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Life Under the Japs: Stories from a Prisoner-of-War Camp

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LIFE UNDER THE JAPS

STORIES FROM A PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMP



By
Major John J. Dugan, S.J.
Chaplain, U. S. A.

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Foreword

“**L**IFE UNDER THE JAPS” IS A STORY THAT WAS TOLD 70 YEARS AGO OVER A THREE WEEK PERIOD, APRIL 1-21, 1945, IN THE BOSTON GLOBE AFTER WORLD WAR II. It is the story of a young Jesuit priest, Fr. John J. Dugan, S.J., who in 1936 left his assignment as chaplain at the Boston City Hospital to join the United States Army.

He became a chaplain at the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp at Fort Ethan Allen in Vermont from November 1937 until June 1940. (During the Great Depression the CCC was a public work relief program for unemployed, unmarried men, ages 18-23, and later ages 17-28, of whom only 11% had completed high school. The camps were operated by Reserve Officers from the U. S. Army.) He was called to regular Army service in 1940 and served at Fort Riley, KS from June 1940 until September 1941, where preparations were being made because of war clouds gathering over Europe and Asia. During this time Fr. Dugan wrote an article about the role and duties of a chaplain serving in the military that he was substantially able to carry out in the relative peace and quiet of Fort Riley. But that was to change dramatically after his transfer to the Philippines in October 1941, two months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the United States declaration of war on Japan, and just four months before his being taken as a prisoner of war in April 1942 by the Japanese. For the next 34 months Fr. Dugan would be carrying out his priestly ministry

under incredibly harsh conditions both for him personally and the young men with whom he suffered and struggled and among whom he was one of those who survived. I believe that you will be both appalled and inspired by what you are about to read. Appalled by the brutality with which the prisoners of war were treated and the tragedy of the far too many who made the ultimate sacrifice in the fight for freedom. Inspired by the honesty, courage and high level of morale of the American prisoners, their care and support for one another throughout their imprisonment and the generosity of the Filipino people who sacrificed their lives and freedom to provide our men with gifts of food and medicine. For his heroic and selfless service to all the U. S. prisoners, especially the sick and dying, Fr. Dugan was awarded the Bronze Star and the Army Commendation Ribbon.

After receiving much needed medical attention upon his return to the States, Fr. Dugan's next assignment in May 1945 was as chaplain at Cushing General Hospital in Framingham, MA, where still recovering from his ordeal during which he had

lost all his teeth and weighed less than 120 pounds, he was regarded as much a patient as a chaplain. In August 1946 he was relieved of active duty with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. But just a little less than two years later in June, 1948 he was recalled to active duty with chaplaincy assignments in Texas, Georgia, Michigan, Guam, Manila and Japan until his final separation from the Army Reserve as Lieutenant Colonel in May 1954.

Over the next ten years Fr. Dugan carried out his priestly ministry in various parishes and later as a member of the Jesuit Mission Band. It was after

returning from eleven weeks of giving missions in late November 1964 that he suffered his first heart attack. After two more in the following two weeks he breathed his last and returned to the Lord whom he served so faithfully and well. At his request, Fr. Dugan's funeral was, like that of this brother Jesuits, simple and plain, with no military honors. But his is a story of faith and courage in the service of his country that should never be forgotten. How proud St. Ignatius, the soldier-saint and founder of the Jesuits, must be of his faithful son!

JOSEPH P. DUFFY, S.J.

The Boston Globe

Sunday, April 1 – Saturday, April 21, 1945

“LIFE UNDER THE JAPS”

By

Major John J. Dugan, S.J.
Chaplain, U.S.A.

As told to Willard de Lue

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From Bataan’s Fall to Miraculous Rescue at Cabanatuan by Yanks

AN INTRODUCTION BY **WILLARD DE LUE**

OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS, HOUR ON HOUR AT A STRETCH, I HAVE HEARD ONE OF THE GREATEST STORIES OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE that has come my way in nearly 40 years of newspaper life.

It is the story of 34 months under the Japs, as told by Maj. John J. Dugan of Boston (of South Boston, if you insist on complete localization), a Jesuit priest of the New England Province, for some years an Army chaplain. He was captured on Bataan April 9, 1942 – and from that day until night of the 30th of last January spent his days as a captive in Japanese prisons in the Philippines.

Never before has the complete day-by-day, month-by-month story of the lives lived by our men as prisoners of the Japs been told in any such detail as you will find in Maj. Dugan’s story. To begin with, this blue-eyed priest of 47, who for four years was a chaplain at the Boston City Hospital

and then served in the CCC camps of Vermont, has an amazing memory. Again he has recorded the whole story of his prison experiences while they are still freshly seared in his mind.

He reached Boston a week ago last Tuesday, scarcely six weeks after he and 510 others were rescued from Cabanatuan prison camp by Col. Mucci’s Rangers, aided by a group of Alamo Scouts and bodies of Philippine guerrillas. Boston gave him four hectic days – receptions, dinners, meetings, questionings by reporters, posing for photographers. Then he was kidnapped.

It was realized that if his story was to be recorded in its fullness Maj. Dugan must be

freed from all distractions. So we carried him to the peace and restful surroundings of Poland Spring, Me. – dragged him away even before he had an opportunity to visit members of his own family.

PLAIN, UNADORNED STORY

At Poland Spring, in long sessions (often running past midnight) in our convenient sitting room, in long walks through the pines (where touches of still-remaining snow made sharp contrast with the scenes he had known under the blazing sun of Luzon), at leisurely meals at the Mansion House, Maj. Dugan told me his story.

You will find it a plain, unadorned story, told without a touch of rhetorical decoration. It is not a horror story, though you will find in it accounts of Japanese brutality. There's nothing sensational about it; it wasn't told to "make a point." But if you want to know what life in Japanese prison camps was like, here it is in its every aspect.

The story runs chronologically. It opens with the day of surrender, a day that no man in it will ever forget, but which to Maj. Dugan in a special way was a day of fantastic adventure. Things happened which left him dizzy; evening found him a prisoner of war. That story is printed in today's Sunday Globe.

From here on it is a story of prison life – first as a patient at Field Hospital No. 1 at Little Baguio, on Bataan itself; then at Bilibid, once the criminal prison of Manila; next in Japanese Military Prison No. 1, near Cabanatuan, north of Manila; again, at Military Prison No. 3, also near Cabanatuan, and finally back in Prison Camp No. 1, where he remained more than two years.

Its outstanding feature is its detail. It will answer almost every question you might raise about prison life. Did they have to eat rats? Maj. Dugan tells you the answer to that one. How did they make out on footwear? How much did the Japs molest them? What were the sleeping quarters like? What did they read? How well did packages and mail come through? How about the weather? Did they have money, and could they buy anything with it? How did they get it, and how much? What were their amusements, if any?

The story contains some baffling contrasts. Here you'll meet Japanese guards who beat prisoners for

seemingly no reason at all; and then you'll meet guards with another work detail who act more like human beings. You'll even meet Japs (but not many of them) who pick flowers to lay on the graves of American dead. How come? Fr. Dugan doesn't pretend to know.

After I had heard the entire story of 34 months under the Japs, I told Fr. Dugan that I thought it somewhat reassuring to the families and friends of those men still in Japanese hands. He didn't agree with me. Yet I still think that it is reassuring. For Fr. Dugan's story shows that all through the period of his imprisonment conditions improved. True, the improvement was perhaps scarcely perceptible. But to me the very fact that things did not deteriorate in this one case brings the suggestion of hope for the many men still held in prisons in Japan and Manchoukuo.

Fr. Dugan is now back in Boston for a few days before reporting at Lovell General Hospital, Fort Devens, for medical checkup. He looks well and has regained much of the weight he lost while on a rice diet. He picked up several pounds while at Poland Spring. But it will be a long time before he and those who were with him will get back to normal; I noticed that he tired easily and was glad of a rest after what was to me a short walk. But Fr. Dugan certainly doesn't consider himself an invalid. He's already talking about the day when he can get back into active service with the boys he loves so well.

CHAPTER ONE

24 Hours of Chaos and Mystery Preceded U. S. Surrender of Bataan

FOR THREE YEARS I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THE DAY OF SURRENDER ON BATAAN, STRUGGLING TO CLARIFY THE CHAOS OF EVENTS AND EMOTIONS that made it perhaps the most amazing day of my life. Only those who were there, crowded into the lower end of that peninsula, physically worn out by weeks of unequal struggle, nerves taut from steady bombing, against which there was no defense, shaken by the report that the Nips had at last broken through and that the end was near – only those who were there can understand the terrifying confusion of the last hours in which I played a very small but active part.

I was convinced that somewhere there was treachery. Not in the surrender itself, for that, we knew, was inevitable. But strange things happened in the collapse of resistance down the peninsula. Perhaps treachery, perhaps just trickery, perhaps just imagination. After three years I am still wondering for I know what fantasies the strain of war and the poignancy of defeat and utter disappointment can conjure up.

Throughout the days of the Bataan defense I was assistant chaplain of the Philippine Division, the famed outfit known as the Philippine Scouts. Though its officers were men of the United States Regular Army, the rank and file were entirely native Filipinos – fine living, loyal and courageous soldiers. I look upon it as one of the blessings of my life that I was privileged to work among them and with them and to have known them as close friends.

I had served with the Scouts almost from the day of my arrival at Manila, Oct. 24, 1941. Just a

few days after that I was assigned to Fort McKinley as chaplain of the 12th Medical Regiment of the Philippine Division. I was at Fort McKinley when the Japs struck, and shortly after that was made assistant chaplain of the division. But I continued to make my headquarters, until the very end, with the medical regiment.

Our outfit had been forced down the Bataan peninsula by gradual stages, but for some time before the surrender we had been at Lamao, which lies on the east coast (that is, facing Manila Bay), perhaps 12 or 15 miles above Mariveles, which is at the extreme southern tip.

CHAOS BEGINS

Bataan was surrendered April 9, 1942. Late in the night of April 7 our clearance company and the headquarters service company were ordered to fall back under cover of darkness through Cabcaben, past Field Hospital No. 2, and to bivouac alongside Field Hospital No. 1, at Little Baguio,

not far from Mariveles. Our collecting companies, whose job it was to bring in the wounded, were stationed with the various tactical units of the division on both sides of the peninsula. We moved out of Lamao at 2 o'clock in the morning of the 8th, of course carrying with us all the wounded then in the clearance company's temporary hospital. By daylight we were at Hospital No. 1.

Hospital No. 1 lay on a piece of rising, wooded ground on the west side of the East Bay road that runs along the shore of Bataan. There were four or five wooden buildings that had been used at one time as a maneuver center for the 14th Engineers. These were used mainly for service units and as quarters for doctors and nurses. The patients were in wards with open sides in a clearing among the trees. About a week before we moved down alongside the hospital area, it had been bombed by the Nips; there was still the ghastly shell hole where once had been one of the wards, and some of the buildings, too, were damaged. On the eighth there was a lot of plane activity – the bombing of roads and areas adjacent to the hospital, but there were no casualties in the hospital or the clearance company area.

That night, the night of the eighth, began the 24 hours of chaos that ended in the surrender. It was a black, moonless night. The main road outside the hospital area was jammed with vehicles and swarms of stragglers from the Philippine Army, which should not be confused with the Philippine Division. Our outfit was part of the United States Army; the Philippine Army was an all-Filipino force.

AMMUNITION DESTROYED

The Scouts, together with the Philippine Army and the purely American outfits comprised the USAFFE – the United States Armed Forces of the Far East.

The Philippine Army soldiers had done excellent service, but by this time had been, in part, reduced to an ill-equipped force, garbed in little or almost nothing – many of the men identifiable as soldiers only because they carried rifles. I mention this because of what happened a few hours later. Word was passed that ammunition dumps would be blown up, the small stuff start-

ing at midnight and the big bombs at 2 o'clock. About 10 o'clock the commissary outfits began passing out food to everybody – a big extra meal, all you wanted. And it was as we sat there beside the road in the darkness, eating and watching the streaming traffic headed for Mariveles, that the earthquake came.

If you have never been in an earthquake, you can't understand the terror it brings. The ground rocked with the tremors; and they had scarcely subsided when came the first sharp percussions of the small-arms ammunition from the dumps above us, staccato above the rumble of trucks on the road and the voices of the men. For an hour or more it kept up, and then the heavy detonation of the exploding bomb dumps and the other heavy stuff. There were flashes of light in the black sky. And as we look off across the bay, we could see the fires blazing on Corregidor. Finally the 14-inch guns at Fort Drum contributed their thunder, shelling the road up above us to hinder the movement of the Nips.

The last day, the 9th, began with everybody utterly fatigued, mentally shaken and confused. We knew that the end must be near, but that is all we knew.

But at 8 o'clock that morning (and this, as I later learned, was some hours before Maj. Gen. E. B. King, then in command on Bataan, had formally surrendered), while Nip planes were still dropping bombs and hostilities had obviously not ended, down the road past the hospital came a line of trucks flying white flags. Every truck was loaded with men, apparently Philippine Army men.

It was the first sign of surrender, the first of many puzzles of that day.

BOMBS STILL FALL

Bombs were still falling and there was what sounded like machine gun fire along the roads as the Jap planes came in low. Yet the roads weren't damaged, and we couldn't see any sign of casualties among those passing us, and no casualties were coming into the hospital. And I remember thinking. "They're not machine-gunning the traffic, they're dropping firecrackers to cause confusion." You can see how men think under these circumstances.

It was then that my first suspicion was aroused. Those trucks with the white flags! Were the men in the trucks Filipinos, or were they Japs? If they were prisoners, why did they have their rifles?

And I wasn't the only one to wonder. Somebody said, "Those birds were Japs."

I thought, "Maybe they were Filipinos all right, but the Japs tricked them, and sent them with the flags to cause confusion down the line." But then I recalled (perhaps it was all imagination) that they had been too clean to have come out of foxholes. Maybe, I thought, they weren't Philippine Army boys but civilians the Nips had picked up and rigged out as phony soldiers.

Set down this way, these events and ideas may look distinct and consecutive. Actually it was all confused. Even a few days later we couldn't recall exactly the order in which things occurred.

I remember the reaction of a sergeant who stood beside me as we watched those trucks go by with the white flags. He was a hardened old-timer, with long years in the Regular Army. He broke down and cried, wept openly.

"It's all over," was all that he said. "It's all over."

I guess that's the way we all felt, and maybe it would have been better if we all had wept.

By this time the road was clear. The stream of traffic had dwindled.

About 10 o'clock three tanks, each flying a Japanese flag, came down the road. The first went on, and I never saw it again. The other two stopped in front of the entrance to the hospital area and swung their turret guns our way.

Japanese officers and men climbed out of the tanks, and with them came an American officer – at least a man dressed in the uniform of a major of the United States Army.

GERMAN DECOY

The commandant of Hospital No. 1, accompanied by his adjutant and other officers, including the regular chaplain of the hospital, went out to meet the newcomers; and I, playing Mickey the Dunce, went along with them. I just didn't belong there, but had to see what was going on. Shortly I came to regret it.

The Japs, who spoke excellent grammatical English, but with the usual Nip accent, announced that

they had come to accept the hospital's surrender.

Down by the tanks there was speechmaking. A Nip stuck his head out of a turret and opened up in English of sorts. I recall only his peroration: "Damn Roosevelt! Damn Roosevelt! Damn Roosevelt!"

The man in the major's uniform stayed back with the tanks; but I heard someone say that he was Maj. So-and-So. It was a name I'd never heard in our Army, but was close to that of an officer I had been told was in the Philippines. Back at Fort Riley, in the States, a friend had urged me to look the officer up when I hit Manila. I figured that this probably was my man, so I went up to him.

"You're just the man I've been looking for," I said.

"Yes?"

I told him that a friend at Fort Riley had asked me to look him up.

"Where's Fort Riley?" he said.

Now it's hard for me to believe, even today, when I can look at things more evenly, that any Army man would ask "Where is Fort Riley?" I was immediately convinced (and I'm still wondering about it) that the United States major was a German and a decoy, and that it was all part of a trick to add to the confusion. If it was, then it certainly worked, and I was in the middle of some of it in a very few minutes.

The Japs said: "We want an officer detailed to go with us to identify the commander at Mariveles."

"Let the chaplain go," one of the officers replied. But by that time the regular hospital chaplain had moved off. So I, who really had no business to be there, was elected to make the trip.

The Japs requisitioned the hospital's Buick. I got in with the two officers, and the driver started off at a terrific clip. It was then that I got my first close-up of things to come.

There was a body ahead of us in the road – the body of a Filipino soldier. The driver made no attempt to avoid it. With a thump and a quick swerve he drove right over it.

PLANES FILL THE SKY

Our troops were all along the road, but off at the side. Two or three times we met sizable contingents of American troops, and the Japs

ordered the car stopped, climbed out – I with them – and informed the American officers that the war was ended.

“We’ll have your sidearms,” they said to the officers.

But there was plenty of fight in our boys, confused as they were at having seen the trucks and white flags go through, and by this sudden appearance now of the Jap officers. I explained to them what I knew of the situation, and they themselves could see that they hadn’t much choice.

Overhead the sky was full of Jap planes, circling and diving, but only rarely now dropping bombs. I can remember the thought that ran through my mind as we stood there. One of the last books that I had read pictured the scenes in Belgium in the dark days when the British were being evacuated over the beaches – how the air was filled with German bombers pounding the troops on the crowded roads and on the beaches, and the Nazi fighters coming in low and strafing them . . . and not a friendly plane in sight. And I thought, “Here we are now in the same box.” If the boys attempted to resist, the Jap bombers over us would come in for the slaughter.

Our officers finally handed over their sidearms, and the Japs tossed them on the floor in the back of the car. No attempt was made to disarm the men.

Before you get in to Mariveles there is sort of cutoff that runs over to the west side road on the other side of Bataan. And it was close to that point that we met the man in the white suit.

This is what happened – and what it meant I still can’t figure out. Leaning against a rail fence, right at the side of the road, stood a man in an immaculate white linen suit. He was either a Filipino or a Jap. He held in his hand a small silk Japanese flag.

Our car drew up to him and stopped. The chauffeur reached out, took the flag, and patted the man on the shoulder. The man smiled. Not a word was spoken. Then we drove on.

TREACHERY

“More treachery,” I thought. Where did he come from and what was he doing? Was he there to direct those trucks?

Somewhere along here was another body in the road. This time I knew what to expect, so I asked

the driver to stop. I pulled the body off to the side.

Just above Mariveles lay the last of our Bataan airfields, protected at its upper end by anti-aircraft guns. The Japs removed the sights, checked the ammunition boxes, made some notes in books they carried and then we rode on towards the other end of the field.

There an American officer was standing alone, in the middle of the road – an officer I had known intimately for a long time. He is now dead.

“Jim,” I said, “these men want to find the officer in command of the Mariveles area. Do you know where he is?”

“I am in command,” he said. “Gen. King is down the road but he left me in full command. I have complete authority.”

There was something odd about his manner. Odder still his talk about being in command. I told him that Gen. King couldn’t be down the road; that King was up above us somewhere. But he insisted that the General was in the area.

“I have complete authority,” he repeated.

“You’ll sign for the surrender of Mariveles?” the Nips asked him.

I figured the officer had gone completely berserk.

“Look here, Jim,” I said, “you haven’t authority to surrender.”

He was indignant.

“I have full authority to surrender Mariveles; I can surrender Corregidor,” he told the Japs.

“Here, you write it on this paper,” they said and they gave him a sheet of paper. “You give us the written surrender of Mariveles and Corregidor.”

But I told them we’d better find the General.

The four of us got into the car and we started on – past a place where some of our men and some Filipinos were gathered in a field. The trucks with the white flags were there by the side of the road, empty. The Filipinos – the same ones I assumed, whom I had seen go past in them – were standing around the trucks, still carrying rifles. We’d gone no more than a kilometer when the Japs yelled to stop the car.

“General not here,” they said. “Don’t try treachery.”

But the officer still insisted that Gen. King was there on that road. And I tried to make him understand that King must be up far to the north of us.

“I am in command here,” the officer continued to say. “I’m boss. Do as I say. We’ll go on and find him.”

The Japs wanted to know how far.

“About a kilometer,” Jim said. “You’ll find the General in a little hut on the right of the road.”

But the Japs refused to budge. They said to me: “You go and find the General and bring him here.”

I found neither the hut nor the General.

When I came back the Nips said, “Did he sign?”

“He isn’t there,” I told them.

So we started on again, across to the west side road and swung up towards what was called Signal Hill.

REFUSED TO QUIT

There was an MP post at the foot of a side road that swung off inland toward the hills. There we inquired for the General (no name mentioned; the Nips said they wanted to meet any General in the area) and were directed towards the hill.

About 200 yards in on the road the Japs got jittery again, talked about treachery, and directed me to go on and find the General. So I went on, on foot.

It was a steaming hot day. How far up in the hills I went I don’t exactly know. Perhaps two miles. I had been discharged from the hospital only 10 days before – malaria – and by the time I reached Gen. Lough’s command post on Signal Hill, I went berserk myself, I guess.

I remember that the officers there told me they knew nothing about a surrender, that they were going to fight it out.

“You go out and take your two Nips back where you got ‘em,” they told me.

I remember starting down the hill, and getting into one of our own cars, driven by a non-com. When we reached the spot where I’d left the Buick with the two Japs and my friend Jim, they were not in sight. I never saw any of them again.

At the MP post they said the Japs hadn’t gone through there. It sounds fantastic, but that’s what happened.

When we got back to the concentration area I spoke of (where the trucks were) we were held up by an MP.

“No traffic is to go through, north or south,” the MP said. “A Geneva Convention car came through and left orders.”

“I’ve got to get to the hospital,” I told him. “We’ll have to go through.”

He said all right, if I’d take the responsibility.

I got back to Hospital No. 1 about 5 that afternoon. One of the Nip tanks was still there, only it had moved off the road into the hospital area. I found that everything was really ended. It was all over. The Japs had given orders that all but the medical staff and patients must get out. The hospital held me as a patient and there I was to stay until late in June.

That’s how I missed the Death March.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Fr. Dugan, a native of South Boston and a priest of the Jesuit Province of New England, begins today that part of his story which deals with prison life under the Japs. In yesterday’s *Globe* he described the chaos of the last day of the Bataan defense and of finding himself in the late afternoon of April 9, 1942, a patient and a prisoner at Field Hospital No. 1, on the lower east side of the peninsula.

Now, step by step, he will carry us through 34 months of life in various Japanese camps in Luzon – first in hospital No. 1, later in the Bilibid of Manila, and then in two camps near Cabanatuan. His imprisonment ended when he and 510 others were rescued from Cabanatuan by Rangers, Alamo Scouts and guerrillas.

The great feature of Fr. Dugan’s story is its detail. Every phase of prison life is explained. For instance: Could prisoners get eyeglasses? Did they have to work hard? What happened when shoes wore out? These are a few of hundreds of questions this story answers.



CHAPTER TWO

Captors Seized Food and Medicine; Left Patients on Bataan Only Rice

THE PERIOD SPENT AS A PATIENT IN HOSPITAL NO. 1, LITTLE BAGUIO – FROM APRIL 9, THE DAY OF BATAAN SURRENDER, TO JUNE 19 – might be characterized as the period of complete blackout. I use the word in a sense that is new to me, but which I find has come into use while I was out of touch with American life – meaning a complete isolation from news contacts.

Later in our period of imprisonment we came to know, through the “grapevine” telegraph of the friendly Filipinos, and the constant shifting of groups from one prison to another, something of what was going on in the islands. We knew pretty well where our friends were, and how they were faring. But in the weeks at No.1 we were wholly out of touch with the outside world.

RUMORS “TRULY WONDERFUL”

One result of this was a crop of daily rumors that were (as we later discovered) truly wonderful. One day we learned that a Red Cross ship was at Manila, ready to take all hospital patients back to the States. Then came the story that two Red Cross ships had been allowed to come into Manila Bay and that they were loaded with medicines and food for all prisoners of war. We heard that Tokyo had been bombed. Next, that a complete division of Negro troops had come out from the States and was about to land on Mindanao. These are just a few samples of the stories current in this period.

Actually we knew practically nothing of what went on outside our little hospital area.

Perhaps you think of Field Hospital No. 1 as a big, roomy area. Actually it was small and crowded. It had a frontage on the East Bay road of perhaps 200 or 250 yards and extended back, up a gradual slope, for a quarter-mile or less – probably less. I am no judge of distance. The rough map, while not accurate, will give a general idea of the layout.

NURSES SENT TO CORREGIDOR

There were two important changes just before, and on the day of the surrender. The women nurses of the Army who had been quartered in a small wooden building next to the big ward, were sent away by boat to Corregidor early in the evening of the 8th. Their quarters were taken over by the Army hospital corpsmen. And what had been the quarters for 15 or 20 Jap sick or wounded prisoners up to the end, now became the ward for officer patients.

There were perhaps 500 of us in the hospital as I now remember it. The main ward had about 300 patients, and there were perhaps 60 of us in

the officers ward. A temporary ward must have sheltered 100. There were 20 or 25 doctors, maybe 30 Army medical corpsmen and other hospital workers. The dental officer was a Navy man. He also served as the supply officer.

Everybody at the hospital certainly missed those wonderful nurses. Doctors and patients had been sorry to see them go, yet were delighted to know that they were to be in what was, supposedly, the perfect security of Corregidor.

I knew them all, for though never officially attached to the hospital, I had been a frequent visitor there; and as some of the girls were from around Boston we often had interesting times talking about home, and the places and persons we knew.

THEY MET NEXT IN BOSTON

Helen Cassiani of Bridgewater was one of them – a lovely girl. They all were. I saw Helen that last day, and the next time I saw her was back in Boston, almost three years later. We talked then about Dr. Wallace’s watch.

My watch had broken early in the Bataan defense. Dr. John Wallace, a doctor with the 31st Infantry, had a spare and loaned it to me. Talking with Helen on the 8th, I discovered that she had no watch. So I gave her the doctor’s watch, thinking that as she was going to safety on the Rock it would be the surest way to save it. I never gave another thought to the watch until a few days after I arrived back in San Francisco, when I met Wallace. He, too, had been a prisoner, but had come back in a ship which followed mine into the Golden Gate. Wallace made no mention of it; but Helen talked about the watch. She had managed to keep it all through her own prison days, and then had given it to someone at Santo Tomas just before she left. I think Helen was worried about how I was going to square myself with Capt. Wallace, but I tried to reassure her. Wallace certainly never expected to see that watch again when he gave it to me. I tell all this because these are the little things that those of us who have, through God’s mercy, survived Japanese imprisonment will be talking about among ourselves for the rest of our days.

Then there was Letha McHale of New Hampshire, who has relatives in Boston. I didn’t see her

again until I reported at Letterman General Hospital on my arrival in San Francisco. She too had just got back. Helen and Letha were on the same transport that carried me to the Philippines.

LAUNDERED ALTAR LINENS

In those bad days on Bataan, when I was saying Mass under all sorts of difficulties, Helen came to the rescue by volunteering to launder my altar linens whenever I could get them back to her. Busy as she was, she somehow managed it.

There were six clergymen at the hospital when our captivity began – Rev. Frank Tiffany, the Protestant chaplain of the unit; Fr. John McDonnell of Brooklyn, the Catholic chaplain; Fr. Stanley Reilly of San Francisco, who had been chaplain of the Philippine Division (of which I had been assistant chaplain), and then three of us who were classified as patients, Fr. Walter J. O’Brien of San Francisco, Fr. William Cummings, a Maryknoll Father who had been hit by shrapnel when the Japs wiped out one of the hospital’s wards with a bomb hit a week before, and myself. (Fr. Cummings, who only three days ago was reported missing by the Maryknoll Fathers in New York, will appear again in Fr. Dugan’s story. When I told Fr. Dugan that the “no atheists in foxholes” remark had been attributed to Fr. Cummings, he said that the phrase was current at a later period in his captivity, but that he had never heard with whom it originated. – W. de Lue.)

You may wonder that both chaplains of the Philippine Division were there. What had become of the division? Well, it had sort of evaporated. In the campaign it had never operated as a division. Its units, the 45th and 57th Infantry of Philippine Scouts, the 14th Engineers and the 12th Quartermasters outfit had been scattered for work in different parts of the area. The 12th, for instance, I never did see after the Jap invasion got underway.

When a Filipino soldier got cut off by the Nips all he had to do was shed his uniform to become a peaceable civilian. When the surrender came a great many of our boys got up into the hills, worked their way north, and, I’m told, did effective work as guerrillas.

PATIENTS PUT ON RICE DIET

In the morning of our first day as prisoners the

Japs (1) raised their flag on a little staff near the operating building and (2) put us on a diet of rice. They had carried off practically all of our own food and medical supplies.

We got our first rice about 8 that morning (April 10) – boiled rice in a tasteless liquid that seemed to be nothing more than the water in which it had been cooked. We got rice again and in the same style between 3:30 and 4 o'clock that afternoon. That continued to be our diet. Two meals a day of rice for doctors, corpsmen and patients alike.

That morning Col. James W. Duckworth, the commandant, came to the officers' ward and talked to us, as he had to all the other groups. He said that he would do everything he could to make the best of the situation, but that everything depended upon the attitude of the Japs. He explained about the rice diet and urged any who might have any private food supplies to give them up to the hospital commissary. Anyone found eating between meals would be severely punished.

While at Hospital No. 1 most of us saw very little of the Japs. Non-coms made rounds of inspection, but there was no molestation. This was by direct orders of the Japanese officers, who had been impressed by the good reports from their own men who had been cared for at Hospital No. 1. They had been given exactly the same treatment as our own casualties.

MUST BOW TO THEIR CAPTORS

We had been told how to act when the Japs showed up. We were to bow politely to them, not servilely, but courteously. If you happened to be seated when a Jap officer entered, you'd jump to your feet and bow.

Within our hospital area the staff and patients who could get around were not restricted as to movement. A Japanese major, a doctor, was in control of the hospital, but paid us only occasional visits. The administration was wholly in the hands of our own Army men.

Col. Duckworth, a veteran of the last war and a splendid officer, did a masterly job in those days. With nothing to work with, he somehow managed to keep the hospital in excellent shape. That conditions at Little Baguio were as good as they were is due to his inspiring leadership.

That first day the road in front of the hospital was packed with horse-drawn Japanese artillery, moving down below to take up positions as close as possible to Corregidor. We were told that the guns were lined up hub-to-hub; certainly within 24 hours they opened up with a roar that was continuous day and night.

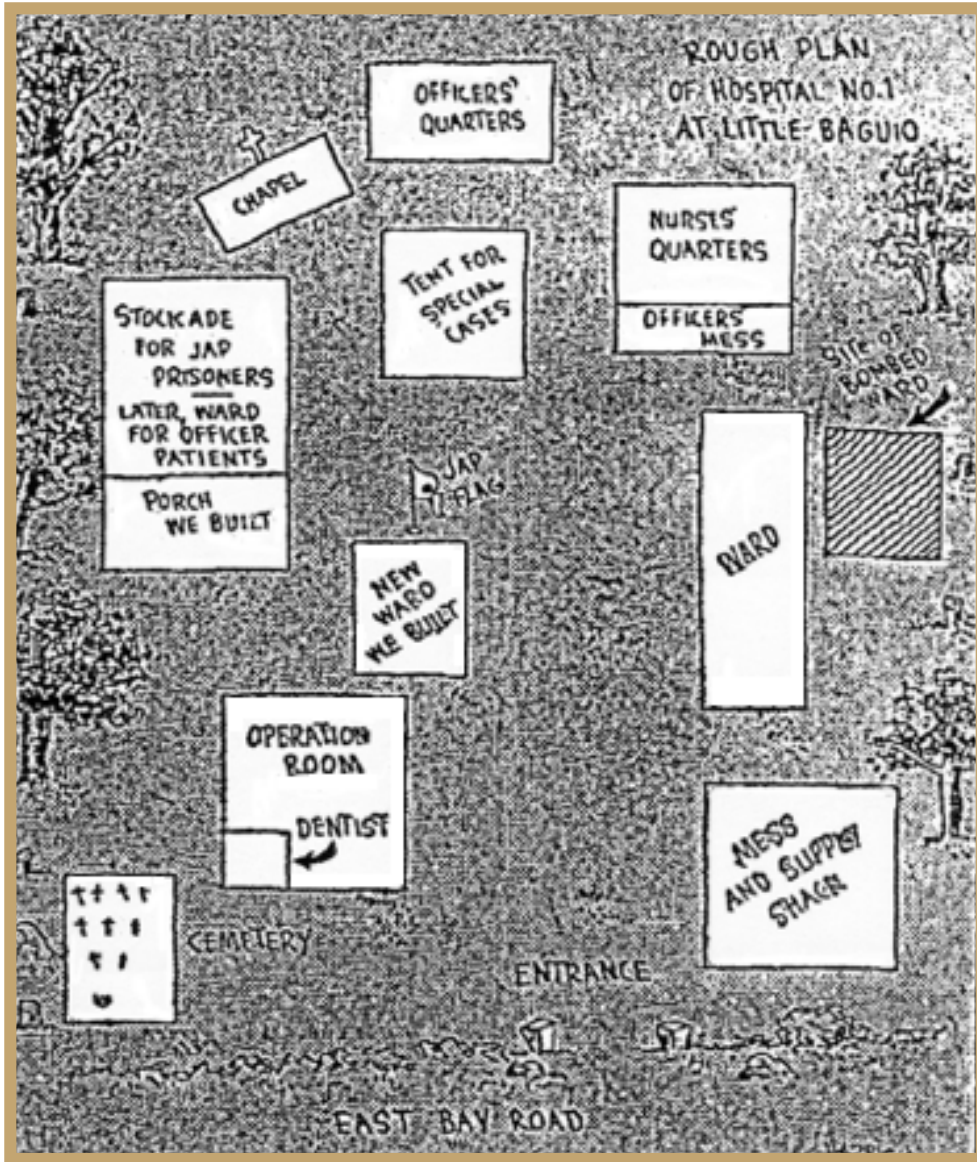
BATTERY ENDANGERED HOSPITAL

Somewhere in the hills right back of the hospital the Nips had set up a battery of heavy guns – so close to us that we got the concussions when they went off. Their shells whistled over us.

Col. Duckworth protested vigorously to the Jap doctor, pointing out that if American guns attempted to reply, the hospital would be endangered.

"The Japanese," he was informed, "didn't put the hospital here."

The heavy guns at Ft. Drum did open up, and for a time the artillery duel raged right over our heads. I think the guns at Ft. Drum finally knocked out the Jap battery, because after a few days we heard no more from it. But the thunder along the East Shore road never really let up until the fall of Corregidor, May 6.



CHAPTER THREE

Nips Did a Brisk Business in Stolen U. S. Cigarettes; How Yanks Starved on Rice

EVERYBODY WHO WAS ABLE TO GET AROUND, REPAIRED, PATCHED AND FIXED UP THE LITTLE BAGUIO HOSPITAL AS BEST WE COULD WITH FEW TOOLS AND LESS MATERIALS. The big ward building was overcrowded; all its double-deck bunks were filled. Though from the night of the surrender no new patients were supposed to be admitted, a few were allowed through for a day or so – mostly cases of exhaustion. Heart cases, some of them.

So we built a new small ward near the building used as an operating room. The new ward had a dirt floor, but we managed to get wood enough to make a roof. The sides were open; and we built rough double-deck bunks with 2-by-4s.

Later we tacked on a sort of screened porch to the lower end of the officers' ward, which we used as a mess. And the boys constructed an open shelter for the altar – a sort of shell – with sides of army shelter halves and a nipa thatch roof.

RICE DIET CAUSES ILLNESS

It wasn't long after the surrender of Bataan before most of those in the area began to feel the effects of the rice diet. Everybody lost weight, and dysentery was prevalent. There were no adequate medical supplies, and the few things available went to the most desperately ill cases. At times surgical dressings were about nonexistent. Col. Duckworth and his men labored heroically, and offset some of these handicaps by the unflagging care given to the patients.

A big tent shelter was erected near the middle of the area for the care of dysentery cases; and when cases of amoebic dysentery were discovered, or suspected, an isolation shelter was established a short distance outside the area.

Though rice was the staple, once in a while we'd get a little surprise. One time the boys made the rice into a sort of flour, added a bit of sugar, and produced cookies. We'd get one cookie at each meal as long as they lasted.

For a short time, at noon, we had "tea." It was made of leaves or herbs, and we thought it was wonderful.

JAPS SELL U. S. CIGARETTES

Then one day it was announced that the Japs were going to allow one of the doctors to go into Manila to get some medical supplies. The man picked to make the trip was Capt. George Raider, a North Carolinian. So we made a collection among us, and gave him the money. We figured he might be able to buy some food or smokes.

In the first few weeks we had managed to keep in cigarettes. Most of the men had a few packs on hand when confinement began; and almost immediately afterwards Jap soldiers made their way into the area selling cigarettes – good American cigarettes that they'd either stolen from our men or from our stores. That lasted for about a week or 10 days. Then the Jap non-coms tried to put a stop to it, and were fairly effective; but I'm sure that there was still some secret traffic because Chesterfields and Camels were occasionally turning up. Now we waited hopefully for Dr. Raider to return, and I remember the general disappointment at the first news – that the supply of medical stores brought back was nothing like what was needed. It meant that as the days wore on patients would be getting weaker, the sick list getting longer perhaps, and the death list, too.

CLOSE TO 100 DEATHS THERE

I kept no records because until I left there I had no official connection with the hospital staff. Even when I was not actually ill I continued to be rated as a patient and was quartered in the ward. Yet as a chaplain and as a priest I was always active among the men. And I participated, with the other chaplains, in most of the burial services. My recollection is that in the 10 weeks at Little Baguio there were close of 100 burials. Assuming my recollection to be right, this meant about a 20 percent mortality. The cemetery was in a small grass plot close to the main road at the lower end of the area – the southeast corner.

Though the news about the medical supplies was disheartening, the other results of Dr. Raider's mission were better. He had managed to buy a small amount of candy, some cigars, and a supply of Philippine cigarettes. I think everybody in the camp got a couple of pieces of candy and one cigar. The cigarettes were distributed to the patients – one each day as long as they lasted, which was about two weeks.

As conditions outside settled down after the fall of Corregidor more freedom was allowed. Some of the corpsmen went outside and bought bananas, which were then plentiful. Another time they brought back pineapples; there was a slice apiece for everybody, and an extra supply for the patients who most needed it.

JAPS PERMITTED CARABAO HUNT

One day they let some of the corpsmen go out with rifles, with the Japs, to "hunt carabao." The carabao is a domesticated water buffalo, and what the process of hunting them was, I don't know. Perhaps it was just another name for foraging. Neither do I know that they brought back any carabao meat. If they did, it went to the patients.

In spite of these minor additions to the diet the general physical condition of everybody was on the downgrade. I mentioned loss of weight. In my case I dropped from about 155 pounds (I was 15 pounds under my normal weight of 170 at the end of the Bataan fighting) to 128 pounds in early June, 27 pounds in two months. Probably I went lower in the next two weeks or so.

But if the weight went down, if there were illnesses sometimes progressively getting worse, the spirit of the men never wavered. I don't mean that we were in high spirits, for the very wall of silence with which we were cut off from almost everything outside our hospital gate was depressing. We kept asking ourselves what was going on. Wondering this. Wondering that. And never getting an answer except the rumors.

After some weeks there was one rumor that, before long, some of us learned to be true: that conditions at Camp O'Donnell were deplorable and the death rate there high.

JAP FLAG MADE MEN BOIL

Yet in spite of that wall of silence and the general air of unbelieving wonderment at our position, the men were unbroken in spirit. The Jap flag flying in the middle of the area made them boil; the remarks that were passed about it never would pass the censor. That flag, instead of lowering morale, raised it.

One night in either late May or early June word was passed that the Japs were going to move out a group of prisoners; we understood to Manila. I guess there were 50 in the group, but I never did know by what process they were selected. The names were read. Among them was that of Fr. O'Brien, who had been there as a patient. He had been quartered with me. The group pulled out in trucks about 11 at night. We learned afterwards that they had gone to O'Donnell.

Then came June 19 and my last day at Little Baguio.

Everybody knew that another detail was being shipped out. The list this time was a long one, and my name was on it. I'm really only guessing, but there must have been 250 or more of us. I hastily packed my Mass kit (altar stone, chalice, vestments, etc.) in its case, threw my personal belongings into a barracks bag and a musette case. Then we lined up and were checked off.

There was a line of trucks out in the road. There were a couple of men on stretchers in my truck, and a dozen or more others, with all the luggage. We pulled out in the middle of the morning, traveled through the heat of the day, and about 5 that afternoon our truck column swung under the brick arch and through the gates of Bilibid, in Manila.



CHAPTER FOUR

Sympathy Shows in Faces of Filipinos
as Prisoners Start Trip to Cabanatuan

TO THE SICK, WHO MADE UP THE GREATER PART OF OUR GROUP FROM HOSPITAL NO. 1 AT LITTLE BAGUIO, OUR ARRIVAL AT BILIBID WAS A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT. We had known that we were headed for Manila, and there had been talk of a hospital; so we figured that it would be one of the modern hospitals of the city where the seriously ill would get good care. Everyone at No. 1 had done all that could be done, but the place was at best a collection of shacks that had been hastily converted to hospital purposes.

But now here we were, at Bilibid. To digress for the moment: I have, since getting home, seen accounts that mentioned “Bilibid Prison.” The “prison” is superfluous. Bilibid means prison.

Once the principal penal institution, but had been abandoned for some years. One or two of the buildings may have been used, because I recall seeing a sign that said “Government Printing Office,” or something like that. We quickly discovered that the Japanese now called it a hospital. They had turned it over to United States Navy doctors, and referred to it as the Naval Hospital Unit. But the place had no hospital facilities whatsoever.

ROOF AND WINDOWS GONE

There was a high cement or brick wall around the grounds, which our truck convoy entered by passing beneath a massive archway and two sets of iron gates. There was still another wall dividing the grounds. Then we halted before what had been at some time the prison hospital – a three-story building, its windows all out, its roof falling apart

so that the upper floor was exposed to the elements. In bad weather the rain percolated down through the floor to the second story; and if there was any wind behind the rain, it drove through the gaping windows everywhere.

We got out of the trucks, were lined up and counted, and then were ordered to take over the second floor. The stairs went up in the middle, and on each side was a big, bare room. There wasn't a cot. A few mattresses were on the floor, but only a few. Sick patients, some of them, had to be placed on the plain cold floor. Most of us just dumped our bags, and that was our spot. I remember one poor fellow, desperately ill with malaria, who had looked forward to a fine hospital. He could look forward now only to death.

At Bilibid we experienced a new atmosphere. There had been a freedom of movement, a certain informality at Little Baguio, almost no interference by the Japs. Here we were under the eyes of Jap sentries with fixed bayonets. They surrounded the prison, were in the grounds and came through the

wards, and we'd have to stand up and make our bows to them. And there was a great deal of slapping around by Jap non-coms for the least infraction of rules.

At Little Baguio we were never counted in groups. Here they started "bango" – roll call.

Our initiation to bango came the next morning. At daybreak everybody had to line up – the well and the sick – and be counted. First we were checked by our senior officer (under orders of the Japs, of course) and then we had to stand there until the Japs counted us, **AND ALL THE OTHERS IN THE ENTIRE PRISON** – several buildings.

The Jap non-com would finally arrive at the total and depart, but we still had to stand until he went to the prison headquarters and compared his count with the books. If there was any variation (as there commonly was), he'd start the count all over again. Sometimes there were three counts before he got things to suit him. And the sick prisoners would be standing there in line for close to an hour.

After bango came breakfast. Rice.

MUST STAY NEAR BUILDING

We found that we could leave the building, but had to stay close to it in the yard. We were forbidden to go near other buildings in which prisoners were housed; but they, or, rather, the doctors among them, did visit us.

We learned that morning from the naval doctors that the place was devoid of medicines. The commandant, Commander Lea B. Sartin, a doctor of the Navy Medical Corps, visited us and pleaded for quinine, or any medication we might have. He needed quinine especially, and vitamin tablets. He told us that large numbers were dying from malaria and there was nothing with which to treat them.

Noon, and more rice. We got three meals a day at Bilibid – rice, morning, noon and at about 5 in the afternoon, served dry. At noon and at 5 o'clock the rice was supplemented by some water (I suppose it was intended as broth) with greens stewed up in it.

For a week or 10 days after our arrival, Filipinos managed to get in past the heavy guards – they must have bribed them – with fruit and candy, which they sold to those who had any funds. These were the first friendly persons we had seen, our

first contact of any sort with the outside world since the fall of Bataan. It was amazing how much this chance to buy this penny candy and to exchange a few words with the Filipinos did to cheer everybody. While our first impression of Bilibid was "now we're really locked up" (because of the wall around us), this touch with the outside world, and the knowledge that around us was a great city whose noises we could hear, and whose lights we could see, made us feel that we were really getting back into civilization after our exile and the silences of Baguio.

Some of the prisoners who had been here before us and also men attached to the hospital unit managed to get around in the area; and a few took advantage of the chance to earn a peso or two, as most of them were without funds. They'd buy a box of candy from a Filipino, paying perhaps five pesos (about \$2.50) and would make the rounds selling it by the piece. They might clear a couple of pesos on the turnover.

There was another way we got some things. Work details were sent out nearly every day to labor in the port area. They got an opportunity to do a little buying; one day I gave one of the boys a peso and he got eight or 10 cigars for me – and pretty good ones, too. It wasn't much more than the normal price.

We had bango first thing every morning, then after dinner and after supper – three times every day. And the same long drawn out procedure every time. We could feel the pressure of the routine.

HE COULD VISIT THE SICK

At Bilibid I could say Mass only on Sunday, whereas at Little Baguio I said Mass every day. Yet since I was the only chaplain now at Bilibid I was permitted to visit the sick in the other wards and to officiate at all burials.

The other buildings in the prison yard were mainly long narrow one-story wooden structures, in which the patients lay head to the wall and feet toward the middle, with a clear space from end to end. Some of the men had mattresses, others lay on their blankets on the floor. Many of them had no proper clothing.

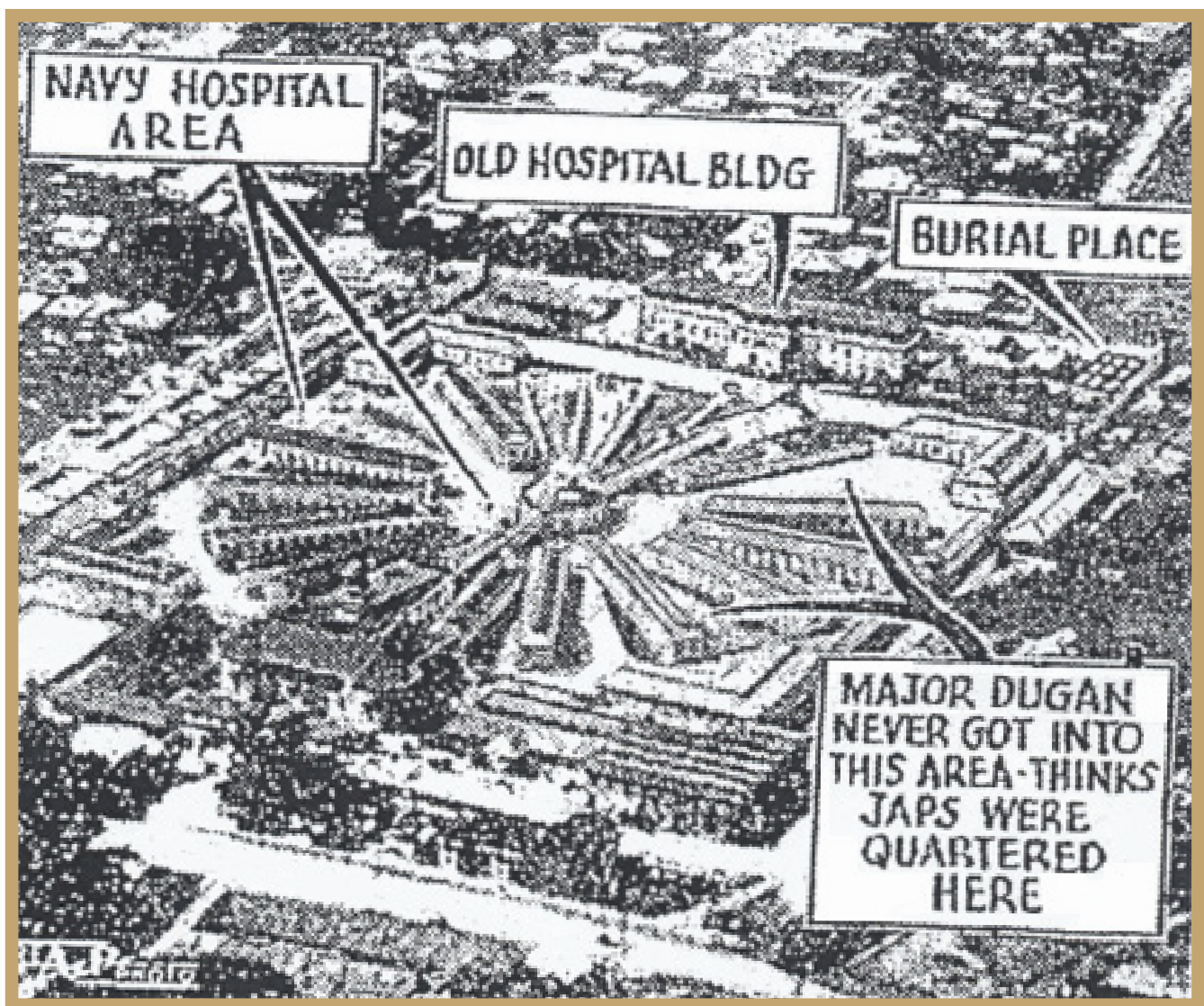
The Navy medical men were doing a wonderful work. A pharmacist's mate was in charge of each

ward building, of which there were six or seven, as I recall it. In some mysterious way, Com. Sartin and his corpsmen managed to keep the entire Bilibid setup in excellent condition and were carrying on the best United States Navy traditions as far as sanitation and general cleanliness went.

Out of the odds and ends they had built a long flush latrine – an open depression, at the end of which they had rigged an automatic flusher. Half of a gasoline drum had been set in such a way that a steady stream of water from the city mains flowed

into it. When it filled, it tipped, flushing the latrine; and when empty it swung back into position to fill, and so kept up this cleaning process day and night.

It is impossible to say too much in praise of the Navy men, who had been at Bilibid since early in January. At the outbreak of war part of this Navy medical unit had been in a hospital near Cavite. Bombed out, they had set up their hospital at the St. Scholastica girls' school in Manila, and there they remained until the Japs occupied the city.



CHAPTER FIVE

Handed Ball of Rice and Sent with Corregidor Men to Notorious Cabanatuan

COM. SARTIN, NAVY DOCTOR IN CHARGE AT BILIBID, IN MANILA, TOLD ME THAT AFTER THE FALL OF CORREGIDOR THE JAPS PLANNED TO BRING ALL THE UNITED STATES ARMY NURSES TO BILIBID. There would have been no chance there of any privacy for them and Sartin argued for days with the Japs before he convinced them that the move would be a mistake. So the nurses were sent to Santa Tomas, with the civilian internees.

Though hospital facilities were wholly lacking, the mortality rate at Bilibid was not high while I was there. I think I buried about 30 men (I had the list, but lost it when I fled from Cabanatuan); they lie in a little plot inside the prison wall.

One big advantage at Bilibid was the adequate supply of city water. Water had been a problem at Hospital No. 1; and later you will see what we were faced with at Cabanatuan. It was the plentiful water supply here that had made possible the ingenious latrine flushing system rigged up by the Navy men, which I have previously mentioned.

They also had improvised some very fine showers – one set in front of our old hospital building, another, as I recall it, near the front part of the prison. Cleanliness has always been a Navy boast, and they were in true form even here at Bilibid.

ORDERED TO COUNTRY

We slept in our clothes, with just a blanket under us; and I can still recall the joy of getting down to those showers every morning, and positively luxuriating in the bath after an uncomfortable

night. Then I'd shave, wash the uniform I'd just shed, get into my other and be presentable. By noon my first uniform would be dry and I'd be all set for the next day.

Small groups of prisoners were brought in from time to time, but on July 2 a large contingent arrived from Corregidor, and the place became badly overcrowded. Many of the newcomers were in terrible condition – disheveled, bearded, clothes gone, seriously ill.

Ordinarily our lights went out at 9 o'clock. A small bulb cast a dim glow in each of our two large second-floor rooms, and there was another bulb on the stairs. This night they stayed on until 11, because sleeping space was at a premium and there had to be some readjustments.

Before lights-out, one of the Navy doctors came in and said that a detail would leave Bilibid the next morning. He read the names. The list included all the men who had just come from Corregidor, excepting only the most serious cases, and all those of our Hospital No. 1 group who were in condition to travel. I could understand now what some of

the moves meant. The Nips obviously were using Bilibid as a clearing hospital – operating somewhat as a clearance company does in the field in sorting out cases, save that in this instance the worst cases were held and the others sent along to the prison camps out in the country.

We got up about 5:30 in the morning of the 3rd of July, went through the long routine of bango, and then each of us who were going out were given a ball of rice which was to be our noonday lunch. The rice had been boiled and steamed and then pressed into a ball about the size of an indoor baseball, or a small grapefruit.

SYMPATHY IN FILIPINO FACES

We had thrown our gear together and everybody was fairly well loaded down with bags and bundles. Now we were checked off again, put into trucks and driven through the streets of Manila to the railroad station on the north side of the city. It was still early, but the streets were well filled with people; the day, in the tropics, gets off to an early start.

To the Filipinos of Manila the sight of long columns of trucks loaded with American prisoners was no novelty by this time, yet it was clear that they had not become hardened to it. They made no demonstration. They knew better, for the slightest sign of hostility to Japan was punishable; and now Jap soldiers were in the streets and there were two armed Jap guards on every truck. But we could see suffering written on the faces of the men and women and children of Manila as they looked up at us. And along with the signs of their own travail we could see their deep sympathy.

At the railroad station we got out, were counted again, and then carried our baggage down a long platform to a row of iron freight cars (fully enclosed box cars, with the usual side doors), and were ordered to get in. Though the worst of our hospital cases had been left at Bilibid, many of those in our party were in bad shape and had to be lifted into the cars.

50 IN CAR; DOORS LEFT OPEN

I have heard of many cases in which prisoners were packed into poorly ventilated box cars in stifling heat, but with us the Nips were pretty good. Men have since told me that 100 or more were

put into a single car and the doors then closed and locked. In our case we had only 50 in the car. Again, they didn't lock the doors or even close them. As I keep looking back on my own experiences of these last 34 months and contrast them with the sufferings of others less fortunate. I know that I have much to be thankful for.

We left the station about 7 that morning and rode to the town of Cabanatuan, 60 miles north, where we arrived about 3 o'clock. It was a hot dry day, but with the car doors open the trip was not too bad.

Outside the railroad station we were lined up and counted and checked, bag and baggage; and here again luck was with me.

Across from where we stood were two waiting trucks with American drivers. We knew that we were heading for one of the two prison camps that lay off to the east of the town, one of them perhaps five miles distant, the other still further away. A few of us, especially those who were priests and had our Mass kits, were pretty well laden with baggage; we were all in poor shape physically; nobody looked forward with optimism to the march in the hottest part of the afternoon. I kept looking at the trucks – just two of them. They couldn't carry all the baggage.

LUGGAGE GETS A RIDE

A Navy chaplain, Fr. Francis J. McManus, from Cleveland, had ridden up in the same box car with me. We now stood close to one another in the second row of our lineup, and were about ready to toss up to see which should abandon his Mass kit, when I discovered what the trucks were there for. They were to pick up a few very sick, or the disabled; and I soon saw that, on the basis of the selections, there was going to be plenty of room in them. So I tossed my barracks bag and Mass kit out in front of the boy who stood in front of me. He had been at Little Baguio with me from the start of our captivity. His own baggage was just a small bundle. The boy's arm was in a cast.

A Nip non-com came up in front of him.

"Whose is this?" the Nip said, pointing to the baggage.

"Mine," the kid told him, though the Mass kit and barracks bag had my name plastered all over

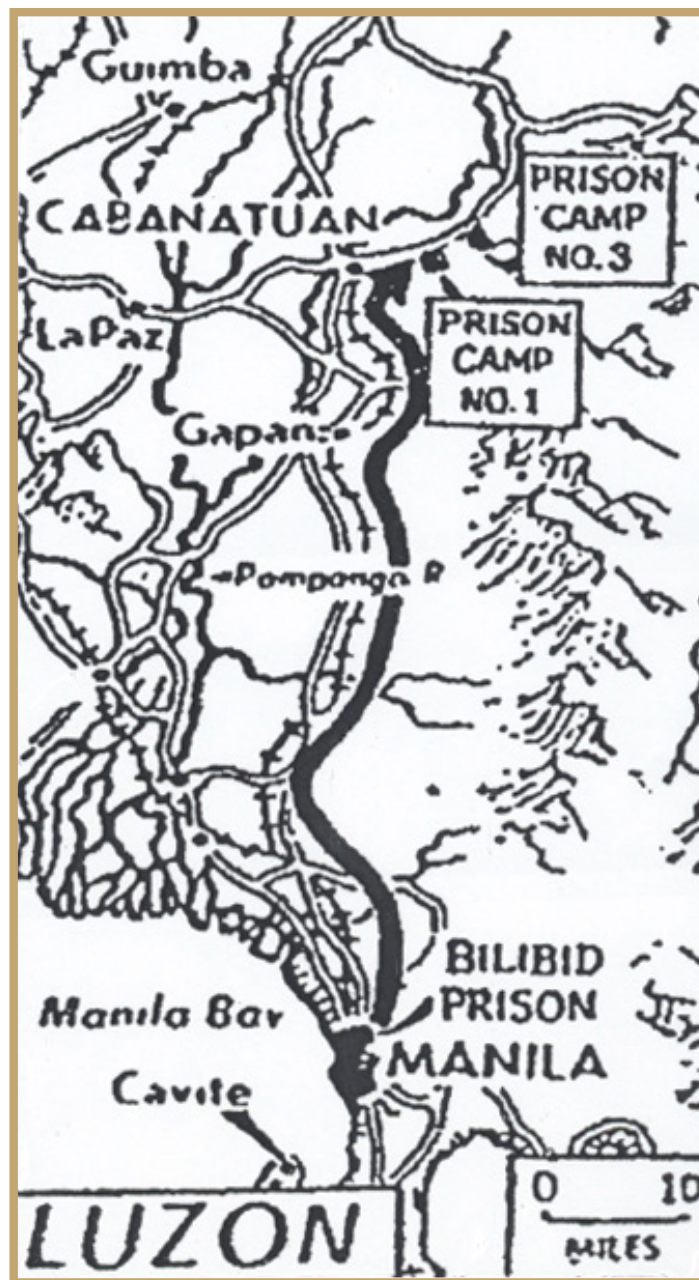
them. So the boy got into the truck and the Jap tossed the luggage in after him. That left me with only a musette bag. Throughout the march that followed we helped each other share the burdens.

We started off in columns of fours. It was terribly hot, and a few dropped out along the road and, as far as I know, were picked up by the trucks. They didn't push us, and we made a couple of stops. Though we were flanked by Jap guards with fixed bayonets, I saw no interference from them and I can report no acts of cruelty.

As we approached the Cabanatuan prison camp, which lay along the right side of the road on which we were traveling, we still weren't sure if this was our destination.

"Maybe they're sending us on to No. 3.?" we questioned. Camp No. 3 was the smaller area further along. But then the head of our column swung off into a side road, leading to the main gate, and we knew we'd ended our march.

This was soon-to-be notorious Cabanatuan later known officially as Japanese Military Prison Camp No. 1.



CHAPTER SIX

Survivors of Death March Didn't Want to Remember

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW SOMETHING OF THE LIVES OF THE THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN PRISONERS WHO WERE AT CABANATUAN IN THE COURSE OF THE LAST THREE YEARS, you should acquaint yourself with the general layout of the prison area. While minor details varied in different periods of its history, Japanese Military Prisoner Camp No. 1 was laid out just about as shown on the accompanying plan.

It is on the south side of the road leading out of the town of Cabanatuan, and as we marched over it in the full heat of that July day we came in sight of our future home when about four or five miles from the town.

The first section of the camp (as we later learned) was the hospital area, its buildings grouped back from the road and bare, open fields leading down to where we marched. Passing this, we came to a central area pretty well filled with barracks. This was the camp of the Jap guards and administrators.

Just beyond the Jap area a little road ran off at right angles through the camp, separating the Jap section from the third and last area, in which the non-hospitalized prisoners were confined. We turned past a Japanese guard station into that road, marched down it to the main gate (in these early days well toward the rear of the area) where we were met by three or four Jap officers and an American officer, a Major Morey or Maury.

Inside the gate we were separated into three groups, Army men in one, Navy in another, and in the third, a number of civilians who were classified as war prisoners because they had been employed by various branches of our armed services. American officers told us that we were to open up our gear for inspection, laying everything out on the ground. Jap non-coms then went through our possessions, confiscating all compasses, flashlights, maps and cameras. Some Japs took scissors and knives also, but others passed them up.

Now we were assigned to barracks. There were no special arrangements; American officers just indicated the area we were to occupy (the rear section of the camp) and we picked our own barracks building and our own companions. We discovered that the three classifications had been made for inspection and check off purposes only, but in actual practice the men commonly gravitated into service groups.

The whole camp area, all three sections of it, occupied a big, open treeless field, practically flat.

Before the war it had been used by the 81st Division of the Philippine Army which Gen. MacArthur had been hastily organizing for the Philippine defense. My recollection is that the Jap and hospital areas were unfenced, and at this early period even our main prison area was enclosed, as I recall it now, with no more than a rude, barbed wire barrier, later much strengthened. The barracks buildings and the few other structures within our enclosure varied in size but the chief features were the same.

My barracks was perhaps 50 feet long, with an opening (but no door) at each end, and two openings in each of the long sides. It had a peaked roof covered with nipa thatch. The sidewalls were of swali-matting woven of thin pieces of bamboo.

As you stepped in the end opening your feet were still on the bare ground; the building was floorless, as were all the others. A narrow aisle ran down the middle. On each side, about two feet off the ground, a shelf six feet deep extended in to the wall. The shelf, made of lengths of bamboo close together, ran the length of the barrack except where broken by the side doors. Four feet above each lower shelf was an upper. These were our beds – upper and lower berths. There were no mattresses, though a few had been provided for earlier arrivals in the camp, who were quartered in barracks toward the front, nearer the main road. At least some of them had mattresses; how they got them, I don't know. I think that one or two in our group coming in from Bilibid had brought air mattresses in their packs. But most of us just picked out a sleeping place on one of the shelves, tossed in our gear, and that was our place. There were 60 or 70 men in my barracks that night.

Veterans of the camp warned us of certain regulations which, they said, the Japs rigidly enforced – there were to be no lights, no smoking within 15 feet of any barrack or other building, and every man was to be in his bunk by 9 at night.

After we got squared away we had supper – plain boiled rice, dumped into our mess kits. Many of the men had no regular kits but had picked up plates or pans that served them well enough. It was dark by this time. We were directed down through the area to the nearest galley (set up in an old barracks), got our portions, carried them back to our place and ate there sitting on the ground. It was past the usual

eating time, but our galley hands had cooked up this stuff especially for us, working in the dark.

We went looking for the heads. I have spent so much time in the past three years serving in camp areas occupied mainly by Navy and Marine personnel that I find myself commonly using Navy lingo; to a Navy man the toilet area is the “head,” to the soldier, a latrine.

I used to get ribbed about it at the camp; and Fr. John McDonnell of Brooklyn, a Regular Army chaplain who came to Cabanatuan from Hospital No. 1 at a period later than that of which I am writing, had a habit of catching me up on it.

“I knew him when he used to be in the Army,” he'd say to others.

“Well,” I told him, “I can't pronounce two-syllable words.”

(Chaplain McDonnell, who will appear again later, is now a prisoner in Japan.)

Our investigation brought us to a series of open pits, called P-trenches. Then there were long trenches with floors built over them. Small holes were cut in the floors. Conditions were terrible. The stench, the filth, the flies accounted in part for the awful death rate at the camp in the Summer and Fall of that first year. Later things improved, and at the end there actually were septic tanks installed.

The population of Cabanatuan prison camp at this time must have been around 8000 in the main area, with perhaps another 1500 or 2000 in the hospital area, over beyond the Jap camp. Many of the men here were survivors of the Death March, and also of the terrors of Camp O'Donnell, and it was now that we newcomers got our first real accounts of what had been going on in the three months since the Bataan surrender.

The Japs were beginning to shift men from O'Donnell to Cabanatuan. By the following October Camp O'Donnell was to be emptied by death or transfer, and Cabanatuan was to become the main prison camp in Luzon, officially called Japanese Military Prison Camp No. 1.

The men from O'Donnell carried memories so vivid that they strove to put them aside. Some didn't want to talk of what they had experienced and seen. Yet we got stories of how as many as 300 and 400 died there in a day. One man told me that all

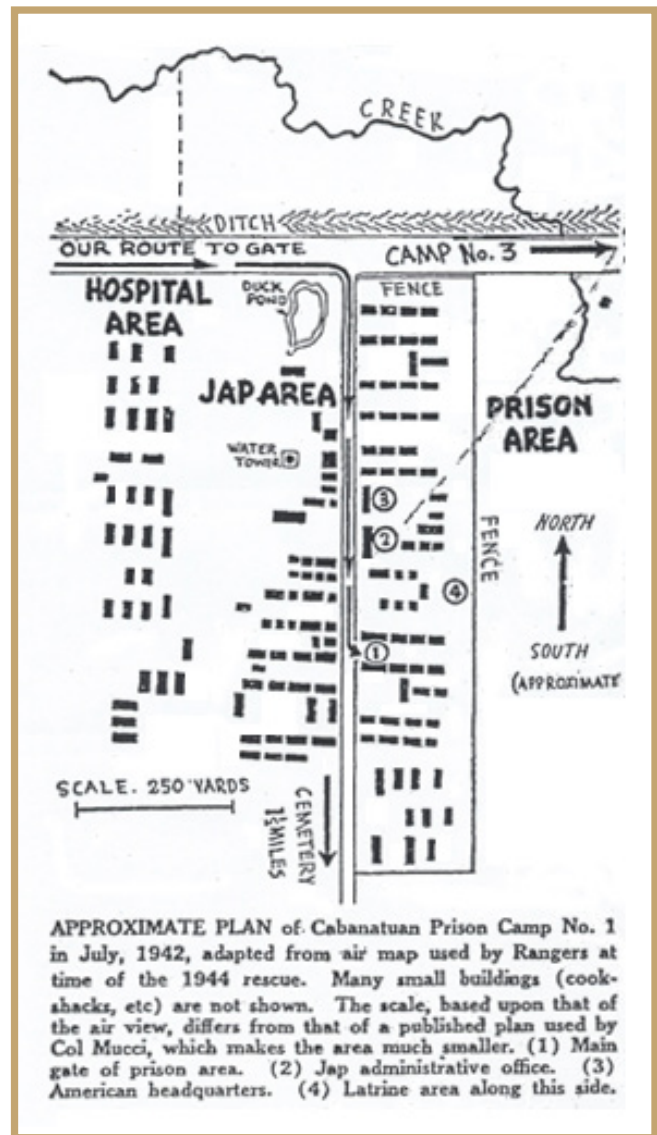
were so ill that often the litter-bearers carrying the dead to burials would themselves drop dead.

A few months later, here at No. 1, I was to meet an officer who had been in the Death March with a close friend of mine, a man with whom I had traveled to the Philippines, whom I last saw going into our lines at Lamao on Bataan, grinning and shouting to me, "Don't forget to duck!" My friend hadn't been able to make the march.

"I didn't see it," this man now told me, "but I heard he dropped out and was bayoneted. Later I heard he had been buried near Lubao." I have mentioned neither names nor ranks, for I think the first man is still listed as missing, and the second is now a prisoner in Japan. But this shows the sort of stories we were getting.

In our group from Manila were five other chaplains – two Protestant, John Borneman, a Methodist from Philadelphia, whose wife now resides in Buffalo, and Chaplain Cleveland, both Army men; and three Catholics. Francis J. McManus of Cleveland, a Navy chaplain, Albert Braun, a Franciscan who had been working among the Indians in the Southwest; and Herman C. Bauman. Braun and Bauman were Army chaplains.

We found a dozen or more other chaplains at Camp No. 1, men we had not seen since the surrender. The Protestants included Chaplains Frederick D. Howden, later transferred to Mindanao where he died. Then there were Frs. Thomas Seccina of Indianapolis, Henry B. Stober of Kentucky and Richard E. Carberry of Portland, Ore. And Fr. Albert D. Talbot, a Sulpician who came from Fall River, was serving the men in the hospital area, where he continued to give comfort to the sick and dying for the next two years. I will have occasion to refer to some of these chaplains as we go on.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Everybody in Camp Seemed Ill; Worst Cases Hospitalized

WATER WAS HARD TO GET AT CABANATUAN. THE SUPPLY, PIPED ACROSS FROM AN ELEVATED TANK IN THE JAP CAMP, WAS AVAILABLE ONLY AT FOUR OR FIVE TAPS IN THE WHOLE PRISON AREA. There was always a long line at each outlet, and it was a regular thing to have to stand close to an hour before you got your turn to fill a canteen. Some of the enlisted men in our barracks volunteered to turn out at 3 in the morning and go down to the nearest tap with all the canteens they could carry. This helped matters a lot, but the process of getting the water still was a slow one because our men discovered that they had not originated the idea. So water, at all times, was carefully treasured. If you wanted a bath, you stood out in the rain.

July had brought in the rainy season, and we were getting the usually torrential shower every 24 hours, with occasional 48 hour stretches of steady downpour. Our prison area was in grass, now showing green under the rains. But the front section, toward which the ground fell away in a slight slope, was turned into a quagmire after each deluge.

I said my first Mass at Cabanatuan early the second morning, using for an altar an abandoned Army cook stove. Our barracks evidently had been at some time the quarters of mess cooks of the Philippine Army. At the end of the barracks was an open section where their galley had been. This was my chapel.

Fr. McManus, who was quartered with me, said the first Mass that morning. There was a small congregation (less than 20 percent of the men in camp were Catholics), but there was a sizeable group of lookers-on, to whom the ceremony was so evidently

new that I explained things as Fr. McManus went along. I said my Mass after he had finished.

At the time of this first stay in Cabanatuan there was no fixed place for religious services in our upper (south) end of the camp. I believe this area had never been tenanted by prisoners until our group arrived. Within a day or two we set up a temporary altar under an old shed roof. Some time in the next few months, while I was away at Camp No. 3, our boys pulled the end out of a small barracks building, tore out the bunk shelves, built some rough benches and produced a clean, edifying place in which to offer divine service. It was used by all the chaplains, Protestant and Catholic, and served the men quartered in our section.

At the lower end of the camp (that is, the north end, fronting on the main road) a little chapel had been extemporized before our coming. In the middle area services were held in the open until some time in 1943, when a barracks building that actually

bragged a wooden floor was converted to a recreation room. After that services were held there.

The first week at Cabanatuan was devoted by us newcomers mainly to getting acquainted. Our impressions – certainly my own – were pretty discouraging. The large numbers who were ill and the appalling number of daily deaths were depressing.

Everybody in camp seemed to be ill and many clearly were hospital cases. As far as I could judge, the only distinction between our area and the hospital area was that they had the worst cases. Ours were ambulatory cases, that is, they managed to stay on their feet much of the time. Yet malaria and dysentery were common and beriberi was beginning to show. There was general malnutrition. I had no opportunity at this time to get over to the hospital area, where I was told conditions were shocking. It was a hospital in little more than name, for the doctors had neither equipment nor sufficient medicines with which to work.

Bango, or roll-call, was in evidence here as at Bilibid, but in a modified form. We had it before breakfast and again after supper, and it continued with variations until our rescue. Here, at first, our own men counted us as we lined up, and then went down and reported the results to the Japanese administration building. We didn't have to wait for a possible recheck, as at Bilibid. But much later, say early in 1944, when our camp population was reduced and conditions much different, we were forced to stand in ranks outside our barracks until the Jap Officer of the Day went through the camps and made a few spot checks of groups to make sure that the figures turned in to him were correct. That continued for a short time. Then he started to check every barracks group, and we had to stand until he had finished. Finally the entire camp population had to assemble in an open area near the center of the camp and be counted by the Jap O. D., his non-coms and some privates.

At this time there was no extensive organized system of work details; certain cleanup and wood-gathering jobs had to be done, but on the whole there was considerable leisure. And as there was then no organized recreation either, most men had little to look forward to but one inadequate meal after another.

My recollection is that in this period (that is, early July, 1942) chaplains at Camp No. 1 were not permitted to accompany burial parties, and the men who died were buried without benefit of so much as a prayer at the grave. Within the camp, in addition to daily Mass, we Catholic chaplains led the rosary every evening for the men of our immediate areas. Usually 30 or 40 men joined in, a good representation. It was comforting to us to see men ready to attend religious services without any pressure. As we went along you could see the increase in daily Mass attendance.

The food we got from the Nips was rice, prepared by our own men in the few galley buildings. There was a fairly good serving three times a day. There was also a commissary system in operation when we reached the camp, set up with the approval of the Jap commandant, for the sale of food brought in by Filipinos. There wasn't much food, or much money with which to buy it.

I recall seeing canned fish, a few cans of milk, fresh native fruits, such as papayas and bananas, small bags of brown sugar and cans of powdered cinnamon, used to give a suggestion of flavor to the rice. On the first day after our arrival one of the Catholic chaplains gave a group in my barracks a can of fish – a prize. It was "Stateside" stuff. Everything from the United States is "Stateside" in the Philippines. This flat oval tin, marked "Packed in California," contained a number of small fishes in some sort of sauce. There was only a little for a few lucky ones, but we'll never forget how wonderful that little was.

Those in the camp fortunate enough to have any funds usually made it a practice to share with their friends who most needed it such extras as they could get at the canteen. But though nothing went very far, it was a big help to those in the poorest physical shape. Later more money was available but I'll cover that when we come to it.

By this time I was feeling much better than I had been at Little Baguio. There we had only two meals of rice a day; at Bilibid we got three (plus the "soup" with greens that I mentioned) and here at Cabanatuan also we got three. So, though you never got enough food, it still kept you going. I hit my low at Little Baguio and I think I never lost any further

weight save on two or three occasions when I had attacks of malaria.

It was a relief to get away from the walls of Bilibid and also the Japs there. At Bilibid Jap non-coms were always in evidence through the prison area. Here we saw them only occasionally. But it came to be part of the required etiquette that we bow to all Jap officers, commissioned and non-coms. If a man failed, he was usually slapped around by the sentry.

Here at Cabanatuan instead of being oppressed by high walls, there was a feeling of roominess and freedom. The barracks may have been crowded (certainly there was no spare space between us on the berths at night), but outside there was no suggestion of congestion. I began to feel really better in every way, even in the brief time I was here.

On July 9 the report circulated in camp that Philippine guerrillas had attacked a party of

prisoners sent out to gather wood from Prison Camp No. 3 (a few miles up the road from us), had kidnapped the driver, killed one man, and wounded a few of our boys and some of the Jap guards. Whether there was any connection between that happening and my transfer, I don't know – but next day, July 10, I was told that because there were no Catholic chaplains at Camp 3, three of us were to be sent there – Fr. Walter O'Brien of the Diocese of San Francisco, Fr. John Wilson, a member of the Congregation of the Precious Blood, who had been in the Death March and at Camp O'Donnell, and I.

We were ordered to pack our stuff and report to the American headquarters building before noon. Early that afternoon we were picked up by a truck that had come down from No. 3 for supplies, and were carried to our new post. There I was to remain until Oct. 31.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Sometimes Japs Put Flowers
on American Graves

I HAVE NO DESIRE TO MAKE CONDITIONS IN THE JAPANESE MILITARY PRISON CAMPS OF LUZON APPEAR TO BE BETTER THAN THEY ACTUALLY WERE, yet I must say that prison life at Prison Camp No. 3 was tolerable, and even pleasant as compared with what I had previously experienced.

On our arrival Frs. O'Brien, Wilson and I were greeted by the American adjutant, Lt. Col. Curtis Beecher of the Marine Corps. The senior American officer here was Col. Boudreau, USA, who had been captured at Corregidor. A short time after I reached Camp No. 3 Boudreau was transferred to Camp No. 1, and thence to Japan. I think that all the full colonels and generals were removed from Camp No. 1 about August 1942, and shipped to prisons in Japan. At any rate they were gone when I got back to Camp 1 in October. After Col. Boudreau's departure, Lt. Col. Beecher became American commandant at No. 3.

There must have been 700 or 800 men here, mostly Navy men and Marines, housed in three groups. The first of these, whose men I served as chaplain, was made up entirely of Navy and Marines; and it was now that I began to pick up my sea-going terms. Group 2 was pretty well mixed – Navy, Army and civilians who had worked for the Army or Navy. The third group was all Army.

ONE SHOWERBATH FOR HUNDREDS

The general character of Camp No. 3 was that of Camp No. 1, and, like Camp 1, it had originally been occupied by units of the Philippine Army. But it was very much smaller in area, and its prisoner population wasn't a 10th of that of No. 1.

Sanitary conditions were much better, and water was more plentiful and much easier to get. It was supplied by the usual taps spotted through the camp area. At one of these places the outlet pipe had been run about six feet above ground and a shed had been built over it. This was the camp shower; and though it wasn't exactly adequate for the needs of hundreds, it was still more than had been available at Camp No. 1.

This camp (again like No. 1) was on the south side of the road, from which there was a gradual rise. Those in the Navy group, in barracks at the low front end, wallowed in a mudhole when it rained, as it did at least once every day. Our barracks were floored with nothing more than the ground on which they were built.

JAP GUARDS DECORATED GRAVES

There was a light barbed-wire fence around our enclosure, but it gave no feeling of oppressive confinement. The Nip sentries were more lenient in their attitude than at No. 1. For instance, the chaplains here took turns going out with the burial parties. As a rule, only a single sentry came along with us; and I have seen our Jap guard, while on the way out to the burial plot, pick a few wild flowers and lay them on the grave after it was filled in.

Sometimes while our detail was digging the grave and while the burial service was going on, the guard would go off 30 or 40 feet, sit down, and often fall sound asleep. When we were ready to march back to camp, we'd have to arouse him.

I don't know the answer to that one. Possibly they were green troops and hadn't been instructed in the accepted mode of handling Americans; for often when some of our men had occasion to pass from our camp to the hospital area (over on the other side of the highroad) we didn't have to salute or even bow to the Nip sentries. Elsewhere this had been insisted upon.

Our hospital at Prison Camp No. 3 was small, because most of the transportable serious cases were sent down to the big hospital area at Camp No. 1. Consequently, our death rate was low. We were having perhaps one death a day, and sometimes none. Our men seemed to be getting onto their feet.

Food, too, was somewhat improved, though the base issue was still just rice. But there was sometimes a little soup, a light broth (exceedingly light) in which were greens of some sort. And there was also the chance here (as at No. 1 Camp) to pick up a few extras from the outside if you had any money.

We newcomers found that most of the officers had chipped in and established their own mess. A man chosen as commissary officer was allowed to go down to the town of Cabanatuan on one of the Jap trucks and buy certain foods.

Peanuts were a great favorite. And there was candy, fruits and items like cans of fish. Sometimes the commissary officer would get to the town once a week. There really was a pretty good commissary setup for those who had a few pesos.

Each officer was supposed to throw 10 pesos a month into the fund. When I hit Camp No. 3 I had

just seven pesos, but by pooling with the two other priests we got enough to cover us for a month.

When the second month came up, Maj. James Bradley, USMC, of Millinocket, Me. (now listed a prisoner in Japan) came over to us.

"Are you broke?" he wanted to know, and we assured him that we were. So he gave each of us 10 pesos. After that second month nearly everybody was out of funds, and the mess was discontinued.

THEY COULD BUY EXTRA FOOD

At this period we could even buy an occasional chicken, or a few eggs, from the Filipinos. Two or three men might chip in and get eight or 10 eggs. Sometimes there were a few small Philippine sausages. And prices were only a little above normal. Such extras as these would be prepared by the galley crews and added to the rice portion of the fortunate owners. Native cigarettes were also brought out from Cabanatuan by the commissary officer.

Though everybody was still hungry, we managed pretty well, and conditions were really tolerable.

Members of the work details who went out every day into the neighboring woods to gather fuel for our galley fires were allowed as an extra a "biscuit" a day – a cookie made of rice flour. The work wasn't exceptionally hard, and there was little or no trouble with the guards, so the men used to volunteer for the wood detail in order to get that extra bit of food.

There were no Nips stationed inside our compound, other than a few in their administrative office, who were seldom in evidence. Our camp, together with No. 1 Camp, was under command of a Japanese colonel; his representative here, a major, lived across the road, next to our own hospital area, with his staff and crew of interpreters, and the soldiers of the guard.

Mostly when we saw Japs inside our compound, they had come to buy or swap for watches. American watches were in great demand, and many of our own men were delighted at the chance to exchange their timepieces for food or money. I knew one fellow who got 20 cans of milk, four bottles of Jap beer, and 20 pesos in Jap-Philippine war money, for his watch.

THREE WERE SHOT BY GUARDS

Just so you'll know that everything wasn't sweet

and lovely at No. 1, I ought to report that shortly before I arrived at the camp three of our boys were shot by the Japs. I saw their graves, with little crosses over them. The Nips said they had been shot while trying to escape.

Towards the end of August, 1942, they gave us some baseball equipment. There were even shin guards and chest protectors. After that we had games every Sunday and a couple of days in between. They even let us play in a field outside the fence. A limited number of our men were counted as they passed out and checked again as they returned. And in addition to our own lively rooters and sideline coaches, the Jap officers and men used to stand off and watch the games. Our little "league" at Camp No. 3 was the first sign of organized recreation that I had seen. Later we learned that a recreation program had been started back at Camp No. 1 about that same time.

We had very little reading matter, chiefly a few badly worn books men had managed to bring along with them from Bataan and Corregidor. But about this time the Japs began to distribute bundles of the Manila Tribune, most of the copies from two to six months old when we got them.

EVERY BATTLE A JAP VICTORY

These Manila Tribunes provided little genuine news, but they did give us plenty of laughs. In pre-war days the Tribune had been reputedly pro-Japanese, and now it was nothing else but.

Printed entirely in English, its "news" stories were all glowing accounts of great Japanese victories. The United States forces were invariably wiped out, and the losses of the Imperial Japanese Navy and Army were always insignificant.

Articles in the Tribune were continually emphasizing that the great spiritual forces of Japan would sweep all before it – sentiments like "the spirit of Japan, aflame in the hearts of our troops, will surely conquer the materialistic imperialism of the United States." That was a favorite theme.

Terrible internal conditions in the United States were played up. The papers gave great prominence to strikes and other labor troubles, and to industrial conditions generally – always described as being chaotic. There were also stories about crime waves in America; how, due to the neglect of mothers and fathers who were working, youths were running wild. The papers carried illustrations supposed to be of battles won by the Nips but we noticed that they were usually pretty vague as to location. Every day there were a few paragraphs devoted to a lesson in Japanese.

What was the effect of this propaganda? It was all so childish and obvious that it had just the opposite effect to that intended. The Nips never counted on the American spirit and the American sense of humor. The combination is unshakable.

For a long time we got bundles of these papers about once a week, but as the war progressed and the tide turned, we saw less of them and finally the distribution was stopped.

CHAPTER NINE

“No Atheists in Foxholes” Saying is Largely True

IMMEDIATELY ON OUR ARRIVAL AT CAMP NO. 3 WE CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS WERE WELCOMED BY THE TWO PROTESTANT CHAPLAINS SERVING THE MEN THERE, Chaplain David Quinn, USN, an Episcopalian, and Chaplain Ralph Brown, USA, who was, I think, a Baptist. Of that I'm not certain. Thereafter the five of us shared quarters with other officers in one of the barracks.

They had been holding services in various parts of the camp, in the open. But now with the rainy season on, some sort of protection was needed, especially since we planned to erect temporary altars in the various group areas to which we were detailed. I have mentioned that I was assigned to serve the Navy-Marine group. Fr. O'Brien was chaplain to the Navy-Army-civilian mixed group and Fr. Wilson served the Catholics in the Army group, which occupied the back part of the prison compound.

So we applied to the Japanese authorities for permission and materials for three chapel shelters and to our surprise they promptly and efficiently provided both. Our boys built neat and serviceable coverings of nipa thatch over the places designated, and thereafter services were held regularly. The Protestant chaplains, in addition to their usual services of prayer and song, held a Communion service at least once a month.

One of the great problems of the Catholic chaplains here and at Camp No. 1 (and wherever stationed) was to maintain a supply of wine and

wafers for the celebration of Mass and for Communion. Now a German priest in Manila came to our aid.

He was Fr. Teodoro Bottenbruch, a member of the Society of the Divine Word, who had for many years been a parish priest in Quezon City, a residential suburb of Manila. As a German citizen he was not interned, and had been allowed by the Japanese to visit all the accessible prisons and camps in which Americans were held. Fr. Bottenbruch, a man close to 70, had been working in the Philippines for almost 30 years.

Once a month he visited Camp No. 3. In addition to bringing altar wine and altar breads, he brought food and clothing – this, of course, with the approval of the Jap authorities in Manila and at the camp. As a result, a great many in the camp, Catholics and Protestants alike, benefited from his visits. Any who had friends or friendly contacts in Manila made the German priest his emissary, and often he arrived loaded down with bundles. Frequently he brought generous donations from

the Catholic Women's League of Manila for general distribution.

At each of his monthly visits the three Catholic chaplains would be called to the Jap administration building and allowed to speak to Fr. Buttenbruch in the presence of Japanese interpreters. The mere fact that we could chat with him was a consolation to us, even though the subjects were limited, and, as a result of the supplies which he provided, each of us was able to say Mass for each camp group every day. We also had the rosary and litany after supper each night.

Around the middle of 1943 Fr. Buttenbruch was no longer permitted to come up from Manila. Thereafter, though we received occasional shipments from the Catholic Chaplains' Aid Association, we had to go to lengths to conserve our supply of wine and altar breads (an unleavened wafer), essentials for the celebration of Mass. So from the time Fr. Buttenbruch's visits ended, altar wine was poured into the chalice with a medicine dropper – one dropper full. In the ceremony a very small amount of water is added to the wine, usually poured from a cruet. Now we added the water with a dropper – one or two drops. Communion wafers were broken into very small pieces for distribution to our many daily communicants.

At some time I had heard the expression about there being “no atheists in foxholes,” but I'm not sure whether it was while we were still prisoners or in the short time we were in the Philippines after our release. While it is not literally true, because I did meet some atheists in foxholes, the saying does reflect the attitude of most of our men.

In the four months at Prison Camp No. 3, religion was a big factor in their lives. For the Catholics I can report that at the daily Masses at 6:15 there were usually 30 to 40 present in each

group and most of them went to Communion.

When you consider that our Sunday Mass attendance ran only 60 per group, and that this represented the total Catholic population, you can understand how good the daily showing was. We arranged to have chow time on Sundays moved ahead to 7 o'clock (breakfast rice usually was dished out starting at about 6:40), so that we would have time for a short, simple, practical talk to the men.

Aside from the services the boys in camp showed a lively interest in religion, and after the night service usually started a confab. All sorts of questions were asked by Catholics and Protestants alike – and by some of the Jewish boys, too, of whom there were 40 or 50 in the camp.

Because of an interesting angle, I'll mention that in the four months we had more than 100 conversions, with the accompanying ceremonies of Baptism and First Communion. Then we submitted a plan to the Japanese to invite the Archbishop of Manila, or any other bishop in the Philippines, to come out to the camp and administer the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Now the Archbishop of the Philippines is Michael O'Doherty, a citizen of Eire, a neutral country, so he was left free to carry on his episcopal duties. So our plan looked good to us. Col. Beecher approved it and so did the Jap authority at our camp. But when it reached the Nip command at Manila it was held up and then came back with a “not for the present” form of rejection. I thought then and still am sure that the Japs passed up one of their best chances for a piece of favorable propaganda. They could have said, especially to the Filipinos, “Look, there may be a war on, but we do nothing to interfere with religious practices.” But they didn't see their chance, and we never did have our Confirmation ceremony.

CHAPTER TEN

Fear of Death by Torture
Was Always in All Minds

EARLY IN THE FALL OF '42 WE HAD AN OUTBREAK OF SERIOUS EYE TROUBLE AT CAMP 3. NUMBERS OF MEN, SOMETIMES TWO OR THREE NEW CASES A DAY, SUFFERED FROM EYE ULCERS THAT CAUSED TEMPORARY BLINDNESS. Whether the blindness would be permanent nobody then knew, so there was a terrible fear in everybody's heart. So far as I know, all the patients did recover their sight; but it was sad to see these men with bandaged eyes being led around the camp by companions.

I suppose this outbreak was due to some specific infection, but poor nutrition caused a lot of eye trouble all through the prison period. There were eye doctors among our medical personnel at both Camp 3 and Camp 1, but they, like the other medics, were hard pressed for materials with which to work.

They had a few lenses that they brought with them. Later other glasses were available – some sold by their owners to get money for food, others from . . . well, though we made it a point not to inquire too closely, everybody supposed that the glasses of all men who had died were added to the optical supplies. In the final stages of our imprisonment, when everybody's eyes were going bad, I was lucky enough to get a pair of glasses that probably aren't quite right but are close enough to give me good service.

Here at No. 3 the boys started a weekly variety show – recitations, songs, and all sorts of novelties. At first some of the stuff was on the off-color side, but it didn't go over. A lot of good individual talent was discovered. We also tried group singing, but

it didn't go so big and was dropped. Somehow the boys weren't just in a singing mood.

In the course of the Summer several small groups were shipped off to work in other parts of the island. I remember that a few men went to Nichols Field, where we heard that 400 or 500 Americans were working on the airfield. Some men would eventually return to us; many didn't. Stories were brought back of horrible conditions at Nichols; stories of brutal beatings by Jap guards and of deaths. From what I heard I should say that Nichols Field was the toughest assignment on the island. Some of the groups that went out to do salvage work on Bataan had a better time of it.

One day around the end of September we are all called to assemble at the principal open space in the camp, and there were informed that the Japanese colonel in command of the two Cabanatuan prisons had come up to give us a talk. What it was all about we didn't know.

Then they led in three Americans, their hands tied behind their backs, and signs hanging from

ropes about their necks. The signs read: "I tried to escape and found it impossible," or something like that.

The substance of the Japanese colonel's long harangue, as given by his interpreter, was that it was useless for any of us to try to escape, as these men had discovered, because all the islands in the Pacific were occupied by Japan and there was no refuge anywhere.

"He says, 'Be patient,'" the Jap interpreter told us. "He says, 'The war will be over soon, and after Japan's victory you will be sent back to your homes.'" This, remember, was in 1942.

The three Americans said nothing. They showed no signs of having been beaten; yet I remember that they were dark-skinned, and I supposed they were boys of Mexican blood. They were led off by ropes and I never heard further of them.

What impressed me most about this business was our own apprehension before it got underway. We were ready for almost anything. I was talking afterwards with a naval officer, now a prisoner in Japan, and he said that he expected that any day the Japs would come in and machine-gun us. We had all heard of the Death March by this time and of savage brutality elsewhere. I remember having read that the Japanese policy was not to take prisoners; I think that was in Gunther's "Inside Asia," which a dental officer had on Bataan. So though I had seen only "slapping around" and as yet no instance of cold-blooded cruelty, I shared the general fear that some day "something is going to happen."

In addition to the news brought in by our own returnees, there was always the underground. I can give you one sample of how it worked. There was a young Filipino girl, 18 or 19 years old, whose home was up to the north of us on the way to Bongabon. She'd go into Manila, by bus to Cabanatuan town and thence by train, and come out bearing written messages from some in the camp who had close friends there among the Filipinos. More important, she would bring medicine and money; and the money meant food for those most in need of it. These she left at certain points in the fields near our camp where they were picked up by certain other persons whose identity had best not be mentioned. This went on regularly, but only a few in the camp knew of it.

Here you have just one story of the bravery and the loyalty of the great mass of the Philippine population. This girl knew the risk. Death was the penalty. She was just one of thousands of unnamed heroes among the Filipinos.

Rumors were current in middle October about a possible breakup of Camp No. 3. One version was that we were all going to Camp No. 1. Another had us headed shortly for Manila.

On Oct. 30 the thing materialized. Half of the camp population was transported to Camp No. 1 on that day. I went down with the final cleanup on the 31st. Those unable to make the march were loaded into trucks, with the rest of us trailing afoot.

Just how far it is I don't know, though we always spoke of the two camps as being 12 kilometers apart, better than seven miles. But it took us from about 7:30 in the morning until around noon to cover the distance. Few were actually ill, but none was in shape for a march. We arrived in a torrential downpour, our bags and scant possessions dripping water.

I have used the term "slap around" to indicate the punishment inflicted on our men and officers for minor infractions, deliberate or accidental, fancied or real, of Jap rules and orders. This will be a good place to explain what this "slapping around" was. . . sometimes.

As we pulled into Camp No. 1 a Jap sergeant spotted one of our boys, Marine Sgt. Stanley Bronk of Seattle, aboard one of the trucks.. Bronk was where he had been told to go by the guards at No. 3 camp but the Jap sergeant evidently thought otherwise. He ordered Bronk down, and then struck him a vicious blow on the ear with his fist. From that time on Bronk had trouble with his ear; it was still bothering him when we got away together more than two years later.

That is an extreme example of "slapping around." For the most part it was a crack with the open hand or a side-slap with the fist that did no serious injury. The boys felt it, but the greatest effect upon them was inside. Yet they'd just have to clamp down on their emotions, and just take it.

This served as a reintroduction to Japanese Military Prison Camp No. 1, which was to be my home for the next 27 months.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Burial Detail Left Camp with Dead at 4 Each Day

WE HAD NOT VIEWED WITH ANY PLEASURE THE MOVE TO WIPE OUT CAMP NO. 3 AND SEND US TO NO. 1. Through the Summer we had been getting word of conditions there and knew what to expect.

We now found the prisoner population much lower than what it had been when I left early in July. Deaths, outgoing labor details to other parts of Luzon, and group shipments to camps in Japan had so reduced numbers that many of the upper barracks were untenanted; and even after all of our crowd from No. 3 was housed, there were still many empty barracks at the rear of the camp. My guess is that there weren't many more than 6000 Americans here after our men got in, exclusive of those in the hospital area.

We had heard about the heavy toll of deaths. No. 1 had lost 40 or 50 a day. I recall that somebody at Camp 3, after we got that news, figured that at this rate Camp No. 1 would be wiped out in six months.

We had heard also of the sad affairs of attempted (and actual) escapes. At one time three officers had been caught and practically beaten to death outside the camp, in full view of many of the men. All officers in the barracks in which the three had lived were confined to quarters for 30 days. Also, as a result of escapes, a ban had been put on weekly shows that had been started after I left in July; and more telling punishment was handed out in a shortening of rations.

At least, food was short for a time (shorter than usual), and this was believed by the men to be a mass reprisal.

Those of us who had just come down from No. 3 were also conscious of the stricter attitude of the sentries. Everything here was on such a large scale that the Japs evidently figured that had to run things in a more machine-like way. A rule was a rule and there were no liberties.

Sanitary conditions were perhaps slightly improved as against those I had found here in July, but not notably so. Yet there were fewer hospital cases, and the daily death list was down from its peak. But the whole camp population was down, too.

About the middle of October, Lt. Col. Beecher, who had done such an excellent job at No. 3, was put in charge here by the Japs as American commandant. He immediately made changes. Beecher put up a fight (he could stage a good battle when he went after something), and got the Japs to provide materials.

Water was piped into the galleys, which up to this time had to get water from the few outside taps. The whole latrine system was reorganized and rebuilt, and repairs were made on some of the barracks.

Within a couple of months there was distinct evidence of improvement.

On my second day in camp I went over to the hospital area. To make this visit I had first to get the permission of my group leader (the camp was organized for administrative purposes into three groups, as at No. 3), and then the O.K. of our camp commandant. Thereafter I could visit the hospital every afternoon..

It was a sorry affair – malaria, dysentery, other illnesses; many desperately sick. The doctors and the corpsmen were doing heroic work. The horror of the place was one ward (“O,” I think it was), in which those were placed who had only days or hours to live. Throughout the hospital there were no beds, and our sick were on bare bamboo shelves or berths such as I have previously described. In Ward O, however, there was a floor – a real wooden floor – and on it the dying men lay with, at most, a blanket under them.

I wish I could make every American know of the sufferings of those poor souls in the hospital area at Cabanatuan, and also of the heroism of the medical staff there, mostly Army men. They had no real hospital facilities, practically no medicines; they were overworked, and further burdened by the heavy realization of the odds under which they labored. Yet they carried on with a Christ-like spirit of humility and service. Some of the doctors and corpsmen died; many of them barely escaped death. And they carried on their work when they themselves were desperately ill. All through this they got little or no help from the Japanese.

Immediately after my return to No. 1 Camp I joined with the other chaplains in going out with the burial details. My understanding is that the Japs had not permitted this at No. 1 until some time in August.

At 4 every afternoon a long line of litter bearers, carrying the nude bodies of all who had died in the previous 24 hours, started out from the hospital area and proceeded up the road to the cemetery, about 1 1/2 miles south. A chaplain – Catholic or Protestant, according to the rotation, but never more than one – led the way. The bearers followed in single file; there might be 30 or 40 litters. And on each side marched the Jap guards with drawn bayonets.

The burial ground was just a big, unfenced field; though later, about 1944, the Japs did fence it and erected there a granite obelisk, perhaps 10 or 12 feet high, unmarked.

Arriving at the cemetery, the party would sometimes have to wait until a work detail prepared the graves. Commonly, however, they were ready – each six feet wide, about three feet deep, and long enough to accommodate 10 or 12 bodies laid side by side. Two or three or more graves were used each day at this period.

When the bodies were laid in the graves, the chaplain read a burial service. After a hand salute, the graves would be filled, and back to camp our procession would march. The Japs were silent spectators. They took no part; they gathered no flowers.

Sometimes in this Fall of 1942 a report was current in camp that Archbishop O’Doherty, at Manila, had offered to pay 30,000 pesos for meat for prisoners of war, but that the offer had been refused. What the truth of the matter was we never knew; but certainly about that time the Japs did begin to issue us a little meat – carabao meat. Carabao is gray and bloodless. Our cooks usually ground it up like hamburger and each person in camp got about a heaping teaspoonful once a day, (sometimes twice) with our issue of rice. This innovation came, I’d say, late in November or in December. The era of the greatest food scarcity was ended.

But everybody still was half-starved, and anything edible was carried to the galley to be cooked. I have heard that men ate rats. Very likely they did, but the only instance I knew about was of a boy who took a rat to be cooked and the galley crew refused to handle it.

Dogs were eaten, though not often. I was told that the flesh was excellent; I never knowingly sampled it.

One night, though, Fr. McManus said, “We’re going to have a delicacy.”

“What is it?” I asked him when the dish was brought on. Its basis was the usual rice, but there were bits of meat mixed with it.

“You try it,” was the only answer I got, so I went ahead. It was really good; about like chicken. I noticed, though, that Fr. McManus himself was eating not very rapidly and with a sort of experimental air.

“Well, what was it?” I demanded after I’d cleaned up the meal.

“Snake,” said he. It was down, so it was all right then. Somebody had brought it in from the wood detail.

But all these items were oddities and didn’t contribute much to the staple diet of rice and minced carabao meat.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Christmas Midnight Mass
for 6,000 in Moonlight

BY DEC. 1 THE DEATH RATE WAS DEFINITELY DOWN. DOUBTLESS THIS WAS DUE IN PART TO THE IMPROVED SANITARY CONDITIONS, but that element must not be overestimated. The truth of the matter seems to be that death had done its worst. The men with low resistance had died and the more fit had survived.

The great morale booster of this period was news that British and Canadian Red Cross boxes had arrived. Trucks, we learned, had been sent off somewhere to get them; and enough were brought back so that on Christmas morning (1942) each man got a box, and another box went to every two men to be divided between them.

They were not huge boxes, but if they had been enormous, they couldn't have brought more happiness to the boys starved for food and starved for contacts with the world they had once known – the world of the very things these boxes brought them. I don't remember everything, but there was a can of butter, sugar, a package of cocoa, a can of prunes, condensed milk, canned plum pudding, cheese in a can or jar, jelly, four or five packages of cigarettes and a few other things.

You just can't imagine the tremendous lift these gifts brought to all of us. Christmas and feasting go together and here was our feast.

Yet there was a sad aftermath. Two patients in the hospital, who on opening their boxes proceeded to eat the entire contents, died the next morning. In their condition (indeed, in the condition most

of the men were in) the system could not stand so substantial a meal. But there was little danger to most of us on that score, for nearly all the boys treasured their new supply and doled out the delicacies over a long period. We didn't know when another box would arrive.

Another highlight of Christmas, 1942 – and for many of us it was the most notable event of our whole imprisonment – was the Midnight Mass . . . a solemn high Midnight Mass such as I never expect to see again – said in the open under a great moon in the presence of almost every man in our part of the camp (nearly 6000) and many of our captors.

Chaplain Scecina, who comes from Indianapolis, had by this time organized and trained an excellent choir of officers and enlisted men. On a platform near the middle of the camp, used for entertainment, he erected a portable altar and decorated it in Christmas fashion with odds and ends found about the area.

Fr. Scecina said the Mass, with Fr. Wilson as deacon and Fr. O'Brien subdeacon. An enlisted man, named Fitzpatrick, whose home was in

St. Paul, Minn., led the choir, and Fr. John McDonnell, an Army chaplain from Brooklyn, preached the sermon.

I was the narrator, who explained the ceremonies, for more than 80 percent of the congregation was non-Catholic. So I stood in shadow at the side of the platform, from where I looked out upon a scene so inspiring that it surely must have brought the meaning and the spirit of Christmas to everyone present.

The platform on which the altar rested was about three feet high and stood on a slightly elevated spot so everyone had a clear view of the ceremony. Over the platform, with permission of the Japanese, a row of electric lights illuminated the altar and made it stand out in the otherwise lightless camp; and on the altar itself glowed our substitutes for candles – glass cups with a little oil in them and improvised wicks.

A few steps led up to the platform, in front of which we had placed two rows of chairs and benches. In the front row sat the Jap commander and a dozen of his officers, with our own commandant, Lt. Col. Beecher, USMC, and his adjutant, Maj. James Bradley, USMC, of Millinocket, Me. Other American camp officials occupied the second row and then behind them, seated on the ground, was the great congregation that would have done honor to any cathedral.

The flickering altar lights, the vestments of the priests, the ceremonies which so many had never before seen, the solemn chant of the celebrant and his assistants, and the response of the choir, centered all eyes and ears in one direction. From my place in the darkness I explained what was going on, the purpose of each move of the celebrant, and the happenings and the symbolisms of the ceremony. Due to a slight breeze, the words were heard clearly even by those farthest from the altar.

Fr. McDonnell's sermon was on the meaning of Christmas. He took for his text the first part of the Ave – "Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee" – and his theme was that devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to her who gave birth to the Savior of the world on the first Christmas night, is the fulfillment of the spirit of Christmas in the lives of men.

For men in the hospital area Fr. Talbot of Fall River, the hospital chaplain, also said a Midnight Mass. He had contrived an open-air chapel for his usual daily Mass by removing the side wall of matting from a section of his quarters, so that his temporary altar was in full view. For the Christmas season the boys of that area had built a Christmas crib beside the altar, replete with figures of the Holy Family, the shepherds, animals, etc., each figure carved from wood by the men themselves. The Japs allowed a single electric light bulb to illuminate the crib.

All formal and lengthy sermons such as that of Fr. McDonnell were censored by the Japs, and were supposed to be in their hands a week in advance; but when they saw that the essential part of the Catholic service was the Mass itself, and when it was explained to them that our brief talks were just scriptural explanations and catechetical instruction, they waived censorship.

Our Christmas dinner was of rice and carabao hamburger, supplemented by the contents of our Red Cross boxes.

In the course of the Christmas observances (non-religious) came an incident that has engraved itself in my memory.

It happened in one of the barracks, where several officers were celebrating Christmas in their own way, with a few illicit libations (smuggled in) and with songs. In the midst of the singing some one in the group brought out from a hiding place a small American flag. Immediately the touch of hilarity died down; there was a profound silence, and tears came to the eyes of every man present at the sight of the flag which they had not seen in so many months. When New Year's Eve approached, the Japanese commander was reminded about the American custom of seeing the New Year in, and permission was gained to stay up until midnight. Usually we were supposed to be in our bunks at 9.

At 12 o'clock the galley crews served cocoa, made from the packets in the Christmas boxes, and a rice cookie, and then we waited around for the midnight bell to sound.

The "bell" which gave the camp its time was not a bell. It was a gong – made from the wheel of a

railroad car, suspended from a post, and struck with a piece of pipe. Furthermore, our gong sounded Navy time, that is “bells.” So when midnight arrived, there came over the air not the landlubber’s 12 strokes, but the Navy’s eight bells.

A great cheer went up, and everybody was calling out “Happy New Year,” and hoping that by the next New Year we’d all be back home.

The Jap guards, those on duty and the others in their camp just across the road, became so alarmed at the uproar that the Jap officer of the day came over and asked our senior officer to quiet his men down a bit.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Prisoner Farm Workers
Often Brutally Beaten

THE YEAR 1943 WAS USHERED IN WITH A STRING OF JAP HOLIDAYS (JAN. 2-5) THAT SUITED US PERFECTLY. WE WERE GIVEN LAYOFFS FROM THE USUAL WORK DETAILS. Sometime earlier the Nips had organized a regular system of detaining men and officers to labor at various jobs – the idea seeming to be to leave none idle in our camp, for any sign of unoccupied men brought an immediate increase in the size of the call for workers.

The largest number usually was assigned to the wood detail, which had been operating from the earliest days of the camp. Sometimes the wood-cutting area would be 10 or 12 kilometers distant. On such occasions it was usual to drive the men out and back in trucks, though often they had to foot it one way. They would start off about 7:30 in the morning and get back at 5 or 6. The noonday rice was sent out to them. The men had to chop wood all day, saw it into lengths and load it on the trucks. Here in camp another detail chopped it in small pieces for the galley cook stoves – our own and those of the Japs.

Another detail, which operated in the four or five months of the Spring dry season, cut, made and gathered hay in the fields about two miles from camp. This detail had to carry the bundles back to the Jap area, where the hay was used as feed for the carabao. It was highly important to us that these animals should be well fed, for they were used not only as draft animals but also provided us with meat.

Animals selected for our use were slaughtered and cut up by our own men.

In all work details officers and enlisted men labored side by side. Everybody in camp was detailed for these work gangs, with the exception of those officers and men who had definite work assignments in the administrative machinery of the camp itself, and in the hospital.

There was a road construction detail that worked in and near the camp and another and pleasanter detail which went with the daily bull-cart (carabao) train that moved over the road into Cabanatuan every day to fetch supplies.

Sometime before the middle of 1943 (and perhaps as early as February or March) the Japs started operation of a large farm in the field immediately adjoining our compound on the south. This was virgin ground, and with the inadequate tools provided, the task of turning it over to cultivation was a grueling one. There was one tractor, but most of the work of turning the sod was done with pick and shovel. It was just plain coolie labor.

I worked on the wood detail for a short time, carried hay regularly, and was fairly regular on the farm detail up to the last six or seven months, when I was assigned as a senior group-chaplain within the camp.

There must have been a couple of thousand men or more at work on the farm every day, for it grew to be much larger than the whole camp area. We cultivated, weeded, dug, collected and carried in all the products, and all this under a blazing sun. On a day of steady rain, of course, we did not work. This wasn't because the Japs had consideration for us. Their consideration was for the crops, which would be damaged if worked on in rainy weather. But if rain clouds came up while we were at work, we were kept right at it until the downpour started. Then we would line up and be counted in the field, march to our area and stand there and be counted again, with the rain coming down in a torrent all the while.

Boys on the wood detail got regular soakings every day in the rainy season and the other details weren't much more fortunate.

In the dry season the farm was watered by hand. When the farm detail ended its work, a fresh detail arrived and for three hours, from 5 o'clock until dark, its men traveled back and forth between the rows of crops and a small elevated water tank, carrying five-gallon cans of water.

Our weather was divided by the seasons like this: From January to March, the period of monsoons, with a 40-50 mile wind that blew without letup for three or four days, then laid off two or three, and started in again. Day and night it blew, whipping everything before it, including sand and dirt (because this is the dry season) to get all over your rice as you carried it back to your barracks from the galley. We'd be likely to abuse the monsoon when it was with us, and pray for it when it wasn't.

Next, from April through June, we baked, for the monsoon ended but the rain was yet to come. By June all our area would be dried and the grass nothing but a brown carpet.

July brought the rainy season, which ran on till December.

The food produced went mainly to the Japs, some to their camp, the greater part shipped by bull-cart into Cabanatuan town. We got enough to be of some help, but not much. We grew corn, telitum. (I don't know how to spell it; it was something like spinach), camotes, which are a variety of yam or sweet potato; onions (which we never got), parsnips, cucumbers, and tomatoes (of which got mainly the rotten ones).

It was on the farm detail that our men suffered most from the beatings of their guards. The "whys" of Japanese behavior are beyond my comprehension, so I can't explain why guards of the farm detail commonly acted like brutes while those on other details weren't so often tough.

On the farm, sometimes for minor infractions of orders (usually due wholly to misunderstanding) but usually for no apparent cause at all, beatings would be administered by both Jap non-coms and by the sentries, who carried clubs instead of, or in addition to their rifles. I call them clubs, but I suppose the Japs would call them rods. They were sticks three or four feet long, and an inch or more in diameter. The Japs would bellow at some poor fellow and beat him unmercifully with these sticks.

Another favorite trick of theirs was to trip a man and when he was down kick him in the stomach and face. I've seen men left bleeding from the mouth and ears and many had to be hospitalized when they got back to camp.

Every day Col. Beecher would protest to the camp commander through the official interpreter.

"Very sorry, it will not happen again," was the usual response. But the beatings continued daily.

As far as I could learn, the Jap non-com rules the roost in his own outfit, and doesn't hesitate to beat up his own men. That is their way of obtaining obedience to orders. I was told that the Japanese officers couldn't understand how discipline could be maintained in the United States Army without recourse to corporal punishment.

For a long time the work details went out seven days a week. Then the Japs let us rest on Sundays, whether of their own volition or as a result of protest from our commandant I don't happen to know. Perhaps they realized belatedly that they could get more out of us if we had a chance to rest. Nobody in camp was in condition to work even six days a week. Everybody was half-starved; everybody was suffering from some sort of ailment.

Men working in the fields would often drop from sunstroke. Exposure to the sun was about the worst thing possible for those who had been given quinine for malaria.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Nine Threatened With Death If One Prisoner Escaped

ON THE OCCASION OF ONE OF THE INSPECTIONS MADE BY THE JAP GENERAL IN COMMAND OF ALL PHILIPPINE PRISON CAMPS, A CHANGE WAS MADE THAT ADDED TO THE DISCOMFORT AND SUFFERING. He ordered that from that time on all prisoners except those on the wood detail must work without shoes. This was to make escape more difficult.

The hardship endured by our men under this new rule can only be known to those who experienced it. The ground was seemingly red hot under the burning sun. The sharp rocks and the rough stubble caused sores that were almost impossible to heal. In fact, the physical condition of all of us, with a general tendency toward beri-beri as a result of dietary deficiencies, brought ulceration from even the merest abrasion. Some men had sores all over their bodies. (I have seen some of the scars which Fr. Dugan bears as a result of conditions such as he here describes. W. de L.)

Due to the numbers and vigilance of the guards escapes by our men were few and far between, but some did manage to get away.

One night two men who had been on the watering detail at the farm were discovered missing at the final roll call. The Japs sent out their search parties – and the next day we learned of Jap brutality and sadism in the concrete.

One of the two men had been captured and killed. His body was brought back and turned over to our hospital for examination and burial. A doctor told me about the condition of the body. It was horrible.

The second man was never heard from and presumably got away.

When the boy's body was brought back, the Japs called all our group leaders together. Pointing to the sheet-covered litter, the Japs informed our officers that this was what would happen to any prisoner who should attempt to escape.

Attempts to get away also were discouraged by a regulation that was emphasized from time to time by the Japs. All prisoners were grouped into squads of 10, and the rule said that if any man in the squad escaped, the other nine would be shot. These squads were known as "execution squads" and this arrangement obtained for the duration of our incarceration.

I have no first-hand information of the threat to shoot the remaining nine ever having been carried out. However, stories were current from other parts of the island that the regulation had been enforced.

As the months ran on our clothing problem became acute. We had managed to get occasional donations from contacts in Manila, and on one occasion I recall that the Japs issued to most of the men

dungarees and dungaree jackets which they had taken from supplies of the Philippine Army. But hot sun and constant soakings quickly wrecked anything a man owned.

In the fields many wore just shorts – either the underwear type or roomier outside shorts. But don't picture the nicely tailored affairs you find in stores. Many of our boys "rolled their own" out of pieces of clothing otherwise unwearable. The ingenuity of some even enabled them to make shorts from bits of old GI blankets.

Some whose skin couldn't stand the tropic sun wore shirts, others dungaree coats that eventually became so patched that they looked as if they'd been made from a patchwork quilt. My use of the word "dungaree" may be wrong, for garments issued by the Japs were of light-weight material like denim, not like the rugged stuff you get in stateside dungarees.

Circumstances eventually forced most of our boys to perform marvelous feats of tailoring in order to cover their bodies. And I often thought that if we could only take a movie of one of our details coming into camp after a day at work, especially in a rain, their few garments soaked and their bodies blue with cold, they would have looked worse than...I was going to say "scarecrows," but scarecrows at least have coats and hats. If we could have caught the bent, limping forms and the strained features, the picture would have been beyond your wildest imagination.

A contributing cause of our clothing trouble was the seizure of some articles by the Japs. Once or twice a year there was a general inspection of all our gear – clothing, personal effects, everything we possessed. This process usually extended over three days, one of our three camp groups being inspected each day. When they started this, and we saw how the first day went, with the Japs confiscating all extra clothes, the men of the other two groups buried most of their stuff, and thereafter the Japs found little to grab. But even what was saved quickly wore out.

Partly through necessity and partly as a means of diversion, our boys turned their hand to producing substitutes for almost everything. Give some men a tin can, a nail or two and a few bits of wood and it was unbelievable what they could produce.

I was told that one day a couple of Jap officers passing through the hospital saw one of our boys working

on some sort of device. One Jap said to the other, in understandable English, "If we give these Americans time enough, they'll have a railroad built through the camp."

One naval officer made practical oil lamps out of empty cans (from the Red Cross boxes I've mentioned) and empty bottles. The can formed the base of the lamp, from which protruded a wick made from bits of cloth or other suitable material. Then the bottoms were cut out of the bottles...and there you had as fine a lamp chimney as you'd want. The officer rented his lamps (run on oil smuggled in from the Jap area by some of our boys) for a small sum per week, and so managed to get a little money with which to buy food at the commissary. For a few weeks the Japs tolerated this violation of the "no lights" rule; then they clamped down and the flourishing lamp business came to an end.

Our expert craftsmen produced all kinds of pipes from the ordinary native woods. To us they were the equals of the best stateside pipes. Their makers sold them at prices ranging from five to 30 pesos, or \$2.50 to \$15. Some were bought for practical use, others as souvenirs; we were always thinking of the day we'd start home.

Smoking was always a problem here at Cabanatuan. At first we had some native Alhambra tobacco, very coarse and of poor grade. There were also some native cigarettes. But supplies of both dwindled.

As your American has to have his smokes, the Filipinos now brought whole leaf tobacco to the commissary. It was of the very lowest quality, and so full of mold and dirt that we had to wash it. After drying it in the sun, we'd cut it up fine with a razor blade or mess kit knife. This was for our pipes or "makings." After a time we didn't get much of even this.

Due to the absence of the usual cigarette paper the men used anything. Perhaps the paper most commonly resorted to was a page torn from the pocket-size editions of the New Testament, which for size and thinness made perfect cigarettes.

A common practice among very many was that of patrolling the grounds for butts. But even butts were scarce, because almost everybody saved his own and used the tobacco in a pipe.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Red Cross Shipments Exposed Jap Lies

WITH LIMITED EXCEPTIONS, THE ONLY REAL AMERICAN PIPES, TOBACCO AND CIGARETTES WHICH THE MEN RECEIVED WERE IN THE AMERICAN RED CROSS BOXES OF CHRISTMAS, 1943. They came sometime in December and were distributed at once.

In addition to being the greatest of morale builders (as had been the British and Canadian boxes of the previous Christmas) the American Red Cross boxes proved especially demoralizing to the Japs. For months, in their propaganda newspaper, the Manila Tribune, they had been publishing stories of the extreme shortage in the United States of such vital materials as tin, rubber and the like. What a surprise and shock they must have received when, on inspecting these boxes, they found them filled with tin containers. And with this shipment came a general supply of rubber heels! The shipment also included leather for repairing shoes, and all necessary repair equipment, such as cobblers' lasts, hammers, tacks, laces, etc. Now we were able to set up a shoe repairing shop.

BUT MANY HAD NO SHOES LEFT

By that time, unfortunately, many of the men had no shoes to be repaired. Even at the start of our imprisonment footwear was in bad shape after the wear and tear of the campaign, and few men were able to get replacements. The most common substitute for shoes was what we called the "go-ahead," a

flat piece of wood shaped to the outline of the foot and held on by a couple of straps crossed over the instep. I've seen some fancy examples in shoe store windows since my return home; but our Cabanatuan variety was often pretty crude. They were made by our boys out of scrap material.

Some of the men had almost perforce adopted the Filipino habit of going barefoot even before the Jap edict. That we must all work in bare feet accustomed nearly all of us to it. But when the repair kits arrived there was a reappearance of wrecked shoes, some of which responded to treatment.

Each Red Cross box was really a beautiful job, for in addition to all sorts of substantial foods and delicacies, there were vitamin tablets for every man, something sorely needed.

These 1943 boxes were the only food and smoking materials that got through to us from the American Red Cross. Later, in 1944, we received a welcome shipment of books and other reading material, but no foods.

EVERY BOOK A "BEST SELLER"

The 1944 books were a wonderful addition to our well-worn camp library. I mentioned previously

that a great many men had kept a book or two in their bags after the surrender. Sometime in '43 a call went out to turn in all reading matter so that we could form a central lending library in the recreation building. We got everything – novels, classics and (from the Japs) textbooks which they had picked up from the grade and high schools through the islands. To these they later added, after their Manila Tribune ceased to circulate, some poor imitations of our American illustrated magazines, with texts in English and Tagalog, glorifying Jap accomplishments in occupied territories.

Everybody had an opportunity to review his schoolday texts. I read, among many others, a number of grade school geographies. Since they were special Philippine editions, they proved especially interesting. I read three or four school histories of the United States. Arithmetic books were in great demand through the camp.

Now, in contrast, came this Red Cross shipment of '44 which brought us all the latest publications – novels, biographies and general scientific books. The shipment included 15 copies of Gray's Anatomy – not exactly a late number, but it did give our doctors a chance to do a little review work.

The lending library was well organized and was staffed largely by our officers. We patrons had library cards, bearing our name, rank and serial number. We were allowed five days on a novel, 10 on a textbook, and the "overdue" penalty was deprivation of library privileges for a term of days. Money fines were out of question. Money was too precious for that.

SOME MONEY WAS SMUGGLED IN

The sources of our funds were twofold. The first and most bountiful source was the "grapevine." Friends throughout the island managed to smuggle money in, and in many cases in large amounts. I've touched on this before. Details will have to wait the end of the war.

Sometimes we didn't even know where the money came from. For instance, it wasn't until after our release that I learned that the Army and Navy nurses confined at Santo Tomas in Manila had taken up several collections among themselves and had forwarded the money to us – sometimes to

individuals, sometimes for general distribution to the most needy.

The second, and limited, source was Jap payments. About the middle of 1943 the Japs started monthly payments to officers – 50 pesos (\$25) a month to lieutenant colonels, 40 to majors, 30 to captains, 20 to all lieutenants, and the same amounts to Navy men of corresponding grade. A peso was worth 50 cents.

Enlisted men were paid (a gross abuse of the term, as you'll see) on the basis of work done. Say there were 100 men on detail; the Japs would pay only a certain percentage of the men each day, and the daily rate was one centavo – half a cent. Coolie labor was never like that. Our officers managed to rotate the pay allotments so that every enlisted man in camp got approximately equal amounts each month, but the most he could expect was 20 or 25 centavos, or 10 or 12 cents.

40 DAYS LABOR FOR ONE EGG

Now in terms of purchasing power at the canteen, 20 or 25 centavos was next to nothing. You may recall that I mentioned certain prices as they were in parts of 1942 – not much above normal. But by '43 the islands were feeling the shortage of everything, and prices jumped. I don't pretend to remember exactly the 1943 commissary prices, but I'd say that eggs were 40 centavos each and a package of Philippine cigarettes that sold in Manila for 5 centavos before the war now was fetching 70. A can of fish, if you could get it, sold for 10 pesos, or \$5. So you can see what the Jap "pay" to our enlisted men amounted to.

The question is sure to be asked about what the more fortunate officers did for the enlisted men. With rare exceptions, they did everything they could do; but in terms of effective help this was never very much. Even the highest paid officer in the camp had a monthly purchasing power of just five cans of fish (perhaps 40 little fishes altogether), or a few dozen eggs.

As for money that came via the grapevine – it wasn't by any means confined to the officers. Many of the men had a sizeable number of Filipino friends, and some had married Filipino wives. Nevertheless, the enlisted man did have to bear the brunt, and through it all he never wavered. He was

magnificent in his courage and his confidence; for plain everyday “guts” you couldn’t beat him. I knew thousands of these boys intimately, and every man of them won my undying admiration.

MEN TURN TO HANDICRAFTS

Many of the men, in order to get funds, turned to handicrafts and to odd jobs of all sorts. One boy did a wonderful job of repairing an old leather jacket I had from back in my days as chaplain in the CCC camps in Vermont. It was badly worn and its zipper was gone, but this camp tailor added some buttons and buttonholes and the jacket was a life-saver for me at the time of our escape in '45. Other men managed to earn an extra peso or two by doing laundry for some of the officers.

And then there were other ways in which money changed hands. Our boys turned out some of the most beautiful dice tables you’ve ever seen outside of a high-class gambling casino. They were lined with green cloth, were properly marked and did a

flourishing business. Three or four men would run the game and take a percentage of the turnover.

Then there were card games (all of this in spite of Jap rules against gambling) played with pretty badly worn and dirty cards until the arrival of a new supply in boxes from home on March 17, 1944.

This St. Patrick’s Day distribution was of personal boxes that had been sent by friends and families. They arrived in one lot and mine bore a Boston date of August, 1943. So far as I am aware these were the only boxes received by anybody in Cabanatuan other than the Red Cross boxes of Christmas 1942 and 1943. Many of the boxes contained packs of playing cards, and games started up immediately.

One enlisted man made a slot machine from a wooden box, some cardboard and bits of metal. It didn’t work, but still was a most ingenious looking device. It had slots, lever, dials that spun and even a money cup. But it was only a sham.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Shaving Became Problem;
Japs Grabbed Razors

ONE OF THE TREASURES OF THE BOXES FROM HOME WAS THE SUPPLY OF RAZOR BLADES MOST OF THEM CONTAINED. In a life of many problems shaving might have been a big one if we had let it be. But as blades grew scarce, men let their beards grow.

Most of us, however, managed to get along. Blades were treasured and sharpened (?) by rubbing them on bits of glass, the inside surfaces of drinking tumblers, etc. As I remember, some blades came through with both Red Cross shipments. The home boxes gave us the third, largest and last supply.

Most of the few men who used straight razors had them confiscated at the time of surrender. And those who managed to save them at that time eventually lost them when later inspections turned them up.

Almost from the start of our imprisonment some of the boys turned to haircutting. They'd do a job for anybody without charge; but those with money paid a small fee, thereby making it possible for the barbers to get a few items at the canteen. Some time in '44, when special-duty men were assigned, four or five were designated as official camp barbers and excused from work on outside details. These posts went to men who were not physically able to stand the more laborious tasks.

LETTERS BEGIN COMING THROUGH

Though we got no boxes from our friends and relatives until March of '44, letters had begun to

come through before that – around the Fall of '43. For the first few weeks only four or five letters were released each day; after that the number increased until the total in a day ran to 200 or 300.

They were all old (in this first period at least a year old) and had been quadruply censored, first in the United States, then in Tokyo, again at Manila and finally at our camp. The American censors did their work mainly by blotting out, but the Jap censors stuck to cutting, and some of the letters arrived almost in ribbons.

One letter I received from Fr. Thomas McLaughlin, S.J., procurator of the New England Province, gave me the football scores of the 1942 season. I got the letter in '44. All the team names were there, but all the scores had been cut out. Evidently the Japs were afraid that the figures contained a code message. The B. C. team was described as one of the leaders of the country. But I had nothing but my imagination to rely upon in trying to figure out just how leading it was.

Another time I received a spiritual bouquet from the students at Shadowbrook, our seminary at Lenox. This had listed the number of Masses,

prayers and Communion offered for my intention; but here again the numbers had been neatly sliced out of the page.

The largest number of letters that I knew any one person to have received in the course of our 34 months of imprisonment was somewhere between 50 and 60. I got 18 or 20. I received one letter from each member of my family except one of my sisters, Sister Therese of the Little Sisters of the Poor, whose headquarters is in Baltimore; but all, as I later learned, had been writing regularly. A very comforting letter came through from Rev. James H. Dolan, S.J., then the New England Provincial of our Order.

Shortly after the first distribution of mail it appeared that messages were cut to 25 words. I got several of this type (all counted in the 18-20 total) from Fr. Louis Logue, S.J. of the B. C. High School faculty, which briefly gave me news of my fellow Jesuits.

THEY COULD WRITE 25 WORDS

Sometime in the middle of 1943 we were allowed to send 25 words on special Jap prisoner-of-war cards to anyone in the States – one card every two months, and the messages to be confined to a greeting and a statement about our health. We tried to send some of these to friends in other prisons but it didn't work.

Everybody in camp suffered from dental troubles because of the dietary deficiencies – cavities, loose teeth, general dental deterioration. There was a dental office over in the hospital area; but our dental setup was at one end of the long American administrative building in the prison compound. Here five officers worked pretty steadily, four Army dentists and one Navy man.

A few ordinary chairs, one foot-drill and a few instruments made up their office equipment. But their greatest problem was supplies. At one time, before a big exodus of prisoners in October of '44, which will be mentioned later, they were so short of fillings that a request went out for silver coins, which they proposed to melt down and use for plugging teeth. However, so few of us were left after October that this emergency measure was never resorted to, as far as I know.

One man in camp, an officer, had his false teeth stolen by a Jap at the time of the Bataan surrender and had to get along for three years without them. No, the Jap didn't take them out of the officer's mouth. They had been giving some trouble and the officer was carrying them in his pocket. The Japs ordered everybody to show all possessions, and then helped themselves to what they fancied.

While the officer didn't enjoy being without them, it wasn't as serious a matter as it might have been if the Japs had fed us thick steaks. As it was, the stock diet of rice and bits of carabao meat was almost made to order for him.

My own teeth are in such shape that I am slated for some long sessions with the dentists at Devens; and I have one prominent gap in the front of my mouth. That tooth I lost trying to eat an ear of corn – not a fine, fat, tender ear of table corn but a hard, dry ear of the yellow corn grown for cattle feed. I managed one day to get in from the farm with two of them. One I gave away. The other our boys in the cook shack boiled for three hours in a desperate effort to make it tender. The missing tooth is testimony to their failure.

THEIR OWN VEGETABLE GARDENS

In this year also the lack of food was somewhat made up by vegetables produced in individual garden plots inside our compound. How the seeds came in I don't recall, but they were there; and both officers and men labored on their little plots in all their spare time. The largest of them weren't more than 20 by 20, but before long space was at a premium.

Hunger will drive men to many things; here it drove a few to pilfering in the gardens. You'd hear our boys tell how, overnight, their plot had been strafed. That was the term used: strafed. The business can't be excused; but we who were there can be understanding. You who read this must always remember that though we are talking about work details, of religious services, of letters and books and entertainments, through all these things runs one unending story – hunger. Hunger and weakness and illness.

As '43 rolled along small groups continued to be sent away to work in other parts of the islands; also, we were told, some who went out were being shipped to prison camps in Japan. There would be one officer with every 50 or 100 men. Consequently the camp population had gradually decreased. I'd say there were only 3000 or 4000 at Camp No. 1 early in 1944.

With few exceptions we had no Generals or full Colonels here at No. 1; I was told that all had been sent to Japan as early as August '42, mostly from Camp O'Donnell. O'Donnell had been closed down in October '42, and all its remaining prisoners sent to No. 1 with us.

That move brought Col. Duckworth to our camp. You may recall that he was in command

of Hospital No. 1 on Bataan, while I was a prisoner-patient there after the surrender. When that hospital closed he had been sent, with some of his staff, to try to correct some of the terrible conditions at O'Donnell; and he had battled to save the lives of the desperately ill men remaining there until the camp was abandoned.

Through it all Duckworth himself was in bad shape. Shortly after the surrender he had been operated on for appendicitis at Little Baguio and never got back into form again. At Cabanatuan he was always rated a patient, and as his services as a doctor were also in demand, he was allowed to remain despite his rank. Duckworth was the ranking officer in camp when the rescue came.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

American Navy Bombers
Flew Directly Overhead

THE YEAR 1944 WASN'T VERY FAR ALONG WHEN CONSTRUCTION WAS BEGUN TO ENLARGE FOR MILITARY USE, A SMALL CIVILIAN AIRFIELD ABOUT MILE FROM OUR CAMP. Everybody began to wonder what might happen if the Yanks showed up and began to drop bombs in our general direction.

Six days a week and sometimes seven, details of prisoners started out about 7 or 7:30 (often barefooted, for by this time nearly everybody was hardened to it) and marched to the field. There they dug and shoveled and leveled off the ground – sometimes using small cars on tracks, filling them, pushing them to an unloading point, dumping them, and then repeating the process unendingly. It was hard, laborious coolie labor. Lunch was brought out to them at noon – rice. The men returned at 5 o'clock, exhausted by the work of the day, the heat and the final march back.

Various opinions were expressed that the Nips would never get a chance to use the field before the arrival of the Yanks and tanks. That was a favorite expression – Yanks and tanks. What wouldn't the Yanks and tanks do when they arrived!

Sept. 20, 1944 brought the greatest thrill of our entire 34 months of imprisonment except our rescue.

At 10 o'clock that morning we sighted our first American planes – three successive formations of Navy bombers (we knew they must be off a carrier), 55 in each group, accompanied by fighter planes.

They sailed directly over us in beautiful forma-

tion, headed due west, to drop their first load of bombs on Clark Field. Some of the boys could scarcely believe the planes were ours, but the Nips on the other side of the fence were sure enough. They were utterly bewildered. They ran out of their headquarters building and barracks and scattered madly as if they were to be the immediate targets.

Any doubt about the identity of the planes was dispelled when the flight returned. Two fighters dropped out of formation and strafed the airfield. And those who had noted the direction and timed the return were sure they'd visited Clark.

Later that day Nip sentries told some of our men working on the farm:

"Too bad for American planes. When they returned to carriers, they did not find them. Japanese Navy sank all the carriers."

Yet that same afternoon about 3, the identical formation in three successive waves came over again with a fresh load. And the next morning the same number of planes appeared again.

For a long time now we had known pretty well how the tide of war was running, though few in camp knew the source of our news. Some of the

boys had manufactured a short-wave receiver from parts they had stolen from the Japs over a long period, on occasions when they helped repair radios and other electrical apparatus in the Jap camp. They built it inside a standard Army water canteen, and powered it with improvised batteries. I don't pretend to know the details, but we were getting news over it right up to the end.

In addition to the radio news, we were also hearing through the grapevine about the activities of the Filipino guerrillas; and I think it was about this time that the Japs began to really strengthen and fortify their positions around the camp. Evidently they feared a raid.

As I said before, my recollection is that for most of our stay in Camp No. 1, the area in which the prisoners were confined was enclosed by a not very elaborate barbed wire fence. Now the Nips built a triple fence around the entire camp zone, enclosing not only our prison area but the Jap area and the hospital area as well. All three fences were of barbed wire strung close together on posts. The outer fence was perpendicular. Then came a space and the second fence, also perpendicular. The third fence started at the base of the second fence and inclined inward at about a 45-degree angle.

There had always been a strong sentry patrol around us. Now they ran up two or three watchtowers, 15 or 20 feet high, with sentries posted in them, and a guard appeared on the platform of the water tower in the middle of the Jap area. The Japs also erected poles just outside the fence and mounted lights on them with reflectors that threw a glare over our area.

The final touch was the erection of strongpoints of earth, logs and sandbags just outside each corner of the outer fence.

From time we saw our first planes there was frequent air activity day and night in our part of the island. Whenever the planes came in at night the lights on the poles were shut off, and the prison area thrown again into its old-time darkness. By day our planes would bomb and strafe the airfield; and our boys used to get huge enjoyment on these occasions from watching the antics of the

Nip sentry on the water tower platform. The airfield was a mile away, but you'd think every bomb and burst of fire from our planes was aimed right at that Jap outlook. He'd keep on the near side of the tank and peer around it as though he expected to find a Yank right on the platform.

Now the grapevine began to filter in reports about the destructive raids on military objectives and shipping around Luzon.

Fifteen or 16 survivors of one bombed ship, all of them British subjects, arrived shortly afterwards to join us. They had come from Singapore as prisoners, en route perhaps for Japan, and their ship had been hit by American planes.

"Your lads are too bloody accurate," they informed us.

These men were without sufficient clothing or any personal effects, so our boys gave them whatever they could spare from their own scant possessions. The newcomers told us stories of conditions similar to ours that existed in the prisoner of war camps in Singapore and throughout the Malay Peninsula.

All through the Spring and Summer of '44, groups continued to be shipped away from our camp, either to other parts of the island or to Japan and Manchukuo. As the prison population shrunk, those of us who remained were gradually shifted to the front area of the enclosure. The extreme rear area in which I had been quartered on first arrival, in July, '42, had long since been cleared of most of its buildings, and was now outside the fence and had become part of the farm.

The old hospital area beyond the Jap camp had been abandoned, and all its remaining patients and staff shifted to the front buildings in our enclosure – those on the north end, close to the Cabanatuan road.

Water now was no longer a problem. By 1943 our just-get-out-in-the-rain method of bathing had been supplanted by the more satisfactory one of being doused by a five-gallon gasoline can filled with water from the taps. The cans and a smaller camp population made that possible. By September of '44 two showers were erected, the first in our prison section of Camp No. 1.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Japs Suddenly Pull Out; Leave Prisoners Unguarded

TOWARDS THE END OF OCTOBER, 1944, AFTER NEWS HAD REACHED US OF THE LANDING AT LEYTE, IT WAS UNDERSTOOD THAT EVERYBODY WAS GOING TO BE SHIPPED TO JAPAN. On the 30th all but the hospital patients and a small group which was to remain to care for them were ordered to be ready to leave the next day. John Borneman, as Protestant chaplain, and I as Catholic chaplain, were among those picked to stay.

On the 31st all who were going had their effects inspected, were herded into trucks, and pulled away from the camp. I'd say that 1500 to 1800 went out. A few more than 500 remained, about 480 being patients.

Three other chaplains were left in the camp, all of them hospital patients – Alfred Oliver of Washington, D. C., a Protestant chaplain, and Fr. Hugh Kennedy, S.J., of New York City, and Fr. Eugene O'Keefe, S.J., from one of the Oranges, New Jersey. The last two had been missionaries in Mindanao. Just a month before our forces on that island surrendered, both priests had been commissioned as army chaplains, and so found their way into our military prison camp.

I now had a chance to meet many men I missed when we had the bigger crowd.

One day a boy came up to me and said: "I remember meeting you when you were chaplain at the CCC camp in Marshfield, Vt."

I recalled him well – Stanley Malor of Salem, now a sergeant. In previous months in the Philippines I had run into eight or 10 other CCC

boys of my Vermont area. Stanley was the last I met, and he got out with me. Only a few days ago, when I visited the General Electric plant at Lynn in company with some of the Rangers who rescued us, I met Stanley's sister, who is doing her job on the home front.

On Sunday, Jan. 7, 1945, our senior officer, Maj. Emil Reed, an Army doctor (Col. Beecher went out with the big crowd on Oct. 31, and Col. Duckworth was a patient) was called over to the Jap headquarters and told by the commandant, a Major, that we were no longer prisoners of war.

Reed was mystified by this pronouncement and suggested an explanation.

"Exactly what is our status?" he wanted to know.

But the Jap assured him that no further information could be advanced.

"Then will you please give me a statement, just as you have made it, in writing?"

No, the Jap wouldn't do that either. He did tell Maj. Reed that if we remained within our compound no harm would come to us, but if we left it we might be shot by Japanese soldiers in that

section of the island. The Jap troop commander in that area would hereafter be in command, the Major added.

Maj. Reed was further informed that the Japanese Major, his officers and his entire prison guard were leaving camp immediately; that they had set aside a 30-day supply of rice for us.

A few hours later, about 1 o'clock that Sunday afternoon, the whole crowd pulled out bag and baggage.

To say that everyone in our camp was confused by this sudden turn of affairs will not make our mental state clear. We were bewildered. We had been told we were no longer prisoners of war, yet had been warned to stay in the compound. We were free and we weren't free. As far as we could figure it, the Japs merely had freed themselves of all responsibility for us as prisoners of war; and if we were all shot by some butcher squad that might come down on us, they could wash their hands of the whole proceeding.

Early the following morning, led by Maj. Reed, all who were able went to the Jap area and confiscated large stores of food and of shoes – good American GI shoes. Instead of finding a 30-day supply of rice, we discovered all sorts of wonderful foods. We seized and carried over to our area more than 8000 cans of stateside evaporated milk (Alpine Brand, according to the labels), several sacks of brown sugar, a huge supply of onions and other vegetables, several live pigs, chickens that were roaming the camp, live ducks from the little artificial pond at the front of the Jap area, and a few carabao – eight or 10, I think.

Now, for the first time in 33 months of captivity, we had enough to eat. The pangs of hunger subsided. For the first two days each patient was given two cans of milk, and after that one can nearly every day. For most of them it was the first milk of any kind they had tasted in a long, long time.

We had meat in fairly generous helpings. The pigs were slaughtered and barbecued. The boys dug ditches for the fires; and for grates used bedsprings from a few cots that had come down at some time from Camp O'Donnell. The pork lasted only two days. After that we had the chicken and ducks. Then from time to time a carabao was slaughtered. So from Jan. 8 to the end of the month we had an abundance of food.

On the evening of the second day – that is, Jan, 9 – a small company of Jap soldiers came into the Jap area. We wondered what this meant; but next morning they left. But from that time until the end of our captivity various Nip Army units made almost daily use of the old camp as a stopping place.

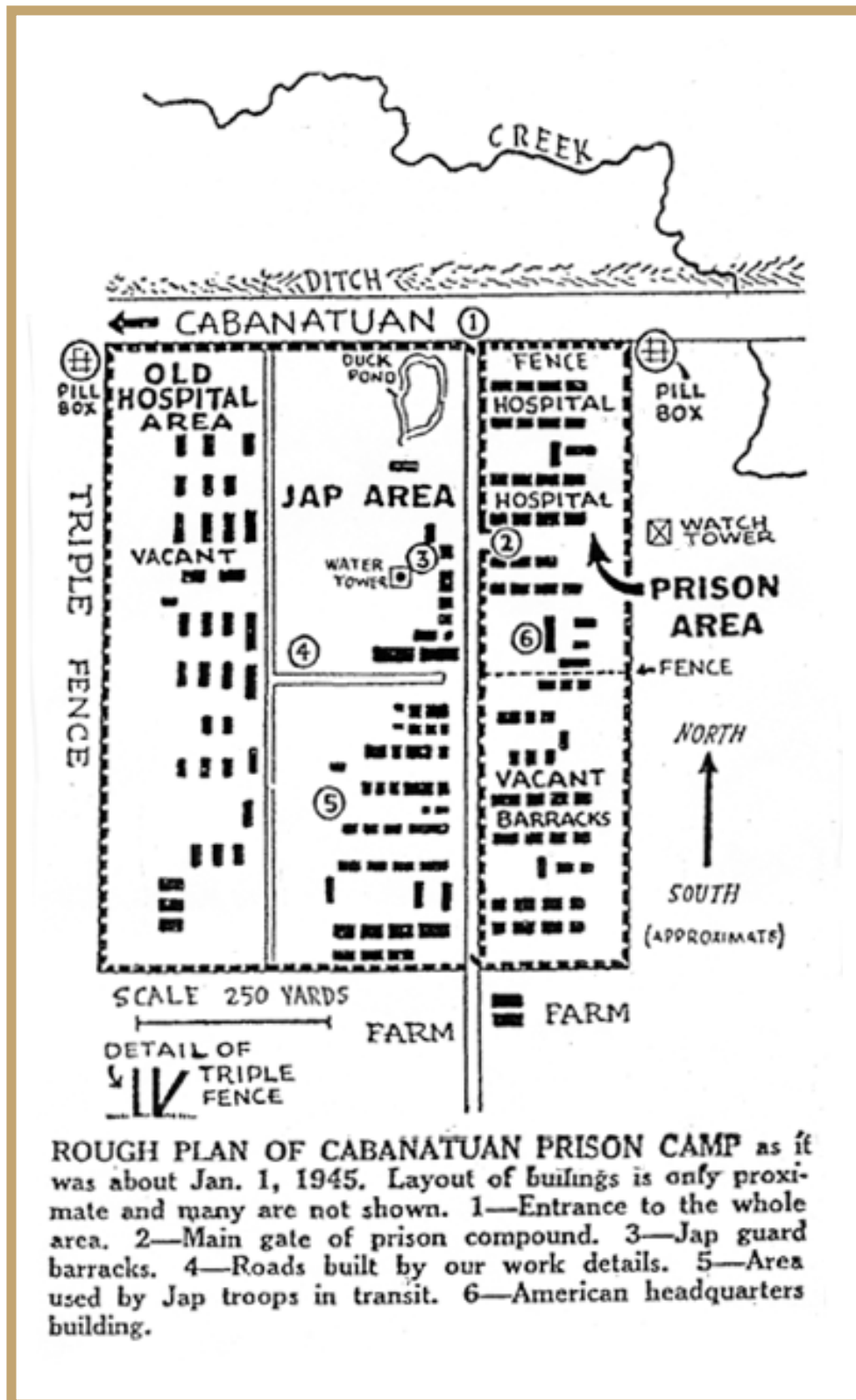
Finally, perhaps a week after our old captors departed and we were supposedly free, a small guard of less than 100 men arrived, took up quarters in a few barracks towards the front of the Jap area, and without any explanation to us, posted sentries around our camp. Our "freedom" was ended.

Not only did the Nips post sentries outside our fence, but they manned the pillbox defense on the northeast corner and put a lookout in the watch tower and atop the water tower again. Only one watch tower was now used, that just outside the fence on the east.

The Jap commander also posted a small guard on the main road close to a gate which had been thrown across the little road that ran in between our prison area and the Jap area. The general layout at this time is indicated by the accompanying plan.

During January there was an increase in American air activity over our camp and in our general neighborhood. We never knew the exact purpose of the missions. But we did know of MacArthur's landing at Lingayen Gulf, 50 or 60 miles northwest of us, on Jan. 9. That came in our secret radio I've mentioned. We typed a few sheets of bulletins every day and passed them around among the patients. Everybody was able to follow to some extent the progress of our American troops.

We knew of the drive towards Manila, and as we saw no indications of a spearhead in our direction, we feared we were going to be by-passed.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Hearts Pumped Like Mad at Cry, “We’re Americans”

IN THE AFTERNOON OF TUESDAY, JAN. 30, 1945, THERE APPEARED TO BE A BIG INCREASE IN AMERICAN AIR ACTIVITY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF OUR CAMP. We commented on it, but it had no special significance to us. We had not the slightest inkling that our rescue was at hand.

We often talked about the day when we should be free, and about the coming of the Yanks and tanks; but a great deal of our talk was to bolster our own morale. I doubt if anybody in the camp thought we’d ever get back. Most of us felt that when the Americans came our way the Nips would wipe us out to a man – with or without pretext.

That night we had chow sometime between 5 and 6. After that, everybody sat around in groups chatting, or otherwise occupying themselves. As far as we were concerned, it was to be just another evening.

By 7 o’clock night began to close in rapidly, and we could see the flare of light from artillery fire off in the direction of Clark Field. By 7:15 or so the light was pretty well gone, though it still wasn’t what you’d call pitch dark.

You may recall that I mentioned the electric lights that the Japs had erected on poles outside our area and how they were turned off whenever our planes came over. That was back in ’43. By this time, with our invasion of Luzon in full swing, these lights were never on. We were in full blackout every night. The Japs even forbade our smoking in the open for fear a match-flare might attract a bomber.

So we sat there just talking, wondering how the battle was going off to the north and west.

Suddenly came an outburst of small arms fire from somewhere at the back of the camp – right up back of our prison compound – and almost instantly the fire was taken up seemingly on all sides of us. It was so close that we needed no orders to act. Every man hit the dirt. I dropped into a shallow, dry drainage ditch; and I can still remember vividly my sudden realization that one of my arms was outside the ditch, and how I tried to get it under cover without exposing any other part of my body.

WE WERE CONVINCED THAT THE NIP GUARDS WERE WIPING US OUT, and I guess most of us were pretty well terrified. Nobody likes the idea of being mowed down without a chance of resistance.

Yet in another minute or two we became puzzled. For though the firing continued, and bullets ricocheted through the area, we heard no cries of the wounded from any of our men.

I now know that the firing lasted 15 or 20 minutes, but to us, lying there, the time ran to interminable lengths. There was the familiar rattle of small arms

and machine guns, spotted with heavier roars we couldn't make out. There were cries, and heavy firing along the little road that divided our compound from the Jap area. And then the battle sounds died down almost as suddenly as they had begun, and there came the cry that we'd been waiting for all these long months:

"We're Americans! You're free! Go down to the main gate!"

Nobody can ever give you an idea how we felt. There was amazement, joy, unbelief. Our hearts were pumping like mad.

We still didn't quite understand what had happened and there was confusion, a milling around in the darkness, for now it was black night. Our rescuers were saying, "Go to the main gate," but the main gate, as we knew it, was the main gate to our compound, a gate at the side, opening onto the little road inside the camp. That gate was closed and locked.

Col. Duckworth came up from the front of the camp. Just wait a minute, he said, and we'd all know what the number was.

Then an American soldier appeared.

"Go down to the main gate," he said; and we discovered that they'd been talking about the gateway to the whole area – a gate across the head of the camp road, opening out onto the main highway. The rescuers had blasted that gate open and then had cut through the inside wire fence into our enclosure.

More soldiers came up (we later discovered they were the Rangers) and directed us.

"Don't wait for anything," they said. And we didn't.

We streamed out onto the Cabanatuan highway. Some of the more seriously ill patients had to be helped along. Many were being carried in litters by members of the rescue party and by Filipinos they had brought along for just this work.

We went right across the high road, down through a dry ditch bordering it on the far side and across the rice paddies that lay beyond. We were going across country, heading north. Many staggered from weakness, yet all found strength in the excitement of the moment.

It was quick work. The Rangers told me afterwards that everybody was out and on his way to safety in 28 minutes from the time the first shot was fired.

We wore exactly what we had on when the attack began. Some had only shorts, others shorts and undershirts. Many were barefoot. I had on old khaki trousers, and that ancient leather jacket that had done service back when I was chaplain of the CCC camps in Vermont. My footgear was socks and a pair of the "go-aheads" I've mentioned before – just flat pieces of wood, cut to the outline of the foot, and held on by a couple of straps across the instep.

Just beyond the first rice paddy we came to a creek or slough, but it had plenty of mud. In the crossing I lost my go-aheads; and I made the rest of the march in my stocking feet and, when the stockings went, barefoot. Later in the night one of our men, a sergeant of Marines, gave me another pair of socks.

Off on the right at some little distance we could hear firing, and we were told that the action was on the Cabanatuan road, above the camp where Filipino guerrillas had set up a road block to prevent the Japs coming down when the firing broke out. There was another guerrilla road block below the camp (between the camp and Cabanatuan town), but we heard no sounds of action in that direction.

We walked fast, as fast as we could; and it seemed to us that we were racing. Yet actually the pace must have been slow, for few were in shape for a march. Soldiers on each flank guided us.

After a while we came to a river, and were met by bull carts waiting there to take on the litter cases. Some of the men in our camp hospital had only recently been operated on, and a great many others were seriously ill. Now these were moved from litters to the carts and the crossing was made. Most of us waded the stream, which wasn't more than waist deep.

CHAPTER TWENTY

“Alarm” Rescuers Heard Was 7 Bells, Navy Time

WE CONTINUED TO HEAR THE SOUND OF FIRING OFF TO OUR RIGHT FOR THE TIME IT TOOK US TO TRAVEL A MILE OR TWO FROM THE PRISON CAMP, and then it died away. They told us later that the guerrillas had drawn off, and now were protecting our flank.

Our first halt was at a little barrio called Platero, which I thought at the time must have been three or four miles from camp, but some of our guides said it wasn't anything like that. Maybe two miles. But all the traveling had been cross-country and in our physical condition each mile got longer and longer as we marched. Even those in the bull carts were wearied by the shaking and jolting. I think there were more bull carts waiting at Platero, and still more at another barrio further along; and as those on foot weakened they were placed on these new conveyances.

We must have rested at Platero for 20 minutes. Then we started on again; still at a pretty good pace, because, though a carabao isn't speedy, you can push him along at a fair rate.

It was at this first halt that I began to gather the story of our rescue. There was little conversation with anybody while we were traveling. We just kept our mouths shut and did what we were told. We were just so much baggage; the credit for getting us out goes entirely to the Rangers and the Alamo Scouts.

The American rescuing force consisted of 121 Rangers, men specially trained to carry out missions of this kind, in direct command of Capt. Robert W. Prince of Seattle, Wash. Of course, Lt. Col. Henry A. Mucci of Bridgeport, Conn., commander of the 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion, was the overall commander of the operation, and to his inspiring leadership and marvelous planning we all owe our freedom; but Prince headed up the actual attack on our camp. Mucci said to him, "It's your show; go ahead."

Under Capt. Prince were two Massachusetts boys, Lt. John F. Murphy of Springfield and Lt. William J. O'Connell of Boston. After the rescue we three held a sort of Bay State reunion. Weeks later, right here in Boston, I met Capt. Prince again and so came to really know him for the modest young American that he is.

With the Rangers were 14 men of the Alamo Scouts, a small body of picked men from various outfits whose specialty is reconnaissance behind the Jap lines. They always work in small groups, often just two or three men. They've gone ashore on Jap islands days before our landings in force; they've

penetrated Jap positions time and time again in recent months, and yet so skillful are they that they hadn't lost a single man up to the time I was last in touch with them.

The Scouts had started out from the American lines, about 30 miles away from our prison camp, on the previous Saturday. The Rangers followed 24 hours later. They traveled by night and lay low all day, making junction at two points with sizable groups of Filipino guerrillas who aided in the operation.

The story of the rescue party has been told and I do not plan to repeat it. But there was one happening that at first alarmed and thereafter puzzled the Rangers and the Scouts. Only those of us who were inside the camp can clear it up.

For sometime before the opening of the firing the Americans had been lying close to the camp. The Scouts were so brilliant at their work that they'd actually been watching the whole area all day; two of them had been for many hours within 75 yards of the Nip sentries. They sent word back to Col. Mucci in the middle of the afternoon. Then the Rangers started forward, worked their way across the open fields, and then closed in under cover of darkness.

Shortly before 7:30 that night they had most of the place completely covered – the pillbox defense near the northeast corner, a guard on the watchtower, and the guard post near the gate on the Cabanatuan main road. One detail (Lt. O'Connell's platoon) had been assigned to rush in when the gate was blown open, and wipe out the Jap prison guards in their quarters and whatever transient force might be found in the Jap area.

Another detail, commanded by Lt. Murphy, was working its way around to the back of the camp. They were scheduled to start the party.

In this critical period an "alarm bell" sounded inside the camp. The rescuers thought for a moment (as they told me on the way out) that they had been discovered and that the great advantage of surprise had been lost.

But nothing happened after the "alarm," and they proceeded according to plan.

Now the "alarm" could have been only one thing – our camp time gong. We had become so accustomed to hearing the hour and half-hour struck regularly (Navy time, in "bells") on an old railroad

car wheel that served as a camp bell that we scarcely noticed it. I am not conscious that the bell did ring that night, but it must have. It always did. So, assuming that the attack opened about 8:45, the "alarm" our rescuers heard must have been our man striking 7 bells (7:30).

(Just when the attack did begin is something of a puzzle. Fr. Dugan at first thought it was before 7:30. One account by Col. Mucci says it got underway at exactly 7:30. Another Mucci account, that of the Infantry Journal which carries a detailed time schedule that looks like the figures from an official report, says that the boys at the front of the camp were all set at 7:25 and that Lt. Murphy started the attack at the back of the camp at 7:45. And everybody seems to agree that the firing lasted about 15 or 20 minutes. From my own study of the available evidence I think the attack started at 7:45, and the "alarm" was the 7:30 time bell. – W. de L.)

We were told that when the attack opened the Jap sentries went down at the first fire. The barracks occupied by the Jap commander and his guard were riddled by fire from the road (directly through the fence) and then the gate was blown open. The Rangers made their way up the little road between our area and the Jap camp, raining fire on the barracks.

One of our Rangers told me about the Jap commander rushing out of his door in the darkness, shouting in English, "Here, what goes on?" Then he dropped in his tracks with a dozen bullets in him.

In 20 minutes not a Jap survived. Not only was the guard wiped out, but also some Nips that had come in for a daytime stop-over and were ready to pull out for the battle front with a tank and trucks.

We pieced some of this story together in the course of our journey to safety (though many of the details we did not learn until later) and there came to us a deep sense of gratitude for what these men and their Filipino associates had done for us.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

End of Long Trip Was Like
a Triumphal Procession

THERE GREW IN OUR MINDS AS WE CONTINUED THE MARCH A REALIZATION OF HOW PROVIDENTIAL HAD BEEN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PREVIOUS THREE WEEKS. As I have told before, there was one two-day period when we had been freed from all surveillance at the camp. In those two days we raided the Jap area and moved great stores of food into our prison compound.

That extra food, over the three weeks before our liberation, built new strength in even the weakest of our little group of prisoners. Had the rescuers come much earlier on their mission few of our nearly 480 patients would have been able to make the trip out.

For you must remember that the sole reason that these men had been left at camp when all the other prisoners had been moved out in October '44 (most of them to Japan), was that Jap doctors themselves had certified them as being too ill to be moved. They were the sickest, the weakest. Now here they were making this journey, most of them on foot in its first few miles. Certainly God was with us; the very sufferings with which these men had been afflicted led directly to their rescue.

Our rescuers were less fortunate than we. As we were passing out of the prison and across the road to begin our march, one of the Rangers was dying close to the prison gate.

"Leave me here," he urged, but the men stayed with him until he died. I was told that his body was taken by the guerrillas and buried with honors the next day.

The other man was not a fighter but a doctor – Capt. James C. Fisher of Vermont, son of Dorothy Canfield Fisher, the writer. He had volunteered to make the trip in order to help care for our sick men; now he was dying of Jap wounds. They carried him along until we reached the first halting place. There it was plain that he could not hope to survive the journey, so when the column moved on some of the men remained with him. They included one of our prison doctors, Maj. Stephen Sitter, of the Army Medical Corps, a few of the Alamo Scouts, Filipino patriots, and Fr. Hugh Kennedy, S.J., Army chaplain, one of the freed group

I got the story from Fr. Kennedy two days later.

Capt. Fisher died that night or early in the following day, and was buried close by.

Nearly 1000 Filipinos gathered at his grave, and a Filipino doctor spoke to them in Tagalog, telling what a brave man this was. He had laid down his life in their cause.

"This place where he lies," he told his compatriots, "must be held forever sacred, to be set aside as a memorial park."

A cross was erected over the grave, and Capt. Fisher's identification tag was hung from it.

"If the Japanese destroy this marker," the Filipino leader said, "his second dogtag will be found in a tree," which he pointed out to the throng. He warned that should the Japs approach, the cross must be removed and concealed, and then put back when the enemy had gone.

"This park, which we shall make, is to be known through all time as Fisher Park," he said.

After the ceremony our men remained near the barrio all day, and that night came in through the lines with the aid of the guerrillas.

Meanwhile we had been moving on through the night, across open fields and through wooded areas, and as we marched the moon rose over the hills. Without its light, it seems to me now, the march would have been impossible. Some may have been fearful that long before we reached our lines we might be shot down in some Jap ambush. Yet the calmness and coolness of our rescue party must have inspired everyone with confidence.

We moved in a long column, the bull carts usually in single file and we who walked straggling along beside them in twos and threes. And always we were shepherded by our rescuers and their Filipino aides.

There were three or four rests. Once or twice we had to cross main highways on which the Japs were moving troops. There were halts until the way was clear, and then we went across as fast as possible.

The skill of our guides got us through. An hour or so after daybreak we arrived at the barrio of Sibul, close to the American lines, which had been pushed forward in the three days since the rescue party started out.

"Stay where you are; we will get you," was the message that came over the field radio from our Army.

It was in the period waiting at Sibul that I first met Col. Mucci, and we met as a couple of fellow New Englanders.

"You've done a wonderful job," I said to him.

"The boys did a fine job," was the way he put it. Then he added: "But it isn't done until we get you to Guimba." The town of Guimba, (its real name, I think, is San Juan de Guimba) was inside the American lines.

Now came a new thrill. Down the road rolled a line of American trucks – ambulances, jeeps and other vehicles – carrying heavily armed guards. And what a greeting they gave us . . . shouting and cheering . . . handing out cigarettes and chocolate and candy . . . making us feel that now the danger certainly was over and that our long adventure was ended.

They drove us to the 92nd Evacuation Hospital at Guimba – past lines of American boys waving to us and yelling, so that it was like a triumphal procession. And at the ride's end we were greeted by a big group of officers.

Baths, with plenty of water for all of us. Clothes, too; and of course special attention for those who were in need of medical care. And greatest of all, our first American chow in 34 months.

A Navy warrant officer sat beside me and downed his first long drink of steaming, fragrant American coffee. "Boy," he said, "now I really have a jag on."

Then came Gen. MacArthur. Only 12 hours after our arrival he dropped in to visit us . . . and what a wonderful impression he made. In plain suit of suntans and garrison cap he came among us, spoke to hundreds, passed out cigars. So we were really back home now . . . back again with our old chief, our beloved leader.

THE END.

Appendices

SERVICE BIOGRAPHY

Dugan, S.J., John J. (New England)

SERVICE BIOGRAPHY	
BORN	26 JUN 1897
ENTERED SOCIETY	30 JUL 1915
ORDAINED	20 JUN 1928
APPOINTED TO ARMY	28 AUG 1936
SERIAL NUMBER	0348200
TO THE RANK OF CAPTAIN	6 FEB 1941
TO MAJOR	18 FEB 1945
TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL (MASSACHUSETTS NATIONAL GUARD)	11 MAY 1946
SEPARATED FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS NATIONAL GUARD AS COLONEL	JUN 1953
SEPARATED FROM THE ARMY RESERVE AS LIEUTENANT COLONEL	25 MAY 1954

ASSIGNMENTS: 1937 – 1945	
<p>Chaplain USAR, CCC, Vt. (Nov 1937 to Jun 1940); Fort Riley, Kan. (Jun 1940 to Sep 1941); to Philippines (Oct 1941); to Bilibid Prison, Manila (20 Jun 1942); to Cabanatuan, Luzon, Prison Camp #1 (3 July 1942); to Cabu, Luzon, Prison Camp #3 (10 Jul 1942); to Cabanatuan, Luzon, Prison Camp #1 (1 Nov 1942); liberated by 6th Ranger Battalion (30 Jan 1945); arrived in San Francisco (8 Mar 1945); Chaplain, Cushing General Hospital, Framingham, Mass. (May 1945).</p>	
RELIEVED OF ACTIVE DUTY	25 AUG 1946
RECALLED	21 JUN 1948
ASSIGNMENTS: 1948 – 1953	
<p>Randolph Field, Tex. (Jun 1948); Oliver General Hospital, Augusta, Ga. (Sep 1949); Fort Custer, Mich. (Feb 1950); Camp Crawford, Hokkaido, Japan (Oct 1950); Guam (Feb 1951)</p>	
RELIEVED OF ACTIVE DUTY	JUN 1953
AWARDS	BRONZE STAR; ARMY COMMENDATION RIBBON

BOSTON GLOBE, APRIL 15, 1943

Maj. J. J. Dugan, S.J., Boston, Jap Prisoner in Philippines

Maj. John J. Dugan, S.J., former City Hospital chaplain and Army chaplain at Bataan, is a prisoner of the Japanese in the Philippines, according to a card received from him yesterday by Very Rev. James H. Dolan, S.J., New England provincial of the Society of Jesus.

He had been reported missing in action in February, although believed to have been taken prisoner at that time with 23 other chaplains.

The Army chaplain, a native of South Boston, has two brothers, William F. of 41 Hinckley Road, Mattapan, and Walter of Panama, and two sisters, Mrs. Stephen Cronin of 4 Elmer Ave., Saugus and Theresa, stationed in Baltimore as a member of the Order of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

WOODSTOCK LETTERS: 74, 154-157 (1945)

The American Spirit

I CAN TELL THE WHOLE STORY OF MY COMRADES DURING THESE PAST THREE YEARS IN A FEW SIMPLE WORDS. Those words are these – they proved themselves real Americans; Americans with honesty, courage, Godliness and fine common sense; Americans who never faltered and who may have feared, but were too proud to admit it.

Many of them found God in death; others found their God with me in the simple service we were allowed to hold in our rude little prison chapel.

Yes, we lived a barbaric, cruel and often bestial existence. But we lived a life which bound each unto the other and we shared the pain and suffering of imprisonment under our ruthless Japanese captors with the same community feeling with which we are now sharing our freedom under the Army officers and men who are almost too kind to be real.

I was one of those few fortunate men who missed the Death March – I was ill, too ill to walk, and even the Japanese apparently feared to infringe greatly at that time on the Church.

But everywhere around me I saw what they did to our men. First they confiscated everything we had – our few precious remaining valuables and keepsakes, what little food we had saved aside, and, yes, even our medicines.

Not then, nor weeks later, nor months later, did they ever give us that medicine we needed so badly for our wounded and our dying.

They did everything they could to starve us, but they forgot one thing – the American spirit. Our boys had that from the start to the finish and they absolutely refused to let the Japanese crush that spirit.

Deliberately, in the first days, they did all they could to confuse us. There were frequent moves, disquieting reports which they circulated of what our leaders were doing, propaganda about how America was about to surrender.

It achieved them no good except to create an even deeper distrust and dislike.

Our death toll at first was staggering. In the early days at Camp Cabanatuan, second only to the terrible scenes at Camp O'Donnell for savage administration, our soldiers were dying at the rate of fifty a day.

Then, in late November of 1942, we were given our first Red Cross parcels – parcels with food, medicine, cigarettes and even some reading matter which the enemy troops let pass.

Nothing was received in all the time we were imprisoned that did so much to lift our morale, to

increase our confidence and to cut our death rate. That medicine meant the difference between life and death for many scores of our men.

All the officers, chaplains and doctors had to do manual labor in the fields every day, working from dawn to dusk.

Our jobs ranged from cleaning latrines to farming and wood chopping. And those who failed to meet the schedule the Japanese had set were beaten and sometimes executed.

I've seen more than one American beaten to death because he lacked both the strength and the will to keep up the back-breaking physical labors our captors demanded.

Certain memorable highlights stand out in those three years we were in captivity, but not many. In time, often in a very short time, the sheer weight of living becomes so heavy you strive to let each day pass with as little notice as possible, except for a thankful prayer that you are still alive.

I could tell of tens and tens of thousands of terrible things we saw and heard, of little events which we magnified so much at the time, but which seem so small to us now, of more of that same type of camaraderie I mentioned before.

But fortunately, while the hardships of those years will always remain, somewhere deep within us, it's the brighter things we like to remember.

For example, the wonderful kindness of all the Filipinos who willingly sacrificed their lives and freedom to bring us gifts of food or medicine.

I cannot find words to praise too highly their unselfishness, their loyalty and their friendship for us when we were representatives of what seemed to everyone but them and us, a great lost cause.

I can give the time right down to the minute when our captors knew that our cause was not a lost one. It was 10:30 a.m. on Sept. 21 of last year. We were working in the fields when that hope flew past high above us – in the form of at least 150 carrier-based planes.

We should have been beaten to death had we showed the least outward signs of happiness, but you can imagine what joyfulness seethed within.

That moment, I think, we all knew better than ever before that the Americans were on the way back to us for sure.

It was an unforgettable day in all our lives.

I like to recall Christmas Eve of 1942, also – an evening which will live in my mind as one of the great experiences of all my imprisonment.

We secured permission from the prison authorities to hold Christmas services in the fields near Cabanatuan. All the churches and all denominations were represented in that picturesque setting and 6,000 American soldiers came to that single service of belief.

I am sure God looked down on us that night and today I am equally sure that He answered our prayers.

Of course, Tuesday night, Jan. 30, was our night of redemption and there'll never be another quite like it for any of us.

If all Americans are pouring into this war the same efforts those 120 Rangers gave, individually and collectively, to rescue us from almost certain death, then I know why we are winning this war.

They did an absolutely herculean task with truly beautiful teamwork.

You just can't put into words what your heart feels when freedom – the last thing you have learned to expect after three years of prison – is suddenly yours.

What perhaps made it most realistic to me was that two friends – Lieut. John Murphy of Springfield, Mass., and Lieutenant O'Connell of Boston – were among the first to recognize me and tell me it was not a dream, but reality.

Then I knew that even though there was a long march ahead of us, home lay at the end of the road.

Our Government cannot reward too highly Colonel Mucci and his Rangers for what they did.

I want to say once again that the morale of our men the night we left Cabanatuan was the same strong, unflinching morale they'd showed throughout, and I want to say again how proud they make me feel to be an American.

How do I feel about this new freedom? It's like walking in a new and wonderful world.

**CAPTAIN JOHN J. DUGAN, S.J.,
U. S. ARMY CHAPLAIN**

BOSTON GLOBE, FEBRUARY 2, 1945

Fr. Dugan was Chaplain at Boston City Hospital

RELATIVES AND FRIENDS OF MAJ. JOHN J. DUGAN, S.J., 47, A NATIVE OF BOSTON, former Boston City Hospital chaplain and prisoner of the Japanese since the fall of Bataan, were elated yesterday on the announcement of the news that he had been rescued in the daring attack Wednesday night on a Jap prison camp on Luzon by men of the 6th Ranger Battalion and Filipino guerrillas.

William F. Dugan, an executive at the Buck Printing Company, 154 Newbury St., and a brother of the priest-chaplain, said that he was stunned yesterday morning when his wife called him at the office and gave him the glad news.

“Apparently, he had had a hard experience during the long days since Bataan,” the printing executive said. “You know he was one of the first members of the New England Jesuit Province to enter the Army for service in the Far East.”

When the Boston Globe yesterday broke the news to Mrs. Stephen Cronin of 4 Elmer Ave., Saugus, that her brother, Maj. Dugan, a prisoner of war, had been rescued by the Yanks on Luzon, her heartfelt words were – “Thank God.”

Mrs. Cronin said she had last heard from her brother two weeks ago, when she received a post card mailed last May.

Fr. Dugan was graduated from Boston College High School in 1915, after which he entered the Jesuit Order at St. Andrew-on-the-Hudson. From 1927 to 1929 he attended Weston College and was ordained there in 1928.

From 1929 to 1931 he was prefect of discipline at Boston College High School, and from 1932 to 1937 served as chaplain at the Boston City Hospital. During the period from 1937 to 1939 he was an Army chaplain in the Civilian Conservation Corps and was stationed at Fort Ethan Allen, Vt. He was called to regular Army service in 1940 and served at Fort Riley, Kan., until 1941, when he was transferred to the Philippines, arriving shortly before the United States declared war on Japan.

During the early part of August, 1943, definite word came through that the Boston priest was a prisoner interned in Philippine military prison camp No. 1.

Besides his brother William living in Milton, another brother, Walter V. Dugan, is engaged in construction work in the Canal Zone. In addition to Mrs. Cronin, the priest has another sister, Theresa, now stationed in Baltimore as a member of the Order of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

BOSTON GLOBE, APRIL 1, 1945

Maj. Dugan to Talk at Patriot's Day Service

MAJ. JOHN J. DUGAN, ARMY CHAPLAIN, WHOSE THRILLING STORY OF LIFE IN A JAPANESE PRISON CAMP begins in today's Globe, will be among the speakers at interdenominational religious services Patriot's Day at 11 a.m. on Gen. MacArthur Mall, Boston Common.

Sponsored by Mayor John E. Kerrigan, the services are to be held in honor of men and women who have died in World War I and II. Invitations are being extended to all religious, military and civic leaders in the city to participate.

NEW ENGLAND PROVINCE NEWS, 1965

Fr. John J. Dugan, S.J. 1897 – 1964

IT SEEMED TRAGIC BUT FITTING THAT FR. JOHN J. DUGAN SHOULD DIE IN THE BOSTON CITY HOSPITAL WHERE HE HAD SERVED SO LONG and memorably as Chaplain. Despite all the efforts of doctors and nurses, Fr. Dugan succumbed to three heart attacks over a period of two weeks on Dec. 6, 1964. His family were visiting him when the last attack seized him.

John Dugan graduated from Boston College High School in 1915 and entered the Society at St. Andrew-on-Hudson. His regency found him teaching at Brooklyn Prep. After ordination he returned to Boston College High as Prefect of Discipline. The alumni remember Fr. Dugan for his manly appearance and firm discipline.

After tertianship, Fr. Dugan returned to Boston to succeed the famous Fr. Louis Young, then hopelessly ill, as Chaplain of the tremendous City Hospital. In those days there was only one Chaplain. He was “on duty” 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Fr. Dugan, like Fr. Young before him and Fr. John Madden after him, had a direct extension phone from the hospital. It was usual to hear the phone ring all hours of the night. Day or night, Fr. Dugan always appeared well groomed and spotlessly attired.

Many of the benefits and privileges accorded the Chaplains of the hospital today were won for them by Fr. Dugan’s efforts. The Operating List, the Communion rounds, and the right of the patient to see the priest before an operation so that the

Chaplain took precedence over the medical service were largely the result of Fr. Dugan’s determined insistence to establish a strong Catholic tone in an equally strong non-Catholic environment. The results then and now surpassed all belief. Thousands of souls each year received sacramental administration. Hundreds of babies were baptized. The hospital personnel have gone to untold lengths to assist the Chaplains until today the Boston City Hospital is regarded by many Jesuits as the most Catholic hospital in all their experience.

In 1936 Fr. Dugan enlisted in the Army. He was assigned to one of the most arduous and taxing of all assignments: the C. C. C. Camps where so many high school “drop-outs” and graduates matriculated in the days of the “Depression,” when employment was unobtainable and no one had money to go on to college.

Shortly before World War II broke, Fr. Dugan was transferred to Fort Riley in Kansas, and then on to the Philippines in October, 1941. Captured by the Japanese, he was made to serve as Chaplain of the many prison camps. In the next four years his

health was undermined, and he was on the point of starving when rescued by the Ranger Battalion in 1945. Those four years are a sacred arena of military martyrdom that Fr. Dugan could seldom be persuaded to recall. The hundreds of prisoners who remembered his devotion to the sick and dying U. S. prisoners brought him the Bronze Star and the Army Commendation Ribbon and countless tributes on his return to Boston in 1946.

Now a Colonel, Fr. Dugan spent the next two years as Chaplain of the Cushing Hospital in Framingham, where he was regarded more as a patient himself than as a Chaplain. In the Japanese prison camps he had lost all his teeth, and was under 120 pounds. In the years to follow Fr. Dugan never fully recovered from his prison ordeal. He served as Chaplain in Texas, Georgia, Michigan, Manila and finally in Japan, until he retired from Army service and the Army Reserve in 1953.

After some assignments in parishes of the Southern Province, Fr. Dugan returned to Boston to join the Jesuit Mission Band. His experience in hospitals and army life provided a rich background for his Mission talks. Simple and direct in his style, he labored to improve his material and his delivery to the day he died. He had been eleven weeks giving Missions when he returned to the Immaculate Conception Rectory late in November. Less than a week later the first attack struck. Although the doctors were hopeful of his recovery, this great Soldier-Chaplain had fallen mortally stricken. A few days later his Commander-in-Chief called him for his eternal reward. His funeral was simple and plain, with no military fanfare – as Fr. Dugan had repeatedly requested. May he rest in peace.

FRANCIS J. GILDAY, S.J.

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