

Bataan Death March: 50 years later

Survivors want to be repaid

By Herb Brock
Staff Writer

Thousands of Japanese-Americans were herded into internment camps during World War II where they were detained but not harmed. The U.S. government recognized the wrong that was committed and has paid compensation.

The survivors have \$20,000 apiece to show for their ordeal.

Edwin "Skip" Rue was herded into a Japanese prison camp during World War II where he was beaten and abused. The Japanese government has not recognized committing any wrong and the United States hasn't asked it to do so.

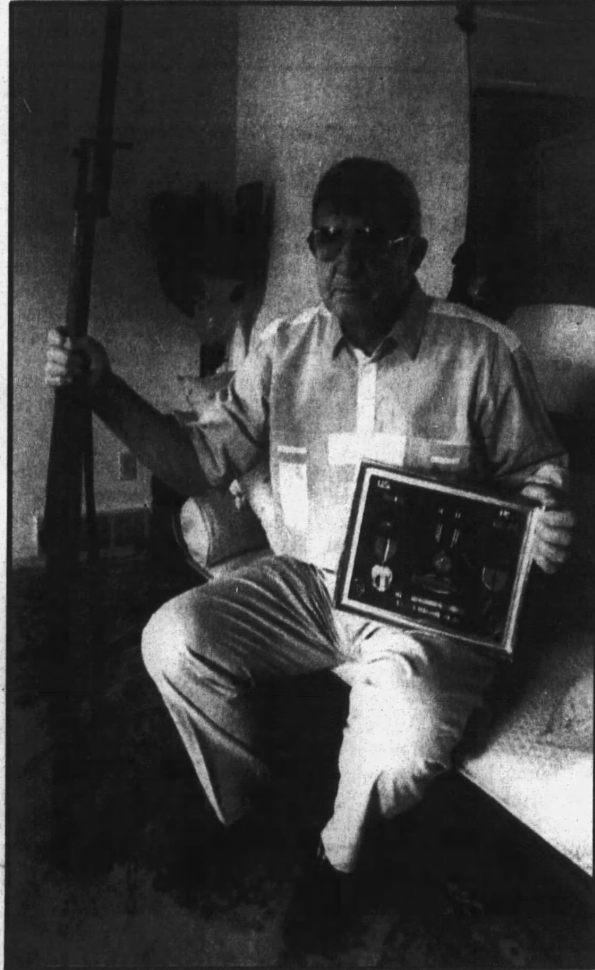
The only thing Rue has to show for his ordeal is the memory of a bowl of rice and half-cooked fish.

That meal is one of the most poignant memories that the Mercer County native has of the American surrender at Bataan and Corregidor, the subsequent Death

(Continued on Page A7.)

Bland Moore of Danville, a survivor of the Bataan Death March, shows off medals and a Japanese sniper rifle he brought home from World War II.

Staff Photo by James Morris



Ruel

Clipped By:



jopolony

Sat, Dec 3, 2016

Bataan survivors want to be repaid

(Continued from Page A1.)

March and slavery-like imprisonment he and thousands of Americans and Filipinos endured. The memories are particularly strong now as this is the 50th anniversary of one of the most shameful chapters in American military history.

But the meal is more than a memory of what happened in the past. It's become a metaphor for what hasn't happened since then.

"I recall it like it was yesterday," said Rue. "I had given a fellow prisoner 20 yen to buy something for me. A Japanese officer stopped my friend and asked where he had gotten so much money. When the officer found out it was me, he gave me a beating."

But a few days later, the Japanese officer dropped by Rue's prison dormitory and mentioned for the American army captain to follow him.

"He brought me into his quarters, fixed some food on his little wok and shared his meal with me. That happened three times," said Rue. "We didn't say anything to each other. I didn't understand Japanese and he didn't understand English. But we both understood food."

Wants compensation
White Rue still appreciates that rare gesture of kindness during his nearly three years of imprisonment in Japan, he doesn't believe it compensates him for what he had to endure.

And just as he and his captors understood the language of food 50 years ago, he believes the U.S. and Japanese governments need to understand the language of fairness today.

A lot of Americans and Filipinos were treated rough during our captivity in World War II. I got off lightly compared to a lot of men," said Rue, a soft-spoken man who now lives in Lexington.

"I bear no hatred toward individual Japanese. War is hell for everybody," said Rue. "But the thought has crossed my mind that if the United States has compensated the Japanese-Americans who were placed in internment camps during the war, then Japan should compensate the survivors of their prison camps."

"It's simply a matter of fairness."

That thought has been crossing the minds of many survivors, including the members of Company D of the 192nd Tank Battalion, which Rue commanded until it arrived in the Philippines. The battalion included a total of 60 Mercer County men, and about 15 are still alive.

Report says agriculture secretary under investigation for role in S&L

CHICAGO (AP) — Agriculture Secretary Edward Madigan served seven years as a director of a savings and loan seized by federal regulators and sold at a cost of more than \$111 million to taxpayers, a newspaper reported Saturday.

Madigan, a former Illinois congressman, was on the board of Olympic Federal Savings Association from September 1985 until June 1990, the Chicago Tribune said.

Meanwhile, The New York Times reported Saturday that federal officials were investigating whether Madigan and

Mercer men recall In recent interviews, Rue and his comrades said they wholeheartedly support the efforts of the American Defenseers of Bataan and Corregidor Inc. to obtain from the Japanese government \$20,000 in compensation for each survivor in a 50-year-old for the same amount that the U.S. government paid survivors of the Japanese-American internment camps.

The way Rue looks at it, the 20 yen he had when he was a prisoner may not be equal to the \$20,000 he's seeking as an ex-prisoner on the currency exchange but it is in the humanly exchange.

ADBC is working on several fronts, including the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, where it has filed claims, and the White House, where it is urging President Bush to lean on the Japanese government instead of trying to appease it for economic purposes. So far, though, the White House says its hands are tied because all claims were settled in the 1961 peace treaty.

Fairness
Survivors think the U.S. can untie its hands in the name of fairness.

"If we can pay the people who were interned over here, they can pay us for being imprisoned in forced-labor camps over there. And we were treated a lot worse than the Japanese-Americans," said Kenneth Hourigan of Burgin, who was in the 192nd and is a member of the ADBC.

Hourigan, 75, escaped after spending a couple of days on the Death March on Bataan. However, he was recaptured on Corregidor and spent 3½ years in prison.

"They were as rough as they could be. The way they treated us was horrible. It's something I'm going to live with until the day I die," he said.

Blair Moore, 71, of Danville, another member of the 192nd and now of the ADBC, hopes that if any compensation agreement is reached, it will benefit the families of those who died on the march, in prison or since the war, as well as the survivors.

"Nightmares sometimes" "I do have nightmares some times, and I know some guys who live through it daily," said Moore. "But I don't go around feeling sorry for myself. I was one of the lucky ones. A lot of men died."

Moore said during three years of captivity he went from 187 to 118 pounds, suffered a minimum of 60 beatings, and endured one episode where he had to stand at attention for 13 hours, had eight

teeth knocked out and then was tied to a tree for four days.

"But the worst part was seeing men — 50 to 100 a day — dying, and witnessing others being executed or tortured," he said.

"The psychological aspects were the most terrifying. You never knew when they would beat you or execute somebody because you didn't know what set them off," said Moore.

"One time, I thought I was going to be executed. I told a friend to tell my family that I died like a man. Then, in a split second, the Japanese of fear changed his mind and told me to go back to work."

"I don't hate the Japanese race. But I do hate the Japanese who beat me and my friends," Moore said. "For that, the Japanese government owes us compensation."

Survivors believe their suffering surpassed what should have been inflicted on a defeated army. Prisoners were forced to work for Japan's war effort as slave labor, in violation of the Geneva Convention.

Many soldiers died
The more than 75,000 soldiers, including 12,000 Americans, who surrendered on Bataan were herded 60 miles to the north in the notorious Death March. Nearly 10,000 died along the way, many of them killed by their Japanese captors.

It was the worst defeat ever suffered by the United States. Roosevelt already had committed the nation's resources to defending Britain and Europe.

"How typically American to write in anguish at the fate of a distant cousin while a daughter is being raped in the back room," Manuel Quenson, president of the Philippine Commonwealth, said at the time.

MacArthur intervenes Earlier, as war with Japan loomed, Gen. Douglas MacArthur was called out of retirement and sent to organize the defense of the Philippines.

Congress refused to provide enough money to defend the islands adequately. MacArthur was left with about 30,000 Americans and 110,000 poorly trained and poorly equipped Filipinos.

Hours after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, his planes struck the Philippines and destroyed most of MacArthur's aircraft at Clark field.

On Dec. 22, 1941, Japanese troops landed at the Lingayen Gulf, 110 miles north of Manila. Two days later, MacArthur declared Manila an "open city" and withdrew his forces to the jungles of Bataan.

MacArthur, Quenson and their staffs evacuated to Corregidor, a rocky island about the size of Manhattan three miles off Bataan at the entrance to Manila Bay.

Bataan and Corregidor appeared impenetrable. Three major volcanic mountain ranges cross Bataan, a finger of land 30 miles long and 20 wide between Manila Bay and the South China Sea.

The only road leading southward through the peninsula flanked Manila Bay to the east. On the westerly side are steep mountains ideal for artillery positions.

Food not available
In the confusion, however, the defenders failed to bring along enough food and supplies. Dr. Paul Ashton of Santa Barbara, Calif., then a medical officer, scrounged all the supplies he could from Manila's Fort McKinley, now Fort Benifacio, and rushed to Bataan, where he set up a field hospital.

"Our unit was very well trained," Ashton said, "but we didn't have any food."

"People not around then think we lost the battle. They don't realize we were defeated before it started because we had no food or supplies," said Moore.

Rations were steadily reduced to less than 1,000 calories a day. Desperate soldiers survived by foraging banana bushes and boiling for brains and snakes.

Sardines for 13
"We would have one small

can of sardines for 12 men," said retired Brig. Gen. Luis Villareal, then a Filipino major in the 21st Artillery. "We would mix that with whatever porridge the cooks could prepare."

Plans called for reinforcements to arrive within six months, but the destruction at Pearl Harbor made that impossible. For morale purposes, the U.S. military withheld both details of Pearl Harbor and Roosevelt's decision to concentrate on Europe.

On Corregidor, naval officers learned the truth. A submarine, the USS Trout, brought some supplies in February 1942, and officers aboard were told no relief convoy was coming.

On March 11, MacArthur, Quenson and their staffs fled to Australia. On Good Friday, April 3, the Japanese attacked the main defensive line at Mount Samat, hurling defenders toward the tip of the peninsula.

Bataan surrendered six days later, and Corregidor on May 6.

Dates not important
Those dates are important to history, but not to Edwin Rue. Ironically, the most important date to him is Thanksgiving.

"As a soldier, I arrived in the Philippines on Thanksgiving Day 1942. As a prisoner, I arrived in Japan on Thanksgiving Day 1943," said Rue.

And as a beating victim, he arrived in a Japanese officer's quarters for what turned out to be a simple meal for which he is grateful to this day. "I thought it was going to be my last supper, but I'm thankful it turned out to be a gesture of humanity," he said.

But Rue thinks it's time that the U.S. and Japanese governments undertake a bigger gesture of humanity — something easier to swallow than a bowl of rice and fish from his Japanese captor and a platter of excuses from his country.

Some information in this story was provided by The Associated Press.



U.S. and Filipino soldiers begin what was later called the "Death March" from an unnamed location on the Bataan peninsula in the Philippines following surrender of Bataan to the Japanese in April 1942. An estimated 10,000 prisoners, including 2,000 Americans, died on the forced 60-mile march to prison camps.

THE KENTUCKY ADVOCATE

by Ron

Be off

On ve

to wh

the he

a c

cat in

y out

Pris

ges his

3 pec

oath

inv

and the

out. If

Star

yes

RueArticle2

Clipped By:



jopolony

Sat, Dec 3, 2016