FOLLOW THE GLEAM

The True Experiences of Ray H. Church
A Prisoner of World War II
By Cheryl Black Roper

Best Wishes
Cheryl Roper

FOLLOW THE GLEAM

GUAM

My story starts on the tiny island of Guam in December of 1941. At that time this speck, eight miles wide and nearly thirty miles long, was nothing more than a garden spot on the blue Pacific. I had come to the island in March of that year after my basic Marine training at San Diego. I was twenty years old and had never been very far away from home before; yet here I was, clear around the world from my loved ones. I was a patrolman guarding the island and took my orders from the Military Governor, Captain McMillan.

Ten of us lived in a private home at Agana, only a block away from the jail where our headquarters were. There were many lonely hours spent patrolling the beaches, looking out to sea in the direction of home, and getting homesick--homesick for a farm in Utah and the precious ones there. Back home seemed so very far away that it was almost like another world. Since I was the seventh child in a family of eleven children, I had that many more to miss than the next fellow. We had never had much money; but I certainly had not considered us poor, for we had been so happy.

As I would pace back and forth patrolling the beaches, I would wonder what my brothers might be doing right then: perhaps they were gathered around the old piano, singing their hearts out on the old songs we all loved to harmonize on; they might be sleighing, pulled by old Dick over the snow covered fields; they might be roasting pinenuts, with the sweet fragrant aroma aroma filling every corner of the house; there might be the exaggerated cries and whoops of laughter over their favorite indoor game of Rook. Although most

Mormon families were close, it seemed to me that ours was the closest I'd ever seen. The married sons and daughters would all gather home, and grandchildren of all sizes and ages ran in and out. After prayers at night, we boys would lie in our beds and sing ourselves and all the household to sleep. How we loved to sing those old favorites like "The Bulldog on the Bank and the Bullfrog in the Pool", "The Utah Trail", "The Old Arm Chair", "The Burglar Boy" and many others we considered "our" songs. My father and most of my brothers and three sisters could all sing by ear, and were always singing in programs around the vicinity. We played all kinds of games together, and there was pracitcally no sport in which one of us didn't excel. I had played half-back on the football team at Delta High School in 1939 and we had taken the State. At Dixie, a college in St. George, Utah, I had played half-back on the main team. I had also, with Talmage Christensen, taken the state championship in horseshoe pitching. I was a fairly good wrestler and had won several matches, some since entering the Marines. Little Ned, my older brother, had also won a state, or regional meet in racing. We always told him he really desearved it, too. He was so little, he had to run twice as fast as the bigger contestants; he had to take three strides to their one. Ned could also broad jump about as far as anyone I'd ever seen. Jimmey could entertain us for hours walking around on his hands; and Mel, built more like me, was as rugged in football and wrestling as anyone I'd ever care to take on. "Shine" my older brother actually got his name at a baseball game, when he was real young. As he took his turn at bat, each time Mother would call out, "Come on now son, SHINE!" Somehow that "Shine" just stuck with him and there are few people that know his given name is Grant. My sisters could play ball and race nearly as well as any of us boys--and how we enjoyed being with each other. There never lived better sports, either.

As I continued my patrolling of the beach, my eyes would be as misty

as the sea as I gazed off in the direction of the ones I loved and missed so much. Their letters were wonderful, Oh, how I looked forward to them! But the letters made me miss my family all the more. I'd get so homesick to see them that my letters home were rather hard to write sometimes, since I tried so hard to keep them from knowing just how homesick I was way around the world from them.

I'd just sent a letter home that went like this:

Nov. 24, 1941

Dear Folks,

I hope this letter finds you as well as it leaves me. I received your welcomed letter and I was happy to hear from you. I have never been so surprised as I was when you said Jim was getting married. (Jim was practically an old bachelor when he went to work as a cowhand on a ranch out in Spring Valley, Nevada. He met, fell in love, and married Irene Aaurhuse, the teacher at the one-room school. Kind,gentle, quiet, yet witty as could be, Jim would make any woman a wonderful husband.) I think that will be a good thing for him. I have never met a fellow that has the good common sense that Jim has, and if he puts it into the right thing, he will go places.

Did you have a good time for Thanksgiving? We had a pretty good dinner, but it didn't seem like it was Thanksgiving to me. (How could it seem like Thanksgiving when it was so warm? When there wasn't all the exciting preparations for the big dinner? When you couldn't smell the tempting aroma of puddings, pies, dressing, for a day or two ahead? How could it be Thanksgiving without Father giving the Thanksgiving prayer?)

That was a nice way to write, each one sending your hello and best wishes. I enjoyed it very much. You said you wished I was there; well, I wish I <u>was</u> there too. (If they only knew how much I wished it) Although it is nice out here at Guam.

How are Sarah and Lyman getting along? (My youngest sister Sarah had married Lyman Finlinsen of Oak City that fall.) My best wishes for a happy future are certainly with them. I also received a letter from Margaret a while back with some pictures. They were really nice. (Margaret Callister, one of my angel sisters, who lived with her husband Lathel on a farm next to the folk's.) It only took a few days for the boat then, but the boats are very irregular now, so I don't know about when anything would get here.

I don't know anyth ing that I could send that would get there in time for Christmas only a good word, which is worth more than anything that I know of, and that is: I'm getting along fine in all ways and not letting this life get me to drinking and so on. I'm not trying to brag to you. I just want you to know that thinking of you is helping me very much, and I hope in

the near future I will be able to go home; and when I do it will be hard to get me away again . I had better close for this time. I wish you all the very best of everything and may the things you do be of good value to yourselves both in physical and spiritual ways.

With all my love,
Son and Brother
Ray H. Church

Guam was entirely different to me, a dry farmer from Utah. Here it rained a lot; in fact, on one mountain it rained every day. There was much jungle and lush vegetation. Back home on the farm, we paid for irrigation water, or the crops would have dried up. Agana, the capital of Guam, had a population of about 10,000; Sumay had 2,000; and Agat had about 1,500. There were many little villages throughout the island, making a total population of about 30,000. The whole of Millard County in 1941 was somewhere around 6000. Our farm was about three miles southeast of Delta, Utah, a little farming community with a population then of about 1300.

There were few modern buildings on Guam, most of which were wide-walled cement Spanish-type dwellings. The native huts were built on stilts, high off the ground. Some were of lumber, but most of them were made of grass and straw. Their animals lived under the houses. The natives were light, more like Hawaiians, but with a lot of Spanish blood. The people were friendly but uneducated. The whole island smelled of the sweet-stale odor of the beetle-nut which the natives chewed. Clothes were washed in the creeks and pounded with rocks to get them clean. Fishing and farming were the chief occupation of most of the natives, but some earned their living working for the United States government or in one of the few larger companies on the island.

Ten of us Marines stayed at Agana, the rest of the Marines, about 150, were at Sumay twelve miles away; there were about 400 navel personnel there, including the ones on board the ship in the harbor. Guam, the closest United States possession, was only 1600 miles southeast of Tokyo. Nevertheless,

Congress was fearful that any preparation for the defense of the island would agitate the Japanese government; so we had absolutely nothing in the line of defense. Because of this "ostrich-like" attitude, Guam was left to bask in the sun, although it was well known that Japan was building up its army.

I had made a few friends; Bill Jensen was my dearest and closest. He was a clean-living fellow. He seemed to meet up to Latter Day Saint standards, although he was not one; and we took to each other at once. After three months we were absolute buddies. He was a University of New Mexico graduate and a complete gentleman. He was about six feet tall and very good looking. It was good to have a close friend to talk with.

THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS

Sunday morning, December 8th was warm on Guam. I had just showered, shaved, and gone downstairs to have breakfast. It was 8 o'clock. I told our native cook Frank to fix me some bacon and eggs and was sitting at the table wondering what I would do. There was no Latter Day Saint organization on the island and I certainly missed Sunday School and Sacrament Meeting. To me, Sunday just wasn't Sunday unlessyou went to Church. I thought about going to a Protestant service. My thoughts were broken into by shouting outside. A native was running down our street scream ing "The Japs have bombed Sumay." I didn't believe it! It just couldn't have hap pened. The natives believed it and suddenly, what had only minutes before been the peace of a beautiful Sabbath morn became the confusion and clamor of fearful people panicking. We called headquarters and were told to report there on the double. It was true!

We dashed up to put on our khaki clothes, then ran to the jailhouse which was our headquarters. The jailhouse was on the south of a large plaza.

The plaza was about the size of a city block, and in the center was a raised pavilion where the band gave weekly concerts. The plaza lawn was like rolling green velvet and was bordered by a four-foot hedge on all sides. On the west of the plaza was a big Catholic church. On the north end was the Governor's Palace, a lovely, huge, two-story Colonial-type building.

The orders for us at headquarters were this: "Round up all the Japanese living on the island and put them in jail." With loaded guns and furiously beating hearts, we went out to find subversives, anywhere we could find them. At nine o'clock, fifteen small Japanese planes started strafing the city and kept it up all day. We patrollmen were out in it all day, rounding up the island's Japanese and helping the natives evacuate.

We had just put 20 Japanese that lived on the island in the jail and were going out the front door when a Marine shouted "Hit the deck; a plane is diving on us." There was a terrific explosion. I couldn't see; and when I finally could, I could only see spots for a while. The walls of the jail were caving in and I couldn't get my breath for a few minutes. The Japanese prisoners were screaming, "Let us out, open the doors, don't let us die." Not a soul was hurt, although the ceiling and walls of the jail were completely destroyed. The prisoners were released with a guard and taken to a private home.

The Japanese Army radioed the island "Surrender. You are surrounded. We are going to take the island."

Captain McMillan, the Military Governor of Guam, radioed back: "No, we are going to put up a fight." Of course, this answer was the answer of us all; despite the fact that we were practically unarmed when it came to war!

We patrolmen were busy all day Sunday helping the natives evacuate and looking for the island's Japanese citizens. I felt as if I were in some kind of play, that none of it was real. I was scared to death!

Monday morning the strafing began again, splattering death and destruction without resistance. Five of us patrolmen decided to go up on the hill overlooking Agans to see if our rifles couldn't come closer to hitting one of the Jap planes. The planes came in over the hill low and swept down on the defenseless city to unload. We finally hit one plane and downed it! How excited we were! But just then a messenger came with orders from the CO to get off the hill. We rather dejectedly came down, many of us indignant at his order. But just as we reached the bottom, the Jap planes came over and bombed up the whole hill. Our dejection quickly turned to overwhelming thankfulness that we had got off in the nick of time.

Six more patrolmen from outlying districts were called in to help patrol by this time. Bill and I worked together on the 8 to 12 shift. We went to San Antone district to patrol, for we knew the Japs would land there. The beach was large and would make an ideal landing place.

San Antone, on ly two miles from government headquarters and Agana, was a recreational area with an ideal beach. Three small wooden shacks served as dressing rooms for the bathers. A few little native shacks dotted the shore, but were supposed to be evacuated by this time.

When I first saw the strange footprints of the enemy frogmen or commandos on the beach, I wondered, "What is this we are going to fight." They wore wide split-toed wooden sandals and walked like ducks. All that day the natives had been reporting "strange men" to the patrolmen, so we knew there were plenty of them around us somewhere. I suppose there were nearly 75 of these frogmen hidden on the island but we only apprehended 5 all together. These frogmen looked so repugnant to us that we were more frightened than ever. They were greasy looking and smelling as they had been in the water for hours destroying communications,

and getting ready for the invasion. The captured frogmen could speak the native tongue and one talked quite freely. He told us that the Japs were going to land Wednesday. (He was shot by the Japanese when they took the island.) We locked these prisoners up in a private room in Agana where two men guarded them.

A frightened, but determined little group of men gathered at the Pavilion on the plaza to hear the combined native and Navy band play the Star Spangled Banner. About 30 Americans and 50 natives watched with wet eyesand saluted with shaky hands as Old Glory was hoisted for the last time. It was Monday evening, but the flag was left waving throughout the night.

Tuesday night at eight o'clock Bill and I walked down to the beach with heavy hearts. It was a pitch black night and every light had been ordered blacked out. There wasn't a sound, just the heavy pounding in our ears of our own hearts. We weren't even supposed to use our flashlights. We relieved the two men on watch and then we separated, each to guard a section of a half mile. About an hour later I was quietly walking along, suddenly a light flashed on in one of the native huts. These huts were supposed to be evacuated. I knew Japs were in there or around there; I also knew that I had to get that light out. I hated to expose myself by the light; but when I got to the hut, no one was inside. I didn't know who had turned on the light, or why, or where he was. Quickly I ran into the room, broke the globe with my pistol and just as quickly ran out. I felt as if a million eyes were on me.

Sometime later, Bill and I were standing together when we heard a toilet flush in one of the beach houses. We were the only two on guard here, the natives had long since fled; it could only be a Japanese! We dashed around the building in opposite directions. We found no one there either. (We later learned that over 400 Japs had already come ashore and were waiting for the three o'clock rush!)

Bill and I knew that we were probably surrounded by the enemy; that it was almost Wednesday--the time set for the invasion of Guam; that this beach would certainly be the key spot for the beachhead.

The night was black, silent, and evil with foreboding. We separated again, each of us to tread silently once more into the abyss of fear that was our half-mile section of that beach. My ears strained for the slightest sound; my eyes strained towards the ocean. The heavy blackness, the deserted alone feeling, gripped my soul with the most intense terror I have ever known.

I begged my Heavenly Father to protect me, to preserve my life and give me the courage to face whatever lay ahead. At the thought of never seeing my mother or father again, tears rolled down my cheeks; tears for them at my loss and tears for my own fear of dying. I relived my whole life in those few hours, as people facing death usually do; going over my mistakes and sins of omission and commission. I wondered if the Lord thought I was worthy of saving. I wished I knew--the suspense was nerve-wracking! I didn't beel like a brave United States Marine guarding San Antone beach; rather I felt like a terribly young farm boy from Utah waiting for the slaughter. Bill and I tried not toshow each other how frightened we were. We tried to cheer each other up; it was silly, I wanted to scream!

About 11:30 Bill and I heard the sound of loud, carefree voices as six Americans sailors came toward us. We said, "Halt, Who goes there?"

"The United States Navy"was the prompt reply and "We're not going to be taken alive and tortured. We're going to put up a fight."

Their flickering light revealed their mighty arsenal--a rifle apiece and a few rounds of ammunition. One fellow carried a case of beer on his shoulders, to give them courage, I guess. They had already had enough to drink to make them fearless and cocky about their effectiveness in the forthcoming battle. They planned to use one of the little grass shacks closest to the ocean as their fortress to put up their resistance. You could put your hand through it! (When their remains

were discovered several days later, they were beyond recognition. Their bodies were charred and bloated. The Japs had gone into the grass shack with a flame thrower. Each blackened body had also been shot about twelve times.)

About a quarter to twelve I saw a flare way out in the bay and gasped to Bill, "Here they come!"

At midnight our reliefs came. (Two hours later, these two men were dead.) Bill and I got back to our place after our watch, showered, and put on our sturdiest clothing and shoes. Then we lay down--to wait!

Suddenly our ears heard what they had been straining for--GUNFIRE! THIS WAS IT! I lifted the blind in our upstairs window and looked over at San Antone beach two miles away. It was completely lit up with exploding shells and fires. It was 3:15. I kept thinking, "I'm dreaming, I'm dreaming, I'll wake soon."

The phone rang; we were ordered to headquarters. At headquarters, everything was utter confusion; it was every man for himself. We were under attack and the governor's mansion was in an uproar with frightened men running all over the place. An eighteen-year-old Marine kept running around sobbing,"I'm too young to die. I'm too young to die." Six sailors prepared to escape to the hills and hide out as most of the natives had already done. I told them they could take the truck the patrolmen used, and also about two tons of food. Better them to have it than the Japs!

Eight of us patrolmen that were left had our 45 pistols. At headquarters we grabbed what other weapons there were. What an arsonal to fight the whole Japanese Army: Ten machine guns and about 50 rifles with half enough ammunition. If all of us there, about twenty-five Americans and nearly 60 native guards had been firing at once, our ammunition would have lasted us perhaps 45 m inutes! Such was Uncle Sam's defenseof Guam! The rest of the Americans, nearly 120, were at Sumay, the Marine base about twelve miles away.

A native guard came running in. He had just come over the road Bill and I had traveled from San Antone. He said he had seen a whole company of Japanese soldiers hidden off the road; that he had seen Bill and I pass within twenty feet of them!

The hysteria at headquarters was contagious. The confusion, the approaching terror, the lack of organized command made men lose their heads. Some of them ran out the back door of the palace to the gardens, but Jap snipers already there cut them down.

It was about 4:30 a.m., just starting to get a little light. A couple of other fellows and I quickly ran out the front way, facing the plaza and began firing from behind the hedge. We could spot Japs running for hiding places all over. The native guards of Agana were firing from the hedge on our left. I guess there were about 3000 Japs. It seemed the place was swarming with them. I still felt as if this were just a dream, a horrible nightmare. I could not imagine myself dead. Surely I would wake up soon!

Finally an adjutant came out of the Governor's Palace to let the Japs know we were surrendering. He carried a long stick with a white sheet tied to it, and started down the road toward the beach. We didn't expect to see him again as he was gone for at least five minutes-or ten. A few minutes after he had gone someone hollered "Cease fire!"

We threw down our guns and stood with our arms raised. An American was even honking an old Ford that stood in front of the Palace to let the Japs know we were surrendering. After standing with our arms up in surrender for five minutes, we heard a bugle and were horrified to realize it was a signal for the Japs to charge! I looked down across the plaza and held my breath. Swarming all over the grounds were screaming Japs, bayonets fixed, rushing us. Each one wanted a prize!

I was behing the the hedge; so one big fellow ran around it to get me. He

had a huge handle-bar mustache and really looked ferocious. With his bayonet he knocked off my hat, cut the buttons off my shirt, and ripped off the badge that marked me a patrolman. Then he began grunting and gesturing.. I knew what he meant and started pealing off my clothes. As I hurried, I noticed out of the corner of my eye, a fellow American about fifteen feet down the hedge from me. He just got his shirt off when his Jap captor plunged his bayonet clear through his stomach. I fully expected the same when I got mine off.

Wednesday, December 11 at about 7a.m. I became a Japanese prisoner! Our captors herded us over onto the plaza lawn, stark naked, and formed a packed circle around us, their rifles on dead aim. They made us sit down for what seemed an eternity, with our legs straight out, our chests on our knees and a sharp bayonet point in our back should we raise up a fraction. They let us ease up on this cramping position after a couple of hours. One Marine with a slice of his back cut out all the way down kept passing out. Another had been shot seven times in the ankle and the flies were swarming it unmercifully. He couldn't stand it. When we motioned to it to the Japs, they finally threw an undershirt over it. I kept looking for Bill, but could not see him--or a lot of my other buddies.

We sat there for about five hours in the hot sun while the Japs rounded up more Americans and natives. It finally started to rain. A Jap interpreter came over and told us to put our clothes back on. The Nips made a small pathway for each of us to go find our clothes, one at a time. When I got to where mine had been, they were gone. I had to go over and take the rest of the bloody clothing off the fellow I had seen bayoneted when we had been ordered to take our clothes off. We were just allowed pants and shirts, no shoes. (I wore those pants and that shirt for the next six months.)

About 2 p.m., after everyone was rounded up, they herded us over to the Native Guard House. It was a small building, about 30 by 100 feet, situated on the south side of the plaza next to the Governor's Palace. The Nips nailed the windows and

doors shut. The building had a very low roof, with one skylight window in the center. Our jailors told us that if any of us tried to escape, we would all be shot. The natives were panicky to get out and find their wives and children in the hills; so the Americans posted their own guards to prevent any native escapes. There were about fifty of us locked up there, twenty-five of us American Marines. There was one bathroom, with water, and that was all we had tosustain us for one week. Five Marines diedthere and at least five or six natives.

The second day in this prison, I volunteered to go out on a burial party of five to bury our dead. It was then I found Bill. (He had apparently run around the opposite side of the building from the side I was on when the Japs attacked.) There lay one of the choicest friends I shall ever have, with twenty bullet holes in his chest and his head almost severed from his body. His friend, Bulman, lay close by; his body was riddled with bullet holes. As I carefully lifted Bill's body, and laid it in the truck with the many others, I felt like a part of me died. There was absolutely no sane reason why such choice, honorable, outstanding young Americans as Bill and these others should be deprived of what would have been long useful, happy lives: no sane reason why their bodies, mutilated and desecrated should be wrapped in an army blanket and laid in a shallow grave in a foreign land. I didn't even try to control my tears as we laid Bill away; even in front of the fiends that had caused his death and watched like wretched grinning apes as we went about our grisly chore. We buried each of our fallen buddies in a separate grave in a graveyard a mile outside Agana.

All the natives on the island had to register, their names, their families' names and ages, and occupation; then they let them go. After two weeks of absolute starvat ion in which I lost 40 pounds, they moved us into the big Catholic church with about 100 other American prisoners of war that had been rounded up on the island. Other prisoners were jailed in the hospital. The Catholic church was about one hundred feet high with high rounded ceilings,nearly one hundred feet

long and seventy-five feet wide. The church was nearly a hundred years old. We slept on the tables or on the benches or on the floor of the big main room. Some steps behind the altar led up to the rooms where the priest had lived.

Everytime a Jap soldier of any rank walked into the chapel, everyone immediately had to stand at attention. Six or seven of the starved prisoners would promptly black out and then would be brutally kicked by the Japs. They took some of the really bad cases over to the hospital later, where our doctors were. I had a terrific headache for three or four days so that every time I stood up I would pass out. In all that thirty days we were locked up on Guam, I didn't have to use the bathroom once. My body had had no substance.

One day a native man and woman hurried by the chapel and threw a cooked half chicken in the window to their friend and told him to give me some. I got a wing and nothing ever tasted so good in all my life. After days and days without food that chicken tasted like manaa from heaven. (When we had first been settled in the chapel, the Japs brought in a tub of warm water with a little rice and seaweed floating in it; and we were given a spoonful of this once a day, early in the morning.)

We had been in the church nearly two weeks when the Japs ordered us all out one day. When they hustled us outside, the order was given: "March up on the hill." We knew we were going to be shot. The road up to the hill was nearly five miles long and steep. Emaciated men were fainting all along the way and I felt as if I would never make it.

As we staggered and crawled up the hill, we could see a company of Japanese troops with rifles, machine guns, flame throwers, and of course automatic weapons. A second order rang out: "Bow to the East and then stand at attention." Again men started fainting--the tension alone was enough to kill anyone. I think I was scared too stiff to faint. The whistle blew--the action started. The soldiers briskly fixed their rifles and. . . .exercised a mock attack. Our terror slowly

turned to bewilderment. What in the world were they doing? Why had they crucified, crucified us by the exhausting climb up the hill if they were not going to kill us? Simply to watch their war tactics and maneuvers seemed fantastic; yet that was it! Our overwhelming relief left us practically as exhausted as the fearful climb up the hill had been. The Japs had invited the civilians too; I'm sure that the machine-gunning, mortar flame throwers, and hand-to-hand combat impressed them much more than it did us stupefied POWs. After two hours they marched us back down to our prison. It surely looked better than it had before.

McLain was a pro-Jap Navy man who had married a Japanese woman before the war. He spoke Japanese and felt no qualms about turning traitor. He was put in charge of the American Prisoners of War. A fuss-budget, he was always trying to impress the Japs. He had a long nose, freckles, and always wore dark glasses. He was forty, about medium sized...physically.

One day he was questioning a young Marine as to who would be the most likely to make an escape.

The Marine answered: "The patrolmen know the island well, probably better than anyone but the natives."

As I was the only patrolman left alive, I was called to the make-believe king's private sanctuary.

Mc Lain said "Son, if you try to make an escape, I will be glad to kill you with my bare hands!"

I thought he was just kidding at first. He had called me "son". A sickening nausea flooded me as I realized that he was not kidding. Finally I managed, "If you have anything to say, talk to my CO." As an afterthought of my mounting contempt for him, I added: "I hadn't thought of escaping, but that sure sounds like a good idea."

In an animal growl he threatened, "You'll be killed <u>first</u>, if anything happens." The Japs really respected his judgment, and of course, they were the only friends he had. How we detested him!

THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN

We were all frightened about getting on the boat for Japan. Rumors ran wild as to what would happen to us when we got there. Finally, the dreaded day came. The Japs began calling muster--just a few men at a time.

So hungry, I felt like being risky, and another fellow and I crept up to Mc Lain's apartment, which was up in back of the altar upstairs. There we found a can of pears, a bottle of sugar, and a whole gallon of molasses. The Japs had come in the day before with a few blankets full of our shoes, or someone's. Lo and behold, plainly stamped on one blanket was my name, Ray H. Church. Naturally, I quickly claimed it and this precious blanket concealed the gallon of molasses. The other things, we each concealed in our shirts. We had to walk thirteen miles to get on the ship; the wounded got to ride. We were so shaky and weak we could hardly walk after a month of being locked up with virtually nothing to sustain us. It had been a strain to even stand at attention, and this forced march was more than most of us could stand. My HEAD THROBBED, my HEART POUNDED, I could hear ringing and queer sounds in my ears, I could see fantastic colors and spots, I was drenched in perspiration after the first few hundred feet. Sharp cracks of the guards's whips echoed through the air as they popped against the bones of the walking skeletons. Hot tears blinded me as I saw men moan and pitch forward only to be brutally kicked until someone with a little more compassion than strength lifted them onto his back and staggered along. It was hot, the cries of anguish, the crack of the whips, the unnaturally pale emaciated whites, trudging a death march with their small, dark grinning fiends prodding them on with bayonets, kicks, and whips was a living hell no man surviving will ever forget. The stolen food seemed a miserable mistake, it seemed to weigh a ton. I would gladly have dropped the molasses somewhere, but we were too heavily guarded.

We left the island on a cattle coat and were surprised at the good condition of the ship we boarded, the Argentine Maru. It was a large ship, used for a paggesger boat before the war. Our pleasure turned to dismay as the guards herded us down into the very bilges, the v-shaped bottom of the ship. The musty dank heat nearly overwhelmed us as we floundered down some steep stairs at one end. Into this small miserable hold were crammed 150 American civilians, and all that were left of our fighting force on Guam--about 100 Marines and 200 Sailors.

There was no light, no room to lie down, our only ventilation coming from a little hatch, ten inches square, above us. It was bolted over. There were buckets under the stairway at the end of the hold. Everyone was sick with diarrhea and the stench and heat were unendurable. Men had to crawl over each other to reach the buckets. Huge rats, as hungry as we, scurried about sniffing for food, their beady eyes searching. Above us on rafters Japanese soldiers kept machine guns pointed at us constantly.

After the third day, as we left the Tropics, the heat suddenly changed to cooler air and as we approached Japan it grew steadily colder. There was much talk of trying to take over the ship; we had plenty of well trained seamen, but we were guarded too heavily. Later we learned the guards had received orders to shoot us in case the ship should be torpedoed.

That was another horror, the gnawing fear that at any moment we might be torpedoed by one of our own ships. (Later at a Jap prison camp, one fellow appeared who was one of three lone survivors of our eighteen hundred American prisoners of war aboard, or rather in the bottom of three Jap ships that had been torpedoed.)

The Japs overhead on the planks would drop their cigarette butts down on us and treat us like animals; we felt almost like animals. Everyone was nauseated by the stench, sick, hungry, filthy dirty, lousy, and discouraged. The severely wounded or sick had been separated from us from the beginning. Yet, everyday, down

in that hole someone died.

Once in a while, in the daytime they would let a group of us go up on board to get some fresh air; and oh, it was fresh air compared with what we were used to down in the bilge.

They brought three buckets of brown, unseasoned rice, but we pounced like starving dogs to get it. We each got a half cup a day. I opened my molasses to put on my rice and Major Spicer, Adjutant Commander on Guam, asked for some molasses for the nurses up above, who were sick and couldn't eat the rice. I gave him two cups for them, poured a big gob on my rice and passed it on, knowing I had seen the last of it; but I couldn't enjoy it alone.

We sailed into the Sea of Japan about two in the afternoon and all the ship's heat was cut off to save fuel. What had been stifling heat at the beginning of our journey was now damp, chilling cold that penetrated our summer clothing and thin bodies. We had been crammed in the bilges of that ship for seven long miserable days. Yet it was ten o'clock at night before we were allowed off the ship; they didn't want us to see anything. An old, flat, open cattle boat was tied alongside our ship. The wind was blowing and the sea was rolling quite heavily. It was a four-foot jump; luckily no one fell in. The cattle boat wasn't very large, but with nearly 500 men on it, it began to list heavily on the ship side, and the Japs began to scream and motion to get to the other side. It began to snow, and there we stood, unprotected by anything--shelter, clothing, or adequate flesh.

A young, trembling, blue Marine said, "I can't stand it, I'm going to jump." He started for the edge of the boat, but a couple of us grabbed him and held him between us all the way to shore. We were nearly an hour on that open boat, the wind blowing the snow through us, 9 above zero temperature. We had only our shirts and short pants on, no underclothing, and we had had no food since the day before. We couldn't even talk it was so cold; we just huddled together.

Finally we set foot on the land of the Rising Sun...Shikoko Island, the first prisoners Japan had taken. The press, dozens of photographers, and a crowd of

curious Japanese were waiting ashore. I had wrapped a towel around my head and neck to keep warm. For about an hour we were penned in a cement building with no window panes--almost as cold as the cattle boat. Another fellow got so cold he became hysterical and tried to end it all by running out and jumping into the ocean. An American grabbed him and slapped his face to shock him back to sanity.

The Japs needed a detail of five men to unload baggage and I volunteered. I felt that if I didn't move around I would freeze stiff. Our ten doctors had brought from Guam what medical supplies they could and there was the Japs' baggage. We worked fast and when we got back to the cement building, the other poor guys were huddled together nearly frozen to death.

They brought us some biscuits, a little larger than a hard roll, and quite hard. Each of us got a whole one and chewed these sour dough buiscuits as slowly as we could to make them last longer. It was the first solid food we had had to put our teeth into.

They then loaded us into streetcars in groups of thirty, with almost as many guards as prisoners. When the guards saw us shivering so and our bodies blue with cold, they laughed loud, and threw open the windows. They were warmly clad and their raucous laughter hit us as sharply as did the freezing breeze.

For twenty minutes we rode, too cold, frightened and angry to speak or move. Gratefully we at last heard the bus chugging to a stop. Zentsuji! (We couldn't even pronounce it.) Our destination. "Trot to your barracks," came the order. Eagerly I raced toward shelter and perhaps warmth! What a disgrace to the word barrack. It was nothing but a section of what had once been horse stalls, full of fleas and old manure, with a pile of straw and three thin fiber blankets for each man. We paired up to keep warm.

As I lay there, thinking of the day's events, the nauseating smell of old horse manure reminded my of the barn and corral at home. It didn't take much to make me think of home. It's funny how dear things become when you're faced with

the prospect of never seeing them again!

Morning, and in a fellow came with steaming hot "soupy" water. My it tasted good! Our breakfast over, we weren't left long in doubt as to our next move. Suddenly in swarmed a horde of Japanese and began what can only be called the most extensive, bewildering examinations in history. Not only were we fingerprinted, weighed, photographed, and measured in the usual manner, but for some perplexing reason, our teeth were counted, our noses measured for length and breadth, likewise our heads, foreheads, hands and feet! Maybe we all looked alike to them as they did to us, that's the only reason we could figure for all this almost ridiculous red tape.

Zentsuji was supposed to be a model prisoner-of-war camp. All the prisoners--British, Australian, and Dutch--were officers, except for the Americans. The officers were taken to one section and we enlisted men to another. The International Red Cross came and took pictures, the food was fairly good, and we were able to keep clean.

Major Spicer, my commanding officer, loved to come over to our barrack in the evening and we sang and talked to ease our loneliness. Major Spicer had a good voice and loved to sing. Of course, it was like a tonic to me too; and I suppose the others--Bob Watts, Dr. McGinnis, and Jim Garrison--who never missed a session, needed the comfort and the true pleasure that comes from singing. Our quartets began to attract large groups. What a lift that singing was to our morale, whether we were listening or singing.

Naturally Major Spicer recognized how important this was, and through his efforts, the whole camp was delighted to learn that the Japs would allow us a "Sing-Song" once a week. Thus began the one thing most of us could look forward to, the Sunday night programs in the large hall in which the doctors were quartered.

Everyone had an opportunity to participate. One week the British would put on the program, the next week the Australians, then the Americans. I sang in a

quartet many times on our programs. There would be skits, songs, personal experiences, (prewar of course), and we had expert advice from the many professinnal men in our camp; attorneys would give legal advice, clothing personnel would give discussions on proper dress (how we would have loved the chance for even a change of clothing) and doctors would give first-aid information .

These wonderful evenings were the only bright spot in our gray existence. Something else happened about this time that I knew would be a bright spot for my family. The Japanese at Zentsuji were anxious to propagandize, and announced that ten lucky men would have their names drawn to broadcast to their families in America. My number wasn't drawn, but the odds had been great against it. However, the odds of my smoking the package of cigarettes, which I hoarded as security, were zero. One of the fellows whose name was drawn was skeptical of the broadcast ever reaching America and the pack of cigarettes was much more tempting to him than the chance to let his family know he might still be alive. How thankful I was then and many times later that a cigarette didn't control me.

In the studio, above us on the wall was a list of "don'ts" as long as my arm: we couldn't say where we were, how much we weighed, how cold it was, what we did, and on and on. (This taped, short-wave message was picked up in nearly every state in the Union and was my folks first inkling that I was still alive, almost a year after my capture.)

As I said, these were the bright spots. Most of the time was ugly, even in this model camp. At least once a week we could expect to be knocked, kicked, beaten with a club or humiliated in any way any of our guards felt the urge. Our work detail cleared the hill, Asi Yama, (Morning Mountain) of brush and rocks. One day, after we had been at Zentsuji about a month, I was passing a huge rock down the hill to Taylor, the next fellow in line. His hands were raw and bleeding. He tried to hold the rock, but it was too big and went crashing to the bottom of the mountain. Our guard was one of Mc Lain's stoogies, a Chief in the Navy, who actually shouldn't have had any command over Marines. He was about 30, tall, heavy set, and never without his Navy cap.

He barked at me, "Go pick up that rock and bring it up here and pass it down again." It was 200 yards to the bottom of the hill; it was ridiculous! Pack a rock that weighed nearly as much as I back up a hill with sore, raw fingers just to please a skunk?

I said, "Our hands are sore and bleeding, and that kind of rocks are too big anyway. I didn't drop it and I'm not going to go get it!"

"You'll either go pick up that rock or I'll report you to headquarters and you'll be put on the black list."

"Go to blazes."

He told Mc Lain that I had refused to work. Result: The next Sunday was a rest day and two other fellows and I were hard at work chipping cement off, or cleaning used bricks. A big pile of old bricks from some building had been dumped in the compound and we were to clean them for reuse, from 9 o'clock until 4. About two o'clock one of the fellows found a cigarette butt and sat down for a minute to smoke it. I needed a rest too. We had just sat down when Mc Lain came around the corner of his office. "What are you men doing sitting there?" "We just stopped a second for a smoke," came the weak answer from the one with the cigarette. "All right," came the sarcastic reply, "that's an extra hour of work for taking time off without permission."

When the hour was up, a guard outside told me to take our tooks in to Mc Lain's office. There he sat, the despot of the whole camp, the American Sailor who delight= ed in having his fellow Americans whipped, starved and punished; the American who wanted Japan to win the war, to whip America. He heard me come in but gave no indication. I was exhausted and sore--mad sore.

I said, "Where do you want these hammers?"

He looked up from his papers, over the top of his perpetual dark glasses, and insolently pointed his finger to a shelf. I walked over and dropped them on the shelf. "Church" he snarled, "you're heading for trouble; you're nothing but a

troublemaker. You'd better watch out."

"You're skating on pretty thin ice yourself, Mc Lain," I shot back; "you daresn't come down to the compound away from your Jap guards."

"When you're speaking to a superior officer, come to attention!"screamed Mc Lain. I saw red! I jumped over the desk, grabbed this "superior officer" and smashed him across the face, breaking his prized dark glasses. I was so furious I hit him again and again, I kicked him and shook him. All the time he was screaming, "Get him off me, he's crazy." An American, Hessian, had been raking leaves outside and dashed in at his first howls. He couldn't pull me off but had to call in three Jap guards. They all thought I was berserk to be so violent and strong. Perhaps I was--temporarily!

I was immediately clapped into solitary confinement or "Aso!" The next day, I was taken to Mc Lain's office to ask what type of punishment I chose, Jap or American. I was dumbfounded to see just what I had done to him. His face was so swollen, bruised and cut up it was hardly recognizable. Had I done all that? Dumbfounded as I was, I still had enough wit to choose Jap punishment; for I well knew Mc Lain would be in charge of American punishment.

This infuriated Mc Lain even more--he was deprived of whatever revenge he had planned. My Commanding Officer came to my cell and I told him the details. He also saw red and stormed into Mc Lain's office and angrily told him in no uncertain terms that he would face General Court Martial at the war's end. (Mc Lain did face Court Martial and today is serving life imprisonment in Leavenworth, Kansas.)

I was taken to the Japanese Commander for the hearing. Mc Lain and his stoogies were there and a whole roomful of guards. My CO told my side of the story through the Japanese interpreter. The interpreter was very well educated, a Harvard graduate. He could easily have ruined things for me, but he was more than fair and thoroughly represented my story. The big Jap Colonel, an older man who had been in many campaigns, nodded his shaved head as he listened attentively to both sides.

My heart was in my mouth as he gave his judgment, "All must co-operate." Incredible! The trial was over!

As I walked down the hall, still dazed by my good luck, Mc Lain came up and snarled, "We're not through with you yet."

My Commanding Officer also came up afterwards, put his arm around me, and said, "I'd give a year's pay to do what you did to Mc Lain."

Every man in camp welcomed me with a clap on the back, and glowing admiration. I was the camp hero.

We had heard that fifty men were to be sent to Tanagawa, a rock-breaking camp. The first detail that came up to go there, Ray H. Church's name headed the list. Mc Lain had gained his revenge.

TANAGAWA-DEATH

It was just one year since I had arrived in Japan; I was again on the move--to the death camp.....Tanagawa! We got there in the cold of January. The buildings at Tanagawa, were just partially finished, and terribly damp and cold. They looked like chicken coops, with only bare boards for the roc f. There were three barracks, about 20 by 100 feet square, and each one housed ninety to one hundred men. There was not even a floor to keep out the dampness, just dirt. Three shelves stuck out from the wall all aroundthe inside of the building. These were our bunks. One whole barracks was used for the sick bay, and it was always full. One long table, the full length of the inside, was where we ate--what little we ate. We ate twice a day--water with potato vines, a little rice, and mogee, a small white grain like millet. My weight dropped even further, to eighty-seven pounds--one hundred pounds less than I had weighed before my capture. All of us looked like skeletons. Pleasant company!

Tanagawa was in a rural area. We had to get up in the dark, walk about two miles to the seashore where there was a round mountain that had to be moved. (We quickly appreciated how much tillable land meant to Japen. We also wondered at a

nation with practically no tractors or modern machinery of any kind, an almost uncivilized nation, that had the audacity to attack the most powerful country in the world.) They gave us their modern tools, hammers and picks, and we broke rocks, all day every day, as long as we could see. There was never time for any diversion and not enough food to keep us warm--or scarcely alive. From one to five details worked each day.

Under the Articles of War at Geneva, officers are not supposed to work in Prisoner-of-War Camps. So, the officers here, as in all the camps, weren't allowed to work, though they would have liked to; work kept many of us from going crazy, or thinking too much.

The Chaplain at Tanagawa was Captain Frank from Gunnison, Utah...a Mormon. He read on the lists that I, too, was a Mormon from Utah and sought me out. He was about thirty or thirty-five; yet his wisdom, faith, and love of his fellowmen would have been hard to equal in men twice his age. Every night we poured our hearts out to each other. He was such an inspiration to me, almost like an angel in Hell. I felt that I knew personally his wonderful wife and darling babies back home. I believed, as he did, that his life was being spared for some great purpose. He had had too many narrow escapes on Bataan; men shot all around him, a bomb exploding beside him. Captain Frank was a humble, quiet spoken man, very nice looking, and always clean. He was always calm and poised, he never got ruffled, and had a quality of leadership that men unquestioningly follow.

What a comfort it was to me to talk with this dedicated, wonderful man. He was always busy: he spent long hours with the sick and dying, carrying water to them, writing letters to their loved ones at home for them, trying to cheer them up in their wretchedness and pain. You saw this good Samaritan trying to fi nd a warm shirt for some ragged, blond kid with a fever, or begging for rags from the Japs with which to wrap the bleeding feet and hands of practically fleshless Americans. Everyone in the camp loved him; how could one help it?

The Commanding Officer of the Camp told me one day that Captain Frank was the only man in the whole camp he would trust. Things had long before reached the point of every man rooting for himself, like hungry animals. Captain Frank stood out as a light in darkness...a true Christian. He never used his authority on anyone; yet his kind, wise decisions were never questioned in settling minor quarrels or deadly fueds. I knew that God had spared Captain Frank's life, and believed with all my heart that he would continue to spare it, that he would be allowed to fulfill his dream of settling in Logan, Utah, and raising minks. His trusting, happy, homely character was the most essential need of the camp; he truly fed his Father's sheep.

One night after work, I saw him all bundled up in a blanket. I didn't think anything was wrong and didn't get to see him again that night. The next morning, when I went out to wash, someone said, "Captain Frank died last night." I stood and stared; it was preposterous! I ran on weak, shaky legs to Curley Meyers, who was in charge of the hospital. He looked at my searching eyes and nodded his head. "I'm sorry," he said gently, "He got some kind of virus that effects the brain. It was all over in 24 hours. There was nothing I could do."

It shook everyone in the camp, but especially me! I wanted to run cry somewhere, to someone, but there was no one to turn to. Why had God taken him now? Why hadn't he taken him on Bataan when he had escaped death so many times? Why would he take him now when a whole camp depended on him for their link with God? When I needed him so? I felt so completely alone and forsaken, I wanted to die too.

That day I was in charge of a six-man detail on the farthest corner of the dock. That was how it happened that I saw Captain Frank's box as it was carried by. They were taking his body to be cremated.

When I got back to camp, I was called to the CO's headquarters. He said, "Captain Frank told me that you hold an office in the Mormon Church, is that right?"

I said, "Yes, I am an Elder." (I had been ordained an Elder just before I joined the Marines.)

The CO asked quietly, "I'm asking you to be the new Chaplain, will you?" I was twenty years old and had never been to a funeral in my life before joining the Marines. Even as an Elder in our church, I was still fairly stupid as to theology. The CO said he felt that I was the man for the job and handed me a Bible and a Prayerbook that had been Captain Frank's. Thus emerged the new Chaplain of Tanagawa.

I had to be the spiritual leader of the whole camp, settle quarrels and differences, and cheer up the sick and despondent. I also had each man in the camp make a will and give it to me. When a man died, there was so much quarreling over his shoes, or clothing that it was the only way to save trouble. I don't know how many funerals I conducted. Men died like flies. I conducted the funerals when I got off work at night. If I was working, sometimes the dead were taken away without a funeral or even a prayer.

Everyone had beri-beri (a disease affecting the nerves, accompanied by weakness, loss of weight, and wasting away) dysentery, scabies, and numerous other maladies to further torment them. I could push a dent in my own leg and pour water in it and the water would stay for an hour, I was so swollen with beri-beri at that time. (the time the picture on the cover was taken) Men so sick they couldn't walk, would crawl painfully out towards the latrine. Sometimes they would get halfway out, nearly fifty feet, and die.

It's a wonder anyone lived... our food at Tanagawa was nothing but the sweepings of the floors of the warehouses! In our cups were wheat, rice, rodent wastes, straw, dirt, and bugs. The cooks would try to wash the refuse out, but nevertheless, our food came off the floors of the warehouses and we could tell it. It was so filthy it was like poison, but we had to eat it, what little there was, or go without! (Of the eighteen thousand American prisoners taken from the Phillipines, only six thousand survived the prisons--one out of three. Starvation diet of contaminated food wiped out twelve thousand husbands, sons, sweethearts.)

Our spiritual food was just as scant. Only when we had a restday, possibly once a month, could we hold a religious service. When it rained, we couldn't work and I held study classes then, too. Sometimes I would organize entertainment at night. One fellow named Paul Anderson had the most beautiful tenor voice and his songs seemed to touch all our hearts. On one program, a Phill (prisoner taken in the Phillipines) wrote this lyric,

> I spoke to the Lord the night before last
> And He said to me, "What have you to ask?"
> I said only this, and the answer would thrill
> All that's bothering this poor "Phill".
> "When can we go home, when will it end?"
> He answered in haste, "Wakady Ma Sen".
> (I don't know)

I never used the prayerbook; Latter Day Saints believe in saying their own prayers, not somebody else's. A prayer should fit the occasion, a prayer should come from the heart. I always did all the praying at these meetings.

I held a Bible class every rest day in the intense cold, first in the bath house and later in a little room in front of our barrack. At each of these Bible classes, I would assign one of the men to give his thoughts on a certain subject or scripture. A Jewish boy would tell a story, or a Lutheran would give a talk on prayer. Only three or four ever took an active part. There were men there of all denominations, some of them real Bible scholars.

Things would be going along smoothly and we would take courage from our association and spiritual feast. The Japs would note our buoyancy of spirit and pronounce: "Not more than three men can be in a group" or "No more group singing."

Despair was our worst enemy and death our constant companion. Eighty per cent of the men sent to Tanagawa never left--two out of ten survived! Every day, there would be a man fall here, one over there, the fellow in the next bunk wouldn't wake up in the morning. Those sick enough to send to the hospital entered death-row; there was nothing to take care of them with, and their rations were cut in half since they couldn't work. The hospital was their death sentence. I dreaded each new day, not knowing which of my many friends would be dead by nightfall. We saw so much death, we became numb on the outside, while our hearts and spirits

broke on the inside. I wondered each day how much longer I would last. I was tired, hungry, sick, and discouraged as was everyone in the camp. The stink of death, the sight of death, the sounds of death, the feel of death was like a heavy fog over Tanagawa....we couldn't get away from it, even in our dreams.

One bleak winter day, I was hit with the flu. I was chilling so that my own thin blankets wouldn't begin to keep me warm. My best friend, Walter Sloviak took his own blankets and wrapped them around me. He walked away and began pacing up and down the room to keep warm. The bunsho was almost as cold as the snow outside, but Sloviak walked back and forth most of the night. When I awoke in the morning, I saw him crouched in the corner, his teeth chattering, his nose blue with cold, nothing to keep him warm but his great big wonderful heart. How I loved him!

Walter Sloviak was normally about the same size as I, but in the prison, with no meat on him, his neck seemed as thin as a chicken's. He was light complexioned, about twenty one, a Catholic from Chicago. He was the cleanest person I've ever known. He often declared with fervor, "Church, this filth kills more of us than any other thing." He would bathe every day, and was extremely particular about his personal hygiene. He would take my tin plate with his and rub them with sand until they sparkled. He would wash and boil our blankets and hire someone to guard them while they dried in the sun. He became an expert tailor, always keeping new patches and buttons on my clothing as well as on his own. We had to make everything last and Sloviak certainly proved a blessing in this respect.

One night, in all the despair, an American Naval Flagman wrote a letter to the Japs, offering his knowledge on codes if they would only give him food and clothes. He went to sleep with it under his pillow, but the letter stuck out and was discovered. The men showed it to an Army Sergeant, a big bully, who was always stirring up trouble. He told the men to push the flagman off the dock the next day and make it look like an accident.

The next day, a couple of the men came to tell me the plan. When I found out who had given the orders, I was really mad. Just at that very moment, we heard a shout of terror! I dashed down the dock. The victim had already been pushed off the little tracks where we unloaded the little mining cars full of rocks, down about forty feet to the sharp rocks on the beach below. I ran down and found him still alive.

He gasped out brokenly, "Why did they push me off?"

I said, "Were you pushed?"

"Yes" came the pitiful answer. (He was all crushed but lived for several agonizing days.) Three or four other men and I carried him up the rocks and to a Jap hospital which was a half mile away. All the time I was in a turmoil; if I had only been told ten minutes sooner, I could have stopped it; I could have at least tried. I was furious with the Master Sergeant and found him as soon as I left the victim.

I sputtered,"You dirty rotten murderer! What makes you think you have the right to pass judgment, to have a fellow American brutally killed? How do you know he wasn't crazy when he wrote the letter? (So many of the men were unbalanced.) He didn't give the letter to the Japs; maybe he changed his mind about giving it to them. How do you know he hadn't?"

He stood and laughed at me.

I walked up to him and grabbed hold of his shirt, and looked him straight in his insolent eyes, and warned, "If you ever lay a finger on any Marine, whatever the reason, I will personally see to it that you get what's coming to you; in fact, if anything happens to <u>anybody</u> from now on, I will hold you responsible." (He'd already had two men beaten up. He claimed they'd stolen food from somewhere and were bringing punishment by the Japs to the whole camp.)

Time went on somehow, but each day there were fewer of us to greet it. We felt out of touch with the world as a whole; one day passed much as the next. Easter

morning, 1943, the group leader, Captain Thorton, said, "It's Easter Sunday today, men. Let's have Church sing a song." It was before breakfast and we were all assembled for muster. I sang the song"The Lord's Prayer", which seemed to be the general favorite. I did a lousy job. We had breakfast and went to work. I thought how good a hard-boiled Easter egg would taste. I hadn't seen an egg in ages.

Unexpectedly they notified us that we were to leave Tanagawa. Everyone was so anxious to get away from that death hole, we were really elated. Then we heard that only the Marines and Sailors were leaving, the Army men had to stay!

The night before we left Tanagawa, the Commanding Officer, Slane, gave a speech of farewell and called on me to sing "The Lord's Prayer." It was a sad parting, especially for the Army fellows. We knew nothing could be worse than Tanagawa, and were anxious to leave...they knew it too and were just as anxious. When we left them, we were sure we would never see any of them alive again. We were all crowded into one barrack, and the tears were contageous. It was like saying, "I'm sorry boys, but there's not a life boat for you." Two hundred army personnel were left at Tanagawa.

OSAKA-HOPE

On May 15, 1943, nearly 100 Marines and Sailors were moved to Osaka. At the time we didn't know where we were going. It was pouring rain, and seemed a gloomy forecast for the future. As we pulled away from Tanagawa on the train, we could almost feel the thick fog of death fade away. We, who had survived Tanagawa hadn't much fear left. What was left to fear?

Osaka was the ninth largest city in the world. It was a great center for Japanese trade. When we arrived, we could easily see that the prisoners there were far healthier than we. We were replacing a group of soldiers being sent back to Tanagawa.

Umeda Bunsho, or camp, was a much filthier place than the one we had left. The main building was a three-story frame thing, it just barely hung together. The big railroad yards were right in the middle of town, or in the Umeda section

of the city. The barracks consisted of fourteen sections, each one averaging nearly thirty men. The tables were too small for everyone to eat at once. Some had to sit on the bunks that stuck out from the walls in two layers.

We washed in a big cement tub, ten feet square which was out in front of the building and heated only once a week. The water was always filthy--four hundred men washed there! Men would get in that tub with sores as big as my hand. I would take a little wooden bucket of cold tap water and pour it over me. As Sloviak said, filth killed many prisoners of war.

We prisoners from Tanagawa were disappointed, yet puzzled when we saw the cups containing our rice. They were even smaller than the ones they had given us at Tanagawa, a little pan, containing scarcely a cup of rice to divide between two men. There was always trouble dividing it. Then there was weak tea for dinner. An American doctor at Tanagawa had told the Japs that the food we had there couldn't sustain us for three months, yet we had even less here.

Our bewilderment over such scant rations but healthier prisoners was short-lived; we quickly found that the reason for the better condition of the Umeda veterans was their chance to supplement their diet by stealing from the cars along the tracks and at the docks. The men who couldn't steal starved to death on the rations. At first there was bungling and beatings for getting caught; but amazingly quick, the new men became expert thieves. When their lives literally depended on their success at stealing, their cleverness became a wonder even to themselves sometimes.

The stealing served as a form of entertainment to relate the various narrow escapes to the others, helping to boost the prisoner's morale in their cleverness over the captors.

Ateach camp we had a different commanding officer, but at each camp, the CO became my good friend. Many times I expressed my silent thankfulness that I was not an officer. Work was my salvation; it kept me too busy to think. If I were an officer I would not be permitted to work. We were so much luckier to have some-

thing to do to relieve the monotony--physical activity in working and mental alertness and cunning in stealing food. When we reached the door at night, the officers eagerly awaited us, begging for news and food. Many a time my heart ached for them and their living death of inactivity.

The Nips assigned us to various work details, each group composed of ten to twenty-five men, working at various parts of the city. Each detail had an American work captain. On the docks stood tents, or shacks as the prisoners called them. In these shacks were our bento boxes (small wooden lunch boxes about two and a half by five inches) which contained our rice and seaweed.) Our work hooks, work aprons of burlap, and Jap army coats we kept in these shacks too. We ate our noon meals here and here hid any loot we had.

The Jap leaders assigned a coolie, Japanese civilian worker, to each four or five men. About 25 of these "haunchos" or foremen worked with us. They were always changing the coolies so that they wouldn't become too familiar with any one group of prisoners. Our contact with the average Jap civilian was very limited, as we were always heavily guarded and the Japanese people were terrified of their military personnel. I think they would have been more friendly if they had dared. One or two offered me some food and medicine.

I was chosen work captain of the Sakaragama detail, another section of Osaka. We worked mostly at loading raw rubber. We called it blubber, and each piece weighed about one hundred to three hundred pounds. We also loaded fifty-five gallon oil drums. This was really a raw deal for us, especially when at night we saw the other prisoners eating their stolen sugar or beans or whatever and there was nothing to steal in our assignment but horse feed.

Our detail at Sakaragama, however, was certainly interesting in other ways. It included one of the most colorful characters I ever met, John D. Mucciacciaro. He was a very handsome, blue eyed Italian. He had been a professional football player and wrestler back in the States. He was about 5'10" and in peace time weighed around 225 pounds. "Mooch" was cocky, vigorous, and enthusiastic, a real ham .

He joined the Marines when I did, and went through the whole war with me. As I said, he was on the Sakaragama detail and life certainly wasn't dull with him there. He would steal the chopped wheat the Japs fed their horses. That and his extremely strong body, earned him the name, "Horse" with the Japanese. All through our years in prison he stole more than anyone else in the camp, and got more beatings too. They couldn't hurt him much. If an ordinary person had taken these beatings he would have been dead, but Mooch knew how to take punishment.

The Jap guards and coolies were always making fun of the "weak and lazy" Americans. When we first reached Osaka, we were terribly run down and weak; but as we gained some of our strenght and became accustomed to their way of unloading goods, we became better than the coolies. Anyway, one day a cocky guard was taunting the Americans about being weaklings, as we were having difficulty carrying some b ags of charcoal, weighing about one hundred pounds.

He said, "Americans can't carry anything." With that he proceeded to show us Japanese strength; he lifted two of the sacks and strutted off with them. Mooch called to him, "Come back and pick up some of this blubber."

This particular piece of raw rubber weighed about six hundred pounds. The Jap walked back and tried to pick it up; he couldn't budge it. It was our turn to sneer at the Japs now; for Mooch easily picked it up, hoisted it to his shoulder and sauntered off with it. His weight was down to one hundred and fifty pounds at that time, but how he boosted his buddies' morale with that amazing feat of American strength. We worked at the Sakaragama section for nearly seven months, after which the detail was discontinued.

Our next work section, Tanoji, was a "home and a feeder" because of the excellent opportunities to steal food. At this place I talked with a Jap boss and got Sloviak on my work detail. We worked strictly as stevedores, unloading coal, firewood, rice, sweet potatoes and white potatoes, beans and many other things. My weight went up from 115 pounds to nearly 145 pounds. I would steal an apronfull of potatoes

dash over to an incinerator and throw them in. Then later I would go back and have roasted potatoes--if no one else had spotted them first.

About two or three months after I had arrived in Osaka, I got my first word from home. I had been a prisoner for a year and eight months and in all that time had had not a word from my folks. I wasn't sure if they even knew I was alive. My first welcome news was a letter from my older sister Deona, a letter nearly a year old by the time it reached me. (Mail was exchanged at North Africa and would be held up sometimes for a year.) Her letter contained some pictures of her family, and was such a sweet, inspiring, newsy letter. I read it and reread it and carried it with me until it was in shreds.

The first Red Cross boxes we got were issued the day before Thanksgiving 1942 at Zentsuji. Each box had to be divided among seven men. On one occasion an International Red Cross Captain from Switzerland came to find out conditions. The Japs got a handcart of oranges, soap, and socks. The prisoners were marched around it, each taking some while the movie cameras rolled. Afterwards, we were again marched around it and unloaded the booty.

The second Red Cross boxes were passed out at Christmas. There were only four men to a box this time. There was a candy bar, four packs of cigarettes, raisins, pipe tobacco, instant coffee, cocoa, cheese, a can of corned beef and a little can of marmalade. The men would flip to see who would get first choice. There was always trading and quarreling. One fellow put his Red Cross box up on his shelf to save, just to make it last a little longer. Before he could eat it all, he died.

We got some Red Cross boxes at Osaka--I received about one and a half boxes the whole time we were there; that was all. (There was a whole building full of Red Cross Boxes meant for us, but we weren't allowed any. We seethingly watched the guards chew American candy bars and smoke American cigarettes.)

We were paid about fifteen cents a day in Japanese money for our back-breaking work. If one proved himself to be a good worker, he was paid forty-five cents.

The Jap civilian railroad boss at Osaka appreciated the Americans as very good workers. One day as I was unloading coal from a car, I saw this fellow coming and really worked hard. It was hard work loading rice, beans, grain; or any of the dozens of items we packed on our backs each day. Each rice sack weighed a hundred and thirty five or forty pounds. If a fellow picked them up in the ordinary way, shortly he was completely exhausted. The coolies executed a little twist in the lifting which made it not nearly so tiresome; I did too. I was twisting the bags up from the ground to a freight car one day and noticed this Jap watching me again. He was "No. 1 Bluecoat." (All the railroad men wore bluecoats, so that was what we nicknamed them. Of course, No. 1 Bluecoat meant exactly that; he was in charge of the whole railroad yard there.)

He waved me over to him and took the gloves he was wearing off and handed them to me. This was indeed a compliment! He also said that I was a good worker and would be paid forty five cents. Of course, there was nothing to spend the additional money for; it was all just useless paper. Still the compliment was a morale booster--the good old days of pitching hay on the farm weren't forgotten. (You can always tell a Utah farmer.)

Finally the day came when I had eaten enough stolen food during the daytime that I wasn't too hungry at night. When I asked who wanted my ration of rice, I was nearly mobbed by the starving men. To save trouble, I gave my supper to the Section Commander to give to someone who needed it the most. The men were amazed to think I would voluntarily give my food away; they thought I wasn't very smart not to trade it for something else, at least.

Getting, hiding, and eating stolen food not only kept us alive, it provided dangerous excitement. One day I found an old can, filled it with rice, water, and some curry I had discovered, and left it in the incinerator while I was working. At noon, I stealthily extracted my treasure from the smoldering coals, wrapped it in an old rag and dashed for the shack as fast as I could run. The aroma of the

hot, curried rice almost made me forget how hot the half-gallon can was on my hands. I bounded into the shack and set the hot can down. Triumphantly I looked up--straight into the cold, black eyes of the railroad boss, No. 1 Bluecoat! The grin left my face as the bigwig stepped over and glared at the can of bubbling rice, then at me.

"Where did you get that?" he shrieked.

"I picked it up in the yard and cooked it in the incinerator" came my weak reply. He said I was a robber and must never do it again. He gestured that the military men would see me and cut my throat. His words tumbled over each other as he rattled on, but his hands were more easily understood. I got the message. He had given me some gloves several days before as a gesture of friendship. He now told me to give them back. (The Indian trader!)

Another day, I decided to cook a big batch of stolen rice in the attic of the little shack in which we ate lunch. The ceiling of the shack was just paper stretched over the boards; but I hoisted myself up through a little attic hole and the other fellows handed me up a can full of charcoal, already burning, and a gallon can of rice and water. I was squatting on a narrow plank, fanning the flames as anxiously as any chef in the world. Without warning, a Nip guard came into the room below and ordered everyone out front for a count. A fellow conspirator called the guard outside to ask a question. I slid down that hole almost like a snake, ripping my shirt on a protruding nail clear down from the sleeve to the hem of the shirt. I wasn't caught, except by the nail.

At first the Japs called me "Yakida" (Scar) because of a scar on my chest. (I had pulled a pan of hot water down on me when I was a baby, and the lasting scar was apparently an easy identification mark.) The Japs just couldn't say r or l and some of them would call me "Chockie" for Church. Naturally it was easier for both of us, Japs and Americans, to use nicknames than the foreign sounding surnames. Anything different about us--looks, habits, or characteristics--gained for us a crude nickname in Japanese. That is exactly the same way we knew them--with usually insulting names.

Stealing wasn't always limited to food. One time I stole two nice sweaters and gave one to Sloviak. To disguise them, Sloviak cut them down the front, sewed buttons and worked buttonholes on them. He then pulled the labels off J. C. Penny underwear received in Red Cross boxes and sewed them inside the sweaters. They surely didn't look the same; so we felt perfectly safe in wearing them, and gee, they felt good in that damp climate. We were generally by the seashore, and in the winter the temperature ranged between 20 and 60 degrees.

When we first reached Osaka, we were issued worn, even bloody Jap army clothing. Wow, some of them were stinkin' rotten. They had been taken from the bodies of dead Japanese, but even that kind of clothing was better than nothing!

After our clothing was patched beyond recognition, we could have a new shirt and pants. One time they issued us a bran new set of army clothes. We were really pretty boys. How we laughed at the drawstrings and the cuffs that hit halfway to the knee or sleeves just below the elbows. Still, we were pleased and posed prettily for the picture they took of us. That night, they came around and gathered up the nice new clothes. Pride goeth before a fall.

In Umeda they issued us some split-toed canvas shoes that bottoned down the back. They surely didn't last long; they were all too small to begin with. We made our own shoes our of wood and nailed cloth straps across so that we could wear them.

Another lucky find in the clothing line was a box of warm underwear. I stole two pair, one for Sloviak and one for me. Oh, they felt so good and warm, we were really thrilled. The Nips were in a rage when they discovered that a whole case had been stolen, and the interpreter came to warn that anyone caught with the underwear was in dire peril. Very unhappily, I wrapped mine around a rock and threw them into a canal. Sloviak felt more like keeping warm than fretting about getting shot and kept his, wearing them all that long cold winter.

We men would tease and kid each other to take our minds off our dreary life.

I would often tease meticulously clean Sloviak about being dirty. At night, lying in bed, I would say,"Phew! What's that awful smell? Sloviak, is that you?" or "Do your feet stink?" Sloviak would be fighting mad, until my grin would give me away, or my laugh.

One night I got up and walked through the barracks in the dark and stubbed my toe on a fellow's wooden shoes. His shoes were always right out in the middle of the floor. Another fellow had fallen over them too, and the two of us nailed them down. Next morning, we nearly choked as we watched him try to pick up his shoes. He thought his strength had failed him at last.

On Corregidor, Wake and Guam, there had been a lot of payroll money at the time of the Jap Attack. It had been ordered destroyed before it fell into enemy hands. In most cases, the ones ordered to burn the money couldn't resist taking several of the big bills. Therefore, destitute as we were, our camp was still probably one of the richest camps in history as far as money was concerned. There were plenty of one hundred dollar bills and several thousand dollar ones. The money was practically worthless, and if anyone were caught with it, he was in trouble.

Cigarettes were far more valuable than money. They were going for $100 a cigarette or $10 a draw. I was lucky; I had the chance to steal twenty precious packs of Japanese cigarettes off a boxcar. I put them in my shirt. They only had ten cigarettes in a pack. I always kept two packs for insurance. You could always trade a cigarette for an aspirin. Cigarettes were worth more than food to a great majority of the American prisoners.

I gave some of the cigarettes to Sloviak who smoked; he said he needed the lift they gave him. I answered, "Look at me; it doesn't bother me not to smoke, and I have as much energy and am just as healthy, perhaps more so than any other men in the camp." I knew, just as Latter Day Saints have known for a hundred years, that tobacco is poison to the system. (It came as no surprise to Mormons when all the recent tests proved the death-dealing power of the cigarette.)

I continued, "Sloviak, you're so careful about the food you eat, washing your

hands and keeping your body clean, yet you deliberately take poison into your already rundown body every time you puff on a cigarette." Sloviak was a real man with self control: he quit smoking.

As I said, there was a lot of big money floating around the camp. That's just about what it did; it changed hands so often. The bets that were made in that camp, with $100 at atake, were sometimes nothing but hilarious. For instance, one man would bet $100 that there were more colored people in Georgia than in Mississippi; or that it rained more in Texas than Oklahoma. One of the doctors from the Phillipines had managed to bring a 1935 World Almanac. Everything was settled on this worn, old book. Often, if one of the gamblers got to the Almanac first and discovered that he was wrong, he simply tore out the page. So many goofy bets were made that the Almanac finally was just half its original size. No matter how sure a person was, the Almanac was the only proof. The common joke was, "Well don't tear the page out until I see it." To be able to joke, bet, and laugh is very special when one is surrounded by the enemy.

Friendship and love are the most special things of all, anywhere. Once a week, the prisoners had to take a watch for fires. This duty was just a farce put on us to add to our burden, as no one was allowed any matches anyhow. Sloviak would give me a kick as I lay sleeping and say, "Get up; let's go stand watch." I would yawn and start to get up and Gloviak would grunt, "Oh, go to sleep, I've already stood it. I might as well stand watch for two as one."

Now that I was generally able to steal enough food at work, I usually gave my supper ration away. Many of the men were able to do the same. The sick were still starving to death; only those that were able to steal and steal well survived. We lived by the day, some days of plenty, some of fast. We weren't able to save or horde any food; we had to eat it right where we found it usually. Yet, even here at Osaka where we were able to supplement our diet, we got stomach cramps all the time--we were HUNGRY. At night we would lie in bed and chew our lips and tongue.

The feeling of hunger was with us constantly; it never left us during the entire war. We still felt uncomfortable even when we did find something to eat. We would gorge our poor tortured stomaches with one single thing and then have dysentery. The day after I had found and eaten some syrup, I was so terribly sick I couldn't even move. It was simply too rich for my system.

My mouth had such horrible sores, sometimes I could hardly chew. Almost everyone in camp including myself had Pellagra and Beri-beri. (Pallagra-a disease marked by eruption on the skin, a nervous condition, and sometimes insanity, caused by improper food.) Still, I felt like I was especially blessed in finding such things as a grapefruit, orange, or tangerine once in a great while; and so I was in fairly good shape.

One day a couple of cattle cars came into the docks loaded with milkcows. They had something I hadn't had in ages. I found a bucket, crawled in over the top, and finding the cow with the fullest bag, milked her dry. I hadn't tasted such fresh, wonderful, warm milk since I had left home. My two companions and I gulped down all we could hold, but there was more than we could drink; we were caught by our guard. He asked us what we were doing. I told him I had noticed that the poor cow was in misery, so had just wanted to help her out. Apparently the Jap, not having been raised on a farm, didn't realize the plausibility of my alibi. He took a swing at me with his rifle butt; I ducked and finally soothed him down so that he decided not to report me. I guess he thought I must be another crazy American. (There were about four Americans that went really berserk.)

Before stealing anything, we would carefully plan every detail. Each man would have a particular thing to do. By the second year at Osaka, we Americans were so well organized, we were as healthy as the average Jap, because we were able to steal enough food to survive and Japan's citizens were practically starving, themselves.

Always, on our way to and from work, we passed mute evidence of Japan's wretched mistake in starting a war with anyone--especially America. Starved, frozen bodies of old men, women and orphaned children were huddled in doorways, or culverts almost

every day. The Japanese people in general just ignored them--we American prisoners were more disturbed than ever at a country who apparently didn't mind losing it's own citizens to wage death and war on others.

The highest prize of stolen foods during the whole time was sweetened condensed milk and persimmons. Our group of four decided to team up with another group of four to steal a whole case of milk. Unless one has been without anything to drink but water, and without any sweetening or flavoring on food for over two years as we had been, one could not imagine how wonderful a drink of this rich luscious-tasting liquid was to us. I dug a hole in the dirt floor of the shack, hid my two cans there and filled the dirt back in. When the bristling guards charged into the room to search for the milk, I stood over the spot where my treasure lay.

The day before, I had uncovered a bag of dried persimmons and was watching for the time when the coast would be clear to get some. The day after I had stolen the milk, I determined to try for some persimmons. The loading platform had dozens of long counters and the persimmons were in one of them. As I was crawling up to the counter containing the prize, I saw a bright patch, neatly done, sliding along on the other side of the counter. Sloviak was after some persimmons too! I quietly reached the bag from my side, cut a hole in it, and reaching my hand clear through it, I grabbed Sloviak's hand as tightly as I could. He was too horror stricken to even yell, and when he discovered that it was I, he nearly fainted.

Together we stole nearly twenty-five pounds of delicious persimmons. Sloviak even crammed some of them in his socks. When we got to the barracks, we hid them in the wall. (Everyone had to hide his loot, as much from his fellow Americans as from the Japs. We would pull the loose boards from the wall, the floors, hang things in clothing from the windows, or anywhere we could think of.) The persimmons and milk were a delicacy I shall never forget. Sloviak said his magnificient obsession was to get a five-gallon can of sweetened condensed milk, put it above his head, lie down, then slowly sip the delicious stuff from a straw as soon as he returned to the States. He would take a spoonful of the persimmons

and milk and cry out, "Oh, I can't stand it! I can't stand it! It's too good!" He got up and ran around the table, savoring each mouthful as long as possible. It was such a treat he just couldn't sit still to eat it.

One night at supper, a fellow pulled some salt out of his pant cuff. (Our rice was always tasteless and unseasoned and oh, how we longed for a little salt.) He sprinkled some on his rice, and hungrily took a big mouthful. A minute later, before our horrified eyes, he slid under the table, dead! What he thought to be salt had been in reality potassium cyanide. Fifteen other men who had been in on the "Salt" find, quickly got rid of theirs. It looked and tasted exactly like salt. I even threw away my good salt and we were very leery of <u>any</u> salt for a while.

Once we discovered a boxcar full of apples, but two other fellows and I couldn't get the sliding door opened. Mooch, our strong-arm wrestler, came along and sized up the situation. He found a big green tie along the tracks, picked it up easily and gave a run at the door. It opened! I thought he was going to knock the whole car off the track with his force. I grabbed twenty apples, stuffed them in my shirt and tied a string around the bottom so they wouldn't fall out. Then I dashed to the toilets, locked myself in and stuffed apples. Sloviak came over, politely knocked, and I let him in for the treat.

Those toilets were wonderful! Some men even cooked their stolen rice in them. The Japs would come along and tap on each of the half-dozen little booths and sometimes, unthinkingly, two involved Americans, one fanning charcoal, and the other cooking the rice would answer together "Busy".

The "Nigger" was the handle we pinned on a big, dark, mean coolie. All of the guards and coolies had nicknames, usually well deserved. We would name them after a particular animal they resembled or any noticeable characteristic. No one liked this fearsome "Nigger" and all dreaded to work for him. For some reason, he took a liking to my group and would go out of his way to help us. He was the

one who spotted the apple car first and promptly told us about it.

He said, "I am glad to help you, but I don't want to get mixed up with the others because they aren't experienced robbers like you."

In fact, everyone wanted to get into our detail because we did get more to eat; but each man in our group did his full share, trusted and liked each other.

One day I stole a bottle of milk, and quickly slipped it into my belt. To my dismay, it slipped on through my pantleg and crashed on the cement. The Jap army guard let out a yell and came dashing over. Quickly, the Nigger came over too, jerked me by the arm, and marched me around a corner. Once concealed from the guard, he told me, "Chochie, you be more sly!" (Of course, Nigger was in our payoff. His family was in dire need of any food he too could sneak home.)

The real danger in stealing was in being caught by any of our military guards. It was quite dangerous to steal and be caught by a civilian, but you could off-times talk him out of disclosing the crime, by sharing it with him. However the military had been more indoctrinated against us and military punishment could be severe; brutal beatings or even death!

One unlucky incident involved Castle, a husky Navy man who had been taken prisoner on Bataan. He had found some Japanese wine (sake) and had taken a healthy swig. His body was in no condition for even a tablespoon of liquor. He jauntily staggered down the dock past an alert guard, who came up to him, smelled his breath, and hit him a staggering blow on the jaw with his rifle butt. As Castle pulled himself up, all the pent-up emotions of nearly three years of unappeased hatred engulfed him. His fist shot out, connected with the guard's face and flattened him to the ground! Other watching guards quickly piled onto Castle. Mooch and another American, Turner, who were feeling quite brave themselves, couldn't stand such injustice. They waded in, cracking jaws and arms as they went to Castle's aid. What a riot! Mooch's original intention had been to rescue Castle, to get him away; but the guards turned on him and Mooch couldn't let a

blow go answered.

Suddenly a shrill whistle pierced the air--the Shock Troops had been summoned! Twenty-five or thirty soldiers with fixed bayonets came running on the trot, blowing whistles. They surrounded the three Americans and viciously jabbing them with their razor-sharp bayonets--inflicted wounds, some nearly three inches deep. The blood streamed from all over their bodies. Three trails of blood glistened all the way to the Jap barracks where they were taken.

Several days went by with no word of them. We were afraid they had been executed. On the fourth day they appeared--all the fire and half the blood drained from them. Turner had had the end of his nose cut off in the fray. They had been standing at attention the whole time they had been gone--nearly 72 hours.

A car of sugar or sato came in another time, and Nigger sat down on the tracks to watch while I crept into the car. I had a razor blade and a sack, but I found it a difficult job in the pitch black car. Suddenly Mooch came in. I was surely thankful it was he and not a Jap guard. Together we got a lot of sugar. Another time, when I was inside a car stealing sugar, Sloviak called to me, "Come down Ray, Canada's caught you." Just then the door opened and the Jap ordered me down. This particular Jap had been raised in Canada and spoke good English. Since sugar was even twice as scarce in Japan as it was in the U.S. at the time, anyone caught stealing it was severely punished or even killed. We begged the guard to take some of the sugar and give it to his family.

"No, you robbers!"

"We like to work hard for Japan." we argued, "But we are weak and sugar makes us strong so that we can work harder."

We were petrified, but the sugar was too much temptation for him also. We weren't turned in, but he took all the sugar--twenty pounds of it!

One of the prisoners was a young man named Carl Jensen, who came from a very wealthy family. He was not used to taking care of himself and was continually

whining. He was very scrawny and became even scrawnier because he was such a poor stealer. After it had been unloaded, he noticed the sugar with a tarpaulin over it and two Japanese guards standing by. Jensen very precisely strode over, tore open a sack and gulped down five or six handfuls of the precious sugar to the amazement of his fellow workers, to say nothing of the guards. At once he was knocked to the ground with the butt of a gun, only to jump up and gobble some more sugar. They knocked him to his knees once more and hit him several severe blows. Everytime he got up, he went for the sugar. The guards finally had to push him away, thinking he was crazy. He just walked off with his head bashed up as if nothing had happened. I don't know what came over him.

Once I discovered some chicken feed; chopped grain, bran, and corn, and I told Jensen that it was very good for beri-beri. He hurried over to what he thought was the right car to get some and really stuffed himself. When he returned he said that it was surely the most rotten stuff he had ever tasted, but since it was good for you, he had really gorged. We looked at the stuff on his beard. It wasn't chopped grain he had been eating, but sawdust and chopped corn husks the Japs used to pack things. We nearly died laughing at his mistake and the sawdust didn't even give him a stomach ache. Our stomachs had had such a conglomeration of things, sawdust couldn't hurt!

When we had been at Tanagawa, we were given three small biscuits a day, along with our potato vine soup. Carl Jensen would hurry and gobble down his three biscuits. Then he would say to anyone sitting near him, "If you will give me two of your biscuits, I'll pay you back tomorrow." Finally he was in debt too far. He owed nearly thirty fellows biscuits, and they demanded them. Carl Jensen began starving to death, because the men were taking all of his biscuits. I called the men together one evening and pointed out that Carl was starving. I suggested that no one should lend him anymore, and that he was to pay his biscuits back at the rate of one a day only. The debt was finally paid, and he learned that debt

is a burden anytime, even in a prison.

KEEPING ALIVE

At Osaka, since almost everyone in camp had become very proficient at stealing (or died of starvation) the Japs became infuriated at the cleverness involved; consequently they dealt brutally with anyone at the least provocation. They discovered three or four pieces of hard bread in the pockets of three POW's one night. As punishment, the three were tied up naked outside the barracks all night. Soft, freezing snow fell on them all through the night and on the morrow, two of our buddies were dead, the third nearly so, with double phneumonia--all for a few crumbs of hard bread to help sustain life. We were all double cautious after that sickening experience to have nothing at all on our persons, but to gobbel what we could where we found it.

Starvation makes caution, following brutality, transient, however. Excitedly, we one afternoon discovered what the Japs were guarding so heavily. It was soybean milk--cases of it-- just sitting on the dock, neatly stacked. Immediately our group began figuring out ways to get some. Mooch said to Osborn, "Come with me and we'll have a fight, while Church goes around behind and swipes a case." They very buddylike strolled arm in arm to a spot directly in front of the guards and the precious goal. Suddenly they were arguing; then they were exchanging blows and fell to the ground with grunts and groans. They were both experienced wrestlers and really put on a supberb show. Their yelling and moaning soon attracted guards from all over the docks. The guards thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle--two Americans viciously torturing each other--but not half so much as the two great American hams enjoyed themselves putting it on. Abruptly, (at my whistle) they got up, dusted themselves off and again walked off, arm in arm, leaving the guards scratching their heads at the antics of Americans. Yes, we got a whole case of milk, and it was delicious. The alert eyes of the Nigger had observed the whole thing, I found out later as he called me over and with a wide grin conceded that we were very "zurui" or sly.

In the beginning of our plottings for extra food and clothing, we all wasted

a lot of time and took foolhardy chances opening boxes and crates useless to ourselves. We found it to our advantage to learn to read enough Japanese to avoid this waste and risk. We could speak Japanese fairly well at this point. Before long, we learned to spot the writing that spelled food of any kind. However, I strafed (Our prison term to indicate a box that had been gone over by an anxious, hurried POW. A plane strafing a box with several machine guns couldn't demolish it more thoroughly than a hungry American POW.) a straw suitcase containing what I thought was syrup one day, and without having had a chance to taste it, hid a bottle of it in the shack. Opening it later, I could tell at one whiff what it was. When I asked the fellows if they would like a drink of whiskey, they just laughed. They were amazed when I handed them the bottle. They each one had a spoonful, which on their beat-up stomaches was enough to render them completely drunk.

There was no limit to the ingenuity of free-thinking Americans. As everyone was busy working one afternoon, Mooch ran furtively down the dock with something under his coat. He was immediately surrounded by a dozen guards. They threw him down and tore at his clothing. A huge clod of dirt fell out. The perplexed Nips slapped him around decided he must be baka (crazy). A few days later, down the dock he ran again with something under his coat. Two Japs ran to stop him; then remembered and not wanting to lose face said, "Oh no". When he got to the shack, we were amazed to see him proudly pull out a huge sack of beans. He was always putting big rocks into his pockets, or his shirt to keep the Japs in confusion.

These bits of hoodwinking helped in a way to lessen the monotony, the depression, the gnawing hunger for decent food, the fear and uncertainty under which we lived. The Japs were always telling us that they were winning the war, that they had bombed New York and San Francisco, and other big American cities. We knew nothing of what was going on in the world outside our barbed-wire enclosure and the Umeda docks. As before said, the first word I had from home was a wonderful letter from

my dear sister Deona. Whenever any of us did get a letter, it was passed around until it was worn out. The whole time I spent in Japan--nearly four years--I received only five letters; four from Deona and one from the folks. (My folks and brothers, sisters, relatives and friends wrote me dozens of letters, but I never received them.)

A little Navy gunner made all our hearts ache every mail call. He would sit and wait and wait for a letter from his wife and little children. Five or six hours after everyone else had left, I'd go touch him gently on the shoulder and tell him that there just wasn't a letter for him this time, but he would still imagine maybe they had misplaced his and would be bringing it soon. He never gave up hoping....he never got a letter.

I got a box from home with a long list stuck to the outside stating what the box contained. Inside I found a pair of leather gloves and a bottle of vitamins. The Japs had helped themselves to the underwear, homemade candy, shaving equipment, soap, cakes, stockings; well everything else. One fellow from Chicago got a huge three foot square box from home. In excitement, he tore the box open--only to stare dismally into the empty enterior.

Our main concern was enough food to keep us from starving, but after going without soap for months at a time, anyone would be as excited as Seeger and I were when we happened on a car of soap, one of Japan's most prized commodities, and something we hadn't seen in the prison camps. To our chagrin, the car was tightly padlocked. Seeger, one of the reasons our group did so well, very efficiently took a piece of wire and picked the lock. Naturally, it was therefore my turn to get inside the car; so I jumped in and began throwing soap into my loot sack. Then I quickly opened the door and jumped from that car straight across the track to an empty one and from that, to a culvert nearby where I hid the sack.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, the Japs discovered the broken carton minus the soap. Frothing at the mouth, they descended upon us. There were about

twenty-five of us working that section; they lined us up and told us that we would stand at attention until someone confessed. The Japs stood there for hours with their bayonets fixed on us. At least a dozen of the starvation-weakened men passed out from exhaustion--nervous and physical. Our work captain very cautiously started the whisper down the line that whoever had stolen the soap was absolutely NOT to confess or it would be taps for him. He didn't need to tell us--how well we knew! At evening they marched us to the barracks and searched us again. Everyday we were questioned and searched.

In about two weeks, however, things had calmed down so that Seeger and I dared get the soap from the culvert. Our dirty bodies had crawled even more, as we had dreamed of washing off the filth with that precious thing--soap! Water in the ditch in the meantime had spoiled some of the soap; nevertheless, there was enough for each man in our room a bar, and five apiece for Seeger and me. It was more than worth it, to be clean for a change.

I later doubted this for a while, however, when I was smuggling two bars of it into the bunsho. (The third story of our barracks was our hospital. Babs, a little fellow who had had both legs shot off, was our faithful lookout. Everyday he would be at the upstairs window; if the Japs were searching the prisoners outside the gates, he waved a white cloth in warning. We could see it quite a way off and would try to get rid of anything we had on us. We always looked to that window as soon as we came in sight of it. We had had ample proof that our captors would kill us over a few pieces of dry bread.)

One afternoon as we marched to the bunsho, we came in sight of the white fluttering at the window. I was panic-stricken, for this was a day I had decided to smuggle some soap into our camp. I had a bar of the "hot" soap in each pantleg, tied to my leg. Slowly and furtively, I began a struggle to unloose the bars and get them in my hands; I couldn't just drop them, too many wary guards surrounded us. It took me halfway to the barracks to finally get the soap in each hand--

I was in a cold sweat! We reached the gates in a three column group. With a bar of soap in my hand, I saluted the Sergeant. No slant eyes spotted the white protruding from my paralyzed grip. They ordered us into one line to be searched as we went through the gate. I held my arms high above my head, a bar of chimerical soap in each hand, as the guard ran his hand down my arms and pulled up my pant-legs. Frequently we had to unbutton our shirts or untie our shoes. I knew that if I had to do this, my game was up. Behind me, little Joe Perry knew it too, and before the guard could search further, he pretended a faint and fell heavily against me. The guard shoved me through the gate and began cuffing my hero! Once inside, I was too weak even to walk. Some of my buddies came over, when they saw my ashen face, and asked me what I had. I opened my hands. They thought it nothing less than a miracle. I knew it was!

If it wasn't one thing in prison, it was another. The bedbugs, lice, and rats in the barracks were horrible. The place swarmed with them. Some of the fellows lived in deadly fear of the huge rats. I would bluff with the comment, "The rats won't hurt you" and tried to act nonchalant, for my own benefit as well as the others. One night after I had dozed off, I awoke with a terrified scream as something furry dropped on my chest! Bolting up, I knocked away the brush that the fellow bunking above me was gleefully dangling from a string. I had no more words of assurance to offer anyone about the rats!

It was a constant struggle to maintain even a minute semblance of civilized men--scant, ragged clothing, meager hot water and no legal soap, plus the long hours of slaving labor. However, someone had an old Star razor blade; and never in history did one blade get so much earnest use. Forty of us shaved with that one precious blade for over a year. We split a piece of bamboo for a handle, sharpened it on a belt, and literally wore it completely out. It was about a fourth of an inch long when we finally had to throw it away.

CHRISTMAS

Christmas 1944 at Osaka was the best we'd ever known in this bleak land. Each of us had a Red Cross box to ourselves at last. I took my whole can of coffee, boiled it all and told the men in our room, "Here's a Christmas present for you all." They knew I didn't drink coffee, but still thought it wonderful to give it away instead of trading it for something. It made my Christmas to much more like Christmas. I did, however, keep the tobacco to trade for aspirins and quinine.

I was made responsible for the Christmas party and the whole camp enthusiastically joined in preparations! The officers were to put on a play and so were the enlisted men. The Japs even entered into the excitement and offered a prize for the best decorated section. How we scrubbed, shaved, shined and primped for that day. We were allowed an extra half-hour's sleep on Christmas day. (Japan doesn't observe Christmas, but their big celebration Ganjitsu is just a week after.) They were getting the holiday spirit and gave us Christmas day off. They even added a little extra rice for our Christmas dinner.

Everyone turned out for the program that evening, even the Japs! Everything was as elaborate as stolen and makeshift props could make it. (One of the men had been a tailor before the war and the Japs had supplied him with an old sewing machine so that he could keep our clothes in repair.) We now took him a stolen piece of purple-colored material and he made big neckties for our blackface minstrel show.

The orchestra, all professional musicians, played the first number on the program. The Japs had generously lent us a harmonica, a couple of guitars and a violin. The orchestra played by ear, old time favorites and what had once been popular music. Little Smitty, who had been a concert violinist, held us spellbound with his hauntingly beautiful, rapturous strains of the classics. The tears even rolled down his own cheeks at the ethereal refrains.

My quartet of Bob Watts, Jimmy Jameson and Stumpus (who was our camp bugler and later spent three years in a Korean Prison camp) and I sang Christmas carols: "Oh, Holy Night", "The First Noel," "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem", and of course the favorite, "Silent Night".

Nichols, our well-educated, clever playwright, gave a short talk introducing the plays; then the fun began. The end of the barracks had been remodeled into a stage and as the curtains were pulled aside, we were as excited as any children in the whole world about to watch a play. The officers performance of Cinderella will never be forgotten by the men who witnessed it. The feminine parts were played hilariously with the help of mops, and dye. The tailor had costumed the whole company. The affected high voices and simpering smiles and awkward graces as poor Cinderella was berated by her mother and sisters nearly convulsed us in laughter. The bunsho men's performance of "Christmas Carol" was also very good.

I led the men in singing Christmas carols at the end, and oh, those good old carols tugged at our hearts and unloosed a roomfull of tears. We thought it a wonderful program and it gave us something to talk about for months afterwards.

GOOD SAMARITANS

One day the coolie workin g with me accidently pushed a heavy tie over on my foot and broke it. He really felt bad and carried me on his back quite a distance to where we got a wheelbarrow and he and an American helped wheel me to a Japanese civilian doctor. I was in torturing pain when we finally reached the doctor, but there were nearly twenty civilians in the waiting room staring at me; so I tried to hide the grimaces of pain on my face. My foot had swollen until it was almost round as a ball and the doctor could do nothing with it. I was wheeled back to camp and helped up to the hospital to Curly Meyers who acted as the doctor for the camp. Meyers, captured on Guam, had been a Chief Pharmacist's Mate. He, too, couldn't set my smashed foot in it's swollen condition. He had me soak it for four or five days. Then I took some cotton, to pad my foot in a proper position, put a board under it, and wrapped it up tight. It was excruciating pain with no

aspirin, or anything to ease it but holding it up.

About twenty men suffered in that hospital; twenty men for whom nothing much could be done. A Jap doctor came through ev ry week, but wasn't really interested in our survival. I hated to see him come; hewould say, "Everyone stand up". My foot would throb so when I lowered it to the floor that I nearly passed out. The other prisoners were as unable to stand as I. He thought some of us were goldbricking; but not a one of us would have been there if we had had the strength to walk out. I was in that hospital for six weeks, and couldn't even walk for three more weeks.

Again in the hospital, my friend Sloviak proved his true worth. Every night, up the ladder he would climb to give me a bath. He would bring his bowl of rice and just walk off and leave it. As before mentioned--anyone bad enough to be taken to the hospital was given one-half of the already pitiful ration of rice; the food was for the working men. Sloviak never asked if he could do anything; he always just went ahead and did whatever there was to be done.

The fellows in camp always argued over whose turn it was to go steal charcoal to cook our stolen food on. Sloviak would often disappear and come back a little later while they were still arguing, with an armload of charcoal for the fire.

One night he decided to make hotcakes with some flour he had swiped. He tied four of the cakes to his legs with strings and brought them up to some of us in the hospital. They weren't very tasty, but they were a change, and the thoughtfulness behind them made us love him all the more.

Another night, Mooch came up with some cooked fish which he had really paid for. Three of the prisoners had noticed the fish vendor as they were passing from work. While the other two men distracted him, Mooch stole several large fish and slipped them up his sleeves. The fish had been frozen in dry ice, however, and his poor arms were completely blistered. When he finally reached camp and tried to pry them loose, his skin came too.

Of all the various jobs in the camp, that of server was the least desirable. The server went down the line, dipping each man's share of rice and trying desperately to give the same amount each time. Sometimes he had no rice left for himself--sometimes, if he had a little rice left over, he would pack his own bowl. The men always quarreled over their portions. One man would turn to his neighbor and complain "You've got more than me" or I never get as much as the rest of you." Then, too, they were always suspicious of the dipper--"He shows favorites" or "He hates certain ones" or He's been bribed."

There was so much trouble over it, that finally Hessen, who was in charge of our barracks, chose me to be the new dipper. I suppose it was an honor to be chosen under the conditions, but I never hated any job in all my life so much! Besides, it was hard work. I got up before daylight, scrubbed and cleaned the cooking utensils, cooked and hauled the bucket to the section. Then I had to listen to the growling and accusations as I dished it up. Finally I exploded, "All right, if anyone wants to trade bowls with me when I'm finished serving, he's perfectly welcome to". After that, there was very little trouble.

My duties as Chaplain left me little free time either. On Mother's Day of that year, 1944, instead of listening to a program or speech about mothers, the men wanted me to explain to them some of the aspects of the Mormon religion. I felt utterly inadequate as I tried to explain to some forty men how the Gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored in these latter days by direct revelation. How I wished I had studied and learned more about the religion I so firmly believed in.

As Chaplain, I naturally had the job of camp peacemaker. It seemed that I was always settling arguments. Men much older than I would often come to me for advice. Most of the time in the prison, I was put in charge, either by the Japs or by the Americans, of men who had far outranked me before the war. One thing I do know, I was one of the healthiest. I thank my belief in the Word of Wisdom for this; my belief that if I would refrain from using coffee, tea, tobacco, or

strong drink, and would use wisdom in all things, my Heavenly Father would bless me with a strong body. He did.

REVENGE

From what we could learn from our civilian coolies, things weren't going too well for Japan. In June, word reached us that at long last Uncle Sam was retaliating against Japan's homeland with bombs! We suddenly had new hope, but our personal safety at the same time decreased. Our guards and the army men over us were more hostile than ever. They punished us severely for any slight mistake.

One day a Jap came out and ordered our detail to unload a car of bombs. A wheel on the car was broken and another train was coming. I said we wouldn't do it. The officer flew into a rage. I reminded him and the guards that under the Articles of War at Geneva, prisoners of war were not supposed to work any ammunitions and that we were not going to do it. The officer screamed for the guards. The bloodthirsty guards eagerly obeyed the command. Swinging big clubs, they began beating us with venom. We wouldn't give in and time was running out (thank goodness); finally the guards had to unload the car themselves.

On the job one day, another fellow and I found a big newspaper map of the Phillippines. We took it to the shack so that we could study it, hoping to find out what was happening there. The map showed planes and ships and lines of action. The guards walked in on us as we were trying to figure it out. They hustled us to the army headquarters, where as usual, the room was full of guards. They thought some civilian had been in cahoots with us planning our escape. We hadn't had an oppurtunity to collaborate our reason for scanning the map; unluckily, our stories didn't jibe. I told them I had found the map and was trying to learn Japanese better. Arvell told them he found it.

The officer in charge said I was bad. (Just to put me on the defensive.) He very deliberately took down a big, long belt, doubled it, and began hitting me across the face, neck and back with it. They hit Arvell and knocked him down; he

pretended he was unconscious, in a vain attempt to avoid further pain. His captors weren't as human as he had hoped, however; like birds of prey, they surrounded him, kicking him viciously in the stomach and head.

I felt like I must not faint--no matter what--I didn't want to be kicked to death! As the belt cracked against my face and ears, I began to feel numb and whoosy. Everything was foggy. The room began to swim, the leering faces of the guards merged with the malicious form of the demon lashing me.

The belt stopped and the shrill voice demanded, "Who gave you the map? What were you going to do with it? When did you plan to escape?" I tried to answer again that we hadn't planned an escape; but he shrieked, "You lie!"

Then the guards began working me over with heavy bamboo sticks. It seemed like a lifetime--I thought I couldn't live through it much longer--I didn't want to. At midnight, we were taken back to the barracks. We had been in Hades for six long hours. The bruises and cuts on my back, my neck, and my shoulders, together with my throbbing head hurt so I could not sleep. The next morning, when I attempted to arise the whole world seemed to be turning with me....I felt as if I would fall off it if I moved. I could not move--I didn't dare. I wondered why things seemed so queer. I couldn't get my equilibrium. I wondered if the severe head punishment had affected my brain.

At last I learned that my throbbing whirling head was the result of a broken ear drum. After the unleashed torrent on my head, I was surprised to even have an ear left. For several weeks I had no sense of equilibrium, and then, miraculously, my ear healed up! Arvel suffered bad cuts and bruises. All for looking at an old map out of a discarded Japanese paper!

The Japs took advantage of every possible opportunity to punish. Once during a rest period, two other prisoners and I were sitting near a Jap guard who was smoking a cigarette. When he finished, he smugly tossed the butt over under my feet. The two men sitting beside me lunged for it, but I quickly squashed it with

my foot. It really made them mad, and the guard came over, yanked me up and slapped my face several times. I tried to tell the men that I had been doing them a favor, that cigarettes are poison to the body, especially when they have gone so long without nourishment and that Americans shouldn't delight the Japs by fighting like dogs over their discarded cigarette butts.

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We learned with delight that Uncle Sam had bombed Tokyo--we couldn't be losing the war! We had had air raid warnings for months, and now, after all these long years, we saw our first giant American planes bomb Osaka. It was September, 1944; after three hopeless years, our future looked brighter.

In consternation, we came to realize that our future was cruelly diminished by the bombings instead of brightened. Our camp, which should, according to international prisoner of war rules, have been plainly visible with big marks, was unmarked and was actually bombed nearly four hundred times! Several American prisoners were killed by our own planes. We were appalled to think we had withstood nearly three years of misery and death as war prisoners, to be killed in the end by our own side.

I was within seven feet of a bomb one time. It splattered me with burning gasoline jelly, turning me into a living blaze. All I could think of in my panic was to run and jump into the ocean, nearly half a block away. Of course, I never could have made it; and fortunately, an American prisoner of war grabbed me. He rolled me in the mud and dirt and put the fire out. It was another wondrously close call for me.

Several times we food-conscious POW's went out on butcher details and gathered up the dead horses or cows. However, our ever-gnawing hunger subsided as we watched them being cooked. Our frustrated cooks had nothing to saw or hack up the bones with, and so, huge bones of horses and cows extended far up out of the boiling pots. It was a change from the sweepings we usually had.

On one raid, our barracks and everything around them for blocks were completely

burned to the ground. The newspapers we had been able to steal said that the United States had warned Japan that she--the U.S. was going to destroy seven of Japan's major cities. Osaka was on the list. Quite suddenly they informed us that we were leaving the doomed Osaka, and how relieved we were!

Myers, Martin, and I had kept records of all the men that died--rank, cause of death, date, and any personal data we could add. We could always steal papers and pencils, but our big worry was being caught with the records and having them destroyed. At Tanagawa, we left these records with the doctor. They were concealed in the sick bay at Osake, where someone could always guard them. The night before we left Osaka, at midnight, we put all the papers in a tin can, went out into the yard by the toilets, dug a hole and duried it. We knew these records were our only real proof of our mistreatment. How important these records were!

(After the war was over, the Army sent bulldozers into the ruins at Umeda to find the can, and luckily they were able to find it in all the wreckage. I had been home three weeks when I received a call from the Attorney General of the United States to go to Salt Lake City. I called him from there. He informed me I was wanted to go back to Japan as a War Witness, but I was already out of the service and didn't want to leave home again. Myers went back and really enjoyed himself identifying all those who had mistreated us.)

When we left Osaka, they put us on a train with the shutters pulled. We couldn't imagine our destination. Perhaps the spiteful Japanese were sending us to our graves. Our captors were becoming more hostile and edgy with each passing day. Their homeland was being demolished, their people slaughtered, and the surviving population were practically starving. If you should even look sideways at a Jap guard, he might take a vicious swing at you with his sword. The week we left, as we walked to work one morning, we met a Japanese officer with a long sword. Suddenly he charged us, screaming "Barbarians", swinging his long two-handed sword at our heads. He made three or four swings at our necks

before we grabbed him. Some Japanese guards came and took him while we got away.

As I said, we were glad to leave Osaka, but fearful about our new destination. After a long ride, we arrived at Tsuruga, a country village with a large harbor, full of ships. Our bunsho there consisted of another frame three-story building. But this one was even in worse condition that the one at Umeda had been. It looked at least four or five hundred years old, and there were even braces propped against it to keep the building from collasp ing.

Inside the bunsho, much to our surprise, were the Army men who had been left behind at Tanagawa. Perhaps I should say, inside were half of the men that we left at Tanagawa nearly two years before--the rest had died of starvation and neglect. Nonetheless, they were all that were left, and what a miserable looking collection of living skeletons. They were still as sick and thin as we had once been. How in the world had they survived in this state all this time? Our terrifying bombings had been nothing compared to their life at Tanagawa. How lucky we had been!

The Tanagawa victims were amazed at our condition. We, indeed, looked like All-Americans compared to them. Of course, we were the ablest of our own group. For just before we left Osaka, the prisoners had been again divided, the sick and wounded left there to be bombed further. The city was demolished. (A pitiful few of those left at Osaka did manage to endure the remaining months and come through to life.) As always, the Japs' theory that only the fit and useful men are of any importance was again cruelly enforced. We were needed at Tsuruga, unloading the ships and cars as before.

We lived only by stealing at Tsuruga too, and gave what we could to the Tanagawa men. At first they were too frightened to steal for themselves; but when they saw that we were not caught, they tried it. Naturally they were eager and inexperienced and were often caught and punished.

Then American B29's started unloading their cargos over Tsuruga and again our

unmarked barracks were demolished. They lined us all up and put us in a warehouse. The warehouse was hit hard too, while most of us were in it. It was an absolute miracle that none of us were killed; my blankets that were rolled up on the floor had huge holes through them. On the 30th of July they moved us to an old brick factory where we stayed 'till the war's end.

THE ATOMIC BOMB

One day I was in the bottom of a ship unloading beans. When I came up, the fellows were talking about a wave of forced air that they had just felt. At noon, our guard, "Silly Willy" (an excitable, skinny Nip with a funny girlish laugh) fearfully told us that the Americans had dropped a new bomb that exploded three hundred meters in the air and killed everything. They had dropped it on Hiroshima, about forty miles away. He told us we were to go to the mountains and bury in. The terrified civilians quickly evacuated the city. About twenty of us, under guard, went up to the mountains to dig holes to hide in--the other prisoners stayed and worked at the railroads and docks.

About a week after the detail had been digging into the hill, and as my detail was unloading salt from a boxcar, suddenly the guards appeared and said to stop working. They lined us all up without the customary saluting and ordered us back to the barrack or factory. We couldn't believe our ears when they told us that the next day was a rest day. Why? What was happening?

That rest day we did all the things that we had never had time for--washing our clothes and blankets, ourselves and living area. To our amazement, the next day was also declared a rest day. Then, incredulously, we noticed that the guards we hated the worst were not around anymore. Finally, there were only one or two guards left.

One American said he was positive that the war was over. We all laughed at him. We had waited and prayed for so long that we just couldn't believe it. He was determined enough to crawl out under the barbed-wire fence and to shout as

he left for town, "I'll find out!" As he walked into the apparently deserted town, he met no one to challenge him. He walked about until he found a house with a radio antenna and went up to the door and knocked. The old couple who answered the door were terrified of him, until he told them that all he wanted was to listen to their radio. He finally got a Phillipine station which said that the Japs were asking for peace. Japan was surrendering!

He came tearing back down the road to us and threw open the gates to freedom to 250 souls! We all let out a shout of joy that could be heard for miles. Then we started to sing "Roll on, Uncle Sammy, roll on." We sang until we were exhausted. We cried until we could cry no more. There were still many questions--how soon before we could leave here, where were the Americans, when would we see them, when could we have some decent food, and finally, how long would it be before we would see the good old USA again?

A Jap intrepreter came the next day and politely asked us what we would like to eat! We ordered beef stew and WHITE rice. We were so sick of the tasteless brown rice we had lived on for so long, nutritional though it was.

Next, we decided we must have a flag, our own Stars and Stripes. Some of us got some red, white, and blue silk and took it to a Japanese woman to sew. Our flag raising ceremony was very simple, but impressive. It was the most beautiful flag any of us had ever seen. Our commander wasn't an orator, but said what was in his heart, and the hearts of all those present: "Men, the world will never know what went here and at the other POW camps, and maybe that's a good thing. But we here, who survived will never forget the men who have died, the cream of the crop. I know we are all thankful the end came at last. I just want to say, men, I think you are all the finest men I have ever seen. God bless you all". He then asked me if I would lead the men in singing the "Star Spangled Banner". Never has our anthem been sung with more depth of feeling, more thanksgiving, more devotion. We sang our hearts out--"Oh, say does the Star Spangled

Banner yet wave, o'er the land of the FREE, and the home of the BRAVE!" Then our own Old Glory was reverently raised. This was the very first American flag raised in Japan. Whenever any Japs came by, we immediately demanded that they salute it too.

Most of our guards had vanished and we were on our own...free men! It was August and warm, and we were all desperately in need of a bath. We went down to the river to swim. While we enjoyed ourselves, like schoolboys playing hookey, we heard a plane flying low over the valley. It was a big B29 and it spotted our American flag waving in the breeze. We hurriedly jumped into our pants and tore back to our barracks, nearly two and a half miles away. As quickly as possible, we lined up and spelled out P.W. They saw us!

The bomb bays opened and huge parachutes came floating from heaven. Each parachute held big fifty-five gallon drums filled with food. They fell all over some rice paddies and ruined them. I reached the first one first. It was filled with fruit cocktail and Hershey bars. Some of the others contained Spam and other canned meat. (The fellows that crammed on that became very sick. The high protein content was like poison to their run-down systems.) We all ate all we could and carried the rest over to the barracks. The plane also dropped a note saying that more planes would be over later. Sure enough, a little later two smaller planes came over and dropped tobacco, coffee, shoes and khaki clothes. The lovely, clean, American cut clothes seemed as wonderful as the food. It was stimulating to look like men again instead of derelicts.

Our Commanding Officer had taken on importance again; his name was Slane and he asked nine others and me to act as MP's over the group. Freedom was going to the heads of some of the men and they were going wild. Some of them were unnecessarily harsh and mean towards the Japanese people, and took delight in showing their pent-up malice.

One group, mere privates, went into a luxurious resort hotel and <u>took over</u>.

They ordered the shaking hotel proprietor to prepare a feast--his choicest wines and most exotic foods. Then they pompously sent formal invitaions to the town mayor, the chief of police and a visiting ambassador and anyone that took their fancy. MP's were sent to get them, but the exalted potentates wouldn't let the MP's in, and stayed at the hotel making merry for about a week.

When we went down town, the civilians showed varied responses. Some were sullen, some patronizing, many frightened. We got some pistols from the Japs to carry in our duty as MPs. We were supposed to keep the prisoners together until they were examined by American doctors to determine the best way of sending them home. This disipline was hard to enforce; the waiting here now after such a long dreary time seemed absurd to some of the men. We MPs did the best we could, but when friendly persuasion wasn't effective, we just couldn't beat up one of our former co-sufferers of the prisons, and either dragged him back to the dreary factory or let him be, if he wasn't causing trouble.

FREEDOM

Finally arrangements were made to leave. I'll never forget the words one fellow uttered looking back; "That's the last time those barracks will ever hold such good men". At the depot, we made a huge banner that stretched along the whole passenger car, proclaiming "Phill Americans". As I have said, the majority of the prisoners were from the Phillipines; only a handful of us, about ten, weren't from there. Our train traveled all night, and picked up some Australian and some English prisoners. Someone came after me to lead in group singing. I led them all in such good old songs as "God Bless America" and "Roll Out The Barrell".

We were going through a town about three o'clock in the morning, when suddenly a rifle shot pinged through a window. That dampened our spirits for a while. We arrived at Hokohama the next morning. All of us were straining our eyes to spot the first American. One of the homeliest fellows among us declared earnestly that the first American girl he spotted, he would kiss regardless. When our

eager eyes spotted the station and the crowd with white faces--beautiful white welcoming faces, our ears picked picked up the nostalgic "Marine Hymn" that OUR band was playing for US! A General and other officers shook our hands, a beautiful American nurse smilingly handed me a carton of fresh milk. We were too thrilled, too choked up to say much to anyone. To us, these Americans looked like the healthiest, tallest, most beautiful people ever put on earth! They treated us like human beings and soon took steps to make us feel like human beings. An American doctor led us to a huge tent where we took all our clothing off. They sprayed, sprayed, and sprayed us, our hair, our bodies. The discomfort seemed minor, for we knew we were losing our bosom companions of many years. What a blessed relief!

They handed us beautiful new clothes--clothes that fit, sturdy, durable clothes that wouldn't wear out in two months, shiny new shoes and warm sox, even underclothes. We put them on reverently--with pride--we looked like men again.

We marched out of the tent with heads high, marched with brisk, unafraid steps; we were Marines, Soldiers, and Sailors representing the United States of America, the greatest country on earth. The gleam of hope that had burned so steadily all these years, the hope that our country would triumph over evil and carnage, was now a flame of pride that overwhelmed us.

They next took us to an assembly hall and put us in groups of about thirty to be taken aboard our ships in the harbor. I was placed in charge of thirty-three men until we reached Guam. We boarded the ship, "West Virginia", a battle ship. They fed us five times a day, a little at a time--no more chances such as those taken at the food drop at Tsuruga.

We had had thorough physical checkups when we left the train. Of the three hundred prisoners, all had Malaria but five. I was one of these five! A majority of the men also had Tuberculosis. The doctor who examined me was astonished at my good condition. I was suffering only from malnutrition and worms, which conditions were soon corrected. I was, as I had been constantly, so thankful to

the Lord for protecting me, for my health and my strength. I knew that my prayers and those of my loved ones at home had been answered.

The first popular song I heard on board the ship was "Sentimental Journey" and it was certainly going to be that. "Going to take a sentimental journey, going to set my heart at ease, going to take a sentimental journey, to renew old memories." Everything had changed; the President of the United States, the President of the Church, music, clothes, movie stars, and movies. We saw the movie "Frenchman's Creek" and how thrilling it was. In fact, we sat through it six times!

The next morning I was up on deck and noting with interest the men performing their daily duties. A pilot, going over his plane, asked me if I would like a ride. I answered "Yes". He replied "Go get permission". When I told him I already had permission, he stared in amazement. After explaining that I was my own boss, I got into the cockpit and they shot us off. This ship wasn't a carrier and it's observation plane had to be shot off the deck like a torpedo. I was thunderstricken, to put it mildly. I thought: "Of all the near misses I have had, only to end it all in this plane"!

When I dared breathe and open my eyes, I found myself high above Japan. The pilot flew me all over Tokyo and Yokohama. Everything was in ruins. I was amazed to see such complete destruction. A shambles --pitted buildings, leaning walls, and still smoldering debris--stretched out for miles and miles. The people were living in dugouts in the ruins.

We were up an hour and a half, and as I gazed on the destruction this land of the Rising Sun had brought upon herself, I was thankful that I was leaving it forever. We landed in the ocean, my heart again in my mouth, and taxied over to the battleship. A huge crane lifted us aboard ship once more.

We were there three days waiting for our plane to fly us to Guam. Then they transferred us to another ship overnight; as I got on deck, the loud speaker

boombed, "Ray Church, report to the quarter deck". I couldn't imagine how anyone knew my name. What was wrong? Was it bad news?

Up on the quarter deck I was relieved and happy to see Garth Cahoon from home. He couldn't tell me news fast enough. He said that my folks were okay the last he had heard, but that my kid brother Mel had joined the Navy. (He not only had quit school to join the Navy, but had volunteered for the most dangerous of all wartime assignments--that of an underwater demolition expert, or frogman, because of his love and concern for me!) Garth said he (Mel) had been in action since the start of the war. After that I was always on the lookout for Mel, but didn't find him.

We boarded a C54 for Guam. Since Guam possessed the nearest hospital, we all had to be processed there. We landed at night--back again after four long years. The morning sun revealed the changes that had taken place on Guam, too. The island was completly changed. It had a huge hospital, a tremendous airfield, and super highways. I felt like I had changed as much as this tiny island--I was more humble--and felt like I was a hundred years older!

They examined us, re-examined us, and examined us again. We had to hand in a report to the officials giving information of any mistreatment we had suffered during the war, either from Japs or Americans.

After examinations and reports, we asked and got permission to take a jeep to visit the graves of our buddies of Guam. Many little cemeteries on the island contained our former comrades--the big good-natured fellow from Iowa, the handsome Marine from California, the very quiet buddy from Tennessee. I knew them all by their first names and can only say that they had had all the hopes and aspirations of any fine American boys--hopes and aspirations that would have to be realized in a better place.

We also went to visit several of the natives we had known. They told us some of the horrors they had undergone during the Jap occupation--in one area

the Japs had killed a farmer each month in an effort to get information. One native showed me a twelve inch scar on his neck; a Jap officer was in the very act of killing him when a senior officer stopped him.

The voyage home by ship was full of anticipation. Each of us had plans for our homecoming. All of the men agreed that they would really go out on the town and celebrate. I said, "Well, I'll celebrate, but in a different way. I'm going to Church Sunday, since we land Saturday night, and thank God for everything--for bringing me safely through this in one piece".

Before our journey's end, the whole group came up again and coaxed me to go celebrate with them when we would land, but I repeated what I had said earlier. (We docked on a Saturday; Sunday afternoon, all the fellows except two informed me that they had gone to their respective services.)

Saturday, the 12th of October, we were all on deck at nine o'clock to sight land--our land. Has anyone ever looked for the Promised Land more anxiously than we? We studied the horizon, wiped our eyes, and stared again. Finally, through our tears, we spotted Point Loma, off California! We cheered, we yelled, we hugged each other, we cried and offered up thanks. It had been five long years since I had seen my homeland--now I was going home!"

My desire to write this story came while I was a pre-teen during the war. At this age, heroism and causes are most important, and more so when they involve someone close to you. Over a period of fifteen years, I have coaxed, questioned, and plied to get this story. Ray was in California and only came up several times a year, and I caught him when I could. After I had rewritten the story several times, I went to Mrs. Marvel Clayton for help. Without the help and encouragement of this wonderful friend and dedicated teacher, this book would never have been published.

Ray received a Hero's welcome from his hometown on his arrival by train to Delta. He received a letter from President Truman thanking him for his service to his country and also a Special Citation from the Marine Corps for service above and beyond the call of duty.

Ray married the former Mariane Moody of Sutherland in 1946 and they are the parents of three children, Susan, Carolyn, and Mike. Ray managed the Crest Theater in Delta until they moved to California in 1953. In California he was also a Theater manager until he went into banking. At the present he is Vice President and Manager of Valley Federal Savings and Loan in Conoga Park. He has filled a stake mission for the L.D.S. Church and at the present is Sunday School Superintendant for the Conoga Park Ward. He is also President of the Kiwanas, President of the Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the Draft Board, and Vice Chairman of the Boy Scouts of America in Toparga District.

Ninety-nine percent of the men in this story are now dead, almost all as a result of P.O.W. treatment. Ray's faith and the faith of his loved ones was his Gleam of Hope; Ray Church is alive---a modern miracle.

By his niece

Cheryl Black Roper