



From the Commander

Our reunion celebrating the 65th anniversary of liberation was a huge success, and is described in another article. However, whether it was a result of the economy or just weariness of reunions, the attendance was down considerably from the previous two years reunions. For that reason, we will not be holding a full-blown reunion next year, but instead have a Sunday banquet scheduled for mid-February. Details will be in a future announcement.

The energy and enthusiasm of those who attended was truly amazing. Everywhere I looked there were groups laughing and hugging, and war stories were never ending. As always at these affairs, I walked away with a whole new understanding of the camp experience and a lot of information to fill gaps in my personal knowledge.

One of the most gratifying things to see was the participation by descendents of the people who had been in the camps. More than ever, these people sometimes called BACEPOW kids, most of whom are definitely not “kids”, are stepping up to take leadership roles in our organization. Two are now on our Board of Directors – Suzie Reynolds and Mike Roeder – but others are also pitching in to contribute valuable services, such as Nancy Guittard who is taking the lead role in a Public Relations program for civilian ex-POWs. In this issue, we include a new feature for descendents called *The Descendents View*.

For too long, both the government of Japan and our own government have ignored those who were held as civilian prisoners by the Japanese. On this 65th year since our liberation, our goal is to publicize the injustice that was done, to recognize the health issues caused by the deprivation, and to reconcile with these governments that we should no longer be treated as the “Forgotten POWs”. We encourage all of you to write to your local newspapers and remind them that we are still alive and well. We remember the injustice done to civilian families, and we hope that others in our country will learn from our experience.

Angus Lorenzen

My Story of Santo Tomas

This is a continuation of Sarah England's story from the January issue, where she described the events she saw as the Santo Tomas Internment Camp was liberated on February 3, 1945. General MacArthur arrived for a short visit in the morning of February 7. Unknown to most of the people, a Japanese shell had hit within the camp at around 8:00 AM, destroying the façade of the Chapel adjacent to the Father's Garden; but during the General's visit, all was quiet. Shortly after noon, when he had left, the Japanese started a concerted shelling of the camp that lasted the rest of the afternoon and continued intermittently for two more days. Most of the shells hit the western side of the Main Building, though a few shells also hit elsewhere. The casualties were 22 dead and about 100 wounded, with civilian internees suffering 17 dead and 65 wounded.

After liberation, everybody floated along on clouds of happiness, joy and bliss with full stomachs, until February 7. After an early lunch, I went to my room and someone told me that one of the big water tanks on the roof had been hit by gunfire. I was standing in the doorway of my room, looking up through the patio at water running down the side of the building, when there was a terrific noise just outside my room. I jumped behind a heavy concrete post, and when the noise died, looked into the room.

I couldn't see a thing for the thick white cloud of cement dust, which cleared in a few minutes. Over half of the front wall had been blown away,

(Continued on page 3)



The first shell to hit the Main Building at Santo Tomas was captured on film by an Army Signal Corps photographer



Santo Tomas Internees



Los Baños Internees



Baguio/Bilibid Internees



Descendents of all of the camps

The singing Blue Stars of the USS Hornet entertain at the Saturday receptions



65th Anniversary Liberation Reunion

The three prison camps around Manila were liberated in February 1945, and we celebrated with a reunion from January 22 to 24, 2010 in Fremont, California, using liberation as our theme. No gathering of ex-internees is complete without an excellent spread of food, and we feasted at receptions on Friday and Saturday evening and at the Sunday banquet.

The Blue Stars, a singing group that emulates the Andrew sisters entertained with songs of the '40s and '50s at the Saturday evening reception.

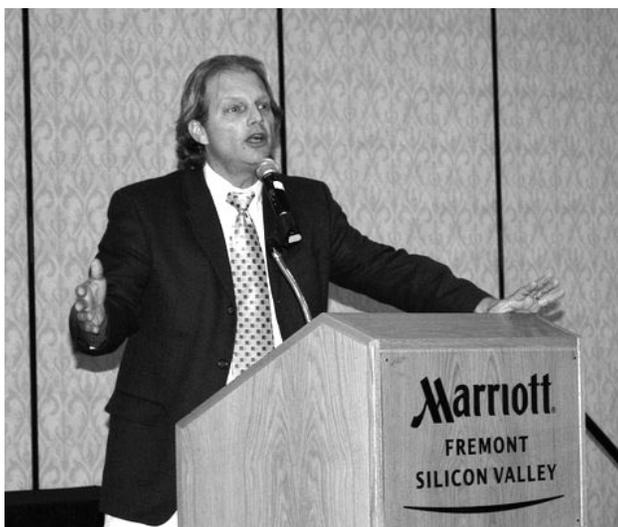
The features at the Saturday sessions were the three panel discussions that represented each of the camps – Santo Tomas, Los Baños, and Bilibid. James Zobel, Archivist for the MacArthur Memorial Museum, moderated the panels, and the panelists discussed their actual experiences during the liberation of their camps.

The panel for Santo Tomas consisted of Curtis Brooks, Liz Irvine, Frank Stagner, and Frank Mendoza who entered the camp that evening as one of the liberators from the 1st Cavalry. John Montesa, Margie Squires, and Sally Morgan told of the events during the liberation of Los Baños. And the Bilibid experience was described by John Ream and Francine Juhon Bostrom.

The keynote speaker at the banquet was James Zobel, who described the founding and the mission for the MacArthur Memorial Museum in Norfolk, Virginia. He told many anecdotes about the general that held the audience in thrall, and then answered many questions about MacArthur's Philippine campaign that led to the liberation of the camps.

James also interviewed several people who had been prisoners, for a living history to be available at the museum.

The reunion left the participants with a warm glow after spending time with old friends, swapping stories, and learning new details about that wonderful day so many years ago.



James Zobel, Archivist for the MacArthur Memorial Museum, gave the keynote address at the banquet.

(My Story continued from Page 1)

and the room was littered with stones and shrapnel. Three or four of my roommates were in the room, but fortunately, no one was hurt, though they were dazed and shell shocked. I helped them to the corridor, where more explosions met us. The Japanese were shelling Santo Tomas.

The clinic was next to my room, and an Army Nurse came out and told us, "Get out of here, the Japs have the range of this corner of the building." An Army Officer said, "Go to the back of the building, or to the other side of the lobby." I stayed in the front corridor, where many people were sheltering - internees, GIs, officers. One officer told me to sit down on the floor with my back to the patio wall, facing the front of the building, where two heavy walls were between the outside and me. A little Russian woman sat next to me. She had an army blanket that we kept across our knees, and with every explosion, we drew it over our heads. After about three hours, the firing seemed to be lessening.

When I got up, I could hardly walk; but it was time for the line to start for supper. I met Walter Schoening, who had come in from his shanty with his buckets to get his wife and his supper rations. He had not realized that the shelling had been hitting the Main Building. Walter took my meal ticket and told me to go to Agnes at the shanty. On my way, I had to stop twice and lie behind some object. When I entered the shanty Agnes said, "What's the matter?" I started crying, and then tried to tell her. When Walter came back with our supper, I couldn't eat. I had stopped crying but had a terrible stomachache.

The shells seemed to be coming our way. One hit a tree on the other side of the wall only a few meters from us, so we rushed to the air raid shelter that Walter had built. It was already filled with people, so we lay on the ground in ditches. Our friends Peg and Helen had also come to the Schoenings, so the five of us, along with three or four GIs, spent the whole night there. My stomachache got worse and resulted in diarrhea. I had to crawl to the toilet that was 60 meters away, accompanied by Walter who wouldn't let me go alone.

The shelling kept up for several days and nights, and we spent hours in the air-raid shelter. There were eight of us and we each had our own allotted spot to sit. Fortunately none of us were injured, though many others were. Our former despondency returned, and we hit the lowest point of discouragement. Freed by our own boys, we were hopeful that we would see our loved ones again. Now after only a few days, we were thrown deeper into the pit of despair.

Our boys had to silence these Japanese guns one by one, and finally got the last one on the roof of the Philippine General Hospital. Finally, we thought, we will be taken home to safety and freedom; but not yet because the Battle of Manila had started and Santo Tomas was near the battle lines, with American shells flying over our heads, making a sound like the tearing of a heavy piece of taffeta, only much louder. The sky was bright red from fires.

This battle finally came to an end, and the guns were silenced. Our artillery moved up ahead of us, and we now heard only occasional gunfire from snipers. Our good Filipino friends were allowed to come in to see us, and we were allowed to go out of the gate to walk around in the street in front of the camp.

Time passed quickly - plenty to eat, letters, entertainment, dances, and we spent our days preparing to go home, packing and repacking our bags. On March 12, I was told that I would leave the next morning. At seven o'clock, March 13, I rode in an army truck out of Santo Tomas over deserted streets to the airport. We went by plane to Leyte, then by ship to San Francisco.

From December 7, 1941 to April 9, 1945, I had lost three years and three months out of my life.

Word of Mouth

Book review by J. Michael Houlahan

My Upside-Down World

Madeleine Poston

Benneta Publishing, Portland, Oregon, 2002.

Long-time resident Madeleine “Geege” Poston’s torturous road to Columbus makes an interesting read. Born in Shanghai in 1921, her father was an American-educated British citizen and her mother from a well-connected local family of mixed American, Dutch and Chinese ancestry. Madeleine’s father, an extremely successful architect, deserted his family when she was six and ran off to the U.S. with his White Russian mistress, who a few years later would in turn desert him for a wealthier man. Her husband’s defection embittered Madeleine’s mother, left the family financially dependent on the generosity of relatives and created a strong curiosity in the young girl about the father she never knew. The first third of the book recounts her coming of age in the sheltered and privileged international community of Shanghai. On occasion her descriptions of Shanghai and its 1930s street scenes border on the lyrical.

Because of the father’s desertion, Madeleine’s mother was forced to work to augment financial support from relatives. The Japanese invasion of China would erode the calm of this sheltered life and lead to her attempt as a nineteen year old to join her father in the United States. This journey, expected to take only a few weeks, would require almost four years to completion.

The first leg was a short voyage to Manila on a French coastal steamer. Madeleine arrived the afternoon before the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Stranded by the sudden outbreak of war, she was interned a few weeks later at the University of Santo Tomas, where most of the civilian foreign community was imprisoned by the invading Japanese. The last two thirds of the book recount her experiences and impressions during this lengthy incarceration. Interspersed through this narrative and adding to its flavor are numerous skillfully-executed sketches of fellow inmates and daily life for the more than three thousand internees.

One of the aspects of her tale that separates it from most other accounts of those surviving Japanese imprisonment—and has earned her some criticism from other internees—is her tolerant view of the commander of the Santo Tomas Internment Camp (STIC) and of most of his largely teenage guard force. For example, in one instance the Japanese camp commander, recognized a young woman who escaped from the camp walking down a Manila street, returned her to the STIC and asked the internee medical staff to certify her insane, so she would not be executed. They did and she was saved. (Not all fared so well, as at least two groups of male internees were taken away and shot for escaping or smuggling.) Madeleine felt that through most of the war, the Japanese tried their best to allow adequate food to be acquired for the internees. This became more difficult as the war dragged on, and would change dramatically when the first commander was replaced by a much harsher military officer.

Madeleine’s account draws together an interesting patchwork of vignettes. She is aided in this by a detailed diary she kept secretly and from which she frequently quotes. Her de-

Call for Stories

Beyond the Wire is for and about the civilian ex-POWs who survived the Japanese internment camps of WW II. We have been told that stories by the people who were there make it interesting. Our January 2010 issue included stories about what people saw and did during the liberation of the their camps and the Battle of Manila. It was one of our best issues ever. We want to continue that theme and this issue has a story about what happened in Santo Tomas after the liberation.

In the coming issues, we we’ll continue the theme of what happened after liberation. We’d like your stories about what happened in your camp in the seemingly eternal period between liberation and repatriation – your repatriation voyage – life in the months after you returned home – how your experience during the war affected the rest of your life.

We’d also like to hear from people who escaped the internment and were home in America wondering about family and friends who were still over there under Japanese domination. What you knew or did not know about them – how you were notified of their condition – what letters you received.

We all have a little bit of the big picture, but your stories can help to fill in the gaps. So, please send us your stories. They don’t need to be polished works of literary art. They can be simple drafts, and we will work with you to make them meaningful to those who receive our newsletter.

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scription of the grinding boredom of camp life, friction caused by deprivation and crowded living conditions, as well as romances and acts of kindness from strangers is interesting and rings true.

The sudden liberation of the STIC by American soldiers on February 3, 1945, dominates the last chapter of the book. After liberation, Madeleine remained in Manila for a few months, falling in love with Lt. Mac Poston, a young artillery officer from Columbus. After a whirlwind romance, they were married in early April, 1945 and, following the war, they settled in his hometown. Unfortunately, during his final weeks in combat, Mac was seriously injured and also came down with a severe case of malaria. This would affect his health for the remainder of his life.

Interviewed in her cozy apartment in a retirement complex near the Ohio State University campus, Madeleine Poston looks and sounds twenty years younger than her 83 years. In her living room are displayed several sketches she has done of family members. Her marriage to Mac, entered into after a war zone courtship of only a few weeks, broke up in the late sixties. He passed away many years ago and their four sons are grown, with families of their own.

After Shanghai and Manila, Madeleine’s adjustment to Columbus was easy. “I thought it was wonderful. I mean it was so clean and it was so open and the people were so friendly.

Recipe Corner

By the end of 1944, the daily rations were below 800 calories per person with only two meals a day in Santo Tomas Internment Camp. But with their indomitable spirit, people were determined to celebrate Christmas in the traditional manner and set about preparing decorations, gifts, and a special meal. The "feast" was the challenge and they dug deep into their hoarded supplies from the last Red Cross package a year earlier, depleting their last emergency rations, and trading with others to put together just the right combination. They knew that, one way or another, it would be their last Christmas in camp. Innovation was the key, and people who may never have had to cook a meal before entering camp produced what could be considered a gourmet treat. Sascha Jansen tells of her family's enterprise. MASARAP!

1944 STIC Christmas Menu

Our last Christmas meal in Santo Tomas was a colossal hit. Our immediate family of five invited my dad's brother and his family of four. The nine of us were delighted to celebrate together. We had on hand for nine people:

- 2 garlic buds
- 1 can of corned beef (last one from our Red Cross comfort kit)
- 1 small can of pineapple (last one from our Red Cross comfort kit)
- 1 taro root (from our Elephant Ear plant)
- 1 scoop Lugao
- We traded a small can of "old" mustard powder for a big bunch of Talinum.

My mother cooked and mashed the taro and added the corned beef to make "hamburger patties." She cooked them on a tin plate with Mabelline face cream for oil. She made a salad out of the garlic and Talinum.

A small amount of taro was mixed with the lugao and the drained pineapple chunks for dessert muffins. Before serving she spooned the juice over the muffins. It was incredible!

Before my mother cooked lunch she made me take Dodie and Bud for a walk. They didn't want the kids to see my dad cutting up their crudely made rocking horse for firewood.

That night the camp kitchen line served us real rice mixed with a bunch of camotes - two scoops apiece. We finally went to bed with full stomachs, which was too good to be true.

The Descendents View

At the descendents' breakfast during the reunion, ideas were exchanged about how they could support the BACEPOW organization. Suzie Reynolds and Mike Roeder, both descendents of Santo Tomas survivors, were nominated to represent the descendents on the Board of Directors, and at the Banquet were elected to the Board in a unanimous voice vote of those attending.

Suzie Reynolds immediately set up a group Facebook page titled, **World War II Civilian Ex-POW's and BACEPOW Descendents**. Already, there are a number of messages posted, photos of the reunion, reference to the Yahoo group for BACEPOWkids with more pictures, and references to YouTube videos of Santo Tomas. To access this site, you can simply join Facebook, and be a friend of the BACEPOW group site.

Nancy Guittard, also a descendent of Santo Tomas survivors, offered to set up a public relations program for BACEPOW and is working on a press release that will be broadly released. The objective is to bring media attention to the "forgotten POWs" of WWII, and to influence U.S. and Japanese government policies towards providing medical benefits and inclusion in Japan's reconciliation program.

We encourage others whose parents, grandparents and other relatives were imprisoned by the Japanese to join the BACEPOW descendents group and help to ensure the legacy is not forgotten.



Suzie Reynolds and Mike Roeder represent the descendents on the BACEPOW Board of Directors

BACEPOW Spring Lunch

WHERE:

Alameda Elks Lodge – 2255 Santa Clara Avenue
Alameda, CA 94501 (510) 522-1015

WHEN:

Saturday – May 1st - 2010 - Sign In and Social Hour: 11:30 – 12:30 – No Host Cocktails

BUFFET LUNCH: Caribbean Jerk Chicken/Mango Salsa – Honey Glazed Ham – Roasted Potato Melange – Fresh Asparagus – Insalata de la Casa – Sour Dough Rolls - Chocolate Mousse with Strawberries – Coffee/Tea

GUEST SPEAKER: Nancy Keeney Forster – Author—An Internationalist, Educator, and wife of Clift Forster of the U.S. Foreign Service who was born in the Philippines, and spent time in Santo Tomas. Their foreign posting of "public diplomacy" in the P.I.-Japan, Burma and Israel are related in her book, *Encounters – A Lifetime Spent Crossing Cultural Frontiers*. This is a great treat to those who delight in foreign adventure with an intimate peek into post-war Philippines and Japan.

PRICE: Members \$27, non-members \$29 **Contact:** Sascha Jansen mabuhayma@aol.com (530) 795-0411

Testimony of National Commander Kenny Hanson

This is an excerpt from the Congressional testimony of the National Commander of the American Ex-Prisoners of War before the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee in Washington, D.C. on March 4, 2010. BACEPOW is a chapter of AXPOW and he is very supportive of the civilian ex-POWs.

“Now I would like to speak to you briefly on a small but vital part of the membership of American Ex-Prisoners of War. They are the civilian POWs. They have been members of our organization from its beginning. There are now so few of them left today and they need both our help and the help of Congress.

“In 1994, a bill was presented in the House and Senate to provide civilian prisoners of war with equal entitlements with their military counterparts. The bill did not pass, but 16 years later, it is even more imperative that the tiny number of American citizens captured, confined, starved, and mistreated have their experiences recognized by their government.

“The World War II POWs were children at the time of their imprisonment and they are talking about civilian people here. When they were repatriated back to the United States in 1945, they were still children. The War Claims Act of 1948 provided for civilian internees at the rate of \$25.00 for each month they were interned and limited periodontal care. Those constituted their only benefits.

“My war was the Korean War. Therefore, that is the civilian situation that I am most familiar with. All of or most of the civilian POWs in the Korean War were captured before the first military captive was taken. And not only that, but they marched right along with the military POWs on the Tigers Death March, the most brutal death march of the Korean War. I would compare it in large part with the Bataan Death March of World War II.

“And on the Tigers Death March, if a military POW became too weak and exhausted to keep up, they were left behind with a guard. A shot would be fired and they would see that guard come and rejoin the march. If a civilian POW became too exhausted and tired to keep up, they were left behind with a guard. A shot would be heard and then they would see the guard catch up with the march. And the same held true in Vietnam .

“Today we estimate less than 1,000 of these civilian POWs are still living. Now we are asking the House and Senate to pass legislation identical to that introduced in 1994. The single difference is that although the Department of Labor would oversee and administer the entitlement, the Veterans Administration would be the facility of choice for treatment. Our reason is simple. The VA is the premier agency to former prisoners of war. There is no facility even remotely comparable in the private sector. The cost to the Department of Labor is almost nonexistent. As stated above, there are less than 1,000 civilian former prisoners of war still alive today.

“A majority of the boys entered the Armed Forces after they served their country, after their liberation. They are already entitled to VA treatment. Many of the remaining few had had their medical treatment managed by private insurers or through their work and now through their retirement. The time is now. In less than ten years, you will be counting the surviving civilian prisoners of war in the dozens. The greatest country in the world is correctly spending resources to care for him who shall have borne the battle. It is also correct to spend resources on the children and those who were caught up in the battle. We can do no less.”

BACEPOW Board of Directors

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