

# 'They Made Us Slaves in Japan'

By LT. GEORGE H. (BUCKY) HENSHAW  
Country Club Rd., Honolulu

## INTRODUCTION

The Honolulu Star-Bulletin on Monday will start publication of the personal story of George H. (Bucky) Henshaw, now 27, the Honolulu boy who for three years and eight months was a prisoner of war in Japan.

An ensign in the naval reserve, he was among the gallant Americans who stood off the vastly superior enemy forces on Wake Island from December 8 to December 23, 1941.

They surrendered when there was nothing else to do.

But in their battle against the Japanese they took a toll of 5,000 men, seven ships and 35 planes, by the enemy's own admission.

Treated not as an honorable foe but rather as slaves, the captured Americans were placed aboard a dirty prison ship and transported to Japan, after they had been held, almost in chains, on Wake for 18 days.

The voyage was a nightmare of poor food, abuse, packed quarters, filth and above all constant threats of punishment and the eternal arrogance of their captors.

This they endured for 10 days.

Ashore in Yokohama Ensign Henshaw was taken to the Ofuna camp where at first he was well treated.

But soon he was subjected to a nerve racking, never ending round of interrogation by Japanese naval officers who wanted to know all the military "secrets" Ensign Henshaw had stowed away in his brain.

The fact that he was but a very junior officer who had come into the service from civil life, made no difference. He was supposed to know everything anyhow—which he didn't.

Later a new commandant for Ofuna appeared and the pitifully few comforts Ensign Henshaw and his comrades had been enjoying disappeared as if by magic.

The guards, who had behaved reasonably well under the former administration, now became abusive. They slapped the Americans around, stole everything they could lay hands on, drank on duty and laughed when the prisoners complained about their lack of food.

It was bitterly cold but the guards had no hesitation in stealing the Americans' coal ration, burning it at night while the prisoners tried to sleep.

But in February, 1942 another change came. Ensign Henshaw was transferred to the Zentsu camp. Compared to Ofuna it was a paradise.

The prisoners met many of their own officers and men from Wake.

They had warm clothes, much better food.

Turn to Page 2, Column 1.



LT. HENSHAW, above, as he appears today. Below, as he appeared when he returned home late in August after having been a prisoner of war in Japan for three years and eight months.



nard J. Lauff volunteered.

When he left for Wake on November 21, 1941, Ensign Henshaw told his mother he would be back before Christmas.

That Christmas at home for him won't come until this year.

# # #

**MONDAY:** The story of the battle of Wake island.

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## CHAPTER 4

A nightmare of a trip to Japan as a prisoner of war.

I had always believed that a trip to the Orient aboard one of the famous NYK liners might be an experience to remember for a lifetime, and I was absolutely right.

The original plan, however—breakfast in bed with a swarm of hissing, bowing Jap stewards to carry out my every wish—doesn't enter into the picture. I made my first crossing as a prisoner of war—in the baggage hold.

We left Wake island on the 11th of January, 1942—18 days after the Japanese had taken over.

A copy of the following orders was given to each prisoner officer prior to departure aboard the Nita Maru:

"1. The prisoners disobeying orders will be punished with immediate death.

"(a) Those disobeying Lt. Henshaw orders and instructions.

"(b) Those showing a motion of antagonism and raising a sign of opposition.

"(c) Those disordering the regulations by individualism, egoism, thinking only about yourself, rushing for your own goods.

"(d) Those talking without permission and raising loud voices.

"(e) Those walking and moving without order.

"(f) Those carrying unnecessary baggage in embarking.

"(g) Those resisting mutually.

"(h) Those touching the boat's materials, wires, electric lights, tools, switches, etc.

"(i) Those climbing ladder without order.

"(j) Those showing action of running away from the room or boat.



"(k) Those trying to take more meal than given them.

"(l) Those using more than two blankets.

"2. Since the boat is not well equipped and inside being narrow, food being scarce and poor, you'll feel uncomfortable during the short time on the boat. Those losing patience and disordering the regulation will be heavily punished for the reason of not being able to escort.

"3. Be sure to finish your 'nature's call,' evacuate the bowels and urine before embarking.

"4. Meal will be given twice a day. One plate only to one prisoner.

The prisoners called by the guard will give out the meal quick as possible and honestly. The remaining prisoners will stay in their places quietly and wait for your plate. Those moving from their places reaching for your plate without order will be heavily punished. Same orders will be applied in handling plates after meal.

"5. Toilet will be fixed at the four corners of the room. The buckets and cans will be placed. When filled up a guard will appoint a prisoner. The prisoner called will take the buckets to the center of the room. The buckets will be pulled up by the derrick and be thrown away. Toilet papers will be given. Everyone must cooperate to make the room sanitary. Those being careless will be punished.

"6. Navy of the great Japanese

Turn to Page 2, Column 1



and a talk with a few of our enlisted men who had made the trip in the ship's hold, I decided we had traveled in comparative luxury.

There were so many of them jammed into the area, that it was almost impossible to sit down, let alone stretch out on the deck to sleep.

**They organized themselves into squads of 10, and one fellow, who had dared keep his watch, timed the groups on a routine of standing, squatting, or sitting throughout the trip.**

More than 500 of them had to use four small soya tub latrines, which were hopelessly inadequate and overflowed all over the deck.

Many of the prisoners were very sick, developed diarrhea or fainted in the foul air. Their food was the same as ours—a few spoons of barley gruel twice a day with a piece of seaweed or pickled radish if the steward felt generous—but there was never enough to go around.

\* \* \*

Water was unobtainable until a half dozen prisoners passed out and some guard felt it his duty to revive them by offering his canteen.

Rats and cockroaches were rampant.

The prisoners were beaten frequently, and sometimes made to beat each other while the guards stood in the doorway and laughed.

They were robbed of everything they possessed, including most of the clothes they had on. I stopped complaining when I heard these stories.

The Nita Maru dropped anchor in Yokohama harbor on January 18, 1942, and after a bit of questioning, the Japs decided to send ashore a party of 21—eight officers, one civilian and 12 enlisted men.

**We were taken, according to**

the ship's captain, to a "nice, warm house where you will receive good treatment."

The fact is—we opened a camp which was to be known in months to come as "Ofuna"—where a man was a captive, not a prisoner of war, and where he was subjected to long hours of grilling and given what the Japs prefer to call "corrective punishment."

**FRIDAY: Life at Ofuna: Not enough food, too much inquisition.**

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## CHAPTER 5

How life began anew for the American prisoners at Ofuna.

The "nice, warm house where you will receive good treatment"—to which we specially-selected prisoners of war were taken on the 18th of January, 1942—was situated in the Yokohama suburbs.

It was once the property of an American businessman occupied at the outbreak of war by Japanese naval authorities.

Twenty one of us were housed there after a most unpleasant trip from Wake Island to Japan in the hold of the NYK liner, Nita Maru.

All departments which had existed on Wake were represented in our group, selected from the 1,200 prisoner passengers by Jap intelligence officers.

Ensign Bernard Lauff, USNR, and I were chosen for grilling on naval communications.

We were greeted on arrival by

an ensign in the Japanese navy, who announced he was in charge and instructed us to address him "Commander" Shindo.

He boasted that his selection as our commandant was due to his extremely high standing with the authorities at Yokosuka naval base.

If we behaved well and carried out his orders, we would receive excellent treatment. If, on the other hand, we misbehaved, he would lose face with his seniors and have to resign.

He didn't mention what would happen to us.

The first few hours in our new home reflected such a radical change in the Jap policy toward us that we stood around with our mouths open.

Shindo smiled and bowed in and out all day. He brought us magazines, editions of the Nippon Times (in English), cigars, coal for the fireplace, and generally tried to

make the atmosphere as pleasant as possible.

We had a cook, who worked before the war at an American home. Shindo explained he had given him orders to prepare our food "western style." We could hardly wait.

As for the rest of the establishment, there were two maids, a houseboy, and 15 navy guards.

The first day, time passed quickly and pleasantly. The "western style" cooking—what there was of it—was marvelous. But there wasn't a member of the group who couldn't have eaten a horse for dessert, had one been available.

We were asked to be allowed out into the court for a little fresh air and exercise. Permission was granted.

The 15 guards came out on the double, encircled the area, and beckoned us to start performing.

There was no alternative after this intrusion but organized calisthenics—so someone took the lead and the agony began.

One by one we dropped out of formation, exhausted, only to be prodded into line again by a guard who must have thought it was good for us.

It was too bad we ever suggested an outing in the first place, for later that afternoon, when Shindo appeared with our "daily schedule" two periods of exercise were listed—one in the morning, and one in the afternoon.

Roll call was set for 7 a. m., followed by breakfast.

At 9 the enlisted men were to clean house. Ten o'clock was exer-

Turn to Page 2, Column 1









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## CHAPTER I Works of Robert South March finally reach fruition

Early in the summer of 1941 at Honolulu, the Japanese authorities announced that they were preparing to send the South Marches to the United States. The South Marches of World War I had been organized to support the American war effort. The South Marches were organized to support the American war effort.

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## Donce Planned

Miss Joan Childer's resignation from the U. S. Army Reserve is expected to be announced in the near future. She is currently serving in the U. S. Army Reserve. She is currently serving in the U. S. Army Reserve.

## Hande's Oratorio

Hande's Oratorio is a musical work by the composer. It is a musical work by the composer. It is a musical work by the composer.

Central Union Church, TONI

## NO 1 ANNUAL

DAHU DISPENSE will be held on THURSDAY AT 9:30 A. M. in the Bay opposite the post office.



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## CHAPTER 10

The great radio propaganda comedy gets under way

"You will obey all orders given you by the authorities of this camp in an effort to restore peace between Japan and America.

If you refuse to cooperate voluntarily with the Japanese administration, you will be severely punished, even with death.

Named: Commander in Chief of the Imperial Japanese Forces -

President, Imperial Government of Japan -

Generalissimo, Japanese Empire -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Army -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Navy -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Air Force -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Marine Corps -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Army Reserve -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Navy Reserve -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Air Force Reserve -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Marine Corps Reserve -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Army Reserve -

Chief of Staff, Japanese Navy Reserve -

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Chief of Staff, Japanese Army Reserve -

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Chief of Staff, Japanese Air Force Reserve -

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Chief of Staff, Japanese Air Force Reserve -



Lt. Henshaw

frustrated throughout Japan

by natives and prisoners alike for his long record of broadcast and exertion.

"Our messages were clear: We would cooperate with the Jap authorities, or sever our bond again.

"At 1 o'clock on the following day with a background of Jap martial music, America heard for the first time the queering voice of one of her speakers coming from Radio Tokyo.

"The Henshaw Hour is on the air! Whereas it had in the past been broadcast from the Imperial Japanese Navy, it is now broadcast from the Imperial Japanese Army.

"It featured prisoner commentators in news, magazine, and violent attacks on the Roosevelt administration.

"It appealed for peace, described the horrors of war, and blamed the Japanese for their kind treatment of war captives!

"All this was voluntarily presented by shivering, half-captured prisoners while the critic-Jap propaganda machine like lightning proclaimed the Japanese program: 'The Henshaw Hour is on the air!'

"If you disagree, you are in the script you will be shot.

"We lived under a constant reign of terror. Hardly a day passed without at least one member of the group being beaten or threatened with death for daring to protest against a commentary he was forced to read, or for committing some breach of camp regulations.

"We were restricted to three meals a day and high school building, hanging grotesques, but less than normal physical activity.

"Each day the place had to be washed down, and often during the cold winter months ice loosed on the floors.

"There was no fuel and despite the fact that we were to be kept fully clothed and wrapped in five blankets, we still couldn't get warm.

"No one was allowed out of doors except for two periods of supervised calisthenics. At first we looked forward to these as our only recreation, but more the days went by we were making ourselves just as inactive as the dead men whose bodies they laid into everything else.

"If a man looked tired, or put his hands into his pockets his slippers, thrown at in the ears and kicked, or made to run around the compound until exhausted.

"Anyone who accidentally broke anything—a window or a dish, was shamed and forced to share his bread.

"Once we protested the slant ration and for daring to suggest that the commandant was not feeding us adequately, we were each struck in the jaw and forced to stand rigidly at attention, while he delivered a 30-minute lecture on the benevolence of the Japanese, threatening

to behead us if we ever dared mention food again.

"One night, Lt. Jack McNaughton, British actor and senior prisoner of war, sat with me in the mess hall for one hour cured our immediate predicament and every thing Japanese we were being forced to broadcast, and the fact that we were slowly freezing and starving to death.

"Just as we had exhausted ourselves on these points, a Jap interpreter walked in with: 'You gentlemen look as if you were displeased with something.'

"And then, in practically our own words he proceeded to tell us why we were displeased.

"The program, this clothing, heating, food—we knew them all, and in practically the same order he had discussed them.

"You must not be impatient about these things," he said. "Improvements will come in time if you do your work properly.

"The place was wired! There was no doubt about it, but no matter how hard we searched we never found the hidden microphone. We did, however, employ considerable ingenuity in future discussions of the Japanese.

"After two weeks of this badinage one of our officers was removed. They told us he was shot for disobedience. Any other member who felt he could not obey the Jap orders might also be put "six feet under."

"No one committed himself one way or the other.

"On the 18th of December two more officers, Maj. Charles Oomena, well-known Australian radio commentator, and Capt. Walter Zach, a Connecticut "Voice of Freedom" were brought in to join our group.

"Both had been broadcast frequently under the pressure of hospital quarters propaganda departments for several months before our arrival.

"Maj. Oomena had been beaten unmercifully until he agreed to go on the air. Capt. Zach had been threatened with the lives of his wife and two baby boys who were under Japanese jurisdiction in Manila.

"From these men we received confirmation of what we had suspected: that the Jap propaganda was to use us in their propaganda war.

"The Jap propaganda was at least certain objectives were attained, then put out of the way.

"They did not intend that we should live. Maj. Oomena said, in fact of this atrocity.

"Some days later the Japanese announced that they were to take over the entire program. It was to be a strictly POW show, no more Jap commentators. From that time we were to write and produce the Henshaw Hour under the direction and supervision of a Jap prisoner.

"Ed Kahlbach, veteran lieutenant of the Philippine campaign, was the first to make a brave experiment.

"With a clever analogy at the start of a commentary on some political issue, he "put over" the fact that all prisoners were being slowly starved to death.

"The Jap center missed it completely.

"The incident was an eye-opening

to all of us who had been assigned to work in the script department.

"By voice inflection, inference, analogies, sarcasm, slang, and musical monologues, we began to thwart the policy of the prisoner program: 'I'll under the nose of every censor in their duplicitous spy number one broadcasting studio.'

"Before we had been on the air a month the Jap office was a laydown. They knew that something was radically wrong but couldn't make up their minds where to place the finger.

"The director of the organization was discharged and in his place headquarters installed a new board of hopelessly incompetent, silent censors.

"Under this group we attempted to 'clean up' the program, and were successful in many instances.

"We persuaded the director of Jap martial music, and the radio program, that about half being "strong, determined and ever-victorious."

"We injected double meanings into the script without detection.

"So many elements were working against us that we had to proceed with extreme caution.

"Not only were the Japs suspicious and going over everything with a fine toothed comb, but two of our own people, the Wake Island divil-

and the Japanese-speaking U.S. Army sergeant were acting suspiciously. Then and entering in the camp.

"Lt. Kahlbach was the first to be "shot." It was a gross line of one of his commentators he deliberately misled a guard, thus changing the meaning of the article.

"He was threatened and deprived of his food for 24 hours.

"Later he was caught again. After his script had been reviewed he was ordered to give a general opinion and infection with on the phase of the program.

"Following the program, the Jap found his article satisfactory. The Jap was unable to give a satisfactory explanation of the matter.

"The mathematics and nothing for several days. Only our notorious sergeant comment on the "butter." According to him, Kahlbach had said "On the Jap" in the Jap office, and unless we promised to recognize him as the supreme authority in the group he would see to it that we were punished for disobedience and subterfuge.

"Three days later Kahlbach was removed. That evening, before the Jap group had departed, my sergeant smugly announced that he was directly responsible for what had taken place.

"The next day one member of the group dared ignore his authority or "fail" to understand the true spirit of the Japanese," that prisoner would also be removed.

"The next day two of us packed Kahlbach's belongings and delivered them to the Japanese office, asking that they be sent to him. The Japs at the desk laughed and said: "You can't pack and forget about it. You need 'em where he is."

"THIRSDAY, the end finally came as new danger threatened.

"The mythical founder of Rome was named Romulus, and so was the last of the Roman emperors.



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## CHAPTER 10

The great radio propaganda comedy gets under way

"You will obey all orders given you by the authorities of this camp in an effort to restore peace between Japan and America.

"If you refuse to cooperate voluntarily with the Japanese administration, you will be severely punished, even with death."

Signed: "Commander in Chief of the Imperial Japanese Forces."

Fourteen terrified prisoners of war, glued at attention in the

to behead us if we ever dared mention food again.



AT BUNKA. Ensign Henshaw, right, Lt. Ed Kalbfleish, center, who later "disappeared" from Bunka because the enemy didn't like his broadcasting, and another prisoner, Corporal Albert Rickert, USMC.

for all of us who had been assigned work in the script department.

## Ships Present In



annoying me with fictitious news reports describing an appalling food shortage in my home town, Honolulu.

"Your family," he would say, "must be slowly starving to death. I am very sorry for you."

# # #

Then suddenly a letter arrived from my sister containing 12 snapshots of my newly acquired niece taken on her first birthday. All poses revealed the largest arms and legs I have ever seen on a child of that age. She was positively rolling with health.

"Mmmmm," exclaimed our Guiding Light as he censored the photographs. "Very fat baby!"

**"Oh, no sir," I replied. "You forget that food is very scarce in Honolulu. This is beriberi!"**

For the first time in my life, I actually saw a Jap blush. Those were the last words we ever exchanged.

Several weeks later Mr. Hishikari and his corrupt staff resigned, and imperial headquarters appointed an entirely new group to administer their prisoners' propaganda department.

# # #

**NEXT: Chop Chop Charlie and the Bunka camp.**

Santiago, Chile, was founded in



