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PERPETUATION OF TESTIMONY OF
HERBERT GEORGE KLINGBEIL
(Formerly Private, MCSN 278420)
Minneapolis, Minnesota

My name is Herbert George Klingbeil. My permanent home address is 3115 - 29th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota. I am now 27 years old. I was formerly a Private, Serial No. 278420, in A Company, 1st Battalion, Fourth Marines, U. S. Marine Corps, having enlisted December 5, 1939. I went overseas April 4, 1941, and returned to the States October 20, 1945. I was discharged from the Marine Corps April 5, 1946.

I was captured on Corregidor, Philippine Islands, on May 6, 1942 by a Japanese infantry unit, the name of which is unknown to me.

I was held on Corregidor, P. I., until May 29, 1942; then at Bilibid Prison, Manila, P. I., for two days; then at Cabanatuan Camp No. 3 until late October, 1942; then at Cabanatuan Camp No. 1 until July 17, 1944; then at Camp Moji, Kyushu Island; then at Camp No. 10, Futasi, Kyushu, until liberated on September 21, 1945.

While on Corregidor, treatment of Americans was good, food was sufficient, and there was no mistreatment of prisoners that I witnessed.

During the two days I was held at Bilibid Prison, Manila, treatment was also good and there was no mistreatment of prisoners that I witnessed.

Also, while stationed at Cabanatuan, Camp No. 3, treatment of the Americans was fairly good. However, there was one Jap guard on duty there called "Clark Gable", a two-star sergeant, who took pleasure in mistreating prisoners. He usually carried a bamboo walking stick about an inch in diameter and used this walking stick to hit prisoners whenever the whim took him.

One particular occasion when I was in a working party returning to camp at the end of the day, we encountered a group of Filipinos along the road who had food and wished to sell it to us. Several of our boys, half starved, broke ranks and started to barter with the Filipinos. When "Clark Gable" saw what was going on; he dashed through the ranks swinging his walking stick indiscriminately at every one he encountered. I personally was hit severely three or four times, raising red welts on my body that took several days to disappear.

Shortly after arriving at that camp, about June 3, 1942, four American soldiers escaped from the camp and were caught by the Nips about a day later. They were returned to the camp and tied in a half-kneeling position with a stick across the back of their knees and their hands tied behind their backs to their feet. They were placed out in the open where we could all observe them and left there for two days without food or water. After two days of this torture, a pit was dug. The four boys were stood up along the edge of the pit and then shot. This shooting was witnessed by myself and many others. About 20 high ranking Japanese officers also witnessed the shooting.

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In late October, 1942, I was transferred from Cabanatuan No. 3 to Cabanatuan No. 1. Here the treatment was much worse. Japanese guards particularly vicious to Americans were "Donald Duck", "Mortimer", "Air Raid", "Big Speedo", as well as some others whose names I don't remember.

During my stay at that camp, I witnessed a beating administered to Captain Wermuth by a Taiwan called "Laughing Boy". This beating happened as follows: Captain Wermuth was in charge of about 100 of us and responsible to the guard, "Laughing Boy". The detail was hauling manure in litters from the Caribou corral to various points throughout the farm. The usual procedure was to assign four men to each litter. These groups of four would make two trips, take a break, and then make two more trips during the morning, with the same during the afternoon. This particular day after we had made two trips, Captain Wermuth asked "Laughing Boy" for a break and he said that we had not worked hard enough and would not have a rest. While carrying the third litter, Captain Wermuth reported the lack of rest to an interpreter, Colonel Inglehart. Colonel Inglehart ordered "Laughing Boy" to give the men a break after they had carried the third litter. When we had completed the trip with the third litter, "Laughing Boy" ordered Captain Wermuth to kneel down in front of him. Captain Wermuth refused to do so and was slapped severely for this refusal. The rest of us standing around told Captain Wermuth he should kneel before he was killed. So Captain Wermuth knelt. "Laughing Boy" then kicked him in the face with his hobnailed boots. A Jap called "Four Eyes" and another called "Mortimer" then came up and joined in the kicking and the beating. "Four Eyes" was using the butt of his rifle hitting Captain Wermuth across the back, while the other two Nips continued kicking Captain Wermuth in the face, stomach, back, and head. This beating was so severe that Captain Wermuth was confined to his quarters for three weeks, unable to move. This was one of the most severe beatings I ever witnessed in this camp.

Another time while on a rice threshing detail, I was suffering considerably from malaria and reported this fact to the American officer in charge, Captain Fowler. Captain Fowler told this to the Jap in charge, "Caribou". "Caribou" told Captain Fowler that it would be all right for me to go over and sit near a straw stack at which place the medics were situated. It was permissible whenever we took a break to smoke, so I lit a cigarette and commenced talking to the medics who were also smoking. Within a few minutes, "Laughing Boy", who was in charge of another working party a short distance away, came over to where I was sitting and ordered me to stand up. When I did so, he took the medic standard, a bamboo pole about 8 feet long and an inch in diameter and struck me across the head with it. He then continued to beat me with the standard, hitting me about ten times across the top of my head and about ten times across my face. He hit me across the face so severely that the inside of my mouth was split. The only reason he stopped beating me at this time was because he saw the Japanese camp commander, who did not allow such beatings, coming down the road. So "Laughing Boy" told me that he had beaten me because I was smoking and left before the camp commander noticed what had happened.

At another time while on a vegetable carrying detail in charge of a Nip called "Charlie McCarthy", a Marine truck driver (I believe his name was McCormick) was beaten unmercifully. I don't recall what "Charlie McCarthy" accused the truck driver of doing, but I do know he was so mad he was almost out of his mind. He took his saber out of the scabbard and beat McCormick

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across the face with the flat side of the saber. He beat him until his eyes were swollen shut and then beat him across the legs cutting him in several places.

On the 18th of July, 1944, we were placed aboard a Jap transport, I believe called the Misha Maru, and set out for Japan. This voyage, in my estimation, was the most horrible part of my entire time as a prisoner of the Japanese. We were put on board in groups of 100, 15 groups in all. I was in the sixth group.

The previous 500 men had already been put down into the after-hold when we came aboard and we were ordered down into the hold also. Along the three bulkheads of this hold were compartments, about 3 feet high, about 7 or 8 feet in length, and about 12 feet deep. The ship commander had ordered that each of these compartments were to accommodate 35 men. I believe there were about 18 compartments in all arranged in tiers three high. When the hold began to jam up with prisoners, the Jap guards kicked, clubbed, and forced all the remaining men into this hold. Eventually all 1500 men were jammed into this hold. Of these 1500, about 700 or 800 of them were forced into the compartments and the remainder were jammed into the small open area in the middle of the hold.

As the air became bad and the heat intense, men began to pass out. These were allowed to be passed over the heads of the standing prisoners to the ladder where they were taken up on deck, revived, and sent back down into the hold.

The only belongings we were allowed to bring into the holds with us were the clothes we had on and our mess gear. All other gear, including our bed rolls and shoes, were thrown into the hold below us.

Fifteen hundred of us remained in that hold until about 5 o'clock that afternoon when 900 were moved to the forward hold. The forward hold was approximately the same size as the one we were in. Conditions were so crowded that all men could not sit down at the same time, approximately 50 of us having to stand at one time. We were allowed but one canteen cupful of water per man per day. Frequently we would receive only a quarter of a cupful. Food was fairly plentiful, consisting of wet rice and bits of bamboo shoots. However, the men were unable to eat much of it because of the lack of water.

Sanitation conditions were horrible. Three wooden buckets would be lowered into the hold for defecating. Frequently we would be unable to get up on deck to empty these buckets. As all men were suffering from diarrhea, the buckets would overflow throughout the hold. This voyage lasted for 18 days, during which time three men died in our hold, two of them dying from insanity.

When we arrived in Japan, the Japanese officials at Moji were extremely dissatisfied with the condition of the Americans when they left ship. They could see no reason for the type of treatment we had received during the voyage nor that conditions aboard ship had had to be so bad.

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We remained at Moji for about two hours and then were loaded aboard a train and taken to Futasi. We left the train at Futasi and marched about a mile to our camp. We arrived at Futasi on August 5, 1944, and spent the remainder of the month learning the Japanese words that were used in working the coal mines and learning Japanese drills.

On September 1, 1944 we were put to work in the coal mines. I remained working in the coal mines until August 15, 1945, the day the war ended. Working conditions in the coal mines were never good, although the treatment in the mines was generally better than it had been in the camps.

One beating received by me in this camp should be mentioned. One evening, a few minutes before roll call, I had gone into my barracks, room 15, to make sure that everything was in order. I stepped up into the bay to straighten my blankets but did not remove my mine slippers. Just as I was completing the straightening up of my bunk, a Jap guard known to us as "No Good", came into the room and caught me in the bay with my slippers on, which was against the camp rule. He then picked up a slipper and holding it by the toe, beat me across the face with it 23 times. During the beating my face became numb and swollen and my left eye was closed for three days.

On August 15, 1945, the various camp working details began coming back to camp during the afternoon and we heard rumors that the war had ended. I was working on the night shift at the time, and when it came time to go to work, we were informed that there would be no work that night. The next morning, the day details were not sent to work either. The American officers informed us that the rumors that the war had ended were pretty accurate. The Japanese did not inform us that the war had ended until September 3. From the 15th of August until the 3rd of September, the Japanese confined us to the camp. The food situation immediately improved in that the rations were doubled. On the 3rd of September, the Japanese camp commander called us out and told us in English that "the war was over and that he was very happy for now we could go back to our loved ones".

/s/ Herbert George Klingbeil

State of Minnesota)
) SS
County of Ramsey)


I, Herbert George Klingbeil, of lawful age, being duly sworn on oath, state that I have read the foregoing statement consisting of four pages, and that it is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

/s/ Herbert George Klingbeil

Subscribed and sworn to before me at St. Paul, Minnesota, USA,
this 25th day of September, 1946.

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY:

/s/ C. H. Roberts
C. H. ROBERTS


ANGEL G. MIRANDA
2nd Lt., Inf.

Notary Public, Wright County, Minn.
My Commission expires July 2nd, 1952

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