

Article published in
THE TELL CITY NEWS
Tell City, Indiana

Capt. Saalman tells of World War II fall of the Philippines.
(Fateful years of prison life)
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1945

Capt. O. E. Saalman was with Patrick Walsh of St. Croix, Indiana when he died in a Japanese prison camp; Lauds Walsh and Glenn Robertson for heroic part they took in the War.

(Editor's note: This is the story of Capt. Otis E. Saalman, formerly of Branchville, Ind., who fought through all the vicious battles of Bataan and fought in the heroic and last stand of Corregidor, P.I., which finally fell to the enemy on that fateful day of May 6, 1942, where he was captured by the Imperial Army of Japan, survived three years and three months of prison life filled with the most horrible tortuous punishment that a human being can possible go through and live to tell the story. This story is told in Capt. Saalman's own words.)

I have been asked by many of my friends and many newspapers all over the country for a complete story of the campaign of the Philippines Islands and the fateful years of prison life which followed. At first I felt very reluctant to talk about it, but upon reconsidering I feel it might be well to let the American people know the fate that befell several thousand American soldiers due to the lack of preparedness and the lack of the American people to realize the value of our security of not keeping a large well-trained army. This is a fate that could have happened to your own son, husband, or brother, and could happen again if we again go back to that idea that a large military force is not necessary.

At the outbreak of the war on December 8, 1941 (Manila Time), I was stationed at the historic Spanish fort of Ft. Santiago within the walled city of Manila. At the time I was assigned to the Public Relations Department of General MacArthur's staff. When war was declared, I was transferred to the office of the Provost Marshall and was made Assistant Provost Marshall of Manila. It was my duty to help round up all of the Japanese civilians as well as all German and Italian civilians living in Manila. We also coordinated our activities with the Military Intelligence to break up any spy rings and arrest any suspicious characters who might be on the payroll of the enemy. This involved many hours, day and night, of hard labor, many shooting scrapes and other incidents that would involve such an assignment.

Our Far Eastern Air Force had been knocked out and our Navy had been sunk. Japanese bombers dominated the skies and Manila was almost continuously undergoing air raids. Finally, in order to save the beautiful city of Manila, General MacArthur declared it an open city and

ordered all military personnel to evacuate to the Bataan Peninsula. Meanwhile the Japanese had landed overwhelming and superior forces on many parts of the Island of Luzon and these forces were rapidly closing in. On reaching Bataan I was assigned to the famous 57th Infantry, Philippines Scouts. I was given command of Company (*M) of this regiment where I remained to the end. This regiment, being used as shock troops, participated in practically every battle of suicide mission that followed. It my firm belief that the Philippine Scouts are the bravest and most daring, loyal soldiers of any Army anywhere in the world. For one stretch of 46 days we were in continuous battle with the Japanese Forces without a break or a relief. The Japanese threw overwhelming waves of fresh troops against us day and night and in one 24-hour period we fought off 11 counter-attacks launched at our line. Many times we were engaged in hand to hand conflict and our forces proved outstanding in bayonet fighting. It would be utterly impossible to adequately describe the scenes that followed. Out in front of our lines were huge masses of enemy dead. In the heat of this steaming jungle the bodies rapidly deteriorated. The smell and stench was horrible. Finally, when we couldn't stand it no longer we launched a counter-attack at the enemy forcing him to withdraw and giving us a chance to bury the dead. There were many thousands of them and their bodies were so deteriorated they were falling apart and we were forced to use a large road grader to rake them into a large ravine which was filled to the top. This was their grave. A Japanese General who had promised the Emperor to take Bataan at a certain time and who utterly failed, finally, in desperation, committed Hari-Kari or suicide as we know it.

Meantime, our medical and food supplies had dwindled to such an extent that we were eating only two meals per day and this was nothing but rice. Our rations were eight ounces of rice per man per day. We managed to supplement this with all the horses and mules of the 26th Cavalry and when they were gone we resorted to monkeys, snakes, lizards, roasted grasshoppers, or anything that might prove edible. Many of the men became victims of Malaria, and with raging fevers these men fought on Dysentery Dengue fever, Tropical Ulcers, and many other diseases became prevalent and we often wondered which was going to get us first, disease or Japs. Men were losing weight and strength daily, and many were so weak they could hardly walk. But as long as they could hold a rifle in their hands they fought on.

All this time we were continuously expecting help from the United States but none ever came. It was at this time we heard that Japanese Submarines had shelled the west coast of the United States. With a little irony and a sense of humor we sent a message to the American people asking them to hold out as long as they could or until we could help them.

Finally, the Japanese decided they had lost too much face already so they moved in fresh troops and artillery units which they had used to take Singapore. They concentrated 100 batteries of large artillery ranging from field guns to heavy siege guns, plus large flights of dive bombers, and began one of the heaviest, bloodiest artillery

concentrations on our line that the world has ever know up to that time. It was estimated that from 25 to 30 thousand shells per minute were blasting our line. This was in addition to the hundreds of bombs that were being rained on us. There was a continuous roar of artillery and drove of dive bombers. Organizations suffered as much as 85% casualties and many were wiped out to nearly the last man.

The lines of Bataan were wavering and a defeated American army was in the making. Then with an onrush of hundreds of tanks, and a four months' battle behind them, tired, sick, and hungry, the lines of Bataan were broken. There is nothing more pitiful or disgusting than to see a beaten, defeated army in retreat. Finally, after eight days of these heavy assaults, Bataan was forced to surrender.

Then the real fight for life began. We thought we had seen a hard time in Bataan. We were assembled together and the infamous Death March out of Bataan began. No food or water was given to us. The march itself lasted 12 days. When a man fainted or became so weary he could go no further, he was immediately bayoneted, or beheaded, or shot, depending upon the fancy of the Jap performing the execution.

I was on this march nearly two days and realizing my body was too weakened to carry on, I decided to try to escape. On the second night in company with another Major, a friend of mine, we succeeded in slipping out into the jungle. We first intended to get into the mountains and organize guerilla warfare but then decided we were too weak for that so we made our way back and succeeded in finding a boat in which we reached Corregidor. The three mile stretch between Bataan and Corregidor was heavily mined and full of sharks. But God seemed to take us in his hand and guided us safely through the mine field to Corregidor.

Upon reaching Corregidor, I was assigned to the 4th U.S. Marines. There, because of my combat experience, I was given the mission of helping to organize a new battalion of men from the Navy which had been ship wrecked and reached Corregidor. I was put in charge of training these men in infantry combat tactics, which lasted a month. During this time, the Japanese now in possession of Bataan, moved up every heavy artillery gun they had in their possession. Over on the south of Corregidor, near Cavite, they moved up more guns. Now they were in position to shell us from both sides. They moved up their 240 millimeter guns which are used for heavy sieges. These shells pierced the 16 foot concrete wall, behind which were the heavy guns of Corregidor. For about three weeks it was a continuous counter artillery battle. We were receiving fire from both sides and the big guns from Corregidor roared back defiantly to the enemy. Every Japanese ship which came within 12 to 15 miles of Corregidor was sunk. The range of our guns was approximately 25,000 to 40,000 yards. The men manning these guns were under constant aerial bombing and artillery fire. These men stuck to their guns regardless of what happened. On several occasions, the powder magazines of these guns were hit resulting in gigantic explosions that shook the whole island and killed nearly all personnel within the battery. Many of the men in my organization

assisted in the rescue of personnel entrapped in these flaming tombs. For this they received Distinguished Service Citations and many other military citations for their outstanding bravery. Two other men, whom I know from Perry County, were helping to man these giant guns. They were Glenn Robertson and Patrick Walsh of St. Croix. I had the fortunate experience of seeing these men in action, and I cannot praise too highly their outstanding bravery. They were absolutely fearless. The families and friends of these two men will never have to be ashamed of their records. There are few who fought in this war who exceeded them. I never realized it then, but Patrick Walsh was later to give his life in a Japanese prison camp. I never had occasion to meet Charles Wilber of Leopold, Indiana, who I later learned was also a prisoner in the same area as myself.

On April 29, 1942, which was the Emperor's birthday, began the real siege of Corregidor. All other artillery concentrations we had seen were "child's play" compared to what this one was. During the night time, the skies were so full of flame and explosions that you could continuously read a newspaper, if you'd had one. I afterward found out that the streets of Manila 40 miles away were lighted by this bombardment. We knew that we could not possibly hold out much longer. Day by day our gun positions, coast artillery, and anti-aircraft, were being knocked out and rendered helpless. The bombardment never ceased, and I don't believe there was an hour passed when there were not Japanese bombers overhead raining down death and destructions. As one American Colonel remarked, it was like an "X" on a piece of cardboard at one those shooting matches back home in Perry County when some of those sharpshooters looked down the sights of that shotgun thinking of the big piece of beef they were going to take home, or that turkey they were going to roast. Our food supply, as in Bataan, was rapidly diminishing. We were put on half rations and again the pangs of hunger were taking hold of us. At last, General Wainright, whom I think is one the most valiant fighting men the world has ever known, requested that all men serving on the Rock take out \$10,000 life insurance as he knew there would be many of us never to see our home or families again. Then one night a submarine slipped into Corregidor to bring us supplies and evacuate some sick and wounded. Then word was passed around for everybody to write their last and farewell letter home. That was the hardest letter I ever tried to write. It certainly brought tears to my eyes when I realized this would probably be the last letter I would ever send my family. I certainly know how a person in a death cell feels when he knows he's going to be hanged. All of us began taking our religion and prayers seriously. Then on May 4, we received the shocking news that our water supply had been bombed out, and that we had only enough water to last three more days. Our water was immediately rationed and we were thirsty as well as hungry.

Men were dying from disease and being killed and wounded every day. We finally resigned ourselves to our fate and placed our future in the hands of God. We never knew when our number would be up next.

Then on the night of May 5, 1942 the enemy began his assault on Corregidor. Thousands of troops and hundreds of landing barges were

assembled along Bataan coast. The artillery fire directed at us was increasing its fury every minute. It was estimated that close to 50,000 shells per minute were bursting on Corregidor. The whole island was shaking as if it were being engulfed by a gigantic earthquake and many times I thought the whole island would sink into the sea. Then from the lights and glare of bursting shells we could see hundreds of landing barges coming toward us. We knew now that it was only a matter of hours until the end. Every man went into action. Every gun we had left began firing. As I watched those large red-hot projectiles screaming through the air I took great pride in the fact that I knew Patrick Walsh and Glenn Roberston were feeding those shells into the chambers of our big guns. Hundreds of barges were being blown out of the water. Above the roaring of the guns we could hear the shouts and screams of the Japanese soldiers as death overtook them. But still they kept coming. It seemed that there was no end of them. It was utterly impossible to get them all. Then they reached our beaches and came ashore. The 4th Marines were there to meet them. Then the real fight began. With overwhelming odds they broke through our lines and started towards Malinta Tunnel where General Headquarters were located. At three o'clock in the morning, my battalion was ordered to make a suicide attack and drive them off the island. We launched our attack and slowly began forcing them back.

Daylight broke. I will never forget the sight as I looked out over Manila Bay and saw thousands of dead Japs floating in Manila Bay. As far as the eye could see only dead Japanese and a continuous stream of landing barges with fresh troops coming toward us. My heart sunk as I saw the hopelessness of the situation. All hope was gone.

My battalion commander asked me to be ready to take over command to the battalion in case of his death. I suggested to him that we stop our advance and hold what ground we now had until we could get reinforcements. This he agreed to do, so we took up defensive positions and waited for the attack we knew would come as soon as fresh troops were landed. It was not long in coming. Then followed five hours of the most fierce fighting I had ever seen. We were greatly outnumbered. We were firing at point blank range, throwing hand grenades at them and picking up ones they were throwing at us before they exploded, and throwing them back. Then they closed in. With bayonets, clubs, rocks, and everything we could pick up, we beat off the first wave and waited for the second. It was now 11 o'clock and word was sent to us to start withdrawing.

As we started our withdrawal, the artillery of Bataan opened up on our lines. We had to continue our withdrawal right through all this hell. Upon reaching Malinta Tunnel where we expected to make a last stand, my heart sank within me. Men began falling on the ground and crying like babies.

There before our very eyes I saw Old Glory being hauled to the ground and a large white flag of surrender being hoisted. Corregidor had fallen. I hurled my gun into the China Sea, then sat down and cried. I looked up and saw our beloved general, General Jonathan Wainwright,

going forth to accept our fate. His face was taut and grim, his eyes were filled with tears, and I could not help but realize that this man was carrying the heaviest burden on his shoulders that any American General in the history our country has had to carry. I thanked God that such a burden of responsibility did not rest on my shoulders.

Little did we realize what the future had in store for us. If we had only known, I am sure the Japanese would never have taken a live prisoner off that island. Again, we were a tired, hungry, defeated army. We were disarmed and crowded into prison ships and taken to Manila. Here, we were paraded through the streets of Manila. We were ragged and sick. The streets were lined with people. Everybody was crying. Many women fainted as they recognized their husbands and sweethearts in that long stragglng line. We could hear shouts of God Bless America as we marched along. Candy and cigarettes were thrown at us, in spite of the fact that they would be killed, if caught. We were taken to Bilibid Prison in Manila and later to the prison at Cabanatuan in central Luzon. Here, again, we met our old friends of Bataan. There were not many of them left alive. Three thousand of them died in one month of starvation, disease, and torture. They were nothing but living skeletons. I was down to 140 pounds compared to my usual weight of 170. I looked like a giant compared to them. I again thanked God that I had been able to escape from that horrible Death March of Bataan.

Our food was nothing but rice, and very little of that. Conditions went from bad to worse. Malaria, Beri-Beri, Scurvy, Pellegra, Dengue Fever, Yellow Jaundice, Amoebic, and Bacillary Dysentery, Elephantiasis, Diptheria, and Mal-nutrition were the most common diseases and it was nothing unusual for a man to have about all of them at once. Needless to say, life was very short. There was absolutely no medicine available. Men were dying at the rate of from 50 to 100 per day. Long shallow graves were prepared daily and the bodies just thrown in crosswise, standing up or head first, all depending on the way they fell. The average body weighed about 60 pounds at death. They did not look like human bodies at all and many were unrecognizable. Men who once tipped the scales from 150 to 225 pounds were all but reduced to the point where even their closest friends could not recognize them. Many men in desperation took their own life. Their death lacked the glory of falling on the battlefield amidst the triumph of victory, but instead the only form of death we could look forward to was the squalor and misery of torture and suffering until the human body was wasted away and the calmness of death overcame them. Indeed, it would have been a pleasure to die. That was one thing that we could always look forward to, that some day, soon we felt, we would not need to get up again. There seemed to be nothing more pleasant to the Japanese than to find an excuse to torture or cut off somebody's head. This was great fun for them. One of their greatest delights was castration. Another was to take a man and pump water into his body until he could hold no more and then jump up and down on his stomach until his abdomen burst. Much of their bayonet practice was with human bodies. On one occasion we were given three chickens and 12 eggs for 600 men. Then in their newspapers they bragged about the generosity of the Japanese Imperial Army giving

chicken and eggs to the prisoners of war. Their apologies always ran like this, "we are velly solly, but you men have killed many, many Japanese soldiers. You kept us from pushing our attack on Australia. You have resisted and refused to succumb to the kind intentions of the Son of Heaven, our beloved Emperor of Nippon, therefore we must annihilate you."

It was at this time I met Patrick Walsh who had been sent to the hospital with dysentery. I received a note from him asking me to come to see him. I might add here that the place they called the hospital was where they sent you to die. A ticket to the hospital was usually one way. You never came back. I immediately went to see Pat, and for a long time I could not recognize him. He was nothing but skin and bones. As was typical of many, his elbows and knees and were the largest part on his limbs. I saw at once that his days were limited. I tried to encourage him by talking of his family and friends that we both knew back in St. Croix. We talked of the Cunninghams, Flannagans, Huberts, Caseys, LaGranges, Donnellys, Kellys and all the other families around that area. At last he saw that death was creeping upon him and he gave me his personal possessions, including his dog tags to take back to his family if I should live to get back. These I kept faithfully for several years but at last I lost them, which I will explain later. Then when I saw that death was only a matter of hours, I got the Catholic Chaplain to administer the Last Rites for him, and I am sure his next place above was much happier than the one he had just left. Although his death lacked the glory of dying in battle, he gave his life just as freely for the cause of human freedom as any who fell before the salvo of enemy guns. His death was brave and honorable. He had given that last full measure of devotion. He had made the supreme sacrifice for God, Country, and his loved ones.

At this time, which was the latter part of October, 1942, we were informed that some of us would be taken to the island of Mindanao, which is the southernmost island of the Philippines. I felt the conditions could not be any worse there and since many of my close friends had died, I wanted a change of scenery. I got it. There were 1,000 of us loaded on a prison ship in a space that would have been crowded with only 100. In this limited space we had to eat, sleep and perform the duties of nature. This miserable journey lasted two weeks. Upon reaching Mindanao we were forced to march 21 miles to the Davoa Penal Colony, which had previously been a prison for Filipino convicts. How we survived that march, that is, the ones who did, I still wonder. It seemed that every step would be the last one. We finally reached our destination and were crowded into wooden buildings with five square feet of space per man to sleep on. Of course, our bed was the bare floor.

The next morning we were lined up and counted to see how many were left alive and then the Japanese Commander came out to welcome us. The text of his welcoming address was something like this; "You are our eternal enemies. I hate you all. You have killed many Japanese. You attempted to thwart our attempt to build a greater Asia, our great army is marching on. We will defeat you and your country. At this very minute our navy is shelling your great cities of San Francisco, St. Louis, and

Chicago. (Then there was a snicker among us which made him more angry). You do not believe me, no? Then I will now sentence you to two years of hard labor here on this Penal Farm. Your work uniform will be a G-string. You will not be permitted to wear anything else. Dismissed."

The next day and the following days thereafter we went to work. At first it was not too bad, but like everything else, it went from bad to worse. The location of this place is right in the middle of a steaming jungle almost under the equator. The heat was unbearable.

We had to live and work under the most filthy condition. Our daily routine was something like this; Revelle or roll call at 3:30 A.M., breakfast of steamed rice (a very small portion), then marched out the prison gates to the farm. We usually arrived there a little after daybreak and went to work. It was all rice farming. We plowed the fields with water buffaloes and many times harrowed it with our hands using our fingers as harrow's teeth. Sometimes we were hitched to the crude, primitive farm tools and forced to pull them like horses. We were assigned so much work to do in a day. We were kept out until the work was finished. Sometimes it would be after dark. Then back to our living quarters and a nice soft board for a bed. We were not permitted to wear our shoes. Our feet would be bleeding and swollen. The rice fields were always hip deep in filthy mud and water. The water would get so hot during the day that the steam would come right up in our faces.

We managed to steal enough food from the Japs to keep us going. We got to the point where we could eat anything. Raw frogs and roasted grasshoppers were a delicacy. Occasionally we would kill a nice big snake or a lizard. But the greatest luck that would happen to any of us was for a dog to come into the camp. There was usually a mad scramble to see which of us could catch him first. The same thing with the cats. In a few minutes we would have them on a fire and a great feast was prepared. And believe it or not I never ate anything that tasted so good in all my life. Men were always sick. Regardless of how high our fever was or how sick we were, one worked until he fell. Then the Japanese guards would beat on you with clubs until they were satisfied you were sick. Sometimes these beatings would result in broken legs and arms or a few ribs or even death. Some of the Americans succeeded in escaping from this hell and some few actually made it home. One of my friends, Col. William Edward Dyess, got home and wrote a book about it.

We managed to steal a radio from the Japs and therefore was able to keep up on some news. We could always tell when our forces had won a battle for we were tied hand and foot, then tied to each other and blindfolded, thrown in trucks and taken 50 kilometers to Davao Gulf where we were crowded on another prison ship and taken back to Manila. From there to our original prison camp of Capanatuan where we finished working out our sentence.

Here we found that conditions had been much better in our absence, but they had again gotten worse just before our arrival. Finally, on October 13, 1944 we were loaded in trucks and taken to Bilibid Prison in

Manila. Here we were kept two months with a ration of two cups of thin rice soup per day . . . We all began losing weight and getting weak. During this time the American Forces had landed on Leyte and were bombing Luzon in preparation for an attack. The thousands of troops and skies full of airplanes that Uncle Sam had promised us in Bataan were at last arriving. Only three years late however for us. But they sure sent our morale hurtling skyward. Everybody began to smile occasionally again. We then believed that it was only a matter of time until we would be rescued. Little did we know the fate that was in store for many of us. On December 13, 1944 we were marched from Bilibid Prison through the streets of Manila to Manila Bay. There was a big transport, the Oryocu Maru, waiting for us aboard. There were 1650 on this ship and 1800 on another one. I might add here that the ship with 1800 American prisoners of war was never heard from again. All on board were lost. On our ship of 1650, we were all jammed in one of the owe holds of the ship. It was so crowded that none could sit down. In fact, the last few to get in were knocked in the head by the Japs and thrown down in on us. Immediately after we were loaded on this ship, the hatch covers were bolted down and we were like rats in a trap. The air was completely cut off and almost immediately men began to faint from lack of air. On this same ship were 3,000 Japanese civilians, men, women, and children, returning home. We left Manila in the morning and started north from Manila Bay when our ship was attacked by American dive bombers. Three of the bombs hit the ship. We could hear the screams of the women and children as the life was blown out of their bodies but it did not arouse any feeling of sympathy within us. We also knew that our turn was coming next. All afternoon they kept up the attack and continuously striking the ship. Finally, it caught afire and they left us. After they left, the Japs managed to extinguish the fire and during the night the civilians were taken off, leaving us still penned up in the bottom of the ship. That was the most miserable night I ever spent. Men were dying of suffocation and thirst. Many got panicky and many more went completely crazy. Many of them had gone on board without carrying any water with them and they were the first to become affected with the thirst craze. Some of them went so crazy that they cut the throats of some of their fellow men and sucked their blood. Many slashed their own wrists and drank their own blood. Many drank their own urine. All of this added to their craze. Some committed suicide. At last the situation got so serious that those of us who had kept our heads were forced to kill the crazy. Knives and razors slashed through the air in an attempt to preserve our own life from the insane. This lasted until noon the following day and thank GOD, the American dive bombers attacked us again. This time a bomb came right down in the middle of us. Arms, legs, heads, intestines were blown in every direction. Then the ship caught fire in our hold. We immediately rushed the ladder and started climbing out. We were met with machine guns and rifle fire from the Japanese guards left on board with us. We rushed them. Then followed a fierce hand to hand battle. We were using knives, razors, and clubs against machine guns and rifles. At last we overpowered the guards and escaped. There they burned up alive as did many of the wounded Americans who could not get out. We then jumped overboard and started swimming ashore where more Japs had machine guns set up waiting for us.

We were immediately rounded up, for we were all too weak to offer any resistance. Everybody, before jumping overboard had taken off most of their clothes and some were absolutely nude. After we were all rounded up we were put in a barb wire enclosure. We were there for three days plus the two days before leaving Manila and were not given any food. On the fifth day we were given two spoonfuls of raw uncooked rice to eat. This tasted very good to us. On the sixth day we were given four spoonfuls of the same stuff. We had no way to cook it so we ate it raw. Men were dying daily. We stayed there until Christmas Day, 1944 when we were put on trains and taken to Linguyan Gulf in northern Luzon. We had a foodless Christmas. On reaching Lunguyan Gulf we were put on another ship which had just got through unloading some cavalry troops and we were put down where the horses had been. The horse manure was about a foot deep on the floor but we had to lay in it. Many of the men were so hungry that I actually saw them pick up the grains of corn that had passed through the horses and eat them.

We immediately headed north for Japan. I afterwards learned that the American forces landed on the very spot just three days after we left. We were on this ship ten miserable days. Our ration was about four spoonfuls of water per day. That was all the food and water we got during those ten days. At last, about January 9, 1945 we reached Formosa along the China Coast. There we pulled into the harbor and were again attacked by American dive bombers. Our ship was immediately hit and one of the bombs again landed in our midst. 400 more were immediately killed and many more wounded. Again, I had to thank God for saving me. Men were killed all around me. The two men sitting on both sides of me were killed immediately. I fortunately got only a slight leg wound. The ship, being in shallow water, immediately settled to the bottom after running aground. The dead were piled up in two racks like a cord of wood across the front of the hold. We were kept in the same hold with them for two weeks. The stench was horrible. The flesh was falling off the bodies which were bloated and black. Flies and maggots were all over them. I still get sick to my stomach when I think of them. Finally the bodies were taken ashore and burned. We were put on another ship and again started for Japan. On this ship our food ration was three spoonfuls of water per day. As we drew our water rations we would kneel down and the distributor would pour it in our mouth.

As we got farther north the weather became very cold. All the clothes we had were what we had left after we jumped off our first ship. Many of the men had none at all. As for me, I had on a pair of undershorts, nothing more. On this ship, in the hold below us, there were several sacks of sugar. By raising up a board we could crawl down in the next hold and steal sugar. Practically everyone who was able was stealing sugar. The Japanese warned us that if we were caught with any sugar we would be killed. One day a Jap guard looking down at us saw an American with a cup of sugar. The immediately sent word down for the man to come up on topside. Nobody responded. Then they sent down word that unless that man came up, we would all be killed. They immediately started getting grenades and machine guns ready to finish us off. Then a Catholic Chaplain, who had never stolen any sugar at all volunteered to

go up and receive the punishment in order that the rest of our lives would be saved. He was taken and beaten until both his legs were broken and both his arms and many of his ribs also. He was then thrown down with us where he died a few hours later. I thought of the famous bible quotation: "Greater love hath no man than he who will lay down his life for his fellow man." We were on this ship for nearly two weeks. Every night at dark the Catholic Chaplains who were still on board would lead the group in prayer. Catholics, Protestants, and Jews alike knelt in the prayers that were said. Never were prayers said with more meaning and sincerity behind them than were those prayers. One could almost feel the presence of God in our midst. One felt that he was talking personally to him.

The weather was bitter cold. Sleet and snow was falling. Men froze to death every day. Many mornings I woke up with the men sleeping next to me cold in death. They were thrown overboard so fast that it kept a detail busy carrying out the dead. Daily, the Chaplains would say a few words of prayer for their souls, then they were cast over to the sharks which continually followed our ship.

On the night of January 29, 1945, our convoy was attacked by an American submarine. Several of the ships were sunk and we were expecting it any minute. Luckily we got by with a few near misses. On the morning of January 30, we arrived in Japan. There were 235 of us left, out of the 3,000 that left Manila. I weighed 92 pounds and was suffering from Amoebic Dysentery and exposure. As we climbed off the ship we walked barefooted and practically nude on the cold icy decks with sleet and snow coming down and a cold north wind whipping through us. We were unloaded and sent out to nearby prison camps. There we were to receive much better treatment than we had been used to. This was on my thirty first birthday and a happy birthday it was to get some cooked rice. We were then given some warm clothes. I was immediately sent to the hospital where I remained three months. During this time my weight went up to 112 pounds. American planes dominated the skies over Japan. Bombs were being dropped all around us. Two large bombs landed in our camp, killing and wounding many. Finally it looked that there was going to be an invasion of Japan, so in order to prevent the officers from being recaptured, we were rounded up on April 28, 1945 to be shipped to China.

The next day, April 29, we were loaded on another crowded prison ship and sailed for Korea. We reached Korea safely and were put on a train and sent to Mukden, Manchuria. There, the treatment was the best we had ever received. To the average person it would have been horrible. But to us it was too good to be true. There we were taken off the rice diet and was given two pieces of corn bread and three bowls of soup per day. The soup was made from soybeans or maize. It tasted so good after over three years of straight rice.

It was at this camp, I again met Glenn Robertson of St. Croix, Indiana. He had been sent to this camp early in 1942. There he was forced to labor in factories. The job that these prisoners did in the way of sabotage was equal to hundreds of bombers. Practically every piece of

machinery and equipment in these factories had been sabotaged when at last they were forced to quit altogether. Even though these men were prisoners they still did more damage to the Japanese than many of our troops who were fighting them. This was done at the risk of their lives. One cannot but praise Glenn Robertson and his fellow prisoners for the outstanding work they did here in destroying millions of dollars worth of vital enemy equipment.

On August 15, 1945 the Russian Red Army moved in and took the city of Mukden. They immediately dispatched tanks and troops to our camp and again we became free men. We knew what freedom was. Many of us got in the tanks and went out with the Russian troops to fight the Japanese.

Finally, the famed Kwantan Army of Manchuria asked to surrender. The war was over. We greeted it with shouts of joy and tears. The vodka was passed around and a great celebration was had by all. We were then taken to the seaport of Darien in North China and put on a hospital ship and taken to Okinawa where we saw our first American soldiers in nearly four years. It was a grand sight. We felt like Rip Van Winkle. And did we eat! I ate about 12 times a day. I was soon back up to my normal weight of 172 pounds. From Okinawa I was flown back to Manila where I again met many of my old friends and Philippines Scouts who had served under me. But Manila was completely destroyed. The people there had undergone such suffering. At one time in this city the food situation became so critical that human flesh was sold on the meat markets.

I stayed in Manila for one month and was then flown by plane from Manila to Kansas City in 60 hours. The Air Corp has made great strides in these last three years. As I looked down on the large fields with hundreds of airplanes I could not help but think of our three p-40's which had comprised our air force in Bataan.

But now it is all over. I can only thank God for carrying me safely through 3 1/4 dark years. There are too many things too horrible to tell. Some of the minor things I did not dwell on were the body lice, bedbugs, and other creatures of torment. There were plenty of them. In all the rice we got it was always half worms. At first we had to shut our eyes to eat it, but one can get used to nearly anything.

As I look back over it now, it seems to have been a bad dream. I realize that there are many of us who have seen some horrible and difficult times these last four years. I have read many back copies of the Tell City News and I find that many of my old friends have seen plenty of action all over the world. It makes one feel proud to know that when the defense and honor of our country was at stake that then men from Perry County responded. Not only did they respond, but as in the last war they fought. I take off my hat to them.