

THE *Heritage* OF VERMILION COUNTY

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE VERMILION COUNTY (ILLINOIS) MUSEUM SOCIETY

EDITORS

Donald G. & Susan E. Richter

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THE HERITAGE OF VERMILION COUNTY is published quarterly by the Vermilion County (Illinois) Museum Society, 116 N. Gilbert Street, Danville, IL 61832. Vol. 18, No. 4, Autumn 1982. One dollar per copy; \$8.00 per year. Subscription available through Society membership. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. Return postage must be included. Printed in U.S.A. Second Class postage paid in Danville, Illinois 61832. I S S N 0018-0718.

In This Issue

In the first of a two part series, Harry Johnson of Danville recounts his experiences as a prisoner of the Japanese during World War II. Of the thousands of Americans who surrendered on Bataan, there are less than fifteen hundred survivors. Their story is one of deprivation, suffering and death. It is truly a miracle that any of the men survived the infamous Bataan Death March and the ensuing captivity.

June Uthe recalls, with the help of Miss Helen Feldkamp, a happier period of time when the Museum at 116 North Gilbert Street was the home of the Feldkamps. Her article tells of a night when ghosts and goblins haunted the house for an evening on Halloween.

Harley Wynn remembers a peddler who came during his childhood with his backpack of wonderous items for the ladies. His mysterious disappearance was the object of much speculation in the rural community of the early 1900's.

The Heritage and the Vermilion County Museum Society lost a good friend with the recent passing of George Holloway Webb. An early contributor to the *Heritage* his knowledge of the Civil War era and his personal experiences in World War I were well received and informative. His cousin, Mrs. Ruth McGibeny, said it was the work of Mr. Webb that first inspired her to write her successful books and other works. We at the Museum Society will greatly miss him. □

Correction:

The Summer 1982 *Heritage* article under Reflections (inside back cover) incorrectly identified Captain Chapman as a medal-of-honor recipient from the county. The name of the third man who received the Medal of Honor should have been William Black, who like his brother, John, was awarded the medal for service in the civil war.

Bataan Remembered

by Harry Johnson

Four decades ago American and Philippine soldiers on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines surrendered to the Japanese invaders. Of the roughly seventy-five thousand men who surrendered, about twelve thousand were Americans and the balance Filipinos.

What followed the surrender was to become known as the infamous Bataan Death March. Ten percent of those captured would either die or be murdered on the move to prisoner of war facilities. For the survivors, many sick, wounded and already suffering from malnutrition, the Death March was only an introduction to the horrors and living hell of the prison camps that were to come.

Two Vermilion County men were among those that surrendered on that April day, one of them survived, this is his story.

I joined the Army Air corp on August 21, 1940 and was assigned to the 94th Pursuit Squadron at Selfridge Field, Mt. Clements, Michigan. I was later transferred to the 17th Pursuit Squadron (October 22, 1940) and the entire unit was moved to Nichols Field, Manila, Philippine Islands, arriving December 5, 1940.

I spent the next year learning to be an airplane mechanic. This skill was to be of limited use because the Japanese destroyed most of our planes in the first days of the war. I passed my Second Class A.M. in September of 1941 and at that time our 155 man squadron had approximately 16 to 25 P-40 Bs and Es (planes).

During the period September to December many army and army air corp units were arriving from the states. Growing concern with the Japanese military presence in the Pacific was bringing a steady increase in U.S. forces in that area. The 34th Pursuit Squadron arrived just one

week before the war, men new to a foreign land and soon to be dead or prisoners of their brutal captors.

In the Philippines it was already December 8 when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor occurred (approximately 2 A.M.). Our first contact with the war at Nichols Field, was a lone bomber dropping several bombs on the officer's club and hangers, with several men killed and wounded.

Two days later, just after lunch, the war became a vivid reality. Formations of Japanese bombers and fighters caught us flat footed on the field. The bombers dropped their loads on the barracks and field while the Zeros shot up our planes as they sat exposed on the edge of the field. Our squadron miraculously escaped without one casualty, others less fortunate suffered many killed and wounded. The bombers continued across Manila Bay and bombed Cavite, a U.S. Naval base. This base serviced submarines and elements of the fleet when in the area. This raid, along with the raid on Clark Field the day before all but finished the U.S. Army Air Corp. What few planes we had left could only be used for reconnaissance missions as the Japanese were already landing in the Islands.

On December 24, 1941, the Allied forces (Philippine and U.S.) began to move to the Bataan Peninsula. This was a move of 35 miles by crossing Manila Bay and was over 50 miles from Manila. Japanese forces entered Manila on January 2, 1942. We spent most of December hiding the few planes we had left. Several of our pilots had been killed in dog fights and by Japanese anti-aircraft fire as they attempted to damage the new Japanese airfields.

From Christmas to April 9th we fought the best we could with dwindling resources. Food was low, malaria

Harry V. Johnson



Chuck Kaneen



was prevalent and our three planes could only be used for recon. As the fighting increased in intensity and the pressures became greater at our front, everyone was given a rifle and became provisional infantry. We were on a small piece of real estate, concentrated and well organized. The Japanese paid dearly for their attempts to break through or infiltrate. As the war dragged on and we held out under impossible conditions the Japanese landed fresh troops and were sent a new plan of battle from Japan. On April 9, 1942 our positions were over-run by the enemy.

April 10, 1942 was the beginning of the end for many American and Philippine soldiers. For others it was the beginning of three and half years of starvation, humiliation, hard work and a way of life that is difficult to explain so it sounds believable.

Thousands of us were forced to hole up on the beaches and air fields at Marivelles, located at the bottom tip of the Bataan Peninsula. Those at the beaches on the west side of Bataan were forced to march twenty to twenty-five miles to the Marivelles assembly. On April 10 we started what was to be later known as the Death March. A walk from Marivelles up the east coast road to San Fernando, then by boxcars to Capas, then an eight mile walk to Camp O'Donnell, a total of over eighty miles without food and with very little water. Chuck Kaneen and I arrived at O'Donnell April 16, 1942.

I should note here that Chuck Kaneen and I were very close friends. We went to Danville High School where our lockers were side by side. Now here we were, a world away from Danville, ready to start the March out of Bataan together, and on April 10th at 10 A.M. we did exactly that.

Brutality was witnessed by all those who made the March but it was in different degrees. Chuck and I just seemed to be ahead or behind enough to miss the most terrible atrocities. We had just started walking up the road when a Japanese soldier pulled my barracks bag away from me and emptied it on the ground. I looked at the Jap and he gave me a mean look and a gesture, I pointed to my bag. He then threw me a blanket and motioned for me to get going, which I did. I didn't know it at the time but he saved my life, had I tried to carry that bag all those miles I would never have survived.

As we marched away from Bataan, coming down the opposite side of the road were Japanese soldiers and heavy guns, all the material needed to blast away at Corregidor, which had not surrendered. As the road was within range of the American guns on Corregidor, the Japanese had the perfect human cover in their prisoners, the men on the rock would not fire on their countrymen. However, a few of the later men to begin the March were caught by artillery fire from Corregidor. This was three to four days after Chuck and I had left.

All I had was a few cigarettes and a few cans of sardines, my blanket and the clothes on my back. As soon as Chuck and I got a little way up the road we ate the sardines, I remember that they were Eatwells in Mustard Sauce. Since we had been on one-half rations the last two and a half months on Bataan, most of us were already suffering from malnutrition.

Some of Bataan is mountainous and at the beginning of the March we were going up hill. Men became tired very

quickly, the ravages of malaria, the heat and our general weakened conditions took their toll right from the start. Even though we marched the first two or three days on our own, the further north we went the more the Japanese took charge. When men become too tired to continue they would lay down beside the road, never to rise again. Many were shot and beaten because they could not keep up. Those who didn't die were shot, clubbed or bayoneted to death by the Japanese.

At dusk the Japanese would assemble us in rice fields beside the road to sleep on the ground. This was nothing new as we had been sleeping on the ground since December 10 when our barracks had been bombed. The next morning a Japanese soldier would be at the head of each column and one at the rear.

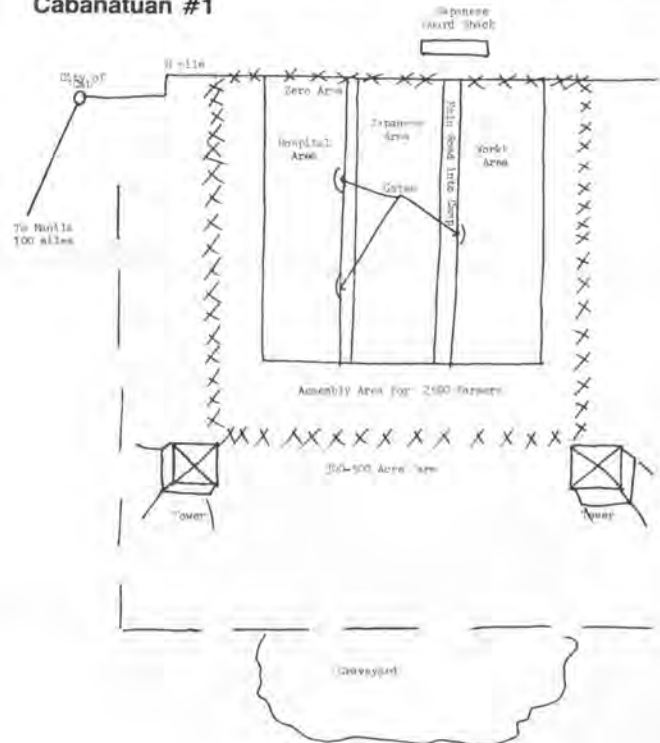
There were all forms of harassment during the March. Japanese soldiers would aim their guns at us as they rode past in their trucks, others would grab us off the road and search us for rings, watches and pens. A favorite was laying a rope across the path at dusk to trip us. These were things I personally encountered.

One instance of brutality which I did witness to civilians was during the final sixteen mile march to San Fernando. We made this march without stopping and our plight must have seemed unbearable to the Filipino women who were witness to this tragedy. They came out and tried to give us food and water as we passed along. A Japanese officer observed what the women were doing and beat them to the ground with his fists.

At San Fernando we were herded like a bunch of animals into a church and school yard where we remained until the next day. As I remember we were all given a hand full of rice and allowed to fill our canteens. Malaria

Bataan Remembered (continued to page 14)

Cabanatuan #1



Bataan Remembered (continued)

and dysentery had become prevalent among captives by now and we were a pretty listless lot.

The next day we were loaded into small box cars to the point of overflowing, then the doors were closed. The heat and the smell were stifling, the conditions during that three hour train ride are truly indescribable. There had been no toilet facilities the entire March and of course there were none in the prisoner cars. Our condition when we arrived at Capas had deteriorated rapidly. We were unloaded from the train and forced to march the remaining eight miles to Camp O'Donnell. Here I was to begin my three and one half years of confinement. American and Filipino prisoners were separated at this point and the Filipinos were interned in a camp further down the road, they were released six months later.

At first everything was utter confusion, everyone shifted for himself. A high wire fence was installed around the camp and for the most part the Japanese stayed on the outside of the fence. On one occasion the Jap commander gave a speech through his interpreter. It consisted mainly of one thought, to inform us that "I hate you, you are my enemies, if you try to escape, I shoot you."

Food was scarce with rice being the mainstay of our starvation diet. On occasion a sweet potato (camote) was mixed in. When someone shouted chow, seven to eight thousand men made lines at three areas to wait for a mess kit of rice. Our food was cooked in large cauldrons of cast iron, four to five feet in diameter. (This was to be the order of the day for the next three and half years, sometimes better, sometimes worse.)

Many soldiers endured the march to Camp O'Donnell on their last reserves, they would die in a few days. Our "hospital" was a building with a roof and a partial floor. If you were sick (with either malaria or dysentery being the main diseases) you would or at least could enter the building and lay down on the floor or the ground and hope for the best. Doctors consisted of officers with no medicine to dispense, only moral support. The death rate increased each day as new illnesses would complicate the already tenuous hold on life that we possessed.

Each day those who were able would pass through the hospital and other buildings and gather up the dead. The bodies were carried to the back of the hospital area and deposited cord wood fashion on the ground. Later that day the burial detail, four men with a bamboo window slat between them, would carry the dead to a spot about a quarter of a mile from the camp where an earlier detail had dug several holes. They could not be called graves. Fourteen to sixteen men were buried in each pit, some actually above ground covered only by the dirt from the excavation. Often the pall bearers of one day would be the ones laid to rest the next.

Our American officers tried to record the names of those who died but the Japanese insisted we bury immediately. Eighteen hundred men died from April 15, 1942 through July, 1942.

Somewhere near the end of April I came down with a fever which could have been either Dengue or Malaria. At

this time Chuck Kaneen and I parted company, I went to the hospital in hope of getting quinine (no quinine) and Chuck was shipped out on a work detail of fifteen hundred men to Clark Field. In a week I felt better and went back to my original area.

The Filipinos who were in a camp nearby fared even worse. Their death rate at times reached seventy-five to one hundred a day.

At the end of May I was picked as part of a one hundred man detail to go to a nearby town to clean up an American Army headquarters that had been left in disarray. Upon returning to camp from this project I became ill with dysentery and again went to the "hospital" for whatever I could get. I lay on the wooden floor with only my blanket and a New Testament.

This time things got worse, soon malaria complicated my condition as the dysentery continued unabated. My condition steadily weakened as I was unable to eat and there was no medicine to relieve my sickness. I was not alone as the building was full of sick and dying men lining both sides of the walls. Every kind of human misery was represented by the men; malaria, dysentery, starvation, pellegra, scurvy, and berri-berri to name the ones I know. Of these the malaria and dysentery were the toll takers.

After about a week and a half or so in the hospital I knew my days were numbered if medical relief didn't come and there was little chance of that happening. I needed sulfa and quinine just as about every other man in the building and in the camp. Then one day, in late May, I looked up to see an old friend from West Point Prep School. We had attended school at Baggio in the Philippines from June through October of 1941 in hopes of getting back to the states to attend flight school.

Jack Peek, who seemed to be in good shape, was touring the hospital to see if he could find any of his old friends when he found me. We visited for about an hour there on the floor and he produced seven or eight quinine tablets. As we didn't know just how I should consume them for maximum effect, I told him I would ask the chaplain-doctor who made the rounds every night.

At about six that night when the doctor came around I told him of the quinine tablets and my problem. The quinine would take care of the malaria but I would still have the dysentery. The officer reached in his pocket and came out with a couple of sulfa pills. He instructed me to take all the quinine tablets at once plus one sulfa tablet. I was to take the other tablet at six A.M. The chaplain knew that here was a chance to save at least one and he parted with the life giving pills.

In twenty-four hours the fever was down and the dysentery stopped and my appetite also returned. The word was passed that all who could walk would be transported by truck to another camp which was more complete and where there were no malaria mosquitoes. This new camp was to become known as Cabanatuan Camp Number One. I made the truck appointment June 1, 1942. Needless to say eventually all personnel, except "bed patients", were transferred to the new camp.

By now Corregidor had fallen and there was a new group of prisoners. Many of these new prisoners were sent

Bataan Remembered (continued)

to Japan or the southern Philippines, the remainder coming to Cabanatuan Number One. Men in different P.O.W. camps had diverse details. They worked in coal mines, zinc mines, steel factories in Japan and airport runway construction, all in violation of Geneva Conference rules they had agreed upon.

This was perhaps the saddest part of my time as a prisoner of war for it was during June that I lost my good friend Chuck Kaneen. He had cerebral malaria when I found him and he was very weak but he knew me. With the help of a priest we were able to move him to the hospital area late that afternoon but the malaria had taken its toll and Chuck died the next morning. He was given the last rites by a Catholic priest and was buried that day along with about thirty other men in two holes in our new graveyard. His body was never identified when the bodies were moved to Manila in 1946-47. Chuck Kaneen is now buried in an unknown grave in the American cemetery where Fort McKinley once stood. The graveyard is in the area where he and I once rented horses for fifty cents to ride over the rice fields in better days.

By now some sense of organization was beginning. Each barracks had at least two American officers in charge and certain buildings were designated as mess halls, etc. Even roll call was a must every morning so that the Japanese would know that we were all there. But some things did not change, at least for the next six months. One of these was the food; rice for breakfast (a gumbo to make it go around) and sometimes a spoonful of unrefined sugar. Lunch was a mess kit of dry rice with some greens (sweet potato tops) and supper was dry rice, greens and on occasion a sweet potato. There was always the tepid, weak tea to help fill the empty places left by the starvation diet.

Those who were too ill to work were kept in about a third of the barracks which were fenced in at the west end of the camp. This hospital area was about a block and a half long and a half block wide. There were about twenty-seven barracks in the hospital area and they had thatched roofs with bamboo slats for the men to lay on. There were six bays down and six bays up on each side of a walk through hall. Sixty to eighty men occupied each barracks and they were full in the beginning. To the east side of the camp the working men would live and the Japanese guards and commander lived in the middle of the camp. This arrangement lasted until January of 1945 when the

Rangers came and rescued five hundred invalid Americans.

The dying kept up; thirty, forty, sometimes fifty Americans went to their graves each day via bamboo window slat carriage. From June 1, 1942 to April 1943, thirty-eight hundred Americans were buried in our new boot hill.

In August of 1942, two men who had been regularly sneaking over the fence and going down to Cabanatuan for extra food were caught. After the Japs beat and ridiculed the two men they were marched through the hospital area to an open field and shot by a firing squad using American rifles. I witnessed this execution with my own eyes. This was again against Geneva rules; a POW can be shot while attempting to escape but not after he has been recaptured. Approximately sixty-eight Americans were shot by firing squads from June 1942 to January 1945.

Rumors persisted in the camp, "We'll be exchanged soon. Red Cross will be coming in. We will be sent to Manila to live. Red Cross packages just arrived." These among many other proved mostly untrue. The one that did eventually prove correct was about the Red Cross packages.

The Japanese had been keeping the Red Cross packages from us and it was late November before we received any Red Cross material and then just a small amount. Finally around Christmas we all received one sixteen pound box from the Red Cross.

At the time that the Red Cross aid started coming the death rate in our camp reached fifty to sixty Americans a day. It was nothing short of miraculous what a reversal these Red Cross boxes started. In addition to the boxes some bulk food and medical supplies were also allowed through to us. Even though the Red Cross sent enough for four boxes per week, we only received one box per month. The Japanese kept the rest. Each box contained powdered milk, spam, dry soup, candy, powdered coffee (Nescafe), corned beef, etc.

By May of 1943 we had only one death a day compared to the large daily numbers that we had become accustomed to seeing. Many of the hospital area P.O.W.s became strong enough to move to the duty side, including myself. I had just survived dyptheria. During my sickness I was a patient in the "zero" ward of the hospital, the ward getting its name from the survival rate.

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After returning to the duty side most of us were sent out to work on the farm each morning. Here twenty-five hundred men worked eight to fifteen hours per day, six days a week. We would plant, tend and harvest such crops as sweet potatoes, turnip greens, radishes and tomatoes. An American lieutenant named Jones was in charge of the workers. He was watched as were we by Japanese guards. It wasn't long until Lt. Jones became known as Farmer Jones and he had little compassion for his fellow men. Men who were to be given light duty instead were given hoes with which to work the soil. Farmer Jones was to later die an ironic death on one of the "Hell Ships" transporting prisoners to Japan. The ship he was on was sunk by American planes whose pilots did not know that the cargo was American POWs.

Even with all the misery, hunger, death and boredom, we were beginning to rediscover our brighter side. Books found their way into camp, some brought by the POWs, others smuggled in by the various work details and much to our surprise the Japanese brought some old school books in and gave them to our officers. We converted one of the buildings into a library and reading room and if you were fortunate enough to have a day off, you could spend time reading. Colonel Wing, father of actress Toby Wing (1941 era) was head librarian and he told us many interesting stories about the Hollywood Film Industry.

Since hunger was a constant companion and food was always on everyone's mind we would keep old recipes from magazines and others that we knew or just made up. Talking about food wasn't the same as eating it but it seemed to help in its own way.

In May of 1943 the Japs allowed us to have a weekly show for an hour each Wednesday night. A group as large as ours, seven to eight thousand men, had a lot of talented people. We had all sorts of musicians, singers and comedians. Musical instruments were donated by the people of Manila and the Japs let us have them. Our group of twelve to fifteen performers became known as the Cabanatuan Art Players. Shows like "H.M.S. Pinafore" (satire) and "Back on Bataan" gave us all entertainment and let us forget our plight for at least a few hours.

By the middle of 1943 we had solved many of our problems and life as a POW became almost routine. Our food supply was still sparse with rice the only mainstay of the diet. For clothing we had a pair of shorts, some underwear and a jacket. We had long ago worn out our clothing so what we wore was redistributed from the men who had died. When a man died he was stripped of all his clothing and it was boiled then reissued. Nothing was wasted. For shoes we all had clackers, a wood shoe with a strap to hold it on. These we left in camp when we went on work details in order to prevent us from escaping. Two men had escaped earlier while working on the farm so from that day forward no shoes for the rest of us while working.

Working on the farm is not to be construed as pleasant duty, beatings and cruelty were a part of our everyday life in the fields. There were various reasons for punishment, though often there was punishment for no good reason. You were beaten for eating produce from the field, not

working hard enough, not keeping enough water in the five gallon watering can, not enough honey in the twenty-five gallon honey bucket carried by two men and stealing produce from the field. The punishment varied sometimes being a knock on the head or back by the guard or sometimes he would swing a hay maker while placing his foot behind you to trip you when you tried to go with the punch. This hurt your pride as well as your physical being because you knew that to strike back meant instant death. One POW was made to hold a log over his head until he dropped it, sometimes the log would fall behind his knees while the guard kept pushing down on his shoulders with his foot. Another form of punishment was to line two groups of Americans up across from one another and have them slap each other as hard as they could, if the guards thought you weren't slapping hard enough they would step in and show you how.

All this time I had been in prison camp forty-four details had left camp to go work outside and had come back. Soon details would be leaving and not returning for they were being shipped to Japan. Until July of 1944 all details had been filled by volunteers. They felt it would be better to go out of the Philippines should the Americans decide to retake the islands. Many feared the Japs would slaughter us if they thought we were going to be rescued. They were both right and wrong, depending on where you were at a specific time. It was a game of chance with the stakes being your life.

By August 1, 1944 over sixteen hundred of us were on the high seas bound for POW camps in Japan, the ordeal of Bataan lay behind, the effects we would always carry with us. Ahead lay a traumatic period just as bad as the one we were leaving behind. □

Bataan Remembered (to be continued next issue)

Halloween (continued)

Yeomans, Paul Anderson, Leo Fairhall, Robert Lindsay, Carl Lamcool, Ben Jewell, Alph Murphy, Roydon Brand, Bart Rushnell, Ira Abbott, Carl Jewell, Albert Good, Joe Blackburn, Ray Loomis, Ed Maxon, Ed Seiwel, Herschel Baldwin, Edwin Esslinger, Ralph Ross, Harry Bolles, Will Martin.

Miss Fannie McKnight, Wilmington, Ohio; Miss Louise Krantz, Chicago; Miss Edna Cannon, Portland, Oregon; Miss Harriet Bandy, Asheville, N.C.; Miss Norma and Carl Bauermeister, Terre Haute; Louis and Clarence Hill, Terre Haute.

Today, guests touring the Museum see more than a fine old landmark, much of the memorabilia given to the Museum has come from guests (or their descendants) of this ancient party. The Barkley Room (2nd floor--north-east) often referred to as the "Sad Room" was a gift of Mabel Bredehoft; the Shutts Memorial Room and Fragrance Garden a gift from Berenice and Frances Shutts. Part of Grace Fenton's unique doll collection can be seen in the "Child's Room" (1st floor--northwest) of the Carriage House. Because of the generous sharing of records and old photographs by Miss Helen Feldkamp, youngest sister of Theda, Bernard, Millie and Marie, just one of these laughter-filled happenings at 116 N. Gilbert has come into sharp focus like a Victorian kaleidoscope, rich, colorful and so humanly interesting. □

Bataan Remembered

TECH SGT. by Harry Johnson

MOS 747

Part Two

AIR PLANE MESS

Harry Johnson and Chuck Kaneen were childhood friends and school mates in Danville. In 1942 they were both captured on Bataan and endured the Bataan Death March, making the long trek side by side while hundreds of their countrymen were killed or died on the brutal march. Chuck Kaneen died in captivity in 1942 but Harry Johnson survived the Japanese prisoner of war camps in the Philippines and in Japan. This is the second part of his story.

In July of 1944 I had been a prisoner of the Japanese longer than I had been a soldier for my own country. I had served in the Army Air Corp nearly four years, over two years of that time spent in prison camps.

Life at Cabanatuan P.O.W. Camp in the Philippines had become a bit routine, or as nearly routine as life under the stern and cruel Japanese could be. Though men were not dying as they did when we were first captured we were still suffering from extreme malnutrition. The strongest of us worked on the "farm"; others worked in the camp, cleaning and maintaining the buildings. The men fortunate enough to work in the mess halls always looked healthier and had bigger bellies from the extra food but even they were weak because of the imbalance of the diet. Other men formed small details to bring in rice and wood and serve as bakers and office personnel for the Japanese. Some men were too weak or sick to pull details so these men were classed as light, light duty people. Among these were the normal number of "gold bricks" who managed to avoid all work.

We all knew that the Americans were getting closer and it was viewed with mixed feelings. Would the Japanese kill all of us to prevent our being rescued? Would the American planes which were becoming more numerous inadvertently bomb our prison camp? Of course we could ponder these questions but we had little control over our ultimate destiny, it would be decided by fate.

At this time a new detail was formed to build a landing strip for Japanese planes. The airstrip was constructed less than a quarter of a mile from our camp which made it possible for us to walk to work. The project consisted of tearing down rice field dikes, chopping away a hillside and hauling it to the low spots. Four wheel railroad cars were used to haul the dirt in and we had to lay track to the more distant low spots.

About the middle of July 1944, Japanese headquarters called for a 1500 man detail to go to Japan. This detail would include 1400 enlisted men and one hundred officers. Since most of the men who wished to volunteer had been sent on previous details this detail would be filled by taking a certain number of men from each barracks.

I should explain here that I had become friends with another prisoner from Illinois, Fred Wenzel, from Springfield. We had decided that if either of us got picked to leave the Philippines on one of the details the other would go also. This sounded simple enough as a lot of the men did not want to go so it would be possible to trade places with one of them. We were picked in alphabetical order and I was selected and Fred wasn't, the quota being filled long before they reached the W's. What complicated matters was the medical examination that the Japanese gave us before leaving, each of us was checked with a "swab" stick before we could leave. What was ridiculous about this test was that it didn't matter what the test showed (if they ever did a test), all men who had the test went just the same. Try as we could even our own people would not let Fred switch with anyone. (A tragic conclusion to this occurred four and a half months later when Fred was killed on a Japanese "Hell Ship" as it left Manila Bay. American planes, whose pilots had no way of knowing the cargo, bombed the ship. On the other hand, Howard Morgan of Georgetown, Illinois, who was scheduled to go on the same ship as Fred was removed from the Japan bound detail in Manila to help with the Japanese paperwork. Howard was later rescued by the American 37th division).

On July 15, 1944 at 8 P.M., twenty-five to thirty transport trucks arrived at Camp Cabanatuan. Fifteen hundred of us were packed into these trucks and taken to Manila. We were so crowded that no one needed to worry about falling down on the rough ride to the port city, we were like sardines in a can.

We arrived at Bilibid Prison in Manila seven hours later, our only food being rotten sweet potatoes (camotes) served in the dark. We were given very little to eat on the sixteenth of July as we waited to board the ship that would take us to Japan. I had two pieces of paper on which I was able to keep a diary of our boat trip. The following is copies from that diary of nearly forty years ago.

July 17 - Left Bilibid at 7 A.M., walked to pier number one and boarded ship, name unknown, approximately 8000 tons. Unsuccessful attempt to pack 1500 men in rear hold below main deck, finally 600 men in rear and 900 in fore. (All our carried belongings we were made to throw in open hatch of ship's bowels, no exceptions.)

July 18-23 - Anchored outside the breakwater for five days getting up convoy. Rice and vegetables cooked together served twice daily and two canteen cups of water. No smoking. All luggage thrown below and mixed with coal and others. Fellows going down each evening raiding for food in their buddies baggage.

(Some fellows working at Port Area still had Red Cross packages of food in their baggage. The Japs finally put pressure on and the looting stopped. They made the offenders go without food for three days and sit on deck in the sun with their hands tied behind their backs.)

- July 23 - Left breakwater at 8 A.M. off Corregidor and anchored at 2 P.M.
- July 24 - Left Manila Bay 10 A.M. to open sea.
- July 25 - Proceeding north? (N.N.E.)
- July 26 - Proceeding north east? N.N.E.? Big Fire off starboard at 3 A.M. (Many years after the war I learned by going through Navy records that the big fire was the 5,280 ton tanker Otari Yama Maru. It was torpedoed by the submarine U.S.S. Flasher just off North Luzon. The tanker was part of our convoy and could just as easily have been our ship. The Allies had no way of knowing which Jap ships contained prisoners).
- July 27 - Boat drill again last night (Japs very jumpy after the explosion and sinking of the Otai Yama Maru). South Formosa coast this morning.
- July 28 - Docked 9 A.M. took on food. Hatch closed all morning. Sailed 7 P.M. course N.E.
- July 29 - Proceeding N.E. all day and night.
- July 30 - Course changed? 7 P.M. into storm. One death in forward hatch. Buried at sea 7 P.M.
- July 31 - Course N. (Going to island near Nagasaki where we would arrive the next day sometime. We were so crowded that everyone could not lay down to sleep. Our only toilet facilities were five gallon pails placed near the stairways to the deck. You can imagine the problems of fifteen hundred men, some sick, all starving and most scared in the darkness as they crawled over each other.)
- August 1 - Stormy and rough all night, course N.E., high wind.
- August 2 - Clear day. Second death this morning. Things rough in forward hatch. Proceeding N.E.
- August 3 - Land to starboard and port this morning. Mostly mountains. Upper hold issued clothing.
- August 4 - Emptied bottom of hold and arrived ^{MOSI} Mōji (Kyshu) Japan midnight. Off boat 8 A.M. Spent all day in theatre in Port Mōji. Left on train 9 P.M. arrived camp number 23 at 2 A.M. - walked the last three miles from station.

Finally after spending seventeen days aboard a dirty, scarry prison ship we arrived at our destination. The 1500, less two, while camped out at the Mōji theatre were divided into groups of 200 and sent in different directions.

The Japanese had decided that my group would be coal

miners. Our prison camp was located one quarter mile from the mine we were to work. It consisted of six or eight barracks, a mess hall, bathroom, hospital, and the Japanese headquarters and guard area. All this was built on a hill with a ten foot fence around th perimeter. We slept in bays in the barracks which measured 15 feet by 15 feet. Six men occupied each bay and slept on straw with a blanket and quilted coverlet to keep out the cold. We observed the Japanese custom of removing our shoes before going into the bay. The Japanese employed a quaint energy saving measure in our barracks; they did not heat them in any way. During the winter months the temperature at our camp stayed about 14 degrees above zero with snow on the ground, the temperature in the barracks matched that outside. To avoid freezing to death and minimize frostbite we doubled up, sleeping back to back and doubling our covers. There were no lights of any kind in the barracks so it was essentially a sleeping place.

A long dirt runway ran through the barracks and this is where we would fall out to be counted. The Japs would count us many times each day, at 6 A.M., 6 P.M. and 9 P.M. plus all the times in between when there would be an extra detail. As they would count we would also count in Japanese 1-ichi, 2-ni, 3-san, etc. It was not uncommon to be counted ten or twelve times a day and to try to make it simpler for our captives we fell in at the same place each day.

We spent the first two weeks learning the Japanese terms for things we would be doing as miners. A few of the more important words were haku-coal car, kakita-rake, kobako-timber, and kase-air. The mine had at one time been owned by the English and at it we graded coal and made brickets from coal dust as well as mining the coal from the three thousand foot deep veins.

Each of us was interviewed by the Japanese commander of the camp. He tried to impress us with his English which was fair, but he spoke it a lot better than he understood it. From these interviews we were assigned our jobs at the mine.

The various jobs at the prison consisted of the day miner, night mine, top side coal dust digger, bricket maker, and camp worker. I made the miner ranks as did about one hundred others. We were divided into two groups: A miners-daytime and B miners-night time. The A miners worked a twelve hour shift, the B miners worked longer, overlapping the A shift. Each ten days we would change and day would become night.

The Japs called the tenth day the "Greater Coal Mining Day", for on this day we were supposed to work harder and get more coal out for the Emperor. For this we would receive a sourdough bun made from rye flour. That they would try to bribe us with a biscuit every ten days attests to our starving condition.

Many Japanese men and women (civilians) worked in the mines. After we were marched to the mines by the guards we would be turned over to the civilians. We were divided into groups of five or six with a civilian "honcho" in charge.

We were equipped with electric lamps and a spare battery which we carried around our waists as we made our

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way to the bottom of the mine in a "Jinsha" car operated by a Jap civilian. The rails were rickety, the mine damp and falling rocks from the ceiling common. The "Jinsha" did not always work and then we had to walk the slope. We always had to walk a couple of blocks after leaving the cars to reach the working surface of the coal vein.

At first the civilian "honchos" were halfway decent but that didn't last long. They almost immediately began to press us to load more and more cars. Of course we always wanted to know how many they expected so that we could take a "yasumae", break.

We soon learned that the more we did, the more they expected, there was no satisfying the Honcho. We responded to the constant pressuring for more cars with good old American ingenuity. When the civilian Jap left us for a few minutes we would fill the old mine cars with timbers, rocks and anything else that would fill up the cars fast. Then we would place a thin covering of coal on top and then each car was marked with a number so that mine boss would know where it came from.

It would usually take the cars about a week to reach the top of the mine and be dumped into the grader. Of course all the rocks and timber would plug up the grader and all work would stop topside until the mess could be cleaned up. The mine boss would give our civilian Honcho hell and he in turn would scream "Abunido!" (dangerous) at us. The civilian soon made a deal with us and we went on at a more reasonable pace. We would mine and load about ten to twelve tons of coal per day. After we ate our meager lunch each day, tears of hunger would come to men's eyes.

Accidents were common in the poorly run mine. A fellow POW riding on the front of a coal car (which was a no, no) got his leg caught between two cars at the entrance to our tunnel. A Japanese doctor had to amputate the leg at the knee. The man survived and made it back to the states, dying of a heart attack two years ago.

There was one advantage to working in the mine in the winter; the temperature always stayed at a constant 65 to 70 degrees. The other warm spot was the swimming pool type bath tubs where the water was heated by a huge boiler. There were two tubs, one for soaping up and the other for rinsing. After the bath we tried to make it under the covers before we lost our body heat in the 14 degree temperature. Mornings were especially bad when we would put on our filthy mining clothes and spend about an hour in the frigid temperatures before going down into the mine.

Food remained scarce, gumbo and rice for breakfast, dry rice in our wooden dinner box for lunch, dry rice for supper with maybe ten or fifteen soybeans and on occasion a salted cherry. Once a week we might get a fish head which was always supplemented with weak tea and often a thin green soup of undetermined origin. We filled up on the tea to try to stem off the terrible pangs of hunger.

During our last six months of captivity we were marched by a number of Japanese homes and we always went through the garbage cans but usually the only edible thing we found (which we prized) were orange peels. The Japanese were feeling the effects of losing the war.

Near the mine there was a barn where the Japs kept a couple of cows. The cows were fed with type of barley that had the oil removed by a press. As we marched by the barn

each man would reach into the feeder and grab a handful of barley, providing the guard wasn't looking. We would have a fuller feeling once a week at the expense of those cows.

As 1945 wore on and our condition became steadily worse we knew there was little chance of our lasting until Christmas of that year. I was a large man and my weight was down to about a hundred and forty pounds, many of the men were under a hundred pounds. We knew the war was going badly for the Japanese but we did not know how long they would hold out.

I was injured in April of 1945 while working in the mine at a gallery type operation. This is a dangerous type operation because there is a lot of ceiling area exposed without support. While shoveling coal into a conveyor that carried the coal out I noticed coal dust falling on my hat and shoulders. In seconds a large part of the ceiling fell, missing my head but hitting my right foot. It took four hours to reach the surface where they washed and sewed up my wounds. Only local anesthesia was used. I spent the next two weeks in the camp "hospital". As soon as I could walk I was given the duty of delivering rice from the kitchen to the hospital. I went to the doctor once a week to have my injury dressed and examined. He decided to leave the bandage off to see if the wound would heal better. The camp medic noticed me walking around without a bandage and accused me of "dogging it". He promptly hit me in the face with his fist knocking me to the ground, so much for Japanese convalescence. I was sent back to the mine to work four weeks topside and then back to the shaft again.

On August 5, 1945 we had been in Japan a year and we had only lost two men to illness. We were now only allowed one half day off each ten days instead of the normal one full day. Food had become even scarcer, both the captives and the captors were short. Rumor had it that the Americans had captured Okinawa and only recently we had built air raid shelters in the little yard space we had.

Now the American Navy started pounding the Japanese in earnest. Each time the air raid siren sounded we were forced to go to the shelters, the Japs did not want us to see the planes. We were only about seventy miles from Nagasaki but we were unaware of the atom bomb being dropped.

On August 15 when we emerged from the shaft at 5 P.M. we were told that the war was over! My friend in the next bay came over and told me "Johnson, the war is over." (He had arrived top side on the previous "Jinsha".) "I don't believe it," was my reply. I asked him why the next shift of miners was waiting to go down if the war was over. He replied that if I didn't believe him I should go in and see all the civilians sitting around crying as they listened to the news on their radios. I went into the main building and saw the civilians, they told me it was the emperor's message to the people of Japan, hostilities were to cease.

We were still skeptical as the Jap guards refused to tell us anything. We had only one sure way of knowing but it would be the next morning before our conclusions were reached; if we weren't sent to the mine the next day, we knew the war was over.

The next morning the get up and go bell did not ring. Five thirty, six, six thirty, we waited anxiously but still no bell. At 7:30 A.M., here came the night crew, what a sorry

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looking bunch, we knew then the war was over. One of the night crew said that the Japs had got all they could out of them the night before. "They worked the hell out of us," he said using a few stronger words to describe the ordeal.

About 10 A.M. the Japanese commander called us all together and informed us that hostilities were to cease but that we would still be required to stay in the camp. We would no longer have to work and he would try to find us more food. We still knew none of the terms of the surrender; was it conditional, unconditional, would Americans come and get us or would we wait to be released by the Japs?

On August 24 the Japs brought us large quantities of paint and canvas and instructed us to paint P.O.W. on the canvas and to put it on the roofs of our buildings. He informed us that American planes were going to make a food drop.

On August 28 fifteen or twenty B-29s came over and two began to circle our camp. Then the bomb bay doors opened and fifty five gallon drums dropped supported by small parachutes. (The chutes were inadequate and the drums fell like rocks). We knew who was in charge now and the Japs realized we knew. All the guards quickly disappeared. The camp commander ordered the gates opened and starving Americans went after the food which had all landed outside the fence that had kept us prisoners. We would have liked to run after the food but all we could manage was a walk, we were too weak to run. The first drum I came on was busted and peaches were floating in juice in the bottom, I reached right in and had some canned peaches.

The stronger men, (those who worked in the kitchen), brought the food into the camp on wagons and carts. Eating began immediately and continued all night. We had spam, canned vegetables, soup, sugar and nescafe coffee. I think the sweets were first choice but we were starved for the coffee and cigarettes as well. There were also shoes and other articles in the drops. The guards had left their weapons so we set up our own guards and the former prison camp became an American outpost. We traded the shoes, which were too heavy for us to wear, to the Japanese for flour, chickens, rabbits and baking powder. The civilians were friendly and glad to see the war end. They tried to explain Hiroshima and Nagasaki to us but all we could understand was that it was a big bomb.

More food was dropped to us in a week and a few of these went through the civilian homes. Though I did not hear of any casualties, I will never forget the sight of a young mother clutching her baby, crying, eyeing a large metal drum which had come through her roof and was sticking up in the middle of the room. That ended the food drops.

The first Americans came September 15, (the peace treaty was signed September 2) several officers and enlisted men. It was the first chance we had to let the folks back home know that we were still alive and we all wrote out telegrams. I was sick at the time from eating too much but was overjoyed at the thought of finally leaving Japan. (I celebrated my 25th birthday, September 11, 1945).

In two days we had received clothes, given the officers our history, and were ready to board the twenty-five trucks the Japs had provided us for transportation. (Normally they would have given us four trucks).

The trucks took us to a railway station where we caught a train to Nagasaki. Here we were deloused and checked over by Army doctors and nurses and the more serious cases were placed on a hospital ship. When we passed through Nagasaki to the harbor we could see the devastation wrought by the atom bomb as well as conventional bombings that had preceeded it. Nothing but rubble and the stench of death, many Japanese were still buried in the ruins.

Most of us boarded the U.S.S. Marathon which took us to Okinawa, the B-24s air lifted us to Clark Field and Nichols Field in the Philippines where we had left what seemed like a lifetime ago. We were kept in a special area south of Nichols where we were processed. The main purpose was to feed us and get us in shape for the folks back home. Here I ran into other boys from Danville and we were all surprised to see each other. Paul Pasky of Danville had survived as a prisoner and was waiting to go home by boat. Another boy Leo Seifert, who had fought his way up from Guadalcanal, had gone to grade school in St. Joseph with Pasky. Seifert lived only one block from my home on Commercial. Two others I remember are the Carpenter brothers who still live in Danville.

Around October 5, 1945 a group of POWs including Pasky and myself were put on the Dutch ship Klipfonteen. Twenty-three days later we landed in Seattle and were able to call our folks free, courtesy of the Red Cross. It was a great thrill when I got to talk to Mom after all those years.

After a short stay at Fort Lewis near Seattle and Schick Hospital, Clinton, Iowa, we came home, arriving in Danville November 7, 1945. There to greet me was Mother, Aunt Anna, Cousin Harry Erickson and others.

I had been gone five years and three months but it seemed like a lifetime.

Notes: Most of Bataan and Corregidor survivors belong to "American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Inc." This group meets once a year in April or May. Our week long get together in 1982 was in Louisville, Kentucky. 1983 will see us all at Miami Beach, 700 to 1000 strong. We have officers selected from the membership and 1983 will be our 37th meeting.

In 1967 I returned to the Philippines along with 650 other POWs to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the fall of Bataan and Corregidor. It was a two week trip, highlighted by parades, trips to Bataan and Corregidor and visiting with new Philippine friends. Marcos, who was at that time and still is President of the Philippines, was a Death March survivor. □

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