

The Bataan Death March and Camp Cabanatuan

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Wearing grim expressions, Pfc. Field "Jack" Reed and two friends sat down to eat at the post exchange. All morning, after hearing the shocking news about the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, the perplexed National Guardsmen from Harrodsburg, Kentucky, and other tankers from the 192d Tank Battalion had cleaned weapons and hustled about preparing positions to defend Clark Field on Luzon in the Philippines. Outside, the airfield's B-17 bombers and P-40 fighters, after being airborne much of the morning, lined the runway while the pilots and crewmen gulped down a meal. About 12:20 P.M., only ten hours after the Japanese had struck Pearl Harbor, Reed heard the roar of sixty-eight planes getting closer and closer. Someone "reckoned" they were the new B-17 bombers expected from the States. Suddenly, earsplitting explosions shook the ground with the violence of an earthquake. Reed and his friends sprang to their feet and streaked for the door.

Outside, with his jaws ajar and heart pounding, Reed looked down the runway and watched whistling bombs falling and exploding. Debris and smoke rolled down the runway through the parked aircraft toward him. Planes burst into balls of fire, sending up plumes of smoke. Airmen, tankers, and Filipino employees ran in every direction, some falling never to rise again. His mind could not digest the chaos and confusion or tell him what to do. Finally, some instinct sent him running to the company area a little farther down the runway.

At full speed he zigzagged, darting first behind a tree then behind a piece of equipment to get something between himself and the hostile planes that were attacking from all directions like angry wasps. Bombs and bullets peppered the area around him as he darted from one temporary cover to another. One bomb tore into the post exchange he had just left. Large and small steel fragments whistled or fluttered past him, bouncing off steel equipment and shearing off tree limbs; clumps of dirt thrown up by the



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explosions rained down on him, and acrid smoke filled his nostrils. Shock waves from the closer explosions shook the ground under his feet when he ran and under his belly when he hit the ground. At times, concussion would steal his breath and make his ears ring. Still he continued the mad dash, determined to get to the company area-why, he didn't know.

As he reached it, a sergeant shouted, "Man your guns!" Reed and another soldier dived into a .50-caliber machine gun dugout. Trying hard, he managed to steady his hands enough to help break open the ammunition and load the weapon. Then Reed grabbed the gun and fired wildly, swinging from one plane to another. The firing helped to settle him down, and soon he was selecting and tracking the best target as he engaged it. It bothered him when he

saw his tracers rip through one approaching plane without knocking it out of the sky.

In the midst of the battle noise and chaos, Reed saw American fighters running full throttle down the runway, trying to take to the air as Japanese fighters swarmed over them. Some American planes, hit before they could rise off the runway, burst into flames and careened out of control. Others barely off the ground took hits, exploded, and tumbled to the ground. Another left a smoke trail, glided down, and crashed hard into the ground. To stay in control, Reed had to fight off the host of emotions racing through his mind.

He saw enemy planes coming in from nearby Fort Stotsenburg to the west and zooming in from the east, the south, and the north, strafing and bombing from all directions, bringing noises, ungodly sights, odors, and chaos that he had never experienced in field training. War games in Louisiana a year before had not prepared him for the fear caused by the heat from the fireballs, the shock waves, the ground vibrating beneath him, and the bomb fragments whizzing by his head. His mind could not sort out the realities of death hovering over his dugout. Again and again he said, mostly to himself, "What in the hell is going on?" Still, he kept firing away, realizing now that he needed to husband his dwindling supply of ammunition.

Sgt. Zemon Barddowski's halftrack, at the edge of a banana grove just across the runway, caught Reed's attention when a Japanese plane spewing bullets flew straight at it. The bullets, kicking up dirt, made two tracks as they streaked toward Barddowski and his crew. It gave Reed encouragement and a sense of pride to see Barddowski stay at his machine gun in the face of death and pound away at the flying predator until finally he scored a killing hit. As the plane painted the sky with a descending smoke trail, someone shouted gleefully above the battle noise, "He got the son of a bitch, he got the son of a bitch!"

As suddenly as it began, the Japanese attack stopped. The hostile planes gathered in the sky and headed away to the north, leaving in their wake roaring fires, billowing smoke, and destruction. Distorted bodies lay scattered about; wounded civilians and soldiers were pleading, moaning, or dying quietly. As the violence and din disappeared with the hostile planes, it took Reed a moment to realize that the angel of death had gone too. Relief and a good feeling of being alive replaced the awesome burden

of fear. Still, shock and disbelief gripped him as he surveyed the devastation and pandemonium. A state of numbness helped him to block out some of the horrible scenes, but he had to check on his friends from Harrodsburg to see for himself how they had fared.

Touring the battlefield in the Company D (Harrodsburg unit) area, Reed heard someone under a tank screaming, "I'm hit, I'm dying!" Reed and others gently pulled him out and huddled over Fred Leonard, another native of Harrodsburg. Leonard's eyes staring out from his bloodied head revealed his fear, but he didn't die. Not so fortunate was Robert S. Brooks, an inductee, a native of Scott County, Kentucky, and the only African American in Company D. Miraculously, however, Brooks and Leonard were the only casualties in the unit.

Farther out, Reed and some others stumbled upon the dead Japanese pilot that Barddowski had shot down. Reed stared down at a bloody body missing both arms and legs, but he didn't feel sorry for the dead man. He thought the pilot had gotten what he deserved. When a chaplain came and told the men standing around to bury the Japanese, none were in the mood to do it, and one soldier demonstrated his feelings by strolling over and pissing on the body. Then all the Americans turned and walked off, leaving the outraged chaplain shouting words that fell upon deaf ears.

That was just the beginning; more difficult and deadly ordeals awaited. The tankers endured four more air attacks on Clark Field before they moved north on December 22, 1941, and met the Japanese amphibious forces landing at Lingayen Gulf.

Making his first resupply run near the front lines, Reed knew that somewhere toward the beachhead Company A waited in hiding for the gasoline and ammunition carried by the two trucks from headquarters company. But he didn't like what he saw and heard as he drove the lead truck toward the enemy. After crossing the Agno River near Carmen, he saw one dead and mutilated horse after another, all freshly killed. Some, still wearing their bridles and saddles, had fallen on the sides of the road; others lay on the road in pools of blood. He didn't know what had happened to their riders from the U.S. Twenty-sixth Cavalry Regiment, but the Japanese airplanes making dive-bombing and strafing runs a few miles ahead told him what had happened to the horses. Reed

strained to keep his eyes on the planes and the road at the same time.

Finally, he and "Mule" Henderson saw Company A's sign pointing off the road to a clump of trees on the right. The tankers, hidden from air observation but out of ammunition and running low on fuel, were glad to see them. No one, however, noted that it was Christmas Eve in their joyful greetings to the resuppliers. Reed surveyed the fast-moving situation with anxiety. He heard the high-pitched sound of enemy dive bombers and exploding bombs a short distance up the road. The rattle of automatic weapons told him that the front lines were getting too close to be ignored. Everyone hurried to unload the 55-gallon drums of gas and the boxes of 37-mm shells. The serious-minded men cracked no jokes now but exchanged what information they could without slowing down the resupply task. Reed labored hard to fit the pieces together, to grasp the immediate danger, and to comprehend what perils he might soon have to face.

After unloading his truck, he focused his attention on the wounded man stretched out on the back of a tank. Captain Walter H. Wright, a National Guardsman from Janesville, Wisconsin, wanted to talk. As Reed and others gathered around him, he said, "You fellows take care of yourselves. And watch these little bastards, because there are a lot of them." With those last words, he died. Before they left, others told Reed to stay on the roads, because the dry-appearing rice paddies would deceive a driver, and urged him to hurry along or the Japanese might cut him off.

Back at battalion headquarters just south of the Agno River, others coming and going exchanged grim information. Reed learned from Grover Brummett, a fellow Harrodsburg Guardsman, that in the first tank-versus-tank battle near the landing beach on December 22, 1941, a platoon from Company B lost all five of its tanks. Brummett didn't know the details, but both men knew that there were just 108 tanks in the only two tank battalions in the Philippines and that such an outcome was a serious matter.

The Japanese army pushed the defenders off one delaying line after another and drove everything before them toward the south. This fast-moving situation created chaos and a dangerous, confused world for Reed. Most of the time, only the tank units acting as a covering force were in contact with the enemy and they were scattered over a wide front. Moving north of Cabanatuan at a snail's pace on December

28, Reed labored to keep moving through the masses of Filipino troops and civilians making their way south. On their faces he saw traumatized expressions and their eyes revealed their fear. The heavy-laden civilians carried chickens and other treasured possessions on their backs and heads; some had overloaded carts drawn by carabaos. Untrained and frightened Filipino soldiers mingled with the crowd. These helpless men, usually without their weapons, were in disorder and out of control, though the two well-trained Philippine Scout regiments withdrew in good order and moved with unit integrity.

With horn blaring, Reed and Henderson sliced through the masses moving in the opposite direction. They stopped for a moment at a little village and worked their way through the melee into a liquor store whose owner had apparently given up on being paid for his wares. There they and some Filipinos helped themselves to all the bottles of rum they could carry. From then on Reed and Henderson took good care of their prize. Now and then they would take a little nip, though taking care to stay sober.

Continuing their one-truck resupply operation, Reed and Mule worked day and night driving over clogged roads, searching out the scattered tank units, delivering ammunition and fuel to the exhausted tankers. Sometimes they got in front of the tanks, and sometimes elements of the Japanese army infiltrated behind them and the tankers. On several occasions they had to run and gun their way out. Once, while Mule was driving, Reed noticed in the rearview mirror a Japanese soldier running alongside their truck. He grabbed his submachine gun, kicked open the door, and shot the enemy soldier before he could get his rifle unslung.

At the supply pickup points, trying to piece together the puzzle of what was happening, they would quickly swap stories with the other truck drivers. Then while the truck was being loaded, they would catch a nap on the ground, often without eating. But things moved so fast that no one seemed to know what was going on. Early in the ordeal Reed had heard that Company D had lost all seventeen of its tanks north of the Agno River. Many of these fellow National Guardsmen were, like him, from Harrodsburg, Kentucky, and he wondered and worried about them.

It was General MacArthur's plan to gather both his northern and southern forces and hold out on Bataan Peninsula until reinforcements came from the United

States. Near the Calumpit Bridge, the main gateway into Bataan, Reed watched in awe as men and machines clogged the arteries that converged from north and south and streamed across the bridge over the Pampanga River. He knew the engineers were going to blow the big bridge as soon as the army had crossed it. The tankers crossed just as the New Year arrived.

About the time the American engineers blew the bridge, Reed received some good tidings at last. Lt. William Gentry, also from Harrodsburg, had led his own and another platoon from Company C in an attack at Baliuag, a little village about six miles north of the Calumpit bridge. Gentry and the tankers had knocked out six or seven Japanese tanks without losing any of their own.

One month after the start of hostilities and the successful completion of the long-existing withdrawal plan, General MacArthur's forces were on Bataan. On January 9 the weary, hungry, and dirty tankers of both battalions, in desperate need of a respite, assembled in a bivouac area near the east coast about eight miles behind the main battle position, on the Abucay-Moron line. It was a welcome relief for Reed and the other tankers who had been fighting day and night, snatching only catnaps when they could. As men moved about replacing worn-out tracks, working on engines, and doing other much-needed maintenance, Reed and others took advantage of the change from near-constant driving to bathe in a creek, mend clothing, and eat food prepared by cooks for the first time since the bombing of Clark Field. But the half-ration being issued did not appease his appetite. They had been told there would be ample supplies in Bataan and fortified positions so that they could defend themselves until reinforcements arrived from the States. But rumors were flying wildly, and Reed began to have doubts.

Thirty-six of the two battalions' 108 tanks had been lost during the fight to get into Bataan. The 194th Tank Battalion, to which Harrodsburg's Company D of the 192d was attached, had lost twenty-six. While the remaining tanks were being redistributed so that each platoon had three (instead of the usual five), Reed moved about the bivouac area gathering bits of information. He learned that his Harrodsburg friends and others in Company D had swum and rafted the Agno River, because the bridge there had been blown before their tanks could cross, and that all of the Harrodsburg men had made it to friendly lines after walking several miles.

Later, after the tanks were back in action, Reed and Henderson made a resupply delivery to Company D and another company hidden from air observation in a grove in the foothills of the mountains near the Pilar-Orion area. While there, Reed and Henderson volunteered to take a jeep to an artesian well and get the men some drinking water. Cruising along, they came over a hill and looked right into the barrel of a big Japanese self-propelled gun. Reed did a screeching U-turn and raced back to tell the tankers that the only road out was blocked. For twenty-four hours the Japanese artillery pounded their position. While enemy shells exploded in their midst, the tankers pondered the option of going by foot over the rugged mountain. Reed, Henderson, and the men of Company D decided to fight their way out, but a few tankers chose to abandon their equipment and climb out, hoping to get to the west coast and into the hands of friendly forces. Finally, however, a Filipino force counterattacked and helped the tankers clear the area.

Each passing day made life more difficult. Not only did the defenders have to deal constantly with the hazards of combat, but they also contended with disease and near-starvation. Added to the problem of surviving were rumors and more rumors that taunted Reed and the others. The wishful thinking worsened after General MacArthur left for Australia in March. The most troubling stories held that reinforcements and supplies were not coming.

The Japanese, with bulldog tenacity, drove the Americans and Filipinos off the main defensive line to the rear defensive line farther down the peninsula. Low on ammunition, the tankers had to be selective about their targets. Also low on gas, they had to turn their radios off, often making it harder for Reed and Henderson to find them. Being twenty-one gave Reed some advantage over the eighteen-year-old boys, who needed more protein. His farming background and hunting skills also helped: in the jungle he hunted monkeys, birds, lizards—anything that moved or crawled. He and the other defenders had already eaten the meat taken from the few horses the Twenty-sixth Cavalry had left; later, the hungry troops ate the horses' oats. More and more of Reed's skinny friends came down with malaria.

Reed operated out of the battalion headquarters and bivouac area in the dense jungle about a mile above the southern coastline at Mariveles. Increasing exhaustion and hunger gnawed and tugged at him, body and soul. Although they made fewer supply runs

over shorter distances, Reed and Henderson had to keep a constant lookout for the hostile airplanes that frequently circled overhead. Trying to supplement the daily 920-calorie diet, they also kept their eyes searching for wild chickens. When they spotted one, they shot it, dug a pit, dropped the chicken in, and waited. When an iguana fell for the bait, they quickly started a fire and soon feasted on the big lizard's roasted tail. They shot monkeys and took them to the company kitchen, where the cooks boiled them. But Reed didn't like the taste of the tough monkey meat, nor did he like the sight of a skinned monkey; it looked too much like a baby.

For several days a small group of Japanese soldiers who had landed behind the main battle lines in the vicinity of Reed's bivouac area concealed themselves during the day and learned the tankers' names. Then at night they lay outside the perimeter and called for Jack and others by name, asking for help. The tankers knew not to respond, but it kept them awake. So did the knowledge that there were hostile airplanes flying too high to be heard; only when the falling bombs exploded in the jungle treetops did Reed know Japanese flyers had paid them a call. It was nerve-racking not to know when or where the bombs would fall.

Before a tank and infantry team drove the Japanese operating behind the main line out on a point--where they jumped off a cliff onto the beach, choosing suicide over surrender--Reed saw how difficult it had been for the tanks to operate in the rugged jungle in the Anyasan Point and Silaiim Point areas. One tank had been knocked out of action by a magnetic mine slapped on it by a hidden enemy soldier. He saw a disabled tank that had been filled with dirt and watched other tankers dig around until they discovered that the dead crew had been buried in their own tank. They had waited quietly for darkness to unbutton their hatch, whereupon the Japanese dropped in a grenade, killing the crew, and then filled the tank with dirt.

On April 3, 1942, a reinforced Japanese army launched a major attack against the undernourished and weakened Bataan defenders. Desperate for food, Reed decided to check out the rumor that the U.S. Navy had food stored at nearby Cabcaben. He and Henderson commandeered a jeep that had enough gas in it to make the twenty-mile round trip from their bivouac area. Fortunately, at Cabcaben he met Sam Darling, a pharmacist's mate from Danville, Kentucky. Though reluctant to break navy regulations,

Darling agreed to give them some food, provided they kept it quiet. They readily promised not to tell a soul. Darling took them into a large tunnel complex filled to the brim with canned goods and gave his excited and happy new friend from an adjoining Kentucky county a few cans of C rations, peaches, and tomatoes.

On their way back they discussed what they should do about their promise not to tell. It didn't seem right to Reed that all that food was there while the army was going hungry. For the time being, they decided to squirrel the food away and share it with just a couple of friends. At Cabcaben for a second time, Reed listened intently as Darling repeated the story told by the crew of a submarine that had surfaced the night before to take on food and supplies. Reed, hungry for any good news, smiled as Darling told how the American sub had sneaked into Tokyo Bay and waited for a new ship to come off the skids, and then had sunk it. But before the sub could escape, it had to take a lot of depth charges while it lay quietly on the bottom of the bay. Reed hoped it was a true story. Returning this time with several cases of food and two cartons of cigarettes, he and Henderson decided that they had a higher moral obligation than their pledge to remain silent. They told their supply officer about the food stored in the tunnels.

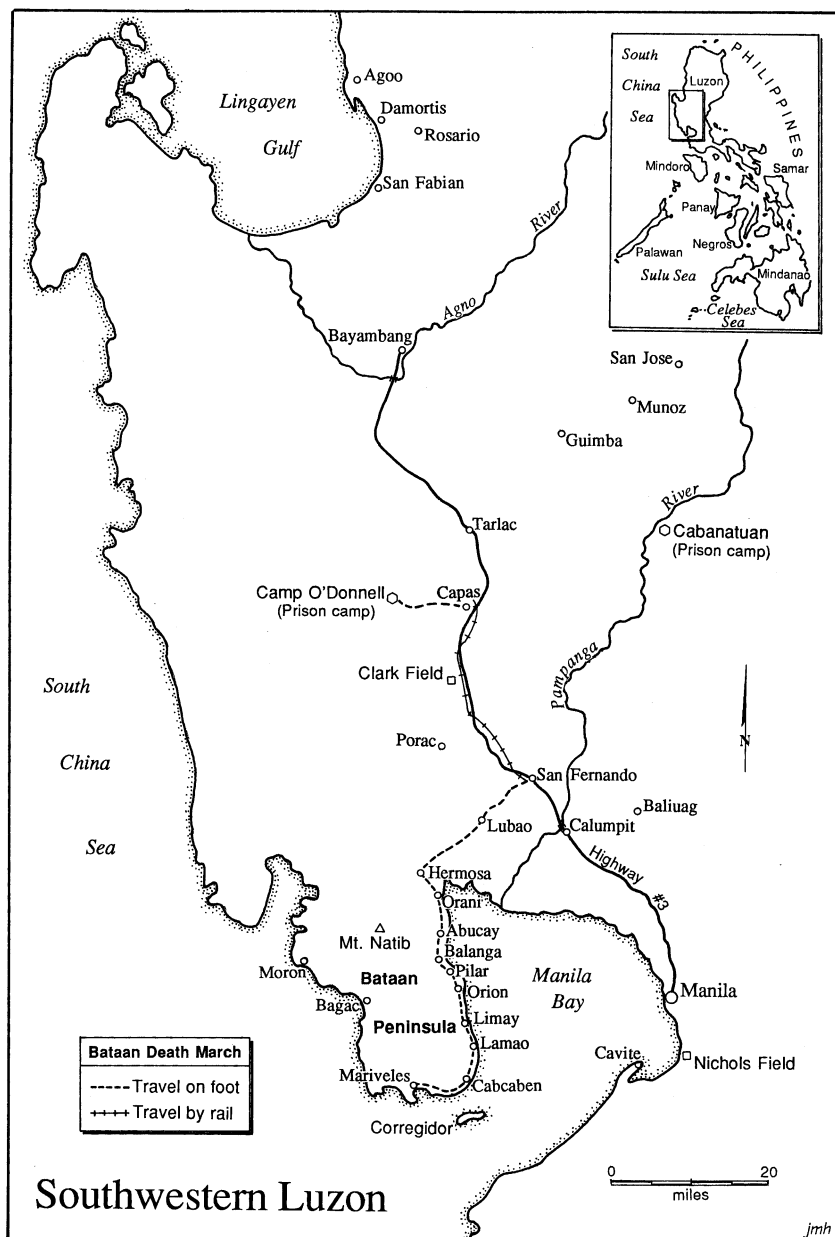
Having the cases of food--now being shared with a larger circle of friends--was like having boxes of gold, but it did not lift Reed's spirits much; it was too late. He could clearly see that the end was coming: the front lines were collapsing; there were no reinforcements; and he knew that they would be subject to brutal treatment if not death at the hands of the Japanese. The tankers had already exchanged stories of Japanese brutality in China and Burma. And earlier, when the defenders had overrun a Japanese hospital, Reed had seen for himself evidence that the enemy had shot their own wounded to keep them from falling into the hands of the Americans. Rumors that Gen. Jonathan Wainwright was about to surrender made the tankers angry. Reed and some friends talked about what they should do and decided they would fight to the last man--with rocks if necessary. Thinking that the Japanese were not going to take any prisoners and that he was not going to get out of Bataan alive, Reed mentally resigned himself to death.

Early in the morning of April 9, 1942, word came down to destroy all equipment, because General Wainwright had surrendered all his forces on Bataan. There was no place to go and nothing they could do, and Reed felt the despair that hung over the bivouac area. While they worked frantically to burn, bury, and blow up their equipment, the Japanese bombed and strafed them. In

the confusion Reed barely noticed the earthquake that shook the ground beneath his feet.

In the column leaving the bivouac area, the somber men moved quietly with their emotions in turmoil. Reed struggled to get his feelings under control. A prayer would cross his lips now and then and disappear. He glanced back and forth, searching for the Japanese machine gunners he expected would open up any minute. He felt that President Franklin Roosevelt and the army had let them down. They had been told at the beginning that they were fighting a retrograde action, part of a strategic plan to gather them on Bataan where food, ammo, fuel, and other supplies would be sufficient to enable them to fight until reinforced. He knew that the tankers had done their part to buy time for the United States, and it had pleased him that General Wainwright had told the defenders to hold their heads high, for they had fought the good fight. But now their heads hung low. He had to beat down his anger to stay alert. Still, other converging emotions constantly distracted him. He felt thankful that the folks at home were safe from this mess, but he worried about how his wife, Joanna Coleman, would take the news of their surrender. Hungry and half sick, he thought, "If they kill me, so what?" Someone else said, "Hell, they ain't going to kill all of us." A little ray of hope shown through, and he thought maybe this danger would pass.

At the assembly point near Mariveles, Japanese soldiers met them. With disbelief and contempt Reed looked at the small, bedraggled soldiers and said to himself, "We are surrendering to those little bastards." Humiliation drove his spirits down even further. Angry guards shouted orders in Japanese and waved their hands, pointing first to the prisoners and then to the ground. Finally, some of the new POWs got the message and hurriedly started throwing the things they had carried out of the bivouac area into a pile; others, startled and confused, milled around trying to protect themselves from being hit with rifle butts. In the midst of the angry shouts and confusion, Reed saw a guard run his bayonet through a prisoner.



The American's knees buckled and he slumped to the ground. After seeing another POW stabbed to death on the ground, Reed thought, "I have got to get out of here at the first opportunity."

Standing at attention in a formation of four ranks, Reed had to control his rage as a guard stuck his hands in Reed's pocket and took whatever he wanted. Reluctantly, Reed handed over his watch and wedding ring. Reed and Joanna had married while they were still in high school, and it hurt to part with his wedding ring. But he still had an important possession untouched by the Japanese - his canteen.

Moving out toward Cabcaben on what historians would later name the Bataan Death March, Reed pondered what lay ahead and what he had to do to

stay alive. Still weighing about 200 pounds, he knew he was in better shape than many of his peers, but it was already obvious to him that he must concentrate on staying alive. The signs were everywhere. Just off the road he saw a hundred contorted and bloodied bodies scattered over the ground of the compound Americans had set up for Japanese POWs, and word came back that the Japanese had machine-gunned their own soldiers who had surrendered.

The long snakelike column of four men abreast in groups of about one hundred clogged the road to Cabcaben and beyond. Past Cabcaben the column moved northward on the road along the east coast of Bataan. Reed's group was near the rear of the long column of some 10,000 Americans and 65,000 Filipinos. Soon the thin, exhausted, hungry, thirsty, and in some cases sick men began falling to the ground. Now and then shots rang out. Word rippling up and down the column confirmed Reed's suspicion that those too weak to be helped up were being shot or bayoneted. Near Cabcaben the sudden, loud boom of Japanese artillery at the airfield grabbed Reed's attention. He knew the artillery shells roaring over his head were aimed at the Americans on Corregidor, five miles away. Just as he came within a few feet of the guns, he was horrified to see a huge shell, roaring like a freight train, rise out of Corregidor and head for the Japanese artillery. The American shell exploded in the middle of the Japanese battery and a hot, jagged fragment about the size of a nickel slashed through the flesh of Reed's leg and lodged against the bone. With his ears ringing, he took note of the blood running down his leg but didn't dwell on it. Although the prisoners were caught in a duel between Japanese and American artillery and Reed feared for his life, he was glad to see the American gunners pounding the Japanese.

Before the prisoners reached Orion, the guards had Reed's group sit. He pulled his pants leg up and looked at his now festering wound. The POW next to him said: "If nobody is watching, I've got a mess kit knife here in my pocket. Maybe you can get that metal out." Reed took the knife and, despite the pain, worked it under the shell fragment and pried it out. To stop the bleeding, he scooped up a handful of mud and plastered it over the wound.

Farther up the clogged road, Japanese troops were moving south in trucks. While both the convoy and Reed's group were halted, Reed's attention shifted to a Japanese officer who ranted and railed at the guards

for shooting and wounding two POWs. Following the officer's orders, the guards hastily dug a shallow hole in the soft dirt, picked up the wounded prisoners, pitched them into the grave, and started to bury them alive. The horrified victims thrashed about, clawed their way to the edge, and grabbed the guards' legs. The guards beat the wounded men's heads and bodies with shovels. More guards with shovels pushed the bleeding and mangled POWs to the bottom of the grave while dirt was hastily thrown over them. The battered prisoners clawed their way out again. More beatings and more shoveling followed. Finally, the thrashing in the grave stopped, and the grunts and moans turned to silence. Only the noise of continued shoveling could be heard. The memory of the grunts and moans and the men's panicked expressions moved Reed and his group to tears before they moved on. It puzzled him that the officer would reprimand the guards for shooting the POWs and then idly stand by and watch their cruel murder and burial. But there was no time for reflection. He had to get his mind back on the business of surviving.

The hot sun that bore down constantly on the laboring, suffering column took its toll. Near Orion, about halfway up & peninsula, Reed's dehydrated body demanded water. He had drained the last drop from his canteen a day and a night before, and now his tongue had begun to swell. He knew that if he did not get water he would die of thirst. He also knew that if he made a break for one of the many artesian wells beside the road, the guards would try to kill him. But the sight of cool water streaming from a well and his overwhelming thirst drove him to break rank and make a dash for it. While he was filling his canteen a shot rang out. Reed dived to the ground as the bullet whizzed by. Fortunately for him, other prisoners too broke rank and distracted the guards, who clubbed the thirsty POWs with rifles to force them back into ranks. During the confusion Reed, unnoticed, crawled back as fast as he could. He had managed to save a little water. Approaching Pilar, three miles farther north, five POWs broke ranks and made a mad dash for another well. The guards shot and wounded all five and then bayoneted them to death. Reed licked his dry lips as he watched in disbelief, and his spirits sank even further.

Constant agony dogged Reed and the other prisoners every step of the way, and death stalked them around the clock. Near Hermosa, just out of Bataan, Reed and his group of weak, exhausted, and thirsty men snaked their way through a crowd of friendly Filipinos gathered on both sides of the road. Full of

compassion, they shouted words of encouragement and sneaked the Americans small portions of food and water. The masses of sympathetic civilians in the rear squeezed their front ranks closer to the road. The infuriated guards shouted and gestured, motioning to the Filipinos to get back, and then started attacking the people with bayonets and rifles. In the midst of the general shouting and shoving, Reed watched out of the corner of his eye as one guard stuck his bayonet into a screaming baby. The force ripped the infant out its mother's arms. While the woman wailed in agony, the guard struggled to get the bayonet out of the child and then, shouting and screaming, hit the side of the mother's face with the bloody bayonet. Others were stabbed before the people in the rear caught on and started making room for the civilians nearest the road, now in total panic.

Walking on, Reed knew not to look directly at the terrible scene. He had seen others bashed just for looking at a Japanese act of brutality. Nor could he feel sorry for the mother or think about the awful act; he had to concentrate on what was happening around him in order to survive. If a prisoner became distracted for a moment, he could find himself in trouble -- hit in the head with the butt of a rifle by Japanese soldiers in trucks going in the opposite direction, or attacked by the guards. Always there was some threat hanging over the POWs' heads. By this time not even thoughts of prayers entered Reed's mind, only the need to maintain constant vigilance throughout the day.

Nights were no better. Usually, Reed's group would be moved off the road and jammed together in a sitting position. All night he sat pressed together with the others, unable to stretch out his legs. When the guards passed around a bucket of water, a fast prisoner could manage to get a canteen cup full. For several days at a time Reed's group got no food, and when they did, it was only a handful of rice. Some prisoners with dysentery had saturated their pants, and a terrible odor hung over the cramped POWs. Later, after reaching Hermosa, they were herded into pens that had been occupied by other groups. Packed in like sardines, Reed and the others had to sit or stand all night in human feces. Although he didn't have dysentery himself, Reed's coveralls were coated with filth.

Reed and Lonnie C. Gray were the only two of the sixty-six National Guardsmen from Harrodsburg in Reed's marching group. The Guardsmen had been separated from the start: some, like Reed and Gentry,

had transferred out of Company D before the march began; some had gone with Morgan French to Corregidor on a boat commandeered at Mariveles; and others were scattered about in different groups. But somewhere beyond Hermosa and before they reached San Fernando, Reed ran into Lt. William Gentry and Lyle C. Harlow. Seeing them alive lifted Reed's spirits, though other than Gray, Harlow, and Gentry he didn't know who had survived the last battles before surrender or who had survived the march to this point. It would be some time before he learned that none of the Harrodsburg guardsmen had died on the march. The weary Kentuckians exchanged lessons learned on how to stay alive, talked about the odds of surviving this ordeal, and pondered whether escape into the jungles or the mountains was possible or desirable. Soon they were on the road again--in their own separate worlds.

Not far from San Fernando two or three POWs stumbled and nearly broke rank before others could help them along. Unfortunately, in the confusion Reed relaxed his guard for a moment, and a shouting and enraged Japanese soldier wheeled and jabbed the Kentuckian with his bayonet. For a moment the blow stopped Reed in his tracks. Fortunately, the jab wasn't meant to kill, and the guard jerked the bayonet out and left Reed bleeding, adding another difficulty to the task of staying alive.

By now some of the men with malaria were delirious and had to be carried along by others. Occasionally a weak man would fall and could not summon the strength to stand. If his fellow POWs couldn't get him up before a guard got there, he was doomed to death by a bullet or bayonet. No one knows the exact number who perished on the death march. Some estimate as many as 10,000 Filipinos and 700 Americans; Reed himself saw about twenty Americans killed between Mariveles and San Fernando.

When they reached San Fernando, the POWs were jammed into suffocatingly hot railroad cars for a nightmarish journey to Capas, about ten miles from their final destination at Camp O'Donnell. On the railroad cars the living did not know who among them had died on their feet until the survivors got off the train, making room for the dead to fall. Fortunately, Reed had decided to take the advice of a friendly Filipino who told him and others that those who volunteered for a detail would be working for Japanese engineers, and he thought they would get better treatment there. The detail loaded on a truck and in a few hours arrived back at Mariveles -- where Reed

had started on the agonizing march several days earlier.

For a couple of months Reed's detail filled in shell holes in the roads and rebuilt bridges. As long as they worked hard, they were treated reasonably well. One Japanese engineer who spoke English would sometimes sit and converse with the POWs. For Reed, any semblance of decent treatment ended with this detail; from there he was sent to the infamous Camp Cabanatuan.

In 1943, Reed and about 800 other POWs were assigned to work at Nichols Airfield, a few miles southeast of Manila. There they labored for months, usually moving earth and construction materials in the blazing sun or sometimes toiling in mud above their knees. Every day some of the abused, neglected, diseased, and underfed POWs died.

One day, Reed could not keep up with the crowd running across the airfield, everyone trying to avoid being the last to meet the chow truck. Having finished last, Reed knew what awaited him. While most of the guards ate in a Nipa hut, three of them tied Reed to a nearby post. One guard hit him across the back with a pick handle, another whacked him with a belt, and a third rammed his fist into Reed's stomach. For thirty minutes, while the other guards and POWs ate, Reed's tormenters circled him and jeered, alternately beating him on the body and over the head. One blow to an eye sent blood dripping down his cheek; a hit to the side of the head made his eardrum bleed. Finally, unconsciousness delivered him from the agony. It was not the only beating he had received for being the last POW to get to the chow line, nor was he the only one beaten, but it was the worst during his six-month stay at Nichols. His eardrum was permanently damaged.

Another time, after a hard day's work, a Japanese called "the white angel" by the Nichols Airfield detail (because he wore a Japanese commander's white uniform) rode in a limousine behind the column of weary POWs, pushing them toward the camp at the usual fast pace. On the road Reed's closest friend, suffering from dysentery and too weak to go on, fell to the ground. An excited guard ran over and plunged his bayonet through the helpless prisoner and continued stabbing him until the man was dead. Outraged by this brutal act against his friend, Reed threw caution to the wind and with all his might struck the guard under the chin. The blow broke the Japanese soldier's jaw. Other guards quickly unleashed their

fury against Reed, and back at camp they put him in the sweatbox under the blazing hot sun. For fourteen days Reed stayed coiled up in a box about two by three by four feet. Three times a day he got a ball of rice. An old bucket served as a toilet. Heat and painful cramps consumed most of his attention. Still, he grieved over his friend, and when he thought about the murder it further embittered him toward his captors. Though it had been obvious that his friend had been too weak to get up, the Japanese tried to justify the killing on the grounds that the POW had tried to escape. This gross injustice and evasion of responsibility added to Reed's bitterness and frustrations.

When at last they released him, Reed could not stand up, and for a few days he had to crawl to his food, to the latrine, or wherever he had to go. When the Japanese realized Reed could no longer work at the airfield, they shipped him to Bilibid prison in Manila. By then the emaciated prisoner's weight had dropped from 200 pounds at the time of his capture to about 100 pounds.

One morning after Christmas of 1944, back at Cabanatuan, Reed sat up on the bamboo floor, looked at another Harrodsburg tanker who slept next to him, and realized that Ben Devine was too weak and too sick to get up. Every day after work on the camp farm, Reed nursed, fed, and cared for his friend, who was suffering from malaria, dysentery, and the effects of malnutrition. But after about a week he saw the far-away stare on Devine's face that indicated his sick friend was giving up. Reed knew Devine's life would soon slip away if he didn't do something. But what? He reminded Devine that Ruth, the pretty wife he had married just before going overseas, was waiting for him and that his family wanted to see him again. Devine said, "There isn't any need to go on. There isn't any need for any more suffering. There is nothing in the future, just more of the same."

By now Devine's lips were scabbed over and sticking together. After work Reed gently washed the scabs off, pried Devine's mouth open, and forced water down his throat, but Ben would not eat. Reed knew that sometimes a person with the "thousand-mile stare" would snap out of his despondency if you could make him mad, but nothing worked on Devine. There was no response. One evening Reed came in from work and saw maggots working between his friend's lips. Mercifully, the angel of death came that night and took Ben while Reed slept.

By the end of 1944, the 500 POWs still living at Cabanatuan were all in bad shape. Many not much better off had been sent to labor camps in Japan on the "Hell Ships." Of the Harrodsburg Guardsmen only Reed, Bill Gentry, Charles Quinn, and Garret Royalty remained at Cabanatuan. To stay alive the POWs would risk their lives and steal food while working in the vegetable crops. Compassionate Filipinos from a little village down the road periodically appeared beyond the camp fence and threw sugar cakes to the Americans. They also sang popular American songs in English, slipping bits of news about the progress of the war into the lyrics to lift the prisoners' spirits. And there had been signs that their ordeal might soon be over. The friendly Filipinos had told them that American and Allied forces were closing in on the Philippines. In September, Reed's spirits had shot upward when he saw the first American air attack against Japanese targets on Luzon. The large formation of airplanes from aircraft carriers told the prisoners that powerful forces were within striking distance. Still, it was an ever present challenge to stay alive, and they had to use their collective wits and skills in every way possible. To supplement their rations, Reed and others, at the risk of their lives, found a way to sneak out of camp at night to steal food. Using their discarded plaster cast for the ingredients, the prisoners manufactured pills that looked exactly like sulfa pills and traded them for food to guards seeking treatment for gonorrhea. To prepare the food without getting caught, they established ingenious networks to warn of approaching guards.

After hearing that the Americans had landed at Lingayen Gulf on January 9, 1945, Reed and others organized a pool, gambling on the exact day, hour, and minute the Cabanatuan prisoners would be liberated. But he and others talked and worried about being lined up and massacred before that could happen. Had he known that on December 14, 1944, Willard R. Yeast and Joseph B. Million, fellow Guardsmen from Harrodsburg, had been herded into trenches with 150 others at Palawan Island, doused with gasoline, and set on fire, he might have panicked.

One day, guard activity picked up in and around the camp, and prisoners were put to work building a platform. One guard who was a Christian and shared information with the prisoners whenever he could told Reed that Tomoyuki Yamashita, the commanding general of the Japanese forces in the Philippines, was going to speak to them. All the POWs who had the strength to walk were gathered in front of the platform and forced to sit down on their knees. Reed

remembers that the Japanese officer he assumed was Yamashita spoke through an interpreter, saying essentially: "We hate you damn people. If I had my way, I would line a machine gun up here and kill every damn one of you. But Tokyo won't let me do it. We are not going to win this war. We know that. But as far as we are concerned we have won this war because of the economic distress we've caused in your country, the turmoil we've caused. We've won our war, because we are going to get our fish and rice regardless of who feeds it to us. You sons of bitches, we hate you. Some day, some way, we'll whip you. Some day, some way, we'll conquer you."

It took a moment to soak in, but one day Reed and his friends realized that the guards had disappeared. The prisoners who were still mobile began scouting around, and soon they had a plan. Some headed for the farm cattle and started a roundup; some gathered firewood; others rigged up grills and assembled butchering equipment. Like a beehive, the camp hummed with excitement and movement. At the slaughtering site, weak and emaciated men wrestled with the cattle, joking and laughing about their plight as they tried a range of ideas to get the job done.

When the aroma of steaks on the grills spread throughout the camp, the festive mood moved up another notch. The POWs were about to have their first decent meal since the bombing of Clark Field. Before long, hungry men were gorging, and it wasn't long until Reed, like most of his friends, had severe stomach cramps. Some of the celebrants lost everything they had eaten.

In a few days seventy-three new guards appeared and took control of the camp. Traffic was building up on the road just north of the camp as convoys of Japanese combat troops being redeployed by General Yamashita rushed by. The prisoners, watching, sensed that their fate would soon change. They did not know that General MacArthur, leading the approaching American army, had had reports that caused him to fear the Japanese might massacre the POWs rather than let them fall into the hands of the Americans.

On the evening of January 30, 1945, Reed and his friends sat chatting along the outside wall of their bamboo barracks. A guard at the front gate clanged the gong, as he did routinely on the half-hour. Reed figured it must be about 7:30 P.m. In minutes, a shot rang out. All conversations ended, and Reed hastily looked around to see if a prisoner was trying to

escape. Almost immediately there was a second shot. Reed thought, "if they missed him the first time, maybe they will miss again." Then all hell broke loose. Rifle and automatic weapons fire filled the air in and around the camp. Reed hit the dirt, face down, and wrapped his arms around his head. What in the hell were the Japanese up to now?

He had no way of knowing that Lt. Col. James Mucci and part of his Sixth Ranger Battalion were systematically wiping out the guards in the towers, bursting through the main gate, annihilating the off-duty guards in their barracks and the 150 Japanese soldiers temporarily bedded down in the camp, and knocking out the tanks in the tank shed. Only when he heard the Rangers shouting, "Head for the main gate!" did Reed realize that they were being rescued. He and others ran toward a gate they had been using, but giving some POWs a firm shove, the Rangers quickly rerouted them to a gate they hadn't used before.

Half running and half walking, skinny POWs converged on the gate. Behind them, Rangers carried on their backs and in their arms about 170 who were nonambulatory. In just twelve minutes the firing was down to a few scattered shots in the camp. Reed saw the Rangers' wounded and dying surgeon, Capt. James Fisher, being attended to on the ground. Nearby, a Ranger stepped behind eight Japanese guards with their hands up and one at a time slit their throats. Reed watched it but never gave it a thought as he hurried along. Within thirty minutes of the first shot, a red flare shot into the air, the signal that all POWs had cleared the camp. Reed heard a big explosion and machine guns firing, 300 or 400 yards to his right. He didn't know the Philippine Scouts and guerrillas were inflicting heavy casualties on a Japanese combat unit that happened to be bivouacking in the vicinity and had launched an attack trying to get to the POW camp.

In the moonlit night 511 weak POWs, in a long column stretching out about a mile, moved happily toward friendly lines some twenty miles away. Water buffaloes pulled carts loaded with the men too weak to walk; those who could walk followed the carts. When a water buffalo gave out along the way, friendly Filipinos quickly replaced it and added more carts during the night for the men who collapsed.

About ten miles north of Cabanatuan the column had to enter a mile long section of a main highway the Japanese had been using to move forces at night. Although Colonel Mucci had blocking forces de-

ployed, he worried that they might not be able to hold out long enough to allow the column to clear the dangerous stretch of the road. Reed wasn't aware of these problems. He was in a state of ecstasy, thinking about his wife, his two children, and the rest of his family, rejoicing that the end of his purgatory was in sight. Despite his physical condition, he thought he could walk any distance necessary to get out of there. Tired, weak, and weighing only about a hundred pounds, he nevertheless moved with a spring in his walk. The open wound that had plagued him ever since he had operated on himself during the Death March continued to drain. The arm the Japanese had broken with a pick handle hung in a sling. Two teeth knocked out left a gaping hole in his smile. The dry beriberi caused by malnutrition ached like a bad tooth, as it would for the rest of his life. He was deaf in his right ear from the beating at the airfield. But none of this reduced the warm glow that embraced him.

By 8:00 A.M. the column had covered about fifteen miles and arrived at Sibul, a tiny village where friendly Filipinos waved American flags, fed the former prisoners, and provided an additional twenty carabao carts. Here for the first time Mucci made radio contact with Sixth Army headquarters at Guimba. The good news about the raid rippled through army headquarters.

At 11:00 A.M. the lead Ranger ran into a friendly patrol who advised him that trucks and ambulances awaited the men a short distance down the road. Reed welcomed the friendly airplanes that circled overhead. In an hour the convoy arrived at Guimba, where American soldiers cheered, waved, shouted words of encouragement, and gave the V for victory sign. As those who could walk hastily unloaded, the crowd gathered in closer, shook the hands of the long-lost Philippine defenders, patted them on the back, and told them what a great job they had done and that America was proud of them. In the midst of the good cheer and jubilation, tears rolled down Reed's cheeks. Wide smiles and wet cheeks surrounded him. It was the best day of his life. He was a free man again.

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