

Reproduction of a letter from Capt. Edward Egan 499th Bomb Squadron, 345th Bomb Group. Submitted by Jim Mahaffey.

Letter to Lt. Doris Cunningham, 104<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, Ringwood (near Bournemouth), England, from Capt. Edward F. Egan, 499<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, San Marcelino, Luzon, Philippine Islands dated April 7, 1945. The letter was written during wartime and was subject to censorship and places are not identified so a map is attached.

Dear Nurse---

Light up a cigarette, settle yourself comfortably on your sack and get some soft music on the radio for I have a story to tell.

A while back (it begins) I flew back to one of my old bases to get some equipment. It was a good trip and I mixed business with pleasure by doing some swimming and visiting a couple of doctor friends at the 105<sup>th</sup> General Hospital (remember my writing of it?). I had a few dates with a nice little nurse and even spent a couple of evenings dancing, a luxury which I have been doing without for a long time. I was a bit loathe to leave but finally a plane came for me and ---- I left.

There were eight of us aboard. It was a B-25. The pilot was Lt. Cavins, co-pilot Lt. Langdon, engineer Sgt. Singerman, radio operator Sgt. Mazerolle and navigator Lt. Tarwater. Beside myself there were two other passengers, Lt. Boeing and Sgt. Peters. All are from the group although none of the others are from my squadron. Boeing and Singerman I had known before, Cavins by sight, the others were new acquaintances.

The weather was pretty good when we started but as time wore on it began to get worse and worse until it became downright bad. We kept on though because we thought it would break, but it didn't. The radio operator tried to raise our destination and get a bearing but he was not able to make contact. We were lost and we were running low on gas. Finally the weather cleared up and we sighted an island. We didn't know what it was except that it was in the Philippines. There are 7,000 islands in the Philippines. There seemed to be no sign of any military installations. I asked Cavins what he was going to do and he said our tanks were just about dry and he was going to set her down. I crawled back over the bomb bay and told the three in the rear: Boeing, Peters and Mazerolle to get ready for a water landing. We picked a little bay near a village but not too near in case there were Japs there. Cavins was going to make a pass at the beach so we could drop some of our supplies and save them but on the way in both engines quit almost simultaneously so there was nothing to do but drop it in. We all braced ourselves. I put a parachute pad underneath me and one behind my back, sitting facing to the rear, and hung on. We hit the water first but we were too close to the shore and smaned up on the beach. There was a lot of noise and bouncing around and then all of a sudden we were still. I found that the fuselage had buckled and my legs were pinned in but otherwise I seemed to be okay. Boeing hollered from the rear that Peters seemed to be hurt pretty badly but he and Mazerolle were alright. Cavins and Langdon were in good shape, Singerman had a deep cut on a finger and Tarwater who was sitting just above me with his back to the co-pilot's seat had a foot caught.

Almost immediately it seemed the airplane was surrounded by chattering Filipinos. Somebody asked if there were Japs there. They said "No Japs, no Japs here". Which was good news.

So Singerman got the crash ax which every plane carries and started chopping us out. Tarwater had to come first. I remember seeing his shoe alongside my left shoulder twisted around 180 degrees and I said "Here's your shoe but it's bent way around. It must have come off" and he said "No, I don't think so" and I felt the toe and sure enough I could feel his toe inside. I thought "My God, his foot must be twisted off" but it wasn't and he was soon free with nothing more than some wrenched muscles. Singerman then started on me. His finger prevented his swinging the ax so a Filipino lad did the work on his instructions. Meanwhile other natives were peering in the windows and some were mopping my brow with leaves and fanning me with fronds. I asked for water not thinking that fresh water might be miles from there but some how,, in a couple of minutes, I was handed a half coconut husk of good cool water. It sure tasted good.

It took quite a while to get me out. Afterwards I couldn't have told you whether it was half an hour or four hours but Singerman said it was about two and a half. After a while I guess the shock began to wear off because my leg began to hurt so I took a shot of morphine from the plane's emergency first aid kit and that helped so much I later found a bunch of cuts on my hands caused by my pulling on jagged pieces of metal without feeling anything. From somewhere the amazing Filipinos produced a crowbar and finally I was free. They hauled me out and carried me on their shoulders to a nearby hut. Someone brought out a wicker armchair and they put me in it and I took my pants off to take inventory. Except for some bad bruises everything looked ok and I guess I breathed a sigh of relief. Some Filipinos said they were going to take me to their guerilla headquarters so I was hoisted up on their shoulders again, only this time in the chair, and paraded down the road. The morphine must have given me a jag on for I was feeling good and I remember waving to people along the road and making some attempts at humor. No, it did not make an addict of me.

We came to a small barrio which had a one-room schoolhouse and I was carried in there. Peters was already there, on a cane bed, and some girls were bandaging his cuts. I asked him how he was and he said his chest was hurting him a good bit. Singerman was there and he told me he thought he was going to lose the tip of his finger which he now had bandaged although it was still bleeding. Someone brought me a glass of water and I spent some time talking to some of the guerilla officers. One of them, a captain, said he was sending word of us to his commanding officer, a major, at another town. He informed me that there were no Americans on the island and only a small Japanese garrison which was keeping itself barricaded so the guerillas had the upper hand. That, too, was good news. They had no radio, the natives that is, so the captain said the major would probably have us carried to the nearest American base by sailboat. I wanted to start immediately for I was worried about Peters but you can't hurry these people. The captain said he must wait for the major so wait we must.

The other boys meanwhile had been in the major's house across the road but now they came to see us. Cavins had a great bandage across his forehead which he said covered two small cuts. Tarwater was hobbling awkwardly, the other three looked good although Langdon said he had a sore shoulder.

I was brought some clean dry clothes. Somehow, although we finished up on shore, I was soaking wet. Part of it was salt water. Part was hydraulic fluid from the airplane. They gave me a standard G.I. shirt and pants, the shirt having buck sergeant's stripes on

it, which next day Boeing insisted on cutting off. I never did find out where the uniform came from.

It was about 6 PM by this time and we were brought some supper. It was the first of a succession of fabulous meals which continued all the time we were there. I don't think I've eaten as well since I came overseas. I can't remember what we had for each individual meal but during our stay there we consumed fried eggs, boiled eggs, rice, chicken rice soup, beef bouillon, pork, steak, chicken, sweet potatoes, scallions, unknown greens, banana and flour pancakes, devilled eggs, coffee from a native bean, rice coffee, bananas, sugar cane stalks (which you can chew on), and other exotic unusual dishes. We were fed often and in great quantity. For breakfast I would be brought five platefuls of food of which I could only eat a small amount and embarrassedly must turn the rest away. For us there was no rationing, we wanted not.

During the evening we had more visitors. Two of them were attractive young girls who said they were lieutenants in the WAS. And here I must devote some space to the WAS. The letters stand for Woman's Auxiliary Service (Filipinos are alphabet-conscious too). But the way they pronounce them it comes out "wash". And they are quite amazing. They wear no uniforms, neither do the guerillas, but they work. Someone has given them excellent training in first aid. Two of them were very near our plane when it piled up and gave Peters emergency treatment on the spot and it was the WAS who took care of us in the schoolhouse. They go right out with their men when fighting. One pert little thing had a long scar over her left eye which she said was caused by a piece of shrapnel from a Jap trench mortar when she was only 100 yards from the battle. She told me of another "wash" who had her leg broken by a shell fragment and had been sent to an American hospital.

They couldn't do enough for Peters. He had a bad gash on his head and two more on his right leg, his chest pained him when he breathed and his hip and tail bone were sore. They washed his cuts and with the emergency first aid kit which we salvaged from the plane they sprinkled sulfanilamide on them and bandaged them. Those were the first real medicines and bandages they had seen in a long time. Previously they had been using native herbs and oil and such. And yet though they had had many wounded they had never lost a casualty which they had been able to evacuate from the battlefield.

The girls sat with Peters all evening talking to him and fanning him and finally they sang us to sleep with "God Bless America" and their own "wash" song. Or they tried to. I guess Peters didn't sleep any and I know I just caught a few cat naps. The excitement hadn't worn off, my woven reed bed was a far cry from my air mattress. Two of our "washes" sat up all night with us and the guerillas posted an armed guard on the building.

Next morning we were brought some water to wash (they don't have soap). Peters was still uncomfortable but in good spirits. The girls changed his bandages and also discovered some cuts on me which none of us had noticed before and those they daubed with iodine. The morning passed quietly although sometime during it a slender black-haired girl walked in wearing a neatly tailored green slack suit, nicely embroidered. I blinked twice but she was still there. It was quite a while before she came over to see me but when she did I learned her name was Felisa Co and she was the daughter of a Chinese father and Filipino mother and I go on record that the combination was most satisfactory. She was quite intelligent, seemed fairly well educated, spoke English better than most. She was also a WAS but worked at an emergency hospital at another town.

At noon the major showed up. He was a young fellow, just 25, larger than most Filipinos, and was wearing a khaki uniform with regulation insignia. The boat, he told us, was at a town about ten miles away and tomorrow he would take us there and we should leave for the nearest army base. The further delay did not appeal to me much but Peters was not getting any worse and all those people were being so good to us I was not able to insist.

We had just finished lunch at the major's house when he arrived. I had been able to hobble over there leaning on the shoulders of a couple of guerillas. Our host at the meal had been an uncle of the major who was the provost marshal. He was a character. To me he looked and acted like Leo Carillo. We were drinking nipa gin, their local booze, which is made from coconut sap and although it doesn't taste like Black and White it has a potent kick. Old Leo was tossing them off neat and he was in fine fettle. Singerman is a complete extrovert and the two of them took to each other right off. They were constantly saluting each other in that exaggerated style that soldiers sometimes affect when they are joking. "Captain, I salute you" and "Sergeant, I salute you" they would bark at each other and burst into great laughter.

About eight that evening a youngster came into the schoolhouse with a violin and began to play. He was good too and soon Singerman got up with a friend of Miss Co, an older woman, and began to dance. They were both good and everyone applauded (there were 40 or 50 there). The Filipinos wanted to hear some American songs so we sang some for them with warmth if not with melody. Boeing offered to teach Felisa "I'll Walk Alone" but she wanted something more "snappy" so he taught her "Mairzy Doats" with which she was delighted. (I did not see much of her after he met her because he could walk around). One of my little "washes" and her young boy friend asked me to teach them a song and I wrote out "Sweet Sue" for them and hummed the tune for them and in a little bit they were harmonizing on it as pretty as you please. The Filipinos are very musical.

We left for the other village about 9 the next morning. Peters and Mazerolle were left behind, our plan being to have a seaplane go back for them as soon as we could contact the Army. That way we figures Peters would get back almost as soon as we and would not have to undergo a long painful journey. Mazerolle being in the best condition stayed with him.


Our procession was unique. Tarwater and I were in two wicker chairs, each of which had two bamboo poles thrust through them and were borne on the shoulders of four Filipinos, Langdon and Boeing rode two of the Philippines small horses, Singerman and Cavins walked. Langdon's horse was so slow he got off the beast half way and finished on shanks mare. Boeing lasted the trip but later wished he hadn't because his creature was bony and there was no saddle. We had a platoon of guerillas with us, the major and his pretty wife were on a horse, so were Miss Co and her friend on another. Tarwater and I had the deal though. We sat there like a couple of potentates, waving to people along the road, talking to our manpower. All I needed was a big cigar. A native came up to me

from one house and handed me an egg saying "Please accept my humble gift". Little kids ran along with us and many people joined the parade as we neared the town.

Once there we were taken to Leo's house where we were served cookies and some more nipa gin. Leo was the grand host. One of the boys asked for a glass of water and Leo said, "My daughter, my daughter" until a serious faced child of 12 appeared. "My daughter, you will bring a glass of water for this gentleman". Soledad, for that was her name, turned and started to leave but Leo aimed a big kick at her and said "Goddamit, hurry up!" The kick deliberately missed however and his face broke into a gold-toothed grin and even Soledad laughed to show her papa was a great joker. Later Soledad came back and did a Hawaiian song and dance for us and her combination of shyness and the movements of the hula was delightful.

We were asked if we would like a shower. My reaction was instantaneous. Just before we left the schoolhouse my clothes were returned to me washed but I had not shaved or bathed all over since the crack up. They took us to the rectory a couple of blocks away where the priest, lo and behold!, had a tile floor bathroom and a flush toilet. Cavins had salvaged his shaving kit and he had some soap so in a short time we all couldn't recognize one another. I sat and talked to the padre for a while, told him the latest news (they are all hungry for that).

Back at Leo's we ate and afterwards a boy with a guitar came in and played and sang for us. He started off with "Goodbye Dear, I'll Be Back In A Year", which seemed a bit incongruous to me, swung into "In The Mood" and then gave out with a couple of tangos and rhumbas. He was good.

About three we were taken to the municipal building, a two story structure with a balcony to which a flight of steps led on either side, like this.  We were seated in chairs on the balcony where we were joined by the major and a couple of his officers, the priest, the judge and some other town functionaries. And then they put on a parade for us! First came a brass band, then a couple of platoons of guerillas who gave us "Eyes right!" which we returned with a salute feeling, as one of the boys later expressed it, like Mussolini! Finally all the males in town it seemed, led by the youngest and smallest carrying placards "Welcome U.S. Airmen". The parade went around the block, came back again, broke up and everyone gathered about the building as though some speechmaking was about to begin. And that is just what happened. The toastmaster spoke, the judge spoke, the priest spoke, the mayor spoke, and every blessed one of us spoke. The Filipinos love to make speeches. We were the "distinguished American visitors", the major was "their beloved major", this was the typical old fashioned oratory, flowery and repetitious. But they were earnest and sincere and we were caught up by their spirit and quite outdid ourselves thanking them for their wonderful hospitality and rattling on about Filipino-American friendship. It was all quite amazing. Langdon, a country boy, has a good tenor voice and I guess Singerman put the Filipinos up to it for it was announced that he would sing a song. He was taken by surprise but got up and made us all sing the "Air Corps Song" which went over big so we told him to do a solo and he obliged with the "Wabash Cannonball". They ate it up.

A young woman came out and sang "God Bless America" (I think every Filipino knows "God Bless America") and a mixed chorus sang a Filipino song. It was sunset when all was finished and the bugler blew "To The Colors" and then the band played "The Star Spangled Banner" while the flag was lowered. Just before the conclusion the toastmaster

announced that there would be a dance in our honor at the schoolhouse that evening. It would begin at eight o'clock Army time. I asked the major what that meant, were they on different time than the Army? No, he said, they were on the same time but if you scheduled a dance in the Philippines for eight o'clock everyone would usually show up about nine. Saying Army time meant that this time the dance really would start at eight (This tardiness is a hangover from their old Spanish era and it is called "the manana habit").

We returned to Leo's, ate, and sat around talking and listening to a boy play the guitar. Eight o'clock passed and no one did anything. Singerman asked if we shouldn't be getting to the dance and Leo said sure, in just a few minutes. We got there about nine. And we were the first arrivals. Habit is a great thing.

The band was there however and soon the Filipinos began coming in. The women all went over to one side of the room and sat down, the men stood at the other. When the music started they would wait until one of us started dancing and then the men would walk over, select partners, and soon the floor would be crowded. At the end of the number the women would be escorted to their seats and the men would return to their wall. It all seemed quite formal. The building was large and there must have been a couple of hundred there. We were seated at the end of the room opposite the band.

Tarwater and I couldn't dance but all the others did and had a great time. There were some very pretty girls and Cavins, Langdon and Singerman played the field. Boeing was concentrating on Felisa who was a very good dancer. The band was good. They started off with "San Antonio Rose" and played fox trots, tangos, rhumbas and waltzes. I was sorry I couldn't dance but I had a fine time watching. Their people dance well, many of the men are quite handsome in a sleek Latin way, and as I've remarked the girls are often striking. I was tired and begged off about 10:30 but the rest did not stop until one thirty and a good time seemed to have been had by all. The boys told me that later on there was another, and even better, orchestra.

We were up early in the morning and after breakfast were taken to the boat, anchored in the river on the edge of town about a mile from the sea. It is called a paran (sp?) and was a sailboat of about thirty feet with twin outriggers. There were about twenty two aboard plus six little monkeys and I don't know how many live chickens. We were six, there were about 14 guerillas including the major and there were even two Japanese. No fooling. One was loyal, had lived in the islands for about 16 years and was even a sergeant in the guerillas. The other was a prisoner taken in their last fight whom they were going to turn over to the Army. The Filipinos seemed to treat the latter fairly well although they kept him busy bailing out the boat. There was a crowd along the shore to see us off and as we shoved off they began throwing straw hats out to us until all of us had one. Some fell in the water and a chap in a rowboat would pick them up and bring them to us.

I was almost sorry to leave. If it had not been for Peters I would not have minded at all a few more days there basking in their care and eating that marvelous food. Of course our egos had been tremendously inflated by their treatment of us but, although we all realized it, nevertheless it was still great to be the object of so much attention and to be treated as though six ordinary guys who had merely gotten lost were actually "distinguished American visitors".

There was no wind and the natives rowed the boat out into the ocean which also was calm. It wasn't until noon that a breeze sprang up. About eleven a fire was built in a small stove and a meal of rice and carrots and boiled eggs was prepared for us. That evening they killed one of the chickens and we had a chicken dinner. When the wind finally did come we made good time. The major was quite proud of his boat, said it was the fastest in the island. It was very pleasant sailing. The center of the boat had a thatched roof over it and we lay on that alternately sleeping and talking. The major turned out to be a great sack hound and mostly slept. After dark we began singing and telling jokes. The Jap prisoner apparently was enjoying it for through the other Jap (who did not speak English but did speak the native dialect of course. If we wanted to talk to the prisoner it had to be relayed through a third tongue) He said he would like to sing us a song in Japanese. And he did, some Army song, and then darned if he didn't follow it with the Marseillaise, in Japanese.

It was bright moonlight and about 1AM we sighted a ship ahead of us which crossed our bow, sailed away a distance and then came about and passed in front of us again, moving very slowly. It was quite close this time and we recognized it as an American destroyer. We had a flashlight aboard and blinked SOS at it a few times. For a while there was no reply but finally it blinked back that our message was received and it came about again and bore down on us. When it was in hailing distance we shouted that we were a B25 crew and they told us to come alongside which we did and the six of us plus the major were taken aboard. We said there were some injured among us so the ship's doctor was awakened and he met us at the rail and took us to the wardroom which is the officer's lounge and mess. The captain also was up looking ruffled and sleepy in his dressing gown. We briefly told him our story and he gave instructions for a message to be sent telling of our rescue and of the two remaining on the island. Then the doc took us down to sick bay and went over us. He said my leg would be ok and put an elastic bandage on it with the effect that I was able to hobble around under my own power. He sewed Singerman's finger up and told him the tip would not be lost. Back in the wardroom there were sandwiches, an apple pie, and Silex made coffee waiting for us. I made a pig of myself again and then crept into a soft bunk between white sheets. Ahhhhh, peace.

Well that's about it. The destroyer brought us back while we ate their good food (their officers ran it down, we asked for second helpings), poked our noses into every corner of the ship, and the major got seasick and spent a whole day in the captain's bunk, interfering with his afternoon's sack time. We were told that every gun on the ship was trained on us the night we were picked up as they couldn't figure out what we were. My laughter at this was a bit forced.

We were joyfully received back at the group. The colonel had us all in his office to hear our story, group public relations took our pictures and Associated Press sent out the story. We entertained the major for a couple of days and finally took him to the base where his boat was awaiting him, presenting him with a couple of cases of cigarettes, some clothes, and 10 in 1 rations although after what I ate at his island I cannot quite see the point of the last. In return he gave us all presents --- the colonel a Jap samurai sword, Singerman two monkeys, me a Jap battle flag and a cage with two bleeding heart doves (which I think I shall set free although they are very pretty). We parted with protestations of everlasting friendship. And I meant it. I've never met such people.

By the way, the day we arrived back Peters and Mazerolle were brought in. Peters will be ok.

So this story has a happy ending. It might not have been but we were lucky. We had all the pleasures and excitements of such an experience without any of the sorrow and hardships. Many others have not been so fortunate and I hope I will never forget it.

This has turned out to be long. Well, I warned you, Nurse. It isn't often that a ground officer in the Air Corps gets to tell a "combat" story. You may or may not consider yourself lucky receiving all this. The rest of my friends will get synopses. I'm still not a productive letter writer.

We were fortunate in another respect, too. The group had not sent out missing reports on us which would have meant the folks receiving one of those War Department telegrams regretting to inform them their son is missing. That I was sweating out. Mother would have had a bad few days, if it had been sent, until the news of our rescue reached her.

But now enough, enough. This has run its course.

Ed

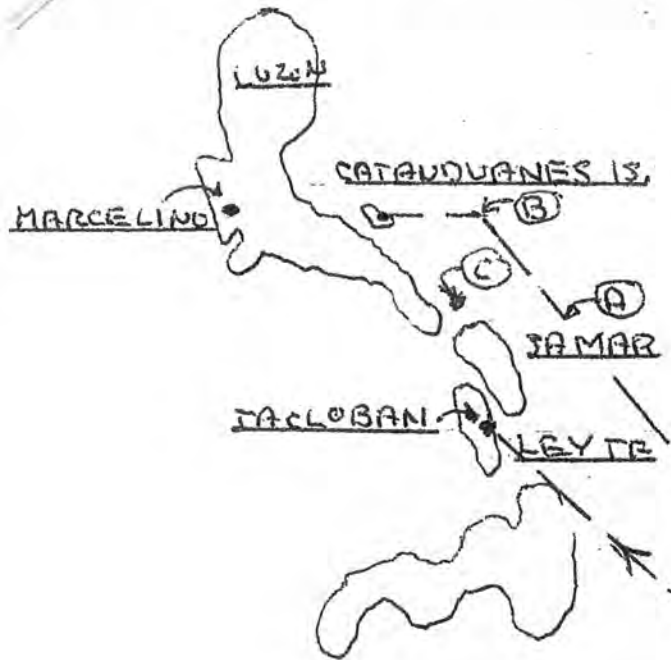
PS Things have obviously been left out of this for censorship reasons. What there is I hope will not infringe but if any of it is cut however please tell me about it. The Army's decisions on just what is and what is not censorable have long been a puzzle to me.



FLIGHT OF "CHOWHOUND", FORMERLY "TONDELEYO" 3/30/45

JAN MARCELINO WAS THE DESTINATION WITH A REFUELING STOP AT TACLOBAN

UNAWARE OF A STRONG WEST WIND THE PLANE WAS BLOWN EAST OF ITS COURSE AND NEVER MADE LANDFALL AT (A) A RADIO SIGNAL INDICATED TACLOBAN TO THE SOUTHWEST BUT THE WEAK SIGNAL WAS NOT BELIEVED. AT (B) THE PLANE WAS SO LOW ON GAS IT TURNED DIRECTLY WEST SOON SIGHTED LAND (CATANDUANES ISLAND) AND DITCHED (C) WHERE THE DESTROYER PICKED US UP, WE WERE HEADING FOR TACLOBAN



CHOWHOUND