



From the Commander

BACEPOW is only relevant as an organization if it provides the services that its members desire. From time to time, we need to poll our membership to ensure that we are doing what they expect and to accept new ideas about what we should be doing. In this column, we are summarizing who we are and what we are doing, and open the door for your comments.

WHO WE ARE In the 1980s, a group of civilians who had survived World War II as prisoners of the Japanese in the Philippines started to meet regularly to share their experiences. The group later organized and was chartered as a chapter of the American Ex-Prisoners of War (AXPOW), which is primarily an organization for military POWs. The chapter adopted the name BACEPOW, which stands for Bay Area Civilian Ex-POWs. We have outgrown that original group and now have a widespread membership all over the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and the Philippine Islands; but we keep the original name in respect for our founders. At a time when many similar WW II organizations are declining and closing, BACEPOW continues to grow as we welcome a wide variety of people interested in the war experience to join.

OUR MEMBERSHIP The majority of our members are people who were in the internment camps in the Philippines – Santo Tomas, Los Baños, and Baguio/Bilibid – and members of the armed forces involved in their liberation. Our growing membership is now focusing on the descendents of those prisoners, and they are represented on our Board of Directors and take an active part in organizing our activities. We also welcome friends of our organization and people interested in the wartime history of the Philippine campaigns. Though our membership is primarily oriented to the Philippines, we welcome others who have ties to the prisoners held by the Japanese throughout East Asia.

OUR GOALS The goals of BACEPOW are to promote the welfare of civilian ex-POWs, provide a structure where they can exchange information, provide a forum for next generations who wish to research and better understand the experience that so shaped the lives of their ancestors, and provide accurate historical accounts of what happened in and to the internment camps. The organization is also dedicated to maintaining an accurate history of the World War II experience, and summarizes books that relate the histories.

HOW WE COMMUNICATE Three times a year, we publish and mail to members a journal called *Beyond the Wire* that provides articles relevant to the internment experience. This also has a wide electronic distribution to people who inter-

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YMCA Relief Program

By Angus Lorenzen

Robert Heinlein once wrote, “*Beware of altruism. It is based on self-deception, the root of all evil.*” This statement certainly applies to the Neutral Welfare Committee of the International YMCA in Tokyo in 1943 when it decided to provide books, sports equipment, and musical instruments to prisoners of war. No doubt the POWs would delight in the opportunity for a game of soccer after they got back to camp from their 12-hour shift in a Japanese coal mine, then after a hearty dinner, get together for a musical jam session.

Mr. H. A. Hanson, a Swedish citizen, was appointed by the committee to carry out its goals in the Philippines. After petitioning the Japanese Headquarters for Military Prisoners, Hanson received permission for the program, with certain restrictions, in late 1943. One restriction was that the Japanese authorities would inspect the relief goods, and another was that the YMCA representatives would not have access to the prisoners.

Hanson wired W. Bagge, Swedish Minister in Tokyo and head of the committee, that he had approval of the Japanese to proceed with the program in the Philippines. He added that the approval included the distribution of food, clothing, and vitamins, which were badly needed because Red Cross activities were non-existent. He asked how much money would be available.

Bagge wired back that Red Cross supplies had just been landed in Manila, and that the YMCA program would be limited to books, sports equipment, and musical instruments. (*Red Cross packages had been picked up from the Gripsholm during the prisoner exchange in Mormugao and delivered to Manila by the Teia Maru, then sat on the dock in Manila for months. Santo Tomas received its allocation in January 1944, and the internee Executive Committee determined that the Japanese had removed some of the packages for their own use. It directed that the remaining packages be opened and some of the canned food removed for an emergency. The rest were distributed to the prisoners at 1/2 package per person. This was the second distribution of Red Cross packages, the first being in January 1943.*)

Hanson considered it imperative that he be authorized to deliver all articles for the necessities of life as granted by the Japanese. He again wired Bagge, pleading to be allowed to supply food, clothing, and vitamins; but on December 21, Bagge replied that it would not be possible to authorize his request. Hanson had already formed a committee of other neutral

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face with our organization. The journal also tries to reflect the same kind of humor, based on the cultural and language subtleties between Americans and Japanese, that kept up the spirits of the internees who were subjected to large doses of propaganda about American losses in the Pacific. We have an Internet site at www.bacepow.net that includes additional information such as profiles of the Philippines internment camps, book reviews, articles, feedback from others, and a wide variety of other information. We also receive many inquiries at our e-mail addresses about people and subjects that relate to the internment experience.

MEETINGS AND REUNIONS We have been holding a reunion every couple of years, and one or more luncheon meetings in the interim years. Most of these have been held in the San Francisco Bay Area, and a few in Southern California. Our next reunion will be in Norfolk, Virginia at the MacArthur Memorial in April of 2014, which promises to be very exciting. And of course we will be planning something big for the 70th anniversary of Liberation in February of 2015, including a tour to attend the ceremonies in Manila in February and a reunion in Sacramento in April. We have had some terrific speakers at our

reunions, and they keep getting better.

OUR FINANCES We are financed by the annual \$15 dues from members, which haven't changed in many years, generous donations from members and friends, and sale of our challenge coin. Our expenses include publishing the journal and web site, postal services, office supplies, and donations to worthy veterans' organizations. In addition, we have been setting aside funds for the BACEPOW History Prize, which will award monetary prizes to students who submit relevant essays on WW II, the best of which will be published in *Beyond The Wire*. Uncompensated volunteers do all the work for BACEPOW.

NOW WHAT? The foregoing tells you what we are doing; but now we'd like to hear from you whether we are on the right track, or whether we should be doing things differently. Please send your ideas to:

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Angus Lorenzen

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nationals, and had decided to proceed on its own to provide foodstuffs to the camps until such time as the Red Cross was permitted to do so. During December, deliveries were made to 7 POW camps around Manila with approximately 4,300 prisoners, and deliveries were also made to Japanese headquarters for 400 prisoners on small details. The deliveries included food staples, sweets, and tobacco products donated by Manila residents, and of course the requisite games and recreational equipment were paid from the YMCA funds. The deliveries were made by truck directly to the camps, though no member of the committee was allowed to accompany it.

The last shipment was made on December 31, 1943, after which the Japanese informed the committee that no more shipments would be allowed because Manila was suffering from an ever-increasing shortage of food.

Up until this time, no shipments were made to the civilian camps because private individuals were allowed to send packages to the internees. In a letter, Carroll Grinnell, Chairman of the Santo Tomas Executive Committee, wrote, "We shall be very happy to receive such materials from time to time. However, it is our desire that the War Prisoners Camps be given preference and that need of this camp be considered only after those of the War Prisoners Camps have been fulfilled".

In February 1944 the Japanese shut down the package line at Santo Tomas, ending the ability of individuals to continue to send supplies to the internees. In the middle of April, Hansen received news that the situation regarding food supplies, especially for the children in Santo Tomas, was becoming more and more grave, and about that time, Bagge finally rented and gave permission to use YMCA funds for relief supplies. Hanson then received permission from the Japanese to make weekly deliveries of eggs and milk for the children. On April 27, He arranged delivery of 2,000 eggs and 100 quarts of milk, and on the following day a delivery of about a ton of meat. Both deliveries were made directly to the gate of Santo Tomas and received by the internee Executive Committee.

Following this delivery, the Japanese informed Hanson

that only one delivery was permitted each week to either a War Prisoner Camp or a Civilian Internment Camp. Subsequently, deliveries were made each week to a camp, including May 10 to the children of Santo Tomas, and on June 7 to the civilians in Santo Tomas, Los Baños, and Baguio. All of these deliveries were made to the Japanese Headquarters for Military Prisoners. Though the Japanese provided a receipt, Hanson did not receive one from the prisoners, so there was no assurance that they received the supplies. On June 7, Hanson was officially advised that no more shipments would be permitted.

Numerous attempts were made to renew shipments, but Hanson was informed that the orders to stop deliveries came from Tokyo. The perishable goods the committee had accumulated had to be disposed, and Hanson's committee provided some to hospitals where civilian internees were treated and the remainder was sold and the funds retained. There still remained a stock of non-perishable goods, and Hanson finally received permission to deliver this to Santo Tomas on December 21, 1944, along with a quantity of fresh fruit bought with the retained funds. The Santo Tomas records show that mongo and brown beans, sugar, coffee, and cigarettes were received on December 28 from YMCA, but no fresh fruit.

Though we have Hanson's records of the relief supplies delivered for the various camps (to the Japanese Prisoners Headquarters), except for Santo Tomas we have no records of what was actually delivered and suspect that a good deal of the supplies were not delivered. Hanson points out as an example that they were compelled to unload milk for the children of Santo Tomas at the Japanese Headquarters, where on at least one occasion it was left standing in the sun for the whole day.

We give our sincerest thanks to Mr. Hanson and his committee of neutrals in Manila for their hard and frustrating efforts to get relief supplies to the prisoners. But we can't have much respect for the Neutral Welfare Committee of the International YMCA in Tokyo for its closed-minded blocking of the Manila committee's efforts to get food, clothing, and vitamins to the prisoners.

Setting the Record Straight

By Sascha Jansen

An occasional column intended to highlight and correct grievous historical errors being perpetuated about the civilian prisoner experience and war in the Philippines

A friend sent a newspaper article written by a **Diana Russell Cantrel**, who was in Los Banos Civilian Japanese Prison Camp in the Philippines during WWII, and I just thought I would send along this bit of information to shake up your day. Ready?

Cantrel was a special guest for the 196th Regimental Combat Team Reunion in Idaho, where she revealed her made up stories to an audience of veterans, and her article ran in their newsletter, *THE FOXHOLE*. This article was about her life in camp with her family, and states in part – ***“I knew life was a desperate enterprise where you pleased or you were punished. The first time I failed to please, they pulled out my fingernails. The second time I was hung on barbed wire for a night and 2 days without water. I was 3 years old.”***

Really? Did you folks get that?

Cantrel takes grievous blind liberties in charging that these Japanese atrocities really did happen to her. Well now, let's delve into these claims.

Already suffering from malnutrition, no child of this age can make it through two full days in the hot sun hanging from a barbed wire fence without water. Coupling with the tale of a

whole night of the same treatment seems to replenish the writer's lack of sensibility and mental capacity, leaving an enormous playing field for Russell's proclivity for blatant lies. Two main characteristics of the climate in the Philippines are: severe elevated temperatures and severe atmospheric humidity. This poor child would have been dead in a few hours from immediate dehydration with renal failure, and multiple organs shut down.

I am not addressing the results of “tearing out her fingernails.” Why? None of these atrocities happened. Not one child in any civilian prison camp in the Philippines was ever treated thusly. Want proof? Ask anyone of the civilian prisoners from the Los Baños, Santo Tomas, Baguio and Bilibid camps that are alive and well. Most importantly, all the camps kept meticulous records of grave illnesses and hospitalized patients of all ages. Any questionable maltreatment, torturing and executions by the Japanese were reported and recorded. The wounded prisoners and those who died from shelling and air attacks were treated by medical staff, noted, and became post-liberation camp statistics. Any questions? We will be more than glad to SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

Later on in the article, Diana informs us, *“My mother died at the age of 44 years from the effects of torture.”* Again, we are snowed with grave untruths by a mind that has a need to place itself on center stage in a WWII tragedy, plagiarizing other's real life horrific events, no matter what the cost. Shame, Diana Russell Cantrel!



The Holy Ghost Children's Home was originally organized by Dr. Fe Del Mundo in a small Red Cross Building, but moved to the Holy Ghost College when it became overcrowded. Almost 400 young children left the overcrowded and disease-ridden Santo Tomas for this healthier place, until they had to return in 1944. Can you find yourself or a parent in this photo?

Santo Tomas Liberation

Because of its size and the distribution of internees in Santo Tomas, many people saw different things on the night of liberation. Only by hearing the different stories can we begin to understand the enormity of that rescue operation. Here is Irene Hecht's story of her experience.

The 1st Cavalry liberated Santo Tomas Internment Camp on the night of February 3, 1945. While we did not anticipate its arrival on either that date nor the timing nor manner of its arrival, we had already been alerted to the possibility of being freed months before.

The first alert was the arrival of bombers over Manila in September 1944. That was a special day, indeed. Needless to say, every internee was elated.

Our second "warning" that liberation was possible came in the context of the landing at Leyte Gulf. Though at good distance from us, the presence of American forces at Leyte indicated that they were heading to Manila. That news was passed to us in a most unusual manner.

Every evening, before being locked up in Main Building, internees were in the habit of assembling on the Plaza outside Main Building, enjoying that last of the evening light before being forced to retire for the night. During that informal "assembly" we were entertained with announcements passed to our announcer by the Camp Commandant. One evening, as we relaxed at the end of another hungry day we were admonished to get something done by a certain time. The closing line on the part of the announcer was, "Better lat-ee than never", a mockery of Japanese pronunciation of English.

The effect was electric. Every one of us, down to myself at the age of twelve, understood exactly what information had been imparted. The American forces had landed at Leyte Gulf. Though absolutely clear to us, the Japanese could not decode the delivery.

We must have been in the hundreds sitting on the Plaza, and my impression is that everyone had drawn in a deep breath and was holding it, forcing themselves not to evince any reaction at all. If we had broken into cheers, the Japanese would have instantly understood that important news had been transmitted to us. It would have confirmed their suspicion that there was a shortwave radio somewhere on the campus. The result would have been catastrophic for every one of us. Holding our breaths, we disbanded and retreated to Main Building, but I can assure you that the rumor mill in the next days went into overdrive.

Perhaps two or three days before the arrival of the American forces, the tension within the camp was palpable. I recall a lot of too-ing and fro-ing of Japanese units. On February 3 during the day there was a time in the morning when a Japanese unit deployed across the great front lawn, setting up their machineguns all aimed toward the front gates. By afternoon, that unit like others before them, had retrieved all their equipment and vanished somewhere beyond the camp walls.

But we continued our routine and by nightfall everyone had retreated to their sleeping quarters. I was upstairs in our second floor corner room with its balcony that faced over the front Plaza. None of us were yet in bed when we heard some commotion toward the Main gate – which was not visible, being down a lengthy U-shaped driveway embellished with great

trees. By then, I was out on the balcony and I could see a brilliant searchlight fingering its way up the driveway. Someone was coming, but who would it be? Before long, a hulking tank came into view, its way being lit by the searchlight. On the right of the tank a short man, hunched over, holding a gun, was walking slowly at the side of the tank. As I looked, my heart sank. Such a short man had to be Japanese. My immediate conviction was that this was it. This unit would see to it that none of us survived the night.

Then the meaning of the scene changed in the most remarkable way! I saw a Japanese officer, in uniform, brandishing his unsheathed samurai sword running toward the tank. He pointed his sword at the tank, as if he wanted to spear it. I instantly understood the tank and the soldier were American! The short man immediately fired his rifle and the officer sprawled on the driveway.

At that point, an immense shout went up from everyone, now hanging out the front windows. I learned much later from my good friend Ben Legarda, whose parent's house was not that far from Santo Tomas, that they heard the shout, and they feared that the Japanese had begun the massacre of the internees. Of course, by morning, they knew the real news: we had been liberated!

The instant reaction, once we understood we were free, is that everyone went to assemble in family units. My mother and I headed across the main lawn for the nipa hut we shared with René Engel. René had long since lit the clay stove and was brewing a concoction we called coffee, though its resemblance to the real stuff was far fetched. We reveled in our new status.

About an hour later my mother and I headed back to Main Building via the road that went in front of the Education Building. For some time there had been a large pile of heavy wire mesh deposited by the Japanese in front of that building. When my mother and I reached the pile of wire we found a number of American Cavalry men lying crouched beneath its protection as tracer bullets could be seen streaking across the lawn toward them. The Japanese guards who occupied the Education Building were firing the shots. My mother and I dropped to the ground amidst the soldiers. It was impossible to move either back toward René's hut or to advance towards Main Building.

We remained stranded for quite sometime. Finally, the shooting died out. After an interminable stay, my mother and I hustled in front to the wire pile and ran for Main Building. On that sprint, I was thinking how ridiculous it would be to die now just as we were finally free!

The denouement had more chapters to play. There was the siege of Manila and for a time we were a target of Japanese artillery. There was internal reorganization of the camp, and eventually repatriation, followed by all the adjustments to "normality." But the critical thing we were spared after February 3, 1945 was hunger, a change bordering on the miraculous.

Word of Mouth

By Sascha Jansen

Within the Walls of Santo Tomas-by Betty Byron & Cassius Mullen A novel - the story of captivity and liberation in Manila during WWII, Tate Publishing.

When I first saw the front cover of this book, with that famous photograph of the U.S. Army nurses being released from Santo Tomas Prison Camp, I had hopes of another story of praise for those wonderful women. As I opened the book to the *Author's Note*, the authors proclaimed that the story is based on actual historical events, which took place in WWII, but went on to say they fictionalized the history to produce a more compelling story. Why?

Why indeed would two writers, who initially became intrigued with the true story of U.S. Army nurses taken prisoners by the Japanese in the Philippines, decide to take license with adventurous and true, compelling personal stories, only to make up their own tales of horror in flights of fancy. Keeping in mind that research and writing such a promising book takes so much energy and time, one would think it would be a run-away hit by telling the actual true story of these heroic, amazing women.

Santo Tomas prison camp held sixty-seven army nurses among a civilian population of almost 4,000 American, British and other allied prisoners. Malnutrition, dengue fever, bacillary and amoebic dysentery and beri beri plagued the population. Bombings, shrapnel, and shelling killed and wounded many. Vermin, lice and bedbugs ruled each day. Interrogations by the Kempetai with harsh results were commonplace, and executions numbered seven from this camp alone. The cruelty of some of the Japanese Commandants, officers, and higher echelon of the Imperial Japanese Military in the Philippines were reprehensible and still unbelievable to this day. Evidently, these conditions of cruelty of war were not enough to excite the minds of Byron and Mullen, hence they invented their own tales of horror and lies.

The Commandant at the time of liberation was Lt. Colonel "Hyashi" who the authors had living in a small house by the main gate with his child daughter who had suffered a bad case of polio with crippling effects. They bring into camp a "Dr. Abiko" who, with his zeal for inhuman treatment, imitated Japanese Unit 731, which included chemical and germ warfare and amputations. He was made one of the key villains in camp by bringing the same atrocities that he had performed in Manchuria to Santo Tomas, using the prisoners as the subjects of inhumane treatment (as if they didn't have enough to worry about). The authors invented stories that people in Santo Tomas had firearms or made explosive and incendiary devices to protect themselves from their captors as apparently the authors wished to see the prisoners pop the Nips if confronted. They claim that distilleries in camp and alcoholism were rampant, new ones popping up each day.

The pretend nurse of this book is named Molly, who by all accounts lives a totally unidentifiable and undistinguishable personal life of her own. It seems Molly is so special that she was personally rescued by Navy Lt. John Bulkeley's boat - PT-41 - from Bataan. He of course later rescued General MacArthur and staff from Corregidor. Molly had other fictitious characters around her during her incarceration

to "give more depth" to her persona. There is much more...at this point, please forgive me as I have to cease and desist, because I am becoming totally confused with this whole story telling episode.

But here is the clinker. I spoke to the authors by phone as they were anxious to know of my opinion of their book. My answer was as follows.

"I appreciate you allowing me to critique your book. You both are good writers and did an admirable job in that respect. However, it is the content that I hold umbrage with. There are a few hundred of us ex-Santo Tomas prisoners still alive. Our BACEPOW organization's purpose in these times is to keep our history alive and accurate. We monitor film, books and documentaries, and are avid proponents of our American/Philippine experience during WWII, sharing our true history with the world. We have a problem embracing a book where you folks are not only changing the history of our war experience while using real pictures, but inserting fake intimate details of the people in camp to the extent we don't know our true selves.

"Your bibliographies are LIFE magazines and the archives at the First Cavalry Museum in Fort Hood. You picked the worst book written - *Captured* - by Cogan. It is far from accurate and a disgrace. Not once did you attempt to interview any civilian prisoners from that camp to get the real personal stories. It was a poor attempt at research. But then, you had your own agenda in mind all along. Having said all this, I cannot recommend this book to anyone. I wish you folks luck."

As Mark Twain said, "A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes."



The Japanese teach their prisoners how to show proper respect

MacArthur Memorial to Host BACEPOW Reunion April 25-27, 2014

**Start planning now to join us for a memorable reunion in
Norfolk, Virginia**



Events will include:

**Tour of the MacArthur Memorial
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**We recommend making your reservation as soon as possible to get the
BACEPOW preferred rate**

(You can cancel later if your plans change)

\$109 for a room with king sized bed

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