

# **Back From The Living Dead**

Back From The Living Dead

MAJOR BERT BANK

An original story describing the infamous March  
of Death; 33 months in a Japanese Prison  
and liberation by the Rangers.

Major Bert Bank

THIS Booklet is humbly dedicated to my Mother  
and Father, and to my many friends who were  
interested in me, and whose prayers were responsible  
for my deliverance from the ordeal described herein.

## FOREWORD

He breezed through the office with a hearty laugh and a healthy handshake as he bid us farewell when going into service.

When he came back it was with the same sort of welcome. "The same old Bert" we said and undoubtedly these qualities helped him to survive the ordeal that had come in the intervening time.

Bert was on his way to becoming a crackerjack advertising solicitor at The Tuscaloosa News when the war clouds gathered. He left us to go into service in 1941 and he was called up from inactive status on his reserve commission.

From the time he left us until he came back this year, Bert went through a lot that many other men did not survive. He was taken prisoner of the Japs on

Bataan, survived the Bataan March of Death and 33 months internment in a Jap prison camp. Now he's a patient at Valley Forge General Hospital where Army doctors are attempting to restore his sight to normal. The long, gruelling months on a meager diet took its toll.

But Bert doesn't complain. "There are a lot of other fellows less fortunate than I," he will tell you.

Many friends have asked him to tell of his experiences. During the course of bond tours and other public appearances in the Army's behalf, Bert has recounted these experiences. And so he thought he would write them down for these friends. That's the reason for this booklet.

The story of his capture and internment are here in Bert's own words. He is the man identified as the Captain Bert of Alabama in the late Lieutenant Colonel Edward Dyess' story "The March of Death." Bert was

scheduled to make a break from the Jap prison camp with Colonel Dyess but was sick at the time and could not make it.

So this is the story of Major Bert Bank, a native Tuscaloosan and graduate of the University of Alabama. He's one of the men who came back from the "living dead."

This is the original story, a part of which was printed serially in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat October 4 to 12, 1945.

Norman H. Bassett

Editor, The Tuscaloosa News

PART I Saved From Death by Daring U. S. Rangers,  
Major Bank Relates Story of Sensational Raid

on Cabanatuan Prison

On January 30, 1945, 511 American, Dutch, British, and civilian prisoners of war became free men again.

These starved and beaten men had been subjected to three years of “hell” at the hands of the Japanese.

The Americans were from Bataan and Corregidor, while the British and Dutch prisoners were survivors from a ship which had been bombed by American planes off the coast of Luzon on September 21, 1944.

The Japanese had rescued the 60 survivors of a ship carrying approximately 800 and brought them to our camp at Cabanatuan. The civilians were interned at the outbreak of the war, a few being brought to Cabanatuan from Manila. There were several camps in which there were only civilian prisoners.

Rangers and Guerrillas Make Daring Raid

On the night of January 30, 1945 (Jan. 29 in the



States) 100 men of the Sixth Army Ranger Infantry Battalion, assisted by approximately 200 Filipino Guerrillas, staged the most miraculous and sensational rescue in our history. Coming 28 miles behind the Jap lines they evacuated 511 hospitalized and weakened prisoners of war. Their job was not completed when they had killed every guard surrounding the camp, for it was necessary for them to carry many who were unable to walk on a jaunt which lasted from 7:30 o'clock that night until 10:00 the following morning. At that time American trucks met us and carried us to the American lines. We had no pre-knowledge of this rescue at all, and when the firepower started at 7:15 P.M. we all thought that the Japanese guards had opened up on the prisoners, as we did not expect them to turn us over to the Americans alive. Then, too, just the previous day the Japs had come over and asked our American CO. how many could walk if it were necessary. This meant to us that they were getting ready to move us. We had also heard through some of the Filipinos that the Japs had killed many

of the American prisoners of war. We were later told how at Palawan the Japanese had set fire to 190 Americans and shot them.

### Prisoners, Distrustful of Japs, Keep Under Cover

The Rangers' fire power lasted approximately 13 minutes, during which time all the Americans were lying flat on the ground. At the cessation of this firing, which was the most terrific we had ever heard, the rescuers ran into the compound screaming. "The Yanks are here, run for the main gate," but not one of the American prisoners stirred. We whispered to each other not to move, that it was a trap to get us to run and then they, the Japs, would open up on us. Of course, the Japs did not need an excuse to shoot us, but they might consider this the most convenient way out.

Nevertheless, during this effort on the part of the Americans to get us to run, I crawled down a ditch

on my stomach, close to a man with a rifle, who was still screaming. “Run for the main gate, the Yanks are here.” He was crying, “What the hell is the matter with you people, don’t you want to be free?” Well, very reluctantly. I asked him if he was a Yank, to which he replied, “I’m from Oklahoma.” At that I shouted, “That is good enough for me,” and ran like hell for the main gate.

## Guerrillas Blockade Road

The Rangers had come inside the camp to get us, while the guerrillas accompanying them put a blockade on the road. After we evacuated the camp, 500 Japs with 12 tanks started after us and the guerrillas fought a rear guard action as the Rangers were assisting the prisoners. The tanks were destroyed and the Japs that were not killed, fled.

Many Filipinos were outside the camp with carabao carts to carry those who could not walk. The stronger were aiding the weaker. A Ranger was helping me through the darkness of the night, as my eyes are very bad, and I was carrying a paralytic on my back. The Filipinos in the barrios were waiting for us to come through and they were all crying with joy and happiness. They were screaming "Mabahuay" which in the Philippine language means good morning, hope you are well, wonderful to see you or anything else which may indicate a word of good cheer. They were

all crying and very happy as they had also been mistreated by the Japanese during the past three years.

The Rangers seemed as happy as the prisoners they had freed. All during the night and the next morning they run up and down the long columns inquiring if anyone was from their home towns.

Hear of “Bazookas” and L.S.T.’a

We first received information about the new Army equipment. After they had killed all the 150 Japs guarding us and we had evacuated the camp, I asked a Ranger what type of mortar I had heard during the firing. He casually replied that it was a bazooka, whereas I and a few others standing by asked “What in the hell is our Army using now, Bob Burns’ Bazooka?” The Ranger immediately realized that he was talking to men who had been out of circulation for three years and had no idea of any of the Army’s new equipment. He also began speaking of L.S.T.’s and other amphibious equipment. We reminded him

again of our ignorance concerning modern equipment, and he apologized and described to us some of the equipment used in the landing on Luzon.

At our first stopping point at about midnight, we were told by Lieutenant Colonel Mucchi, the commanding officer of the Rangers, that when we reached the Rizal road, approximately 16 miles ahead, we would be safe. Three days previously the Japs were in control of this road, so for 16 miles we were in danger of being ambushed by the Japs. Fortunately the

Americans had driven the Japs back and had taken control of the road during the three days interim. We were all very tired and hungry the following morning when, at 10 o'clock, we were met by American trucks and soldiers who gave us cigarettes and toilet articles and told us of the wonderful meal awaiting us at the hospital at the 12th Battalion Replacement Center.

We were loaded on trucks and started for the hospital in real American vehicles and not standing on each other as we had done when we travelled with the

Japanese.

### Sight of “Old Glory” Thrills All

A few minutes after we had started in the trucks, we passed a barrio with a large American flag flying in the air. Every American in those 40 or 50 trucks stood at attention and saluted with large tears rolling down their cheeks. We had been through lots and lots and starved and taken beatings from the Japs and had become very tough but the sight of this “Old Glory” made us all realize that we were not really so tough and that we were real Americans and still had that emotionalism which most Americans possess.

During this ride in the trucks which lasted for about two hours, the American soldiers who had received word of our liberation were lined up along the road, cheering us as we passed. When they saw our trucks approaching they ran from their tents as far as 600 to 800 yards to yell a word of cheer to us. And they

were all wonderful, and to 511 Americans it was a great satisfaction to see such a demonstration. It was also gratifying to see the large amount of supplies and equipment that our Army now has. On Bataan and Corregidor we had seen nothing like this, and during our imprisonment the Japs had told us that our Army had been defeated and we had no Navy and other similar lies. Of course we did not believe this, but after all, three years in a Jap prison camp is a long time.



## Bread and Butter Favorite Food

We arrived at the hospital at about 12:30 P.M. and we were given our first real food in three years. Food such as bread, butter, meat, potatoes, milk, and other items which we knew existed but had not seen. We sat down to eat and everyone was reluctant to begin because of the fine silverware on the table. We were all afraid that we could not handle these knives and forks, but someone made the first move and that was all that was necessary. We all dove into the meal. I think everyone enjoyed bread and butter more than anything. The nurses all cried and felt sorry for us as we were ravenous and ate like animals. However, it did not take us long to regain our former table manners. I was actively engaged in devouring bread and butter when a nurse came up to me and asked me if I had ever heard of Frankie Sinatra. I turned to someone sitting next to me and seeing the expression on his face, I knew the same question was in his mind.

I voiced it, “Who is this guy Sinatra?” and she told me that he sings and makes all the girls swoon. At that I yelled, “Pass more bread and butter, please.”

Embark at Leyte for U.S.A.

We remained at this place for two days and were then moved further to the rear to the Fourth Replacement Center where we remained for five days. Some remained there longer. We were fed royally and given beer each afternoon at 4 o'clock. We all picked up weight and began looking more like humans than skeletons. Many of us could not recognize each other because of the amount of weight we had gained. After being wonderfully entertained here, we flew to Leyte and remained there two days before we boarded ship, U.S.S. Anderson, and started for the good old U.S.A., the country that we had been dreaming of for three years. It took us a week to get from Leyte to Hollandia, New Guinea, because we were in a 40-ship convoy, and from Hollandia we made it to the U. S. in 14 days.

At Hollandia we were aboard ship for two days and the people there certainly entertained us. They had clothing, food and entertainment. These Red Cross girls and nurses certainly looked good to us, as they were the first women we had seen in three years.

## Meets Brother at Hollandia

I had a pleasant surprise at Hollandia. The Air Corps officials ascertained that I had a brother at Morotai and they flew down to get him and flew him back to Luzon. Finding that I had already left they flew to Leyte, and I had left there, too. They heard that we were stopping at Hollandia, so they flew him there and he was the first person I saw when we docked at Hollandia. We spent two days together and he gave me the first information of the homefolks that I had in three years. After leaving Hollandia we were on the water 14 days and on March 8th we passed under the Golden Gate bridge. I don't think that there was an American P.W. who did not come out on deck and cry as we passed under the bridge. We were witnessing a sight that we had been dreaming of for three years.

## San Francisco Welcomes Returning P.W.'s

San Francisco had a wonderful reception for us.

They had a large parade and luncheon and we were all taken to Letterman General Hospital, where we were processed and sent out to any General Hospital we chose. I selected Northington General since it was located in my home town. We were told that after we were dismissed from the hospital we would be given a 90 days leave, after which we would have two weeks at a redistribution station and then be given any post we desired as long as we were qualified for the job.

The only thing that marred the liberation at Cabanatuan was the fact that two prisoners died just as we

reached the American lines the morning after the raid. They both died from a heart attack as a result

of the march during the night. It was certainly a

tragedy that they had to die so late in the game. However, they did have the satisfaction of dying while in

the hands of Americans and being accorded a funeral

usually given to Americans instead of being thrown

in a hole with 20 other bodies as the Japs had done

during our imprisonment.

It is useless to try to describe how wonderful it was to these Americans to be back in the States. Nevertheless, I don't think that the hell that we have gone through for the past three years will ever be completely forgotten. Occasionally now I wake up during the night, having dreamed about some atrocity in camp, and it is hard for me to realize that it was an actual occurrence. I am sure that if these Americans had known what was in store for them when they began that horrible March of Death, very few would have been taken alive.

PART II Horrors of The March of Death From  
Bataan Peninsula; Prisoners Denied Food, Water;

## Buried Alive

When Bataan fell those men who were not fortunate enough to get to Corregidor began this March up the National Highway which was to mean death to many. Those who were fortunate enough to survive this march were to see many days of hell at the hands of the dastardly Japanese.

The lines on Bataan disintegrated about 4 o'clock the afternoon of April 8, 1942. The American troops were driven back to Mnrivales, which is the southern tip of Bataan. the little peninsula where so many Americans held a vast army of Japs for four months in one of the greatest defenses ever staged in the history of America.

The following morning. General King, who was our commander, went forward to ask the Japanese for surrender terms. At approximately 9 A.M. the American Headquarters received word that the surrender

had become official, but the Japanese continued to bomb and strafe the Americans on the island. We were in terrific confusion. During the day the Japs discontinued the air activity and we began this March up the National Highway which for myself lasted five days and five night. All Americans were congregated at Marivales and started marching north. I fortunately happened to be a little farther north at the time and was on this march for only five days, but many marched as long as 10 days and 10 nights.

#### No Water Permitted for Entire March

The Japs had just sent up 80,000 troops from Singapore to put on this final drive and when they were successful in forcing us to surrender they were very bitter. They were crack Jap front line troops and this was the first opportunity that they had had to inflict cruelty on the Americans. They did everything: possible to make us feel inferior to them. They lined the Americans four abreast and made them stay in the road. We were surrounded by guards on bicycles and



other vehicles. We were told when we started that we would not be allowed any water at all, and it was very difficult to restrain from getting water as there are hundreds of artesian wells along the highway. All one of us would have to do would be to step a few feet either to the left or right and we could drink all the water we desired. But we had strict orders to drink no water. If anyone of us attempted to get water, we would be shot, just as we would be if we accepted food from the Filipinos.

We found out that the Japs meant this order. They took everything they desired from us when we started this march. They took all the clothing that they wanted for themselves, all watches, fountain pens, *etc.* During the noon hour every day they would give us 'about face' and march us for five or eight miles to the rear, between noon and 2 P.M. when it was terrificly hot.

Hundreds were killed by the guards or died from exhaustion.

The Japs were moving vast amounts of equipment south and installing guns along the beach preparatory to landing on Corregidor. During this march the Americans on Corregidor were firing at the Japs and we had many men who were injured from this shell-ing from our own lines.

### Lieutenant Colonel Bayoneted for Falling Out

We saw atrocities committed by the Japs that we thought could never happen to Americans. They would not let the strong help the weak. If a strong man attempted to help the weak they would shoot both of them, so we were all reluctant to help anyone who fell out. One day I was assisting a lieutenant colonel who was very large, and he kept telling me that he was going to fall out and I was pleading with him to continue marching because they would kill him if he fell out. I held him as long as I could and finally T had to let him fall. When he fell a Jap sentry came and pushed me on, and as I looked back I saw him bayonetting the colonel through the stomach. This was a

habitual occurrence. Anyone who fell out on the march was instantly killed. Many Americans and Filipinos were buried alive on this march.

### American Prisoners Forced to Bury Filipino Alive

One day during the march, I, along with other Americans, was called out of the line by a Jap, whom we thought was an officer, and forced to dig a large hole at the point of a bayonet. Then, we were forced to bury a Filipino alive. Just before throwing the last shovel of dirt on his body the Filipino moved and a Jap guard was ordered by this officer to bayonet him through the stomach. Many Americans were buried alive also. (Every incident related in this story was either seen by me or told by some responsible person after we arrived at our first prison camp). Many men on arriving at O'Donnell were actually stark crazy from witnessing such atrocities. One man was required to bury an American officer alive after the officer had passed out on the march.

## One Rice Ball Ration for Five Day March

On this March, I was with my very good friend Lieutenant Colonel Dyess who escaped in 1943 and successfully reached the States and gave the American people the first information concerning our prison life and the March of Death. The third day of this march, Dyess and I were very thirsty and we stepped to the right a few feet and attempted to get a drink of water from an artesian well. A guard shot at me and missed, but killed a Filipino standing right next to me. This was not an unusual incident, as many of us were desperate for water. For the entire five days the Japs gave us no water at all. After seeing so many killed in the attempt, few of us would dare to try to get the water.

On this march we were given one small rice ball about the size of a 50 cent piece. Our lips were so blistered and raw that we could not eat even this small

amount of rice. That is all the food the Japs gave us during these five days and nights of horror. I reiterate, many were on this march as long as 10 and 12 days, but in my group we were only marching for five days. I will never understand how those few made it for 10 days and longer.

The third night it rained very hard and about midnight the Japs said we could rest, but the minute we

sat down on the road they screamed "Forward march."

This was very difficult, as the moment we sat down our limbs became so stiff we could hardly rise again.

During this second of rest, I fortunately sat in a mud hole and I drank this water in the hole, even though animals and humans had marched through it for days.

Along the highway one saw bodies maimed and completely decapitated as the result of the Japanese trucks along the highway. The Japs in these trucks would hit the Americans on the head in passing. One day a Jap in a passing truck attempted to decapitate

me and I ducked and he completely cut off the head of a Filipino standing next to me. One day during the march we heard a blood curdling scream and when we looked over into a nearby rice pattie we saw a guard cutting the stomach out of a poor old Filipino. I was later told that the Filipino had refused to march any farther. The Filipino was not dead when they finished cutting out his stomach and he was begging the guard to shoot him, but he was refused even that.

### Americans Forced to Eat Human Flesh

One person told me that he, along with other Americans, had been required to eat pieces of human flesh during the march. Another American told me that he had seen several men who had had their penis cut off and stuck in their mouths.

It is certainly hard for the American public to believe that anything like this actually occurred, but the three years spent by the Americans in these prison

camps are probably the most terrifying of any period in American history. The most amazing thing to me about this march and the thing that I was to see borne out later in prison camp was the high morale of the Americans in the face of these atrocities. I remember late one evening we all sang "God Bless America." The Japs immediately forced us to stop. They could not understand how our morale remained so high, but we were to see the same thing in prison camp.

#### Filipinos Killed for Throwing Food to Prisoners

On this march the Filipinos were lined along the highway and tried to give us food, but many were killed for throwing us rice, candy and cassava cakes. I remember one old Filipino woman threw a rice ball out of a window of her house. An official looking person, probably an officer, jumped out of his car and, with an enlisted man, ran into the house. We heard the poor old woman screaming and then there was a moment of silence and the Japs came out of the

house. This was also a common thing as many of the Filipinos took great risks in giving us food, and were not careful to see if there were any Japs around. I am convinced after witnessing the demonstration by the Filipinos on this march and after we were liberated that they are 100 per cent for the Americans. The Japs have mistreated them terribly and have not gained the support of the natives at all. Once on this march a Filipino threw me a piece of sugar candy and I will never forget the expression of a few Americans close by when I offered them a bite of sugar.

They fell on their knees and cried. One would have thought that they were being turned loose instead of being given a suck of a hard piece of sugar candy. That was really wonderful and it give us a little more energy.



## Slashes Off Finger for Ring

One man told me that a Jap took the glasses from an officer and the officer could not see and had to be led the remainder of the march. The Japs took all rings and jewelry. One man refused to give a ring to the guard and, when the guard attempted to take it from the American's finger, he was unable to do so. He pulled a bolo out and cut off the finger and ring and forced the man to move on. This was witnessed by one of the prisoners who cried every time he told the story.

I was walking along the road during the morning of the fourth day and an official looking car stopped right next to me and a man in the rear motioned for me to come over by the car, which I did. He asked me something in Japanese and since I was unable to understand, he hit me over the head several times and pushed me on. I am sure that he was a high ranking

officer. His uniform was covered with insignia and he was about 55 years old. He had a driver and rode in the back seat.

### Prisoners Taunted on America's Lack of Armed Power

During this march the Japs kept asking us where the wonderful American Army and Navy were and where was the Air Corps about which we had boasted so much.

No one will ever know how many Americans died on this march. When a man fell out he was shot and buried or even burned on some occasions. At about two o'clock one morning I was weak and walking from one side of the road to the other. I accidentally bumped into a guard. He hit me on the head with something which some of the fellows told me later was an iron rod. It knocked me out completely. Fortunately for me, a few of the fellows carried me for about six hours. When I came to I had a big gash on my head.

If these men had not carried me, I would have been killed like the rest who fell out. I think the fact that it was so dark and the guards could not see very well, was the only reason the men were able to assist me.

Many die of Malaria and Dysentery

On this march the Japs were riding ahead of the column and the pace set was terrific. We had to stay closed up and if one dragged behind he was immediately bayoneted. It is amazing what an individual can do when there is a 'slant eye' behind him with a bayonet. We were all very weak from fighting on Bataan. Many of us had\*dysentery and malaria, which is of course common in the tropics. On this march those with amoebic dysentery were in a very precarious condition as they were not allowed to have a howel movement. Many just fell out and died and those who were able to keep going were living in filth. They had no water to wash their bodies and after arriving at the first prison camp it was going to be 35 days before they

were to get any water to use externally.

PART III Unattended Sick, Unburied Dead Litter  
Japanese Prison At Camp O'Donnell After Death  
March.

We arrived at our first prison camp at O'Donnell on April 14, less hundreds who had originally began this march. We were given a good case of sun treatment here for an entire day. We were to hear the Jap commander the following morning. He began his speech in the heat of the day. We were in the sun, weak and starving and sick. He, the Jap CO of the camp, was under a canopy and talked to us for about two hours. He told us that we were captives and not prisoners. He said that we would be treated as captives and that we were his enemy and would always be the enemy of the Japs. We always referred to him as "little Hitler." We had all the guards and officers named. He said that if Japan was defeated this time, that she would come back again to fight us. He was speaking through his interpreter, but I am sure that the

“little Hitler” could understand and speak English because he would correct the interpretation of his speech. All the officers used interpreters and I have been told that they are required to do so as they are not allowed to speak English to a group of Americans.

## Disease Decimates Ranks of Prisoners

Here the Japs inspected us closely to see that we had nothing of importance concealed and they took away a few of the blankets that had been brought into camp. We were all in very bad shape now, with many severe cases of beri beri among: us. I had to cut my shoes off because my feet had swollen so much. This was common procedure to all of us. From April 14th to June 4th of 1942 we were to see thousands of our comrades die at the hands of the Japanese. Many more who had not had malaria were now having chills and fever. We all had dysentery, beri beri, yellow jaundice, and many other diseases. We had no medical supplies at all but the Japanese designated a large building to be the hospital. Here men were sent and remained there for one month before they would be approached by a Jap doctor. When an American doctor did see them he could only give them the “sympathy treatment” as we had no medicine at all. I don’t think that any books will ever be written that can convey the

actual picture at this hospital. Americans were dying by the hundreds there. They were all around the building and under it, and would remain there until they died. After they died they were nothing but human skeletons. Dysentery and malnutrition and malaria probably took the greatest toll here. Between April 14th and June 4th we had 26,000 Filipinos and 1,670 Americans to die in this camp. Every day one could look as far as he could see to the right and left and see bodies being carried and dumped in one area. The Americans were dying in camp so fast that we could not bury them. We would lay the bodies in front of the barracks and they would remain there for as long as six days at a time because no one was strong enough to bury them and we had no tools to dig a hole with.

## Eighteen Bodies to the Grave

About once a week the Japs would let us go and dig a hole and throw fifteen or eighteen bodies in that one hole. During the rainy season we had to hold the bodies down with a rake while we filled the hole tip with dirt. This was necessary because the bodies would have floated away. The next time we came to this area designated as the cemetery we could see legs; and arms of the bodies protruding from the hole and birds eating the arms and legs.

If a man wanted a drink of water he had to stand in line for 10 hours to get a canteen of water. Those of us who were a little stronger were helping our friends and when we returned with the water we usually gave our ration of water to some friend who had 104' or 105' fever. But he would probably die in a few hours and we could finish the canteen and also get his spoon of rice. We received a few spoons of rice twice a day



and during these two months we were given only one small piece of meat.

#### After 35 Days, Rain Furnished First Bath

We had no sanitation facilities and we had to use open latrines, which remained overflowing all the time as no one was strong enough to dig new ones. Many men when they would go to these latrines were so weak that they would fall in the hole and for 35 days we had no water to wash with at all. The floors inside the barracks were always cluttered with human waste and no way to wash it up. After we were there 35 days it rained and we ran out and washed our bodies for the first time since we had surrendered. The Lord had sent this water just for us we thought and it was certainly wonderful.

We were all so hungry that the stronger ones would pick out someone whom he thought might die and stay close to this individual so he could get his food when

he died. Many times I have seen and done the same thing. I have seen men die and an American nearby grab his rice and eat near the body of the deceased. Everyone was on the alert, watching to see who was the sickest so that they could get their rice for them and hoping that he would be too sick to eat it.

## Ten Killed for One Escapee

The Japanese pulled many of the Americans out after arriving there and sent them on various details. One detail was sent under the supervision of a captain down the road to build a bridge. While on this detail one of the Americans escaped one night with some guerrillas. The local Jap officer in charge of the detail did not want to punish anyone for this escape, but a general arrived from Manila and ordered 10 men to be shot for one American escaping. Ten men were required to be selected by the captain in charge and they were shot before everyone else. One soldier watched his brother shot. These men all died like true heroes, and one of the men just before the last shot was fired screamed "God bless America." The Japs issued an order that for every man who escaped, 10 other men would be shot. We found that they meant what they said, but you cannot anticipate the Japs because they don't follow any certain procedure.

## Prisoners Divided Into “Shooting Squads”

We had our own organization in camp and we selected American officers to lead the barracks. We had about 200 men to a barracks, and all were required to sleep on the floor which was nothing but the ground. One morning one of the men had attempted to escape during a cerebral malarial attack. He was caught going out the gate, or rather the fence, and brought back into camp with his hands tied behind him and severely beaten about the head. The Japs called me over since I was his barracks leader. They asked me if he was from my barracks and I replied in the affirmative. They informed me that they were going to shoot the escapee and were going to shoot me because I was his barracks leader. I gave them my name and they told me that they would take the man with them and would come back after me later. I immediately went back to the members of my shooting squad, as we were all divided into squads of 10, known to us as “shooting squads,” and told the fellows that I was

going to attempt to escape that night because the Japs had just told me that they were going to shoot me for one of my men trying to escape. I told the boys that if they wanted to go with me they could. I would just as soon take ray chance going out the fence since I was going to be shot anyway. Well, they all began worrying because, if I escaped, they would be shot. They begged me not to go and said they felt sure that the Japs were not going to shoot me. They watched me for two days and every move I made one of the members of my squad was right with me to see that I did not attempt to escape.

## Author Has Charmed Life

The third day passed and I told the fellows that I was going that night. They pleaded with me and finally convinced me that I should remain one more day. I asked them in the event the Japs called me would one of them volunteer to go and be shot in my place, and when no one volunteered I told them that I was definitely going that night. Well, they watched me 24 hours a day and I never did attempt to escape, but the Japs did not call me, and I never did know why. I guess that I just had a charm over head.

The morning we left O'Donnell I saw this same soldier who had attempted to escape and I told him that I was certainly glad to see him and glad that they did not shoot him. He told me that he had just escaped from the Jap guardhouse that they had him confined in and was getting ready to escape from the main compound. I certainly did not want this case

brought up again, but I went to the American Headquarters and reported the conversation I had just had.

The American CO told me that this man no doubt had been freed, that he could not have escaped. In a few minutes some guards came in looking for this man as he had actually escaped from the guard house and he was then apprehended by the guards and taken away and shot.

#### Pro-American Filipinos Tied to Trees and Beaten

The Japanese frequently brought in Filipinos and tied them to the poles and trees for days and beat them unmercifully. This was evidently punishment for pro-American activities. Many of the Americans were interrogated by intelligence officers of the Jap Army while here at O'Donnell. I was interrogated by an officer and he was probably the most intelligent man I saw in their army. He asked me a few questions regarding Bataan, but he was very cordial and polite

and spoke perfect English. He told me that he had never been to the United States, but that he was a Christian and had been baptized when he was fifteen years of age. His family disowned him when he became a Christian. Of course, we thought at times that these officers told us such things thinking that they would thereby get more information from us. But I assure you that if they used the information that they ascertained from the Americans I can readily understand why they were so decisively defeated.

What we termed wet beri beri took a great toll at O'Donnell. We had dry beri beri and wet beri beri. The dry beri beri is when you have shooting pains in the joints and the wet is when you swell over the entire body. We had men who weighed 160 pounds and when they died from wet beri beri they weighed 300 pounds. It was necessary to handle them with great care because if you didn't, they would burst. I saw many of them burst when they were dropped on the ground just a little too hard.



## Prisoners Forced to Salute All Jap Soldiers

We were forced to bow and salute to all Japs that we saw. The regulation was that if we had a cap on we were supposed to salute, but if we had no cap on, we were compelled to bow. We were required to do this to all Jap soldiers whether he be a private or officer. At O'Donnell we did not have an opportunity to learn much about the guards. We first started working with them at Davao, which I will cover later in the story.

After May 7, 1942, when Corregidor surrendered they moved all the generals and full colonels to Formosa, and we heard later they had been moved to Manchuria. While at O'Donnell we could see the bombers from Clarke field each day going to bomb Corregidor. After May 7th when we did not see any more planes, we assumed that Corregidor had fallen. Then later the Japs gave us a Manila paper which

confirmed our opinion that the “Rock” was now in the hands of the Japs.

### Wild Rumors Help to Build Camp Morale

When we would go out to work in the morning the Filipinos would tell us all sorts of stories to try and raise our morale. One day a man from my barracks brought in a note which said that Berlin was afire and that the Germans had surrendered. This was in June of 1942. I think such rumors helped our morale. We would immediately spread these stories and they really helped many who had given up but, of course, after so long a time it was hard getting any one to believe them. We would make up rumors ourselves in an attempt to get the fellows in a fairly good mental mood. Here we were all wondering who would die the next day. We knew that approximately 60 men would die each day and we all wondered who would be next. You would inquire where John Doe was one day and someone would tell you that he died from a

cerebral malarial attack that morning, when you had seen him just a few moments prior to that. They were dying so fast from these different diseases that we could not keep up with our friends. You mention a friend's name and find out that he had been dead for three weeks or longer.

#### PART IV U. S. Prisoners Ate Dogs And Cats To Prevent Starving, Even Lizards At Foul Cabanatuan Prison Camp

On the morning of June 4, 1942, we were taken by trucks to Cabanatuan which is approximately 90 miles northeast of Manila. At Cabanatuan we saw many of our friends from Corregidor who had been brought to Cabanatuan when Corregidor fell. These men thought that they had been in bad shape until they saw us, who had made the March of Death when Bataan fell. I had many of the men from Corregidor tell me that they would never complain after seeing our group and how we looked. I now weighed 130 pounds, having dropped from 185 and was to lose

more weight before very long. In 1943 I weighed 102 pounds and was blind, all from malnutrition. At Cabanatuan we saw many more Americans die. The average here was 48 deaths a day. We still had no medical supplies. We remained here until October 26, 1942, when they moved 2,000 Americans to Mindanao to work in the rice fields as slave laborers.

## Cabanatuan Also Disease Infested

The conditions at Cabanatuan were the same as that of O'Donnell with no medicine and no sanitation facilities. Everyone continued to have dysentery, diarrhea, yellow jaundice, scurvy, dengue fever, and beri beri.

I had my first chill and fever. Before I was to be free I had malaria 20 times. I had 105° fever and a terrific chill but no quinine and no medicine. I could only pray that I would get over it. I say that I had malaria 20 times, but fortunately since I have been back in the States I have not had one attack.

Our commanding officer here at Cabanatuan was a Lieutenant Colonel Mori who many thought was the owner of a bicycle shop in Manila. Lieutenant Jones, who had been in Manila before the war told me that this was not the same Mori that owned the bicycle shop. But there is still some confusion among the Americans as to whether or not this is the same Mori.

Our diet here was lugao for breakfast. Lugao is the rice cooked with water, and when it is finished it is very wet, similar to oatmeal or cream of wheat. For noon we had a small portion of rice, and at night we had a small portion of rice with some commottoe vine soup. The Japs would give us the vines from the commottoe, which is a very inferior potato and full of worms. Sometimes they would give us a few commotoes if they had too many worms in them. We would take them and eat them very enthusiastically. We ate dogs and cats and many of the boys had traps to catch rata, and devoured them frequently. Lizards and frogs were eaten constantly.

### Black Market Traffics in Stolen Food and Money

A "Black Market" was operated by the Japs who worked in the kitchen along with the American enlisted men who also worked in there. Many of the Americans managed to bring in quite a pile of Filipino money, and were able to get the Filipinos to smuggle money into camp. This later turned out to be quite a

large smuggling racket. The Japs in the kitchen would get canned fish and corned beef, and soups and any other American products that they were able to pro-cure and give it to the Americans to sell in the camp to the other prisoners. They would give the Americans a certain portion of the profit and many of them made thousands of pesos in camp and loaned it out to others for gold, given either in notes or checks. They would charge 10 pesos for a can of corned beef or fish and it cost them maybe 80 centavos which, of course, is 40 cents. This racket was worked for a long time but finally stopped. Later the money was no good at all and all you could do with it was play poker or, if you were fortunate enough to get any tobacco from the Filipinos, you could use this paper to wrap the tobacco. We had wells here dug by the Filipinos and while they were working in the compound digging the wells we could make contact with them and get them to bring in money and what food and medical supplies they were able to get. The Japs watched them very closely and many were punished for talking to the Americans.

The Filipinos did much to help the Americans and many in camp who had been civilians in the Philippines before the war made many good contacts with the Filipinos. These would bring food and medical supplies into camp from their friends in Manila. Many of these men who did have connections were very generous and shared their money and food with the other Americans but, of course, you found a few who did not share one penny with their fellow prisoners.



## Red Cross Barred from Camp

Colonel Mori, the Japanese commander, was about 55 years old and in speeches would tell us how he was praying for us and how he was doing everything to help us. But he never mentioned the times when he refused to let the Red Cross in Manila bring us food. I know of two occasions when trucks loaded with food and Red Cross supplies came to the gate and the Red Cross tried to persuade the Japs to let them give supplies to the Americans, but they were driven away and told that if they returned they would be shot.

## Officers, Attempting Escape. Tortured and Shot

Two lieutenant colonels and an ensign attempted to escape one night. They tried to crawl out of a drainage ditch but were caught by an American who asked them not to go. One of the lieutenant colonels made so much noise that he attracted the attention of the guard who took the three to Colonel Mori and he had

them beaten severely and then tied to the telephone pole on the main road leading to Cabanatuan which ran by the compound. Every American and every Filipino who passed by these three men had to beat them with a 2x4. The Jap guard would show us how they wanted them hit and if you did not hit them hard enough they would beat you. They had them tied in the sun for three days and after that took them down the road where they put them in a truck with a group of guards and a detail to dig a grave. They were carried away and executed. The Japs later told us that two had been shot and one had his head cut off. These men welcomed death, I am sure, because they had been terribly tortured for three days at the hands of the Japanese. On another occasion I remember that five men had been going out each night to a nearby store to get food. They would come back in the early morning by crawling through the fence. They were caught and tied on the main road as the other three had been. They were beaten by everyone who had to come by. We would try to avoid going by these men, but we had to when we went to work. I will never forget how

one of the fellows broke loose and ran into the camp and into his barracks. The Japs came in and got him and, getting the four others, they took them out and shot each of them.

### Jap Lieutenant Proves to Be Head Hunter

Late one evening approximately 60 guards went out with a Lieutenant Hosume, whom we had been told had royal blood. He hated the Americans and we were later told in Mindanao, where he was sent with us, that he had been on Bataan, but because of neglect of duty there, he was sent to guard the prisoners. He was retaliating against the Americans by being as cruel as possible. He had with him on this detail this particular evening an interpreter, whom we called "Pittsburgh," as he had told us he had been in Pittsburgh. You must remember that we did not call the men these names to their faces. We only called them these names among Americans. Anyway, they went out this evening with full field packs and ammunition.

We were told that they were going to suppress some guerrilla activity. Early the next morning this group returned carrying the head of a Filipino on the end of a string, tied to a long stick. They hung the head on the main road with a sign written in English, Japanese, and Filipino stating "The bad man of the woods."

The Japs were afraid of the guerrillas and we were to learn more about this when we arrived in Davao.

Japs Label Escapees with "Do Not Escape" Signs

We started a large farm at Cabanatuan for the Japs which was finished after T left. Several men escaped but were later apprehended. Colonel Mori would hold meetings of all prisoners and lecture to them on the futility of trying to escape and tell us that the Americans would never be back and that we would be turned in by the Filipinos. Each of the men who had attempted to escape had signs on them saying, "Do not escape, etc." Three escapees who had successfully escaped very early in our imprisonment gave themselves up after reaching the southern islands. They had acquired a

severe case of malaria and also were afraid that the Filipinos were going to turn them in. They returned voluntarily. They were required to make speeches to us periodically about futility of attempting to escape.

It is my opinion, after seeing the attitude of these

Japanese commanders, that they themselves are punished by higher authorities when someone escapes.

Sometimes they would promise more food and other things if no one tried to escape, but, of course, they never carried out any of these promises. They believe in mass punishment and this is what we were always fearing. If one man violated a regulation on detail they would punish him as well as the rest of the detail and you never knew what type of punishment they were going to think of. You could always expect someone to violate a regulation with 10,000 Americans in camp, and we were living in fear of who would be the next one to be shot as a punishment.

## Guards Swindled Through Yankee Ingenuity

The Jap guards were all interested in getting American clothing, and after they had taken all they could

away from us, they began trying to trade for anything

we had left. They liked American socks, underwear

or anything on that order. They would give you cigarettes for these articles. I remember once the Jap

commander, evidently suspecting his guards of trading with the Americans, had a surprise inspection. It

was amazing how much American goods was found

on the Americans on that detail. We had tooth brushes,

clothing, and many other supplies. Much of this had

been brought in by the Filipinos. After this the guards

were reluctant to trade with the Americans, because

they had been punished along with the Americans for

trading. Approximately 95 per cent of the Jap guards

have venereal diseases and on detail they were very

anxious to trade for sulfathiazole tablets. But they

were only interested in getting tablets with a "W"

on the back, a tablet made by the Winthrop people.

The Japanese are very stupid about such things. For

example, they were only interested in a Parker pen. You could show them a \$10 Sheaffer and a 25c Parker and they would take the Parker. Anyway, they would offer us cigarettes for the tablets, but they did not care for any tablets except ones with a “W” on the back. They had issued us some Japanese tooth powder which was no good. The first time that we used it it took all of the enamel off of our teeth, and we used it for washing mess kits only.

Some of the boys began using their American ingenuity and thought of this idea: We took this Japanese tooth powder and, using a cartridge to make a form, began manufacturing tablets with a “W” on the back, just as they asked for them. The Japs would take these tablets on detail without any water at all, and I have seen them take as many as 10 at a time. They would give us cigarettes, but after a while they discovered that these were fakes and this did not work anymore. The Americans built an airport for the Japanese about half a mile from our camp and,

although there were many complaints during the construction by the Americans, it was probably worth

the time and sweat for we saw the American planes bomb and shoot down planes taking off from this field later.

General Orders “More Exercise” for Famished P.W.’s

After each escape at Cabanatuan, or, rather after each attempt to escape, we had no idea whether or not they were going to shoot anyone or not. After one man attempted to escape they punished everyone by making us close the windows in the barracks, and allowing no one to go to the latrine without two others. It was terrible stuffy and hot, but these conditions existed for a week. Everyone had kidney trouble and visited the latrine as many as 30 to 40 times a night. I remember that I went for three weeks without a bowel movement, but it did not bother me. This was common among all of us, as we were not getting enough food.

A general came out from Manila to inspect the camp,



and we were required to put on our best rags for the inspection. The American CO showed him the small amount of rice we were getting for dinner, and asked him if he could not increase the ration. The general said that it was enough for Americans and that what we needed was more exercise. Even though 48 men were dying a day, we needed more exercise and no more food. The Jap doctor here was very ignorant concerning medical knowledge. He would look the patients over and that was all he knew to do.

## Cyclone Destroys Camp Barracks

We were living in bamboo barracks, and in October of 1942 a cyclone hit the camp and destroyed most of these. We built a few back and acted as if nothing had ever happened. One of the hardest details was the house moving detail. A Jap non com was in charge of this detail which consisted of moving small houses over the camp. He would take about 20 men when he could have easily used 50 to move the house. This guard would carry a golf club with him and when the Americans would slow up he would beat them with this golf club and throw rocks at them. I remember he hit one American on the spine and permanently crippled him. This Jap was the meanest one I saw during my three years of imprisonment. He delighted in coming around in the afternoon when everyone returned from work and making us get out and clean the grounds. He would tell us the Americans were dirty. The Jap kitchens were filthy and I can readily understand why they have so much sickness, but of

course we could do nothing about our filth as we had  
no means of sanitation.

## Emperor Owns All Army Property

The Japs all look on their Emperor as their God, You must be careful not to say anything around a guard that he might take it as insult against the Emperor. Even when you break one of their tools they get very angry, as they say it belongs to the Emperor. For example, I remember once when I was in charge of the wood detail at one of the mess halls here (we cooked our own rice in the camp), one of the boys cutting wood broke an axe handle, and put the axe in a fire in order to burn the remaining wood out of the axe. Of course, this was very foolish, as it took the temper out of the axe. Well, we went to the Jap supply to get another axe, and we both received a severe boating from the Jap non com in charge. He told us that this axe belonged to the Emperor and he, the one in charge, must account to the Emperor for this axe. He told us that, his army was different from ours, as in the American Army they would give

you another axe and that would be all but his army did not have too much equipment, and all this belonged to the Emperor. He beat us with an axe handle about the head and face. One of their favorite types of beatings is throwing you down with a lot of ju jitsu, which they excel in, and then kicked you in the groin and stomach. Many of us were sick for days as a result of such beatings. The Japs were always trying to humiliate the Americans. Another favorite way of punishing the Americans was to line the men up facing each other and make them slap each other. For example, on one particular detail I have in mind, there were 16 men and one of the men was not working according to the guard in charge. He, the guard, lined us up facing each other. He told us that we should slap each other, so I just barely touched my man who was a little smaller than I was. The Jap came running over to me screaming that he would show me how he wanted me to hit the man. The only trouble was that he demonstrated on me. He hit me with his fist across the mouth and nose and I bled profusely. Well, of course, I had to hit the fellow American just like this

or I would be hit again. So I hit him as hard as I thought I could get away with, and it knocked him to the ground. When we came in that evening, this fellow wanted to fight because he said that I hit him too hard, but after he cooled down everything was all right again. The Japs always thought up such punishment in an attempt to lower our morale, but they were never able to do this, as the Americans would not have their spirits and moi'ale beaten.

## Smuggling Activities at Cabanattfan

After I left in October they began a beautiful smuggling racket at Cabanatuan. You must remember

that our camp was located five miles east of the town of Cabanatuan. Each evening the guards would take the Americans with the carabao carts to the barrio to get the rice to bring into camp. These Americans made contacts with the Filipinos at Cabanatuan as these Filipinos were loading the carts with the rice.

They passed notes between themselves and they would see each other daily. One of the favorite places of

exchanging notes was between the camp and Cabanatuan. There was a water hole where the carts would

stop in order to water the carabaos. The Americans would leave the notes there and the Filipinos would pick the notes up and leave their messages there also.

The man that handled all of this was a civilian from

Manila who worked in the pump house on the Japanese side, as there was a fence between the Japs and

the Americans, of course. This civilian handled all of these transactions and charged a person 10 per cent

for handling his money. For example, if I wished to get a note to someone in Manila I would see this civilian, whose name I will not divulge, but I understand that he was a gambler and owner of a gambling house before the war in Manila. I would give him the note and if I requested 100 pesos he would charge me 10 per cent when the money arrived. We found out later that much more money was sent sometimes, but he would charge you 10 per cent of your request and keep all over the amount you requested since you would never know the difference. It is said that this individual made thousands and thousands of dollars because what he did was lend this money out for American money. If you had plenty of money, that is, Filipino money, and, later, even Japanese money, you could get a few items of food. Of course, this practice all stopped about six months before the Americans invaded the island. At this time the money had no value at all. But when the money was good this person loaned out these pesos, one peso for a dollar, and, friends, that is making plenty. He would take checks or notes. But he was particular in that he would only



take checks from officers who were in the regular Army. It is estimated that he had approximately \$80,000 in checks and notes, and I have heard men who know him say that if he ever gets out of this war you can depend on it that he will collect that money.

#### “Mrs. V.” Handled Smuggling from Manila End

This smuggling racket lasted for about eight months and it really did help a lot of people as it enabled them to get money in and buy a little extra food. A lady whose name I do not know, but called Mrs. “TJ,” handled the transaction from the other end in Manila.

She really did a wonderful job and I personally think she should be congratulated by our Army officials.

She took great chances and helped many by sending this money and distributing the notes in Manila. The Jap non com who worked in the pump house with the civilian handling the transaction from our end was on the civilian’s pay roll, also. He helped the Americans

by acting as go between. I am of the opinion that he was either pro-American or just crazy for the money that he was getting each month for his assistance. The Japanese headquarters got wind of this racket and one day one of the guards saw a can containing money thrown over the fence. This was reported to their headquarters but they did not say anything about it at that time. They called in the Japanese MPs from Manila who began working on the case. The MPs worked both in Manila and in our camp without our knowledge.

One day the men on their way back from Cabanatuan with the rice were unexpectedly “shaken down”

(the term we used to mean inspected). This was carried out by the MPs who had been called in from

Manila to handle the case. Many of the Americans had notes on them and these notes contained names of some of the Americans in camp whom the notes were marked for. All men whose names were in the notes were taken to the Jap headquarters and after much questioning

many were rounded up and put into solitary confinement by the Japs for five

months. These men were tortured and looked very bad. One of these men was a lieutenant colonel who was 60 years of age, but he took it beautifully. The surprising thing about the discontinuance of this racket was that the civilian who handled all of this was not punished nor was the Jap non com, since their implication in the racket was not discovered. The non com effected a transfer for himself and later was moved. He was really happy because he was worried about being found out.

It is really amazing what one can find in a prison camp. The most amazing thing about this is that they inspect us so frequently and so very closely, making us take off our G string and get in the nude. They go through our bedding and barracks, and still we have hidden such things as a vacuum cleaner. The Japs held these inspections frequently and in Mindanao they worried quite a bit about the guerrillas smuggling in things to us.

## Dysentery Situation Very Acute at Cabanatuan

The dysentery situation at Cabanatuan was as horrible as at O'Donnell. Men were lying on the ground

around the barracks in the nude and in filth. There was no medicine or medical supplies, as the Japs would not allow the civilians to send in Red Cross supplies. Men were nothing but skin and bones. We had many men who were so skinny that they did not have a buttocks at all, as the only thing that you could see was an anaeus. It was the most horrible sight I have ever witnessed in my life. At this time I weighed 130 pounds and the fellows would tell me how good I looked. The average weight was 85 or 90 pounds. Wet beri beri was very prevalent. I remember one captain from Illinois with this disease, and he was swollen terribly. He would always smile and laugh even though he knew he was going to die. He could not walk because his feet were so swollen, and his eyes were closed. One morning he awakened and began talking about all the hot dogs he was going to eat when he

returned to Illinois. He died that morning. We slept on the floor and when one entered the barracks it was necessary to walk very carefully on tip toes since the least jar might cause someone with dysentery to defecate on his clothes. We had no water to wash up the human waste and many just slept in this filth. We worried all the time for fear some sort of plague might begin spreading among us. The good Lord was certainly on our side in this respect because we did not have any of a serious nature. I remember one officer who had a very bad case of dysentery and each morning when I got up the floor would be dirty on his side. He felt very badly about it, but he could not help it at all. It was nothing unusual for you to be eating your rice and someone with dysentery would defecate right next to you on the floor and you would continue eating without any hesitancy at all, only hoping that you would be able to get a little more to eat. This sounds incredible but I assure you it is the truth. I pray that no one will ever again have to learn from experience.

## “Very Sorry” Was Jap Retort to Protests

Many men attempted to strike back at the guard when they were hit, but, of course, this meant certain death as they were immediately shot. It was very difficult to restrain yourself but it was certainly the only thing that you could do, as many found out. Many men were shot in cold blood by the guards and nothing was ever done about it, even though the Americans protested. Their reply was always “We are very sorry.”

When a protest was made to the Japanese Headquarters about some American receiving a beating,

they would always say that they were very sorry, but the same thing would occur again. The Japs many times would tell us that it was very bad but that we were prisoners of war and that is all we could expect. They told us that they did not recognize the Geneva Convention regarding the treatment of prisoners of

war as they were not a signatory to the treaty. They told us that we were mistreating their prisoners and therefore they would mistreat us. You must remember that all of this was being done by the Jap officers who were in charge of the camp. These officers have wonderful control of their men, the guards, and these beatings and atrocities could have been prevented if the officers had chosen to order the guards not to mistreat us. But they condoned all of these atrocities and this should clear up in many minds the question of who is responsible. They are all responsible and deserve anything that we do to them. They have killed and tortured Americans. Their idea is to kill 10 men for each one trying to escape. It is my opinion that they all should be wiped out, just as Paul McNutt has said. If you Americana could have seen the atrocities committed on Americans, I am sure that you would share the same opinion that the prisoners of war share today.

## Mass Burials Common at Cabanatuan

Cabanatuan was known as the main or central prison camp of all the camps. From this camp many details were sent out. In early October 400 specialists were sent to Japan. All Americans had to inform the Japs of their specialty. Many were foolish and put mechanics, radio, *etc.* The Japs immediately grabbed these men off and shipped them to Japan. A great majority of the men did not give a true rating, just saying farmer, driver, lawyer or anything that they might think the Japs would not be interested in using. Many details were sent over Luzon to load all the equipment the Japs had and ship it to other theatres. Many men were used as slaves carrying large field pieces, work that should have been done by teams of mules or tractors. We lost many men engaged in this type of work. After a few weeks at Cabanatuan the Japs let us bury the dead. We would go and dig a large hole and throw 18 to 20 bodies in the hole, in the nude,



of course. We had 2,700 men die at Cabanatuan. In the early days it wasn't unusual for 20 per cent of the detail to die each day as result of fatigue and beatings given by the Jap guards. The Americans, with the exception of a few, did not let it bother them, but of course a few went insane from witnessing such atrocities.

PART V Prisoners Suffocated In Box Cars And Ship Holds, Being Transferred From Cabanatuan

## To Mindinao

In October they moved 2,000 men to Manchuria to work in the salt mines. We heard unofficially that 80 per cent of this detail died because of the cold weather, as the Japs did not give them winter clothes. On October 26, 1942, they also shipped 2,000 Americans to Davao penal colony in Mindanao. I was one of that group. We were selected at Cabanatuan to go because we were all sick. The Jap CO at Cabanatuan told us we were going to a rest camp where no one would work and there was food and meat, and vegetables were plentiful. We were all sick and did not believe the Jap commander, but we thought that maybe it was true.

We left on the morning of the 26th walking to Cabanatuan five miles away and there we began a trip that was going to eventually mean death to many of us. At Cabanatuan we were loaded into box cars with a capacity of 75. They threw 125 of us into each of these cars. The doors were locked and we had no air at all. Many suffocated. We lived in filth as many had

dysentery and diarrhea. This trip in the box cars lasted for approximately 10 hours. When we arrived in Manila we had a stampede in getting out of the cars.

## Marched Through Streets of Manila

We marched from the station to Bilibid prison in Manila where we spent a night. While marching through Manila we were taken by the Manila hotel and stopped so that some high ranking officers could come out and see how we looked and enjoy seeing Americans being told what to do by the Japs. Many of the Filipinos along the side of the streets were crying and trying to tell us under breath not to give up as the Americans were coming back some day. The sun was bearing down and we were being pushed through the streets like a herd of cattle. The Japs would beat us as we marched through the streets just to try and impress the Filipinos who were watching us from windows and the sidewalks. I am sure that there wasn't a Filipino who would not have helped everyone of us if he had had the opportunity. We saw many Germans and Italians standing along the streets and many of them looked a little sad at seeing men who breathed the same

as they did being pushed through the streets like cattle. The Filipinos would try and throw food to us, but it was always intercepted by the Japs who ate it themselves and then beat the Filipinos for trying to help the Americans. If an American would pick up anything he would get a severe beating.

### Japanese Officials Revel in American Degradation

Many high ranking Jap officials watched this procession through the streets of Manila and all sparkled with joy over such a sight. They used this as propaganda for the Filipinos. This showed that the Americans were defeated and would never return to the islands. They had the natives pledge their allegiance to the Japs in many ceremonies, but they never gained the support of the natives. They forced the natives to help them, as this was the only way they could get any support whatsoever. They had the fear of God instilled in the civilians, as each civilian had to bow to every Jap he saw just as we did.

After spending a night in Bilibid prison, which was a group of cement buildings used by the Philippine government before the war, we moved out early the next morning marching through Manila again on our way to the boat. This boat trip was another horrible trip. I can give the Japs credit for one thing, and that is that they can crowd more people into the smallest amount of space than any other race I have ever heard or read about. This trip was horrible, but still the return trip from Mindanao two year<sup>3</sup> later was to be worse.

### Days of Horror Crowded Into a Boat Hold

Going to Davao we were on the boat until November 8th. We were crowded into the hold of the ship. Twelve men were assigned to a bay, that is, a small space.

We were all supposed to get in this bay, but when the Japs went back on deck we crawled out. We measured to see exactly how many men could get in this space

and four men if they crowded up very closely and put their legs and arms around each other could get in. But the Japs with bayonets forced 12 men to get in there. Many of us were desperately ill. I had a severe case of diarrhea and lay on my back in the ship for five days thinking that I would die any minute. One had to go on deck to use a filthy latrine, but it was necessary to get in line for six or eight hours to use it. There was no sanitary facilities at all and we lived in our human waste. Fortunately, we had only two men to die on this trip. The Lord was certainly on our side during this trip as all were sick, and only two died. One was buried at sea, and the other taken off at Cebu. The only satisfying thing about the trip was the fact that the Japs gave us some corned beef and cabbage. I will never know why they gave us a little more food. This is characteristic of the Japs in that you can not anticipate what they will do from day to day. On the trip the water was turned on for about two hours each day and the prisoners were all very exhausted from thirst. Later we were to learn that this

trip was wonderful compared to what was going to happen later on the return trip.



## Landing on Mindanao Island

On November 8th we arrived at the docks at Lasay.

We were to walk from there to the Davao penal colony, some 30 miles away. This march was horrible. We were all tired, but we were forced to keep moving.

The Jap officer in charge, this same Lieutenant Hosume that I mentioned previously, told us when we started that if we walked fast for the first few hours we would stop and rest for the night, but after it became dark he made us keep marching until we reached the penal colony early in the morning. We were all exhausted. When the Japs threw us in the compound we all fell out and slept right on the ground.

During the march there was one incident that I

don't think I will ever forget. It was late in the evening and I was walking along the side of a Marine

officer. A group of Japs riding in a truck right in

front of us were moving very slowly as they were

keeping the Americans in line. I asked the Marine

officer beside me if he knew what rank a certain Jap

was. The officer replied that certainly he knew what rank was held by the Jap. He ridiculed me for not being able to recognize the rank of the Jap. I asked him what was his rank and he replied in a very loud tone, that the Jap was a first lieutenant. The Jap jumped out of the truck and began beating my friend and saying that he was a captain, and not a first lieutenant. I thought that this was very funny even though my friend received several licks over the head. After this every time I saw a Jap I would ask him if he could tell me his rank, and he never attempted to inform me anymore. Many of the Japs spoke English since they had been educated in the States.

#### “California” Jap Turns Tables on Jokers

A friend of mine who was in camp told me that in the early days of the war some men, five in number, were captured in the northern part of Luzon. These five men were put in a room and each morning a Jap would enter the room where the men were. They were

required to bow and say “good morning.” They would do this and when they bowed they would say “Good morning, you yellow bellied son of a bitch.” Whereas the Jap would bow and say something in Japanese. Fortunately he did not understand English. This went on for several weeks, until one day a new Jap entered the room. These five men went through the same procedure, greeting him as they had the previous Jap. After greeting him with these words, the Jap went to each man and slapped him, saying “California, ‘37.” He had finished the University of California and of course spoke English just as well as the men in the room.

PART VI American Prisoners Do Slave Labor In  
Rice Paddies of Davao Prison Colony As Disease

## And Malnutrition Kill Many

The next morning we were to learn what slave labor means. We were to learn what working in the rice fields for the Japs means. Major Mahiti, the Japanese commander, had a meeting of all the prisoners and told us that we had come down there to work. He was very angry because so many sick men had been sent down from Cabanatuan. We then realized that the commander had sent all the sick from Cabanatuan so that he would have nothing but the strong men left.

The Jap major here at Davao told us through his interpreter that we would all work and, as the interpreter said, “You did not come here to be lazy.” And we later found out what he meant by this statement.

When he finished the speech we were sent back to our barracks. We looked out of the windows and saw millions of bananas and coconuts, and avocados. We hoped that the Japs would give us this fruit, but we soon learned that they were not going to give us any at all. We would have to steal what little we got. When

we arrived at this Davao penal colony we found 600

other Americans who had been captured in the southern islands and brought to Davao a month before we

arrived.

## Davao Penal Colony on Mindanao

The penal colony was a pretty place, and they had many Filipino prisoners still here when we arrived. They lived in a compound across from ours, but we would work with them on detail. They had a school there in the compound for the children of the overseers in the colony. I will never forget the teacher at this school. She was a tall pretty Filipino and she would always help the Americans when she could. When we passed her going to and from work she would very surreptitiously drop tobacco on the ground for the Americans. She cried when she saw us go out to work being driven as slaves. She used to tell us when she had the opportunity not to give up, but to have faith in God and the Americans would come back some day. All the families were like this. They were wonderful to us all and if it had not been for them I think we would have lost more men. They gave us food from their own kitchen and food was not very plentiful

with them. When the Japs saw one of them talking to us, they would beat both the Americans and the Filipinos. The Filipinos would take dangerous chances to give us food and medicine. When we would go out in the jungle to work they would slip through the woods and get our canteens and fill them with coffee and sugar. They would also leave hot fried bananas which were very good. The Japs did not know this was going on and when they discovered any association they would exert more effort to keep us separated.

Usually these Filipinos worked in the bodaga, ware-houses where we had our rice weighed. When they

could they gave us more rice than was our ration.

Several times they were caught and beaten severely, but they would continue to do this despite the danger involved.

### Filipinos Aid Americans at Great Risk

We pleaded with the Filipinos not to take such chances to help us but our pleas did no good as they continued to assist us when they could. I remember

on a detail one day, I had a severe case of scurvy, which was common to us all. I showed it to a Filipino and when he saw how my lips were blistered and my skin peeling off of my body, he cried and went to his house and brought some sort of salve to put on it.

It did no good, but I told him later that it had helped

lots. What we needed was lemons which were plentiful, but the Japs would not give them to us. We were

all starving and needed fruit, and we could look out

of the window into the jungle at these papuyas,

bananas, coconuts, and many other tropical fruits, but

the Japs refused to give it to us.

The Davao penal colony was a large space cut out

of the middle of the jungle and had been in operation

for years. The Filipino in charge, whose name I forget, was pro-Japanese, according to many of the

Filipinos in the colony. This Filipino had been in

charge of the camp before the war and he never

showed any signs of friendship to us during the time

we were there. I am of the opinion that he was a little

pro-Jap, but on the other hand he may have been



afraid for his family. He bowed to the Japs and any-time he could do something for them, he would do it.

I say he may have been afraid they would punish his family, as they did this on many occasions.

The children of the Filipinos who worked in the colony were all very kind to us. They would slip through the jungle where we were working and hide fried bananas for us. They would make cassava cakes and throw them to us. Occasionally we would find a guard who would let them give us food, but this was very unusual. They were afraid of their officers and they would not take any chances. In the main, they were all delighted to beat the Americans and do what they could to subject them to more cruelty.

#### One Jap Guard Was Kind to Prisoners

I did find one guard who was more considerate than anyone else. When we would go out on detail he would

put an American on both sides of the field to watch for his officers coming around to inspect. He would then send out two Americans to get coconuts for all the Americans. He would not eat any until he saw that all the Americans had eaten. He was 18 years of age and from Kobe. He worked in the bureau of statistics there and was very intelligent for a Japanese. Most of the guards we had were very ignorant, and this is characteristic of the majority of the Japanese soldiers.

Incidentally, while on this point, I had a Jap officer, the one that I spoke about earlier, tell me that when they go to the farms and get these soldiers they tell the soldier he will not see his parents ever again and all he will be required to do is to fight for Japan. This officer is the intelligence officer that interrogated me at O'Donnell. He said that their soldiers were very ignorant and were taught only to die for their country. I found out later that he was right about their ignorance.

## Wants to Visit Tuscaloosa After War

This particular Jap guard from Kobe who was so good to the Americans was never known to have hit an American. He told me that he liked the Americans, but that Roosevelt should be killed, then the war would be over. He had been given the same propaganda about Roosevelt that we have been given about Hitler. This guard used to come in and wake me at 10 o'clock at night while making his rounds to give me cigarettes. I did not smoke but would give the tobacco to those who did smoke. He realized that the Japanese were much inferior to the Americans. On the details away from the camp we would take our rice with us and not come back for lunch. On these occasions the guard would eat with us. On one particular detail. I noticed Hirota, the 18-year-old guard, did not eat. He said that he was not hungry. After all the Americans finished eating he came up to me and asked me if I would lend him my spoon. He was selfconscious about eating with his chop sticks. I loaned him my spoon and he

ate his dinner, and the next day he ate with us. having acquired a spoon somewhere and discarded his chop sticks. Another time he asked me where I was from, and telling him that I was from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, he came to me the next day and told me that he was coming to visit me when the war was over and I could come back to Kobe with him. I told him that was a good idea, and reached for another cigarette to give some of my friends. This guard called me Captain and was always very kind. But he was the only one I found like this.

## Dangerous to Fraternize with Guard

I might mentioned here that many of the boys tried to get friendly with the guards, but you could never anticipate what their reaction would be on different occasions. I remember once a lieutenant had been very friendly to a guard for several months. One day the guard came into the barracks to see the lieutenant and they were talking and the lieutenant told the guard that someday the Americana would be on the outside looking in, and the Japs would be on the inside of the fence. The guard immediately jumped to his feet and threw a bullet into his chamber and asked the lieutenant to come outside that he was going to shoot him for insulting the Emperor. The guard had taken such a statement as an insult to the Emperor. Fortunately, the guard was talked out of it, but this shows that even though you may think that you are good friends with these guards, you cannot get too familiar with them.

## Japanese Recognized No Rank Among Prisoners

I might say at this time the Japs recognized no rank.

All officers and enlisted men worked and lived together. The Japs made no distinction in rank at all.

We had lots of trouble with some of the enlisted men who cursed the officers and refused to show any respect towards them at all. There were many fights among the men and the Japs did not care. They told us to take care of our own problems. Many of the enlisted men retained the respect towards the officers but, on the other hand, many did not. Many called the officers by their first name, and acted like anything but American soldiers. But I say there were lots who did realize that they were still soldiers and showed the respect that they had shown before they became prisoners.

We worked with the enlisted men in the fields and they would curse the officers and talk about others in front of all of us. I must admit that during times

like this when everyone is thinking of self preservation and trying to live, that many officers did not conduct themselves like officers of the American Army. But the amazing thing to me was that these men condemned all the officers instead of being cognizant of the fact that there were many of them who had been and were still good soldiers. But I presume that if you look back into history you will see that in prisons of this nature everybody is on edge and blames those of rank for their being in such a prison camp. We had one enlisted man whom everybody had trouble with. He was dis-liked by the enlisted men themselves. He called our commanding officer in camp a son of a bitch one day. He was reported to the Japs, and they said take care of it yourself. So he was put in a guard house for a week, but he did not mind that as then he did not have to work during this week.

### Work in the Rice Fields Meant Death to Many

The principal work here was in the rice fields. We

would go to work in the morning at 6 o'clock and return sometimes as late as 11 P.M. The work was horrible, as we worked in the nude and barefooted in mud and water up to our necks. I remember before we started working in the rice fields the Filipinos would tell us with tears in their eyes that they hated to see the Americans work in the rice fields because many would die from the rice poison, and we later found out what they meant.

This rice poison causes large sores to break out on the body and when they became infected it caused many to die, as we had nothing with which to take care of it. I, as were many others, was covered with these sores from ankle to neck, and today have scars on my feet from them. We planted the rice and harvested it for the Japs. They gave us the third grade rice that was scraped from the floor. Our feet were always in bad condition as a result of running over the patties barefooted. The guards would watch us and when we did not work according to their regulations we would be given a



beating with a large stick which they carried. I remember "Mussolini," one of the guards, hitting a man over the head with this stick and splitting it into. We were out in the hot sun all day and when we returned at night we would be so tired that we would go right to sleep. The rice fields were known as "Mactan" and it was a 30 minute ride on the small train that we called the "Mactan Special." We would take our rice there and eat it in the fields. We were given two 15 minute rest periods a day. This work was horrible and it is responsible for many Americans being dead and permanently injured today.

### Monkeys, Lizards Form Part of Diet

At Mactan we used the carabaos for harrowing purposes. Of course, the carabaos live in water, but during the harrowing some of the men tied a rope around the carabao's neck and legs and in some way drowned the animal. Well, the Japs would not eat

these animals when they died, so they gave it to us.

We did the same thing several times the next week and the Japs got suspicious of this and came over and said that they could not understand a carabao drowning in water when it lived in water all the time. They took the Americans off of the carabaos and let Filipinos drive them. After that we received no carabao except when one died in the jungle. We caught a monkey now and then in the jungle, and we also ate dogs, cats, lizards, rats, and weeds. On detail we would get pig weed, which grows on the side of creeks, and bring it in and cook it in hot water. At Davao we were able to get a little tobacco but the last few days at Cabanatuan before the liberation, the Americans were smoking papuya leaves, squash leaves, and I was eating the squash leaves, as I do not smoke. When I brought some in to eat, if I had enough left over I would give them to someone else who would smoke them.

Dengue fever, malaria, blindness, and beri beri was also prevalent in Davao. I remember one lieutenant who had beri beri so bad that for 18 months he had

remained doubled up rubbing his feet and he could not straighten up. This was very common. The Japs would give us commottoe vines here as in Cabanatuan. Our diet was about the same as in Cabanatuan. For breakfast we had this wet watery lugao. For lunch we had rice with this vine or pig weed soup, and for supper we had rice with soup and sometimes we had a few rotten commottoes.

## Rotten Commottes Sole Diet

About six months before we left Davao to return to Luzon we had rotten commottes for lunch and supper and that is all, with no rice. If we were fortunate enough to steal vegetables on the farm here it was always a great pleasure, but so many were caught that we were afraid to bring any food in the compound. I remember one man who had a hollow heel in his wooden shoe. We all wore wooden shoes. He would bring in rice each clay from the fields. One day just as he arrived in front of the guard house where all the Japs sat, this heel came off and all the rice spilled out. He was immediately grabbed by the guards and beaten severely and taken to the Jap guard house and tortured for one week. Many times this happened for bringing in food and vegetables which were plentiful but were not allowed to the Americans.

## Chicken Punished for Eating Own Eggs

The Jap guards were stupid in many respects. On

one occasion they punished their chickens for eating their own eggs. They had some Americans working on a chicken detail for the Japs. The Americans would eat the raw eggs when they had an opportunity. One day the guard noticed that many of the eggs were missing and asked the American about it. He was told that the chickens were eating their own eggs. The next day they punished these chickens by cooping them up and not feeding them for three days. They punished the carabao also when they did not work to the satisfaction of the Japs.

Our mess officer would repeatedly ask the Japs for more food for the Americans and the reply was that we had enough and if we were given any more we would attempt to escape. On many occasions they made the mess officer sign for chickens and eggs that we never saw. I presume that they still have these receipts and plan to show them to Americans stating that that is what they fed prisoners of war in Davao. They would force the mess officer to sign for more rice than was received, also. If the mess officer refused

to sign for these articles as requested they said that they would refuse to give the Americans any food at all.' So we thought it was better to take a little than nothing at all. I was told that at Cabunatuan they brought a carabao and took a picture with the Americans looking at the carabao and then took the carabao away. I remember one time they took a picture of a few Americans holding three chickens, and then gave us the chickens. But these three chickens were for 6,000 men.

## Starving in Land of Plenty

At Davao they had some beautiful avocados but instead of giving them to the Americans they let the hogs and carabaos eat them. In 1943 at Davao I weighed 102 pounds and was blind. Many weighed much less. We had men who were crippled from the waist down, many with paralyzed arms and legs, all caused by malnutrition. These bananas and coconuts that we were surrounded by would have been the answer to much of this sickness but we were unable to get it and the Japs refused to give it to us.

We were surrounded by some of the finest fish in the world and begged the Japs to let us get some fish. They refused but now and then would give us a small fish head which consisted of nothing but the eyes, but we devoured these eyes and wished for more. The Japs themselves ate lots of pork and fish and they had plenty of rice, but of course their best meal would

be considered a very poor meal here in the States.



## Who Is Picking the Commottes

Many asked me if the Japs have a sense of humor.

I remember one occasion where one of the guards did show h sense of humor. On a commottoe picking detail one of the men asked the guard who had the best army, the Japanese or the Americans. The guard replied, “Who is picking the commottoes?” Many of the guards would talk on detail but the minute someone screwed up, they would give him a beating.

The bedbug situation was terrible. We used to go out on the grass in front of the building and sleep because the bedbugs were so horrible inside the wooden buildings. We slept on the floor but later on we built an elevated wooden bed, which was still hard. These buildings were full of bedbugs. They are horrible bugs, and have a terrific odor. It wasn't anything uncommon for you to get up in the morning with blood smeared all over you from smashing bed bugs all night. We

were also bothered with lice and it became a problem for a while, but we managed to get rid of the lice. But never were we rid of the bedbugs. I personally would rather have the lice than the bedbugs. I detest bedbugs and their odor.

## Prisoners Talked Mostly of Food

The principal topic of conversation in the prison was food, and food alone. When you entered the barracks you would ask the first person what he was doing and he would reply that he was making a list of all the good places to eat in the United States. The next person was making a new recipe for some certain dish that he had heard of; the next person was drawing up plans for a restaurant he was going to build, when he returned; the next person was going to buy a farm and raise hogs. No one ever thought of women even though they had not seen a woman in three years. The only time that we thought of women was when we received a Red Cross box and our stomachs were full for a few days.

## Japs "Divide" Red Cross Boxes With Americans

In January, 1943, we received a Red Cross box of food. The Japs had taken what they wanted out of

the box, including most of the cigarettes. Fortunately they did not like corned beef or Kraft cheese. We had five men who died the first night we received the food because they attempted to eat all of it. I ate two cans of corned beef and one pound of cheese and was sick for two weeks, but it was the most wonderful sickness that I had ever had. Many had to have their stomachs pumped out from over eating. A few packages of cigarettes were allowed to come in and we had a regular market for exchange. For instance, I gave five packages of cigarettes for a can of corned beef. Many swapped food for tobacco. One-half pound of cheese brought three packages of cigarettes.

We were like a group of small children when these packages arrived, even though the Japs had taken out most of the food. We devoured what food was left in a short period and then we were hungry again. The Japs took most of the medical supplies sent in this Red Cross issue, although we did get some supplies. In order for a man to get quinine for malaria, he

must have a chill and fever of 105. The Japanese doctor, Lieutenant Yoshumura, seemed like a good man, and would tell us that he would do more for the Americana if he was in charge of the camp. He said that Major Maihiti was a drunkard and would not give the Americans anything to eat or any medical supplies. I sometimes thought that the Jap doctor was sincere, but many of the Americans disagreed with me. They said that he would do no better if he had been in charge of the camp. He would inspect the Americans every Sunday in order to try and get more to work. We would pass in a line by him and the American doctor would tell our trouble. If the Jap doctor thought that you should be in quarters then he would mark you "Quarters," but if he thought that you should be on duty he would mark you "Duty." The American doctors were forced to send the man where the Jap doctor ordered him to go. Many times the American doctor would disagree with the Jap doctor as to the condition of a man, but he would have to send him out anyway, and the Jap doctor would say

that his major must have so many men out to work,  
and it was his job to carry out the orders of the Jap  
major.

## American Doctors Performed Miracles

In camp we had two barracks with American doctors as barracks leaders. These barracks were designated as the quarters for men who could not work. We also had one large building designated as the hospital by the Japanese. It is amazing what wonderful work was carried on by the doctors in the hospital. They performed operations which were successful, even though the patient went through undue hardship during the operation. I remember once when we were working near the hospital, I heard a man let out a terrible scream. On returning to the barracks late that evening I ascertained that the morphine given to the boy was no good. After his stomach had been opened up, the morphine wore off, and the man was in horrible pain. We had no facilities to keep the morphine cold and it was very old, and as a result was not effective at all. As this was all we had, the patients suffered terrible pain.

As a result of malnutrition many of the prisoners had to have their toe nails removed. The big toe nail would curve over and under the toe. The doctors said that this was the result of improper diet. Many men had to have large infections cut out, which was very painful. Hardly a day passed that you did not hear someone screaming from pain during an operation.



## Paralysis Spreads in Penal Colony

We had several scares in camp at Davao. Once a man became paralyzed in his legs. We thought that infantile paralysis had started in camp. We all wore masks for about two weeks as a protection. The Japanese doctors and the entire Japanese personnel were frightened, as they were afraid their own men might catch this disease. We were not sure that this person had infantile paralysis, but we were trying to take all precautions necessary. Fortunately, this was not the cause of the paralysis, as no one else caught it. But we did have many who became paralyzed, not only in the legs, but in the arms. Many of the prisoners had severe cases of drop foot. The doctors later told us that this was all caused from malnutrition. I remember a fine looking master sergeant who lost his speech. His throat was paralyzed and he could not utter one word. It is incredible what the lack of proper food will do to a person. If it doesn't cause immediate death, it will cause so many impairments of the body that sometimes

death is better. Many of us were totally blind, and the Japanese were repeatedly asked for the large beautiful avocados surrounding our compound, but we were refused on each occasion. I remember in August, 1944, I saw a lieutenant who could not control his legs at all. When he walked he was required to walk very fast, and then had difficulty stopping. But when he reached California in March of 1945 he was walking normally again. It was the good American food that had made him walk again, as it had hundreds of others.

PART VII 21 U. S. Prisoners Spent Agonizing 30  
Days Awaiting Japanese Firing Squad After 2

## Companions Escaped

We had two Japanese interpreters in camp who were mean and stupid. One, a Mr. Wadda, who had worked for an importer in Japan, was the stupidest person I have ever known. He was always trying to lower our morale by telling us that the war would last for 20 years, and that the Americans would be defeated very decisively. We had been allowed to write cards once a month. You could only say a few words. When I returned I found that only a few had reached the States. We never did expect the Japs to send any out at all. On one of these cards, one of the doctors, in order to make his family feel better, wrote that he was spending lots of time browsing through some medical books. This Mr. Wadda came over one day and hit Hie doctor a few times and told him that he had specific instructions not to mention anything in the card about eating or food. The doctor replied that he had not mentioned anything about eating or food at

all, whereas the interpreter showed him the statement about browsing through medical books and hit him a few more licks over the head. The doctor tried to explain to him that we used this to mean looking through the books or perusing them. But the Jap interpreter paid no attention. He said that his dictionary defined "browsing" as to graze or eat weeds. The interpreter was right, literally, and could not be convinced otherwise. He immediately destroyed the card, and hit the doctor another lick as he walked out of the room.

#### Interpreter Called "Simon Legree"

The meanest interpreter that we had was the one we called "Simon LeGree." He was very cruel, and delighted in beating Americans at all times. He was from San Francisco, and told us that he had made a lot of money in California. Everytime he passed an American he would hit him with his fist. He was a person of very short stature and little frame, but he could hit harder than any little man I have ever seen.

He would hit you with his fist and would always draw blood. These two interpreters spoke very poor English.

In fact, they murdered the English language. We could understand them, but with great difficulty. I remember once, all Americans were required to write a letter stating what our impression of the war was, and describing our most horrible experience during the war. We were also asked what we desired most at present. Of course, we were told to say only things that would be favorable to the Japanese. For example, they told us to say that our greatest desire was that the war would end and that we would make everlasting peace with Japan, and that Japan would be our friend.

The Japs told us that there would be three classifications of gradings on these papers. Those receiving an

“A” paper would be given a prize, those receiving a

“B” paper would be given a prize, and those receiving

a “C” paper would be punished. I remember one barracks leader was relieved by the Japs because all of

his barracks wrote poor papers.

The day for the grades to be announced arrived and

the Japanese segregated all the Americans according to the grade they received on this paper. All the people receiving "A" papers had to march by those receiving "C" papers. As a result, many of the Americans receiving "C" papers became very angry with those receiving "A" papers, because they thought that they were cooperating with the Japanese. But the peculiar part about the whole thing is that the Japs just gave some "A's" and others "C's" without even grading them. They were always trying to cause friction between the Americans. I remember I dictated my letter to a friend of mine and we both turned in exactly the same papers. I made a "B" and he made a "C." Those receiving the prize winning papers were told to get in a line. We passed by the Jap interpreter who gave us coconuts, commotoes, and papuyas. Well, they were not checking the line, so everyone got in, and they began giving out the food. The interpreter stopped everybody and said, "The Americans are embezzling me." This type of English was very common among them. Many of the guards spoke English better than these two interpreters, as they were more intelligent

men.

## Americans Sabotaged Japanese Equipment

We were sent out to work on details over the island with the Japs here as we had been on Luzon. The prisoners operated the pump house and power plants for the Japs. Anytime we could sabotage their equipment we would do so. I remember talking to an officer that had been sent to Corregidor to work on a detail, and while there they were compelled to work on some large guns of the Japs. The men sabotaged the guns and this particular officer told me that if the Japs ever attempted to shoot these guns that it would kill everyone within 75 yards. Well, the Japs evidently began wondering whether the Americans had done such a thing, because right after the guns were sabotaged these Americans were told that the following morning they themselves were going to shoot the guns. Of course, the Americans were all scared to death, as they knew that they would be killed when they attempted to shoot the guns. The following morning arrived and they walked to the guns just as a man walks to his death chamber when he is being electro-cuted. These men knew that



it meant certain death

the minute they fired the guns. Well, they were at the guns and the Jap officer in charge came and saw that the Americans did not show any outward signs of being afraid, so he called the firing off. Eleven Americans had been saved just because they did not show any outward signs of being afraid to die, a symbol of true Americanism.

Americans also drove the trucks for the Japanese, as the Japs were very poor mechanics. This was one of our best sources of information. The trucks would go into town and the drivers were always bringing in a little unofficial information. This was the origin of many rumors. I may say here that I am convinced that many rumors started in prison camp because a day never passed that some rumors weren't floating around camp. Many of them would later turn out to be true, and I am convinced that these rumors helped many survive. Of course, in 1943 at Davao most of the weak men died and just the strong were still living.

## Ten Escapes Cause Arrest of Twenty-One

On April 4, 1943, our first group of men escaped from Davao. Ten men escaped on a Sunday morning. This was the first group to escape and we were all scared to death of what the reprisals would be. We were all divided into shooting squads, and we had seen them shoot 10 men before, so the whole camp was in turmoil. Everybody expected others to attempt to escape that night. I slept between two marines that did escape. These men left at 7 o'clock in the morning presumably to go to work, and the Japs did not know anything about it until 6 in the afternoon. When they came over to have roll call they first realized what had happened. The first thing that they did when they found out the news was to secure the names of all the men who slept next to the escapees. Well, sleeping next to two did not make me too popular with these Japs. They were getting ready to carry out their idea of mass punishment again. They were great believers in

such punishment. They told us that these men whose names they had just secured would be shot for sleeping next to the escapees. We were to be moved the following morning to another compound and there would await our execution. We realized that you could not be sure what the Nips would do, but I personally felt that I had cheated death once before at O'Donnell when I was sentenced to be shot, so I felt sure that I could not do it again. That night I watched the remainder of the sleeping companions to see that they did not attempt to escape, because if any one attempted to escape that night I knew the rest of us would not have a chance. About 3 o'clock in the morning I saw another Marine officer, a friend of mine, get up and put his canteen belt on. I jumped up immediately and asked him if he was going to try and get out the 3-12 strand barbed fences, and, if he was, I sure as hell was going also. He said that he was just trying on his belt. Well, I put my belt on also, explaining that I was just trying on my belt and we remained up all night watching each other. The next morning the Japs came

and took us away to a separate compound to watch us until the day of the execution. We were taken away and remained there for one month with extra guards around us and no chance of escaping, as guards were inside and outside the camp. We really lived in agony, and prayed that they would come and shoot us right away instead of letting us suffer for a whole month.

## Condemned Men Await Execution

Well, one day the Jap Major sent word that he was coming over and read our sentence the following morning. That night all of us stayed awake and talked of many things, just as a man does while he awaits his execution the following day. We all wished that we would be given the same privilege that the men in the States are given before being executed, that of ordering anything they wished to eat. All night we said that this expected death would not be so bad if we could have some bread and butter and ham and eggs, and some cold sweet milk. In fact, there were many of us who would have given our lives for some food of this type. The next morning arrived and not one of the 21 men to be punished had slept a wink. At about 8:45 in the morning we looked down the road and saw the major with a large group of the shooting squad coming. Our friends who were working around the barracks came up with tears in their eyes and told us to take it like men, and that we were sacrificing

our lives for other Americans, and that it was a wonderful way to die. One of the men to be shot asked the prisoner sympathizing with us if he wanted to take his place in the execution and die like a real American but, of course, he received a quick negative answer.

### “Fifteen Days of Meditation”

The major and his shooting squad entered the compound and we were all called outside and told to walk

20 paces to the front and stand at attention while the

major read our sentence. The major, through his interpreter, began reading the names of each of the

prisoners, and after reading all 21 names, ended with

saying, “You will now hear your punishment.” Between

the time he said this and the time the punishment was

read, I think 20 years elapsed. Well, my punishment

was 15 extra days meditation for the group escaping.

I had to meditate for 15 days over these men escaping.

I could not go out to work for 15 days but had to

remain in bed and meditate, only being allowed to go

to the mess hall and the latrine. The other fellows

would go to work in the rice fields and I would tell them not to bother me that I was meditating. The officers in charge of the barracks from which these men had escaped received 30 days meditation. You just can't figure out these people, and I assure you that those 21 men probably lost more weight in those 30 days than any other group of men in American history. At this time T was at my lowest weight, 102 pounds, and this mental worry did not help me at all.

## Japs Tighten Up After Escapes

The Japs did not only punish us, but they punished the entire camp. They came over and took our axes away from us, and as a result we had no wood for the mess hall. We were required to tear down our barracks and get the wood from them. Of course, this meant less shelter for us but we had to have a little wood to cook the small ration of rice given to us by the Japs. The Japs became much more cruel on details after this. All the guards were told to take more precautions and to shoot if anyone even looked like he wanted to escape. I remember that a soldier was just outside the fence working with a detail and the guard was watching them. The soldier called back over the fence and asked his friend to throw his canteen to him as he was thirsty. The friend went into the barracks and returned with the canteen and tossed it over to the soldier outside the fence, and the guard shot the soldier outside the fence, standing only a few feet away from him.

When the first bullet hit the soldier, he was knocked to the ground. He begged the guard not to shoot him



any more, but the guard pumped three more shells into the dying American. The friend who had tossed the canteen from within the fence began running to his barracks, and the guard, who had just killed an innocent American, opened up on the running man who was seeking shelter within the fence. Bullets were flying all through the compound, but, thank God. no one was hit.

The same sort of incident occurred at Cabnatuan.

An officer who had been on the High Commissioner's staff in Manila before the war was shot in cold blooded murder just as this soldier had been shot. This officer was near a small garden he had, and the Jap said that he was too close to the fence, so he decided that he would shoot the officer. He killed the officer and then explained that the officer was attempting to escape, when all the time he was within the limits set by the Japanese. Of course, the Jap officials came back with their same old reply. "That is very unfortunate, you are prisoners of war, we are so sorry,

it is your misfortune.” The Jap guards would sometimes induce the Americans to come to the fence by

showing the Americans tobacco, something they had

not seen or smoked for three years. When the Americans would get close they would shoot, but, fortunately,

I do not remember anyone being killed, although some

of the Americans say that there were a few who were

killed by this trick on the part of the sly Japanese

guards.

## Impromptu Entertainment included Orchestra

For our entertainment in camp we held lectures as often as we could. The Japanese issued an order that no meetings or assemblies could be held, but in the barracks on many occasions we held discussions. Some person from New York would tell us of the most interesting places to see while on a visit there, while others would tell us of the best places to ent. This was more interesting to everyone. Others would tell of New England and a few of the lawyers carried on discussions on some points of law. One of the most common pastimes was the discussions of building houses. There were many who had been contractors and architects before entering the Army, and they would tell us about planning and give ideas concerning the construction of homes. For a short period we had an orchestra in camp with some wonderful musicians. The only reason th:it the Japs allowed this music in camp was because they are crazy about music themselves. They let us have a show each Sunday night for just a few minutes,

until they saw that we were enjoying the music too much, then they took up all the instruments that they had given to the Americans. They would let us play popular music, but were always present to see that we did not play patriotic songs. They had the Americans playing Japanese numbers. In fact, they stopped the shows and made the musicians learn Japanese music to play on their occasions. The Japs have quite a few celebrations, and the Americans were required to play for these occasions in Japanese music.

### Japs Issued No Clothes Save “G-Strings”

The Japanese gave us no clothes with the exception of a few G strings. This is, as one person called it, a large diaper. Of course, we did not need many clothes because it was always hot. On detail we would get very wet, as they required us to work in the rain and many developed pneumonia. When we came in, we would take our clothes off and hope that they would dry during the night. But if they were not dry by the next

morning, we would have to wear wet clothes. Very few had long pants, but some did.

Our mental attitude remained very good, but we had several men go insane here. I remember one lieutenant colonel who held a responsible position during the war. lost his mind and it was very pitiful to see him tied up in a room. The Japanese knew that he was insane and did not pay attention to his yells and screaming. This lieutenant colonel always had a rope around him, and two attendants when he went outside the building. Many men acted a little peculiar and all of our minds degenerated during the years of total ignorance.

## Letters Mutilated Beyond Recognition

We were allowed a few letters in early 1944. The Japs came over to our compound and told us that they had 10,000 letters for 2,000 prisoner, and we were all elated over this as we expected to get a lot of mail. They would bring maybe two or three letters every six months and purposely keep the others from us just to humiliate us. When we did receive the letters every other word would be deleted so that sometimes we could not even tell who they were from. Of course, this lack of information for such a long time was one thing that made it difficult for us to keep up the morale.

One word that was used by everyone in camp was the word "quan." "Quan" means anything you may desire to use it for. I do not have any idea how it originated, nor do I think that anyone else does, but it was originated in prison camp. You can use it as an adjective, noun, pronoun, adverb, conjunction or what

have you. Everything was referred to as “quan.” Another word used was “SNAFU.” Snafu means situation all fouled up. When things did not go right as they

often didn’t, we used to say “snafu.” From this statement you can see that this word was used plenty. We

called each other Joe as this is what the Filipinos call

the American soldiers. This was true even before the

war. If you asked a Filipino something he would

always finish the statement with “Joe.” We had no

new jokes to tell after the first two years, as there

was no source of information. We exhausted all the

jokes, but on my return to the States I see that there

aren’t too many jokes of new origin floating around

today.

## More Escapes From Davao Colony

Including the 10 men that escaped in 1943 we had 21 men escape. All were successful except two. One major, while working on the rope detail in the compound hit a guard over the head and grabbed his rifle, but at the time the rifle had no ammunition in it, and he was apprehended in the compound and taken away. All night we heard him screaming from the torture being given by the Japs. The next morning the Japs announced that he died from wounds received in the scuffle during his apprehension, but he did not receive a scratch during the scuffle. He was killed by the Japs, and I am positive, as are other Americans, that this major welcomed death.

One of the unfortunate things about this incident was the fact that the major failed to kill the guard when he hit him on the head. The remaining members of the detail were tortured for 10 hours as punishment, for this incident. They were required to sit on their



knees and lean back on their haunches in an erect position, which is a “pain killer.” The Japs stood guard over them and, when one of the prisoners weakened, he was immediately bayoneted in the buttocks or beat on the head with the butt of a rifle. When at the expiration of 10 hours, they told the Americans that they could go home, and we had to carry all of them in. The Japs sent for us to bring them to the barracks. Their shins were all bruised where they had been kicked, which is a favorite type of punishment of the Japs, as I mentioned previously. These Americans were in awfully bad shape, but were very fortunate that they all had not been shot, as the Japs told them at first that they were going to shoot all the detail. This incident also brings out the fear that we were living in from day to day. You could always expect someone to do something to jeopardize the welfare of others. But this is common in normal times, except that the retaliation or reprisals may not be as severe as it was with the Japanese.

## Hits Guard With Shovel

Right after this incident, there were eleven men working on a detail on the edge of the jungle, when one of the men hit a guard on the head with a shovel. Seven men, including the one that hit the guard, ran away into the jungle while four were unable to get away as the guards immediately caught them. The seven men who were fortunate enough to flee, were later surrounded in an abaca field and one man, a Navy lieutenant, was killed. This lieutenant's body was brought back to camp and we were allowed to bury his body. The remaining six fled to safety, we later ascertained when we reached the States. The four men who did not escape were brought back to camp and thrown in the Japanese guardhouse and brutally tortured for two weeks. They were released and when they returned they were unable to mention anything about their torture because they had been warned by the Japanese commander that if they opened their mouths they would all be executed. Even though they had been

tortured they were mighty fortunate that they had not been killed. It was a miracle that they were not shot. When the men came back to the compound they had lost about 25 pounds each, and had bruises all over them with scars of two weeks of hell. They had only been given one spoon of rice twice a day and a little water, so it was easy to understand how they had lost so much weight. They were kept inside and someone worked for them, that is someone who was just a little better off than these four men.

Of course, the Japs punished the entire compound again for this incident by refusing to give us food for a week or more. We had saved up a little rice which was to be used just for such occasions. They did as they had done before took our axes and we had to tear down some of our buildings again. If these escapes continued we would be sleeping completely in the open, as our buildings were getting less and less.

Jnp.t Hold Mortal Dread of Guerrillas

A few weeks later two enlisted men walked away from the rice fields during lunch period and we had the same thing happen in regard to punishments as had happened before. The most amazing thing to us was that the Japs did not shoot anyone for these escapes. But you could never tell when they would decide to do so. This was the last attempt to escape until we were on the boat returning to Luzon in June of 19-14. You must remember that these guards were much meaner after each escape because sometimes they were shot if they let an American escape from the details they were acting as guard for. They watched us closely and many times would not let us go to the edge of the field to urinate or deficate because they were of the opinion that you were going to escape. Another reason, secondary to this, was the fact that they were afraid of the guerrillas in the jungle. Once on a detail one of the Filipinos cut off a head of one of the guards, and they were all scared of the guerrillas. This particular Filipino had worked

with the Japanese, but he fled to the jungle when he had completely decapitated the Jap guard. In each corner of the compound at Davao, which was a perfect square, they had a 50 calibre machine gun facing the jungle to prevent any attack from the guerrillas.

When we would go and work on the edge of the jungle they would always get in the middle of the Americans while walking to and from work. While working on the edge they would have guards facing the jungle as well as facing us working in the fields. One morning on arriving at the bodagos at the rice fields some vitamin tablets had been left in conspicuous places with the hope that the Americans would see them first, but the Japs guarding the Americans saw them and took the tablets, which had been left by the guerrillas. The Japs used to compare them to the American Indian because they cut off the heads as the Indians were known to scalp the white men.

On or about June of 1943 the Japs moved all the Filipinos away from the compound, evidently because

they were of the opinion that they were helping the Americans escape. But many of the Filipinos hated to leave because they had no place to go. Several told me that they had no homes as they had been taken away from them when the Japs invaded Mindanao. They would go to Davao and try to get a little food to survive, and I remember the morning they were taken out on trucks, they passed on the road and waved with tears in their eyes, because they had seen Americans who had been so friendly to them before the war, and with whom they had lived and worked for such a long number of years, being treated as slaves and driven like sheep at the point of a bayonet and a gun to do work for the Japs, to try and further the co-prosperity sphere that the Japs spoke of so much.

#### Guards Beat Men Who Falter With Rifle Butt

The Americans were still weak from the rice fields and the hard work in the sun each day. The guards would beat you if you were unable to do the work and

did not take any excuses. I remember one detail in which we were weeding the commotes, which required good eyesight. Many of us had difficulty doing this. During this weeding I was pulling the commote vines instead of the weeds and the guard beat me over the body and the head with the butt of his rifle. He kicked me, and when I returned to camp I was in bad shape, and after that was not sent out to work anymore.

This happened every day. Many men would ask the guards not to hit the men on the detail, but the guards would only beat the ones making such requests. We could never explain to the interpreter that the men were weak and just could not endure this work without falling out. They always answered that we were prisoners of war and it was our misfortune.

We were made happy for a few days again in January, 1944, when the Japs gave us the remainder of

a Red Cross box which they had pilfered. We had one more box to be given to us when we were getting on the boat in June. Prior to this time, that is, between January and June, when we were sick and weak, we

asked the Japs for the other box that they told us we had in camp. Their reply was that they had the box and would give it to us when they chose to, and it wasn't any business of ours where, when or how the boxes would be given to us. Our American Red Cross boxes were none of our business. I think that they kept it so that they could be sure and get what they wanted instead of giving it to us right away. We saw them smoking American cigarettes long before the boxes arrived. They were all crazy about American cigarettes and when they smoked all of their tobacco they started dealing with us for cigarettes. They gave us a very few packages of the cigarettes but what was issued was quickly smoked up. The men used to take one cigarette, line up as many as 15 men and ration each man to two puffs in order to make the cigarettes go farther. The tobacco situation was a little better here than it was at Cabanatuan where the men smoked squash and papuya leaves.

PART VIII U. S. Prisoners Stuffed Into Hold of Jap



Slave Ship On Foul Return To Cabanatuan Prison

## And Liberation

In May the Japanese doctor began inspecting everyone and we knew that we were going to be moved. He

took all the enlisted men and gave them fical smears,

which was a good indication to us that someone was

going to Japan. The Japanese were very careful not

to send anyone to Japan who had dysentery. Well, we

had no idea when or who was going, but one afternoon at 6 o'clock, about 35 trucks came in camp, and

a few minutes later we were told that we all were

moving the following day, which would be June 6,

1944. Incidentally, against strong protest, the Japs

had moved 750 enlisted men and officers out of the

camp in March of 1944 to work on an airport at

Lysang and some other airport. These men were later

moved, in September of 1944, but the ship was torpedoed by American subs and, out of the 750 men, there

were only 83 survivors.

## Twenty Days in the Hold of a Slave Ship

On the morning of June 6, 1944, we began leaving the camp at five o'clock. All Americans were put on trucks barefooted, standing four abreast, with ropes tied to each of us. We all were blindfolded. We had a one-legged officer who was required to stand, also. This trip lasted for about two and one-half hours, as we were taken to Lysang and put on the boat there.

We were all thrown in the bottom of a ship and for 20 days we were to ride in what was nothing but a slave ship. The trip, lasting until June 26, was horrible, and sometimes I think it was as bad as any other 20 days during the imprisonment. We were in the hold for six days in the harbor of Davao. The Japs were a little nervous on this trip, as they stayed close to the shore the entire trip. We were all sick and in this hold with the hatch down it was so hot that many men were on the verge of insanity from heat exhaustion. If a person desired to use the filthy latrine on deck, he had to remain in line for many hours awaiting his turn. One person would go up on deck at a time to

use the latrine and the guard was there to see that you did not stay too long. If he thought that you were remaining a little too long he would immediately throw you down the stairs. On June 7 the Japs gave us our other Red Cross box, with what food they did not want. We were all in the hold and, surprising as it may seem, you had to watch what you had as the other prisoners would steal your food. Many had their boxes stolen from them during the night by Americans who were later caught with it. We ate this food as rapidly as possible and, of course, this did not help the sanitary conditions in the hold of the ship.

#### Prisoners Packed into Hold with Bayonet

Many had dysentery and the floor was cluttered with feces and filth. We had large cans to urinate in, but they were being knocked all over the floor, and urine was running over the entire place. When the Japs threw us down in the hold and kept telling everyone to move to the rear, we all were slow in moving as we

did not think it possible to move another inch, but when the Jap officer came down the stairs and began hitting us on the head with his bayonet, we moved a little farther. I remember a Jap came down and inspected the few cigarettes the Americans had been given. This officer would grab the cigarettes and smell them, if they did not smell moldly he would keep the cigarettes, but if they smelled moldly, he would throw them back into our faces. We were given one canteen of water a day, and two meals consisting of a few spoons of rice and just a little commote tops soup. I thought that none of us would reach Manila, but with the help of the good Lord we only lost one man. A young lieutenant died on the morning of June 26, just as we arrived in Manila bay. I will never forget that young officer, as he died lying in that filthy and crowded hold, from starvation and heat exhaustion. The Japs would have let us all die, but for some reason we were able to make it. I was afraid that the Japs would kill us all, as many of us were losing our minds and it was thought that a stampede

would start to run to the top for air. We actually could not get our breaths at times, but if such a thing had happened it would have meant certain death. The guards were at the top of the hatch and would have shot each of us as we came out of the hold. When it rained at night, or even in the day, for that matter, they would cover up the hatch and spread tarpauling over it in order to prevent water from seeping down to the lower holds. We were of the opinion they were carrying war supplies in addition to the prisoners.

We could not sleep at all, as we had to stay in a sitting position, so close to each other than you could sometimes lean just a little on your friend next to you.

This was no rest at all, as the person next to you could hold you for only a minute or two. People were offer-ing their daily ration of two spoons of rice for just a canteen of water and, of course, we were all so famished from thirst that we had to use what little water we could get, and this was only one canteen a day. Our bodies were covered with sweat and we were breaking out with rash and heat so badly that many of us were naked even though we were living so close

to each other. At night we could get no sleep and many were praying; that the Americans would come over and bomb the ship so as to end it all. We stopped about 400 yards off the shore of Zamboanga during the night of the second week, and while here, a Lieutenant McGee, one of the finest officers I have ever known, jumped overboard and made a daring escape. The Japanese guards all opened fire on him, but on reaching the States this year we ascertained that he was safe. The Japs had let small groups come on deck for a few minutes each day, but after this, all were required to remain in the hold. Conditions were terrible and they got worse when the following night, a lieutenant jumped right over one of the guards and swam ashore. We also learned of his safety on reaching the States. We were approximately three miles from shore when this lieutenant jumped overboard and we did not think that he had a chance, but, fortunately, he made a successful escape. The Japs watched us very closely. We were so crowded in the hold that many of the stronger ones had to hold the small men on their shoulders since there was no room in the holds for

everyone to stand, much less sit. We would take turns holding the men on our shoulders. Things were horrible and I am sure that the slave ships of the early days never surpassed the filth and cruelty of this Japanese slave ship.



## Arrived at Bilibid Prison

We were taken off of the boat on the 26th and taken to Bilibid prison where sick were left. Three hundred men were taken to Japan, and the remaining men were taken to Cabanatuan. I was left at Bilibid because of my condition. Along with many others, I was later taken to Cabanatuan. At Bilibid I talked to a doctor who had been the American doctor on the "Pasay" detail, one of the most horrible details worked by the Japs. This detail was under the supervision of the Navy and the men were working on Neilsen and Nichols Field building runways. This doctor who had been in charge of the detail, as a result of the beatings given him by the Japs, could not hear at all out of one ear. The Jap non com had struck him over the head because so many were were sick, and as a result he lost his hearing in one ear. What would happen would be that the Japs would come and ask the doctor for so many men to go out to work and the doctor

would tell him that he could not get them, as the men were too weak and sick, then the doctor would receive a beating from the Japs because he could not get the men out. This doctor told me that the Japs would use the water treatment on the men. They would put a tube down the man's throat and turn the water on to see if the men were actually sick. Of course, the men were killed right there. When the Japs would kill these men they were required to send the bodies to Bilibid prison, which was very near. Before the bodies were sent, the Japs would seal the boxes the bodies were in and nail them very tightly so that no one could see how the men were killed when they arrived at Bilibid. This same doctor told me that once he was testing a man's reflex action by tapping him on the knee with a small piece of stick, and a Jap came in and saw him. In a few minutes he returned with a 2 x 4 and hit the man across the knee, breaking his leg in two places. There were many other horrible experiences related by this doctor on this detail, but this gives you an idea of the savagery of the Japs on certain occasions. On

another detail on Luzon over 90 per cent of a detail died as result of dysentery. I talked to a doctor in Bilibid who told me this. He said that the Americans were required to drink the water from a creek below where the Japs cooked, washed and used the creek as a latrine. This was the only water available, so they were compelled to use the water after the Japs had used it above stream in the manner I mentioned.

#### Bilibid Prison in Charge of American Naval Personnel

This doctor was one of the very few that was fortunate enough to escape dying. He had a severe case of dysentery, but did not die, or, rather had not died at the time I last saw him. Bilibid prison was in charge of the personnel of the American Navy. It was more or less a hospital and the serious cases were brought here. I presume that it was the best prison of any. The conditions were a little better. The Japs used this place as a clearing ground, also. They were moving great numbers of men to Japan now and all

were brought to Bilibid where they were examined to see if they had dysentery. If they didn't they were sent to Japan. I remained in Bilibid until August 2, 1944, and was then moved to Cabanatuan, from which I had been taken in October of 1942. When I arrived at Cabanatuan I found most of my friends had been moved to Japan during the two years I had been gone.

Conditions at Cabanatuan were very bad. The Japanese doctor was surveying all the Americans daily to

see who was in good enough condition to go to Japan.

Only the healthy, or I should say the stronger, were taken to Japan. Many men here were in the dysentery section, and, of course, they were not being sent to Japan. They were required to have a positive stool before the Jap doctor would excuse them. The men were swapping stools among themselves. For instance, if "A" had dysentery but did not show a positive stool, as many of them do not, then he would get a stool from "B" who did have a positive, and as a result "A" would not be sent to Japan. Anything to put one over on the Japs.

## Food at Cabanatuan Remained the Same

The only thing that had not changed in the past two years was the menu. Conditions were horrible and we were continuing to starve. I used to drink two canteens of water at each meal, or, rather, at each sitting. That is six canteens of water a day. We were getting a few weeds now and then and would make weed soup, but rice was still the diet. Even though all these years the men had had no tobacco, many were practically insane for tobacco, and continued to smoke papuya and squash leaves. The Japs had told the men at Cabanatuan that if they planted a garden that they could have the produce for it. The men all worked very hard and beautiful produce grew, but the Japs came and took the produce and left the leaves for the Americans. These leaves were smoked and eaten by us all.

The Japs were now moving groups of 500 men out

three and four times a week to Japan. The Jap doctor was examining everyone and sending all men that he thought were in condition to go, and he was especially desirous to send officers. I had cheated death twice during these three years, and I was to do so again.

The Jap doctor came by late one evening to inspect the men. He marked me with an "X" which meant that I was to leave the next morning for Japan, on the ship that was carrying 1,800 prisoners. I was ready to move out the next morning, when the American doctor told me that he had been to our headquarters and screwed

up the records some way to show that I was not supposed to go, and for me to stay behind. Well, I did that

and if it had not been for this brave American doctor, who did not believe that I was in condition to go even though the Jap doctor did, I would be at the bottom of the Pacific today, for the ship I was to sail on was torpedoed and there were only five survivors. This doctor had changed the records some way, and today, as far as the Jap records show, I am in a Jap prison camp somewhere in Japan.

## American Navy Dive Bombers Raid Cabanatuan

The principal work now at Cabanatuan was working on the farm, and the Americans had built a beautiful farm. Near the compound, the Americans had

also built an airport for the Japs, which was later to

give us much amusement and satisfaction. On September 21, 1944, we saw hundreds of planes on the

horizon, but did not know whose planes they were.

This was at approximately 9 A.M. Everyone thought

that the Japs were really flying that day, but few had

the idea that it might be American planes. At approximately 11 A.M. the planes came over our compound very low and caught three Jap planes taking

off the field nearby. They were American Naval dive

bombers and they immediately went to work on the

Jap planes and shot them down right outside our

fence. All the Americans ran around very excitedly.

It was the most beautiful sight that we had seen in

three years, and we now felt sure that America had

not forgotten us. The Japs issued an order that all

Americans would remain inside their barracks when

planes came over the compound or they would shoot inside. When we were working on the farm during any air activity, the guards would not let us look up at the planes, but required us to continue working. Every day after September 21st we saw American planes, but we felt that when we saw land based planes that the Americans would really be close by. I believe it was in late October that we saw our first land based planes, and everyone actually cried with joy over the thought that soon we might be free again. By this time there were only 51 1 prisoners left as the rest had been moved to Japan. When the P-38s and P-61s and the other new types of planes flew over our compound and buzzed the camp many of us were ignorant as to the type of planes. The planes would come very low and we were all so excited that many thought our liberation might come any day now. Incidentally, we had a radio in camp from the time General Mac Arthur landed on Leyte. It was kept hidden, for if the Japs had known it they would never have allowed us to have it. An officer, who was a radio engineer, had built



the radio out of a canteen, demonstrating again the ingenuity of Americans when it becomes necessary. It was built in a canteen with a hole cut in it, and a sock was held over the canteen which looked like an ordinary canteen. This canteen had one tube. "B" batteries made of plastic shaving soap container. "A" battery 6 V storage used in emergency operating light, the station most generally listened to was KGEX, with 495 MC. After the landing on Leyte was made, we had a news sheet each morning which was taken around to the barracks and read to the men. This was the greatest morale building factor that we had and we followed the landing on Luzon with this radio. This station was for the information of the Filipinos and used for propaganda purposes, but we received the news which was principally about the Pacific theatre.

#### American Progress Followed by Improvised Radio

We followed the progress of the American troops down the West coast of Luzon and knew that they

had taken Clarke field and Tarlac, but the thing that we could not understand was why they had not come closer to the East coast and rescued us. We thought that they would get to Manila before they came to get us. We all discussed just how the Americans would come and rescue us. We were of the opinion that MacArthur would enter the camp with a large fleet of motorcycles and that he would be riding in a staff car with members of his staff. We thought it would happen some day about noon. We were also afraid that the Japs would move us out of the camp any day. We had no idea that such a raid as actually took place would be the way our liberation would come. The Japs were very nervous and mean during all this air activity and I am sure that had the Americans arrived as we thought that they would, they would have found either 511 dead Americans or an empty camp. Planes were buzzing our camp daily. One day a cub used for artillery observation dropped a note, but we did not run for it as the Japs were watching us with a machine gun. The Japs got the note, but we later found

out that it was nothing but a word of good cheer.

### Jap Guards Leave, Say “You’re Free”

On January 7th the Japanese regular guard company evacuated the camp, after coming into the compound and telling us that from now on we were free Americans. We were free as long as we remained in the camp, but if we went outside the fence we would be shot by guards in the surrounding territory. We all felt mighty good now, but still worried quite a bit about the Japs moving us out of the camp since the Americans were getting so close. These guards left in a big hurry on January 7, 1944, and no doubt were being called to Lingayan Gulf to await the landings of the Americans on January 9th. The Japanese had a house of prostitution in camp for the Japanese personnel. The morning they evacuated the camp, the major and his personal prostitute rode out atop a tank. After these troops left we realized that we were in a precarious position. We were alone and there were

many troops roaming around and looking for food.

They might come by our camp and there was no telling what they would do. For 24 hours we had no guards

at all. During this interim, we went over to the

Japanese side of the fence and went through their

bodagas and found sack after sack of rice, and

hundreds of cans of American milk. There were plenty

of carabao and hogs around the area, so we rounded

all of them up and brought them in the compound.

From January 7th until the time we were liberated

we had plenty of meat, rice and milk. On January 8th

a new group of guards came into camp, and fortunately

they did not bother us about food. They probably

thought that we had none. If we had not taken this

food we would have had no food at all during this time,

as this new group of guards never inquired whether

or not we had food. This group of guards were on duty

the night of the raid by the Rangers. Between the

time the Americans landed on Luzon and the night

of the liberation, the Japs brought many tanks in and

out of the camp, hiding them in the barracks from the

American planes. Fortunately, they had moved the tanks out the morning of the day of the raid. Planes buzzed the camp very low during the day of the raid. Later we ascertained that they were looking for the tanks. We had no idea why these planes were coming so low. They were also covering for the Rangers who were coming in that night.

#### Prisoners Affected with “Limber Neck”

About two weeks prior to the rescue, everyone in camp was affected with what we called the “limber neck.” It was no doubt due to a dietary deficiency, because we all got over it. But no one could hold their heads up, as their necks were very limber. We would go around holding our necks up with our arms. We were frightened at first, but we all got over it.

During the time that the American planes were bombing and strafing the airport nearby, we were afraid that someone would get hit by stray bullets

from the planes. When they came out of their dive from bombing and strafing they came very low over our camp. We had only one boy hit. He was hit with a bullet from a 50 caliber when a plane came out of a dive from bombing the field. This prisoner was hit in the hip, but he is in Northington General Hospital now and is getting along fine.

## Three Years of Horror

I have tried to forget all of these three years of horror, but now and then I have a horrible nightmare, and wake up to realize that such a nightmare actually existed. But there is one thing that I am sure I will never forget, and that is the group of Rangers led by Lieutenant Colonel Mucchi who freed 511 prisoners, after being tortured for three years.