



PTE. S. E. VARCOE

... In the morning, "Rhapsody in Rice."

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GRENADIER TO PUBLISH VERSE SOLD FOR FAGS

Because he could write doggerel with ease, one Grenadier turned his experiences in a Jap prison camp into verse. It had three advantages: it made the other fellows laugh in spite of their troubles; it bought the author cigarettes in camp; now it's providing him with a published book of verse.

Pte. Sidney Edward Varcoe, 730 Jefferson ave., said this morning he had been "scribbling doggerel since I was a punk. It's not good verse but it comes easily. I'm sinking a lot of dough into getting it published. No, I never tried to find a publisher. The Advocate Press is printing it and Cyril Ashmore, commercial artist, is doing the cartoons I have in mind. It ought to be out by Christmas."

This was how the book came into being: Two weeks of prison life, with rice gruel twice a day, kept Sidney awake one night composing. In the morning he recited his Rhapsody in Rice. "The boys liked it. The officers gave me five cigarettes and said there'd be five more for another piece to recite or sing, if I could. After that it was strictly commercial."

(The officers, Pte. Varcoe explained, could buy cigarettes. "One or two were decent enough to pass them around among the men. Bardal was a prince.")

"After I did seven pieces, it was suggested to me I carry on till I had enough to tell the whole story of the trip and the experiences in camp. I had begun with a little limerick soon after things began to happen:

Premier King sent us out from
Vancouver,
F.D.R. said it's just a manoeuvre,
But the Japs struck,
Now they're passing the buck,
And they can't pin this last up
on Hoover."

Plenty happened to describe. When Pte. Varcoe had 30 poems, typed on an officer's typewriter, he bound them with string and sold them to the officers for more cigarettes. When he was moved to Japan to work, "the Hunter brothers who had both done a bit of book binding, fixed up my stuff. A Welsh kid did a double-page cartoon—which Mr. Ashmore is reproducing, and an Imperial did a cover design. I had to burn it all one night when the Japs were raiding the camp."

By the time he was freed Pte. Varcoe had re-written some; others he knew by heart.

He wants to go to a school of journalism, "Columbia is too much to hope for." His wife, former Sgt. Stella Varcoe, has applied for a discharge from the C.W.A.C.; his dad is at the coast; his mother died "at a very inopportune time—two weeks before I finished high school