



From the Commander

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a huge surprise to most Americans; but for some time, those expatriates living in Asia were aware of the probability that Japan was about to attack American interests. In 1941, military and diplomatic dependents were shipped home from the Philippines, and by the end of that year American businessmen and their families started an exodus from other Asian countries, though by in large they remained in the Philippines. Some critics have stated that they had no one but themselves to blame for winding up in Japanese prison camps. However correspondence between the offices of Philippine High Commissioner Sayre and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, not declassified until 60 years after the fact, gives a clearer picture of the reasons.

Sayre to Hull, October 9, 1940

"... the State Department has instructed our Far Eastern consulates to advise Americans living in the Japanese Empire, China, Hong Kong, and French Indochina to return to the United States. So far as the Philippines are concerned ... there is no reason for anxiety ... Manila is one of the safest places in the Far East today."

Sayre to Hull, January 7, 1941

"I am of the opinion that at the proper time the Department should consider whether American civilians are to be evacuated either from Manila area or the Philippines ..."

State Department memo, Brandt, March 17, 1941

"If the Philippines are threatened by an enemy power, are we going to tell and assist Americans there to depart, and thus to subject ourselves to the accusation by Filipinos ... that we are fleeing from our own soil and leaving our wards ... to face the danger alone? ... we should tell the High Commissioner that we do not contemplate an evacuation of Americans from the Philippines ..."

State Department Memorandum of Conversation, Hiss, April 21, 1941

"The United States Army has moved up to May 15 its deadline for the removal of dependents of army personnel from the Philippines. ... American citizens including women and children ... are not being urged to return to the United States at this time."

Congressional Legislation, June 21, 1941 (22 U.S.C. 228-229)

"U.S. citizens in the Philippines were barred from depart

Commander continued on Page 6

It Was A Shindig

It was after curfew of February 3, 1945, and 3,768 prisoners waited and wondered how much longer they could survive. They had little energy to do much as they were starving – 38 had died in December and another 42 in January. But they were hopeful on that evening because there were rumors that American forces were advancing on the city to liberate them after more than 3 years as Japanese captives, and during the day, Marine Corps dive bombers had flown over several times, one of them dropping a message of hope.

Unknown to them, a small force of 1st Cavalry troopers led by tanks from the 44th Tank Battalion had kicked off three days earlier and raced 100 miles through Japanese-occupied territory, and even now was wending its way through the back streets of Manila, led by guerillas to the front gate of the prison camp. A brief engagement with the Japanese guards resulted in the wounding of the columns leader and the death of its guerilla guide, but a tank broke through the gate and entered the walled camp just before 9 PM, triggering pandemonium on the part of the prisoners as they greeted their saviors.

There were only about 250 troopers who entered the camp that evening, and another 250 reinforced them after mid-

Shindig Continued on Page 2



In 1945, some of that same group of ex-prisoners who attended the shindig climbed aboard Battlin Basic, the Sherman tank that broke through the gate and was the first to enter the camp to liberate them.

night. That small force defended the camp surrounded by 26,000 Japanese who occupied the city, until other units of the 6th Army arrived over the next few days.

Recently, the 44th Tank Battalion held a reunion with the civilian prisoners from the Santo Tomas Internment Camp who they had rescued on that dramatic evening. Time has taken its toll on those troopers, and few could make it to Farmington, New Mexico for the event so they named it a shindig, and 10 of the surviving prisoners came to tell their stories and express their gratitude.

Hosting the shindig was Tom Dugan, who joined the 44th Tank Battalion after the Battle of Manila, and was wounded during the invasion of Mindanao. The weekend was filled with activities, and at the evening banquets, the ex-POWs shared their stories of that evening so long ago with the 44th Tank Battalion families and friends.

1st Cavalry trooper Frank Mendez related how emaciated the prisoners were and how they overwhelmed the troopers with their joyous greeting. Intersections were relived. Liz Irvine remembered that Frank had given her a candy bar, her first in 3 years. The troopers were most generous in sharing their treats considering that they had departed on the race to Manila with only 4 days of C-rations, which were already mostly consumed. Curtis Brooks and Tom Crosby had both been Japanese hostages in the Education Building, while Frank Mendez's machine gun crew had been firing into the building, holding the Japanese garrison down, but not harming the hostages. Angus Lorenzen remembered a tank in the doorway of the Main Building, and then later watching tracers flowing from a machine gun on the roof above his head into the Education Building.

The stories never ended, and the Shindig was a hugely emotional event, leaving the attendees in euphoria from reliving the events of 66 years ago. It was a fitting memorial for those brave men who lost their lives in that daring mission and others who have passed on in the many years since.



Frank Mendez manning the machine gun, with a group from among the prisoners rescued in the famous raid, accompany Tom Dugan, in the passenger seat of the WW II halftrack with 44th Tank Battalion markings.

The Girl on the Stair

Alan Hald wrote these lyric to a song about his mother, Dorothy Brooks who had been an internee in Santo Tomas. Her husband Curt Brooks, also an internee, read these moving words for her at the 44th Tank Battalion Shindig.

There's a girl that sits at the top of the stairs
She's a frail little thing, someone carried her there
She's been too weak to climb them, but hope is alive
She's heard there are soldiers about to arrive

The girl and her family remember the day
The Japanese army forced them to stay
in Santo Tomas, where they would have died
if not for the soldiers about to arrive

So here's to the men of the brave 44
Who fought for our freedom and won the great war
Some gave their rations
and some gave their lives
for the girl on the stairs
and that's how she survived

I met a soldier in fall '99
his name was John, he was the first to arrive
and when I called him a hero, he said "no, I survived
"The heroes are all those who died."

So here's to the men of the brave 44
Who fought for our freedom and won the great war
Some gave their rations
and some gave their lives
for the girl on the stairs
and that's how she survived

I am the son of the girl on the stairs
and I owe my life to the men that were there
and their names will be known to my sons and their sons
and we'll never forget how that battle was won

So here's to the men of the brave 44
who fought for our freedom and won the great war
some gave their rations
and some gave their lives
for the girl on the stairs...for the girl on the stairs
for my mom on those stairs
and that's why I'm alive

Alan Hald

Bataan and Corregidor Memorial

In April of 2012, Sascha Jansen will lead a tour to the Philippines to memorialize the 70th anniversary of the surrenders on Bataan and Corregidor and visit the POW camps. Contact her at mabuhayma@aol.com.

Freedom

Rear Admiral Bruce Black made an inspirational speech to the attendees at the shindig at the Veterans' Memorial in Farmington. In his speech, he read the following contribution by Sasha Jansen.

Their names were Joe, Scotty, Rusty, Hank and Shotsy. They hailed from Wetumpka, Alabama, Beryl, Utah, and Barstow, California. From small hamlets, farmlands, sunny beaches, and dusty roads of the Alamo, they came. Some were young men in their twenties, some much older, others were just kids. Age did not matter. When they reached us, they were all well seasoned and battle worn.

As prisoners, we were waiting for them for over three years, when on February 3, 1945, among flares and gun fire, they crashed through the gates of Santo Tomas Internment Camp with their tanks of massive steel.

I have a feeling that when the Flying Column of the 1st Cavalry Division, the 44th Tankers, and the Buckeyes from the 37th Infantry Division headed south from the Northern part of Luzon, little did they know that, among the intense fighting, they would be taking care of so many civilians and "baby sitting" hundreds of kids for so many weeks. We were free, but still endured hostage-taking and shelling. We were the front lines and the night belonged to all of us. The Battle for Manila was on.

From the onset, we took good care of each other. They fed us and protected us. We washed their uniforms and lovingly washed and darned their socks. We bolstered each other's egos, laughed at each others jokes and exchanged war stories with sadness and humor. They spoke tenderly of their loved ones back home, and we listened. When they rotated back out of the camp to battle the enemy, we waited for their return. When they returned, we rejoiced. When they didn't come back, we felt a deep loss.

We shared our run down shanties with them. They slept, dog tired, in, under and all around our sawali shacks and meager abodes – anywhere to be close to us. They told us kids how ice cream tasted, what a roller coaster ride felt like and if the Brooklyn Dodgers were going to win the pennant that year. They spoke about sledding in the winter and reveling in the swimming holes in the summer. Because of these exceptional men, we were given another chance at life, though many of them lost their own in doing so.

Today, many years later, when we meet our heroes at reunions, it is a glorious event. We hug, laugh, and yes, shed a few tears. It is a relationship hard to define – one life responsible for another. Perhaps a "high plane of intimacy" is appropriate if you will. Because so many of our liberators have gone their way, we turn to their families whom we have befriended over the years and still stay close. This is an ongoing legacy of our liberation and our freedom.

When we say "thank you" to these gentle men, a mantle of great discomfort falls over them. "No, dear," they say humbly, squeezing your hand. "It was only my job."

And what a hell of a job that was!

Thank you.

What Happened to?

We get correspondence from people all over the world who ask if we know what happened to individuals who were in the Philippines at the outbreak of the war. We do our very best to research the people and respond, which often gives closure to the requestor trying to find out about a relative or friend.

Often all we can give are dry facts based on historical records, and this is where all of you who were in the camps can contribute personal anecdotes. We have initiated a new web page feature titled Info-Alley where we list the original inquiry and the information we have returned. Please visit this page, and if you can contribute more personal information, send it to one of the editors of this journal. The address is <http://bacepow.net/info.htm>.

Fred Baldassare, our web master is an amazing researcher. He was the archivist for the Battling Bastards of Bataan, and has a large collection of records of the POWs in the Philippines, as well as personal knowledge of the historical events during the war, which he uses for research.

Our first request, that is posted, started with this simple request. "My father was a POW in P.I., Civilian and died on the Arisan Maru torpedoed by the U.S. Shark. What POW camp was he in the P.I.?" Our first response was that civilian POWs were not on the hell ships unless they had a military connection or were capture with the armed forces.

Then Fred dug into his records and discovered that the following information about the person in question.

- Working for the Dept. of Engineering, AGO, until sometime before Dec. 24, 1941, after which he went to Corregidor. He was an accountant and he was 37 years old.
- Was surrendered to the Japanese, on Corregidor, by Gen. Jonathan Wainwright on May 7, 1942.
- On May 10, was moved to the 92nd Garage, the hangar area, in Kindley Field on Corregidor and kept there for almost two weeks.
- On May 23, all but about 300 men, were put on boats and sent to Manila and were forced to march through the streets to Bilibid.
- Around May 27, taken by train to Cabanatuan POW camp.
- In June, 1944, transferred to Bilibid.
- On October 11, 1944, boarded the Arisan Maru. The ship first went to Palawan to pick up prisoners there, then returned to Manila, and from there sailed for Moji, Japan, carrying 1800 men. On October 24, 1944, approximately 200 miles southeast of Tokyo, the Arisan took two two torpedoes in her from the Submarine, USS Shark. She broke in half and sank very quickly. There were only five survivors.

People seeking information about family and friends can write to us, and we will do our very best to respond, giving others a chance to contribute to the information.

Escape from Baguio

By John F. Ream Pearl Harbor was bombed 10 days after my 7th birthday. My family was living in Baguio on Luzon in the Philippine Islands and by Christmas 1941 we were civilian prisoners of war. Our camp was located at Camp Holmes on the outskirts of Baguio. On 18 February 1943, the Japanese brought in a muscular young man named Herb Swick. He and another internee named Rich Green escaped from the camp on 4 April 1944. In August 1989 the survivors of our camp held a reunion, where I saw Swick, and asked him to tell me his story.

In 1941, Swick had recently graduated from college as a mining engineer and was offered a job with a mining company in the Philippine Islands. He had served several years with the Arizona National Guard prior to taking the job, and obtained permission to leave the country. When he arrived in Baguio, being a single man, he began associating with the U.S. military personnel assigned there. This is his story

When the war started I remained behind to help the Army blow some bridges on Kennon Road, and when finished, we headed for Manila. We stayed at the government hotel at Belibe Pass and heard the last broadcast of the Voice of Freedom; Manila was declared an open city. We went back to Mountain Province and organized guerrillas and fought with them for 11 months. After Bataan and Corregidor fell, before my capture, Army officers Moses, Noble, Blackburn and Volkman came up to the mountains and swore me into the Army as a 2nd Lieutenant.

Unfortunately, I was captured in mid-December, 1942 as I was going north up a shallow riverbed when I suddenly heard bullets; somebody had fired at me. Ping, ping, ping! And one fellow with me started yelling "Nipon, Nipon". I ran up the side of the mountain and hid in this tall grass; but they came upon me and took me to their camp, tied my hands and legs and then tied me to a post and kept guard over me all night. The next day they took me to Binalonan and threw me into a dirty, stinking jail, where I was held for over a month.

They would take me out about every other day, late at night, and interrogate me. The interrogator was born and raised in California and spoke very fluent English. I kept telling them, "I'm a civilian", believing that they were going to execute me. Every time the Japanese would interrogate me I could not control my kidneys and wet my pants. After each interrogation they would carry me out unconscious back to this dirty stinking jail. This went on for a period of over four weeks. Then one day a Japanese guard unlocked the jail door. He had a bar of soap in his hands and took me to an artesian well. I stripped my clothes and took a bath, while the whole town had gathered around because it was very rare to see an American. I stuck to the story that I was a civilian, which they eventually believed, and the best break I ever got was when they sent me to a civilian internment camp, Camp Holmes in Baguio.

In the camp I had a job working in the kitchen and also on the garbage crew. Being in the camp was like a vacation to me at first, but I lived with one fear in mind: that some day the Japanese military would find out my true status from some Filipino that they captured. That would have been the end of me. It took almost a year and a half to find a way to escape.

ESCAPE PLAN When I was on the garbage crew, we would take the garbage outside of the camp and dump it into a river. Two Japanese guards would go with us. On the way back they would let us talk with the Filipinos. One of those days I recognized a Filipino scout who I was sure was with some Americans who were still in the mountains. I asked him, "Where is Colonel Calvert?"

He said, "He's right out here in the mountains, and I'm



still with him and I'm on my way back to their camp now."

And so, through him, I arranged to have a rendezvous with Colonel Calvert, who came as close to the camp as he could at night. After roll call one night, Doug Shaw and I went through the guards and met Calvert. I told Calvert that I was going to have to get out before the Japanese found out who I was. Calvert and his group were about to reorganize all the guerrillas. They said they needed all the help they could get so my escape was all set up. I met Calvert one more time to set the date and time: 9:30 p.m. on 4 April 1944. Richie Green, a bachelor, escaped with me. Calvert had cargadores outside of the camp waiting to take us to his camp. When we left Camp Holmes we went down beyond the rear barracks, right over a 4-foot fence a child could crawl through.

Prior to my escape the only one who knew I was going to leave was Doug Shaw, who had gone in and out of the camp with me three times. The night we escaped Doug, helped us carry out medical supplies and boots that we had brought into camp on two previous excursions to repair. Johnny McCuish was a shoemaker; I told him, "Here, repair these boots and don't ask any questions".

The night I was going to escape I talked to Bill Moule at the flagpole and told him, "Bill, this is it." He had known for a long time that I was planning an escape. Unfortunately, the Japanese took three civilians out: Bill Moule, Jim Halsema and Eugene Kneebone, thinking they knew something about my escape. They beat the living hell out of them. Bill knew, but he never revealed anything. Doug Shaw knew everything, but

they never questioned him about my escape.

The Sunday before my escape I gave confession to Father Sheridan, the Catholic Priest in the camp. He couldn't see me but I am sure he recognized my voice. I told him I wanted to make a real good confession and wanted to be prepared for death in case something happened to me in the future. That helped my morale a lot.

Author's note: Moule, Halsema and Kneebone were taken from the camp by the Kempei-tai and tortured and interrogated for five days. They were hung by their thumbs until their arms were dislocated at the shoulder and beaten repeatedly. Our camp Commandant, Rokuro Tomibe, went to the Kempei-tai and sought their return. The Kempei-tai wanted to keep them until their injuries healed, but Tomibe appealed and got their release. Tomibe was to say later that he received a minor rebuke over the issue, but it appeared that he was demoted.

I did not believe the threat that the Japanese would kill five prisoners if anyone escaped because one of the internees, Sy Sorrell, escaped and was recaptured without anyone being hurt. I didn't find out about their beating up the three civilians until after the war. When I first heard about it I felt really bad because they were good friends of mine. I saw each one of them after the war and they said they did not carry a grudge and they thought I had done a good job.

We only traveled at night, and it took us three nights to get to Calvert's headquarters. I learned that Moses and Noble had been captured and Russell Volkman, who was a graduate of West Point, took over command of all units in northern Luzon.

When I got to Calvert's camp, Volkman had moved from Banaue down to Calvert's camp to take over the entire division. He sent Green to join Colonel Barnett, who was the commanding officer of the 121st Infantry in the La Union Province. I was sent north to join Don Blackburn (who retired as a General after the Viet-Nam War) in the Province of Ifugao.

I was there for about two months. The pagan tribes there were headhunters before the war and we were able to settle their ongoing tribal wars. Bontocs, Ifugaos and the people of Mountain Province were all pagans; they were the most loyal people to the Americans that I ever met out there. They let you know right away that they were for the Americans, whereas in the lowlands everybody played the fence — whoever was winning the war, then that was the side they were on.

GUERRILLA INFILTRATION I was sent north by Blackburn to reorganize the guerrillas. I was to pick up all ex-constabulary, ex-Philippine Army and ex-Philippine scouts. While going through these villages I would get up and give a short speech assuring them that the Americans were coming back. Submarines were bringing in radio equipment, small arms and a lot of matchbooks with MacArthur's photograph on them. We distributed these along the way, and that helped to convince the civilians. We were also given a large quantity of American dollars to spend.

I went up to Cagayan to organize a battalion of the 11th Infantry. I started with one company on the northern coast of Luzon at a town called Sanchez Mira and soon had a full battalion. We were armed mostly with Japanese weapons obtained from small ambushes and started to wipe out small Japanese garrisons, then we moved up to Ballesteros and wiped out the



garrison there.

While at Ballesteros we rested for a few days, and looking out at the ocean, we saw a lot of Japanese ships and a bunch of Japanese coming ashore. I had a lot of troops stationed there for security purposes; so this was the best ambush we ever had. We waited until those boats practically got on shore and we killed 150 Japanese. They were part of the Navy and they did not know anything about guerrillas being in that part of the country.

We continued from there over to Aparri, wiping out the Japanese, but could not take Aparri because it was too well fortified and that was left to the American Army when it returned. I was called by Colonel Volkman to come down to Basoong Pass overlooking the City of Cervantes. That was one of the biggest battles we had. The battle had been going on for about a month before I got there. I took over what was called a provisional battalion attached to the 121st Infantry commanded by Colonel Calvert. I was there three weeks before we broke through; my battalion was one of the first as we took Cervantes.

From Cervantes we went up north and took the towns of Tadian and Sagada, wiping out the few Japanese there. Then we went on to Bontoc, where we had a fairly good-sized battle. While resting there, I had one company of Igorots. I was sitting in one of their huts one night when they called me down to join them in a celebration. They were doing native dances and in the middle they had thrown 30 Japanese heads and were dancing around them. I did not mind because I knew what the Japanese had done to the civilians in the Philippines. I did not feel sorry for them.

I pushed southeast to Banaue where I met the 6th Division of the American Army. I was attached to this division and we pushed towards Yamashita's headquarters in the mountains. Yamashita surrendered and that is when I stopped fighting. I stayed in the Philippines several weeks to help organize the Philippine Army and then left to be home by Christmas 1945.

Author's note: Swick was a Major at the end of the war. He remained in the Army, but after 17 years was suffering with petite-mal epilepsy as a result of the beatings at the hands of the Japanese. He took a medical discharge. Herbert Swick passed away on 16 August 1997 in Tucson, Arizona.

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Reminder

The next BACEPOW luncheon will be in Alameda on Saturday October 22. Contact Sasha Jansen for details. (530) 795-0411 or Mubuhayma@aol.com

Commander continued from Page 1

ing from or entering any territory of the United States without a valid Passport." (U.S. passports for citizens in the Philippines were ordered to be turned in on September 9, 1939.)

Hull to Ambassadors, November 22, 1941

"... American diplomatic and consular officers call to the attention of American Citizens in the Japanese Empire, Japanese-occupied areas of China, Hong Kong, Macao, and French Indo China the advice previously given in regard to withdrawal ..."

Correspondence of Lucia B. Kidder, secretary in High Commissioner office

"... I recon that 5,000 letters were written denying passports."

Tracing through these declassified records makes it clear, that while it was U.S. policy to encourage Americans to evacuate East Asia before the war broke out, the State Department was equally adamant that Americans were not to leave the Philippines, thus sealing their fate when the Japanese invaded. 7,300 Americans civilians were in the Philippines in 1941, and 770 of them never returned home because they died of deprivation in the prison camps, executions, and massacres.

The State Department's anti-civilian program continued after the liberation of the civilian POW camps when it demanded that these people must either pay for transportation back to the U.S. or sign a promissory note to that effect. General MacArthur flatly refused the order from State. He took the position that many of the American civilians concerned were not able to pay their way home because they had lost everything during the Japanese occupation.

When State repeated its instructions, MacArthur repeated his position, implying that if necessary, he would advance the sum for passage from his own funds, and then request Congress to reimburse him. The State Department realized that if the issue was taken to Congress there would be widespread sympathy for the victims of Japanese aggression, and backed down.

And so by 1945 our government had struck twice at its own citizens, and now started the 20 year battle for those who lost everything to obtain compensation for their losses out of the reparations our government received from Japan.

BACEPOW Newsletter
15 Diamonte Lane
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