The Silence of a Soldier
The Memoirs of a Bataan Death March Survivor

Table of Contents

This book is dedicated to Gertrude Merrill (nee Worfolk). This courageous woman remained loyal, loving, and hopeful during the long years of silence imposed on her beloved friend Bub, because of his imprisonment by the Japanese. This book is dedicated to all those courageous women who shared Gertrude's travail. They waited, hoped, and prayed that their loved ones would return. In Gertrude's case, her prayers were answered.

This book would not have materialized were it not for the complete cooperation of Smith (Bub) Merrill. When I first approached Bub about writing his story, he was reluctant. He did not think his experiences were worth a story. Also, these events happened so long ago, he didn't think he could remember events accurately. It was the Internet that would refresh Bub's interest and memories. The exchanges between old comrades brought to life the many events that Bub had suppressed for so many years. When I approached him again, he was very responsive. I believe that Bub's story is worth telling.
It will bring to our minds an understanding of the suffering and sacrifices endured by these silent soldiers.
I want to thank Treg Merrill for her kind support. She assisted in maintaining accuracy. Her proof reading was invaluable. I thank also my wife, Barbara, who made sure my sentence structure and spelling were correct. I owe a debt of gratitude to Robert H. Curran who artfully crafted the maps. They add greatly to the story. In a category all his own, I thank David W. St. John, Editor of Elderberry Press. His patience, humor and suggestions were constantly helpful toward completion of this book.

(Return to Contents)

Prologue

The day was cool and breezy. The sky was speckled with white fluffs of cotton. The bright sun rendered the clouds even more amorphous. "Mares" tails trailed high above; a premonition of troublesome weather ahead. My wife and I were visiting our home construction site high on a bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. The month was July. The year was 1997. We could not determine whether the construction had progressed or regressed. Such are the fits of anxiety suffered by most potential home owners. We talked ourselves into the dubious fact that indeed progress had been made. It was our hope to be in the house by mid-August.

As we left the site, we noticed a car in the driveway one lot down from us. There was an empty lot between our house and this newly built home. We could see an older couple sitting in the car. We pulled into the driveway to introduce ourselves. It was obvious that the couple were attacking McDonald hamburgers and fries

with a vengence. We kept our introduction brief because we didn't wish to interrupt their lunch. The couple introduced themselves as Smith and Gertrude Merrill. As we prepared to make our departure, Gertrude said, "Now don't you mind us because we are kind of queer" With a chuckle we replied, "Well, aren't we all!" From that time on we became good neighbors; never intrusive, but always willing to lend a helping hand.

We moved into our home in mid-August. Since both our lawns were young, they needed some tender loving care. Bub (Smith) and Treg(Gertrude) Merrill were often outdoors working on the lawn or the flower bed. Bub and I would occasionally meet in the vacant field between our houses. We chatted about this and that, complained about the owner's association, talked about the lawns.I did not know at that time that Bub was a survivor of the Bataan Death March. He never mentioned it. It was a neighbor across the street who told me about Bub and Bataan. Being somewhat of a WW11 buff, Bub Merrill took on a new fascination for me.

Bub's formal name was Smith Merrill, the son of Laura and Leigh Merrill.This did not mean much to me at first until I made the connection that Bub's mother, Laura was the daughter of Christopher Smith, the founder of The ChrisCraft Corporation. As a child, I grew up in Detroit. Along the Detroit River, the names of ChristCraft and Gar Wood were household names, especially in the world of power boat racing. In the late summer of 1997, I read Mitch Albom's book, "Tuesdays With Morrie." It was a heart warming story about the relationship between a former student and a lovable professor in the last throes of a killing disease. The thought struck me that Bub Merrill was truly a wonderful subject for a book. His personal experiences as a Japanese prisoner of war would provide any reader with greater insights into the tragedy of the Bataan Death March and of Japanese imprisonment. There was just one problem; Bub was very reluctant to talk about it. He had taken great pains to block out from his memory these terrible experiences He was also afraid that he wouldn't be able to remember specific times and places. I did not press Bub any further, that summer. When the winds of October blow off Lake Michigan, it is time to head south. The snow blizzards are not far behind. We winter at Seabrook Island, a few miles south of Charleston, South Carolina. This area is one of God's garden spots known as " the low country'. Bub and I would communicate via the Internet. Mostly, we would exchange the innumerable jokes that would float across our screens. Bub took an interest in the Internet. He made an effort to find some of his fellow prisoners. He was amazed to learn how much information about the Bataan Death March was available via the Internet. The Internet served as a key to open his memory. He began to remember more clearly the sad events of his life. As he sent and received information about fellow prisoners who shared similar experiences, the cloud of silence concerning these events began to lift.

The title, Silence Of A Soldier, has a twofold significance. When Bub was captured by the Japanese, a veil of silence lingered for four years. His mother and father had no word from him. The last word his beloved Gertrude would receive was a Christmas card from Del Carmen, Philippines, dated December 19, 1941. She would not hear from or about him until 1945. This remarkable young girl had a deep love for Bub. She knew in the depths of her heart Bub would return. She never faltered in this belief. The second aspect of this soldier's silence was that for many years after the war, Bub would not talk about The March nor his imprisonment. These memories were simply too painful. He blocked them from his mind. Only time would heal the scars inflicted upon his body and soul by a brutal and inhumane enemy.

The summers of 1998 and 1999 were spent pretty much the same We frequently saw Bub and Gertrude working outdoors. Our routines were occasionally broken by having lunch at one of our favorite hamburger joints. In the spring of 2000, I approached Bub once again about writing his story. He was quite responsive. He was willing to talk about his experiences. He felt he owed an accounting to his children. The story that unfolds is a true story. It reflects the memoirs of a man in his eighties. But, these memories are quite accurate when cross checked against the vast materials that are available. What unfolds is not a history or a chronology. It is annecdotal: the story of a young man caught up in the Japanese invasion of the Philippines and his subsequent imprisonment. It is a story of the will to survive expressed by the survivor. It is a remarkable story about a remarkable man; simple, honest, and courageous. He would blush at my use of these words.But, they are true.
(Return to Contents)

Before The War

In 1930, the Great depression was in full swing. The Worfolk family had moved from Detroit to Algonac Michigan. Many homes were lost during the depression. Gertrude Worfolk was ten years old. Although Gertrude's father had a good job with Hudson Motors, he could not sustain the mortgage payments. It was not uncommon in these hard times for families to move back in with the grandparents. Gertrude's grandmother had a spacious home in Algonac. Smith Merrill lived across the street from Gertrude. The advent of Gertrude would prove to be one of the most significant events in Smith Merrill's life.

Algonac, Michigan is a small town situated on the St. Clare River, across from Harsen's Island. Both sides of the Smith Merrills' family made a living on the water. Smith's (Bub's)grandfather, Christopher Smith, had his ChrisCraft plant in Algonac Bub's father, Leigh Merrill, was in the marina construction business.

At first, Gertrude and Bub were just neighbors. But, gradually, they became friends. The age difference between Bub and Gertrude was three years. In a town the size of Algonac, teenagers will pal around together regardless of the age differences. Bub and Gertrude became friends in just such a group.

Bub graduated from Algonac Highschool in 1934. Gertrude was finishing her freshman year. Gertrude was not a person to accept the ordinary. She did not like the nicknames, Gert or Trudy. With some imagination, she called herself Treg which is Gert spelled backwards. She informed the family of this when she was six years old. She was known as Treg from that time on. As the years drifted by slowly as they do when you are young,

Bub and Treg became very close friends. Bub took Treg to her senior prom. This was the first real date for both of them. From that time on they kept steady company.

After his graduation, Bub worked for his father at the Merrill Dredging Company. Bub was intent on learning the business from top to bottom. He did not want to go to college. Bub's uncle,John Wetzel, offered to send Bub to Engineering School. He graciously declined. Bub's eye doctor offered to pay for Bub's training in that field. Again, he declined. Bub admits that not going to college was one of his biggest mistakes. The truth is that Bub loved working with his father. They were not only son and father, but good friends.

One of Bub's primary jobs with his father was to pull scows with a 225hp Chriscraft Runabout out into the depths of Lake St. Clare. The scows would be filled with the dredging. After his work was finished, Bub would wander over to the Chriscraft shop. He was fascinated with marine engines. He learned as much as he could from the men in the shop. One evening as Bub left the shop for home, he noticed a fire underneath a staircase. Bub was able to put the fire out. There was a union strike at the plant which probably was the root of the trouble. His first cousin was grateful for Bub's action and offered him a position in the Chriscraft office. Bub preferred to work with his father and politely declined the offer. After Treg graduated from highschool, she worked at the Chriscraft switchboard. Bub and Treg were never very far apart. Bub would often take a noon break to have lunch with Treg either on the Chriscraft pier or at the Merrill marina.

Bub's uncle John was a colorful man. He loved to wear a derby most of the day. One day, Bub told him how fine he looked in the derby. Whereupon, his uncle took the derby off an placed it on Bub's head. Bub wore the derby everywhere including at work. On one occasion when Bub and Treg were having lunch, Treg grabbed the derby and ran to her house. She could run every bit as fast as Bub. The house was a large old colonial two story with many rooms both upstairs and downstairs. Treg had the advantage because she knew all the hiding places. Bub chased Treg throughout the house; upstairs, downstairs, kitchen, dining room, bedrooms and closets. The derby was finally retrieved but only after each had collapsed from exhaustion. This story serves to point out that there was more than a little of the old nick in Treg. Her love of fun would stand her well for the years to come.

Bub did not speak very often about his parents. It is a silence born more out of love and respect than indifference. Gradually, after a few conversations, a sketch of each parent begins to shine through. Bub's father, Leigh Merrill, was a hard working man. The marina business during the Depression was at a low ebb. He served on the local school board for which he received fifty dollars annually. He always gave the money to the school superintendent to be given to the teacher most in need. He could have used the money himself, but he was concerned about those who were worse off than he. Bub's father had a terrible temper and swore like a trooper. But, beneath the rough facade was a man deeply concerned about the welfare of the townspeople. No one knew who or how many Leigh Merrill had helped through tough times. He invoked the strictest confidence.

Bub's mother, Laura was very similar to her husband when it came to the needs of others. She was very generous to anyone who was in need. She did not wait to be asked; but simply kept her eyes and ears open. In a small town, there are no secrets concerning whom might be in dire straights. Laura would do what she could unpretentiously. In difficult times Laura Merrill had a gift of remaining calm. She was a second mother to Treg. Treg describes Laura as a loving mother and wife. Her husband Leigh was her first and only love. She would say to Bub, "If you turn out as good a man as your father, you will be a great man'. The friendship between Laura and Treg became a great source of comfort as they both faced the long silence of Bub as a Japanese prisoner.

This kindness and concern for others would be inherited by Bub. There was a group of native Americans on nearby Walpole Island. They were very poor. Bub would hire as many as he could in order for them to provide for their families. He treated them with fairness and more importantly with respect. This was not always the case with the townsfolk of Algonac. Bub tells the story of one very large native American. His name was Big John. He came to Walpole Island from Sault St. Marie. Big John could outwork any three men. He would carry an eight inch pipe twenty feet long through three feet of marina muck. Big John would on occasion run afoul of the law. Bar fights were his biggest problem. One Saturday night Big John wrecked a local bar. The police put him in jail. The next morning Bub went to the bar owner. He offered to pay for the damages if the owner would drop the charges. The damage was calculated at three hundred and fifty dollars. In those days that was a sizable sum. Bub paid and obtained the release of Big John. Within a few years Big John drifted away.

Bub was learning his father's business inside and out. His friendship with Treg had grown into a loving relationship. There was, however, a cloud on the horizon. Germany invaded Poland. England declared war. The US instituted the draft in preparation for America's inevitable involvement. The storm clouds would darken. Bub and Treg knew instinctively that their lives would change. Bub had a great survival kit. What he had learned from his father, his love for his mother, and his love for Treg would form the cornerstone of his struggle for survival.
(Return to Contents)

The Army

Bub received his draft notice in March, 1941. He and his Dad were involved in a major project to remove a sunken hulk from East Tawas Bay in Lake Huron. The hulk was a hazard to shipping. Bub requested and received a three month deferment. In June of 1941, he reported to the Ft. Wayne induction center in Detroit, Michigan. he said his good-byes to his Mom, Dad, and Treg in Algonac. The trip to Detroit was fifty miles. Little did he know as he held Treg tightly in his arms that he would see her only twice more before the bamboo curtain would cut him off from all means of communication with his friends, family, and Treg.

During the physical examination, the doctor was concerned about two things. Bub had his back tightly taped because of a fall two days earlier. He was removing a battery from the trunk of a car. He fell backwards with the battery in his lap. His back was very sore from the fall. The doctor was also concerned about the fact that both of Bub's eardrums had been ruptured. Two of many adventures on water skis resulted in the busted eardrums. Bub was careful to point out to the doctor that the back was healing quickly. As to the eardrums, they had been treated medically and presented no loss of hearing. Bub pleaded with the doctor that these minor conditions should not keep him out of the army. He could not live with himself if he did not do his duty. The doctor gave Bub a clean bill of health.

The army into which Bub was drafted was far from the caliber of today's army. The pre-war army of the late thirties and early forties was a conglomeration of malcontents, misfits, and social pariahs. The enlisted men were crude and uneducated, but quite skillful at goldbricking. The non-commissioned officers (NCOs) were not much better. They would march and drill the men; but cared little about them. The social life of the NCOs was a continual round of drinking, gambling and fighting. They also took great pride in conning the draftees out of as much as they could. The officers, from lieutenant through major developed their own ritual of survival. They did not know how to control the NCOs or the men; so they ignored them. The senior officers were the elite country club types. Some of them would rise to greatness during the war. One has to wonder why the Marshalls,MacArthurs, Eisenhowers, Pattons, and others would let the US army deteriorate to such a low level. In this environment, Bub developed a healthy dislike for the army.

The same evening of Bub's physical examination, He left for Ft. Grant, outside of Chicago.It was not so much a boot camp as a center to identify the specific skills of the draftees. From there, the men would be sent to camps which had a specific mission. It was very early in the morning when the train from Detroit pulled into Ft. Grant. The sergeant in charge asked for volunteers for KP duty. The understanding was that those who volunteered would be excused from the morning drills. Bub was not very sleepy. He volunteered. His job was to crack open several crates of eggs for the morning breakfast. There was a specific procedure. A bucket was placed on each side of the cracker who sat with another bucket between his legs. Picking up an egg in each hand, the eggs were cracked on the edge of each bucket. The shells were deposited in the bucket between the legs. The sergeant in charge supervised several operations. He spotted Bub standing up and stirring one of the buckets. "Hey soldier, What are you doing there?" Bub explained that one of the eggs had feathers on it. He was trying to find it." Hell, soldier, don't worry about that, this is the army and the men will eat anything."

Bub went to sleep about four AM. At six AM the sergeant came roaring through the barracks. He awakened everyone for the morning drill. Bub told the sergeant that he was one of the KP volunteers. He shouldn't have to drill. The sergeant yelled, "This is the army, everybody drills!" Bub felt he had been lied to. After the drill, he walked straight to the Colonel's office. The desk sergeant said, "What's up soldier?" Bub replied, " I want to see the Colonel!" "No way soldier, he's busy." Bub walked over to the Colonel's door and opened it. The Colonel was sitting at his desk with his feet propped up. Bub saluted the officer and said "Sir, I volunteered for

KP this morning with the understanding I would be excused from morning drill. The sergeant did not keep his word. Now, if it is OK for the army to lie to me, I assume it is OK for me to lie to the army. I don't think that is a healthy relationship." The Colonel said, "Go back to the sergeant and tell him you are excused from drilling the rest of the day." Bub returned to the sergeant and informed him of the Colonel's orders. The sergeant was enraged. Bub was taught by his Dad that a man must keep his word. He would pay for this moment of truth.

During the various drills, all of which were new to Bub, the sergeant put him through the traces. "OK soldier, you messed that up. Put on your knapsack and we will run around that track over there." Gradually, the sergeant fell farther and farther behind. From a distance, Bub could hear the sergeant's voice call out, "OK soldier, that's enough, fall out!" After that, the harassment dwindled considerably.

After two weeks at Ft. Grant, Bub was transferred to Ft. Leonard Wood, a camp which hosted several engineering groups. Bub's experience with earth moving equipment was the primary reason for this assignment. He would spend two and one half months at Leonard Wood. Boot camp training became more intensive. Bub was finally issued a rifle; a WW I Springfield. Marching, drilling, and firing the rifle were much of the routine. On the firing range Bub achieved a badge for expert marksmanship. On one occasion overnight maneuvers were ordered. Apparently, no one bothered to listen to the weather reports. The men put up their pup tents on a field adjacent to one of Missouri's small rivers. A thunderstorm hit around midnight. The river overflowed it's banks, flooded the field, swept away the tents, and buried the rifles in mud.The men sat on nearby picnic tables waiting for the waters to subside. Cleaning the muddied rifles became the main chore for the next day.

The sergeant in charge was looking for a man who could operate a gasoline powered shovel. Bub volunteered because of his experience with large machinery. He was instructed to fill a dump truck with either dirt or gravel, take the load to a construction site and offer it to the construction crews. He filled up the truck with dirt, drove it around to the construction sites and offered the load to the crews. There were no takers. He drove the truck back to where he got the dirt. He dumped the dirt and filled the truck with gravel. He drove the truck to the various construction sites. Again, there were no takers. All day long Bub drove back and forth with alternative loads of dirt and gravel. Load it up, drive it around, take it back and dump it. It was rare that anyone wanted either the dirt or the gravel. One good thing about the job was that Bub could hit the mess hall for lunch and for dinner when it best suited him. For two and one half months he performed his job meticulously, seasoned with occasional drills and rifle practice.

Bub's parents drove from Algonac to Ft. Leonard Wood. The ever faithful Treg was their companion. Given the absence of interstate highways the trip took two and one half days. Motels were few and far between. Lodgings were hard to find. On the first evening a farmhouse could accommodate the trio.The house had a spare bedroom. Leigh and Laura were the prime candidates. The lady of the house had a sewing room in which there was a cot. Treg gladly accepted the room. She was young and could sleep on almost anything. What did she care; she was on her way to see Bub. Treg had a wonderful relationship with Leigh and Laura. They were very considerate of her needs and her feelings. The visit was truly a happy family reunion.

From Ft. Leonard Wood Bub went to Westover Field, Massachusetts. The troops were trucked to Chicago where they boarded a train for New York. From New York they caught another train to Westover Field. The train was loaded with soldiers and sailors. There were no sleeping accommodations for the entire trip of two full days. They slept where they sat. A dining car was on board, but the soldiers ate only what they could afford which was very little. At Westover Field the 803rd Aviation Engineers was formed. Bub was assigned to B company. Rifles (still WW I Springfields) and winter clothes were issued. Then they were told that they would be going to the Pacific. So much for the winter clothing. They lolled around Westover Field for two weeks.

The only eventful thing about Westover was the visit by Treg and Laura. Leigh drove the ladies to Detroit where they boarded The Wolverine, an overnight train to New York.The ladies had berths, but the train was filled with military personnel. It was a challenge for the ladies to change discreetey into sleeping garments. Beyond the frail barrier of heavy curtains was the hustle and bustle of the soldiers and sailors. Actually, the men were extremely polite to Laura and Treg. The ladies reminded them of their own mother and sister. The ladies were thrilled with the excitement of seeing Bub. Again, the visit was a delightful family affair. Bub missed his Dad who could not get away from work.When the time came to say goodbye, he kissed his Mom. He then held Treg ever so tightly as if he had a premonition of the next few months. Little did Bub and Treg know that this would be their last kiss for some four years.

From Westover Field, the troops were sent by train to Ft. McDowell, an island outside of San Francisco. Winter clothing was exchanged for tropical wear. The men marched and drilled in their newly acquired clothes. There were no laundry facilities at Ft. McDowell. The laundry was stuffed into barrack bags and sent to the Alcatraz prison laundry. It so happened that a riot broke out in the prison laundry. The clothes were laundered but were dumped into one huge pile at the foot of the Ft McDowell flag pole. The men had to rumage through the pile with the hope of reclaiming socks, shorts, undershorts, and outerwear. It was not easy to find the appropriate fit. One man was quite large. There was only one pair of trousers that would fit him. He reclaimed them but one leg was missing from the knee down. He marched and drilled and went to mess with the one legged trousers. Officers would, of course, upbraid him. He would simply say, "Sir, If you can find me a pair of trousers that will fit me, I will be happy to replace these." The men began to exchange clothes. The short ones wore clothes that belonged to the tall ones. The tall ones wore clothes that belonged to the short ones. Peals of laughter could be heard as the men paraded in these ill-fitting uniforms. The officers suspected that some collusion among the men had taken place.

The 803rd was at Ft. McDowell for a short time; two weeks at the most. The NCOs tried to con the men into buying all sorts of useless things; jackets, knives and bayonets. Bub wouldn't buy anything from them. He knew the proceeds were needed to pay gambling debts.

(Return to Contents)

The Phillippines

The 803rd left Ft. McDowell near the first of November, 1941. The troop ship, Tasker H. Bliss awaited the men at a San Francisco pier. The Bliss was the former ocean liner, The President Cleveland. Bub was chosen for M.P. duty. This was fortunate because the MP quarters were aft, separated from the rest of the troops. A large room housed the MPs; each having his own cot. They also had their own latrine. The rest of the troops slept on army cots crammed into the hold of the ship.

Passing under the Golden Gate Bridge was a beautiful sight. One not to be enjoyed again until four years had passed. The sky was a light blue and the sea a dark green. A breeze was playing with the wings of the gulls. The ship cut through the water like a knife through butter. One day out and this would change dramatically. A severe storm came up suddenly. The ship was buffeted with fourteen foot waves. Seasickness was rampant. The latrine floors were covered with the fluids from retching stomachs. Bub was not prone to seasickness. His many years on the Great Lakes had given him worthy sealegs. The mess hall was empty. Bub had a great choice of food from a lineless buffet. The food aboard the ship was far better than what the army had provided to date.

The 803rd had its equipment stored on the foredeck of the ship; bulldozers, graders, dump trucks, and power shovels were rolling freely back and forth with the roll of the ship. Help was needed to lash down the equipment. Bub volunteered. It was impossible to secure the machinery because of the pitch and roll of the ship. Bub asked an officer to have the Captain head the ship directly into the wind. The Captain not only steered the ship into the wind but also slowed the ship down. After four hours of intense work, Bub and his crew were able to secure the equipment. Bub's job as an M.P. was to protect the nurses quarters from possible intruders. The nurses were young women on their way to wonderful times in Manila. Their deepest wishes were that they might meet attractive officers with whom they could share their lives. Sometimes they would leave their cabin in the evening to catch the fresh sea breezes. Always pleasant and proper, they liked to chat with Bub about their hopes and dreams. Little did they realize how their dreams would be shattered, how dreadful their lives would be, when Manila fell to the Japanese.

The ship made a port of call at Honolulu on its way to the Philippines.The soldiers put on their best attire with the expectations of going ashore. They learned quickly that only the officers were given shore leave. The problem was that a few ships before had let the soldiers go ashore. It took days for the Shore Police to round them up. Most of them were quite drunk. What Bub saw of Honolulu was from the ship's railing. Occasionally, a launch with hula dancers aboard would circle the ship as a ritual of welcome. So much for Bub's adventures in Honolulu. When the ship pulled into Manila harbor, the troops disembarked. They were loaded into trucks and transported to Ft. Stotsenburg in the Philippine interior. What they saw of Manila was through the truck's tarpaulin. The 803rd would stay at Ft Stotsenburg for five days. There was no marching or drilling. The men were not allowed outside the compound. Time and inactivity increased the anxiety that began to build up. But, this would be short lived.

The 803rd was ordered to Del Carmen, a sugar plan-tation.(See maps and notes at end of chapter.) The mission was to build an air strip. In addition to their construction machinery, they were issued WW1 Springfield rifles. They had little else with which to defend themselves. The "Aviation" Engineers began construction of the airfield. Del Carmen had new barracks. The roofs were thatched. The bunks were reasonably comfortable. The men were at Del Carmen for six weeks. During this time Pearl Harbor was bombed. Bub was on a grader when the first Zeroes flew over. They bombed and strafed the field. Bub's first instinct was to take cover in the sugar cane field. He soon discovered that the cane was very poor cover from the Zero's machine guns. The fox hole was far better and Bub learned exactly where the fox holes were dug. On one occasion a Zero was strafing the airfield. Bub and a few others rose from their fox holes. They hid behind a large Palm tree. When the Zero made another sortie, the men fired their rifles. The Zero was hit and crashed. The men ran to the downed Zero. They put out the fire and retrieved the machine gun. It became their main defense against the Zeroes. On another occasion when the Zeroes flew over, the men remained on their machines. They had learned that the Japanese were not the greatest marksmen. For his bravery under fire, Bub would receive the Bronze Star and the Silver Star with the Oak Leaf Cluster.

American fighters began to use the airfield. The dust was kept at a minimum by treating the surface of the field with molasses. As the day heated up, the molasses would seep further into the dirt. A junior officer got the bright idea to put the molasses on the thatched roofs of the barracks to camouflage them. He also ordered the

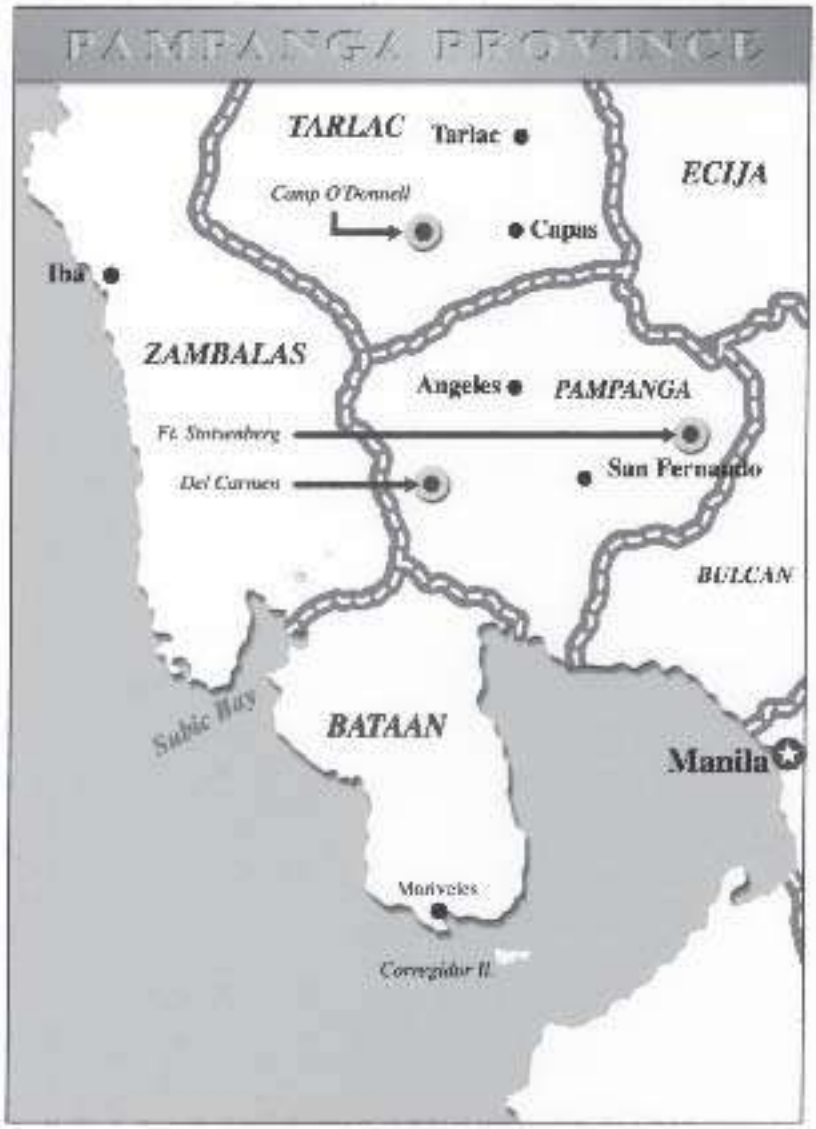
barracks bags and rifle to be brought out of the barracks and placed underneath the thatch overhangs. As the day heated up, the molasses moved downward toward the edge of the thatch. From there it dripped on the bags and the rifles. It took hours to clean the rifles. It took days and several washings to get the molasses out of the clothing in the duffel bags.

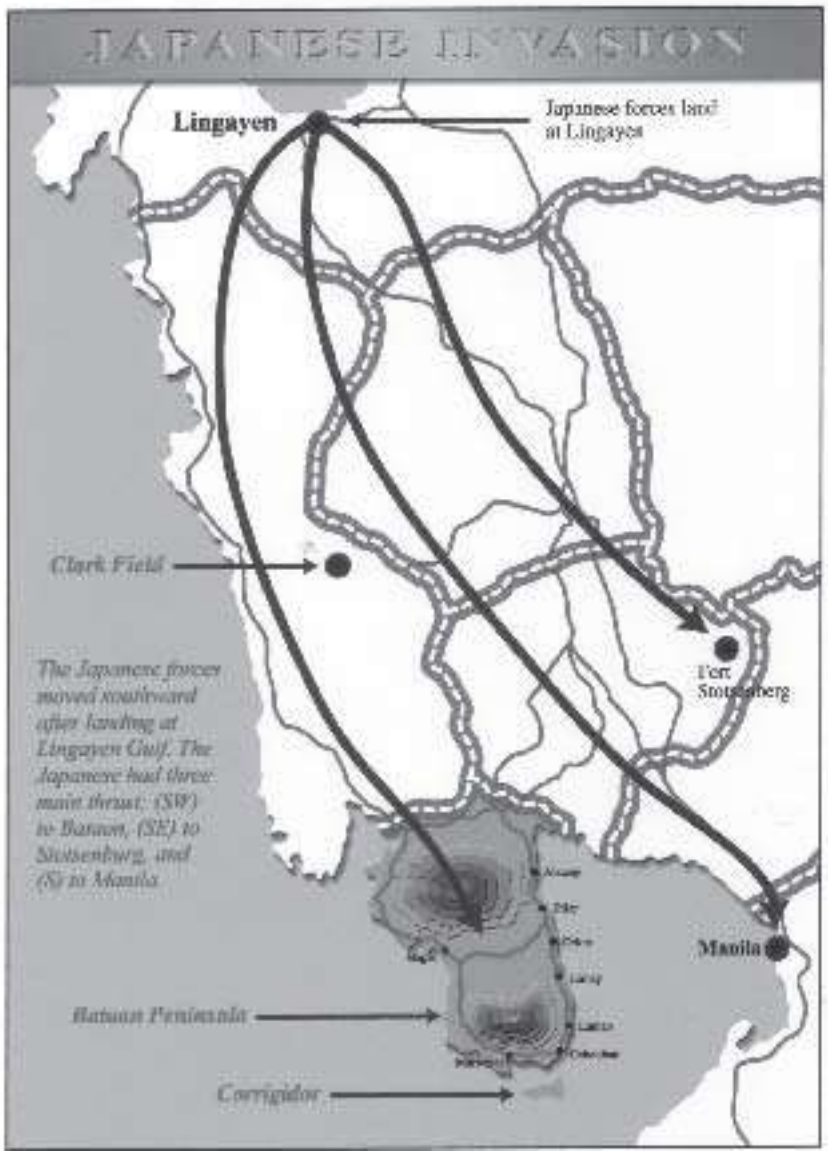
Bub and a crew of four engineers were sent about twelve miles south of Del Carmen to begin construction of a new airfield. The field would be quite close to the northern part of Bataan. After a full days work, the men would usually, but not always, return to Del Carmen for food and sleep. One of Bub's officers was a ROTC man. When it came to construction problems, he consulted with Bub. He was a fine leader of men. When the Zeroes flew over to bomb and strafe, the officer remained at his desk and sang at the top of his voice, "This is not my home, I am just passing through", a hymn of great beauty. When the Japanese invasion of the Philippines began, the mission of the 803rd changed to keeping the road open between Del Carmen and Bataan. The hope was that vital supplies for the men on Bataan would be trucked down this road. The supplies never came.

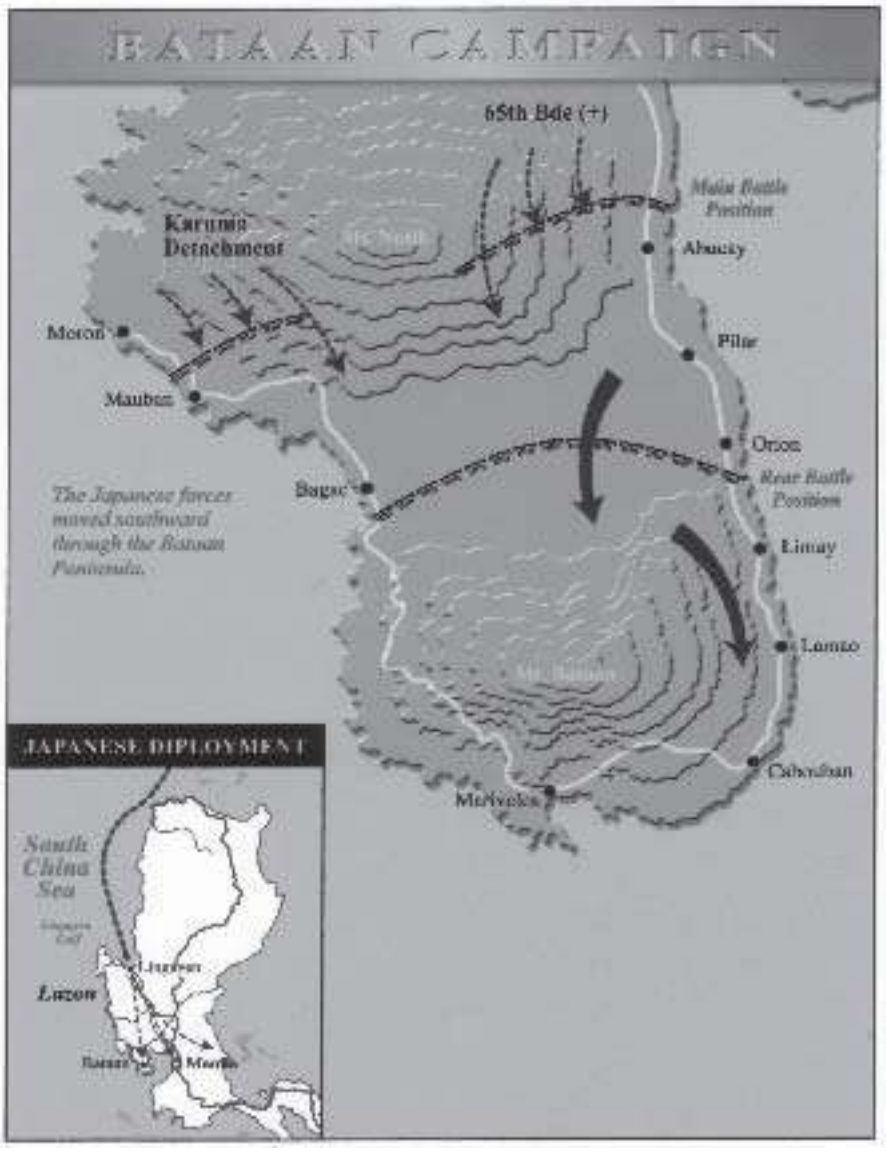
Notes:

1. Ft. Stotsenberg was in the southeastern part of Pampanga Province-The Philippines. It is referred to in Gavin Daws, "Prisoners Of The Japanese', New York, William Morrow &Co.1944, p.62

2. Del Carmen was a sugarcane plantation ten miles due west of Ft. Stotsenberg and ten miles north of the Bataan pennisula.The 803rd Aviation Engineers built an airstrip at Del Carmen. It is referred to by Ray C. Scott, "Behind Enemies Lines', University Press of Kentucky,1986, p.7. Scott refers to the strip as a sugarcane field where the P40 squadron landed its planes.


PAMPANGA PROVINCE
TARLAC
Tarlac
ECIJA
Camp O'Donnell
Capas
Iba
ZAMBALAS
Angeles
PAMPANGA
Ft. Stotsenberg
San Fernando
Del Carmen
BULACAN
Subic Bay
BATAAN
Manila
Mariveles
Corregidor Is.


JAPANESE INVASION
Lingayen
Japanese forces land at Lingayen
Clark Field
The Japanese forces moved southward after landing at Lingayen Gulf. The Japanese had three main thrust: (SW) to Bataan, (SE) to Stotsenburg, and (S) to Manila.
Fort Stotsenburg
Manila
Bataan Peninsula
Corrigidor



The Japanese Invasion

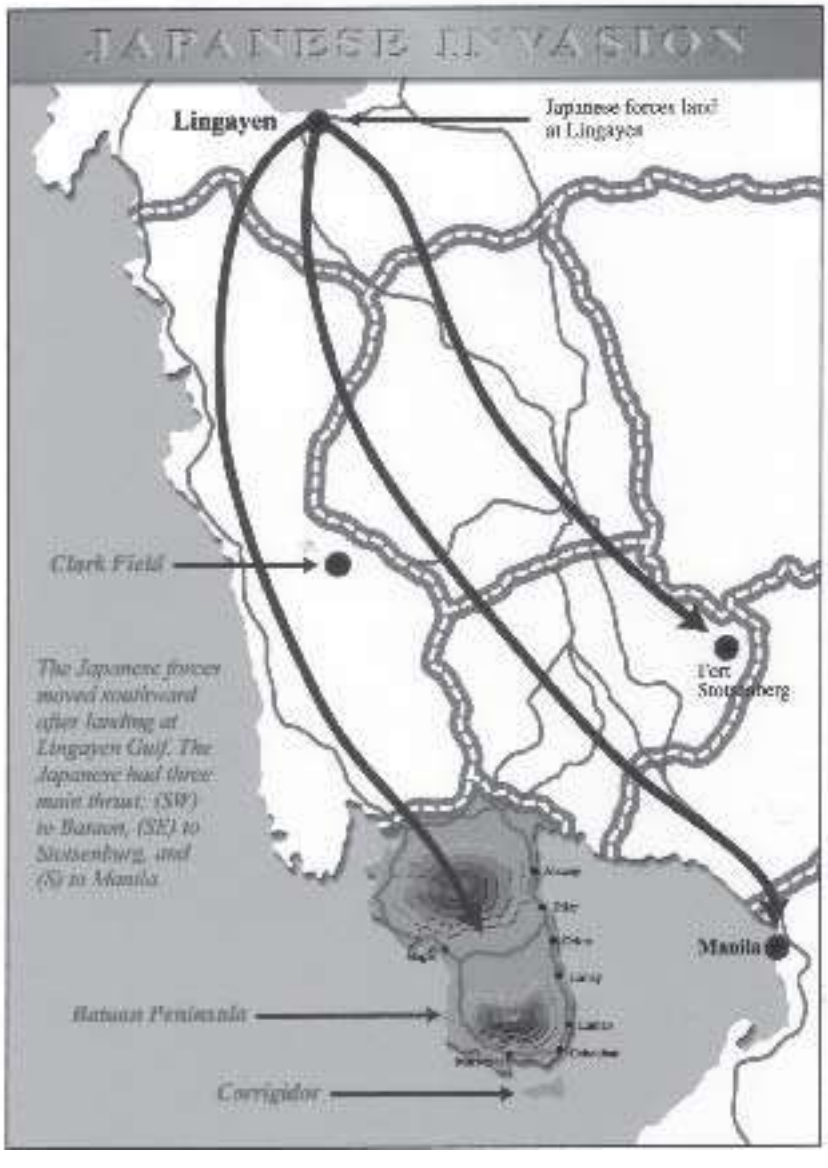
The Japanese invaded the Philippines at Lingayen Gulf, off the coast of Luzon.(1) The men at Del Carmen learned of the invasion by radio. The announcer described the heroism of a single American fighter pilot who made sortie after sortie over the Japanese invading forces. He was shot down on the second day. He was one of the first American heroes to face the Japanese onslaught. Bub thought his name was Colin Kelly.

By landing at Lingayen, the Japanese were able to cut Luzon in half.(2) The supply depots that MacArthur had established between Manila and the northern tip of Luzon were cut off from the American troops in the south. The 803rd was ordered southward to the Bataan peninsula. Company B was given the job to keep the road open to Bataan. They held off the Japanese as best they could with one thirty caliber machine gun and their WW1 Springfield rifles. The ammunition casings for these rifles had to be filed down to fit the bullet chamber. On one occasion, Bub sat behind the machine gun in the middle of the road. He saw a group of men heading his way. He could not make out whether they were American or Japanese. He decided to hold his fire until their identity became clear.

They were Americans. When the men saw Bub behind the machine gun, they thanked him profusely for not firing.

The Americans fought bravely against the oncoming imperial army of Japan. The Japanese invaded Luzon in late December, 1941. The Americans held them off until April of 1942. The Battling Bastards of Bataan earned their title. General Douglas MacArthur, commanding General of the joint American-Filipino forces, committed

several strategic and critical errors. He used Filipino regulars to defend the coasts of Luzon. When the first wave of Japanese troops came ashore at Lingayen, the inexperienced regulars fled back into their villages in the mountains.(3) MacArthur should have guarded the shores with Filipino Scouts and American regulars. MacArthur did not disperse his air power. The fighters and bombers remained on the tarmac at Clark Field awaiting orders. They were "sitting ducks" for the Japanese Zeroes.(4) MacArthur's air force was destroyed. A great quantity of supplies were stored at Ft. Stotsenberg. MacArthur did not order them trucked southward to Bataan. Food and ammunition sat in the Ft. Stotsenberg compound until the Japanese had it completely cut off. Bub was able to send a Christmas card to his beloved Treg. It would be the last word from him for four long years. The silence had set in.



MacArthur fled from Corregidor. General Jonathan Wainwright was in command of the Corregidor forces. General Edward King was in command of the Bataan forces. Although the numbers vary, there were about seventy thousand combined American-Filipino forces on Corregidor and the Bataan peninsula.

Japanese planes flew over both Corregidor and Bataan dropping leaflets. The leaflets urged surrender, promising humane treatment according to the Geneva Conventions. The armies on Bataan were down to one-eighth daily food rations. Ammunition was scarce. General King felt that the situation was hopeless. He was certain that his men would fare better as prisoners of war than to continue the hopeless battle. He was dead

wrong on this point. Wainwright had ordered the troops to fight to the end. King was convinced that this was useless. Prior to the surrender, orders came to destroy all equipment. Bub and his Company drove the heavy equipment over cliffs. Fifty gallon drums of gasoline were rolled over on top of the machines, then set afire. Arms and ammunition were thrown into the flames The explosion of shells was to Bub like a Fourth of July celebration in Algonac.

Although the numbers vary, it is safe to say that about 70,000 combined American and Filipino troops were on Bataan. One might question the decision of General King to surrender. The answer is simple. His troops were out of food, out of ammunition, and the promised reinforcements never materialized. King believed the Japanese leaflets that his men would be well treated. Little did he know how brutal the Japanese would be. The possibility of the men to swim across the straits to Corregidor was real, but the order came not to do it. The problem was that Corregidor was running out of food and ammunition. MacArthur was safe in Australia. It should be remembered that he left behind close to seventy thousand troops to face a life of misery under the Japanese captors. MacArthur's loss of men was one of the greatest military losses in American history. For this he was highly decorated.

The Japanese took the Americans prisoners at 11:00 am, the morning of April 9, 1942. They were marched five miles southward toward Corregidor. It was the intent of the Japanese to use the prisoners as a buffer zone between themselves and the large guns on Corregidor. It would be a full month before Wainwright would surrender the island fortress. No food or water was given to the prisoners. They were herded into fields where they sat for hours. Bub had filled his canteen prior to capture. He sipped from it sparingly. As he sat in the field, he dropped his arms to better support himself. As his hands dug into the dirt, he felt two round objects. Each hand pulled up a small rutabaga. This was all he had to eat for several days.

Notes:

1. By landing at Lingayen, the Japanese forces cut Luzon in half, depriving MacArthur many of the supplies stacked in northern Luzon.

2. For the Japanese landing at Lingayen, se Gavin Daws, "Prisoners Of The Japanese", New York, William Morrow & Co. 1994, p60

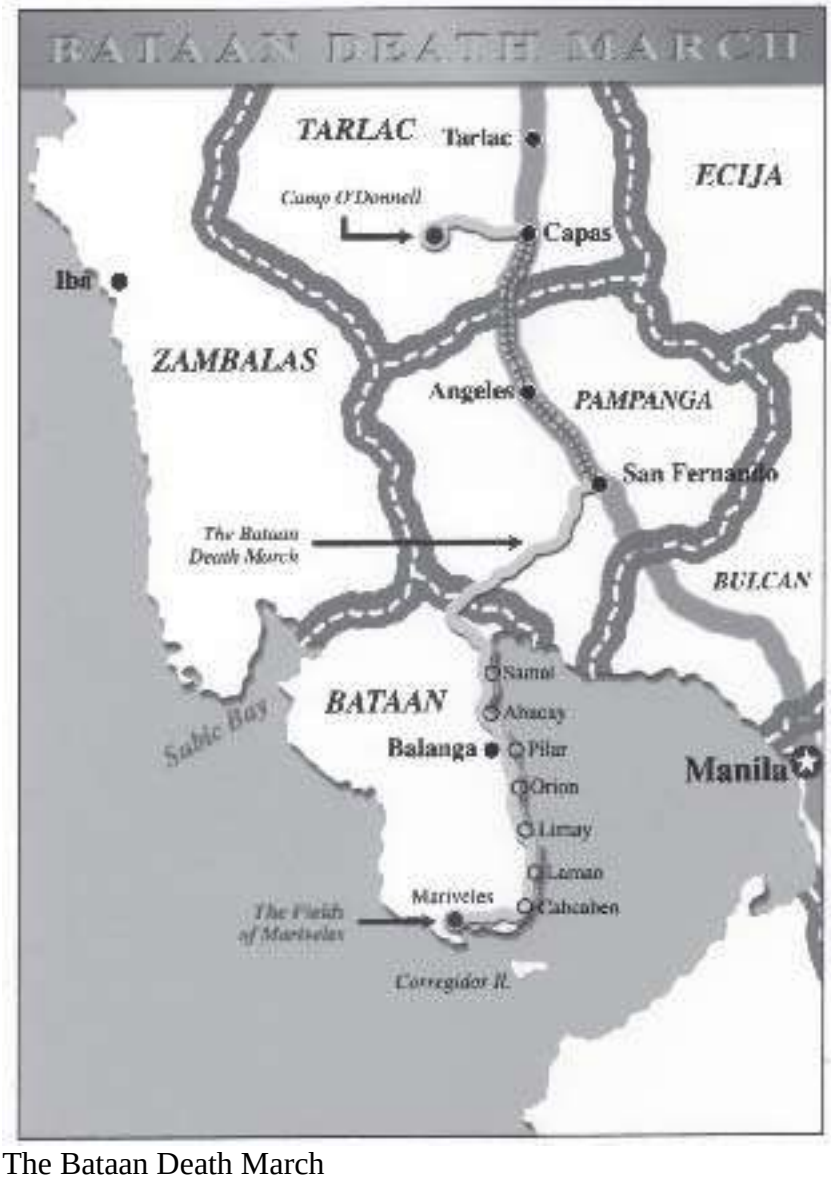
3. The Japanese moved southward and eastward, pushing the American-Filipino forces into the Bataan peninsula.

4. "Sitting Ducks", Gavin Daws, "Prisoners Of The Japanese" Ibid, p60.

(Return to Contents)

The Death March

For three days after their capture the prisoners sat in the fields near Mariveles. They were given no food or water. On the morning of the fourth day Bub and fifty other prisoners began their march northward. They were headed to Camp McDonnell(1) some sixty miles away. Without food or water the men were in considerably weakened condition. The march was slow and painful. The Philippine sun beat down on them mercilessly. On a few occasions a prisoner would spot a pond or trickling stream. He would break ranks for the water. For his effort he was either shot, bayoneted or beheaded. Bub had witnessed about a dozen such killings. The road was literally strewn with American and Filipino prisoners whom had been killed by their Japanese guards. Along the way, Filipino women and children would offer sugar cane for sale which had been pressed into hockey- puck size cakes. Bub had hidden two twenty dollar bills inside his belt. With one twenty he bought eight cakes. These cakes would keep him going for several days.

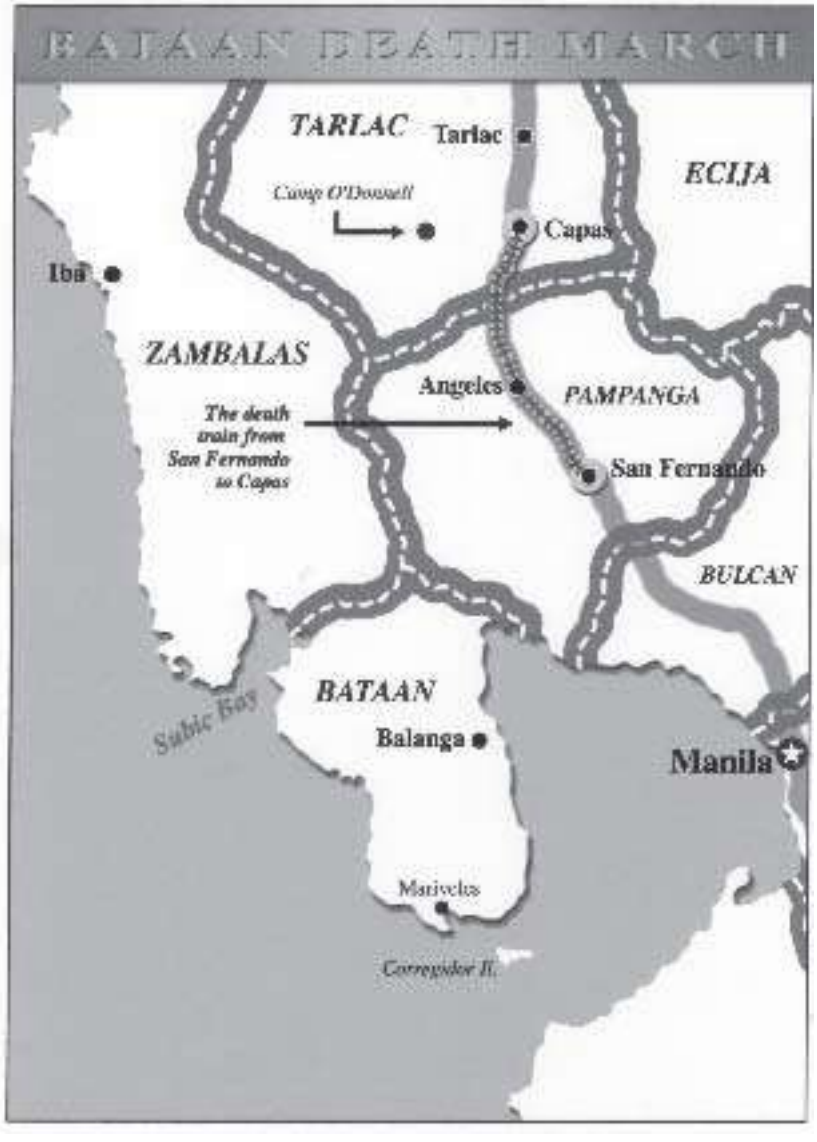


The Bataan Death March

The reason that the march to Camp O'Donnell took as long as it did was that the prisoners were suffering from malnutrition and disease. Although many men from Company B would survive the march to O'Donnell none were in Bub's group of fifty. For the marchers, survival became the order of the day. Finally, when the prisoners reached San Fernando, a captured rail head, the men would receive a cup of rice.

The Japanese guards were regular army. Their officers were for the most part non-coms. The guards were changed frequently. It seemed that each new batch of guards tried to outdo the previous guards in cruelty. The slightest perceived affront was met with a rifle butt to the face or a bayonet in the stomach. It was imperative to avoid eye contact with the guards. The Japanese soldier was never trained or equipped to handle prisoners. To surrender was quite foreign to the Japanese culture. Consequently, the Japanese looked upon their prisoners with utter contempt, and worthy of any punishment the Japanese felt like giving, including death. The Japanese officers were cruel and demanding in regards to their non-coms. The non-coms in turn were cruel and demanding of the soldiers. It was they who took out their own punishments on the prisoners, relentlessly.

When the men had finished their cup of rice given them at San Fernando,(2) they were loaded into box cars. They were stuffed into these box cars like sardines in a can. So tightly were they packed that all stood upright. Disease was rampant. Dysentery was the main culprit. Bub remembers the man next to him standing perfectly upright.



The man was dead, but he could not fall until the box car was emptied. The prisoners disembarked the train at Capas. From San Fernando to Capas was twenty five miles. The train tracks were old narrow gauged rails with old wooden box cars used for the hauling of sugarcane. There was no ventilation. Once on the ground, the men were in for a fourteen mile march to O'Donnell. On this march many more prisoners died. In addition to starvation and dehydration, the killer diseases were dysentery, scurvy, beriberi, and malaria. It was the combination of any two that would result in death.

Camp O'Donnell was a Filipino training camp. The barracks and compound were set up to accommodate about two thousand men. By the time Bub arrived there were about five thousand men. Bub's group sat on the ground. They slept with their backs against fence posts or whatever else would prove to be convenient. For three days they sat and watched the Filipinos carry their dead outside the compound for burial. The only food they had was one cup of boiled rice in the evening. Three water spigots stood in the middle of the camp. The prisoners lined up for hours at a time to fill their canteens. One man would stand in line for hours with several canteens. He would be relieved by another who in turn would stand for hours. It was not uncommon that it took ten to twelve hours to reach the spigots.

After three miserable days at Camp O'Donnell, Bub's group was marched to the camp's gate. They were forced into slave labor. The Japanese were moving northward to Bontoc,(3) a hundred or so miles north of Capas.

The Forced March from San Fernando to Bontoc

prisoners were forced to carry Japanese food to a point eight miles north, return and pick up another load. The rice sacks weighed one hundred pounds. The dried fish weighed eighty pounds. All day long the prisoners moved back and forth carrying the Japanese food.

All summer long the prisoners carried the rice and fish sacks on the trek northward to Bontoc. The men received one cup of boiled rice, usually in the evening. They slept wherever they could find a good spot. Occasionally, when they passed through a Filipino barrio, the men were allowed to sleep under the huts with the dogs and chickens. One thing Bub remembers about the barrios was that there were no children. The Filipinos hid their children in the mountains. Generally, the Filipinos were kind to the Americans. Among Bub's group was a civilian who was about sixty five years old. He had been a gold mine engineer. He warned Bub not to accept offers of escape from the Filipinos, because they would turn an escapee over to the Japanese for food. One frequent sight along the road to Bontoc was the number of wrecked and burned trucks. The Americans had rendered them useless to the Japanese.

An American officer spoke to the prisoners. He told the men that if they could get the trucks working, the Japanese would let them ride in the trucks. He asked for volunteers. Bub spoke up and said, "I can fix about four of those trucks, but I won't do it." The officer ordered Bub to fix the trucks. Bub knew that if he did, the Japanese would confiscate them and use them for their own purposes. No American would ride in them. He again said to the officer, "I won't fix them." The officer said, "I'll have you court-martialed when we get out of this mess." Bub replied, "Yeah, well I'll have you hanged for aiding and abetting the enemy." The problem was resolved on that note.

Occasionally, the Japanese would shoot a wild pig. They gave some of the uncooked pork to the prisoners. One prisoner, Ed O'Rourke, refused to eat the uncooked pork. He had been instructed during boot camp never to eat uncooked meat. The Japanese threatened to kill O'Rourke. Bub pleaded with him, "Ed, if you don't eat the pork, they'll kill you." Ed refused to eat the meat. The Japs grabbed O'Rourke, dragged him fifty feet to a ravine. They then swung him by his hands and feet down into the ravine. Bub is not sure, but he thinks he heard that O'Rourke had survived the ordeal and had returned to the States after the war.

During the trek northward, the prisoners, carrying the rice and the fish, had to negotiate a gorge. Filipino guerrillas had destroyed the bridge. The prisoners had to climb down one side and up the other loaded down with the sacks of food. One prisoner came down with appendicitis. He was in excruciating pain. The Japanese ordered Bub and three other men to carry the prisoner down and up the ravine to a Japanese field clinic. The Japanese doctors removed the appendix. Bub and the other three then had to carry the man back to the ravine, down one side and up the other. The journey took twenty four hours. Bub knows that the man did not continue the march. He doesn't know what happened to him. This event represents to Bub the great inconsistencies of the Japanese. On the one hand they would bayonet a prisoner for the smallest infraction. On the other hand they would try to save a prisoner's life. Bub never could make head nor tail out of it.

In route to Bontoc, the prisoners were met by a tribe of Ingorot Indians. They had come down from the mountains. They were headhunters, but quite friendly to the Americans. They were small in stature, but very ferocious looking. They offered the prisoners bananas and other fruits. They also offered them some betel juice from the bright red betel nut. The red dye of the nut covered most of the face, mouth, and chest of the Indians. The Americans graciously declined the juice. It was known to be a very strong narcotic. One Indian noticed that Bub was limping. His toe was badly infected and painful. With sign language the Indian instructed Bub to urinate on his toe. Bub figured what the hell, nothing else seemed to work. He proceeded to urinate on his toe. Within two hours the pain was gone and within three days the toe was back to normal.

Outside of Bontoc Bub came down with a severe case of dysentery. He was weak and dehydrated. A Japanese officer saw how bad off he was. The officer switched Bub from bags of rice to bundles of mosquito netting. Bub grew weaker and collapsed. The officer ordered Bub to stand up. When he stood up, the officer struck him a hard blow to the side of his head, knocking him down. The officer then went over to the bundle of netting. He could hardly lift it. The problem was that the Japanese guards had placed their bandoleers of ammunition inside the netting. The mosquito netting was far heavier than the rice or the fish. The officer was ashamed that he had struck Bub. He was ashamed of his own men who hid their ammunition in the netting. He took Bub into Bontoc, placed him in a room on a cot. The officer ordered that rice gruel be prepared. He fed this to Bub for two weeks. He allowed no other Japanese soldiers near Bub. After two weeks he regained his strength. The dysentery cleared up. He was returned to the ranks of his fellow prisoners.

Some of the prisoners along with Bub were housed in an abandoned school house. Their job was to wash the eating utensils of the Japanese. They also laundered the undershirts and shorts of the guards. They were given one cup of rice daily in the evening. On laundry day the prisoners went down to the river to wash the clothes. Filipino girls would often slip down to the river bank to offer the Americans some food. These same girls offered to show the Americans the escape routes to northern Luzon where there were no Japanese. The problem was that if any prisoner escaped, those left behind were shot. The prisoners declined the kind offer of the girls. The Japanese were aware that some of the girls were trying to help the Americans to escape. But, they didn't know who the culprits were. The prisoners were interrogated by a Japanese officer who spoke impeccable English. He had been educated in the United States. When the war broke out, he was trapped in Japan and could not return to the States. He had come to visit his parents and was drafted into the Japanese army. The interrogation was one on one with other Japanese in attendance. It went on for four hours. No one told the

Japanese anything about the Filipino girls. When Bub left the room, the officer followed. He said to Bub, "You did very well, not even one slip up." He then told Bub how he got trapped into this senseless war. Bub stayed at Bontoc for two weeks.

From Bontoc,(4) Bub's group of prisoners were trucked to Cabanatuan where there were at least two prison camps that he knew about. By this time disease was taking its toll. Malnutrition, dysentery, and malaria were claiming a large number of lives. An American sergeant pleaded with the Japanese to allow the Americans to bury the American dead. He then pleaded for help among the prisoners to assist with this gruesome job. He knew that if the dead were not buried, disease would wipe out the entire camp.

Bub offered to help. Not everyone did. They dug mass graves. They buried ten bodies to a grave; their dog tags stuffed into their mouths. The hope was that someday the graves would be found and the men identified. Often, heavy rains would fall on the gravesites. The dirt would wash away. An arm or a leg would reappear. The men did their best to keep the graves filled with dirt. All day long for three weeks the burial detail continued their thankless task. They were housed in wooden huts with thatched roofs. One cup of rice was their daily fare. They slept on raised wooden platforms with little or no straw for a mattress. The closeness was very disconcerting.

Truck route from Cabanatuan to Cavite

The sanitary conditions were extremely crude. An open trench ran along the side of the barracks. Every night the same sergeant who organized the burials would go outside to the open trench and spread lime on those spots where it was obvious someone didn't quite make the trench. This sergeant was sixty three years old. He was an orphan, and the army was the only family he knew. He was determined to remain in the army as long as he possible could. The men were desperately hungry. Sometimes the Japanese guards would shoot a wild pig. The only thing the prisoners got were the intestines. The really sad thing to witness was the prisoners fighting over this slop.

Notes:

1 A detailed map of the Bataan Death March can be seen in the inside cover of Hampton Sides, "Ghost Soldiers" New York, Doubleday, 2001.

2 For Camp O'Donnell see Gavin Daws, " Prisoners Of The Japanese', New York, William Morrow & Co, 1994, pp 27,74,,79-81.

3.Between San Fernando and Bontoc, the prisoners were forced to carry one hundred pound sacks of rice and dried fish. They could manage about seven miles per day. The distance between San Fernando and Bontoc is over two hundred miles. At the end of the day, the men received one cup of rice.

4. The men were trucked from Bontoc to Cabanatuan for burial detail. As many as one hundred per day were buried. Cabanatuan is the center of the book, "Ghost Soldiers" by Hampton Sides, New York, Doubleday,2001.

5. Cabanatuan is mentioned in Galvin Daws" "Behind Enemy Lines" New York, William Morrow & Co. 1944, pp64, 108-110, 125, 132, 136-7.

Manchuria

After three weeks of burial detail, Bub and other prisoners were marched to the gates of Cabanatuan. The were loaded into trucks for a four hour trip to Cavite, a small seaport south of Manila. The roads were rough and the men were sick. The rough ride made them sicker. But, this rough ride with the wind blowing through the trucks, was a far better trip than the one that awaited them. At Cavite, the ship "Totorri Maru" was waiting at the docks. The men were loaded into two separate holds: seven hundred and fifty to a hold. These were forward holds. Bub had no idea how many other holds were aft or how many prisoners they held. The men slept on raised wooden platforms inches apart from one another. The daily rations consisted of a small bag of biscuits (hardtack). Bub managed to eke out a corner in which he made a hammock out of remnants of a shelter tent he smuggled aboard. A friendly rat would run along a beam; stop and stare at Bub. By placing a small piece of biscuit on the beam at regular intervals, Bub was assured of a travel companion. Disease was rampant aboard the ship.

Truck Route from Cabanatuan to Cavite
The Ship Route from Cavite to Pusan

Scurvy, beriberi, and dysentery were the main culprits. Bub remembers one night when a soldier woke up yelling, " Holy God, I'm covered with shit!"

The ship sailed through the Luzon Straits then headed northward to the East China Sea. American submarines were plentiful in these waters. More than once the subs fired upon these ships unaware that American prisoners were on board. A great loss of American lives was due to these sinkings. Bub remembers hearing a torpedo miss the ship and a second and third pass under. After three days, the ship pulled into a cove of a deserted island, most likely off the coast of Taiwan. For two days the ship avoided American submarines, then proceeded on its way to Pusan,1 Korea.

The sanitary conditions aboard the Totorri were deplorable. Wooden horses held a metal chute running down to the ship's scuppers. Human feces was floated down the chutes to these openings. A stiff wind would send the waste back on board plastering the bulwarks. Bub tells the story of a Japanese guard who would peer through a porthole in the bulwark unaware of the new coating it had recently received The ship continued its northward trek for two days finally reaching Pusan Korea.2 From Cavite to Pusan took roughly one week, counting the hide and seek games with the American submarines. Not all American prisoners were to leave the "Totorri'. Sadly many would remain on board to end up in Japan. The treatment of prisoners in Japan was far worse than those prisoners who went to Manchuria. The prisoners who disembarked were stripped naked and fire-hosed. New clothing was issued. They were then loaded into passenger cars pulled by an old steam engine. The one good thing about the steam engine was that it heated the passenger cars. Winter was approaching. The train

snaked its way northward to Manchuria. The temperature continued to drop. The train was side-tracked several time to make way for Japanese troop trains. Sometimes, when they were sidetracked, the Koreans would sell box lunches. The prisoners had little or no money, but they would barter with whatever they had. The lunches consisted of pickled vegetables and pickled minnows. With the lack of vitamin C, most of the men had scurvy. The pickled food burnt the inside of their mouths. The train ride from Pusan to Mukden Manchuria was about twenty-four hours. Mukden is located in southern Manchuria which today is known by the Chinese name of Shenyang . The prison camps at Hoten were another seven miles south of Mukden. Modern Chinese maps do not show Mukden or the Hoten camps.

There were several camps at Hoten. There were also several Japanese war factories in Mukden. The factories produced airplane parts and military clothing including boots. Each day the prisoners would march to their respective factory. Bub worked in a factory named MKK. To his amazement, the factory contained many crates of new American machinery. Bub's group of prisoners were assigned the job of building cement foundations for these large machines. The guards within the factory were Manchurians who hated the Japanese more than they did the Americans. The prisoners were loosely guarded. They were in no mood to help the Japanese war effort. One at a time a prisoner would slip away to damage the new machinery. Bolts were unscrewed; knobs, handles and flywheels disappeared. The prisoners finished the foundations and secured the machinery; but, it was totally useless.

The Japanese had to keep the prisoners alive to work in the factories. They were fed three times a day. It was usually a rice gruel or corn mush. Also the Japanese provided shots of vitamin B to combat scurvy. The Japanese had a method to determine who needed the shots and who didn't. The test was as follows: a man was stuck with a pin, starting with his foot and moving up his leg. If a prisoner cried out when his foot was stuck he was entitled to a small shot and a wedge of orange. If the pain was located further up the leg, the prisoner received a larger shot and a bigger wedge of orange. Bub caught on to the procedure. He practiced not to wince by pricking his foot, then his leg with a pin. When it was his turn to be examined, he held back from wincing as long as he could. It was quite painful but the reward was a large dose of vitamin B and three quarters of an orange. Also, one of Bub's friends worked in the Japanese infirmary. He would smuggle out some vitamin B for Bub and others who were in pretty dire straits.

Manchurian children also worked in the factories. Bub could not figure out what they accomplished. All day long they would sit at a bench and pound scrap metal with a ball-peen hammer. The children never played; they never laughed; they never sang. It was a very sad thing to behold. Another memoir of Bub was an old Manchurian man who was frozen stiff along the side of the road that led back and forth from the camps to the factories. The old man was in a ditch, naked, but sitting up in forty below zero weather. The prisoners called him "Fu Man Chu." Each day there was a little less of the old man because dogs nibbled away at his hands and feet. As the winter turned to spring, the old man disappeared.

The prisoners had arrived at Hoten in November of 1942. They would remain there for two and a half years. Bub has many memories and stories of those terrible years. On Christmas eve of 1943 one of the prisoners had smuggled some anti-freeze into the compound in a pair of water wings. Bub could never figure out where he had gotten either. It was assumed that the prisoner could make an alcoholic beverage out of the anti-freeze. As he made his way toward the barracks the officer of the day called for an inspection. The man had to ditch the water wings behind some shrubs. A guard found the water wings and brought them to the O.D. The officer was enraged and demanded that the offender step forward. The word went up and down the line not to say a word. The officer's rage approached insanity. He ordered the men to stand at attention all night long. the temperature was thirty below zero.The culprit told his fellow prisoners that he must give himself up. The reply was, "Hell no, don't give that son-of-a-bitch the satisfaction." In the morning a new O.D. saw the men standing in the cold at attention. He was amazed at the punishment meted out by the other officer. He ordered the men back to their barracks. Once again the contradictions of the Japanese made their appearance. Bub would have occasion to run into the cruel officer often. He was called the "Bull of the Woods."

One fellow prisoner of Bubs was part native American. He and Bub became friends. Bub was long used to working with native Americans. He had saved the soles of his boots, but, the rest had rotted out. Bub's friend had many skills, one of which was bootmaking. He made Bub a pair of slippers out of the old soles and a part of

an army blanket. He lined the slippers and sewed them to the soles and to a few scraps of leather for tops. It was these slippers that kept Bub's feet from freezing on that cold Christmas Eve.

Camp Hoten was no Hilton hotel. The barracks had very little heat. The prisoners slept on raised wooden platforms on which straw was thinly spread. The men were issued five blankets. Bub used four beneath him as a mattress. He slept with his clothes on and a cover of one blanket. The men had a cup of the rice gruel or corn mush three times a day. It was not uncommon to find a dead mouse in the cooked gruel. When this happened, a prisoner would shout out, "Hey, I found some meat in mine'. Sadly, some of the soldiers would not eat the gruel because of the mice.

On the outside of the barracks was a ditch, six feet wide and two feet deep. When it rained, the ditch would fill with running water. Bub decided to build a bridge over the ditch.He filled in the ditch with clay. He then made clay bricks which he laid across the ditch on top of the mound of clay. He waited for the clay bricks to dry; then removed the supporting clay from under the bricks The principles of the Roman arch held true. The bridge held together perfectly and easily supported the weight of a man. When Bull of the Woods saw the bridge, he was bewildered. He looked under it, trying to figure out what held the bridge up. He was dumbfounded as to how it could support his weight as he jumped up and down on the dried clay bricks. The following day Bub dismantled the bridge. He told his barrack buddies that he was going to drive old "Bull" nuts. He then laid some wooden planks across the ditch. These planks were usually used for coffins. He covered the planks with the clay bricks from the former bridge. The bricks completely cover the planks. "Bull" came along and spotted the new bridge. Again, he looked under the bridge to see what was supporting it. He saw nothing. "Bull" jumped up and down on the bridge. He could not understand why the bridge did not collapse under his weight. Back in the barracks Bub laughed his head off. But, his buddies told him, "Bub if that s.o.b. finds out it was you who built the bridges, he'll kill you."

One of the factories to which Bub was assigned was a tannery. It processed raw leather for a nearby boot factory. The prisoners were not inclined to process leather for the boots of Japanese soldiers.There were several stages in the tanning process. When the leather passed through the final vat, the men repeated the process which rendered the leather soft as cloth. It was easily torn to shreds.

The prisoners were at Camp Hoten from November of 1942 until September of 1945. Occasionally a prisoner would try to escape. In May of 1943, three made the attempt. They were captured, brought back to the camp, and paraded before the other prisoners. They had been badly beaten and bloodied. "Bull" stood before the prisoners with a vicious smile on his face. He stuck his thumb high in the air. The message was that Americans stand out like sore thumbs in any oriental group. You cannot escape without being caught. The three men were taken outside the compound and were never seen again. The prison grapevine said that the escapees had been shot. This was never verified.

Notes:

1.The "Totorri Maru" dropped off some prisoners at Pusan, Korea. The ship then continued onward to Japan with many other American, British, and Dutch prisoners. Bub Merrill was among those dropped off at Pusan. The prisoners who then went northward to Mukden, Manchuria, fared much better than those who went to Japan. At the Hoten camps, the prisoners were guarded by the Manchurians who hated the Japanese more than they did the Americans.

2. For the landing of American prisoners at Pusan, see Gavin Daws,

"Prisoners Of The Japanese'New York, William Morrow & Co. 1994,p 285.

(Return to Contents)

Liberation

On the evening of September 11, 1945 Bub fell asleep after a long and hard day at the tannery. He was awakened on the morning of the 12th by the sound of motorized vehicles. He thought little about the noise because Japanese trucks frequently moved in and out of Camp Hoten. He dozed off to sleep only to be awakened again by motorized vehicles, a large number of them. The sound of the motors were not Japanese. By now, most of the men were up and peering out the barrack windows. The Japanese were gone, but the Russians were there. The Russians told the prisoners that they were free to go whenever and wherever they wished. The

American prisoners were completely on their own. The Russians departed almost as quickly as they had arrived. American officers took charge of the camp.

Food and clothing had been dropped earlier on by the Army Airforce. The Red Cross packages had sat on the tarmac for weeks. The Japanese never distributed the packages. Instead, they rifled through the goods and took what they wanted, mostly cigarettes. The packages also contained soap, shaving cream and razor blades, candy, dried fruit and spam. The newly released officers had the food and clothing distributed among the prisoners. It was then that Bub learned that his stomach could not digest any solid food. For two more weeks, the prisoners stayed at Camp Hoten.1 They awaited orders. Finally, Airforce planes arrived on the short runways just beyond the gates of the prison compound. The mission of the Airforce was to take the very ill back to the hospitals in the Philippines. Bub was very ill with the stomach disorder. He declined to be among the first to be removed. He told the officers that there were men far worse off than he. This was a mistake because the stomach disorder would haunt him for several years. Bub and the remaining prisoners were trained back to Pusan along the same tracks that had brought them to Mukden two and a half years earlier. Bub was in such bad shape that he would remember nothing about the two-day trip to Pusan.

When the now- freed prisoners arrived at Pusan they were put aboard the hospital ship "The Relief."2 The hospital ship sailed for Okinawa. Two days out, a hurricane developed. The ship changed its course to skirt the hurricane. Returning to course the ship encountered mines which had been torn loose from their moorings by the hurricane. The men were in the hold of the ship. When they heard about the mines they rushed to the stairs to go topside. As Bub climbed the stairs he spotted a friend going downstairs. Bub yelled, "Hey, where are you going?'The friend shouted back, "I forgot my immunization card and I'm not going through those damn shots again." On deck the sailors were shooting at the mines to explode them. It took a good shot to hit a horn protruding from the mine. The sailors were good shooters. One sad note was that the released prisoners had war souvenirs of one sort or another. Bub had a Japanese saber which he placed under his mattress. While the men were in the mess hall, the sailors robbed them of their souvenirs. Bub didn't really care. He was going home. The meals were buffet style, but Bub could not keep any solids down. He literally lived on milk. It saved his life.

The ship landed at Okinawa. The Red Cross had set up a makeshift camp with tents and a mess hall. The conditions at the camp were primitive because the above mentioned hurricane had completely wrecked the facility. There was no phone or telegraph to notify people stateside. The War Department, however, did notify Bub's parents that he was safe in Okinawa. After a one week stay at the improvised camp, the men were loaded onto B 24s.They sat in the bomb-bay on planks that were eight feet long, with a seating depth of 12 inches. As soon as they took off, the bomb-bay doors were opened. The pilot informed the men that this was necessary because of the gas fumes that could accumulate in that area. Several B-24's had been lost by explosions caused by the gas fumes. The men flew with their legs dangling close to the bomb-bay doors. General MacArthur, always the showman, wanted the men to be brought back to the Philippines. He wanted them to share in his "I shall return" gig. Bad weather forced the plane to land on the northern tip of Luzon. The runway was short and made of packed dirt. There were no tents, cots, or ground personnel. Army rations were plentiful, but Bub could consume only the powdered milk. After two days the pilot decided to give a take-off a try. He was nervous about the shortness of the runway. He revved up the engines and gave the plane as much forward thrust as was safe. The end of the runway was approaching quickly. With a final thrust of the throttle, the plane lifted off the ground just in the nick of time.

The plane headed for Manila. A hospital camp had been set up by the Red Cross to receive the returning prisoners. For two weeks they received whatever medical attention was available. Bub had a cousin, Betty Jane Smith, who had married an army officer. They came to the camp, looking for Bub. The party of three went to the Officers Club outside of Manila.3 Bub had jello washed down with milk. Prior to his capture, he had hidden some personal items under a tree; a watch, class ring, and some money. Bub took a short trip to Bataan. He was sure he found the place of surrender, but he couldn't remember the exact tree under which he had hidden the treasure. Bub had an Aunt Rosemary by marriage. She in turn had a cousin Bobbie who came to the camp to see him. She was a very attractive woman. She was dating a general at that time. She drove Bub and her General friend to a place close to Manila for a nice lunch. Again, Bub could only have milk. He doesn't remember what

ever happened to Bobbie, but he does remember how attractive she was. He had not blocked that from his memory.

By the time that the army interrogation officers got around to Bub, they had already interviewed thousands of prisoners. They were primarily interested in the fact that he had been on a burial detail. They wanted to know where American soldiers had been buried. After almost three years in Japanese prison camps, he had already begun to block these kind of things from his mind. He simply could not remember the burial sites. Only years later did his mind tell him that the burial site was Camp Cabanatuan. Actually, there were several camps in the Cabanatuan area.

After two weeks at the Red Cross camp outside Manila, the men were loaded onto troop ships docked in the Manila harbor. The ships sailed directly to San Francisco bypassing Hawaii. The holds of the ships were redesigned to accommodate the troops. The bunks were three tiers and relatively comfortable. The men were very ill from their sojourn in Japanese prison camps. Bub was worse off than most of the men. He still could not eat solids. At night time he would go topside. Landing craft were lashed to the decks. He would crawl inside a landing craft and sleep on the craft's floor. The sea air was far more soothing to Bub than the smell of sickness in the holds.He remembers very little about this trip. He did know that he was going home.

The ship sailed under the Golden Gate. It had been four years since Bub last saw the bridge. When the ship docked, the men were transported to Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco. An old Algonac friend, Sam Martin, visited him. He was the supply sergeant at Ft. Ord. He called Treg to let her know that Bub was OK. She uttered a silent prayer to thank the Good Lord for bringing Bub back. Like most of the men he received many shots. He told no one about the stomach problem. He did not want to be hospitalized and delay his return home. Later diagnosis would verify that Bub had a severe case of gastric ulcers. He would, through subsequent operations lose half of his stomach. After one week at Letterman he boarded a train for Galesburg, Illinois.

There were sleeping berths on the train. When the train stopped at Las Vegas, the men were led to a mess hall in the station where they had lunch. Bub had a class of tomato juice which he immediately threw up. A nurse had witnessed his distress. She took him by the hand and led him back to the train. She put him in her own private room. For the rest of the trip she nursed Bub as best she could. He pleaded with her not to report his illness. She didn't. Upon arrival at Galesburg, he was placed in the Mayo Clinic with a dozen other men on the ground floor. He received word that his Mom and Dad and Treg were on their way to visit him. He wanted to look his best. He went to the dentist with a tooth cap wrapped in a handkerchief, a memorial to a Japanese rifle butt. The dentist smiled and said that the cap would no longer fit the tooth. A new cap had to be made. It would not be ready for the upcoming visit. Bub would return to the dental office on another day.

The day of the visit was at hand. Laura, Leigh and Treg walked arm in arm down the central corridor of Bub's ward. The men were standing at the end of the ward. Half way down Leigh and Laura stopped. They pushed Treg forward to be the first to greet Bub. Treg was hesitant because she felt Laura should be the first.

In this moment of indecision, she spotted Bub. Treg had on a brown suit which did her figure justice. Her brown hair was fixed in a short bob. She had not seen Bub for four years. She didn't know what to do, what to say. She had read about the Bataan Death March. She was simply petrified. The closer she stepped toward Bub, the greater her heart pounded. The smile on his face lifted the shroud of terror in her eyes. Bub was in very poor health. He too, was frightened, because he had not heard from or about her for over four years. He knew about the "Dear John" letters that other men had received. Had she fallen in love with someone else? One look from Treg and one look from Bub was all that was needed to throw the future husband and wife into one another's arms; a warm embrace, a loving kiss. When he let her go, he said to her, "You've gained weight." The truth was that she had not gained a single pound since he last saw her. The problem was that Bub had lived too long with the skeletal frames of his fellow prisoners. Treg was very much aware of Leigh and Laura waiting to see Bub. She took him by the hand and walked quickly to his parents with him in tow. It was a very emotional reunion.

The day after the visit, Bub returned to the dental office. There were three dentists standing around, doing nothing. When Bub appeared, they tossed a coin to see who would treat him. He was outraged and stormed out of the office. He went directly to the Commanding General's office. The officer at the desk informed Bub that there was no way he could see the General because he was at a meeting. He walked over to the General's door and opened it. There were about twelve officers sitting around a table. The General rose. He could see that Bub was very agitated. He was shaking and perspiration dripped from his forehead and hands. The General gently

spoke to him. “What can I do for you, son?” Bub unloaded about the dentists. He also unloaded about the fences that surrounded the hospital. The treatment and the damn fences weren’t any better than the Japanese camps. The General said to him, “Let me finish up here and I’ll talk to you some more in fifteen minutes.” Bub was not an arrogant person. When his sense of justice was offended, he sought a remedy. His father had always taught him that if you think you are in the right, stick to your guns.

The general was a kind man. He knew what Bub had gone through. He sat and listened to Bub who pleaded with him to send him home. The general told him that the only way he could do that was to get him a medical discharge. The paper work would take a month and monthly visits to a VA hospital would be necessary. Bub replied that if he could go home now, he would return in one month to obtain his discharge papers and he would make the monthly visits to the VA hospital. The General believed Bub and gave him a leave to go home. He called his Dad to come take him home. Leigh was there the next morning. The trip from Galesburg to Algonac was a good day and a half. Leigh drove all night long alone. Bub drove back while his father slept. They were home the next day. The drive for Bub was his first contact with reality for over four years. The drive gave him a sense that he had some control over his life. The trip home was very therapeutic. Bub realized how much he loved his Dad and how much his Dad loved him. This special relationship would bond the two men together until death took Leigh away.

Notes:

1. There is a list of prisoners released from Camp Hoten. The appendices has an abbreviated list. The list contains he names of Lt. General G.F. Wainwright who surrendered Corregidor, and Maj. General

E.P. King who surrendered Bataan. Bub Merrill’s name appears under the category Engineers.

2.. The hospital ship, “The Relief”, which carried the wounded prisoners to Okinawa is referred to in Gavin Daws, “Prisoners Of The Japanese’, New York, William Morrow &Co. 1994, p.343.

3.When the prisoners were sent from Okinawa to Manila, Manila was out of bounds to them. Manila had been completely destroyed by the Japanese upon their retreat. The civilian popuation had been killed. Disease was rampant in the city. See the index for a report on the complete devastation of Manila.

The young soldier

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS

UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES, PACIFIC

GENERAL ORDERS; APO 500
9 October, 1945

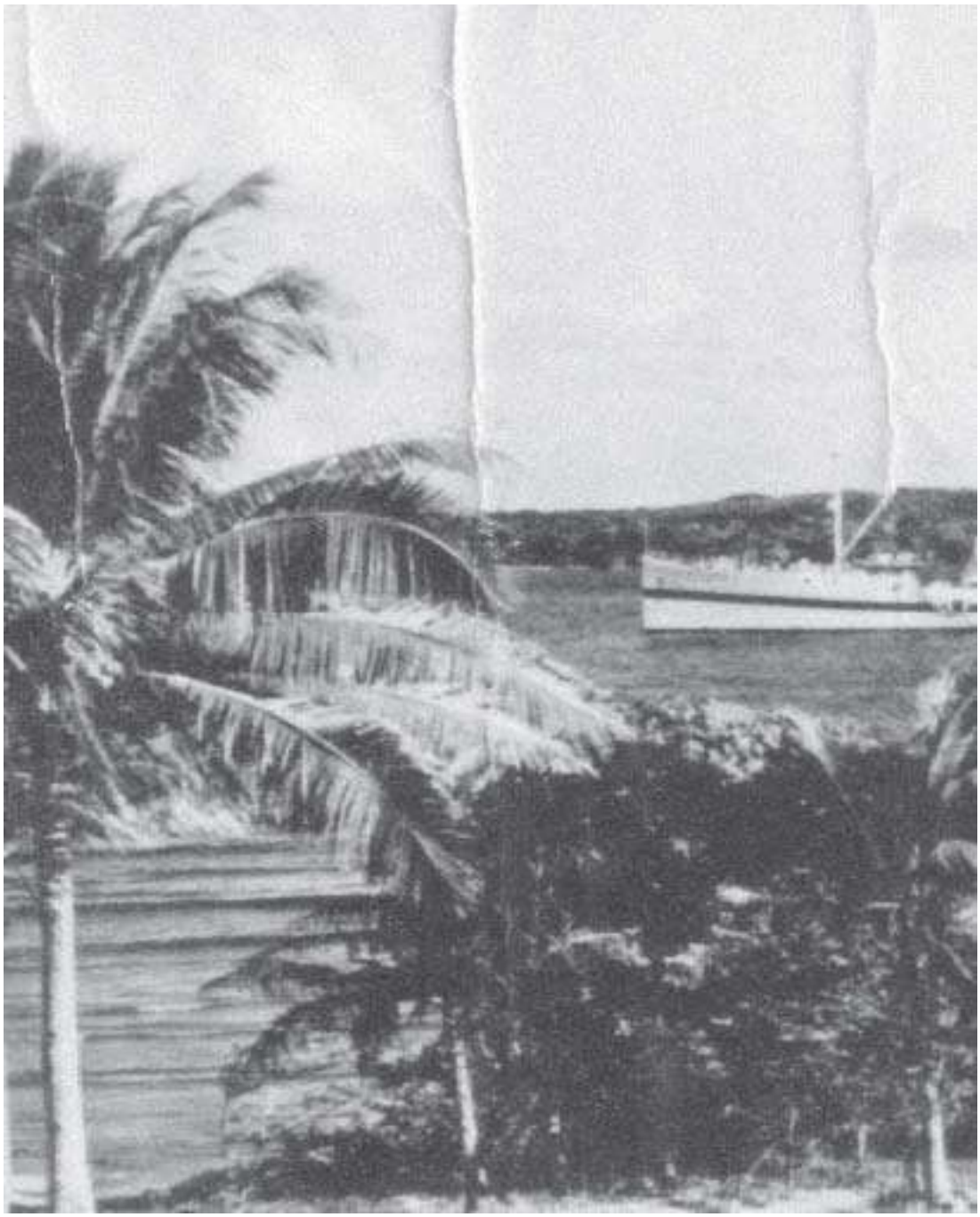
IV. SILVER STAR. By direction of the President, under provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 9 July 1918 (bulletin 43, WD, 1918), a Silver Star is awarded by the Commander-in-Chief, United States Army Forces, Pacific, to the following-named enlisted men:

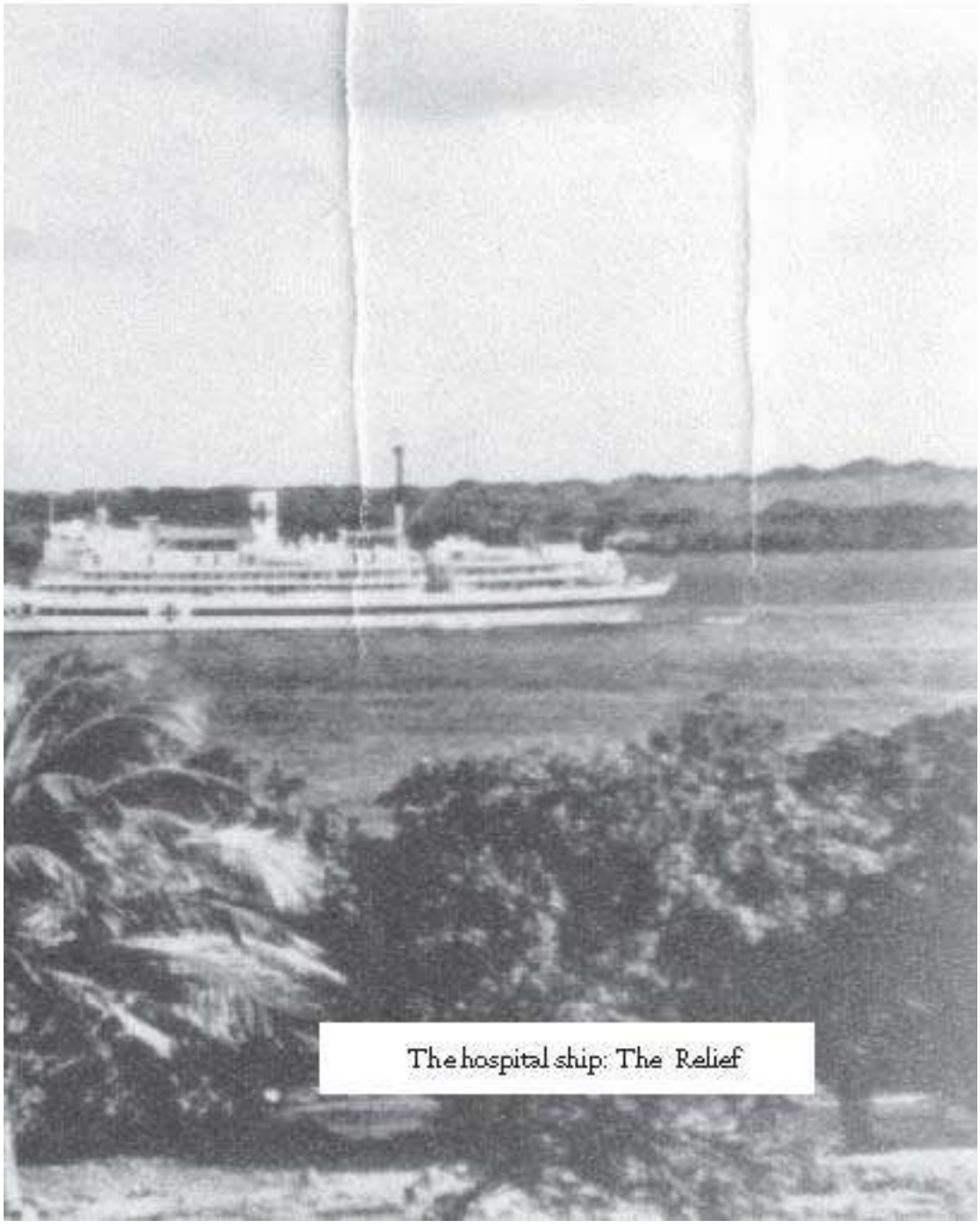
(an excerpt)

.....Corporal SMITH MERRILL, 36115779, (then private), Corps of Engineers, United States Army. For gallantry in action in Luzon , Philippine Islands, from 11 to 20 December1941. At the outbreak of hostilities, Corporal Merrill was serving with the 803d Engineers Battalion in the construction of new runways at Del Carmen Field. Upon the approach of 54 enemy bombers, he courageously remained with his equipment and kept it under control despite heavy bombing of the immediate vicinity by Japanese planes. Although the field was the target of relentless enemy attack, he cheerfully and willingly, continued working on the project, thereby making possible it's effective use by our aircraft in a gallant effort to stem the savage tide of Japanese aggression. Through his courage and determination to complete a strategic air base, Corporal Merrill made a noteworthy contribution to the defense of the Philippine Islands.
Address: 215 St. Clair River Drive, Algonac, Michigan

Bub outside Manila — 1945

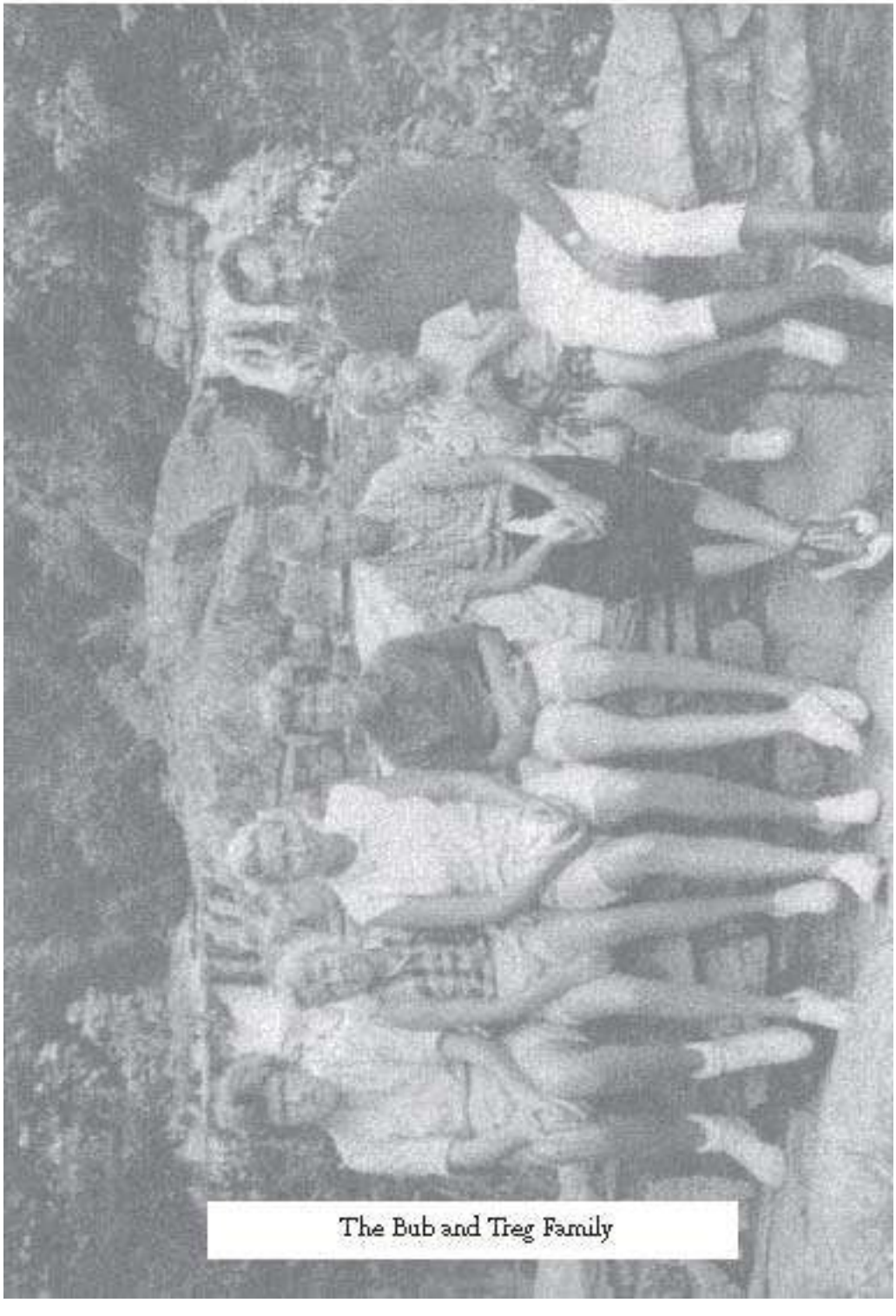
The wedding cake





The hospital ship: The Relief

Gertrude Worfolk—Bub’s Partner in life



The Bub and Treg Family

(Return to Contents)

Home in Algonac

Bub and his Dad drove the entire day from Galesburg to Algonac. It was late in the evening when they drove into the driveway on St. Clair Drive. The house was lit up and music could be heard coming from the living room. Bub's sister Ann had purchased an antique record player. It had a brass turn table and the record disks

were also made of brass. The records were very rusty. Ann's husband had taken the records to a brass repair shop. The records were restored to pristine condition. Ann had put on the player a recording of " The Wedding March" from the opera, Lohengrin, by Richard Wagner. She slipped out of the house before Bub arrived. The reunion with her dear brother was too much to endure. She knew she would cry. It was Ann who gave Bub his nickname. One day she came home from college. Smith Merrill was four years old. Ann said, "What's up Bub?" and from that day Smith was called Bub. When Bub entered the house, his mother was beside herself. She hugged and kissed him. He was too tired to eat. He drank a glass of milk, then went to bed.

Men who have gone through what Bub experienced as a prisoner suffer psychological damage. The harshness, the brutality, the deaths, the diseases, the lack of food, all take a toll on the human mind. This damage is handled in different ways. Some men turn to alcohol. Some commit suicide. Some become very bitter with a sense of hopelessness. Others become reclusive. The damage can be repaired but it takes time. At first Bub was reclusive. He stayed inside the house; reluctant to venture out. He feared that he would not remember people when they spoke to him. He was aware of his problem and knew he had to beat it. One day he ventured out and walked toward town. A man passed him by turned and said, "Hi Bub, welcome home!" Bub returned the greeting but was petrified. He didn't know the man but he knew the voice. He continued to walk telling himself that he knew that voice. Then it dawned on him. The man was Robert Townsend, one of his sister's former boyfriends. This was a breakthrough for Bub. So what if he didn't remember names and faces. He could handle that. If he didn't recognize a person who spoke to him, he would simply say, " I'm sorry, I have been away for awhile. What is your name?" People understood. And more importantly, his memory began to improve. He went for walks more frequently. He returned to work with his Dad. His father never pushed Bub, but let him find his own pace. Life was achieving some normalcy.

The wounds of war heal slowly, mental wounds more slowly. After a month had passed, Bub drove back to Galesburg to get his medical discharge papers. The General was genuinely pleased to see that Bub looked so much better. "You made the right decision, son!" The discharge papers were in order. Bub drove back to Algonac by way of Ann Arbor, the home of the University of Michigan. Treg was finishing her college years. They drove around the campus and stopped at the Arboretum, an experimental station of the university. The trees and shrubs provided a natural place for two people to express their love for one another. On this occasion he told Treg that the Letterman doctors had informed him that the starvation and disease he suffered during Japanese imprisonment would leave him sterile. Treg was not concerned. She had waited for him for four years. As it would turn out in later years, Bub and Treg would have five Children. As they kissed passionately, a police car pulled up beside them. The police officer approached Bub, "May I see your driver's license, please?" Bub did not have a driver's license. The officer began to berate him. He explained to the officer that he had just been released from a Japanese prison camp. The officer apologized profusely, shaking his head in embarrassment as he walked back to the patrol car. This situation would repeat itself when a few weeks later Bub was driving Treg home to Algonac. Treg spotted an abandoned gas station. Let's pull over and "neck," she said to Bub. He was ever so happy to oblige her. A sheriff's car pulled along side of them. "What are you kids doing here" "We're necking," Treg replied. The officer got out of the car and asked Bub for his driver's license. Bub told the same story as before. The officer was apologetic and advised him to get a driver's license. "And be careful around here, there have been several robberies in this area." Bub and Treg thanked the officer and drove quietly away.

On one of their frequent kissing bouts, Treg said, "Let's get married!" Bub thought that it was a great idea. He wasn't sure why he hadn't popped the question earlier. There remained a shyness about Bub. The mind was still healing. Arrangements for the wedding were made at the Episcopal Church in Algonac. It was to be a small and very private affair. It was customary in the Episcopal Church to publish the wedding band. When Treg and Bub arrived at the church on December 22, 1945, they found the church literally packed with friends, townspeople and churchgoers. Bub's best man was, Fred Gilbert, the friendly undertaker. The wedding party rode in a highly polished hearst. Treg's very old and dear friend, Grace Trix, was her bridesmaid. The wedding dress belonged to Treg's cousin whose husband was a clothes designer. It was a beautiful purple taffeta dress. The skirt was pleated. When Treg swirled the least bit the pleats opened up to reveal a lovely scarlet lining. After the wedding the reception was held in the church hall. The same people who had crowded the church, now crowded the hall.

After the wedding, Bub and Treg drove to Detroit for an overnight honeymoon at the Statler Hotel, a very old but gracious hotel. When Bub signed in at the desk, he wrote only his name. The clerk looked at him and asked about the lady. " Oh, I forgot, we just got married!" They had a quiet but pleasant dinner. Somewhat exhausted, they collapsed into a much needed sleep. In the morning a knock on the door woke them up. They invited the knocker to come in. The bell boy stood holding a massive red poinsettia plant. It was from Uncle Owen. He had sent red roses the night before but they had frozen on the way to Detroit. His note was apologetic, but expressed a hope and wish for a very happy married life. Bub dropped Treg of at the University of Michigan. She still had some required courses to take in preparation for her June graduation. Bub went back to his parent's house. There were many trips back and forth between Algonac and Ann Arbor. Sometimes Bub would meet her in Detroit and drive up to Algonac for a long weekend. Treg had earned enough money to pay for her tuition. Her parents helped with the room and board, but from December to June this became Bub's responsibility. His work with his father provided sufficient money to pay for his wife's education. She would remain his source of strength and happiness as he put his life back together.

Shortly after Treg's graduation, she and Bub decided to have a second and longer honeymoon. They wanted to visit his sister Marie at Ft. Monroe, Virginia. It was another warm and loving reunion. After the visit, they drove farther south to Georgia. Bub wanted to see his old native American friend to thank him for the slippers and other kindnesses he had performed for Bub during their imprisonment. His name was Ike Garret. Bub spotted the mailbox at the end of a dusty road. As he pulled in, he saw an elderly lady working in the field. Bub asked her if Ike lived here. She said he did, but had gone to town. He explained to her that he wanted to thank Ike for his many acts of kindness. She said to Bub, "Suit yourself, but you will only make things worse. He'll start thinking about those Jap prisons and be more bitter than he is now." The honeymooners thanked the lady and headed further south to visit another prison friend in Mt. Dora, Florida. The man was happy to see the couple. He then told Treg and Bub about his wife, who was unbalanced. She would go out on the highway and pick up hitchhikers and take them wherever they wanted to go. He had enough of this and wanted a divorce. From then on Bub refrained from visiting any of his old army friends.

Bub's Dad had bought a piece of property on which he hoped to build a marina. Bub had ideas on a much grander scale. He hoped to purchase some property adjacent to the one his dad had bought. By combining the properties, a larger marina could be constructed. He also wanted to keep his summer workers for winter jobs. There were two native Americans from Walpole Island, Don Jacobs and Gene Altman. They were excellent workers well trained by Bub in the drudging business. The property that Bub wanted was owned by his cousin's brother-in-law who was also building some homes on marsh lands. He needed canals behind the homes which would connect with Lake St. Clair. Bub made a deal with him that he would build the canals in exchange for the property adjacent to his father's lot. He then talked his Dad into buying one more piece of property. Father and son now had sufficient land on which to build a good size marina. The father and son were a great team. During the winter of 1946, Bub dug the canals. In the spring the L.C. Merrill Dredging Company became The Merrill Marina and Dredging Company.

Bub and his dad did not receive salaries as such. When money was needed for equipment, machinery, autos, or for groceries, they simply wrote checks against the company's bank account. There was never a doubt on the part of father or son that one would take unfair advantage the other. Social Security legislation put an end to this way of doing business. Salaries would have to be paid and Social Security taxes deducted from the salaries.

Bub's sister, Anne, and her husband were transferred to the ChrisCraft plant in Cadillac, Michigan. His Dad had bought the house in Algonac for Anne. Bub could have the house, if he took over the mortgage payments. This was a fortunate happenstance. When Treg had returned to Algonac after graduation, she and Bub lived on a ChrisCraft with a cabin. It was a twenty three foot Express Cruiser named "The Prisoner's Dream." The cabin cruiser was simply too uncomfortable to live on. Treg had become pregnant with the first of five children. It would seem that the doctors at Letterman had overstated Bub's condition of sterility. When his sister's house became available, Treg and Bub sold the cabin cruiser and moved to their first real home. A baby daughter was born to them in late summer at Harper Hospital in Detroit.

Because Bub had a medical discharge, he had to report to the VA hospital in Detroit once a month. It was a fifty mile trip each way. The routine was always the same. He would hurry to get to the hospital then sit around and wait until someone had time to give him a physical. The doctors were curious about the various diseases

Bub may have had as a Japanese prisoner. They were particularly concerned about a possible case of shistosomiasis, a parasitic disease often found in returning prisoners. Bub did not have the parasite, nor had he ever had malaria or pellagra. He had had dysentery, scurvy, and beriberi. His main health problem was with his stomach. He never mentioned this to the VA doctors. Bub was tiring of these monthly trips and the long hours of waiting. On one occasion he had sat for several hours waiting to see the doctors. He was escorted to a room where the physical would take place. Several doctors were in the room completely ignoring Bub. He was enraged. He stormed out of the room and went directly to the director's office by-passing the receptionist's desk. Without knocking he entered the director's office and told the man what exactly was on his mind. The treatment of soldiers by the VA staff was simply deplorable. The director listened attentively. He told Bub that he understood the frustration. There was to be a meeting of the VA board that evening. He pleaded with Bub to tell the board exactly what he had told him. Bub agreed and that evening he unloaded on the board of directors. When Bub left the meeting the director followed him out of the room, shook Bub's hand and said, "You don't realize how much good you have just achieved for your fellow soldiers who so depend on the VA." Bub was never notified to return to the VA. The trips were over.

The marina business was growing quickly. Money was more plentiful and pleasure boats were multiplying like rabbits. On one occasion one of Bub's customer complained about the high cost of painting the bottom of his boat. He told Bub that a local yacht club in Detroit charged considerably less. Bub explained that the local yacht club only power washed the boat bottoms and then painted over the minuscule moss cells.He told the man to watch the boats of his friends as the summer wore on. By mid-summer these boats would be sluggish because the maturing moss would begin to pick up all the garbage that floated in the Detroit River. He then explained to the customer that not only did he power wash the bottom, but sanded every inch of it. Then he applied only the best of marine paints. The customer was so impressed that he told his friends about Bub's fine workmanship. His business picked up considerably that summer. The price was high but so was the quality.

Treg helped out at the marina switchboard. One day she received a call from a man who was verbally abusive and offensive.Treg listened politely and then simply hung up the phone. When Bub came into the office, Treg told him about the phone call. He picked up the phone and called the customer. "Please come and get your boat! No one talks to my wife disrespectfully." The customer got to the root of the nasty call. One of his mannequin employees was the culprit who called on the customer's behalf to see if the boat was ready. The man came to Bub's office the next day and apologized for the poor behavior of one of his employees.He remained a loyal customer.

The marina business flourished. Bub and Treg raised their family in Algonac. Their children grew up quickly. Their happy family life was interrupted by a very sad event. The oldest daughter lived in an apartment in Algonac with a couple of other girls. She came down with a throat infection. During the night her throat swelled cutting off her air supply. Bub and Treg got the call to come to Melinda's apartment. When they arrived it was too late. There is no greater sadness in life than losing a loving child.

Bub and Treg retired from the marina business in 1969. They had purchased some acreage on Lake Charlevoix in northern Michigan. They enlarged a small house sitting near the lakefront. Bub did the work himself including putting up the trusses. It was a real challenge but a labor of love. They enjoyed many a happy year on Lake Charlevoix. In 1997 they sold the property and moved to their current address in Petoskey, Michigan. The Duggans and the Merrills became neighbors.

1. The prisoners who returned to the States were physically debilitated due to lack of food and various diseases. They were psychologically damaged from imprisonment and brutality either endured or witnessed. When Bub went to Mayo General Hospital in Galesburg, Illinois, he was in very poor condition physically and mentally. It is no wonder that he reacted negatively to the chain fences around the hospital and the callused attitude of the hospital staff. He spoke out whenever he encountered these conditions.

(Return to Contents)

EPILOGUE

There comes a time in our lives when we meet people who are outstanding individuals. What they exude is a certain simplicity and honesty, and a complete lack of braggadocio. They are aware of their own shortcomings. When it comes to a choice between their own needs and the needs of others, they place the others first. It is refreshing to meet such people. The stories within this book are the memoirs of a unique person and his ever loyal wife. It was her strength and love that formed the basis for his survival. Within these pages the personalities of Bub and Treg emerge as both ordinary and heroic.

The Merrills are in the autumn of their lives. Yet, that same spirit that kept their hopes alive during the almost hopeless years of Japanese imprisonment, still prevails today. Illness has become a daily companion. Yet, when you are with them, their love for one another cannot be hidden. I doubt seriously that death will end their love. Bub still addresses Treg as Dear. Treg refers to Bub as her one and only love. Impatience is a malady of the aged. Flair-ups happen, but they are always followed by a thinly veiled apology. One great element of their friendship is the humor that goes back and forth between the two of them. I would sometimes drop in unannounced. I would ask Treg, "Where is Bub" She would answer, "I don't know....haven't seen him in years. Or I would ask Bub, "How's Treg feeling today?" He would answer, "She doesn't have any! Each time a different set of replies would be forthcoming. Sometimes, I would "pop" in and ask " Am I on time for lunch?" Treg would shout out, "No, but I will change clothes and be ready in a minute! Their good sense of humor simple pervaded their lives.

The brutality of the Japanese during WW2 has always been somewhat a mystery. In conversations with Bub, it became clear that he understood the problem. To him the war with Japan was a clash of cultures. Their traditions of Samurai and Banzai completely colored their military behavior. Bub often said that the Japanese officers were equally brutal toward their own soldiers as the were toward the American prisoners. The most disconcerting part of Bub's experience was the total unpredictably of any given Japanese at any given time. They were simply arbitrary. On many occasions, the Japanese could be both brutal and merciful. To this day Bub does not understand this ambiguity.

(Return to Contents)

APPENDICES

World War II was a war of devastation. The following official reports are indicative of the destruction. Germany was a brutal force against humanity, especially in the Holocaust. Japan was equally brutal in the annihilation of Peking and Manila. The treatment of prisoners of war by the Japanese was simply horrific. Today, Germany and Japan are stabilizing forces in the struggle for global peace.

The following appendices are not meant to demean the Japanese. They are meant to remind mankind as to the depths of degradation to which some nations had fallen. We as a nation must be careful not to allow such atrocities to be committed again either by ourselves or by others. The appendices are as follows:

(Return to Contents)

CAMP O'DONNELL REPORT

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR INTERNED BY THE JAPANESE IN THE PHILIPPINES.

Prepared by the Office of Provost Marshall General,19 November, 1945.

Summarized:

Once arrived on the area at San Fernando, the prisoners were crowded into boxcars and taken to Camp O'Donnell, located near Capas in North Luzon Because of the starvation, disease, and brutal treatment they received, 2,000 Americans and 22,000 Filipino prisoners died at Camp O'Donnell. Eye witness reports

Excerpts:

Corporal Arthur A. Chenowith.....Although the Japanese had plenty of food and medicine, 1600 Americans and 20,000+ Filipinos died of disease and starvation. Captain Mark M. Wohfeld.....Lacked cooking water. Water from a murky creek two miles away had to by carried in oil drums on bamboo poles. For drinking water,

prisoners had to stand the better part of the days to reach three spigots in the center of the camp. Salt and sweet potato were added to the rice diet. Most could not eat because of malaria and dysentery. The sick lay on floors in a so called hospital Covered with feces, blood vomit and flies. Major William E. Dyess.....We were marched for several days without water or food. We were made to sit in the boiling sun during the day and not permitted to lie down at night. Prisoners who fell out of line because of sickness were killed on the spot. Several were buries alive. The prisoners were terrorized and dehumanized. During the first week at O'Donnell, twenty men a day perished. During the second week the numbers rose to fifty a day. Regardless of their weakened condition, the prisoners were forced into work details. The great sadness was to see the prisoners die as they buried their dead.

CABANATUAN

Report On American Prisoners of War Interned by the Japanese in the Philippines. Prepared by the Office Of The Provost Marshall General, 19 November, 1945 There were several interment camps at Cabanatuan. The camps were twelve miles from the town of Cabanatuan. Camp # 1 held the relatively healthy prisoners who surrendered at Corregidor. Camp #2 held the prisoners from Bataan and other parts of the Philippines. Camp # 3 served as a makeshift hospital. The very ill from camps #1 and #2 were sent to Camp 3. It was a death camp and the burial details were from camps #1 and #2. These camps were administered far better than Camp O'Donnell. The death rate at Camps two and three was greater than that of Camp one. The high death rate was due to starvation, dysentery, scurvy, malaria, and beriberi. The officers of the Camps organized the camps into administration, kitchens, and dispensaries. There were medical doctors dentists and medical corpsmen among the prisoners, but they had very little drugs to work with. It should be noted that the large number of deaths at these camps was also due to the cut in rations prior to surrender. The fighting men had their rations cut to one eighth of the ordinary daily rations. Consequently, both the prisoners from Bataan and Corregidor were in vary poor health at the time of capture.

HOTEN POW MAIN CAMP MUKDEN, MANCHURIA

Report by: Capt. James I Norwood
Capt. Emily L Shek
31 July 1946
Summarized:

Hoten was the name of the POW camp on the outskirts of Mukden, Manchuria, (Shenyang, China) three miles northeast of the walled city. The camp was several miles from the industrial part of the city which housed the Japanese MKK factories. These factories manufactured airplane parts, structural steel, and tannery goods. The camp held prisoners from Bataan,Corregidor,and Singapore. There were three brick buildings for housing, very similar to Japanese Barracks. The men slept on raised wooden platforms with a straw mattress beneath them. The rooms were heated by two small stoves which were inadequate to ward off the 20 below zero outside temperatures. In a separate building there were 22 showers and three pools. This facility was not heated. Another brick building was used as a cookhouse and bakery. The prisoners did the cooking and baking under Japanese supervision. It was then carried in large buckets to the barracks where it was distributed to the prisoners.The food was the same every day. Breakfast consisted of corn mush. Supper and dinner was a watery vegetable soup and a bun. The vegetables were grown by the prisoners on a plot of land next to the barracks. The vegetables were varied and in good supply. The prisoners were marched to the factories every day except Sunday. On Sunday and holidays, the prisoners could play sports on an open field next to the barracks. YMCA had provided over 1000 books for a small library.

LIST OF PRISONERS LIBERATED

The Russian Red Army Guard was under the command of Colonel Skriknikov. He and Colonel Pilet of the American Army jointly created a list of prisoners at Hoten. The document was signed by the above officers. On August 10 and 11 of 1945, a list of 1,383 officers and soldiers of the allied forces was made by the Russians and Americans. Gradually the men were released from the camp. The less ill were transported by rail to Dairen(Luda, China). The very ill were flown to their respective military centers. On August 24, 1945, 47

former prisoners were airlifted out of Camp Hoten. This included officers and soldiers. On August 27, 1945, thirty officers and men were airlifted. Among these were Lt. General J.M. Wainwright who surrendered Corregidor in 1942 and Major General E.P.King who surrendered Bataan in 1942. On 30 August, 14 were evacuated. On the same day 47 other men departed but a record of there names is not available.On September 4,1945 another 37 were airlifted. On 2 and 10 September, 23 men were airlifted. Beginning September 11, 1945, 44 officers and 587 enlisted men were sent by train to Korea to board hospital ships. On this list, the name of Corporal Smith Merrill # 36115779 of the Corps of Engineers (the subject of Silence Of A Soldier) appeared.

THE DESTRUCTION OF MANILA

The account of the destruction of Manila is based on testimony collected from eye- witnesses by the US forces which liberated Manila. The testimony was under oath. The reports are condensed. The once proud city of Manila is dead. The churches, convents, schools and universities have been reduced to rubble by the Japanese.The civilian population has been starved, raped, burned, murdered, mutilated and bayoneted, including small infants.The orders for these atrocities came directly from Tokyo. The destruction of Manila was not the act of crazed troops. It was a operation carefully planned by General Yamashita and the Japanese high command.

Excerpts:

In the first three weeks of February,1945, The Japanese began to destroy methodically the churches, convents and charitable institutions in the inner city (Intramuros) St. Tomas University, the Manila Cathedral, hospitals and libraries were either bombed or set ablaze. The occupants of these institutions were locked inside the buildings when they were set afire. Orphans, foundlings, sick people in hospitals and insane people in the Asylums were locked into their institutions to be burned to death along with the incinerated buildings. On January 25, 1945, Japanese soldiered entered the facility of the Philippine Red Cross.They bayoneted or shot doctors, nurses, babies with their mothers, young girls, some of whom they raped. On February 12, they entered Lasalle College. There were seventy people within the premises. The inhabitants were slain with sabers, bayoneted, or shot. On February 23, 1945, in one charitable institution, 50 people were shot in the head with their hands tied behind their backs. A few blocks away another 30 bodies suffered the same fate. On February 24,1945, an air-tight food vault was opened to reveal the bodies of close to 300 people suffocated in the cramped 15 by 18 foot space. The Spanish Consulate flying the Spanish flag was set afire killing more than fifty people within. Filipinos in the outlying areas faired no better. In Calamba, 5000 men, women and children were slaughtered and the town decimated. At the Medical School of the University of the Philippines 190 students and faculty were locked into one room in which the furniture had been soaked with gasoline. The doors were locked and the room set afire. Only three people survived. Dr. Frankel a university surgeon lived to tell the terrible story. Captured Japanese documents record the death of 1000 civilians. Men were shot after their genitals had been cut of. Women were mutilated by having their breast slashed off with sabers. Children were bayoneted. Area by area, block by block homes and buildings were torched. Whole neighborhoods disappeared. These are only a few of the evils perpetrated on the Filipinos by the Japanese As the war drew to an end, the Japanese forces took their revenge on the defenseless civilian population. When they were finished, Manila had been leveled. The people lay dead everywhere, in the streets, in the buildings in the schools and in the churches.

William J. Duggan retired from Webster University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1995, as Provost of the University. He was at Webster close to thirty years: first as a professor of Comparative Religion; then as Dean of the Graduate School. He established Graduate Studies programs in: Geneva Switzerland; Vienna, Austria; Leiden, The Netherlands, and London, England. He also established Graduate Studies at some thirty seven military bases across the United States.

William and his wife Barbara divide their time between the Charleston SC area and Petoskey, Michigan. As Professor of Comparative Religion, Duggan wrote "Myth And Christian Belief" Fides Press (1970) which traced the influences of Babylonian and Jewish religious thought on early Christianity. During the 90's He has published many commentaries in the form of Political Satire. His interests are reading, writing, and not arithmatic, but golf.

###