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THE LOST BATTALION: SECOND BATTALION
131ST FIELD ARTILLERY, 1940-1945

THESIS

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By

Elmer Ray Milner, B. A.

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As a part of the Texas National Guard, the Second Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery went on active duty as World War Two erupted and eventually became trapped in Java by Japanese forces. It became known as the Lost Battalion after its surrender because it lost all communication with the Allies for over three years. The Japanese forced these Americans to work in Burma on a railroad construction project connecting Burma to Thailand. After the railroad's completion in 1944, the Lost Battalion remained in various prisoner-of-war camps until liberation came in August, 1945.

Research sources consulted include the prisoner-of-war project of the North Texas State University Oral History Collection, published memoirs of former captives, pertinent United States government documents, and contemporary newspapers. Secondary materials investigated embrace books and periodicals.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1940, world conditions were extremely unstable, Japanese forces occupied much of China's territory, and wishing to insure the complete isolation of the Chinese people, Japan insisted that the British close the Burma Road.¹ In Europe, Germany overwhelmed the French defenses and forced France's surrender. Great Britain waited across the English Channel for the expected German invasion and prepared for the Battle of Britain. The Italian Army finalized plans to invade Egypt.²

In the United States, the citizens carefully watched world events as the American Congress debated the proposed Selective Service bill. The proposal, also known as the Burke-Wadsworth bill, was discussed throughout the summer, and if it became law would introduce the first peacetime military draft and mobilization in the nation's history.

¹The Japanese blockaded all of China's coast, and the only Chinese access to the sea was over the Burma Road that ran from Lashio, Burma, to Kunming, China. F. F. Liliu, A Military History of Modern China: 1924-1949 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 207.

²Winston S. Churchill, Their Finest Hour, The Second World War, 6 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1948), 2:224, 256, 319, 469.

A congressional joint resolution on August 27, 1940, authorized President Franklin D . Roosevelt to mobilize the Organized Reserve Corps and the National Guard. On September 14, 1940, Congress approved the Selective Service bill and sent it to the president, who signed it two days later.³

Since Roosevelt wished to increase the strength of American forces as quickly as possible, he issued orders for the mobilization of several state National Guard units throughout the country. The Texas National Guard began its tour of duty as the Thirty-sixth Division, United States Army, on November 25, 1940, at Camp Bowie, Texas. Within weeks, the division increased its manpower from 11,737 officers and enlisted men to nearly 15,800 by the addition of new officers and Selective Service inductees from Texas and surrounding states.⁴

The Thirty-sixth Division contained a smaller unit, the Second Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, whose members hailed from small towns and cities of West Texas, including

³United States Statutes at Large, 1939-1941, 54:858, 965; New York Times, September 15, 1940, pp. 1, 30; September 17, 1940, p. 1; Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 347.

⁴Official History of the Thirty-sixth Division file, Texas Army National Guard archives, Camp Mabry [Austin], Texas; Dallas Morning News, November 29, 1940, section 2, p. 1.

Abilene, Decatur, Jacksboro, and Lubbock. The agrarian background and the frontier heritage of many battalion members, coupled with the economic conditions in Texas during the late 1930s, insured the tenacity of the new soldiers, and prepared them for the ordeal that awaited: forty-two months in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. The total departure from United States contact with this entire military unit when captured led to the phrase, "The Lost Battalion."⁵

⁵Dallas Morning News, March 5, 1942, section 1, p. 4.

CHAPTER II

FEDERALIZATION OF THE TEXAS THIRTY-SIXTH DIVISION

The Texas Thirty-sixth Division was comprised of an amalgamation of men with diversified backgrounds who joined for patriotism, for an association of friends, and for monetary reasons. From their own accounts related thirty years later to an interviewer of Texas prisoners of war, one may piece together patterns of thought that led to enlistment.

W. L. Starnes had not thought of joining the National Guard; he had a good job working on a seismograph crew exploring for oil. Though he claimed Decatur, Texas, as his hometown, Starnes's work required his travelling over much of the northern part of the state. When he returned to Decatur in late autumn of 1940, Starnes discovered that many of the local young men were members of Headquarters Battery, Second Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery Regiment, the Decatur unit of the Texas National Guard, and were then enroute to Camp Bowie, Brownwood, Texas, after being mobilized. Starnes decided that if it could be arranged for him to be sent to Brownwood to join his friends, he would volunteer for the draft. The local

Selective Service Board accepted the young man's enlistment and sent him by train to Camp Bowie.¹

George Lawley of Lubbock later remembered that he enlisted because he felt it was "the patriotic thing to do." Lawley was older than most guard recruits and was not subject to the draft, but he was interested in military service none the less. In 1940, as the United States drifted to the brink of war, Lawley joined the Texas National Guard so that he could be in the service with friends who had already enlisted.²

J. B. Heinen, Jr., a Dallas resident, was a graduate of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas and was a commissioned officer in the Texas National Guard. Heinen also looked upon membership in the guard as an act of patriotism, and as a duty. He enjoyed the guard program and wanted to be a part of it.³

Lawrence Brown of Decatur joined the National Guard for monetary reasons. Effects of the Great Depression persisted in North Central Texas by 1940, and the remuneration Brown received every three months for attending

¹W. L. Starnes, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 186:4.

²George Lawley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 164:2.

³J. B. Heinen, Jr., personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 174:13.

the required training meetings ". . . kind of helped out a little bit."⁴

Another young man, Horace Chumley, joined the Decatur unit only one week before mobilization. Chumley wanted to attend a technical school and he felt that joining the National Guard would provide him the opportunity. If he waited to be drafted, he reasoned, he might be attached to an area of training that he would dislike.⁵

Alfred Brown also joined the Decatur battery after the announced federal mobilization of the unit. Brown had already registered for the draft, so he just enlisted at the armory one month prior to the division's activation. Brown had friends in the battery, and by joining he could serve with his boyhood acquaintances.⁶

C. A. Cates, also of Decatur, had joined the guard several years prior to mobilization and had risen in the ranks from a private to a non-commissioned officer. Upon his graduation from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, Cates was commissioned a second lieutenant. He regarded membership in the National Guard seriously and tried to convince the enlisted men of the gravity of the

⁴Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 178:2.

⁵Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 199:2-3.

⁶Alfred Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 188:2-5.

world situation and their roles in the unit. Few were impressed. Even Cates acknowledged that the unit had ". . . a summer camp which was a picnic. . . . We were inspected and scored and graded and raked over the coals if we didn't make a certain mark. But still, it was taken rather lightly, I think."⁷

George Burns did not consider nor worry about the draft; he joined Headquarters Battery in Decatur to be with his friends. Although some of the veteran guard members considered the program little more than a social club, Burns did not. By the time he entered the unit, mobilization was imminent and the men were beginning to take their roles soberly.⁸

P. J. Smallwood joined the guard while he was still in high school, so that he could attend summer camp. A Plainview High School friend, who had been a former member of the Army Junior Reserve Officer's Training Program and was now a sergeant in the guard, persuaded Smallwood to enlist. The unit commander, Captain Robert W. McDaniels, a Plainview bank teller, assured the potential recruit that joining would only obligate him to go to summer camp

⁷C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 185:2.

⁸George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 176:2.

each year and to attend regular guard meetings once a month.⁹

Frank Fujita, an Abilene High School student, had a friend who belonged to E Battery in Amarillo. Fujita's friend presented the National Guard as an attractive adventure and convinced Fujita to join. This enticement precipitated an animated discussion at the high school.¹⁰ The teachers polarized into separate groups. One group said Fujita could not legally join because he was not a citizen. The second group argued that Fujita was a natural born citizen and therefore was eligible. The second group proved to be correct, and Fujita remained in the unit.¹¹

George Killian worked at the Amarillo Hotel when friends persuaded him to join E Battery of the Second Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery Regiment. Being single with no dependents and only nineteen years old, Killian succumbed to the slightest pressure.¹²

B. D. Fillmore was a member of F Battery in his hometown of Jacksboro. He had entered the Agricultural

⁹P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 166:2-3.

¹⁰Fujita's father was a native Japanese who had settled in the United States and married an American girl.

¹¹Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 59:2.

¹²George Killian, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 56:3.

and Mechanical College of Texas in September before mobilization in November. He left school and returned home to assume duty with his friends. Like so many others, Fillmore had joined because his friends were already members of the guard and because of the two-week summer camps.¹³

Jack Moss realized that all his friends were enlisting either in the National Guard or the army. Since more friends belonged to the guard, Moss waited until the unit received orders to mobilize before signing up at the Amarillo Armory, so that he could be with his friends. At Camp Bowie Moss had adequate opportunity to reflect upon his action, as he spent six weeks on a kitchen police detail.¹⁴

Keith Naylor hailed from Wichita Falls. In the summer of 1940, several of Naylor's close friends were members of D Battery. When notice of mobilization arrived, Naylor decided the guard was the best way to serve, so he was sworn in one month prior to the November mobilization.¹⁵

Glenn Pace wanted to complete his year of military obligation and return to college. He and two friends travelled from their hometown of Denton to Dallas to join

¹³B. D. Fillmore, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 162:3.

¹⁴Jack Moss, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 145:2-3.

¹⁵Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 72:1-2.

the regular army for one year. The recruiting sergeant in Dallas told Pace and his companions that they could join the army for a minimum of three years. The three returned to Denton and joined D Battery of the Second Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery Regiment.¹⁶

Uell Carter worked for the Plains Chevrolet Company in Amarillo. His parts manager was a master sergeant in E Battery of the Second Battalion who repeatedly asked Carter to join the unit. The sergeant promised Carter that the battery would have a beer social once a month, paid meetings, and the pleasure of a two-week encampment each summer.¹⁷

For a time after the mobilization, some units remained on active status at their hometown armories. The Headquarters Battery stayed in Decatur for over a month before being transferred to Camp Bowie. When the units reported for duty, the men found their new surroundings to be quite primitive. Streets and sidewalks were trails of mud; the housing was a group of leaky tents. Disappointedly, the men learned that they would keep their pre-mobilization weapons and equipment that antedated the First World War. Within the

¹⁶Glenn Pace, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 184:3.

¹⁷Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 56:3.

next few weeks, however, some of the National Guardsmen regarded the lack of new weapons as being offset by the extensive training.¹⁸

One new soldier who felt the training too extensive was W. L. Starnes, who had volunteered for the draft to be with his friends from Decatur. Upon arriving at Camp Bowie, Starnes received assignment to Company F of the 142nd Infantry Battalion. After spending several weeks in the infantry, including complete infantry basic training, Starnes transferred to the Decatur unit.¹⁹

Horace Chumley, who had joined the guard to get technical training, attended radio school at Camp Bowie for six months. When the division went to Louisiana to participate in simulated war games, he was assigned to the battalion executive officer, Colonel Winthrop Rogers, as radio operator.²⁰

George Burns worried about the older weapons and the ill-trained men that arrived at Camp Bowie in December, 1940. A serious man who kept himself informed about world conditions, Burns pleasantly noted that the

¹⁸C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 185:4-6; Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 178:3-5.

¹⁹W. L. Starnes, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 186:2-4.

²⁰Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 199:3-5.

men gained satisfactory military expertise as the training increased in intensity.²¹

While Headquarters Battery reported to the Decatur Armory each day until December, A Battery remained on duty at the home armory in Plainview until the middle of January before departing for Camp Bowie. When the unit joined the division at Brownwood, the Plainview men also became disillusioned over the equipment. Some of the men received their full complement of personal equipment later than others. P. J. Smallwood was not issued a rifle until the Second Battalion was on board ship going overseas. Unlike Burns, Smallwood remained singularly unimpressed with the Louisiana maneuvers, and regarded the war games as an endurance test rather than comprehensive training.²²

Others noted the inadequate training and equipment; some men complained that only the officers receiving training. George Lawley served as a member of the seventy-five millimeter gun crew, but his section did not fire the artillery piece while in training. The field guns were

²¹George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 176:2.

²²P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 166:5-9.

French Model 1897 which had been modernized by replacing the wooden wheels with rubber tires.²³

Frequently, when equipment was unavailable, the men used salvage materials. Frank Fujita served on maneuvers with a section that acted as an anti-tank unit. Fujita and his men removed driveshaft cowlings from abandoned trucks, mounted these on axles with wheels, and called the improvised weapons anti-tank guns. As the umpires and scorers watched, Fujita's gun crew would aim at a tank, often an army truck with "tank" printed on the side, and yell "bang." The umpires would then decide if the gun had successfully disabled or destroyed the tank. Fujita called this simulated action ". . . broomstick toy soldier training."²⁴

Uell Carter found the instruction extensive. Carter's unit became a training section upon reaching Camp Bowie. Selective Service draftees were assigned to the battery to bring the group to required strength of personnel. Thirteen weeks of physical conditioning soon followed. At first, the men marched one mile each day, then one and one-half miles a day, and progressively increased until the

²³George Lawley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 164:5-6.

²⁴Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 59:11-12.

battery marched a distance of twenty miles without hardship. In contrast to other battalion members's views, Carter believed that the National Guard had provided comprehensive schools for training members of the gun sections, radio personnel, and mechanics, and cooks.²⁵

²⁵Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library
OH 56:4-6.

CHAPTER III

ASSIGNMENT OF THE SECOND BATTALION TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC

After the Thirty-sixth Division returned from the Louisiana maneuvers, some of the men merited furloughs. Within a short time, the division commander alerted the Second Battalion for assignment, and ordered the recall of the furloughed troops. When Lawrence Brown returned to Camp Bowie, he noticed that the division headquarters offered the older National Guardsmen an option of discharge or transfer from the Second Battalion.¹

Battalion officers advised Brown and George Burns that the army selected the unit for overseas duty because of its outstanding marks on maneuvers.² J. B. Heinen interpreted the mobilization legislation as prohibiting assignment of

¹Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 178:6.

²This account is corroborated by the official United States Army history of World War Two, which states that regular units were composed primarily of recently drafted recruits and therefore unfit for overseas duty. Consequently, specific National Guard units were chosen by the army for overseas duty. Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 178:6; George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 176:5; Mark Skinner Watson, Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations, 4 vols. in sub-series, The War Department, United States Army in World War Two (Washington: Department of the Army, 1950), 1:186-187.

activated National Guard units outside the Western Hemisphere except in case of war. The army circumvented this congressionally imposed condition by asking for volunteers, and the Second Battalion "was asked to do that volunteering."³ When Frank Fujita, surveying instrument sergeant⁴ in the First Battalion, heard that the Second Battalion was being shipped out, he transferred from the First Battalion on November 5. Unfortunately, the less prestigious position of machine gun sergeant was the only vacancy.⁵

In other sections of the unit, transfers were also occurring. P. J. Smallwood, unlike Fujita, did not volunteer for transfer. It was out of Smallwood's hands. He was told to ". . . watch the bulletin board. If your name appears, you'll be going overseas." The commander transferred Smallwood along with others from First Battalion, Service Battery,⁶ to Second Battalion, Service Battery, to replace the older men.⁷

³J. B. Heinen, Jr., personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 174:5.

⁴The surveying instrument sergeant installed precision equipment to control firing accuracy.

⁵Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 59:4-9.

⁶This section furnishes transportation and other services for the battalion.

⁷P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:11.

Robert Gregg welcomed the transfer to Second Battalion. He and the majority of the younger men in the battalion felt that the overseas assignment offered them a great opportunity.⁸ On the evening of November 10, 1941, the Second Battalion boarded two trains at Camp Bowie. One train left that night; the second train pulled out the next day. Unit officers advised the men that their destination was the Philippine Islands.⁹

The battalion detrained at Fort McDowell, Angel Island, San Francisco, California. The troops, processed and given overseas inoculations, left for a short tour of the city. While on leave in San Francisco, Larry Brown and a friend met a veteran soldier who told them ". . . where you guys are going, I'm glad I'm not there anymore."¹⁰

On November 21, 1941, the battalion boarded the United States Army transport Republic docked at pier fifty-seven.¹¹ When the ship steamed out of San Francisco

⁸Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 69:3-6.

⁹J. B. Heinen, Jr., personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 174:14; Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:4-9.

¹⁰Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:10; Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:4-9; Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 72:4-9.

¹¹Alfred Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 188:16-20; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:12.

Bay, it joined the Pensacola Convoy, so named because the U.S.S. Pensacola, a cruiser, accompanied the vessels.¹²

While the Republic joined the convoy, the Texans became seasick. Frank Fujita noticed that ". . . everybody, including the captain of the ship became seasick."

Alfred Brown, a rural young man whose experience with a large body of water had been rather limited in North Texas, watched the ground-swells just outside San Francisco and compared them to small hills. He expressed amazement that the approximately six-hundred-foot long Republic was being tossed about by the waves. Presently, Brown went below deck to the galley for supper and saw troops regurgitating in all areas of the ship. As Brown passed through the "chow line," he discovered another reason for the men's sickness; the cooks were serving sauerkraut and weiners. Brown looked at the food on his tray and wondered how he possibly could eat it. He sat down and slowly and carefully

¹²Since the departures of military vessels were not announced in the press, it was necessary to rely on the United States Army official historians for facts involving the Pensacola Convoy. The Fall of the Philippines cites a radio message dated December 12, 1941, from General George C. Marshall to General Douglas MacArthur, to point out that the seven vessels in the convoy were the United States Army transports Holbrook, Republic, Meigs, Bloemfontein, Admiral Halstead, Farmer, and Claumont. Aside from the Second Battalion, the convoy carried a field artillery brigade, ground crews for the Seventh Bombardment Group, seventy crated aircraft, 500,000 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition, five thousand bombs, and miscellaneous equipment. Louis Morton, The Fall of the Philippines, 7 vols. in sub-series, War in the Pacific, United States Army in World War Two (Washington: Department of the Army, 1953), 4:146.

ate every bite. Then he went upon the apex of the deck, allowing the wind to blow directly into his face, and watched the movie Waterloo Bridge being shown on a lower level of the deck. Brown managed to retain the food and never experienced seasickness.¹³

Keith Naylor suffered nausea the first night due to the San Francisco ground-swells and the evening meal, but he recuperated the next day. Lawrence Brown was not so fortunate. A navy boatswain told Brown to get in the middle of the ship where the pitch and roll were less severe. Brown looked, but ". . . never did find the middle of that darn ship."¹⁴

The Republic docked at Honolulu on November 28, and stayed two days. The troops went into the city on four-hour passes; half the battalion went ashore in the morning and half from four in the afternoon until ten in the evening. Many noticed armed soldiers on alert. Uell Carter saw armed troops on the docks and on the tops of buildings. To his inexperienced eye ". . . they looked like they were ready for an attack." B. D. Fillmore went ashore and saw ". . . a machine gun set up in one of the squares with sand

¹³Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:4-9; Alfred Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 188:12-14.

¹⁴Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 72:4-9; Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:11.

bags around it." Cates noted several barbed wire entanglements, a large number of military police, and mounted machine guns at busy intersections. When George Lawley went into Honolulu, he also observed large numbers of military police on duty. P. J. Smallwood went ashore with the second group from four o'clock until ten o'clock in the evening. As Smallwood returned to the Republic, he saw machine gun nests and soldiers racing around in jeeps. Smallwood surmised that the city ". . . was very definitely under martial law." While ashore, Keith Naylor passed the railroad depot and noticed that the station, railroad tracks, and water supply facilities were under armed military guard.¹⁵

The Republic received fuel, fresh water, and fresh vegetables during the men's tour of the city. Later, with the troops back on board and the loading of supplies complete, the Republic steamed out of the harbor to rejoin the convoy. The crew recognized an addition to the convoy, the subchaser U.S.S. Niagara. Alfred Brown heard that this ship was a

¹⁵Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 56:7-10; B. D. Fillmore, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 162:7-9; C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 185:9-12; George Lawley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 164:10; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:12; Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 72:4-9.

converted yacht donated to the navy by the eminent Dodge family. Soon out of Honolulu, some members of the battalion manned their respective battle stations while others scrubbed down decks and stood watches. In addition, the troops exercised every day as part of their physical training.¹⁶

Two days after the Republic's departure from Hawaii, on December 2, the navy placed the ship on alert. Uell Carter especially regretted the alert because several new movies were scheduled to be shown on deck after dark; after the navy's directive, the troops could not even strike a match on deck after sundown. In spite of the alert, the Republic still flew the American flag from the mast, and flags were displayed on both sides of the ship. One night, a few days out of Honolulu, the watch saw a great many ships passing in the darkness, headed for Hawaii. The watch reported the sighting and signalled the ships in international code; the ships did not reply. Cates was on deck at the time and personally spotted masts of several ships.¹⁷

¹⁶Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:4-9; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:15-18; B. D. Fillmore, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 162:7-9; Alfred Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 188:12-14.

¹⁷Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:7-10; Glenn Pace, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 134:6-12; C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 185:9-12.

On December 7, the ship commander called all troops to their battle stations and advised them that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Cates recalled the mysterious fleet spotted a few nights earlier that did not answer the Americans's signal. In view of the position of the two convoys at that particular time, Cates believed that he had witnessed the Japanese fleet that had launched the attack.¹⁸

Sitting on the deck playing poker with some friends, Smallwood heard the announcement of the infamous Pearl Harbor attack. Shortly thereafter, he and his "buddies" began chipping paint off the deck and others started painting the deck battleship grey. As the paint detail worked, the ship's crew opened the cases of machine guns and began to mount them on the rail.¹⁹

Glenn Pace and some of his friends painted over the American flags decorating the sides of the ship. Pace thought to himself as he washed, "Well, I'll never make it home." His more optimistic friends attempted to encourage him. George Messer from Port Arthur said, "Glenn, don't worry. They don't have a bullet over there with your name

¹⁸Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:4-9; C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 185:9-12.

¹⁹P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:15-18.

on it." An acquaintance from Denison, Texas, told Pace, "Well, we'll knock those Japanese out in no time. They can't see ten feet in front of them." Horace Chumley discussed the war with his companions and they all wondered if they would ever return to Texas. Several of the men in Alfred Brown's group stated that America and her Allies would defeat the Japanese in two weeks. Brown disagreed and said, "No, it's going to be a long hard one [war]." ²⁰

Later that day, some of the men referring to Frank Fujita asked if there was a Japanese on board. Fujita felt he should answer the charge himself. He told the group of men that there was no Japanese on board; to his knowledge there were only Americans on the Republic. He conceded that there was one sergeant on board who was half Japanese of ethnic descent, if that information was significant. The men understood and said nothing more. ²¹

Jack Moss did not have time to worry about the war or Japanese on board ship. As part of a gun crew, he brought the artillery pieces from the hull onto the deck

²⁰Alfred Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 188:16-20; Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 199:8-9; Glenn Pace, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 134:6-12.

²¹Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:4-9.

for additional fire power. Due to the movement of the ship and the inexperienced troops, the project required almost three days. Robert Gregg and some of his friends supplemented the navy gun crew. At a later date, the navy tried to arrange for the artillerymen's permanent assignment to the Republic, but the army would not permit the transfer.²²

The Pensacola Convoy, still proceeding toward the Philippine Islands, now under Japanese attack, received a naval message ordering the convoy to Suva in the Fiji Islands.²³ Keith Naylor, on deck when the Republic reached Suva, recalls that the convoy remained in port only a few hours before steaming out to sea again. This

²²Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 69:3-6; Jack Moss, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 45:4-5.

²³At this point the official United States Army historians, the only scholars permitted to research the Pentagon files, differ. One volume of the series, The United States Army in World War Two, Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943, cites December 8 as the date that the Joint Board (early version of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) followed the navy's suggestion and ordered the convoy back to Hawaii; this order was recalled on December 9 President Roosevelt's suggestion. A subsequent volume in the series, The Fall of the Philippines, which states that the decision of the Joint Board to order the convoy back to Hawaii was not made until December 9 and withdrawn the following day at the president's request, contradicts the earlier version. The latter work is probably correct since the sources cited are the minutes of the Joint Board for December 9 and minutes of the meetings of the Army Chief of Staff for December 10, 1941. Richard M. Leighton and

brief visit is corroborated by Frank Fujita, who noticed that the men were not allowed to go ashore, but the ship ". . . just took on fresh fruit and water and left immediately."²⁴

Nevertheless, the navy ordered the convoy to sail to Brisbane, Australia. As they neared their destination, war ships bristling with guns and camouflaged with war paint raced toward the convoy. The men of the battalion did not know if the approaching vessels were friend or foe. P. J. Smallwood and his friends fearfully watched the oncoming ships and realized for the first time the full

Robert W. Coakley, Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943, 4 vols. of sub-series, The War Department, United States Army in World War Two (Washington: Department of the Army, 1955), 4:149; Louis Morton, The Fall of the Philippines, 4:145-146.

²⁴The official army version as written in The Fall of the Philippines seemingly disputes the short stay in Suva, and states that the navy ordered the convoy to the Fiji Islands on December 9, and gave no additional instructions until December 12 when it advised the convoy to proceed to the ultimate destination, Brisbane, Australia. One possible explanation of this inconsistency is that the convoy in fact did leave Suva soon after arriving to return to Hawaii. This version is substantiated by the earlier volume, Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943, which states that the navy ordered the convoy back to Hawaii on December 8, and changed the orders one day later. If this is the case, the convoy would have travelled in a circle. Uell Carter calculated that the vessels did sail in a circle of possibly three hundred miles or more, because each night as he went on deck he noticed that the ship's bow pointed to a different direction. Leighton and Coakley, Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943, 4:149; Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:7-10.

significance of the war. Fortunately, the ships were friendly.²⁵

When the convoy reached Brisbane on December 22, 1941, it met almost insurmountable difficulties. Heinen saw that the Republic's captain had ". . . one helluva time getting into Brisbane because the harbor wasn't deep enough. . . ." Finally, the vessel docked satisfactorily, and the battalion landed in Australia. Since the men of the Pensacola Convoy were the first American soldiers to land in Australia, the officers felt that marching the troops from the ship to their bivouac area, the Ascot Race Track, would boost the Australians's morale. The shortest distance from the ship to the race track approximated one mile, but the route of the soldiers's march went up one street and down another to impress the native population. The bands played, flags waved in the breeze, and the troops began to march. Smallwood heard the cheering as he walked. Occasionally, an Australian shouted, "Oh, the yanks have come to save us." Smallwood viewed this confidence as ironical because each American's equipment consisted of a trainer gas mask, a 1903 rifle with only four rounds of ammunition, a pair of old canvas leggings, and a British type World War One helmet. Smallwood thought the Americans were quite comical looking.²⁶

²⁵P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:15-18.

²⁶J. B. Heinen, Jr., personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 174:22-24.

All the troops did not participate in the parade; some of them busily unloaded the equipment from the Republic. As soon as the men had removed all the vehicles and gear from the ship, it departed for the United States.²⁷ The Americans stored their equipment in an assigned warehouse. While moving the battalion gear into storage, one of the men discovered that a partition separating the American storage area and the adjoining warehouse did not extend to the ceiling; the Tiger Beer Company of Malaya leased the other side of the building. Carter and his friends discovered that they could easily slip over the divider and sample the Tiger beer. The personnel learned that they could not complete the equipment's transfer into the warehouse because someone had left the battalion trucks's keys in San Francisco.²⁸

Meanwhile, the troops marching to Ascot Race Track discovered interesting things about their hosts. First, the Americans learned that when teatime arrived, the Australians stopped all activity, regardless of its importance. Glenn Pace, setting up camp at Ascot, solicited help from some of the Australians to hold the ropes until the Americans could stake the guy ropes. A cook rang the

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:10-14.

bell for tea, and the Australians released the ropes and left the area, causing the tents to collapse on the troops. Next, the newly arrived men found that the Australians preferred mutton to beef. The Americans loved the Australian people, but everyone agreed with George Burns's statement ". . . We couldn't hardly go for that lamb."²⁹

Except for the Australians's choice of meat and their devotion to teatime, the Americans liked the country and its people. When Fillmore went into Brisbane, he found that Americans did not need money. The native population insisted on feeding the visitors and buying their beer. As Starnes walked down a street in Brisbane some Australians stopped him and invited him into their home for a visit. On one occasion, Chumley and his friends ordered meals and drinks in a restaurant, only to find that the Australians paid the bill.³⁰

Everyone was not so cordial to the Americans. One Australian told Glenn Pace, "We don't need you yanks over here. We just need your weapons." Pace said, "I didn't ask to come over here, and if there's any way that you can get me home, you can have every bullet I've got."³¹

²⁹Glenn Pace, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:10-14.

³⁰B. D. Fillmore, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 162:10; W. L. Starnes, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 186:16-17; Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 199:12-14.

³¹Glenn Pace, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:13.

The battalion spent Christmas in Brisbane, and most of the men visited Australian homes for the holiday meal of mutton. Three days later the Second Battalion returned to the dock and boarded one of the ships that had also been in the Pensacola Convoy, the Bloemfontein. After the loading operations had been completed, the battalion commander instructed the unit to go ashore. The men began to leave the ship and still further orders arrived advising them to return to the vessel. The second loading was final, and the men remained on board. While the troops waited on the Bloemfontein, Australian taxi drivers drove up alongside the ship and conducted a brisk business trading whiskey for American watches and money. The troops acquired a large supply of whiskey and began to celebrate. The army then ordered the battalion to proceed to Java to provide ground forces for the Nineteenth Bomb Group from Clark Field in the Philippines. The battalion commander desired to apprise the men of the new orders, and an officer instructed the soldiers to "fall in." Carter noticed that the whiskey bartered to the troops by the taxi drivers was almost consumed, and when the battalion commander ordered the men to meet formation, ". . . very few were able to fall in. They just fell out." Colonel Blucher S. Tharp, the battalion commander, became angry. He told the troops

still sober enough to understand that the unit was going to Java to help the air corps.³²

The Bloemfontein cast off on the night of December 28, 1941, and slowly sailed out of Brisbane harbor. Smallwood was somewhat apprehensive about the Bloemfontein since the vessel had followed the Republic across the Pacific with a large line running from one vessel to the other. Consequently, Smallwood considered the ship to be a slow steamer, and possibly have weak engines. However, when the Bloemfontein cleared the mouth of the river down from Brisbane harbor, ". . . all hell broke loose. . . the stern went into the water and this ship was really a runner." Smallwood blissfully watched the ship achieve a speed of ". . . eighteen to twenty knots in nothing flat."³³

The battalion travelled up the eastern coast of Australia around the Great Barrier Reef to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Frank Fujita, standing guard on deck, observed that ". . . everybody started going beserk again on ship." A large group of vessels had been spotted ahead of the Bloemfontein. The Americans ascertained from the approaching vessel's signals that the ships were friendly,

³²Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:18; C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 185:14-15; Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:10-14.

³³Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:10-14.

and the Bloemfontein proceeded on to Port Darwin on the coast of Australia. The battalion remained on board at Darwin, and within a few hours the Bloemfontein hoisted anchor and headed northward to Java.³⁴

A few days after leaving Darwin, a sailor advised Alfred Brown and his companions that Japanese submarines had attacked and possibly sunk an Allied ship only forty miles ahead. Following this conversation, Brown and the friends remained on deck with their life preservers on.³⁵

While on watch several nights, Fujita noticed the beauty of the area as the ship passed through the Lombok Strait between Bali and Java. One day out of Surabaya, Java, the convoy commander placed the ship on alert because a Japanese submarine was following the convoy. Suddenly, a Japanese torpedo struck the tanker S.S. Liberty directly in front of the Bloemfontein.³⁶

Smallwood and his associates were shooting dice on deck when they heard the general quarters alarm. Though scared, Smallwood enjoyed watching the action by the United States Navy. "The cruisers moved back and the tin cans [destroyers] came in. They were really hitting at

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Alfred Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 188:21.

³⁶Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:10-14.

everything. We had a torpedo off the bow and one off the stern. But no one got hit but the submarines.³⁷ They got hit. There two of them. From one of them we saw an oil slick." The following day, January 11, 1942, the Japanese invaded Borneo, largest island of the Dutch East Indies, and the Second Battalion landed on Surabaya.³⁸

³⁷Smallwood stated later that he was unaware of the sinking of the S.S. Liberty.

³⁸P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:25.

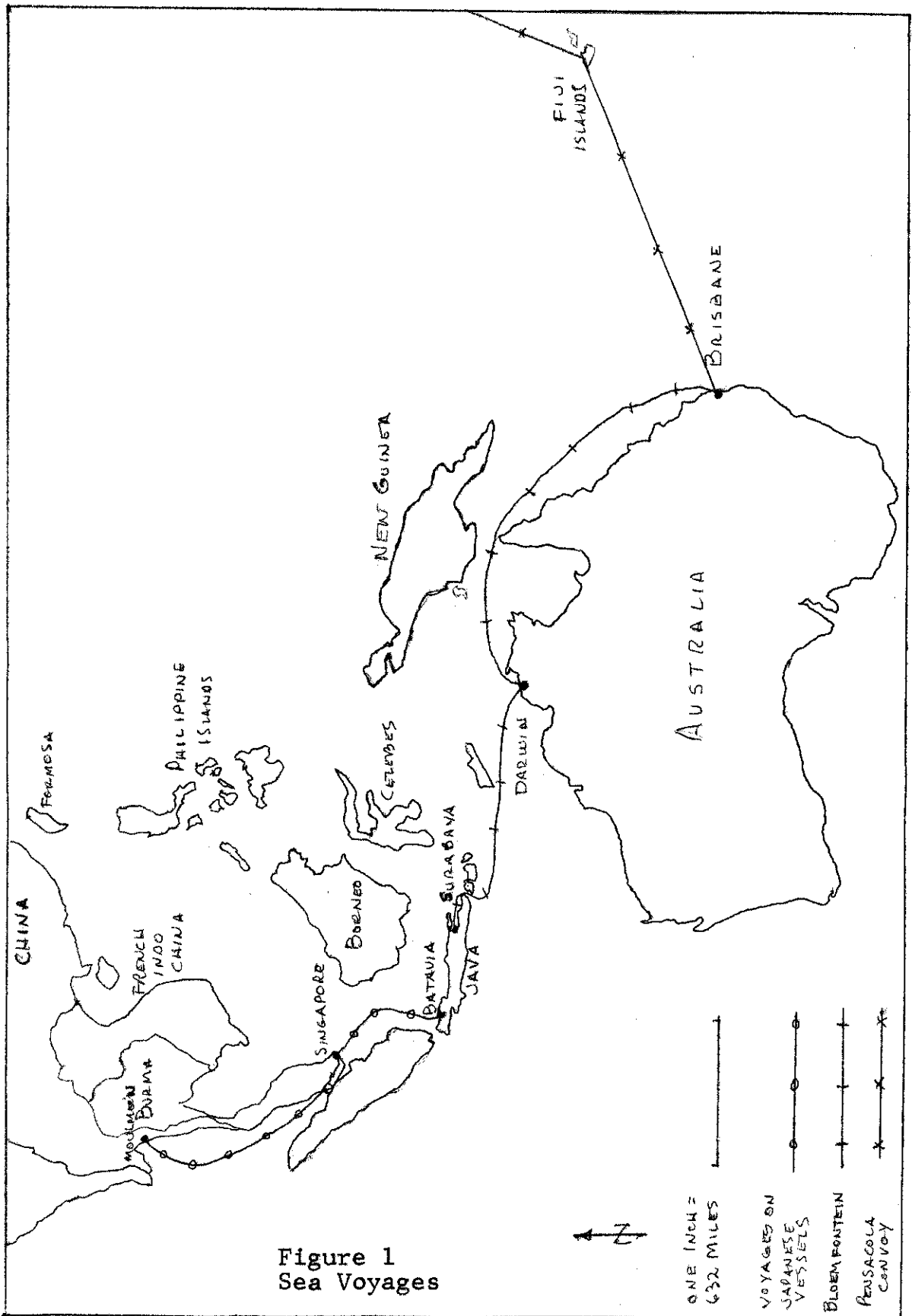


Figure 1
Sea Voyages

CHAPTER IV

UNITED STATES-NETHERLANDS-EAST INDIES RELATIONS

Shortly after the Japanese invasion, Dutch authorities accused the United States of abandoning its Allies, and carried this charge to the world's press. This censure climaxed several years of Dutch apprehension over American foreign policies.¹

As the Japanese became increasingly more aggressive in the South Pacific area during the 1930s, the Netherlands colonial government became concerned about its security. This feeling of hopelessness grew when the Germans conquered the mother country and turned to fear as an invasion by the Nipponese Army became probable. As early as 1939, an American travelling in Java, the main island of the Indies, found the consensus of the Javanese to be that the take-over probably would come as soon as Japan conquered China. The colonial government that year considered possible attack of such gravity to devote more than half the annual budget to defense.²

¹New York Times, March 3, 1942, p. 4; March 7, 1942, p. 1; Times (London), March 10, 1942, p. 4.

²Marc T. Greene, "Lifeblood of the Netherlands," Asia, 39 (December, 1939), 708.

After steadily being drawn into the Allied cause, the United States became involved in planning the defense of the Far East in late 1940. In December, Admiral Harold R. Stark, United States chief of naval operations, instructed American Asiatic fleet commander Admiral Thomas C. Hart to open discussions with the British and Dutch supreme commanders in the Far East. Stark assumed that the two countries would be Allies of the United States in the event of a Pacific war, but he also contemplated that the Dutch might be reluctant to participate because of the fear of Japanese reactions. The naval leader cautioned Hart to commit the United States to no particular military or political decisions. Stark felt that the American-British staff conference, scheduled to begin soon after the first of the year in Washington, would be the appropriate time for major decisions and commitments.³

The Washington conference⁴ evolved from American progressive inclination toward active involvement in the war. Originally, American interests had entailed only the sale of small numbers of aircraft and munitions to Great

³U. S. Congress, Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack: Hearings, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1946, pt. 4:1929.

⁴The conference lasted from January 29 to March 27, 1941, and was referred to as ABC-1 by United States Army conferees. Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1968), p. xxiii.

Britain, but by late 1940 had escalated to result in half of America's production of airplanes and war materials being sent to the British. With British funds exhausted, President Roosevelt introduced the Lend-Lease bill to supply war materials for Allies according to need rather than repayment ability. Consequently, the American-British conference constituted a meeting of inextricably intertwined Allies coordinating military plans of the two countries around the world in the event the United States actively entered the war.⁵

The conference members agreed that the Allies would concentrate on the defeat of Germany and Italy first; if Japan entered the war, Pacific action would be limited until resolution of the European war. The Allies disagreed on one major point: the British naval base at Singapore which Great Britain's conferees felt symbolized the empire's strength and should be held at all cost. The British insisted that the United States commit a large portion of its fleet to the South Pacific. The American representatives refused, pointing out that loss of the

⁵Mark Skinner Watson, Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations, 4 vols. in sub-series, The War Department, United States Army in World War Two (Washington: Department of the Army, 1950), 1:367-371; Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, p. 9; U. S. Congress, Senate, Congressional Record, 77th Cong., 1st sess., 1941, 87, pt. 1:4487; United States Statutes at Large, 1941, 55:31.

United States bases in the Philippines would also be a blow to American prestige. However, the representatives pointed out that in order to concentrate on the European theater, loss of the Asian bases might be necessary. The Americans advised the conference that the United States contemplated no increase in her Far East forces.⁶

Meanwhile, the Japanese attempted an economic invasion of the Netherlands East Indies. American Consul General Walter A. Foote reported from Batavia, the colonial capital, that Japan had approached the Dutch authorities with the proposition of joint exploitation. The Nipponese wanted to participate in the harvesting of the natural resources of the colony and simultaneously promote trade and economic relations. The Japanese also suggested that the Dutch government allow unlimited immigration of Japanese nationals despite the Netherlands's policy regarding quotas, allow Japanese medical personnel to practice without restriction, and insure that all applications or requests of Japanese nationals be treated in a friendly spirit. Furthermore, they requested permits for exploration in areas the Dutch government reserved for itself. The Japanese asked permission to fish in East Indian waters, to begin air service between the Dutch colony and Japan, and to abolish all restrictions on

⁶Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943, 4 vols. of sub-series, The War Department, United States Army in World War Two (Washington: Department of the Army, 1955), 4:52-54.

navigable areas and tonnage for Japanese ships. Finally, the Japanese wanted to install a cable from the colony to Japan and revoke the Dutch prohibition of the Japanese language in communications between the two peoples. Foote promised to ascertain the reaction of the Netherlands authorities and cable the information to the State Department the following day.⁷

Consul Foote informed Secretary of State Cordell Hull the next day that the Netherlands government rejected the Japanese proposals as unthinkable, thus forming no foundation whatsoever for further negotiations.⁸ The Netherlands minister, A. Loudon, called on Stanley K. Hornbeck⁹ and advised him that the Japanese and Portugese considered establishment of an airline from Japan to Portugese Timor. Should these talks achieve fruition, the Dutch feared they would be subjected to Japanese aircraft flying over fortified areas of the Dutch Indies. Both the British and Dutch governments had tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Portugese, said Loudon. The Netherlands minister solicited American assistance in influencing the Portugese.¹⁰

⁷Diplomatic Papers, Far East, 1941, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1956), 4:25-26.

⁸Ibid., pp. 27-28.

⁹Stanley K. Hornbeck served as political relations advisor to Cordell Hull.

¹⁰Diplomatic Papers, Far East, 1941, 4:28.

Two weeks later, on February 8, 1941, Joseph Grew¹¹ telegraphed Hull regarding intensified Japanese encroachment in the South Pacific. Grew felt that Great Britain could not then nor in the future spare enough naval power to defend Singapore, which in Grew's opinion was vital to the defense of the area. Grew reminded Hull that the morale of the Far East British forces, the Dutch, and the Nationalist Chinese depended almost entirely upon the hope of ultimate American aid.¹²

Admiral Stark's suggestion of conversations between Allied Far East commanders resulted in a conference at Singapore during the week of April 21-27, 1941, and included Americans, British, and Dutch.¹³ The British again proposed that the defense of Singapore be the keystone of the plan; once more the American representatives disagreed. Colonel Allen C. McBride, the United States military delegate, conveyed his impressions to Major General George Grunert, commanding general of the Philippines Department, at the conclusion of the conference. Grunert reported to the War Department that McBride had discouraged the British from expecting that additional forces would be ordered to

¹¹Joseph Grew served as American ambassador to Japan.

¹²Pearl Harbor Hearings, pt. 6:2918.

¹³The Singapore conference was also known as ABDA. Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, p. xxiii.

the Philippines, that American planning went south of Manila, or that increased United States forces would use Luzon as an offensive base. Grunert pointed out that Great Britain presumed the United States Asiatic fleet was at the disposal of the British commanders for almost total devotion to the defense of Singapore.¹⁴

The Netherlands charge d'affaires, W. V. Van Boetzelar, requested in Washington that the United States join the Dutch and British governments in making a declaration to Japan. Should the Nipponese make additional major moves to the south, the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands would conclude that their interests were affected. If the United States government wanted to take alternate action, Van Boetzelar added, the Dutch would gladly consider any suggestion; the State Department demurred.¹⁵

Some United States government civil servants urged limited action to show United States concern. Despite Washington's reluctance to make a formal statement, Hornbeck wrote and forwarded a paper to the War Department recommending three-fourths of the United States fleet be kept at Hawaii to insure Singapore's security. He further

¹⁴Watson, Prewar Plans and Preparations, pp. 394-395.

¹⁵Diplomatic Papers, Far East, 1941, 5:141.

suggested sending more planes and submarines to the Philippine Islands's command and additional equipment to China, Singapore, and the Netherlands East Indies. Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall opposed the proposals, saying a collapse in the Atlantic would be fatal to the American cause. He continued by stating that while a collapse in the Far East would be serious, it would not be fatal.¹⁶

On May 3, 1941, Dutch authorities announced that future exports from the Indies to Japan might be reduced below previous figures; the Nipponese immediately requested a review of the situation. The Dutch consented on the condition that the Japanese cease further expansion of their companies in the Indies, the Dutch reserve full freedom to carry on the war against Germany, the Dutch make no promises regarding rubber or tin, and the colonial government determine the amounts of commodities to be released for shipment to Japan.¹⁷

The Netherlands foreign minister, E. N. Van Kleffens, called on Sumner Welles, American undersecretary of state, to say that morale in the Netherlands East Indies remained high and defensive measures taken had impressed him. The

¹⁶Watson, Prewar Plans and Preparations, p. 397.

¹⁷Diplomatic Papers, Far East, 1941, 5:141-142.

foreign minister expressed confidence in the colony's ability to repulse any invader in every respect except in numbers of aircraft. When Van Kleffens asked about the reinforcement of bases in the Philippines, Welles told the minister that urgent requirements of the United States defenses dominated the priorities. The Dutch official requested anti-aircraft artillery, small arms ammunition, and bombers, and gave the undersecretary his opinion of recent Japanese economic proposals, stating that he feared the Japanese would use the rupture of negotiation as an excuse to threaten the Dutch. Nevertheless, the minister did not expect the Japanese to launch an open attack on the Indies in the immediate future.¹⁸

While statesmen discussed the unsteady situation, the United States Atlantic Fleet expanded at the expense of the Pacific naval force. From January 2, 1941 to July 12, 1941, the navy transferred from the Pacific to the Atlantic three battleships, one aircraft carrier, eight cruisers, seventeen destroyers, and fifteen auxiliary vessels. No ships were transferred to the Pacific from the Atlantic.¹⁹

President Roosevelt desired that some restraint be placed on Japan to indicate the United States displeasure

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 250-251.

¹⁹Pearl Harbor Hearings, pt. 6:2918.

of Japanese policies. The president moved to prevent the use of American financial facilities and to restrict trade between the two countries. Six weeks earlier on June 14, Roosevelt had issued an order freezing the assets of belligerent European countries.²⁰ This action placed Japan in the frozen assets category and was designed to bring under control by the United States government all import-export trade negotiations and transactions which involved Japanese nationals or interests. The announcement, Executive Order Number 8832, dated July 26, 1941, also included provisions for freezing the assets of China, incorporated specifically at the invitation of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to aid the Chinese government.²¹

Following Roosevelt's action, E. N. Van Kleffens called on acting secretary of state Sumner Welles. The Dutch feared Japanese retaliation against their colony, and the minister told Welles that he hoped the Dutch government would be kept better informed of the American government's actions regarding the situation in the South Pacific. The minister noted that his government would not

²⁰Federal Register, vol. 6, no. 146, doc. no. 41-5384, July 26, 1941.

²¹Diplomatic Papers, Japan, 1931-1941, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 2:266-267; Federal Register, vol. 6, no. 109, doc. no. 415359, June 14, 1941.

appease the Japanese; he wanted to know what steps the United States would take if this policy resulted in hostile action. Welles reminded the minister that the two countries had conferred through their military representatives and for the moment he could say only that the situation was uppermost in the mind of the American government.²²

In contrast to the Americans, the British government assured the Dutch of assistance. On August 1, 1941, the British ambassador to the United States, Sir Neville Butler, told the Netherlands minister, Van Kleffens, that the entire Far Eastern situation had been reviewed and His Majesty's government would guard the rights and possessions of the Dutch as far as possible. The ambassador gave his assurance that Great Britain would do everything in its power to help if the Japanese attacked the colony. Aid would be based on two things: the British would decide the appropriate time and type of action; any British movement would depend on steps of the United States government.²³

The British encouragement emboldened the Dutch to issue the following statement:

The Authorities [Netherlands East Indies government] feel that the occupation of Indo-China is a direct threat to the Netherlands Indies and

²²Diplomatic Papers, Far East, 1941, 4:350-351.

²³Ibid., pp. 281-282.

that under the circumstances any exports that would materially add to Japan's potential power would not be in the interest of the Netherlands Indies. Resumption of normal relations is possible only after the removal of this threat.²⁴

The Dutch announced that oil could not be exported to Japan unless the Japanese government publicly declared they would not invade the Dutch colony and the Nipponese troops would not continue occupation of Indo-China.²⁵

The Japanese quickly responded. Eiju Amau, Japanese minister for foreign affairs, conferred with the Netherlands minister in Tokyo, General J. C. Pabst, on August 23, 1941, and entreated the Dutch to make no move harmful to the relations between the two countries. Amau urged the colony to honor all contracts with Japan, and assured the Dutch minister that the Japanese occupation in no way jeopardized the Dutch Indies. When Pabst requested a public declaration, the Japanese stated that public opinion was so aroused over the Dutch attitude that it would be impossible at that time.²⁶

Meanwhile, A. Loudon pressed the American State Department for assurance of aid should the Japanese become aggressive toward the Dutch. The minister reminded the secretary that the Allied military conferences were complete and were

²⁴Diplomatic Papers, Far East, 1941, 5:271.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 281-282.

²⁶Ibid.

approved by the Dutch. The Netherlands government anxiously awaited the United States government's approval of the conference plans.²⁷

While the Dutch sought pledges from their Allies, the British strongly and publicly discussed the United States's commitment to the defense of the South Pacific. Duff Cooper, special envoy from the Crown to Singapore, arrived at Batavia, Java, on September 19. When questioned by newsmen about the base in Singapore being used by American forces, Cooper coyly replied that there existed ". . . no agreement on paper, but the answer is obvious." When asked if ". . . the ABCD front was merely wishful thinking," Cooper retorted, "emphatically no. It is a fact."²⁸

This publicity distressed American military men. Admiral Hart complained to the Navy Department about British Air Chief Marshal Earle Brooke-Popham, who had visited him in Manila for brief discussions regarding patrol bombers. When Brooke-Popham returned to Singapore, however, he implied to the press that extensive talks had occurred. Obviously upset, Hart said, ". . . the fanfare of publicity which accompanied the above visit and which the British always seek to give to our talks with them in

²⁷Diplomatic Papers, Far East, 1941, 4:389.

²⁸Pearl Harbor Hearings, pt. 10:5227-5228.

the area is unwise." The American admiral believed that early conversations which constituted only the first steps toward realization of a viable and ongoing Anglo-Dutch-American alliance against Japanese expansion should have no publicity.²⁹

The Dutch became increasingly apprehensive. At the Singapore conference, the British had outlined a proposal to form a defense against Japanese expansion, but this plan had not developed to Dutch satisfaction. The British vaguely promised help, but based their pledge on the action of the United States, and the Americans were being non-committal. Furthermore, needed war material available only from the United States had arrived in limited quantities. Consequently, when the Dutch Navy observed a build-up of Japanese forces in late November, 1941, near the Pelew Islands east of the Philippines, the Netherlands government became alarmed and sought advice from their Allies. When the Dutch suggested a joint statement declaring the area between the Pelews and the Dutch colony a defense zone of the United States and Great Britain, the two larger countries declined to join in the announcement. The American chief of naval operations and the British admiralty discounted the information about the Japanese build-up. The American Navy regarded the Dutch proposal as political and

²⁹Diplomatic Papers, Far East, 1941, 4:505.

hesitated to become involved. The British pointed out that a joint statement might disturb current United States-Japanese diplomatic negotiations and suggested the Dutch issue a unilateral declaration to cover the colony's own shores. This attitude soon changed.³⁰

On December 5, a British reconnaissance plane spotted a large Japanese convoy between Malaya and Siam. When the pilot tried to approach the group, Japanese planes from the accompanying aircraft carrier quickly forced the British plane to leave the area. The Allies, upon receiving the information, began to take a more aggressive stance. The British War Office advised Brooke-Popham that assurance of American help had been promised should the Japanese invade another part of Siam, the Dutch East Indies, or attack the British military in the area.³¹

The Netherlands East Indies War Department advised the American consul general that they had intercepted and decoded a communication from the Japanese ministry of foreign affairs in Tokyo. The message included a code in weather reports that would be used to keep the Japanese in the Indies abreast of current events; East wind, rain, would indicate war with the United States; North wind, cloudy,

³⁰Pearl Harbor Hearings, pt. 10:4874.

³¹Ibid., pp. 5082-5084.

war with Russia; and West wind, clear, would signal war with Britain. The consul forwarded the information to the State Department, but cautioned that such messages had occurred frequently since 1936; he transmitted the telegram on December 6, 1941.³²

On Monday following the Pearl Harbor attack, President Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress requesting a declaration of war. Later that day, Roosevelt telegraphed the congressional assent to Prime Minister Winston Churchill and added, "Today, all of us are in the same boat with you and the people of the Empire and it is a ship that will not and cannot be sunk." Churchill answered Roosevelt on December 9 by proposing a conference to discuss the ". . . whole war plan in the light of reality and new facts. . . ." ³³

After receiving the president's approval, Churchill sailed for America on the battleship H.M.S. Duke of York. The prime minister received press reports and official communiques that indicated an enraged American nation would be devoted entirely to Japanese destruction. Churchill feared American preoccupation with Japan, in which case Great Britain would be forced to fight Germany and Italy alone.

³²Diplomatic Papers, Far East, 1941, 4:713.

³³Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, p. 210.

The British leader and his staff hoped that they could convince the president and his advisors that the Japanese defeat would not cause the collapse of Hitler, but destruction of Hitler would mean the annihilation of the Japanese war effort.³⁴

As the British prime minister steamed across the Atlantic, General George C. Marshall ordered Brigadier General Dwight D. Eisenhower to Washington. The two men met on the morning of December 14, 1941, and Marshall outlined the situation. The Japanese attack impaired American naval expectations and it would be months before they could participate in large operations; the reinforcement of weakened Hawaiian forces should take priority in the Pacific; and, the Philippine Islands faced disaster. Marshall wanted Eisenhower's recommendation for action. After studying the situation, Eisenhower advised Marshall to give all possible help to the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies, but suggested the main effort should be toward saving Australia as a base from which to operate. Marshall agreed with this assessment.³⁵

³⁴Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War: The Grand Alliance (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1948), 3:641-643.

³⁵Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1948), pp. 14-22.

One week later the British delegation arrived in the United States for the Washington conference that had code name Arcadia. From December 22, 1941, to January 14, 1942, these leaders of the free world discussed their formal objections. They formed a Combined Chiefs of Staff and issued a joint memorandum outlining the destruction of Nazi Germany as the major objective. An entry in a subsequent section of the message indicated a secondary role for the Allied war program in the South Pacific. The Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed that only the necessary force required for the safety of prime interests in other areas should be taken from the attack against Germany.³⁶

The Dutch began a publicity campaign during the Washington conference designed to sway American public opinion to their save-the-Indies viewpoint. On January 3, 1942, the Netherlands government in Batavia praised General Douglas MacArthur's stand in the Philippines and reiterated the necessity of defending the Indies and the vital importance of reinforcing the islands. The Dutch stressed that if the colony fell, Japanese forces would be released to operate elsewhere, and suggested the west coast of the United States might be next. The colonial government

³⁶Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, p. 210.

declared that the outcome of the war depended upon saving the Dutch East Indies.³⁷

The Dutch announced two days later that Major General George Brett and Admiral Thomas Hart, both of the American military establishment, had assumed roles as deputy commanders in the Far Eastern unified command, and that United States air and naval reinforcements would be forthcoming.³⁸

On January 11, Shiela Graham, noted American columnist, joined the campaign and led an article on the Indies with the statement, "The Netherlanders are good payers as well as fine fighters." Graham pointed out that the Dutch paid 100 percent in cash for all war materials they received from America. A New York Times feature writer, Hanson Baldwin, soon joined the campaign with two articles insisting on reinforcements for the Dutch.³⁹

On the following day in New York, Colonial Lieutenant Governor H. J. Van Mook reemphasized that sufficient American reinforcements could hold the Indies. Van Mook presently went to Washington and conferred with President Roosevelt. Upon emerging from the White House, the Netherlander told

³⁷New York Times, January 4, 1942, p. 10.

³⁸Ibid., January 6, 1942, p. 7.

³⁹Ibid., January 11, 1942, p. 3.

reporters that he had been given a great deal of encouragement regarding attempts to strengthen the defense forces in the South Pacific.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the Japanese, after heavy aerial bombardment, invaded Borneo, the largest island of the Dutch East Indies; on the same day the Second Battalion, 131st Field Artillery landed on the main island of Java. The Bloemfontein docked at Surabaya, Java, on the afternoon of January 11, 1942. The decorated sampans and barges impressed the Second Battalion men. The United States destroyers remained at anchor next to the Bloemfontein, which eased the anxieties of the American soldiers. When the troops left the ship, Lawrence Brown thought to himself, "Oh, my Lord! What have we run into here? Can't talk their [native] language, can't understand them." Uell Carter, however, was fascinated. He considered Surabaya picturesque. Street cars ran down the center of the wide boulevards which were ". . . lovely, scenic green gardens with flowers."⁴¹

An officer assigned P. J. Smallwood and Horace Chumley to the crew unloading supplies from the ship. The men had

⁴⁰Ibid., January 19, 1942, p. 3; January 2, 1942, p. 4; January 21, 1942, p. 6.

⁴¹Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 56:14; Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 178:21; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 166:26; Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 59:15.

understood that the cargo on the Bloemfontein was ammunition, but while unloading the cargo, they discovered that canned milk filled the ship's holds. Chumley's section completed its task late the following night. Shortly thereafter the Dutch officers accompanied the men into Surabaja to an exclusive hotel for dinner. The array of silverware on each side of the plates overwhelmed the Texans. One of the men gathered up the excess flatware while another held a linen table cloth as the silver dropped in. This behavior shocked the Dutch officials and waiters.⁴²

While the dock detail had been unloading the ship, the balance of the battalion boarded a narrow gauge railroad car and travelled several hours to Malang, a community in the mountains. Dutch school buses waited for the Second Battalion as they detrained. The men boarded the buses

⁴²On another occasion, Frank Fujita and six other Americans entered a Dutch canteen and watched various Dutch military men entertain several Royal Air Force people. Fujita noted that the Dutch and English ". . . were very ceremoniously drinking. . . with little thimble size glasses . . . and [the] Texans got a bottle apiece, sat down at the table and threw the cap away and started drinking out of the bottle. . . . [The] Dutchmen and Englishmen [']s eyes liked to have popped out. They had never seen anybody who could drink like the Texans." The aristocratic Dutch were appalled, and as Lawrence Brown found later, they ". . . wouldn't have a cotton-picking thing to do with us. . . ." P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:26-29; Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 199:17-18; Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:21-24; Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:15-20.

for Singosari Airfield, approximately seven miles away. The Texans, arriving late on the night of January 11, welcomed the Dutch cooks's greeting of hot coffee and pastries.⁴³ The battalion officers assigned the troops to permanent-type brick barracks normally used by the Dutch. Slits at the top of each wall provided ventilation for the buildings; tile roofs covered the barracks. Open ditches running through the camp constituted the only sanitary facilities. To the Americans, the rooms inside the barracks resembled horse stalls. Since they had neither bunks nor bedrolls, the artillerymen found hay in a nearby field and made beds on the floor. The men of the battalion quickly utilized the one luxurious facility, the showers.⁴⁴

The Second Battalion acted initially as ground crews for the Nineteenth Heavy Bombardment Group. This air unit had been forced to leave the original ground sections at Clark Field when fleeing the Philippines. As the existing runways proved too short for the large bombers, the officers immediately assigned men to lengthen the landing strips

⁴³Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:15-20; Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:14-19.

⁴⁴Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:15-20; Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:14-19; C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 185:17-18; Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 69:9-11.

by using native labor. Rocks gathered from a nearby river provided the base while small stones in the uneven areas made a smoother runway. Simultaneously, other members of the battalion became ground crews for the Boeing B-17 bombers. They refueled the aircraft, cleaned and oiled the .50 caliber machine guns, and loaded the airplanes with bombs. Within a short time, artillerymen were able to remove, repair, and replace the aircraft engines; air corps sergeants accomplished these tasks by giving instructions and acting as cadre in training the battalion troops.⁴⁵

The artillerymen had great respect for the flyers. The army used the large cumbersome planes as heavy bombers, fighters, and transports. The ground crews noticed that when the planes returned from missions the flyers jumped out and kissed the ground; large holes from anti-aircraft fire were frequently in the American aircraft wings. When Glenn Pace asked a flight crew member if the damage could be repaired before take-off time, the flyer said, "Heck, no, we're fixing to go. . . ."⁴⁶

Not all the artillerymen served the air corps as ground crews. The gun sections dug pits and set up their

⁴⁵Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:14-19.

⁴⁶Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 69:9-11; Glenn Pace, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 134:17.

artillery pieces. The four gun-sections of D Battery utilized the first several days at Singosari to clean the cosmoline packing grease off the cannon. Within a few days, the cannon tubes pointed skyward and served as anti-aircraft weapons when the first air raid occurred on February 5.⁴⁷

Frank Fujita served as machine gun sergeant and guarded the runway. Scorning a fox hole for his position, he requisitioned two .50 caliber machine guns from burned B-17 bombers, and by using makeshift tripods mounted the weapons on the back of a jeep. Fujita's anti-aircraft jeep could scurry around the base and evade the attacking planes. On the first occasion that Fujita fired both guns simultaneously, however, vibration virtually dismantled the jeep. After the first raid, the Japanese planes came

⁴⁷The men of the battalion differ on the details of the first air raid. George Burns saw seventeen bombers attack the field with the cook shack just inside the gate being the primary target, "one bomb hit right in that cook shack. . . one bomb hit in a building where they had been unloading condensed milk off a ship and storing it. . . . You can imagine how the condensed milk was scattered there." Starnes and Fillmore disagree; they saw seventeen planes that attacked the field and destroyed the barracks. All agreed, however, with Fillmore who said, "After the first one [air raid] you always kind of walked around with one eye up in the air." P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:29; Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 72:14-17; George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 176:21-22; W. L. Starnes, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 186:22; B. D. Fillmore, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 162:16.

over almost daily, usually around noon, and flew one bombing run over the field.⁴⁸

Churchill, in the meantime, posed a question about the British troops stationed in the Dutch colony. Could evacuation be accomplished should it become necessary? After the successful removal of troops from Dunkirk, the British increasingly considered this means of saving the Empire forces in the Indies. British Field Marshal A. P. Wavell, supreme commander of the Allied South Pacific forces, appraised the Netherlands East Indies military situation and cabled Churchill that the Dutch colony could be held only by air and naval superiority, which the Allies lacked. Because of this capability, Wavell suggested the abandonment of the Indies. At that time the Japanese occupied all the islands except for Java, the main colonist island. The field marshal recommended to Churchill that efforts be concentrated toward saving Australia and Burma, which Wavell considered vital for the prosecution of the war against Japan. The British commander regarded the loss of Java as a potentially harmful blow, but not fatal to the war effort. Churchill agreed with Wavell's proposal that the current British troops in the Indies not be

⁴⁸Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:21-31.

evacuated because of the lack of sea power, but he did order that reinforcements enroute to the area be diverted to Australia.⁴⁹

Unaware of the American-British decision to concentrate on saving Australia, the Dutch continued their publicity campaign. General Heim ter Poorten, commander in chief of the Dutch forces, said the colony would be defended to the last man and called upon America for additional planes and anti-aircraft artillery. News magazines joined the campaign with articles extolling the resoluteness of the Dutch and describing how they had altered their beautiful islands to repel the Japanese. Cecil Brown, a Columbia Broadcasting System correspondent enroute to Australia from Singapore, wrote that the survival of Java depended upon American and British aid. Brown said the Netherlanders felt that both Allies had not only failed the Dutch, but also themselves.⁵⁰

Shortly before the invasion of Java, the United States Army Air Corps ordered the Nineteenth Bomb Group to abandon the Indies and fly to Australia. The flyers suggested that the Second Battalion accompany them, but the army had other

⁴⁹Winston S. Churchill, The Hinge of Fate, The Second World War, 6 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1948), 4:140-142.

⁵⁰Newsweek Magazine, January 2, 1942, pp. 15-16; February 16, 1942, pp. 21-22; March 2, 1942, pp. 14-15.

plans because ". . . they sent a General Barnes⁵¹ from Australia to Java to give. . ." the men a speech of encouragement, saying, ". . . to boost the morale of the Allied people on Java it would be necessary for the American troops. . . to stay and. . . make a show of trying to fight."⁵²

With the aircraft leaving Singosari Airfield, the Second Battalion again became artillerymen. The Dutch told the Americans that the high command planned to deceive the Japanese by racing vehicles around the island to give the appearance of mass troop movement.⁵³ The action, called a motor march, continued for several days. The unit ". . . drove all day and bivouacked at night. . . ." Finally the truck convoy went into bivouac at a race track near Garoet.⁵⁴

Battery E had been left at Singosari Airfield to store all the battalion equipment. Before the work could be completed, however, the Japanese landed and the battery

⁵¹General Julian F. Barnes, United States Army Air Corps, who accompanied the convoy from the United States, was the highest ranking American military officer in Australia.

⁵²Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:22-27.

⁵³W. L. Starnes, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 186:30; Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 69:14-18.

⁵⁴Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 72:19-22.

moved into combat position near Surabaja. The Japanese landed 92,000 troops in the area defended by 105 Americans and 5,500 British and Australian forces. George Killian found a motorcycle and rode out to survey the situation. He saw Japanese soldiers slowly moving through the underbrush and thought, "what are they creeping along for; everybody knows they're there." Killian looked at the soldiers closely and said to himself, "they sure are small [and] they sure are dirty." Killian speeded through the Japanese to return to the American position.⁵⁵

Captain Hollis Allen, Battery E commander, ordered Frank Fujita to take a group of thirty-one men to a Dutch Army emplacement and guard the approach to the city. An English-speaking Dutch marine sergeant went outside the enclosure and soon returned saying, "Sergeant, there's a bunch of American troops coming down the road." Fujita ran outside and peered at the approaching soldiers. Rumors had been circulating that 20,000 American troops were enroute to reinforce the island. To Fujita's dismay, however, the oncoming troops were Japanese. Fujita yelled, "Americans, hell. Open fire." The Japanese retreated to a close

⁵⁵George Killian, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 56:22-27; Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:21-31; Hollis Allen, The Lost Battalion (Jacksboro: Herald Publishing Co., 1949), p. 68.

village and Fujita's section opened fire on the village with their artillery pieces, killing several enemy soldiers before exhausting their ammunition supply. The section then made a brisk attempt to escape the Japanese.⁵⁶ The battery regrouped and the commander ordered every man to save himself. Carter and Killian drove to the nearest docks and commandeered a Dutch boat for voyage to Australia. They found no food or water on board; while the Americans searched for provisions, Japanese planes bombed and sank the boat.⁵⁷

Fujita and a companion, Ben Keith, decided to retreat to the mountains. At dusk they stopped at a house and inquired about spending the night. The occupants, three women and two girls, fed the Americans and gave them lodging for the night. The next morning the women anxiously knocked on the door and said, "Please, please, you must leave. . . or you will get us killed. . . . The Japanese are here." Fujita looked out the window and saw ". . . Japanese all over the yard. One was at the front door. . . . It so happened that we had picked a house that was directly across from the railroad station." Fujita and Keith calmly walked out the door and through the group

⁵⁶Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:21-31.

⁵⁷Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 56:29-31.

of Japanese soldiers who looked at the Americans and moved out of their way. The two Americans strolled through the front gate and headed for the edge of town. Once out of sight of the house, the artillerymen began to run. They asked everyone they met, "What's going on?" But they received no answer. Finally, one man told them, "Don't go. They're [Japanese] killing everybody. . . [and] paying the natives five guilden a head to point out anyone trying to get out of town." The Americans reversed their direction and returned to town. Presently they recognized the International Red Cross building and went inside, where they found the Red Cross representative busy in his preparations for departure. They requested aid in getting transportation out of town. When the Red Cross representative discovered they were Americans, he refused to talk to them saying, "They'll kill me if they see me talking to you." Fujita became furious and said, "Okay you son-of-a-bitch, if you're not going to help us, at least take a letter. We'll write a letter, and you take it and mail it so our folks back in America will know, at least as of this date, we were safe." The representative refused.⁵⁸

While the Netherlands East Indies public relations campaign progressed, the Japanese Army continued to advance.

⁵⁸Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:32-37.

Allied forces, especially the Australians, had little respect for Dutch military men. An Australian intelligence officer requested information from the Dutch headquarters about enemy troop movements and was advised that the information was unavailable since the morning paper had not yet been delivered.⁵⁹

Lieutenant Governor Van Mook, having returned to Java, raised criticism of American failures. He admitted some Dutch blame, but felt the majority of the censure should be placed on the United States. Van Mook posed a question to the news reporters: If the Japanese could conquer the Indies from one thousand miles away, should not the Americans be able to send enough aid to save the colony from nearby Australia? Other reporters joined this renewed publicity campaign four days later when the United States Army Air Corps ordered the American bombers to Australia. One reporter said the planes abandoned Java in its greatest hour of need. A leading British newspaper criticized the United States for failing to reinforce the Dutch before and soon after the beginning of the Pacific war. The newspaper pointed out that the Dutch had counted

⁵⁹Lionel Wigmore, The Japanese Thrust, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, 7 vols. (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957), 4:501.

on the reinforcements, and in many instances had paid for them in advance.⁶⁰

Supported by an unopposed navy and air force, the Japanese Army continued to rout Allied troops. The Dutch transferred the military headquarters from Batavia to Bandung, located inland and more isolated from Japanese attack. Leaving their families, Van Mook and several other officials fled by plane to Australia. The lieutenant governor of the collapsing colony made no attempt to hide his bitterness toward the Allies, especially the Americans.⁶¹

On March 7, the Japanese penetrated the Bandung perimeter and effective resistance in the Dutch colony ended. Just prior to being overrun, the Bandung radio station broadcast its final message that Americans received at 7:55 A.M. New York time: "We are now shutting down. Good-bye till better times. Long live the Queen." The following day Java, the last unoccupied island of the Dutch colony, formally surrendered.⁶²

⁶⁰New York Times, March 8, 1942, p. 1; March 10, 1942, p. 1.

⁶¹Newsweek Magazine, March 16, 1942, p. 25.

⁶²New York Times, March 10, 1942.

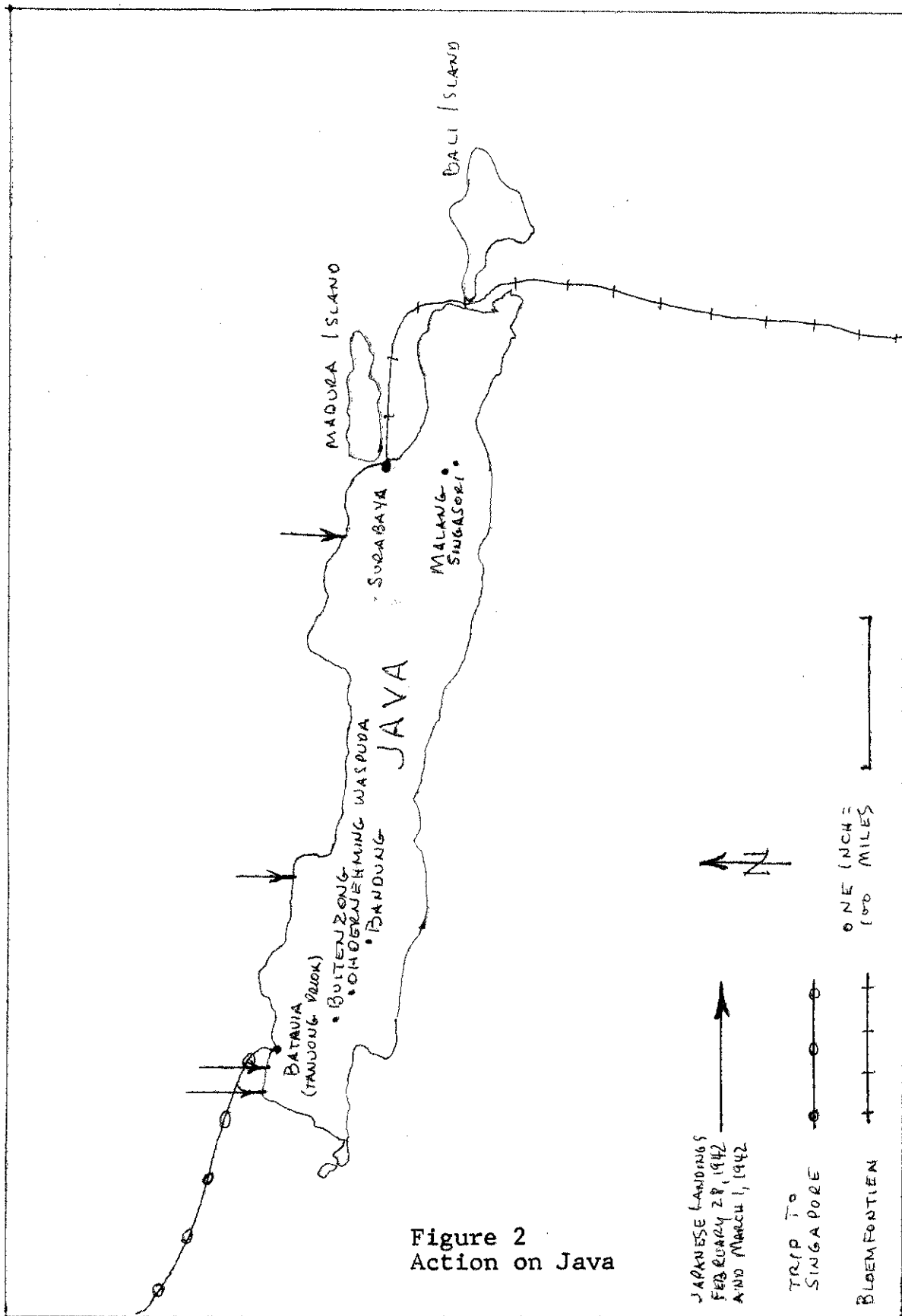


Figure 2
Action on Java

JAPANESE LANDINGS
FEBRUARY 28, 1942
AND MARCH 1, 1942

TRIP TO
SINGAPORE

BLOEMFONTEIN

ONE INCH =
100 MILES

CHAPTER V

SURRENDER AND EARLY CONFINEMENT

Shortly after arriving at the Garoet Race Track, the Second Battalion received news of the Dutch capitulation. An officer told George Burns and several others that the American unit was also surrendering, but that the evacuation ships were ostensibly located off the east coast of Java. Burns's group decided they had two options. "We had a choice trying to make it down there [to the ships] if we could get transportation. . . . Otherwise, the ones that stayed there would still stay organized in a unit." The officer warned the men that confinement could last ". . . three months, six months. Who knows? It might last a year."¹ Burns thought to himself, "My goodness, we'll be out of here in six months."²

Some of the men decided to attempt to reach the coast. Jack Moss drove a group in his truck to the intended

¹Confinement ultimately lasted forty-one months and nine days. Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War (Wichita Falls: Nortex Offset Publications, Inc., 1973), p. 15.

²George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 176:26.

evacuation area, but found ". . . no planes, no boats. . . no nothing." Moss's group stayed in hiding for several days until an American officer, advised by the British of the group's location, came to the men and persuaded them to surrender.³

Keith Naylor with two other Americans joined a group of Australians and travelled to the southern coast looking for an escape route. The Australians soon capitulated and were joined by the other two Americans. This left only Naylor who finally surrendered around April 1, 1942.⁴

One group did manage to escape. Glenn Pace with a group of Americans from Dutch Headquarters managed to reach Batavia and get on board the last ship to leave, the Abad-De-Kirk; the ship reached Perth, Australia, after being attacked by Japanese planes and submarines.⁵ Fujita and Keith from E Battery were still at large. After leaving the Red Cross building, the Americans noticed that the Dutch population avoided them. Finally, one Dutchman offered to take the two artillerymen home for the night. Furthermore,

³Jack Moss, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 145:11-14.

⁴Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 72:27-33.

⁵Glenn Pace, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 134:22.

he said, "I got some American cigarettes. . . . I'll give you a 'Dutch wife' apiece, and we'll come back tomorrow and surrender." The Americans accepted the offer and accompanied the Dutchman to his home. They were disappointed to find later that a "Dutch wife" was a pillow Dutchmen placed between their legs while asleep in the tropics to prevent perspiration from creating a rash.⁶

The battalion waited at the race track for further instructions. Although the Japanese had given orders to Allied survivors to preserve their equipment, the battalion officers ordered the men to destroy all usable items. Lawrence Brown's group systematically ruined all the mechanisms of the rifles and guns. W. L. Starnes, who had been driving a new 1941 Oldsmobile command car, drained the water and oil out of the vehicle and ran the engine until it became inoperative.⁷

Several days later, a Japanese officer came to the race track to confer with the battalion officers. The appearance of the Japanese officer astounded George Burns. He thought, "People like that conquering people like us?" Scrutinizing the commander closely, Brown exclaimed, "My Lord of Mercy. We surrendered to that guy?" The Japanese

⁶Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 59:37-38.

⁷Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:32-34; W. L. Starnes, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 186:32.

ordered the battalion to proceed from the race track to a tea plantation, Ondernehmig Waspuda, up in the mountains.⁸

Lieutenant Wade Hampton from Decatur gave money to Alfred Brown with instructions to purchase whiskey for the men. Brown procured several bottles of Haig Original Scotch Whiskey from natives that had raided a liquor warehouse. Some of the men became inebriated while others played poker. Lieutenant Heinen, who had aided in directing the motor march and had lost sleep for several days, went to bed.⁹

After one week of occupation, the Japanese moved the battalion from the tea plantation to Batavia by train, and then marched them three miles to a native camp called Tanjong Priok, which lay approximately two hundred yards from the docks. Occasionally, the Japanese permitted the men to work on the Batavia docks on a volunteer basis. Many volunteered for work to relieve the boredom and hopefully to find other means of supplement for their meager rations. Essentially, the diet consisted of

⁸George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:30; C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 185:29; Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:32-4.

⁹Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, pp. 18-19; Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 69:30.

exceedingly poor quality rice that had been swept up from the warehouse floors. The men cooked their rations by filling burlap bags with the grain and placing the bags into barrels of boiling water.¹⁰ A Japanese halted one group unloading canned sweet cream to lecture the captives on stealing food. The officer told the prisoners that they could not steal from the Japanese because Nipponese were too smart. As the man turned to walk away someone from the ranks of prisoners threw an empty sweet cream can out behind him.¹¹

The Japanese Army incarcerated approximately 1,200 prisoners at Tanjong Priok, and the guards counted the inmates each morning and again at bedtime. Except for Battery E, the battalion remained intact. Strange as it may seem, some of the men were allowed to keep their weapons. Uell Carter possessed an automatic pistol, and others retained different types of rifles; many of the soldiers still held hand grenades. Carter did not consider using the weapon because of prison rumors that American forces soon would recapture the island. Carter thought ". . . it would be a few days here 'till our bunch got

¹⁰B. D. Fillmore, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 162:100.

¹¹Ibid.

things straightened out, and so we were just having a lark."¹²

After five weeks in Tanjong Priok, the battalion travelled a short distance to a Dutch Army camp, formerly the base of the Netherlands Indies Tenth Bicycle Regiment.¹³ The new prison, known as Bicycle Camp, impressed the Americans with its Banyan trees, paved streets, and stone barracks. The quarters were arranged six on each side of a center street; each unit could house approximately three hundred men. The sanitary facilities at Bicycle Camp were excellent, relative to Tanjong Priok: Dutch-type latrines with no commode, only a hole and a place for two feet to be placed on either side. The men bathed in large concrete vats filled with water by first soaping themselves and then dashing the water over their heads native style.¹⁴

At Bicycle Camp, the Second Battalion discovered

¹²Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 69:32-35; Uell Carter, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 56:33; Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 199:32.

¹³There is disagreement on mode of travel. Naylor states in Oral History Collection, OH 72:34-36, that the trip was on foot; Clyde Fillmore in Prisoner of War, p. 18, says by train; and P. J. Smallwood in Oral History Collection, OH 166:44, says by truck.

¹⁴J. B. Heinen, Jr., personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 174:45; C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 185:32; Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 188:45; Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 72:36-48; Alfred Brown, personal

survivors of the U.S.S. Houston, which had been sunk off the east coast of Java on the night of February 28, 1942. The artillerymen found the sailors in rags as they had escaped from the sinking ship with only the clothes on their bodies and had remained in the water for several hours before rescue. Consequently, the men of the Second Battalion shared clothing with the Houston crew.¹⁵

Americans encountered Japanese humiliation and brutality for the first time at Bicycle Camp. The guards forced the Americans to cut their hair close to the scalp Japanese style. Soon after the battalion arrived, the prisoners learned that their captors expected them to sign a pledge of allegiance to the Japanese Army, but the American officers ordered the men not to sign. When the Japanese found the men refusing to sign the pledge, they placed the prisoners under the sun and seated them with their legs crossed, their arms folded and allowed no movement. The men sat in this position for several hours. As it became apparent that the Japanese would ultimately kill the prisoners that refused to sign the pledge, the

interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 188:52; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:46, 57.

¹⁵Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 19; Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 69:45; B. D. Fillmore, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 162:42.

American officers ordered their men to comply with the request.¹⁶

The guards required prisoners to maintain a watch at the end of each building. Whenever a Japanese soldier came near the barracks, the sentry cried, "ki o toukete (attention)," and all occupants would stand at attention until the Japanese passed by. Then the sentinel would give the command, "yashumi (rest)." George Burns found that "we had to treat them [Japanese] like gods. We had to salute them even if it was a one star private. We had to bow to them [if a prisoner wore no hat or cap]." ¹⁷

The Bicycle Camp roster included many different nationalities: British, Indians, Australians, Dutch, and Americans. The prisoners not on work detail played volleyball and basketball. At times the Americans and Australians competed against each other in basketball championships.¹⁸

¹⁶Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:42; Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, pp. 22-23.

¹⁷Alfred Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 188:62; George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:37. For explicit descriptions of torture see Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 24, and George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:38-40.

¹⁸Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 21; Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 69:49.

A number of men secreted small radios which apprised the prisoners of events of the outside world. Often the radios received transmissions from station KFI in Los Angeles, California. One American civilian captured in Java had an artificial leg. Later, when the other radios had been confiscated, this prisoner concealed a radio in his hollow prosthetic leg.¹⁹

The Japanese transferred the men of E Battery to the Jaarmarket [yearly market] at Surabaya, and instructed the prisoners to bow or salute. E Battery personnel decided they would not acquiesce to this requirement. Before testing the rule, however, the Americans saw another Allied prisoner beaten with clubs for refusal to bow. After this action, "They [Japanese] didn't have trouble from then on. Everybody bowed or saluted." A short time later E Battery artillerymen moved by train from Surabaya to Bicycle Camp.²⁰

Six months after arrival at Bicycle Camp, the Japanese ordered the first group, composed of 191 Americans and 88 Australians, to report to the docks. Some of the men

¹⁹The civilian, a Sperry Instruments representative, maintained the radio, undetected, until the end of the war; the artificial leg and radio are now in the Smithsonian Museum. Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 199:40.

²⁰Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 59:42.

had been assigned numbers and they felt the selection for shipment was determined by the individual's number. In any case, the first group left the camp on October 2, 1942, for an unknown destination.²¹

²¹Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 31; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:62.

CHAPTER VI

LATER CONFINEMENT

Nine days after leaving Bicycle Camp, the first group of men from the Second Battalion arrived at Singapore and the second section departed from Batavia for Singapore. Japanese prison camp abuse proved less brutal than the Singapore voyage. The Japanese Navy had forced the prisoners into the holds of the ships with only a few square inches of space allotted to each man. Captives suffered from intense heat and rancid air. Guards occasionally allowed prisoners on deck for food, water, or latrine call. The latrines, wooden outhouses on each side of the vessel, extended out over the water.¹

Upon arriving at Singapore, the Japanese removed the captives from the ships and marched them to Changi Barracks prisoner-of-war camp, formerly a British Army post. The camp contained stone barracks, three stories high with red tile roofs, paved roads, parade grounds, and lovely palm trees. Soon the Japanese assigned to the Americans the

¹Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War (Wichita Falls: Nortex Offset Publications, Inc., 1973), p. 32; W. L. Starnes, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 186:49.

task of clearing a rubber plantation for garden space. The work was not difficult, and some battalion members felt that ". . . relatively speaking, everybody had kind of a resort deal at Changi."² The Americans bought tobacco from natives who came through camp, and supplemented their diet by stealing chickens and ducks from the British and coconuts from the palm trees.³

The presence of numerous Indian guards (Sikhs) who earlier had been Allies, plus the British officers' insistence on saluting, provoked the Americans. Battalion members refrained from saluting even their own officers after leaving Java and certainly refused to salute Allied leaders. This resistance caused an incident when a United States soldier refused to salute an English colonel and British military police placed the American in confinement. The Second Battalion commander quickly demanded and received the American's release.⁴

The men maintained some contact with the outside world while in Changi by means of a radio the British possessed. Those who listened to broadcasts relayed the information to the other captives in the camp.⁵

²Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, pp. 33-35; Alfred Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 188:71; Jack Moss, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 45:24; J. B. Heinen, Jr., personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 174:69.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

The men from Battery E presently arrived at Changi, having left Bicycle Camp a short time after the second group. They bivouacked in an area near the other Americans, and some of the men were given passes to visit their friends. A small number of Second Battalion men remained in Bicycle Camp. Horace Chumley stayed in the Java prison because he had a foot problem. He and seven other Americans remained at Bicycle Camp throughout the war.⁶

Approximately sixty Americans, including Houston crewmen and Second Battalion artillerymen, plus 200 other Allied prisoners, left Singapore October 27, 1942. The Japanese had chosen these men, because of their mechanical or technical training, to be shipped to Japan. Frank Fujita, the American-Japanese sergeant, found himself enroute to his father's homeland.⁷

Soon after January 1, 1943, the remaining members of the American group at Changi boarded a train to Pria, five hundred miles up the Malang Peninsula. Here the men transferred to a ship; on the morning of January 11, 1943, the vessel steamed out of the harbor and headed north.

⁶Ibid.; Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 199:68.

⁷Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 37; Frank Fujita, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 59:47.

The Americans were aboard the Dia Moji Maru, which was accompanied by another transport and a small warship. Four days later, American B-24 Liberator bombers attacked the convoy. They quickly sank the second transport which carried Dutch prisoners and Japanese civilian technicians. The flyers next turned their attention to the warship and sank it. Four bombs fell near the Dia Monji Maru, destroying lifeboats and wooden latrines. One bomb exploded at close proximity and fragments entered the hull killing several Australian soldiers. The Japanese attempted to battle the American planes with a small cannon located on the stern. The gun crew inadvertently traversed the barrel toward the superstructure of the ship and damaged the bridge with a cannon shell. In the next attack, one of the American bombs struck the stern, destroying the cannon, killing the gun crew, and setting the ship on fire. Seeing columns of smoke billowing up, the American pilots left the area. The Japanese extinguished the fires and began picking up survivors from the sea, then departed for Moulmein, Burma. The holes in the side of the ship created a problem; near Moulmein, the ship began to list heavily. A Japanese officer covered the deck telling the troops, "You men get on that side of the ship. There's too many on this side. It's been hit and is sinking." The prisoners ran to the undamaged side

of the vessel and the list was corrected. The ship reached Moulmein a short time later.⁸

As the ship cruised into the harbor, some Americans saw the pagoda that Rudyard Kipling mentioned in his poem, "On the Road to Mandalay." The prisoners disembarked and marched through the city to a provisional prison for convicted felons where they remained for several days.⁹ While they suffered from poor accommodations, each day the prisoners of war received from the guards only two meager meals of rice and one pint of water. Many of the men contracted dysentery because of the baneful sanitation facilities.¹⁰

Within a week the prisoners boarded another train and journeyed south to Thanbyuzayat, Burma. The men detrained and met Lieutenant Colonel Y. Negatomo, who warned them to

⁸Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, pp. 37-40; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 166:87; George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 176:64; Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 178:68; Jack Moss, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 45:29.

⁹Some of the prisoners were housed in a mortuary, and others stayed in a former leper colony. Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 69:59.

¹⁰Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 72:59; Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, pp. 40-41.

do their jobs because the railroad would be built on the bodies of white men, if necessary.¹¹

From Thanbyuzayat, the prisoners travelled by truck to their first work camp on the railroad, 18 Kilo Camp.¹² The men found the camp at 18 Kilo representative of all work camps they would see along the railroad. Burmese natives erected bamboo huts twenty feet wide by one hundred and sixty feet long. Local builders constructed this housing by driving large bamboo shafts into the ground for uprights, then three feet above the ground lashing crossmembers to the uprights and covering these with split bamboo. This horizontal construction served as the floor and a bed. The Burmese then added a pitched roof and covered it by thatching bamboo leaves. In the elaborate camps, the huts contained six-foot aisles down the center with raised sections for beds on either side.¹³

At Kilo 18 the prisoners first encountered Korean guards, but in their early relationships the Americans could not distinguish Koreans from Japanese. The prisoners soon noticed that a Japanese was always in charge of the

¹¹Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 43.

¹²The various camps in Burma were called kilo camps, preceded by a number. This number indicated the distance in kilos from Thanbyuzayat; 18 Kilo Camp was 18 kilos from the railhead at Thanbyuzayat.

¹³P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:93; Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 45.

Korean guards, and some prisoners regarded the Korean guards as sub-human.¹⁴ Other captives felt the Koreans were savage because they ranked less than privates in the Japanese Army. Some Americans considered the Korean brutality a result of the guards's frustrations.¹⁵

The Americans began in sections of fifty men or kumis. Originally, the prisoners's quotas constituted one cubic meter per man per day. A captive fulfilled his quota on a grade level project by digging and moving one cubic meter; on a filling project, the prisoner procured one meter of dirt and moved it to the fill area. The Japanese furnished no equipment beyond a pick, shovel, and burlap bag tied to the end of a bamboo pole. The prisoners enjoyed reasonably good health at 18 Kilo and could fulfill their quotas before the end of the workday. Some of the Americans warned the swift workers to slow their pace, but they continued to work at rapid rates to finish early. As a result, the Japanese soon increased the quota per man to one and one-half cubic meters and later to two and one-half meters. Later, during the monsoon season, guards forced

¹⁴A British medical officer described the Koreans as ". . . purely amoral coolie vermin. . . brutal by nature as well as by orders." Lionel Wigmore, The Japanese Thrust, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, 7 vols. (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957), 4:547.

¹⁵George Lawley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 164:41.

men to work until 3:00 A.M. to complete their quotas. During these periods the men would frequently finish the previous day's quotas only two hours before beginning a new day. The prisoners earned ten cents per day; they worked ten days and then rested one.¹⁶

The work varied; one kumi would dig a ditch one day, and the following day be assigned to unload rails. The Americans soon realized that the Japanese ignored the quality of the work. Captives neither packed nor blocked the fill dirt; they placed cross-ties upon the loose dirt, followed by the rails and completed by filling in ballast. This type of construction usually sagged or, during the monsoon season, collapsed completely.¹⁷

Bridges, occasionally two or three tiers high, spanned rivers and gorges. The captives constructed pilings from teakwood logs, which were fifteen inches in diameter by twenty-five to thirty feet in length, by sharpening one end with a hatchet. Natives used elephants to hoist logs until the primitive pile driver could force the log into

¹⁶George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:74-75; Jack Moss, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 45:32; B. D. Fillmore, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 162:85.

¹⁷Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 69:78; George Lawley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 164:47.

the ground; the pile driver was a five-hundred pound weight with a small hole in the center. The top of the log had a hole drilled and filled with a rod several centimeters smaller in diameter than the hole in the the weight. Ropes ran through pulleys from the weight to the banks; with the rod acting as guide, the prisoners pulled the weight up by the ropes, and after counting, "ichi, mio, sanyo (one, two, three)," the men released the ropes and the weight crashed down on the end of the log, driving it into the river bed. After driving pilings, the prisoners lifted a horizontal log across the tops of the uprights and secured it with steel "U" rods. Occasionally, the unstable bridges leaned precariously. The Japanese then assigned a kumi to pull the bridge with ropes as elephants pushed on the other side. The captives then placed a small brace on the pilings, and the Japanese engineers considered the structure sound until it began to lean again.¹⁸

Elephants labored exhaustively in constructing the railroad; they pulled stumps of trees, dragged logs, and placed pilings upright. Natives contracted the elephants

¹⁸Captain Earnest Gordon, a Scottish officer who survived the construction of the railroad, regarded the celebrated bridge on the River Kwai as overrated; "Much has been made of the building of the bridge. . . but it was, in fact, a relatively minor episode. . . construction was finished in less than two months, but it took a year to build the railroad." Earnest Gordon, Through the Valley of the Kwai (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 69; George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:80; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:109-110.

to the Japanese and rode the beasts while they worked. George Burns worked closely with several of the large animals and found that

an old elephant can get as lazy as a man. You'd have him pulling the stump, and he'd wrap his trunk around there and just grunt and go on and raise cane and bellow. [then] The native would rap him with that. . . pick. . . and that old elephant. . . would jerk it out before you could say scat.¹⁹

Burns also learned that an elephant can move rapidly when he saw one become frightened.

He was pulling some kind of old cart. . . and he was running down the hill to the dump with this dirt. . . one of the carts turned over. . . he looked around and saw that thing following him and he took off, threw the native, and they like to have never caught him.²⁰

Prisoners constantly thought of food. Often the men used their limited funds to purchase food from the natives. In the first few camps, natives circulated through the areas on payday, selling eggs, tobacco, and other commodities. Later, the men found they could eat virtually any animal if given the opportunity. One camp contained a Dutch doctor of veterinary medicine who examined the stray dogs that the men caught. If the veterinarian certified that the animals were healthy, the men ate them. Many of

¹⁹George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:82-83.

²⁰Ibid.

the captives ate python snake and found it tasteful. Prisoners considered strange food necessary for survival.²¹

Captives also regarded each day or month as time to be endured for survival. P. J. Smallwood ". . . did it one day at a time. . . . I went to bed at night and tomorrow was a new ball game. . . tomorrow'd be the last day we'd be there." Robert Gregg was more general; he lived his confinement ". . . three months at a time. . . most of us felt like within. . . a short time that the Americans would come in and get us. . . . I never gave up for a second that I wouldn't be going to come home." George Lawley faced his imprisonment ". . . six months at a time."²²

The Americans and British approached survival differently. Most Americans formed families of four or more in a group. These men cared for one another, and if one member became sick the other "family" members shared their meager medical supplies.²³ Captain Earnest Gordon, who closely observed his group's behavior, noticed that

²¹P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:95; George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:74-75; Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:94.

²²P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:59; Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 69:36; George Lawley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 164:26.

²³The family ties still exist; at Lost Battalion survivor conventions, wartime groups tend to exclude everyone but the original family members.

many British soldiers lived by the jungle rule: "I look out for myself and to hell with everyone else."²⁴

Clandestine radios furnished additional support in the search for survival; world news progressively became more optimistic as time passed. Expected mail also sustained the prisoners. At times guards allowed captives to mail cards to their relatives.²⁵ Infrequent attempts at sabotage also lifted the men's spirits. Jack Moss, who aided in the blasting of rocks and boulders, ravelled dynamite fuses causing them to burn too fast. Moss watched from a distance as this action ". . . got rid of a few of them [Japanese]." Some prisoners stole batteries from Japanese Army trucks and hid them to use for radio power.²⁶

As the distance from Thanbyuzayat increased, the prisoners's health deteriorated. Fevers, malaria, dysentery, and beriberi became prevalent. Heinen helped treat sickness in his kumi.

Now I've taken a man's temperature. . . at 109°.
I carried him in myself at the end of the workday.

²⁴Earnest Gordon, Valley of the Kwai, pp. 74-75; Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:102.

²⁵C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 185:88; Keith Naylor, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 72:97-98; George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:99.

²⁶Jack Moss, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 45:33-34.

The man would get up the next morning and go to work. At three o'clock in the afternoon. . . when I knew that chill and fever were going to hit, he'd come out of the hole. We'd lay him down in the brush and he'd go into a coma with his chills and his fever. We had to carry him home because it'd still be with him. Then he'd get up and go to work again the next morning.²⁷

Tropical ulcers also depreciated the prisoners's health; the smallest scratch became infected in the tropical climate and deteriorated into an enlarged section of decayed flesh. Treatment constituted removal of the dying skin. Doctor Theodore Hekking, a Dutch prison physician, devised the method of treatment. Robert Gregg saw the doctor ". . . take what he called a spoon and just scrape that [ulcer] out 'till there wasn't anything left and then he'd make a compress out of boiling water."²⁸

Frequently, Burmese advised prisoners of native remedies to cure diseases. C. A. Cates contracted a mild case of cholera. On a native's advice, Cates ate charcoal made from burned rice; the charcoal ostensibly would absorb the impurities in his system. By using this remedy, Cates survived while many other cholera victims who ignored the natives's advice died.²⁹

²⁷J. B. Heinen, Jr., personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 174:115.

²⁸Robert Gregg, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 69:64.

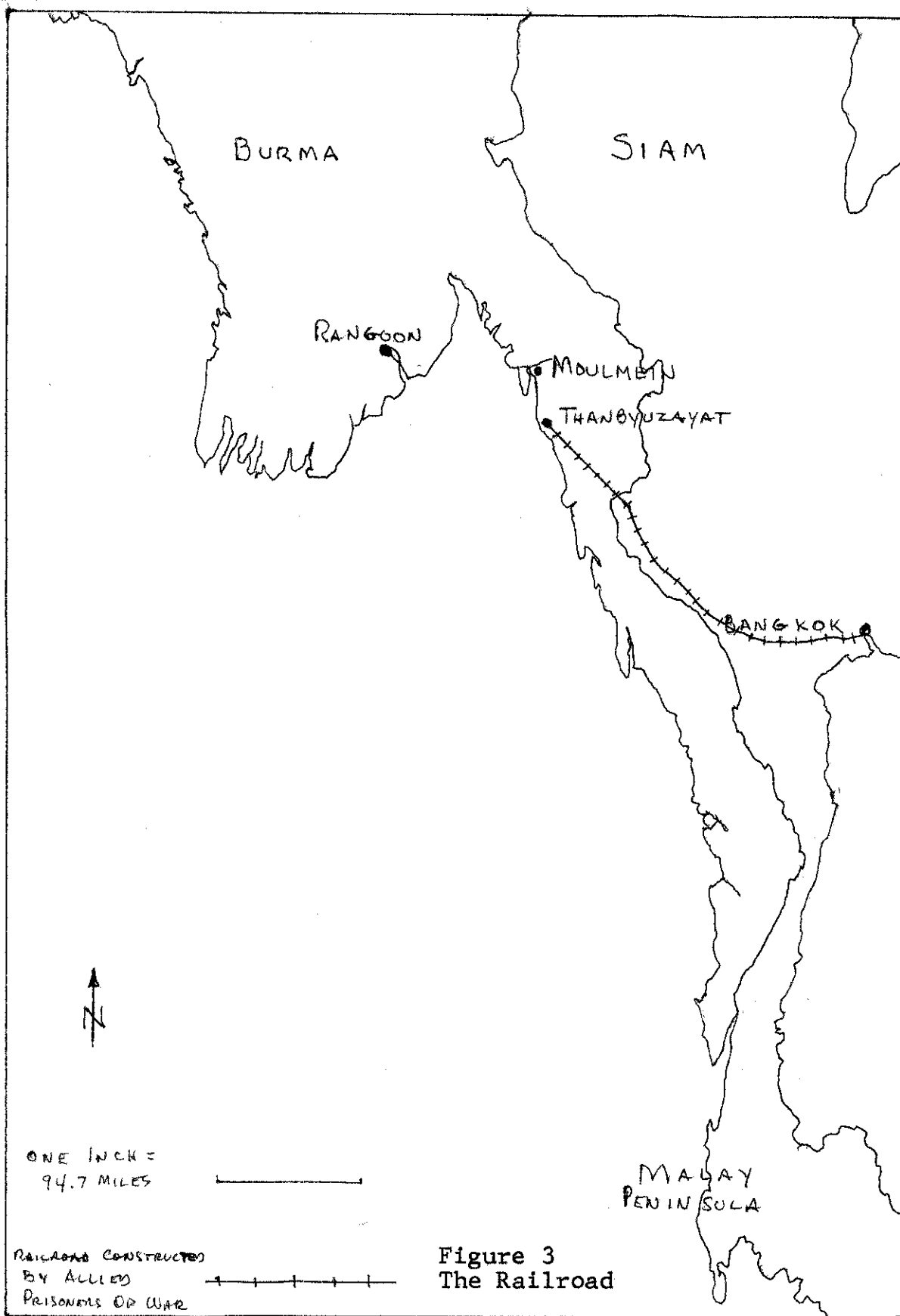
²⁹C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 185:82.

When sickness became acute in a given prisoner, the doctors assigned the man to the hospital camp, although physicians avoided this action where possible because few men survived the hospitalization.³⁰ John Stivers, a United States Navy pilot from the Houston, returned from the hospital after undergoing surgery. Stivers had a brain tumor. Fortunately, a prominent Australian neurosurgeon practiced at the hospital camp. The prisoners made an instrument from a saw blade and the surgeon removed the tumor.³¹

The men soon discovered the symptoms of approaching death. When a prisoner receded into utter despair, his comrades tried to encourage a response by sympathetic means. If sympathy failed, friends insulted the despondent prisoner by ". . . calling his mother a whore and his grandmother a bitch and his daddy a drunkard. . . . If he won't get angry, he won't live. You'll bury him the day after tomorrow." In the first days of the railroad, the traditional customs of burying the dead were observed. "The first man that died we tried to do it right. . . . The ship's carpenter built him a nice teakwood coffin. . . but they [the dead] got to coming so fast and they

³⁰The man called the hospital camp, "the burial ground." Jack Moss, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 45:39.

³¹Stivers survived the surgery but died after liberation. Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 150; J. B. Heinen, Jr., personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 174:132.



[the carpenters] just didn't have time to do it." As the railroad moved deeper into the jungle, the death rate increased. At 85 Kilo Camp, the burial detail interred nine deceased prisoners in one day.³²

The death rate increased substantially in the spring of 1943. The Japanese, progressively more concerned that the railway would not be completed at the appointed time, pressured the prisoners for more production. The monsoon season had begun, but in spite of the weather the Japanese continued the pressure and harassed the prisoners with the command, "speedo, speedo."³³

By the middle of 1944, the railroad was complete. The Japanese transferred some prisoners to a camp in Siam [Thailand] called Kanchanaburi; near this encampment the Japanese built a monument to the workers who had died in the railroad construction. Japanese dignitaries performed a ceremony at Three Pagoda Pass and dedicated a twenty-five-foot shrine to the 70,000 persons who perished on the project.³⁴

³²George Burns, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 176:93; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:115.

³³During the monsoon season, water stood under the barracks, and Cates even saw fish swimming under his bunk. C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 185:80.

³⁴Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 97; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:123-124.

The Second Battalion, which until this time had been relatively intact on the railroad, became fragmented. Some of the men went to a camp about fifty miles from Bangkok to work on Japanese gun emplacements. Others travelled by train to Phnom Pehn, Cambodia, and later on a barge to Saigon, Vietnam, where they worked at Tan Son Nhut Airfield or at the Saigon oil refinery. Still others went to Tamarkan, Siam, and subsequently to Saigon.³⁵ A final group volunteered to act as an advance party from Tamarkan to Chungkai, Siam. The balance of the Americans at Tamarkan were never shipped to Chungkai, however, and the six Americans in the advance party remained separate from the Second Battalion members for the duration of the war. Once the Second Battalion emerged from the Burma jungle, the conditions and food improved. Prisoners worked little, and in some cases, not at all.³⁶

The Second Battalion members languidly accepted the news that the war had ended. "Men were stunned. We had been hoping for just this so long that when it did come, we could not grasp the significance of the news. . . ." ³⁷

³⁵Many of the American prisoners were present in Saigon when the Vietnamese people instigated their revolution, under Ho Chi Mihn, against the French. P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:165.

³⁶Jack Moss, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 145:43; P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 166:164-168; Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, OH 178:117, 143.

³⁷Clyde Fillmore, Prisoner of War, p. 125.

CHAPTER VII

LIBERATION

By the end of hostile military actions, members of the Lost Battalion lived in prisoner of war camps from Bicycle Camp and Batavia in Java, to Chungkai in Thailand. Horace Chumley, who remained at Bicycle Camp the entire time, joined three Australian prisoners and commandeered four Japanese trucks. They drove the vehicles to a Japanese warehouse and ". . . in Hollywood fashion. . ." shot the lock off the door and loaded the trucks with shoes and clothing. The men transported the trucks out into the farming district of the island and traded the clothes for fresh vegetables, which they gave to the inmates of a women's prison near Bicycle Camp.¹

The British rescue teams arrived in Java, but did not process the American prisoners. Later, a United Press reporter located the Americans and radioed the information to his headquarters. Shortly thereafter, two United States Army Air Corps C-54 Skymaster aircraft landed at Batavia to evacuate the Americans.²

¹Horace Chumley, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 199:94-95.

²Ibid.

After receiving news of the Japanese surrender, Alfred Brown's group travelled to Bangkok, Thailand, and quartered themselves in a warehouse with other Allied soldiers. American air transports arrived to ferry the former prisoners to a hospital, but the British camp commander pointed out that there were ten British prisoners to each American and accordingly instigated a quota system of evacuation. Brown recalls that

This went on for a couple of days. . . the Americans were sending about eight planes down there and the British two. The British were taking up all the planes. So the American flyers stopped there one day. This flyer says, '. . . How many Americans are down there in that warehouse?' They told them. They [the American flyers]. . . got the truck and said, 'Take us down to that warehouse.' These American flyers came in and said, 'All you Americans get ready to go to Rangoon. By God, we're tired of coming down here and hauling British back when they won't send any planes.' They put nothing but Americans on American planes. They [the American flyers] said, 'we're not coming back anymore.'³

P. J. Smallwood heard of the surrender while he was in Saigon. Within a few days, Smallwood saw American aircraft landing at the Saigon Airfield, and shortly a group of American soldiers, led by a major with an American flag on the back of his leather jacket, arrived at the camp. The American major said,

I have come to take the Americans out and nobody else. That's all that's going with us. . . if you have a grudge against someone, if you want to

³Alfred Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 188:146-148.

kill them, go ahead. That's your business. We can't stop you. But I hope you'll remember that you'll live with your conscience the rest of your life. . . .

Smallwood later saw two Australians kill a guard with their hands.⁴

B. D. Fillmore went to a hospital camp near Cratchai, Thailand. A Japanese Army unit bivouacked nearby, and one day Fillmore saw the Japanese burning papers and crying. Later, an Australian sergeant called the prisoners together and announced the surrender. Fillmore noticed that the Korean guards changed into black suits and left the area. On the following day, one of the Korean guards returned with a truck of food and began selling the food to the prisoners. Four days later, an American officer arrived at the camp and arranged for the Americans to be sent to Saigon. Within a week, the army planes flew the men to Calcutta, India.⁵

Lawrence Brown's group flew from Rangoon, Burma, to Calcutta. During the flight the pilot came back to the passenger compartment and asked, "Any of you guys from Texas?" The ex-prisoners all answered, "yes." The pilot

⁴P. J. Smallwood, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 166:204-210.

⁵B. D. Fillmore, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 162:92-96.

then asked, "How about Decatur [Brown's hometown]?" Brown called the pilot back to his seat and saw that "This darn kid was going to high school when I left Decatur. . . to think that I'd run onto that guy in Calcutta, a major in the Air Force and he was flying me home."⁶

All the surviving Lost Battalion members travelled to the 142nd Convalescent Hospital in Calcutta, India. Through a mix-up in urine samples, C. A. Cates stayed at the hospital longer than the others. The army medical staff released the wrong man and forced Cates to remain in the hospital until the doctors were certain that no disease was present. During his detainment, Cates progressively ate more food each day on a regular basis, which contrasted with the prisoners-of-war customary small meals served five times a day. While waiting for clearance to return to the United States, Cates met one of the bomber pilots that had bombed the three-ship convoy near Moulmein, Burma, in 1943.⁷

The prisoners who survived the captivity developed a philosophy of tolerance and gratitude; no member of the

⁶Lawrence Brown, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 178:150.

⁷C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 162:appendix.

Lost Battalion sought to revenge their former captors. Cates possibly spoke for the survivors when he said, "I couldn't question my luck. . . because some of the fellows that we left back at Camp Bowie hit Salerno⁸ and didn't get out. . . . Who had the good luck and who had the bad luck?"⁹

⁸The first American amphibious landing on the European mainland began on September 9, 1943; the Thirty-sixth Division led the landing. Official Records, Thirty-sixth Division, microfilm of records and reports, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas, Reel 1 (No. 330).

⁹C. A. Cates, personal interview, Oral History Collection, North Texas State University Library, OH 185:107.

CHAPTER VIII

ANALYSIS OF MOBILIZATION AND CAPTURE OF THE SECOND BATTALION

Some Second Battalion members considered the unit to be ill-fated. A reasonable case can be presented to support such a claim. The Second Battalion was one of the first National Guard units to be mobilized, and it was selected for shipment overseas, ostensibly because of its achievement while on maneuvers. Battalion members argue, however, that the record was accumulated by using simulated weapons firing imaginary ammunition.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the Pensacola Convoy, of which the Second Battalion was a part, to return to Hawaii. President Roosevelt's intervention prevented the convoy's return and committed vital American forces to an area that Winston Churchill and other Allied military leaders regarded as second priority. The United States Army with unfathomable logic selected the Second Battalion for ground crews of the Nineteenth Bomb Group, despite the fact that the convoy contained nearly 5,000 soldiers, many of them United States

Army Air Corps ground crewmen. Later, when the Nineteenth Bomb Group prepared to abandon the island and fly to Australia, the flyers requested that the Second Battalion be allowed to accompany them. The army refused, saying that American military presence was necessary for Allied forces's morale. This assertion is weak. General Julian F. Barnes, who went to Java to explain the necessity for the Americans to remain, did not elaborate on how one American unit (less than five hundred men) could sustain the Allied armies's morale. The Netherlands East Indies government apparently was not extremely impressed with the Americans's efforts; the island capitulated shortly after the invasion. Furthermore, the battalion's presence did not elevate the Dutch leaders's morale enough to prevent them from fleeing to Australia. The facts indicate that no Allied government concerned itself with the American unit's location, least of all the Netherlands Indies forces which were unable to maintain basic military information about the Japanese forces that were attacking them at point blank range. The United States Army apparently regarded the battalion as an expendable pawn, which it utilized to convince the Allied forces that America had not abandoned the Dutch colony. The battalion, relinquished by their

military leaders and forced to assent to the Dutch capitulation, essentially vanished intact into the murky world of Japanese occupied territories, hence the designation, the Lost Battalion. The battalion members experienced the sensation that the unit was not lost, but that the world itself was lost.

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