

## Story of Escape of Cpl. Don Meyer From Japs Is Told by Government

The story of the heroism of Cpl. Don E. Meyer, of 21730 So. Figueroa st., Torrance, during and following his escape from Japanese captivity, has at last been told by the War Department.

Young Meyer, awarded the Presidential Citation and the Order of the Purple Heart, was honored in Washington and back home in Torrance following his return from a round-the-world trip after his escape.

Reports that a Japanese prison ship carrying approximately 1800 Americans was torpedoed and presumably sunk last October were given to the War Department by Meyer and the other survivors.

The department, disclosing this said it has asked Japan for the names of the prisoners who might have been aboard such a vessel.

"No response has been received up to this time," a department statement said.

Would Be Second  
The sinking is the second reported involving Jap prison ships carrying Allied prisoners. Last Sept. 7 a ship carrying approximately 750 prisoners was torpedoed off Mindanao in the Philippines. There were only 83 survivors.

The survivors in the latest reported sinking were Master Sgt. Calvin R. Graef, Silver City, N. M.; Sgt. Avery E. Wilbur, Navarre, Wis.; Cpl. Anton E. Cichy of New York Mills, Minn.; Cpl. Meyer of Torrance and Lt. Robert S. Overbeck of Baltimore.

But for the fact that Lt. Overbeck, 28, was a powerful swimmer and able to endure long enough to catch up with an abandoned Jap lifeboat, there possibly would have been no survivors among the Allied prisoners

who were loaded aboard the 5000-ton Jap freighter last October for removal from Manila to Japan.

There were 1800 men, Overbeck said, crammed into an area 9 feet high, 50 feet wide and 90 feet long, divided into three tiers each three feet high. They couldn't even sit erect. The heat was almost unbearable, with the sides of the ship "so hot nobody could touch them as the men lay naked." They got only about two handfuls of rice a day and had so little "dirty water" to drink they couldn't eat that.

"I don't think any of us got hurt in the torpedoing or the explosion," Overbeck said.

The Japs took the two lifeboats aboard as all 300 abandoned ship, but not before cutting ropes leading into the forward hold where 600 prisoners had been moved to lie on loose coal. The ropes were the only means of escape.

"For about 15 seconds there

### Hospital Cases

Among patients admitted to Torrance Memorial hospital during the past week were the following:

Mrs. Genevieve Brown, 1017 Maple ave.

Walter Dallimore, 712 Acacia ave.

Edwin Greenlee, 1632 Arlington ave.

Gloria Jean Harris, 1229 Portola ave.

Mrs. Ruth Moeller, 1852 W. 220th st.

Mrs. Maria Nicoletti, 1527 Torrance blvd.



CPL. DON E. MEYER  
His Story Told

was panic among us, but there were five or six chaplains who prayed fervently and quieted the men. The chaplains were great fellows," Overbeck declared.

Overbeck and others in his hold climbed to the deck where they saw many Japs in the water with Nippon destroyers picking them up.

### Lifeboat Abandoned

When the Japs in one lifeboat were picked up, they threw the fresh water, oars and sails overboard, leaving the craft half-filled with sea water. There was a strong wind, blowing the lifeboat away from the prisoners.

"Thirty-five of us began swimming toward it," Overbeck said. "I swam after it for about a mile as the wind kept driving it away in a fairly heavy sea. I finally caught it. I was the only one to get there."

Overbeck finally reached Sgt. Wilbur and two hours later Cpl. Cichy.

At daylight they picked up Cpl. Meyer and Sgt. Graef. Two days later they reached friendly territory.

## Local Men With 40th Division in Action Against Japs in Philippines

Three local men are with the 40th Infantry Division, comprised partially of two former California National Guard infantry regiments and two field artillery battalions, which is in action in the Philippines.

They are S/Sgt. Roy W. Sullivan, 1919 1/2 Gramercy ave., a squad leader in a heavy weapons company; Pvt. Carl Murray Cozby, a rifleman, and S/Sgt. George S. Mihalak, husband of Mrs. Genevieve Mihalak, 2150 250th st., Lomita.

Thousands of 40th Division assault troops, riding Buffalos and Alligators, stormed ashore in the first wave on D-day, smashed Japanese coast defenses around Lingayen Gulf and seized the important enemy airstrip a few yards inland and the city of Lingayen, capital of Pangasinan province.

Pushing from the sandy beach, head across marshy swamp land,

rice paddies and fish ponds, 40th Division infantrymen spearheaded the overwhelming Allied offensive in the Agno-Calmay River Delta, turning the tables on the Japanese, who in December, 1941 also chose Lingayen Gulf as their invasion route.

These hardened, experienced 40th Division infantrymen, veterans of two years' campaigning and several months' jungle fighting in the Pacific, with other troops under Gen. Douglas MacArthur's command are driving through the narrow central valley toward Manila and the historic Bataan battlefield.

Maj. Gen. Rapp Brush, 34-year-old regular army officer, is commanding the 40th Division in the battle for liberation of Luzon and revenge for the heroic defenders of Bataan and Corregidor—greatest land campaign in the Pacific and second

only to the invasion of Normandy.

The bold strike at Luzon marks the second campaign in the Pacific war in which the 40th Division has participated.

From April to December, 1944, the division was given the assignment of making escape proof the trap which surrounds the Japanese garrison at Rabaul, New Britain, in the Southwest Pacific.

The division is credited with the capture of Cape Hoskins airdrome on New Britain's north coast, a success which extended Allied positions some 25 miles toward Rabaul.

Rifleman of the division killed a number of Japanese in patrol engagements. Many of them were wearing the combat infantryman badge when they waded ashore on Luzon.

Born during the first world

war and nurtured in the last days of fighting in France, the 40th Division was inducted into federal service March 3, 1941, when national guard units from California and Utah reported for training at Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Ranks of the division were augmented in April, 1942, when thousands of troops, trained at Camp Haan, Calif., were assigned to various headquarters units, infantry regiments and field artillery battalions.

These trainees included soldiers from Texas, Oklahoma, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Washington, Montana and Oregon.

Overseas since August, 1942, the division was assigned to the central Pacific, where its troops maintained and improved military defenses in the Hawaiian

islands from September, 1942 to June, 1943.

During the succeeding six months more troops from other states joined the division to undergo advanced training courses in ranger and hand to hand combat, jungle warfare and amphibious operations.

The 40th Division sailed in December, 1943 from Honolulu to an advanced island base in the South Pacific, where it was on duty for four months before undertaking the New Britain campaign.

All members of the Division are entitled to wear the Asiatic-Pacific theater ribbon. Practically all regular infantrymen, including rifleman, machine gunners, mortar and anti-tank gunners, have earned the expert infantryman badge.

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