THE FALL OF HONG KONG AND ITS AFTERMATH

Or

MEET THE JAP

AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF HONG KONG

AND FOUR YEARS OF LIFE IN A JAPANESE PRISON CAMP

SERGEANT TOM MARSH
May 4th, 1915 – February 3rd, 1995

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my comrades of the Winnipeg Grenadiers and all that brave company, British, American, Indian, Chinese and Canadians that took part in the defense of Hong Kong in December 1941, and to the survivors, who suffered four long years of cruel imprisonment with its accompaniment of starvation, disease, beatings and exhausting labor. I trust this book will give some satisfaction, as I have tried to show the Japanese Army and Japanese officialdom as they were, cruel, mendacious, vindictive, treacherous, and cunning.

I also hope to give them some sense of importance, as their survival proves that they possess, to a marked degree, the soldierly qualities of courage and endurance and are not lacking in native intelligence. The majority, given sympathetic understanding by the government re-establishment agencies and the opportunity of employment by private individuals, will adjust themselves and continue to make a worthwhile contribution to our Canadian society.

The public, however, mostly see the boys that have returned from Hong Kong now fat and prosperous looking. They may say, “Look! They are well off.” They seldom see those who are in hospital and sanitariums taking treatment for blindness and paralysis and other diseases caused by malnutrition.

A great deal was taken out of all the prisoners. They were the lost men of the Lost Battalions. They lost everything; their liberty, contact with loved ones, health, self-respect, human dignity – everything! All they had left was an ingrained desire to live so that they might defeat the intention of the Jap, to crush them. And that some day, somehow, they would again see their loved ones and recapture the happiness they once knew.

Aided by modern surgery, wounds of the body heal quickly, but the wounds to the human spirit take a much longer time to heal and leave deep scars. Four long years of disease and starvation, four long years of abuse and humiliation - four long years when every decent conception of human relationship went into the discard, it will take time for such wounds to heal and as I have said there will always be scars.

Figure 1 Winnipeg Grenadiers D Company Platoon No. 14 - Sergeant T.G. Marsh, back row forth from the left.

I trust that the good people of Canada, who welcomed us back so gladly and the Americans who were more than generous to us we returned by their aid, will agree with Kipling that 'East is East and West is West' and never will they merge. Differences of colour, language and creed will always divide mankind. Failure of us to recognize them is no guarantee that the other fellow is gong to be equally tolerant. History proves differently. We found the mildest and best-intentioned Japanese loyal to their race and to its rulers. Remember, but for the decision of one man – the Emperor, the Japanese would have committed mass suicide after killing every prisoner. This plan was actually prepared, then abandoned.

Introduction to the author by his father, Thomas George Marsh Senior

My boy, Thomas was born May 4th, 1915, in the railroad town of Transcona, Manitoba, six months after the First World War had started.

I had been four years in Canada at the time, migrating from England in 1911. I married his mother, Sue Garner, from Kent, England, in April 1914. The Reverend Phillip Barker, a valued friend of the family officiating.

Joining the Canadian Army in 1916, I went overseas with an infantry draft of the 44th Battalion C.E.F., six months later my wife and little boy Tommy followed.

They lived mostly in the south of England – garrison towns, training centers, etc., and later, when I returned wounded, near hospitals and rest camps.

It was here that I believe Tommy got his first liking for things military. He had a mass of golden curly hair, an engaging smile, and – if I do say so myself, a very pretty mother. The Canadian boys made a fuss of the lad. Often he would run to a Canadian soldier as soon as he saw the Maple Leaf badge, crying "Dada!" much to the embarrassment of his mother.

He also learned something about the enemies of his country. At Folkstone, where they stayed, German zeppelins and planes came over on several occasions and bombed the town.

His mother recalls an incident when the dismal sound of the air-raid siren was head, followed by the cries of the wardens, "Take cover, and take cover!"

The people stampeded to comply and an older child who had him in charge deserted little Tommy. Frantically running to catch up with the deserter, as well as his short chubby legs would let him, he fell flat on his face and when picked up, mad as a hatter, forgot his fear of air-raids in his rage at the girl who left him behind.

If he were in the house at the sound of the alarm he would scramble under a cloth that draped the sitting room table to the floor. He would disappear completely. Presently, he would pop his curly head out of a fold in the tablecloth and enquire, "Dem Germans gone yet?"

At night he was often plucked from his bed, wrapped in a blanket and hurried down to the basement, where amid the boom and crash of the anti-aircraft guns he sat huddled on his mother's lap till the all clear sounded.

These early experiences must have made him both fear and hate. His mother remembers an occasion when she caught him banging his Teddy Bear on the floor, with each bang remarking; "You bad German you!"

Returning to Canada in 1916, he manifested a liking for things military. As a schoolboy he collected brass buttons, badges, shell cases and other souvenirs of war. His pride was a German sniper's helmet.

He also had a scrapbook. In it he pasted pictures of interest that he had cut from the daily paper or some magazine. Nearly all these pictures dealt with scenes of war and the military. About this time the Chicago Herald, ran a particularly gruesome supplement dealing with the horrors of the First World War. It showed pictures of naked and mutilated dead men and women in the war zones. I remarked that they should be destroyed as morbid, but he managed to keep them. I think now that it was a premonition of what he would actually see and experience in later years.

Of course he read many other books, his favorite being the old country book "Boys Own Paper" and "Chums". Those who have read these books know that they are healthy reading, and help to form the best in a boy's character.

He was a participant, often a leader, in school sports and was a good swimmer and cyclist.

At the age of fourteen he joined the Winnipeg Sea Cadets. At the time (1929 – the year of the great depression), this organization of loyal business men and youngsters, was so neglected by the powers-that-be that I remember my boy going around very proud of his naval uniform with a big patch in the seat of his pants.

At nineteen he joined the 10th Machine-Gun Battalion of the N.P.A.M., stationed in Winnipeg under Lieut. Col. O.M.M. Kay. Two years later this outfit was amalgamated with the 1st Battalion Winnipeg Grenadiers. Thus in 1936 Thomas became a Grenadier. He attended drills and camps and was attached to "B" co. commanded by H.W. Hook (who later died in a prison camp at Hong Kong).

Tom was very proud of his uniform and prouder still when he was promoted to Corporal. He worked hard during the day at this trade of decorator but never missed a parade at night or on weekends.

In 1939 he became a Sergeant and an authority on the heavy machine-gun. This knowledge and training served him in good stead at Hong Kong where, at one time of emergency, he found that of the group he was attached to, he was the only one that knew about the Vickers to be able to take new parts from their packing and actually put the gun together that would work immediately without delay of further adjustment. An armourer usually does this work.

There were two big events in his life that year. First, his marriage to a Miss Betty Horton of St. Vital, Manitoba, and secondly the visit of Their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

Thomas always had a picture of the reigning Monarch hung in his room. First, George V, then Edward, and lastly the present occupants of the Throne.

So he was exceedingly proud to be chosen as member of the guard of Honor at the Railroad Depot. How he scrubbed and polished. This was still a time of depression and many of the men in the Militia were out of work. Yet all donated their meager militia pay to Battalion Funds in order to hold their organization together. The men had to provide their own military boots and some on the Guard of Honor could not afford to do so. The Officers, out of their own pockets, provided them.

This was short six months before the outbreak of the Second World War, a war that threatened the very existence of Canada and its people. There was not enough military equipment in Winnipeg at the time to properly equip a Corporals Guard.

Many of these lads, who gave their pay; later gave their lives - all honor to them! They were the first to enlist in the active army and the basis of the firsts training of new recruits. They served well then, and later on the battlefront. May they not be forgotten!

John Payne, Bob Manchester, Ken McCully, Earl Dickie and others – hastened to be the first to enlist. The Grenadiers were to be mobilized as an Infantry Battalion under their old commander Lieut.-Col. Kay.

After a brief period of training they were sent to Jamaica in the West Indies to relieve an English regiment for front line service. They stayed fifteen months, returning to Winnipeg in October 1941 in fine shape. Perhaps some of them were a little heavy, as my boy weighed 190 lbs., quite difference to the 120 lbs. to which he was reduced in Japan.

In Jamaica he was, for a time, in charge of the guards at a prison camp for Germans. The prisoners were well fed and were cocky enough to hoist the Nazi flag in their compound and make all inmates salute it. He saw the English Commandant; armed only with a walking stick, actually risk his life in separating opposing factions who were fighting. How different was his treatment when he, in turn, became prisoner.

They had only been in Winnipeg a week when they were recalled from leave and told that the Battalion was leaving immediately for parts unknown.

There was some confusion and annoyance at the haste of the departure. Thomas, however, accepted this curtailment, as one of those things that happens when a nation is a war and he reported promptly. He was put in charge of a patrol to round up stragglers in Winnipeg. He disliked the job at the time and the memory of it now even more. Some of those the patrol rounded up died in Hong Kong prison camps under distressful circumstances, but at that time it was his duty and he did it. Many of the Grenadiers were very indignant at having their leaves so abruptly terminated. Extra guards were posted at the barracks on Main Street as all were confined to barracks.

On the 24th of October 1941, a fine day, the Battalion marched to the CPR depot to entrain for the East. They were a fine body of men – all over five foot nine inches. Many were the fond farewells – some, forever.

As the train steamed out and they waved good-bye, little they thought that they were to be one of Canada's Lost Battalions, the other being the Royal Rifles of Canada.

They were to disappear, every man of them (except a few that skipped the boat at Vancouver) for four long years. Four hundred disappeared forever.

Those who returned, we welcomed as returning from the dead. As you read my son's story you will admit it was a miracle that as many did survive.

It was not by the grace of the Japs they did so but only by their own courage and intestinal fortitude, for which the fighting men of Canada are noted and of which all Canadians can feel justly proud.

With this short introduction I leave my boy Tom to tell his own story as he told it to us at home. I know you will find it very enlightening and interesting.

T.G. Marsh Sr.

Hong Kong Prisoners' Song

"Koo-Da! Koo-Da!" So cries the Jap
As heavy boot and rifle slap.
Koo-Da! Rise from your bed of rags.
The bayonet point for him who lags.

"Koo-Da!" Freeze on the icy road.
Trembling hands lift the heavy load.
Bow, to every smirking Nip,
While yellow hands your neck do grip.

"Koo-Da!" Feel bare feet, cut by stones.
They probe your wounds and break your bones.
Naked, on snow swept compound stand,
Tight-wired the wrist and numb the hand.

"Koo-Da!" Pick dirt from out your rice.
Eat worms, weeds, slugs, snakes, dogs and mice.
Swell your guts with beriberi
Lose your bowels with dysentery.

"Koo-Da!" Watch comrade as he dies.
Tormented by a thousand flies.
On hard wooden boards lie at night.
While bugs and fleas your carcass bite.

"Koo-Da!" Sick exhausted you lie.
A skeleton before you die.
Four long long years of misery.
You pray for death to set you free.

"Koo-Da!" I hear it from afar.
Oft times my dreams it comes to mar.
Heavy slumber or fitful nap.
Again, again I hear the Jap.

"Koo-Da!" In the very pit of hell.
May the Koo-Da at each other yell.
Let Old Nick hear each piercing note,
Ram "Koo-Da!" down each yellow throat.

T.G. Marsh Jr.

The following poem was written before embarking for Hong Kong by Sergeant John Payne of the Grenadiers, who was killed by the Japs after attempting to escape from a prison camp at North Point in the fall of 1942.

The Lost Battalion - Fighting Men All

We've shivered in snowstorms, in rain and sleet,
We've pounded parade squares, in tropical heat
Crawled on our faces, in cactus and sand
And we've swaggered a bit, as we followed the band

On weary route marches, we've ticked off the miles
And we've all had our troubles with acting blank files
And in spite of the Guard Shoot, it strangely appears
We're proud of the fact, that we're all Grenadiers

Chorus

Raise your glasses and follow me
Here's a toast to our destiny
Shout the Chorus, as you never did before
Call us fighting men, just once more
Call us fighting men just once more

John Payne was indeed a fighting man of Canada, who proudly marched a way to lay down his young life as a sacrifice to uphold that which he believed in, his home, his country and our way of life.

If there is a warrior's Valhalla, John will be there and from his comrades who knew him in battle and prison camp will come the cry,

"John. You were a fighting man"

Sergeant John Payne

An Explanation and Apology

As my friends have insisted that this book be written in the first person, to make it more authentic, I have constantly used the personal “I”. I trust this will be forgiven, as no one knows better then myself that there were many at Hong Kong who shared my experiences and had more harrowing ones. It is certain that many died and we, the survivors, were the fortunate ones, we lived, to be reunited with those we love.

Thomas George Marsh Jr.

Figure 2 Jamaica 1941: Left to right: Sgt Marsh, Dickie (from Gunton), McCulley

CHAPTER 1 - OFF TO WAR

The Grenadiers entrained at Winnipeg on October 24, 1941 and their departure was so hurried there was a great deal of confusion, changes having been made in the posting of officers, noncommissioned officers and other ranks. Added to this was the receipt of around 300 reinforcements practically on the day of departure.

Officers and non-coms were, therefore, kept busy on the train, trying to seek out and familiarize themselves with the men for whom they would be individually responsible. Because of this confusion a few of the men strayed from the train at the stations along the line and were left behind.

At last we reached Vancouver, the docks, the smell of the sea. Slowly each man, laden with his full equipment, filed up the gangplank of the New Zealand ship “Awatea” There was a feeling of unrest and uncertainty among the men. A feeling that forces they did not altogether trust were herding them into something they did not understand. Where were they going and why? The Canadian soldier obeys orders much better when he understands their meaning and their significance. To some of the troops all was strange as they had never been on shipboard before.

This feeling of complaint became one of open protest and insubordination when the men saw their living and sleeping quarters. Closely packed between gloomy decks a man could not move from his hammock without disturbing his neighbors and he had to sleep either above or below his dining table. Due to so many closely packed bodies the air was fetid. We all thought the conditions terrible. Little we knew then that within a few weeks we would face conditions that, in comparison, would make the accommodation on the S.S. Awatea a paradise.

The men had observed that the best parts of the ship were allocated to the Officers, who had spacious lounge and dining rooms. Just before the ship sailed the men gathered in groups and voiced their complaints about the set up. Officers and NCOs found it difficult to place responsibility for the unrest and disturbance on any particular individual as those best known to them were usually the best disciplined and behaved. One group of thirty broke ship and was left behind in Vancouver. I wonder how many of these owe their lives to this incident?

On October 27, 1941 the ship sailed. It was misty and damp, typical Vancouver winter weather. We of the Grenadiers, who were accustomed to the sunshine of the prairies, and recently the warmth of Jamaica, were a trifle depressed. There were no flags, no bands, no waving of handkerchiefs, nothing. The ship crept away into the mist, a ghost ship taking the Lost Battalions to their rendezvous with destiny.

CHAPTER 2 – HONG KONG

The S.S. Awatea approached the Island of Hong Kong on the morning of November 16, 1941 less then one month before the Jap attack on Pearl Harbor. That morning the sun rose blood red in the east. A fiery ball in a clear sky, blinding to look upon, here was the symbol of Japan, a blood red ball blazoned across the sky to welcome us. Although we did not know it at that time, behind those low hills that fringed the Mainland, crouched the battle seasoned soldiers of Japan in their tens of thousands, fresh from the rape of Nanking and the capture of the cities like Canton in China. Here they waited, impatient to be unleashed on the white man's settlement of Hong Kong, the greatest prize in China.

I stood by the ship's rail with Sergeant John Payne and some of the others and we saw only the romantic and mysterious East. We saw the blazing sun as the sun of Kipling's ballad "Come back to Mandalay. Come back you British soldiers". We were back.

As the ship passed along the channel that runs between the Island of Hong Kong and the mainland of Kowloon we gaped at the endless mass of fishing boats, junks, barges and Chinese houseboats that littered the harbor. I pointed eagerly to the first native Chinaman I saw. He wore a black blouse and a long pigtail. I remembered that I thought that pigtails were outdated in China. Slowly and majestically we sailed past all the flotsam of China till we came to where the channel narrows to about one Mile.

The Crown Colony of Hong Kong takes in the island and then spreads over 350 square miles of the Kowloon mainland. It is a conglomeration of modern buildings. There were banks, warehouses, Government offices, etc. and native buildings of every description mostly constructed of wood. These last, to our western eyes, seemed to be much in need of paint and repairs. On the Island of Hong Kong, back of the business section, there rises a high ridge of hills. The highest and most central of these is called the Peak. On the slopes of the hills are built the homes of the more wealthy families, mostly British. Some are quite pretentious and have all modern conveniences. It seems the higher you go the bigger the house and the more important in the affairs of the Colony.

All along the water's edge, both on the Island and at Kowloon are crowded native huts surrounding the dock areas. On the water itself live a real floating population of tens of thousands. They live in barges, junks, and houseboats of the flimsiest construction or anything else that will float. I was told that the native population of Hong Kong had doubled during the Japanese war with China as hundreds of thousands of Chinese had fled here to escape the Jap. They sought protection under the British flag and constituted quite a problem to the authorities. There was at the same time we arrived a million people to be fed and housed. Many died of neglect and starvation. It was not unusual to see a dead child lying in the gutter with people hurrying by paying no attention. The fear of starvation was seldom removed from these people. Crowded into such a small space they

were dependent on supplies, mainly rice, brought in by ship. When the lifeline of shipping was out, as happened even before the Japs attacked, the position of the civilian population was desperate. Robbing and looting added to the chaos.

We were welcomed on the mainland of Kowloon by the bands of the British Garrison, the Royal Scots and the Middlesex Regiments. Besides these the Garrison consisted of two Indian Regiments, one Rajputs the other Punjabi, garrison artillery, engineers and medicals. Altogether, including the Canadians, there must have been eight thousand troops of all arms. Wearing battle order equipment and dressed in tropical shorts and shirts we marched through the dock district of Kowloon, headed by our bands, to a local football field where we were officially welcomed by the Governor, Sir Mark Young, and the British Commander, Major-General C.M. Maltby M.C.

After the ceremony we marched a distance of four miles to Sham Shui Po Camp. This camp, in which many others and I were to be held as prisoners, was a permanent British Garrison Encampment. As we marched through the streets of Kowloon we carried ourselves proudly. We were all big men and hoped to make a good impression on the inhabitants. We eagerly scanned the streets for all that was strange and different. We breathed deeply the smell of the Orient, camphor and sandalwood, cooking and drains. We stared blankly at Chinamen pulling rickshaws. How they scampered. No one seemed to pay any particular attention to us. A hasty glance and they went about their business. The only flags we saw were the cotton and paper streamers with Chinese lettering that bedecked many of the native stores. This is where we first sensed the ominous. Something was foreboding.

These people were evidently afraid. Afraid of what? The average Chinaman has a full share of human intelligence and he knew, I now believe, what was in store for Hong Kong and for us. Many of them had seen the Jap in action. Seen the rape of the great cities of China, like Nanking. They knew what the Jap was capable of. Knew his numbers. Knew how near he was and that Jap emissaries were already among them. They were afraid.

At Camp Sham Shui Po we found excellent quarters, compared to the troop ship, and all thought this was the life of “Reilly”, Sergeants seemed to be somebody in this neck of the woods. We were waited on hand and foot. We could also procure the services of a Chinese servant. A young Chinaman, who asked to be my boy, approached me. His pay? Two Hong Kong dollars a week, sixty cents in Canadian money, for this amount he did as much as any personal servant could do, cleaning equipment, shining buttons, ironing and pressing clothes, running errands, etc. He even wanted to shave me before I was awake in the morning. I remember I awoke the first morning feeling rather damp and saw a razor being flourished in front of my face held in a skinny yellow hand. I had trouble distinguishing my grinning boy from a Jap. Wiping the soap from my lips I spluttered, “Don’t do that any more!”

These services were all very pleasant at the time but not so pleasant is the memory. Later, in the same camp when we were hungry prisoners, we learned that the East Indian employed by the British to supervise these personal servants was a Japanese

agent and spy. He came into our prison camp where many Indian troops were also held and in their own language asked the Indians to desert and serve the Japs. He got few recruits. The Garrison tailor, who was an Indian, and the barber, a Japanese, were also spies. There were dozens of others in the Garrison and hundreds among the teeming millions of Hong Kong. Why the British closed their eyes to all this I do not know. Luckily we had been alerted enough to remove most of the white women and children. Those who remained either refused to be evacuated or were Red Cross Nurses staying at their posts. How the Japs treated these women, in too many cases, brands them as beasts and savages. One portion of the white population, including the Military, seemed to be alerted and fully aware of the peril that faced them, the other carried on as usual.

Before landing from the ships we were told to take off our Canadian badges and all else that might identify the Battalion. Later the same day we bought Hong Kong papers with glaring headlines, "Canadians land in Hong Kong." Such is Official secrecy.

We noticed at every street corner the tall Sikh policeman, a very fine body of men. We remembered the lectures on the boat as to our behavior when meeting the East Indian, that they did not smoke or drink and we should not spit in their presence. While remaining at their posts performing police duties many of these fine tall men were killed by the Japs. Others were forced to continue these duties under the Japanese.

From India comes many breeds, the lowly coolie from the rice paddies of the burning plains, the clever and often times rich Parsee[1] merchant or barber, the hardy little Gurkha soldier from the hills of Nepal, and the warrior types, the Sikhs, Rajputs and Punjabi, the last, fighting hill men from the north.

After the surrender I saw an example of the courage and loyalty of these Indian troops. They were herded into an enclosure of barbed wire and the Nip made use of his Indian spies and collaborators to urge these men to join the victors and have a share in the spoils. This they steadfastly refused to do, paying little or no attention to those making the appeal other then spit in disgust. The Japs, to emphasize how much choice was allowed them, brought up a machine gun and trained it upon them. The Indian soldiers took quick notice of the gun. As a man they walked up to the wire, bared their chests by tearing open the front of their shirts, and with feet apart and heads thrown back challenged the Japs to shoot. The Japs withdrew the gun. How many of these proud warriors were latter reduced to dead and living skeletons? Did the Japs ever break their spirit? I think not.

We had been on the mainland about two weeks and had carried out battle practice and maneuvers when we were ordered over to the Island of Hong Kong. A plan of defense was taking shape and the two Canadian Battalions were to be part of the reserves on the Island. The Royal Scots and the two Indian Battalions were left on the mainland in prepared positions, the first to oppose the Jap when he attacked.

We crossed the ferry and marched through the business section of Hong Kong. It was a warm day late in November. The seasons at Hong Kong and Japan are much the

[1] *a member of a monotheistic sect of Zoroastrian origin; descended from the Persians; now found in western India*

same as our own but the winter days are often hot while the nights are freezing cold. We wore full battle dress with steel helmets and were loaded down with machine guns and ammunition. Our air was entirely different than when we first arrived. Then we came to garrison, now we were taking the field. The British authorities had supplied us with some field equipment including two Bren Carriers. Our own had been on a different ship and was detained at Manila.

The seriousness of things was plain now to everyone. Big events were afoot and we were in the middle of them. Feeling the heat as we marched through Hong Kong, seeing the furtive looks of the people, and noting the brooding Peak beyond, I thought of Lyttons “The Last Days of Pompeii”. The Roman soldiers on guard at the City gate kept their places when all others had fled. Were we going to keep ours? There was one thing about Hong Kong, the people had no place to flee to, unless it was by sea.

CHAPTER 2 – THE JAPS ATTACK

Arriving in the foothills, the Battalion was distributed by companies around the Peak. Brigade Headquarters was set up at Wong Nei Chong near the main highway under Brigadier J. K. Lawson. I was Senior NCO under Lieut. Birkett, in charge of a platoon of thirty men. We were supposed to be a mobile force with carriers and machine guns available to re-enforce any point under close attack. Our platoon set up machine gun posts and roadblocks around Battalion Headquarters almost at the summit of the Peak. Guards were posted that night and we were all excited. War seemed certain. We got very little sleep.

Early the next morning we heard the sound of gunfire on the Mainland and the explosion of bombs on our old camp at Sham Shui Po and the flying field of the Island. Then a Jap reconnaissance plane, clearly marked with red ball, passed directly over our heads. It had come. This was war. We of the Grenadiers hoped to be in the thick of it. We did not think highly of the Jap. We had confidence in ourselves and in our Officers. Let them come. One more glorious episode of Empire was to be written with the help of Canada. Strange how many enemy planes kept coming over. Where were our planes? Although we did not know it then, well-aimed bombs had already destroyed them before they were able to leave the ground. The Japs first objective had been the airport and the destruction of the half dozen obsolete biplanes that stood there. Even had they left the ground they would have been duck soup for the Zero Pilots. Their crews latter fought valiantly with the ground troops.

As the day wore on the Japs dropped bombs on the crowded dock areas and other chosen spots both on the mainland and the Island. We could see several big fires. Now it was our turn. A Jap Zero marked with the blood red orange of Nippon dived at our roadblock. We also dived, for the ditch. The Japs machine guns rattled and the dirt flew. There were some Indian troops in a truck nearby at the time and they also jumped for the ditch. One threw himself on top of me. When the plane had passed and the commotion subsided somewhat we found that we had no casualties. I collected myself and asked the Indian soldier, who spoke fair English, "Why did you jump on me?"

He replied, "Sergeant Sahib. You white man, valuable to King Emperor. One Indian soldier no great matter if killed."

I could not quite figure this out. Was he really concerned with the survival of one white man of such exalted rank as a Sergeant or was he making sure that my dive for the ditch would receive notice thereby excusing himself and his companions for doing likewise. I gave him the benefit of the doubt and thanked him. I had the suspicion that white officers in Indian Regiments are expected to stand up and be shot in order to maintain the white mans prestige under such circumstances. Not for me. A dead Officer is no example, or at best a poor one.

Now panic was spreading from the mainland to the civilian population of the Island. All manner of people started to rush from place to place lugging the bundles

containing their few possessions. Some were seeking friends and relatives in preparation for further flight. Others were seeking refuge after their flight from the mainland. Orders were given to halt this exodus at the roadblocks and along our barbed wire. This we did. Looking out over the harbor we could see that great mass of Junks, Sampans and Houseboats slowly moving out to sea. The great majority anchored around a small rock island fort a mile or so beyond the main Island of Hong Kong. They were awaiting the outcome of the battle so that when it was over, whichever side won, they could move back to their old berths along the waterfront. Most seagoing ships had left the harbor. Those, which could not get away, were already being scuttled and the straits were dotted with wrecks. Our Naval force had consisted of two destroyers and some small gunboats. One of these destroyers ran aground. The other, I believe loaded with women and children, was the last ship to leave. The docks and wharfs were aflame and their installations were being destroyed by naval ratings. The ferries, under heavy bombing and gunfire, were salvaging what stores and supplies they could from the mainland.

Originally it had been the intention of the Garrison Commander to make a final stand on the mainland and stores had been put there for this purpose. However the Japs by their swift, sudden and ferocious attack had forced back the defenders of Kowloon and the survivors were being withdrawn to the Island. That day D Company of the Grenadiers had gone over to the mainland in support of the Royal Scots and was pulled back helter-skelter that same night. Riding in trucks they dashed through the deserted streets, over roadblocks and other obstacles, shot at by Jap snipers from the darkened houses. They reached the ferry and were carried back to the Island where they took up position at Wong Nei Chong Gap. They held this position with such tenacity and skill that the Japanese Commander was astounded and would not believe that so few had held up so many for so long. He slapped the face of an Officer of D Company, thus forcibly intimating that he did not believe him and that he was hiding the true numbers of defenders.

Our own situation was maddening by the thousands of Chinese crowed in and around the battle zone. They and their properties were everywhere impeding military observation and maneuver. The Japs were delighted to fire upon this helpless mass, destroy their homes, and do all they could to panic them. Adding to the confusion they cleverly planted spies, agents, and saboteurs everywhere. Our boys couldn't tell a Jap from a Chinaman and, dressed as Chinese civilians, many Japanese soldiers penetrated our lines. It was a poor setup. Possibly if the Garrison had been composed of thoroughly seasoned troops, under a ruthless and brilliant commander, the story might have been different. Most of our boys who met the Jap are of the opinion that the average British or American soldier is worth a half dozen of them. At Hong Kong they were adept at treachery and surprise and had the superiority in numbers.

There were many local Chinese and East Indians and Companies of these were formed and attached to the Hong Kong Volunteers. Those of us who saw the Volunteers in action, or heard accounts of their gallant stand, will always give credit to these civilians who fought alongside the regular soldiers to the last. Many preferred death to surrender and refused to lay down their arms. Perhaps their refusal to surrender was based on their knowledge of the East and of the Jap himself. They knew what to expect. Most of these Volunteers were clerks, merchants, Government officials, etc. Given arms, ammunition,

parts of a uniform and little or no training, they were posted as guards in the different warehouses and buildings. Looting by the hungry populace was a constant occurrence. When the Japs swept through the business section of Hong Kong many of these guards were isolated at their posts. Most fought valiantly to the end. Those that fell into the hands of the enemy before the official surrender were murdered.

To return to my own platoon, at the roadblocks, halfway up the Peak, we had orders to prevent anyone entering the area we were patrolling, and if they refused to stop or tried to sneak through, to shot them. Many tried to pass and were turned back. A few, refusing to take our denial as final, by subterfuge and stealth, tried to penetrate our lines. They were shot. I remember seeing the body of one old Chinaman our boys had killed, my first introduction to the red fruit of war … dead men and women.

"Poor devil!" I thought, "and what has he to do with all this?"

Yet again he might have been a very cunning spy, out to get information for the enemy. We let him and others lie where they had fallen, as we had no time for burial. I asked the Chinese interpreter attached to our Headquarters, as he stood by me viewing the body, "How can we tell a Chinaman from a Jap?"

His face inscrutable he replied, "Japanese little man. Always bowing. No good."

This did not help us very much as I was sure that no Jap would bow when getting over our wire.

In the morning we were relived by a special detail of Battalion Headquarters men consisting of cooks, clerks and bandsmen. They had been rounded up to relieve our platoon, which was a highly trained machine gun and carrier unit, for more active combat duty. Our little party, under Lieut. Birkett, marched up to the Peak and near the summit we were housed in an imposing bungalow type residence. This was a distinct improvement over the tents we had occupied down the road. The house was comfortably furnished and occupied by the owner. There were also some women staying there, among them a very pretty and charming American girl. I remember how the boys joked with her and how we talked of the nearness of Christmas. We even arranged to have a Christmas feast, each to bring what he could lay his hands on. Already I had a tin of Christmas pudding earmarked for the happy occasion and she had a bottle of wine. I wonder now, as I wondered when I saw the dead and mutilated female corpses along a seven mile road, what ever happened to her? If she reads these lines I shall be glad to know. If she cannot, God rest her soul.

We stayed in this place about a week until the 18th of December. Meanwhile the Japs had occupied Kowloon and were preparing to assault the Island. During this time we maintained guards and roadblocks. One evening our patrol met a party of the Royal Scots, dirty, disheveled, wild-eyed and exhausted. They had just returned from the mainland where they had been heavily engaged with the enemy. They had seen horrors that they would not easily forget. With some bitterness they looked at our spic and span patrol and answered their own question, " Where are the Canadians?"

They heard our boys in the bungalow singing, " Home on the range" and other songs. Then they looked back at Kowloon and saw the sky red with the flames of bloody war. A Corporal with about three days growth of beard pointed at the bungalow, " Hear ye that. Them puir daftees. They think 'tis Christmas. Gawd help us."

I assured him that it was not as bad as he thought and that we were well aware there was a war going on. One of the party, an Englishman I believe, sidled up to me and said, "Sergeant, if you Canadians get us out of this ere mess I'll never say another word against a Colonial as long as I live. God 'elp me."

From this speech I gathered that he and his pals had said plenty in the past and in a way I did not blame him. Many of our boys were of the opinion that all available combat troops should have been on the mainland and met the first onrush of the Jap. I assured the Englishman that we would set things right and surprisingly we both believed it.

There was one thing I noticed. The appearance and attitude of our men under alarm or threatened attack seemed to inspire confidence. There is something about the Westerner that make him appear nonchalant and confident when he may be using his wits very actively to get out of a particular mess he is in.

One night there was a terrific explosion and the whole Island shook. A barge, loaded to the gunwales with ammunition, had blown up in the harbor. This is what I was told happened. The Garrison had established a powder magazine and ammunition dump on a rock island between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. It had been decided, as the enemy closely threatened this place, to remove the ammunition. That night the British Navy obtained volunteers from the Hong Kong Volunteers to go out in a barge, load up all the munitions they could carry, and return to the Island before morning. All went well until the barge, heavily loaded, began its return to the Island. Without lights it was mistaken by guards on the shore as an enemy vessel and fired upon. It exploded, killing many gallant members of the British Navy and volunteers.

On the 18th of December, Lieut. Birkett assembled us all in the large drawing room. We slept on the floor of this room. Standing before an open fireplace he briefed us as to our mission that night. We were going to be used as assault troops to try to recover a radio station on another of the small rock islands that dotted the channel. This station was believed captured by the enemy, as no messages had been received that morning. Lieut. Birkett seemed nervous and high strung. He told us that the element of surprise was essential and that we would use boats. He was annoyed at the inattention of some of the men. It was evident that they did not realize the seriousness of the mission. The Officers had better information about the progress of the fighting to date then did the men and it was not encouraging to them. Lieut. Birkett finally left the room, his face white with controlled annoyance. One of the boys remarked, "What's the matter with him?" Another replied, "He's yellow, that's what's the matter."

How little then did they know their Commander. Lieut. Birkett was far from

yellow. This he proved gallantly the next day when he led these men against the Jap, and died, personally manning the last machine gun. No, he was not afraid of the enemy, he was afraid of the inexperience of his men on such a dangerous mission. A stumble, a curse, a shot, and we would be betrayed. He well knew we were not commandos and had not had that specialized training.

CHAPTER 4 - WAR IN EARNEST

Just before we were due to leave our orders were changed. The attack on the radio station was off. It was too late! The Japs already had full command of the channel and were bringing up heavy artillery and field pieces to attack the Island. We would stay where we were for the night and report at Brigade Headquarters in the morning. We had no sooner settled in for the night when we got orders to report immediately. Two trucks were sent to enable our speedy delivery. Hurriedly we put on our equipment, loaded ourselves with hand grenades and ammunition, filled our water bottles, and with our machine guns, were ready. In our hurry to depart the two men on guard were left behind. Lieut. Birkett inquired their whereabouts. I told him they were still at their post, no orders having been given to withdraw them. He decided to leave them there as we could not carry all our stores and hoped to return to the same billets, which we never did.

The two trucks hurtled down the winding road in pitch darkness. There were now twenty-nine of us. Lieut. Birkett rode in the front seat of the forward truck. I rode on the front seat of the one following. This was going to war with a vengeance. Ahead of us we could see the red sky and the fires in the City. We careened and bumped over and around obstacles in the road, crashed through roadblocks before being challenged. I quite expected to see the truck in front blown to pieces by the road mines that we had so assiduously planted. It was a miracle of instinctive actions on the part of our own driver that we did not crash headlong into the truck ahead of us. Before leaving we had been told that the Japs were already on the Island. We soon knew this to be true as we approached our objective.

The air was bright with sparks and acrid with the smell of smoke. Guns thundered. Shells shrieked and exploded. The deadly rattle of machine guns and the whine of sniper's bullet added to the bedlam. Steel helmeted figures crouched behind barricades but we saw few civilians. That dense mass of humanity that was Hong Kong lay hidden in their cellars. Many were killed by bomb or bullet and others were burned alive.

The Japs were following a carefully laid plan. Spies and saboteurs had prepared landing places by the seizure of strategic positions and aided by Japanese troops garbed as civilians, who fired from the buildings. The main body of the enemy crossed the channel in barges and boats. Many of them swam across.

We arrived at Brigade Headquarters at Wong Nei Chong without casualties. This Headquarters was situated in a small fort on a hillside outside the City. Here, a day or two later, Brigadier J.K. Lawson and some of his staff were killed. Sergeant Bob Manchester told me that from his position at the Gap he had seen Brigade Headquarters surrounded and that Brigadier Lawson and his staff had decided to try to breakout. He saw a few red tabbed figures run out of the fort towards our own lines. They came under direct machine gun fire and he saw some of them fall.

At Wong Nei Chong we left the trucks, which were shortly afterwards destroyed

by mortar fire, and awaited further orders. They soon came. Lieut. Birkett returned to the platoon with a member of the Hong Kong Volunteers who was to act as our guide. We were ordered to occupy a small fort or pillbox called “Jardine’s Lookout” about a mile away. With Lieut. Birkett, who had a map, and the Volunteers in the lead, the men picked up their loads and followed. We were strung out over some distance and had difficulty keeping in touch, as it was very dark. I brought up the rear to encourage the stragglers. The men cursed and sweated under their heavy loads as we left the main road and took a side path that wound over and along the foothills. Although we were unaware of it we were walking right into the Japs. They had already infiltrated up to and past our destination. Rifle and gunfire was all around and we could hear the peculiar cries of the enemy as they sought to make their positions known to each other. We could not see them however, and fortunately they could not see us. Our leaders must have avoided the enemy patrols. We came to a pillbox occupied by a detail of the Hong Kong Volunteers. They were very glad to see us but were disappointed when Lieut. Birkett said that he had his orders to go to Jardine’s Lookout and to Jardine’s Lookout he would go. He did not say so but he had a date with destiny, and he was going to keep it.

Again we loaded up and started down a small valley and up the hill on the other side. Now we were going into the thick of it. We were being fired upon. Evidently the Japs had located us and were shooting from the darkness. Our pace quickened until finally the leaders broke into a run. It was Follow-My-Leader with a vengeance. Men called to each other, a machine gun was coughing death, and several were hit. The ground was very uneven and many stumbled and fell.

There was a shout up ahead. They had found Jardine’s Lookout. It was a pillbox built into the side of the hill near the top. One side stuck out, from it a short tunnel led into the pillbox which contained a room about 10' x 10' in area. In the front was an iron door with a machine gun slot but we never used it. It was evident that this position was under, or soon to be under attack. Possibly the former garrison had just left and the Nips thought they were still there for we walked right into a battle. The day was just breaking. A number of our platoon never actually entered the pillbox for Lieut. Birkett assigned the men to positions below the fort as soon as they had struggled that far up the hill. They immediately setup their machine guns and opened up on the enemy. I believe we lost three men coming in. Several others were wounded and these we sent to the pillbox for dressing. I was the last up the hill. I took up a position behind a rock and with my rifle shot at the flashes of the enemy’s fire.

As it got light I could examine our position and the nature of the terrain. We were on a steep slope. The hillside of soft volcanic rock was very rough and broken. Ridges and gullies were everywhere covered with sparse vegetation, thistles, coarse yellow grass and other cactus like plants. I saw no trees. It was ideal ground for cover both for the attacker and the defender. The Jap however had the advantage, as we were pinned down and he knew where we were. During the night he had infiltrated our lines in many places. Wearing rubber sneakers and light equipment, their helmets camouflaged with greenery, they were hard to detect. I learned that they also carried a week’s ration of rice that enabled them to stay out on patrol for several days.

While climbing over the top of the hill, back of the pillbox, I came upon an English artillery Observer studying the enemy's position through his binoculars. He was surprised at their rapid advance and its boldness. "By George." He remarked. "They are even flying battle flags. We will soon take care of that."

And he hurried away, as I supposed to his battery. But we never received any artillery support in the vicinity.

When I joined Lieut. Birkett he was lying behind a rock on the slope in front of the pillbox. On our right we could see small figures moving slowly backwards. This, we were told by Lieut. W.V. Mitchell who made his way over to us in passing, was A Company of the Grenadiers. He wanted to know what unit we were. He also said that he thought we had fired at A Company. This was possible in the confusion when we first took our position but as Lieut. Birkett pointed out, it was much more likely that the fire came from the enemy who was attacking our own position and who now, nearly surrounded us. Lieut. Mitchell was able to rejoin A Company, which we did not see again.

The Japs firing was increasing. Trench mortar shells were bursting on the hill. The twang of bullets and flying pieces of rock followed any movement. We lay flat behind cover and returned the fire with our rifles, grenades, three Bren guns and two Tommy guns. After studying the situation our Commander decided that we were too spread out and that it would be better to have all the defenders on the crest of the hill, in or behind the pillbox. He therefore gave orders that our forward guns were to be withdrawn. Under heavy fire he then started to climb the slope. He had almost made it when I noticed that his leg was dragging. He had been hit, but continued. I was told later that he took up position with one of the Bren guns on the roof of his objective.

There were two Bren guns, and their crews, in my immediate vicinity. One, who had heard Lieut. Birkett's order, was withdrawing. The other, manned by Bugler K. Simpson and Private L. Hallett, lay a little to my left. Taking advantage of all cover I crawled over to warn them. I lay just above them on a ledge behind a rock. Their position was at the base of an almost perpendicular drop of about six feet. I lay flat on my stomach in a firing position, my rifle pointed towards the enemy. I called to Hallett and got an answer. Just at that moment, right in front of us, a Japanese officer jumped up waving a sword and shouting "Banzai! Banzai!"

I took careful aim and shot him through the middle. He spun and collapsed, lying in full view, his hand still waving as our machine guns pumped lead into him. Hallett now informed me that his companion, Bugler Simpson, had been shot through the neck while working the gun and was helpless. I told him of the order to get back to the pillbox. He wanted to know what we were going to do about Simpson. I could hear Simpson pleading not to be left and heard the assurance of Simpson. We then decided that we would try to get Simpson out. It was arranged that I should unfasten one end of the sling and pass my rifle down slowly, butt first, and that Hallett would put Simpson's belt through the sling. On a signal from Hallett I would pull and he would lift. We waited for a particularly vicious burst of enemy fire to subside and in the lull that followed Hallett

cried, “Ready!” and threw Simpson up. I pulled, or rather jerked, and he fell behind the rock beside me. There was a hail of fire but we were well covered. Hallett threw up the Bren gun and a short while later jumped up quickly to join us. So far, so good, but the really dangerous task lay in getting Simpson up that steep rugged slope. We turned him on his back. He was semiconscious but I did not think his chances were good. Hallett was determined to save his friend. Slowly and painfully we commenced the climb, dragging Simpson by the shoulders. We took advantage of every bit of cover. Bullets whined and rocks flew. We had completed about half our journey and had come to a place where the ground was open and where we would be more likely to attract attention. Both of us were exhausted so we rested for a while. I called up to the pillbox asking for someone to help us get Simpson in. Corporal C.W.Darragh came down keeping well covered behind rocks until he lay behind another rock just above the open space we had to cross. Waiting for what we thought was a favorable moment we started to pull our comrade up and across the open space. We had almost made it and Cpl. Darragh had stretched forth his arm to grab Simpson when all hell broke lose. An enemy machine gun, a short distance away, had us directly in his sights. A hail of lead was around us. First Hallett was shot mortally, crying,
“ I’m hit. I’m hit.”

Simpson’s body was riddled. I saw my trousers flick as a bullet grazed the bone of my leg just below the knee. I had doubled up over my rifle to fling myself down the hill out of the zone of fire when I felt a terrible blow and tumbled in earnest head over heels down the hill. The vicinity where I landed was rugged with rocks and gullies where grew thistle like plants and long tufts of course grass. I must have landed in one of these gullies and passed out, for how long I do not know. When I regained consciousness I examined myself for damage. I noted that I was bleeding profusely from the mouth and first thought that I had been hit in the stomach. Having a horror of a serious stomach wound, as I believed that under the circumstances I was now in, it would be both painful and fatal. I put my rifle to my head. I do not suppose I recalled Kipling’s lines from his “Barrack Room Ballads” giving advice to the British soldier, “When you lie wounded on the Afghans Plains, and the ladies (he could say Japs) come out to cut up your remains, roll to your rifle and blow out your brains and go to your God like a soldier.”

I had another thought. One always does in such desperate situations. Seeing I was thus able to use my rifle I could, for a while at least, postpone my desperate resolution. I therefore lowered the weapon. My whole body was bruised by the fall and my head was dizzy and numb. I examined my stomach but did not find the horrible wound I had visualized. Perhaps I had struck my head on a rock, but feeling around where the blood was trickling down my face I found that I had been shot clean through the head. The Japs use a smaller caliber bullet then we do, both for their rifles and machine guns. To this fact I am sure I owe my life. The bullet had entered just under my right cheekbone, passing over the roof of my mouth and out the other side of the left cheek. I was losing a lot of blood, mostly from my mouth and I must have swallowed a good deal. Taking out my first aid kit I supplied a dressing to both cheeks and put the bandage around my head to hold the dressing in place. These dressings and the bandages were soon soaked in blood. I must have had a very gory figurehead. Examining myself further I found that the bullet, which had grazed the bone of my leg, had made a painful wound. This I also dressed.

As the enemy seemed to be paying no attention to me I removed all nonessential equipment but kept my rifle. I remembered my dad telling me of a similar experience in the First Great War and how we agreed that a soldier should never let go of his rifle under any circumstances while still in battle.

Taking advantage again of every bit of cover and the short lulls in the firing, which came from both the enemy and our own boys in the fort, I gradually made my way up the hill. Fortunately my comrades had identified me for I was not fired upon by them and was able to reach the summit and tumble into the trench behind our pillbox.

Here the situation was indeed desperate. All but the seriously wounded were up top along the parapet manning the machine guns or supporting them with rifle fire. The Japs had brought their mortars to bear on the emplacement and shells were exploding all around us. Being weak and dizzy, and not being able to see properly, I was of little or no use. I almost passed out again so I took cover inside the tunnel that ran to the partly underground chamber of the pillbox. Here I collapsed on the floor and tried to collect my senses.

Several of the platoon, dead or desperately wounded, were lying in this inner chamber. The place was also being used to store ammunition and spare arms. At intervals men came in to get ammunition or to dress their wounds.

I spoke to Corporal Darragh who, as I said before, was shot in the hand. He informed me that when I was hit and rolled down the hill he, and others who had witnessed the incident from the pillbox, were convinced that I was dead. He also told me that Lieut. Birkett was still on top manning a machine gun. The enemy had, by this time, brought up field artillery and was shelling us.

Suddenly there came a terrific explosion. They had scored a direct hit on the pillbox. I was blown into the connecting tunnel flat on my face. I felt someone rush over me as I crawled out into the main trench. When I reached the end of a small branch trench I lost consciousness.

I awoke later in the afternoon to find a Corporal Brittain lying across me. He was badly wounded and when I tried to move he motioned for me to lie quietly. The Japs had wiped out all resistance by mortar and artillery fire and their infantry was now storming the position and bayoneting the wounded. I again passed out and remembered no more until I awoke to a fine drizzle of rain in the darkness.

There was no movement from the pillbox. All was quiet. Only the dead remained. There was just enough light for me to see my way around. I sat up. It was cold. This and the rain had no doubt revived me. I found that I had little or no use of my left arm. Later I learned it had been broken when I was blown out of the blockhouse. After a while, when the sky became a little lighter, I struggled to my feet and made my way back into the pillbox. It was deserted and partly collapsed. Extending from the pile of rubble I could see the bodies of comrades. Along one side there still remained a rack of rifles. I took one

of these, found a full water bottle from which I drank and decided to make my way as best I could towards the first pillbox we had stopped at on our way to our present position, the one manned by the Hong Kong Volunteers.

I believe now that the reason the Japs, who stormed the pillbox, did not make a complete job of me was that I was shot through the head. They were sure that I was dead and as the position was under their own artillery fire they did not hang around. If they had they would have removed the rifles from the rack.

As I stumbled away from Jardine's Lookout I looked back and saw the pile of rubble that had been the fort. I thought of Lieut. Birkett and the other gallant lads who lay or were buried there. This heap of rubble was their cairn. It should be marked with a plaque or some other memorial to their courageous stand.

I made my way down the hill in the early morning mist, seeing nobody, and up the next rise further back. I finally located the other pillbox. I cautiously approached the barbed wire that was strung along the top of the ridge. I saw two figures lying on a parapet and believed them to be our guards on observation duty. I crawled through the wire and down the trench. Staggering along with my rifle slung over my back I saw a rifle with a fixed bayonet moving slowly up and down beyond a turn in the trench. I had made it. Soon I would be with friends and have my wounds attended, but to my amazement when turning the bend of the trench I came face to face with a Jap.

CHAPTER 5 - PRISONER OF WAR

The Jap sentry was as much surprised as I. He was squat and ugly with a short straggly growth of black beard. Upon seeing me he let out a loud “Koo ia” and put his bayonet level with my stomach, making short jabs and foaming at the mouth. Besides being at a great disadvantage I was in no condition to fight, so I raised my arms and stood facing him. At his first cry several Japs, headed by a Corporal, came running out of the pillbox. They were all very dirty, their eyes bloodshot, and foam around their mouths. I believe they must have had a tough time job in taking this particular pillbox. They seemed to be doped with some sort of drug. Seeing that I stood still and was wounded they decided to take me prisoner. They removed my rifle, ammunition, wristwatch and some personal belongings in my pockets. At the point of a bayonet I was urged inside the enclosure where I sat against a wall. It was still early in the morning and the sun had not risen. I sat surrounded by six squatting shadows. They seemed to be highly nervous and especially upset by the noise of our guns and the occasional shell that passed overhead. Pointing at me they jabbered in Japanese. Evidently they were deciding what to do with me.

My head and throat were swollen. Although most of the bleeding had stopped I was still spitting out blood clots and gristle. Motioning to my mouth I tried to make them understand that I wanted water. Finally one of them handed me an open tin of diced carrots. This I was unable to eat. I believe now that this little patrol was hiding out and none to eager to get into the midst of the fighting again. Their wounded must have been removed. Perhaps they were destroyed as the Japs seldom bothers with badly wounded men. If a wounded Japanese solider cannot walk out of action the Officers often shoot him.

My capture offered a good excuse for this party to get further away from the firing line. When day broke I was prodded out of the pillbox and made to stand while my hands were tied tightly behind my back with thin wire. All Jap soldiers carry a loop of this wire attached to their belts. They had practiced on helpless civilians in China and were adept in tying the wrists so tight that the wire cut the flesh stopping the circulation.

Having tied me securely, and assigned on their number as my personal guard, the whole patrol started down the hill towards the Japanese line. I soon lagged behind and was prodded by my guard to keep up, which I was barely able to do. Down in the valley we came upon some thickly strung barbed wire. The Japs scrambled over but I was unable to do so. In spite of threats and blows from a rifle I could not make an effort. The Corporal at the other side of the wire was gesticulating and screaming at my guard. He and his party were impatient to get on. I did not understand Japanese then but I had the conviction that he was telling the guard to finish me. At that moment there was a deafening explosion. I do not know weather it was caused by a landmine or from a shell falling short. All went blank. When I recovered my senses I was over the wire and being hurried along by the same guard in the rear of the same party.

After a short time we reached a road crowded with enemy troops. They were all

streaming towards the battle zone, infantry, guns and lorries full of soldiers. Many glanced curiously at our party. Officers on horseback seemed to be urging the traffic forward. Japanese Military Police were posted along the road. From these our Corporal sought direction and finally we came to a halt in front of a low wooden building at the side of the road, evidently a point of assembly for prisoners.

I was turned over to the NCO in charge and was again searched and ordered by signs to remove my boots but my leg had stiffened and I was unable to bend it. I also had difficultly in moving my head. I therefore found it impossible to untie them. The Jap guard jabbed me with the butt of his rifle and, with another guard, took me to the door of the hut. They opened it a little and thrust me in. I fell headlong inside and subsided on a cement floor.

Someone was blabbering to me and I looked up and saw a Jap with clubbed rifle urging me further back into the shed. This was the inside guard. The building was a low roof shed about sixty feet long by thirty feet wide with a concrete floor. There was some heavy trestle tables down the center. The shed had probably been used as a mess hall by the garrison. It was now crammed with prisoners of the Japs, Whites, Chinese and Indians. Most of them were in some sort of uniform. Many, like myself, were wounded and some appeared to be dead. The floor literally ran with blood. There was not enough room in which to lie down, so closely were we packed. Most sat huddled in attitudes of despair with their knees drawn up. The only clear space was around the guard by the door and he kept it this way by the swing of his rifle butt.

Here was gathered all the misery of military defeat. There was no food and worst, no water. Thirst, doubly prevalent when one is wounded, was an acute torture. I saw no Red Cross or any attempt on the part of the Jap to minister to the wounded. Many collapsed and died where they fell. A few of the prisoners tried to help a comrade or an immediate neighbor but most of us stayed huddled, awaiting we knew not what. It was now high noon and the sun was hot in the sky. The place was thick with flies pestering the wounded. Although I did not recognize them all, there were several Grenadiers from A Company in the hut, among them the Mitchell brothers, both Lieutenants, also Sergeant Pugsley, Cpl. Hiscox, and Pte. Matte.

The guns of battle were still booming towards Hong Kong. The Japs had planted one right beside our hut and its discharge shook the building. I heard the sound of a nearby mortar shell exploding and knew that our own mortars were seeking the range on the Jap gun position. Then it came. Two mortar shells, almost simultaneously, one landed squarely on the roof of the building. There was a blinding flash, shrieks and moans all was confusion. Instinctively I had thrown myself under the only available shelter, the trestle table, on top of what I later discovered to be a dead Imperial with half his head blown off. Under him was a live Chinaman who was bleating piteously. Miraculously I was not hit. From my vantage place under the table I saw that the place was a shambles. There was a gaping hole in the roof and beneath it a pile of bodies. The only reason that many escaped death or further injury was the fact that we were so closely packed our companion’s bodies protected us. Most of the survivors were splattered with fresh blood over bandages and previously caked and dry wounds. The Guard by the door was killed

outright. Moans and groans could be heard on all sides.

The door was flung open and excited Japs pulled out the body of the sentry but forced all others back into the shed with their bayonets. The door was then closed and it must have been an hour before it was again opened. We quite expected there would be another direct hit. With apprehension we awaited the explosion but it never came. We heard the jabbering of Japanese voices and the doors were thrown wide open. They had reached a decision about us.

A dozen or more guards entered and began sorting the living from the dead, the seriously wounded from those who were able to walk. Those able to walk were crowded to the door and out onto the road, where their hands were tied behind them with wire. In groups of six or seven they were herded to one side. As the first group went past the door I heard a click of a machine gun. I thought, “This is it! They are going to shoot us!”

I thought desperately of some subterfuge to avoid this fate. I noticed that there were a few Imperial and Indian Officers present and that the Japs had put them aside from the first group. There was a dead Imperial Lieutenant near me and I thought of taking his coat and thus passing for an Officer but I gave up this idea when I saw that they were now wiring the Officers as well. I thought, “What’s the use? Might as well get it over with.”

So I staggered to my feet and joined the next group feeling eager to die a clean death to end this horror.

Out in the glare of the sun our party’s guard hurried us to join the other groups standing against a small bluff or cliff. Here we faced two machine guns and their crews. The gunners sat behind the tripods and swung the guns backwards and forwards, covering us all in turn. Our guards withdrew to the sidelines and waited. Two Officers jabbered. I do not know if anyone prayed. I was too sick to care what happened but I hoped that if they were going to shoot us they would get it over with quickly.

We were a forlorn and helpless looking band, a pathetic mixture of Indians, Chinese and whites, old and young, officers and privates. We were evidently waiting for final instructions to be received. As we waited some sunk to the ground. Now a message had arrived and evidently it was in our favor for we were herded back onto the road and each group was wired together back to back with at most only a foot of wire from the next man. Some, like the big Englishman wired to me, were wired wrist to wrist. There must have been at least one hundred prisoners in the party and possibly more as fresh arrivals were coming in all the time. I supposed we were to be marched for some distance as we were arranged in column of route along the road. There was still plenty of traffic. The air was thick with red dust and the ever-present black flies.

Like myself many of the prisoners were wounded and wore bandages. Many were half naked as the Japs at this assembly point had systematically searched all the prisoners and taken away everything they had fancied. Some had lost their boots and walked bare footed. All were bare headed and exposed to the blazing sun. I had been lucky in keeping my boots. I had on at this time underwear, socks, khaki shirt, battle dress, boots, and my

web equipment. I also carried a water bottle that was, unfortunately, empty.

Among the badly wounded left in the shed was Lieut. E.L. Mitchell. His brother Lieut. W. V. Mitchell refused to leave him when ordered to do so by the Japs. He chose to stay with his wounded brother and share his fate. That was the last time they were seen alive. There is little doubt that all those left in the hut were killed.

CHAPTER 6 - THE SEVEN-MILE MARCH

I did not know how far we would have to march but I knew it couldn't be over seven miles as we were approaching Hong Kong. Seven miles is like a hundred when one is wounded and parched with thirst. I had not drunk since the night before. Many of the prisoners had probably gone longer without water.

I do not want to dwell on the details of this march for the sake of a horror story or for the opportunity of boasting of my own powers of endurance. However I do wish to let the reader know the extent of deliberate cruelty and indifference to others reached by the Jap.

Our group, like the others, was tied back to back. This meant that some of us had to walk sideways or even backwards. The big Englishman who was tied wrist to wrist with me was in a bad way. He was delirious and kept stumbling and falling. His companions in our group kept urging him to keep up but he dragged on me and we dragged on the rest. The stronger took the lead with the result that the weaker, like myself, were forced to walk sideways. Naturally our pace was slow. Fortunately we were not in the leading group for they set the pace being beaten, as we all were, to do so. At times the groups became so strung out that the leaders halted until they closed up again. We were the object of curiosity and evident satisfaction of every Jap that rode or marched by. Men were already falling from exhaustion. They were probed to their feet by bayonets and forced to continue the march.

It was evident to whoever was in charge of the party that he would never get us very far at the rate we were going. A halt was called beside a spring where a Jap soldier stood with his helmet full of water. As the prisoners reached him they bent over and drank. This took time and we were all grateful for the rest.

When my turn came I bent over but my leg was so stiff and my neck muscles so sore that I could barely reach the water. I had drunk only a very little when I lost my balance. My face fell into the helmet and almost knocked it out of the soldier's hand. As I was struggling to my feet he raised the helmet and struck me in the face with it. In spite of this blow the little water that I did drink, and that which had splashed over me, refreshed me somewhat. Sergeant Pugsley, of A Company, who was in the party following mine, was certain at the time that I would collapse on the road, but he later told me that I seemed to pick up quite a bit after my encounter with the water carrier.

We passed from the main road to another that ran along the side of a cliff. Along the road, a little above us, Japanese troops were hurrying to the scene of combat. A group of these, evidently shock troops, broke away from their formation when they saw the prisoners and came bounding down the slope in high spirits with fixed bayonets with the evident intention of having some enjoyment by bayonet practice on our miserable carcasses. Luckily, for us, their own Officers restrained them by shouting and beating them with swords, returning them to their own ranks. This outfit evidently had no time to

waste on prisoners and their column hurried on. Not so with us. We were going slower and slower. Men were falling now who could not get up and the others were dragging them. Orders must have been given to cut these men loose for we heard screams and later passed the bodies of unfortunates who, after being freed, were bayoneted and left by the roadside. I thought of falling down for good, come what may, but hearing these screams I decided to keep going as long as my weary and stiffened limbs would allow. I was past feeling heat, dust, or wounds. I was smothered in a sort of coma. I, like the rest, just staggered along, at every few paces trying to avoid a stumbling companion.

The big Englishman was in serious difficulties. In spite of the pleadings, mutters and curses from our group he continued to fall down. Each time he would be butted by the rifle of the guard, pulled to his feet by the others and made to stumble on. This is where I first met that phenomenon of misery and captivity. The greater misfortunes of others often tend to mitigate one's own sufferings. The big Englishman, being beaten each time he fell, received most of the attention of our guard. His falling also gave us a breathing spell. But finally he could rise no more. We were halted. Wire cutters were produced. The Englishman was cut loose and kicked to the side of the road. I heard his scream of agony as they bayoneted him and threw his body over the cliff.

We were now able to make a little better progress. We passed through the residential districts on the outskirts of the city. The Japs had looted the bungalows that dotted the hills leaving household gear and the bodies of both men and women lying on the road or nearby.

The group in front of us had a disturbance in its midst and was halted. As we passed I saw a young Indian officer crying out in good English, "You are savages and you call yourselves civilized! There is your civilization! You bloody murderers! Look! That is how civilized you are!"

By the side of the road lay an old white haired lady killed by the Jap bayonets. She lay in a grotesque position, most of her body exposed and mutilated. It was a ghastly sight. The Indian officer was struck down with a rifle butt.

No more in our group fell and finally we staggered along the streets of Hong Kong to an old warehouse near the docks. Here we were cut loose and threw ourselves on the wooden floor.

Already there was a considerable assembly of prisoners in this camp. We were right in the danger zone for the battle of Hong Kong was still raging and fires were burning all around but like our previous hut there were no Red Cross markings and wounded and unwounded were thrown in together. I lay exhausted. It was cold for in Hong Kong at that time of year, December, it is winter and the days are often hot while the nights are freezing cold. I often wondered how the flies survived for each day there were fresh millions. Shells screamed over our heads and I thought it very likely we would be hit although I was past caring if we were or not. My hands were numb and partly useless. I was parched with thirst but later was given a drink of water by one of my companions.

Early next morning guards routed out the wounded and unwounded. I was so stiff I could barely move. As the sun came up its warmth helped a little. We were formed into groups, this time without tying our hands, and marched, I say marched but we actually staggered, a short distance to the dock where we were loaded on open barges and put across the harbor to the mainland. This was in broad daylight and on the same stretch of water that was being used to transport troops and ammunition. In fact our own barge had just brought troops over and was now returning for another load. The Japs were obviously using the prisoners as a cover for their army's transportation of supplies and men over the channel. Our own guns maintained a constant fire and while still on the water I heard a nearby explosion which sounded like one of the Jap barges had received a direct hit and had blown up. Debris was in the air and fell around us.

Once more I landed on the shores of Kowloon. What a difference from our first landing. There were no bands to great us this time, not even the scurrying Chinaman. They had all disappeared. I saw some Indian troops under heavy guard loading the Japanese barges.

Once more we fell into sad procession. I believe at this time that the wounded were separated from those more fit. I know that I, with about fifty others, arrived at a girls convent run by the Catholic Church in Kowloon and staffed by the nuns. It was only about a mile from the docks but I had great difficulty in keeping up with the others. Because of this our group of seven fell behind. The guard kept beating and urging me to keep up. My thirst was unendurable and the dust of the road and the heat of the sun added to my fever. I was sure that I could not go on and thought of my late companion the Englishman. However my guard must have been a milder type for as I pointed to my mouth making motions of drinking he understood. As we came to a Chinese fisherman's hut at the side of the road the he halted the party. Standing with his back to the door, his rifle pointing in our direction, he kicked with his heels against it. Getting no immediate reply he banged with the butt of his rifle. Presently the battered door opened and an old Chinaman peered out. The Jap made the Chinaman understand that he wanted a bucket of water. The old man disappeared and soon reappeared with a wooden bucket filled to the brim. How we drank this life saving fluid. When we had all drank the Chinaman clamored for the return of his bucket but was ignored by us all. There was still half a pail of water left and we were not parting with it without a struggle. The guard did not interfere. He motioned us on and swung a parting blow at the old man with his rifle as he did so. The group ahead of us noticed that we had stopped for a drink. They had also seen the bucket so waited for us to catch up. They drank and the bucket was emptied. The water helped immensely and I was able to keep up with the rest and stagger into the convent.

At the convent most of us received food and water. I was unable to eat but could drink. The nuns were doing all they could for the wounded and the dying. The place was crowded. I saw no Japanese attendants or doctors. Already some of the garrison Medical Corps, among them Capt. Banfield (Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC) Banfill, S. Martin Captain (Att. to Royal Rifles) MD – *T.Banham*) of the Royal Rifles who had been captured earlier, were doing what they could for the cases that needed

immediate attention. They could do very little as they had no supplies. Later I heard the story of Capt. Banfield's capture.

He had been in charge of an advance dressing station and hospital located in one of the buildings in Hong Kong. It was plainly marked with Red Cross and as the battle proceeded it was filled with our wounded directly from the fighting. Many were stretcher cases and lined the walls of several rooms. Upon entering this hospital the men had removed their battle equipment, arms etc., which were piled in the hallway. When the Japs overran this part of Hong Kong and retreat was imperative the doctors and the staff of Medical Orderlies decided to stay by their patients and once having made formal surrender to carry on with their duties.

They therefore gathered in the lobby to meet the Japanese who were headed by a Major who spoke excellent English. Pistol in hand he advanced into the lobby confronting Dr. Banfield and others who stood lined up in their white uniforms and Red Cross arm bands. The Jap bowed and Dr. Banfield informed him that this was the hospital and that he and his staff were at the disposal of the Japs but trusted that they would be allowed to continue their work of mercy. While his men overran the building, taking everything they fancied, the Jap Major talked with Dr. Banfield and told him that he had lived in Canada and had attended University there. He named the University. Dr. Banfield replied that it was the same University from which he himself had graduated. The Jap Major was pleased and smiled. Dr. Banfield hoped that by this chance happening he could get a break for our wounded. Then it was reported to the Major that a quantity of arms and equipment had been found hidden in the hospital. This was the equipment and arms of the patients and was not hidden but the Major pretended to believe that it was and that the hospital was being used as a secret ammunition and supply dump. He upbraided Dr. Banfield for what he called the abuse of the Red Cross flag and the Geneva Convention. He brushed aside the explanation that this was the clothing and arms of the patients. He was 'So sorry' but an example would have to be made. All in the hospital would have to be shot. Guards came into the room and covered the staff.

"You my friend, for the sake of our old Alma Mater, will be spared."

And before the Doctor's horrified eyes the Jap gave the order and every one of the staff was shot down. Then the Japs ran amok in the wards bayoneting the wounded. The hospital was a shambles. At the convent Dr. Banfield, still shaken and nervous, was trying to do his best to alleviate suffering but his experience had placed its mark upon him.

At last the doctor examined me. Noting that the bullet had passed through my head he shook his own and said that he could do nothing for me, not even change the dressing as there were none. I did not sleep that night and suffered agony. Shells were still falling in the vicinity and the boom of the guns was constant.

Next morning Japanese guards appeared and we were told to prepare ourselves for another march. Many were unable to rise and were left. At first I had great difficulty in standing. My leg was swollen and stiff to the hip. My head seemed to be twice its normal

size. I had not yet recovered the use of my hands and still could not move thumb or fingers. I managed however, with the help of another prisoner, to roll up a blanket given me by the nuns.

Now commenced another march, thankfully a short one, in the blazing sun. It has been said that the Japs deliberately marched their prisoners in the heat of the midday sun to torture them. I can vouch for this statement. This day we marched again along the streets of Kowloon. What a change from the time we marched with bands playing and warm meals and good billets awaiting us. Now we hobbled along on sticks and makeshift crutches, many supported by stronger comrades. Others were carried on wooden stretchers. Finally we entered the compound of Argyle Camp, lately used as a Chinese refugee interment camp. Our group was halted and I collapsed upon the ground where I stood. I had made it this far but I could not go a step further. I desired nothing so much as to sink down to the ground, to be left alone, and to make no further effort.

All of the group were allotted to certain dilapidated huts that surrounded the compound, the badly wounded to two huts designated as hospitals. When all were gone I was left alone lying on the square. An Englishman, a medical Corps Orderly, came over and knelt beside me. Placing his arm beneath my head he raised me to a sitting position, “Come on chum!” he said encouragingly, “You can make it!”

They told me later that they had all thought me dead but he, noticing a movement, had come back to make sure. The Englishman half carried me to one of the hospital huts and turned me over to a friend of his, a big Scotsman who had been badly wounded in the thigh while fighting in the streets of Hong Kong with the Volunteers. He was a marine engineer but his ship had been scuttled and lay at the bottom of the bay. Scotty lay on three boards raised about a foot from the ground on the framework of an old wooden bunk. He helped place on the boards next to himself, groaning as he moved over to make additional room. He took my blanket and as he had none, wrapped it around the both of us. He then made himself my personal nurse and physician.

The hut was crowded with wounded, most of them lying on the damp cement floor. In places there were actually puddles of water. There were only a few bunks and Scotty had one of them. Before the Japanese had taken over, and after the garrison retreated to the Island, the Chinese had looted this camp and had removed everything portable including the bunks, which they used as firewood. Wood was very scarce in Hong Kong and also very necessary for the winter nights.

Scotty provided me with a pillow made like a box of bamboo. Huddled against him that night both of us fearing to move in order not to hurt the other. I slept uneasily, sweating and shivering, but I did sleep … the first sleep that I had in three days. This rough seafaring engineer with red beard and bloodshot eyes, his face flushed with fever, was a Florence Nightingale to me and but for his attention I would surely have died. My throat was so swollen that I could not swallow. Scotty produced, of all things, a tin of condensed milk, which he had procured through his friend the Orderly. The Orderly had obtained this tin from the meager stores in the camp. The prisoners themselves had brought the stores in on their arrival. Many of the troops who had surrendered, and also

some civilians, were able to carry in what food and supplies they happened to have with them. Some arrived with large bundles. All this was confiscated by the camp Commandant, as there was no other food supply. Later the Japs issued rice with a meager ration of shriveled greens and occasionally some spoiled meat. What little of the original stores remained were used for the so-called hospitals. That's how Scotty obtained his tin of milk. He fed me this essential by adding water and letting it trickle down my throat. That tin lasted a few days and about this time I regained the use of my hands.

There were three white doctors in the camp, two civilians and Captain Banfield. They occupied a little partitioned room at the end of the hut but as they had little or nothing to work with they were unable to do their best. They worked tirelessly to alleviate the suffering. Under Scotty's administration I gradually recovered. The swelling of my head and throat subsided and the wounds began to heal. I was able to swallow a little rice and some vegetable soup, which the camp cook provided, but I had no other attention. My head wound healed under the same dressing, which I had put on in the field, stiff with blood and dirt. My arm must have set itself, one bone only in the lower arm being broken. My leg wound bothered me the most. The bullet had nicked the bone and bone injuries take a long time to heal.

Many others in the hut were not so fortunate. They died like flies, I should estimate about fifty percent. Every day, morning and night, someone died and there was another still shape on the cement floor that ceased to toss and groan. Every afternoon we heard the guard turn out and stand to attention as detail after detail of prisoners filed past their post carrying the bodies of those who had died. This they considered an honor to our dead. No bands played. No flags draped them. Sometimes an old blanket was used, only to be retrieved by the burying party as few of the prisoners had blankets. Wooden crosses were made and erected by the graves on the side of the hill. The next day when another party arrived the crosses were gone, stolen by the natives for firewood.

Then came the sad Christmas of 1941. Hong Kong's remaining garrison surrendered. The Jap was jubilant, and well he might be. The two huge Howitzers beside our hut were silent, how they used to shake the building, another example of the Jap using prisoner camps and hospitals to protect his own guns.

The Indian troops in this camp were housed in different huts than the whites. The Japanese made a particular effort to win them over, using bribes and threats and Indian traitors to speak to them in their own language, urging them to throw off their allegiance to the British Crown. Only a few responded. In regiments like the Rajputs and Punjabi, with their long military history and record of service to the Crown, loyalty is assured in defeat as in victory. They make very good soldiers. In line with this policy of placating the Indians they were given extra rations of rice and cooking fat. On Christmas day, as a tribute to our wounded and in commemoration of the white man's Christmas, the Indian soldiers ground up their rice ration into flour and made a type of pancake called 'char patties', fried them in hot fat and donated them to the wounded. This was our Christmas dinner and was eaten with relish. The day before Christmas some of the survivors of D Company of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, who had made such a heroic stand at Wong Nei Chong Gap, arrived. The survivors of this Company surrendered only after their

ammunition was exhausted. They had held up the Japanese advance in their section for five days. Among the survivors who I knew were Sergeant Bob Manchester of D Company and Sergeant Pugsley of A Company. They both visited me as I lay beside Scotty. I remember particularly the entry of Bob Manchester into our hut. He entered with his head held high, his arm in a sling, looking for me. How welcome old friends are under such circumstances. I am sure I had tears in my eyes. Sergeant Pugsley later told me that when he first saw me in this hut he thought I was a goner, but on another visit he saw I was going to live because I showed him an empty milk can and explained how I had made a wire handle for it so it could be hung on my belt and used as a drinking cup. He thought that the bullet must have missed the old brain because I seemed logical enough to be inventing things.

A few days after the surrender we were given a packet of cigarettes from our own stores in Hong Kong and a Japanese band played the Jap national anthem and 'God Save the King' on the square. The guard and all prisoners able to walk were turned out and stood to attention.

Conditions were rapidly getting worse in the hospital hut. Most of the wounded and sick lay on the floor. Many were without covers. We were pestered by millions of flies during the day. I saw a lieutenant; I will not name him for the sake of his family, with half his back blown off, lie withering, moaning and dying, and his back black with flies. He died in torment. The place reeked with foul odors. One bedpan was available for over fifty patients. The sickly smell of gangrene was always present. Amputations were performed without anesthetic, just where the patient lay. More and more died.

Then at last came a Japanese doctor. He sniffed as he stood by the door and I believe he would have retired only that one of our doctors was performing an operation, the amputation of a mans leg without drugs. The Jap waddled across the hut and with legs apart stood watching. The doctor, who happened to be Portuguese, raised his head and looked at him. The Jap remarked, smirking superciliously, "Primitive. Primitive."

Then he turned and walked from the hut. The Portuguese doctor's face went first red then white. If a look could have killed the Jap would have dropped dead.

This hut was a pest house. It was freezing cold at night and this, while it brought fresh discomfort to the wounded, may have helped to hold down the epidemics of dysentery and diphtheria which later swept through the camp. Many had no blankets and awaited the death of a neighbor to have first claim on his possessions, some extra clothing, or if lucky a blanket. We saw no Red Cross supplies.

As soon as I could hobble around on a stick I decided to get out of this charnel house and move to another along with Bob Manchester and some other Canadians mostly Royal Rifles. C. S. N. Todd was in charge, he was killed in Japan several years later while working in a Yokohama shipyard. I was sorry to leave Scotty and thanked him, and his friend the orderly, for all they had done for me. How true it is that a friend in need is a friend indeed. Those noble souls who from their own innate decency and goodness of heart ministered to others like brothers, even though they were strangers. They redeem

one's faith in human nature and set an example that all should follow in order to make this world a better place to live in.

In my new quarters the atmosphere was a little better. Food was scarce but most of the unwounded were in fair physical shape when captured and had not yet begun to lose weight. The Japs left us much alone and in charge of the white camp officers, the senior being a Major of the Hong Kong Volunteers. They had the arranging of fatigues, burial parties, distribution of rations, etc. There was little discipline as we were a mixed lot.

The Indians kept much to themselves, having their own huts, and were somewhat resentful of carrying out any orders other then those of their own officer. There was some disagreement between the Camp Commandant and the Indians over the distribution of food and the occasional cigarette. On rare occasions a little tobacco came into the camp. The Indians did not smoke. They felt somehow they should be compensated for the loss of this part of their rations. One Indian, who seemed to be somewhat of a fanatic, pestered the Commandant continuously by hanging around the Officers quarters and forcing himself inside at every opportunity. He became such a nuisance that the Commandant reported him to the Japs. The Japanese guards came and took the man out of his hut and lead him to the front of the Officers Quarters. They tied his hands and feet together behind his back, placed him, placed another wire around his neck, drew the wires tightly and left him in a helpless position lying on the ground. Here he lay for three or four days and would have died of exhaustion, thirst and hunger if the officers themselves had not attended to him. On the Commandant's supplication to the Japs this man was released and he never reported another.

Besides the one dim electric light burning in each hut there were no other supplies in the camp. No soap, no towels, no brooms or stoves, however there was a certain amount of optimism that we would be liberated soon. We had not yet heard of Pearl Harbor or the sinking of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse. Signs appeared on the walls of the huts written in chalk saying,

"Are we downhearted?"

" In the fall Churchill says Hong Kong will fall."

" The Yanks are coming. Hold everything."

As the wounded recovered sufficiently to be moved they were taken to other camps. The Japs were assembling the prisoners at these camps preparatory to shipping them as slave labor to different parts of their stolen empire and to Japan itself.

I had an example shown me of the queer mentality of the Jap and his almost childish desire to appear as someone of importance. An otherwise inoffensive soft spoken Japanese civilian will, if inducted into the army as a private, no class (they had three classes, no class being the lowest) or given a uniform in some lowly official capacity such as a watchman at a dock yard, immediately turn into an arrogant little devil, eager and willing to kick his erstwhile civilian companions in the pants. They must all bow to him. He has the right to slap them if they do not, and he usually does. He struts in his ill fitting and shoddy uniform before his inferiors and meekly stands to attention while his immediate superior, a No. 2 private, smacks him. A Sergeant can smack almost anyone. We prisoners got the full benefit of this system as being considered the lowest of low. All

could smack us. When I say smack this was a blow administered to the side of the head with an open hand, a cuff, but sometimes sticks, fists, boots and weapons were used.

While I was in the so called hospital hut there was one little man on our guard that looked more like a yellow monkey then the rest. He must have been around forty and a little too old for front line work. We will call him Koto. Koto thought himself a very important person, though actually he was no class private. When off duty he sometimes came into the hospital hut, where he had no right to be, and gravely inspected the patients, moving from one form to another. If the patient was sufficiently alive to notice him, Koto would bow and place a cigarette by the prisoner's side, then he would gravely continue his inspection. He evidently wanted to talk to someone. I found out later he spoke English fairly well when he stopped and squatted beside my bunk and gave us, that is Scotty and I, a cigarette apiece. He paid several visits and seemed to take quite a fancy to me, showing me photographs of his family in Yokohama and explained how he had come to learn English in a missionary school. He asked many questions about my family but no military ones. He was very pleased to be able to make use of his accomplishment, the ability to speak English.

He assured me that he was quite a personage in the Japanese Army and his present duties were much beneath him and that he was both mentally alert and physically fit. As he said this he arose, took off his belt, bayonet and hat, and choosing a bare place on the floor, he stood on his head. Even the very sick were interested in this strange performance. Were they seeing right? Or did the Japs walk upside down? Koto had almost completed his performance when in walked the Corporal of the Guard. He took in the situation at once, went over to my friend who still remained shakily balanced on his head, and gave him a terrific kick in the pants. Koto was catapulted to his feet, looked with dismay at the Corporal and picking up his hat, belt and bayonet, hurried out of the hut, closely followed by the Corporal still kicking. Koto lost a lot of face that day.

Sergeant Manchester and myself had been three months at Argyle Camp when we were moved to Sham Shui Po, our old barracks on the mainland and a little later from there to North Point Camp on the Island of Hong Kong. This was also an old Chinese interment camp and before leaving they had stripped the property of everything movable, even removing the doors and windows. Here were assembled around one thousand Canadians, Winnipeg Grenadiers, Royal Rifles of Canada, and Headquarters staff. This camp was cleaner then the one that we had just left, although in a terribly dilapidated condition by our standards. Rags and sacks covered the doors and windows and we slept on sacking and old boards tied or lay on the framework of the previous bunks.

A Colonel of the Royal Rifles, who was acting Brigadier, was in charge. Under him was Major, later Lieutenant Colonel, G. Trist. The Medical Officers in charge of the hospital huts were Major J. Crawford, now Lieut. Col., Capt. J. Reid, and Capt. Banfield.

The Japs left us mostly alone outside of a few work parties they requested to enlarge a nearby airfield. There were fatigue parties to look after the sanitary and other arrangements of the camp.

The food was terrible. A handful of rice twice daily was our main ration. Dysentery and beriberi were now common. This was followed by an outbreak of diphtheria. The hospital huts were full of patients and deaths from disease and malnutrition were every day occurrences. Our cooks did the best they could but had little with which to work. The rice was evidently sweepings from the warehouse floors and contained mouse and rat dirt. Few of us could say we liked rice but as we got hungrier we ate snakes, grass and seaweed. Rice became a delicacy, eagerly sought; it tasted like cake to us. On my return to Canada, while visiting friends, my hostess remarked, "I had better not give you rice. I guess you are sick of it."

I replied, "Lady, we didn't get enough rice."

I remember some of the men of the Royal Scots at Sham Shui Po Camp had a mascot, an Airedale I believe, as I never saw the dog around, but I was invited to a special feast one night and we ate the dog. It tasted very good. At North Point I received, without soap, my first haircut and shave since my capture. I presented a little less wild appearance.

Major Crawford, the Grenadier Medical Officer, stated that one hundred and fifty Canadians died in the camps in Hong Kong. So many died that at last the Japs took notice and a Jap official appeared and had Major Crawford and his aides before him. He asked the cause of so many deaths. On receiving the reply, malnutrition and starvation, he slapped the Major across the face. Major Crawford and his aides did splendid work prolonging many lives and saving others. Without medicines and little equipment they labored at their job of mercy. Often sick themselves they continued to minister to others.

The Officers received a little better treatment then the men. They did not have to work and got first choice of the meager rations. They were paid about 100 sen a day, with which they could sometimes buy, at the camp canteen a few extras such as cigarettes. The men, when they worked, were paid 10 sen a day, but as it cost three yen, which was about 300 sen, for a packet of Japanese cigarettes, the money they received was deemed almost worthless. The canteen, which opened occasionally, contained a few cigarettes, a few bottles of soy sauce, some salt and once a couple of tins of Australian jam. Who got the jam I don't know but it certainly was not the men. The Officers shared what little extras they could with the men of their platoon or Company. Some almost lived with their men in their eagerness to ease their lot. A few, a very few, kept their extras to themselves and on occasions when they bathed they were ashamed to be seen by the men as they had flesh on their buttocks while the men were mostly bones.

Such is humanity, conforming to the first law of nature, Survival. Can one blame a hungry cook if he dips his fingers into the cauldron of rice, or picks a piece of meat out of the small quantity in the soup? We were fast learning the primitive law, "Man, mind thyself."

Use what strength, what wit, what cunning you may have for your own survival. Hang on to what is yours, your tattered clothes, your ragged blanket, and your meager ration of food. Never give away anything. Always trade and bargain. If you do not smoke

trade your ration of cigarettes for rice. He, who prefers smoking to eating, let him eat less and starve the quicker. Lay awake at night scheming to conserve your strength by avoiding labor.

It became so bad when we were in Japan that men actually studied to learn how much energy would be required to pick up a paintbrush or to walk a few steps. As they sat painting, or at some other task, they would make the least possible movement, just the slow motion of the brush or tool. They knew that every extra effort would hasten exhaustion.

Use your intelligence to avoid drinking contaminated water, or coming in touch with infected persons or articles. Use only your own feeding utensils. Those who were stupid or careless died, as diphtheria and other contagious diseases were rampant. Men survived by natural immunity, stamina, ingenuity, and dissembling towards the Jap, and by a certain amount of just plain luck.

A job as a cook or as an Orderly relieved one from arduous labor. They also had their little advantages, a little extra food, and the first selection of the belongings of the dead.

The Japs used hunger to discipline and to get the maximum amount out of us. What little rations of food there was went first to the strongest. If a man was sick and unable to work his ration was cut and he lay in the so-called hospital and starved to death, a long and painful death aggravated by beriberi and other diseases. Men lost their sight and hearing. Some, who were rescued just in time to escape death, may never recover the full use of their eyes. In dry beriberi the body shrinks to a skeleton, nerves become paralyzed, all functions of the body become impeded, some lost. It starts at the extremities, hands and feet. They feel as if on fire. Men plunged their feet into icy cold water to ease the pain so that they could get some sleep. Gradually it spread to the hips, stomach, and finally to the heart, ending in a protracted period of intense torture. Men with this, or some other form of beriberi, dysentery and other diseases, would be marked for work and would be seen trying to carry a load on the point of collapse, often with one foot dragging behind them.

At every prison camp I was at there was always a black market. This was strictly ‘hush-hush.’ There was always someone in touch with the outside, either by bribing the guards or by contact with the Chinese civilians that might visit the camps on some duty. Through these sources a few individuals received money and some supplies but this was so strictly secret few benefited.

CHAPTER 7 - PRISON BREAK

On the Island the Canadians were grouped together at North Point prison camp. The Grenadiers were in some huts and the Royal Rifles in others. The Sergeants of the Grenadiers made a little group at one end of one of the huts. Here were my own particular friends, Sergeants Bob Manchester, John Payne and Ken McCully. As work parties at this time were few we had plenty of time for discussion. John Payne contended that it was the Jap's intention to ultimately destroy all of us and that starvation and disease were all part of that plan. He also was of the opinion that the best we could hope for was years of slavery and then death. He stated he would much prefer to take a chance of dying now, while attempting to escape, then to live in the misery were experiencing.

The matter was discussed pro and con. Bob Manchester and myself were of the opinion that it was impossible to escape. We were on an Island and would have to swim at least a mile. We would be easily identified as white men and were not able to speak Chinese. A reward would be offered and many of the Chinese would gladly turn us in. If recaptured the Japs would kill us all after torturing us. Our friends left behind would be punished, perhaps shot. Where would we go? It was a thousand miles through hostile country to our nearest lines. Still John was determined to go and was annoyed that we tried to deter him.

He was in touch with a group of three enlisted men in another hut, Privates Ellis, Adams, and Bereziski. They were of the same mind as John and would accompany him so they prepared for the attempt. His plan was to steal a boat and to make his way along the coast. Somehow he provided himself with a large knife, which he sharpened assiduously, and I believe a revolver. He had obtained a pair of cavalry britches and puttees and seemed concerned that there should be no mistake he was in military uniform. The Jap however makes no distinction with escaping prisoners. In their code any prisoner escaping had broken the surrender terms and his life was forfeit.

John made a smart and soldierly figure as he left our hut that night to join his companions in their desperate enterprise. To make the escape John and his party had to climb over or through encircling heavily charged wire, over the roof of an old warehouse that abutted the camp and then down into the streets of Hong Kong, all this past the Japanese sentries. This they must have done successfully.

The next morning before our meager morning meal there was a roll call taken by the NCO and the Officer of the day. All the NCOs knew the boys were missing but delayed admitting it as long as possible. The Officer was told that they were at the latrine and he dispatched the NCO to find them and have them report, as he could not turn in his list as correct unless he actually saw them. Being unable to locate the men he demanded an explanation and it was finally admitted they were absent. He reported this to Major Trist and the other Officers. They were in a quandary. If they delayed reporting the escape to the Jap Commandant they would be held as abetting the escape and punished in the Japanese style. If they reported, so much less time the boys had to get away. They

hesitated as long as they dared and then reported the escape.

Almost immediately the camp was in an uproar. The Japanese guards began running from hut to hut routing out the prisoners. All had to assemble on the square in their proper companies and platoons. The sick, bedridden and wounded, were all carried out and laid in rows. No one was allowed to leave for any purpose. All except those who had been carried out had to stand at attention. The guards slapped and beat us. A Japanese NCO tried to number the men in Japanese and the attempt broke down every time, as the men could not remember the Japanese numbers. They would add up the figures they had obtained and find their total differed from our own … more beatings, more confusion. No one ate or drank all that day. Men fell from exhaustion and were left to lie where they fell.

Evening came, then night, still we stood there. It turned bitterly cold and at last the Jap Commandant allowed the sick and those who had fallen to be carried to the huts. Men eagerly volunteered to carry these comrades. I was one of these and helped carry a sick man to our lines but instead of taking him to his own hut we took him to ours. We laid him on a heap of rags, looked about and grabbed all the loose articles of clothing we could find to take back on us to the square. Here they were distributed among our friends. This extra clothing helped us to withstand the rigors of the night, unlucky some never recovered from this exposure. Towards morning the whisper went around,"They have been caught."

And shortly afterwards we were dismissed and hobbled frozen and stiff to our huts.

Soon the Gempi (Japanese Gestapo) came to our hut and began to question everyone about the escape. They finally concentrated on our little group of Sergeants. They had a mean pinched face interpreter along and like a ferret he was to trick us into saying something that would incriminate our companions or ourselves. Both Sergeant Manchester and myself were closely cross-questioned.
" Did you know this man Payne?"
"Only as a chance companion in the next bed."
" Did he ever say anything about escaping?"
" No we seldom spoke."

I know how Peter must have felt denying his Lord.
"He was a big, fine looking man wasn't he?"

My heart fell. I knew that this little rat had already questioned John. I also knew that he would get no information out of him that would implicate a comrade. Then came a typically foolish Japanese Question "Why did he want to escape? Was he not happy here?"

"I don't know."

My head was wet with sweat when they departed. If they thought we were implicated I am sure they would have tortured us.

Shortly afterwards we were all placed in groups of ten and warned that if any

escaped from a group the rest would be shot. We never heard anything more of John and his companions. I understand the Canadian Authorities have confirmed the manner of their deaths and that they were all shot.[2] There was no other attempt to escape made by the Canadians but certain individuals who could speak Chinese or who had friends outside able to hide them, escaped from the settlement interment camps.

This event cast further gloom over us and we were glad to volunteer for labor in Japan. This volunteering consisted of being able to walk five paces without limping or falling down. Both Manchester and myself passed the test at Sham Shui Po preparatory to being shipped abroad.

At Sham Shui Po Camp conditions had worsened in our absence. An epidemic of diphtheria was at its height and assisted by malnutrition the death list was long. There was no medicine and it was some time later that a few inoculations of antitoxin were received. Every morning we felt our throats. It was the melancholy duty of the doctors, imprisoned in the Camp, to inspect our throats daily. Those found infected were removed to the so-called hospital, really a death house with no medical supplies and little food or attention. The chance of coming out alive was a slim one.

I awoke one morning with a sore throat and was examined for diphtheria, but was not removed until the doctor was certain. It was found I did not have the disease, which I accredited to the fact I had already had it in earlier years.

Supplies of food were getting scarce. That Christmas of 1943 we received one British Red Cross parcel. This was the only Red Cross supply I saw during my fourteen months stay at Hong Kong. What joy there was on the receipt of these parcels! The men hugged them to their chests as they carried them away and though close to starvation did not wolf them. We had learned the necessity of conserving food. A few thought, and said, "Now all will be well. We will be getting a parcel every week. Let us eat to the full."

Most being governed by the bitter disappointments of the past carefully apportioned their parcel and used its contents carefully to supplement their meager daily ration. This is what I did though I ate enough at a time to derive benefit. A friend of mine, a very thoughtful fellow, had it all doped out that about a spoonful a day would make his parcel last a long time. I reasoned he would get no benefit from it. He went on his spoonful a day but soon quit. He devoured his parcel before mine was finished.

The habit of hoarding food for a last emergency became a fixed one. One prisoner got a tin of bully beef in his parcel and having eaten the rest hung onto this prize. It

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[2] * Four Canadians escaped Sergeant John Payne, Percy Ellis, and another Grenadier by the name of Adams, and Corporal Prozinski made an escape in August 1942. They were the only Canadians to attempt an escape, and they were captured almost the next day, without trial, were literally murdered by the Japanese. - From an interview with Harry Atkinson, April 19, 1986

** I have the report of Tse Dickuan, the British/Chinese spy who worked in Sham Shui Po. He states that Payne and the other three Canadians were beheaded, and that five of the seven British escapees captured at the same time were bayoneted (the other two were simply sent back to camp - I have no idea why. However, he does not state when and where these murders took place. - Personal correspondence from Tony Banham, author 'Not The Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong – 1941'*

became a treasure, always in his thoughts, the most valuable thing in the Camp. He hid it by day and examined it at night. He suspicioned his comrades as desirous of stealing it, as perhaps they were. His first thought upon returning to the hut was to see that the tin was safe. Then he sickened and was removed to the hospital, holding tight to his bully beef. He was slowly dying of malnutrition but he still had his bully beef. He had lost the power to open it. He died with the tin clasped in his skinny hand. I wonder who ultimately ate the beef and if they did not feel his ghost protesting.

There was a Catholic Priest in the Camp who made vigorous protest against our treatment and of the disappearance and non-arrival of money apportioned by the Holy See for our relief. He became such a nuisance to the Jap Commandant, who possibly had misappropriated the money, that he was taken away by the Gempi and returned in a few weeks time with his finger and toenails torn out.

It was interesting to watch some of the prisoners trading articles and food out of their Red Cross parcels. A shrewd trader might, by trading cigarettes for a packet of raisins, trading the raisins for chocolate and chocolate for cigarettes, end up by having twice as many cigarettes then when he stated. If the boys had not eaten most of the stuff quickly, the really clever ones would have cornered the lot. I could see how our own civilization works right there. To the clever go the spoils.

In February 1943[3] about seven hundred Canadians and other prisoners were taken out in tenders and loaded on the Tatuta Maru. We were poured down the hatch and into the hold like so much coal. There were no bunks, nothing but steel walls and stanchions. We were packed so tight that there was no room to lie down. I sat on the metal stairs that went up to the hatch for three days it took to get to Nagasaki. Guards were mounted above and kept a constant watch over us. We thought of submarines but worried little. We were a miserable bunch. I thought of my boyhood and the stories I had read of the old slavers that sped through the night with their cargo of slaves battened down in filthy and stifling holds. I never thought then that I should live to experience something very similar. Many of those we left at Sham Shui Po sailed later in other ships. Some were torpedoed. I knew several fine fellows that went down. In January 1943 we landed at Nagasaki and were loaded on a train for Tokyo.

[3] January 19th, 1943 at 1 PM – from the diary of Lance Corporal Charles Richard Trick, Winnipeg Grenadiers http://members.shaw.ca/tricksweb/

Figure 3

The *Tatsuta Maru* (16,975 grt, 584 ft. long) commenced her maiden voyage between Yokohama and San Francisco in April 1930. The transliteration of her name was changed to *Tatuta Maru* in 1938. She became a troop transport for the Japanese Navy in 1941, but ended her days two years later when sunk by a US submarine.

CHAPTER 8 - JAPAN

When we left Hong Kong the Jap military had made some effort to equip us for our journey. Evidently we were regarded as a source of labor by someone in authority and therefore our rating was now higher then when we had been left to idle and starve in the camps of Hong Kong. Before leaving we were all provided with overcoats.

How?

By taking the military overcoats away from those left behind. We were also given a generous supply of bully beef and beef stew ration. Most of us carried several tins of this in our baggage, which consisted of a bag of some sort or sack that could be carried.

We anchored out in the bay and were taken ashore in tenders. Here we got quite a reception. On the wharf to receive us was a party of the Emperor's Household Guards. They had smart new uniforms, peaked caps, and carried the new short rifles then being issued to the Japanese Army. They were bigger men then ordinary Japanese. Their Sergeant-Major was a huge man, over six foot, with a large red sash and a black pointed military moustache. They were also of a much milder disposition then the combat troops we had met. The big Sgt.-Major himself helped others and me up the ladder to the wharf. Here we all squatted and were sorted out into our respective companies. The guards were all smiles and we thought that this was going to be much better then Hong Kong. This impression was strengthened when the guards served us each five hot buns made of pure white flour. They must have plenty here, we thought, to give the prisoners such delicious food. Possibly this was a gesture on the part of the Emperor. He had welcomed us to Japan and was soon to be through with us.

The Imperial Guards stayed with us till we reached Tokyo. They made some of our boys understand that all was not well where we were going and that we would encounter some very bad actors. They told us that any extra food we might have upon us would be taken away. Most of the boys decided to eat as much as they could. Some gave tins of beef to the guards.

The coaches were small with hard straight seats, but at least we all had one. The following afternoon we reached Tokyo and pulled into the huge modern station. We were detrained and marched a short distance to another train, passing through a subway in doing so. It must have been suppertime for the station platforms were crowded with Japanese commuters, each almost an exact replica of the other. Cheap fedora hat with feather in brim, dirty white collar, black string tie, black morning coat, baggy gray pants, white dirty socks and Oxfords or rubber canvas shoes. Here we had the white-collar brigade, each a caricature of a London banker. They swarmed about the platform like beetles. They pushed and swayed. Some were eager to see the prisoners while others were more concerned in keeping their feet and position. I saw several fall off the platforms onto the tracks and scurry to get back before the trains came. I saw few women.

On the new train was a different detail of guards. We were back to the old style. These were shabby and ill equipped and treated the prisoners harshly. I have often noticed that trait in human nature that gets satisfaction from having someone else in a worse position or condition. If the guards are well fed and satisfied with their job they treat prisoners fairly well. If the guards themselves are cold and hungry they see to it that the prisoners fare worse.

Finally we came to a small station on the outskirts of Yokohama. Here we detrained and were and were told to get our bags. All was confusion. The guards gave us no time to find our own bags and cuffed us around. At least our luggage was put on a couple of trucks, and with a Jap officer on horse back in the lead, we marched two miles to our new camp. The district was a poor one and given over to industry. Everything looked dirty and dilapidated. There were bits of rusty machinery scattered around and evidently a lot of small sheds were used to house machines that did subcontract work for the shipyard nearby. We saw few people.

Our camp was in a factory yard enclosed on one side by a steel works and the other by a refinery. In this yard had been recently built two large buildings 120 ft. long by 35 ft. wide. Each of these housed 250 men. There was a five foot passage down the middle of each bay that ran crossways to the hut. These huts were built of flimsy material, mostly bamboo and laminated wood. The roof was of gray clay tile and was so heavy that after a few weeks the building sagged. Few of the windows opened. The beds were wooden platforms covered with a grass mat and divided by strips of wood. The floor was dirt mixed with lime but it had already crumbled in many places.

We were given four wood fiber blankets apiece. There was no warmth in them. We were also issued a bowl, a cup without a handle, and later a paper towel. We were first crowded into the small compound while a mean faced Jap Army Officer read us the riot act. Sword and all he climbed up on top of a table with his interpreter who said, “He say that you are prisoner. You forfeit all rights when you surrender. You are property of Imperial Army. You must be obedient and diligent and have confidence in Imperial Army. Any breaking of rules will be severely punished. He say go now and work hard. Imperial Army will watch to see you do same.”

We were all given a number on a piece of paper which we wore pinned to the front of our clothing. We poured into the shelters and were allotted our places. There was a board shelf over each platform where we could pack our clothes. All goods given us were marked with the red star of the army. We were given a G-string, a piece of cheap cotton about eighteen inches by six, with a string to tie around the waist.

We had no knifes, spoons or forks. The Japs, like the Chinese, use chopsticks which are however shorter then the Chinese type. The Chinaman can perform gracefully, lifting his rice from the table to his mouth. The Japs hold the bowls up to their mouths and shovel in the rice. We gradually obtained or made ourselves eating utensils, a wooden spoon or a tin knife.

At first they fed us fairly well with rice, beans and sweet potatoes but as the American

blockade tightened our meals got worse. Most of us put on a little weight but this only helped to conceal our true condition. Many men who had shown symptoms of beriberi in Hong Kong now suffered from hot foot. There was an epidemic of diarrhea caused by the change of diet and water. This was very weakening and it could be said that there was not a really fit man among the five hundred in the camp.

For a day or two we were allowed to stay around and clean up the enclosure and to attend lectures where we were supposed to learn the Japanese language. From then on all commands given by the NCO were to be in Japanese and we were told to learn Japanese numbers. The Jap language and numerals are not difficult to learn and we had already acquired much knowledge of them because if we disregarded or misunderstood a command we were beaten. We learned fast, so that when we paraded and numbered, one would hear, "YATAKI" (attention), "BANGÔ" (number). "ITCHI – NI – SAN – SHI – GO" (1,2,3,4,5 … etc.)

We had been here about four days when one cold morning we were fallen in and marched to work. Previously there had been a questionnaire, which we were required to answer and to fill in the trade or profession we had worked at in civil life.

We marched a mile and it was wet and rainy. Puddles of near freezing water lay all along the route. Most of us wore only rubber tennis shoes, part of the Hong Kong Garrison stores. Our feet were soaked and icy cold. We were marched to the Nipon Ko Kan shipyard[4], through the big gate past the guards and into the ground floor of a building used as a storehouse. This floor was open on one side to the wind and rain. There were several civilian Japs awaiting us. Each wore an armband marked with a sign like our seven turned about; this was the Japanese 'F'. We called them "Foo Men".

In this place tables and benches were set up marked with numbers for each section. We were supposed to find our section and ultimately did so. My group of thirteen, I discovered, was supposed to be painters. Eight of us had experience in painting and decorating. The rest consisted of a commercial artist, two farmers, a printer, which I guess they had confused with the word painter, and a truck driver.

Now we were introduced to our 'Foo Man'. A civilian workman's importance in the shipyard was shown by a ring of tread or tap around his hat. A three ringer was a foreman. Our Foo Man was a three ringer. He made himself known to us by bowing. We all rose and gravely bowed back. He then disappeared, to return with some others carrying bundles of clothing. These were our working clothes, consisting of badly made overalls of a strong khaki material. All the suits were of a huge size. They had been especially made for us. Whoever had described us to the Jap tailor must have exaggerated somewhat. We were all underweight and some of the smaller men simply disappeared

[4] Nipon Ko Kan and its founder, Morosiro Shiaichi, made millions of dollars profiting from the Japanese war effort, partly from using Canadian prisoners as slave laborers. In similar circumstances, German corporations have paid billions of dollars in compensation to wartime workers. Japanese companies are being pressed by Canada's veterans for compensation, but refuse even to discuss the issue.

into the coveralls. Putting them on we followed our Foo Man through the shipyard until we came to the paint shop, an iron shed with a cement floor, about 30 ft. by 60 ft., crammed with all kinds of painting material and ladders etc.

At one end there was a storeroom, a stove, and also a place for lockers. A small cubbyhole served as the office. As we entered and stood gazing on and being gazed at by those Japs that happened to be around, the office door was suddenly opened and out came the Master Painter himself, a very important personage. He was in our eyes a funny figure of a man. About five foot nothing, black morning coat, khaki army pants, dirty white socks, worn out low shoes, bow tie with polka dots, and to top it all a straw boater, and of course spectacles. He gravely regarded us. Then bringing himself to attention gave us a military salute. We all gravely saluted back. He came forward and began to ask questions in Japanese. Fortunately we managed to know enough to tell him we were Canadian soldiers. When he heard we were soldiers he pulled himself up and gravely gave us another salute. We replied. By now we were entering into the spirit of the thing. He asked who was the senior. I showed him my chevrons and again he came to attention and saluted. I returned this salute. Then we were shown by signs that they wanted us to work and gave us dusters and told us to clean up the paint shop. The Master having saluted again returned to his cubbyhole.

Later we were assigned heavy work around the shop or in the yards but the Japs were rather disappointed that such big men should have so little life in them. They didn't know we were all sick from exposure and malnutrition not counting wounds that slowly healed at best. Pointing at their flat noses, a manner by which they identify themselves, they said, "Look at Jap. He jump around. He quick and active. You all humped up and drag your selves around."

This was true and would remain true till we got a proper diet and protection from infection and exposure. An illustration, marching to work in canvas slippers through icy water and stay all day with wet and cold feet meant colds and flu and in some cases pneumonia, and a further weakening of resistance against more virulent diseases.

In this paint shop were some queer characters. There was Buster, so called by the boys because of his resemblance to Buster Keaton the comedian. Buster was the most self-effacing individual that I ever saw or failed to see. During the day he slunk past in filthy overalls. He spoke to no one and few spoke to him. He knew himself to be a wretched slave working only for a meager ration of cigarettes and salt. But at night that was different.

Folded over so carefully away in his locker was what he and all that saw him knew to be a dude suit. White straw hat, a coat that fitted nowhere and rose at the back as if angry, tight blue pants, a little short, spotted socks, canvas shoes and a cane. Buster walked out through the gate a different man. A ladies man prepared to charm the opposite sex.

Then there was 'Old Iron' He was indeed old and was known as a miser by all in the paint shop. While our misers collect gold Old Iron collected anything, a cigarette end,

a bent and rusty nail. Hand any of these to Old Iron and his wrinkled face would writhe with smiles. He would bow not once but several times and then would hide the tit bit in his rags. I say rags and I mean just that. He was a mass of patches. His grandfather must have got the suit secondhand when young for the patch on patch made padding at the knees and elbows or wherever there was wear.

The foreman, the three ring Foo Man, was almost a lovable character and deserved a better fate then to work under the conditions and pay for which they all worked. He was intelligent and considerate. He was obviously sorry for us. He never struck one of us and never reported any of us. He was concerned when we got soaked coming to work. He would allow us to congregate around the stove and when a guard appeared he would spring forward and abuse us in Japanese and tell us to get to work or else. The guard would smile. We were being hounded and that was what he wanted. As soon as the guard was gone our friend would allow us back around the fire. He could not believe that when he reported a man sick, obviously almost unable to walk, that the Army would not look after him. The Army took no notice and sent the man back to work so our Foo Man told the sick one to hide up in the loft on some old sacks and thus helped him to recover.

CHAPTER 9 - RADISHES AND SOAP

I had determined that my best policy, if I wished to survive, was to play along with the Jap civilians who worked in the shipyard and to make myself obliging and useful. Most of the prisoners did the same with the result that we were able to obtain small favors and sometimes a little extra food.

Having had experience in civil life in mixing paints I was given a job that kept me around the shop, cleaning and repairing brushes, mixing paint, making pails from old drums and finally looking after the fire. This last meant hunting for fuel, as none was provided. We were all interested in keeping the fire going. When it was cold and damp it was a great comfort to the men working on the ships to be able to warm themselves for a while before going back to our camp.

Devious were the ways we obtained fuel. No one dared to leave anything around the shipyard that was either movable or inflammable. Even parts of the building were torn off. One particular cold spell when we were desperate for fuel we obtained quite a supply. In another part of the yards a gang of prisoners had erected a wooden scaffold for some repair to a building. The repairs finished the scaffold was not removed immediately, so a gang from our shop marched smartly up to the scaffold and under the noses of the guard, who could not tell one white prisoner from another, dismantled it. They carried the planks to the back of the paint shed where they were quickly broken up and stored for use as fuel. Later when the Japs came to remove the scaffold they were mystified as to where it had gone. They never found out.

After I had been working around the paint shop about a month I was taken into the confidence of the grand master himself, that is, the Master Painter. He, it seems, was running a little graft all his own. This was a small soap making plant consisting of a boiler in which were put any oils and fats that could be picked up around the paint shed. To make the soap the fats had to be boiled and mixed. I was given this job. Soap at the time was at a premium in Japan and there was no doubt that this little racket was extremely profitable to the Master. As it was all strictly secret, I was told that on no account must I let the guards catch me tending the fire or making the soap. We all kept an alert lookout. The old Master had solved the problem of getting the soap out of the shipyards by molding it into the form of daikons, which were large radishes, a popular food in Japan. To make this deception more realistic real daikon tops or greens were placed on the soap imitation. This made a very realistic looking vegetable and with four our five under his arms the Master smilingly slipped through the gate each night. The guards, placed there for the purpose of searching all suspects, never caught on.

I was getting to be quite an expert soap maker and we were never suspected. One day when I was scraping a batch of newly made soap out of a pot, a particularly snoopy guard spied me and putting his flat yellow face over my shoulder, he pointed at the soap saying, “ NÂN DE” (why or how) Which means everything in Japanese from a question to a command. I feigned stupidity and pretended I could not understand, in other words

‘no soap.’ it was no soap I thought for both the master and myself. We were fairly caught. Then the office door opened just a little and spectacles himself peered out like a rat peeping out of a rat hole. He saw in a moment just what the trouble was and came out and approached the guard all smiles, bowing not once but several times. There was much gesticulating and finally they made an adjournment to the Master’s office. A little while later the guard came out beaming with a couple of big soap daikons under each arm. He waddled away evidently well satisfied with himself. The Master thoughtfully watched him go and sadly shaking his head turned to me and said, “We must make more soap. Much more soap.”

All the time that I was chief soap maker the guard got his daikons.

Some of the Jap workmen took enough interest in me to leave a small portion of fish or rice in their lockers. I also received a few extra cigarettes. How little, before the war, we thought of such things, that for such small favors we should be beholden to such wretched creatures. Yet this extra food to one like myself who had never regained his heath and stamina since Hong Kong was a Godsend. I was able at times to smuggle a little of this extra food back to camp. Sometimes I obtained tea, which was very welcome to the sick friends.

CHAPTER 10 - TAKE A BOW

There were a bunch of Korean men and women working in the shipyard. These Koreans were virtually prisoners and had very little use for the Japs and were always glad to annoy or humiliate them. They provided our boys with a good deal of correct information as to the progress of the war. I believe that both the Chinese and the Koreans had a well organized underground that functioned in Japan itself, and distributed news and supplies. Once while taking paint to a ship I was accosted by a smartly dressed Chinese Quartermaster who beckoning me aside slipped me a packet of cigarettes saying, I am Chino (Chinese) and then slipped furtively away.

The Koreans working along side the Canadians favored the Allies to win the war and often tried to ingratiate themselves to us, but when they came into our already crowded paint shop and crowded our boys away from the stove, and this after we had scrounged the fuel, we got mad and kicked them out.

"You scrounge your own fuel you yellow bastards."

The Koreans were rather disappointed in us and retaliated by painting and saying, "Horyid", which meant that we were cowards and had surrendered to the Japs. We did not care about this. The Japs and all Orientals seemed to place a lot of importance on what they call 'losing face'. No matter how wretchedly poor you are supposed to be ashamed if you do not live up to the expectations of someone else, mostly those who are exploiting you. Emperor worship was one of these manifestations. Through the divinity of the Emperor the army and officialdom functioned. The rest of the population, or the majority of them, are his very neglected children. They are taught to obey without question first in the home where the father is supreme and the women do not count, and later in the school, workshop or army. The Jap believes everything the Government tells him. The way the war ended was expected and prepared for by the leaders but most of the people actually thought they were winning up to the very last. In the shipyard it was different. The workers had better means of knowing what was actually happening, especially to their shipping, than were the Japanese in other employment. Every day ships left never to return until finally most of the shipyard workers were convinced that the whole of Japan was surrounded by the American Fleet. Then came the bombers, those mighty fleets of American planes. Added to all this was the growing scarcity of food.

There was one little Jap whom I met in this shop who seemed better educated then the others. He had taken a sort of liking to myself and spent most of his time, when speaking to me, in defending the Japanese viewpoint.

"Japan he is refined and cultured. We like simplicity. America depends on machines. We depend on the spirit of our people."

I knew enough at the time to foretell the early bombing of Japan and pointed out that the Americans already had Saipan. I asked, "Where is the Japanese fleet?" a question

that some Japs themselves would like to have answered.

"Ah." Said my informer, "Here we have the supreme cleverness of the headquarters staff and the Emperor. Let our enemies come closer and closer." He gathered an imaginary fleet in his arms.

" Closer, closer, then wham! Out springs the Imperial Navy and the Imperial Air Force joined by the Imperial Army. We have got you. The war is over. Japan has won!"

He walked away satisfied for the moment that it would be so. However another day he would say to me as we discussed the war, "America has everything. Japan has nothing. I am very sad. Maybe Japan will not win."

To say anything like this was treason in Japan. They had spies everywhere to see that the people thought right and an outspoken confession of defeat would soon put the speaker behind bars and to applied torture.

Towards the end when food became very scarce and the bombing was severe there was a great relaxation of authority of the Japs over the prisoners. Even the Koreans beat up their guards. There was so much graft that the Jap civilian did not dare report a prisoner to the Army authorities for fear that the prisoner would tell them what he knew of the grafting activities of the complainant. One Jap said to me, " Why don't the Americans come? Why should they torture us like this."

He seemed to hold the American people responsible for prolonging the war.

All over Japan they have Shinto Shrines, two posts with two logs across the top. This is a symbol something like our own cross and is revered throughout Japan. It is the Emperor's trademark. It is placed outside of the homes of the people and everywhere else. Everyone bowed to it. It was amusing to see the Japanese workmen all hurry through the gate after their day of toil. There was a Shinto Shrine at the gate and some, in their haste to go home, would forget to bow. Guards would be alert and run out and grab them making them bow to the Shrine before they were allowed to proceed. Bowing is a full time accomplishment in Japan. The average Jap bows a hundred times a day. He bows to friends and neighbors, to strangers who approach him, to all military and government officials, and to every soldier on duty such as the guard at the gate. That is why he runs when he sees a soldier approaching. He may forget or overlook one of their number and be beaten for so doing.

One night I had the occasion to go outside my hut. I just went as I slept, naked. Because of the lice, bedbugs, and fleas which I tried to keep out of my garments. I passed a sentry and half asleep gave him a bob of the head. I had only gone a few paces when he shouted "KOO DA," and brought me to a stop and to attention. He was a squat quarrelsome fellow who possibly, bored with his turn of sentry duty had determined to pass the time by baiting one of the Prisoners. This happened to be me. Luckily it was summer and a fairly warm night. The Jap jabbered and I understood that he was not satisfied with my bow. Sleep was still in my eyes. He then and there, out of the goodness

of his shriveled heart, decided to give me a lesson in Japanese etiquette … how to be polite in the middle of the night, naked, and on the way to a necessary errand.

He drew himself up to his full five feet, put his bandy legs and splayed feet as closely together as possible, brushed imaginary dust off his tunic, which even at night I could see was filthy, dropped his hands to his sides and bowed to me form the waist about half way to the midriff. Then he recovered gave a satisfied smirk and said, “You bow!”

Shivering and miserable I kept bowing. He was not satisfied and repeated the performance. This went on for an hour. If torments there are in hell this must be one of them. This perverted tormenter had the power of death over prisoners and a false move or a blow on my part and I would not only die but also in all probability be tortured to death. This did happen to some of the prisoners in the camps.

Finally he tired and escorted me to the Guard House, There I was told to report to the Sergeant of the Guard for goodness knows what. The bowing one remained outside in the shadows. I went to the Guard House and found the Sergeant much annoyed at being disturbed. He wanted to know what I had done. I acted as dumb as I felt, shrugged, “ I do not know,” and taking him to the door pointed out the sentry peering from the shadows. The Sergeant spoke to the sentry and by the sound of his voice gave him a reprimand for disturbing the guard. He returned to me and admonished me for running around without clothes, this being disrespectful to constituted authority, that is, the Sentry. The next time I made sure I wore G-string and stopped to bow to the sentry in the middle of the night and while it was raining. Such is the importance the Japanese put on bowing.

CHAPTER 11 - THE OTHER SEX

We saw very few of the women of Japan. As I have stated, on such times as we marched through the crowed districts to and from work, as in Yokohama, all civilians scuttled out of the way of the soldiery. If they did get in the way they were likely to be beaten. That is why when the Americans arrived it took some time to for the civilians to feel they were safe to line the curb. They are afraid of all soldiers.

I saw an amusing incident along these lines. We were being marched to work under a particularly obnoxious guard whom we called Moose Face and who, to us, seemed a little crazier then the others. He was one of the fortunate ones who had returned from active service abroad where possibly he had been wounded. To attract attention, when there were plenty around to observe him, he would spring out on the camp compound and go through extraordinary gymnastics, jumping around on all fours and springing into the air, finally standing erect and patting himself on the chest. Obviously he considered himself really something. The boys had a name for him but it is not printable.

On this occasion when we were marching to work, a Japanese civilian dared to attempt to cross the street through the lines of prisoners. Immediately Moose Face went into action. He seized the civilian by the collar, shook him and slapped him. This civilian however was of tougher fiber than the ordinary run of the mill. He shouted back at Moose Face and finally made him understand that he was one of the officials of the shipyard and of importance. Grasping this fact Moose Face countenance fell in dismay, and he stood at attention while the civilian soundly berated him, emphasizing each word with a blow. All of us, tattered and emaciated, grinned. Such incidents helped our morale, which surely needed a fillip (boost).

To return to the ladies, sex was in very little evidence in the camps. Malnutrition with its following of painful and weakening diseases, aggravated by constant labor, left no inclination or thought of sex. Hunger and its abeyance was our constant thought. Those who have never been really hungry cannot visualize the obsession to obtain enough to eat which besets the starving man. However, the Japs thought of women. They regarded women as a lesser breed to be used either as workers to perform all menial tasks in the home, and much if not most of the work in the factories and also for mans entertainment. Therefore through out Japan were the Geisha Houses and teashops. The Japanese woman was constant, hardworking and a slave to her husband. She was not allowed to sit at her own table until her Lord and Master had finished his meal and was made to walk five paces in the rear on the few occasions when he deigned to allow her to go out with him. However he could and did frequent the Geisha Houses and was entertained by as many females as he could afford.

During the later part of the war the authorities closed many of these places as a war measure, the Geishas being drafted to the factories. The Japs resented this and bemoaned the pleasures that were past. At the close of the war these houses immediately

started up again. At Sendai coal mining camp, where we were marooned three weeks after liberation, most of the boys visited the town and some found themselves being entertained at the local Geisha establishments. I was one of these, as at the time they were the only Japanese places where we could go. We squatted around a bare room and were served in small cups of tea made out of willow leaves. A bevy of flat faced, flat chested waited us upon, duck bottomed females, bundled in a multitude of rags. They all wore insipid grins and toddled around evidently quite satisfied with themselves. It was rather pathetic. There was no music or dancing. A particularly gruesome number, with bad teeth, attached herself to me, devouring avidly an American chocolate bar which I gave her and hiding others in her not too clean garments. None spoke English and we soon tired of trying to show interest in Japanese. Then came the big moment. My partner squatted in front of me and giggling stupidly waved both hands in front of herself, evidently inviting my attentions. I refused, as did most our boys. Our not so charming hostesses were evidently disappointed, having I believe, lost face to those who had picked the less discriminating. We got out of there fast. We were bored and a little sick at such fraternization, male or female they were all Japs.

In the summer the boys had an occasional bath in the sea. There was no soap, towels, or bath suits. Such things are not worn in Japan. All bathe naked, male and female. In the towns and villages they have community bathhouses. In peacetime they were filled with hot water but as fuel became very scarce during the latter part of the war I doubt if there was much bathing. The Jap had broadcasted that he is a very clean race but most of those I saw, both military and civilian, were dirty. They had no soap and of the clothing they wore most of it wouldn't stand a washing.

Their sanitary arrangements were filthy. Men and women used the same toilets in the shipyards. These toilets consisted of holes in the ground. The Japanese superintendent, who expected us to admire the efficiency of the shipyards, asked how they compared with the shipyards at home. We told him that they were medieval in many respects. For one thing the whole works was indescribably dirty. He asked how this could be remedied and it was suggested that at least there should be seats for the toilets. So a wooden plank was placed above the hole used by the prisoners, but as the Japs continued to squat the plank and the whole place was as filthy as ever. There being no disinfectant the location was black with flies which helped to spread dysentery and other diseases.

I remember an occasion when a group of prisoners bathed in the sea beside a group of Korean women. These women were employed as laborers in the shipyard. The Koreans are much better looking people then the Japanese being taller and not as yellow. Although most of the women bathing would be classed as tough and homely looking by our standards, some of the younger ones could be called attractive. Our boys paid little or no attention to them and this was not surprising. When your shoulder blades stick out like wings, stomach bloated with beriberi and the bones of your buttocks making it painful to sit down, one is in no shape to make a hit with the ladies.

The attitude of many of the Korean women was that of pity. Some, when unobserved by the guard, slipped scraps of food to the prisoners. It is possible that one of those boys now returned to Canada will one day be reclining on a beach at a summer

resort. His wife or sweetheart, in a very fetching bathing suit will be beside him. She will be trying to feed him chocolates, which he refuses with closed eyes. He is thinking of another beach in far away Japan and of another women, a young and rather shapely Korean who out of pity slipped him a dried fish head wrapped in a Japanese newspaper. How grateful he was for the gift and how delicious the fish head tasted.

The Japs had some queer quirks about sex. They seemed to delight in making prisoners strip believing this to be humiliating which perhaps at the beginning it was. Later we paid little attention as many were reduced in the summer months to wearing little more than a 'G' string. The Jap often delighted to relate sex experiences with others and would ask the most intimate questions about a man's sex life before capture. They reminded me of smutty minded adolescents. The prisoners were not interested in this conversation. This, I think, is the answer to the Japanese behavior. They are in most cases mentally immature. They seldom reach the stage where they are responsible individuals. Always they look to be instructed and ordered around.

To abuse and discredit white women in conversation with the prisoners was common. I remember having a conversation with Condo, a paint shop acquaintance. He spoke as an authority, comparing white women to Japanese women. His knowledge of our women came from American films that were shown in Japan in pre-war days. Incidentally, in spite of what Condo had to say these films were very popular.

Condo said, "Your women domie (no good)! They throw themselves into improper attitudes, show their legs and breast in public. They have no posture. They slump and fall around exposing themselves. They talk too loud, have no respect for anyone. They mush and kiss long time. This not sanitary. They dress like men and smoke. Japanese women dainty like butterfly or little bird. They respect everybody. They talk sweet like little bird. They walk pretty like this."

Condo, putting his hands level with his chest, fluttered them and minced around the paint shop. I agreed that it looked very nice but thought, 'Every man to his own taste, as the Irishman said as he kissed his cow,' and the Japanese taste is not ours.

Another time, this in Hong Kong, we were marching through the streets and passed a compound where women internees were housed. Most of these were either Portuguese or Parisians. They crowded to the edge of their enclosure and waved at us as we went by. In charge of us was a Japanese interpreter nicknamed Kamloops. He was born in Canada and educated in that town. He spoke Canadian English well. He told us he hated us.

"When I was in Canada I took all kinds abuse." He said. " They called me a little yellow bastard and I smiled. Now where is your so called superiority you dirty scum, etc., etc."

Being wise to our language and habits, Kamloops was able to check and report a man absent from Parade when he'd been marked present. Then he would have Capt. Morris of the Grenadiers brought before the Jap Commandant for an explanation and before the whole Parade he would fly into a violent temper, knock the Captain down and

kick him unconscious. He took a delight in torturing us by his snooping and reporting. All hated him.

To return to the women, they waved and smiled at the boys. Kamloops went wild. Shrieking, he told us, "These women are for us Japanese. Keep your filthy eyes off them!"

And then followed a whole spew of filth. The women fled and we marched on. Kamloops heard us muttering and caught a repetition of what he had been called in Canada. He tried to find out who had spoken but failed to do so and punished us all.

To be likened to a woman was considered a great disgrace. Some of the boys had gotten into trouble by some minor infringement of the camp rules at Yokohama. They therefore had to be humiliated. Feminine garments were produced and they were compelled to strip and put them on, and were then paraded around the camp. They were finally made to stand in the compound to be inspected by the men returning from work. Instead of the culprits being humiliated however, they entered into the spirit of the thing, and as the boys filed past they simpered and ogled lifting up their skirts to show their emancipated limbs and all had a good laugh. All except the Jap that is. He was furious. He could not understand.[5]

Japanese women are squat and bandy legged. They are flat chested and have bad teeth and other blemishes. To a white man they can have very little sex appeal, perhaps I did not see the best. They are browbeaten by their men folk and, as young girls, are often sold into brothels by their fathers. Ridiculous restrictions are placed on every movement. They are childlike in their simplicity, devoted to their husbands and children, hardworking and loyal to their Emperor and family to the point of fanaticism. They possibly deserve a better life than that vouchsafed them. When they are young they are passable but when old they are grotesquely wrinkled and indescribably ugly.

Marching to work one day, under the guard of Moose Face, we saw one of these poor creatures, old and wrinkled, standing on the side of the road. She was naked to the waist and her withered breasts hung down to her stomach. We could not help noticing her ugliness. Someone remarked,

" Look there's Hedy LaMarr!" And got a big laugh. Moose Face noticed this, saw to whom the joker was referring and sprang off the road towards the old women. She saw him coming and fled yelling. Moose Face, in hot pursuit, overtook and beat her. I thought Japanese women like little bird. Poor wretches, they were beaten for being what Japan had made them.[6]

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[5] *Kamloops or Kamloops Kid, was Kanao Inouye, he was personally responsible for the deaths of eight Canadian soldiers held as prisoners. At the end of the war he was imprisoned for war crimes and this created quite a problem for the Canadian Government. Kanao Inouye was a Canadian citizen and there is no provision in the Canadian government to execute one of its own citizens for war crimes. However, Kanao Inouye was tried for treason and executed.*

[6] ***Hedy LaMarr*** *(1913 – 2000)*

CHAPTER 12 - JAP STUPIDITY

The Japanese mentality, observed by me, was a queer mixture of conflicting emotions. He said, and believed, that he was winning the war, yet knew he was not. He had implicit faith in his superiors yet distrusted them. He hated the white man and yet secretly admired him. He was thorough in nothing. He was hounded continually by officialdom, red tape, and ancient religious customs. There was little sincerity in his life, all was empty show, and everything was preordained for him. Thus all became face. How he appeared to others was most important, if he had a uniform so much the better. To steal was not a crime, but to be caught, that meant "Loss of Face".

In the paint shop, Nicholson a prisoner, had a pair of leather gloves obtained through the Red Cross, (about a dozen pairs had reached the camp). One noon hour these gloves disappeared. Nicholson reported the loss to the Master Painter, telling him that the Army would hold him responsible for their disappearance. When we returned from our midday bowl of rice lo and behold there were the gloves. We asked Condo how they were recovered. He struck a pose and said, "I am great detective Sherlock Holmes. (Conan Doyle's stories were popular in Japan and many had read them.)

"Tell us how you did it?" we chorused.

"I say, who was in the place when gloves disappear? Prisoners and Albert. (a Jap worker.)

"You say prisoners would not take gloves, then Albert do take them. Simple Mr. Watson. Now where would Albert hide same? No place in shop, too open. He would hide gloves on person. We undress Albert and inside 'G' cloth we find gloves. Thank you." He bowed.

Having been discovered Albert was never the same man again. He had lost face and from them on he avoided us.

While I was at Shinagawa Prison Camp near Tokyo the Gempi suddenly instituted a search of all prisoners and their belongings. They were looking for a secret radio set, as they knew we were getting the news from somewhere. They found nothing suspicious, however until they came to examine the shelf over the bunk occupied by an American named Johnson. Here they found a heavy box. Carefully taking it down they carefully opened it. Heavy, it could contain shells or batteries. The investigators gathered around. What was their surprise, when opened it contained nothing but stones. Now Johnson, who was a cigarette smoker, had trouble like the rest of us in getting a light for his fag, as no

Austrian leading lady of the 30s and 40s, in Hollywood from 1937 after creating a sensation by appearing nude in the Czech film Extase (1933).

matches or lighters were allowed. He got the idea that he would make a lighter out of pieces of steal and some flint. He therefore became a collector of stones, trying to find which was the most flint like. These were the stones that the Japanese found. They had Johnson brought before them, “What is the meaning of this box of stones?”

Johnson thought fast and then said with a silly grin, “Oh, those. I play with them like this.” He seized a handful and commenced to juggle them not too successfully. The Japs were astonished that a grown man should want to play like a child with stones and thought he must be a little peculiar. The white NCO in charge of the hut confirmed this viewpoint. He tapped his head significantly and they all laughed as the balmy one left juggling his stones until he could continue his experiments.

The Japs were in such good humor after this incident which seemingly proved their own conclusion that most of us were batty, that they soon departed with only a perfunctory further search.

CHAPTER 13 - ATTITUDE OF PRISONERS

It was surprising to watch the different attitudes of the prisoners to their imprisonment. Some resented confinement and reacted so strongly that, like John Payne, they preferred escape and death to further captivity. Some escaped by throwing in the sponge and dying. Others became a listless as dumb animals. They paid little or no attention to their surroundings. They did only what they were compelled to do and disappeared into the mass, losing all individuality. A few, however, became leaders and took responsibility. These the Japanese put in charge of work gangs and fatigue parties. Some of the NCOs were very helpful in organizing the men and keeping up discipline and morale. Others were useless. Our officers at Hong Kong made promotions to Corporal, Sergeant, and company Sergeant Major. These promotions were sometimes not in line with field service and seniority. Those who showed the most courage, initiative, and capabilities of command in front of the enemy seemed to receive the least recognition.

I was told that one fighting Sergeant who had provided splendid and courageous leadership to his men, while his Company Officer sat in a dugout drinking and refusing to engage the enemy, was threatened with a court martial for fighting that enemy. This never materialized however, as the NCOs record and conduct under fire was too well known.

But to return to the department of prisoners, most of the Officers and NCOs hung onto their distinction of rank. The Officers especially benefited by this distinction. They were not required to do any work outside of keeping their own quarters clean. They got a little extra pay and thus some other extras. Their hat and other insignia of rank therefore had to be treasured so that they would be confused with the men. This class distinction was in line with Japanese military practice. The Nips put great importance on rank. A little higher rank gave the owner the right to abuse and beat those beneath him. That our officers did not beat the men was always a surprise to them.

As I recovered from my wounds I put some importance on my appearance and having little to do at Hong Kong I was generally found cleaning my buttons. The rest of the prisoners thought I must be crazy for they had ceased to clean buttons as soon as they were released from the obligation. I however tried to regain my pre-capture standing. Cleaning my buttons I forgot that I was a prisoner. Later the Japs forced all prisoners to repair their clothes, often without proper material. I remember making a needle from the lid of a milk can. It was surprising the things the boys did make, pen knifes, compasses, lighters, and razors. Speaking of razors one lad was an expert at making them. He could take an ordinary table knife with a bone handle, temper the steal and grind and hone the blade so that it was the finest shaving instrument in the camp. Some excellent carving and other artwork were also done. There were also poets and musicians among the prisoners. Some of this poetry and a song have since been published.

While working as a painter in a shipyard near Yokohama I had a Jewish friend named Allister. He was the exact opposite of myself. No one put less importance on his appearance than he did. He just slouched along, his hat pulled down over his ears, his

clothes hanging on him with pins. His pants fell over his shoes. He was so slovenly and grotesque that even the Japs at the shipyard mimicked him. One, whom we called Joe Lewis, would ape Allister's hunched up appearance and shuffle but would pretend to swing a cane. He would say as he shuffled along, " See American gentlemen take a walk" Then suddenly he would pretend to spy a cigarette butt on the ground, spring upon it, crouch down and furtively hide it on his person. We could not help smiling at these performances for they were just the way Allister acted.

Joe Lewis and Allister did not get on well together. Joe was a "two-ringer" or foreman. He was always trying to ride Allister. The climax came when Joe, in charge of a small gang in which Allister was supposed to be working, thought of the idea of telling Allister to stop talking. This was the worst punishment he could have devised. Allister talked all the time. He talked now, telling Joe there was no rule against talking. Joe replied to the effect that there was one now. Every time he caught Allister talking he threw stones at him. Allister, at last really engaged, seized a very small stone and threw it at Joe. The boys intervened. These little disputes never went to the guards, as all knew that once the Jap Army was brought in all suffered.

Allister was a meek appearing chap. He was so disinterested in his work that he would, by slowly dragging the paintbrush out of the pail, let half the paint drip on the ground or down his coveralls. His coveralls became a dried mass of paint. He would apply the remainder to the surface to be painted paying no attention to how it was spread and as a result left thin and uneven bare spots. In the meantime he talked about anything but the job. I asked him why he did not put his mind on what he was doing.

"On this rusty ironwork," he replied, "I would go crazy if I did."

He was quite a philosopher and argued that we should put our real selves beyond being hurt or hungered by the Jap. We should stand back and regard our bodies as something apart. Something that could be exploited and battered but which we would not let affect our true selves. One time when Allister was pretty low, having been given a slap over the head with a rifle butt causing a nasty wound, I said, "What about your philosophy. Can the mind get away from the suffering of the body?"

He replied, " I can only try."

I think my association with Allister kept me sane. We talked about everything. We diagnosed the character of others and ourselves, and he said this about me, "You remind me of the typical volunteer British soldier. Your thinking is a hundred years out of date. You see glory in the arms and in war. That went out at Waterloo with the bright uniforms. You have a militia mind that wants to march in step over the precipice."

I replied, "Do not these modern wars prove that it is your thinking that is out of wrong? Are we not still back a thousand years? Does not our survival and liberation depend on the so called militia mind of thousands of young Canadians, Americans, and Britishers, who are ready and willing to march in their country's defense."

He replied “ Perhaps.”

Still, although we sometimes disagreed, we were fast friends and I trust that the world is now treating him more gently.

CHAPTER 14 - THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS AT YOKOHAMA

Everyone, if they live long enough, can tell a ghost story and I tell this one for what its worth. At Yokohama we were housed in a long hut divided into bays. Each bay was like a room. There were about ten of them. When we first arrived there were eight men in my bay and I came to know them well. Too well in some cases as constant companions in misery often bored one and I could have screamed at the sameness and the pettiness. The same man at the same day after day would make the same complaint about his rice, upbraiding the cook with the same string of oaths. Another would take his bowl at every meal and compare for quantity with every other in the bay. Another sat mute and glum and said nothing to anyone, sullen, surly, starving. I often took my bowl of rice and ate elsewhere and was benefited by the change.

Gradually the number in our section declined. One at a time they sickened and were removed to the hospital, never to return. We were down to four. A chap named Roy Robinson, who was a particular friend as he came from my home district. Another named Lavarie (Lavriere?) and one other made up our group. We four discussed the demise of the others and one day, feeling miserable, I predicted that I would be the next to go. Roy would not have it and urged hanging on although he was actually weaker then myself. Lavarie said very little and soon after sickened and was taken away and died. This left only three in our bay.

One night I had occasion to go to the washroom. The two others were asleep. Returning to the gloom I entered our room and was surprised to see a figure sitting at the foot of the platform that had held the beds of those who had died. It was Lavarie. Startled I stopped. Lavarie was dead. He seemed to turn his head towards me and I beat it and awoke a friend in another bay. He was skeptical and obviously thought I was sickening from fever and was already seeing things. I got him to accompany me back to my bed. The ghost had gone. I told Rob Robinson and he regarded me suspiciously but as he later admitted felt a little squeamish. I never saw the ghost again and no doubt a figment of the imagination but that night Lavarie was very real and I felt that he wanted to give me a message.

I spent two Christmases in the Yokohama shipyard prison camp, 1943 and 1944. The first was a little better than the last for there was not such a shortage of food, which developed as the blockade of Japan tightened. But Christmas 1944 was most hopeful, as it was obvious to the Jap Officials that they had lost the war. Christmas had a certain nostalgia for all of us. Childhood memories of peace and plenty were opposed to our situation of war and want. Gaunt, emaciated prisoners sat on their beds and vied with each other in devising decorations for their particular ward. Bits of colored paper, paint, any greenery, all were collected and arranged as decorations. No Merry Christmas or Happy New Years appeared however, Xmas 1943 or 1944 sufficed. My friend Allister, the commercial artist of the Jewish faith, outdid himself in painting Christmas cards scenes on the walls of our quarters. The bright stars, falling snow, cozy cottages and open hearths all were there. I asked Allister why he went to all this trouble to commemorate a

Christmas feast. He replied, “I like the idea of Christmas. Peace and goodwill, I like that.”

The boys built imitation fireplaces. There were three of them in our hut made of painted cardboard and colored paper. They had even rigged up a fan connected with the electric light and obtained the effect of smoke and flames. The Japanese guards thought this was wonderful and pointed it out to each other. They were like children. Their lives are so drab that the little color the Christmas decorations made pleased them immensely.

The Commandant ordered that no one should disturb us on Christmas Day. Possibly he expected to be let in on some secret rite that all this preparation foreshadowed. Happily we had a Red Cross parcel. The McKnight brothers had held an orchestra of five pieces together. They had very little opportunity and practically no place to practice, but they managed to play creditably. There was an impromptu concert but few had the heart to sing. Our entertainers thought they would try to cheer us with something bright, but it didn’t sound that way.

At the last Christmas the Japanese shipyard authorities as a great contribution to our happiness, gave a Christmas tree about two feet high. It was some kind of a scrubby birch but it was a tree and was received gratefully. It was decorated with paper and put in a position of honor. The Japs thought, ‘ Ha, ha!’ These are queer people. They are like children. Give them a few bits of colored paper to play with and they are happy. We will humor them, as it is harmless.

CHAPTER 15 - COLLABORATION WITH THE ENEMY

Under our circumstances it was hard sometimes to draw the line between what would be considered collaboration and what the Japs expected of us. All NCOs and men were supposed to work. How hard they worked and how efficiently were largely up to the man himself. He could make trouble for others as well as himself or play along. He could be smart and ingratiate himself with the Jap and receive favors without betraying anyone. He could do the same thing and betray his comrades.

One of the Canadian prisoners I knew in Hong Kong was smart and soon picked up the Japanese language and their customs, especially the one of bowing to a superior. He bowed to them all with a smile. As most of the other prisoners at that time were sulky, the Japs loved it. He was soon given little privileges and was consulted on many matters pertaining to the running of the camp. The rest of us were suspicious of him but he always played it safe. When there was a conflict of orders or a minor rule infringement and one of the boys was up for discipline he, being the only one that understood both sides, was brought in as an interpreter. He always deftly explained away the action or lack of action of the accused. He was so adept in translating their own regulations to the Japs to the benefit of the prisoners that they finally preferred to get along without him. He was far too ready to help and a darn sight too smart for them.

There were a few that carried their fear of what might happen to them to the extent that when they returned home they stood charged with collaboration with the enemy. I was with one of these in Hong Kong. I remember an incident that might give insight to his character. We were on a work party when American planes came over and bombed the docks. The Jap guards were very excited and made our group of prisoners squat down in a circle while they surrounded us with leveled bayonets. Some of the prisoners were openly enjoying the show and praying for some more direct hits on shipping and other targets. The guards were showing their fear and anger and seemed to need little provocation to massacre the bunch of us. The collaborator sensed this as I did. He glanced fearfully at the guards and back to us.

“Make like your scared,” he said, “like this.” and he assumed a position of groveling fear. Most of the boys were disgusted. I said to him bitterly, “If you want to show them you’re yellow go ahead but leave us alone.”

Fear can make men do queer things. As we were being marched to prison camp before the surrender I saw another, diligently driving one of our ambulances loaded up with Japs. He was a prisoner that was making himself very useful to the enemy.

The Officers were forced to collaborate to a certain degree in helping to enforce the rules of the enemy in running the camps. Men and Officers for that matter were punished for actions, which would not be regarded as punishable by our own military or civilian authorities.

For example at Yokohama I had jaundice and for a short time was put into a hospital hut. There were about twenty patients in this hut laying on platforms slightly raised off the floor. There was a small stove but no supply of fuel. It was winter and very cold. The boys working outside the camp would pick up the odd stick of wood, hide it under their clothes and bring it into the hospital so that at night there would be a fire and some warmth.

About this time there were some American Naval Officers placed in the camps, survivors I believe, of the Philippines. One of these, nattily dressed in white and with peaked cap with the large golden eagle badge, a typical young American Officer, paid us a visit. Finding it cold in the Officers' quarters this young fellow had found a book and a box to sit upon and had taken a place near the stove. He sat reading his book by the dim light of a yellow bulb that lighted the hut. He read quietly. The twenty sick patients envied him his health, composure, and appearance. He typified the best of our civilization, physical perfection, personal cleanliness, education and subscription to all the rules of Naval and civic etiquette that made up the world with which he was familiar. Then came the Jap.

The door partly opened and a cruel yellow face peered in. It was the guard armed with rifle and bayonet. He looked around the hut, saw all the patients lying on their beds and then saw the Lieutenant. He was curious for he had noticed the big gold eagle in the cap. This was not an orderly. It was one of the American Officers. He waddled into the hut freeing his rifle and fixed bayonet from his shoulder. He stood with legs apart regarding the Officer. The Lieutenant glanced up from the book he was reading, saw the sentry, stared at him for a moment and then went on reading. The sentry's face became distorted with rage. He drew his lips back and bared his teeth like an animal then he leaped and knocked the gold braided hat off the young Officer's head. " YATAKI" (stand at attention). The young fellow was startled and amazed. Many emotions registered on his face, anger, fear, and shame. He slowly stood to attention. Then the stocky guard belabored him, slapping his face, making him pick up his hat, stand to attention, salute and bow, the last without a hat. He jabbered in Japanese which some of the patients, like myself, could partly understand but which the Officer evidently could not. He beat him with his rifle butt, smashed his clenched fist into the Officer's face. They stood glaring at each other. All the hatred and differences of their respective races were here expressed. The Jap wanted to be regarded as a superior being by one whom he knew to be his superior. He hated the white man for that superiority and was determined to humiliate him.

The white man had not risen and bowed when he had come into the room. He had no right away from his quarters. It was the guard's opportunity; here was the superior type of white man. Ferociously he beat him. It made many of the boys in the hospital; myself included, physically sick and retarded our recovery. Men covered their eyes and ears. To me it was one of the worst experiences I suffered and do not know how we contained ourselves from rising en masse and tearing the sentry to pieces. The young man stood, deathly white, with blood on his face and his uniform, glaring at the Jap. He knew and the Jap knew that a false move and the Jap would try to kill him. If he killed the Jap they would torture him to death. So he stood and took it for over an hour and we shared his

hell with him. These Officers, newly captured, did not know the Jap as we did and therefore often angered him by not understanding an order.

CHAPTER 16 - GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD

This was the unuttered cry of all the prisoners. Give us food. Give us enough so that we can live. How can we work when we are starving? The Japs answer 'We will show you how' and he did. At Hong Kong following the surrender the rations were meager. Every man got two small bowls of rice daily and some greens such as turnip, cabbage, eggplant and sea kale and the occasional serving of a small portion of fish or meat. From December 1941 until February 1945 we each received one Red Cross parcel. At the time we left for Japan proper we were all suffering from malnutrition. From 190 pounds at the time of my capture I was down to 120 pounds and so it was with the rest. Malnutrition diseases had set in, beriberi, dysentery etc. Yet if a man, however sick, was able to walk he was presumed fit for work and was compelled to go out on working parties. He was of little or no use and his condition was aggravated by exposure and toil.

At D3 Camp near Yokohama, in the winter of 1943, I suffered an attack of dysentery and as I was sick and so weak that I was utterly useless for any kind of work. I reported to our Medical Officer, Capt. Reid. What I desired was an excuse from work in the shipyard until I could recover a little. Captain Reid had not the power to excuse anybody. All the sick able to walk had to be paraded before one of the guards, a private. He sat at a table at the end of one of the huts. Vastly impressed with his own importance and determined to impress that same importance on any of the prisoners who should come before him. That morning there was a long line of sick prisoners. Most could hardly walk and were suffering from a variety of malnutrition and exposure diseases. All of them had previously been examined by Dr. Reid and found him to be in dire need of hospitalization, extra food and rest.

We were told by the Doctor that all depended on the whim of the surly guard and that we should all salute and hope for the best. As we filed up to the table Captain Reid stood beside the Jap pointing out the names of the men on a sheet of paper. In the best Japanese, of which he was capable, he tried to make the guard understand the seriousness of the individual prisoners complaint.

Man after man dragged himself before the table. They stood after giving a feeble salute in a hopeless forlorn position. Captain Reid would make his plea. The Jap paid scarcely any attention to what he was saying and would put a mark against the name on the list. Then peering at the sick and shivering prisoner he would say in English with a motion of dismissal, "Work. You work."

A few, for no particular reason, were excused work. A fewer still were allowed an increase in their ration of a small bun of bread a day for a limited period to offset dysentery and malnutrition.

I had been long enough a prisoner to have some idea of the Jap's mentality and decided to give my knowledge a tryout. When my turn came at last and I stood before the table, I gathered together the last remnants of strength I possessed, sprang smartly to

attention and gave Mr. Glower Puss a real military salute. He was at first surprised and then obviously pleased. Turning to Captain Reid. He said, " Give that man bread."

And bread and rest I got, for about ten days. When we were dismissed I told the Doctor he could keep the bread, as I knew there were some who needed it worse than me. I would be satisfied with the rest from labor.

He replied, " Keep the bread Marsh. If I gave it to others the Japs would find out and it would be the worse for us all."

I shared this bread with friends as they had shared with me.

During the summer of 1944 in Yokohama we were, as usual, very hungry. Our constant ambition was to get a little extra to eat. One afternoon, while passing along the quay on an errand, I was surprised to see the water around the dock alive with little fish. Here was food, but how to get it? I went back to the paint shop, and unobserved, made myself a scoop net out of some bamboo canes and an old piece of sacking. Waiting an opportune moment I slipped out and down to the dock. No one was in the immediate vicinity so I crouched down and commenced fishing in earnest. Eureka! There was silver, better than gold in the net. Again and again I plunged in my scoop and more and more little fish accumulated until I had quite a pile of them. I thought I had better hide them for the guards were always prowling and I might be discovered. Where could I hide them? My pockets were already full of the fish so I stuffed them inside my shirt and overalls. I felt them wiggling all over me, it was a delightful wiggle, it meant food. I was now pretty well packed with fish but could not tear myself away from nature's bounty and decided to take a few more scoops when, wham! I felt a violent blow between my shoulders blades that almost knocked me into the water. At the same time I heard the dreaded " KOO DA! KOO DA!" the shout of a Japanese guard. Looking around I saw him waddling or half running towards me. He had just thrown a fairly large rock, with which I had made acquaintance. He was in a terrible rage, gesturing and screaming like a monkey. I stood to attention as we were compelled to do when being addressed by a guard. He seized my fishing scoop and tried to break it over my head. He broke it on my arm and shoulder instead. I was thinking hard. I hated to lose those fish. My assailant was fairly old and flabby, splayfooted and either lame or in no condition to run, so I suddenly gave him a push. He must have slipped on a fish for down he sat and I bolted, not to the paint shop but to another part of the yards where I dodged among the different buildings, being busy on an imaginary job when I saw another guard.

At last I got back to the paint shop without detection. The Paint master himself greeted me and wanted to know where I had been. As I was trying to tell a plausible story little fish fell out of my sleeves and overalls. I then told him the truth and we went into the office where I emptied the fish into a pail. He said he should report me to the guard but as they would take away the fish it would be better that nobody say anything and that he and I eat the fish that evening. We did. They were delicious.

At the same camp at a time when we were down to the barest minimum of sustenance we once got for our evening meal, along with our cupful of rice, one small sprat apiece. This was a welcome treat and everyone watched with greedy eyes as they

were distributed one to each man's bowl. Then just as we were prepared to seize the delicacy the lights went out. Commands were shouted, "Hold everything. Stay where you are. Nobody move."

It was a full fifteen minutes before the lights came on. Then horror. One of the little fish was missing.

Everyone looked suspiciously at his neighbors. Movement of the jaws was looked for. Men turned out their pockets. Curses were cried on the thief. After a half hour search a tiny piece was cut off each man's fish to make up the missing portion and we ate. The topic of the week was 'Who stole the fish.'

That night one of the boys was discovered secretly devouring a fish in bed. He claimed he had saved it from his supper. But now when his old comrades meet him they say to themselves, 'He stole the fish.

With so much dire necessity there was bound to be a certain amount of pilfering and this was divided into two kinds, that directed against the Japs was OK with the boys but against a fellow prisoner was considered a serious crime. Fortunately there was very little of the latter. As far as the Japs were concerned the prisoners stole anything they could carry away, mainly food and fuel.

At the shipyards the Japanese workmen would bring their lunch boxes or rice and bits of this and that and place them in orderly rows at the back of the shipyard kitchen where, before lunchtime, they would be warmed up. Our boys soon located this display of food and on different pretenses would sneak back into the kitchen. Sure enough when they did some ones dinner would be missing. It got so bad that the Japs had to put a special guard on their cookhouse.

At the Sendai Coal Mining Camp I remember an Imperial soldier being caught by the Japs as he was stealing food from a pig trough. The Japanese Commandant decided to humiliate him, and indirectly all of us, by having the trough brought out on the square. Filling it with swill they drew a line and made the culprit crawl on his hands and knees from the line to the trough and eat. Many of the prisoners, myself included, were ashamed to see one of their own people so humiliated, but the victim did not seem to mind. Grinning broadly he scrambled up to the trough, put his face into the swill and ate. A short while later, after liberation, I saw this same lad singing in the choir of a camp Thanksgiving service. He sang heartily. Evidently the swill did not affect his outlook.

In every camp there was bound to be a few underworld characters that seemed to be naturals for any thieving, cheating, or black market transactions. The Japanese police picked up a Jap in Tokyo with a pair of our Red Cross boots. These boots had been issued to a few of the prisoners in our camp who were in dire need of them, but a couple of prisoners, having got hold of a pair, traded them to the Tokyo Jap for provisions.

The Tokyo Civil Police, a smart body of men with neat blue uniform, shiny boots and a small silver sword, were well on the job. They brought the Jap to our camp where

he identified one of the prisoners (I shall name him Smith). Smith was seized and asked to name his companion. He refused and was given a beating.

The next day they lined up all the prisoners and asked Smith to point out the man. Again he refused and received more beatings. Then we were told that if the man did not come forward we would all be punished … still no confession. Now Smith was led up to each of the prisoners in turn and the prisoner was asked, " Did you trade the boots with Smith."

All replied "No", until they came to the guilty party. Smith then muttered, "Come on! Own up! I've taken enough beatings for you."

So his confederate confessed and they both were hauled away to jail in Tokyo, and this was the extraordinary thing, they both got better food and treatment than they were receiving in camp. They came back heavier than when they left, reporting that the food was good, the jail clean and warm and they were never beaten. They just sat around without working and had met the intelligentsia of Tokyo, diplomats, politicians and bankers, while exercising in the prison yard. Also they had been issued with warm padded clothing and to prove it they produced a fine jacket that they had swiped from the police station. Right then and there we all wanted to go to jail.

Our underworld consisted of about nine tough characters. Living so closely together we had come to know them and therefore when some particular skullduggery was afoot it could usually be traced to their vicinity. So it was at camp D3. My friend Allister lost his sweater. Obviously it had been stolen. Now a sweater was essential to offset the cold winter. It could not be replaced and meant that the loser would suffer real hardship.

Allister reported his loss to Captain Reid. All Captain Reid had to do was to call the nine men of our underworld before him and say, "I know one of you has the sweater. If the one who has it does not return it to Allister before morning I will turn the whole nine of you over to the Japs and let them locate the culprit."

They departed and sagely talked it over. They knew what would happen if the Japs started working on them so it was decided that whoever had the sweater should give it back and the guilty one accordingly returned Allister's sweater. The rest of the boys in the hut were indignant and decided to punish the thief. Here is the matter of one prisoner beating another. They dared not report to the Jap and they had no other means of punishment so they took the thief outside and gave him a beating. They dragged him before Allister and said, " Come on, take a good poke at him! It was your sweater!" After some urging Allister gently tapped the cringing one on the cheek and then departed. I said to him later, " Why didn't you give him a good one. He deserved it." Allister replied, "I was so happy at getting my sweater back that I couldn't feel mad!" Such is the difference in human nature.

CHAPTER 17 - SLAPHAPPY JAPS

The Japanese practice of slapping all and sundry, so prevalent among their own troops, was extended to the prisoners. I have told of Officers, NCOs and men being beaten among the prisoners. This slap in the face was often an almost childish exhibition of temper. At other times it was mean and vicious the forerunner to blows by fist, belt, boot or rifle butt. The Japanese Commandant at one of our camps was surprised that our officers did not beat the men. He asked, " How do you punish them?" He was told the truth. " Oh we put them in solitary confinement and just feed them bread and water." So the next prisoner to be punished by the Nips was put into a pen by himself. No work and real bread to eat. The Japs noticed this, shook their heads saying they could not understand how this could be punishment and put the man back to work.

The Japanese private is slapped often by his Officers and sometimes severely beaten. I saw a guard being inspected by a Jap Major at Sham Shui Po Camp. The Major was in a towering rage, possibly half drunk on Sake. The Guard stood ridged to attention, NCOs as well as privates. After abusing them the Major took off his heavy leather belt and swinging the buckle end knocked down the man at the end of the line. Immediately two of his comrades bent smartly and carried him into the guardhouse. They returned and took their places in line. The Major then knocked down another. He was smartly carried away. Finally they were all knocked down and carried away except the last two who were left laying in the road as their Major strutted off. I thought 'What an efficient Guard is left at the gate.' The Major must have felt like the tailor who swatted six flies with one blow.

I was told that in the Japanese Military Hospitals at Hong Kong there were whole wards of slaphappy Jap soldiers knocked silly by their superiors. When the guards practiced their slapping of the prisoners it was held as a sign of military virtue if one took this slapping without flinching. The slightest sign of fear, or any other emotion for that matter, and the Jap went crazy and pounded into you, often beating a weakened prisoner unconscious.

I had an experience in Camp D3 of wholesale slapping that at the time was very distressing but which I can now recollect with some amusement. There were about twenty men in the double bay in which we slept, all laying on wooden platforms. It was midnight. The huts were ghostlike and fitfully lighted by the moon. Men tossed in uneasy sleep, bitten by fleas and bugs and run over by the occasional rat.

All was dark and quiet at midnight when the sentry made his rounds. He came into our bay, shone his flashlight on the sleeping forms then onto a board we used as a table. On this was an ashtray. It was supposed to be emptied and cleaned before we retired. Some ash had, however, been left in it. The sentry chose to regard this as a positive sign that someone had been smoking after 'Lights Out.' Therefore we were all awakened by his loud cries, " KOO DA! KOO DA! YATAKI! YATAKI!" (Meaning get up, get up.) Those who were slow in obeying this order were thumped with his rifle butt. Half awake we crept out of our blankets. Some were naked others were in makeup

nightgowns. One chap, I remember had a long nightshirt, a women's nightgown he had picked up somewhere. The Jap guards, when in good humor, used to laugh at this gown, stand the man at attention, lift the gown and look at his legs. This night however the guard was in a vile humor. He stood us in two rows facing each other, still half asleep and groping in the half-light. He demanded to know who had been smoking.

The sentry moved down the line stopping in front of each man and asked if he had been smoking. When he received a negative reply he slapped the man. After slapping every man in the group he seemed to tire of this and decided we must all be punished. He ordered that we were to slap each other. At his signal all were to reach over and slap the man in front of him. There was a chap named Guy Stewart facing me and we exchanged perfunctory taps. " Hit harder!" shrieked the Jap.

Still not awake and annoyed at the whole proceedings, I involuntarily hauled off and gave Stewart quite a smack. He retaliated with a hearty one. I returned the compliment. Now both awake we realized where we were and what we were doing and felt rather sheepish. From then on we traded love taps until our tormentor called a halt and allowed us to retire. It must have made a weird sight. Twenty emaciated prisoners, some still under the impression they were dreaming, some naked, others with only G-strings on, slapping each other to the accompanying cries of a little yellow devil with a flashlight ... Just a little corner of Hell on earth.

There is a sadistic trait in the Japanese, as I believe there is in many Eastern races. I saw that cruelty and callousness to the suffering of others was common. For one Japanese that made a gesture of helpfulness towards the prisoners there were ten who sought the opportunity to torture, annoy, and humiliate us. They were only prevented from destroying us by the fact that their higher ups believed that we might be of some use. First as hostages to compel further surrender and secondly as slave labor.

Their treatment of the Chinese was not governed by these considerations and therefore they seldom bothered to take them prisoner. If they did they soon executed them. I have heard the saying 'Not a Chinaman's chance.' Well the Chinaman had little chance when he met the Jap. At Hong Kong any Jap soldier could kill a Chinaman and no questions were asked even after the battle.

At North Point prison camp, on the Island of Hong Kong, the Chinese had been driven out to make room for the white prisoners, however these refugees still hung around the camp. Homeless and starving they would try to obtain a scrap of food or a piece of wood for fuel. They stole anything they could lay their hands on. The Jap guard at the camp sometimes caught them and beat them with rifle butts. Once, as a warning to others, they hung two Chinese women, a mother and her daughter, by their thumbs outside the gate. They hung there until they died.

There was a small window in the hospital hut out of which I could see a portion of the prison yard. Along the side of this yard there had once been flowerbeds. Although neglected, some of these flowers still bloomed. One afternoon I saw a party of Jap soldiers lead a Chinaman to one of these flowerbeds. They gave him a shovel and made

him dig a hole. When he was finished they forced him to kneel down. They cut off his head with a heavy sword and kicked his body into the hole without bothering to cover it. Then they started to pick the flowers. When each had a little bunch they came into the hospital hut and put them on our beds, smiling blandly. What a nice gesture. From one gallant foe to another as it were.

On my return to Canada I saw a picture of one little Nip carrying a large bunch of flowers to General MacArthur at the surrender. Possibly the idea is that if you smell the flowers you won't smell anything else.

The harbor of Hong Kong and the reservoir were so full of dead Chinaman that they were unsafe even for bathing. Dead bloated bodies were everywhere. At North Point Camp I saw an incident of punishment that none but the savage could inflict. A Chinese boy was caught stealing by the guard. After being beaten he was made to crawl into a section of earthen drainpipe about four feet long and ten inches wide. When the boy had crawled in the pipe was stood on end and he was left head downward with his feet waving above the pipe. Throughout that hot day the pipe stood there and soon the legs stopped waving. When it was taken down in the evening the boy was dead.

I will pass over the treatment of white women at the time of the surrender. I saw their bodies littering the road. I did not hear of one case where some of the Japanese Officers made an effort to punish their troops guilty of this type of atrocity.

I have tried to keep my narrative to what I actually saw, however, this was told to me by those who did witness the incident. The Japanese soldiery ransacked a British Hospital unit and murdered the patients. The staff, which included a group of red Cross Nurses, was taken prisoner and a guard put over them. That night the guard raped all the nurses, bayoneting those that resisted. This incident came to the attention of the Japanese staff. A Japanese Officer, accompanied by one of our imprisoned Majors, visited the hospital and interviewed the surviving women. The members of the guard were paraded and the nurses were asked to identify their assailants. The younger women, hysterical and ill, were unable to do so, but some of the older ones were and they positively identified several of the Jap guard.

The Japanese Officer took out his revolver and handed it to the British Major saying, "Shoot them!" After the Major refused to do so the Japanese Officer stepped forward, put his revolver to the ear of the first culprit and shot him, then shot the others.

Torture of the prisoners was not unusual. Several of our boys had splinters of bamboo forced under their fingers and toenails. Some suffered the water torture where water is forced down the throat and when the stomach is full, bloated and extended the Jap would jump upon the prisoner's stomach.

For certain diseases the Japanese doctors subscribed cure would be to burn the body in several places with hot coal. From this Japanese cure arose a new form of torture. I saw a prisoner forced to lie over hot coals fresh from a fire and do hand presses lowering and raising his body over the coals. Endurance only prolonged his ineluctable (*Can. Oxford Dictionary*, ***ineluctable*** *– unable to be resisted or avoided*) fate. When fatigue and

exhaustion finally overtook him, his body dropped down into the cinders.

A more refined torture was the withholding of red Cross Supplies and letters from home. In all the four years of my imprisonment I received exactly seven letters and the other prisoners about the same. At Shinagawa Camp in Tokyo I saw whole sackfuls of letters, which the Japs were too indifferent to distribute themselves and refused to let us distribute. Bags of mail were burned at Tokyo before the eyes of the prisoners. Red Cross Supplies were stolen and consumed by the guards. Some were stored and allowed to rot. The little that was issued was used as bait to sick and exhausted men working. “No work! No food.” seemed to be the motto.

I think my reader will agree that the Japanese have proven themselves through the acts of their Army and of their camp Officials to be cruel, heartless and indifferent to the sufferings of others.

CHAPTER 18 - AMERICANS BOMB YOKOHAMA

In the fall and winter of 1944 we knew we were winning the war. The more intelligent Japanese also knew it. In spite of their bravado and 'face saving' the higher ups were preparing an out. American planes were now seen in broad day light in perfect formation, heading to and returning from Tokyo. The Jap workmen in the shipyards whispered furtively of what had happened there. We knew it would not be long before it happened to us. The majority of the prisoners accepted this with a certain amount of fatalism and grim satisfaction.

We could not visualize any ending of the war that would set us at liberty before the Nips has vented their spleen on us. But having survived so far, we were content to let the perils of the day and, as the bombing became more intense, those of the night suffice.

Around our compound we dug funk holes as air raid shelters. Just a hole covered with some old timbers and a pile of dirt. We went to this protection when the warning signal sounded, accompanied by our guards and carrying our scanty belongings and food supply, a few bags of rice.

The American pilots must have identified our camp. This was quite a feat for we were right in the middle of the factory district, being in fact quartered in the yard of an oil refinery and steel works. Again the Jap was using us to protect himself and his equipment for making war. It speaks well for the American Bomber Command that they spared this refinery and steel works to save the prisoners. American reconnaissance planes would sweep low over our camp, wave their wings and dart away.

One night in July a large-scale attack with firebombs was made in our district. The ack-ack was terrific. The whole world seemed aflame. In spite of the efforts of our guards to keep us from witnessing the sight we stood and gazed at the conflagration. Only a river running nearby and the fact that our huts had tiled roofs saved our quarters from the fire. Smoke and sparks were all around. I saw a terrible sight that night. I watched a string of American bombers, in line astern formation, following their leader. The lead aircraft made for the very center of the ack-ack fire and at this point burst into flames. Plane after plane followed to the same point and were shot down. Altogether I counted five. I felt sick. We all prayed for those gallant lads.

One of the Jap guard, like quite a few Japanese who prided themselves on their esthetic qualities, got quite a kick out of seeing his home town destroyed. He stood gazing on the burning city in rapt ecstasy and then raising his arms to the sky he turned to us and said in English, " Drama! Drama." he was convinced he had a front seat at a good show, all for nothing. He appeared quite mad and if he had a fiddle like Nero I'm sure he would have played us a tune.

For several days following the bombing we saw long files of civilian refugees filing past our camp trekking into the hills. The Japanese Officials had cleared the whole

district of its inhabitants. The remaining hovels and dwellings that had survived the firebombing were pulled down to prevent the further spread of the fire but little was left to save.

The Nips had a kind of Red Cross organization, which took part in the evacuation of the population. All those, who had lost everything were given an emergency parcel, a gift from the Emperor, to enable them to carry on. It consisted of a tin of salmon, one small package of army biscuits, one 'G' string and a pair of white cotton socks, a box of tooth powder, a bamboo tooth brush and a small towel, and finally a paper flag to wave. They were packed off to the hills to live and starve in holes and caves. Docilely they went carrying the bodies of their dead loved ones.

It was three days before we returned to the shipyards. Our yard had suffered only minor damage as the buildings were spread out and many of the workmen had disappeared. The Japanese workers that were left appeared thoroughly frightened and told us the missing workmen were either burned out, dead, or sent away. Surprisingly the Japanese workmen did not seem to hold us responsible for the holocaust.

I asked one Jap workman how he made out. He smiled and replied, " Wife dead, two children gone!" He reached out, patted me, and then walked away.

Some of the prisoners took delight in informing the Japs that this raid was nothing. The Japanese listened popeyed as they were told of the sky black with planes and of blockbusters so huge that everybody would be blown to smithereens. At the time they said this to impress the Japs but in actuality came very near to the truth.

Through the grapevine we heard that balloons were being used to bomb Canada and that the Rocky Mountains were afire. We had seen the Rocky Mountains and considered this report malarkey.

We also heard that half the American fleet was sunk and as one little Jap explained to me mathematically, " One Japanese plane never return, sink one American battleship. Lots more Japanese planes then battleships! Result, little while no American battleships."

We called the Japanese Commandant of D3 Camp Charlie because he had a Charlie Chaplin moustache and he was a real smoothie. He owned a chain of hotels in Japan and as they were destroyed one after the other he had taken up his quarters at the camp with two young women companions and lived luxuriously on our Red Cross Supplies. He inaugurated the practice, which I have since found prevailed in some of the other camps, of not distributing Red Cross parcels. He would open them and turn over a small portion to our cooks for incorporation in our boiled rice issue. The remainder he kept for himself and friends. During the time of the bombing he gave us several lectures.

"You must all be prepared if this camp is struck. Look! I am always prepared My Hotels are burned down. What do I care! I have plenty of money. Do not be scared of what people may do to you. The Japanese Imperial Army will protect you. I am the Army! One Japanese soldier can protect you from everybody. The people respect the Army!

Many great men in Japan are soldiers. I am soldier!"

I wish at this time to pay tribute to Captain Reid, Medical Officer, Sgt.-Major Shore of the Royal Rifles of Canada and Regimental Sergeant Major Keenan of the Grenadiers who were in charge. All were upright and honest in their handling of supplies and for this they were hated by the Japanese officials. This kind of talk went on for an hour or more in a high shrill voice. Few bothered to listen after the first few minutes.

There was a cement bathtub in the guards' quarters and the water was heated in a nearby boiler and then poured into the tub. As fuel was scarce about the only time we could get hot water to wash our clothes or ourselves was when Charlie had a bath, which he did at fairly frequent intervals. Accompanied by his two Geishas he would disappear into the bathhouse and they would wash him and later themselves. Only after they were finished did a lucky few of us get to use the hot water.

Once in a while Charlie would give a party for the shipyard officials out of the Red Cross supplies. The food was washed down with Sake. To cover himself in case of future investigation he asked Sergeant Pollock to sign a document purporting to show that these goods went to our cookhouse. Pollock refused to sign saying that later he would have to account for those same supplies. Charlie did not mind, he signed the forms himself.

Our usefulness as a protection to the shipyards, and as workers, was pretty well at an end by the spring of 1945. The shipyard was at a standstill so we were addressed by a retired Japanese Admiral. His talk was entirely different to the one we had received from the Army big shot when we first arrived. Now we were told that we were the wards of the Emperor and that he would protect us. He went on to say that through out history many brave had been taken prisoner and for your own protection we were to be sent out into the beautiful country where the air was fresh and the grass green. We thought this sounded pretty good until he went on to say we were going to a coal mining camp where we must work diligently, safe and warm. He dismissed us almost benevolently. We thought it couldn't be very bad and most were glad to go.

During the bombing we were visited by a group of twenty-five Dutch and other allied prisoners of war. They were in a terrible state and evidently had been much abused. They carried one of their number who had been bayoneted by their guards. I saw several of them being beaten. One particular big Dutchman was beaten terribly. They were not allowed to communicate with us. Apparently their camp had burned down and after an overnight stay they were hurried away.

Just before we were due to leave we were given a new suit of overalls, Red Cross boots, two good shirts, a uniform and an army overcoat. Most of this stuff had been held in storage and during our long stay denied to the prisoners. We were also given a little extra food ration, which was a great benefit as all were desperately under weight and riddled with disease.

Our old camp was to be taken over by the Rising Sun Boys. This was a large

group of delinquent Japanese youth who worked in the shipyard building gunboats. They were disciplined along Japanese Navy lines and did everything on the double. They wore thin cotton uniforms with the red blot of Nippon on it. It was pitiable to see these kids in winter. Without overcoats and shod in running shoes, running to work behind six of the most robust who ran abreast blowing short blasts on bugles. Half the party would fall behind and be whipped by the guards who carried long bamboo canes for the purpose. Many of these children were like us prisoners, suffering from malnutrition and disease. I was told they worked on twelve-hour shifts, day and night. I thought, "suffer the little children". Was it any wonder that if these children survived and later went into the services they paid little attention to cruelty and suffering?

Before we left, some of the boys and I went to say goodbye to those Japs we had found friendly. We gave them the possessions we could not carry with us, an old coat or some other piece of equipment. Some seemed genuinely sorry to see us go. We went around to the cubbyhole and found the Master Painter. He was highly nervous and had difficulty in understanding what we had come to say. " Tri ana la" Goodbye, Goodbye." He was not bad as Japs go and we left him as he furtively slipped back into his cubbyhole.

Under the Command of Captain Reid around two hundred Canadians entrained for our journey to Camp Sendai.

CHAPTER 19 - HOSPITAL TREATMENT

At the time of the bombings in the fall of 1944, while working in the shipyard near Yokohama, I suffered from a mild attack of dry beriberi and then developed jaundice. At this time the Japanese had established a central Hospital camp for prisoners called Shinagawa Camp at Tokyo. Acting on instructions from Tokyo about a dozen of us, too sick to work, were bundled one morning into a truck and driven several hostile miles to Tokyo. A Winnipeg Grenadier named McPhearson, who had been caught in some machinery while working in the yards and broken his arm and several other bones, lay on an improvised stretcher at the bottom of the truck. The road was rough like most Japanese roads and the truck bumped and swayed as it careened along. McPhearson was in great pain and we had trouble in keeping him on the stretcher. We pleaded with the driver of the truck and the guard beside him for more careful driving. They both laughed and paid no further attention.

Going through parts of Tokyo we saw grim evidence of the effectiveness of the American bombing. Whole areas were laid waste, most being burned out. Shinagawa Camp was placed right in the heart of the district and the Japs were using it to protect themselves from American bombs. The camp itself was much the same as the others. A high board fence surrounding a collection of low sheds with tiled roofs and few windows. Here were held most of the medical personal both American and British that the Japanese had captured during the first two years of the war. The medical Officer in charge under the Japanese Commandant was a Commander Surgeon of the British Navy captured at Hong Kong. He was a tall, elderly, distinguished looking Englishman who always wore full navy regalia, gold braided hat and coat sleeves and ribbons were possibly the only clothes he possessed. He did not wear a monocle but it would have suited his facial expressions perfectly. When questioning the patients his jaw would drop, one eyebrow would come down and he would constantly saw “ Haw” He was however a very good surgeon and a helpful, honest and well intentioned man.

He was often in trouble with the Japs, as they hated his type and what he stood for, but they wanted to pick his and other doctors' brains. They had Japanese doctors watching all operations and turned many of them into experimental demonstrations often at the cost of life and limb of the unfortunate patient. The Commander and the other white doctors were in some cases compelled to operate secretly and at night to avoid having the patients experimented upon. As usual there were few Red Cross supplies in the camp and practically no medicine. All the medicine I saw was a few white pills. Most of the operating equipment, surgical instruments and an X-Ray machine had been made or set up by a small group of officers from a Norwegian merchant ship. These men were very clever and seemed to be able to make anything. I believe they had a radio hidden somewhere and the Japs knew it for several times they instigated searches but always without success.

The Japs were continually punishing both the doctors and the patients. An American doctor had performed an operation without the knowledge of the Japs and was

sent to work in the shoe shop, mending boots. He showed me his hands and told me that they were ruined for any future surgical work. All the patients were on half rations and remained at the edge of starvation. A small bowl of rice with a few greens but at least we didn't have to work. In spite of our condition the Japanese doctors continued to torment and terrorize the patients. The walking patients were paraded and exercised and forced to attempt the impossible such as bending, stretching, and running exercises. All the patients lived in fear of the Japanese experiments and their treatments. One of them related earlier, being the use of live coals to burn the body believing this counter irritant would produce a cure. No one was allowed to smoke and this was a great hardship to the men as they were constantly being punished for breaking this rule.

I had jaundice for quite some time before being moved to the hospital. I was already recovering when admitted so in three weeks I asked to be sent back to work. This was a request the Japs always granted whether you were fit or near death. The Japanese could care less. All they were interested in was to get as much work out of us as possible.

I was taken before the British Commander and a Japanese doctor. Upon examination they noticed my arm, which I could not straighten. It had been broken during the shelling at Hong Kong and had healed itself without treatment. The Jap made a quick motion of breaking something, meaning that it should be broken and reset. I heard our Commander explain in Japanese and English that there was a growth in the elbow and re breaking the arm would do no good. The Jap then made the motion of whittling and said impatiently, " Scrape it off. Scrape it off." The Commander then informed him that if they operated I might possibly lose my arm and that in any case he was certain I would be unable to use the arm for a very long time. This seemed to convince the Jap. He asked if I could now work with the arm. I said, "Yes!" and demonstrated its use. They seemed pleased so I was allowed to return to Camp D3.

Our Commander that day saved my arm and no doubt my life for I believe I was in no shape to endure such a painful operation and a prolonged recovery.

CHAPTER 20 - THE COAL MINES OF SENDAI

We left Camp D3 one afternoon in April 1945. We were under Captain Reid and a Lieutenant Finn, an American Naval Officer, who had accompanied us from Hong Kong. Traveling all night we arrived the following morning at a way station near the coal-mining town of Sendai in northern Honshu Island.

By Japanese standards we were well equipped when we left D3, each man had a uniform, overcoat, shirt, underwear and new boots. Most of this was from our own British Army stores. The boots were from a shipment of Red Cross supplies. In comparison to what had happened to us in the last three years we now considered ourselves well off. Most of us now felt that the war could no last much longer and that we had a fair chance of survival. We had also been issued a little extra food from Red Cross stories on our departure. This bucked us up a lot.

Another thing that helped our morale was the opportunity to learn the latest war news. One of our boys, Charlie Clark, at some risk to himself, got in touch with a Japanese civilian worker in the shipyards. For the price of three hundred yen this worker agreed to go to Tokyo and obtain a current copy of the Nippon Times. This was an enormous price in Japan when one considers that we were paid ten sen a day and there are one hundred sen to a yen. This paper was smuggled back to camp in one of the men's shoes and was eagerly read as it is printed in English. It told of the collapse of Germany and the death of Hitler. It also told indirectly of the advance of the Americans in the Pacific. We were jubilant! It was the first authentic news we had since our imprisonment and definitely the best.

As soon as the train stopped we detrained into a large siding used for loading coal. This is where we first saw our new camp officials. They had come down to inspect and greet us. Our train guard did not leave until they had escorted us to the camp. Our new camp bosses were a nondescript lot. The Japanese system of running each camp was much the same. First there was a Japanese Officer as Commandant. Usually this officer was unfit for front line service or had money, like Charlie at D3, and desired a safe haven or was the fool of an influential family and was thus put out of the way.

The Japanese Commandant at Sendai was a fool. We called him "The Child." He was young and completely dominated by the NCO under him. Next in every camp there was a Senior Noncommissioned Officer, usually a Sergeant. He was very important and practically ran the camp. These men were trained at a special school in Tokyo and all operated along the same lines. The Army supplied the guards at the gate and around the camps, usually about twenty men under a Corporal. These guards were changed every two weeks and were supplied by the local garrisons. Sergeants and Corporals in the Japanese Army have much more responsibility and power then in our Army. The Army guard does not interfere with the working of the camp.

The economy of the camps and their discipline are regulated by the

Quartermasters, a body of men who are closely aligned with the Army yet not of it. They have no rank yet fill positions of responsibility. Master Cooks, Chief Clerks, camp Mine Guards and others. They wear makeshift uniforms and at times carry arms and yet a private in the regular Army could knock them about. The only thing lower then them were the prisoners. These were the men with whom we would have most to do with and we recognized their bread as soon as we stepped off the train. They were itching to show their importance by abusing the prisoners. We had seen it all before.

On the pretext of helping to get us loaded into a number of waiting motor trucks they shouted contradictory orders and began pushing and slapping the prisoners. I finally found myself in a truck, squatting, tightly packed on the floor. I was looking over the side watching with interest the antics of a particularly repulsive individual who was cuffing every prisoner within reach. Suddenly the same man jumped up on the wheel of the truck and slapped me in the face. This man was the camp Quartermaster. He had a big close cropped head, bright beady eyes, wide mouth and a hanging lip that gave him a constant leer. Because of his squat yellow form we called him the 'Frog.' All through our stay at Sendai he was constantly devising ways of adding to our misery and torture.

Once loaded the trucks started off and proceeded through a hilly country along a dirt road for about eight miles to camp. Along the way there were a number of thatched farmhouses surrounded by small well-cultivated fields. Although it was April most seemed to be growing crops. The road wound into a valley and along the banks of a river and we saw our new home. The buildings were the usual low tiled sheds surrounded by a nine-foot fence. It lay close to the base of a steep hill into which ran the mineshaft.

Our trucks unloaded outside the main gate where a sentry stood in his box. Still under the charge of our railway guards we filed through the gate to the curious inspection of the rest of the guards. We soon found out how out of place the word "home" was when applied to Camp Sendai, it was just another form of hell. Our first inkling of the conditions at Sendai was when we saw a group of human scarecrows standing near the gate. They were half naked, emaciated to the point that it was difficult to imagine how life could possibly remain in such a pathetic form. Their faces were pale, gaunt and haggard with hollow unseeing eyes, which stared at nothing. Their almost lifeless bodies were crippled and covered with scabs and sores. They were supposed to be brushing grass mats, but each movement was one of utter exhaustion as if in slow motion.

"Who were these poor souls?" we asked each other.

We learned later they were British Prisoners unable to work in the mines.

Once inside the gate our railway guards left and we were at the mercy of the Frog and his companions. We were formed into a line around the compound and some tables were placed in the center. Our two Officers, Captain Reid and Lieut. Finn, stood by these tables with a party of the Japanese officials. The Sergeant of the camp appeared strutting in polished jackboots and pulling on white gloves. He addressed us through his interpreter, an old Japanese with the behind out of his pants, and gave the usual line of, "You work or else." Then he told us to empty our pockets, each man making a little pile

of his personal belongings in front of himself. At first we wondered what was coming off but we soon found out. It was all our good clothing we had received on departing from our last camp.

We were all ordered to strip and pile our clothes beside us. At the time we were allowed to keep our wedge service caps and boots but these were later taken as well. Most of us were wearing union suit underwear; these were taken from us, and a G-string provided. We were all called to attention and made to turn about and march twenty paces and halt. We then turned and faced our clothes. Now Frog Face, the quartermaster, and his minions had their innings. They began carting off our clothes and piling them on the sidelines. They took practically everything. They also rummaged through our personal possessions taking what they fancied and treading over and kicking the rest in every direction.

These little piles constituted the whole of our belongings. A few letters, a snapshot of loved ones, a package of Red Cross cigarettes, a hand made comb, a carefully whittled spoon, razor blades, all were kicked around or stolen. The men stood and watched anxiously hoping their own pile would not be disturbed. Naked and shivering with cold for two hours they constantly edged towards their clothes only to be beaten back when they did so.

At last we were allowed to march back to where we had left our possessions. All was confusion and disorder. Some found that all was gone while others were more fortunate. I was lucky and managed to recover a few letters and photos as well as a cardigan sweater and my water bottle. Putting these on I was well dressed compared to most of the others. We were each given a small cotton work shirt and a suit of overalls or work clothes which were made of sacking. The pants fastened around the waist with a string and the bottom of the leg reached to my knees. A jacket with sleeves that came to my elbow completed the outfit. These clothes were obviously intended for Japanese workmen and were much too small. We made ludicrous figures and the whole scene would have been laughable if it were not for the tragic circumstances. We were dismissed and allowed to find our allotted place in the sheds.

Our huts were divided into a number of rooms by wood and paper partitions. Previously, Japanese miners and their families used these huts. Each room held about twelve prisoners however the low platforms that served as beds only held ten. The remaining two prisoners were forced to sleep on the dirt floor between the platforms. We were so closely packed that during the night it was impossible to move without disturbing the others.

Arriving in our room our little party sat or squatted on the platforms and gloomily commented on the situation. The frog-faced Sergeant and all his motley crew were roundly cursed by the more robust while others just sat in despair. The majority however were of the opinion that we could see it through. It would soon be summer and the war must soon end. We all knew the Jap now. We knew his weaknesses and how to string him along. Once we determined to do this we all felt a little better.

A block from the camp, the mine was a large hole running a mile down into the hill. That evening we saw the other prisoners come out of the pit returning from the days work in the mines. There were two hundred British and two hundred Malayan Dutch prisoners. It was an unbelievable vivid scene of tortured humanity. Half naked emaciated bodies black with coal dust. Bare foot and adorned in rags. Hardly able to walk with backs bowed. It was like view a procession of the living dead. These living skeletons paid no attention to us as they shuffled into camp dispersing to their huts, the ultimate in human misery somehow maintaining the power to live.

We were all shocked! I made a vow then and there that come what may I would not go down into the mine. I still had the will power to decide my own fate and this was the end of the road for me. I had enough! Life as these men now lived would be intolerable. I regretted that I had survived and endured so much only to end up in this hell hole called Sendai.

Later we learned that the Dutch miners were in much better shape than the British. This was explained that the British were the survivors of Singapore and had been sent to help build that infamous railroad along the peninsula through Indo China. They were riddled with malaria and other tropical diseases as well as severe malnutrition. The Japanese hated the British for their defiant stubbornness and unwillingness to cooperate. The Japanese had reduced them to dumb driven beasts, sick both in mind and body. Later when we spoke to them they told us it was only a matter of time until we would all die. They had seen thousands of their comrades die. They had heard no news from anywhere for years, no letters, no Red Cross parcels, nothing. We told them that Germany had surrendered and that Japan too would soon fall. They refused to believe us. They hated the Jap and lived to thwart him. Perhaps it was only hate that kept them alive.

We soon discovered that one of the Commandants for this camp was a white man, a Dutch Captain working under the Japanese. The camp cooks were also Dutch. Captain Reid and Lieut. Finn were able to negotiate a fair distribution of the available rations with the result that the British received a little more to eat.

We were given two blankets each, made out of wood and wool, and a porcelain bowl. Our eating utensils that had been taken away were now reissued but few got their own back. Our food was always the same, two small bowls of rice daily and on a good day some greens or a small bun of bread. Water was our only drink and it was a surprise to me upon my return to Canada that I preferred water to drink for quite some time. I am only just beginning to enjoy a cup of tea.

The day following our arrival we had a visit from a Jap doctor who was to decide which of us were most fit to do the hard work in the mines. We all assembled in the compound where the doctor, with spectacles and buckteeth, sat on a box attended by Captain Reid the Frog and several others. Through the old interpreter, with the ragged rear, we were told, “This great man he say give you big prize if you are strong. Run quick.” The Doctor gave a grin with his buckteeth.

The prisoners were paraded in front of the doctor in groups of ten and made to do

pushups as long as they were able. The Jap doctor questioned those who were unable to carry out this exercise or who collapsed early. Captain Reid would offer an explanation to as to the man's inability as best he could. The whole process appeared academic as men riddled with diseases were posted for work anyway.

Most of the prisoners did not bother to deceive the Jap. They knew from past experience that sick or not they would be put to a task in the mine and that this would be the real test of their remaining strength. All the prisoners were aware that the more that faked the test the harder it would be for the others. Therefore the prisoners developed a kind of game around the tests. They began booing those who collapsed early; especially if they knew the man could do the work, and cheering those who managed to out last the others. None of the prisoners achieved anywhere near what they could have when fit however most did quite well. Of course they were so thin they had a lot less weight to lift.

When my turn came I was determined not to go into that mine and decided to fall right away. I pretended to make an effort and fell on my face. The boys did not boo me. They knew that I had been badly wounded. That my arm had been broken and healed crooked, and riddled with diseases. The Frog was right on the spot to beat me for malingering when I pointed to my arm saying, " Hong Kong." Captain Reid explained to the Jap doctor and I was excused from further tests.

Now a forty foot circle was marked out and the boys were made to run around it as many times as they could while carrying a hundred pound bag of rice on their backs. Some made a fairly decent job of this and were cheered by the others. This pleased the Japanese doctor and the guards immensely. Even the Frog momentarily stopped kicking and cuffing prisoners near him on watch. Others however just staggered a few feet and dropped the bag. If the boys thought they were putting it on they booed.

When all the prisoners had completed the tests they were assigned their tasks. Most of course went to the mines. A few, like myself, having very obvious disabilities were found jobs in the camp. Another Grenadier and I joined two more of our boys in the shoe shop, which was in the same hut as the tailor shop. There were also two Dutchmen working there and we worked two shifts day and night. The work consisted of patching by hand the rotten footgear the prisoners wore. Our good boots had been taken away from us and we were issued old rubber sneakers. These were mostly too small for our feet as our toes stuck through and the soles fell off. We managed to save these as best we could by using one old shoe to patch another.

When our boys had returned from their first day in the mine they had a terrible story to tell. The mine went down into the earth over a mile and there were no ventilation or safety provisions. Pit props were so scarce that the men were in constant danger of being buried by a collapse and there had been many accidents in the past. Men worked naked and up to their knees in water. The Japanese miners were like animals, ignorant and stupid, speaking a patois that was hard to understand. They threw coal at the prisoners, beat them, some even bit them. They were a very sad bunch of boys. Some of the prisoners were lucky and by chance had fared a bit better then the others. They had been assigned to digging an opening in a new vain of coal in a different part of the hill out

in the open.

As the summer dragged on there was very little to ease the men's lot. We received one half of a Red Cross parcel each during our stay. There was some attempt made at entertainment on rest days, which were few and far between. The Dutch Captain was quite a performer of stage magic and once in a while would put on a performance.

He would mesmerize the Jap Commandant's chickens and sew two prisoners together by passing a needle and thread through their throats without pain. Many of the prisoners swore by his magic powers so I asked them, " Well, if he has so much mystic power why can't he get himself out of here?"

CHAPTER 21 - RUMORS OF PEACE

Rumors of peace began in August and suppressed excitement seemed to be troubling the Japs. When we were around they kept looking over their shoulders with apprehensive glances, they were afraid. One morning we were told that we didn't have to work and then we knew the end was near. All punishments were stopped and the camp staff, including the Japanese Sergeant, suddenly became considerate and obliging. Even 'Frog Face' kept his distance and left us alone.

A few days later the 'Child', the camp Commandant, called the white officers to his office and told them that Japan had made peace with America due to the fact that America had developed an atomic bomb which he stated was much worse than gas, "Which you know," he added, "is outlawed by all nations. Therefore to ensure the survival of the Japanese nation a peace has been arranged."

Our officers were told that they must be responsible for the conduct of the men in the camp as the situation was delicate owing to the threat of the uprising of the civilian population and the break down of communications. At the time there did not seem to be any direct communication by radio with the Americans.

When Captain Reid and Lieut. Finn returned, they advised us to be patient and not to break camp. The Japanese military still supplied a guard and roll call was still taken every morning. But the prisoners were impatient to be released. All the pent up disappointment and bitterness of four long years was now finding expression. The prisoners demanded more food and threatened to raid the stores. The Japanese had already reopened the stores to reissue our boots, uniforms, and overcoats. Captain Reid and Lt Finn called the men together and listened patiently to their complaints. The men were asked to appoint delegates to take up these complaints. The most clamorous were expected by the men to head this committee of complaint. However those who had made the most noise and trouble did not step forward. They did not want to be held responsible for the actions of a mob they had little or no control over. The result was that with the loyal support of most of the NCOs a certain amount of order was maintained.

Our jailers and taskmasters slunk around furtively and the worst of them like the 'Frog' simply disappeared. Captain Reid told the Jap Commandant that if these particularly hated individuals were not removed he would not be answerable for what the prisoners might do. The Jap still clung to his authority expressed by the armed guards at the gate. The Commandant did not yet know the score, as the Americans had not landed yet. How impatient we were and rumors became rife. The British and Dutch had re-imposed military discipline by parades and drills.

Our own disciplinarian, Lieut. Finn, excused the Canadians these parades upon the assurance that the boys would make no trouble. In spite of this assurance long suppressed disputes erupted among the men. For the next few days Lieut. Finn was kept busy running around settling these disputes.

The men had determined to break into the stores in spite of the Jap guard when we saw our first American plane. It was a fighter and as it circled high above our camp we all ran out into the compound. It made a long loop over the hills then dived on the camp. Six hundred men went wild. We could plainly make out the red, white and blue and the white American star. A little figure leaned out of the cockpit making the 'V' sign. Over come with joy, naked figures dressed only in G-strings jumped and sprang around like a bunch of savages. Men slapped each other, shock hands and cried. It was true. It was really over. Our liberators were here. Now we would be free.

The little fighter disappeared and returned shortly with a whole squadron. They dove all around us, did stunts, and were as wildly excited in the sky as we were on the ground. We danced, waved blankets, shirts or any rage we could find. Men climbed onto the roofs of the sheds signaling and waving their arms. The fighters dropped several notes giving the names of the pilots and the number of their squadron and telling us that soon planes would be back with supplies. They also asked that we identify the men and their numbers by making the roofs of the huts.

With the sun shining on their silver wings each plane would dive skimming the roofs of the huts. The pilot would slide back his canopy and lean out waving and making the sign for victory. They were so close and powerful I was certain one of the pilots would fall out. We marveled at the cohesion and control the pilots had of those splendid little planes and the gallant figures waving so cheerfully. They were God's own angels sent to liberate his people. They meant freedom and happiness. It was a beautiful day … the best day of my life!

I was overwhelmed by the sudden release of emotions that had been suppressed for four long years. I could not control my feelings and a wave of tears flowed down my face. I returned to my hut and cried like a baby without any shame. Others were so hysterical they had to be hospitalized while some sat motionless, too dazed with happiness to be able to speak.

The next day the fighters returned and after swooping low over the camp several times came into the wind as slow as possible and dropped large duffle bags. They were loaded with food and cigarettes but they fell with the speed of a bomb and some burst on impact scattering the contents over a wide area. There was a wild scramble to recover the goods and if the men realized the danger of being struck and killed by one of the bags they did not seem to care. One of the bags crashed through the roof of my hut, struck the floor, and in a flash had swished right out the door spraying it's contents with a whole gang of prisoners chasing after it.

Once again the fighters swooped down over the huts, waving and dropping notes. The notes explained that full supplies would soon be dropped by bombers and for us to take cover when this happened. The bags were collected and their contents distributed as equally as possible among the prisoners. We all had plenty of American cigarettes and how good they tasted. We also had delicacies we had long forgotten the taste of, cheese, jam, chocolate, oh how we enjoyed them.

The real joy was that this was not a Red Cross parcel that had to be nibbled to make last. We ate everything. We had our good angels promise that plenty more was to come. We had seen the might and power of the American Air Force and we believed them. For the first time in many years the prisoners slept with smiles on their faces.

This demonstration of air power was all that was necessary to break down the last vestige of Japanese authority. The military guard disappeared. Tojo's pets slunk around making themselves as inconspicuous as possible. The prisoners disarmed those Japanese still with weapons. The 'Child', the Commandant, had his sword taken from him and the Dutch Captain appeared wearing it trying to assume the authority of the deposed Jap. The Canadians would have none of him and respected only their own officers.

We were able to get some whitewash from the mine and I climbed up onto the roof of a large mess hut, with some of my old paint gang from Yokohama, and in large letters painted on the tar paper roof, "569 MEN" which was the exact number of prisoners in our camp.

CHAPTER 22 - THE FLAG

The British and the Dutch had each made flags of the respective countries and flew them when our planes appeared. Some of us felt that we too should have a flag and I spoke to Captain Reid about this. He reminded us that American planes were dropping our supplies and that our own Lieut. Finn was an American Naval Officer. “I’m sure he would like to see an American flag.” It was a great idea and with the Captain’s blessing a few others and I formed a flag committee and got busy.

We began by collecting all the red and blue materials we could find in the camp. These colors were very scarce and hard to find. We were almost stumped for blue when we heard that one of the prisoners had received a blue shirt in the supplies that had been parachuted into camp. The flag committee searched out the individual and only after great patriotic pressure was put on him was the shirt surrendered. We used a six by four cotton sheet for backing and, vowing everyone to secrecy, set up a workshop in a vacant room in one of the huts.

Private N. Zytaruk of the Grenadiers, had worked as the prisoners’ tailor, brought the camp sewing machine over and we went to work. For a guide we used a card with a picture of the American flag provided by one of the prisoners. All forty-eight stars were carefully measured and cut out and the bars spaced correctly. Within two hours the project was completed. We only had enough material to finish one side the flag so someone suggested having the Canadians sign the back. Over two hundred men left their signatures on the flag. A bamboo pole was provided and the flag was ready.

It was suggested that we form a color party so that the flag could be presented with full military honors to Lieut. Finn. At this time we had recovered our old uniforms and the American planes had dropped other supplies. We were therefore able to turn out a fairly smart guard dressed in khaki shirts, shorts, socks and boots, and even our old Grenadier wedge caps with badges. I was the Sergeant in charge of the color party. When all were ready it was decided to draw Lieut. Finn over by subterfuge. Sgt.-Major ‘POP’ Corrigan of the Rifles was detailed to go over to Finn’s quarters and tell him there was trouble among the men and to come immediately.

Soon Lieut. Finn could be seen hurrying across the compound prepared to deal with the same trouble he had been dealing with for many years. Most of the other Canadians were gathered around our small group and as Lieut. Finn approached I called the color party to attention. The flag was unfurled and our impromptu bugler, a bandsman who had recovered a cornet somewhere, blew the general salute. We all turned to the flag and saluted. Every man within the camp stood to attention with hand raised.

Lieutenant Finn looked perplexed as if he were still ready to deal with some dispute. When he saw the flag and the color party he stopped, stared, and slowly raised his hand giving a salute with tears welling up in his eyes. I presented it to him and asked that he accept it on behalf of all the Canadian prisons. The flag was a tribute to the United

States of America, its armed services that had liberated us and to Lieutenant Finn who, at all times under the most adverse circumstances, had conducted himself towards the prisoners and towards the enemy as an American Officer and a man. As I presented the flag to him I could see his lips quivering with emotion. He accepted it and said "Its just what I wanted." Clutching the flag close to his chest he hurried quickly away to his quarters and the boys gave him a great cheer as he went.

The names of most of the party have escaped me but I remember a lad named 'Gooch.' He was an American born Canadian and from that day on he attached himself to the flag. Whenever planes came over Gooch would wave the flag. When it was put on the roof of a hut Gooch watched it and made sure it was taken out of the rain. Later when we traveled by train Gooch could be seen waving the flag from the window. The last I heard of the flag, Lieutenant Finn had it at Yokohama ready to take home. It should make a wonderful souvenir and later perhaps a museum piece. Say what you will, a little piece of bunting can mean a great deal to those who had lost what it stands for, Liberty, the rights of man, tolerance, fair play and freedom. Long may it wave!

When the B29s dropped the main bulk of supplies it was a miracle that none of the prisoners were killed. Crates, barrels, and boxes tumbled out of the planes. Often the parachutes were too small for the heavy cargo and failed to slow its decent and could be seen coming in over the camp like streaming missiles. Occasionally a parachute would fail to open at all and the load of cargo would impact the earth like a bomb scattering its contents, marked by a wide field of debris over the area. Supplies were strewn all over the countryside and parties were sent out to locate and retrieve them.

At first every effort was made to salvage all we could but as our stores mounted we became less particular and let the local Japanese have what was smashed and beyond keeping. On each container was written in Japanese 'This is the property of the American Government and must be delivered to the prisoners, signed MacArthur.'

From miles around Japanese came lugging in the groceries and were rewarded with some of the Japanese supplies we had remaining in camp. Within the supplies were small newspapers printed on the U.S. Carrier 'Lexington.' These were read avidly and brought us up to date on most of the war news. Now that the war was over it was a little strange that all kinds of Japanese supplies began arriving at the camp, fresh vegetables, oranges, fresh pork, soap, towels and toothpaste and many other things.

For four years we had been forced to save every little scrap of soap or a bit of rag and it became difficult to break the habit. Like squirrels we gathered our particular portion of the loot and scurry away to hide the goods in our own secret cache. For some strange reason my weakness was for soap and soon I had amassed a ridiculous amount. I had bars and bars of it, Japanese and American.

Three weeks had past since the surrender and yet we were still on our own. With the exception of the American planes we had seen our liberators had not come to find us. Although they did not know where to go the prisoners were impatient to be gone and we decided to affect our own release.

Captain Reid and the Dutch Captain went off to the town of Sendai by special car attached to a local train. Reid told us later that they had traveled like princes, private car, hotel accommodation, wines and the best food. When they arrived the Japanese they met shrugged their shoulders, bowed and said, “Much too bad about poor prisoners. It was the wretched war. So solly! So solly!”

They spoke with a Red Cross official from Geneva but he was of little help. When Captain Reid returned he said it was best to wait. This did not go over well with the prisoners, as they would wait no longer. Captain Reid and other Officers went to the mine officials and told them they wanted a train to take the prisoners to Tokyo and that was an order. Within a few days we were told that a train of coal cars awaited us at the siding adjoining the mine.

CHAPTER 23 - HOMEWARD BOUND

How quickly we packed. The prisoners were loaded down with duffle bags filled with cigarettes, chocolate bars and spare clothing. The Jap Commandant, without his sword, and his crew came to see us off and stood at salute as the train pulled out. Some, still keeping up a pretense of responsibility, came with us and were the best behaved although a little nervous. They were unsure how the Americans would receive them at the other end of the line. Although we were packed in coal cars all that mattered was that we were on our way home.

We laughed and sang and each section waved its flag from the side of the train. We still had Old Glory and Gooch was there to wave it. Our route was a hundred and twenty miles long and we threw gum and chocolate to everyone we saw. As we neared Tokyo we witnessed the incredible devastation the American bombing had caused in the towns we passed until finally we reached Tokyo and disembarked to change trains.

As we detrained on an open platform another train came to a stop opposite us. It was full of Japanese troops returning to their homes. We stood staring at each other and all became very quiet. This had been our enemy. Long tense moments passed. Then someone laughed and threw over a package of American cigarettes and a dozen Japanese went to pick it up. This broke the tension and more cigarettes were thrown over and the Japanese began throwing back oranges. This was my last contact with the Japanese. Shortly afterwards we arrived at Yokohama and were met by a regiment of American Cavalry with their band.

We were overjoyed to finally see our liberators. I jumped out of the train carriage before the train had even stopped and flung myself upon a stout, red faced, American Major. I thumped him on the back, shock his hand and all but kissed him. Others joined in and began pounding him on the back from all sides. The Major struggled to keep his parade dignity for this was a formal reception and the American troops were not allowed to break ranks.

Some of my comrades were more fortunate first greeting. They were met by a real American WAC (US Women's Army Corps), dressed in nifty uniform she was there handing out chocolate bars to the liberated prisoners. When I managed to reach her she was already surrounded by a group of gaping ex-prisoners. This was the first white woman they had seen in four years and were completely (paralyzed?) by her presence. They would have liked to pinch her, but they were so mesmerized none dared reach out to her for fear she may disappear.

The Americans took us in charge and whisked us to a warehouse refitted as a reception center where we were given a delousing bath, a complete change of clothes, food and an opportunity to send a message home. When the American soldiers and seamen saw us for the first time I believe they were a little disappointed that we were not as thin as they had pictured. We had been stranded for the three weeks at our camp eating

the plentiful supplies dropped to us and this had made quit a difference and all had put on weight.

At this clearing center particulars were taken of our imprisonment with the emphasis on abuses to which we had been subjected. As I gave my own particulars I remember a big American Sergeant of the Military Police with a six-gun at his side say to me, “You name ‘em buddy. We’ll go and get ‘em.” How I wished to introduce him to Frog Face. They would have got on well together.

When you are all skin and bones, a grass mat on wooden planks with no pillow is a difficult place to sleep. That night we slept in beautiful white cots with real sheets and pillows and soft mattresses. The next morning we were taken on board a hospital ship and were given a preliminary examination.

Later the same day a party of thirty of us, with Sgt.-Major Brockwell in charge, were taken out by a landing barge to the U.S. battleship ‘Iowa’. We were greeted in great style. A marine band played ‘Mine eyes have seen the Glory of the Lord’ and Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching.’ Thousands of white clad sailors cheered as we reached the fore deck where we were addressed by the Captain, “Whatever you want, name it. You are the honored guests of the U.S.A. The ship is yours.”

Immediately upon dismissal we were taken in tow by a crewmember whose business it was to show us around and look after us. We had showers, a wonderful supper with fresh fruits, ice cream and jellies. Later we watched a picture show. They treated us so well that later that evening when we were told that fifteen of our number who wished to volunteer could fly home only ten came forward. I was one of them. The rest wanted to go home on the ship. It was heaven on water, everything a man could desire was there, outside of feminine company and most were quite prepared to let the ladies wait. Five others had to be detailed to join our group and we soon left by the same tender for Yokohama airfield.

I was lugging around two big duffle bags filled with clothes, boots, cigarettes, candy, soap, cheese and much else. I had lived for so long without anything that I just could not bring myself to part with such supplies. At the airport we scrounged around for souvenirs as I had given away the Japanese money I had to the sailors on the ship. I found a Jap helmet and stripped the breech mechanism off a machine gun of a Jap plane. These I added to my already heavy load.

I came across an unexploded bomb, while prowling around the airport which had been bombed many times. I informed the military guards and a soldier was placed over the explosive pending its removal.

Soon we were aboard a C54 and headed over the broad Pacific towards Guam and landed there the following morning. We continued over the Marshall Islands and on to Honolulu where we transferred to a luxurious flying ship equipped with reclining bunks and a stewardess.

As we flew through the darkness towards San Francisco the stewardess came and sat beside me and said, “ You have been away a long time.” I replied, “ Yes will have a lot of catching up to do. There are bound to be quite a number of changes in four years. You know I don’t even know the popular songs that are sung in America and Canada.” She smiled. “ I used to be a singer. I will sing some of them to you if you like.”

As the motors roared and my companions snored I listened as she sang, “Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer”, “White Christmas”, “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition”, and others. What a wonderful country is America and what a wonderful people. Four years of hate, suspicion and torture. Here comfort and understanding. Little girl your song was the great heart of America and Canada welcoming us home.

---- THE END ---