

CONFIDENTIAL

FOR THE WAR CRIMES OFFICE

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT -- WAR DEPARTMENT

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In the matter of the improper transportation of American prisoners of war from Manila, P. I. to Moji, Japan

Perpetuation of testimony of John Rudolph Cicha, Coxswain, USN, Serial #328-60-46.

Taken at: Pisek, North Dakota
Date: 4 January 1946
In the presence of: Joseph C. Simpson, Special Agent, SIC
Reporter: Joseph C. Simpson, Special Agent, SIC
Questions by: Joseph C. Simpson, Special Agent, SIC

- Q: State your name, rank, serial number and permanent home address.
- A: John Rudolph Cicha, coxswain, U. S. Navy, Serial #328-60-46. I reside permanently at Pisek, North Dakota.
- Q: When were you born and what was the extent of your schooling?
- A: I was born April 9th, 1918 at Rankin, North Dakota, and attended school through the eighth grade until 1933.
- Q: What was your occupation before entering the Navy?
- A: From 1933 until September 1939 when I enlisted in the Navy I worked as a farm hand in the vicinity of Pisek, North Dakota.
- Q: Were you a prisoner of war during World War II?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Where and when were you captured, and where were you held as a prisoner?
- A: I was captured by the Japanese at Corregidor, Philippine Islands on May 6, 1942, while I was assigned to beach defense. I was held as a prisoner of war by the Japanese at Corregidor from May 6, 1942 to May 23, 1942; at Cabatuan, P. I., from May 23, 1942, to September 19, 1943; at Las Pinas, P. I. from September 19, 1943, to October 19, 1944; at Dilibid Prison Camp, Manila, P. I. from October 19, 1944, to December 13, 1944, and at Camp Number 17, Kyushu, Japan from January 31, 1945, until September 12, 1945.
- Q: How long were you enroute from the Philippine Islands to Japan?
- A: We left Manila, P. I. aboard the Oka Maru on December 13, 1944, and arrived at Moji, Japan about the last week of January 1945.
- Q: Will you describe your trip aboard the Oka Maru giving details regarding the food and water you received, the quarters you had and any adverse conditions.
- A: Some 1639 American prisoners of war boarded the boat about 5:00 P.M. of the afternoon of December 13, 1944. The Japanese put us in two holds,

CONFIDENTIAL

RG 153
Stack 270
Row 7
Camp 8
Sheet 7
Box 1434

the forward hold and the back hold. Most of us were put in the back hold where I was. They had a hard time squeezing us into this hold. Three or four Japanese came down with long bamboo poles. They held the poles horizontally and pushed us back into the hold as tightly as possible so that we had to stand. They brought more prisoners in.

Q: How large was this back hold and how many prisoners were finally in there?

A: It was too dark in there for me to estimate its dimensions. I know that it was oblong shaped and believe it had keys around three sides that the officers took. I don't know how many men were in the hold but it was more than half of the 1600. We were so crowded that several men died of suffocation the first night on the boat, and a number of others fainted.

Q: Do you know the names of any of the men that died or fainted?

A: No, I don't remember any names, and would not be able to say who they were.

Q: What happened after your hold was loaded?

A: During that night some buckets of rice and basins of water were handed down through the hatch for the prisoners. There was not much for the number of men, not enough to go around. I got about a handful of rice, but may get nothing. The next morning while the boat was still in the China Sea, about 11:00 A.M. it was attacked twice by American planes. There were no bomb hits, but the deck was hit by strafing. So far as I know no American prisoners were hurt because they were in the holds. Because of the attack the boat was run aground but was brought out again that night. The following morning the boat was lying in the bay about five hundred yards off shore when American planes returned and made two bomb hits.

Q: What damage was done by the bomb hits?

A: The first one hit the forward deck, the latter hit the stern coming through into our hold. About three hundred American prisoners were killed; others were hurt. I did not receive a scratch.

Q: What happened then?

A: The Japanese evacuated the ship, and then we did. They did not stop us. We ran up on deck, and most of us just jumped over the side and swam ashore. Some Americans crowded into the few lifeboats that were left. The Japanese garrisoned themselves along the shore, set up machine guns, rounded us up, and then took us away to a tennis court at Olungapo where we were held for five days. Then they took us by trucks to San Fernando where we remained a couple days; then by train to San Fernando La Union north of Lingayen Gulf where we boarded another boat, but I don't know its name.

Q: When you boarded this second boat were you still under the same Japanese officers and enlisted personnel?

A: Yes. We were taken all the way to Japan by the same group of Japanese officers and men that first loaded us onto the Cha Maru at Manila.

Q: What happened aboard this second boat?

A: On this boat we were taken to Taiwan being aboard from about December 23, 1944, to January 3, 1945. The survivors from the first boat were, including the wounded, crowded into two holds, an upper and lower hold, the wounded being assigned to a certain part of the upper hold where I was. We could sit down and lie down at intervals but we were too crowded for all of us to lie down together.

RG 153
Stack 270
Row 7
Camp 8
Sub R 7
Box 1434

CONFIDENTIAL

- Q: What food and water did you receive?
- A: We never had enough food or water. All the men were always hungry and thirsty. On an average we got a half muntan cup of rice twice a day per man, and nothing else whatever. Also on an average we got about a half cup of water a day per man.
- Q: Did any men get sick?
- A: Many of them. I did not. But many had fever and dysentery. A number of the wounded men died. Also a number that had not been wounded died from starvation and disease. There was an medical care from the Japanese. There were some American doctors among the prisoners who had a little medicine, but not enough, so they could not save the men.
- Q: Do you know the names of any of the men that died aboard this second boat?
- A: No. I don't know any of their names, and could not identify them.
- Q: What happened next?
- A: When we got to Yatsen we remained aboard this ship in the harbor for about eight days. About the fifth day, the Japanese took a few hundred men from the lower hold and some from the upper hold and put them in another hold that was on the forward part of the boat. That same day some American bombers came over, bombed the boat, got one hit in the forward hold that killed several hundred more American prisoners and wounded a number of others. I was still in the upper hold in the back. The ship then settled down in the mud, and the surviving prisoners were removed to a third vessel, but I don't know its name.
- Q: Do you know whether either this second boat or the Oka Maru were identified so as to indicate that American prisoners of war were aboard?
- A: I am sure neither was because the raid that had the ^{JRC} two bomb hits on the Oka Maru was about 1:00 P.M. in broad daylight, and the attack on this second ship was also at daytime.
- Q: What happened on the third vessel?
- A: On the same day we boarded it we started out for Japan and arrived at Nagai a couple weeks later. It was a troop ship. About six hundred or seven hundred Americans were left. That is as close as I can estimate. All of us were put into one hold that had bays around all four sides. We were not too crowded by comparison because there was enough space that we could lie down at the same time.
- Q: What food and water did you receive aboard this ship?
- A: We were fed twice a day, only rice, sometimes a half cup, sometimes a third. There was very little water, our issue being about a muntan cup for six men per day. It was so limited that it was issued out with a G.I. spoon. We were always hungry and thirsty.
- Q: Was medical care available to sick and wounded men?
- A: Some from the Japanese and very inadequate care from the American doctors because they did not have any medicines and the Japanese would not give them any. Some of us had enough clothing so the men began coughing and caught colds. I had a very bad cough. All we had to wear were shirts and trousers, and many had no shirts. Dozens of men died, mostly wounded men from the bombing attacks, but also others who were not scratched but who gave out from starvation or sickness. Only about five hundred men ever reached Japan.
- Q: Do you know the names of any of the men who died or who became sick with colds or other ailments?
- A: No, I don't know any names, and could not even identify them now.

CONFIDENTIAL

PG 153
Stack 220
Row 7
Comp 8
502A 7
Box 1434

- Q: Do you recall the names of any other Americans who made this trip with you?
- A: No.
- Q: Do you know the name or identity of the Japanese Commandant or any of the other personnel?
- A: The Commandant was named Yoshida (phonetic), a Lieutenant, about 5' 8" 160 or 165 lbs in weight, in his late thirties, and straight posture, but I do not recall any insignia, scars, characteristics or anything else about him.
- Q: Do you recall any of the others?
- A: The interpreter was named Wada (phonetic). He was about 5' 2", 140 lbs. in weight, in his late thirties, rather hunch backed, but that is all I can recall about him. There was also a guard named Mihara (phonetic) whom we called "Air Raid". He wore three stars on his chest, was about 5' 8", 150 lbs. in weight, in his early thirties, had buck teeth, horn-rimmed glasses, but that is all I remember about him.
- Q: Do you recall any others?
- A: No.
- Q: Do you have any other facts concerning mistreatment of American nationals in addition to what you have related in this and other depositions this afternoon?
- A: No.

John Rudolph Cigna
 JOHN RUDOLPH CIGNA, U. S. Navy

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA }
 COUNTY OF WALSH }

I, John Rudolph Cigna of lawful age, being duly sworn on oath, state that I have read the foregoing transcription of my interrogation and all answers contained therein are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

John Rudolph Cigna
 JOHN RUDOLPH CIGNA

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 4th day of March 1946.

C. E. SHENWOOD,
 Notary Public, Walsh Co., North Dakota
 My Commission expires Sept. 8, 1950

C. E. Shenwood

CERTIFICATE

I, Joseph C. Simpson, Special Agent, SIC, 7th SO, certify that John Rudolph Cigna personally appeared before me on 4 January 1946 and testified concerning war crimes; and that the foregoing is an accurate transcription of the answers given by him to the several questions set forth.

Joseph C. Simpson
 JOSEPH C. SIMPSON, S/Ag't, SIC, 7SO

Minneapolis, Minnesota

13 March 1946

RG 153
 Stack 270
 Row 7
 Camp 8
 Sec 7
 Box 434