

Old Bilibid Prison

Report on American Prisoners of War Interned by the Japanese In The Philippines

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The Prisoner of war camp known as Old Bilibid Prison was located in the heart of Manila, not far distant from Santo Thomas University where the Allied civilians were interned during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. Designed and built under the auspices of the United States Government during the American occupation of the Islands as a place of detention for Filipino criminals, Old Bilibid had, before World War II, been regarded as an extremely modern penal institution.

It was comprised of approximately 11 long, low one-story buildings, one large main building formerly used as a hospital, and, at one end of the prisoner grounds, a two-story administration building constructed partly of wood and partly of concrete. Under the old administration prior to the Japanese occupation, one of the small buildings had been set aside as an execution chamber.

The prison grounds were laid out in the form of a wheel, of which the high stone wall surrounding the grounds formed the rim, and the long low buildings the spokes. The wall had entrances on three sides and was topped by a walk on which guard towers were erected at certain intervals. They were manned by guards who used them to patrol the camp at strategic points. From this description it may readily be seen that this prison was extremely well equipped, in the best modern manner, to insure that its occupants had scant opportunity to escape alive from within its walls.

When the Japanese entered Manila they took over Old Bilibid Prison with the intention of using it as one of the prisoner of war camps they were establishing in the Philippines; and, indeed they did use it as an interment camp for those prisoners they took in the early days of the campaign before the fall of Bataan and Corregidor. Upon the surrender of the Americans, however, and after the Japanese had actually occupied all of the Philippines, this prison was used by them as a clearing house and transfer point for all prisoners of war who were being sent to other camps in the Philippines or to Japan.

As in the case of Cabanatuan camp, this prisoner of war camp will be discussed here with respect to its administration, sanitation, food, etc., during the years 1942-45 when it was in operation. Since the Japanese failed to, or refused to, notify either the Swiss Government or the International Red Cross of all the movements of the prisoners of war in and out of Bilibid during that time, our statistics have had to be compiled for the most part from affidavits of escapees,

liberated prisoners of war, and from Military intelligence reports. As a consequence they are very meager and in some instances at least, incomplete.

In the latter part of May, 1942, all of the American prisoners of war captured on Corregidor were marched through the streets of Manila to Bilibid Prison. Here they were met by another group of prisoners who had been captured before the fall of Bataan and Corregidor and were assigned to the camp as a permanent detail to aid in its administration and to clear the transient prisoners of war through it to other camps.

When the prisoners of war from Corregidor arrived at Old Bilibid their captors search them and stripped them of all articles such as knives, forks, watches, flashlights, extra clothing and any other personal possessions that the Japanese deemed unnecessary for prisoners of war to have. Each man was allowed to keep only one uniform, a shelter half and a blanket, as well as any mess gear he may have had in his possession including a spoon. Many of the prisoners had no mess kits or canteens and had to utilize any kind of container they could find such as cans, pieces of sheet metal, or even coconut shells, to eat and drink with.

They stayed at Bilibid only a few days. At the end of their time there they were sent in groups, on successive days to the prison camp at Cabanatuan. Several hundred volunteers were retained by the Japanese authorities to be used as permanent work details in and around the city of Manila. These men were housed and quartered at Bilibid Prison along with the first prisoners already referred to who were aiding in the administration. This constituted the initial cadre of Bilibid Prison Camp in Manila.

The sick and wounded from Corregidor were not transferred to Cabanatuan along with the other prisoners but were kept in a section of Old Bilibid Prison reserved for patients. They were joined later by another large group of patients from Corregidor Hospital. There was also a large influx of patients from Camp O'Donnell, mostly men who had originally been confined in the U.S. Army Hospital No. 1 on Bataan and who had been taken when that stronghold fell.

Administration

For the first few months after the contingents of American prisoners of war from Corregidor arrived at Bilibid, the Japanese were so much occupied with administering civilian affairs in Manila itself that they had little time to spare for establishing any definitive administrative policies in the prison camp. The Japanese officers in charge seemed apparently quite content to restrict their efforts to seeing to it that the few hundred prisoners permanently assigned there were kept busy on the various clean-up and salvage details throughout the city. They kept almost no records and left all routine matters concerning new prisoners such as roll calls, discipline and organization of work details in the hands of the American administrative staff.

The hospital staff was made up of physicians and medical corpsmen comprising the medical staff of the former Naval Hospital at Canacao, as well as a few civilian doctors. Most of the routine

administrative tasks connected with the management of the work details were performed by Naval medical officers on this staff.

In August 1942 an administrative force arrived from Japan to take charge of all the concentration camps for military and civilian prisoners in the Philippines. Immediately upon taking office, the new commandant, Lt. Nogi, announced that he intended to run the prisons in accordance with the rules laid down by the Geneva Convention, except that every American, whether officer or enlisted man, would be expected to salute or bow to all Japanese soldiers regardless of their rank. He told the prisoners that a set of rules was to be posted in each building for the guidance of all prisoners of war, patients and duty personnel in Bilibid. These rules, he warned, must be strictly adhered to. He also promised that conditions in the camp would soon improve.

The lieutenant was as good as his word. The promised regulations were posted and a more rigid guard system was established to patrol the compound. Within a very short time conditions, particularly in respect to food, sanitation and recreation, were much better. It was his responsibility to contract with Japanese and Filipino merchants for food to be purchased by the prisoners. This galley crew worked in the kitchen under the supervision of an American officer. A sanitation detail was designated to police the compound and may necessary improvements to latrines and urinals. One Japanese and one American interpreter were detailed to the Japanese headquarters as liaison officers and a number of the American prisoners were also detailed there as clerks and typists.

The increased efficiency of both the Japanese and American administrative forces at Bilibid was reflected in the marked improvement of living conditions that soon took place, an improvement that continued through 1943. The Japanese authorities made some attempt to keep careful records of prisoners in the camp as well as those who came and went constantly on work details. All in all, a great deal was accomplished this year for the welfare of the prisoners. The food became much better, with the result that there were fewer prisoners ill and thus more of the better grade men became available for administrative work.

The following year the Japanese sent some of the American Army officers who had been the administrative staff to Cabanatuan and installed a group of Navy officers to take their place. This new staff functioned efficiently until October, 1944, when they too found themselves relieved of their functions and placed on the list of details to be sent to Japan. Next an entirely new American administrative staff made up mostly of doctors and medical corpsmen was put in charge and remained in control until the camp was liberated by the invading American forces on February 4, 1945. During the period of their administration this last staff conducted extensive surveys of the conditions of the patients in the camp and also increased the number of routine inspections.

Housing

The Buildings in which the prisoners were housed at Old Bilibid were long, low concrete structures approximately 200 feet long and 50 feet wide. They did have a sufficient number of windows to supply ample light and air, even though they were barred. But they were poorly insulated and the concrete floors and walls remained damp for long periods of time after every rainfall, thus providing excellent breeding places for bedbugs, cockroaches and mosquitoes with which the buildings were always infested.

In some buildings the roofs had been damaged by bombs and had been repaired with makeshift materials such as strips of corrugated

tin or even cardboard. During the period from January to May, 1942, Japanese soldiers had stripped the buildings of all furniture as well as much of the plumbing and light fixtures. When the American prisoners first came from Corregidor they were forced to sleep open the damp concrete floors. This situation was remedied, however, when the new Japanese administrative staff took over in August of 1942.

The year 1943 saw considerable improvement in the housing situation. Repairs, additions and changes were made. Some additional beds and bedding were brought in, showers were repaired and water facilities throughout the buildings were improved.

The next year, however, very few improvements were made in either barracks or quarters. The wooden shutters on the windows began to show signs of wear from all the typhoons and other adverse weather conditions of the previous two years. Though roofs of some of the buildings were in fair condition, others had developed gapping holes. The Japanese made no attempt to assist the American in their attempts to repair either the roofs or the window shutters. They did, though, keep the electricians among the prisoners busy repairing and maintaining the camp's electrical system.

After October, 1944, many patients were shifted from ward to ward, apparently because of the desire of the Japanese to concentrate in a smaller area for administrative reasons.

Sanitation

When the Naval officers from Canaco Naval Hospital took over the administration of the work details at Old Bilibid around June, 1942, they found several hundred prisoners of war lying on bare floors of the barracks. They were covered with flies. Some were dying, some suffering for uncared for wounds, and many were ill from malnutrition or a variety of tropical diseases. Corpsmen were immediately assigned to the task of cleaning up the patients, washing the floors and generally improving sanitary conditions throughout the compound.

The Japanese did not object to improvements the Americans wanted to make, but refused to cooperate to the extent of providing the necessary materials. The men who went out into the city on work details every day, recognizing the need for the materials, every evening would bring back any tin, wood, nails or other materials they could lay their hands on during the day. With these materials the sanitary detail installed several urinals and sanitary latrines and even devised a flushing system for the latrines. That consisted of a large gasoline drum suspended on a pivot at the end of each latrine. Under this drum was placed a spigot connected to a water pipe running into the drum. When the water from the spigot reach a certain height in the drum, the drum would tip to one side and the water would spill down into the latrine, flushing its contents into a main drainage system that led outside the camp.

The sanitary detail also put in a series of wash basins along the inside of the wall that surrounded the compound and set up trench disposal units in remote parts of the camp that consisted of enclosed ovens with wood fires underneath them.

During 1943 a few slight additional improvements were made in the sanitation of the camp. The Japanese issued some insecticides which were very well received, and, as the health of the patients improved under the slightly better food and indubitably better living conditions, individuals and groups alike took more pains to give better care to their clothing and to the barracks and hygienic conditions in general.

Sanitary conditions in the camp remained virtually unchanged the

Old Bilibid Japanese Prisoner-of-War Camp in Manila on Liberation Day, Feb. 4, 1942



Old Bilibid's front gate on liberation day, Feb. 4, 1945



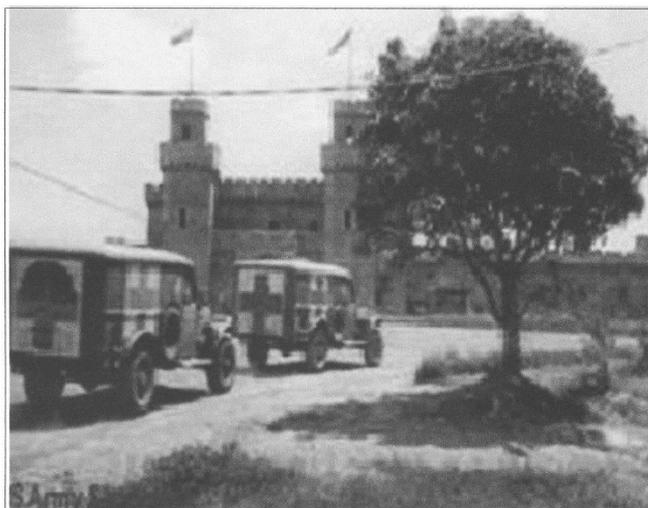
Old Bilibid barracks shown shortly after American troops broke through one of the prison walls on Feb. 4, 1945, to liberate allied prisoners being held by the Japanese. This ward likely was Uncle Bob's home for 32 months.



Burial area for prisoners of war of Japanese who died in Old Bilibid from 1942 to 1945.



Space between Old Bilibid's concrete barracks. Photo taken shortly after prisoners' liberation on Feb. 4, 1945.



Army ambulances approach Old Bilibid on day of liberation, Feb. 4, 1942.



Inside Old Bilibid walls on liberation day, Feb. 4, 1942.

(All photos U.S. Army Signal Corps.)

next year, except that after September the increased number of transient details arriving at Bilibid from Cabanatuan en route to Japan put a strain on the prison's water supply. This was only temporary, however, and soon readjusted itself after each contingent had departed.

Food

Food was a serious problem for the prisoners of war at Bilibid during the early days of their internment. Through the first year the normal amount of food issued by the Japanese was 90 percent rice of the very poorest quality and small quantities of greens mainly used to make soup. On rare occasions the Japanese also issued small quantities of meat or fish. The average daily menu for the prisoners consisted of one cup of boiled rice for breakfast, another cup of rice and a bowl of soup made of vegetable greens for lunch, and the same for dinner. A slight improvement was seen after the new Japanese administrative staff took charge in August, 1942. They authorized the establishment of a commissary under the supervision of an American officer who made contracts with Japanese and Filipino merchants to supply certain items of food for the prisoners either directly or indirectly. Those who had the money were able to buy such items as mung beans, bananas and garlic to supplement the monotonous rice diet furnished by the Japanese. They could even purchase small amounts of tobacco from time to time.

In November, 1942, the Japanese began paying the American officers, non-commissioned officers and medical corps. The purchasing power of the camp now rose to great heights. Soon the demand far exceeded the supply and prices began to soar. A fund was established from the contributions made by paid personnel to purchase additional food for the seriously ill patients who had no funds of their own and were not receiving pay. The additional food obtained thus from the commissary was instrumental in saving the lives of many of the men who would otherwise have perished. But even so, the food situation at Bilibid was never adequate and many did die of malnutrition and starvation. Of the approximately 1,000 patients who were hospitalized at Bilibid during 1942, more than 250 died of starvation or diseases directly related to malnutrition.

The arrival of Red Cross packages at the camp in December, 1942, caused considerable improvement of the food situation in the months that followed. Early in 1943 the Japanese also began to issue small quantities of meat and fish regularly in addition to the customary daily issue of rice. This increase in food rations, while not reducing the number of patients suffering from malnutrition, did help prevent any increase in the incidence of vitamin deficiency diseases. The additional supplies obtained from the commissary were also of great help during the first few months of 1943 in keeping down the number of deaths and in preventing the outbreak of epidemics directly related to malnutrition.

In the latter part of 1943, however, the food situation became critical. During these months the diet consisted almost entirely of rice and soup made from greens varied occasionally with small spoons full of dried fish. In September, the Japanese ordered that individual purchases through the commissary be limited to 7 pesos per month. They did allow any person who wished to continue to contribute a few pesos to the general mess fund. With all these new regulations and with prices of commodities soaring, it became nearly impossible for the commissary officer to have sufficient funds on hand to purchase any great quantities of food for the camp. Indeed, almost the only articles that could be obtained at this time were mung beans, garlic and tobacco. Soon the commissary was, for all practical purposes, out of business. Once again, arriving Red Cross

supplies, this time about three boxes per man, proved to be the salvation for the starving prisoners.

For the first few months of 1944 the Japanese steadily cut down the amount of food issued. The Red Cross packages that had arrived in late 1943 supplemented the rice diet as long as they lasted. But from February on, the Japanese issued nothing but rice to the prisoners, except on very rare occasions when they gave them a little meat or dried fish.

A diet kitchen was set up separate from the general mess so food could be prepared under the supervision of an American doctor for those who were seriously ill. However, the amounts of canned milk, vegetables and fruits issued to this kitchen were so small that the patients never received large enough quantities of this supplementary food to show any visible beneficial effects from it.

By August, 1944, the food situation was becoming critical. For the next four months the daily issue of food for each person amounted to only 200 grams: 100 grams of dry rice, 50 grams of soy beans—a variety that is impossible to cook and make palatable—and 50 grams of dried corn. Because of shrinkage and theft by the Japanese, however, as well as other reasons, the actual issue averaged 170 grams, not 200. At 8 o'clock every morning, each prisoner received one canteen cup of rice boiled in so much water that it was actually a thin rice gruel. His second meal, at 8 o'clock in the evening, was the same boiled rice, only this time cooked to a thick consistency. Occasionally a few greens were boiled to make a greenish colored soup for the men. The only exception to this horrible diet came on Christmas Day, 1944, when the Japanese issued some extra vegetables, a little sugar, and a few soy beans.

Under this starvation diet, prisoners became emaciated and ill. Soon the average weight dropped to less than 120 pounds. The death rate began rising rapidly. (The average number of men buried each day varied from one to four.)

When the American invasion forces arrived at the camp on February 4, 1945, the prisoners of war had reached a point of starvation that none could have survived much longer. Many had fallen victim to tuberculosis, dysentery, Beri-beri, and other tropical diseases and practically all were suffering from malnutrition or acute starvation. What the arrival of their rescuers meant to the prisoners of this camp can scarcely be imagined by one who has never been in a similar situation.

Clothing

When the American prisoners of war came to Old Bilibid in 1942 they had with them only the clothes they were wearing when they were captured. As time wore on these clothes became torn and ragged. Since no replacements were available except a few blue dungarees taken from the American quartermaster depots, the men had to patch their old garments as best they could with any kinds of material they could lay their hands on.

During the first year of internment, their captors issued them some 1,500 pairs of cotton socks of Japanese manufacture and a few "G-strings" made up of thin cotton cloth about 12 inches wide and 30 inches long. Prisoners wore these tied about their waist and pulled up between the legs. No shoes were issued and since most of their own shoes soon wore out, they had to rely on home-made wooden shoes that they called "clacks."

Toward the end of 1942, the clothing shortage was alleviated somewhat by the distribution of a few items that came in with Red Cross supplies in December—some felt hats, woolen garments and a few pairs of socks. But there were still no shoes.

In January of 1943 Commander Sartin reported that a survey revealed there were 100 men in the camp without shoes and 275 had shoes that were beyond repair. Five hundred of the men, the report went on to say, were in need of trousers and 200 had no undergarments at all. The Japanese installed a cobbler's shop and a tailor's shop in the compound under the direction of the pharmacists mates. But this apparently helpful move did little good for they neglected to supply materials necessary for making repairs. By March of 1943, 150 of the men were without shoes. Then at last the Japanese did issue some leather, nails, thread and other materials the men could use to repair their clothing and shoes. In April of 1943, 101 pairs of shoes were distributed, and a few more in the following month. Thereafter, however, the only shoes to be issued were old ones turned in by the prisoners themselves, which were then repaired at the cobbler's shop and reissued at the rate of 50 a month—just a drop in the bucket in light of the great need.

No new clothing was issued in 1944. Late in the year, two details, each comprising more than 1,500 men who had come from Cabanatuan in August and September respectively, were sent to Japan. Before they embarked they were given woolen Japanese uniforms. Their castoff clothing was redistributed among the prisoners at Bilibid. Aside from this unexpected and not altogether satisfactory addition to their clothing stores, the men at Bilibid continued to go around in old patches and motley rags—that is those who had rags did so; for by this time even the rags were beginning to wear out. When American invasion forces arrived in February of 1945, they found many of the men stark naked.

Medical Supplies

The Japanese furnished the hospital first with approximately 300 to 400 wooden bunks with straw mattresses. Toward the end of the year they also supplied an equal number of mosquito nets and a few blankets. The mattresses proved to be a problem for with constant use to which they were subject they became more and more soiled. Since there was no way of cleaning them they were soon filthy and crawling with vermin.

Absolutely no medicines at all were issued by the Japanese for the care of the sick and wounded prisoners during the first few months of 1942. The only medicines available then were those that prisoners themselves had been able to hold on to when they were captured and then bring with them. These, understandably, were very few. In June, 1942, the hospital received several thousand quinine tablets for malaria patients. Thereafter the Japanese supplied a sufficient quantity of quinine to enable the hospital staff to treat current cases of malaria. But there was never enough for prophylactic treatment. The only other medicines available were a little bismuth and nine bags of powdered charcoal, both utterly useless in treating dysentery. Later a little emetine, carbazone and yatren were issued at irregular intervals but never in sufficient quantities to permit full therapeutic dosage. When the U.S. Army unit from Corregidor arrived in July, they brought with them some surgical supplies and a small amount of vitamin synthetic, all of which were thankfully received by the hospital staff.

Again in January of 1943, some medical supplies were issued to the camp from Red Cross shipments that had arrived a month earlier. But even with these reinforcements there were never enough medicines available to those who needed them. The precious medicine on hand had to be saved for those most seriously ill; even in those cases it had to be rationed out in inadequate dosage if indeed all who needed it were to receive even the minimum treatment required.

In 1944 the situation regarding medical supplies improved somewhat from what it had been before. The Red Cross shipment of late December, 1943, contained a large quantity of vitamin pills, sufficient to enable every man in the camp to receive two pills per day for the entire year. Of course, even two vitamin pills cannot make up for the deficiency resulting from a highly inadequate and completely unbalanced diet. This was particularly so since the situation had been continued over a long period of time as it had been with the American prisoners at Old Bilibid. But even so, the vitamin pills produced some psychological benefit. And, who can say how much they were actually helped physically by the pills? In the Red Cross supplies, there was also a limited amount of blood plasma which the Japanese officials issued to the hospital staff. In view of its scarcity, this life-saving plasma was used very sparingly by the medical officers only for those prisoners who were dangerously ill. The amount of quinine and sulfa drugs as well as bandages and other medical supplies issued to the Americans in 1944 was quite sufficient to care for prisoners' needs in contrast to previous years. Some small quantities of fish oils were turned over to the American doctors for patients suffering from visual disorders resulting from malnutrition.

If medical care provided the prisoners left much to be desired, still less could be said for the attention given to dental needs. In their first year of internment at Old Bilibid, almost no provision was made for dental care. In 1943 the situation improved slightly. The Japanese assigned two dental officers to work on prisoners but so little equipment was furnished and facilities were so limited, dentists were able to make only minor repairs. The primary handicap was the lack of proper materials for fillings. This lack became increasingly pressing when the Japanese began requiring the dentists to care for their officers' teeth as well as the American prisoners. Under the stress of emergencies, the dentists and their assistants scoured the compound to salvage silver or any other kind of metal that could be used to fill cavities. Silver Filipino pesos were in special demand since they could be melted down.

Work Details

The Old Bilibid Prison Camp, as has been said before, was supposed to be not only a base hospital for prisoners of war who were seriously ill or injured, but also a transfer point and clearing station for details of American prisoners who were being moved from camp to camp in the Philippines or from the Philippines to work camps in the Japanese homeland.

Of the prisoners who were not ill or physically incapacitated, a work detail of several hundred enlisted men and a few officers were permanently assigned to the camp in June of 1942 to work as stevedores in the Manila dock areas. The rest of the healthy prisoners at Bilibid were classified for labor and were subsequently used as truck drivers and construction workers by the Japanese Army. In many instances men from other prison camps in the Philippines were sent to Bilibid for assignment to work details. A number were detailed to the Japanese headquarters to work as typists, clerks and orderlies for their captors. The prisoners on these work details received fair treatment from their guards, who, on occasion showed themselves not at all loath to accept bribes in return for extra food and medicines. Some even allowed prisoners to make contacts with friendly Filipinos.

As the second year of internment approached, the prisoners found that except for a scant few hundred assigned to work details in the city of Manila, the only work required of them was as cooks, medical corpsmen, sanitary details or administrative duties.

By 1944, the incidence rate of disease and malnutrition among prisoners was so high that there were only 100 of the 1,000 left who were able to carry out regular work of the camp such as administration, cooking, carrying of supplies and general policing of the grounds duties. Only occasionally after January of 1944 did the Japanese call upon men for special work outside the compound gates, and usually that was for technical work connected with the Japanese war effort.

Brutalities and Atrocities

In general there were few instances of affirmative mistreatment of prisoners at Old Bilibid. There was almost nothing that could be construed as actual brutality or atrocity during the entire three years the prison operated. However, one former American prisoner of war at Bilibid reports a rumor to the effect that the Japanese for security reasons summarily executed many political and military prisoners there during December, 1944. Some few of the men were slapped and sometimes beaten by the Japanese guards for failing to comply with the regulation that required them to salute or bow to Japanese officers and enlisted men. They were particularly zealous in enforcing this regulation. Occasionally a prisoner would be forced to stand at roll call for a half-hour in the pouring rain as a punishment for some misdemeanor or minor infraction of rules. In general, however, the treatment accorded to the prisoners, although far from ideal, was a good as could be expected in any Japanese prisoner of war camp and far better than most.

It must be said though, that unlike many American prisoners in other camps, who, irritated at their unaccustomed lack of freedom, did everything to antagonize their captors and willfully disobeyed orders, the prisoners here (at Old Bilibid) probably did much themselves to ease their existence by forcing themselves to comply, as far as possible, to the rules laid down by the Japanese, thus minimizing possible causes of friction. One cannot judge, of course, how different the fate of the prisoners at other camps might have been had they pursued a law-abiding, peaceful, "non-belligerent" course of action. Perhaps they too would have found their lives easier. Who knows? On the other hand, there is ample evidence that in many camps even those prisoners who did nothing to antagonize their Japanese captors, and indeed sometimes went out of their way to pacify them, were treated worse than were prisoners in other camps who carried on planned resistance to the Japanese authorities.

One is inclined to believe that here, as in so many other affairs of everyday life, it becomes a matter of individual differences. The prisoners at Old Bilibid were not tortured or even mistreated as were those at Camp O'Donnell and Cabanatuan—that much is known. But whether it was because they were more obedient—which is doubtful—or whether, and this is far more likely, the Japanese administrative officers at Old Bilibid were perhaps a little higher up the scale of human intelligence and more freely endowed with a spirit of decency and fairness. That we will never know for certain. The only thing we do know is that the prisoners at Bilibid were comparatively well treated—in fact very well treated—when one considers the treatment of their fellow prisoners in other Japanese prison camps in the Philippines.

Recreation

The prisoners at Bilibid displayed considerable ingenuity and cleverness in the devices they chose to provide entertainment and relaxation for themselves during their confinement. These devices took on many forms.

Early in their stay at Old Bilibid the American prisoners set about establishing some form of organized athletics. The only space available for such activities were the small triangular areas between the main buildings that radiated outwards from the central Chapel Building. As for equipment, there was none at all to begin with. Dr. Wanger discovered to his surprise that some of the pharmacists mates had managed to bring with them to camp a volleyball net. And the seabags were explored further, a volleyball and a basketball turned up. There was plenty of lumber around at the time and within a very short time the men had rigged a volleyball court and one basketball backboard. A volleyball "league" was organized first, complete with timekeepers, referees and assorted other officials. There were eight or nine teams in the league. A number of men soon began to evidence interest in basketball, another basket was erected, a court laid out, and an eight-team basketball league launched. The Japanese prison officials, representatives of a race which manifested a somewhat self-conscious and artificial enthusiasm for athletics, nonetheless appreciated the limited athletic programs at Bilibid. Once underway, the Japanese officials encouraged the sports programs with gifts, among them another volleyball net and some balls. Most of the equipment, however, was purchased by voluntary subscriptions from prisoners themselves. Eventually, the rising wartime prices made replacements impossible and the games came to a halt because of lack of equipment.

A library, or rather, libraries provided food for the minds of the prisoners. There were two of them. One was a medical library for the staff officers and the other a general library for the rest of the prison population.

The medical library contained medical textbooks salvaged by individual doctors from possessions brought in when they arrived. Several other medical books had come in with supplies from Corregidor. All of these the Japanese doctor collected together and put in a room in the Fort Building which was christened the Medical Library. Here the medical officers could read and study for the profit of both themselves and their patients.

The general library was of more accidental origin. The principal source of books for this library was again the private stores of individual prisoners who had been fortunate enough to get a book or two of their own past inspection when they came to camp. A short time after the camp was established, the first Japanese camp commander, Kusomoto, took three American pharmacists mates with him on a "tour" of Manila. The Americans returned with large portion of a very excellent library of the University Club in Manila, as well as a number of books salvaged from abandoned apartments of interned U.S. citizens. This now comparatively well-stocked library was housed in a small building between Wards 1 and 2. The original stock was augmented from time to time by miscellaneous donations from the Japanese themselves. In July, 1943, the Japanese ordered all privately owned books to be surrendered for censoring. These volumes later were turned over to the library.

Of the miscellaneous nature of the books in the general library, Lt. James Robb, one of Bilibid's American prisoners of war, said: "...It was a peculiar, almost bizarre, collection of between 75 (at its lowest) and 600 (at its highest) books, ranging through all the gamut that anybody has ever written about."

Nevertheless, this library, miscellaneous and ill chosen though it might have been, provided many a prisoner with the reading matter he so much craved whether simply to while away the long, weary hours or to satisfy his need for information on serious subjects.

Another educational project, far more ambitious in nature than the library was the one known unofficially as "Bilibid College." The

college was the brainchild of Lt. Robb, who was quoted in the paragraph above. Since it never received the official approval of the Japanese commandant, it operated clandestinely if not to say furtively. In spite of its underground nature, however, Bilibid College was a complete success while it lasted. Started in January, 1943, by the following February it occupied three classrooms and was offering instruction in 15 subjects, among them Spanish, German, Chinese, Public Speaking, Biology, Parliamentary Law, Astronomy, Bible Study and Materia Medica. Classes went on throughout the day and one class even met at night.

But it was too good to last. After only two months, its life was snuffed out by order of the Japanese commandant.

Says Lt. Robb in explaining the demise: "...Unwittingly the enterprise ran afoul of the interpreter. This individual, together with the Headquarters interpreter, had been conducting a class in the Japanese language four nights a week before the college got underway. For want of anything better to do, something like a hundred of the prisoners had been taking the course, but when Bilibid College started, attendance at the Japanese classes fell off sharply. It continued to dwindle until the two interpreters were lecturing to an audience of about 10 men. This was a loss of face the Japs could not endure. The net result was all classes were banned, including the Japanese language classes. The official reason or excuse given was that, allegedly on the advice from Tokyo, all education or instruction of prisoners of war was to be curtailed on the grounds that it 'tended to improve the efficiency of the enemy!' At the same time, various restrictions were imposed on group assemblies. Prisoners could only meet together for 'religious, athletic or entertainment purposes.' That was the end of Bilibid College.

Another class of instruction, which met the approval of the authorities and continued to meet even after the the disbandment of Bilibid College by official order, was a "Navigators Bible Class" which continued to meet at intervals to study the Bible as long as the camp operated.

In a lighter vein, a program consisting of of nine variety acts including band numbers and called "The Bilibid Follies" was staged for the first time on an improvised platform in one of the buildings on November 12, 1942. A week later the show moved outside where everyone could see it. Dr. Nogi, the prison's commandant, attended in person accompanied by his staff. That put the official Japanese army stamp of approval on the venture. The Japanese even awarded cigarettes as prizes for the best numbers. This variety show was the first of a long series of Saturday night programs. But the Bilibid Follies lived on beyond the first two performances. It was soon moved into the old hospital building where a stage had been erected. It was gradually expanded until it became a rather pretentious affair, considering the time and the setting. On Christmas night of 1942, for example, the program consisted of 11 numbers. The band, which had grown to seven instruments, sounded almost professional.

The Japanese gave a party in August of 1942 to celebrate the first anniversary of their occupation of the Philippines. According to one prisoner's report, American prisoners' commander Sartin and Dr. Joses were invited to attend the affair, along with two other American prisoners selected because of their "exceptional good conduct."

The great American passion for movies went unsatisfied in 1942: there were none shown. But in 1943, the Japanese, prompted by the suggestion of their Propaganda Corps that the American prisoners should not be denied the opportunity of being educated in the benevolent war aims of the Japanese nation and the blessings ahead from the establishment of the New Order in East Asia. This began a

systematic program of Japanese propaganda pictures, interspersed with some American "shorts," mostly comics, and some other very old American films. The first program was presented on January 21, 1943. It wasn't too bad. In fact, this offering, which included a Mickey Mouse short, two Japanese newsreels and the Marx Brothers in "Go West," was never equaled thereafter. The propaganda film showed Japanese warships plowing through the seas in search of the enemy, Japanese soldiers advancing intrepidly through acres of Chinese corpses, Japanese warplanes blasting invisible enemy positions, etc., etc. The propaganda films had fairly good Japanese dialogue. The second offering a month later was a full-length film entitled "The Fall of Bataan and Corregidor." This was not so well received but the prisoners sat through it. These first two film presentations set the pattern for subsequent programs. There were usually two or three Japanese newsreels, an old American short, and a full-length Japanese propaganda film. Once in a while, an ancient Hollywood feature would be substituted, usually a comedy. Weather permitting the pictures were exhibited on an improvised screen in the open.

Religious Services

At first the prisoners at Old Bilibid were unable to receive spiritual consolation of religion except by stealth, since chaplains were not permitted to hold services openly. After a few months, however, they were told that they would be allowed to conduct any religious services they desired. Thereupon the men set about to build a chapel. They fashioned it from four old 2x4s they salvaged from within the compound. They covered it with a metal roof. Within the shed, for that what it actually was, they placed a small altar they had constructed for the chaplains to use.

During the first few months the "Navigators Bible Group" met regularly to study the Bible, and some of the chaplains also held Bible classes. Early in 1943, however, the ban placed by the Japanese camp administration on group meeting which grew out of their discovery of the existence of Bilibid College, put a stop to Bible study groups. The regular religious services, though, continued. Religious supplies, such as altar wine and bread, candle sticks and candles and other religious articles were obtained by the Japanese interpreter from Filipino religious associations which were still functioning in Manila. The Japanese scrutinized all such supplies carefully whenever they were brought into camp to insure that no forbidden materials were being smuggled in. As time went on, these supplies became scarcer and much harder to get. But by practicing rigid supply economy, the chaplains were able to keep enough on hand to enable them to continue formal religious services throughout 1944. It is the unanimous sentiment of all the prisoners at this camp that the chaplains, by virtue of the services they held, to say nothing of the spiritual advice and comfort they gave in more informal ways, were instrumental in maintaining morale at a high level for the half-starved, despairing men through the difficult days of this last year in camp.

Correspondence

No mail of any sort was received by the prisoners the first year. In November of 1942, each man was permitted to send one postal card to his next of kin at home. The card contained only the statement as to the sender's state of health, place of internment and a personal message limited to 25 words. No information about the camp itself was allowed. Five or six times during 1943 the prisoners were allowed to send similar postcards home but they still could not

receive mail. Indeed, it was not until well into 1944 that they had any word from their families. When this eagerly awaited mail came the correspondence was quickly distributed. The Japanese administration here did not hold up the mail for censorship as did officials in some of the other prisoner of war camps. Again in 1944, the prisoners were allowed to send several postcards to their families.

Movement of Prisoners from Camp

Since the camp was a clearing house for work details, it is difficult to trace the destinations of all the prisoners who came and went from Old Bilibid during the years 1942-44. Two large contingents of 1,000 men each came through the Bilibid "clearing house" in October and November of 1942. One of these groups was loaded onto a transport and sent to Davao and the other on a transport headed for Japan. During July there was a large influx of prisoner-patients from Corregidor, and a several hundred other prisoners of war came in a work detail from Tayabas. Shortly after that, in August, a large group of prisoners was shipped to Cabanatuan.

The men in the contingent that shipped out for Japan in October, 1942, were given medical examinations by both American and Japanese doctors. A few of them who were suffering from chronic tropical diseases were left behind in the Bilibid Hospital. The quota for this group was filled by substituting former patients from Bilibid Hospital who had been discharged as "fit." The men placed aboard ships in 1942 did not receive any issue of clothing or shoes from Bilibid. They only were wearing the clothes they had on when they were captured. In the next two years, however, the situation was remedied, at least for those who were being shipped to Japan.

Throughout 1943 there was a constant and continuous movement of prisoners through the Bilibid "clearing house." It is impossible to trace these movements accurately without having access to official records kept by the Japanese during this period. At the moment the records are not available.

Even without these records, however, it is known that in October, 1944, a contingent of 1,905 men, including several hundred doctors and medical corpsmen, was shipped out of Cabanatuan to Bilibid and eventually transported to Japan. Upon their arrival at Bilibid they were jammed into filthy quarters, given a little rice and some water, provided with shoes and heavy Japanese Army clothes, and then marched through the city to Legaspi Landing. The entire group was herded into the hold of a ship that was not intended to accommodate more than about 200 men. There was nothing about the ship to identify it as a Japanese prisoner of war transport.

The story of this ship's movement is one of the usual hardship accompanying travel on any Japanese prisoner of war vessel. It was grossly overcrowded, it had no sanitary accommodations and no provision for air and light. The men received almost no food during the entire trip. Many died during the first few days of the voyage. On October 24, 1942, the ship the prisoners were aboard was struck by torpedoes launched by American submarines. According to the best reports available, there were only five survivors out of the 1,905 American prisoners of war on the vessel. The five survivors managed to make their way in a small boat some 250 miles to the coast of China where they established contact with Chinese guerillas. Through the guerillas they were able to bring the story of what happened on the ship back to the people of the United States. It has since been recorded that three other survivors were picked up by the Japanese and taken to prison camps in Japan.

In October, 1944, the Japanese transported approximately 1,600

American prisoners of war, mostly officers, by trucks from Cabanatuan to Old Bilibid Prison. These men were herded into a building that had been used as a hospital before the war. Despite the fact that Manila and Manila Bay had come under constant aerial bombardment since early September, the 1,600 men minus 35 who were seriously ill, were given Japanese uniforms and loaded aboard a Japanese freighter to be sent to Formosa. On December 15, the ship was sunk by bombs from American planes off Olongapo in Subic Bay. The 618 prisoners who survived that attack were herded together and marched across Luzon to another port where they again were placed aboard a Japanese freighter headed for Formosa. This ship was torpedoed in a harbor outside of Formosa. The survivors of the second sinking, numbering less than 300, were taken to a prison camp on Formosa and later transported to Kyushu. Some of these men were then moved to camps in Korea and then by train to prison camps in Mukden and Manchuria.

This left approximately 800 prisoners of war at Old Bilibid, most of them so incapacitated physically they could not be moved without the services of two fairly healthy men for each disabled one. They remained in Bilibid on a starvation diet with little or no medicine. On January 9, 1945, American forces returned to the island of Luzon and on February 4 dramatically liberated the 800 prisoners who remained in Old Bilibid Prison. At the same time some 5,000 civilians being held at Santo Tomas University, where they had been interned for almost three years, were set free.

Conclusions

1. Starvation, "nutritional and actual" was present among American prisoners of war in the Philippines in 1942 and was the direct cause of the excessively large number of deaths of men in captivity which did occur.

2. On changing from a balanced diet at the beginning of the war to a nutritionally different one, Beri-beri was the first nutritional disease observed, occurring after three months from a balanced diet; Pellagra was observed after nine months; Ariboflavinosis after nine months, and Scurvy, questionable after nine months but definitely apparent after 10 months. Xerophthalmia and nystopia, although difficult to diagnose microscopically, was definitely present in 10 months and very severe thereafter, increasing in intensity to complete blindness in many cases. It could be cleared up by massive doses of vitamin A and thiamin.

3. Severe and sharp "shooting" pains in the feet and legs developed during the winter months of 1942 and 1943 and resulted in gangrene of the toes and many deaths. It was definitely cleared up by great doses of thiamin in test cases, administered intra-spinaly and intra-muscularly.

4. The efficiency and fighting capacity of the Filipino-American troops in Bataan was markedly lowered by a very poor diet. It affected military capabilities, their morale and their fighting capacity.