

## A Teenager at Santo Tomas, 1942-45

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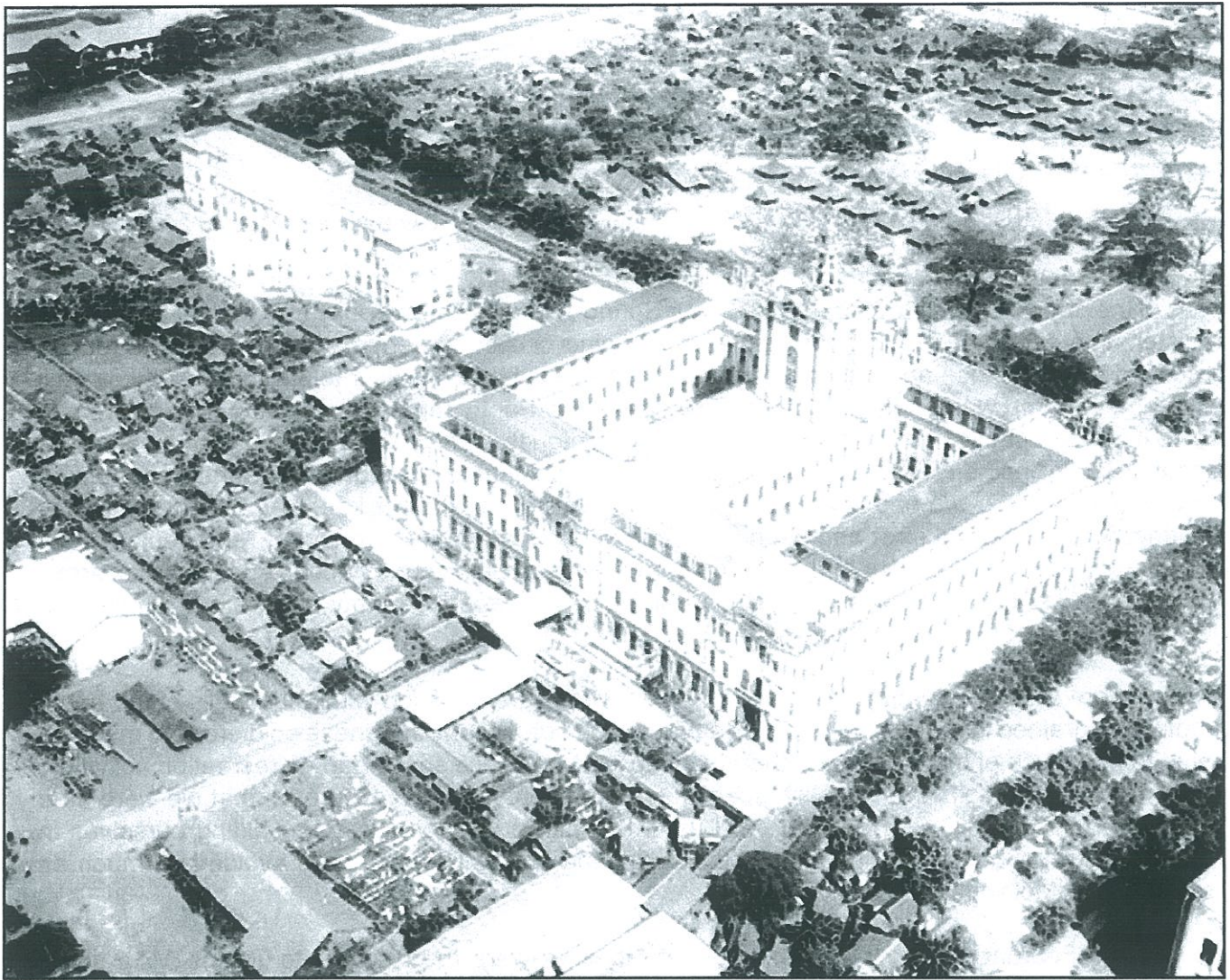
*Len Baker in 1945 and 2005.*

The Japanese Army cycled into Manila on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1942 and soon began rounding up allied citizens in the city. We were staying at the Sulphur Springs Hotel at Quezon City and were only required to register. The owner of the hotel, a naturalized Filipino citizen of German origin, went into Manila and notified the Japanese authorities of our presence at the hotel. He was told to hold us there until the internment camp was ready to take us. The camp was Santo Tomàs (University of Santo Tomàs - to give it its correct title), which began to gain some notoriety although we had no idea what it was all about. The Philippine Red Cross cared us for and we shall always be grateful to them for helping us through this period. We had no means of ever having to pay for our keep. All allied emergency committees had ceased to exist and we had no contact with any British consul or representatives of the British Government. We were effectively on our own in a foreign country occupied by a brutal army. We were very aware of the crimes committed in China by the Japanese Army and we had jumped out of the China frying pan into the Philippine fire.

We were at Sulphur Springs for about 6 weeks and were confined within the walls of the hotel. The hotel had drained its swimming pools as a precaution against any Japanese soldiers who might be tempted to make use of this facility and thereby become a nuisance so we had no recreation activities. Occasionally we had visits from English-speaking Japanese Officers to assure us that we were safe with them. On these visits Bob Barnes and I used to make ourselves scarce by hiding ourselves in a hut within the grounds on the far side of the swimming pools. Thereafter we avoided as much as possible any contact with the Japanese.

On 20<sup>th</sup> February 1942, the message came that we were to go to Santo Tomàs. With some apprehension we climbed aboard the trucks that were to take us into this notorious place. After about 30 minutes we drove through the gates of Santo Tomàs worried about what dreadful things lay in store for us. We were unloaded in the main plaza. People passed by looking at us curiously and somewhat suspiciously. Who are you and where have you come from, some asked? They were surprised to discover that we were British and had been living outside of the city for so long. We were met by a young American lady (one of the Hackett sisters, we discovered later on). We were allocated our dorms, given a mattress, mosquito net, a plate and spoon and a temporary meal ticket. My mother and sisters were put into a room in the Main Building with several of the women from Sulphur Springs. My father, my brothers and I and the other men from Sulphur Springs were sent to the Gym and allocated spaces from where we could lay our mattresses and hang our mosquito nets. We had to maintain a clear space between each person. We slept on the mattresses on the floor. All our worldly goods were kept in a suitcase at the foot of our space. During the day we placed the suitcase on top of the mattress and tossed the mosquito net over the wires used to hold it up. Our plate and spoon were our most valuable possessions, without them how would we eat?

The Gym probably held as many as 400 men with limited toilet facilities. Queuing (getting in line) was the order of the day and so it continued for all the time we were in Santo Tomàs.



*The Japanese used Santo Tomàs University as an internee camp for Allied civilians.*

It was quite a walk from the Gym to the Main Building to collect our meals. We had to join one of four lines (queues) at the rear of the Main Building, which led to the kitchen serving counters. A man at the head of each line checked our meal ticket and punched a hole in the date space. Breakfast was at 8.00 a.m. and consisted of cracked wheat, a spoon of sugar and a bread roll. The beverage was coffee with brown sugar. Eating cracked wheat took a lot of getting used to. It looked like porridge but it tasted nothing like it. For those of us who had no contact with the outside world we had to be satisfied with eating what we got off the chow line. Those who could get supplementary foodstuffs could add milk (evaporated) to the cracked wheat, which would have transformed its taste. They could put butter or margarine on the bread roll and perhaps a dollop of jam. In many cases former residents of Manila did not feed off the chow line until the very end of internment. They simply had their food delivered to them by loyal friends and servants on a daily basis! The evening meal consisted of rice as the staple and some sort of meat and a vegetable. Hamburgers, chili con carne and chicken fricassee were often on the menu. Vegetables included talinum (a quick-growing green), pechay (something like pok choy),

squash, swede, sweet potato and corn-on-the-cob. The beverage was tea with sugar and a calamansi (a sort of lime). Occasionally there was a light lunch. Often there were seconds - i.e. second helpings when the chow lines closed down and there was food left over.

Our first impression of the Camp was of a very well organized place. Our reception was handled efficiently and our accommodation was not as bad as we had been led to expect.

Shortly after our arrival children under 12 years old were given the opportunity of transferring to the Holy Ghost Convent, which was in the centre of Manila. Here nuns and the Red Cross cared for them. My youngest sister, Pat, and youngest brother, George, chose to go to the Holy Ghost Convent. They always said they enjoyed their stay there. They were there for about a year after which the Japanese authorities insisted on their return to Santo Tomás.

Our stay at the Gym was fairly short and we were soon transferred to the newly opened Education Building. This building had been opened to accommodate the increasing number of allied citizens being rounded up from outside Manila. This was a three storey modern looking edifice. There were four staircases leading to the upper floors. There were 2 sets of toilets on each floor, which were intended to serve the needs of some 100 persons. On the ground floor there were an additional 40 persons accommodated in the Lobby. My Father, my brother Stan, and myself were put into the Lobby. Being first settlers, so to speak, we had the choice of location inside the Lobby. The room monitor, Bob Cadwallader, and his son had picked the best spots at the back of the Lobby where there were windows on either side. We were in the second row from the back and drew some benefit from the windows. There were some advantages in this location. The Lobby was high ceiling and capacious, even for those not near windows. It was well ventilated, as the front was open to the large front doors, which were always open so that whatever breeze there might be, the lobby got the benefit. The only occasion, which caused us some fright, was the night of the earthquake. The chandeliers above our beds were swinging madly. They didn't drop but we got up and left our beds.

There was still an area between the front doors and the sleeping quarters where the card and pinochle players used to have their nightly sessions. Most of the players were old soldiers and they were great tobacco chewers and spitters! Lights out was 10 o'clock and they quietly retired to their rooms.

Shortly after our arrival in the Ed Building we were given beds on which to place our mattresses. These beds were made from tongue and groove planks and were strong and heavy. The grooves were wonderful hiding places for bed bugs as were the locations where the planks joined the legs. Once a week all rooms were emptied, beds and baggage were taken out of the room. The floors were cleaned with disinfectant, the beds were debugged and clothes aired to avoid mildew particularly during the rainy season when the humidity could reach saturation.

Clothes were a problem right from the start. Fortunately, shortly after our arrival we became friendly with some boys of our age - I was 14 1/2. Having heard our story one of them asked how we were fixed for clothing. We explained we only had what we stood up in. They then said that they knew where the ROTC store was and there were plenty of khaki shirts and shorts there. They would raid it and get us some clothes. This we subsequently discovered was a climb over a wall and a break-in into the store. Within a day they had brought us three shirts and three pairs of shorts each! These we managed to make last almost to the end.

The dining area was in the open at the rear of the Main Building and as the rainy season

approached about May it was decided to provide overhead cover by constructing the dining sheds. Volunteers were called for to join a construction gang. As there was nothing to occupy our time Bob Barnes and I decided we would sign up. Neither of us had used a hammer in anger and now we had a chance. We were also able to draw a pair of dungarees from the camp store because of the job we were undertaking. It took about 2 weeks to complete the construction of the sheds. There was one on either side of the rear entrance of the Main Building. The roof was of galvanized corrugated sheeting. In fixing the roof sheets to the wood purloins I missed on one occasion and had to leave a nail and washer over the hole. I was always conscious of this one nail sticking through the roof whenever I passed it on my way to the Annex Building. The rains came and it soon became apparent that while the sheds provided vertical cover it did not protect against slanting rain. A medi-agua was added at the front to deflect angled rain.

One significant feature of the dining area was the absence of flies. The Camp was full of ingenious and inventive persons. A very successful flytrap was designed and a number were strategically placed at several points in the dining area. The traps were baited with papaya residues. The flies could enter the trap but the stupid creatures could never figure out how to get out again. At the end of the day the traps full of flies would be placed in a bath of creosote to kill the little beasts, dismantled, cleaned and reassembled to do their good work next day. In addition there were campaigns run by the Health & Hygiene Department with "Swat that Fly" competitions for the younger children. Issued with a fly swatter and a jam jar youngsters would wander through the corridors of the camp buildings swatting flies and collecting them in their jars. Prizes were given for the youngster with the highest number each day of the campaign. So flies were never a serious problem in all the time of internment.

Health and hygiene were high on the list of Camp priorities. All new arrivals were given a medical check including a blood test. The Wasserman and Khan test for venereal disease was applied to everyone!

The principal buildings in Santo Tomàs were the Main Building, the Education Building, the Annex and the Gym. There was also Santa Catalina Hospital, which was outside the Santo Tomàs campus. The Hospital had been a hostel for female undergraduates at UST. It had been rented from the nuns who ran it. We were allowed half the downstairs area for clinics e.g. surgical, EENT and dental. There was also room for a Path lab. There was a kitchen and dining room on the ground floor. Hospital staff had lunch in this dining room - but was discontinued when the ration was cut. A portion of the dining room space was screened off for the hospital pharmacy. At the rear of the kitchen was a laundry with 4 Bendix washing machines. Upstairs there were 2 wards - one for ladies and the other for men either side of the stairwell. Toilet facilities were the best in the camp. Later an operating theatre was located off the ladies ward.

The Main Building housed somewhere in the region of 2000 persons. Men and women were segregated - men on the east side and women on the west side of the building. There was one toilet for men and one for women on each floor and limited shower facilities. Each toilet had 4 seats and 2 basins. Queuing to wash or to use the toilets was the norm. In the early days when toilet paper was available there was a person sitting outside the toilet handing out toilet paper. The ration was 6 sections per session. The ration was limited to those persons from that floor. If you were a visitor you got nothing and had to return to your own building! Eventually the toilet paper ran out and you were left to your own devices!

The Ed Building was a more modern structure and it had rather more in the way of toilets and hand basins. A shower block was built at the back of the building containing 12 showers. The Ed building probably held some 350 men and there was little queuing to use the facilities.

When the children at Holy Ghost Convent were brought back into Santo Tomàs my father was moved to the Annex with my youngest brother who had returned. The Annex was for mothers and fathers with young children. With the continuing influx of people from the islands, my brother, Stan, and I were moved to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Ed Building. We were in a room of 12 men. The room monitor, Mr. Weibel, was a very caring person and felt it his responsibility to keep an eye out for us. It was a happy room. The room was located opposite the toilet and there was a shower in the toilet.

Because we were on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor we never stood outside our room during roll calls (instituted in 1944) as other parts of the camp had to do. Mostly we lay on our beds away from windows and not far away from where we ought to be. We had lookouts at windows and stairwells to spot if the Japanese guards were coming to the Building and were coming up the stairs. On the one occasion when I decided to have a shower during roll call the lookouts gave the alarm and I had to race back into the room and put a shirt on. I didn't have time to put any shorts on so wrapped my towel around my waist. I combed my hair back and got into the back row. The Japanese guards swept past, we bowed and they didn't notice the dripping water in the second row!

In November 1944 the Japanese administration requisitioned the ground floor of the Ed Building. So people were shoved to higher floors. Stan and I were told we had to join our father and George in the Annex. This was like a prison sentence. The Annex was full of kids and their parents. I was 17 by this time and here I was stuck with a menagerie of screaming mothers and the howls of hundreds of kids. After dark, we had blackout. Now I had no one of my age to talk to. I used to crawl under my mosquito net and lay there. Later when hunger became painful, bed was the only haven I had. There I could lie and think when was this agony going to end? Did I believe we would be rescued? Yes, I did - I don't think there was a single person in camp who did not believe MacArthur would return to set us free. Would the Japanese declare Manila an open city? That would seem to be the best scenario. More of all that later.

### **Education in Santo Tomàs**

After the fall of Bataan and Corregidor in May 1942 it had become obvious to the adults that our incarceration was going to be a long one. Powerful help was not on the way and we would better get on with life at Santo Tomàs. All parents were concerned that if nothing were done about their children's education then these children would be at a great disadvantage when we were liberated or the war ended. Prewar there were 2 American schools in Manila - Bordner Central High School and the American School. The teachers from the two schools were interned in Santo Tomàs. Now every adult in the camp was expected to give two hours of each day to help in the running of the camp. The teachers welcomed the start of school and a full school structure from First Grade through Twelfth Grade was put into effect. The Education Committee comprised Mrs. Lois Croft - Head of the American School, Roscoe Lautsenhauser - head of Bordner Central School, Dr. Rene Engels - Philippine Education Department and J. Blinko - British representative.

All children were expected to attend school. Some did not as it was not compulsory. I think those kids missed out on the feeling of belonging to a school which exists in normal circumstances.

All intending students were interviewed and in particular those of us who were British. Our system of education differed from the American system. For instance I was well ahead of my age group (15 years old) in that I had studied Trigonometry, Calculus, Algebra and Geometry well in advance of my peers. In literature I had studied Shakespeare - The Tempest and Julius Caesar, but I had done little in the way of history nor was my English literature into more modern authors and poetry. The Committee assessed that I had 12 credits and decided that I should go into Twelfth Grade but I would have to take American History with Eleventh Grade and Civics. I managed to scrape my way through high school and was allowed to graduate. So I was in the Graduating Class of 1943. The graduating ceremony was held in the Father's Garden

First year of college followed and I signed up for Statics and Strength of Materials, courses given by Professor Roy Swinton, an exchange professor from University of Michigan. He had swapped places with a Filipino professor. Dear Professor Swinton and his family spent the war years in Santo Tomàs while a very lucky Filipino professor was safe in Ann Arbor. I also signed up for College Chemistry given by Bob Smith who happened to be Manager of the hospital Pharmacy. I continued with Calculus and a special class in advanced calculus was held for just four students at between 5 and 6 o'clock one evening a week. The most pleasurable course I have ever taken was English Composition given by Mrs. Richards. This course transformed my whole approach to writing, helping me to develop style and flow. Physics was taught by McCann, one of six civilian physicists attached to the US Navy and who happened to be in Manila degaussing ships. One of the exercises carried out in this course was to calculate the acceleration needed to escape the earth's gravitational pull. We also calculated the velocity required to stay in earth orbit. It was no big deal for me when the NASA space program was initiated and satellites were put into orbit. We had been there before! As an additional course I attended French and Spanish lessons. It was a fairly comprehensive course of study.

All this came to an end when the air raids started and starvation began to catch up on teachers and students. I, for one, will be forever grateful to those dedicated men and women who gave of their time and energy to ensure we did not lose out in our education. The majority of us who had gone to school in Santo Tomàs subsequently attended college or university.

Personally, the qualifications I had obtained from Santo Tomàs were given no credit with the authorities at the University of London. I had therefore to matriculate and I achieved that in January 1946 having attended night school at Borough Polytechnic in order to revise subjects at that level. I had credits in 5 subjects. English, French, Chemistry, Physics and Math. I then went on to take the Intermediate Science Course at night school at Regent Street Polytechnic. My subjects were Chemistry, Physics, Pure Math and Applied Math. During the second year - 1947 - I spotted a notice on the board at the polytechnic advertising Royal Science Scholarships tenable at Imperial College, details of which could be obtained from the H. M. Stationery Office. Having got the syllabus. I discussed it with my manager, Tom Saunders, and he offered to tutor me and get me started. After 3 months he was unable to continue because of pressure of work in connection with the development of a new factory to be located in South Wales. So I continued to study on my own. I had to drop all outside activity to concentrate on this scholarship. The venue for the written exams was Tennyson Grammar School at Kennington, opposite the Oval cricket ground. It often shows up during cricket test matches played at the Oval when the TV camera pans around the ground. Shortly after the written papers I received a letter informing that I had done well enough to be considered and would I now attend the practical exam at Imperial College. The good news arrived at the end of July 1948 telling me that I had been awarded a Royal Science Scholarship.

Unfortunately, and I was unaware of the procedures, I should have applied for a place at Imperial College during the previous academic year. So I went up to Imperial College in the Michaelmas Term of 1949. I graduated with a B.Sc. Degree in Chemistry from the University of London and was awarded the Associateship of the Royal College of Science for having attended that constituent college of Imperial College. Later I became a member of the Royal Institute of Chemistry - now known as the Royal Society of Chemistry. I am still a Chartered Chemist, MRSC.

### **Sport in Santo Tomàs**

In the early days of 1942 there was little in the way of organized sport. There was an outdoor basketball court. One or two people had a ball and we played. In those early days teenagers formed gangs in the best sense of the word. These were young people of a similar age and who shared common values. In no way were they interested in being disruptive or antisocial. They gave themselves names such as: The Brotherhood, Suicide Bombers and Homos! These gangs challenged each other in games of basketball. Later adults got busy and Howard Hick and his team organized leagues for different age groups and for the girls as well. At different times the teenage boys league teams were named after American colleges: e.g. Illinois, Wisconsin etc. The Girls teams were named after famous American ladies Colleges e.g. Bryn Mawr, Vassar, etc. In the next year the boy's teams were named after American Indian tribes and I played in the Seminoles team. The other teams were Sioux, Navajo and Cherokee. Seminoles won the championship and were awarded cups made of bamboo and inscribed with the team names. I still have my cup and it is a precious piece of memorabilia of these days.

In 1943 a delivery of American Red Cross relief supplies brought food, medicaments, comfort packs, clothes and sports equipment. Softball was being played and these relief supplies added to the private equipment held by individuals. Fresh balls and bats were very welcome. There were also footballs (American footballs). Training was given in physical fitness and the techniques of the game. A league was organized for teenagers. And games of touch football were played. Less formally 6-a-side games were also played. In 6-a-side there were no guards or tackles and only three backs, two ends and a centre. I can't remember all the rules but it was a fast game and devising plays got everybody involved.

### **Entertainment in Santo Tomas**

The presence of professional entertainers in the camp led quickly to organized shows. The first shows were held in the East Patio. The British internees presented Noel Coward's Private Lives. The patio was too small to accommodate the large number of people who wanted to attend the shows. Permission was obtained from the Japanese to erect a stage with lighting to be placed at the east end of the plaza in front of the Main Building. This new stage made it possible to present more ambitious productions. Dave Harvey McTurk was put in charge of arranging the shows. He was a professional entertainer and did a marvelous job for the internees. After the high school graduation of 1943 Dave Harvey organized a show for the graduates. Their show consisted of a series of sketches. I was coached into doing a dance, which was dubbed the Basura Ballet. I was dressed as a ballerina, with wig, a 2-piece ballet costume and a pair of red bloomers. Ben Goodier and Bill Gardner were the others in this sketch and their part in the act was to throw me around after I had done my prancing about. It apparently was very funny for the audience and I am often reminded of it at reunions.

The highlight of the show was the parade of the nations of the allies. The girls appeared in costumes of the different countries. When they had all assembled the lights went out on the stage and

a curtain at the centre of the stage suddenly opened and there was in the spotlight was Margaret Ellis with a torch in her right hand and a book in the other. The demonstration lasted a few seconds and was over. The audience cheered like mad. We never got any reaction from the Japanese. It might just be possible they weren't there.

We also had film shows, including Japanese news film of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Other films were Knute Rockne – All American, Tom Harmon of Michigan, George Gershwin and others. I have loved Gershwin's music ever since. After liberation Irving Berlin came along and gave us a performance of his music. The entertainment committee contributed greatly to sustaining our morale.

## **Work In Santo Tomas**

The Camp Committee required all fit men to give 2 hours of their time each day for the good of the Camp. Many men gave much more than this minimum. The kitchen staff was up early to get the mush cooked for 8 o'clock. Then sometimes we had a lunch, and then the evening meal at 4.30 p.m. needed many hours of preparation to feed eventually 3750 persons! Doctors ran clinics at the hospital and at their building of residence. Nurses attended patients giving 24-hour cover on the wards. Teachers prepared schoolwork, corrected student's work and devised exam questions. Camp administrators of one sort or another and a whole lot of other people gave of their time and effort for the common good.

I have already told of my involvement in helping to build the dining sheds. My next job was in the kitchen. I applied for the job to carry pots to service the chow lines. The team I was in consisted of Deema Smackman, Phil Magee and myself. There were 4 serving points, 2 on the kitchen side and 2 across the passageway at the rear of the Main Building. I was in a team of three boys who serviced the 2 points across from the kitchen. We reported to the kitchen 20 minutes before serving time and set up the counters with the day's offerings. We had to carry the pots through 2 chow lines and heralded our arrival by shouting out: "Hot stuff! Coming through! Hot stuff!" It was our job to make sure that when a pot was getting low that we were on the ball and had a replacement pot ready to put on the counter. After service was complete we removed the pots back to the kitchen and drew our own food.

I can't remember how long I worked in the kitchen but with the first transfer of people to Los Baños a new manager was appointed to the kitchen. The existing manager, Bill Gardner, was appointed to be Hospital Manager. The new manager announced that he wanted the existing teams broken up. We objected to this as we had developed a very good method of operating and that would be lost by a change in personnel. So we quit the kitchen. We approached Bill Gardner and he suggested we join him at the hospital as orderlies on the male ward, as there were vacancies caused by some staff going to Los Baños. Phil Magee and I joined the hospital staff. Our job was to sweep and mop the floors, collect and empty bedpans - not too horrible once you get used to it - and to dish out the fruit juice in the afternoon. I continued in this job until late 1943.

In the autumn of 1943 I started my courses in 1st year college and among the subjects was Chemistry. The teacher was Bob Smith, manager of the hospital pharmacy. I was scoring high marks in the tests and was very interested in the subject. One day Bob took me aside and asked if I would like to learn a bit more chemistry as well a little pharmacy. The pharmacy needed someone to wash the bottles returned by patients to be re-used (today, we'd say recycled!). A job's a job so I went along and joined the hospital pharmacy. The bottles came in at a steady rate so I was never overwhelmed. We seemed to have an ample supply of soap but the water was cold. Few bottles were difficult. One other function I had was to collect medical supplies from the camp store. The manager would prepare a requisition and I would take it along during working hours and collect the medicines. I had a small

trolley for this purpose.

On one of my visits to collect medicines for transshipment to Los Baños I was accompanied by the manager at the store and Carroll Grinnell among others. I made nothing of it until the day the crate we had put together was due to go. Often the camp driver, an internee, was allowed to take the vehicle up to Los Baños on his own. On this day a Japanese sentry had been assigned to accompany the driver. There was panic at the pharmacy as a jimmy was used to pry open the lid of the packing case at the point where the boric acid powder bottles had been placed. Out came a particular bottle and in went one off the shelf. I later discovered that this bottle of boric acid contained a radio valve requested by Los Baños. That was the first occasion I became aware of the smuggling going on behind the backs of our captors and it was being coordinated right from the top.

In the middle of 1944 there was a minor epidemic of bacillus dysentery. In the 1943 Red Cross shipment there was a good supply of sulphonamide drugs. Most of them were in tablet form except for the one we needed to treat this form of dysentery. The pharmacist, Henry Bellis, used to spend all day weighing out doses of powder and he had no time for anything else. The hospital management decided to ask the UST authorities, as there had been a school of pharmacy at Santo Tomàs, if they possessed a tablet-making machine. They did and were happy to lend it to us. This machine had a hand-operated flywheel, which connected to a plunger into a die. On the upward stroke of the plunger the die lifted up and the hopper pushed the compressed tablet out of the way while feeding the die with the next charge. I was taught how to prepare the powder and produce granules. The granules are necessary to ensure the space in the die is not so full that the plunger would jam. Raising or lowering the depth of the die could adjust the size of the charge. After a couple of demonstrations I was left to control production of compressed tablets. We got volunteers to turn the handle of our machine. These were mostly English Catholic priests who spared an hour at a time from their duties on the wards. They were very cheerful and were very interested in what we were achieving for the camp. We beat the epidemic with many jars of tablets to spare and they were there on the shelf at our liberation.

We had requests from the Japanese to produce tablets and on one occasion an officer brought in some ephedrine powder. He asked how many tablets we could get from the powder. Bob Smith weighed the powder and said 100 tablets. The officer was satisfied - there was enough powder for 200 as it turned out at the correct dosage, so he got 100 and we got 100 much needed ephedrine tablets.

I was also taught how to make aluminum hydroxide. A favorite with people suffering from stomach ulcers. The chemical reaction involved is classical double decomposition reaction between sodium carbonate and potassium aluminum sulphate (alum). This was a hands-on chemistry lesson. I made a batch each week reflecting its popularity.

The 21<sup>st</sup> September 1944, a date that will live forever in the memory of all Santo Tomàs internees, was a normal humdrum day so I thought. I had turned up for work as usual and was working away with my bottles. The hospital manager popped his head in and called Bob out. After a short while Bob returned and told me that the hospital laundry man, Eric George, was not feeling well and would I run the laundry. Eric would climb out of his sick bed and would show me what to do. The laundry consisted of 4 big Bendix machines fitted with mangles. Four sheets were loaded into each machine and a portion of soap flakes added. Where the camp got the soap flakes beat me for most of us were struggling to get any kind of soap. I got my first lot of 16 sheets on the go and gave them 20 minutes. I came back and rinsed them. It takes a while to rinse 16 sheets. There were washing lines at the back

of the hospital and I was in the middle of hanging up the sheets when I heard a droning noise. It got louder and louder.

I looked up to the sky in front of me and saw shining specks approaching from the south. I looked to my left and there were more aircraft and behind me were more again. A Jap Val flew low over the camp and 2 of those shining specks dove down and shot it up. At the same time these specks started diving down and I could see the white stars on their wings. What a moment! I wanted to shout out with joy but just then a Jap sentry came around. He allowed me to finish what I was doing and hustled me into the hospital. I went upstairs and from the windows saw the attack over the shipping in Manila Bay. That was a day to remember! The air raids continued for three or four days and then there was a pause. For us it was a sure sign that the US forces were making progress towards us.

## **Religious Observance**

The spiritual lives of internees were well catered for. Missionaries from all the main Christian churches were rounded up with everybody else. Services were held in the Father's Garden. Father Kelly, an Irish Catholic priest, came into the camp on Sundays to celebrate Mass in the early days. We even had a Japanese Catholic priest one Sunday. Later with the opening of Santa Catalina hospital, the chapel at the convent was used for Mass. By that time there was a great influx of Catholic priests and in order to accommodate all these priests Mass was celebrated at the UST museum in the Main Building. The Japanese killed Father Kelly together with 3 other Irish priests during the battle for Manila.

## **Bowing**

In February 1944 the Japanese army took over control of the internment camps - Santo Tomás, Baguio and Los Baños. The life we had known up until then was totally transformed. All contact with the outside world was cut off. They immediately imposed two irritations, roll calls and bowing. We had to bow to every Japanese officer and soldier and we had to bow to 90 degrees - we were the lowest of the low! We tried to avoid them as much as possible. If we saw one of them coming our way we would dodge into a door or turn down a different road. I only got into trouble once.

On Christmas Day 1944 I was on my way to my work at the hospital Pharmacy. As I came to the guard post at the entrance the sentry was off his post and had walked down the roadway. I decided not to bow. He was enraged at this affront and barked at me. So I did a bow but that wasn't acceptable. He made me stand at his post while he continued his perambulation down the road. While I stood there other members of the pharmacy staff started to arrive. I had the key to the pharmacy, as I was always the last out and first in. I gestured to the sentry that I wanted to pass the keys over. He agreed and I gave the keys to my colleague. When no one was in view the sentry told me to go I bowed and made to go forward but he pointed for me to go back and re-enter. I did this giving the mandatory bow as I came to him.

The previous day - Christmas Eve - a flight of B24's with P38's as fighter cover flew low over the camp and apparently dropped leaflets on the city with Christmas greetings, none dropped on the camp. Not a gun fired and the air raid alarm never sounded. It was clear to us and it must have been clear to this sentry that the end was not far away so I was not physically abused.

## Roll Call

The roll calls were twice a day - first thing in the morning before breakfast and after the evening meal before it got dark. We were expected to stand outside our rooms in two rows and wait there until dismissed. The public address system would announce the start and end of roll call. The public address system was used to wake us up in the morning for roll call. A tune was always played. After air raids we heard tunes like Lover, Where can you be, Harbour Lights (especially after a raid on shipping in Manila Bay) and many others. On Sundays after the landings at Lingayen Gulf we heard Onward Christian Soldiers! And we prayed that they would hurry to our rescue.

## Liberation

We knew about the landings at Leyte on October 20<sup>th</sup>. On January 9<sup>th</sup> 1945 the grapevine told us that the Americans had landed at Lingayen Gulf. This was the same place that the Japanese had used for their drive on Manila. Now it was the turn of the Americans. There was some panic among the Japanese in the camp but they confirmed that they were not leaving. So we continued with ever decreasing rations longing for the arrival of US forces. There was plenty of air activity and we could see B-24's flying in the distance and then we would hear the explosions as another Japanese target was taken out. At the end of January we had expected to hear gunfire after all the Americans had been ashore now for 3 weeks. Where were they? Hunger was having a really demoralizing effect on everybody. On the afternoon of February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945 at about 4 o'clock two American aircraft flew low over the camp. A pair of goggles was thrown from one of the aircraft to which was tied a message. I don't know who picked up the goggles, but the content of the message seemed to be Roll out the barrel. Santa Claus will be in town tonight.

No one understood what the message was meant to convey but we were to find out before long. After roll call that evening I lay on my bed as usual. With the blackout there was no joy in sitting in the dark only to be attacked by mosquitoes. As I was living in the Annex there was no one my age with whom to pass the time of day. So I would climb under the mosquito net and rest. At about 7 o'clock there was a noisy commotion to the north outside the camp. There was machine gun fire and later cannon fire and star shells were being sent up to light the night. The warning went out to keep away from windows. The Japanese guards were seen to be hurrying towards the Ed Building.

So the central doors of the Annex were closed. More star shells continued to light up the evening sky and then someone burst into the room and called out "There's an American tank coming up the road." I got out of bed, put on some clothes and ran out of the Annex heading for the rear of the Main Building. As I got past the dining sheds a tank came around the corner and a head popped out. The soldier wanted to know if he could get behind the Ed Building on this road. I told him that the road went around the main Building and he would be back where he started. I think he backed away. I went into the main Building and to the Lobby. There was a crowd of internees jumping up and down and cheering the soldiers. The internees started to sing God Bless America I joined in. I still find myself near to tears every time I hear it sung.

Next morning, Sunday the 4<sup>th</sup> I went to Mass in the museum and thanked God for our deliverance.

On February 7<sup>th</sup> on my way to work at the hospital pharmacy I stopped to talk to the Eames at

their accommodation in the west patio. A shell, from the Japanese, hit the top of the Main Building and a piece of shrapnel ricocheted around the walls and landed on my head. I put my hand on my head and there was blood. I ran to the clinic just off the lobby and the army medical team treated my wound. The doctor looked at my hair and said, "You've got pretty strong hair. I won't stitch it I'll just tie your hair to seal the wound." Which he did and then poured a load of sulfanilamide over the wound. By this time my father had arrived and he escorted me back to our room. Shortly afterwards a nurse arrived told she and me to turn over put a tetanus shot into my bum! Ouch!

The shelling went on for a week and 20 internees were killed. Two of our teenagers died - Ann Davis and Mildred Harper. Mildred Harper worked at the children's kitchen in the Annex. When the shelling was going on we had gathered in the lobby of the Annex to keep away from windows. This building had a galvanized steel roof. If a shell had hit the roof we would have all been killed.

A GI was chatting to Mildred but she was anxious to return to the Main Building to rejoin her Mother and family. There was a lull in the shelling and she dashed out by the side entrance. There was a bang and a scream and the GI got up and ran out. He carried her back. She had been hit in the abdomen and died later that evening. She was 17 years old like me.

The battle for Manila went on for about a month and we could hear noise of battle day after day.

### **The Wait to Go Home**

After the liberation groups of internees were shipped out at regular intervals. The first people to leave were the army nurses from Bataan and Corregidor. They left within days of the liberation. Some internees were flown down to Leyte to get on ships returning to the USA.

For those of us waiting for our turn we needed something to while away the time. I found a job as a switchboard operator at the camp. There was a lady who worked by day and we teenagers took over for the night shifts. We often got our PA system to play music and this we passed down the line to the military telephone network. I forget what we were paid but it helped to pass the time.

My mother was ill and we had to wait for Manila Bay to be cleared of mines and other obstructions so ships could safely enter. We didn't leave until about the first week in April. Our ship was the troopship Mormacsea. We were taken down to a beach area where we walked onto a landing craft, which took us out to the ship. What impressed us were the piles of stores being amassed on that bit of beach. During the rest of the day groups of soldiers and sailors came on board. These were personnel going home on furlough. We sailed down to Leyte where we joined a convoy of 6 ships. We arrived at San Francisco shortly after V-E Day. We eventually sailed to Scotland on the Queen Mary and then overnight by train to London where the family met us. So we settled down to life in England.