Cpl. Don E. Meyer Tells Story on Departure Eve

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to believe that a freighter in our convoy of about 13 ships had been sunk. The Japs fired two rounds. At about 5 o'clock, the first torpedo was seen by the top deck workers heading for the stern but missed the ship; another missed the forward part of the ship. The excitement of the prisoners was not great because they couldn't stand what they were going through any longer. About ten minutes later, the last torpedo shot hit dead center; causing the ship to break in half.

Cut Escape Ropes

"It was almost one hour and a half before the ship went down entirely. The Japs abandoned ship as soon as possible leaving us in the holds but first covering the hatches in the other hold and cutting the 40-foot ropes by which we could have escaped later in our hold. They thought it would be impossible for us to get out.

"The excitement wasn't as great as you would think. Some sat on deck smoking cigarets and some looked for water and food. Some immediately dove into the water.

"As we abandoned ship, we swam toward some Jap destroyers that were standing by picking up Jap soldiers and sailors. We were beaten off their ship with long poles, injuring some of the prisoners. The sea was rough and very cold. The wind seemed to go right through you. The next 12 or 14 hours was something to endure, holding on to what pieces of wreckage we could find.

Strength Gave Out

"Another prisoner and I met during the night and stuck together. We sighted what we thought was a little life boat but we were not sure. We swam toward it. Our strength was gone and we couldn't make it. We gave up trying. So we just swam and floated hoping for daylight. Minutes seemed like hours. Day light broke and we saw the life boat about 200 yards off just floating around in the water. There were already three men in it. We swam to it and were helped into the boat. The first thought in our minds was to reach the China coast.

"We were, at this time, off the southern tip of Formosa. The Japs had thrown the oars away and put salt water in the kegs. They threw the sail overboard before leaving the boat but one of the prisoners on the boat saw a box floating by during the night and after pulling it out of the water found it had a sail in it. So we did have a sail and a chance.

Japs Reappear

"As we were preparing the mast, a Jap destroyer came into sight and circled us twice within 300 yards. We thought they would fire on us or ram us. We laid in the boat as if dead. If we had had the sail up, they probably would have finished us off. As soon as the destroyer turned back we immediately started rigging our sail. The wind was very strong and blowing toward the northwest. We sailed toward the setting sun. We were very fortunate in having some canteens which we picked up during the night and tied on our legs. We found a small box of hard tack in the boat. Rationing ourselves a handful of hard tack and about two ounces of water, we started for the west.

"That day we saw no persons nor boats. The wind was very strong and that night we made good time. The next day we made good time, and the third day we reached the coast. The Chinese, seeing our condition, fed us rice and fish and gave us tobacco. We made them understand by drawing pictures. Warm clothes were given us by the Chinese.

Reach Interior

"We walked many miles, rode the sedan chairs and bicycles to reach the interior of China and American forces.

"After giving information of Luzon and staying there for two weeks, we left China for India, Iran, Bagdad, Iraq, Palestine, Cairo, Tripoli, Libya, Casa Blanca, to the Azores, Bermuda and New York and Washington. We were passengers on military planes."

LIFE ON LUZON

Corporal Meyer said that life in the prison camps on Luzon was not much better than that suffered on shipboard.

A typical day, he said, is:

Up at 5 a.m. for roll call, and Japs caring not how many had died during the night—just so they could tally their prisoners.

Breakfast of one-half cup of watery rice at 6 a.m. followed.

The prisoners went to work at 7 a.m., some on the vegetable farms, some on the airports and some gathering wood. If a prisoner was caught eating any of the vegetables, he was given a severe beating, often resulting in broken arms and legs.

At noon, the prisoners were called in for one-half cup of steamed rice with about a spoonful of vegetables added. They returned to work at 1 p.m., and labored under the constant vigil of armed Jap guards, about one to each five men.

At about 6 p.m., they had one-half cup of rice and two spoonsful of okra or eggplant.

They had fish about twice a week, so spoiled that they had to bake it to kill the worms, he said.

The sanitary conditions in camp were so bad, he declared, that at first there were not enough well men to bury the prisoners who died from day to day, often by the scores.

Those in prime physical condition survived, the weaker died. He said that he was able to survive only because he escaped any of the serious cases of tropical disease.

Corporal Meyer was captured on Bataan, and spent nearly three years in Japanese prison camps until his escape from the sinking ship. Most of the time was spent at Cabanatuan.

He will be given the choice of any of the schools of instruction which he desires to enter, and said that he probably will accept refrigeration school.

Lt. Newton Sleeth Is Reported as Missing in Action

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school, Lt. Sleeth advanced through his training in the Army Air Forces, receiving silver wings of a pilot and commission as a Second Lieutenant at La Junta Army Air Field on June 27, 1944. While in high school, he took an active part in track and baseball. Because of Lt. Sleeth's pluck and resourcefulness, his family and many friends in Torrance are confident that he will survive the ill-fated mission, and are anxiously awaiting further word.

Lt. Sleeth's engagement to Miss Shirley Elaine Thompson, 1515 Acacia ave., was announced Dec. 28, 1944. Miss Thompson is a senior at Torrance high school, and the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Carl W. Bower.

The Sleeths have an older son, First Lt. Robert S. Sleeth, Jr., with Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose's Third Armored Division attached to the First U. S. Army. It was the Third Armored Division which was the first outfit to enter Cologne, and has spearheaded many of the outstanding attacks on the Western Front. He has been overseas 18 months, and entered the Army three years ago.

New Ruling on Married Couples' Incomes Given

In a new ruling the Bureau of Internal Revenue ruled that married couples in California need not file declarations of estimated income tax for 1945 unless their income this year will exceed $10,000 from salaries subject to withholding, or their outside income, that is not subject to withholding, will exceed $200.

Collector of Internal Revenue Harry C. Westover said that an additional exemption of $500 will be allowed for each dependent.

Westover explained that the ruling is in recognition of California's community property law and in effect merely doubles the requirements of single persons who must file estimates by March 15, if their salaries will exceed $5000, plus $500 for each dependent, or if they will have more than $100 in income other than salaries.

Child Stealing Charges Are Dismissed

Charges of child-stealing against Mrs. Lucy Perez, 27, of 404 Joy st., Corona, were dismissed by Judge Frank Carroll in Gardena Justice Court Tuesday, on motion of Deputy District Attorney Albert Lucas.

Mrs. Perez had been accused of holding the 11-months-old son of her brother, Pvt. Manuel D. Montoya, who is stationed at an army base in Turlock. Mrs. Perez explained, however, that she was merely keeping the baby because her sister-in-law, Mrs. Peggy Montoya, 2235 203rd st., Torrance, refused to pay her $10 a week promised her since last June for the baby's care.

J. A. BARRINGTON . . . in Navy R. O. T. C., at University of California, at Berkeley, spent last week with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Barrington here.

Big Blast at Shell Refinery Kills One Man

One man was killed and several suffered minor injuries in an explosion that rocked the Shell Oil Co.'s high-octane refinery at Wilmington ave. and Dominguez st. just east of Torrance early Tuesday setting off a fire that threatened huge losses to equipment. The blast was felt four and a half miles away.

James A. Gregory, 346 West 46th st., Los Angeles, succumbed to injuries in a Long Beach hospital. Other workers were given first aid at the plant.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported it made a "routine investigation" of the mysterious explosion, but released no further information.

Federal Bureau of Investigation agents were called to the scene before the flames were under control, and immediately withheld all information, turning away sheriff's deputies and state highway patrol cars at the plant's gates. Observers said the company's firefighting units battled the flames for 40 minutes, asking for no aid from city or county units.

P.T.A. Board Due to Make Annual Report

Mrs. H. W. Nansel, president of the Orange Street P. T. A. reminds the members of the executive board of the association that annual reports are due this month.

With this important work at hand, the group will meet in session at the home of Mrs. William Schildmeyer on 262nd st. immediately following the galloping breakfast at 11 o'clock Tuesday, March 13.

Orange Street P. T. A. will be hosts to the members of the Lomita-San Pedro P. T. A. Council on Friday, March 23, followed by the serving of luncheon.

A paper drive for March 21 by the different class rooms at Orange street school deserves the support of all Lomita folk.

Watch Dogs Kept On Premises of Waste Products Co.

Warning to all loitering in the neighborhood of 1230 Torrance blvd. that two retired Army dogs will be loose within the confines of the property was given this week by A. R. Kayne, warehouse superintendent of Pacific Waste Products Co.

Kayne said that the premises had been entered twice during last week, and that several items had been stolen.

He said that apparently it was the work of youths, and that he sought and received police permission to keep the two watch dogs on the property at night.

George Coxe Is Arrested for Automobile Theft

George Hugh Coxe, 18, Lomita was arrested in Inglewood, on Sunday, March 4, charged with grand theft, auto. Coxe was arrested in a car stolen from the National Supply Co.'s parking lot.

He was arraigned and will have his preliminary before City Judge Otto B. Willett on Wednesday, March 14.

Coxe has been arrested before on the same charge it was said, and was out on bail from the San Pedro police custody.

MICHIGAN PICNIC

Michigan State Society "Wolverines" will gather for their all day out-door reunion Saturday, March 17, at Sycamore Grove park, Los Angeles.

Roberts Cleared Of Crash Death Blame by Navy

A United States Naval investigation into the death of Mrs. John Livingston, wife of Lt. Com. John Livingston, stationed at Port Hueneme, in an automobile accident March 1 near Oxnard, has been closed, and no blame was placed on Benjamin W. Roberts, GM 3/c, husband of Emma Quaggin Roberts, of Torrance, who was driving the other car involved in the fatal crash.

Roberts, it was said, suffered painful chest injuries and Commander Livingston has a severe case of shock.

Reports state that Roberts and E. M. Hofteig, MMM 1/c, had stopped at a restaurant for a sandwich and glass of milk. They were driving out of the driveway when hit head on by the Livingston car. Roberts' car was a complete wreck. Mrs. Roberts went to scene of the accident and the hospital immediately upon report of the accident.

Woman Dies at Army Hospital After Injury

As a result of a traffic accident Pocahontas Quarles, 27-year-old dietician of 15613 South Western ave., Gardena, died Feb. 28, in Torrance Army hospital, where she was taken for emergency treatment after the automobile which she was driving crashed into the side of a westbound Santa Fe freight engine.

Deputy sheriffs said she was apparently blinded by the rain and did not see the train as it was crossing the intersection at Figueroa street, and Santa Fe avenue near Gardena.

Petty Back on Duty After War Injuries Heal

Having recovered at this United States Army hospital from shrapnel wounds received near Guenfall, Germany, Private First Class James F. Petty, 20, of 22227 South Vermont st., Torrance, Calif., has been released for return to duty. While at this hospital he received expert medical care, followed by a period of convalescence.

Member of an infantry unit, he entered the Army on August 4, 1943. His mother, Mrs. Ethel Petty, resides at the above address.

CARL LESTER ADAMS, 21, has been advanced to Staff Sergeant, according to word this week to his mother, Mrs. T. J. Adams, of 1448 Post ave. Serving with an infantry division in Germany, Adams had been in England, France and Belgium before leaving for his present base.

KENNETH A. PERKIN . . . an apprentice seaman, attending Officers' Training School at College of the Pacific, Stockton, spent a recent leave with his mother, Mrs. Henry Perkin, who is visiting at Vallejo.

THOMAS J. ADAMS, Jr., . . . a technical sergeant, serving with an ordnance division, is stationed in Holland, it is reported. A son of Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Adams of 1448 Post ave., he has three brothers in service.