BACEPOW
Bay Area Civilian Ex-Prisoners of War

Beyond the Wire

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From the Commander

From February 1 through 3 this year, we celebrated a BACEPOW reunion in New Orleans, with attendance at the National World War II Museum. The timing for this gathering was most propitious since there was a convergence of anniversaries that affect us.

On 6 April, it was the 100th anniversary of our country's entry into World War I, somewhat belatedly, but we were forced into it by Germany's unrestricted submarine attacks on civilian shipping, and by the infamous Zimmer telegram where Germany offered to restore parts of the United States to Mexico if they declared war on us as a German ally.

Eventually, we sent several million men to France and in active fighting helped to turn the war in the Allies favor, forcing Germany to accept an armistice. 21 years later, active fighting started again in Europe in what came to be called World War II.

Public sentiment in America was against again sending our forces to Europe to bail out our Allies, and almost all of Europe was overrun by German forces. But President Roosevelt's sentiments were with our old allies, and he made significant amounts of materiel available to Great Britain. In turn, Britain helped us develop a secret intelligence capability oriented to the war in Europe that later became the OSS.

Then on 7 December, 75 years ago, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and we quickly declared war on that nation, then against its allies in Europe led by Germany. Our close relationship with our European allies led to a policy of Europe first, using our limited resources, as we hastened to build armed forces and materiel to pursue the war.

Meanwhile, 75 years ago, the situation in the Philippines was deteriorating rapidly. The Japanese Imperial Army, seasoned from several years of fighting in China, quickly invaded the Philippines. The US Armed Forces Far East, made up of American and Filipino soldiers, were valiantly fighting a losing defensive battle on Bataan, while hope still endured for a convoy of reinforcements and arms to soon land. But that hope was dashed by Roosevelt's Europe first stance. On 9 April, 1942, 70,000 of those troops were surrendered to the Japanese and forced on a brutal death march with over 10,000 men dying before being put into POW camps, where many more died. Shortly afterwards, the Japanese invaded Corregidor, which was forced to surrender on 6 May.

Meanwhile, the Japanese were rounding up Allied civilians throughout the islands, particularly on Luzon, and putting them into internment camps. It was just the start of more than 3 years of incarceration in uncomfortable conditions with continually declining quality of life that eventually led to starvation and death for many.

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A Death Sentence

The Intramuros in Manila, the old walled Spanish town, is a popular spot for tourists, and residents as well. You can ride a carromata to visit local attractions, and the streets and shops are decorated in wild colors for festivals. At the north end of the Intramuros is Fort Santiago overlooking the Pasig River where it empties into Manila Bay, a tranquil place with spreading trees providing comfort and shade. The Intramuros is almost wholly rebuilt since its devastation during the Battle of Manila, though it has taken many years to correct the wholesale destruction. The churches and other buildings have been rebuilt and its enormous surrounding wall restored with huge stone blocks.

It's difficult to believe that in 1945 this beautiful and historical place was virtually leveled during the Battle of Manila as the Japanese defended to their death the defensive positions within the walls, holding out for three weeks against the American forces seeking to liberate Manila.

For the duration of their occupation of Manila, the Japanese used Fort Santiago as headquarters for the Kempetai, their secret police, where they could interrogate and execute prisoners. Then during the battle, they herded hundreds of prisoners into an underground cell below sea level (see photo on Page 3), where the rising tide drowned them all. Other prisoners were kept in drier cells, where they were neglected by their prison guards so they died of thirst.

At any time during the Japanese occupation, it was considered virtually a death sentence to be arrested and taken to Fort Santiago. If a person survived the torture, it may only have been for the relief of being taken out and executed. Not many people survived to tell about what happened within those walls, but the following is excerpted from the deposition of Joseph Eisenberg, a civilian newspaper correspondent, for the War Crimes Tribunal.

From April 11, 1942 until about November 1942 I was held by the Japanese as a prisoner of war after being captured by the Japanese Army on Bataan. Thereafter I was considered as an internee.

I was taken to Fort Santiago where I remained as a prisoner of war until transferred in June 1942 to the Philippine General Hospital in Manila, where I remained until November 9, 1942 when I was transferred to the hospital at Santo Tomas Internment Camp. I remained in the camp until transferred to Los Baños Internment Camp in May 1943, where I remained until December when I was transferred back to Santo Tomas for further hospitalization. I remained in this camp until January 13, 1945, when I escaped and remained hidden in Manila until February 11, when I made my way to the American lines.

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Commander, Continued from Page 1

Hope bloomed anew 72 years ago, when the US 6th Army landed at Lingayen Gulf on 11 January 1945. Intelligence had intercepted a message from Tokyo to local commanders to kill all prisoners before they could be rescued. General MacArthur made it a priority to liberate the 4 camps on Luzon that held almost 8,000 Allied military and civilian prisoners before that order could be carried out, and the urgency was paramount when the massacre of American POWs on Palawan became known.

There were 3 rescue operations mounted. The first was on 30 January by the 6th Ranger Battalion who, supported by guerillas, mounted a lightening attack on the Cabanatuan POW camp, rescuing all the prisoners.

The second was by the 1st Cavalry who formed an 800-man Flying Column to go to Manila to liberate Santo Tomas Internment Camp. In 3 days, they raced 100 miles through enemy territory and at about 9 o'clock on the evening of 3 February, their tanks and infantry burst through the gates to liberate the camp. Initially there was fighting in and around the Education Building where the Japanese garrison held 228 hostages, but the rest of the camp was quickly cleared. The hostages were released on 5 February, providing another anniversary to celebrate.

The next day, on 4 February, the 37th Infantry, who had taken a parallel path to the west of the 1st Cavalry, reached the outskirts of Manila and sent a company into North Manila. That evening, a patrol from the 37th Infantry literally stumbled onto Bilibid and effected the liberation of that camp, which contained about 800 military POWs and the 480 civilians who had just been transported from Baguio after Christmas and been held in this grim old Spanish prison.

Those who were held in Los Baños had to wait almost 3 more weeks until 23 February to celebrate their liberation. But oh, what a dramatic event that was and the rescue mission is engraved in military history for its daring and success. The 11th Airborne Division was assigned that mission deep behind enemy lines, and it was comprised of 4 columns assigned to converge on the camp. A company of paratroopers jumping adjacent to the camp would take the lead while 6 groups of guerillas lead by members of the 11th Airborne Recon platoon would emerge from the jungle to suppress the guards at the main gate. The remainder of the battalion would cross the Laguna de Bay in amtracs and set up a defensive perimeter, and a battalion of glider troopers would cross overland by truck to evacuate the rescued prisoners.

This mission was highly successful despite two serious issues. First, because of an erroneous signal, the guerillas launched their attack 10 minutes early before the paratroopers arrived. They caught the Japanese in complete surprise and already had started to route them by the time the Paratroopers arrived to mop up the remaining resistance. Second, the glider battalion coming overland in trucks encountered stiff resistance from a Japanese infantry division and had to fight to prevent the Japanese from going to the rescue of the camp guards. A quick decision was made, and the liberated prisoners were loaded onto the amtracs and carried to safety across the lake. The amtracs had to make two trips, and each time came under Japanese fire from the shore, undoubtedly giving those people the most exciting day of their lives.

This grand reunion gave us a fine opportunity to celebrate our liberation so many years ago, and to see the museum and understand what was happening in the World while we were held incommunicado.

Death Sentence, Continued from Page 1

While I was in Fort Santiago, there were daily instances of beatings and tortures on the part of the Japanese Military Police, whose name throughout the city of Manila was a byword for fear. It was commonly believed by the Philippine people that no one who was imprisoned at Font Santiago ever left it alive. It appeared to be a common practice of the Japanese Military Police to beat up and otherwise brutalize everyone brought in, even prior to questioning.

I heard many prisoners being beaten in adjacent cells to mine. I saw a number of beatings myself in our cell and saw the results of numerous others, including burning with lighted cigarettes. I was myself beaten several times. I was slapped vigorously across the face, beaten with the flat of a sword, still in its scabbard across the back and shoulders, and then with a board across the kidneys. It was a common practice to beat the prisoners across the kidneys and buttocks with some heavy implement, usually a heavy board or the flat of a shovel.

The customary procedure was to hang the prisoner up by his arms, which were tied behind him, a rod or board thrust through the crook of his elbows and across his back and the board supported by a rope from the ceiling so that the prisoner was left dangling with his feet off the floor. This practice often resulted in a man's arms almost being wrenched from the shoulder sockets.

In my case, I was forced to kneel on an open sharp edged, grocery box, with my bare shins in contact with the wood, which produced great pain. Another time I was forced to kneel with my feet thrust straight out behind me so that all my weight rested on my instep which exerted a great strain on the tendons which produced excruciating pain.

Another one of the most serious phases of the imprisonment was the terrible crowded conditions in the cells and the lack of any adequate sanitary facilities. I was in a cell 13½ ft. x 16 ft. with anywhere from 16 to 22 men. With 16 men in the cell, it was barely possible for all to recline. With more than 16, it was not possible and we were forced to sleep in a squatting position.

The cells were located. along corridors underneath the building and had no outside ventilation, and because of the heat and congestion, the atmosphere was stifling. There was a narrow slit in the floor of the cell at the rear, covered by a trap door, under which was located a long shallow tin box. This was the toilet facilities and was supposed to be emptied by a prisoner every day, but the guards often wouldn't allow this and the result was a foul smell of human waste added to the stench of unwashed bodies.

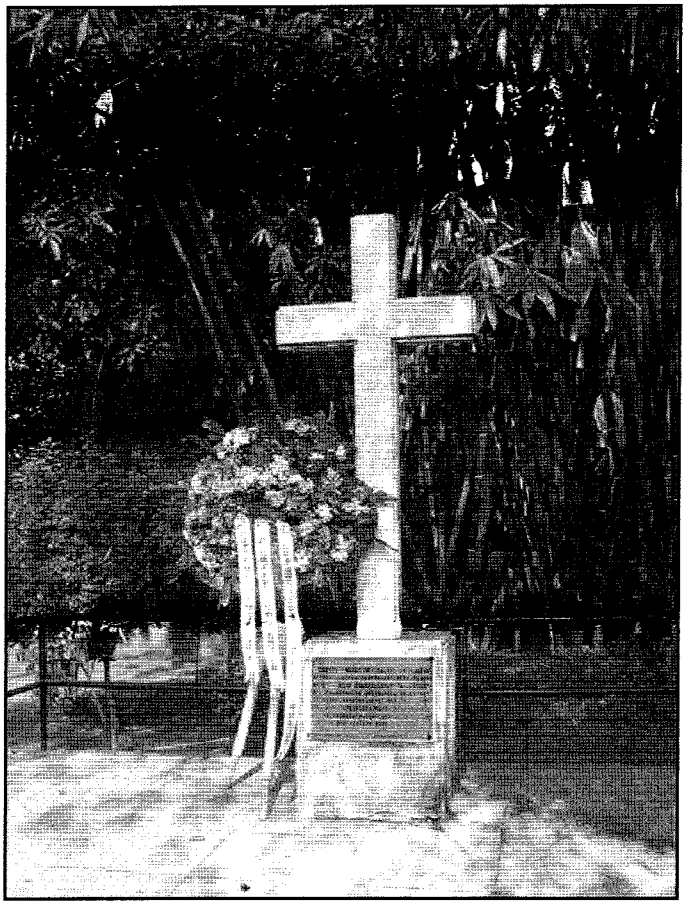
There was a water tap imbedded in the floor of the cell at the rear for washing purposed, but the water supply was greatly inadequate due to the overcrowded condition of the prison and it was often necessary to wait for several hours to obtain an adequate trickle of water.

The food furnished us was very meager. It was quite evident that it was part of the routine of the Japanese to keep their prisoners in a weak and emaciated condition because several times when prisoners obtained an extra serving of rice by a subterfuge and this was discovered, they were severely beaten.

Whenever anything out of the ordinary occurred in a cell as, for example, a disturbance which night occur among the men, the cell was usually punished collectively by removing them to a less desirable cell, if possible. Additional forms of punishment were to put prisoners in solitary confinement without food or water for a varying period of time, some such prisoners going for a period of six days without food.

As a result of the unsanitary way of handling food, permitting flies and other insects to crawl over it, also probably because of the poor quality of the food supplied to begin with, there was a great deal of dysentery and other stomach disorders prevalent in the prison. It was practically impossible, however, to secure the services of a doctor.

My normal weight was 168 pounds and when I was transferred from Fort Santiago to Philippine General Hospital on June 20, 1942 - suffering from beri beri, malnutrition, stomach ulcers and general collapse, I weighed 104 pounds.



Memorial to 600 prisoners at Ft. Santiago who died in a cell during the Battle of Manila

2017 BACEPOW Dues

For those of you who have not yet sent in your 2017 dues, please do so as soon as possible. Please make you check out to BACEPOW and send it to:

Ric Laurence
120 Canal Street
San Rafael, CA 94901

We would appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Mark your Calendar

Our 2017 reunion at the World War II Museum was such an enormous success that people have been asking, "When can we do this again." In response, we are planning another reunion for 2018 to be held in Sacramento. It will be at the Sacramento Riverside Embassy Suites Hotel on the weekend of April 28-29.

More details and information on making hotel reservations will be provided in the September newsletter. If you enjoy getting together with your fellow exPOWs and their families, make sure to attend as it may be the last reunion in Sacramento.

If you have an interesting topic on WWII, Japanese occupation, the internment camps, or related subjects please write to ***bacepow@earthlink.net*** so we can put you on the speakers roster.

A Special Surprise

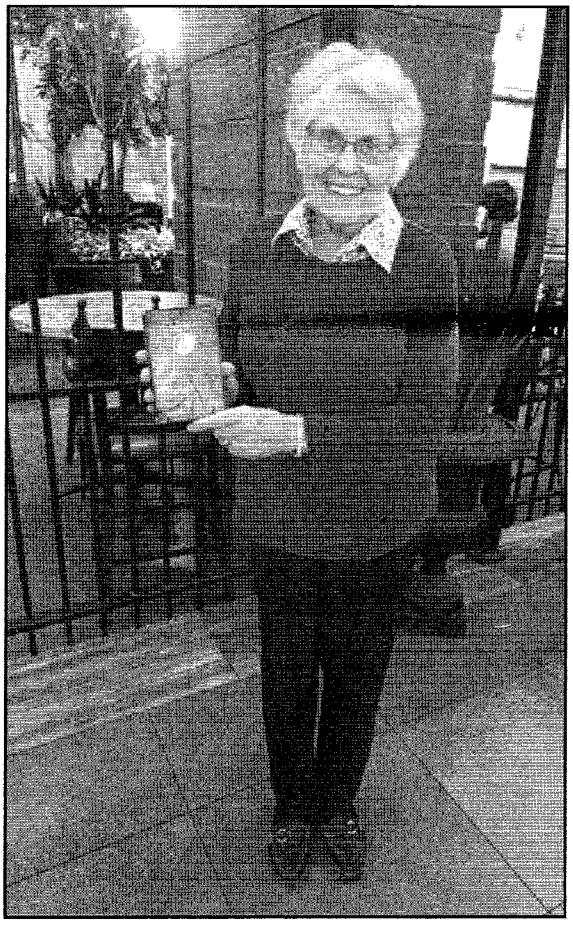
By Angus Lorenzen

When we were having cocktails at the reunion, Judy Johannes joined us and reminded me that our mothers were great friends in Santo Tomas, both being British. Our dormitory was on the third floor of the Main Building and theirs was below us on the second floor. She said that my sister Lucy had loaned her a book, *Just So Stories* by Rudyard Kipling, and I remember reading those stories which forever made me an aficionado of Kipling so that I read many more of his books in high school - *the Jungle Book, Gunga Din, Soldiers Three, The Man Who Would Be King,* and many others.

Judy said that in the excitement of liberation and repatriation, she hadn't returned the book, and she'd like to do it now. Unfortunately, my sister has passed away, but her daughter who was here at the reunion would love to have the book.

The next evening, Cindie Leonard joined us and Judy presented the book to her (see Photo opposite). On the fly page was the signature, Lucy Lorenzen, and Cindie was thrilled to have something of her mother's that had been kept in such pristine condition for 75 years. How wonderful it is to receive a treasure like this from the distant past, and how kind of Judy to have kept it for so long and then made a special effort to return it.

Cindie says she slept with this treasure the rest of the trip. She can't wait to read these stories to her grandchildren, and is just blown away, in the best way, by this sublime surprise.



Incredible Encounter

Liberation was a joy to those who were prisoners, but on occasion there was an added bonus. Mary Franz tells the story about how her father, who was attached to the 11th Airborne force that liberated Los Baños, encountered his brother in the camp after the family had lost contact with him more than 3 years earlier.

The Keilen family was concerned. In 1940, Fr. Ernie, a missionary with the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) had been assigned to study theology at Christ the King Seminary in Manila, Philippines. He wrote home regularly. Then, in December 1941, his letters stopped abruptly. They didn't know where he was, or if he was even still alive.

Meanwhile, my father, Robert, had been drafted into the army and served as a medic in the 136th division which served in the South Pacific. While there, he did what he could to locate his brother. On November 5, 1944, Dad heard from another missionary that Ernie was alive in a POW camp. There were three civilian prisoner-of-war camps in the Philippines. In early February, 1945, two of them, Bilibid and Santa Tomas, had already been liberated. Ernie was not among those who had been released. My Dad surmised that if he was still alive, Ernie would be at Los Baños. His unit was among the troops assigned to raid the camp.

My Dad said that he was pumped full of adrenaline and was ready to charge on the morning of Feb. 23rd. At the last moment, his commanding officer ordered him to remain outside the gate. Dad said he was absolutely furious! Didn't the officer know that his own brother was probably in there? When the others entered, Dad waited outside, as ordered. After a few moments, the officer came out and gave Dad permission to enter. When Ernie saw his brother, he exclaimed, "Why, it's Bob! My God, what a birthday present!" Ernie's birthday is February 24th. Only later did my father come to realize and appreciate the wisdom and compassion of his officer, who went in first to personally check on Ernie's condition before allowing my Dad to enter. Ernie weighed only 97 pounds, but he was OK.

All those released commented on how healthy the soldiers were. Dad watched as Ernie ate with relish a small bowl of rice which was covered with flies. Ernie offered some to Dad, who declined. "Aren't you hungry, Bob?" he asked, "Everyone is hungry."

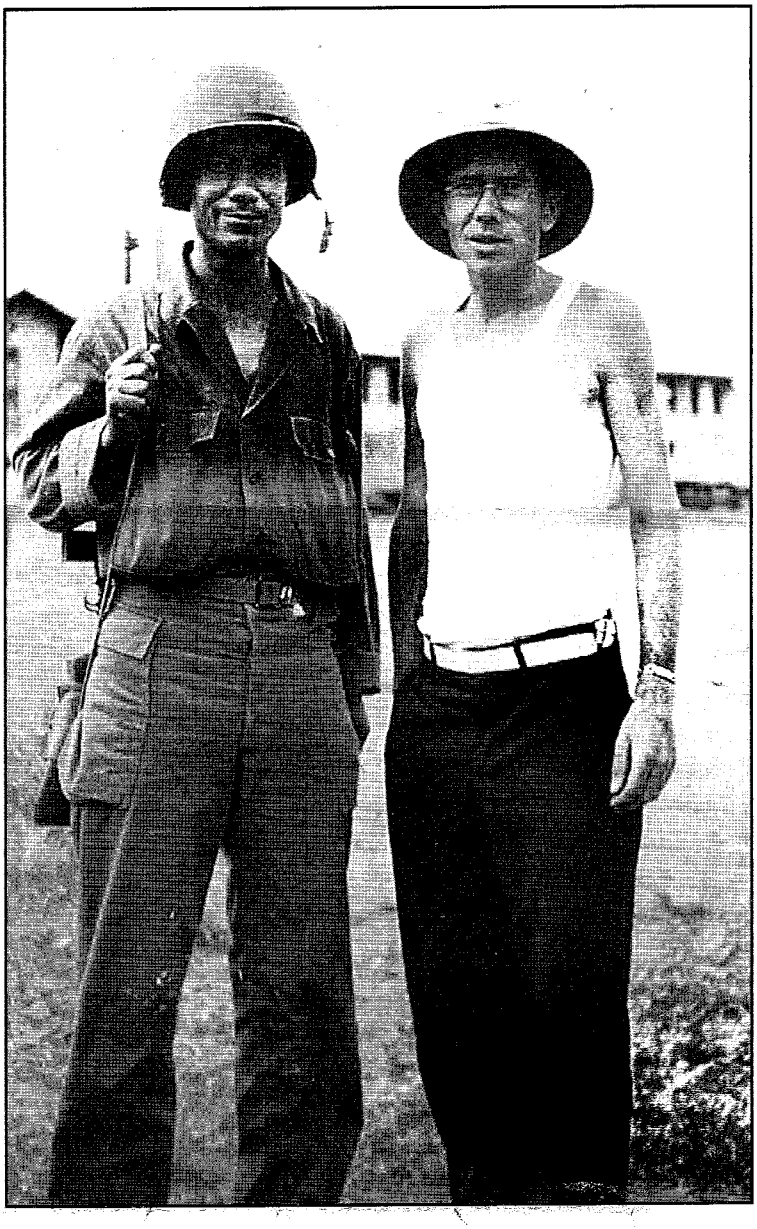
The brothers saw each other only briefly. The released prisoners were quickly whisked away. The raided camp was still deep behind enemy lines. And later, dad's regiment was sent on to Japan.

The next day, February 24, 1945. Ernie's 30th birthday, he wrote this letter home.

> "What a meeting the two of us had! Our hearts were too full for words. The liberation came at the 11th hour. Our condition was desperate. We were down to rock bottom. Starvation, disease and death stared all of us in the face."

Ernie returned to the States to recuperate. At his own request, he returned to serve in the Philippines. For over 50 years he worked at Christ the King Seminary, and served local parishes on weekends. Rev. Ernest Keilen died peacefully in Manila and was buried there in July, 1996.

Dad served in the army without leave for over three years. After his discharge, he returned home to his wife in Michigan, and eventually bought a small orthopedic shoe store in Flint, Michigan. This was a reunion that neither of them would ever forget.



Robert Keilen with his brother Ernie after the liberation of Los Baños.

We Knew You When

Anthony Guittard passed away in Carmichael, CA on January 21, 2017. There was a service at St. Thomas of Canterbury church in San Jose, and he was laid to rest at Chapel of the Chimes in Piedmont, CA.

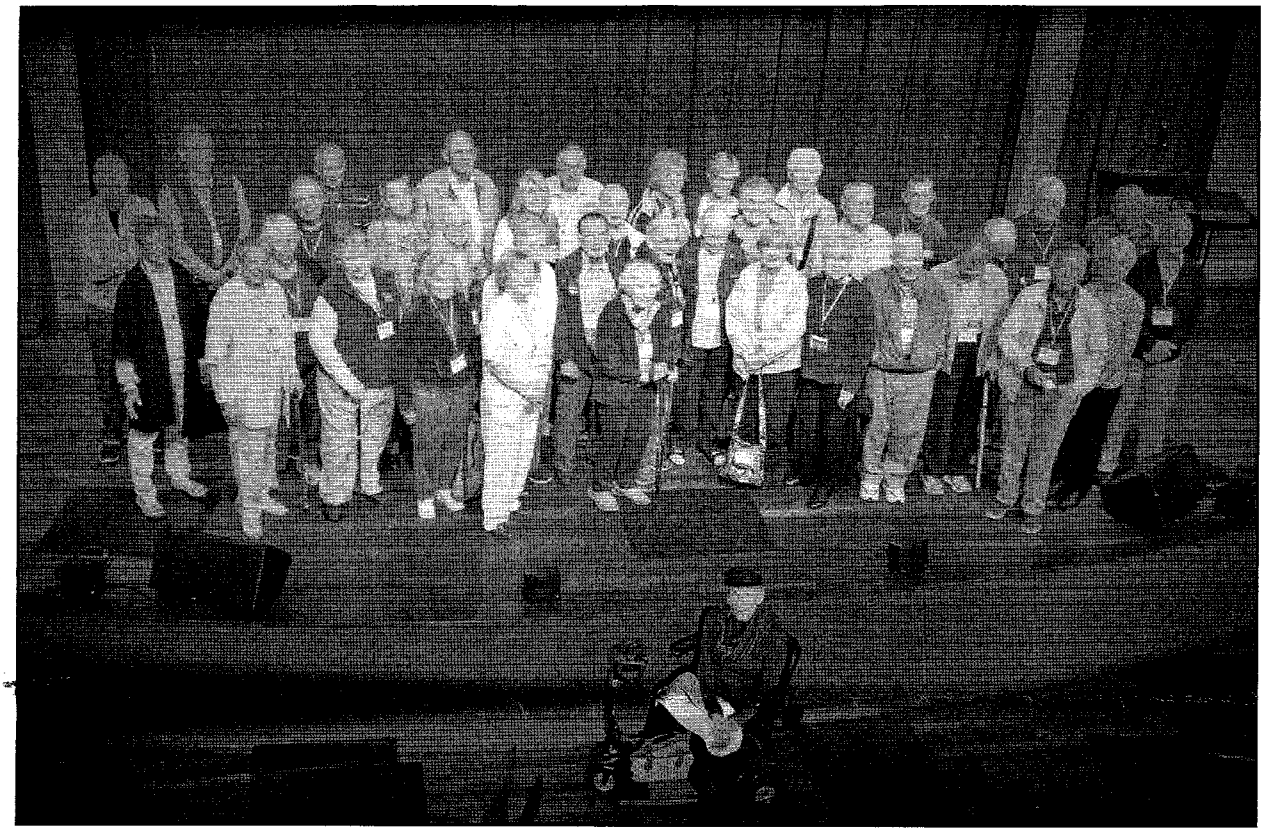
Tony was a young American civilian age 16 when he entered Santo Tomas Internment Camp. At age 91, he was a resident of Citrus Heights, CA, and an active member of BACE-POW.

New Orleans Reunion

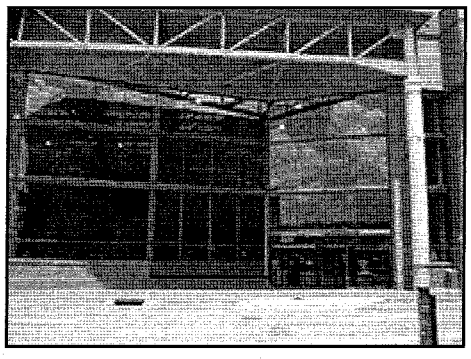
New Orleans, what an exciting venue for a reunion with its old-world French quarter and the new National World War II Museum. BACEPOW celebrated on February 2 and 3 of this year, the 72rd anniversaries of the liberation of the camps at Santo Tomas, Baguio/Bilibid, and Los Baños. A great turnout of 120 people attended, 38 of whom were prisoners in the camps, and the rest were family and friends. We welcomed many descendants attending, especially since these are the people we will rely upon in the future to carry forward the mission of BACEPOW, to keep alive the memory of what the Japanese did to American and our Allied civilians in the Philippines during WW II.

On the first evening, we attended a banquet which was opened by a color guard from Tulane University. Later, Angus Lorenzen spoke about the convergence of anniversaries – 100 years for the U.S. entry into WW I which had a profound effect on the early days of WW II in the Philippines, the 75th anniversary of the surrender of US forces on Bataan and the resulting death march, then shortly afterwards the surrender of Corregidor and all the Philippines, and the 75th anniversary of the incarceration of most civilian prisoners in the Philippines. Grim as these anniversaries are, the attendees were uplifted by the celebration of the 72nd anniversary of their own liberation by American forces, and many war stories were told at the daily evening cocktail party.

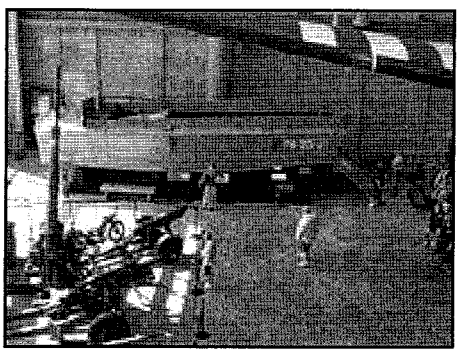
Our guest speaker at the banquet was Tom Gibbs, an historian at the National World War II Museum, who described how and why the museum was established and why it became the "national" museum. The next day we attended the museum, first seeing a movie of the events of the war, then being welcomed by officers of the museum. We then were turned loose to tour and visited the extensive ***Road to Tokyo*** and ***Road to Berlin*** exhibits and along the way toured through the Merchant Marine exhibit. The museum is now planning a Liberation Pavilion, and we provided materials they could use in planning these new exhibits. Perhaps we can **have another reunion** there when the liberation museum is active.



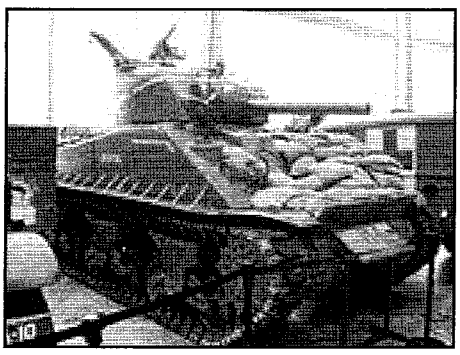
An assembly of the ex-prisoners from Baguio/ Bilibid, Santo Tomas, and Los Baños internment camps



Entrance to the National WWII Museum



Inside the entrance lobby of the museum



Sherman Tank exhibit

Word of Mouth

By Sascha Jansen

EVE OF A HUNDRED MIDNIGHTS

by Bill Lascher, William Morrow Publishing#

Melville and Annalee Jacoby's dynamic and intriguing love for China brought them together for an enduring and life-long romance enhanced only by adventure and passion for the Far East. They had worked in China during the Sino-Japanese war that started in 1937 as members of a tight community of foreign correspondents with close ties to Chinese leaders. They feared that the result, if caught by the Japanese Imperial Army, would surely be execution. However, their editors for TIME magazine had other plans for the Jacoby's, and sent the couple to the Philippines to cover the pending war between Japan and America.

In the latter part of 1941 the newlyweds found themselves with their good friends, photojournalists from LIFE Carl and Shelly Mydans, and other correspondents, at the Bay View Hotel in Manila, tracking Japan's aggression toward the Philippines and sending reports to their editors at TIME. After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and Manila, they witnessed fires, detonations and lootings on the Manila docks. It became clear that Manila would fall to the Japanese, and their conversations became intent – "Do we stay and become POWs? Hide in the hills? Try to escape?" All had different ideas, but Mel and Annalee chose to escape.

Mel had met some merchant mariners with a tale of how their lives had become dangerous carrying cargo from the Pasig River to Corregidor island. "We both want to go to The Rock and see if we can travel out of here before the Japs arrive," said Mel. "We'll take a chance if you'll take us." Barely seconds later, Mel and Annalee clung to the sides of the rusted ship heading for Corregidor, barely making it aboard before it left, spending the trip crouching on their knees. Another journalist, good friend, Clark Lee, took his chances and went for the ride with the Jacobys. On The Rock, the threesome made their way to the Malinta Tunnel and conferred with General MacArthur and his staff, who were waiting for their own moment to start their odyssey to Australia. On the General's orders the trio was armed with a hand gun each, ammunition and hand grenades for their escape. At this point it was a waiting game for all of them.

Their epic story of escape on a small boat through a myriad of islands in the Philippines was with sheer courage and ingenuity – and only heightened their sense of awareness of the countless horrors the Jap convoys were planning to deliver in sneak attacks. Unable to sail by day the small contingency of passengers was treated with kindness by the natives on each of the islands they inhabited. In the "Almost too Good to be True" chapter Australia finally looms large and welcoming, ending their 2 months of rigorous travels.

Mel and Annelee's honeymoon was fraught with upheavals and whirlwind adventures. The two TIME magazine journalists and their talented reporter friends will forever belong in the archives of American great war correspondents. I promise you, this story will stay with you forever.

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