

We Survived The Ordeal of a Japanese
"JAPANESE MODEL OF AN-INTERMENT CAMP" Internment Camp

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BOOK 1

My mind wanders to a few years ago when I find I clearly remember seeing large screaming headlines in huge black capitals in one of Shanghai's leading newspaper, then the North China Daily News. These enormous black letters were warning all British nationals, particularly women with children to evacuate as soon as possible from all China ports as the Far Eastern affairs ~~was~~ ^{will} reaching a critical point.

It was with luck that at the time, my husband's firm presented us with a letter giving us the option of either remaining with the firm in Shanghai, or proceed to safe points overseas. Seeing that we had always wanted the opportunity to leave China as she really was reaching an ugly state, and both being young and adventurous, this to us proved a golden opportunity, our choice was Australia. Arrangements were made almost immediately, and passage was booked on the s.s. "Anhui" which had been chartered by the British Government to carry out the evacuation scheme. She was to sail on December 3rd 1941.

Fortunately for us, the day turned out to be beautiful, and much were we thrilled to arrive at the French Bund where she was tied up, to see this 4000 ton tub ready to carry us on our adventure. The quay was crowded with people bidding each other adieu, and with slight difficulty we were finally able to climb the gangplank and embark. We were extremely happy to find that a suitable size cabin had been allotted us, this came as a surprise as we expected to bunk in the hold, as we were told that cabin space had been reserved for the aged and infirm and for mothers with children. We deposited our luggage in it and ventured on top deck to view the busy crowd, this time from a better angle though, and to see the last of Shanghai.

Around the noon hour the gangplank was lifted, the hawsers removed from the bollards, the engines turning gently, the s.s. "Anhui" slowly crept along the dirty muddy yellow waters of the Whangpoo which two hours later brought us to the estuary of the Yangtze. We remained on deck until the last of the scenery was swallowed up and then proceeded below to unpack.

Amongst the crowd were a couple who had been delegated by the Government to take charge of the passengers' welfare as far as Singapore, where we were to change boats for Australia. The vessel carried 470 passengers out of which at least 150 were Indians returning to their motherland, and the ship was certainly over-crowded.

the journey did not prove a smooth one for me, my husband turned out to be a better sailor and little words can express how relieved was I when we reached Hongkong on the 6th inst. I can honestly say Hongkong's harbour is truly magnificent, it is one that has always been greatly admired. It was during our admiration that the vessel was boarded by the Harbour Police, who, when satisfied with their investigations, issued permission for those wanting to, to go ashore. Some succumbed to this gladly, whilst others had their various appointments. The ship sailed

- 2 -

that evening at 7.00p.m.

On the 8th morning there was much confusion which disturbed our happy minds. We inquired regarding this frenzy only to find that it was the Captain's wish for us all to gather at the stern deck for a meeting. He made his presence known almost immediately, and before long to our horror, these were some of the words he had uttered, "War has been declared since 8 o'clock this morning by Japan on the Allied nations, and dangerously are we sailing in enemy waters." Those happy smiling faces were now completely distorted and as rigidly and calmly as we stood trying to gather ourselves out of the horrible mist, words of encouragement were asking us to please be as aidful as possible during this distressing period. From now on blackout would be in effect, no cigarettes to be smoked and all able-bodied men were asked to volunteer for look-out duty. There, the Captain received every bit of co-operation. The feeling within us then is indescribable, but nevertheless we resolved to take our fate, come what may! That night was a dreadful one, everyone was nervous and shaken for fear lest we should be cornered by a submarine, and believe me the first sign of dawn, we certainly thanked God when we found ourselves steaming through between Mariveles and the Island of Corregidor into the calm of the Manila Bay where we anchored for some time until the stillness was broken by a quarantine launch approaching us. It was boarded with several officials who for some unknown reasons chose to shout at our Captain from some distance away wanting information regarding the passengers. The Captain reciprocated in the same manner informing them of the details they required, only to be told that they would return. Rumour picked up that all women and children would be taken ashore which caused quite a furor as false rumours often do, but things quietened when the same launch reappeared with the direct order that our ship remain at bay under quarantine until such a time they felt like releasing us. This strange method of treatment overwhelmed us particularly as danger was imminent at any moment, but whether we liked it or not, we remained thus all day with no change in the schedule until the next morning the 10th inst.

After having breakfasted, I returned to the cabin where an accumulated amount of washing was awaiting me, and was in there not longer than 10 minutes when the drone of planes in the distance frightened me. I peeked out of the porthole, and sure enough, there they were, an amazing number dazzling brilliantly in the sun. Instantly and instinctively, I had the presence of mind to grab both lifebelts although at the time I had no idea where my husband was. I rushed out insanely to all decks, and when I finally reached the top one, there was a crowd all busily watching the enemy planes flying in perfect formation without the slightest opposition from Allied planes. The anti-aircraft guns used by the defenders were so old that the planes were not even touched. I stood for awhile completely transfixed watching this amazing manoeuvre, dazed and bewildered, when suddenly a thick hoarse cry from the Captain's lips ordered everyone below, and just then my husband rushed out having all this while been helping with messages in the radio operator's room.. The two of us hurriedly rushed down the

steps making speed for our cabin and just as we rounded the corner a terrific blast of exploding bombs overcame us with a deafening noise which burst alongside. For the minute neither of us could quite make out what this was all about, and as suddenly as it had caught us, just as suddenly it left us. We stood quite shaken wondering why the boat remained standing, and pulling ourselves together, we rushed to the saloon where we found many in the same sick state as ourselves. The all-clear sounded soon after and without hesitation we rushed to the top deck to find that the s.s. "Anshun" had been hit on the radio cabin and the s.s. "Sagoland" suffering damage between the bridge and forward hold. It was blazing furiously and later sank. We, luckily, had missed being hit by 50 feet! Cavite, the American Naval Base, was destroyed. The lovely formation which had caught sight-seers consisted of 27 planes so observers claimed, but it was only one that had performed this dastardly act. His bombing was extremely accurate. Although I learnt later of the panic which took place on our ship during this tumult, it led to no casualties.

The Quarantine officials showed up after this with great efficiency and wasted no time in ordering the vessel to be anchored at Pier 7. When this was done, the Filipino passport officials boarded and just as we were ready to line up preparing to hand our passports over, another alarm sounded and in two shakes the deck was cleared. However it so happened the raid was planned elsewhere and before long we were back to where we were. In exchange for our passports, we received a small white identification card, on it, our passport numbers written in ink and our fingerprints. A passport is a valuable document at any time, and we just hated parting with ours, but that, we understood, was a customary measure for anyone landing in the Philippines without a visa. We were then approached by the delegates who told us we would

have to disembark as the ship needed refueling, and at the same time, it would be arranged for us to convey to conduct us safely to Australia. Giving us no option and with a quick decision to be made, trusting the words of the delegates, we marched down the gangplank with a suitcase each leaving the rest of our luggage in the hold as they were too heavy to cart with us and there was no time for sorting. It was a sweltering day, we walked straight into the Customs where our suitcases were closely examined by female officials whose final acknowledgement allowed us to proceed in taxis straight to the Manila Club.

Seeing that things were in a dreadful turmoil, we were not met by our British Consul nor by any of his staff anywhere. In fact we never had the pleasure of even meeting the gentleman! How this man appropriated the title of Consul, we do not know, and we felt he did little to own it. Why does the British Government give men like these such positions to fulfill if they do not do it competently? Paragraph 8 on the back page of my passport states the following:-

"Such registration constitutes the most ready means in emergency or difficulty of enabling proper assistance or advice to be afforded them."