

Batson



E. J. Batson
Social Security [REDACTED]
C-Number 6-055-302 -
Former Rank Staff Sergeant
Serial Number: HF-18010377

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I, E. J. Batson enlisted in the Armed Forces of the United States of America, October 27, 1940, at R.C.T.G. Brooks Field, Texas. Took basic training at Brooks and Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas and reported to the 34th Pursuit Squadron, Hamilton Field, California, February 1941.

I was placed on order for foreign service to an undisclosed destination. I sailed on November 1, 1941 on the S S President Coolidge of the Mattson Lines.

I landed in Manila, P. I. on November 20, 1941. From there I went to Nichols Field and then on November 26, 1941 to Del Carmen Pompenge temporary air strip about 100 kilometers North of Manila, which was named Marett Field after our Commander, Lt. Samuel H. Marett who was killed December 10, 1941. The Japanese bombing began December 8, 1941. On December 26, moved to Orani, P. I. . January 6, 1942 promoted to corporal and moved to Little Baggio to train for infantry. January 12, 1942 I moved to Agoloma and set up beach defense. January 23, 1942 Japanese landed at Agaloma Point and John Morrell, a friend of mine was killed. Pap Jennings was wounded. January 23, another landing was attempted but we wiped them out. All the time we were fighting we were receiving one meal a day of horse and mule meat, eaten up by magots by the time we got it. During this time the Japanese were bombing and straffing us. A big bomb landed close to me and Leroy Gurganus on Agoloma Point, March 1942 tearing a big humk out of his right hip and damaged my ear's so bad the ringing continued until sometime in 1950, when I lost most of my hearing in my left ear and partly my right ear.

On April 8, 1942, we were given orders to surrender and were marched through the jungle from Agaloma Point to Mariveleous, a distance of about 25 kilometers. During this march the Jap's beat, stomped and hit us with the butts of their rifles. Everything of value such as rings, watches, bill folds, money and pictures, and if you had anything that belonged to a dead Jap, you were beheaded with the Jap sword. This was murder as far as I could tell. After we reached Marveleous we were placed in a kneeling position and serched again and again, then left sitting in the hot tropic sun without a hat and no food or water and if you moved you were made to stand and the Jap guard would beat you with the butt of the rifle or his fist until you were out and if you resisted he would practice bayonet on you. This lasted about six or eight hours. The Jap's made no move to feed us. I had very little water in my canteen.

April 10, 1942, the Japs started the "Death March" a distance of 126 kilometers. This lasted six days and nights. I would try to help the sick wounded and crippled but the Jap's forbade me to help these men. Those of us who tried were kicked, slugged or jabbed with bayonet points by the guard who stalked with us in two's and three's. The Japs anger grew as we marched and they no longer were content with mauling stragglers or pricking them with bayonet points. The Thrusts were intended to kill. American solders were bayoneted their stomach, left to die or rolled into the path of truck and crushed to death.

Several times I was pulled out, beat and kicked. About the third day, we were marching through Orion and a Jap soldier hit me across my forehead with his rifle and a buddy caught me and kept me marching until I could make it alone. If you had any water the Jap's would take it away

and pour it out. I got so thirsty that it was almost impossible to go on. We slept walking. On several occasions the Jap's would turn us around and we would stagger over the same road we had come over. The sun was hot, some became delirious. Starvation, exhaustion and being clubbed was too much for our weakened buddies. My weight back in the States was 135 pounds. On the Death March, it dropped to 70 pounds.

I did not receive any medical attention from the Jap's. Some of my buddies died from malaria or dysentery on the Death March. Many times the Jap's would take sick buddies from your arms and kill them.

At San Fernando we were given a cup of water and a small bowl of rice, the first I had in six days and nights.

On April 15, 1942 we were marched to a railroad siding and put in box-cars. None of these could have held more than fifty men. About 115 were packed into each car and the doors were pulled shut. There was no room to move. There was little ventilation and the air was foul beyond description, because some of the prisoners had dysentery. Some fainted from the heat and fell face down in the filth. The ride lasted more than six hours in this stinking hot tropic sun without water or food. We were then unloaded and placed in a rice field in the hot sun for two to three hours. Then we marched seven miles to camp O'Donnell which was to be our prison. This was an unfinished Filipino army camp that had little or no facilities. I stood in line for 8 to 12 hours to get a canteen of water for me and some of my buddies that were too weak to stand. If you tried to escape from the Jap's you would be tortured by being flogged unmercifully and tied up by your wrist in the hot sun to die. The Japs reasoned that slow starvation and thirst would make us too weak to attempt to escape. I managed to get in the kitchen as a cook at O'Donnell, this saved my life and some of my buddies. During my stay at O'Donnell we were burying fifty to one hundred Americans a day. The Filipinos were dying at 350 to 400 a day. Our days were occupied burying the dead. We soon learned to conceal our emotions. We were so weak it took four men to carry a fifty pound body. They put us in groups of ten and if one escaped the other nine were shot. Recaptured escapees were marched through camp for twenty-four hours and used for bayonet practice. During this time I had malaria and dysentery but was still able to stay on my feet. If you ever lay down or gave up you had it. I got burned rice from the kitchen to slow down my dysentery. We were forced to work at all times sick or well if you could walk you worked. If you were too sick to work you got half ration.

In June most of the prisoners were moved to Cabantuan. I was left there with about one hundred other prisoners to bury the dead and clean up the camp. There was flies by the millions. They would light on the dead and filth and then upon your gray rice, the Jap's issued to us.

July 5, 1942, we were loaded into box cars, and moved to Camp # 1 at Cabanatuan. We arrived there July 6, 1942. Here my dysentery and malaria got worse. I was having chills and fever every day. I was too weak to stand in line for food or make sick call. A friend sleeping next to me traded the Jap's cigarettes for quinine and sardines and fed me until I was strong enough to help myself. I also had scurvy and "dry" and "wet" beri-beri. Sometime my face would swell so bad I could not see. My feet would swell so bad I could not get my boots on. I started having pyorrhea of the gums. I later lost all my teeth when I got back to the states. I had forty-four attacks of malaria in Cabanatuan and Davao Penal Colony.

October 26, 1942 I left Cabanatuan for Mindanao. I was too sick and too weak to remember much about this trip. I do remember when we got to Davao prison camp. The American soldiers there from Mindanao thought they were seeing walking skeletons coming through the prison gates. Just the skin and bones were all we had left.

At Davao Penal Colony I was sent with the others to work, planting rice, harvesting it in muddy paddies and sometimes cleaning Jap latrines. In the rice field I was barefooted, naked except for G-string, half-starved

and my whole body exposed to the tropical hot sun. Sticking the rice shoots into the sloppy mud until I felt like my spine would break into. My feet were cut by stones at the bottom of the slime, my legs slashed by the grass which cut like a knife. Infection covered my feet after several days of this, followed by ulcers. The only treatment the Jap's gave me was insults. To add to my trouble, malaria, scurvy and dysentery started again plus being beat by the Jap's for no reason at all. After about six months of this I got assigned to the kitchen. This saved my life. Being only five feet four inches tall and weighing seventy pounds, I was easy picking for the Jap's outside the compound. They enjoyed beating on small men. I had to help unload eighty pound sacks of rice off of trucks. Weighing only seventy pounds I would fall, but by the help of God and the Jap's beating me with a stick on my back and kidneys, I managed to carry my share of it.

I saw buddies murdered here in Davao for trying to escape April 5, 1943. Captain Wm. E. Dyess, Lt. Sam Grashio and six others escaped, and made it back to good old U. S. A. Dry beri-beri started bothering me, and I would soak my feet in cold water to stop the pain.

June 6, 1944 I left Davao Penal Colony, tied in truck with ropes, standing up in shallow bed truck. The ropes were so tight around our bodies it cut off circulation. We rode this way blind folded for 25 kilometers. If you as much as grunted the Jap guard hit you on the head with a big stick, hard enough to buckle your knees. Later we were loaded on a Jap ship, 1236 men to a hole.

June 8, 1944, I received red cross packages. Went without sleep three days and nights. No standing room on deck or down in hole.

June 12, 1944 I sailed from port.

June 15, 1944, Col. Magee went over board at Zambango. From then on we were kept in hole below deck.

June 16, 1944, Lt. Wells jumped over board, sixteen hours out of Zambango. Jap's tried to kill us all that night.

June 17, 1944 I landed Cebu. Left ship, went to old Spanish Fort, slept in rain and mud all night. Better than that hot stinking ship.

June 21, 1944, went aboard another Jap ship. Still crowded. No one allowed on deck except to to to toilet.

June 25, 1944, Lt. Wetsell died from over heat in hot hole of ship.

June 26, 1944, Got off ship at Manila Pier 7. Marched out to Belibid Prison. No bath for six days. Just enough water to wet your throat.

July 2, 1944-Went aboard Jap ship.

July 4, 1944-Left Manila Harbor for Japan.

July 5, 1944-Came back into break water.

July 16, 1944 -Jap tanker and one freighter was torpedoed by good old U. S. A. . We sailed for Formosa that day.

July 17, 1944 thru July 22, rough stormy weather, ship almost sank. Ship was sold to Japan by U. S. for scrap iron. Build in 1925.

July 23, 1944, landed at Formosa. Ship was loaded below us with salt. That the worse misery and torture I ever experienced. Being kept in the hole of this ship with barely enough water and food to stay alive. Temperature in the Islands stayed at 110 to 120 degrees. In this hole it must have been 135 to 140 degrees.

August 8, 1944, Cpl. Weeks died aboard ship, from heat.

From here on I lost track of time. Just tried to stay alive. Steam boilers went out on ship and we got lost from Convoy or Uncle sunk the rest. I never found out. We spent thirty or forty days in a big storm. They would let you go on deck then but the wind and waves would wash you over board. I got two small bowls of rice a day and two cups of water. Had a five gallon can for a toilet. It ran over all time. Some prisoners in other hole cut their buddies throat and drank their blood, they got so thirsty. This lasted ninety days and nights.

September 2, 1944, landed at Mook, Japan. Took train to Jap prison camp.

September 4, 1944, arrived at Yokichi prison camp no 5 Negoya Gun Camp. Here we were lined up on the cold beach in our underwear and they began beating us with stick, trying to teach us to drill and count in Japanese.

Sgt Major, I named "Herman" because he beat me so much. Every time he got a chance he would knock me down and stamp me with his feet. I was assigned with six other men to work on railroad. Since we were all weak, forty to sixty pounds under weight, we could not pick up one rail so they moved us to the factory where they were melting scrap iron. This was a small gauge rail lot smaller. Here we were guarded by Japanese Civilians. (Called stick guards). They beat us with these sticks for no reason at all except hate. I was assigned by Capt. Don Thompson (now retired Lt. Col.) to give a roll call report each morning and night of the men in my area. Herman loved this because when I made an error in my Japanese report he would knock me down.

December 7, 1944, Earth quack hit Yokaichi Peninsula. This damaged the factory so bad we spent about six months cleaning it up. After the earth-quack, we had a small tidal wave which covered the Peninsula with about four feet of water. Then the B-29 started bombing this factory. I was on the beach with the other prisoners when they dropped these block-busters. Pieces of scrap iron would fall all around me. Everytime we got bombed which was nearly every day and night or sometimes twice or three times, the Japs would take it out on us. Jap soldiers and civilians. They would beat us on the head back, arms and legs with sticks about one inch to inch and half diameter.

July 1945, prison camp was hit by American planes. Sgt. Bailey lost both legs from American plane bullets.

August 15, 1945- Work stops in factory. Rumors the war was over.

August 24, 1945- Japs announced Peace Treaty to be signed Aug. 31, 1945.

August 29, 1945-British Planes dropped food on my birthday. I was twenty seven years old. I was twenty-three when all this started.

September 4, 1945-Left Yokaichi prison for trip home.

October 8, 1945 At 9:45 A. M. picked up pilot.

October 8, 1945 -10:45 docked in San Francisco aboard Yormouth .

11:17 A. M. put my feet back on United States soil and I was taken to Letter and gent. Hospital Ward # 43. Later to Mc Closkey Gen. Hospital in Temple, Texas.

Sept. 4, 1945 weight was 70 pounds. Oct. 8, 1945 weight was 145 pounds.

January 10, 1946-Married girl that waited four years for me to return.

April 1, 1946-Discharged from United States Air Force at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

June 1946 Employed by Humble Pipe Line.(Exxon now). Had operation for Hernia in 1948. Assigned to engineering department. Light work. Sunlight and bright lights bothered eye sight. Painted for Humble, Heights bothered me. Dentist started treating for pyorrhea of gum in 1947..

September 7, 1948-Applied for disability at Veterans Administration. Awarded compensation in the amount of \$13.80 a month, which is 10% for deafness partial bilateral with tinnitus curium A. D., Myositis, lumbar muscles, mild malaria and residuals of malnutrition, arthritis.

Quit Humble Pipe Line 1949. Did not want to move to West Texas,

Eyes started bothering me again. Radiated sunlight and bright lights blinded me.

1949: Started wearing prescription sun glasses outside and clear inside.

Legs, arms, back and shoulders bothering me. Feet hurt when standing on them two or three hours.

Employed as salesman on bread route for Mrs. Baird's Baking Co, 1949-1951-Weight was 142 pounds lost down to 115, due to nerves. Check up had nervous indigestion. Dr. said I had ulcers nervous upset stomach. Could not eat and what I did forced down, came back up.

I quit in 1951 and went back to work Humble Pipe Line. Got back in painting. Started having dizzy spells 1958. Went to Company doctor. Said it was my nerves. Chest pains, nervous indigestion. 1959 laid off. Went to work in R. C. Cole bottling plant as maintenance helper. Too much noise drove me up the wall. I quit and asked for service station training by Humble Oil & Refining, could not take the present meeting customers.

Tried milk route with Westmoreland Farm Dairy. Same problem

June 1960 I was employed by Texas Instruments as "industrial painter" or "metal finisher". 1968 promoted to supervisor. 1971 demoted to painter because I could not control my out-burst. Still working for Texas Instruments. Go to work feeling fine, everything upsets me. No control, nervous indigestion, dizziness, outburst, loose contro of emotions. Some of my best friends at Texas Instruments do not know how to talk with me for fear of upsetting me. I have always tried to be friendly with everyone I came in contact with.

To sum it all up, my Dad was a fine man that everyone in Madison County and adjoining Counties respected. When he passed away twenty-one years ago, everyone still speaks of him as being a friend to everyone.

I would like to be remembered this way but what I went through in Japanese Prison Camp, which made me have a bitter out-look on life. Some times I feel like destroying everything with-in my reach. Will it gets worse, that is what bothers me.

It was no way possible I could put in writing the beatings, torture, and starvation I went through for three and one half years I spent in Japanese Prison Camp. I do know that those years were a living hell.

Yoskachi Prison
Sept 4 Sept 4
1944 1945

E. J. Batson +
Carl Reese
Jim Hardy - Deceased

