

A PRISONER'S JOURNAL

CABANATUAN PRISON CAMP, THE PHILIPPINES

July 11, 1944-February 7, 1945

**LT Raymond W. Bliss Jr.
United States Army**

To Dr. R. W. Bliss, MC US Army

July 11, 1944

Cabanatuan Prison Camp

Dear Daddy:

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| 250 grams | Rice |
| 100 grams | Corn |
| 200 grams | Greens |
| 10 grams | Meat |
| 10 grams | Sugar |
| 15 grams | Cooking Oil |

That is the daily ration for one man and is far and away the biggest topic of conversation at present. Translated into meals such a ration makes a mess-kit of rice and corn porridge each morning, a skimpy helping of plain rice at noon; while for dinner we have three courses: rice, greens, and a cookie. Wednesdays and Saturdays are meat days -- one or two carabao are killed and we have a meat gravy or perhaps a few slivers of meat mixed with the rice -- a carabao yields less meat than you might think especially when it had to be split up among four thousand men.

This slim ration has been in effect for about four months. Before that we received about 500 grams of rice and 50-100 grams of meat, together with somewhat greater amounts of vegetables, sugar and oil. Most everyone complained about this ration, although it was apparently sufficient. But since the new reduction we have learned what it is to be hungry -- I am now down to 115 pounds and a 24-inch waist (just measured it with the tape Mother sent in the package).

But this is really an unnecessarily gloomy start in my letters. Things are not really too bad here, as I will tell you in the next few days. Meanwhile the typewriter will soon be needed, and I will close for today.

Your loving son,

Wednesday, July 12, 1944.

Have just finished firing up my pipe and considering yesterday's letter. We've just had lunch — the aforementioned mess-kit of rice, and an unexpected helping of greens. And I have been so extravagant and imprudent as to purchase a cup of coffee from one of the entrepreneurs among the prisoners. "Coffee" is a preparation prepared from minute amounts of parched soy beans, parched corn, parched banana peels, together with (sometimes) an even more minute amount of actual coffee. This cup I have today is a particularly good one with a definite aroma of the real thing.

Right here I guess I should warn you that these letters will probably be written in an unfortunately rambling and disconnected fashion. In the past I usually rewrote my letters several times and the final attempt was, at least, somewhat more concise and coherent than the first. But paper is much too scarce for that sort of thing here, and so I shall have to inflict the "first draft" upon you.

As the typewriter is busy most of the time it is impossible to write very much at any one time, but as the days pass I hope to tell you of the past two years of prison life, as well as describing the camp and our life as it is today.

But perhaps now it would be best to finish the discussion of the food upon which we were engaged yesterday. In addition to the ration I told you of, all men who work on the farm or other outside details receive an additional 250 grams of corn per day, which they receive as a small cup of hominy or as a cup of corn meal mush for lunch and supper. I work in the prison library and am not entitled to this "Class A Ration". Perhaps, however, the ration system will be changed, as the new Japanese Camp Commander

seems to be making a great many changes.

Our previous commander was an elderly Japanese Major who seemed to be quite indifferent to the affairs of the prisoners as long as he himself was not unduly disturbed. He concerned himself very little with us and left the running of the camp to his subordinates who, in turn, left a great deal of the affairs to the Americans. (And now I shall have to leave the typewriter)

Thursday Morning, July 13 -1944

We're at the height of the rainy season now. All last night it drizzled and now we're having a fairly heavy rain. Everything is getting that damp and moldy smell that you associate with tropical rainy seasons.

Well, to get back to our previous Major. During his regime the Japs seldom came inside our area. The Americans handled most of our camp business; They made their own roll calls and reported them through American HQ to the Japs; Americans ran the water pumps and the power plant located in the Jap Area with practically no supervision from the Japs. Americans operated the guardhouse, and even the fence was patrolled by an American guard (altho this was in addition to a Jap guard which also patrolled the fence).

All this worked fairly well, for the Americans are quite capable of managing their own affairs and even could be counted on to furnish accurate roll calls without supervision, for they are very docile prisoners. (On which subject I'll tell you more at a later date)

But, unfortunately for the old Japanese Major's peace and quiet, some of the Americans working as truck drivers and on the carabao cart detail (which went into the town of Cabanatuan about every other day) -- some of these were

not sufficiently docile to refrain from smuggling notes and money in and out of the camp between various individuals and their friends and relations in Manila. This note business had been going on more or less openly for nearly two years. The Japanese MPs, ~~who~~ seem to be the Gestapo of the Japanese Army, and ^{are} greatly feared by Filipinos, prisoners, and the rest of the Japanese Army; These worthies had made several minor raids on the note business but with little result until about two months ago when they suddenly arrested about twenty Americans here at the camp and presumably some persons in Manila. Six of these are still in the guardhouse (a Jap guardhouse, not the American one) and their fate is uncertain. The remainder are released and back in camp.

Well, all this note business caused a steady tightening down of the camp regulations (have to leave here)

Friday noon, July 14 - 1944

Continuing from yesterday -- the Japanese now run the guard entirely -- the American guard is disbanded; the American guardhouse is disbanded (there was one prisoner in it and eight politicians guarding him -- all eight are now busily looking for another sinecure); the carabao detail is now very strictly supervised, likewise the Truck Drivers, the power plant operators, and the various American KPs and orderlies working on the Jap side and we now have strict roll-call formations (the last three of them in the rain) and are counted fairly carefully by the Japs.

But the big news, as of last night, is that a detail is leaving -- 837 men including about 15 officers. The Japs never say where a detail is going,

but they do indicate whether it is a "temporary" detail which will stay in the islands (usually to work on one of the several airports the Japs are constructing or improving) or a "permanent" detail which will leave the islands. This detail is of the "permanent" variety and we assume that they are going to Japan. When any detail leaves, Japanese HQ specifies how many officers, enlisted men, Medical Corps men, doctors, etc. will compose the detail and it is up to American HQ to choose the individuals. Most previous details have been unpopular and their announcement was the signal for every one to exert whatever pull and politics he possessed or perhaps to encourage and loudly magnify any ailments he might have.

But this time the poor food and probably the last three days of continuous rain have made this camp seem more unattractive to most people and I understand that there were more volunteers than places for this detail. I was not eligible for this detail, (I am at present rated "permanent quarters" and unfit for duty because of my eye) but had I been I should certainly not have volunteered. In fact, just the opposite. No matter how tough conditions become here, I hope to remain on the chance that American troops will invade the Philippines and release us long prior to the fall of Japan. There is also the consideration that if conditions should become impossible in this camp, an attempted escape would have a faint chance of success, but such a thing would have no chance at all in Japan.

Usually American HQ receives notice of an outgoing detail 4 or 5 days or even a week or more before it leaves, but this one is a sudden surprise, as it was announced only last night and is to leave tomorrow morning.

Saturday morning, July 15 - 1944

It turns out that only 300 men of the detail left this morning; the remainder will leave sometime today and early tomorrow morning. Those that left this morning assembled at 3 o'clock and after a deal of shouting and counting and being herded about, they left at about 5. They have a muddy six-kilometer walk to Cabanatuan which, however, is quite easy, since all their baggage is hauled by truck. Fortunately for them the rain stopped last night and this morning the sun is out. At Cabanatuan they will catch the train for Manila -- it used to be a three-hour ride but now, what with long heavy trains and worn-out locomotives and rolling stock the trip is an uncertain one and sometimes takes as much as eighteen hours -- locomotives break down and replacements have to be brought, the train can't get up a hill and has to back up and try again, and similar mishaps. As far as the Manila RR. is concerned, Tojo has certainly not "made the trains run on time."

A few words about my experiences as a captive up to now. At the time of the surrender of Corregidor I was still in the hospital, recovering from my eye wound and the rap on the head I received ~~May~~ ^{April} 13. Although there was, considerable excitement in the hospital on the night of the landings by the Japs and on the next day, nevertheless hospital affairs continued about as usual. The big Diesel power plants changed ownership without missing a beat, and the personnel operating the hospital likewise continued their duties, more as a matter of routine than because of any guidance or commands of the hospital staff.

Tuesday, July 18, 1944.

About 15 minutes to supper time. The 800 man detail went all the way to Manila by truck where, according to the truck drivers, they were unloaded on the right on the pier at Port Area. They were told to enjoy any smoking they could, for after getting on the boat they would not be allowed another smoke for 15 days. The total number going on the boat was apparently about 2000 prisoners, made up of our 800 men together with additions from Las Piñas and Nichols Air Fields, the Port Area Detail, and the Bilibid Work Detail --- time out for supper.

Supper was the usual slim helping of rice seasoned with a little ground salted fish which we have been having for the last few days --- very tasty. Also we had 3 slices of native cucumbers. These are much larger than those we have in the States, and hollow inside. So each of our 3 slices was about the size of a very emaciated doughnut. And I have managed to purchase some sugar syrup (at 8 pesos per cup) and so we had a cup of hot water with two spoonsful of syrup for dessert. All in all, a very pleasant meal, but I could still eat a little more.

I was telling you of the early days of captivity on Corregidor. The prisoners taken at Corregidor, about 15,000 of them as I remember, were herded together and moved to mainland in about ten days. The hospital remained in the tunnel, however, with little interference from the Japanese. Well --- there's the bugle for the evening roll call which seems unfortunately to be the signal for a particularly heavy rain. But we'll probably stand outside just the same.

Friday, July 21 - 1944

We did stand outside, and it did rain. But the roll call and counting didn't take very long. The new Major, tho apparently determined to count us twice a day, rain or shine, seems to be trying to arrange that the counting be done as quickly as possible.

Back to Corregidor -- I was discharged from the hospital about the middle of June, 1942. My eye didn't seem completely healed, but otherwise I felt fine. At the time of my discharge I could read fairly large print on a very dark day or at night under electric light -- although during the daytime it was much too bright. All this refers, of course, to my left eye. The right one, although it was filled with dirt and glass by the explosion, seems to have been little affected.

Most of those discharged from the hospital were moved off the island in a few weeks, but I remained with one other officer in charge of one of the work details. There were about 70 men in our detail, employed in various clean-up jobs and in disassembling the various automobiles left on the island and loading the heavy parts on boats to be taken to Manila. The Japs in charge of the detail treated us very well and we had no troubles with them, altho I did get slapped by one burly Nip on one of the boats. As a result of the slap my left eye became bloodshot and quite sore for several weeks and I have since been unable to see much with that eye other than to distinguish light from dark.

During the first few days of September, 42, I became very sick with some sort of digestive trouble. After several weeks of diahrea (which I can never

spell) I came down with violent vomiting and cramps. The doctor decided I had appendicitis and arranged to ship me to the Bilibid Hospital. It was an arrangement which I did not approve, for I thought that the Corregidor doctor had much more equipment and facilities than were available at Bilibid, and that I was simply being shipped off to Bilibid to die. I was mistaken, however, for the Bilibid Hospital turned out to have facilities quite adequate for appendicitis operations. And I turned out not to have had appendicitis. I spent 4 days in considerable pain and absolutely unable to keep anything on my stomach, even water. Then I suddenly and completely recovered -- except for being quite weak, I felt fine and ravenously hungry. The food at Bilibid then was very poor but the Commissary sold things at reasonable prices and I was fortunate enough to have some money, and so managed to get plenty of bananas, corned beef, canned milk, eggs, and other delicacies. Except for occasional mild upsets my digestion has been perfect ever since then.

Sunday Morning, July 23, 1944

The sun tried to come out earlier this morning but it now looks as tho it might not succeed. We certainly need some sunshine, after about ten days of rain and damp.

Today's big news is that the Davao detail is moving over from the old hospital side. But first I guess I'd better explain who the Davao detail is and where they are coming from. They are a group of about 500, mostly officers, who were shipped to Davao about October of '42, and were returned here about two weeks ago. Since their arrival they have been held incommunicado on the old hospital side. The "old hospital side" is the western third of the camp.

The entire camp is roughly a square about half a mile on a side, with the sides running north-south and east-west. This square is divided into thirds by two north-south lines and the resulting three areas, reading from west to east, are the aforementioned "old hospital area", the Japanese area, and the "Duty side." As you might surmise, the hospital used to be on what is now the "old hospital side." Various outgoing details caused the population to shrink sufficiently that there was room enough to move the hospital over here about six months ago.

The Davao detail has been held strictly incommunicado from us, apparently as a punishment to them because two of them attempted to escape on the way up here. We had understood that no visiting would be allowed until August 15, but since the 800 man detail left, there was plenty of room over here for the Davao gang.

Wednesday, July 26 - 1944

About 15 minutes before supper. Well, the Davao detail moved over Sunday -- about 670 of them. They had been kept at the old penal colony near Davao, from which all Americans have now been removed. Those not coming here went on that same big Japan (?) detail of which I spoke about a week ago.

The Davao camp seems to have been similar to the one here. Nipa Barracks, reasonably good food (until a few months ago), working on a farm. But the Davao group seems to have a bigger farm -- they were completely self-supporting and also supplied food to various ~~hip~~ troops around there -- and to have worked somewhat harder than has been the case up here. For a while the guards at

Davao were extremely lax and there (supper time) (rice seasoned with a taste of fish, soup with gourds and various odds and ends of greens, a cookie) — and there were several escapes. One of them, by a party of ten, was a well-planned and well-equipped affair, and we believe that some, if not all, of this party reached the American troops somewhere in the South Pacific.

Well, to finish bringing my prison camp life up to date. I stayed at Bilibid for six months listed as a permanent disability. It was during this time that I managed to purchase a pair of glasses, made up by Dr. Sabater from a prescription improvised by Major Wilson at Corregidor while I was still in the underground hospital there. Major Wilson, by the way, is the doctor who operated on my eye, with the assistance of Major Hagen. As far as I am concerned, they both did a crackerjack job, and it is to them that I owe the fact that I have any eye at all. When I came into the hospital it felt as if the remains of the eye were hanging somewhere down on my cheek. Wilson is an eye specialist from Los Angeles.

It was in Bilibid also that I managed to send you that radiogram which you received in March (sent it about Christmas time '42). As I remember I said, "Treatment excellent, good food" which was true enough as far as I was concerned, but the food was not so good for those poor devils who had no money to supplement their ration at the commissary. We used to have plenty of rice, a fair amount of greens, and smaller amounts of horse meat, presumably from the horses which died on the Manila streets.

I was in Bilibid when the Davao detail — the same group which is back

now -- went through on their way to Davao. I wanted very much to go with them, but was refused permission, being classed as a permanent disability and not to leave Bilibid. However, a month or so later -- there's the bugle for "bango", the roll call formation, so I'll have to leave for today.

Your loving son,

Thursday, July 27 - 1944

Just finished breakfast: a mess kit of rice mush, "lugao" ("loo'-gow") is the Filipino name we call it by. After breakfast it was still a little dark for typing so I finished a pipefull contrary to my usual custom of not smoking until 9 or 10 in the morning. I commenced smoking a few months after the surrender, mainly out of curiosity to learn just why the addicts were willing to pay what I considered fantastic amounts for a little tobacco when they had none. It is a curiosity not yet satisfied. Although I enjoy a pipeful and find it very soothing, tobacco is by no means an absolute necessity for me. I have 2 pipes, one a Dunhill which I picked up on the streets of Corregidor after the surrender, the other made here in camp by one of our many talented whittlers. Cigarettes I smoke occasionally, but much prefer the pipes.

Yesterday we sent postcards to the States, the first we have sent since I started receiving letters in May. I sent mine to Aunt Ida, whose letter happened to be the first I received. I hope she enjoys receiving the card; her letter, the first word from home in 2 years, was certainly an event. Since receiving her letter, I have had eleven more from you, Mother, Martha Jane and others. The letters arrived last Christmas and are being issued as

soon as approved by the snail-like Japanese censors. We understand that there is now a new shipment in, some letters dated as late as January '44. The previous shipment, about half of which have been censored, left the States in the middle of September '43.

Friday, July 28 - 1944

Work details today were particularly numerous. Even some of our library staff were called out. Whether or not you work on the farm or one of the various other work details is dependent upon your ailments and your political adroitness, chiefly the latter. I was sent to the farm several times when I first came up here, and became sick each time, and was finally given this job in the library, where I have been for eleven months now, and where I hope to stay. I've been doing a good job in the library, and my politics, tho not very suave, are fairly efficient; so I don't expect to be ousted unless details become even heavier. The story of the politics is a good one and I'll certainly tell you about it later. Wish I could use this typewriter for longer periods at once.

Saturday morning, July 29, 1944

"So much to do, and so little time." Too much of this prison life is a bitter waste of time. I flatter myself that I spend my time to more purpose than most of those around me, too many of whom are either completely exhausted by their day's toil or else apathetically vegetating about their barracks all day. I spend a half-day each day at the library — a fairly long half day taking up most of the daylight hours of the forenoon or afternoon. The other half of the

day I am free for the various chores of bathing, laundry, cooking, gardening, etc., and for reading and studying. It may sound like a life of leisure. And it is, but a time-consuming leisure. Taking a bath, for instance, requires standing in line with a bucket for fifteen minutes or so. Laundry the same. And after the clothes are hung out to dry they cannot be left there, but must be moved in and out as the rains come along.

Anything extra we get from our gardens or through the commissary we may have cooked at the Quan Kitchen. "Quan" is a useful word of the Filipinos which they use in place of any English word which they do not know, be that word noun, adjective, verb, or what have you. "This part of the rifle is called the ⁹quan, sir?" This part was the belt. "I will quan the beach, sir." He was going to patrol it. The Americans quickly picked up the word and here in the prison camp it is chiefly used in connection with food. Anything edible is quan. Which is a sweeping classification, for all sorts of things are being quanned just now: dogs (a delicacy, and hard to get) cats (likewise), rats, esteemed by some, but still considered as poor quan by the majority), beans, okra, and papaya leaves, squash flowers, the pulpy insides of papaya trees.

Tuesday, August 1, 1944

Yesterday was pay day. Company grade officers receive 30 pesos, those of field grade 40 pesos; warrant officers and medical corps men lesser amounts. Enlisted men receive no pay, except for those doing certain jobs for the benefit of the Japanese (as opposed to work on the farm which is considered to be for our own benefit — we are supposed to get the produce — and therefore is not a

pay job). Such enlisted men as receive pay get from 10 to 25 centavos per working day - dependent upon their rank.

We spend the money, of course, almost exclusively on food and tobacco. Supplies are limited and uncertain and prices high. Bananas, 15 cents each, Mangoes, one peso each. Hen eggs, 1.65 pesos each, Duck eggs about 30 cents higher. Beans, 8 pesos per canteen cup. Molasses made from blocks of unrefined sugar, 10 pesos per canteen cup. Cigarettes, one peso per package. Tobacco leaves, 12 to 20 cents per leaf. The commissary seldom gets sufficient amounts to fill orders but manages to allocate what it does get reasonably equitably, in my opinion. An opinion which is shared by few, for there are bitter and continual complaints about who got what and who didn't. Altho there may be some unfairness, the complaints as a whole are results of the general suspicion and unhappiness of hungry men.

Tomorrow a detail of 300 arrives from Bilibid, mostly hospital cases and disabilities. I hope to see Commander B. - a middle-aged retired naval officer whom

I got to know while at Bilibid. A lean and lanky, albeit wiry individual, religiously performing his small stint of calisthenics each day. I enjoy his company very much.

August 2 - 1944

Commander B. still has his treasured set of the Encyclopedia Britannica, into which he spends much time browsing, Usually the ramifications of the particular subject he is looking into lead him immediately into at least a half-dozen volumes which he spreads out around him. So, when he is reading the encyclopedia he needs all of it, as many a disappointed would-be borrower used to discover at Bilibid.

Although in the main the Japanese seem to have left Commander B. at peace with his Encyclopedia (he was hospitalized for heart trouble soon after the start of the war) he was chivied about somewhat when the hospital would move from place to place before settling at Bilibid, and on at least one occasion his dignity suffered greatly at the hands of a Japanese private who whacked him across the head with a bamboo pole.

Sunday Evening - August 6 - 1944

One of the men working in the library has been sick for the last few days, causing me to be working during the times I usually have available for writing you.

Over four thousand Americans and over thirty thousand Filipinos have died in the Philippine camps mostly from dysentery and starvation.

And we have just received the news via the detail up from Bilibid through some sick Britishers who were brought into Bilibid from a ship en-route to Japan that out of one group of twenty thousand Britishers taken at Singapore only six thousand are left. As to the fate of the other sixteen thousand: mostly cholera; also wretched living and working conditions in the Burmese jungles - malaria and general mistreatment by the men placed over them as guards.

The sick British prisoners at Bilibid are suffering from malnutrition and malaria - not cholera, to my great relief. Although we have had several courses of shots against dysentery, typhoid, and cholera, I am not at all interested in putting to the test my supposed immunity to cholera.

Tuesday evening, August 8 - 1944

Received your radiogram last night "Hope you are well and keep well. Love, Mother Daddy Raymond Bliss." The message was copied from a big sheet of messages sent over by the Japs and I received it on a plain little strip of paper barely large enough to contain it. Somehow it seemed rather insignificant and it was hard to believe that it was really from home. But, in spite of its appearance, I knew of course that it did come from you, and was delighted to receive it. (Letters) (Bango)

Wednesday morning, August 9, 1944

Letters from home always dispel, at least temporarily, that "lost and forgotten" feeling one has. That sounds very trite, and even more so I guess is the statement that it all sometimes seems a dream. But somehow, even after two years of prison life, there is still something unreal. I felt it strongly a few nights ago. The full moon shone through a slight haze

Friday morning, August 11, 1944

As far as the above two paragraphs go, I guess the paper would have been better spent for the purpose intended. I am certainly shamefully awkward and inept at this business of attempting to put my thoughts to paper. (seem to be having typewriter ribbon trouble along here).

The camp is real enough and wet enough this morning. We seem to be in for another week or so of rain. The rains cause me only slight inconvenience but they are hard on the poor devils who have to work in them and who have only the rags on their backs with nothing dry to change to when they come in, no shoes, and only a thin blanket to shiver in while they lie upon the bedbug

infested bamboo slats, tired and bitterly hungry, Such a description is literally true for many of the enlisted men and not a few of the officers.

Saturday, August 12, 1944

Although Bob Huffcutt had been on Corregidor during most of the war, I first met him at Bilibid after the surrender. About my age, several inches over six feet, and quite thin, gazing through his horn-rimmed glasses in a studious, and, on first meeting, a somewhat superior way. Once met, he turned out most friendly. And he was superior. A graduate of Cornell, he had

taught economics for a short while, and then secured a job as economist in the State Department. ("There are two types of employees in the State Department", he remarked, "'trousers men' and ' pants men'. I was a 'pants man'"). Bob worked under Francis B. Sayre, and later accompanied him when he came to the Philippines. When Sayre left for Australia during the siege of Corregidor Bob was offered a chance to go, but declined, saying that he would prefer to see the show to a finish.

Huffcutt came to Cabanatuan at the same time I did. Although not of a particularly rugged physique he worked dutifully on the farm and still possessed abundant physical and mental energy when he returned. One could drop around his clean-scrubbed table with its floral centerpiece any evening and hear not the usual endless rehashing of rumors and complaints but lively discussions on ethics, philosophy, religions, and sciences, and especially of the problems of post-war politics. Bob was an ardent New Dealer and his keen mind and extensive knowledge coupled with a cool and impersonal presentation made his case most convincing.

In addition to all this, Bob was an enthusiastic gardener and despite the discouragements of being moved several times and losing a few plots, he assiduously watered, weeded, and debugged the remaining plots. All in all, considering his ability and energy, I considered him one of the ~~persons~~ persons in this camp who might amount to something after the war.

Yesterday afternoon about 1:30 it was bright and clear for a change and Bob was out with a bucket picking okra in one of his plots. Suddenly the Jap sentry in the tower located outside the fence gave a shout and then almost immediately fell to a kneeling position took aim and fired upon Huffcutt. Bob

fell wounded and calling for help. The Jap watched him for a minute or two and then fired another shot, killing him.

Tuesday August 16 - 1944

An inner line of fence has recently been commenced about 20 feet inside the old one. Bob was working in his garden just inside, that is, just on the camp side of this fence. He and many others had often been there before and it naturally never occurred to him that he was violating any regulation. Nor was he. To me his death seems one of those ghastly accidents which can so easily occur when rifles are put into the hands of morons. I can well imagine the Japanese Major putting out an order to the guards that in the event of any prisoner tampering with the fence they would immediately fire upon him. Then we have this illiterate and stupid guard in the tower, watching Huffcutt pick his okra and wondering what the word tampering meant.

Thursday Morning - Aug. 17 - 1944

Another detail, this time of five hundred men, is leaving this morning, presumably Japan-bound. About 15 officers, the remainder enlisted men, many of them not in the best of health, the medical examination this time was exceptionally cursory.

Wednesday Afternoon - August 30 - 1944

The improved typing is due to a wonderful and unlooked for acquisition: a brand-new (actually!) typewriter ribbon.

Can't plead much excuse for not writing - chiefly just laziness - although it is necessary to use a little foresight and planning to get at the typewriter. It is in use most of the day except early in the

morning, a short period at lunch time and another period in the evening. Unfortunately for me, I am quite busy with my library work at these same periods, since most of my bookkeeping is best accomplished when the library is closed and I have ready access to the card files (it's really quite a creditable little library, about 4,000 books, most of them in constant circulation).

Most of the old letters, which were dated up to the middle of September '43 have been censored, and they are starting on a new batch said to have left the States sometime in March '44. The new ones are 25 word messages, which will no doubt detract somewhat from the news value of any sent by Mother and Martha Jane. I must confess that all the letters I have received from you (about 6 of them) were not particularly loquacious. But of course I was delighted to receive them. Probably in a few days I'll have some of the new ones.

Well, I'll have to put off the subject of rumors until the next time -- there goes the bugle for evening roll call.

Friday morning, September 1, 1944

Have just finished eating my breakfast mush (cornmeal mush, and very good) and enjoying the sunrise. The sun comes up behind a mountain to the east of us whose rolling hump and higher sharp peak reminds me strikingly of Chocorua.

Six months ago the Japs issued us copies of the Tokyo newspapers and various propaganda magazines, written in English of course. But now they make a strong effort to keep any source of news from us. What little we receive now comes from an occasional Manila newspaper smuggled in, from remarks made by the Japs in conversation with the interpreters and others on work details, from radio news surreptitiously picked up by the electricians while repairing a Jap radio

and at present

Sunday morning, September 3, 1944

- and at present an important source of news is a small radio which some of the electrical gang seem to have assembled out of odds and ends. This radio is a great secret -- few persons have seen it and many scoff at it and say that it doesn't exist, and that the alleged "news" is pure fabrication.

Be that as it may, our information about the war situation as of today is about as follows: American-English forces have the channel ports, Paris, Marseilles (landed there about 2 weeks ago), Lyons, and are pushing thru France without great resistance. The Russians are meeting more resistance either in the Polish Corridor or East Prussia; one unit which got as far as Breslau was thrown back. Roumania has surrendered. We have landed on Guam and Saipan in the Marianas group. The Bonin Islands and Formosa have been heavily bombed, also Mindanao. Some Japanese cities have been bombed recently. We are on Almaira or some such name, an Island in the Moluccas.

The opinion of almost everyone in camp, including myself, is that Germany will surrender sometime this month. It is also expected by almost everyone that Japan will surrender a few months later. This latter expectation I do not share, and look forward^{to} about 2 more years of war out here. I seem to be about the sole person in camp with such ideas. I find it easier to keep them to myself, for on the few occasions I expressed them, I invariably arouse great animosity and am accused of abysmal ignorance, unheard-of pessimism, pro-Japanese tendencies, etc., etc. All this does not change my opinion particularly, since most of those who now think they will be free in a month or two

have been thinking that they would be free in a month or two for the last 2 years. Such "wishful thinking" has characterized the mental processes of the great majority in this camp, regardless of their rank and presumed intelligence.

It has been an astonishing revelation to me, that among so many persons supposedly possessed with some brains and mature judgement there should be such widespread and pathetic inability to form an opinion without regard to their hopes and fears.

Thursday, September 7, 1944

Another detail has left for Japan. About 400 men and twenty-odd officers. There are strong rumors, as usual with no immediate factual basis, that within a few weeks we will all be moved. However, it does not seem improbable, as the Japs seem to be definitely discontinuing the various work details scattered about the islands and moving them to Japan.

Saturday morning, September 9, 1944

The rising sun is fast dispersing a gray overcast and it promises to be a bright clear day. My day started with an overcast also. The greenhorn ladling out the breakfast mush unintentionally "short-changed" me by a spoonful or two of cornmeal mush. Naturally the Mess Officer hates to have the line held up while someone complains about this or that; so I went on, but 3 spoonful of cornmeal mush is a hard loss to bear.

Received a letter a day or two ago from Martha Jane. Dated Nov. 24, '43, it is the first of the new batch of "twenty-five worders" which I have received.

Thursday afternoon the permanent quarters cases were examined by the

Japanese Doctor. Altho he had me worried for a while, it turned out to be a fairly lenient approval of the American Doctor's recommendations, and only two or three cases had their status changed. This medical status is a complicated affair and is changed every few months, usually in the direction of further complication. At present the system is

Sunday afternoon, September 10, 1944

At present the system is that only bed patients are sent to the hospital -- there they don't get any beds, except for a few in the surgical ward, but they do get some treatment and medicine. The remainder of the sick, lame and la^zy are divided into "Temporary Quarters" class A, B, C, and D, and "Permanent Quarters" also Class A, B, C, D. Class D is the sickest. The "temporary quarter" people are those with digestive upsets, flu, occasional attacks of malaria, and surgical cases which will recover quickly. They are given a small additional ration to speed their recovery. No extra food is wasted on the permanent quarters cases, however, as their chance of recovery is considered slight.

Well, here I am back in the library after finishing supper -- about a teacup full of steamed rice, a few spoonful of very tasty fish gravy, and a cookie. The cookie I haven't eaten yet, except for a few bites I couldn't resist taking as I was putting it out of reach of the ants to save until bed-time. The cookies are surprisingly good and a fine tribute to the resourcefulness of the cooks and mess officers. The raw materials for cookies are rice, a little oil, and a little sugar, nothing more. In fact for the last few days the sugar has been lacking. The rice must be ground into flour. When the

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camp first started this was done by hand, with a bottle rubbed back and forth across a board. Later small hand grinders resembling home meat grinders were acquired. These are still used, together with a small electric grinder. And bake stoves had also to be built -- from mud and straw and bits of old iron. And bake tins from old pieces of sheet metal roofing. And much experimenting with homemade yeast cultures.

Tomorrow will be our first "Tagasaki Day". Major Tagaski (I believe that's his name) started it down in Davao and is continuing it here. One day per month every person in camp well enough to get out the gate to the farm, both Japs and Americans, goes forth to cultivate. Tomorrow is the day. All in all, I guess it's not too bad an idea, and certainly typically Japanese. Tho not always as efficient as they might be, their reputation for industriousness is well-earned.

I don't know if I'm considered well enough to go to the farm or not ("Permanent Quarters, Class C"). As a matter of fact tho, one day a month won't hurt me a bit. It's the steady day-after-day grind which, coupled with this starvation ration, leads to the vitamin deficiency diseases and loss of eyesight, which of course I am most anxious to avoid. At present I seem to be avoiding it fairly well, altho my vision in my right eye has decreased some over the past two years. My weight just now is about 112 pounds but except for occasional slight swellings of the legs (beri-beri) I feel fine. Well, there's the bugle for roll-call ("Bango" as we have learned from the Japanese to call it).

Tuesday evening, September 12, 1944

6 P.M. Just finished supper and am getting this in before evening

bango, which comes at 6:30. Bang-bang, Bang-bang there went the six o'clock bell. Colonel Beecher, the American camp commander, is a Marine, and it is ^{because} because of that fact I suppose that we keep time by the system of bells as used on ships. It's really an excellent idea; hardly anyone in camp has a watch anymore (long since sold for food) and our "bells" which are old truck brake drums struck with a sturdy piece of pipe are easily heard all over camp. I have the pocket watch you sent in the package, and a most handy thing it is too, particularly with this library job where I have to plan my affairs so as to work up to a few minutes of meal time and then get over to the barracks just in time to line up.

None of the quarters cases went to the farm yesterday but all the able-bodied special-duty personnel including the doctors from the hospital, took off their shoes and trudged barefooted out to the farm to do their stint. The stint was for the morning only, and luckily for those unaccustomed to such exertions, the weather was cool and cloudy.

The scattered rains this afternoon have cleared the air and the mountain to the east which looks like Chocorua stands out sharp and distinct against the blue sky. To the west the clouds are still banked, almost too heavily for a really brilliant sunset. But I shall enjoy whatever we have along with a pipeful I have been saving. Tobacco is becoming more and more expensive. There's the bugle for bango.

Thursday, September 21, 1944 :

Just a few lines before lunch. Great and optimistic discussions now going on all over camp. This morning a flight of planes, variously estimated at from 60 to 90 planes, with perhaps more above a high overcast, came in over

"Chocorua" and flew westward toward Manila and Clark Field. They returned, heading back toward the Pacific; in about 20 minutes. Everyone assumes they were American Bombers, and is greatly elated. Well! At this very instant several planes are overhead and there are machine-gun bursts. And a plane has been brought down! It's burning now, on a hillside a mile or so to the east.

Thursday morning, Sept. 28, 1944

Sorry to break off right in the middle of the excitement and "continue next week". Well, as I was telling last week, we had an aerial dogfight just over camp and one plane crashed and burst into flames on a hillside a few miles from here. At first some thought that the flaming plane was an American, but soon those who had a better view of the fight brought the news that the victorious plane had markings which, altho they did not coincide with any known American markings which we had used out here, ~~were~~^{were} definitely not Japanese, which of course decided that the crashed plane was Jap. In any event, no sympathy was felt for the man burning to death on that lonesome hillside. Everyone was too elated over the realization that American planes had finally and undeniably come to the Philippines. And the next step would undoubtedly be a landing. Everyone was talking of the meals they would eat and the car they would buy.

The flights of bombers continued Thursday afternoon; probably about 300 in all passed within sight during the day, and we could hear but not see other flights to the southward. Friday the attack continued but on a smaller scale: only two flights went over, both during the morning. During one of these flights the nearby airfield was strafed. Saturday was a half-holiday in order that the Japs might attend the funeral of the pilot who burned on the hillside and of

several soldiers who were killed at the airport. Sunday was quiet, except that some of the men who work out at the corral, where it is quiet and easy to see about the countryside, thought that they saw and heard a ^{dog} ~~god~~ fight over near Mt Arayat, near Clark Field.

First and foremost in the train of events following the air raids, we received another ration cut - about 50 grams of rice. But it doesn't seem to change the size of our meals too much. Commissary prices took another rise (corn is now 10 pesos per cup) and probably will go much higher next month. And yesterday the American wood-cutting detail was abolished, presumably thru fear that the choppers would escape while working in the woods. From now on the Japs will cut our wood, probably in insufficient quantity, which bodes ill for cookies, hot water and "quanning."

There have been quite heavy troop movements on the road in front of camp lately. This road goes from Cabanatuan eastward thru the mountains to the little town of Baler on the Pacific coast. Everyone assumes that the troops are moving up to guard against American invasion of Baler. Maybe they are, but Baler seems to me a rather unpropitious place to make a landing, surrounded as it is by jungles and mountainous wilderness. Anyhow, the troops have been moving back and forth. With them they have several terrifically noisy vehicles which, when they pass at night, usually starts the news thru camp "Thirty Nip tanks just went up the road." In the day time when we can see the road, the same terrific noise seems to be made by one or two, half-track ammunition carriers.

Monday morning, October 9, 1944

Forty Britishers and twenty Dutchmen arrived about a week ago. They were from a prison ship, the same ship from which the Britishers at Bilibid came from. It seems that this ship did not leave Manila Bay until the 19th, two days before the big American bombing. Their ship was part of a convoy of 8, the others containing freight or Japanese troops. On the second day out, as they were cautiously hugging the coast line, the American planes struck. The prison ship carried no markings, and promptly received 3 direct bomb hits, one of which broke it practically in half. Before the rattle of the strafers' machine-gun fire upon the decks had died away, the ship was gone, and 1100 prisoners with it. They had all been sent below decks at the start of the raid and, altho the hatches were left open and all were wearing life preservers, everything happened too quickly; only those who were lucky enough to be blown clear when the ship was broken ^{apart} ~~part~~ had any chance.

After the raid, in which 3 other ships went down with the prison ship, the few surviving prisoners dazedly found themselves swimming about together with equally dazed Jap soldiers and sailors. Also among the wreckage were five live pigs which had been on the top deck of the prison ship. According to our survivors up here, a Jap destroyer nosed slowly through the wreckage, picking up all the Japs, and the 5 pigs, but ignoring the prisoners. So the prisoners struck out for shore, about 5 kilometers distant. Some swam all the way in, others were picked up by kindly Filipinos in bancas.

Wednesday evening, October 11, 1944

Great excitement during the last few days. It looks as tho the camp is

being broken up. Monday and Tuesday were signaled by the leaving of the two sections of a hastily mobilized 400 man detail. And now a 475 man detail, all officers, has been called today. It will also go in 2 sections, one tomorrow and the second on the day after, the much talked of Friday the 13th. Presumably they are all going to Japan, with an excellent chance of being torpedoed or bombed on the way. Altho few seem to be extremely depressed over the prospect, there is a general tendency to avoid discussion of the boat trip and to enlarge upon the possibility that the long-awaited "Yanks and Tanks" will be here before the detail can leave Manila. This may be entirely possible, since the details which left here in September are still in Manila, as far as we can ascertain. About 3000 of them are jammed into Bilibid and existing on two scant meals of rice and salt a day.

The details which left yesterday and the day before had their belongings searched more rigorously than usual and among other things were forced to relinquish any food they possessed. This was an unexpected blow. As you can imagine, those who are leaving tomorrow and next day and who have any food cached away (and among the field officers there are many such) are busy consuming it. Some really tremendous meals are being consumed tonight. Being somewhat of a hoarder myself, I still had eight cans left from last Christmas. One of these I had for my birthday last Friday, and two more since then. Altho I am still rated permanent quarters and so far none of that classification have been sent on detail, things may change any minute, and it seems a propitious time to be building up my strength rather than hoarding chow. Well, there's the bugle for evening bango; will try to write some more tomorrow.

October 30, 1944

Dear Daddy,

Well, I see now why most diaries are so dull. You only have time to write in them when nothing is happening. The last few days have been busy ones. The camp is now down to about 700 men, 500 of whom are in the hospital. Only 17 permanent quarters officers are left, the remainder having been "cured" by a particularly thoro Japanese reclassification. The camp is now definitely a hospital camp, everyone here (with the exception of about 50 medical officers and corps men) being sick or disabled. We are now confined to half the former area by a fence thru the middle of the camp ("all those approaching closer than three meters from the new fence at the south end of the assembly ground will be shot to death" was the announcement a few nights ago at bango) but since we are so few no one is crowded, and there is a terrific plethora of home-made tables, wash-racks, cans, bottles, shelter-halves and miscellaneous bits of rubbish which we use to make prison camp more comfortable.

From the truck-drivers who have returned from Manila, we understand that those who have left since about October 1 are still in Bilibid. Over two thousand of them are jammed between the old walls. Soon the now familiar starvation diseases will break out amongst them, for they are getting only two meals a day, lugao (rice mush) for breakfast and lugao with a little corn mixed in for the afternoon meal; nothing else. Besides their suffering from the heat and congestion, they must be having a bad time with the myriads of Manila mosquitoes, for they were not permitted to take their mosquito nets with them.

Saturday afternoon, November 4, 1944

A sultry, sticky afternoon; probably the heat will soon be broken by the rain. The library was quiet this afternoon -- most of the duty side personnel

were out on the farm. Their chief work is to harvest cassava, and a little corn. Cassava roots in suitable soil get to be the size of a man's leg. Here, where the soil is poor and hard, they grow only to about the size of my forearm. Before cooking they have to be peeled, as the skins are poisonous. Boiled, they are a starchy food resembling potatoes; in fact, to me they seem somewhat superior, having a slightly sweet taste and a "chewier" texture. Boiled, mashed, and fried into patties they are excellent. As you probably know, the plant is indigenous to South America (where they call it "manioc" and it is a staple food of the natives) and a variety of it is used in making tapioca. Out here it isn't eaten much in peace time, except in the form of flour and starch. Since the big details left the camp, I have come into possession of one of the 2 "A" (worker's) rations which are allotted to the library. Which means an extra scoopful of cassava at lunch and supper. It makes quite a difference, and for the last few weeks I have definitely moved away from starvation, in fact have gained several pounds. Of course a diet of rice, cassava, a little corn, and small amounts of salted fish is frightfully unbalanced and lacking in minerals and vitamins, but the vitamin shortage apparently is greatly made up by the 4 pills per day which we are now receiving (2 multiple vitamin pills, one nicotinic acid pill, and one vitamin B pill). I usually save one or two of the multiple vitamin pills each day and have now several weeks supply saved up against leaner times, together with the bottle you sent me. At present my health seems excellent, altho I am ashamed of the excessively sedentary life I have fallen into here at the Library.

News is very scarce now. We understand that American forces have landed somewhere in the Visayans (some say Samar, Leyte, and Cebu) and in Mindanao,

No American planes, and hardly any Jap planes either, have come this way for the last two weeks. All of us, to use the apt and popular soldier's slang, are "sweating out" the invasion of Luzon, and hoping against hope that this will occur before the Japs can move us off the island and to Japan. Many here expect to be freed in a week or so, and even with my cautious and realistic views (usually described by others as "that God-dammed pessimism") feel that we have an excellent chance of being out in 2 or 3 months; that is, if we can avoid the "Nippon-go" details. Just about time for supper. Am feeling quite loquacious this evening and will return to the library as soon as the meal is over.

Back to the typewriter. It rained in the vicinity tho not at all in camp and we now are favored with a fine cool breeze and will soon be treated to one of the magnificent tropical sunsets which occur when, as this evening, scattered cloud masses are suspended at different heights with sufficient clear spaces between to enable the flaming colors to paint the various strata in succession.

Supper consisted of a rather meager helping of rice -- perhaps a third of a cupful (the cups I speak of are the issue aluminum cups which go with the canteen; they hold a pint and a half and so are much bigger than a teacup) over the rice was poured about 4 tablespoonsful of fish gravy; then came the cassava-- about two thirds of a cupful; since I get "A" ration I -- sorry, there's the evening call for bango, just the ringing of the time bell, by the way, for the bugler and his bugle went out with the big draft.

Sunday morning, November 5 - 1944

Planes this morning! We heard, but couldn't see a heavy flight which crossed the mountains to the north, heading westward. They returned in about twenty minutes this time going nearly overhead. A few Jap planes were up, but they seemed to be only observation planes and engaged chiefly in keeping out of the way of the Americans.

Tuesday afternoon, November 21 - 1944

A good 45 minutes to supper time. This should be a good long letter, even more rambling and incoherent than usual. Throughout the days here there are ever so many happenings which I should tell you about, ludicrous, unexpected, dramatic, sometimes tragic. Often I think how best to describe them to you even as I am watching them, but somehow when I sit at the typewriter -- well, the obvious solution to such forgetfulness is a small notebook to carry with me, and it's certainly high time I started carrying it.

Day before yesterday was the best air show yet. Soon after sun-up we heard them coming out of the east. "Hear 'em. That's the levelling detail," the prisoners called gaily back and forth. Two flights passed over, and the sky was filled with the ominous drone of many motors. The bombers fly in a ragged V formation, while the fighters work in pairs above, below, and on both sides of their bombers, each pair ceaselessly criss-crossing along the line of movement like some relentless animals hunting for prey. But since the first day, when they shot down one Jap plane to the east, we have never seen them find any. The flights have none of the sterile symmetry of peacetime -- there; damit, goes the dinner gong, But I'll describe those fights to you yet.

Your loving son,

Saturday Afternoon, November 25 - 1944

As I was saying, the formation of the planes no longer have the glittering sterile symmetry of peacetime. Now they work in the purposeful disarray of a long experienced team, powerfully co-operating in pushing through a much-played maneuver.

Sunday Morning, November 26 - 1944

The sun rose a few minutes ago - at 7:21 by the watch you sent me, to be exact. We have a nautical almanac here in the library, and I considered dragging it out and computing at what time it should rise, but guess I'll leave the problem to some of our aspiring students of navigation.

As Cabanatuan prisoners go, I am politically and economically very near the top. A room of my own - a canvas walled cubicle in the corner of the library and Class A (worker's) ration every day.

Sunday Afternoon December 10-1944

An out-of-season rain today, cold and unpleasant. I have been trying to develop more resistance to temperature by taking a shower in the morning

before dawn. But on a day like this I feel chilled to the marrow. It all goes back to the same old story: 200 grams of rice is not enough.

Not much plane activity lately, and we are not quite so cheerful lately. The fact that Americans are on Leyte has been absolutely confirmed tho; we have a Manila paper of November 5 which was smuggled into camp and in which the Japs admit the landing. ("Americans suffer heavy losses in Leyte") In the same paper was an article directing all carromata drivers to register with a local bureau. "Occasionally it is absolutely necessary that the vehicle be used by the Army," the article said. "In this case the owner or driver of the rig is paid P200 per day plus 300 grams of rice for himself and a kilo of copra meal for his horse." No, I didn't misplace the decimal point. The Jap money is rapidly lessening in value, and I doubt if two hundred Jap pesos will buy a good meal now. Incidentally, we were paid as usual at the end of November. I received the usual P35.83 (we had two pay raises a few months ago, one of 5 pesos closely followed by another 83 cents), and the enlisted men who worked on the farm received their usual ten centavos per day.. So far this month we haven't been able to buy anything at any price. I am hoping that something comes in, as I have augmented my pay by 200 pesos, which I obtained by trading an American P20 ^{bill} thru a string of intermediaries, including a Jap soldier, to some one in Cabanatuan.

The Japs took about a dozen Filipinos into custody a fortnight ago. Several were old women and children 8 or ten years old. These the Japs did not bother, except to tie them up like hogs for market and leave them lying on the ground in their guard house. Toward the men they were not so merciful; they were filled up with water and then thrown along the ground where the Nip soldiers jumped on their stomachs. Then they were taken inside the guard-

house and for several days we did not see them, but their screams and groans testified that they were still there. Then two of the Filipinos were lightly roasted over a small camp fire. As far as we know, they have all been released now. We don't know whether those who were tortured died or not. From what we could gather, the whole affair arose from the disappearance of several sacks of cassava.

Saturday Afternoon - January 9 - 1945

Dear Daddy -

For the past three weeks, I have been sick. Very sick. In fact for several days I thought, for the third time in this war, that I was soon to die. And this time for the first time I accepted the idea with resignation. Dengue fever, it was from which they say no one ever died, and which the Japs do not recognize as a sufficiently severe disease to necessitate hospitalization. The first few days I had it were days of intermittent fever and chills and were not so bad. then set in a 4 day period during which my fever never dropped below 103 degrees, day or night. By the end of this I was so sick and weak, they shipped me to the hospital. There I passed Christmas and New Year's, a strict bed patient but much too weak to care. They gave me aspirin and codein every four hours and fed me the regular issue of rice, which is now about 2/3 of a kitchen measuring cup plus 3 ounces of canned milk each meal. And now I'm back up at the library, somewhat weak and worn and 16 pounds lighter but very much alive.

From the underground we understand that the Americans are not in Mondoro. For the past 2 weeks or so we have been seeing P-38's and some type of big

bombers -- land-based planes! They have flown over at high altitudes and bombed Clark Field from whence we could hear the dull pounding of bombs and the sharp-eyed among us could see the anti-aircraft bursts.

But today, for the first time since we first saw the Army planes, the Navy planes were back, and have been putting on a wonderful show all day, strafing and dive-bombing "our" airport near the camp. One of the planes apparently inadvertently cleared his guns over the camp, spraying the hospital area with several shots, causing great excitement and wounding one man, luckily only a flesh wound in the buttocks.

Sunday afternoon, January 7, 1945

All night we hear trucks moving to and from. Some, from the way they backed and filled and stalled, apparently were at work on the airport. And this morning about an hour before daybreak some of our trucks started moving out. Those who live near the fence separating us from the Jap area saw three truck-loads move out - a load of rice, and then a load of Jap soldiers, and finally, chattering and whispering, the girls from the local Army whorehouse.

And all morning there was much moving about in the Jap area. A dismally rainy and overcast morning, it seemed no weather for flying yet we heard regularly the drone of planes.

After lunch I was lying on my bunk half-asleep when I became aware from the conversation just outside my room that something was up. All persons were being ordered to their barracks. And then the call went about "Fall out for Bango". As I went out to the formation I noticed that the Nip guard was not at his customary position on the lookout tower. Something was definitely up. I thought, but only half-seriously, of the many ominous predictions we had

often made as to what would happen to us if the Nips should be forced to suddenly abandon us. I approached the formation warily watching for the predicted machine guns.

But no Nips, with or without machine guns, were at the formation. But the announcement we heard was a stunning surprise in spite of the rumors that had preceded it. The announcement had been made a few minutes before to Captain King, who repeated it to us. "At 12 o'clock noon today, for the convenience of the Japanese Army, the members of this camp are no longer prisoners of war, and the Japanese guard is being withdrawn. Members of the camp remaining inside the camp area will not be molested by any Japanese soldiers. Those going outside the area will be shot by any Japanese troops who may be in the area. Thirty days' rations for the camp are being left by the Japanese. By negotiating with Japanese units which are occupying the area, permission may be obtained to harvest food from the farm." Such the announcement, followed by an appeal by Capt. King that no one should commit any act which would bring the wrath of the Japanese down upon the entire camp (most of the men are sick or disabled), but that all should stay carefully inside the fence and obey instructions and remember that we are very nearly free again, and "play the game." etc. etc.

Of course, we are all now convinced that Americans have landed on Luzon and that in the next few days we will see them. And our conviction has been strengthened by the heavy plane flights which have been roaring over all afternoon.

Yes, it seems that the end of our captivity is near. I am already composing the radiogram to apprise you of my recapture and dreaming of steaks and milk and cream and orange juice.

Like the rest of the sheep, I am staying docilely inside the fence, but I am not proud of it. I try to

excuse my actions to myself by remembering that I am nearly blind at night or when it rains, and by considering the weakened condition in which I have been left by the recent dengue attack.

Thursday January 11 - 1945

Astonishingly enough, the Nips did leave 30 days rations, in fact, considerably more. They must have been in a terrific hurry when they left. For the last few days the rations have been wonderful. The rice ration has been multiplied by 3 and we've been having a field day with the pigs, ducks, chickens, and Brahma cattle left by the Nips, all seasoned with onions from the farm, an unaccustomed and delicious flavor to us for the Nips never issued them to us. And finally, to top this unbelievable food windfall we are getting a can of milk a day from a hid cache which the Nips abandoned.

Bombers, fighters, strafers, and planes of all types have been flying about, all of them American.

We know how the Nips must feel, for we remember how it feels to look vainly about the skies for a friendly plane.

The war is undoubtedly not more than 30 miles from us now. We have been hearing intermittent but heavy artillery barrages for the past few days. They have been in the Northwest, towards Lingayen Gulf, and last night they heard on the radio that the landing forces in Lingayen came in 800 ships. Tho it was 3 years ago, I have not forgotten those minutes on the tortuous mountain road to the interior, crowded with our retreating soldiers, when I stared against the setting sun down into that same Lingayen Gulf at 80 ^{Japanese} Transports anchored along the coast. Not 800, only 80, but they seemed a grim and menacing array.

Friday, January 12, 1945

Very quiet all day. No planes came around, and only a few times did we hear the rumble of distant bombs. According to the radio, the Americans have advanced from 4 to 10 miles inland from Lingayen Gulf. A little disheartening to us, as we had figured from observation of artillery fire that they had come considerably farther.

Our strength report is increased by 3 today. We have a Japanese officer with concussion in the hospital, with two Jap soldiers guarding him. He fell off a truck, as it was going by the camp early this morning. He is badly hurt and will probably die. A strange and sad ending, to die here in the prison camp of his enemies.

Day before yesterday, two of us from the Library went over to the Jap area to bring back some books which were left over there, and, of course, to do a little general looting on the side. We brought back an enormous wall clock, now hanging precariously on the side of our rickety library building, all sorts of stationery including a lot of thin paper suitable for rolling cigarettes,

which we are giving out 2 sheets at a time to the library customers, 4 bottles of extra poor grade rum -- a great find, the remaining two bottles being carefully hidden in my room, and half a dozen small packages of tea, also a great find. This tea we found by going through an entire packing case of Nip "Christmas packages". These packages we judged to be the equivalent of our Red Cross personal packages which persons in the States may send to prisoners by giving the Red Cross \$5 or some such sum. But these Japanese packages contained only a really pathetic selection of cheap and worthless articles. Most of the "packages" were small cotton sacks about eight inches high. Inside these might be a small packet of toothpowder, a cheap razor with one blade, a tablet with some envelopes, two half-sized ping-pong paddles and a ball or perhaps a little cloth doll (the Japanese soldiers tie these to their belts for good luck) and perhaps a package of some foul smelling dried fish preparation or a package of tea. The packages were more varied than our red cross packages, and the individual items were more colorfully and attractively packaged but how pitifully worthless were those items. In one package we found a packet of toothpicks; we could well imagine the feeling of some starving Jap in New Guinea finding those in his package. But we did want the tea, even tho it was of very poor quality, and, as I said, we went thru a whole packing case of the packages, ripping open each little sack and scattering everything about the floor except the sought-for tea.

When we got ^{our} ~~our~~ tea over to this side we found that the quan kitchen wouldn't prepare it for us -- the powers that be had ordered that all food-stuffs picked up on the Jap area were to be turned in to the mess, and they didn't intend that the quan kitchen should aid violators of this order. This

obstacle we have successfully surmounted by quickly constructing a highly illegal charcoal burner from an old oil tin. With this thing hidden in my room and burning a few handfuls of charcoal surreptitiously obtained from the kitchen we are quite independent of the quan kitchen and for the last two days the library gang might well have all been Russians, judging by the amount of tea we have consumed. There goes the chow bell. No doubt we will have another fine supper tonight.

Monday, January 15, 1945

"MacArthur liberated 2 more town," says the radio communique.

Cabanatuan has not yet been liberated, but some of the preliminaries were attended to yesterday: a flight of twenty-four bombers roared over, dropped their load, and left the place in flames. Cabanatuan, which is one of the more important cities of Luzon, has been rather unlucky in this war, for it has already been liberated once by the Japanese, who likewise led up to the gala event by setting the town afire.

Our position since the guard left last Sunday has seemed more like comic opera than reality. Here we are, right in the midst of Japanese territory, calmly going about our business with never a sign of a guard or other restraint. And while the Japs seem to be on almost desperately short rations, poorly provided at that, we are living in comparative luxury. All the rice we can eat (which, after 3 years practice, is quite an amount), camotes, onions, a big helping of carabao or pork twice a day, and two! cans of milk per person each day. And milk is practically beyond price out here now.

At this unprecedented (for us) scale of eating our supplies of meat and milk will soon be exhausted, but it of course seems far better to eat them as

rapidly as possible than to run the risk of their being commandeered by some hungry Jap troops. Altho so far the few troops in the area have interfered with us not at all, a few days ago two tanks, bristling with armament, drove up to the front gate. The tank commander clambered out and came alone inside the gate, while his tough looking crews idly toyed with their machine guns. Camp Supply saw him coming and were somewhat despondently estimating how much rice and milk it was possible to load on 2 tanks. And sure enough, when the tank commander began, most politely and in most difficult "English" to explain that he was having great difficulty in getting supplies, our worst fears seemed confirmed. But after a good deal of discussion with this very polite and apologetic tank commander (no one in here now speaks Japanese) Major Reed finally discovered what he wanted. Could we, please, spare him a little salt? Camp Supply gave him a whole bagful.

And now, late this morning, we have some gurads again. About six of them, walking about and checking the fence. Their leader, with the usual few words more or less at his command, nevertheless managed to convey the idea. "Taksan boom-boom Cabantuan. Filipino very mad." "Taksan" is one of the few Japanese words which all American prisoners have learned in the past few years. It means "very many" or "very much". So we gathered that the Japs had been detailed to protect us from Filipinos seeking revenge for the burning of Cabantuan yesterday. We may need such protection, and again the Japs may be simply trying to prevent our making contact with any of the various guerilla outfits which are said to be about. In any event, the feeling of the Filipinos always has been and presumably still is strongly anti-Japanese and Pro-American, and any resentment stirred up by the bombing of Cabantuan is only a local affair.

Tuesday January 16 -1945

Heavy bombing to the North this morning followed by big clouds of smoke. Probably they "lowered the boom" on San Jose, a town about 25 miles from here.

I am suffering from an ailment exceedingly rare among war prisoners: an attack of indigestion brought on by overeating.

Col. Duckworth is now the Camp Commander. He avoided going to Japan by being marked permanent quarters as a result of hernia, which was quite an accomplishment, as the Japs have always shown a disposition to regard hernias as not at all disabling and used to often send hernia cases out to work on the farm. Col. D. during the war had command of one of the hospitals on Bataan and apparently made quite a good job of it. Since the surrender, the Col. has always been in the good graces of the Japanese partly because he remained capable on the job at the Bataan hospital.

and partly, I believe, because of his large size and generally imposing appearance. As a result of being in the aforementioned good graces, he has always traveled with 3 Cocker trunks and has always looked well in his Khaki uniforms while most of us were starving in rags. From what I have seen of him as Camp Commander he is competent and conscientious.

21st Evacuation Hospital

Wednesday, February 7, 1945

Dear Mother & Daddy,

Rescued! When our prison camp was still 25 miles inside the Jap lines a small group of special troops sneaked thru and staged a night raid which really was a miracle of efficient organization & daring. The Jap guards were annihilated and we were ~~streaming~~^{streaming} out the gate in a matter of minutes. Despite the darkness and the imperative need for haste all the prisoners, including the bed patients, were taken along, except one.

This one, an elderly gentleman slightly hard of hearing, an Englishman, strolled nonchalantly out to the latrine while the fighting and the rescue were in progress. Upon his return he found the camp completely deserted, which he did think "a bit unusual y'know". So he calmly went to bed, awoke at his usual early hour next morning, took his bath, found a bit of something for breakfast, and sat down to await development. Luckily he was noticed by Filipino guerrillas, who hastened him off as fast as his imperturbable dignity would permit. The guerrillas managed to get him thru the lines a few days later, and he arrived at the evacuation hospital most contrite about any delay or extra trouble he might have caused. "As you know, I suffer from loose bowels," he said apologetically.

"How did they treat you"? is the first question we are always asked, and the questioner seems always to expect stories of blood thirsty brutality and sudden death. In truth there are many such stories we can tell, but in the main the story of the prison camps is the subdued but even crueller one of privation and continuous hunger, of dysentery and malaria and all the diseases of starvation.

"How does it feel to be back with the Americans?"

A be —

wildering dream of friendly smiles, of jeeps and trucks and airplanes and unheard-of weapons; all this as a background to the unbelievable miracle of plenty of marvelous food 3 times a day! "You'll be able to get something really good to eat when you get home," they tell us. How strange that sounds to us can only be appreciated by those who have really known hunger.

At present I am a guest of Colonel Chapman at his evacuation hospital, having been moved from the first hospital to which we were brought. He has been giving me a complete medical checkup, and has found nothing wrong, I believe, except my vision.

My health, by the way, is excellent. My vision is poor from the wound at Corregidor and from the prison malnutrition. However, I can still read, and still have both eyes and have no disfigurement (with the possible exception of my goatee). Colonel Chapman said that you had heard that half my face was ~~blown~~ blown away. No such thing at all.

I shall probably be home in a week or so, although we are getting no information on the matter. I haven't yet visited General Swift but hope to do so tomorrow. In fact I would be visiting all over the Island if Colonel Chapman did not have me here as his guest in his quarters. One can hardly take French leave in such circumstances.

While still in Prison Camp I received Mother's letter telling of Martha Jane's marriage. Best regards to them both.

Love to all and hope to see you soon,

Your loving son,

Please excuse the errors of typing — I had to write this rather hurriedly.