History

A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Spring, 1992
Volume 27, Number 1

St. Paul in celebration, 1924. This photo from the Gibson-Wright collection shows St. Paul during the years of labor turmoil that followed World War I. The 1880s city hall-county courthouse is on the left, with the St. Paul Athletic Club beyond it in this view looking east down Fourth Street. See W. Thomas White's account, beginning on page 4, of the 1922 Shopmen's Strike in the Northwest.

Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102. Printed in U.S.A.
 ISSN Number 0485-9758.

Acknowledgements: The postcard views on pages 3, 21 and 22 were loaned to *Ramsey County History* by Robert J. Stumm, author of the article on St. Paul's Fish Hatchery, beginning on page 21. The drawing of American POWs in the Philippines on page 15 is by Benjamin Charles Steele, also a survivor of the Bataan Death March and is from the book, *Soldier of Bataan* by Philip S. Brain, Jr. The drawing is used with the permission of the book's publisher, the Rotary Club of Minneapolis. Photographs with the article, "Growing Up in St. Paul," beginning on page 18, are from the author and used with his permission. Photographs on pages 24, 29 and 31 are from the collections of the Ramsey County Historical Society. All other photographs in this issue are from the audio-visual collections of the Minnesota Historical Society.

RAMSEY COUNTY
History

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Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr., and by a contribution from Reuel D. Harmon.

A Message from the Editorial Board

The Spring issue of our magazine inaugurates a new feature that focuses on the personal experiences of individuals growing up in St. Paul or Ramsey County. Willard (Sandy) Boyd, who grew up in St. Anthony Park as the son of Dr. Willard Boyd, director of the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus, has written the first memoir that begins this new feature.

A graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School, Sandy Boyd was president of the University of Iowa from 1969 to 1981. He is now president of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

Boyd writes about his youth in Ramsey County during the Great Depression. We learn first hand, for example, what the great droughts of 1934 and 1936 meant to him and his friends. Editorial Board members hope that others will share their experiences with our readers.

—*John M. Lindley*, chairman, Editorial Board

Fifty Years Later –

A Survivor's Memories of the Bataan Death March

Philip S. Brain, Jr.

The line between life and death is very narrow. At times it disappears. I believe that many of the prisoners living today stepped more than once across that line with at least one foot and were brought back by a voice, a touch of another man's hand, a memory or some other little incident. In the collection of these thoughts, a well of memories was opened. It has also brought to the surface some emotions I didn't realize were there. I believe that as one goes through an experience like this, he builds a shell around himself, and emotions are suppressed. The shell must be hard, and it must be tough, because once it is pierced – once a crack has been made – a man does not usually live much longer.

It isn't easy to take three and a half years and wrap them up in a little ball and say here it is. Indeed, there are some high points and low points and a lot of things that just can't be included in a summary of this kind.

Our problems in the Philippines began prior to the time of the surrender on April 9, 1942. We had been in Bataan since January 1. When we moved in, we immediately went to two meals of rice a day. By the end of January we were down to one meal a day. We supplemented this by foraging. At the time of surrender, it's safe to say that there wasn't one living thing other than man on Bataan. The cavalry no longer had any mules or horses. There were no dogs. There were no lizards. No living creatures that were edible remained at the time of the surrender.

The men who surrendered were weak and sick. They'd had little sleep. If they stood up suddenly, they often blacked out. These were the men who were trying to hold the lines when fresh Japanese forces were brought up from Singapore to finish the job.

On the night of April 8, the order was given to destroy all weapons and move back farther into Bataan. We destroyed our weapons and started back. It was almost as bright as day. We could have read a newspaper if we had had one because all the ammunition dumps were being blown up. That night I had the best night's sleep in many a month because there was no worry about Japanese infiltration. The shelling we had been under day and night for weeks had stopped, and the planes that had been bombing and strafing us continually were no longer there.

On the morning of April 9, I was awakened by a jab of a rifle butt. I looked into the eyes of a Japanese solder. I got up, put on my shoes and glasses, snapped on my canteen belt and fell in line. The Japanese started walking up and down the line searching us. One took my duffle bag, one took my glasses, another took the ring my dad had given me. All I had left were a pair of fatigues, shoes and canteen belt. I spotted the lid of a mess kit; I tucked that in my back pocket in hope that there would be food. Then they lined us up for chow, and issued each of us a tablespoon of raw rice. We gathered in small groups, found tin cans and cooked the rice, each man taking his share.

About 11 o'clock we lined up to move out. I'll never forget the sensation as we stood on the road, in a kind of gulley, with hills on both sides. On those hills were Japanese soldiers with machine guns. One couldn't help but wonder, "Is this it? Is this to be a massacre, or do we still have a chance?" We had a chance, and we began what came to be known as the Death March.

Men who were too sick or too lame to keep up were eliminated with a rifle shot or bayonet. We quickly realized that one kept going or else.

Water became our toughest problem. In the Philippines there are many artesian wells alongside the road – wells with beautiful, cool water. As we came to the first one of these and tried to break rank and get water for our canteens, rifles were fired and bayonets were used. Many men were left dead at the first artesian well. We realized, as we came to a second one, that the thing to do was to take the canteen cup by the handle and, as we passed the well, make a dash, try to scoop up some water and get back into line. We did this. Again the rifle shots, the bayonets and some men remained behind forever.

The march continued, and the Japanese soldiers changed their tactics. They stopped us in the middle of the road at a resting point for a half hour break under the midday sun, alongside an artesian well – a well protected with rifles and bayonets. Farther along, as we came to stagnant pools in which lay the bloated bodies of soldiers and of animals, they allowed us to fill our canteens and to take a drink.

That night we were marched into a Philippine estate that was enclosed with stone walls. We marched in columns of four. We were marched to the back wall and were told to turn around, sit down and stay there for the night. As the men kept coming in, it got more and more crowded. With no latrine facilities, the area began to get pretty filthy.

Then, in the blackness of the night, a soldier cracked and a shriek rang out. Rifles were fired in the direction of the shriek by guards walking on the wall, and then there was silence. One begins to realize that he is living only minute by minute and that he does not have any control over the situation.

As the days went by and the march continued, the Japanese again changed their

A tragic aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor was the surrender of American forces in the Philippines and the infamous Bataan Death March that followed the surrender fifty years ago, on April 9, 1942 – April 8, east of the International Dateline.

Philip S. Brain, Jr., of Edina was there as a noncommissioned officer with the 194th Tank Battalion commanded by Colonel Ernest B. Miller of Brainerd, Minnesota. Brain was assigned to the battalion after his induction into the army in 1941.

Mobilized that same year, the 194th, which included men from St. Paul, Minneapolis, Brainerd and elsewhere, was sent to Fort Lewis, Washington, for training. In September, 1941, the men sailed on the President Coolidge *to the Philippines. On December 8 (December 7 in the United States), the Japanese bombed Clark Field at Manila.*

Throughout the next four months, the battalion helped cover the withdrawal of United States forces through Luzon and down the Bataan peninsula to Corregidor. Brain survived the agonizing Death March and three and a half years in Japanese prison camps where he suffered from malaria, dysentery and beri beri and his weight dropped from 168 to less than 100 pounds.

He was released in September, 1945, after the Japanese surrender. Then he learned of the death of his mother and his brother during the war years.

This moving account of his experiences is taken from a chapter in his book, Soldier of Bataan, *dedicated to the soldiers of Bataan and published in 1990 by the Rotary Club of Minneapolis to commemorate the approaching fiftieth anniversary of America's entry into World War II. It is reprinted here with the permission of the Minneapolis Rotary Club.*

American prisoners of war in the Philippines, 1942, an illustration from Philip Brain's book by Benjamin Charles Steele, also a Bataan Death March survivor.

tactics. Trucks came along and picked up the men who appeared to be too sick and too weak to keep going. These men were never seen again.

Our part of the Death March lasted five days. We ended up at the railhead town of San Fernando. We went into a sugar warehouse where we stayed that night. Again, no latrines. There was a lot of dysentery and sickness among the men by this time.

In the morning we were loaded into railway cars. These were small steel box cars. The Japanese used bayonets to make sure each car was loaded with as many men as possible. We were crowded so close together that it was almost impossible to move our arms. The doors were slammed shut and bolted. The air vents were closed, and we started on what became an eight-hour trip. As the sun began to beat down on the freight cars, it became almost unbearable. When a man died, and some did, it was impossible to lay him down on the floor.

After eight hours we reached our destination, the train stopped, the doors were opened and those men still living climbed out. Some Filipinos were there and they said, "If you have any Japanese money, throw it away." We marched about six kilometers into Camp O'Donnell.

O'Donnell was a Philippine army camp that had been under construction before the war but never finished. It had few buildings and no latrines. There was one water line with one faucet, and the Japanese were moving all of the Bataan prisoners into this camp. We established a hospital in one of the few buildings that were there. The rest of the men lived out of doors.

Some of the men were well enough to work. There were just two work details: bury the dead and dig latrines. And neither could be done fast enough. More than 1,600 men died in that camp the first month.

The nights were restful, and for me, very important. One could lie on the ground, look to the stars and be in a different world. Then one began to realize the relationship he must have with his God. Nights still mean a lot to me.

On some nights at the camp, the tropical rains would strike. The first thing we would do would be to fill a canteen; then we could face the cold tropical rain. As one lay on the ground and tried to roll up like a ball to keep warm, he couldn't help but think about the number of men who would die that night, men whose strength was almost gone. For the weakest, the cold rain would bring an end to life.

We received word that Corregidor surrendered about May 6. The Japanese then began to send work details out of the camp. I went with a group of fifty men to the town of Calauan, south of Manila.

Our job was rebuilding bridges that had been destroyed as we withdrew into Bataan. We were housed in the village hall, a building about thirty feet square with a concrete floor. Fifty of us stayed there. There were no blankets, no cots, no pieces of furniture of any kind. Home was a spot

on the concrete floor. After arriving at Calauan, I contracted dysentery and at this point weighed about ninety-five pounds. My job was carrying sacks of cement, mixing concrete on a steel plate with a shovel and loading gravel trucks. We learned a couple of things. One is that if you're too sick to work, you're too sick to eat and your rations are immediately cut. Second, if you don't keep moving and thinking, you go downhill fast.

We learned that the work detail stationed next to us had been attacked by a guerrilla band and an American prisoner of war had escaped when the guerrillas left. The Japanese commander ordered all the remaining men in that group of fifty executed. The Americans protested, and the commander reduced the number to ten. Try to imagine your reaction if you were ordered to select those ten men. The alternative: have the entire group face the firing squad. This happened again about a week later to another work detail.

The Americans then organized all prisoners into what were known as "blood groups." Ten men to each group. Interior guards were established to prevent escape. If one man escaped from any group, there would be no need for selection; the remainder of the group would be designated for execution. Some months later, the Japanese agreed to follow the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention, and the order to shoot ten for one was lifted.

After about three months, we returned to the main camp. Camp O'Donnell had been closed because of its unlivable conditions. A new main camp had been opened at Cabanatuan. When we went to Cabanatuan, I took a bag of Philippine pipe tobacco, found my commanding officer, Colonel Ernie Miller, and gave it to him. There were tears in his eyes as he accepted it. Colonel Miller was a great soldier and a great man. Unfortunately, after a serious bout with dysentery and after at least two severe beatings by the Japanese, his health was never the same.

After a month at Cabanatuan, I was among 500 prisoners sent on a prison ship to the island of Mindanao to work on a farm in a penal colony about twenty-six miles into the jungle. There I began to have trouble with malaria. At one time in the hospital, lying in bed at a pretty low point in life, I heard the man on the cot next to me singing a song that was familiar. It was one of the songs of the Theta Delta Chi fraternity. His name was Walt. We became acquainted, and two days later I went back to the main compound

Philip S. Brain, Jr., center, with two unidentified soldiers in the Philippines two weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. This photo by Carl Mydans appeared in the December 22, 1941, issue of Life Magazine *and accompanied a story written by Henry Luce.*

Later, as I was returning from the farm detail on a rainy day, someone handed me a note from Walt. I still have it. It says, "Phil, I have just been operated on again this a.m. More bone off the leg. Would like to see you if you feel like coming."

So I went to see him. He'd had a foot amputated and, because of the conditions, the doctors were having trouble with infection. That day they had to take a little more bone off the leg. No anesthetic. Walt exemplified the kind of people the prisoners were. He had undergone a very painful operation and just a few hours later could send a note to me.

I went over that evening to see him. It was raining and the roar of the rain on the tin roofs of the barracks was so deafening that one could hardly hear anything else. The mud was ankle deep. I waited until dark so it was easier to slip past the Japanese guard who stood between the camp and the hospital area. As I neared the mess shack, I noticed that the light was still on over the rice kettles. Then I remembered that the men were not back from the rice fields. This was nine o'clock at night. They had been out in the rice fields since six o'clock in the morning. The only clothes each man wore was a loin cloth. After working in the cold rain all day, their lips would be purple, and their fingers would be shriveled up like dried peas.

For several weeks there had been contact between the guerrilla forces and the men working in the rice fields. There was a good chance that the POWs with the help of the guerrillas could subdue the guards, take over the camp and then head for the jungle. But we knew that meant sure death for every man like Walt who was lying in the hospital and could not be taken into the jungle.

I visited with Walt. As I returned about 10 o'clock, I was thinking about the chances of the guerrillas and the Americans taking over the guards in the rice fields. As I stood in front of the mess shack, I heard a noise above the roar of rain on the roof. Then I saw the light of the diesel locomotive. The rice fields were a few kilometers away and we were always taken to them on flat cars drawn by a small locomotive. I thought the POWs had taken over and wondered what would happen to Walt and the others.

Then as the train pulled to a stop, I began to make sense out of that noise. I realized that the men were singing. They were singing "God Bless America" as loud as they could. I felt proud to be among men like that.

The next morning the Japanese commanding officer came toward the gates of

the camp with some of his men and some wheelbarrows filled with bananas, avocados and some of the other foods we craved. The officer went up to the POW headquarters and asked for the American commanding officer. He saluted him and said, "I salute the soldiers of Bataan." He pointed to the wheelbarrows and turned and walked away.

After twenty months at this camp, we were again put on a prison ship and taken back to the island of Luzon. In August of 1944, as American forces were getting close to the Philippines, the Japanese were moving things out as fast as they could. We were among the last to be shipped out to Japan. This was to be my third prison ship trip. If I had any choice, I would take three death marches to one prison ship trip.

We were loaded onto small freighters in much the same fashion as we were loaded into the railway freight cars. The Japanese stood on girders above and, with bayonets and poles, pushed men back into the corners of the cargo holds as far as they could get them so they could keep loading more and more men. It was so crowded and hot that one did not believe he could continue to breathe or to live.

We picked up room during the course of these voyages. Men shake down much as sugar would in a bag, and we began to find an extra inch here and there. As men died and their bodies were passed over to the gangway and up on deck to be dropped overboard, one gained a little more space. Near the gangway they placed big wooden buckets. These were the latrines for those men close enough to reach them.

Once again there was a saving factor, at least for me. On some nights the Japanese would remove the hatch covers, and one could look out and up at the beautiful stars and the deep blue sky. As I looked up, I wondered whether or not there was any place on the face of the earth that was still clean – whether there was any place where there was still laughter, where there was still love.

And as you look out and up and begin to communicate with a force greater than yourself, you begin to realize what is important in life. One's sense of commitment becomes a sense of something new beginning to develop within one's self. And as the dawn breaks, you feel a new strength in order to face the day a little bit differently.

Then came a night when there was the sound of scurrying up above. The hatch covers were slammed back on, and there was the sound of depth bombs. Then the POWs became a yelling, shrieking and praying mob. All of them wanted the same thing – a direct hit from an American torpedo. They were willing to take their chances on sudden death, or in the open water – anything to be released from the situation they were in. But then there was silence, and nothing happened. Another dawn broke, and probably a deeper despair set in. These men had steeled themselves not to think of freedom, but for just a moment Lady Freedom had looked at them.

We reached Japan in September of 1944 and were sent to the copper mines on the northern end of Honshu. We went down 478 steps into the mine each morning and back up 478 steps each night. There were elevators, but they were used only by the Japanese. When a prisoner was caught between two ore cars, or otherwise injured, it wasn't a matter of putting him on an elevator and taking him up; it was a matter of getting him up those 478 steps with the help of the men around him.

How do you climb 478 steps when you're weak and sick and have spent the day working with a pick and shovel in the copper mine? You lock your mind on something. You recall a poem or a sonnet or a speech you learned as a boy, beginning with "Four score and seven years ago . . . " Or you plan a meal, a Thanksgiving dinner. That was a favorite. You planned, prepared and cooked it, being very careful to select the vegetables, the kind of potatoes and the dressing that appealed to you. By the time you worked at this until you could almost smell the food, you were at the mouth of the mine. And then as you faced the mile walk down the mountain side to the camp, you set your mind back or picked up a new subject. Many were the times a man would go from the bottom of the mine to the top and never remember taking one step in the course of the whole trip.

On August 15, 1945, we were awakened at 4 a.m. and had breakfast as usual. Then they passed around the second meal, always millet, a good chicken food. This meal we would put in our mess kits until noon to eat down in the mine. As usual, we went out to line up and start the march up the mountain.

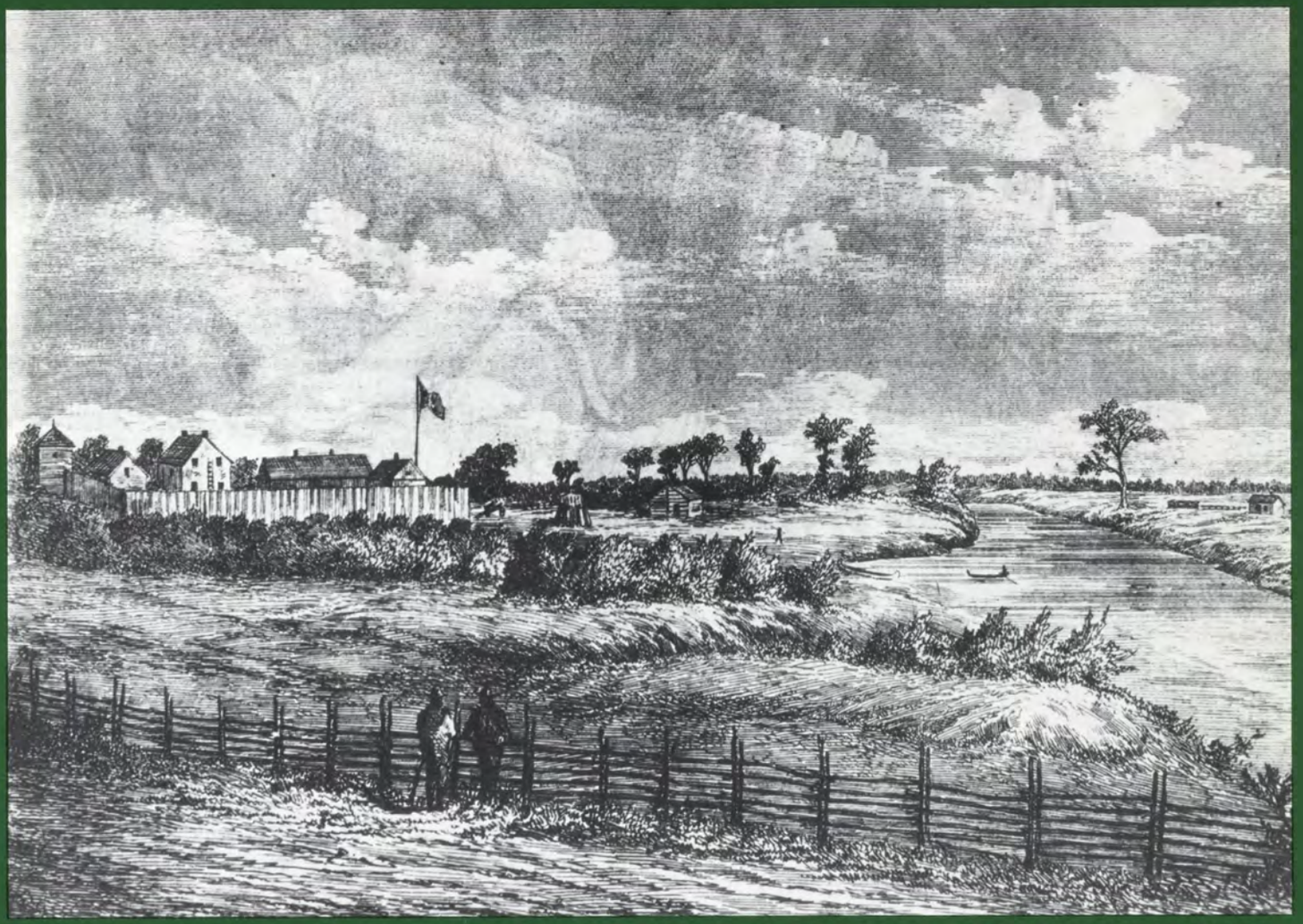
Gone were the regular guards – "Pick Handle Pete," "Popeye," "the Owl," the men who had made life miserable for us. In their place were just kids without any weapons. They said, "No mine today." We went back to the barracks. Later in the day they lined us up again, and the Japanese commanding officer announced that the war was over – that "America has surrendered." We knew this was not true, but we didn't know what the truth was.

After three days, they again lined us up, and the Japanese commanding officer said, "The war is over. America has won. You are going home." We put "POW" on the roof of the barracks. A short while later an American Navy plane buzzed the camp, and the next day B29s parachuted food and medicine. We had never seen planes larger than B17s and those had been lined up at Clark field for the Japanese to destroy on December 8, 1941.

On September 12, 1945, the Japanese told us that we would leave camp the next day and return to American control. In preparation for lunch, I went to the latrine and washed my hands. Suddenly I had the sensation of having left my ring someplace. Then I remembered that a Japanese soldier had taken the ring three and a half years before.

The realization hit me for the first time. The Death March was over, and I was going home.

Philip S. Brain, Jr., is a retired associate general secretary of the Minneapolis YMCA in the areas of personnel, programs, financial management and financial development. He now operates his own financial development consulting firm. He is a past president of the Rotary Club of Minneapolis. His beautifully designed book, illustrated by Benjamin Charles Steele, also a survivor of the Bataan Death March and professor of art emeritus at Eastern Montana College, can be ordered from the Minneapolis Rotary Club, 615 Second Avenue South, #925, Minneapolis, Mn., 55402. Cost is $14.99, including tax and postage.



The Hudson's Bay Company Fort at Pembina, now in North Dakota, from the Canadian Illustrated News, *1871. See the article on the Selkirk Colony, beginning on page 23.*

R.C.H.S.
RAMSEY · COUNTY · HISTORICAL · SOCIETY

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
323 Landmark Center
75 West Fifth Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102