



PASS IN REVIEW

“Shedding Light On Idaho’s Military History”

1st Quarter

March 2005

IMHS ARTIFACT DATA SYSTEM NOW OPERATIONAL

Last spring, I applied for a \$1,500 grant from the Idaho Heritage Trust to help IMHS establish an artifact data system. The project is to acquire and make operational an automated system for keeping our artifact records, specifically through use of a system many larger museums use, PastPerfect[®]. My grant request was denied.

However, at year's end, I asked IMHS Lifetime members to help us fund this project. Their response was spectacular! Eight Lifetime members--**Gary Brewington, James Brooks, Loren Call, James Cozine, Stan Herzinger, Joe Icenhower, Bill Miller, and Jeff Sugai**--donated a **combined total of \$2,050**. Members were asked to donate to the \$1,500 project with the understanding that any donated above what is actually used for the project would be added to the IMHS Endowment.

The IMHS Board authorized the spending of the donated funds on this project, also up to \$500 of it for undetermined system enhancements, with the provision that we would look for donated hardware, software, computer memory, and the like, before spending any of the \$500. It now looks like the only project expense will be the associated software cost of just under \$1,400.

As of 15 March, the PastPerfect software has been purchased, Board Member **Steve Bonde** installed the

software on our main computer, two additional computers were donated by the Idaho ANG, IMHS Volunteer **Gary Donnelley** donated a router, and Board Member **Lisa Mailes** configured the donated computers to function as an integrated data network enabling multiple entry stations for artifact records.

The total system is mostly complete. **Steve Bonde** also trained IMHS Volunteer **Treva Hamilton**, who now has been entering artifact records into the system for two months. Curator **Gary Keith** was very helpful in identifying initial requirements, advising on artifact record protocols, and generally assuring that our IMHS standards would be met--or not compromised--by this new system.

All participants in this effort deserve your thanks for helping IMHS and the Idaho Military History Museum continue to maintain high professional standards.

-Bill Miller, Board Member

CURATOR'S CORNER

We've gotten off to a great start this year and I'd like to begin with our volunteers. Thanks to people stepping forward we will be adding new

docents to include,

Owen J. Clouss, Doug Doehle, Jack Enterkine, Jim Davisson plus Jerre Kauffman who started last winter and is now back in town! This is going to make a BIG difference, especially towards one of my goals- having two docents each weekend day.

These people, along with our veteran docents, make a big difference in the day-to-day operations at the Idaho Military History Museum. Attendance is up at the Museum and it is the docents who are meeting and greeting the public, making that first impression which is very important. **I have received many compliments about this outstanding group of volunteers.**

As promised in last edition, there are already more artifacts on exhibit. Currently the US Infantry Weapons of World War II is underway and will be done in time for our June 4th D-Day Open House. There will be more artifacts out in time for that as well, but I'm not going to spoil the surprise. Also, look for the beginning of the US Navy Chief Petty Officers exhibit, which will be up soon. That's all the details you get for now. I encourage you to come by and see what's new.

Speaking of the June 4th event, we need your help. The IMHS would like to invite as many D-Day veterans as we can find. To honor the invasion of France in June

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MOST WANTED

of 1944, there will be different activities including a brief ceremony to show our appreciation to those who helped liberate Europe. If you know of anyone who participated in this campaign, please encourage that person to contact us at the Museum. We would be grateful to have them here.

One aspect of the IMHS that many of you don't hear much about is our educational activities, which are an important part of our operations. This past year I have been actively working with local schools to increase field trips to the Museum. A big barrier has been funding for these trips so I am working on a grant request to obtain these funds.

The Idaho Military History Museum is a wonderful asset and local students need to see it more. Additionally, Board members **Ken Swanson, Rick Johnson, Russ Trebby** and I visit schools in the area to do presentations about various topics including the Civil War, World War I, World War II and Vietnam. This outreach program is successful and quite popular with teachers and students.

In closing, I would like to remind you about the Mountain Home Air Force Base Airshow. It will be 17-18 September this year and the IMHS will have an important role in the Heritage Hangar. Already this is shaping up to be a significant part of the airshow.

We will need lots of volunteers for this to be a success, especially in the dog tag sales area. The IMHS now has two working machines and it would be great if we had the staff to run them. If you are interested, this is a great opportunity to help the IMHS. Need more incentive? **The Thunderbirds are scheduled to perform on Sunday!** Please feel free to contact me at the Museum at 422-4841 if you have any questions!

-Gary Keith

RECENT DONATIONS

This list is by no means all-inclusive, but highlights some unique items that have recently been donated to the Museum.

MG John F. Kane – WWII Ration Coupons and WWII Farragut Idaho post cards. These postcards were mailed from the Naval Training Camp circa 1944. The postcards are in the process of being scanned and reproductions of them will soon be available in the Museum's gift shop.



WWII Farragut Post Card

John F. Humphrey – 1899 West Point Yearbook and photos of Charles F. Humphrey. John is a descendent of then First Lieut. Charles F. Humphrey who was awarded the Medal of Honor during the 1877 Nez Perce War at the battle of Clearwater.

Pete Boyd – WWII USMC officers uniform, photos, and papers. ★

NEW MEMBERS

In recognition and appreciation for all of his support during his tenure as Adjutant General, the Board presented General Kane with an Honorary Lifetime Membership upon his retirement. Please give a warm welcome to **General Kane!** ★

RENEWALS

Don't forget that your membership is now renewable in January. Check your address label on your newsletter to be sure you have. **Thank you for supporting the Idaho Military History Museum!**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Here are **some** of the events we currently have scheduled; more details will be posted on the webpage as invitations are confirmed and more information becomes available.



2 April 2005. A Military Collector's Exhibit is scheduled for Saturday April 2nd at the Idaho State Historical Museum from 0900 to 1700. \$2 admission. The format will be similar to the *Antique Road Show*. People will be invited to bring in their military artifacts that they can't identify and military collectors will identify them. No appraisals, no sales. The event will be indoors and the IMHS will have a display and membership booth.



30 May 2005. Channel 7's Larry Gebert will do his early morning show **LIVE** at the Museum to help us promote our **4 June, D-Day Open House**. Be sure and tune in!



4 June 2005. D-Day Open House. Honoring those who stormed the beaches on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The day will begin with a soldiers breakfast from 0830 - 1000; the Open House will run from 1000 - 1600. Both Allied and Axis bivouac sites will be set up with equipment displays, WWII Reenactors will be on hand to answer any questions. There will be firing demonstrations of both Allied and German weapons. **All D-Day Veterans are cordially invited to attend.**



8-11 September 2005 – 148th FA WWII Reunion. The Annual Reunion for the 148th FA WWII Veterans will be held in Boise, Idaho on Sept. 8, 9, 10, with a breakaway breakfast on Sunday, Sept. 11. Our own Bill Heath is one of the chairmen and the Museum will be part of the event. To learn more, contact Bill at wahboi@rmci.net.



17-18 September 2005. Mountain Home Air Force Base has invited us to have a booth at their Open House. **The Thunderbirds** will be performing on the 18th!!! ★

VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER



Please meet Treva Hamilton

This month is someone who has brought unique and valuable skills to the Museum. Just over a year ago Treva Hamilton signed up with Volunteermatch.org and became our first volunteer from that service. Her interests? Data entry and office duties! **These skills and talents are greatly appreciated, more than she knows!** She is a very productive lady and very pleasant to be around.

Treva's background is in real estate and title work, something she dabbles in still. What has really interested her at the Museum is the prospect of working with our new PastPerfect software doing data entry. One thing that has impressed me about Treva is her patience- it took us over a year to get it, but it's here and she is working with it.

Her work experiences have benefited the Museum and me with her ability to do lots of the day-to-day office work, which has added a high degree of professionalism. I have been able to go to her with various tasks, which have aided in improving the overall efficiency of how we do things. I really enjoy working with Treva and look forward to every time she comes in.

Thank you Treva, we deeply appreciate all your hard work. You are our Volunteer of the Quarter!

☆☆☆☆

HONORABLE MENTION



I have maintained a self-imposed rule in selecting Volunteers of the Quarter and that is to not name a prior VOQ. I am making an exception this time as I do feel it is important to take time to recognize a volunteer who already had that title, in December 2000. That volunteer is **Stan Ogsbury**.

Stan has been most helpful these past months during our docent shortage. He has been more than happy to work extra shifts every time I call to ask. Plus, there have been some last minute cancellations that came up. Stan worked these too with less than 24 hours notice in some cases. I am personally very grateful to him for what he has done for the Museum. **The next time you see Stan, please thank him.**

ENDOWMENT UPDATE

Our Endowment balance currently stands at **\$33,009.47**.



Recent Endowment Donors include:

Stan Herzinger
(in memory of Robert V. Estell)

Don't forget, you can also make a credit card donation on **on-line**. Look for this link on the Museum's webpage:



Thank you for supporting The Idaho Military History Museum. ☆

NEWS FROM THE FRONT (IRAQ)

By LTC Russ Johnson, Commander TF 1-148 Field Artillery

As we tenuously worked through the month of Feb., the proud soldiers of the 148th continued to post an impressive list of achievements. We experienced *no serious injuries* or damage to equipment, despite the daily activities in the combat zone. Everyone remained safe and healthy. We continue to focus on mitigating risk and exposure to our forces. Keeping the age-old "Scorpion" tradition, soldiers are taking care of soldiers.

This past month, your seasoned soldiers safely logged more than 122,000 vehicle miles (cumulative, since deploying, 239,400 miles). They transported 5,954 gallons of fuel, hauled 84 short tons of cargo, and delivered some 18,060 meals to forward-deployed personnel. The 1-148th conducted a total of 426 combat patrols, consisting of mounted security, combat logistics, and route-clearing operations. Our Paladin howitzers have fired nearly every day. They have delivered 21,600 pounds of ordinance, from the muzzles of their howitzers. The crewmen are truly superb and dedicated artillerymen.

After nine months of living out of duffel bags, the Scorpion soldiers finally got the opportunity to settle into what will be their home for the near term. They finally have room to unpack trunks and bags that they packed back in Texas, prior to our deployment to Iraq.

Throughout Feb., the Scorpion soldiers continued their ongoing humanitarian efforts. They performed medical/dental assistance visits, and delivered heaters, blankets, clothes, shoes and school supplies, to some very grateful people. Our medics have provided emergency medical care to Iraqis. Their efforts have directly saved numerous civilian lives. We continually work side by side with Iraqi medical and emergency-response personnel, both to train, and enable them to achieve self-reliance.

Our signal personnel have worked long hours, establishing and maintaining our extensive communication networks, signal nodes, and computer systems. Their hard work has allowed us to communicate continuously over multiple, networked signal platforms, encompassing 376 square KM of battle space. Our radar systems provide timely, finite protection to our forward operating bases, by pinpointing locations of bad guys, and their indirect fire systems. They enable us to maintain an exceptional force protection, against a clever and evasive enemy.

The professionalism and commitment of our soldiers manning command and control centers, continues to set the standard across the theater. Our hard-working radio-telephone operators, non-commissioned officers, and support personnel, man our command and control nodes continuously. They provide proactive and responsive control to a very diverse and dispersed battalion.

From conveying situation reports to directing Paladin fires, these capable Redlegs are the nerve center of our operations here. They are well trained and supervised within the battalion, and across a myriad of command posts.

Our commitment to enhancing the Iraqi infrastructure, was evidenced by the completion of two primary schools, and a fully staffed and equipped hospital. These facilities stand as testament to the hard work, pride and dedication evident throughout the 1-148th. Numerous humanitarian projects continue to move steadily forward under the auspices of 1-148th units and project managers. This has enabled many Iraqi construction firms, Iraqi people and local engineers, to sustain regional employment, and bring economic stimulus to the remote areas. It is really something to

watch happy children dancing, singing and laughing, because they finally get to attend school in a clean, safe, and properly-equipped facility.

Your soldiers continue to teach, mentor and coach civic leaders such as mayors, city councilmen, police chiefs, EMS personnel, and regional political leaders in a number of small towns and villages. These emerging governmental agencies are gaining ground every day, and learning how a free, democratic society functions through equal representation. These diverse and ethnically unique regions of Iraq have made great strides in improving their communities, and infrastructure, through the direct efforts of your loved ones.

Training, mentorship, and resourcing our Iraqi Security Force partners, continue to be an important part of our mission here. We train and mentor Iraqi Army personnel, Iraqi Police, and other security agencies, as we collectively move toward a safe, stable and self-reliant Iraqi security force. Every day, our talented citizen soldiers are out teaching and sharing their broad knowledge base with the Iraqis. These proud people are eager to learn and develop their skills, for the betterment of themselves and their country. They are rapidly becoming a professional and confident force across the country.

Our successful deployment to Iraq, is a collective effort of families, friends, employers and soldiers. If it were not for the untiring and selfless support of the wives, husbands, moms, dads, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters of these soldiers, we would not be making the strides we are. My personal thanks to the communities, churches, governmental agencies, and employers, for all you are doing to care for our families, during this long deployment and absence. Your efforts are sincerely appreciated.

Our Rear Detachments staffs, Family Assistance Groups and Family

Readiness groups, continue to burn the midnight oil, maintaining the home front. My personal thanks for your untiring efforts to keep our families afloat, and communities informed. You are performing a priceless service to our deployed Guardsmen and women every day. Just like the soldiers and families you support, not a day goes by when you are not asked to drop everything and help someone in need. Your efforts are making this deployment bearable for many of us. For that, we thank you.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit an historic regional memorial, that focuses on the atrocities committed against the Iraqi people. It memorializes the 5,000-plus Iraqi men, women and children, who were deliberately slaughtered back in March of 1988. The memorial and cemetery plots (many are mass graves), are truly humbling to witness. I suddenly realized *this is why we are here*.

We have now been in Iraq for 90 days. Your soldiers continue to perform admirably and look after each other, in this often dangerous and unpredictable area of the world. Let me assure you that every deployed soldier is making an indelible mark upon the future of this great country. Elected Iraqi officials will soon go to work drafting their constitution, and moving their democratic nation forward.

In closing, the Iraqi people are truly grateful for the hard work, sacrifice, and selflessness of the Coalition Forces, and for the peace and security they all represent. *Your soldiers are making a huge impact on this troubled region.*

*Editors Note: A very special thank you to **Bill Heath** for his help in making this story possible. ★*

IN MEMORIAL

It is with a deep sense of loss that we inform you of the passing of Mr. Robert V. Estell. Our deepest sympathies go out to the Estell family. ★

**IDAHO FILE
INTO HISTORY**



**DOROTHY STILL DANNER
NAVY NURSE, POW WWII¹**

Dorothy was born on November 29, 1914, in Saginaw, Michigan, and grew up in the Los Angeles area. She began nurse's training at 18 years of age because her mother insisted that she become a nurse. It was a three-year course. While she was working in special duty nursing in a doctor's office and surgery at the Hollywood Hospital she noticed application forms for both Army and Navy Nursing Corps. She sent her application to the Navy.



Dorothy Danner in 1935 as a student nurse at the Los Angeles General County Hospital.²

She stated she jumped for joy when she received a letter from the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery to appear at the San Diego Navy Hospital for a physical examination on 20 December 1937. She passed her physical and spent her first two-year tour of duty, 1938 and 1939, right in her own back yard.

After two years, Dorothy received orders to report to the 16th Naval District, Cavite, Philippine Islands for active duty at the US Naval Hospital, Cañacao, Philippines on or about 1 February 1940.



The nurses' quarters at the Cañacao Naval Hospital, 1940²

When Dorothy asked, "Where is Cañacao, Philippines?" she was told it was about as far away as the Navy was likely to send her. It was at the south end of Manila Bay, Philippines, halfway between China and Australia.

Dorothy's voyage to her new assignment was on the *Henderson* from San Francisco and they stopped in Hawaii and Guam on way to the Philippines. When at last the *Henderson* entered the San Bernardino Strait, the center of the 1,000-mile-long Philippine archipelago, one of the ship's officers pointed out Samar Island on their left as they passed, and farther west was the tail end of Luzon on the right.

As they approached the entrance to Manila Bay they saw the superstructure of the battleship *Idaho*. Scuttled after WWI, it was manned by soldiers dressed like sailors and they carried on as though it really were a Navy ship. The volcanic rock island on their left was Corregidor.

Dorothy was so fascinated by the historical setting at the Hospital, that with the commander's permission, she spent hours going through the Hospital's archives with its intriguing old records. She stated it was a happy and relaxed duty station.

In October 1940, relations between the Japanese and other sectors of the settlement had deteriorated so noticeably, the Admiral ordered all Navy dependents in the Philippines to return to the states. By about mid-February 1941, the nurses were the only women left on the Navy base.

By the summer of 1941, the hospital was in a state of panic. Enlisted patients with poliomyelitis came in from Sangley Point in what seemed to be the makings of an epidemic. Fortunately, that did not materialize, even though the afflicted patients were desperately ill. One sailor had to be put into an iron lung.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed on 7 December 1941, it was 0330 hours, 8 December 1941, in the Philippines. The hospital began a blackout period and air raid alerts. The supply officer gave the nurses sailors' dungarees and work shirts to wear in lieu of their nurses uniforms. The short-croched men's pants, usually worn along the top of a sailor's pelvis, weren't made for curvaceous female figures, and they were soon told they could wear casual skirts and blouses, or suitable dresses.

The nurses were told they were in a target zone and could be ordered out at a moment's notice. They were also told to pack their personal belongings and to pack a change of clothing and other immediate needs in a small suitcase. They moved the patients from the 240-bed hospital to the former dependent's ward at the Sternberg Hospital.

On 10 December 1941, the Japanese started bombing their location and the nurses took shelter under their building. After the bombing stopped, they discovered that the Navy Yard was flattened and sporadic flames shot up through a blanket of black smoke. They dashed over to the hospital as fast as they could.

After the raid was over, the Yard's casualties joined the parade en route to the hospital while salvage and demolition operations took priority. All of the Army's airports were wiped out on the first day of the war, and the Sternberg Hospital was flooded with casualties who were placed, row after row, out on the front lawn. Each was given a quarter grain of morphine while an extensive triage was made to determine those most in need of immediate attention.

In the middle of the night, they moved their patients from Sternberg Hospital to a

nearby empty Army barracks in PT boats. The medical personnel decided the barracks did not make much of a hospital, so they accepted the Philippine Union College in Balintowak as an alternative. It was out in the countryside and far enough north of Manila that its function as a hospital was of no interest to the Japanese military.

In the meantime, the combined Army and Navy medical corps set up surgical teams in the city so that emergency care could be given on the spot to servicemen and civilians. As soon as their conditions warranted it, civilians were sent to one of the city's hospitals, soldiers to Sternberg, sailors to Balintawak.

During this combined medical corps, Dorothy learned the Army nurses had officer status, while the Navy nurses did not. Granting Army nurses a commission had something to do with the 1920 Army Reorganization Act, and had apparently been a result of their praiseworthy accomplishments while on active duty in Europe. The Army nurses had been granted a relative officer status ranging from second lieutenant to major, with authority directly under the medical officers.

On 12 December 1941, Dorothy sent a telegram to her family back in California. The telegram read: CHRISTMAS GREETINGS ---AM OKAY IN MANILA -- DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME --LOVE DOROTHY. Dorothy was assigned to the Jai Alai Building along with three doctors, three nurses, and 30 or so Army and Navy corpsmen, but they did not have any patients.

On 26 December, they moved to Santa Scholastica. The Army headed in the opposite direction toward Bataan. A third of the citizens of Manila had fled to Bataan along with the Army. The Santa Scholastica was a musical college for young women and was an

excellent choice for the Army's intended purposes.

By the time all of the 84 Army patients plus servicemen found in the city hospitals were added to their roster, the ratio of patients to staff was three to one. On 31 December, they were really jolted when the Army patients were rushed down to the port area to be taken aboard an inner-island ship bearing a huge red cross. They wondered, why not our Navy patients? This brought the ratio close to a one-on-one basis. They thought they would be evacuated any minute.

On New Year's Day the local radio station went off the air. The final edition of the *Manila Tribune* reiterated statements regarding the forthcoming Japanese entry into the city. Civilians were told to carry on normal peacetime pursuits, be respectful, obey the occupying forces. The hospital personnel were ordered to wear the usual white or khaki uniforms while on duty.

On 2 January 1942, a Japanese bicycle brigade, marching soldiers, trucks, and official cars came into the city. Except for guards camped across the street, Santa Scholastica was ignored. The next day, three Japanese officers came in with an interpreter, informed the US commander that *he and his command were prisoners of war*, checked the contents of the safe, and left.

When the guards came in, a series of inspections followed, first for radios, knives, firearms, and flashlights. With smiling faces, the guards pocketed whatever personal effects took their fancy. Seldom did the same guards stay longer than a few days, but each time different guards took over, there were more inspections and more looting. Women's personal effects, except for knives and flashlights, held little interest.

As time went by, conditions deteriorated. No means were taken to feed prisoners, and guards going through the pantry had taken the

canned pineapple and similar tasty items. Then they confiscated their quinine, a vital drug in a country infested with malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Unused beds, mattresses, patients' hospital garments, and mosquito nets went out the gate, not to mention nets taken by individual guards.

Their situation deteriorated further when a group of patients, doctors, and corpsmen were sent to a "well-equipped hospital," and with them went more of their scarce medical supplies. Then even more patients, personnel, and supplies were sent to the new hospital. When a patient was sent back for an x-ray, he told them that Pasay was an elementary school, not a hospital. It had no beds, nothing except kid-size desks, and those were being used for firewood to cook the rice.

In February, Dorothy came down with infectious hepatitis. On 8 March 1942, the nurses were ordered to appear in the courtyard, and the Japanese officer told them they were going to Santo Tomas Internment Camp. On the following morning, out the gate went two trucks loaded with their trunks, beds, mattresses, pillows, linens, luggage, buckets, pots, pans, eating implements, the iron and ironing board, the sewing machine, canned goods, powdered milk, and more. Their head nurse, Miss Redecker managed to take all of their service records with her, stuffed into her uniform.

The University of Santo Tomas belonged to the Dominican Friars and the Japanese dumped some 3000 men, women, and children there. Housing became a real problem! They finally decided on a room on the second floor for the nurses. Each internee was allowed 22 square feet of floor space. The bathrooms had long lines, and each person was given four sheets of toilet tissue as they entered. Cold-water showerheads were attached to a jerry-rigged pipe extending across the length of the room. Under a frosted window was a sign: IF YOU WANT PRIVACY CLOSE YOUR EYES.

The Navy nurses worked in the Camp's hospital. They soon found out why no



Internees washing their hair in Santo Thomas²

one was asked to work longer than two to four hours a day. It was impossible as so much of their time was spent standing in lines. There were lines for the restroom, lines for washing their hair outside under one of the two showerheads attached to a water pipe over a propped-up bathtub, lines for rinsing dishes or washing their laundry under one of many faucets strung along a pipe over a crude trough. The chow line was the longest.

On 9 April 1942, Bataan, where the Army nurses along with many soldiers had gone, fell to the Japanese. For days thereafter, starved and heartsick civilians were brought into Santo Tomas, mostly women, wives, some with children; and they learned some of the hard facts about warfare on the peninsula. They cried as they recalled the horrible conditions they had somehow survived and how the sick and starved servicemen had hardly had enough strength to fight, even if there had been enough ammunition. During the final hours of 8 April 1942, the Army nurses were ordered to go to Corregidor.

On 8 May 1942, Corregidor fell to the Japanese after three weeks of fighting. The big guns of the old *Idaho* would have the distinction of firing the last shells. General MacArthur ordered two PBV's to Corregidor to fly out key personnel, and 19 Army nurses were among those who left the island.

Also on the 8th of May, hundreds of American and Filipino prisoners began the infamous **Death March of Bataan**.

They had to create ingenious ways to get food and necessities for

themselves and their patients. They looked forward to Red Cross boxes and the items that were left after the Japanese guards took what they wanted. They finally received pay in the form of pesos in December 1942. Monthly pay ranged from 310 to 85 pesos. From this, 60 to 40 pesos were deducted for subsistence and a percentage of the balance was put into a compulsory savings in a Tokyo bank. This left 25 pesos in hand for the top officers and 6 pesos for the lowest-rated enlisted men.

On 12 May, the Chief Nurse asked them to go to Los Baños and help set up the hospital. They shipped all of their belongings on 13 May, which was frightening, because they did not know if they would see them again. Except for what they wore, the contents of their small handbags were all that they had with them.

They were transported to Los Baños in freight trains. The medical staff was horrified when they realized they were going to close the doors on the men in the boxcars. Finally, a Japanese guard agreed to open the doors on one side, letting medical staff know that they would be held personally responsible if anyone escaped. Two nurses were assigned to each of first six cars. The men insisted the nurses sit in the open space, and a rotation of the men at given intervals was agreed upon.

The city of Los Baños was 70 kilometers southeast of Santo Tomas and the camp was four or five kilometers northeast as the crow flies. The U-shaped infirmary, overlooking a large courtyard, was a mess! In addition, except for a few battered pieces, all furnishings were gone. Some of the cupboards and shelves had been ripped off the walls, and dust-laden spider webs in the spacious rooms obviously hadn't been disturbed for some time.

Dorothy stated that with so many available hands, they converted the infirmary into a hospital with

remarkable speed. The Japanese brought in an assortment of surgical instruments and an operating table that must have been a museum piece.



The Navy nurses interned at Santo Tomas, Sept. 1942. Dorothy Danner is in the

second row, far right. Photo was taken by one of the Japanese guards.²

A dentist brought in his dental chair and instruments from his Manila office, and lab supplies and equipment came in from a fellow internee's downtown laboratory. The nurses groaned at the sight of an old-fashioned wood-burning stove.

The pharmacy began to look and smell like one, and the storeroom became pretty well organized. Now that the wards were ready, the hospital staff was increased by two janitors and eight orderlies who had not been in a hospital since they were born, if then. The hospital kitchen had breakfast, lunch and supper chefs whose previous experience consisted of flipping steaks on a barbeque grill. But, all considered, they decided they liked Los Baños better than Santo Tomas.

By June 1943, the hospital had settled down to a good routine. Dorothy suggested that the internee orderlies be taught some basic nursing skills, and the other nurses elected Dorothy to be their teacher since it was her idea. The classes went quite well and were apparently appreciated. One of the orderlies told her that when he was asked to do something for a patient, that it sure helped to know why and how to do it.

September 1943, the vegetable gardens flourished, and the canteen sold fresh fruits and vegetables, raw sugar, and duck eggs, as well as smelly cheroots and low-grade tobacco by the kilo. They were able to eat better at this camp. Breakfast included a large ladle of cornmeal mush, coconut milk, a spoon of raw sugar, and

coffee. Lunch was mongo beans flavored with beef (caribou), and supper was vegetable stew with visible meat, a good serving of rice, usually a banana, and a cup of tea.

Dorothy also became the hairdresser for the nurses. They all kept their hair short which was easy to keep clean.

Christmas 1943, they received cases of Comfort Kits from the Red Cross. Dorothy stated they were more of a morale booster than anything else, with their small cans of spam and party loaf, their packages of dried fruit, powdered milk, a fairly large chocolate candy bar, and a small container of instant coffee.

In the middle of February 1944, mail and personal packages lifted everybody's spirits. Standard-size Red Cross packages were unloaded while year-old letters were being distributed. Dorothy received a letter and package from her mother.

The Japanese began to send more internees from Santo Tomas over to Los Baños. On 7 April 1944, 530 internees arrived. They sent all of their criminals, whores, thugs and thieves, not to mention the near-sick, the mentally sick, and the socially unwanted who promptly began stealing from the barracks and the gardens. The scarcity of food had become such a problem that individual gardens were in demand. Available land was surveyed and a drawing was held for the remaining little plots.

They all began to lose considerable weight. One of the other nurses pinned up the seams in Dorothy's two uniforms and sewed them for her.

Thankfully, there was no shortage of morphine, which came with the Red Cross supplies. Without it, general anesthesia would have been more than they could have handled. Pain wasn't the only thing they had to contend with; as time went by, death

was no longer a stranger in Los Baños. More and more of the old timers began to die, and then young people began to die too.

In August 1944, Japanese continued to hack away at the food supply issued to the camp. What had been six caldrons of cornmeal mush for breakfast was reduced to four, and to make enough to go around, ground rice was added. Now, the daily menu consisted of ersatz coffee at 0730, cornmeal mush with coconut milk at 1030, and a questionable supper at 1600. The canteen ran out of everything in short order when the camp was told that everyone's money was to be turned over to the Japanese commandant.

Internees at Santo Tomas and POW's in Bilibid were accustomed to seeing the Japanese pilots shoot at a tow-plane's target, but on 21 September 1944, they were startled when one of the practicing planes exploded in midair. After that came waves of American planes that finished off the rest of the exercising Japanese planes. At the same time, they in Los Baños wondered what the guards were looking at in the distance. A battling US Hellcat and a Japanese Zero were far enough away that their dogfight maneuvering seemed no more than practicing. But then anti-aircraft puffs of smoke began peppering the sky, and the Zero exploded!

The Japanese took over their YMCA building, turning it into a Japanese field hospital. Except for their hospital, all the other original camp's buildings were to be temporary quarters for transient Japanese troops.

Starting on 15 October, air raids over the Manila Bay area went on almost daily, too far away from Los Baños for them to see anything more than the comforting flights off in the distance. On 20 October, the grapevine told them that General MacArthur had returned.

In the meantime food was becoming even more scarce. The Japanese supply officer had all of the camp's

salt moved to the garrison's, and he issued a daily ration of only six grams for the entire camp. They were becoming more and more aware of what real hunger was all about.

A delegation went to the commandant with a plea for more food, but they were told that it was in the hands of the supply officer. Meanwhile there was less than ever, and no more coconuts. The nurses were glad they had something meaningful to do. Without a worthwhile incentive, many lethargic people were too sick to do anything for themselves. After Thanksgiving, around 200 internees were sent from Santo Tomas to Los Baños. About two-thirds volunteered, thinking the food situation would be better there.

The internees began to talk about food incessantly. Young children drew pictures of food they had heard of but had never seen or tasted. Thoughts of chocolate bars sent them into fantasyland. The Red Cross Comfort Kits had them, and believers thought the Comfort Kits would arrive any day. But the Japanese commandant told them that there had been no Red Cross supplies brought into the Far East since last year.

On 22 and 23 December 1944, it was easy to find volunteers to bring 500 sacks of rice into the camp. The commandant let it be known that at the rate it was being consumed, it would last about three months. But the commandant did not mention that the largest share would be used by the Japanese garrison.

The nurses spent their third Christmas as internees. Midnight mass was conducted in the barracks chapel, and nearly as many non-Catholics as Catholics attended. On Christmas Day, General George Kenney's Army Air Force presented a gift of its own: a dramatic show, as hundreds of bombers and fighters roared overhead.

The days after Christmas were truly down, down, down. Meager servings from the main kitchen did little for empty stomachs. Drugs and medical supplies were all but gone, and their patients got little more than concerned nursing care and friendly smiles.

Long gone was the crude camp-manufactured soap, impossible to make without lard or coconut oil, and the hospital was farther than ever from an aseptic haven. Gum from the one rubber tree was no longer available since it, too, had been chopped down for firewood. Now there was nothing in the way of an adhesive to hold dressings in place.

On 9 January 1945, the Japanese turned the camp over to the American camp committee. The committee renamed the camp, *Camp Freedom*. The Japanese left food provisions to last two months if used wisely. But the committee did not know if the Japanese had actually left the area. They told the detainees that they were probably still in a war zone and subject to all the dangers and risks of actual warfare. The committee reiterated the dangers of going out of the camp, and then he made his final statement. "Breakfast will be served at 0830, lunch at 1230, and dinner at 1700 with full rations for all!"

The next day, the entire internee body assembled outside at 0700, where a makeshift bamboo flagpole had been set up. They all stood at attention and watched tearfully as an American flag was raised to the top of the pole. It was an electrifying moment as they sang "The Star Spangled Banner." The American flag was replaced by England's along with their national anthem, then it too was lowered. Dorothy said she never did find out who managed to hang onto the flags.

On 15 January 1945, they were awakened at 0230, **and found themselves looking back into the Japanese commandant's ugly face.** The return of the Japanese was the worst blow ever. The internees who had so magically come to life during that week fell back into their state of collapse. Before the Japanese commandant retired, he released enough food for the camp's

breakfast, sealed the big refrigerator, and left sleepy guards at both bodegas (pantries).

While they were *Camp Freedom*, many detainees left the camp. Now the Japanese were trying to make sure no more detainees were able to leave. They shot them leaving or as they tried to sneak back into the camp.

Their food situation worsened again because of the Japanese deliberate interference. By early February 1945, nearly all of their food was gone. It was suicidal for a rat, a snake or a snail to venture into their camp. Food had dwindled to swamp weed, and soon that was gone.

The morning of 23 February 1945, began as every other morning and then suddenly there was a deafening roar of *nine* C-47's circling the camp at a low altitude. A bold banner attached to the fuselage of the lead plane read **RESCUE!!** Everything happened so fast. Bullets were flying in all directions. Then, as the C-47's glided over the drop zone on the other side of the field, out jumped one parachutist after another, machine guns blazing.

The roaring sound of amtracs came closer. Down went the fences; in came the ungainly box-shaped vehicles with tractor treads. The first one wheeled into the hospital's circular drive; the others turned into the open area across the road. **Magnificent, healthy American soldiers** emerged from the amtrac, down the lowered ramp. Smiling and alert, their heroes had come in their camouflaged uniforms, pockets bulging with hand grenades, cartridge clips, and K rations.

They found out that a Filipino lad had been partially responsible for their liberation. He had appeared out of nowhere and had asked the American major when they were going to Los Baños. The prisoners would also learn that two men who had escaped from Los Baños during *Camp Freedom* week had played an

important role in the rescue. They had helped prepare a map of the camp and had told of the camp's routine and the condition of the people.

An elaborate plan had been devised involving the help of the guerrillas. Then, just minutes before the rescue started, this dispatch had apparently come in: **URGENT RECEIVED RELIABLE INFORMATION THAT LOS BAÑOS IS SCHEDULED FOR MASSACRE ON 23 FEB W.C. PRICE, COLONEL GSC (GUERR) CHIEF OF STAFF.**

One of the rescuers wondered if General MacArthur knew that the Japanese starved their prisoners who are about to be executed.



The liberated nurses being briefed by Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid. Dorothy Danner is the one seated, having been overcome by extreme exhaustion.²

After their dramatic rescue, sequential events were more or less anticlimactic. They were taken to New Bilibid Prison at Muntinlupa where the Red Cross had their mail waiting for them.

There were many adjustments to make in a world that had changed so rapidly. So many new drugs and sterile administration sets designed for treating casualties on the spot. So many disposables, and it hurt to see presterile intravenous tubing and single-use needles thrown into the trash.

And food! It was served cafeteria-style in the prison's mess hall, so much, ever so much. To see the large empty cans of Spam being tossed away was unbelievable. Dorothy asked for milk and a slice of bread to wash down the vitamins of all kinds that were being distributed in wholesale lots. She knew

she could always come back for more, since the line was open around the clock.

The nurses were no longer to be addressed as Miss, but as **Ensign with honest-to-goodness gold-backed American money in their pockets.** They were finally on their way to Pearl Harbor, island-hopping along the way with stops on Guam and Kwajalein. At each stop, photographers and media wanted their attention. But what should have been a festive occasion was dulled as the travel-weary nurses stood self-consciously in the terminals. After the first few words, there wasn't much left to say.



Dorothy Danner wearing a borrowed Army nurses uniform for her flight back to the States, being

interviewed by UP reporter Frank Tremaine on Guam.²

At Pearl Harbor, at last, they were driven to the Nurses' Quarters at Aea Naval Hospital. There they experienced their **first hot baths in nearly four years.** They slept on coil-spring mattresses and had hand lotions, clean-smelling colognes, bath powder, and current magazines at their disposal. Their borrowed Army attire had been replaced with borrowed Navy Nurse Corps uniforms. They were proud of the

Lt. (jg.) stripes on their dress uniform jackets.



Lt. Dorothy Still in 1945²

They were finally on their way to Oakland, California, in comfortable passenger seats. The following days were exciting yet trying, as they all became full lieutenants. They all received physical examinations at the Oakknoll Naval Hospital.

Jeanette MacDonald sang for them at a cocktail party; at a dinner party Mrs. Nimitz told them that the admiral was sorry he missed them but sent his regards; San Francisco opened its arms to them.

After a final luncheon at the St. Francis Drake Hotel in Knob Hill, it was a 90-day recuperative leave for all of them.

Many years later, Dorothy would learn that despite the hardships they had endured, **all of the Army nurses and the eleven Navy nurses came home.**

After she recovered from the beriberi she contracted while a POW, Dorothy traveled in support of the US Navy public relations activities. She left the Navy in 1947, she married Goldburn "Peck" Danner, and raised three children. A grandmother of six, she resided in Boise, ID until her death on Saturday, June 16, 2001, at the Idaho

State Veterans Home in Boise, Idaho. She was buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors on August 31, 2001.

*Editors Note: A very special thank you to **Genevieve (Gen) Boguslawski, CW4 (Retired)** who wrote this story and the **Idaho Women's Veterans Organization** for their assistance. For those who were unaware of the fact, **March is Women's History month.** Dorothy Danner Still wrote a book about her Navy life, titled "What A Way To Spend A War." Excerpts from her book have been used to tell her story. ★*

MOST WANTED

➤ **Docents**



➤ **Artifact preservation supplies (acid free paper and boxes)**

➤ **USS Boise and USS Idaho Artifacts**

➤ **116th Engineer related items from Vietnam**

➤ **133rd Combat Engineer Battalion items from WWII**

➤ **183rd/951st Field Artillery items from WWII**

➤ **Desert Storm field gear ★**

Footnotes: 1) <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/dsdanner.htm>
2) Danner, Dorothy Still, *What A Way To Spend A War: Navy Nurse POWs in the Philippines*, Naval Institute Press, 1995

Produced By: Idaho Military Historical Society
Editor & Production: Gayle Alvarez
Comments or article suggestions are welcome, contact us at 422-4841 or visit our web site at: <http://inghro.state.id.us/museum/>

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