P.O.W.

by

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Pearl Harbor and Bataan - words that are seldom remembered.

Let us forgive but not forget, and remember the bitter lessons learned from these events.

Let us not listen to the cries of the politicans and others who would have us let down our defenses. Let us remain strong while we work for a just and lasting peace.

The world is still torn by war. Our enemies continue to prepare without letup. We do not know their intentions.

The men in my story were once young and full of life. Now they are nothing but faded heroes, remembered by a few aging buddies.

When I have endured I would gladly endure again if it would help my country. I pray that we will never endure another Pearl Harbor or Bataan.

Please let others read this story lest we forget.

December 8, 1941

I was a young Air Force soldier stationed at Clark Field in the Philippine Islands. We had come to the Islands in September and October of 1941 as part of the 19th Bombardment Group. There were six squadrons in the group. My squadron was Headquarters. H.Q. was responsible for transportation for the group and some other administrative duties. We were an old established outfit, one of the few heavy bomber groups in the USAAF at that time. Our group had been assigned some of the first B-17s and B-24s in the air force. We were proud of our giant four engine aircraft, some of the finest in the world at that time. My job was aircraft engine mechanic on a B-17 crew. The crew chief was MSgt. Burel, a rough and tough old sergeant, but a good crew chief.

We had heard the news from Pearl Harbor but did not realize how much damage had been done to our fleet. We had also heard the President had declared war on Japan. It was almost eight hours after the sneak attack and we could not understand why we had not received orders to bomb the Japanese Island of Formosa.

Our Group Commander, Colonel Eugene Eubank, was at USAAF headquarters trying to get orders to send out an attack force. Major David Gibbs, our Operations Officer, was in charge during the absence of the Group Commander.

About 9 o'clock in the morning we received word that enemy planes were approaching and the thirteen B-17s were ordered to take off to avoid being caught on the ground. Their orders were to patrol the coast of Luzon until further orders.

At last Colonel Eubank returned with orders to attack Formosa. The B-17s were ordered to return to Clark Field to prepare for the attack. Our crews worked feverishly to load the planes but the orders had come too late. By this time the Japs had already taken off and were on their way to bomb us.

Part of the group had been moved to Del Monte Field on Mindanao, an island south of Luzon, still out of range of the Jap Zeroes; thank goodness for that. These planes were also ordered to get ready for action.

I had been working on an engine on one of our B-17s in the morning and had just returned from lunch. The time was about 12:35 when I returned to work. I had barely started when I heard the sound of many airplanes. I looked up to see a tremendous formation. They were at high altitude in perfect formation against the blue Philippine sky. I started counting and someone said, "Oh, look at the beautiful Navy formation." By then I had counted 54. Then all of a sudden I realized what was happening. I yelled, "Navy, Hell. They're Japs!" I started running for the nearest shelter I could find, which happened to be a large drainage ditch that carried away the base run-off in wet weather. I must have reached the ditch in record time. There were a lot of other men already there.

Except for a few trenches that had been dug near the hangars, there were no shelters. There was no advance warning and the Jap formation was directly over the field before we knew what was happening.

Different reasons and explanations have been given as to why we were caught by surprise, none of which make much sense. One of the things I remember December 8 was that the base was outlined by small fires that sent plumes of smoke up as if to guide the Japs in. There were several other strange things that happened prior to the attack. For instance, three or four days before, a big four engine flying boat flew directly over Clark Field. It was a strange plane to me, without markings and flying at low altitude. When I asked my superior officer about it he said that it was probably a China Clipper. But I thought to myself that if this was the case he must be a long way off course. I am convinced now it was a Japanese recon plane.

The Jap heavy bombers made a saturations run across the base, dropping their strings of bombs. Many of our planes and buildings were destroyed

in this first run. Then low level dive bombers and Zero fighters came in to finish the job strafing personnel and equipment. It was a terrifying experience.

I was snuggled as close to the side of the ditch as possible. The Jap fighters were flying back and forth across the ditch strafing our equipment. If they had come down the ditch they would have killed a lot of us. A burst of 20mm fire knocked off the side of the ditch and partially covered me with dirt. A row of slugs kicked up dirt about two inches from me.

The Japanese did a thorough job of destroying our base. There was little to salvage after the attack. The sudden, surprise attack had completely terrified everyone. Three hundred military and civilian personnel were killed or wounded by bombs and machine gun fire.

There were stories of courage and heartbreak. Of the few P-40s on the base, a few managed to take off and engage the enemy. It was a futile attempt but the courage of the pilots that tried to get into the air in the middle of the attack is something I will never forget. One of the heartbreaking events that happened was a P-40 trying to get off the ground that was hit and suddenly veered into a B-17. Both went up in flames. Some of our air crewmen went into their ships to fire at the enemy from top gun turrets and died at their guns. It seemed that everything conspired against us to make the Jap attack a complete success. Before the attack our pursuit planes had been sent on patrol and had missed the Jap planes on their way from Formosa. The attack was in progress when the P-40s returned for fuel. Being unable to engage the enemy, they were shot to pieces as they tried to land during the attack.

The Japanese losses were very insignificant, but the hatred against them had been born. One of our sergeants, coming upon a downed Jap plane, immediately urinated on the dead pilot.

After the attack, our troops were scared and demoralized, as well as

bewildered. We had been caught so completely by surprise only hours after the President had declared war on Japan. We had the means to give a good acount of ourselves, but because of indecision and delays we were crippled in one attack from the enemy. I pray and hope we will never be caught in this position again.

My first concern when the attack was over was for my best friends. They were Amon Blair (Little Tex), Howard Gunn, and Gorden Smith. Tex and I had worked together in Fullerton, California before the war and had joined the service together. Howard and Smitty had met me in the service and we had become very close friends. I was relieved to find they had come through all right. I was also sad to hear that some of my other buddies in the squadron had been killed in the attack.

After the raid, we moved out of the barracks into the jungle, for we knew the Japanese would be back. Sure enough, there were raids every day. I don't consider myself a brave person and the attack had scared the hell out of me. I was having a hard time trying to keep from hiding every time I heard an airplane engine. However, everyone was jittery. Filipino and American troops had set up 50 caliber AA machine guns in the jungle around the base and they were so nervous they fired at anything that happened to be flying by, even our remaining P-40s.

A salvage detail was organized as soon as possible, and I was assigned to this detail. Our job was to salvage usable parts from the wrecked planes. To go back to the air field where many of my buddies had lost their lives and where I had come close to death was a terrifying experience. We often had to crawl into a tight spot to salvage parts, with the Jap planes harassing us. We were hard pressed to get out of the blackened hulks and find shelter before the Japs bombed and strafed the hell out of us.

One day there was a low overcast over the field. We could hear the Jap planes above it waiting for a chance to break through. I asked the Lieutenant in charge if we could take cover, but he said not to worry

because they could not come under the cloud cover. However, I had already picked out a shelter just in case. It was a drain pipe under the runway in the same ditch where I had found shelter before. I had hardly finished talking to the Lieutenant when the Japs came under the overcast at the other end of the base. I made the pipe in record time and the Lieutenant was right behind me. He was a little more willing to find shelter after that, especially since the area where we had been working was saturated with anti-personnel bombs.

It was lucky that part of our B-17s were at Del Monte Field on Mindanao. These few planes, along with four others we put back in service with our night and day salvage work, were the only remaining air striking force left in the Pacific. I will not try to tell a complete history of the 19th Bomb Group here. Others have done this much better than I could. But I have described as best as I can some of the things that happened while I was still at Clark Field.

At last the 19th Bomb Group began to fight back. When a large Japanese invasion convoy was seen heading for Luzon, our remaining B-17s were ordered to attack. On December 10, five planes, led by Capt. Cecil B. Combs, made the first U.S. air raid attack in World War II. They found the convoy heading for the towns of Vigan and Aparri on Northern Luzon. They made their bomb run without much opposition, surprising the enemy. However, not much damage was done to the convoy in this raid.

The Japs were not surprised again. They were well prepared for succeeding missions we flew that day. Our B-17s battled their way through swarms of Zeroes to try to stop the Japanese landing forces. The courage and devotion to duty shown by these men should have a permanent place in American history.

One of the crews flying that day was commanded by a young West Pointer named Colin P. Kelly. He and two other pilots, Lieutenants G.R. Montgomery and George E. Schaetzel, had managed to get their planes into the air with only short bomb loads because the crews that had been loading their planes

at Clark had been interrupted by a red alert. Montgomery had 1 bomb and Schaetzel carried a full load of eight. Montgomery flew north and droped his lone bomb on the transports and headed back to Clark for more bombs. He took on a load of 20 100 pounders and took off to follow the others to Aparri. He was unable to locate the other B-17s, so he dropped his bombs near the beach, certain he had damaged a troop ship. He put in again at Clark and was ordered back to Del Monte, but never made it. He ran into a storm and was forced down in the surf off the island.

Lieutenant Schaetzel had flown to Aparri and dropped his bombs before being attacked by Zeroes. He managed to elude them in a cloud and land at a small field between Clark and Del Monte called San Marceleno. His B-17 was shot to pieces, but he and his crew were all right.

Captain Kelly had also headed toward Vigan, where the crew could see the Japanese landing troops. However, Kelly decided to fly to Aparri to search for an aircraft carrier that had been reported. They could see six small ships and a large one they thought was a battleship off Aparri. They did not find the carrier so they decided to attack the big ship. Captain Kelly turned his plane for a bomb run and turned the controls over the Sgt. Meyer Levin, the bombardier. Three bombs were dropped; the first two missed the ship, but the third was a direct hit on the aft turret of the huge vessel. A great explosion shook the ship and black smoke enveloped her. The crew thought they could see an oil slick but the smoke made it impossible to tell how much damage had been done.

Kelly headed his plane back, but shortly before he reached Clark Field he was attacked by a group of Zeroes. The attack blew up the oxygen tanks and one crewman was killed. The model B-17C did not have self sealing tanks and was soon on fire. Inside the smoking plane, Captain Kelly struggled to keep it on a level course so the crew could bail out. At Clark we heard the battle and could see the plane being attacked and set on fire. We knew the ship was done for, but hoped the crew could get

out. Soon we counted six parachutes opening under the big plane before it exploded in a ball of fire. The Captain's body was found near the wreckage, his parachute unopened. Without regard for his own life he had held the B-17 level to the last moment to let his crew get out safely.

When the crew was questioned it was decided that Kelly's crew had indeed sunk a Japanese battleship. The news was flashed to the U.S. where Kelly was hailed as America's first great hero of World War II. Later we found out that the ship was only a heavy cruiser and had been badly damaged but not sunk. To the men that served with Kelly, he will always remain a hero, not because of the strike on the Jap ship, but because he gave his life to save his crew.

There were other courageous attacks on the enemy by men of the 19th Group, as they fought desperately to stem the tide of Japanese landings on Luzon. The enemy had almost complete air and naval superiority and an unlimited supply of landing forces, so there was little we could do but continue to harass the Jap landing forces, even though the crews were tired and their planes were full of patches and in need of repairs. There were now only 14 of the original 35 B-17s that had been at Clark Field.

The enemy controlled the air over Luzon and most of the ground as well. He had landed to the north and to the south of our troops, which were retreating on all fronts. Soon the Japs would be landing on Mindanao.

On December 17, it was decided to move the remaining B-17s to Australia out of range of Jap bombers so they could continue to fight. The enemy had already discovered our secret base, and on December 19 bombed Del Monte Field for the first time. Little damage was done because the B-17s were well dispersed and camouflaged. This was just a prelude for the bombing raids to come. Clark Field had already become too dangerous to operate from because of the persistent enemy air strikes.

By Christmas, 1941, all of the remaining B-17s had moved to Australia with their crews. Left behind were at least half of the group personnel

who were unable to leave. Some of the best trained air force men in the USAAF were now surplus and were used to replace casualties in the infantry, artillery, and other outfits, where they fought bravely until the surrender. After December we lost track of our friends in Australia except for news reports. After the war I learned the 19th had stayed in the Pacific and continued to fight, becoming famous for their courage and bravery.

On Christmas I was ordered into an anti-aircraft artillery outfit, the 200th Coast Artillery, a New Mexico National Guard Outfit. They had come over to the Philippines about the same time as the 19th Group and had been assigned to protect Clark Field and other bases.

The company set up in the rice fields near the approaches to Clark. I went into action immediately, passing shells from the bunker to the gun crew. The AA guns were old Model 3 inch guns without modern ammunition - it was not very effective against high flying planes, falling far short of the target. We fired on the Japanese bombers on their daily runs. I must admit the noise, concussion of the guns, and being able to look up and see the open bomb bays of the Jap bombers terrified me, but at least I was fighting back.

One night we moved to a new position. The next morning the Japs came in low. I guess we surprised them for we put a burst right in the middle of the formation and knocked down three. We were overjoyed to see them get some of their own medicine.

Since the 22nd of December when the Japanese had landed at Lingayen Gulf on Luzon Island, they had been steadily advancing on all fronts. It was plain to me that the entire island would be lost if we did not receive help soon. The only recourse left to our hard-pressed troops was to fall back to the narrow peninsula of Bataan and the fortified island of Corrigedor. There was no doubt in my mind that Bataan was to be our last battle. With the Japanese virtually in control of the South Pacific, I could see no way we could receive help. The only thing we could do

was to fight as long as possible, slowing up the rampaging Japanese on their drive towards the Dutch East Indies.

My life with the anti-aircraft company became one constant whirl of action, setting up the guns to protect bridges or other strategic points as our troops retreated to Bataan. We seemed to move all night and fire at the Jap planes all day. About all we could do was force them to fly high because of our poor ammunition. We would dig our fox holes only to have them fill halfway with water. Jap fighters came often to strafe our gun positions, but we had 50 caliber machine guns set up and when they came in they got a good hot reception.

Most of the company got muddy and wet when we dived into the fox holes. Some amusing things seem to happen, even in war. We had one little Mexican G.I. in the company we called Pancho. One day the Jap Zeroes strafed us. After the raid we couldn't find Pancho. Finally we heard cries for help. When we located them, they were coming from a Filipino water well. These wells were usually about 10 feet deep and 6 to 8 feet in diameter, with 3 to 4 feet of water. Our Pancho had jumped into the well and was stuck in the mud and water at the bottom. We pulled him out and had a good laugh.

Though we seemed to have one disastrous defeat after another, our troops in the north under General Jonathan Wainwright were fighting a rear guard action, and managed to give our troops a chance to get to Bataan intact. The troops in the southern division under General Parker also escaped to Bataan due to General Wainwright's holding actions in the north. Our troops set up a line at Abucay on the peninsula and at last began to slow the Japanese advance. The Japanese continued to put heavy pressure on the line and by the last part of January, 1942, we had pulled back to a new line at Orion. It stretched across the peninsula to Bagac, about 13 miles, to the west coast. This was the main line of resistance for several weeks.

After we had been on Bataan for a while I contracted a tropical rash that

covered me from head to foot. When I came down with a high fever, I was finally sent to the field hospital for treatment, where I was given some medicine and soon recovered. I was told to go back to duty. I knew my squadron was at a small airstrip called Cabcabon Field, and since I realized our time was limited I wanted to be with my own group. I made my way to where they were camped and asked the C.O. if I could rejoin the squadron. He thought it would be okay. I learned that Smitty had gone to Mindanao and Howard was with the infantry, but I could find no information about Tex.

We had a few P-40s hidden in the jungle to be used for special missions only. Some of our men were helping work on them, and I was assigned to guard duty. The P-40s were rigged to carry a 500 pound bomb and they were better dive bombers than fighters. One night they bombed Lingayen Gulf, making several trips to carry as many bombs as possible. They must have done a lot of damage because the next day the Jap radio reported that wave after wave of B-17s had bombed Lingayen. I will never know why their Zeroes did not try to break up our raid.

The Japanese were also shelling Corregidor with heavy guns from Cavite, a naval base on the mainland opposite Bataan. Our artillery on Corregidor could not get their location, so our PT-12 biplane was assigned to get pictures of the Jap artillery. The PT-12 was to be escorted by P-40s. They got the pictures but were intercepted by Jap Zeroes. In the ensuing dog fight the Japs lost 7 planes. All of our P-40s returned, as I recall.

Despite heavy pressures, the Philippine and American troops were holding the Orion line and were inflicting heavy casualties on the attacking Japanese troops. The Japanese had tried several infantry and artillery attacks but were repulsed. The morale of our troops remained high. One of the worst handicaps our troops had was the obsolete equipment. It was extremely old - mostly World War I vintage - our rifles were old model Springfields and British Enfields. Our artillery was also obsolete.

The Philippine scouts were excellent soldiers and they had some 155mm guns that they used very effectively. It is said when they were firing they would say, "Tojo, count your men." They would fire again and then say, "Count them again."

Our hand grenades had a habit of not going off. When they were tossed the Japs often threw them back. Our ordnance men were soon making their own from bamboo, putting powder in one section and whatever could be found in the other, and attaching a short fuse. These proved very effective when thrown end over end.

Another tactic used by the scouts was to dig a round spider hole just large enough to crouch in. The Jap tanks would run over these holes, and the scouts would jump out, pour gas on the tanks, and set them afire.

The Filipino scouts and Constabulary were fine soldiers; often the sons followed in their father's footsteps, and the outfit became a family tradition. But the regular Philippine army troops were poorly trained, having been conscripted just before the war started. If they lost their officers, who were usually American, they would panic and back out of the line, leaving another outfit flanked. Some of the best troops were held in reserve to plug these holes.

Our rations became less as the weeks passed. We ate all the horses and mules from the 26th Calvary, even General Wainwright's champion jumper was sacrificed. A buddy and I were assigned to outpost guard near our camp. A Filipino civilian had set up his camp near us and each day he would bring a can of rice mixed with meat around, and we would buy some food from him. I asked him what the meat was and he assured me it was chicken, but I had a feeling the meat wasn't chicken. One day I decided to see what kind of meat it really was, and went to his camp. From a distance it looked as if he had skinned babies, but on closer inspection I found they were monkeys. When you get hungry enough you get less particular about what you eat, but I tried not to think of the monkeys when I ate his mixture.

We had a visit almost everyday from a Japanese airplane we called "Washing Machine Charlie." This was because of the funny noise his engine made. I guess he was some kind of recon plane. We had several aircooled 50 cal. machine guns set up around the air strip and when Charlie came over he caught hell. Once in a while we would get one of the Charlies. They scared us for a while because they would drop delayed action firecrackers, and handgrenades. Just as we figured we were safe, his firecrackers would start going off, and our duties would be disrupted again. This was a good tactic until we got used to it.

Sometime during March or April, 1942, the Japanese landed a group of Imperial Marines on Longoskawayan Point and Quinauan near the tip of Bataan, with the idea (I suppose) of establishing a beach-head so they could divide our forces by engaging us on two fronts. They were picked men and would fight to the last man. Not many troops could be spared from the front, so with the help of artillery from Corregidor, some Philippine scouts and air force and navy, troops were assigned to clean out this pocket of Japs. After a lengthy battle, they were backed up against an ocean cliff. But when our troops would call for surrender, the Japanese would yell, "Come in and get me, you S.O.B." Most of them were killed and the rest committed suicide, with the exception of a very few that were badly wounded. The Japanese never found out what happened to their troops, although they tried questioning the P.O.W.s several times, but no one would tell them what had happened.

My buddy, Howard Gunn, was with the group that was fighting the Imperial Marines. One day I slipped away to visit him and found him near a fox-hole, for not all the Japanese had been cleared out at that time. It was great to see and talk to him; he had some wild stories to tell. I felt sorry for him, for the smell of death was there from the unburied Japanese. The flies were terrible. But Howard always made the best of any situation. I finally had to say goodbye, not knowing the next time I was to seem him would be under much sadder circumstances.

By March 1972, about 80% of our front line troops were sick with Malaria and our food supplies and medicine were running out fast. My squadron was issued six cans of salmon for 100 men. The ammunition was also running low. We prayed that somehow the good old U.S.A. would send some help. We still could not realize that our country could not help us. Each night the sound of battle came closer and closer. We heard that General MacArthur had been order to Australia and General Wainwright would take over. I knew that something important would happen soon. About April 7, 1942, I heard that the enemy was putting heavy pressure on the front line. I did not know that it was their all-out drive.

On April 8, early in the evening just after dark, one of our 155mm guns began to fire over our air strip. I could not understand what was happening, and I was scared. One of our officers soon told us we were to move to the small town of Marivelous on the tip of Bataan. We moved out as fast as we could on foot. We walked all night and as we walked we knew that something dreadful had happened. Everything in the world seemed to be blowing up around us. A severe earthquake shook the end of Bataan that night too. It seemed like the end of the world. A few hours later the ground shook again, like another earthquake, but we learned later that our commanders had been ordered to destroy all remaining ammunition and supplies to keep them from falling into enemy hands. We walked as far as we could go and there was no where else to go. This was the end.

Soon the word was passed for us to surrender and await further orders. This was the saddest day of my life. I cried in frustration. General Masaharu Homma had launched an all out attack on the front line with a terrific artillery and air attack, followed by a tank and infantry assault. The American and Filipino troops could not hold out any longer.

The first Japanese I saw came down the road in brand new Ford trucks. The Ford Company must have had a plant in Japan before the war. They

stopped to eat and opened five gallon cans of rations with "Made in U.S.A." printed on the tops.

An officer walked over to us and demonstrated the sharpness of his sword by clipping off some small trees. I guess he wanted us to know they could just as well have been our heads. He directed us to a large open field where many men had gathered already. We had put down our weapons before the Japs had taken us prisoner. I had taken my rifle and broken it over a rock. I had a wrist watch, a large sheath knife and my wallet, which I put under a large stone. I was determined they would get nothing from me. They must have searched us a hundred times, each Jap hoping to get a souvenir. The only thing they did not take from us were our New Testaments - maybe they were superstitious about touching the Holy Book.

We were held in this open field for about 24 hours. Then we were ordered to move out to the road and start walking. Most of us had not anything to eat or drink for at least a day and we were getting hungry and thirsty. The Japs gave us nothing. The Battle of Bataan had cost the Japanese a lot, slowing up their time-table of conquest and costing them thousands of soldiers. They started taking revenge right away. Every time we passed a truck load of soldiers they would bang us on the head with sticks and rifle butts. It was lucky that most of us had our GI helmets. It was humiliating to us to be treated like this. This was just a sample of what we were to endure later.

They pushed us as fast as we could go, because they were preparing an assault on Corregidor and wanted us out of the way. They set up their artillery behind our two field hospitals, since they knew that our artillery on Corregidor would not fire on them. As we walked by our little air strip at Cabcaben, we saw the Japanese setting up gun batteries and fire on Corregidor. I was delighted to see a 12 inch mortar shell make a direct hit on one of the batteries.

They marched us without rest, giving us no food or water. They changed guards every three hours so they were always fresh. Our men, already weak from short rations and disease, soon began to fall out of the column. The Japanese wasted no time with stragglers; they were either shot or run through with a bayonet. Soon the sides of the road were littered with dead men. This had become a march of death for the men that had fought so gallantly for America and the Philippines.

The heat was terrible and men risked their lives for a sip of the vile, scum-covered water in the ditches along beside the road. I stumbled along, my mind blurring, not caring whether I lived or died. We passed dead American and Filipino soldiers who had died fighting the advancing Japanese. The Japs had not even bothered to remove them.

We marched for what seemed like an eternity. Still we were not allowed to stop for water. American and Filipino prisoners became targets for Japanese bayonets. I was beginning to get so tired I knew I could not go much further. There were sugar cane fields along the road and many men were killed trying to get a stalk of the can to chew on. I knew if I did not get something to quench my thirst soon, I would not be able to go on. At this point I no longer cared whether I was shot or not, so I ran into one of the fields, expecting a bullet at any time. I fell behind the column. But a strange thing happened. One of the Jap guards grabbed my arm and help me catch up; I still clutched the stalk of cane. I am sure a higher power must have been protecting me. I chewed this stalk of cane, easing my thirst and receiving energy to go on.

The Bataan Death March had lasted six days and nights. As we came to the town of San Fernando, 65 miles from Mariveles, the Japanese finally let us rest and gave us a little rice and some water. Many brave men had been murdered during those six days. As we departed for our first P.O.W. camp the next day, little did we know this horrible nightmare was only beginning.

At San Fernando we were stuffed into little box cars for the final journey to Camp O'Donnell. I am sure if this had been a long trip more men would have died from suffocation and heat prostration. We arrived at Camp O'Donnell 8 days after we had surrendered.

At last the Death March was over. But if we had known what lay ahead, most of us would have preferred to have died on the march. A total of 55,000 Filipino and 8,000 American P.O.W.s entered Camp O'Donnell, after the most barbaric, sadistic march of death in the history of modern man. Over 2,300 Americans, and almost 10,000 Filipinos had been murdered on the march and thousands of others would perish from its after-effects.

Camp O'Donnell, originally built to house a Philippine division of 12,000 men, was not equipped to house over 60,000 men. The buildings were soom filled to overflowing and many men had to crawl under the floors of the buildings to escape the torents of monsoon rains. This was where I slept. Shortly after we arrived, the Filipinos were separated from the Americans and we had no further association with them.

A Japanese interpreter called an assembly and the camp commander told us we were guests of the Japanese Empire and must obey all orders without question. The interpreter made a special effort to let us know he was born and reared in California and was a graduate of U.S.C. He told us the Japanese would take California soon and they would be the bosses. After all that had happened I wondered if he could be right.

Since almost everything had been collected by the Japs while they were "souvenir hunting" most of us had very few possessions. I ended up with a mess kit, a canteen, and the clothes on my back - a pair of Army fatigues.

The Japs gave us a half a mess kit of rice per meal. This diet was designed to slowly starve us and remove any resistance we might have

had. The water supply in camp was very short and we barely had enough drinking water to go around. There was none for washing and laundry. Sanitary conditions deteriorated fast and by the end of the first month, dysentery had reached epidemic proportions. Many men had contracted the disease from drinking contaminated water from the ditches on the death march. Open latrines and lack of sanitation made the camp a perfect breeding place for the disease.

Of all the diseases to plague the weakened, confined men, dysentery was without a doubt the worst. It caused terrible pain, uncontrollable diarrhea and vomiting. It turned men into skin and bones almost overnight. The disease literally ate up the intestinal tract and caused a horrible death. The death rate rose to the point where the able-bodied men could not bury the dead fast enough.

An attempt was made to establish a hospital, but without medical supplies and water, the hospital became one huge mass of suffering men dying in their own bloody feces. The smell from this place defies description.

Other tropical diseases soon began to appear. The terrible, malignant form of malaria kept under control on Bataan by small prophylactic doses of quinine began to appear. The disease affected the brain and men died within 24 to 36 hours. Tropical ulcers appeared and once they became large they could literally rot a man's leg off. Men weakened by dysentery and too weak to go to the hospital would lie near the latrines. The filth and their own excretment covered them until they died.

The death rate rose to 40 or 50 per day and although we tried to bury the dead in shallow graves outside the camp, dead bodies would often remain unburied for days. The smell of rotting flesh, dysentery, and open latrines was so horrible I will not attempt to describe it.

The dietary deficiency diseases began to appear and added their misery to the other diseases. Beriberi, the terrible disease of the starving,

was first to appear. I can only describe the disease as we P.O.W.s knew it - wet and dry beriberi. The dry caused wasting of the body, unsteady walk, and loss of memory. These poor men staggered around more dead than alive, falling and crawling. They tried to carry on. There was no room in the hospital already overflowing with dying men. The wet type of beriberi could turn a seemingly normal man into a horrible, swollen, bloated man overnight. I have seen men with this disease stand up and the water would run out of them in a stream from any broken spot on the skin. These poor creatures usually died from heart failure.

There was little help for the sick from friends or buddies because the struggle for survival had taken over. I am sorry to say we became calloused to the suffering of others and thought only of our own survival.

I was too weak to do much and spent most of my time lying on the ground under the building. But I was determined to find my good friends Howard Gunn and Tex Blair and see if they had come through the Death March. What strength I could muster I used to look for my friends.

At last I located Howard in the hospital area. He had contracted dysentery and was very sick. I hardly recognized him; he had lost so much weight. We talked for a long time and although his spirits were good and he thought he would get better, I left with a heavy heart because I knew without medical care and food my friend had little chance to live.

Shortly after my visit, my friend passed away. He was a devout Christian and I am sure his faith was with him until the end. I could not find Tex and assumed he had died on the Death March. I heard later that he had survived the three years of prison camp only to lose his life on one of the Jap Hell Ships while being relocated to Japan.

Repeated requests to the Japanese for food and medicine were refused. Indeed, it looked as if we all would die in this wretched hell.

I was weak and hungry and did not escape the diseases of my friends. Soon I was burning with fever and shaking with chills. I had contracted malaria and was soon out of my head. I also contracted dysentery. God only knows why I did not die there like the others. Maybe it was a blessing that my mind became blurred by the disease. I do not know if I could have endured the suffering. There was a long period of time where my mind was almost a blank. I remember nothing of what happened to me, but somehow I survived.

A few things remain in my memory. I dreamed I was home and could hear and see children playing. I also remember seeing Christ come down in a vapor with his arms outstretched as if to welcome me, and I tried to go to him, but the vision faded. I have tried to analyze these visions or dreams and why they remain in my mind but to no avail.

During this time the Japanese decided to move us to another camp. Cabanatuan was also built to house Philippine Army soldiers and was more suitable to house the P.O.W.s and their guards. I remember only riding in the back of a truck with other P.O.W.s to the camp. I saw the trees along the road and wanted to lie under a cool tree and did I probably would have jumped if my buddies had not restrained me.

The next thing I remember was lying on a dirt floor in a building with dying men all around me, and the ever present smell of dysentery. I was sure I must be dying and I wanted to talk to someone that would tell my folks what had happened to me. I seem to remember talking to someone, but it could have been my imagination. The man lying next to me was dead and a blanket covered his body. I took the blanket and covered myself. Then my mind was blank again.

The next thing I remember was being in a long building. Bamboo bays had been built up from the floor for people to sleep on. There was the ever present dying men, most of them with little or no clothing; living skeletons with dysentery eating their guts out, maggots working

in their rectums. The American medics did what they could for them but sometimes cried in frustration because they had nothing to work with. I do not know why I still remained alive after all this time.

Somehow a Chinese man from Manila persuaded or bribed the Japs to let some condensed milk come into the camp. It was decided that the very sick should have it. I began to receive a small portion of milk each day along with the meager rick ration. This must have saved my life, for I cam out of my stupor and began to see my surroundings. I gained strength slowly and finally realized what a terrible state I was in. My coveralls had not been removed since Bataan. All body eliminations had gone into them. My beard and hair were down to my shoulders and were matted and full of lice.

The able-bodied men had gotten the camp water system working, and thank God we had more water. I gradually got myself cleaned up as best as I could but I was still very weak. I remember borrowing a pair of scissors and a friend helped me cut my hair and beard as close as possible. Someone brought me a pan of watter and as I washed my head I left a layer of squirming lice on the water.

The condition of the men remained very bad, since we received little food or medicine. The death rate was still 35 to 50 per day. The burying detail that left each day with naked, emaciated bodies was something I can never forget.

Death was always present. The only thing that kept a man alive was a strong will to live. I have seen men apparently in better shape than I give up and be dead the next day.

The hospital had about six buildings. Two of them sat a little aside from the others. I was in one of these buildings. I found out later that they were called Zero Ward and St. Peter's Ward, both of which had been set aside for the extremely sick and dying men. Indeed, St. Peter's

Ward, was more like a morgue than a place for the living, and Zero Ward, where I was, was very little better. Every morning the dead were gathered up and taken to a shallow mass grave. By the next day the torrents of monsoon rain would have washed away the soil revealing parts of the dead men.

Men crazed with pain would crawl out of the building and die on the ground outside in the rain. At one time, diptheria raged through the camp. The Japanese simply had the victims dragged outside to die in the rain.

I am glad the mind can blot out some things, but there is one incident that will always haunt me. One of the men weakened by dysentery made it to the open latrine, but being weakened by the disease fell into the horrible mess; he crawled out completely covered by slimy feces and maggots. To this day I get sick when this comes to mind.

The other buildings in our area housed men that were not quite so sick and acted as transfer between living and dying. As soon as one could work he was sent to the worker's compound, which was separated from the hospital buildings by a road and two fences.

By this time the Japanese had given some control of the camp to our American officers. The officers didn't always use this power for the good of all. They immediately set up their own separate quarters and I was told they took the pick of the rations. I never knew if this was true.

So many men died the first year that the Japanese increased our diet and gave us more rice and some water buffalo meat and seaweed soup. This slowed the death rate but a lot of men were just too far gone for it to do any good. I eventually became well enough to be transferred to the worker's compound, and I went to work in the vegetable fields. What a relief it was to get away from the sick and dying and

be able to do something. We got the water system in the camp working and even rigged up a shower, which was a blessing for us all.

Most well P.O.W.s had a cooking pot called a quan can. The word "quan" in Filipino means almost anything. I don't remember where the cans came from. They consisted of a large can and a smaller one that fit inside. Charcoal was salvaged from the main camp kitchen, and when put in the bottom of the large can which had holes for a draft, the small can acted as the cooking pot when it was set on the hot coals inside the large can. Anything we could scrounge or steal was cooked in this manner.

In order to live, I decided I must eat as much as I could and figure out any way I could to get food. I acquired a large pair of pants and a hat with a high crown. When I went to work, I tied the legs around my ankles and let the legs bag down. I had holes in the pockets and I would put small vegetables in them and they would fall down the legs to the tie around my ankles. I also put vegetables in the crown of my hat. At the end of the day we were searched when we re-entered the camp. The Japs would slap at my pockets and let me go. If I had been caught it would have mean a terrible beating, or they might have even broken my arms.

The Japanese took most of the produce from the fields for themselves and we got what little was left - sweet potato vines and a weed called pig weed. So rice remained the principle diet and the prisoners where always hungry for protein, even if we got a good portion of rice.

Anything that could flavor the rice was a treat. A detail sent out to gather firewood would bring in wild peppers which were put with water to flavor the rice. The peppers were as hot as hell and very few were needed for flavor. One of our Mexican P.O.W.s decided he could eat one of these little green devils. He bit into it and immediately headed for water. He took a lot of ribbing after that.

Almost everyone worked in the fields and we had the guards all named. This was partly for amusement and it also served a purpose. There was Big and Little Speedo, so named because all the English they knew was "Speedo" which they yelled all day. Each one had a large stick, which they took every opportunity to use on someone's back. We named one guard Air Raid so when we would see him approaching someone would yell Air Raid and everyone would get busy. He was too dumb to catch on.

The Japanese that guarded us were not front line troops, but an old home guard type with some Korean and Formosan converts. Most of the guards knew very little about auto mechanics or even how to drive a motor vehicle. Soon P.O.W.s were assigned to help drive and maintain the vehicles. In fact, our P.O.W.s maintained just about all their equipment. It was rumored that a radio had been built from stolen parts that would pick up newscasts from San Francisco. But if so, I never saw it. However, some of the rumors that filtered down to us proved to be true.

We also got the Japanese propaganda sheet which made claims so fantastic that they made us laugh. One such sheet said Jap warships had steamed up the Mississippi River and shelled Chicago.

Sometime in 1943, the Red Cross managed to get a few medical supplies into the camp. Among these drugs were a few sulfa pills. The Jap guards found out about the pills and seemed to be willing to do almost anything to get some of them. Maybe they all had V.D. Anyway, someone got the idea to make a mold to make exact copies of the pills to trade to the Jap guards. A perfect mold was made and a lot of plaster of paris pills were turned out. Anyone going on a small detail would have a supply of pills to trade for tobacco or anything else we could get from the guards. Long after the real pills were exhausted, the supply of plaster ones continued. Why they never wised up I'll never know, but I guess some of them must have wondered why the American wonder drug would not work on his ailment.

Once in a while a funny thing would happen to our captors. One day the Japs loaded up a two wheel Filipino buffalo cart with sweet potatoes. They had piled the potatoes as high as they could reach. Apparently they were going to trade or sell them to the Filipinos. The cart was so full I wondered if the buffalo could move it. However, the water buffalo is a very powerful animal. The water buffalo has no pores in his skin and must have water poured over him periodically to cool him off, otherwise the animal gets too hot and goes crazy. I guess this one had been neglected and got too hot. All of a sudden he took off at full speed, scattering sweet potatoes all over the road. The last time we saw the cart and buffalo he was still going with a half a dozen guards in pursuit. We had a welcome laugh.

When we first cam to Cabanatuan the lice were very bad. Then someone brought in bed bugs, and they must have killed or run the lice off because they disappeared. The bed bugs were worse, however; they tried to get what little blood we had left. There was just no way to get rid of them.

There were very few escape trys for the Japs made it almost impossible to escape. They had us in ten-men squads and if one man escaped they shot all the rest. There was some guerilla activity and the Japs built two fences around the camp - one to keep us in and the other to keep the guerillas out.

Beatings became so common most of us just took them as a matter of course. I guess the worst beating I had was for eating a sweet potato in the field. The guard hit me in the hip with the butt of his rifle. I got an egg-sized knot from that one that hurt for months and even bothers me today. It was a wonder I was not shot, because I got mad and called him a lousy Jap S.B.

Sometime in the latter part of 1942 or 1943, the Japs took a lot of men to Japan and Korea. Some of these men were there until the end of the war. The only contact we had with the outside was from an

occasional work detail returning to camp. We found out that Bilibid Prison in Manila, a former Phillipine prison, was used as a stopping place for details to and from work details and a place to wait when being shipped to Japan.

I had not yet seen my good friend Little Tex but I heard he was alive and somewhere on a work detail. In Cabanatuan I did not make many friends. I was too busy trying to stay alive. Indeed, everyone was occupied with this task.

In Cabanatuan we found out what had happened at Corredigor after the fall of Bataan. When I talked to some of the survivors they told me that the Japs had mounted an all out amphibious assault from Bataan peninsula. The men on Corregidor had put up a tremendous battle and held the Japs off for almost a month. But they finally managed to land tanks at Monkey Point, the narrow end of the island. The defenders turned their artillery point blank on the Japanese and took a tremendous toll. But more Japs took their place and to avoid complete annihilation General Wainwright arranged to surrender. The prisoners were taken to Manila and marched through the streets. They were beaten and ridiculed before they joined the rest of us.

In a prison camp you live from day to day, endure the ridicule and beatings, and have faith that the next day will bring something better or decide to give up and die. As time goes by, you pray and hope.

Sometime in early 1944 a group of men was picked to leave Cabanatuan on a work detail, destination unknown. I was one of the unfortunate men chosen for this trip. But at the time we thought anything might be better than where we were. Little did we know what we would have to endure for the next few months. We were taken to Manila by truck and turned over to guards from the Japanese Navy. We knew then we were going to the Nichols Field detail. The work on the former American Air Base in Manila had been going on since our surrender. The Japanese, using P.O.W.s and slave labor, intended to make it the longest air strip

in the Pacific. First they had used P.O.W.s captured in and around Manila and later, as their ranks were thinned by disease and death, they got replacements from the Bataan survivors.

This detail was run by one of the most brutal and sadistic bunch of Japs in their whole armed services. It has always been a mystery to me how a civilization so old could produce anything like these beasts. Our buddies before us had already named the guards. The White Angel was a navy lieutenant who always had spotless white uniforms. This beast had murdered at least two men in cold blood, shooting one man and hacking the other to death with his sword. He also caused the death of many others indirectly. I am glad he had been transferred when our detail arrived. The Wolf, Cherry Blossom, Pistol Pete, Sacky Sam and the Fox were the others. These made up the leadership of the Jap guards when we arrived.

When we arrived at the camp we were given a blanket and a place on the bare floor to sleep. Then we were assembled in the courtyard for briefings by the camp interpreter. He told us there would be absolutely no question of not obeying their rules and to emphasize this they grabbed a poor man from our group, threw him to the ground, stuck a water hose in his mouth, pumped him full of water, and jumped on his stomach. When the American doctor tried to interfere he was beaten unmercifully.

Our day started the next morning at 6:00 a.m. with a shout from the Jap guards. We were forced to do exercises for 15 minutes; even the sick were not exempt. We also had to count off in Japanese, which most of us did not know. Each time we missed a number we received a rain of blows. How we learned our numbers so fast I will never know, but I never will forget how to say 836 in Japanese.

Our meals consisted of fish eyes, guts, and sometimes whole fish and a little rice. After breakfast, sick call was conducted. Only 50 men a day were allowed off and many had to be carried or dragged to work.

We were marched through the streets to work and often the Japs would beat us for no reason other than to humble us before the Phillipine people. They used clubs, iron bars and rifle butts. The Jap sentrys broke so many arms and put so many men out of commission that the superior officers had to relieve some of them for fear of impairing the airstrip operation.

At work we were forced to push small mining cars to and from a cut through a hill where the Japs were extending the runway. We worked two men to a car, pushing it to and from the cut. A leveling crew worked at one end and a loading and digging crew worked at the other end.

We became robots plodding along in the hot sun with bleeding feet and Japs yelling and beating us all the way. Many men went insane. Some committed suicide and many injured themselves just to be sent to Bilibid Prison Hospital. At Bilibid the medical treatment was fairly good but the food was bad. There are a lot of good American boys buried under the dirt at Nichols Field.

The Wolf also murdered men in cold blood right before our eyes. One day a man was discovered missing. We were brought off the job and assembled while the guards looked for him. He was found passed out because he was too weak to go on. He was dragged before the group, beaten and kicked, and led away and shot.

Another time, a boy passed out from Malaria. That evening Wolf saw the man was still unconscious. He banged his head on the concrete floor and had him carried to the shower. There he held the boy's head under water until he drowned. Some of the other tortures included hanging by the thumbs, or being tied to a post in the hot sun with no water.

We also had "rotten apples" in our own ranks. A few bullies took what they could from the weak and helpless. One of these accused me of stealing from him and was going to give me a beating. I had concealed

a pair of broken scissors. When I backed up against the wall I prepared to defend myself as best as I could. But when this guy saw I had a weapon he backed off like the coward he was. This continued until one day one of these bastards hit a poor weak man and killed him. This was murder. The rest of us turned on him and would have killed him if the Japs had not taken him away. We never knew what they did with him. The days dragged on and most of us cared little whether we lived or died. The beatings and torture became so routine we just endured it and hoped and prayed.

I tried to make myself as inconspicuous as possible and look busy. But each morning in line the Fox seemed to pick me to slap around. I endured his beatings, trying to maintain as much dignity as possible. Maybe he could see the hatred in my eyes, for although I am not a violent man, I would have gladly cut his heart out.

The air field was used by the Jap Air Force, and being an Air Force man I took special notice of their aircraft. They must have had poor pilots or weak landing gear for they seemed to have a lot of crack ups when landing. The wheels just seemed to fold up. We hoped and prayed they would all crack up.

At last there came a time I could not go on anymore. My malaria had returned and I was too weak to work. It was my good fortune to be sent to Bilibid Prison. My first look at the old prison, originally built by the Spanish with thick stone walls 20 feet high, was one of foreboding. The ancient walls were covered with a fungus growth and the smell of death that was present in all Jap P.O.W. camps was present.

Upon entering I received the ever present kicks and abuse from the guards and a search for God only knows what. But inside the place was heaven compared to Nichols Field. I was given some medicine by the American doctors and had a chance to rest. Soon I was recovering

as much as I could on the starvation diet. I was lucky enough to get a job helping in the kitchen where I received a little more food. This helped me regain my strength.

Soon a group was sent back to Cabanatuan and I was with it. If I had gone back to Nichols Field I probably would have given up and died. By this Cabanatuan had dwindled from thousands of men to a few hundred, and most of them were very sick. The Japs had been transporting men to Japan for several months until just this handful was left. We learned later that most of the men moved out of the camp were put on unmarked ships bound for Japan. Most of these ships were sunk by our own submarines. What a terrible thing to happen after surviving for so long in this hell. I can't understand why our intelligence did not know about these ships.

Late in 1944 there was a lot of rumors that American forces were near. But there was no concrete evidence. Our enemy still acted the same as always and their propaganda paper always claimed they were winning. After so long a time even their propaganda was almost believable. Our hopes were at a low ebb.

One day the guards did not come in for the usual garden detail. There was no explanation for the day off. We were mystified as to why because the Japs had never done this before. But we considered it our good fortune to be able to rest a little and we took advantage of it.

I had made myself a hammock in the upper part of the barracks to get away from the bed bugs. I was resting in my hammock listening to the speculations of the other men when I heard a large formation of airplanes. I did not think much about it because the Japs often flew over our camp. However, they did not sound like the usual Jap planes. Some of the men went out to look and comment, but I guess we could not believe after all this time they were American. The formation flew on, but a short time later returned. This time I got up to look with the others.

The moment I saw the formation I knew it was not Japanese. It consisted of heavy dive bombers in perfect formation and fast little fighter ships circling the large formation. What a beautiful sight! Before I could gather my wits a Jap medium bomber came over the camp. As soon as he was past the camp two little fighters hit him, one from the top and one from below. They cut the bomber in two. Then we saw the U.S. Navy insignia on the wings. I thought, "Oh God, is it really true? After all this time, they really have returned." One group broke and attacked a small airstrip near our camp. The sound of their guns was terrifying. The airstrip must have been badly damaged.

The large formation had attacked Clark Field and was returning to their carrier bases. We knew if carriers could get close enough to attack, the main American forces would not be far way. We wanted to cheer and shout but we were afraid of the guard. The next day the guards said nothing about the attack. We went to the vegetable garden as usual. The guards acted as if nothing had happened.

The planes came back while we were in the fields working. They attacked the air base nearby. We were pretty scared because they were making their strafing runs over the vegetable field. The Jap guards were also scared; so we both hid in a ditch this time. I guess we had something in common for once.

The planes attacked for three days and then were gone. We were not to see them again for several weeks. So our morale began to sag again. We wondered if they had been driven off by the Japs. But when they did come back they came in force, not only Navy planes but also USAAF planes. Flights of B-25s and Giant Liberators could be seen all over the sky. The sound of the guns and bombs furnished a constant serenade for us and our morale was very high.

Finally our guards admitted that Americans had landed on Leyte Island and a terrific battle was in progress. We knew then if we were not

murdered by the Japanese we would soon be free.

The guards showed no emotion or change from their regular routine and we had no way of knowing how near our forces were, but from the air activity we knew that we must have wiped out the Japanese air forces for our planes seemed to have no interference from Japanese aircraft.

Some time later we were in camp for a rest day. In the afternoon, the guards came down the barbed wire fence to each station, picked up the guard, and soon there were no guards left in the camp. An interpreter came into the compound and told us they were moving out, and if we stayed in the camp we would not be harmed, but if we left we would be shot. By 6 o'clock there wasn't a guard or Japanese soldier in camp. Some of us wanted to leave immediately, but the senior officers in the camp decided that there were too many sick men and we would just wait for our forces to rescue us. By this time we knew that they were near. We could hear the rumble of big guns and the Japanese were moving men and equipment up the highway near our camp.

There was intense air activity. Even at night, the planes would attack the Japanese transport trucks on the highway. We could not understand how these planes could attack without flares, but apparently they were doing a great deal of damage, because the Japs were shouting and jabbering all the time. A truck or tank would catch fire and by the light we could see a large black plane. This was the famous Black Widow. It was equipped with radar, a device most of us had never heard of before.

Since the Japanese were gone, we went to the fields to take what we needed to eat. We rounded up some pigs and chickens and ate better than we had for years. However, we were not without guards for very long. Groups of soldiers moved in where the former guards had lived. They watched us closely but they didn't bother us. We continued to go to the vegetable fields and take what we needed.

We assumed that our forces had landed somewhere to the south and the Japanese army was retreating before them. Various patrols moved into our camp to rest because they knew that the Air Force would not attack the camp. We had been without our former guards for about three weeks, but were worried about these new soldiers that were moving in and out of camp. They could come in and murder us at any time. We could hear the rumble of guns to the west and we knew that there must be a battle going on close to the camp. We knew that our forces were aware of our location because they had flown over the camp to look us over.

On January 28 or 29, 1945, the prisoners had gone to bed early as usual. There was nothing to do after dark but go to bed. I had settled down for the night when all hell broke loose. It was about 7:30 when guns started going off all around us. I was sure the Japanese were going to murder us. I jumped out of my bed and ran outside and strated crawling toward the fence. I had only gone a few yards when I saw a big man in a strange uniform. My first thought was "My God! Now the Germans are helping them!" Someone asked the man if he was a Yank. He said, "Yes, let's get the hell out of here!" P.O.W.s were pouring out the buildings. The word had spread fast and men that had been sick for months got up and walked out. The ones that could not walk were helped by the Filipino civilians that had come with the Americans G.I.s.

We followed the Rangers out of camp across the rice fields toward the Pampanga River. A terrific battle was going on all around us and the bullets were buzzing by. We finally waded across the river and the shooting seemed to die down. I guess the Japanese decided not to follow us across the river. We came to Plateros, a small Phillipine village, where we were organized and the sick were placed in water buffalo carts so they wouldn't have to walk. The American soldiers were from the 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion and they had had valuable help from the Filipino guerilla forces.

We were then about thirty miles behind the Japanese lines and in the direct path of the American troops that were advancing from their landing at Lingayen Gulf. We still had a long way to go before we would be out of danger. We had to cross two main highways before we reached our own lines, and the enemy traffice was heavy on them all the time.

The Rangers were great. They gave their clothes and food to us without a second thought. In Plateros, when a Filipino saw that I had no shoes, he took off his own and gave them to me. What a generous people they are.

We reached our main forces January 31, 1945. Not one prisoner was hurt on the journey. The next morning we were met by a field kitchen and American hamburgers were served to the men who could eat them. Nothing had ever tasted so good to me. We were given some clothes and taken in trucks and ambulences to Lingayen. Shortly after I boarded the truck, I saw the first American flag I had seen in three years; I broke down and cried with joy. At Lingayen a camp had been prepared for us; Admiral Nimitz sent rations from his own flag ship - we ate over 800 rations a day, almost twice what the other G.I.s ate. We gained one and two pounds daily.

The full story of our rescue was told to us after we had settled down at Lingayen. On January 27, General Kruegar's forces on their way to Manila had received word from a Filipino that Americans P.O.W.s were confined in a camp near Cabanatuan, directly in the path of the advancing American forces. The General ordered his staff to plan a rescue immediately. The rescue forces consisted of 107 Rangers from the 6th Infantry Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Henry A. Mucci. There were also Company C, under Captain Robert W. Prince of Seattle, Washington, and one platoon from Company F, commanded by Lieutenant Frank Murphy from Springfield, Massachusetts, plus 150 armed Filipino guerillas, commanded by Major Lapham and Captain

Pojota, both former officers in the Far East Army. A team of Alamo scouts, an intelligence unit, completed the force, and the whole operation depended on their performance.

They had been sent in to scout the camp and had sent back detailed reports to Colonel Mucci. The Rangers had moved up, dodging Japanese on the main roads, and keeping out of sight of the villages. They finally set up around the camp on January 29. The Rangers surprised the Japanese completely. In a few minutes, all of the guards had been killed, about 225 altogether.

Captain Pojota's guerillas set up a road-block about twenty five yards from a bridge north of the prison camp on the road leading to Cabu, where the main force of the Japanese army was located. About 1,000 Japanese troops were rushed to the camp, but they had to cross the bridge that had been fortified by the guerilla troops, who opened up their automatic weapons. The Japs brought in eight tanks to help their men, but they were taken care of too. More than 400 Japanese were killed on that bridge. They had managed to fire some mortar rounds and had fatally wounded Captain Roy F. Sweezy and Captain James C. Fischer.

The two guerilla outfits formed a rear guard and we moved out to join our main forces. A bond was forged between the prisoners and the Rangers and great friendships grew. We stayed at Lingayen for about a week, rested, ate good food, and gained weight. After a week, we boarded planes for Leyte. We were anxious to get home, but we did hate to leave our new friends. We stayed at Leyte for two days and boarded a transport ship for home. We made one stop in New Guinea. Our servicemen there gave us a tremendous welcome. We were given the run of the New Hollandia Army Base and could have anything we wanted. We stayed there only a few hours before resuming our trip to San Francisco and home.

All in all, the Rangers had rescued 512 men: 490 Americans, 20 British, and 1 Canadian. Only 490 Americans, the survivors of Bataan, Corregidor and three years of hell. The British were survivors of the Singapore campaign. They had been on a Japanese ship headed for Japan that had been sunk off the coast of Luzon. They had been lucky enough to make it to shore where they were recaptured and brought to our camp a few months before the rescue.

Our transport arrived in San Francisco on March 8, 1945. After a great welcome from fireboats and service people we were taken to Letterman General Hospital for physical examinations. After a few days in the hospital we were allowed to attend the official welcome prepared for us by the great city of San Francisco. They city had seen many parades, but none so strange as this one. There were 275 ex-P.O.W.s riding in Red Cross station wagons.

The other men were still too weak to participate in the celebration and remained in the hospital. The people of San Francisco declared the little band of Bataan veterans heroes. Thousands turned out to see us pass. We were taken to the City Hall where Mayor Lapham expressed the city's greetings and presented each of us with a medallion which had been struck as San Francisco's tribute to our heroism. From there we went to the Palace Hotel for a luncheon with relatives and high ranking officers. Because we did not consider ourselves heroes we were overwhelmed by all the attention given to us, but we were thankful for it and will always remember the people of San Francisco. For me there will always be something special about the Golden City.

A short time after I arrived home, my old friend Gordon Smith got in touch with me. He had read about my release and had come to see me as soon as possible. It was great to see him alive and well.

He had many stories to tell. He had gone to the jungle and had

joined up with a group of native Moro tribesmen after the Japanese had captured Mindanao. They had carried on guerilla warfare against the Japanese until the American forces came back. They gave valuable information to the American forces when they landed. Smitty later became best man at my marriage. He married a friend of my wife's.

As years passed, we drifted apart and I lost track of him. As I was writing this story I thought a lot about him and hoped that somehow my thoughts would reach him. Suddenly, I received a phone call from him. He had been living in the San Francisco Bay area, approximately 100 miles from me. We have since renewed our friendship. I hope I never lose track of him again.

I only wish Tex and Howard could have joined us.

The names of Bataan and Corregidor have almost disappeared from the minds of the American people and our youth probably would not recognize them at all. Out of approximately 22,000 men captured by the Japanese, less than 3,000 are alive today. The picture of my wasted, tortured friends will always remain in my mind. I don't know why the Lord chose me to live. He must have had a purpose - maybe it lies in my children.

Today there are also brave American men imprisoned by a foreign power. They languish in the disease-ridden, rat infested torture chambers of Hanoi. The United States seems helpless to do anything about it. Perhaps these men have given themselves a name, as did the men of Bataan. We called ourselves the

"Battling Bastards of Bataan;
No mama, no papa, no Uncle Sam;
No aunts, no uncles, no cousins, no nieces;
No pills, no planes, no artillery pieces;
... and nobody gives a damn."

APPENDIX

We called ourselves "The Battling Bastards of Bataan ... and nobody gives a damn." Thank God someone did give a damn. The American people never forgot us during those long years of imprisonment. We fought, we suffered, and a lot of my friends and fellow Americans died for the freedom we hold so dear today. Americans defending freedom today in a foreign land are suffering and dying in foreign torture camps for that same freedom - and they will not be forgotten.

The people of America considered us heroes when we returned home. We were bewildered because we had only done our duty for the country that we loved and the banner we fought and died for; a country and a banner that represented a freedom millions of Americans like us had died to protect in previous conflicts with the enemies of freedom.

If someone were to ask me today if I would do it again - go through the unspeakable hell and torture I endured for three long years - I would answer him without hesitation, "You're damn right! Where's my gun, my uniform, and my flag."