

Box 12

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Waller

REPORT & HISTORY of the WAR by *Waller*

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INDEXED, VOLUME 8

PLACES MENTIONED	VEGELS MENTIONED
BOB BUCKS	N/S SHAWTCH
WALTER SCORRING	U/S SRA RAYEN
	S/S EWIN ALDRIDGE
	N/S AMERICAN LEADER
	N/S PERE GRANT
	KESNICK

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Mrs. John O. Zimmerman
2525 Belmont Avenue
Chicago 25, Illinois

The Commanding General
Philippine Ryukyu Command
APO 707, 4/8 P.M.
San Francisco, Calif.
ATTN: Chief of Claims Service

Dear Sir:
I have written several times in regard to correspondence such as the enclosed, but evidently the information I sent failed to reach you. My husband, Capt. John O. Zimmerman, T.C., 0-890017, was killed while on terminal leave on June 22, 1946. I am unable to give you any information on the matter spoken of in this and



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previous correspondence.

I am very sorry that I
am unable to help you
in any way.

Yours very truly,
Helen S. Zimmerman

3355 Balmoral Ave.
Chicago, 25, Ill.

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MY REPORT AND HISTORY OF THE WAR
(by 1st Lieut. John O. Zimmerman)

In order to clarify certain facts in connection with the beginning of the war in the Far East it will be necessary to go back into one or two instances in this connection in order to make things easier to understand.

In this connection among ships that we were handling during the first week of December 1941, was the American Pioneer Line Motor Ship (Seawitch). This vessel had four deep tanks in Hatch #2 which had not been decided to do the work in Manila on this current trip, and therefore the vessel was then in the process of having these coil installed.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941 I was in the Elks Club when Bob Burks asked me to accompany him to Cavite to go through one of the new submarines, the U.S. "Sea Raven", laid down in 1939 and put into service late in 1940. The Chief Petty Officer who took us through the ship intimated that all the men were on a semi-alert status and he also said that if nothing happened in the next forty-eight hours, nothing would happen for sometime to come. We did not put very much thought to his statement and finally returned to the Elk's Club about 5:30 P.M. after a very enjoyable afternoon.

No further explanations need be made and now we are ready to proceed with our report and history.

At about 6:30 A.M. December 8, 1941, the telephone rang in my apartment in the University Club and as usual I got up to answer it. Talking on the other end was Walter Schoening of the Atlantic Gulf and Pacific Co. who said that he had called all his men off the MS "Seawitch", on Navy orders. He and I being friends I asked him what the trouble was and he blandly said we were at war with Japan and Honolulu and Pearl Harbor had been attacked. This was unbelievable, so I asked Walter to tell me how serious the trouble on the MS Seawitch was and what had to be done to straighten it out. Then Walter told me he was not joking and really meant what he said. About this time I happened to look down on the floor of the apartment near the door and saw the morning newspaper laying there, and could see the words HONOLULU, WAR, AND JAPAN. Telling Walter to hold the line, I got the newspaper which told the story. There was nothing more to be said or done between us after this so I sat down and read the historical news which we are all familiar with now.

Eating breakfast and dressing in my usual manner, I went on down to the office where activity was at a standstill. Around about noon on Monday Ebba Air Field of the Army was attacked and more or less cleaned out. Just shortly before this Clark Field near Stotsenberg was attacked. Material damage at Clark Field was severe and very large number of planes of both the large and medium size destroyed on the ground. No plane of ours had been able to get into the air. At Ebba all flyable planes had gotten into the air and we able to harass the

the enemy to limited degree. Installations at Ebba were totally destroyed and the field was abandoned later in the afternoon. All flyable planes were scattered to various fields in the Island of Luzon. Shortly after midnight Clark Field was again bombed and about half an hour later Nichols Field was attacked, and some damages done to the field and one of the Hangers.

On Tuesday December 9, 1941, Clark Field was further attacked with some more limited damage. Nothing else of a serious nature occurred in the Island during the day.

On Wednesday ^{10:30} at about 12:30 P.M. three flights of heavy bombers passed over the water area of Manila and down the Dewey Boulevard to Nichols Field which was severely bombed with quite a bit of damage. Passing on from Nichols Field the bombers proceeded over the U.S. Navy Yard at Cavite where bombing was extremely severe and the whole yard was set on fire. At least one new type submarine was hit and destroyed together with one destroyer. Another destroyer was hit and badly damaged together with a number of smaller craft, both destroyed and damaged. The Navy Yard was virtually gutted by fire and wiped out with the exception of Sangley Point where the Navy Hospitals is located, which was not damaged at all. An exceedingly large number of Philippine native workers of the yard were killed together with some Americans. The large number of deaths among the Filipinos is due to the fact that the workers were sitting around the yard, being out for lunch and when the bombs started dropping they all ran in panic instead of laying flat on the ground and was killed by bomb splinters and shrapnel. A number of bombs fell in the town of Cavite which flanks the U.S. Navy yard to the South and a large number of Filipinos were killed here also. After this severe attack, evacuation of the Navy Yard with all possible movable installations and equipment was commenced to Mariveles. This was continued until the Manila area was evacuated and abandoned by all the Military personnel.

In the meantime business had come to complete standstill and every night was a full blackout. All radio program were fully censored together with all outgoing and incoming radio and cable messages, and no codes were allowed to be used. Similarly all mail was censored. All valuable installations of all kinds were closely guarded and everybody was on a very keyed up state of mind. A great rush was made to sandbag various buildings and air raid shelters were being build everywhere. Port Area buildings especially were rushing this kind of work. We arranged to have the American President Line Building sandbagged on the South and East side half-way on each side and then sandbag on the inside to make a square air raid shelter. The Marsman Building next door was sandbagged on the front and the entrance hall protected to make another air raid shelter.

In the meantime we were rushing the unloading of the MS "Seawitch", the S. S. President Grant, the M.S. "American Leader" and the SS "Ruth Alexander". All these vessels were unloading all cargo for all ports at Manila, but only during the daytime, no night work being possible on account of the blackout each night. Most vessels left the docks during the night and anchored well scattered in Manila Bay, returning to docks first thing each morning.

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After the war started a number of ships that had been anchored or berthed in the harbor of Manila pulled out into the bay and anchored, most of them awaiting further sailing orders. They were inclined to anchor too close each other with the result that after the bombing of Cavite the planes as they sped northward dropped their remaining bombs in among these anchored ships. The S.S. Sagoland of Madrigal and Co was hit forward of the bridge and sunk, killing a number of stevedores. Two other vessels were hit, but the damage was not very serious.

About December 14, 1941 word was received by the U.S. Navy that they could not give protection to allied shipping and it was advisable for these vessels to get out of Manila and make a run for it, preferably to the southern islands of the Dutch East Indies or better Australia. They also arranged to open the Mine Field that might at darkness for this purpose. The result was that most vessels decided to take advantages of getting clear and left that night, and with the same movement being continued the next night, there was only about six ocean going vessels left in Manila by the morning of Dec. 16, 1941. Among these the American President Lines had the S.S. "Ruth Alexander" which was still unloading at a rather slow rate of discharge.

In the meantime some bombings by the enemy had been going on, Baguio at Camp John Hay had been hit with a few casualties, and Tarlac had been hit, breaking the railroad line out this point. By now the Japanese were beginning to make landing in several parts of the Island of Luzon and about December 12, 1941 landed a force at Vigan which immediately began to push south. Another landing was made at Aparri a day later. Both landings were successful though we were able to hamper them with aerial bombings and one of our planes was able to dive on a Japanese battleship of the "Harana" class and sink it, though both American Pilot and Plane were lost in this feat. Further landing were made at Lingayen in considerable force and then the Japanese push south really began with our Filipino Troops fighting a delaying and rear guard action all the way. Another landing was made in the south at Legaspi without a great deal of opposition from where the Japanese slowly made their way up to the Southern Luzon gold mining area of Mambulac and Paracale.

Spasmodic bombings of the Manila Area continued and Clark Field up at Stotsenberg was being bombed daily as was Nichols Field nearly everyday also. A second heavy attack was made on the U.S. Navy Yard at Cavite about December 12, 1941 in which more damage was done to the Yard but also Sangly Point and the Hospital were hit resulting in severe damage but luckily the Hospital had been previously evacuated to Manila. One of the large antenna towers of the radio station were hit and knocked down in this same raid. And now comes the incident that has considerably changed my life. On Monday December 15, 1941 Major Byrd, on instructions from Colonel Ward of the Army Transport Service, QMC, called on me at the American President Line Office and asked me to volunteer and join the U.S. Army in the Army Transport Service of the QMC. Having received the consent of Mr. L.B. Jepsen, General Agent of the Manila Office of the American President Lines, we immediately went to the Army Transport Service Office

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in the Customs House and made out the formal application for a commission as a First Lieutenant in the U. S. Army. This having been completed we then proceeded to Sternberg General Hospital for Medical Examinations. This examination was very successful and everything was in good shape except I was 7 lbs under the required weight and we would have to wait for the Wasserman Kahn blood test result. The 7 lbs under weight feature was to be waived. From here on there was nothing further that could be done until after the result of the blood test were announced.

On Tuesday nothing was heard but on Wednesday December 17, 1941 not long after I got to the office, I received a phone call from Major Byrd to report to his office for duty, as the blood tests were all O.K. Having reported to the Army Transport Service Office we proceeded to the Headquarters of the Philippine Department where I was sworn in as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army for duty with the Army Transport Service of the Quartermaster Corp.

About this time a large landing by the Japanese was made at Antimonan with very little opposition. A further landing was also made in Batangas Area and then these two Japanese Armies started their drive north to Manila forcing the American and Filipino forces to retreat, but keeping up as strong a delaying action as possible.

After having taken up my commission I was assigned as Dook officer for Piers 3 and 5 with instructions to see that all the cargo then on the piers removed as soon as possible in order to make the Piers entirely available for the receiving of large convoys of Army supplies. In the meantime a continuous ferry service was being maintained to Corregidor. During this period I was familiarizing myself with the Orange Plan for the Defense of only a part of the Philippine Islands. The basically was a retreat to the Bataan Peninsula, evacuating Manila and attempting to hold in this area together with the support of the Forts of the Harbor defense forts. But up to the day of December 19, 1941 nothing definite had been decided on this movement. But on this day the order to fall back as this plan called for was given. Immediately the Southern Forces fighting the delaying action against the Japanese Antimonan and Batangas started their long retreat into Bataan around Manila at the same time the American and P.I. forces trying to hold the northern Japanese armies had to delay them long enough to allow the southern forces to get into Bataan. Tanks materially helped in both these delaying actions but finally the Southern forces got through Manila into and the northern forces slowly retreated and the whole army successfully fell back as planned by January 2nd 1942. The first real action between the two Armies occurred at Leac Junction were the U.S. 31st Infantry was able to make a very good showing and really were the forces that enabled the Army to successfully withdraw to Bataan. If the Japanese had known and had really made a drive for Bataan at this time they undoubtedly would have ended the war right there, because the hurried retreat resulted in great disorder and/no coordination and a concerted defense action would not have been possible.

And by the time the Japanese were ready to attack we had been able to get the various forces coordinated and present a good defense on what is now known as the Hacienda Line. Going back to the Manila Phase after this retreat had been ordered, following this we were instructed to have all available ships, barges and other vessels ready to evacuate men and supplies to Corregidor and Bataan. Though a lot of vessels were available there was not much attempt to get supplies down to be landed. During this period the air raid activity of the Japanese was increasing in and around the Port Area. Bombs hit between the two Marsmans Buildings in the Meyer Building, the front of the Old Customs House, the Service Mens Club of the Navy and several Quartermaster buildings. In the meantime we continued to move a small amount of supplies out to Corregidor. Coordination between the Transport Divisions and the Supply of the Quartermaster was very poor and large convoys of trucks were leaving Manila for Bataan empty or partially filled only. And most of the water vessels were leaving very lightly loaded. The individual outfits under their own staff organizations were moving a lot more supplies and equipment than the Quartermaster. Conditions continued in this way right up to the end of the evacuation of Manila, though a small amount of supplies and food did get taken to Corregidor and Bataan.

On Christmas Day the Port Area and proximity was subject to a number of air raids with some damage. We had several ships loading and about noon a raid was made in which one of our ships was badly holed by the shrapnel and in order to save it, we had to shift the cargo that had been loaded to one side of the ship and at the same time get the ship away from the dock. This was done with the aid of the British Tug "Keswick" which we had taken over. She got a line to this ship and got her away from the dock and then as she was British with British Officers she needed an American Army Officers to go with her. I was ordered to get a Luzon Stevedore tug and board the Keswick and go with her to the dock at Linao, Bataan which I did. Thus I left Manila having had very little to eat and only a few snacks at the buffet lunch at the Elk's Club as my Christmas Dinner. We arrived at Linao about dusk, got the damaged ship close ashore, so that if she did sink she would only settle in the mud. Then with boat of the Keswick we landed the few soldiers with us, including me and the Keswick headed back to Manila. During the night we, with the help of a small air corp group who had some supplies on the damaged ship and under my directions arranged to float a barge out to her on a long line attached to the dock, get most of the air corp unloaded to the barge and back to the dock. After this there was little for me to do, as I had no orders to do anything except go to Corregidor. During the night a small ship arrived with hospital personnel and patients which were quickly handled. About daylight I and an officer of a detachment of the 31st Infantry walked to Limay where a hospital had been set up. Here I got more or less invited to where I was. Then we both returned to the dock to where he had arranged for transportation to pick up his men, where I stayed till late that afternoon, during which we had a raid in which a number of bombs were dropped around the dock but luckily doing no damage. Late that afternoon there being no one at the dock and nothing further I could do, I got a ride on a truck going back to Limay where I arrived just before dark, which was December 26, 1941.

Whaley

Here I stayed with the Limay Quartermaster, Lieut. Wally. From his office I tried to get in touch with Col. Cruz at Fort Mills, Corregidor but was unsuccessful, so pending orders I helped the Lieut. and took life easy. On the 27th I was still unable to reach Corregidor so remained on at Limay, and on the morning of December 28 helped bury the first casualty of Limay Hospital. Finally after lunch on this day I was able to reach Col. Cruz who ordered me to Corregidor as soon as possible. So leaving Limay I went to Cababalan and caught a boat over to Corregidor arriving about eight o'clock that night. Having no difficulty finding quarters for the night, I reported to the ATS Office the next morning. Having nothing much to do right away I got myself invited on Corregidor and also purchase me some more uniforms. I had got pretty well set by lunch time and just sat down to lunch when an air raid hit the "Rock", Corregidor the place that never was bombed. This raid started about noon and the planes continued coming over in flight for about three hours. Though the raid was heavy, material damage was small, and I took refuge in a culvert from where I was able to make my way to the Middlesick Tunnel. This was very safe. After the raid we had to abandon the A.T.S. officers in the Middlesick Barracks and moved all our equipment to Malinta Tunnel where we eventually establish our office where it stayed for the rest of the war. Lt. Strang and myself then took over the night shift of the night of January 2nd 1942. Very shortly after this we the Army Transport Service took over the water transport of the whole area of war operations. A number of air raids were made on Corregidor during this first week of January doing a certain amount of damage including a number of fairly valuable buildings and also including all the buildings on the North Mine Dock. Only one incident occurred during these air raids, which was damaged in one of these raids and the Navy came crying to us to save these engines. So we managed to move this barge under one of our dock cranes and land these engines on the shore still in good order. The Navy having caused us a lot of trouble and risk thereupon made no attempt to move these engines and three days later in another air raids all engines were hit by shrapnel and damaged beyond repair. Who ever was responsible for this should have been court-martialled.

On the night of January 3rd we sent a party back to get the Tug "Keswick" which was anchored near the Manila Harbor breakwater, having been abandoned by her crew. This was successfully accomplished and the Tug towed to Corregidor.

The Army Transport Service now functioning efficiently, I was given charge of the night operations at the North Mine Dock in which capacity as Dock Officer I functioned until we abandoned the use of the North Mine Dock after the fall of Bataan.

Things went along quite smoothly and we continued sending supplies to Bataan and the Forts Drum, Hughes and Frank. Between January and the fall of Bataan we were able to slip ships through the Japanese blockade to Cebu and return with large cargoes, principally of rice. Only one incident occurred in this connection. The second ship had managed to return to Corregidor the M.S. Elcano and as dusk set in we brought this vessel to the dock and commenced unloading.

In the meantime the Captain had invited General Sutherland and some other ranking officers to eat dinner on board. Everything was going fine both at the dinner and in the unloading, until the Japanese gun batteries on the Cavite-Batangas shore fired four rounds hitting the "Rock" about a quarter a mile away. We immediately ceased work and withdraw the men to the dock. But in the meantime General Sutherland and the other ranking officers came rushing off the ship, jumped into their cars and took off for the safety to Malinta Tunnel. The order was given to send the vessel back to anchorage. But as soon as this had been done, and the General was safe in the Tunnel he issued the order that the vessel was to be brought back to the dock regardless and work continued under any conditions unless he personally order different. Such brave Generals, did we have. Luckily no further trouble occurred and the vessel completed unloading during the next night.

The Japanese gun batteries firing on the Harbor Defense Forts from Cavite and Batangas had commenced firing in February and from then on we had to be careful with our operations between Corregidor and the other fort. But all in all we were quite lucky though the Japanese spotted one of our boats going into Fort Frank and managed to get a direct hit on this vessel setting it on fire, but only slightly wounding one man, and all the crew was able to swim ashore to Fort Frank though the ship had to be abandoned.

Only two-other incidents occurred before the Fall of Bataan. The Quartermaster on Bataan decided to buy up all the carabac they could find on Bataan, slaughtering it on Bataan and then shipping it to the Cold Stores on Corregidor for keeping and then reissuing it back to Bataan as needed. This occurred when a large Japanese bomb went through the Cold Store Building putting it out of condition as such. After this it was decided to send as much of the meat, back to Bataan, as possible for immediate consumption. It was not possible to get it all back to Bataan before it would go bad, so some was sent to the U.S.S. Canopus and some issued for consumption at Corregidor. We had some difficulty getting the meat out of the cold nocks as the Ammonia Lines had been broken by bombing with the result that we did not start loading the Bataan meat until about midnight. Loading was finished by about 4:00 AM and the barge dispatched to Cabcaban. But Cabcaban decided, when it arrived there, that it was too late to unload it as it was nearly daylight and therefore sent the barge to anchorage for the day. Of course the results were a foregone conclusion, the meat having to set out in the hot sun all day was all rotten by night and had to be dumped into the sea. This of course resulted in an investigation and we were all questioned by Inspector General's Office. The results of the investigation were never published but apparently no real blame could be placed on anyone, with the exception of the men at Cabcaban who might have been criticized for not taking all the chance and getting the meat out of the barge on its arrival, they knowing the great shortage of food on Bataan.

The other incident was the departure of General Douglas MacArthur for Del Monte flying foiled thrice to Australia.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

23 March 1948

I certify that I have this date copied the foregoing report of 1st Lieut. John O. Zimmerman now on file at Project "J" Archives Section, Recovered Personnel Division.

Adolfo L. Magallanes
ADOLFO L. MAGALLANES
Information Unit, Checking Section
Records Division

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by *John G. ...*

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