

THE SWORD

In June 1945, a London Guildhall ceremony presented General Eisenhower with a token sword that used to belong to the Duke of Wellington - a part of the ceremony which made him a Freeman of London. At the same time, designers began the making of a new sword. When the Allied Supreme Commander officially became a Lordener it was still in the billet stage. Sword makers then were busy with priority orders for Far East Commando knives - and the ceremonial sword was promised for later on. And when they said later they meant it. With every process hand-done this tale of a sword went on for more than a year. Keeping a record of this example of supreme British craftsmanship, Pathe cameras sat in on every stage of the process. Star of this epic of the sword is old Tom Beasley of Wilkinsons - 84 years old and Britain's oldest swordsmith. In his 57 years with one firm, old Tom has made ceremonial weapons for five British Kings.

Key process is the tempering. Here the 31 inch steel blade is hardened and strengthened to withstand the exacting tests. First step is a plunge into a specially prepared oil bath.

Further immersions in molten lead and mercury put the final touch to the tempering. After that, the blade is ready for anything. And it has to be, considering the men handling the testers give it.

And now for the final polishing. Months of work by ten expert craftsmen on one slender blade. From then on things are speeded up. Goldsmiths wind on the gold-wire for the grip, and the hilt and crossguard are assembled.

Cut deep in the blade the inscription records the Guildhall ceremony which made General Eisenhower a Citizen of London. On handle and red morocco scabbard, General Ike's honours and decorations are recorded. Now the sword remains, a tribute to a man we remember with affection - an American who once said, "I am proud to be a Lordener."