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Thierens

Report about the last few years, based on a few pieces of diary and many chunks of memory.

You undoubtedly already know a great deal about the period from May 1940 until December 1942, partly from our letters, which, however, later in this time we did not dare to send anymore because of disruptive measures taken by the Jerries.

The Dutch Indies, and especially Java, was in a period of rapid economic and industrial development, because this was a time in which funds could no longer be transferred to Holland, boards of directors in Holland could no longer slam on the brakes with their conservatism, and meanwhile many articles had necessarily to be produced here and infrastructure for war had to be counted with. This gave many, including myself, a lot of pleasant work, with increasing costs of living which were luckily offset by handsome salaries and benefits. Cigars and books were of Dutch quality, but produced in Java, Bols came from Canada and Argentina, we received jute bags, newspaper paper, beer bottles, filatures and weaving, etc. On top of this, war industries such as mortars, bombs, ammunition, plans for ship building and such things. I was tremendously occupied, because in between my business work a complete renovation of our office space was under way and therefore we were improvising for a long time, a new electrical installation, with one wing of the building being air-conditioned, having model lighting in the offices, shop windows and demonstration buildings. In addition, Kerry Goossens and me both had to spend one month in three in military training so that one month we did our own work, then one month did double work, and then we were gone for another month. Because of the nervous situation and because of the good business being done there was a great deal of partying, in which we participated more or less. It was a strange time: first one felt the onset of war in Holland, and then we waited for things to start here too, and wonder to what extent we would be ready for it. There was a great deal of fund raising: Wilhelmina, Juliana, Bernhard, Churchill and Spitfire, all of which organised parties to in a friendly way lighten our purses. We did think we contributed considerably and that we had assembled a sizable army. When we were mobilised I was with some 75 men on Bankalan on Madura. After having decently camped and trained my men, which had turned out to be quite necessary, I had a lazy life there. Ger came a few times to stay for a few days and I could take leave of absence to go to Semarang. In Bankalan I drove on unused officer's horses, with a few doctors and a young lieutenant from motor services, all this being supervised by doctor Elsbach, who was fanatic rider himself and ordered his own horse to be brought in. After the landings on Java, and when no such landings were predicted to happen on Madura itself, we asked to be sent to Java, because we became aware that there was a dire shortage of troops there, but the general didn't want to listen. We saw large fires in the harbour area which was demolished and the blowing up of the pyrotechnical workshop in Madura's southern shore. Before the latter's destruction I collected the latest Hütte from there, which I gave in keeping to Aniemman van Bankalan for the time being. Hoping that we would be able to connect with them again! A few days before the [Dutch] surrender many hundreds came from Surabaya to us to join the fight after Surabaya had been evacuated. But because of the surrender there was no fighting in the end, which means I have not really noticed anything of the war other than a few air raids (daily with a few attackers) and my P.O.W. time. When the Japs arrived in Madura a few days after the surrender, I had to report with my section in front of the school where my men were quartered. To me that was the bitterest moment of all those years. We continued life as before, but we had to collect the weapons, arrange our own food. I even kept my motor bike and jeep to be able to maintain telephone and radio communication. After a few days I had to go to Surabaya together with ten of my men to do the same there. Things were good there, but we did such an excessively good job, that telephone wires

snapped because the strings were too tight, so that two weeks later we were sent back to Bankalan. People there were in the meantime crammed into the old barracks.

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Going out was possible during exceptions provided one had a pass which was occasionally granted for going buying things at the pasar. After approximately a week there we went on 11 April with two thousand people on foot from Bankalan to Kamal, and from there onwards by landing craft to Perak, and then in lorries to Sourabaya's market fair terrain. There were approximately 5000 people, under bad circumstances, less fed than we were, and beaten a lot by the handful of Japs that were guarding them. After two days I ran into Jan Bosma, who managed to free up a place right next to him. When I was just heading there with my luggage I received notification that together with 15 people I was to go to the Coen-boulevard to prepare quarters for 1000 people. We worked hard and thought we would at most be able to accommodate 300 people. But the Japs completely disagreed and the next day the 1000 people arrived (perhaps a few dozens less) and all went in, although it was often crowded. We were two rooms full of officers, 19 men, of which two doctors, and a room with some 15 odd ensigns and sub-lieutenants. Next to me was lying Roesing van Itersen, whom I came to appreciate very much there. We each got a section of 50 men that we had to report during the roll calls, distribute rations to, communicate orders and instructions to, etc. In addition, we had to provide people for cleaning work in the harbour area. Each 50 men had to be accompanied by one officer, which meant I needed to go two or three times a week, more or less as a babu-interpreter. Those days were fairly exhausting, but you could buy food, sugar etc. and that was worth it, because the rations were no longer as big as we were used to and very monotonous. On free days we played chess, bridge and I taught high-school mathematics and the foundations of higher mathematics. In the evening hours there were Bible clubs and lectures on law, which I much enjoyed. Slowly the Japs became more annoying, demanded more workers for outside, gave worse rations and beat us for less and less reason. Many of us weakened and the first wave of stomach patients entered the hospital which at some point had to accommodate more than 150 people. Medicine? Forget it. Then, in October, the camp started to be dismantled. First to go were a number of officers, who were brought to the Kempei (sort of Gestapo) because it had come to light that they had talked about what to do in case of Allied landings, but they had managed to survive and mysteriously were interned with the Japs in our office. With the aforementioned "conspiracy" practically everyone was involved, and I too was assigned some task, but only the figures who were in leading positions had been found out, and luckily these people managed to more or less keep their mouths shut during the abuse they were subjected to. On October 25 it was my turn to leave together with a colleague from the S.S. (National Railways) who was in charge of supervising a hundred people. We had to walk to the station, without lorries for our luggage, so I was able to take only some of my belongings. This was not that bad, because I had already handed down to fellow internees the majority of what was not strictly necessary from my original equipments. We went by train following the north coast. It was therefore on the night of her birthday I passed by Ger's, of which of course she was unaware. I had last seen her during a visit that the Japs had allowed on July 8. At that time she brought all sorts of food, clothing and medicines and she must have been shocked to see my closely shaven head and beard that had grown out of control. The train continued until Batavia and that took more than 24 hours. In Batavia we were housed with the tenth battalion, where approximately 10,000 prisoners of war were crammed in very bad barracks with little water, very bad food and with madman Japs that beat us for no reason. After two days in these circumstances and of course having met many dozens of old acquaintances, we again hit the road, this time to the harbor. Now a closely shaven head was obligatory. We were crammed into two holds of a small old cargo vessel, each with about 500 men. There was no space to lie down, no ventilation and the ground was covered in sawdust, sugar and rotten fish scraps. After a few hours the stench was unbearable, as was the itching. The same boat carried a

few hundred Japanese on leave of absence and a cargo of cavalry horses. The seamen were apt and cooked fairly proper meals. After about 7 days following various directions we arrived in Singapore.

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In Singapore a lorry brought us to a corner of the island in a camp of approx. 8000 people, which was part of a complex of camps comprising 30,000 people. Our cohort of a thousand received a separate village of tents in the middle of the clapper garden. Once a day a patrol of Japs came along the car road on bicycle but never in the trails between the tents, so as far as that was concerned this was paradise. Also the food wasn't bad. Previously there was a lot of beri-beri but because the camp had cultivated vegetables we had sufficient vitamins. On top of this we received rice powder, paid from Red Cross funds. The camp was entirely ran by the English, but we all took care of our own section. However, every day we needed to supply a couple hundred people for land cultivation ordered by the Japs. Among our group was a band of completely demoralised military personnel and our commander was a captain by profession, and therefore soon there arose an atmosphere of uproar. Professional officers have poor social skills if there is no prison around to lock up those who disagree, they have no fantasy and can't improvise, and therefore under difficult circumstances don't manage to establish authority over the troops. This showed again and again, although of course there were some good exceptions. In this case the difficulties were resolved because the commander, who himself did not understand he was in danger of his life, was taken from power by the Dutch section commanders (and declared ill) and replaced by an American major of 24 years who was the boss of 200 Yanks among our 1000 people. Here we could buy [illegible] supplies. I got a retired corporal as overseer, who did laundry for me and cooked some extras for me on the condition that he was allowed a piece of it too. On top of this he was one of the few volunteer clapper harvesters so that I had a good supply of clappers. The tents leaked a little and the beds were unusable because of vermin, so we slept on the ground on a sheet. We had a big tent that served as officer's mess and administrative space, close to which I slept. I took the section of the S.S. engineer de Vries, because he was restless and wanted to go for walks all the time, so that I was busy enough too. In the evenings I spent with ensigns of my sections at their camp fire and ate with English friends from across fried *oebie* (sweet potatoes) and other Indian delicacies. For a while I was also occupied with building electric street lights in our camp, and with telephone connections on the camp net. Every now and then we heard rumours about people who left for unknown destinations and about new arrivals. Most of those who arrived before us from Java were still in Changi, as this part of the island was called, but all in other areas of the camp, when we received notification to leave. Before we left they gave us shoes from Red Cross supplies and a few cans. After a stay of about four weeks we went by lorry to the harbors, which had not been demolished nearly as much as on Java, and we boarded the "Kamakura Maru" bound for Japan. A total of 3000 POW's, 1000 Jap soldiers and a few hundred Jap civilians, a few guns and big red crosses. We were lying on the promenade decks so although we had ventilation, we also had spray water, very little space (each three men had to share two small lying spaces) and only two meals a day, each with little rice and a very thin soup. We received only 1/30th of the cans that the Red Cross had loaded for us. Together with the officers I was well positioned, namely in the smoking area of almost 80 cm wide. On board we were given the English battledress of the Suffolk and Norfolk regiments, which during three years served as our only warm clothing. Luckily I had bought a pullover and winter jacket in Singapore, but in spite of those I did suffer from the cold. How the others managed to survive, in so far as they did, without such clothing, still remains a mystery to me. On board we also heard a lecture by general Heath about fighting in Africa. He and a brigadier left the ship in Formosa. We arrived without any major incidents, only a few stomach patients, after some 14 days in Nagasaki. There we had to get up before dawn, left the ship at 7 o'clock, at 14 o'clock were divided into three groups, and at 18 o'clock we were on a train with a ball of

rice and started at 19 o'clock our train journey through Japan in well warmed wagons with strange but sufficient Japanese food (with chopsticks!).

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On the third day after dark we had to get off and then continued our journey in flat freight cars pulled over narrow tracks through the mountains. Everything was covered under thick snow, which was a beautiful sight in the moonlight. However it was also terribly cold, in spite of our being packed so tightly, to keep us from sliding from the planks into several hundreds of meters down. After a few hours riding we were practically frozen and then had to get off again to continue on foot, except for the sick, who together with the heavy luggage went by lorry. With each ten or so men we had a carbide lamp and walked along a small mountain road, where especially the boys from the Indies and those who were exhausted slipped at every step. After approximately two hours rising perhaps 500 meters we came to a small miner's village and then descended another half an hour to reach the camp. The slow people fell behind about an hour but then by four in the morning all had arrived. A warm but strange meal awaited us and in the largest room was a charcoal fire. The sick people together with the luggage had already arrived earlier so that we could retrieve our belongings and go to bed, which consisted of a small mat underneath half a dozen mops with all our clothes on it. But I slept, and how! The next morning we discovered that the camp was located high against the slope of a mountain, drilling for a layer of lead and calamine. The camp itself was only a few hundred meters in size, of which the majority consisted of a slope where one could not go, so if you subtract the area occupied by the office building, small hospital, kitchen, guard house and our barracks, not much space remained, especially because large heaps of coal blocked the way and everything was covered in a few meters snow. We didn't have much time to take all this in on the first day, because at around nine o'clock we had to go to a village located higher up to receive teachings about the Japanese exercise. In the afternoon it was the same story. For many this was too heavy, having had only a few hours sleep after our heavy journey of the last few days. The next day was the same, interleaved with clearing the snow and retrieving bread and other supplies at the village. Each person had to carry about 15 kg, so not too much, but ascending and descending the mountain over the slippery snow this was not easy. The next day everybody who was not exempt had to go to work in the mines, except officers. Those who were exempt had to work in the kitchen, transport coal, take care of the sick, do cleaning work, etc., and on top of this collect food supplies from the village. Since the latter turned out too heavy for most of these "light servants", we the officers agreed to take that task upon us as much as possible. Other duties for us officers were to ensure people showed up for their tasks, hold row calls, bring those ill to the doctor, and maintain various senseless administrative counts. Since I had learned a little Japanese, I took turns with another to go to the sick rapport as an interpreter. After a few days the number of sick people took alarming proportions, every day about 120 people went there, even though nobody was allowed to go two days in a row. I should add that merely visiting a doctor there was enough to make you ill: undressing in a freezing little room (several degrees below zero) and in the draft waiting for the doctor, who did his job above a small coal fire, then putting one's clothes back on in the cold and back through the snow to our nearly unheated barracks. Soon the first started dying, and after several weeks an average of three per day, sometimes reaching 5, with a record of 7. Then the number of those not ill shrunk to 48 and even the Japs were alarmed. We got three days vacation with about 50 gram salmon per person per day. On the fourth day everybody had of course to be ill and no sick were allowed to stay at home, and the consequence was again a couple of dead and after a few days again a lot of ill. The dead were put in their underwear on a mat and six porters brought them along the mountain to the oven. Since few were strong enough for this job I have carried many dozens away like that and put them on the frying-pan. After a couple of months a warm bath was installed and for the first time since our boat trip we could wash ourselves. One person had earlier tried with cold water and had died within two days. Coming

from the tropics, tired and malnourished you simply can't do such things, and all the memories of camping in the Dutch winter did not seduce me to think otherwise.

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In April the snow started melting and the climate became more bearable. In May I was sunbathing a few times in a secluded corner on an iron roof. In June with a dozen or so officers we went for substantial walks several times over a pass at 1200 m. to harvest vegetables on the other side of the hill. One way this took 1¼ to 1½ hour walking, on the way back with 10 to 15 kg of veggies on our back. Searching took about 1-2 hours. It was exhausting because of the heat but walking with naked torso, shorts, and wrecked socks and ditto shoes still it was delightful to be out from behind the fence and enjoy the nature and the views. The vegetables, albeit young, were good food, only a little bitter. A soup made from them was a welcome change from the completely worthless winter supplies of rammenas. Everyone who wasn't too ill perked up in the summer. With a few officers were leveled a terrain along the stream for usage as a sports terrain. The Red Cross had sent us a violin, accordion, several rubber rings and a net. The terrain was still too small for doing sports, so that I volunteered as director and Traffic and Water works and engaged in changing the course of the stream. This allowed us to expand to approx. 10-15m. When everything was done and we had played a few times on it, the Japs changed their mind and made a construction plan for a new shed. We only barely had time to hold a parade for Queen's Day before construction workers came to dig half the mountain away. Queen's Day celebrations were allowed by the Japs because we presented it to them as being a measure of discipline and a kind of religious rite. Both things spoke to them. Everyone tried to somehow put together an orange uniform. We had no flag and it was prohibited anyway.

Now that our playground for officers disappeared we nagged until we got a piece of the farm to work on. The work was a joke, the Jap doesn't know how to do things properly, and they were happy when the officers left the camp and were happy. So we lied in the sun and bathed ourselves in the little river and worked the land with spade and weeded. I went often: that is, approximately 3x a week, sometimes more. The walk there went down far, about ¾ hour, the return was about 1 ¼ to 1 ½ hour. On this patch of land, which was right next to a road, we could often buy tomatoes, delicious. In the meantime also within the camp we had discovered an area where we could lay a bed of tomatoes, but it was too late to sow. We cleaned the terrain and spread a lot of our own manure in it. In September our little farm came to an end again. In Osaka a P.O.W. had fled and now nobody was allowed to leave the camp, other than for official work. People who didn't join the farm work had in the meantime talked the Jap into buying extra food. This meant that between September and December we had various additions for our kitchen, namely potatoes, carrots and mandarin oranges. Other active folk had bribed the Japs to buy guitar strings and wood-glue and smuggle them into the camp, so that soon enough we had a few guitars built from excess wooden beams and triplex ceiling plates from our housing. In June we got the last shipment of newspapers, the Nippon Times. That this had really ended now, we realised only in August. Ensign Steigenga then started to look at a newspaper that was lying around and discuss this with a Jap and make notes of the various Chinese characters. This became apparent to us suddenly, when he told us a week later that somewhere in the Salomons there had been a naval activity. We then went with half a dozen guys scavenging and searching and interrogating the guards and could publish our first news press communication on Queen's Day. By then Steigenga and I were the only ones left of the initial gang and we continued until the end. Unfortunately the Japs had suddenly become very careful in burning the newspapers and we had to get outside workers to get them from bribed Japs. This cost us in the course of the years some three watches and a few hundred yen. The smugglers got an extra spoon of soup as reward. In the fall a friend of mine managed to buy a Jap-Dutch dictionary from his boss at the mine. The guy wanted to learn Dutch but of course didn't have the smarts.

I have always kept this dictionary hidden in a double bottom of a **gudang** if there was an inspection (sometimes in a crazy hurry if a Jap was causing a spectacle) and otherwise it lay on a shelf above my bed with an English newspaper as a cover. When going away from the camp I left it. With this book I spent countless hours. Since it was Japanese-Dutch and not Dutch-Japanese I was never able to search for anything specifically, but by leafing through it and remembering key sounds and characters I had to find what I was looking for more or less accidentally. Although I have lost a large part of my Japanese knowledge now and hope never to need it again, I do feel grateful having had this book. When I had long stopped finding satisfaction in discussing menu's, salaries, and the bible, I had an eternally grateful study object with me. It definitely contributed to keeping in shape mentally in an environment where you naturally would degenerate.

In the afternoon between four thirty and five thirty the newspaper arrived, which I immediately translated on my bed behind stacks of covers and clothes. Every time a Jap came in I was startled and the thing had to be hidden somehow but that gave a pleasant tension to the otherwise dull atmosphere. Mostly after an hour I had the communiqué ready. In difficult cases I called Steiginga to help. In some cases, if there was nothing worth mentioning, we skipped the communiqué a day. The broadcast was as follows: I first discussed it with the Dutch camp commander. Then the other section commanders were called in (there were four of us) and later also both the American camp commanders. They then took over and told their sections while a guard was posted in case a Jap would appear. The Jap did know that we somehow received news, but they suspected an unfindable radio or verbal intelligence from outside. The newspaper seemed impossible to them. This new job gave me the whispered nickname "Reuter" and otherwise the pleasant sensation that I was contributing to the camp morale.

This same autumn ('43) chess and checkers became madly popular for a short while. Culbertson bridge was also being promoted and I busied myself with that too.

In October 1943 doctor Klusman joined our camp, the son of our old neighbour on Alexander street, now a light specialist in Bandung and married to a girl named James from the Hague. Therefore we finally we had a doctor in the camp and were no longer at the mercy of Japanese MTS-butchers- semi fake doctors. Also in October the Jap started construction on the new shed. For this piles were put in the ground manually. Hein Uien (the Jap lieutenant camp commander) asked if we were familiar with this this process. Yes, somebody said, but since about 50 years we only do this with steam engines and concrete piles. A Hein Uien. When the building skeleton was in place I told H. Uien that the building would collapse: insufficient cross connection and the wooden bars were cut too deeply. Impossible, Hein said, until later the building was collapsed under the weight of the snow and with it down went the little hospital. It wasn't yet inhabited so nobody got hurt, except for the shock and cold of a few hospital patients.

We celebrated Sinterklaas 1943 with the first "show". We had an excellent stand up comedian, the son of D. Semmlink (which aunt Hes knows) and music from our own instruments. The old hospital had just been cleared out for this occasion and Joop Wormser (of the "Locomotive" newspaper) arranged pretty decorations. The night was a great success.

Christmas was celebrated in good spirits and the New Year was jolly. What a difference from the first year. In the meantime about 10-15% of us were dead. The winter was a little less cold, but with severe snowfall. Nearly every day I went to clear snow for 2 times half an hour to keep warm and stay fit. In March 1944 an English doctor joined us, Jackson, athletic, a fine doctor and starting out as a surgeon, who did a lot of good and was a nice house mate. Wanted to learn German, French and bridge, which was clearly impossible.

At the end of May 1944 the inhabitants of the new barracks arrived, after many empty rumours, which ended in torpedoed. The new arrivals were Americans who came from the Philippines via over a year in Mukden. Therefore they knew the cold, but still there were dozens who did not survive the next winter. They were 150 men, the biggest rogues selected from 2000 men, commanded by a tough professional sergeant, who ruled them with iron fist. When they arrived we also finally got fish again after months, and herring at that, which would turn out to be our last proper supply of it. End of July another 200 Americans arrived straight from the Philippines, demoralised by air raids, torpedo attacks, ruled by an ill meaning, intriguing Jew lieutenant. Luckily they brought a most kind doctor Ginsberg, an obstetrician from Pennsylvania, who became my soul mate bridge partner playing nearly every evening for more than a year. Both groups of Americans had bad morale, fought among each other and often with us. Finally our Dutch commander was recognised by both and by the Jap as the official representative of the whole camp. Increasing hunger caused a steep rise in theft and smuggling. With that, the Americans were often tactless-clumsy and rude, which often resulted for them in life threatening punishments and of course affected the rest of us too because of greater severity, razzia's in the rooms and a less lenient attitude. After much complaining we were allowed to work again on the little farm over the course of the summer, but too late to reap much benefit. When a deranged American ran from the mine this too came to an end.

Among the Americans there were several guitar players, singers and actors who provided stand up comedy for us. They were trained by Semmelink, because on their own they did not have much style and didn't manage to sell their acts.

The winter 1944-1945 was again very severe, but I consoled myself with the fall of Germany in the spring and that of Japan half a year later, and then getting out just before the first snow. In the end things were therefore quicker by a few months. On top of that in December we got 2 ½ Red Cross packs per person. All of this had to happen with the Jap's permission but all in all we managed to distribute these in three times: Christmas, February and half a pack when Germany fell. In spite of this food injection the situation was outright worrisome and the flu epidemic in the spring resulted in several dozens dead.

Since the beginning of '44 there were regular air raid alarms, in 1945 usually 6 every 24 hours. We had no underground shelter. The orders were: everyone inside, except the fire brigade, which included me. This group had to put out potential fires with little buckets of water. When asked, we told Hein Uien that when fire broke out, we would quickly get our luggage and run far away, because those wooden toy houses could not be salvaged after a raid with incendiary bombs, at which Hein said shocked that the Japs did put out fires and did not believe our report about incendiary bombs. Later, after various air raids in the neighbourhood, he saw enough cities wiped out to change his mind.

In the late spring, 1 June 1945, 40 officers arrived, Dutch, most of whom I knew from Java and Singapore, from the officer's camp in Sensudji. They had been treated decently but were almost starved to death. They had a big library, studied all sorts of things including Spanish, Russian and did not know how a Jap was and did not know what P.O.W. life entailed. Among them were older people who outranked our chief and therefore a fight erupted about commanding etc. We won this fight easily. Otherwise there would certainly have been mutiny in our group that was otherwise working quite well. Since the spring we had worked on the little farm again. I had joined among others to fetch 300 kg potatoes on a cart, of which we planted 50 kg, ate 50 kg and 200 kg were eaten by the Jap. That journey was approx. 26 km, now uphill, now downhill, and the heaviest I had seen in my time as prisoner, but a beautiful walk and up to places where we never came anymore.

Early summer another piece of land was added; it was approx 2 hours walk to there and 2 ½ hours walk back. There we worked some 2 to 3 hours. This terrain had to be prepared for exploitation starting from zero. During a month the miners were allowed to go there to get some fresh air, but for most of them it was too heavy.

On 15 June all officers had to work. One detachment went to live at a little farm near the new land, among whom also Steigenga. That is why I was not allowed to join, because of the newspaper. So I was busy with sawing wood near the camp and in addition building wood coal ovens and filling them, over half an hour uphill. When Steigenga came back from the farm, I secretly joined a fourage convoy and stayed there. The Jap. sergeant who was in charge of the place took a liking of me because I was reasonably fit and found the farm work important. We worked quite hard there, but at least we were not behind the fence and could bathe ourselves under a "pantjuran" with sawah water. The work was scorching hot even though we wore not more than a "G-string", that is, loin cloth.

Already a long time we had not been allowed to possess or spend money, but our little Jap sergeant knew we still had some and he bought on our behalf extra food from the farmers in the neighborhood, with a sweet profit for himself. This was not easy, because all food was seized by the government, but since each Jap is corrupt we got a good supply anyway.

Every now and then, when the work advanced well, we spent a day laundering sheets and swimming in the river approx ½ hour walk away. This was also the case on August 15th. That day at 10:30: air raid alarm. The next morning, when we had just started working the land at 7 o'clock, a Jap came from the camp: stop work, back to the farm. Towards the evening everybody was excited. I was willing to conclude this meant there was a surrender if the air raid alarm did not sound until next morning, but that it was not even necessary to wait that long, since in the evening we got extra food and then were ordered to be ready for marching at 2:00 o'clock. When we passed the land we stopped and the Jap sergeant held a speech to thank for the work that was done, because we would be going home. Then on to the camp. I supported a chap who had a leg wound and who went downhill on the bike of the Jap, but uphill this was no longer possible and we made a crude stretcher. The existing stretcher already had a sick person on it. With 10 man we carried these 2 stretchers uphill, but at the end it was 2 minutes rest, 1 minute walk. We could not go any faster. The rest of the group was kilometers ahead of us.

When we were twenty minutes out, fellow camp inmates came looking for us, so that the remaining distance we only carried our own scarce belongings.

Back in the camp, so on 17/8, Hein U. had told that morning that the war was over (not who won!). In the evening I got a newspaper and could give out a communiqué. We then announced that we would not salute Japs of lower ranks. Hein U. did not agree: there were no orders for a change and a peace had not been signed. Then we told him that the Jap's surrender mission was already sent to Manilla. He could not deny this, but wanted to know how we knew. Didn't tell anything, but demanded a newspaper. Did not arrive, so next day a post at the door waited for the paper boy. After reading the paper gave it to the Jap. One salute-incident occurred, which involved the Jap sergeant who beat a P.O.W. who didn't salute him and was then beaten back, immediately knock-out. Soon thereafter 5 Japs with swords broke into our building threatening us, but we managed to talk us out of it. By the way, our assault team was ready with gas pipes, weapon sticks and rods, so we were not in much danger. The next day threw the Japs out of the camp and took over their weapons. That is how it remained until the end. Now every day a cow or horse in the kitchen and we were ourselves in charge of the rice gudang. We had to carefully guard against eating too much.

Then suddenly some food drops came, each with 3 drops from 5 B29's after which we could not comprehend the luxury we suddenly found ourselves in.-- I am still sorry I did not bring a few of the parachutes, but there was such a feeling of opulence that we did not think about such things.

On Sept 1st a 26-year old American aviator colonel arrived. On 3 Sept the ill were taken away. On Sept 4 it was our turn. We walked to the village downhill. From there onwards over lorry tracks to the train. From there through Nagoya to the south coast and to Yokohama. In the train we found some cans again. The cities were all flat, nothing any higher than ½ to 1 meter. The few people lived in holes in the ground, some with a roof of fuel barrels. On 5 Sept we arrived in Yokohama on the station where a

cavalry band played loud marching music. A general + various Red Cross sisters awaited us with cigarettes and journals etc.

With lorries to the harbour where we got warm food + coffee. Then lice removal, bathing, a dozen doctors, putting on clothes, you thought yourself at an assembly line with a plane ticket at the end. After receiving a dinner ration, onward in cargo trucks in the dark to Tokyo. There in a giant hanger again coffee, cigarettes, food + letter and telegram (for Holland, although it was never received there). At night at 2.00 o'clock by Skymaster to Okinawa and two days later to Manila.

But this is another chapter, I think this is enough for now.