

Writer Says Plea on Bataan Was for 'Chow' and Planes

Nat Floyd, a correspondent of THE NEW YORK TIMES, was rescued from the Philippines last week by the United States bomber squadron that raided Japanese bases in the islands. Now in Melbourne, he narrates in the following dispatch his experiences from the fall of Manila until his rescue.

By NAT FLOYD
Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

MELBOURNE, Australia, April 21—Leaving my hotel room in Manila on Dec. 31, I was plunged into war on two hours' notice.

Just as suddenly I was snatched out of the war and set down in a hotel room in Australia. For 106 days and nights I lived in jungle bivouacs on Bataan and on other Philippine islands, skipping almost at will between Japanese forces by water and by air.

Now that I am momentarily out of reach of the bombers I dodged last week and even farther from the Japanese machine-gunners and slave masters, I look from this untouched city back to Bataan and wonder: Which is the fantastic dream and which is reality?

The answer is plain. Life and freedom alone are real. Food and the weapons to maintain them alone are important. Not the excess food, hot showers and soft beds of hotel life. I never heard a single man on Bataan want anything but "chow" and planes. Nor ever wanted more myself.

My impression of the 106 days of down-to-earth reality, like those I dream, are sharp and clear. But there is no continuity. Scenes from living history on cramped, gallant Bataan keep flashing across the screen of my mind, blocking out every other thought and barring every effort to put them in order.

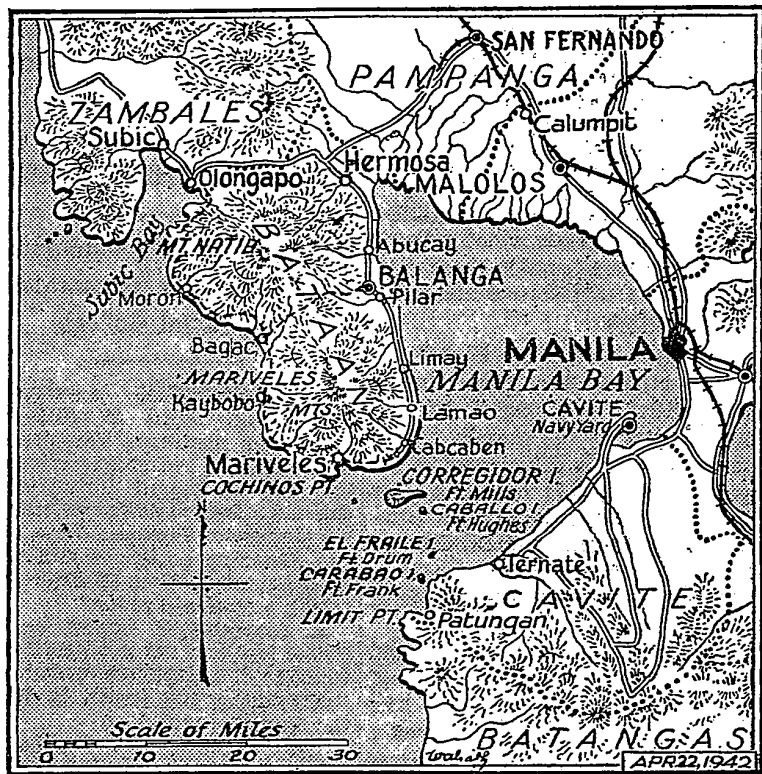
Before the dream started there were three blank weeks, beginning with Japan's attack. In this period the hours of daylight and darkness ran together in a hopeless jumble

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Bataan's Defenders Asked Only for 'Chow' and Planes in Long Philippine Siege

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SCENE OF HEROIC STAND IN PHILIPPINES



The map shows various places referred to in the accompanying account by Nat Floyd of his experiences after Manila's fall.

a howling dog locked in a near-by house.

I lay for hours on the split bamboo floor, wondering what I should do if the Japanese attempted a landing on that beach. I could not wait unarmed for the Japanese to come to the house and I was afraid to start running at night among the slightly trained troops in the neighborhood.

After that interesting night I moved my headquarters to a bivouac in the hills at the southern end of the peninsula.

While at Limay I spent part of each day at the military police control point. One afternoon the lieutenant in charge and his ranking sergeant beat us all into a foxhole when a Japanese bomber came over. The lieutenant broke a leg and the sergeant sprained an ankle. There were two other casualties.

Both Returned to Post

With the leg in a cast and the ankle in a tight dressing both men returned immediately to their posts and did their work from cots set on the side of the road. One of their important jobs at that time was sorting out stragglers, sending them back toward the front.

Soldiers who had been scattered by firecrackers and other Japanese trick attacks went back without a word or gesture of resistance or displeasure. American officers in charge of regrouping stragglers near the line said they invariably went back to their foxholes without a sign of reluctance.

Several weeks later I met the hasty M. P. sergeant of Limay on a single file train through a jungle battlefield on the other side of the Bataan mountains. Then a lieutenant with a Filipino infantry unit, he was returning from a skirmish that had ended two hours earlier. He grinned his greeting and displayed souvenirs of the battle, a Japanese officer's sword in his right hand and a bullet wound in the left.

Among the many pleasant recollections of Bataan is that of a medical captain, 28 years old, who had built up a first-aid station into a miniature hospital to serve the area lying between two main hospitals. Zealously he had put six cots on a platform under a thatch and canvas cover. He was ready in February for the rains that were yet to begin. He did his job with heart and soul, apparently ignoring the danger of his position.

There was usually some fighting going on somewhere on Bataan all through the campaign. Tough fighting! Yet there was a long period in which life was calm and unhurried for all except groups of a few hundred at a time.

This period began with the withdrawal of our line halfway down the peninsula late in January. The Japanese did not follow all the way in. They left an estimated 20,000 troops strung across the top of the peninsula with the opposing lines out of contact for a mile or two in

the mountainous wooded center and three to six miles on the more exposed ends of the line toward the two beaches. The rest of their troops were scattered over Luzon in batches of 500 to 2,500.

However, before this generally peaceful period ended with preparations late in March for the final assault, there were four major actions. Three followed landings in some force on points of land jutting into the China Sea behind our line, and one resulted from a break through near the center of the line. Because of the circumstances our troops were able to kill fully 2,500 Japanese in these four isolated engagements, which were spectacular and for a few days were dangerous to the whole defense position. Our casualties were very light in comparison with the enemy's.

Here is a rough outline of the principal actions during these weeks that make up the body of the Bataan campaign:

Early in February more than 300 Japanese troops were landed at night on Losgoskawayan Point jutting into the China Sea not more than three or four miles above Mariveles at the tip of the peninsula. After about two weeks of slow, careful jungle fighting a few companies of our troops had killed all the invaders except a half dozen or so taken prisoner.

Before this engagement ended another landing was made on Quinauan Point, farther north, but still about six miles behind our main line. Philippine Scouts—Filipinos in the standing Army who had been long trained under American officers—and American pilots and mechanics who had turned infantrymen went in against them. More than 400 Japanese were killed and fewer than a score were taken prisoner.

Foes Killed in the Sea

About the same time a similar number of picked Japanese soldiers were landed on Anyasan Point south of Quinauan across Arloloama Bay. During these battles an attempt to put 500 men ashore to reinforce "lost battalions" was blocked when most of the party were killed in the water. Planes, motor torpedo boats, artillery and rifle units took part in the repulse.

In the second week of February well-armed Japanese broke through the line for a few miles in the mountainous part of the zone. The unit was surrounded and all were killed except a score or so taken prisoner. An attempt to send reinforcements through the line was successfully resisted.

Aside from these fights, which though desperate and dangerous were confined to small areas, there was little activity except by patrols. There was no concerted pressure on any long section of the line during this period.

When I visited the line west of the mountains in the first week General Wainwright was sending out patrols with orders to keep go-

ing until they found the enemy. He wanted to know where their line was.

A week earlier I had taken a Sunday morning stroll along our main line east of the mountains with an engineer officer without seeing the Japanese line although we climbed a hill to look for it. In the center, however, where the final break-through came, the enemy was much closer, though hidden in the forest.

In the first two months of the Bataan fighting most of the men on the line and all those in rear areas were able to relax. All they had to worry about was food, sickness and the future. Only gradually did these three worries become serious. Pressure was definitely being felt by the first of March and by the middle of the month the effects of malnutrition and medicine shortages began to show everywhere.

In these middle weeks I spent days hitch-hiking on our one main road. Day by day it became harder to make time between points for gasoline began to run low and fewer vehicles were in motion. It was an advantage, however, to have less dust to eat.

My most uncomfortable ride was from Mariveles up the west side on my first visit to General Wainwright's headquarters just back of the main line. I stood in the back of a truck loaded with the bloody quarters of a carabao and bounced over the world's roughest twenty miles. The driver overtook and got through a convoy of six tanks on the dustiest stretch.

The most dangerous ride was atop a smooth tank trailer without handles going down the roughest zigzag through a mountain pass with more turns than the road on Pike's Peak. I learned what not to do ever again.

Food and cigarettes soon became a problem. Bananas and other fruits were gone by the middle of January. Early in February rice stocks ran low and part of the Filipino troops were put on bread. The bakery output ran up to 30,000 pounds a day.

Only Rice Left for All

Later small ships loaded with rice, fresh beef and sugar were run through the blockade and the bread output was reduced to 8,000 pounds. Late in March flour ran out and everybody went on rice, with servings limited.

Eggs went quickly. While I was sick at Limay I had two eggs. They cost 25 cents each. Just before I left Bataan eggs were bringing \$1 each in the black market.

Cigarettes gradually increased to \$3.50 a package.

There was not a single store in Bataan, no movies and no recreation except in the amusement we found in Japanese propaganda broadcasts and in poker. Poker was the only use we could find for our money.

The weather was warm and

there was no rain during the whole campaign.

There always was a great deal of work to be done. Every one was kept busy. Yet, of course, there were groups of men here and there lounging through their short hours of duty. At night men clustered around battery radio sets in their own or neighboring camps to hear news broadcast from Bataan's own station and afterward to listen to popular songs broadcast from Manila by the Japanese.

The Japanese propaganda was without exception good for the American troops. They either laughed heartily or became very angry.

These quiet, busy days I remember most. Days and evenings were spent riding with and talking to hundreds of men, men with whom I had a way of life in common. Friendliness and courtesy were the marks of the men of Bataan. More than that, they forgot selfishness. When a man had cigarettes, special food, razor blades or any of the scarce goods he shared them.

No Reason for Fist Fights

The communal life of Bataan, with its pervasive spirit of practical give and take, cleansed the whole body of men. The only fist fight I heard of was started by a man who had done time under observation in a mental hospital two years before. All were in the same boat with the same problems, tied together by the common threat to their lives and freedom. The men had nothing to fight each other about.

In the later days of the campaign, however, the going got tougher. More and more trimmings were dropped from meals. Men went on two meals a day late in January. Usually breakfast was around 8 o'clock and dinner between 4 and 5.

Breakfast was a pancake with a little corned beef hash of poor grade and locally roasted coffee. Dinner often consisted of salmon, beans and bread or rice. There was carabao steak or stew once or twice a week and beef when blockade runners got in.

However, during the last weeks the health of the men of Bataan gradually declined. The disease rate ran up as the drug supplies ran out. Hospital No. 2 had been keeping its patients down to 3,000 by discharging 200 to 300 daily and treating them as out patients. In the last three days before the collapse of Bataan that hospital took in 300 new patients daily.

At Hospital No. 1, where there were 450 beds, the number of patients jumped to 1,500 in the last three days. The patients had malaria, dysentery, malnutrition, beri beri and scurvy.

It was not possible to give quinine as a prophylaxis after March 1. Between March 30 and the end

there was only enough for half treatment of actual malarial patients and there were 100 per cent relapses.

Just before the fall as high as 80 per cent of a typical regiment had malaria, 30 per cent had bacillary dysentery, 10 per cent had amoebic dysentery and some had hookworm. This is indicative of the condition of the men when the Japanese started their last big drive, reinforced by men, planes and tanks.

I was not on Bataan when the collapse came. I had made my way by that time to another part of the Philippines.

One of the last persons off Bataan, Dr. Carlos Romulo, Philippine newspaper editor, International Rotary official and lieutenant colonel in the United States Army, brought me news of the last days of the peninsula. His departure was one of the hundreds of dramatic incidents of the siege.

He left Corregidor for Bataan in a small boat. Before reaching the shore the boat was strafed by a Japanese plane. Two American soldiers a few feet in front of Colonel Romulo were killed.

When safe on the beach Colonel Romulo could not find the car he expected. He gave up looking for it in the confusion of vehicles. Hitch-hiking, he went to the northernmost of the two fields on the east side of the peninsula.

After vainly hunting for a plane around the edge of the field, Colonel Romulo left southward as he heard Japanese approaching from the north. He stopped at the southern field.

The road was jammed with men and vehicles falling back as the Japanese rushed down the east side of the peninsula. Heavy guns, machine guns and thousands of rifles were firing just north of him.

Damaged Plane Found

Finally he found a plane under a tree. It was an amphibian that had been shot down in Mariveles Bay early in the war and later pulled out of the water and put back in commission. One cylinder had just gone out and the pilot had gone to a similar craft, also long since shot down on the beach, and taken out a cylinder for his motor.

There was not time to test the engine. It was after 1 o'clock in the morning and the Japanese were closing in. The pilot and passengers held their breaths until the motor kicked over. After a short warm-up they took off.

The Japanese had reached the edge of the field. They fired at the plane as it left the end of the runway at the beach and soared out over the water, seventy-five feet up. The motor was weak so the pilot could not get an inch more altitude and could not go back. There was nothing to do but to

swing to the right to pass Corregidor and head out of Manila Bay.

Baggage Thrown From Plane
Excited about the altitude, the pilot shouted, "Throw over your baggage! Hurry! Hurry!" Three passengers threw out their musette bags. It was not enough. Tin hats and other gear went down into the China Sea. The rickety plane pushed up to 100 feet, faltered, then gradually eased up to 150 feet.

As they left the bay the men looked back on Corregidor and Bataan. All they could see in the moonless night were flashes of thousands of guns.

Colonel Romulo's plane never got more than 150 feet above the sea. The pilot managed to keep the nose up, however, until he reached a neighboring island.

My own last impression of the Philippine Islands is less dramatic than that scene. Yet the poignancy of it still stings. It is of a group of men circled around a flashlight on a moonless night. But the "what, when and why" cannot be told until later in the war.