

19 October, 1949.

STATEMENT OF: GORDON, Carl Burke, Ser.# 375 67 38,
HMC, U.S. Navy.
Attached To: U.S.S. Merrimack, (AO37).

This is to certify that I first met Robert A. ROSS in the summer of 1938 while I was visiting my relatives in Oakland, California. I was on leave at that time from the U.S.S. RELIEF, a U.S. Navy Hospital Ship which I was on duty aboard.

As Robert Ross was a very close friend of one of my brothers, we soon became well acquainted with each other. Later, about six months after that time, Robert Ross enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Although I did not see Robert Ross again for almost three years, I had heard that he was on duty with the Fourth Regiment, U.S. Marines, at Shanghai, China, in 1941. About October, 1941, while I was serving as a U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman on Independent Duty aboard a U.S. Navy Tug in the Philippine Islands, the Fourth Regiment, U.S. Marines, were transferred from China to the Philippines.

On the morning of the 8th of December, 1941, the Navy Tug that I was aboard for duty, took aboard a group of U.S. Marines at the U.S. Naval Station, Olongapo, Zambales, Luzon, Philippine Islands. Robert A. Ross was then a Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps, and a member of that group of U.S. Marines that came aboard my ship. My ship transported that group of U.S. Marines to Mariveles, Bataan, Luzon, P.I. Robert Ross and I had quite a long visit while en route to Mariveles. He was in very good health at that time and his morale was very high, even though War had just begun that same day with Japan.

The next time that I saw Robert Ross was on the night of the 28th of December, 1941, when my ship again transported a group of U.S. Marines that Robert Ross was among. We took these Marines from Mariveles to Corregidor Island in Manila Bay, P.I.

I saw Robert Ross several times during the next four months and he did not appear to be, or have been, ill, even though the conditions which he had to live were very rugged, he having been assigned to Beach Guard Duties on Corregidor Island during the heavy Japanese bombardment of that Island.

On the 10th of April, 1942, my ship was abandoned during the daytime and the crew were put ashore on Corregidor. We operated our ship only at nights after that time. On the night of the 5th of May, 1942, the Japanese made a landing on the East Sector of Corregidor Island, the Sector that Robert Ross was assigned as Beach Guard.

The following day, the American Forces on Corregidor, under General Wainwright, U.S. Army, surrendered to the Japanese. I did not see Robert Ross for several days later, but found him among the large group of prisoners of the Japanese on Corregidor. Robert Ross was in fair health, having lost some weight due to the low diet he had received prior to and just after the fall of Corregidor, and also had Diarrhea, as most of the other American Prisoners. Robert Ross was also suffering from that let-down which we all had after so long a period of mental strain which everyone on Corregidor had gone through at the fall.

STATEMENT OF: GORDON, Carl Burke, (Continued).

About one week after this meeting with Robert Ross, Ross was taken by the Japanese Army Guards to Manila, and from there to the Prison Camp at Cabanatuan, Northern Luzon, P.I. I remained on Corregidor with the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy Medical Departments. I did not see Robert Ross again for almost two years, but we had sent word to each other through other Prisoners of War, as they were being moved about the Philippines to various work details.

Early in 1944, Robert Ross arrived at Bilibid Prison in Manila, among a large group of Prisoners of War being taken by the Japanese Army from the Philippines to Japan. Robert Ross remained in Bilibid for a few days awaiting transportation to Japan. I was assigned to a group of U.S. Navy Medical Department Personnel who were operating a Prison Hospital in Bilibid. Robert Ross was then in poor health, weighing barely one hundred pounds, and had suffered from severe Dysentery and Beriberi at Cabanatuan Prison Camp. He was quite concerned about his move to Japan, as he knew that he would have to go aboard a Japanese Ship, and we had all heard word from the Filipino Underground how the American Submarines had been sinking the Jap Shipping. He was no different than any other Prisoner of the Japanese who knew that he would have to spend several weeks in the hold of a Jap Ship that would be dodging American Subs and Planes.

The next time that I saw Robert Ross was in February, 1945, after I had been taken by the Japanese to a Prison Camp in Japan, Camp No. 17, at Omuta, Kyushu, Japan. Robert Ross at that time weighed no more than Ninety (90) Pounds, and he appeared to me to be no more than a walking ghost. I could hardly recognize him and he barely recognized me at the time. He had been working long hours in a nearby Jap Coal Mine, receiving little or no food and many beatings by the Japanese.

The Coal Mine, where Robert Ross had been detailed by the Japanese Guards, had been condemned by American Engineers quite a number of years prior to the start of the War. The Japanese had re-opened this mine and forced prisoners to work in it. It was very unsafe to even be in it, let alone work in it, and the Coal Veins were very shallow and rocky. The Japanese demanded that each working group produced a large amount of work in a given length of time, regardless of the working conditions. Failure to produce the required amount of work brought severe beatings with clubs, shovels, iron bars, kickings, etc., by the Japanese in charge of the working group. Robert Ross was on the receiving end of many of such beatings.

The low starvation diet, long hours of daily rigorous work in an unsafe Coal Mine, and numerous cruel beatings had broken his spirit and health, and Robert Ross was probably more dead than alive when I first saw him in Japan, early in 1945. Everyone, (prisoners), in Camp No. 17 had one lone thought in his mind, how could he get more food and how could he work another day for the Japanese. When I look back upon it all now, I wonder how any of us had not gone completely mad - or maybe we did and didn't know it.

On the 15th of August, 1945, the Japanese suspended all work for the Prisoners of War in Camp No. 17, and began to feed us more food. We felt that the war must be finally over, but due to so many disappointments before, we could not bring us to believe such. Everyone was very excited when confirmation was received, but excited is only a mild way of putting it.

STATEMENT OF: GORDON, Carl Burke, (Continued).

After Robert Ross and I were returned to the United States, we both were hospitalized at the U.S. Naval Hospital, Oakland, California, and shortly after our arrival there, we were granted Rehabilitation Leave at about the same time. As we both lived in Oakland, California, Robert Ross and I spent much time with each other while on leave. Our families and friends could not seem to understand us, as we both seemed to have to have something to do at all times. In answer to the question whether or not Robert A. Ross is more nervous today than before he entered the U.S. Marine Corps, the answer is definitely yes. I do not remember Robert Ross having been nervous prior to the War.

I feel that I am well qualified to state the condition of Robert A. ROSS, as I have known him for such a long period of time and have survived the same conditions he has while we both were a Prisoner of War of the Japanese. Also, I have been a member of the U.S. Navy Medical Department for fourteen years, and feel that this should qualify me in stating my opinion of another mans medical condition.

It is my opinion that Robert A. ROSS is now suffering from the after effects of having had Acute Dysentery, Severe Beriberi, Generalized Malnutrition and Combat Fatigue. It is also my opinion that he now has an aggravated condition of Combat Fatigue, due to conditions he had been subjected to while a Prisoner of War of the Japanese for a period of Forty (40) Months, From 6 May, 1942, until after the surrender of the Japanese Government to the United States Forces.

The above statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Carl Burke Gordon

U.S.S. MERRIMACK, (A037),
% FLEET POST OFFICE,
NEW YORK, NEW YORK.

Subscribed and sworn before me this 19th day of October,
1949.

W. L. Talbot

W. L. TALBOT,
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy,
Executive Officer,
U.S.S. Merrimack, (A037).