas, and Alaska, with responsibility for budget analysis and logistics in very large quantities.

A Creek Indian, born in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, Childers attended Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools at Chilocco, Oklahoma, through the high school level. He entered military service as a National Guard private in 1937, rising through the· ranks until he received a battlefield commission in Sicily in 1943.

Shortly after the Salerno landings, at Oliveto, Italy, on September 22, 1943, Second Lieutenant Childers -despite painful wounds - wiped out two German machine-gun nests virtually single handed, topping off the day's work by capturing an armed enemy mortar observer at the point of what later proved to be an empty carbine.

For this "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above arid beyond the call of duty," Childers became one of only two Indians who received the Medal of Honor in World War II. His other decorations include the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Commendation Medal, Italian Cross of Valor, and the first Oklahoma Distinguished Service Medal ever awarded.

Since that time he has served in capacities ranging from operations and training officer to labor relations officer, with experience in ordnance, procurement, intelligence, fiscal and budget work, and other specialties. His record contains many letters of commendation for outstanding accomplishment. Childers, 49, is married and has two children.