


DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

R E S T R I C T E D 

Narrative by: Captain Arthur Lawrence Maher, USN
Gunnery Officer, USS HOUSTON, CA 30.
Jap prison experiences.

Captain Maher is the senior surviving officer of the HOUSTON, CA 30. In this narrative he gives a good account of the HOUSTON's war record and many interesting details of his life in prison camp in Japan. Captain Maher's recording should be read in conjunction with those received from Lieutenant (jg) Hamlin, No. 442 and Ensign Smith, No. 444.

Film No: 465 & 465-1
Recorded: 5 December 1945

Copy No 1 of three copies.
Rough Transcript: Clark, Sp(X)1/c
6 December 1945
Smooth Transcript: Arienta, Y 2/c
19 December 1945

Narrative by: Captain Arthur Lawrence Maher, USN
Gunnery Officer, USS HOUSTON, CA 30.
Jap prison experiences.

Part I

This is Captain Arthur Laurence Maher, United States Navy, formerly Gunnery Officer of the USS HOUSTON, Flagship of the U. S. Asiatic Fleet, speaking on the 5th of December 1945.

The HOUSTON was ordered to the Asiatic Fleet to relieve the AUGUSTA as Flagship in 1940 and left the United States in November of that year, arriving in Manila about Thanksgiving time. We relieved the AUGUSTA and then took on board Admiral Thomas C. Hart, Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Asiatic Fleet, and his Staff. The operations of the HOUSTON from December 1940 until about April 1941 were the normal operations of the Asiatic Fleet. By that I mean we operated in and out of Manila Bay Area carrying out target practices and fleet tactical maneuvers with the MARBLE-HEAD and other units of the Asiatic Fleet.

In April 1941, the HOUSTON, along with many other units of the Asiatic Fleet, was ordered to Southern Philippine waters. We proceeded down to Toutou Bay and Tawitawi and other ports in Jolo and Southern Mindanao. While we were in Southern waters, we were constantly engaged in preparation for war. During these months that we were in Southern Philippine waters, the paint on the ship was scraped from top to bottom, including all the compartments, the passageways below deck and practically every space on the ship. Later these were repainted with aluminum.

We conducted target practice in the Southern Philippine waters and carried out the usual fleet maneuvers. On one or two occasions we returned to Manila where we spent three or four days replenishing our supplies and giving the crew an opportunity for a few hour's liberty. While in the Southern Philippine waters there was practically no liberty for the crew other than swimming and hiking in the mountains.

LEFT CAVITE UNDER SUDDEN ORDERS.

In October of 1941, the HOUSTON was ordered into the Cavite Navy Yard for repairs and installations of new anti-aircraft guns, 1.1 calibre, also, we were to receive four new searchlights. Other emergency work

was to be done, the ship was to leave, as I remember, about the middle of December. Work progressed favorably in the Navy Yard and we managed to get four 1.1 mounts installed and the engineers were able to complete nearly all of their emergency work. However, towards the end of November, we began to receive warnings that we might have to leave the Navy Yard at any minute.

Work was speeded up, in fact, they were working, as I remember, 24 hours a day in the Navy Yard. I was on leave for a few days around Thanksgiving time. I went to Baguio and while there received a telegram ordering me back to the ship. I, of course, knew that the situation was rather acute but still was rather surprised to get these orders.

I returned aboard the HOUSTON on the afternoon of November 28th, Saturday, the day of the Army-Navy game and was told that the ship should leave the Yard as soon as she could get underway with orders to get clear of Manila Bay. Our gunnery work was completed but the new searchlights were not installed. Two of them were on but had to be taken off because the wiring could not be completed in time. As a result, we left the Yard with the four old searchlights.

Monday morning we got underway from Cavite and swung ship in Manila Bay to make a table for the degaussing gear. That afternoon we left Manila Bay and proceeded to Iloilo in the Central Philippines. At all times, from April until December in 1941, we had orders to be completely or 95% fueled and provisioned, so every time we came into port, the first thing we did was to fuel and replenish our food supply. As a result, we were able to leave Cavite under the very sudden orders without any great difficulty.

On arrival in Iloilo, we established a daytime air patrol with the HOUSTON SOC planes. The patrol was run from dawn to dark and the aviators reported to us everything that they sighted. In view of the dangerous anchorage of Iloilo, the Captain decided to have an anti-submarine boat patrol every night so that at dark every night a large motor launch carrying a boat officer and an armed guard crew would leave the ship and patrol the harbor entrances to Iloilo to warn against submarines.

About the third night we were in Iloilo a flight of planes flew over and were reported by the Captain to the proper authorities. We almost opened fire on these planes but identified them as U. S. Army. However, we had no information that they were coming. The anti-aircraft battery was manned day and night. As a matter of fact, it was manned before the ship left the Navy Yard. I believe the first date was about the 26th of November. At that time I was on leave but when I returned from leave, all the battery was manned.

At Iloilo we were awaiting orders, prepared to leave at any minute, in any direction. On the morning of December the 8th, at approximately 4 A. M., I was awakened by the Captain and proceeded to the Executive

Officer's cabin where the Captain told the heads of departments that he had received a message from Admiral Hart that hostilities had begun and to guide ourselves accordingly. Almost immediately thereafter we received another message telling us that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and, I believe, we received a few more messages telling of other Japanese movements.

The Captain immediately gave orders to have the ship prepared to get underway immediately and to go to General Quarters at daylight. As I previously said, the anti-aircraft battery was manned. Word was sent to our boat patrol that war had started and a humorous incident occurred. One of the boat crew, upon hearing the word, made the remark that "Now, I never will get that laundry I left at Cavite." That is the only impression the start of the war had on him.

We remained in Iloilo throughout the day of December 8th, awaiting the arrival of Rear Admiral Glassford, who had orders to join us. We were prepared to move at any minute and it was a rather ticklish day until finally a PBY arrived with the Admiral and his Staff. We took them aboard and proceeded to sea. We had hardly cleared Iloilo entrance when we heard gunfire astern of us and saw a ship aflame. Apparently the Japanese had arrived at Iloilo just too late.

CONVOYED LANGLEY SOUTH.

The HOUSTON's orders were to proceed near the entrance of Manila Bay and convoy some supply ships and the LANGLEY to southern waters. For the next few days we were engaged in this convoy. On about the 10th of December, I believe it was, at dark, while the ship was at evening general quarters, smoke was reported almost dead ahead. Later the spotting officer and myself identified three ships, one believed to be a cruiser and the other two destroyers. Some American destroyers were ordered to proceed to the area and investigate. The ship remained at general quarters throughout the entire night but contact was not made.

We arrived in Balikpapan, Borneo, about a week after the war started, I don't remember the exact date, refueled and again went to sea to continue our convoy. We finally arrived in Soerabaja, Java, on about the 22nd of December. On that date Admiral Glassford and his Staff were transferred ashore and the HOUSTON immediately ordered to sea again.

For the next month the HOUSTON was constantly convoying between Java and Australia, Port Darwin being the base in Australia. We were at sea almost constantly, only spending a few hours in Port Darwin or in Soerabaja. We also went as far to the East as Torres Strait and picked up convoys that had come up from Sydney. This was rather dull work, though tiresome, because there was no time for liberty and a constant watch had to be kept.

Our planes flew all day long as an anti-submarine patrol and, of course, the anti-aircraft battery was manned day and night. The usual procedure was for the entire ship to go to general quarters at dawn and at dusk. Finally, we managed to finish our convoy duty and to be ordered to some actual combat duty in the vicinity of Bali Strait and Makassar.

The HOUSTON was ordered to go up and accompany some Asiatic Fleet destroyers into a night attack. However, unfortunately, at the last minute the orders were cancelled and we did not make it. However, our time of action was rapidly approaching. On the 3rd of February, the HOUSTON, in company with the Dutch cruiser DE RUYTER and TROMP, the U. S. cruiser MARBLEHEAD and destroyers, both Dutch and American, were at anchor south of Madoera Island just outside of Soerabaja. Admiral Doorman had called a conference on board the DE RUYTER. While the Commanding Officers were at the conference, a flight of approximately 72 Japanese planes flew over, headed for Soerabaja.

There was no question but that they sighted our fleet but they made no attempt to attack. The conference broke up quickly and the fleet got underway and proceeded to sea with the units disbursing and orders to rendezvous the next morning. So, on the 4th of February, we were all joined up again and headed in the direction of the Celebes when we were attacked by approximately 54 heavy Japanese bombers. The bombers singled out the HOUSTON and the MARBLEHEAD as their targets and for approximately an hour both ships were under severe attack.

The MARBLEHEAD was hit by two bombs and badly damaged. The HOUSTON was proceeding to the assistance of the MARBLEHEAD when she was struck by a large caliber bomb just forward of the after turret. This did considerable damage in that it disabled turret three, killed 48 men and wounded approximately 20 more.

After this attack, the HOUSTON and MARBLEHEAD were ordered to Tjilatjap in southern Java for emergency repairs. On arrival in Tjilatjap, the dead were buried in the local cemetery and we did the best we could to repair the structural damage which had been done by the bomb. This was very considerable since both the main and second decks had been pierced. Native facilities were very poor though we did manage to get some steel and the ship's force repaired the damage. We were unable to get turret three back in commission and it remained out for the entire war.

When the damage was repaired the ship was inspected by Admiral Hart and Admiral Glassford and afterwards was again ordered to sea to convoy from Australia to Java. We left Port Darwin on about the 14th of February, with the convoy of four heavily-laden troop transports carrying United States and Australian troops. On the 15th of February, we were sighted by

a large four-engine Japanese bomber who kept out of range. On the 16th of February, we were attacked by 45 heavy bombers, 36 of them land-based two-engine bombers and nine seaplanes, four-engine bombers. The attack was centered on the HOUSTON since she was the only ship capable of protecting the convoy. We had with us the damaged PEARY and two Australian corvettes.

At one time the Japanese made a coordinated attack of 27 planes and all bombs dropped within 15 seconds of each other. This was a beautifully executed attack but we were fortunate enough to get out of it unscathed. The Japanese planes finally gave up on the HOUSTON and went after the convoy, but they had dropped most of their bombs and the attack on the convoy failed. There was only one man killed on one of the transports. However, it was evident that we could not get the convoy to Timor as it was planned and the HOUSTON and the convoy were ordered back to Port Darwin.

After arrival at Port Darwin, the HOUSTON again was ordered to Java and left Port Darwin early on the morning of the 18th of February. We proceeded to Soerabaja via the Soenda Strait. On arrival in Soerabaja, about the 23rd of February, we found two Dutch cruisers and several destroyers as well as one American Destroyer Division.

The Japanese had started their air attacks on Soerabaja in earnest and for the next three days we were constantly under air attack. Knowing that an attack or a landing on Java was imminent, the fleet got underway every evening at dark and proceeded to sea looking for the Japanese transports. We would then return to Soerabaja about five or six in the morning. We would no sooner be in port than the first air alarm would go. As a result, the crew was very tired and constantly at general quarters or air defense.

On the afternoon of 26 February, we were reinforced by the British cruiser EXETER, the Australian light cruiser PERTH and three British destroyers, the JUPITER and ENCOUNTER and ELECTRA. We were very glad to see these ships and felt that we were then able to take care of any Japanese attacking force.

We proceeded to sea that same evening about two hours after the British ships arrived and again looked for the Japanese transports but failed to locate them. The next day, 27 February, we were returning to Soerabaja when the Admiral received some air contact reports. The fleet reversed course, proceeded to sea and in the early afternoon contact was made with the main Japanese landing force. The Battle of the Java Sea developed in which the Allied Fleet lost rather heavily.

ENGAGED TWO JAP CAS

Since this battle has been covered in the action reports of the

HOUSTON, I will not spend much time on it. The most notable thing to me about the battle was the fact that the two heavy Japanese cruisers were engaged by the HOUSTON and EXETER at a range of 30,000 yards and the range to the Japanese cruisers remained great throughout most of the engagement.

One of the Japanese cruisers, the HOUSTON's target, was put on fire early in the engagement. At the same time, the EXETER was being heavily straddled by the leading Japanese cruiser. We, therefore, shifted fire to the EXETER's target to try to help her out. Nevertheless, she was struck and disabled and forced to return to Soerabaja.

Later in the engagement, the HOUSTON hit and disabled ~~by~~ what I believe to be another eight-inch cruiser. This ship was claimed to have sunk by some people though I personally did not see it.

When darkness came, Admiral Doorman ordered the destroyers that were remaining, to make an attack on the Japanese convoy. This left the cruisers with only one **destroyer** as protection, one British destroyer, I believe the JUPITER. Shortly after dark, the JUPITER was torpedoed and sunk very rapidly. The ships remaining then were in order, the Dutch cruiser DE RUYTER, Australian cruiser PERTH, HOUSTON and the Dutch cruiser JAVA.

Once again contact was made with the enemy on the port bow. Fire was opened but the range was too great and action ceased almost immediately.

While steaming on a northerly course, the fleet was illuminated in a very effective manner by flares, apparently dropped from Japanese planes. Shortly after this illumination, the DE RUYTER was struck by, apparently, torpedoes, and went up in flames. This happened so quickly that she was almost rammed by the PERTH and the PERTH was almost rammed by the HOUSTON.

We received orders from the Admiral to proceed and not pick up any survivors. Very shortly after that, the cruiser JAVA was struck by what appeared to be torpedoes and also went up in flames. The sight of the DE RUYTER and JAVA burning was a very appalling one. It certainly brought home to us the dangers at night. One moment we had four cruisers steaming along at high speed and about ten minutes later there were only two left, the PERTH and the HOUSTON. It was very hard for us to leave the scene with so many men in the water but we had orders to carry on and command was taken over by Captain Waller of the Australian cruiser PERTH.

He continued a course to the north for some time and then altered and headed for Batavia. I do not know what orders he had received but presume he was in radio-communication with the headquarters ashore. The HOUSTON and PERTH arrived in Batavia about noon on the 28th of February.

After tying up to the docks, we refueled and repaired the damage caused by two 8-inch hits the day before. About dark, one of the HOUSTON planes

arrived in Batavia with Lieutenant Payne on board. He was fired on by the shore batteries before we could convince them that it was a friendly plane, but fortunately was not hit.

The ships got underway approximately at 7:30 having been delayed for over an hour waiting for a pilot to escort us through the mine fields. Finally ~~the~~ both Captains decided we must go without pilots and we proceeded out through the mine fields, headed in the direction of Soenda Strait.

The Captain had returned aboard about an hour before this and had informed the Executive Officer and heads of departments that we were to proceed through Soenda Straits to the southern coast of Java. He said that he had been told that an air reconnaissance had been made on Soenda Strait that day and that there were no enemy ships in the Straits. He was very happy about this since the HOUSTON was practically out of ammunition as a result of the Java Sea Battle and the men were very tired from long hours at their battle stations. Nevertheless, we decided to keep the ship in Condition Two until Soenda Straits were cleared. Condition Two on the HOUSTON consisted in half of the 8-inch turrets being manned and all of the anti-aircraft battery being manned.

After leaving Batavia, we proceeded slowly for a short time awaiting a Dutch destroyer who had orders to join up. The destroyer did not join up and finally Captain Waller of the PERTH increased speed and we headed for the Straits.

At approximately 11:15, while approaching Soenda Strait, enemy ships were sighted almost dead ahead. The PERTH, leading the HOUSTON, challenged and almost immediately opened fire as the Japanese replied incorrectly. The HOUSTON went to general quarters immediately and was firing within a minute.

The ships sighted proved to be three Japanese destroyers patrolling Soenda Strait. Captain Waller changed course to starboard, to the north, and almost immediately I sighted nine ships on our starboard quarter. These ships later turned out to be cruisers and destroyers. It was then evident that we had run into the midst of a Japanese fleet and action began on all quarters. Terrific engagement ensued and within about 20 minutes the PERTH had been struck by torpedoes and forced from the line. I did not follow her movements after she left the line but understood that she sank before midnight.

From then on it was a question of the HOUSTON against the entire Japanese fleet. We were illuminated constantly by one or more of the Japanese destroyers. Also, there was a pretty good moon, almost a full moon, so that we made an excellent target. We were right in the center of the entire Japanese fleet and all guns of the HOUSTON were firing constantly and on all angles. It became a melee and it was evident that the only way to fight it was for practically each battery to go local control. This was ordered and all targets were kept under fire as much as possible.

Early in the engagement the HOUSTON was hit by, I believe, a torpedo running shallow on the port side in the main engine room. No contact was

ever made with the main engine room after this hit so it is believed that everybody in the engine room was killed instantly.

TOLD THAT CAPTAIN WAS KILLED

The ship was able to continue to make about 23 or 24 knots on the remaining engine room and continued the engagement. The Japanese force constantly approached as near as they could to the HOUSTON, reducing the range. At times the range got as low as 1,500 yards but probably averaged about 4,000 yards. At times the Japanese searchlights would illuminate their own ships and once illuminated their transports close to the beach.

We immediately seized this opportunity to get a range on the transports and take them under fire. The HOUSTON was soon being hit by shell fire from both the cruisers and destroyers and soon the forward high turret, number two turret, was hit and went up in flames. The Turret Officer, Ensign Smith, flooded the turret and managed to get out alive. He then got a deck hose and entered the turret, flooding it with this deck hose to be sure there was no danger of further fire or explosion.

This fire in turret two forced the Captain and his talkers to abandon the conning tower. They proceeded to the communication deck and, to the best of my knowledge, remained there throughout the remainder of the engagement. After turret two was damaged, turret one was the only one left since turret three had been out of action for a month. Due to the flooding of turret two, turret one's source of ammunition was almost cut off.

Prior to this night engagement, we had shifted all the ammunition from turret three forward to turret two's large magazine. However, we were unable to use all of this since we had to flood this magazine and later the magazines under turret one were flooded as it appeared that the fire was spreading forward. Turret one fired what ammunition they had left and then abandoned the turret.

About this time the ship was again struck by torpedoes, one forward on the starboard side and one amidships to starboard. The water was full of torpedoes which could easily be seen from my battle station in the top. In fact, at one time, the ship was endangered by two torpedoes coming from the stern and which passed slowly forward, one about ten feet on one side and the other ten yards on the other side.

After the second torpedo hit I lost communication with con, in fact with all stations except the gunnery stations. I then decided to go down to the bridge to see what was wrong as it was evident the ship was rapidly losing her way and it appeared to me that everybody on the bridge had been killed by shellfire.

As I started down the ladder I called down to the bridge and asked who was in command. The reply was that the Executive Officer was in command. At about this time I sighted the third torpedo approaching the ship from the starboard beam and did not have time to either get to the bridge or back to the foretop before this torpedo hit. Therefore, I had a very good view of it.

The ship was very heavily shaken and a large column of water thrown up reaching as high as the forward director tower. The ship began to list heavily to starboard.

I then proceeded to the bridge and on the way down was told by Ensign Leavitt that Captain Rooks had been killed and that the Executive Officer was in command. I then went to the wing of the navigating bridge and found the Executive Officer and the navigator. The Executive Officer, realizing that the ship had not lost its way and the danger to men getting over the side before the ship was dead in the water, countermanded an order to abandon ship which had apparently been given after the third torpedo struck. I did not hear this order since I was not in communication with any part of the ship other than the gunnery stations.

We started to man our battle stations again, especially the guns on the flight deck, but almost immediately the ship was struck by a salvo of gunfire which killed and wounded many people on the topside. I received a minor wound and the Executive Officer then reiterated the order to abandon ship. By this time the ship was dead in the water and the Japanese cruisers and destroyers were at very close range.

The Executive Officer gave me orders to proceed to the forecastle to make sure that all men from the forecastle were provided with lifejackets and were off the ship. I inquired as to what he was going to do and he told me that he would proceed aft and see that all the men were off that part of the ship. I then went forward and, after carrying out my orders, dropped over from the starboard side of the ship. It was a very short drop as the ship was listing approximately 30 degrees to starboard. As soon as I reached the water there were a considerable number of shells bursting in the water all around me. This was due to the close range of the Japanese ships.

I swam rapidly away from the side of the ship and approximately five minutes thereafter observed the ship roll over to starboard and slowly settle. The Japanese searchlights were on the ship to the last with the name HOUSTON clearly visible to me in the water and with the colors still flying.

After the ship was sunk, I took a bearing on Java and decided to strike out for the beach. There were no rafts visible to me, in fact, I sighted, at that time, no men whatsoever. After I had been swimming for, perhaps, a quarter of an hour I observed one sailor swimming a hundred yards away from me. I called to him and we joined together and remained together throughout the night, swimming into the beach. Swimming together, we were much safer since one of us could swim on our back while the other kept heading in the right direction. The mountains of Java were clearly visible in the moonlight.

After we had been swimming some hours, we sighted a Japanese transport column either anchored or underway with very little headway. We swam across one column and were illuminated by searchlights but no action was taken

against us. Later we swam across the stern of the second column and found out that both these ship columns were underway.

While I was swimming in the water, my main idea was to reach the beach, contact the Allied Forces and get to the rear in the hope of soon getting air transportation to Australia or else joining up with the Allied Troops ashore. I had no thoughts of possible capture.

IN SWAMP FOUR OR FIVE HOURS

We continued swimming together throughout the night and finally managed to make the beach shortly after sunrise, a period of what I believed to have been about six hours. We rested for a short time after we reached the beach. In the meantime, Eland, the Seaman l/c, who was with me, proceeded to scout out the beach in the hope of finding out the best way to get away. He came back and told me that it was impossible to go to the West since the Japanese were landing in that direction. Also, we could not go to the East since he believed we were on the tip of the island. All we could do then was to either swim down to another island or else to head directly North. This last was the plan we adopted but it took us right into a coral swamp. Nevertheless, it appeared to be the only safe way to get away. We wandered for perhaps an hour in this coral swamp, cutting our bare feet very badly.

I finally asked Eland if he could climb one of those tall palm trees and he said he would try. He managed to climb it to see if he could find our way out of this swamp. We tried another direction for perhaps another hour and appeared to be getting nowhere, so once again I asked Eland to climb the tree. This time he thought he observed some banana trees or coconut trees and I figured we might as well head for them and perhaps get something to eat, so we proceeded in that direction for a long time but again were disappointed. I was beginning to get a little panicky since I didn't like the idea of spending a night in that coral swamp with the mosquitoes and, of course, our feet were not getting any better. So once again I asked him to climb the tree.

Fortunately, on this third attempt he managed to spy a rice paddy and said he was sure we could make it. Altogether, I believe, we were in this swamp about four or five hours but finally reached the edge of it and saw a huge rice paddy. On the opposite side of the paddy there were a group of four or five natives seated on the ground. I figured it was best to head for those natives and see if we could get something to drink and possibly some information as to where the Allied Forces might be.

We approached the natives and all but one got up and fled. This one native gave us some coconut milk to drink, but could not speak any language that we understood. While we were sitting on the ground, we heard a drum beating and Eland jumped up, and spotted a column of troops coming not more than a half a mile away. I presumed them to be Allied but we soon found out

that they were carrying the Rising Sun flag.

We then decided that we had to move quickly or we would be captured immediately so we took off for the hills of Java, running as fast as we could over the mountain roads. We spent the full day running into the mountains and, I believe, reached a height of around 6,000 feet.

While there, we observed the Japanese planes flying back and forth with no Allied planes in sight. During that night or as dark approached, we realized we had to find some place to sleep and rest but every native village that we had passed through appeared to be unfriendly and wished to get rid of us, so we finally went back to the last village we had passed and begged them to allow us to sleep there. They chased us away but did lead us down a road and into an open field where they indicated we could sleep in a small shack. We both lay down exhausted and went to sleep almost immediately.

The next thing we knew the shack was on fire, smoke pouring in from all sides and I grabbed Eland and we got out of there quickly, only to find ourselves surrounded by a group of seventeen natives, all armed with knives and clubs.

It seems they had noticed my class ring throughout the day and were anxious to get it. I knew that natives had been pulling my finger but was so tired and exhausted that I didn't give it much thought until this incident occurred. We tried to run away from this group but they constantly closed in on us and it finally became apparent that either I had to give up the ring or else we were in for serious trouble. They kept grabbing my hand and finger indicating what they wanted. Finally, I decided to let them have it in order to assure us a little safety and sleep. After they got the ring, they didn't bother us anymore. We immediately lay down on the ground where we were and went to sleep.

The next morning we proceeded in the direction of what we thought to be Batavia and soon encountered a group of six other people from the HOUSTON. They had a native Javanese with them who could speak English. He had been on one of the Dutch ships which had been sunk the night before. This seemed to us to be just what we were looking for, somebody who could lead us to the Dutch troops. He headed us in what he said was the direction of the Allied lines but later on I was convinced that we were being misled.

We continued on up into the mountains and finally had to stop for some food. The natives told us that they would take us to a farmhouse where we could get this food and we finally arrived at this farmhouse late in the evening. While sitting down and eating a few bananas, we found ourselves apprehended by a Japanese patrol. It seems that the natives had gone down to the Japanese headquarters and guided them to our locality. One of our group managed to get away at that time but the rest of us were tied up and taken down to the foothills and back to the Japanese Army Intelligence Headquarters.
(See Note A)

I received my first impression of Japanese justice almost immediately after arrival at this Japanese headquarters. We had been walking for a period of about eight hours with the Japanese guards. The two days prior barefoot walking in the mountains had about torn our feet to ribbons. Nevertheless, we were forced to make this walk and were hurried along by the guards. When we finally did arrive in the Japanese camp, we were all just about dead on our feet.

They started to tie up the men with their hands behind their backs to concrete posts and in a sitting position so they could not lie down and sleep. The men protested and I immediately talked to the Japanese and told them that they should not do that. As a result, I was struck by a very large Japanese and sworn at in Japanese. Later on, I made two more protests as they continued to tie us **up** and was struck both times for my efforts.

The result was we were forced to remain in a sitting position and tied with our hands behind our back throughout the night and were unable to beat off the mosquitoes which were practically eating us alive since we were almost naked. The next morning, the civilian interpreter came to me, found out who I was, and then told me that it didn't make any difference, that you could not complain to the Japanese. If we obeyed their orders we would get along alright but we could not make any complaints.

RECORDED NAMES OF 386 SURVIVORS

We remained with this group for a few days behind the Japanese lines but eventually ended up in the town of Serang, Java. Here we were put into a former moving picture house which had the seats removed, in other words, we sat down and lay down on the concrete deck.

I don't remember the number in the theatre but it was packed with British, Australians, Americans and Dutch. I remained there for about five days. The conditions were very unfavorable due to the crowded condition of the location. We were given two meals a day, each meal consisting of a small loaf of bread, a loaf being about the size of one of our large buns. Water was the only liquid.

After five days, I was taken over to a native Javanese jail and locked up in a cell with about forty other people. Most of the HOUSTON officers that had survived were there. We immediately attempted to get a muster roll of all the HOUSTON people who were survivors and managed to record the names of approximately 368 people. The conditions in this native jail were very bad as regards food and sanitary facilities. The only toilet facilities were a large bucket put into the cell for the use of the forty or fifty men in each cell. These buckets were taken out and dumped in a small drain or moat just outside the cells and on the edge of the parade ground.

A well, from which we obtained our drinking water, was in the center

of the parade ground. As a result, the well water was contaminated by seepage from the disposal from the toilets. After about two weeks in this jail, the majority of the prisoners began to get dysentery. I contracted a very bad case of it and was moved to a Japanese military hospital in Serang. Although I had a temperature of 103 or 104 and was very sick and barefoot I was forced to walk from this jail to the hospital through the city of Serang over concrete roads in the middle of a hot tropical day for a distance of, I should guess, about a mile and a half. I had to stop many times on the way but finally managed to make it.

In the military hospital I found the Japanese doctor who spoke a little German and English. He protested having any prisoners in his hospital since he said he was far too busy. There were, altogether, about five sick prisoners sent to the hospital. I received some treatment from him which managed to check my dysentery but the food situation was very difficult. Finally, he sent over to the jail and asked them to send two prisoners over to take care of us. This was a very good thing and, I believe, helped save our lives. One of the two men sent to us was Marko Sou, the Chinese steward from the HOUSTON. I had managed to get a few Dutch guilders from some of the Dutch prisoners in the jail and with these guilders Marko Sou bought food for those of us in the hospital.

I was soon able to get up for ten minutes at a time and was regaining my health when I was ordered to leave there and go to Batavia. I went to Batavia in company with twelve other Allied officers and after spending one night in a local bank we were taken to the harbor and placed aboard a transport, the ATUTO MARU. We sailed for Japan on the 6th of April 1942, and stopped at Singapore, Saigon, Hong Kong and three ports in Formosa, arriving at Shimonoseki, Japan, on the 4th of May. On the 5th of May we left Shimonoseki by train at about 1300 and arrived at Ohuna, Japan, about 9:15, the 6th of May.

On the trip up we were treated fairly decently, were not crowded since there were only 13 prisoners on the ship. The food was fair though not what we would hope for. On arrival at Ohuna station we were turned over to guards from the camp at Ohuna and immediately we began to be mistreated. We walked to the camp at Ohuna, which was situated about a mile and a half from the railroad station and in the country. It is very well hidden, being in a valley and surrounded by hills and caves.

On arrival at the camp we noticed how quiet everything was. The prisoners that were already present were in their rooms and the windows were closed so they could not see us. We were lined up in the courtyard, searched and had everything but our clothing taken away from us. We were then told that we were not prisoners-of-war, that we would not be prisoners of war as long as we remained in that particular camp, that we were just the same as we had been when the Japanese had picked us out of the water. If they wished they could drop us back in the water again. Those are practically the exact words which

were used.

They then told us that due to the fact that we would probably see many of our friends in that camp and that this would cause a lot of commotion, we would not be allowed to talk to them. In other words, there was to be no communications between prisoners while we were in that camp. They told us our names would not be turned in as prisoners-of-war until we left there.

The camp was not a prisoner-of-war camp but was a military interrogation camp run by the Japanese Navy. The commanding officer was a Japanese naval warrant officer by, I believe, the name Ouchi. He had two Japanese petty officers under him and approximately twenty Japanese seamen guards. There was no Japanese interpreter in the camp. Fortunately, one of the prisoner officers in the camp, Lieutenant Wilson, had been a Japanese language student and was of great assistance in helping us during those first trying days in that camp.

ENFORCED EXERCISE FOUR TIMES A DAY

The routine in the camp was to be available at any time during the day for interrogation by Japanese naval officers who came down to Ohuna from Tokyo or from the naval station at Yokosuka. Therefore, we did not go out to work. All people in the camp were treated equally. There was no distinction between officers and men and we were all called by our last names rather than by any rank. The only work that was done was the cleaning up of the camp. The camp was kept spotless as far as Japanese camps went because we would spend all day long picking up every little piece of straw or wood around the camp.

When we were not doing this work, we would sit in our rooms and think. We were not permitted to have books, pencils, razors or any form of entertainment and, as before stated, we were not allowed to talk to each other. You would be kept locked up in your room during most of the day, guards opening up the doors and letting you out for periods of enforced exercise. This exercise turned out to be very bad since it took the form of hazing.

This physical exercise would be ordered approximately four times a day and usually for at least fifteen minutes at a time. Sometimes it consisted of Japanese form of Swedish exercise but more often it consisted in double timing around the parade ground with the Japanese guard beating you with a club to make you keep up the pace. This was done for periods from anywhere from ten minutes to an hour.

At times, people were unable to keep up, would fall back and fall down and would always be beaten up by the Japanese guards and forced to continue. As a result, this form of exercise kept us all down to skin and bones. Of course, in company with the reduced ration. We had our first run at reveille in the morning which was usually at six o'clock. We would

line up in the courtyard, face in the direction of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, bow to the Emperor and then line up for our exercise. After the morning exercise, we would go into our rooms, clean them up and then have breakfast.

After breakfast we would go out and clean up the entire camp very thoroughly. When this was finished the usual work for the day was done and you would sit down and wait for more physical exercise or for the arrival of the questioning officers. We had three meals a day, the last one being at about four o'clock in the afternoon and would be in bed by eight o'clock at night.

The daily routine changed with the season so that in the winter time we found ourselves going to bed at six o'clock or at 6:30 at the latest. The daily work remained about the same throughout the entire time I was in the camp. At times we did some farming and at other times we dug two large pits and made concrete water reservoirs, but, in general, there was little manual labor. The physical exercise, however, was sufficient to keep us all in a bad state of health.

Soon after our arrival there we complained bitterly about the amount of food as it was evident we were all losing weight very quickly. The answers we received were that we were getting sufficient food to keep us alive and that the Japanese doctors had inspected our diet and believed it to be sufficient to maintain life. Had we not been forced to engage in this physical exercise, perhaps we could have managed to get along on the small amount of food, but this violent exercise rapidly took us all down.

During the summer many people contracted dysentery and berri-berri and the Japanese appeared to be concerned. As a result they eased up a bit on the exercise, though they did not increase the food.

Daily the officers would come to the camp from Tokyo and pick out various prisoners to question. I was questioned many times by from one to ten or twelve people at a time. They were anxious to find out almost anything they could regarding our Navy. The operations of the ships, the officers in command, the number of men on board, the modern installations, radar and so forth. Some of the questions asked were very simple, others were of a technical nature and very difficult to answer without giving away information.

For failure to answer their questions prisoners were ordered beaten by the questioning officers. The Japanese warrant officer in charge of the camp would be called into the office and told that a certain prisoner was to be beaten. Then all prisoners would be lined up in the courtyard and the so-called guilty person called to the front and forced to stand with his legs spread apart and his hands over his head. He would then be beaten with a large club by more than one guard and the duration of the beating apparently

depended upon the orders given to the warrant officer in command.

I have seen prisoners beaten as much as eighty-five times with clubs. Usually, a person will drop to the ground after he has been hit from ten to fifteen times. The procedure then would be to pick the prisoner up or kick him and force him to stand up, then to continue to beat him. As he would fall down, he would be again picked up and the beating continued. At times the beating would be called off and he would be beaten again later on when they believed he could take more punishment. Sometimes a prisoner would be beaten and then called back into the questioning room on the same day. I believe this punishment had very little affect on the prisoners, as far as forcing them to give information.

Since this camp was so small, we were able to hear much of the questions that were being asked in the questioning room. All prisoners were warned to speak as loud as they could while in this room and their voice would sound throughout the camp. In that way we knew what the line of questioning was and would be prepared before the next prisoner would enter the room. Not being able to talk to each other, it was very difficult to keep our answers straight but we tried by various methods to know just what was going on. There would always be a guard near a large group of prisoners. You could not talk unless he managed to turn his back or step some distance away from you. Then you might get in a few words in a low breath, but it was most difficult to carry on any kind of a conversation, especially at the times when you wanted to.

After the questioning, when officers would order a beating of a prisoner, we would observe that the treatment in the camp towards all prisoners would become increasingly bad. We would get more physical exercise and prisoners would be struck both by clubs and by fists for almost anything they did. As a result, the whole mental attitude of the camp was very bad. I complained to the Japanese officers about the conditions in the camp many times and they always told me that they had nothing to do with the camp, but they would speak to the warrant officer in command. Of course, I know that this was not true. The punishments were being ordered primarily by the questioning officers.

Later on, as the summer wore on, the summer of 1942, some of the prisoners were transferred from the camp and we found ourselves down to approximately twenty-five people.

END OF PART I

PART II

Captain Maher:

This was about September 1942. The cold weather was beginning to come on in Japan and we had still not received any clothing from the Japanese.

One day we had the particularly decent guard on, as Japanese guards go. He saw us all trying to make some clothing from rags, etc., that we had. Knowing that the warrant officer in command was out of the camp, he went out and came in with a couple of large bags of civilian clothing which had been taken away from prisoners at Wake and told us to take it quickly and not to let the commanding officer know where it came from. As a result, we did get a little heavy clothing for the winter. However, there was an order in the camp that we could not wear any hats or any gloves. Also, our hair was cut off, clipped off, every two weeks by a Japanese barber and we were shaved every two weeks, not being allowed to have razors. So without any hats and no gloves and having our hair clipped off every two weeks and having very little heavy clothing, we found the weather very cold.

The camp buildings were very poor, some of them apparently had been made from packing boxes and, whenever it rained very heavy, I had to leave my room as I would get rained out. This was true of many other rooms. So in November of 1942, the Japanese decided they had to do something if we were to live in those buildings throughout the winter and they put some plyboard inside the rooms and put glass windows in. Prior to that we had nothing but board windows over the bars to keep out the weather.

As the cold weather came on we were given more blankets. As a matter of fact the Japanese naval blankets that we were given were about the only thing that helped to keep us alive in the way of clothing. We were not allowed to use the blankets at all during the daytime. The blankets would have to be folded up at the foot of your sleeping mat and remain there until about ten minutes before the evening inspection when we would be ordered to make up our bed for the night. Then we would make up the bed and at inspection stand in front of our individual rooms at attention as the Japanese warrant officer or petty officer made his evening rounds.

TEN BEATEN IN ONE DAY

As soon as the inspection was over, we would be ordered to bed and locked in our rooms. The combination of the Japanese diet and our reduced physical condition, forced us to go to the toilet for urination many times a day and it

was the custom or common practice for everybody to get up about three times a night to go to the toilet.

Upon getting up you would have to knock on the door of your room and wait for the Japanese guard to come around, he would then ask what was the number, would come up to your room and open up and let you get out. However, many of the guards were very nasty and you would knock and knock for long periods of time before they would decide to open up the room. This made it very hard on the prisoners in the winter time.

One prisoner climbed over the overhead of his room and got out and got to the toilet and was apprehended by the Japanese guard and then forced to stand at attention for the rest of the night in practically no clothing and just about froze.

Later in the winter we managed to get permission to wear hats and gloves after sundown and before sunrise in the morning. This did not help the situation very much, since we were usually in our rooms at that time.

I have seen as many as ten people beaten in one day on orders of the questioning officers and the commanding officer of the camp. At one time, in, I believe, the spring of 1943, we had what we called a reign of terror for a period of about one month. At that time the camp size had been reduced to twelve prisoners. Things had been very quiet since all of us had been in the camp for some time and the questioning officers had just about given up any hopes of obtaining much information from us. However, a thirteenth prisoner was brought into the camp, it turned out to be an Australian Army officer from Rabaul. He was sent to the camp for punishment, and all of us had to be punished with him.

For the next month, our lives were made more miserable than ever while we went through various forms of physical torture while they were breaking down this new prisoner. At the end of a month, he was apparently broken down to their satisfaction and was transferred from the camp, and then conditions improved a bit for the rest of us.

The conditions in the camp remained about the same throughout the entire period of 19 months that I spent there. The lowest number of prisoners we had was 12 and the highest number reached was 82. The food was never good as far as quantity was concerned. Quality varied, depending on the season of the year. Prisoners were used as cooks in the galley and did the best they could to at least make the food palatable.

After I had been in the camp about a year, the camp was doubled in size as regards rooms and more prisoners began to arrive. Since there was no Japanese in the camp who spoke English, all of us were forced to learn some Japanese. As I was the senior prisoner in the camp, I was constantly being ordered by the Japanese regarding the other prisoners in the camp and as a result picked up considerable knowledge of the Japanese spoken language and acted as interpreter for the

camp after the departure of Lieutenant Wilson (of the POPE) who was a Japanese language student.

This worked out favorably because I was able to contact new prisoners almost immediately on their arrival and would obtain war information from them and also warn them as to the type of camp it was and to what they could expect from the questioning officers. In this way, we were able to keep up with the news to a certain extent.

We also managed to steal the Japanese language newspaper and one of the officers, Commander Blynn, (of the POPE) managed to learn how to read the Japanese headlines. In this way we kept up pretty well with the Japanese side of the picture. Finally, after having been in the camp for 19 months, I was told that I was to leave and go to Zentsuji.

I left the camp on the 3rd of December, 1943, along with about 40 other prisoners but did not go to Zentsuji as I had hoped. Instead I was taken to Tokyo to the camp in Omori, a camp which was called the Headquarters Camp for the Tokyo area, meaning all camps on the island of Honshu from Tokyo north.

Upon arrival in this camp, we were forced to sign a statement that we would abide by all Japanese orders and regulations and ~~did~~ not escape under pain of death.

This camp at first appeared to us to be pretty much a paradise after coming from Ohuna. We could not eat all the food that was given to us, since our stomachs had shrunk to such a great degree. My weight in Ohuna was about 105 pounds, my normal weight was about 150. However, after a few weeks in Omori we found we could eat all the food and still be hungry as were the rest of the prisoners.

WORKED IN TOKYO RAIL YARDS

Omori was a working camp, that is, the men in the camp went outside and worked in the various railroad yards of Tokyo. When I arrived in the camp there were approximately 450 men and around 35 officers. We were all declared prisoners of war and the officers were separated from the men.

The officers were working in the post office, the prisoner of war post office, which handled all prisoner of war mail that came to Tokyo. Approximately 25 officers worked in this post office every day, the remaining officers in the camp being engaged in administrative duties.

At first, Omori was not a bad camp. However, after I had been in the camp about three weeks, the first incident of a prisoner being beaten by the Japanese in that camp occurred. Lieutenant Clark, the Navy Lieutenant who was in charge of a prisoner barracks, was beaten by the Japanese corporal, assistant

to the commanding officer of the camp, Corporal Watanabe, because he had interceded for one of the men in his barracks.

The man had passed the word "Gangway" when Corporal Watanabe entered the barracks, apparently trying to clear the men so Watanabe could get by. However, the Corporal didn't believe the man's story and insisted that he was trying to warn all the men about his coming, and started to beat this prisoner.

Lieutenant Clark immediately interrupted Corporal Watanabe and told him that "Gangway" meant to give way for a senior officer, in other words that he was not insulting Corporal Watanabe but instead was trying to give him room. Watanabe refused to believe this and Lieutenant Clark received a bad beating. We protested this beating to the Japanese duty officer and other Japanese officers in the camp but nothing was ever done about it.

It soon became evident to all of us that Corporal Watanabe was going to run the camp. He had just arrived in the camp a short time prior to this and was not assigned to any duties in regard to prisoners but he was soon placed as assistant to the commanding officer of the camp and it appeared to us that he was ordered to maintain very strict discipline in the camp.

He remained in the camp until the end of 1944, a period of about 14 months, and during that time Omori could easily be called a "hell camp". From morning until night daily, Corporal Watanabe harassed the prisoners in that camp both mentally and physically. He possessed a great deal of physical endurance and could carry on for long periods at a time without sleep or food.

He was a young man, approximately 27 years old, fairly stocky, very Japanese, weight, I would say, about 145 pounds. He was a university graduate, I believe, from Maji in Tokyo. He came from a very wealthy Japanese family, his mother owning Japanese coal mines. He had a very definite sadistic nature and was the nearest approach to Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde that I have ever seen. On some days he would come down into the camp smiling and it would appear that the prisoners could do nothing wrong. He would pat them on the back and give them cigarettes, sugar and other small favors. However, within a very short period of time his whole manner could change and he would be beating up the people to whom he had just given these small favors, and for apparently no reason whatsoever. He saw everything that happened in the camp and wanted to know everything that happened.

Whenever he left the camp his first move on his arrival back in Omori was to send for me and ask me what had happened while he had been away. He never wished to be left out in anything. The other Japanese in the camp were apparently afraid of Corporal Watanabe and his powers.

He, from time to time, boasted that although he was only a corporal in the Japanese army, he had very great powers, even more than the local colonel who was in our camp. This appeared to be correct, since we reported him more than

once to Japanese officers and nothing ever happened about it. Also, I have observed him on many an occasion speaking to Japanese officers in what could only be considered a most surly manner. He would not stand at attention, he would fail to salute them, and would carry on certainly not in the manner of a Japanese corporal before a Japanese officer. Just what his hidden power was, none of us knew, but we all suffered as a result of it.

After I had been in the camp a few months, the prisoner post office was dissolved and this meant that the 25 officers that had been working in the post office, now had nothing to do. This made Corporal Watanabe very angry. He would come into the camp and see these officers with no work and would immediately start finding excuses for punishing them. Very shortly we were ordered that the officers must work if we were to continue to eat, and they asked us which kind of work we wished to do, whether we would go outside with the men or work in the camp.

We realized that we would not get food or a sufficient amount of food if we didn't work, but we did not wish to volunteer, so we tried to get around it by saying that we wished to continue to work in the post office, which, of course, had been discontinued. They then said that we would do farming and some officers would be ordered to work outside. We finally agreed that it would be best to do the farming and perhaps that would save the officers from working outside.

ALL OFFICERS ORDERED TO WORK

Nevertheless, some officers were ordered to work outside and refused and then were forced to go, so from that time on all officers were ordered to work and the failure of one officer to abide by this order resulted in a terrific beating of him by the Japanese commanding officer of the camp, Second Lieutenant Kato. This officer said he refused to go to work since it was in violation of International Law. Lieutenant Kato gave him one chance to change his mind and he again said he refused to go to work and was then given a terrific beating, having his nose broken, both eyes blackened and his face beaten to a pulp.

After this the officers realized it was useless to refuse to do farming work and we did do that work in the camp from then on. Farming work would have been alright except for the fact that Corporal Watanabe changed the work and from time to time we did almost anything, including digging air raid shelters, repairing fences, cleaning up the camp and all kinds of odd jobs. Three officers were eventually sent out to work with the men as punishment as a direct result of being reported by Corporal Watanabe.

Regarding the food situation in Omori, the only reason that we were able to live as well as we did was the fact that the prisoners working outside were able to steal a great amount of food. As I said before, they were working at the large railroad yards of Tokyo loading and unloading freight cars. The men all carried longshoreman's hooks and whenever they saw anything in a freight car which looked like it might be food, they would hook into it and spill it all over the car.

car. They would then steal this food and strap it around their bodies and smuggle it into the camp. At times they were caught and were severely beaten, but they continued to do this throughout the entire time I was in the camp.

All day long they would eat raw beans and raw rice which they picked up from the ground or from the floor of the railroad cars. It is hard to understand how their stomachs could digest these things, but they did and the men managed to keep in a fair state of health. It is true that most of them had diarrhea practically all the time. Nevertheless, the beans gave them the strength that they needed to do the coolie labor that they were doing all day long.

The working parties would leave the camp at around seven o'clock, in the morning, returning at about five or five-thirty in the afternoon. The parties would consist of about 60 men with one prisoner delegated as prisoner hancho or prisoner in charge of the party and an assistant hancho.

After arrival at the working place to which they were carried by trucks, they would fall out, get into working clothes and then be assigned in small groups of about five prisoners per group. A Japanese foreman would be with each group. A foreman was called a "fu". They would then disperse throughout the railroads in these small groups and work throughout the day. One or two prisoners would be assigned as tobans, in another words, servants, and they would stay in the room assigned to the prisoners and would look after the prisoners clothes and heat up some tea and their noon meal.

Their noon meal was carried out to the working place by the men in regular canteen. Then these canteens would be taken care of by the tobans.

The food stolen by the men consisted of rice, beans, all kinds of tin goods, dried fish, sometimes fresh fish, sometimes hokido, butter and cheese, and sugar from the Mitsubishi working party. The men would bring this food into the camp and then would barter it throughout the camp, trading amongst themselves or selling it to anybody who had the money to pay for it.

The officers were being given 50 yen per month in cash. This continued for a period of about six months. During this time we were able to buy some of this food from the men, but at times it was very difficult to get, since they would swap, for instance, sugar from one party for tin food which was stolen by another party and would eat it themselves.

At the end of six months the officer's pay had stopped, so from then on we had no more cash. As a result, we could not buy any of the food that the men continued to steal. Some of the men did donate food to the officers. However, this was the exception rather than the rule.

The officers were, therefore, not getting near as much to eat as the men, and for a time, were doing very hard work in the camp, as well as being harassed

by Corporal Watanabe all day long. Most of the men stated that they preferred to be out at work than to be in the camp with Watanabe on their tail.

The men would be given one day off every ten days. Each prisoner was assigned a number and, for instance, my number was 3445. My number ended in five which meant that on the 5th, 15th and 25th of the month, I would be given a rest, so the men knew what days of the month they would not have to work. This system was very satisfactory, in that one-tenth of the men would stay in the camp daily and get a chance to do their laundry work and rest up.

Omori would have been a pretty decent camp if it had not been for this one man, Corporal Watanabe. I have seen him beat almost every officer, prisoner officer, that was in the camp and many of the men. When he wasn't beating them, he was harassing them in other forms by making them stand at attention for long hours in the cold without proper clothing or making them work after hours dipping the latrines, emptying the latrines, doing extra laundry work, etc. In practically every case the punishment was entirely unjustified.

His particular pets were the officers and as a result some of the officers were practically driven crazy. At one time, we had as many as 70 officers in the camp. This was an unusually large number for a working camp and it irked Corporal Watanabe to see these officers not engaged with the men in the coolie labor. As a result they were all forced to work in what was called the leather shop, a shop where they sewed small pieces of leather together all day long. This was not hard work, but it was very degrading, in that they would work with the men and would work very long hours. In the winter time, it was very cold work, since there was no heat in the leather shop or, for that matter, in any of the prisoner barracks.

POW DOCTORS PUNISHED

Some of these officers were forced to live in the barrack with the men since there were not enough accommodations in the camp. This all pleased Watanabe tremendously, and although I have protested to him many times, he never wished to do anything about it.

At times, we received prisoner of war doctors for punishment, in other words, they would be sent into Omori Camp from other camps in the Tokyo area by orders of the ~~orders of the~~ Japanese Dr. Takada, who was in charge of Shinagawa Hospital. Upon arrival in Omori, Corporal Watanabe would take over the personal job of administering the punishment. These officers would be beaten by him as soon as they arrived in the camp, would be forced to dip the latrines all day long, to do laundry for other officers, stand at attention for long periods of time and in general would be harassed all day long.

This went on openly and, I am sure, was observed by Japanese officers and must have been known to the Japanese colonel in command. Nevertheless, it

continued right down to the end of Watanabe's term.

At the end of last December, Corporal Watanabe who then had been promoted to Sergeant, was then transferred from the camp. A new commanding officer was sent to the camp, as well as a new sergeant, Sergeant Oguri, and new Japanese interpreters. From then on we had a new deal. The camp improved a thousand per cent. There were no more beatings of prisoners by the camp staff and, in general, things were very much better. The Japanese realized, or some of the Japanese realized, that Corporal Watanabe had done a great deal of harm and apparently now were trying to correct that harm.

The new sergeant managed to have the work of the officers stopped, to have the 45 officers transferred from the camp so that those officers that did remain in the camp would have decent living conditions and the working conditions of the men were greatly improved.

The food situation did not improve because of the fact that it was not under the command of the camp commandant but rather under the command of another Japanese sergeant by the name of Fukuda who apparently took his orders only from the colonel at his headquarters. Of course, we realized that the food situation in Japan was getting very bad, and I believe that perhaps they could not do very much about it. I know that the civilians in Japan at this time were not eating very much food, but the Army still was doing alright. Nevertheless, the camp was so much better that we were all very happy and thankful about it.

At about that time the air raids from the B-29s and the Navy carriers started to hit Tokyo, so that although we were relieved from our harassing by Corporal Watanabe, we now had the air danger. Camp Omori was situated in about the center of Tokyo on Tokyo Bay. As a result the planes would fly over the camp either on their way in or on their way out after the attack. We would spend a great deal of time in our air raid shelters.

We had no air raid shelters as such, until after March. Prior to that, we had received permission to dig some trenches, but they were of very little use except as a hole to get out of the way of shrapnel.

After the March 9th air raid of Tokyo, a large number of logs floated down Tokyo Bay. These logs were from trees that had been cut down throughout Japan and were apparently to be sawed up into lumber for wooden ships. We saved thousands of these logs and hauled them onto the island at Omori and then received permission to dig air raid shelters and to reinforce them with these logs.

As the March 9th raid had burned out many of the places where the men were daily working, we had many men available in the camp to put to work digging the air raid shelters. This work proceeded and before the war ended, we had air raid shelters in the camp sufficient for every man. Of course, these shelters would not stand a direct bomb hit, but they were proof against incendiaries,

against shrapnel and strafing attacks.

We saw all the raids of Tokyo and the raids of Yokohama and they were a most impressive sight. Nevertheless, they were not too pleasant when you would see the entire area around you burning. However, we knew that it had to be if the war were to end and so we more or less accepted it philosophically.

Regarding the danger from the air raids, the street across from us, approximately about 250 yards away, was burned out, and two 500-pound bombs were dropped within 300 yards of the camp. Several camps in Kawasaki were burned, but we never did receive any incendiary bombs. We did see several B-29 planes crash very near the camp.

I haven't touched on the news, the war news, while in Omori and I believe I should state a few things about how we were able to keep up with what was going on. As before stated, the men were working every day at the various railroad yards. They made deals with certain civilians who were also working at the yards to steal food for them in exchange for the Japanese language newspaper. The paper would be given to one of the men who would smuggle it into the camp. We had an officer in the camp who could translate Japanese, and he would then translate it and we would put the news out to the various barracks.

Occasionally, the men would be given the English edition of the Nippon Times and this would be brought into the camp. It is true that the news was greatly adulterated and given the Japanese slant, but we did find that the European news was practically 100 percent correct. They probably minimized the losses because all they were doing was quoting the Germans. Nevertheless, we knew exactly where the Allied forces were in Germany and followed the campaign right on through.

As regards the Southwest Pacific operations, the Japanese would be very vague. Nevertheless, they did state, for example, that Allied troops were attempting to land on Iwo Jima or on Attu, etc. Later on the papers would discontinue any remarks about Iwo Jima or Attu. We would then know that our attacks had been successful and these islands were in our possession.

ALSO GOT NEWS FROM CIVILIANS

Also some of the Japanese civilians at the working places spoke English and had been educated by Missionaries. These few Japanese told our men the news and the men would bring it in from time to time. Nearly in all cases was this found to be correct.

Later, in about June of this year, 70 or 80 Japanese soldiers were brought into the camp and housed there. They were brought into the camp for the purpose of learning the English language. Most of them were high school and college graduates, and did understand a little English. After they had been in the camp a few days, we observed that they were rather friendly and would talk to us when

they were not observed by other Japanese. They opened up and some of them gave us the complete story of what was going on and told us that we could expect peace at almost any time. Of course, at this time, we weren't too optimistic, but as the summer rolled on and they continued to tell us these remarks, we were every day expecting the invasion. (See note B)

I knew that Russia was in the war within an hour of the time that it was announced in Japan and knew that the Emperor had called the war off within an hour of the time he made his speech. All of this information came from friendly Japanese. This getting of the information managed to help us keep up our morale.

After Watanabe would have one of his real bad days, we would say, "Well, now we must get a piece of good information," and when it would come in, it would bolster our morale and we would immediately say, "Well, the hell with him," or that we could continue to take it just so long as our boys were getting closer to Japan. This was the attitude of most of the prisoners and in spite of the many beatings and the continual harassment, the morale remained remarkably high.

The closing months in Omori were rather tense as the pressure increased and several of the raids came in with around 500 to 600 B-29s. On the 10th of August we heard the news of Russia coming into the war and were told that negotiations for peace were going on, all of this, of course, unofficially.

On the 15th of August we were told about the Emperor's speech, and when the men came in from work that night, they told us that the war was over. They had been told that by Japanese at work and also by a German civilian. On the 16th of August, I was informed officially by the Japanese colonel that an armistice was being negotiated and that if everything was successful we would soon go home.

About that time, a large number of B-29 crew members were brought into the camp from the local Tokyo jails and dungeons. They were in horrible shape, most of them being very thin and some of them being unable to walk. None of them had on more than one piece of clothing, a flying suit, and they were covered with lice. Before they were allowed to enter a barrack, we made them take off all their clothes right in the street so that we could start to delouse their clothes. These men had not been in prisoner of war camps and certainly showed the results of very bad treatment.

On the 25th of August, the Navy planes started to drop food into the camp. This continued for the next few days and was augmented by B-29s dropping clothing. As a result, in those few days, we had plenty of food. Incidentally, the Japanese from the 19th of August on, tried very hard, it appeared to us, to bring extra food into the camp and were very willing to try to abide by our every request.

On the morning of the 29th of August, American ships led by the cruiser, SAN JUAN, were sighted coming into Tokyo Bay. That evening, boats from the SAN JUAN came into Omori Camp and started to liberate us. This continued throughout

the night and I believe the entire camp was liberated by about four o'clock the following morning.

We were taken aboard the hospital ship, BENEVOLENCE, and I cannot speak too highly of the treatment we received on that ship. After that, we were disbursed to various ships in Tokyo harbor, the prisoners later brought home by various means of transportation.

I left Tokyo myself, on the 6th of September by plane and flew to Oakland, arriving on the 6th (?) of September. After being examined in Oakland, I was allowed to proceed to Chicago, to report to the Great Lakes, was examined again and then started on rehabilitation leave. I think that is about the end of my story.

END

Note A -- Captain Maher stated that the Japanese paid the natives 10 guilders apiece for the prisoners.

Note B -- At the conclusion of the recording, Captain Maher said the prisoners had definitely been told that they would be machine gunned if American invading forces landed on Japan. The Japs would need the guards to fight the invasion. They would tell the world that the Americans were machine gunned while attempting to escape.

G. B. P.