

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 outskirts. 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 haven'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, ½ pound powdered milk—P125] Scotty is sick and may have appendicitis. Annette had to come out of the hospital so he 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 soybeans 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 ecstasies. At night there were flashes 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 dysentery.

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 expected 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 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 Koesling's recipe 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 firewood. 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 weakened the muscles especially around the heart. My beriberi is not serious but I am taking it easy. The rice which Hicklin was getting 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 got 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. It 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 bananas for lunch with a bouillon sauce. They were like a potato. CJ