Only a Matter of Days

The World War II Prison Camp Diary of Fay Cook Bailey

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enough to do considering our diminished strength. I spend three
to four hours daily in the office.

January 22: We are now getting a soybean milk for breakfast. It
helps. The soybeans are also helping our general diet although
some are finding them a little rich for their systems after our
very limited diet of rice, corn, and water. Bombing and strafing
of Japanese positions continue daily and the Japanese seem to
be indulging in more demolition. They also are showing their
teeth here in camp—no additional food and further strictness
about everyone appearing for roll call.

January 23: More bombing of the outskirt. Stories of progress
north and south but it is hard to know what is real news. The
most convincing items from now on in will be what we see with
our own eyes. There has been a further lack of fuel so we cannot
have soy milk.

January 24: We used the last of our cassava flour in very good
hotcakes made without eggs and milk of course. We did sprinkle
a little of our last sugar on a few. That sugar cost P50 [prewar
pesos] for a quarter kilo so it really is gold dust. We are all very
weary. Many of the older people are dying due to malnutrition
and the bad effects the diet and life have on the heart. We have
n’t fared so badly this week and my weight has gone from an
all time low of 114 to 116 pounds.

January 25: Dickering to get extra food for ourselves and for
our bank group if possible at any terms. Paid Stick Duff my
check for P475 but got very little for it. [half pound Milo—
P100, 2 cans (9 ounces each) @ P125-P250, ¼ pound powdered
milk—P125] Scotty is sick and may have appendicitis. Annette
had to come out of the hospital so she could go in. Sam has traces
of beriberi. The news is good though if camp stories can be
credited. It may not take more than another week. We used the
last of our mongo beans today in a very good soup.

January 26: The Japanese are reducing the quantity of soy-
beans but increasing the corn so our evening stews will be more
like mush. We are still able to get a little cassava flour for the
camp which helps to thicken the stew. For lunch today we had
lima beans, a goodly quantity. CJ couldn’t eat all of hers at one
sitting but I think it was because she didn’t relish the flavoring
of slightly old pork fat. It being the General’s (MacArthur)
birthday we celebrated with a chocolate cornstarch pudding.
It was weak in every respect but being delicious nevertheless.
We certainly are going to enjoy things that are even sub-normally
plain when we get out and a rich dish will throw us into ecstasy.
At night there were flares from distant gunfire both sides of
the camp and sounds of shelling to the east. Barney Brooks
went to the hospital. He has been having beriberi and now dys-
tens.

January 27: We were shocked to hear this morning that Barney
died at 2:30 a.m. It is so tragic and sad that he should have got
so much lower than Emilie or anyone else realized. His heart
just could not stand it. Scotty is in a bad way. He was operated
on today but more for investigation. Dr. Fletcher apparently was
not in on the case until after the operation was under way and
considers it unwise. I called on Scotty this p.m. He does not
look too well. If he can hold out for a few days he may be able
to get relief. Our stew tonight thinner than ever. The days are
dragging like our feet but action seems heavier and nearer and
we feel that this may be our last week.

January 28: More demolition—particularly toward the Bay.
The over the wall radio said this a.m. that the Japanese and
Americans are in fierce conflict at Bigua which is just a little
way to the north. Rumor has it that the American forces are ex-
pected in the city at the latest day after tomorrow. It will be
wonderful if true and most timely as people are getting weaker
and weaker and there are deaths daily. Judge Vickers today. I
had a lazy day it being Sunday. Our lunch today helped out by a
half of an envelope of bouillon from Irv made into a gravy using
the juice from greens and rice. Yesterday I used the first half
with greens and fried mush. The meals we fix are most tasty but
too scanty and lacking in butter, eggs, sugar, and milk. There are
no meats either but beans help to make up the protein. Scotty
was easier this morning so he may manage until we have better
days.

January 29-30: I have traces of beriberi myself now and cer-
certainly feel weak. Scotty has improved a little. Irv is getting milk
for him at fantastic prices but he must have it. Irv has stocked
food better than the rest of us and Lois’s being out at Philippine
General Hospital has left him in a good position. He is well
himself and can spare some of his surplus supplies. He had to
pay $200 for a pound can of milk and $180 for another. Lots of
demolition noises and rumors of approaching forces. Now it is
said to be Monday, the 5th, but anytime next week will help.
although it may happen this week. I have Polly Koelsing’s reci-
pes notebook from which I am taking a few choice items. It will
be fun to try these concoctions out when we get our own kitchen
and a store of supplies.

January 31: Taking it easy. Hicklin is helping us get some extra
rice. We used some today for a bigger lunch than usual. Rainy.
Lots of heavy plane action by our boys all around. Saw Emilie.
She is bearing up very well. Hicklin also helping on our fire
wood. We started using our last shelves. We may have to stop
cooking if we can’t get other fuel in ten days time or relief from
outside.

February 1: Sam Thompson died on the first. There are many
dropping off. Such loss of weight due to malnutrition has weak-
ened the muscles especially around the heart. My beriberi is not
serious but I am taking it easy. The rice which Hicklin was get-
ting turned out to be soy. We had a case of casting pearls before
swine, at first with no results but later more success. The beans
in our diet will help. Slim helped cut some wood from our
shelves. Julian Wolfson agreed to let us burn half of the old
screen of his which we used first and then stored after we went
our porch media agua. Scotty is better. Big booms and fires from
demolition on the first and early sounds of heavy action off to
the south continued thru the day and sounded very promising.
won’t be long, but even a few days means so much with our
present state of health.

February 2: Another lazy day but plenty of action around
There is no doubt that the boys are nearer. There have been extra
heavy demolition reports and fires. We had boiled green banana
for lunch with a bouillon sauce. They were like a potato. CJ