

Belote Collection
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Military History Institute
Carlisle Barracks

12th Coastal Artillery Regiment
Reminiscences of Surrender of Corregidor

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1133 Western Meadows Road
Albuquerque 14, New Mexico
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Dear Dr. Belote:

I was surprised to hear from a historian after so long. I have read several accounts of the surrender and prior siege, but none to my knowledge have been too accurate. I might say you are the first to question me although several senior officers received a report from me after the surrender and then in P.O.W. camp several persons were writing experiences, but to my knowledge the latter all died in P.O.W. camp.

Yes, I commanded a battery of 2-75mm model 1917 British made guns. In addition I had 2 - 37mm ex-caliber guns mounted in 50 cal. AA mounts, 2 - 50 cal. machine guns, 2 - 30 cal machine guns, 30 - 25 # aerial frag bombs, 8 - Browning automatic rifles and 3,000 hand grenades. My command on 1 Jan. 1942 consisted of myself, a Phil. Army 3rd Lt. and 35 Philippine Scouts from Btry "A" & "D" of the 92d CA (PS). I & my men were attached for command to the 1st Bn 4th U.S. Marine Reg't, Commanded by Lt. Col. Beecher. My sector started at the old Rifle Butt concrete wall approx 250 yards from the end of the airstrip and continued to the tail end of the island. The location was commonly known as East Pt., North Point was approx 1/2 mile to my left.

As I obtained more weapons, additional men were assigned. One platoon of the 4th U.S. marines joined me and took over the machine guns. Later, after Bataan fell, I rec'd about 10 U.S. Army and Phil soldiers whom though they were tired and ill with malaria. They had recovered by May 6th to perform. By then I had 82 men. The Phil Scouts manned the 75's and trained constantly to where they could perform in the dark as well as in the daytime. Of course, I need not tell of the ability of the Marines to handle the MG's & small arms. They used to practice blindfolded clearing stoppages & getting their guns in action. Within a week after Bataan fell I knew we were to be the target for a landing as the Jap artillery attempted to zero in on our position & the beach in front of us. We were shelled 5 times per day so close we could almost set our watches. The Japs used 150 mm & 240mm though they never damaged our positions or caused casualties. They did hit 1 - 37mm position twice but it was well reveted and so no damage. The first time we were shelled my men were terrified as was I. It took me most of the night to find everyone, they had dug in so deep. I then made it a practice to hold gun drills & communication drills during all shelling. It seemed to boost the morale and then they became sure that their position was invulnerable. When the attack finally came, we were ~~walking~~ waiting in our gun pits, every man on duty. The barrage immediately preceding the initial landing was by far the worst. My own communications (field phones) remained intact but my contact with Marine Hq. was severed; hence I was not able to report, nor did I receive any orders subsequently.

I have always thought the 1st wave hit us about 9:30 P.M. just as the barrage on the beach lifted & moved farther behind us and to the left on the airstrip. We were all so busy I doubt if anyone looked at their watch, mine had quit operating several weeks before. I had a 36" searchlight which was operated by the scouts. I ordered it turned on when I heard the motors approaching the beach. It was knocked out by enemy small arms within 2-3 minutes but not before we got a good look at the craft about 100 yds from the shore. We opened up with all guns & our tracers from the M.G.'s lit up the beach. We hit many landing craft before they hit the beach, but the MG's made short work of those that landed. All guns were sighted (sic) in to form interlocking bands of fire. That is all except 1 - 50 cal MG. It had been moved 200 yds to my left the day before and I was unable to protect it with flanking fire. It was captured shortly after the 1st attack. We heard the Japs crying for mercy, telling us to cease fire, they were Filipinos. After we had fired approx 1 hr. & we were cleaning out the pits of empty shells, we heard more mortars, the second attack. By then the stars were bright and possibly the moon, coming up, I don't remember, but we opened up when the craft were approx 500 yds out & did a better job on them. I doubt if any reached the shore. I'm sure we sunk at least a dozen offshore. This was a larger force, I believe, since we fired more rounds.

Between the two attacks and after the 2nd we threw many hand grenades down on the beach. Also the aerial frag bombs were released down wooden chutes to explode on the beach.

Just at dawn we were in the process of getting a 3rd attack but guns from Ft. Hughes to our rear opened up & the landing craft turned off to our left and landed at North Pt. unopposed. They were never within our range to fire. Or the (sic) possibly saw their hundreds of dead soldiers floating in the water and the half-sunken landing craft on the beach. I counted 22 one-half sunk landing craft and 4 fully loaded with dead Japs. All craft had 10 to 20 dead inside but the 4 were loaded with about 60 in each all dead. All Japs wore orange colored life jackets so they floated in the water until the tide took them out. The sharks were having a feast. Later in the morning I saw one other group of landing craft going up the North Channel to land where I heard later at Officer (sic) Beach.

We of course were in good spirits. I had 1 dead Phil Scout & 1 wounded, both from small arms.

Our biggest scare came after the 2nd attack when our own 12" mortars from Topside opened up on us to cut the island in two. I understand Col. Bunker, who commanded 59th Rgt. was informed that I was possibly still holding out & stopped the firing.

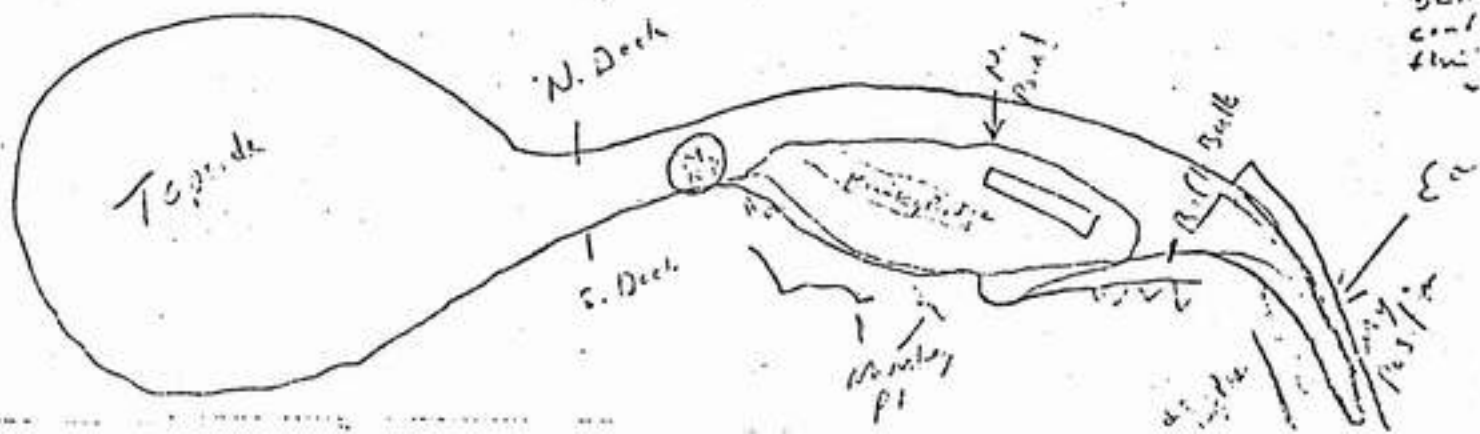
We spent the day cleaning out the few remaining survivors who were sniping at us. By noon we had cleaned out all, I believe. We had formed a skirmish line & started north & in 2 hrs. reported all well. About 4 or 5 p.m. I saw a small boat leave South Dock and sail to Ft. Hughes dock. It was flying a white sheet from the stern. From that I gathered that the island was in the process of surrendering. I took a vote on staying or attempting to negotiate with the

Japs. We hadn't heard a shot fired in our vicinity for several hours. The vote was 38 to 36 for surrender, several did not vote. So just before dark I marched the men out in a column of 2's. I placed my 3rd Lt. who was recently promoted to 2nd Lt. in the rear, to close up the column, ~~undoubtedly~~ ~~undoubtedly~~

I don't think the Japs saw us until we reached the main road at the end of the airstrip & we had marched down it about 100 yds. They immediately surrounded us & disarmed us. They tried to question us but gave up. I'm sure they never knew where we came from or I wouldn't be writing this. They took us about 1 mile along towards the Officers Beach & had us sit in the middle of the road all night. In the morning they lined us up to be shot, but a very high ranking Jap officer with his staff came up from the beach with his staff & guard [this is the way it is written here] of about 25 soldiers. He stopped the proceedings & spoke to me in English. Told me to follow him & keep my men in a close column. He took us to the Bottomside rd dock area & kept his guards on us all morning, brought us water & food. Afternoon another guard detail led us to the old Balloon hangar area, the 92nd motor pool area. We were used to erect a barricade (sic) of ~~hammocks~~ barrels outward from the hangar. That night after we had gone to sleep the Japs brought the rest of the officers & men of Corregidor to the area. The barrels we found were to separate the Filipinos from U.S. personnel. I was then separated from my men & saw few after that. We stayed there for approx 3 weeks when we were loaded aboard transports & taken to Manila. We were taken part way to shore in small boats, then forced to swim ashore. We then paraded down Dewey Blvd. to Bilibid Prison. I spent the next 2 yrs - 2 mos. at camp 3 & Camp I Cabanatuan and in (sic) Aug 3rd landed in Moji, Kyushu, Japan. Was in Camp Camp 23 until end of war.

You ask me to say something about the Pi Scouts. I have nothing but praise & admiration for them. They were, I'm sure, the best disciplined men I've known. They never questioned an order and they fired those 75's at a rate of 20 rds per gun in such precision that any gun crew would have envied. I remember visiting No. 1 gun during the 1st attack & Corporal Navarro the gunner was peering through his gun sight & said, "Sir, I cannot see them through my sight the light is out." I picked him up off his seat & pointed down the barrel & said, "Use it ~~high~~ like a shotgun, you're shooting ducks on the pond now." At that time we were firing pt. blank range 50 yds at the craft on the beach.

I'll try to draw a picture of our position on next page. [H: bell cont line]



Each man carried 100 rds of 30 cal ammo and was replenished several times. I had about 10,000 rds of 30 cal remaining for the M G's & 1,000 rds of rifle ammo. The 8 BAR's fired approx. 500 rds each. Several marines had 45 cal submachine guns & expended all their ammo.

I only wish I could hold a reunion & roll call of my men. I haven't seen a single one since left for Japan (sic) in July 1944 and only a few before that. My Marine NCO was Sgt. Zajak & never saw him again. He and his men were superb. My PI Scouts were so courageous, I often think of them.

I gave a good report to Lt. Col. Beecher, 4th U.S. Marines in POW camp & recommended decorations for my men but never knew if they rec'd them. I'm sure there were no none more deserving for the highest award.

I have tried to be as accurate as possible, but I'm sure you will see some questions. Please feel free to write for any further details.

I retired from U.S. Army July 1, 1961 after 20 yrs active. My last assignment station was Ft. Chaffee, Ark. I am now employed as a project engineer for New Mexico State Highway Dept. stationed at Tacos, N.M. My family, wife and 2 children, live in Albuquerque. I was unmarried until 1947 & have a son age 15, soph. in H.S. & daughter 12, 7th grade.

I believe I am very fortunate, I am in fairly good health and happy. I would really enjoy hearing from any of my men. If you have heard from them please give me their addresses.

Sincerely yours,

Ray G. Lawrence
Lt. Col. (Ret)