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9

Guerrilla Activities

5th MD

Bicol AREA

Baldridge, Rex M (Army)

On 7 December 1941 I was at Aroroy, Masbate Island on an inspection tour of our mine located there. I was working as a metallurgist for the "Nielson & Company", Manila Luzon. The Japanese first came to Aroroy, Masbate around Christmas time, they did not occupy the island but told us to remain in our barrios and we would not be taken prisoner. The Japanese remained on the island for about three days and then retired. The Japanese returned again on 10 January 1942 and at this time stated again that we would not be taken prisoner. They also gave us permission to go to Milagros and Masbate to buy food which we did after they again left the island. The Japanese landed a force of 50 men on Masbate on 7 January 1942. The next day we were told that we would be taken prisoner and sent to a Prisoner of war camp in Luzon. We were given two hours to pack our belongings and could not escape as two Japanese guards were left to watch us. We left for Luzon on the night of 8 January 1942 and arrived at Sorogon, Luzon the next day, 9 January 1942. Our Party consisted of the following Americans, all of whom were working for the mining companies on the island: Mr. and Mrs. George E. Weaders, Mr. and Mrs. E. Foust, Mr. James Banning, Mr. Kertly, Mr. Reese, Mr. and Mrs. H. Morrison and B. Morrison, their son. The following British subjects were included: Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Rowe and Mr. T. Rutherford. We were taken from the launch to a bus and taken to Naga, Camarines Sur, Luzon, arriving there the same day and placed in the Provincial jail.

I was placed in the Provincial jail at Naga, Camarines Sur, Luzon along with 52 other American men. There I remained until our escape, 2 May 1942, when the guerrilla's raided the town. While in the jail we were forced to cook and obtain our own food which became quite a problem as the Japanese had taken all our money. However, Mr. James, General Manager of Alntco Transportation Company, told the Japanese that the safe at his company contained about 5,000 and asked them if he could get it to buy our food. This request was granted and the Japanese kept the money, giving us 40 centavos per man per day for our food.

I escaped on 2 May 1942 when a band of guerrillas under the command of Capt. F. Flours (Filipino USAFFE Intelligence Agent) raided the town. This guerrilla band consisting of about 1,000 poorly armed Filipinos attacked Naga which was garrisoned by 8 Japanese soldiers and 55 Japanese civilians on the morning of 2 May 1942. The engagement continued until the next morning with all the Japanese being killed with the exception of 7 civilians who escaped in an armored car. I did not participate in this engagement but remained in the city as Capt. Flour thought it would raise the morale of his men to have Americans present. He also wanted to open the safes of the Japanese puppet government and obtain the money to carry on his guerrilla activities. He wanted to do this in the presence of Americans. The safes were opened, about 2,000 being obtained, which was distributed as follows: 500 pesos to the Americans who had been imprisoned and the balance to the guerrillas themselves. I left Naga on the morning of 4 May 1942 along with three other Americans, Ralph Rawson, Gardinker, and Erema A. Kookeoritchkin. We proceeded to Sagay on the Lagony Gulf, arriving there the same day. From here we proceeded by sailboat to Carraean Peninsula, arriving there the 5 May 1942. We remained in a small barrio, Parubcan for about two weeks, living in the house of the Tinente of the barrio, Senor Presentacion. He provided us with food and gave us such valuable information as to the location of our hide-out.

Not S.M.D

While we were in this location, we had Philipinos build us a house in the mountains about 8 kilometers north of the barrio. We moved up to our new home about 20 May, 1942 and remained here until September 1942. During this period of time, I was always in the Caracoman Peninsula with the exception of one trip to Lahuy Island about June 1942. On this trip I went to visit with Mr. and Mrs. Parfit, mining superintendent of a mine on the island and an acquaintance of mine. I maintained my relation with the guerrillas all during the period of May to September 1942. I was not active in the field with them, but the guerrilla Captains generally used my home as a working headquarters. I made short trips on the Caracoman mountains with Capt. Flour and on these trips we picked up what information we could on what the Japanese were doing in the area. We would meet at my home and discuss the information we had obtained and other information which the guerrillas had obtained. During this period, the guerrillas were not very active in a combat sense, but were being organized and equipped as best they could be. The information that we obtained was used by us at this time to plan operations for the future time when the guerrillas would be strong enough to fight as a unit. At this time we had no contact with the outside world. In September 1942 the Japanese became more active and began to penetrate inland and we were forced to move our home deeper into the Caracoman mountains. We joined another group of Americans, Mr. and Mrs. L. G. James and their two small children, Peter and Patsy, Mr. and Mrs. L. G. Grove and Mr. and Mrs. Bozart. Mr. L. G. James was General Manager of Alateo Transportation Co., Irigal, Camarines Sur, Luzon. He has two children, a son Peter James, age 9 born in 1935 at Legaspi, Albay, Luzon at Milwakis Hospital and a daughter, Patsy James, age 11, born in 1935 in Manila. I last saw these children in the Caracoman mountains area on 18 February 1945. At that time they were in good health. I have had letters from Mr. and Mrs. James since that date and up to a few days before I left Luzon on 15 December 1945 they were well, living with their parents in the same area and in good health. We remained deep in the Caracoman mountains until 18 February 1945. During this period we talked of joining the guerrillas on active duty and were in contact by runner with another guerrilla Captain Denalia, Commanding Officer of the Camp Timuungan Guerrillas. Also during this period we lost contact with Capt. Flour as he had taken his guerrillas to Yivi, Albay Province. On 18 February 1945 Mr. Kookooritchkin and myself left the other Americans and went down to the town of Caracoman. Here we met with Capt. Denalia and his men. They invited us to join the unit on an active basis. We had had the chance to investigate the unit while we were still in the mountains and had found them to be a worthy group. We accepted the invitation of Capt. Denalia and were sworn into the organization on 22 February 1945. Just prior to our arrival in the town, this guerrilla unit had attacked the Japanese garrison there and driven the Japanese from it. When I was sworn into the organization, I was given the guerrillas rank of a first Lt. and assigned as assistant chief of the engineering section. The first month was spent in reorganizing our unit, checking upon the civilian population and aiding them as best we could. At this time we had approximately 250 men on duty. Also during this period from 22 February to 4 April 1945 we placed the radio receiver in operation so that we could get the news for ourselves and the civilians. In the last week of March 1945 I made a trip by boat to the island of Lahuy to the Pan-Philippine Mining Co. where we obtained radio parts and built a small radio transmitter which was later installed in a sailboat.

About 4 April 1945, Mr. Kookooritchkin and myself with a Filipino crew

set sail in our boat up and down the northern coast of the Caramoan Peninsula. The purpose of this cruise was to contact some outside American radio station if possible. We chose to use the water first, as the sending and receiving conditions might be better, and secondly, it would be harder for the Japanese to spot at. We had very little success until in June 1943 when we established contact with an American submarine "S-82". We had several contacts with this sub in June 1943 but never had any success, as each time they would use the USAFFE code which we didn't have. Thus, we could never convince the submarine that we were actually American guerrilla forces. The last part of June 1943, we were able to contact an American Field station (location and call letters unknown) but our radio equipment was so weak, we never met with any success. When we could hear them they could not hear us and vice-versa. I do remember that the code name they use was "Raspberry". The Japanese by the end of June 1943 were searching for us with launches and we decided that since we were meeting with no success, we should return to our camp. We arrived back at Camp Tinaugan, near the town of Caramoan about 6 July 1943. The day we arrived, Capt. Denalia (PA) left to harvest the crops on his farm and placed Kookooritchkin as acting Commanding Officer of the camp, and myself as acting Executive Officer. For the next two weeks things were quiet, but on 18 July 1943 the Japanese made a landing on the Caramoan Peninsula. Vinson's Traveling Guerrillas under the command of Senor Francisco Boys (known as Turko by the guerrillas) met the Japanese attack at the barrio of Panamanan, fired a volley of shots but were forced to retire back to the town of Caramoan. In the meanwhile we had evacuated the town of all its civilians and were preparing to make a stand against the Japanese. However, on the morning of the 18 July we decided we would meet with more success by engaging the Japanese at the barrio, Gajalio, where they were trying to make a landing. We met the "Traveling Guerrilla Band" here and joined them in the defense of the barrio. We repulsed a Japanese launch three times, but it finally made a landing above the town. The fighting became pretty general all through the Caramoan area. From the 18 July 1943, the guerrilla bands were forced to adopt the policy of hitting the Japanese from ambush and retiring due to the shortage of ammunition. In fact guerrillas became so hard pressed that we called on Capt. Padua's guerrilla's of Camp Isarog in the Partido area. He arrived in the Caramoan area with 100 men and 68 rifles about 24 July 1943. He was accompanied by a Canadian, Capt. Patterson (Reservist in Canadian Air Corps) who was acting as advisor for the band. The combined efforts of our unit, "Camp Tinaugan Guerrillas", Capt. Padua's guerrillas and the Turko group, we completely cleared the Japanese from the Caramoan peninsula by the end of July 1943. In this operation we killed 300 Japanese, losing about 4 men killed and one man wounded. During their stay at the town of Caramoan, the Japanese burned the town with the exception of the church and convent. Thus with no place to live we were forced to move back into the interior of the mountains to the barrio of Pili, the first week of August 1943. Mr. Kookooritchkin was placed in command of our camp and I was sent to the barrio of San Roque on the southern coast of the Caramoan Peninsula. I took the radio receiving equipment with me and set it up in the town. From August 1943 to December 1943 I operated the radio equipment, getting the news and distributing it daily to the guerrillas and the civilians in the area. I was suffering from stomach ulcers at this time and could not be very active. The first part of December 1943 Turko and his band desired more power and took our camp over, as we were poorly armed at this time. Thus with our camp disorganized, most of our unit joined the guerrilla band of Capt. Padua the first week in December 1943. The month of December 1943 I was on patrol with Padua, who was now a guerrilla Major, Kookooritchkin now a guerrilla Captain, and myself a guerrilla 1st Lt. We traveled in Camarines Sur Province through the town of

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Tinambac, Laganoy and Iriga, picking up what information we could about the Japanese. About the 1 January 1944 we came back to the Mount Isarog area and remained there, reorganizing our unit and training our men. The months of January and February 1944 were an armistice period for the Japanese. They were trying to get the guerrillas to surrender to them, which they didn't do. Therefore, with the exception of our training programs, both sides were rather inactive. In the first week of March 1944 I packed up my radio equipment and was sent to the Laganoy mountains where I set up my radio receiver and again became a propagandist. I was my duty to receive the news and distribute it to the Filipinos in the area. I worked at this for about six weeks, moving about every week or so, as the Japanese were always trying to find my set. About the middle of April 1944 I left the Laganoy mountains and returned to Camp Isarog, arriving there about 3 days later. Here in the camp I again set up my radio equipment, using the waterfall nearby to charge my batteries. Here I again distributed the news, putting out about 1,000 copies a week. About 30 January 1944 the Japanese attacked our camp and we had to leave with about ten minutes notice. The guerrillas fought a delaying action but we were forced to retire leaving all our camps where Capt. Kookooritchkin was located, the same day. Here I picked up what radio equipment he had and proceeded about 15 kilometers to the west to the barrio of Salog in the Laganoy Mountains. Here I again set up my set using a small gasoline engine to charge my batteries. I arrived at Salog the last part of June 1944. I remained here until 15 December 1944. During this period I operated the radio station and published the news for distribution to the Filipinos in our area. Also during this period, I went on patrols with Major Padua in the area, gathering information as to the Japanese activities. We had a few small engagements with the Japanese but I was never personally engaged as the Major didn't want his Americans injured if it could be avoided. While on these patrols I left the station in charge of Lt. C. Gear, civilian mining employee, who was working with Major Padua. The Japanese were always trying to find our station, but as of the time I left it, 14 December 1944, it was in full operation. Major Padua wanted to go to Leyte to contact the authorities in the hope of obtaining arms and ammunition to continue his fight in Luzon. I came with him to contact the Americans, thinking that I might help in getting his guerrilla unit recognition. We also brought maps and Japanese intelligence information for the USAFFE. We left Salog on the 15 December 1944 and proceeded by banca, on foot and by sailboat to Babatngon, Leyte, arriving there 2 January 1945. We remained overnight with the American 1st Ca. Div and proceeded to Tacloban, Leyte by barge the next day.

On 10 Sept. 1944 I was promoted to the rank of Captain and made Publicity Officer with the 53rd Infantry Regiment. This promotion was made on Special Order #850, Headquarters 5th Military District, Philippine Army, USAFFE, dated 10 Sept. 1944 and signed by M. N. Zabot, Lt. Col. Inf. District Commander.

Having had the choice of remaining in this theater or returning to the United States by first available transportation in accordance with War Department Circular 58, 1944, I chose to return to the United States.

s/ Rex M. Baldrige
Signature

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 7 day of January 1945, at Headquarters, Fourth Replacement Depot, APO 705.

(signed) Thomas A. Bogard,
1st. Lt. ASD
Asst. Adj. General.

207 file

On 7 December 1941 I was at Aroroy, Masbate Island on an inspection tour of our mine located there. I was working as a metallurgist for the "Wilson & Company", Manila Luzon. The Japanese first came to Aroroy, Masbate around Christmas time, they did not occupy the island but told us to remain in our barries and we would not be taken prisoner. The Japanese remained on the island for about three days and then retired. The Japanese returned again on 10 January 1942 and at this time stated again that we would not be taken prisoner. They also gave us permission to go to Milagro and Masbate to buy food which we did after they again left the island. The Japanese landed a force of 50 men on Masbate on 7 January 1942. The next day we were told that we would be taken prisoner and sent to a Prisoner of war camp in Luzon. We were given two hours to pack our belongings and could not escape as two Japanese guards were left to watch us. We left for Luzon on the night of 8 January 1942 and arrived at Sorsogon, Luzon the next day, 9 January 1942. Our Party consisted of the following Americans, all of whom were working for the mining companies on the island: Mr. and Mrs. George E. Menders, Mr. and Mrs. B. Foust, Mr. James Sanning, Mr. Kertly, Mr. Reese, Mr. and Mrs. H. Morrison and B. Morrison, their son. The following British subjects were included: Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Rowe and Mr. T. Rutherford. We were taken from the launch to a bus and taken to Naga, Camarines Sur, Luzon, arriving there the same day and placed in the Provincial jail.

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On 10 Sept. 1944 I was promoted to the rank of Captain and made Publicity Officer with the 53rd Infantry Regiment. This promotion was made in Special Order #830, Headquarters 7th Military District, Philippine Army, USAFFE, dated 10 Sept. 1944 and signed by M. N. Zabot, Lt. Col. Inf. District Commander.

Having had the choice of remaining in this theater or returning to the United States by first available transportation in accordance with War Department Circular 36, 1944, I chose to return to the United States.

s/ Rex M. Baldrige
Signature

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 7 day of January 1945, at Headquarters, Fourth Replacement Depot, APO 705.

(signed) Thomas A. Bogard.
1st. Lt. AGD
Asst. Adj. General.