

**So Far from Home:
Manila's Santo Tomás
Internment Camp,
1942-1945**

Bruce E. Johansen

PBI
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Omaha, Nebraska

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the shanties, on suspicion that, according to Stevens' chronology, "numerous desks, benches, chairs, etc., recently discovered missing from University buildings, may turn up in shanties." Theft continued to be a problem. On July 2, 1,000 cups and 1,000 plates, property of the Red Cross, were reported stolen from a storage annex.

On June 19, the Sanitation and Health Committee began broadcasting a program, "Campus Health," over the camp loudspeaker system. Despite strenuous admonitions by the Japanese authorities and the Executive Committee, abuse of alcohol continued to occupy the committee's time as June turned into July. Several fresh cases of intoxication were reported, and the committee decided to put special emphasis on locating the source of supply.

No amount of lecturing seemed to cure some people's problems with alcohol. On July 7, two internees were found drunk. An enraged camp commandant revoked all privileges for several days. On July 14, several more people were found drunk on the camp grounds, and the Japanese confiscated several bottles of liquor during a thorough search of internees' personal possessions. The Executive Committee formed a Liquor Patrol Squad to locate the source of supply. The leader of the Liquor Squad, C. H. Hochreiter, became the Executive Committee's first chief of police a week later, underscoring the committee's determination to deal with internee problems before they reached the eyes and ears of the Japanese administration. The smuggling and consumption of liquor was a continual irritant to the committee. Between May 1, 1942 and December 31, 1943, the records of the camp jail counted 174 sentences served by men, and 63 by women. Of these, 63 of the men and 11 of the women served time in the jail or restricted to their rooms for smuggling liquor or drunkenness.⁹⁰

The booze trade was not the Committee on Order's only business. On June 28, two pigs were discovered hidden in one of the shanties. That district's "mayor" was instructed to evict them.

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During July, plans were made for a general election among the internees, which was held on the 28th, of two Britons and five Americans to a new Executive Committee. Americans A. D. Calhoun, E. E. Selph, K. B. Day, Grinnell, and O. G. Steen were elected, along with British candidates S. C. Pinkerton and J. H. Forrest. Grinnell was appointed chairman of the committee by the Japanese commandant. In his work as a Far Eastern representative of the General Electric Company, Grinnell had acquired a knowledge of Japanese language and

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Shanty residents doused the ants with boiling water, but that only stopped them for a few minutes. Many residents were amazed to learn that the ants could swim. "We actually saw them walking across three inches of water," wrote internee Emily Van Sickle. She and others learned that "only by pouring kerosene into our water cans could we stop them."¹⁶²

As cleanup continued after the three-day typhoon, on November 17 the commandant for the first time allowed internees to legally pass notes to each other with packages shipped in and out of the camp. The notes were to be read by the commandant's office, and censored if deemed necessary. Families were again allowed to visit internees at the camp's Main Gate, as long as the visits were observed by a Japanese guard.

Food stocks that had disappeared during the typhoon began to reappear in the camp markets only slowly. Despite the increasing scarcity of food throughout Manila, two of the internees' most generous friends outside the walls somehow managed to come up with Thanksgiving dinner for four thousand people on November 25. Emily Van Sickle identified the two benefactors as Juan Elizalde and Enrico Pirovano, who sent into the camp enough stuffed roast turkey, chicken, and potato salad to feed the entire camp.¹⁶³ A few months later, both men disappeared; they probably were imprisoned by the Japanese on suspicion of aiding the guerilla movement.

On November 30, Saint Andrew's Day, the Scots gave a show of patriotic songs and dances. On December 6, the Japanese forbade the import of sugar, rice, or other "controlled substances" in packages brought in for internees. The officially stated rationale for these prohibitions was to avoid inequity and resulting tensions among camp residents. As grim as the food situation was getting inside the camp, it was worse for members of internees' families who had been left outside with no income, facing demands for rent or eviction by the Japanese. On December 13, the Executive Committee asked the commandant to allow into the camp fifty family members who were in the most dire straits. The committee also asked that the camp allowance be increased to accommodate the new arrivals, and that they be forgiven Japanese rents or evictions from their homes outside the camp. The commandant refused to act on any of the requests.

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On November 17, 177 women at Santo Tomás had begun to pack for transfer to Los Baños internment camp to rejoin their husbands. One

of them was Margaret Sams, who was taking her young son David and newly-born daughter Gerry Ann. The infant was about to meet her father, Jerry Sams, for the first time. After he played a crucial role in constructing an illegal radio at Santo Tomás, Sams was transferred to Los Baños camp, where he constructed another secret set from scratch. One observer reported in astonishment that the women who were moving to Los Baños had assembled an average of a dozen pieces of luggage each, which required ten freight cars to transport.¹⁶⁴

Those suitcases contained the reminders of an elegant life in Manila that was now only memory. Now, the lives of the internees were unraveling as the war ravaged Manila. On December 2, at Santo Tomás, sugar ran out, along with fats and oils. A few days later, meat vanished, along with milk and bread. Coffee continued to be rationed. At the same time, the rituals of life went on, perhaps in a search for the comfort of the familiar. On December 4, the camp high school gave a talent show at the "Little Theatre Under the Stars."

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Outrage spread through the camp on December 16 as internees discovered that Japanese guards were breaking into, and in some cases damaging, Red Cross relief kits meant for the camp residents. The eagerness with which the internees anticipated these packages indicated the increasing scarcity of all but the most basic foodstuffs. In her diary, Tressa Cates noted that a can of condensed milk that had sold for twelve cents before the war was priced in Santo Tomás at five dollars American.¹⁶⁵

A Japanese truck dumped the 40-pound Red Cross relief kits on the ground. Guards rummaged through the punctured packages, removing Old Gold cigarettes from the kits because, they said that a message on the sides of the packages violated regulations. It read:

*Our heritage has always been freedom.
We cannot afford to relinquish it.
Our armed forces will safeguard that heritage.
If we, too, do our share to preserve it.*¹⁶⁶

Some of the guards were opening and spilling canned goods, poking packages of cheese and cans of milk with their bayonets, or stealing things. According to Tressa Cates' diary, "A speechless and hate-filled audience looked on, helpless and powerless to stop them. An emaciated and anguished-looking mother with two skinny kids at

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her side burst into tears."¹⁶⁷ The threat of an internee revolt, an appeal to the commandant, and a written protest to the Swiss ambassador in Tokyo were required to get the kits out of the guards' hands. On December 18, most of the pilfered cigarettes were distributed to the internees, their offending labels having been torn off. Those who didn't smoke used the the cigarettes for barter. Margaret Sams, a non-smoker, traded hers for milk to feed her children.

The Christmas kits contained a number of welcomed items besides cigarettes: butter, corned beef, corned pork loaf, Spam, chopped ham and eggs (in cans), pate, "Party Loaf," canned salmon, vegetable bouillon, powdered milk, processed cheese, jam, dried prunes, coffee, chocolate, sugar, vitamin C, and soap. Very quickly, a market sprang up in each of these commodities; Corned beef sold for P\$11 a can, a chocolate bar for \$10, a can of Spam for P\$11.50. All these prices were reflective of rampant inflation in Manila. The going rate for an entire relief kit was P\$750.¹⁶⁸

One internee, Hank Parfit, reaped profits that Emily Van Sickle characterized as "staggering." Parfit by this time had become such a usurious merchant that his name had become a noun in the S. T. I. C. vocabulary. If an internee took unfair advantage in trading because of scarcity, he was said to be "Parfiteering."¹⁶⁹ For a few days, the balance of smuggling ran *out* of the camp, as large quantities of Red Cross goods moved into Manila at fabulous prices.

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The year 1943 closed at Santo Tomás, according to the camp log, "in a much better condition than might be expected under the circumstances after two years of internment." Most of the internees were losing weight, but otherwise relatively healthy. Food was very plain, but "adequate."¹⁷⁰ Portents were not good, however. Society at large was breaking down in Manila; during several nights thieves entered the camp from the outside. After a number of burglaries by outsiders, the internees established night patrols to keep marauders out. The commandant said that his guards were not responsible. Rumors of food riots in Manila reached the camp.

Christmas, 1943 was celebrated with a pageant illustrating scenes from Christian history, the singing of hymns, and Gospel readings. On December 21, a chorus of 150 internees performed Handel's *Messiah*. On Christmas Day, a Santa Claus entered the camp from the South Gate and distributed toys to children. A rare noon meal was served to everyone. One internee imported a six-foot artificial

the camp in January, 1942, and the end of September, 1944, 239 people died at Santo Tomás, an average of one every four days. Between September 30, 1944 and the end of December, 1944, 43 people died, an average of one every two days. During January 1945 alone, 32 people died in 31 days.²⁵³ Some of the internees speculated later that if the Allied invasion had been delayed more than a month, a high percentage of the internees at Santo Tomás (and the other, outlying camps, both military and civilian) would have died of starvation.²⁵⁴

Toward the end, the few people at Santo Tomás who still had money paid amounts that boggled the imagination for goods that they once had taken for granted. Tobacco that had cost five cents in 1941 sold for \$40 to \$50, according to Robert H. Wygle, an internee whose journal was published in 1991. A can of corned beef, worth 20 cents in the United States sold for \$60 to \$70; a 50-cent package of Klim (powdered milk) sold for \$100 and more. Cigarettes left over from Red Cross relief kits that Wygle described as "moldy" sold for \$10 to \$15 a pack.²⁵⁵ A friend of Tressa Cates sold a diamond engagement ring, the last keepsake of her husband (a prisoner in Fort Bilibid with other military captives), for five pounds of insect-infested rice.²⁵⁶ By the end of 1944, 125-pound bags of rice that had sold for six pesos (\$3) before the war was sold for up to 300,000 pesos.²⁵⁷

Nearly all the food the internees got from the Japanese army had been swept off a floor somewhere on its way to Santo Tomás. Wygle said that "vegetables" often amounted to "a load of stinking garbage from some city market that was too rotten to sell.

The women would pick through the slimy mess and salvage enough to color the cereal mush. The rice and corn were sweepings also; moldy, dirty, and broken into fragments, plentifully populated by bugs, [and] worms, and sprinkled with gravel. We didn't mind the bugs and worms, but the gravel raised hell with our teeth.²⁵⁸

For Thanksgiving dinner, a group of internees shared a boiled tomcat, cooked in a curry sauce with garlic. On November 29, Japanese guards tormented the hungry internees by refusing to accept pushcarts loaded with locally produced fruits, vegetables, and eggs that had been lined up outside the gate by Filipino friends of camp residents. The camp had enough food, the Japanese said.

sentenced to seven days in the stockade. The camp commandant commuted the sentence on January 18, but warned that if anyone else escaped, *all* the monitors would be punished.

The final weeks in the camp brought out the testiness of both inmates and guards, as well as the staff of the commandant's office. People were removed from the camp by armed guards without explanation. Others were taken to the commandant's office and slapped or kicked. Sometimes the incidents were provoked by prisoners' refusal to bow in traditional Japanese fashion at times that the Japanese deemed socially appropriate. The refusal of Americans and Britons to bow, even socially, continued to drive the Japanese to distraction. The Japanese growled that the "aliens" had no manners.

On January 19, a delegation of prisoners visited the commandant's office with a petition for information on C. C. Grinnell, C.L. Larsen, Alfred F. Duggleby, and Ernest E. Johnson, who had been taken away under armed escort. The four men had been arrested by camp guards December 23, and placed in the camp jail. They were taken away from the camp January 5. According to camp historian A. V. H. Hartendorp, the men were taken after the Japanese discovered documentation indicating their suspicions that the arrested internees were supporting Philippine guerillas. Hartendorp, who spent three years' internment typing 4,000 pages of manuscripts on a typewriter smothered in a thick blanket to conceal noise, was relieved that his manuscripts were not discovered in the same Japanese search. At Liberation, he marched out of the camp with two large metal chests of documentation that fifty men in the camp had rotated duty to hide.

Carroll Calkins Grinnell, one of the four internees taken from the camp, was probably S.T.I.C.'s most prominent leader, as long-time chairman of the internee committee. Born in Pennsylvania during 1898, Grinnell had been educated as an engineer. He was transferred to Manila in 1933 as general manager of General Electric Company's Philippine subsidiary. Grinnell was later promoted to commercial manager of GE's Far East operations. He was caught in Manila at the outbreak of the war there, and imprisoned at Santo Tomás January 7, 1942. Ironically, Grinnell's home office and principal residence had been in Tokyo.

Grinnell had gained a reputation for leadership in the camp when he worked in the Release Department, beginning in 1942. Before his arrest, Grinnell had come to be known throughout the camp as a tactful, diplomatic executive. He bought candy for the children, and sometimes most of the internees ate because of loans extended by Manila banks on his personal line of credit.

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the first few days of "freedom" crouched in muddy, dingy air-raid shelters. "Night shelling was especially exhausting and nerve-racking," Van Sickle recalled:

After diving a dozen times into the mud enclosure, where the air was so foul as to be scarcely breathable, we would give up and agree to get some sleep, regardless of shells. Often we dropped dead tired onto our beds, slept fifteen minutes, then awoke with a start....Weary and frightened, we huddled back into the shelter, stepping gingerly over internee forms prostrate on mattresses, blankets, and pillows paving the narrow dirt passageway.³³¹

During several days of shelling, 17 ex-prisoners were killed by Japanese fire, and another 80 were seriously wounded. An equal number of American soldiers and Filipino civilians died as well. The camp's doctors and nurses, who had worked so hard under severe limitations for three years, again were pressed to the limits of human endurance. People came to them with arms and legs blown off. Others died completely dismembered. Stevens reported: "They saw their comrades, their wives and children torn to fragments. Bodies crumbled under broken cement, arms and legs writhing in pain, then stopping all motion."³³²

The camp's operating room worked around the clock, especially the first bloody night, when fifteen people died. Other people who were not mortally injured went into shock, and raged that the torment of war should be over. When shellfire hit the operating room, the doctors moved to a Red Cross building out of the line of fire. After a week of anguish, American forces routed the Japanese gunners, and the shelling stopped. Only then was the camp totally free of Japanese torment. The people who had lived there emerged often in shock, in awe that they had survived, struggling to grasp the task of beginning their lives anew.

On February 21, the bodies of Grinnell, Duggleby, Johnson, and Larsen, who had been taken away without explanation by Japanese guards during the last weeks of imprisonment, were found near Manila's Harrison Park. Autopsies indicated that they had been dead for about five weeks. Grinnell, who was beheaded, seemed to have been the main target of the kidnapping. Larsen's arrest seemed to have been a case of mistaken identity, because his role in the camp's governance was minor. Johnson, who has once been a ship captain, "was known as a man