The Chefoo School Emblem

The emblem is a Chinese dragon, which represents Chefoo's position by the sea, with a Chinese seal which reads "Chefoo's Old Scholar's Association".

BIRDS IN THE FOWLER'S NET

The Story of a Japanese Internment Camp

By J. W. G. Bruce

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“As a bird out of the fowler's net escapes away, so my soul set free." Psalm 124 v.7

On the southern edge of the Gulf of Chihli in the Yellow Sea, about five hundred miles north of Shanghai, lies the small port of Chefoo in the province of Shantung[1]. On the rising ground looking out across a sleepy, sun-kissed bay, there stood a group of rambling, ivy-covered, neo-Gothic buildings erected in 1896 by Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission (C.I.M.). For nearly fifty years these gracious, elegant, mellowing buildings were the home of a great English boarding school - the Chefoo School - where children of missionaries from all over China and children of other foreign residents received a Bible-oriented, English 'public school' education up to Oxford Certificate level. Established in 1881, the School survived the Boxer Rebellion, plague, tropical diseases, bandits and piracy on the China seas, but its greatest test came in the nineteen forties. My father, nicknamed 'Pa' Bruce, was Headmaster from 1930-1945 and we lived in our own wing of the main Boys School building.

For five years the tide of war had been drawing closer. In February 1938, during the undeclared Sino-Japanese War, invading Japanese gunboats entered the Chefoo harbour. Stocky little soldiers in olive green uniforms and heavy boots strutted through the city. Sandbag pillboxes were erected on street and beach and hilltop. At times, trucks crammed with armed Japanese troops roared past the school gates to do battle with Chinese guerillas in the mountains. Increasing numbers of children were unable to get home for the holidays because of widespread fighting between Chinese and Japanese forces and difficulties of communication.

Then, during the Christmas holidays of 1941, the blow fell. On December 7th, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour and declared war on the United States and Britain. Now we were no longer neutral spectators in a Sino-Japanese war. We were 'enemy aliens'. That evening we listened for the last time to a suave unruffled English voice announcing over the air:

> "This is London calling in the overseas service of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Here is the news…."

The next morning a motor cycle-and-sidecar roared through the great iron gates of our walled compound and rumbled up to our front door. A grim-faced Japanese officer dismounted, banged on the door and demanded the Headmaster. "You come!" he ordered curtly. Dad remained calm. Quickly he packed a small suitcase, helped by our frightened Chinese servant. He put on a thick windbreaker and his tweed cap, climbed into the sidecar and was driven off into captivity. Mother tried hard to stifle her sobs and encouraged my sister and I to join her in singing a popular chorus:

> "God is still on the throne
> And He will remember His own
> His promise is true
> He will not forget you
> God is still on the throne"

Japanese guards and/or Chinese sentries from puppet or quisling forces were placed at the main gates and every wireless in the compound was confiscated. The English-language

[1] Chefoo is now known as Yantai.

Chefoo Daily News ceased publication and our weekly copies of London Calling and the Illustrated London News never arrived again.

I was fifteen years old and, foolishly, I tried out a practical joke on one of the 'puppet' sentries who was wandering around near our house by endeavoring to explain to him that there was a secret radio hidden in a hole in the garden. Luckily for us all, my limited Chinese vocabulary was inadequate for the task and he could not - or would not - understand my meaning! With typical schoolboy jingoistic bravado I also informed him that British soldiers would one day come and kick out the Japanese! That idea, though wishful thinking, was perhaps not quite so fantastic then as it seems today. In those days, people still talked about the Boxer Rebellion, and I had read exciting accounts of how British and Allied forces had captured Taku forts at Tientsin and advanced to the rescue of the Peking Legations[2].

Moreover, a few miles up the coast was Weihaiwei, the former British naval base[3]. And the Royal Lancashire Regiment patrolled the border to prevent the locals shifting the boundary stones so as to place their village under British protection! Weihaiwei had been restored to China in 1923, but the Royal Navy continued to be an occasional visitor to Chefoo in the twenties and thirties. including the aircraft carrier 'Eagle', the county cruiser 'Devonshire' and destroyers such as H.M.S. Danae. Cricket matches were played, the Navy v. the Port, in which Dad, wearing his psychedelic 'I Zingan' colours, went in first and sometimes scored centuries.

In 1935, when Chinese pirates captured the S.S. Tungchow, which was carrying seventy Chefoo children returning from their holidays, the cruiser 'Suffolk', the sloop 'Sandwich' and the aircraft carrier 'Hermes' all joined in the pirate hunt. Planes from the 'Hermes' located the ship, the pirates fled and H.M.S. Dainty escorted the Tungchow into Hong Kong. We sang this verse in one of our school songs:

> "In nineteen hundred and thirty five
> The pirates captured us alive
> But British planes scared off the hive
> Chefoo, Chefoo for ever!"

And only two years before, during our Christmas holidays, I'd watched in delight as the Seaforth Highlanders paraded in Shanghai's 'International Concession' to the skirl of the pipes.

Against this background, the idea of British troops or the Royal Navy coming to our rescue seemed far from impossible. Cut off from all hard news, the reality of what had actually happened to Singapore and Hong Kong, those bastions of British power in the Far East, was slow to penetrate. Most of the staff thought the war wouldn't last long and, in any case, the British Government would surely arrange our repatriation. They'd never allow a hundred British children to spend the war in a civil internment camp!

From now on we were forbidden by the Japanese to leave our School compound unless

[2] In those days, the Japanese were our allies against the Chinese Empress Dowager and took part in the relief expedition

[3] In the early twenties, the Governor, General Brown, had a daughter at Chefoo Peggy, his daughter, married Lieut. Elringion of the Royal Lancashire Regt.. and now lives in Santa Fe, U.S.A

wearing large white numbered armbands with a huge black 'B' for Britain or 'A' for America. Some American children, when no one was watching, turned their armbands upside down, chalked out the black crosspiece and - hey presto - they now wore 'V for Victory' armbands

Since the School was now cut off from Mission H.Q. in Shanghai and all its financial resources, food rationing was introduced and the compound's large staff of Chinese servants. cooks, 'table boys', cleaners. gardeners, groundsmen, boatmen, coolies, 'amahs', etc., were drastically reduced. We children took on some of the relevant chores with help and supervision from our teachers. We laid tables, cut bread, made beds...

The 'Wardrobe Department', under a kindly, courageous and enterprising Australian lady, Mrs. Beatrice Lack, had the formidable task of clothing a schoolful of growing boys, in extremes of both heat and cold. at a time when imports from England had ceased. Supplies from Shanghai now ceased too. The departing British Consul donated some of his old clothing: his faded 'gardening suit', remade inside out, was used by several senior boys and was still in active service at the end of the war!

Meantime, Dad and half a dozen other leading British residents of the port had been imprisoned under strict guard at the Astor House Hotel, a substantial two-storey block fronting the 'bund'. (The bund was a wide promenade which ran for several miles along the seafront from Consular Hill via the Chefoo Club and St. Andrew's Church[4] on towards the area of the C.I.M. compound.) A high iron railing, topped with spikes, separated the Hotel from the bund, and at a gate in the railings stood an armed Japanese guard, symbolizing the hotel's status as a temporary prison.

All the imprisoned group were known to have assembled at the British Consulate on the King's birthday to drink a loyal toast. The suspicious Japanese wondered what else they'd been up to and if they'd been collecting and passing on intelligence information to the British Government. Clearly these Western devils had to be closely interrogated.

After the war, Dad wrote a description of one of these interrogation sessions:

> "On the table lay a big thick cudgel. I was asked why I had gone both to Japan and to England in recent years. The idea was that there must have been some 'Report' on what I had seen in Japan given to the British Government. I said that there'd been none at all.
>
> 'Why then did you go back to England?'...
>
> I said, 'You Japanese are noted for the way you love children. Can't you give us credit for doing the same? My three eldest children are in England!..."

All this happened during the Christmas holidays, when I would occasionally cycle or rickshaw-ride into town to visit the shops or to get a haircut at the Chefoo Club. One wet and stormy day, I was cycling along the bund. It was high tide and the foam-capped breakers were hurling themselves against the bund, sometimes sending heavy sprays lashing across the deserted road, now empty, since most walkers, cyclists or rickshaw-coolies had sensibly chosen

[4] St Andrew's is now demolished

other routes or stayed indoors. I myself kept to the inner edge of the bund, sometimes slowing then pedalling furiously, like a racing driver, to escape being soaked by the next burst of spray.

As I cycled past the Astor House Hotel, I noticed that the sentry had disappeared, obviously sheltering from the rain and spray. Curious about my father's prison, I did a U-turn, dismounted and wheeled my bike up to the tall iron railings. I looked up at the broad balconies on the second storey with their iron balustrades. With breath-taking suddenness an idea flashed through my mind. I looked quickly all round. There was no one in sight. I leaned my bike against the railings and gripped them firmly. Slight and agile at fifteen it was only seconds before I was standing on the saddle of my bike. Confidently, I looked up. No problem Eagerly, I grasped the spikes which topped the railings and stepped up on to the top horizontal, reaching up again to grab the balustrade of the balcony. A moment later I was swinging a leg over. Excitedly, I walked to the windows and saw British faces. I tapped on the pane.

Dad appeared, looking tiny (he was 5' 4") at the side of the tall figure of Mr. Bobs MacMullan, a local businessman. We smiled at each other and shouted greetings through the firmly-sealed windows. I could hardly hear what he was saying, but soon it became clear he was worried lest a sentry should appear. I took the hint gladly, conscious of the same worry, waved a cheerful farewell and quickly descended by the same route. I wheeled the bike away, mounted, and in seconds was clear of the danger zone, breathing a sigh of relief, but chuckling to myself with school-boyish glee over the success of this totally unpremeditated exploit.

I told my mother, whose instinctive alarm at the potential danger was overshadowed by her spontaneous pleasure in the thought that I'd actually seen Dad and that he was cheerful and well. A few days later a letter to Mother, from Dad, was smuggled out of the 'prison'. There was a special message for me:

> "Thank you for coming to see me. I am proud of the courage and initiative you showed. Well done. But if you were caught there'd be consequences for us as well as you. So don't try it again. It's not worth the risk..."

Six weeks later all but one of the prisoners were released. The exception was the tall, blunt, ultra-British Mr. MacMullan, who seldom bothered to conceal his contempt for the Japanese. He was kept in more than one prison in Chefoo and elsewhere and died in captivity. Evidence which emerged later pointed towards poison as the cause of death.

The Japanese Army coveted our compound as a military base and soon they began a gradual takeover. The School hospital and various staff residences were commandeered. A block of stables was built across our tennis courts and gardens. In open spaces around the buildings Japanese soldiers practised their bayonet charges, ending with a blood-curdling 'Yah!' as an imaginary enemy received his coup de grace. Our cricket field was taken over for Japanese Army baseball matches.

On one occasion we senior boys, forced to abandon our game of cricket, were disconsolately watching a Japanese team practise their baseball. Idly, I picked up a stone and suddenly pretended to hurl it at the nearest player. He shied away and then swore at me in Japanese. A few minutes later, undeterred, I repeated this piece of cheeky bravado. The Jap let out a roar of fury and signalled to the other players. Terrified, I took to my heels and ran. Thirty

yards off I paused and looked back. The whole team had gathered in an angry group. The Captain took a step forward and beckoned imperiously.

"You cumma heah!" he shouted in broken English.

From the safety of my thirty yards advantage I yelled back in a shrill, derisive, schoolboy imitation:

"You cumma heah!!"

With a bellow of rage, the entire team started in pursuit. Again, I fled for my life. I dashed through some gardens, along a narrow passageway between outbuildings, rounded a corner, shinned up the low wall of another outbuilding in the servant's quarters and lay flat on the roof until I was sure that any hue-and-cry had died away. Then, still shaken, I climbed into School through a dormitory window and made my way home through an upper door into our private wing.

Eventually our main block of School classrooms was also commandeered and so, to our delight, lessons stopped. Finally, we were given forty eight hours notice that we were to be interned in another area of the port, Temple Hill. I wandered around the School for the last time in a sad farewell to the quad, the squash courts, the cricket field and the great School Hall. I looked at the engraved names of old boys killed in the First World War, plus some very new additions of the Second World War. I looked at the School crest and the Latin mottoes, IN DEO FIDIMUS and NIHIL ABSQUE LABORE, and the great silver shields and cups. All this was now to be abandoned to the enemy.

At home, in our private wing, there was the same sense of impending loss. Dad had been in China since 1911, when the Chinese Empire collapsed and Sun Yat-sen's Republic was born. The treasures of a lifetime, furniture and pictures and scrolls, china and silver, lovingly preserved ornaments and most of our books and clothes, were now to be left behind. We would never see any of them again. Yet I never heard either of my parents utter the slightest word of regret or complaint. Their faith in a loving and caring Providence was total. Dad said confidently, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God..." (Romans ch. 8 v.28)

There were others, however, who found it hard to believe that the Almighty would allow the heathen to expel us from our God-given heritage. One missionary refused to pack a suitcase, confident to the end that God would intervene. Others had to do his packing!

But for us children it was very exciting. How wonderful to have a mid-term reprieve from the grind of lessons and preps! What fun too to take a parcel of unwanted 'junk' up the nearby 'Mule Road' and bargain it away to Chinese shopkeepers or passers-by for a few dollars. And ahead lay a new adventure!

November 5th, 1942 was 'The Day'. We were allowed two suitcases each for personal belongings. A fleet of carts and rickshaws and some heavy lorries arrived. We loaded them with boxes and bundles, with bedding rolls, blankets, mattresses, pots and pans, school and household equipment. Then we all piled in too. The long crocodile of carts and rickshaws

wound its way past the Japanese sentry-post, on into the centre of town, on through the narrow streets of the Chinese city where shopkeepers, street hawkers, water-coolies and beggars all stared in wide-eyed amazement and listened spell-bound as the long convoy of 'foreign devil' children burst into melody, singing a cheerful, spirited chorus based on Psalm 46, composed not long before by the School's Director of Music, Mr. Stanley Houghton[5].

"God is our Refuge; our Refuge and our Strength
In trouble, in trouble, a very present help
Therefore will not we fear
Therefore will not we fear
The Lord of Hosts is with us
The Lord of Hosts is with us
The God of Jacob is our Refuge"

At Temple Hill, the School was dumped down in two small internment 'camps': one for the Boys School and one for the Girls School. There was a third camp for all other British residents in the port. In the Boys Camp we occupied three large houses formerly owned by the American Presbyterian Mission. Homes designed for an ordinary-sized family now had about sixty children, plus adults, crammed into them like sardines in a tin. Mattresses were placed on the floor or on boxes and every attic, garage or outhouse became a makeshift dormitory. Even a linen cupboard was slept in!

On the day of arrival some of the ladies in the Boys Camp discovered that we were desperately short of electric light bulbs Two of us senior boys had brought our bikes with us, so we were given a suitcase and hurriedly sent back on a mission to collect some precious light bulbs from the empty buildings before it was too late. These were to be our last moments of lawful freedom for nearly three years and our last bike ride till the war was over.

We pedalled fast and furiously all the way across town, back to the abandoned school buildings, uncertain as to whether we'd be intercepted and ordered back to camp, uncertain as to what we'd find in the old compound. The sentries at the main gate looked astonished as we rode back into the compound, but they said nothing and made no move to stop us. The huge Boys School building stood empty and silent. The Japs hadn't yet begun to move in. Good. Uninterrupted we went from room to room through the deserted building unscrewing light bulbs and placing them in our suitcase.

Our task completed, my mind hit upon one last exploit, a farewell gesture. One frontage of the old familiar building faced the sports field, divided from the enclosed inner quadrangle by an imposing archway. Above the archway was a tall tower which reared into the air above roof level like the tower of a fairy-tale castle, ending as a steeply-sloping roof topped by a weathercock Climbing the weathercock was a dangerous feat accomplished only rarely in the School's history and, of course, strictly prohibited. As a school prefect I had been committed to upholding and enforcing such rules. But now that the school had departed and the building had become, by force majeure, enemy territory, I reasoned that I was free from any such obligations. With the aid of a lightning conductor I shinned up on to the roof and began the difficult crawl up the final steep triangular face to the weathercock. Triumphant, I scratched a faint JB on the figurehead before sliding and climbing downwards to join my companion.

[5] Mr. Houghton later became the Headmaster of the post-war Chefoo School at Kuling, West China

As we cycled towards the main gate the sentry stepped forward and barred the way. He pointed at the suitcase:

"Shemor tsi lito?" (What's in there) he demanded.

Robin Hoyte, my companion, remained calm and unflustered. "Dungshi," (Things) he replied innocently.

The sentry hesitated, uncertain as to whether he should insist on inspecting the contents. He decided not to interfere, stepped back and waved us through the handsome iron gates. We rode away.

We were the last two Chefusians to see that fine old building with its romantic ivy-covered walls and fifty years of memories of schoolboy traditions and pranks. After the war it was looted and burnt and reduced to a shell. Later the ruins were demolished. The remaining buildings, indeed, the whole compound and a substantial area around it, are now part of a large Chinese naval base[6].

Food supplies were sent into camp by the Japanese and our brave teachers and matrons now had the stupendous task of feeding well over a hundred children without any domestic assistance. The Chinese cooks, table-boys, coolies, washing amahs, sewing amahs, gardeners, groundsmen, punkah-wallahs et al who had been so much a part of our life on the School compound were now a thing of the past. Teams of gallant ladies coped magnificently with the catering. Older children helped with vegetables, dish washing, sweeping, dusting, wood chopping, and water carrying and somehow the whole school, with children aged from six to sixteen, was fed, clothed and kept happily occupied.

Some of our old school servants used to smuggle things over the wall to us when the guards were having their meals. Through one of these servants two small pigs were smuggled into camp. At first they were dosed with aspirin to prevent them squealing but later the guards became accustomed to their presence. When our first prison camp Chnstmas arrived, Mr. Olsen, an elderly Australian who had once worked in the outback, skilfully and rapidly administered the coup de grace to one of the pigs, with helpers sitting on it. The resulting eighty pounds of meat gave us all a splendid Christmas dinner and provided other nourishing meals during that winter.

Gradually each house settled into its new, self-help routine. Lessons began again on a part-time basis We sat on the 'beds' in some of the dormitories and wrote in pencil, with exercise books on our knees. At other times, out in the small garden area, there was 'Prisoners Base', stalking, Red Indians-and-Settlers, Scouting and even an abridged form of golf! There were also vegetable gardens, chicken runs and goats. We had books to read, gramaphone records to listen to concerts to improvise, religious services and Bible classes to attend. And at intervals, sisters were escorted under guard for a visit to their brothers at the Boys Camp (or vice-versa), providing a welcome opportunity for communication with girlfriends.

[6] The Girls School, a Memorial Hall, the Co-ed' (the co-tuitional classroom block), the Hospital and several other houses still survive

Some of the Staff grew beards during that first year of Internment, thus providing the theme for a satirical song at one end-of-term 'concert'. There was one verse for each beard followed by the chorus:

"They're always in the way
The goats eat them for hay
The have long spikes like cactus plants
Which lengthen every day"

There was also the 'Temple Hill Tatler', a weekly magazine written and edited by a group of senior boys. There were articles such as 'The Joys of Sweeping' or 'The Pleasures of Chopping Wood'; there were accounts of concerts and other special events and there was some light verse. I was one of three co-editors and, among other things, wrote a serial story entitled 'What the Tatler saw by Moonlight'. This was an imaginary account of how four senior boys escaped from the camp, returned to the Old School and there had narrow escapes and exciting adventures in which they outwitted and outfought the Japanese soldiery!

It was frustrating to me that separated brothers and sisters were allowed regular visits to each other's camps, but that the rest of us were confined without any such outings. So one day I decided to have an unofficial outing of my own. A friend and I climbed over the wall and headed first for the Business Community's Camp and then for the Girls Camp. The puppet sentnes at the latter took no notice. After all, we were entering~ not leaving, the camp which they were guarding or perhaps our confident smiles suggested that this was some permitted visit of which they hadn't been informed. But our pleasant chat, surrounded by a group of admiring girls, was rudely interrupted by the appearance of an angry master. Quivenng with rage he ordered us to return to our camp forthwith. We complied.

Hardly had we left the Girls Camp before we encountered a second angry face, that of a Japanese officer. Scowling fiercely he was obviously asking (in Japanese) what the devil we were doing outside our Camp! Smiling happily we pointed in the direction of our own camp and informed him innocently (in English) that we were heading back to our own camp! Baffled by the language barrier, he contented himself with angry mutterings and then he too pointed fiercely in the direction of our own camp. Smiling and nodding we hastened to comply On arrival back, we walked boldly past our own astonished sentry and returned to our respective 'dorms'. Later I wrote an account of this adventure for the Tatler, in the third person and with a few details changed, but the identity of the unnamed character soon leaked out and I received a curt but surprisingly mild reprimand from Dad.

The Tatler was read out at evening supper, at irregular intervals, by one of the co-editors. On other evenings Dad read aloud to the house a classic thriller. Rider Haggard's 'King Solomon's Mines' was one. Another was John Buchan's deer-stalking adventure 'John Macnab', illustrated by a splendid map drawn by the English Master, Mr. Gordon Martin[7].

Every day we lined up outside for Roll Call and on the command "Bango!" we

[7] Mr Martin was a scholar of Balliol College, Oxford. He was the last Headmaster of the post-war, China-based Chefoo' School in its remote fastness in Kuling, West China, until expelled by the Communisis in 1950

numbered off in Japanese.

'Ichi-Ni-San-Shi-Go-Roku-Shichi-Hachi-Kiu-Chiu... etc"[8]

On one memorable occasion, the first four boys to number off improvised a hilarious rhyming variation on the above:

"Itchy Knee
Scratchy Flea"

The half-stifled explosions of laughter which followed almost disrupted the whole Roll Call!

'Inspector' Kosaka, our dignified, diminutive Police Commandant was a godsend. He was a Western-educated, Christian Japanese who was determined to give us the best possible treatment in his power. With his immaculate turn out, neat little moustache and impeccable courtesy and kindliness, he was (perhaps consciously) the very image of an old-fashioned British Officer-and-Gentleman. No detail of our food, sanitation or welfare was too small to receive his full and careful attention: at the back of our outhouse-dormitory were two enormous squat-shaped “gangs” (jars) big enough to hold Ali Baba and half-a-dozen of his forty thieves! In these were emptied all the urine from the house's chamber pots. essential receptacles in a world where lavatories were few and far between. For the sake of hygiene, as an anti-fly measure, Dad asked for two wooden covers for these 'jars'. Kosaka personally accompanied Dad on a visit of inspection to this insalubrious area, endorsed the idea and gave the appropriate instructions. We got our lids.

When the summer came, some of us carried our mattresses out into the open each evening and slept in the cool, under the stars. For months now we had been imprisoned inside our small camp area and soon a great longing came over me to escape, just for a brief moment, into the nearby hills. Nostalgically I recalled the 'good old days' of freedom, when we'd been able to walk and climb and run in the mountains, scramble up rocky faces and visit 'The Boundary Shrine' or 'The Bamboo Temple'. And so one night I waited till all the lights in our camp were out and all my fellow sleepers-in-the-open were dead to the world. Then I quietly dressed, with one ear cocked for the footsteps of the nightly police patrols. I tiptoed to the wall at the back of the camp, climbed up and dropped silently into the shadows on the other side.

The camp was on the lower slopes of a scrubby hill and I began to walk upwards, trembling with excitement. I was ten yards from the walls when there was a sudden burst of voices and the lights from a nearby house caught me in full glare. For a second I was a mesmerized rabbit, paralysed with fright. Then I dropped to the ground and lay flat, heart thumping as if driven by a hundred pistons, waiting for the shout that would show I'd been seen by an angry policeman. Nothing happened. Slowly I recovered my nerve and crawled upwards on my belly till the pool of light had gone. Upright once more I pressed on till I breasted a low bank and came out on a wide road of hard-packed earth To the right the road wound downwards, presumably leading to the city. To the left I could see the dark outline of a low range of hills. I turned left and walked boldly and openly on the road There didn't seem to be

[8] Numbering one to ten

much alternative. If I was seen I was seen. My confidence had returned.

A solitary Chinese pedestrian appeared on the road. 'What's he doing,' I wondered, 'on this lonely road so late at night[9]' Doubtless he was thinking the same 'Surely he must know,' I reasoned 'that all white faces are now imprisoned[9,9] 'What (he would ask himself) is this foreign devil boy doing here[9,' There was no time to reason further And to run would certainly arouse suspicion. I walked on boldly, head held high. He ignored me. 'Will he report me?' was my next thought. 'Perhaps, like so many Chinese peasants, he will Just mind his own business and be deaf, blind and dumb about things outside his ken.' I shrugged the problem aside. I would hope for the best. There'd be no tuming back.

Soon the road curved to the left. I abandoned it and pressed onwards and upwards, through bush and scrub. Higher and higher I climbed. Above me, topping the summit of a small hill. I spotted a sandbagged 'blockhouse' and chose it for my destination. Was it a Japanese look-out post[9] Undoubtedly. Would it be manned at night? That was the crucial question. There was no sound, no movement as I climbed cautiously and approached stealthily. I took no chances. Warily I circled the blockhouse There was still no sight or sound of a living soul. I tiptoed forward and peeped inside. It was empty

Happily, I explored the interior Then I ensconced myself comfortably on a pile of sandbags and gazed downwards at the dotted lights and the curve of the bay, savouring to the full this brief but delicious taste of liberty. Mad dreams of enlisting with the Chinese guerillas or trekking overland to Chungking, in Free China, or escaping home to England flitted through my mind. But I knew these were only crazy fantasies. Most of the local guerillas, assuming I could find them, were communists hostile to the 'foreign devils' I had no food, no money and no map and Chungking was nearly a thousand miles away. Nor could I bear the thought of the worry and grief it would inflict on my parents if I were to disappear on such a forlorn attempt. In any case surely the war would be over soon and we'd be able to go back to our compound?

Reluctantly, I put aside dreams of escape. I took a last longing look over the bay, remembering nostalgically the fabulous launch trips of the past to nearby islands or longer steamer trips to Weihaiwei, Tientsin and Shanghai, and exulted one last time in my temporary truancy. Then, resignedly, I stood up and retraced my steps, without incident, without seeing another soul, back to camp and a soundless return to my bed.

After nearly a year we were ordered to pack once again, this time to be moved to the larger Weihsien Civilian Internment Camp about two hundred miles inland. We were herded down to the jetty and climbed the gangway of a small coastal steamer. No food was being provided for the journey, so we had been allowed to place a special order for fresh loaves with a local Chinese baker. But at sailing time the loaves hadn't arrived! The ship's siren sounded. We heard the rumble of the anchor being pulled up, then the throb of the engines. Slowly we steamed out into the harbour. But the baker didn't let us down. Arriving too late, he hired a launch and chased us out into the bay and his cargo of oven-fresh loaves was swung aboard just in time.

The whole school was crammed into the darkness of the ship's hold, its portholes

[9] In fact there were still one or two German, Italian and Russian families who remained untouched

covered with thick sacking as a precaution against being spotted by American destroyers. A makeshift curtain divided the hold in two, boys one side, girls the other. We lay head to toe on the hard surface and slept, heedless of the scurrying of rats. Two mornings later we disembarked at the port of Tsingtao and hauled our belongings across to the Railway Station. For about eighty miles, crowded closely together like cattle, we rattled through a Chinese countryside of brown-and-yellow wheat fields, green river banks and walled villages to the city of Weihsien. There we jumped on to lorries, grasping our personal clutter of suitcases, bundles and baskets for the last few dusty miles to the Camp.

Weihsien Civilian Interment Camp, a former American Mission compound, sprang into view. We saw a high-walled 'campus' measuring about 200 by 150 yards overall, with a scattering of trees, a red-roofed church, a few large buildings and street upon street of low barrack-like 'lines'. High watchtowers, manned by armed sentries, were dotted around the walls and the whole enclosure was surrounded by barbed wire. We were driven through a large Chinese gateway decorated with Chinese 'characters' spelling out the ironic message “COURTYARD OF THE HAPPY WAY”.

There were about twelve hundred internees in the camp, from Peking, Tientsin and Tsingtao. They lined the streets and cheered as our Chefoo contingent, about three hundred strong, arrived. It was late summer and many of the men were bare from the waist upwards and deeply tanned from the sun.

It was, we soon discovered, a very cosmopolitan camp. British internees outnumbered all the others put together, but several Commonwealth countries (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) were represented. and there was a large American minority. In all there were about a dozen nationalities, including Dutch, Belgian, Greek, Russian and (later in the war) Italian.

A wide variety of professions, jobs and skills were also represented There were top business executives from many well-known commercial fiims: The British and American Tobacco Company. Jardine Matheson, Butterfield and Swire, and the Kailon Mining Administration. There were engineers, importers, salesmen, bank clerks. There was a large missionary community, including Roman Catholic priests and nuns and every variety of Protestant denomination and tradition. There were professors, lecturers and language students from Chinese colleges and universities such as the Yenching (Anglo-American) university at Peking and the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese college.

There were 'White Russians' whose parents had lost everything in their flight from the 1917 Communist Revolution. There were four American negroes, bandsmen from a Tientsin nightclub. There were internees of mixed blood: half-Chinese, half-Japanese, half-Filipino. There were the drop-outs and hippies of Western society: drug addicts, prostitutes, alcoholics, currency smugglers. One bulky, chubby-faced, eccentric 'conman' nicknamed 'the vulgar Bulgar' escaped internment for a time through the possession of four different passports, but the Japs caught up with him eventually.

This was the community of which we Chefusians now became part. To us teenagers coming up to school-leaving age, coming from our sheltered, Victorian, missionary backwater, it was a revelation. Our new Camp jobs, the wide range of vivid personalities, the sharp clash of

competing ideas, and the glimpses of new lifestyles all combined to make Weihsien Camp, prison notwithstanding, a fascinating, stimulating and educational experience.

Nine Committees had been set up to supervise the internal administration of the Camp: Discipline, Education, Employment, Quarters, Supplies, Health, Engineering, Finance and General Affairs. The chairmen of these committees, elected by popular vote, constituted a 'Council-of-Nine' who were the final authority in the Camp under the California-educated Japanese Commandant. This Camp Council had a difficult and dangerous task. Wisdom and firmness were needed in dealing both with the internal organization of the camp and with the Japanese authorities. The Council discharged its task with consummate skill and tact. It was a remarkable achievement. At war's end, astonished American officers said that we had the best-run camp in China!

Ted Mclaren, North China Manager of Butterfield and Swire, was the Chairman of the Discipline Committee and the leading light of the Council-of-Nine. This wise, honourable, quiet-spoken, canny, rugger-playing business chief was the most respected man in the camp and the epitome of personal integrity. He seldom raised his voice and I sometimes thought that he was the nearest image I'd seen of 'the strong, silent Englishman' of fiction, notwithstanding his Scottish antecedents!

A splendid example of how he walked successfully the delicate tightrope between the Japanese and the Internees was provided by an angry Japanese complaint that internees were showing lack of respect to the soldiers of the Emperor by getting in their way as they moved around the camp on their duties. Mclaren responded by posting on the Camp Notice Board this wonderful tongue-in-cheek document:

> INTERNEES WILL GIVE WAY TO UNIFORMED
> MEMBERS OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY'S FORCES
> I.E. INTERNEES WILL ALTER THEIR COURSE TO
> PORT OR STARBOARD TO AVOID A HEAD ON
> COLLISION
>
> E. Mclaren
> (Discipline Committee)

In some camp notices the humour was unconscious. For example, one aggressive bullying Japanese n.c.o. was constantly yelling at internees "Bo-shing-de" (It's forbidden). Soon he was universally known by the nickname 'Sergeant Bo-shing-de'. Small children would follow him down the streets of the camp shouting 'Sergeant Bo-shing-de! Sergeant Bo-shing-de!'. The Sergeant complained to the Commandant who posted the following notice:

> "...By Special Order of His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Japan,
> 'Sergeant Bo-shing-de' is <u>NOT</u> to be known as
> 'Sergeant Bo-shing-de' but as Sergeant Yomiara."

There were about five hundred children and young persons in the camp, out of about fifteen hundred internees, as well as a similar number of elderly or semi-invalid people. We Chefusians, as hardened Boarding School inmates, took to camp life more easily than many. It

was harder for high-powered executives and their ladies, accustomed to the ministrations of a small army of Chinese servants, to adjust to our cramped and overcrowded existence. where privacy meant a 9' x 5' bedspace and where men and women could be seen each morning carrying their chamber pots to empty them in the noisome communal cesspits.

After a while our lessons began again. But most of us also had our regular chores of pumping water, cleaning vegetables or gutting fish. At other times, we volunteered to chop wood, carry coal or make coal briquettes for the elderly or infirm. At an impromptu Chefoo concert, we sang heartily a splendid, self-mocking parody, composed by Gordon Martin:

"Rule Britannia!
Britannia rules the waves!
Chefoo never, never, never, shall be:
Made to pump
And clean the fish
And make coal balls
Like a gang of public slaves!"

And everyone queued! We queued for our meals at the two Cookhouses three times a day. We queued at the Showers after finishing work. We queued to squat (Eastern style) above the ground-level toilets and then swill them with buckets of water afterwards. We queued in the winter to receive our meagre ration of coaldust.

Unsurprisingly there were, on occasion, arguments, quarrels and clashing temperaments. Strict and straight-laced missionaries didn't always hit it off with cynical hard-swearing businessmen. Nerves were frayed and diet was often inadequate. Old people were querulous or confused. Young people were bored or frustrated. So occasionally the sparks flew. In general however, dignity, harmony, self-discipline, good humour and willingness to help a neighbour, prevailed to an astonishing degree.

Every adult had his camp job. Some worked in one or other of the kitchens preparing, cooking and serving food for six or seven hundred people; others stoked the furnaces in these kitchens, in the hospital and elsewhere. Some worked in the camp bakery turning out about eight hundred kilos of bread daily; others mended and re-mended shoes and shirts and blouses. Some scrubbed mountains of clothes and towels and sheets in the laundry with worn-down scrubbing brushes and strictly-rationed cakes of soap. There were other jobs, too, as hospital orderlies, lavatory cleaners, plumbers, carpenters...

Mrs. Lack, still in charge of Chefoo's enterprising 'Wardrobe Department', continued to perform clothing miracles. An elegant flower-patterned tablecloth became two pairs of underpants with wild roses on the seats! Coloured curtains were transformed into gay shirts. On one occasion she bearded the Commandant himself in his office to beg him to permit clothing material to be brought into camp for the children. especially for those senior boys who had totally outgrown their clothes and were facing a cold winter. She was rebuffed.

"These things are luxuries," said the Commandant. "Our people have no luxuries; you cannot have them either."

Mrs. Lack and her devoted team dug out a number of spare blankets, some grey, some

green, and with the help of an elderly internee who had once been a professional tailor in Tientsin, new trousers were produced for the senior boys.

I myself, after School Exams were over, worked as a helper in No.1 Kitchen, chopping up the tough, stringy meat, stirring the steaming cauldrons of stew, or scrubbing out the big, black, greasy pots. 'Roz' Warren, a cheerful little Australian missionary was in charge of our shift. As the lunch hour approached he would bustle back and forth in front of the huge cauldrons, tasting the stew with a spoon and calling out his instructions: 'Jim, stir no. 1'... 'Tom, stir no.2' and so on.

In our final year in camp I became a stoker in the hospital. Every alternate shift, I would shiver out of bed at 3 a.m. to build up the fires in the basement of the hospital, whose kitchen cooked as many special diets for the patients as our limited supplies would permit. D., my fourteen-year-old girlfriend wrote later, "I can still see you with... a grin from ear to ear... looking through the bars of the Stoking Room... with two rows of white teeth, and your eyes peeping out from a mask of coal dust". At the end of my shift I would head quickly for the showers, scrub off my black mask and relax happily on my bed.

In the bitter, Siberian-type winters, the Authorities issued little black stoves for our quarters. Some internees also built their own amateur stoves from odd pieces of brick scrounged from a demolished chunk of wall or goodness-knows-where, and stove pipes were manufactured by fitting together old tins, while other tins served as mini-ovens.

The next step was to obtain a burnable fuel to make extra cooking possible. Coal was like gold and some internees would spend hours raking through piles of ashes from the camp kitchens to find a few pieces of coke or partly-burned coal for their own needs. Coal dust was a bit easier to obtain, but was unburnable until transmogrified, by special Weihsien formulae, into coal balls or coal briquettes. The formula might vary to suit the requirements of starting a fire, cooking on it, or merely 'banking' it, but the principle was the same: too much coaldust and the mixture wouldn't bind; too much earth and it wouldn't burn.

Sample formula: mix about a tin (sardine tin size) of earth with a little water and four tins of coal dust. Stir well and then squeeze the mixture by hand into little coal balls, the size of a scotch egg. Leave the coal balls to dry in the sun, and you now have a burnable fuel. Subsequent refinements of this technique involved protecting one's hands by soldering or nailing a wooden handle on to a sardine tin or jam tin and pressing the mixture into the tin with a large spoon or a wooden paddle'. In this way a series of coal briquettes the size of the tin could be produced and laid out in rows.

When your new fuel is adequately baked, and hopefully not stolen by some light-fingered neighbour, start your fire: paper, a few precious bits of kindling wood, perhaps a couple of super-precious nuggets of coal and then your coal-bricks. Before long, if your mixture is right and your fire-lighting techniques are adequate, the little black balls start to turn red Now all you need is your old frying pan (if you remembered to bring it into camp) and a little peanut oil (sometimes obtainable from the canteen, but even hair oil was used!). Soon the oil starts to sizzle and you can treat yourself to the luxury of a slice of fried bread and, for some lucky ones, the even greater luxury of an egg, often smuggled into camp illegally from 'over the wall'.

Such bouts of sybaritic self-indulgence could be an occasional supplement to the thrice daily menu served by Kitchen 1 and Kitchen 2. At breakfast we queued patiently with our own container and spoon and mug to receive a ladleful of millet porridge or kaoliang porridge or bread porridge. The kaoliang was a course but nutntious local grain. Black tea was ladled out of a bucket that contained a handful of tea bags in a small net. Boiling water was poured over the net which would be swilled around in the bucket. Fresh supplies of boiling water provided extra mugs of tea, until in the end a near-colourless, near-flavourless liquid was all that was left for latecomers. Most people ate at long wooden tables in the 'Dining Hall'. Others collected their share in a covered bowl and, sacrificing the possibility of a 'second', trekked back to eat en famille in their own tiny cell-like rooms.

At midday we queued once more for the inevitable curry or stew, black tea and bread. More queuing at suppertime for a ladle of thin soup, based on the midday leftovers, bread and, as a special luxury, there was on rare occasions a slice of so-called 'shortbread'. It was in these queues that all the gossip was exchanged. The scandal of the alleged missing rations from No.2 Kitchen would whip through the camp like a dose of salts. Stories emanating from 'over the wall' of Japanese battleships sunk by the Americans would likewise be transmitted at the speed of sound, and, in the process, be suitably exaggerated, embroidered and savoured with glee. As Julie Andrews might have sung:

"A spoonful of gossip
Helps the rations go down
In the most delightful way!"

The so-called 'Black Market', the secret, surreptitious bargaining and bartering with Chinese traders over the wall, was a godsend for many doing heavy manual labour. If the price was right, these traders were ready to risk savage beatings, torture or even death to supply us with such things as eggs, fruit and pai Ka'erh, a coarse local wine. Some of them climbed right over the wall into camp for their bargaining purposes and escaped again unseen! In daytime, these operations were protected by an elaborate look-out system. A sudden nose-blowing or a perambulating black-gowned priest dropping his breviary could be warning signals of an approaching guard and the trade would pack up instantly. At 6 p.m. the current feeding the electrified wire that encircled the camp would be switched on. Carelessness then did indeed mean death, as the body of a Chinese trader spreadeagled over the wires showed us all too clearly.

The phrase 'over the wall' came to have a romantic glamour indicating not only delicious vitamin-packed extras to supplement our gnm diet, exciting rumours of war victories, and dangers of electrical death, but also a precious link, both symbolic and actual, to the wider world outside from which we'd been cut off for so long.

Every morning a bell would clang loudly throughout the camp to summon us to roll call. Long lines of internees would assemble outside their 'block', many with books, some with woodand-canvas stools, ready for a long wait. Younger children flicked marbles into holes; senior boys played leapfrog. The scholarly studied their text books or practised a new language with a tutor. The rest read, joked, knitted, chatted and gossiped. Eventually the guards arrived and we moved back into line to be counted. Then there'd be another patient wait till the second bell dismissed us to our quarters, lessons, chores...

At one roll call a tall, barefooted, sixteen-year-old Irish boy of much charm and audacity looked upwards at a sagging wire which ran diagonally across the roll call ground to a watchtower. A friend nearby made a teasing remark about the wire being out of his reach. The boy, Brian Thompson, instantly stretched upwards and touched it. His fingers closed convulsively over it and with a groan he collapsed on the ground, still clutching the live wire. Mr. Houghton, grasping the situation instantly, slashed at the wire with a stool till the clutching fingers released their grip. Brian was rushed to the hospital where the Camp Doctors fought vainly for his life.[10]

We all fought a never-ending, losing battle with the bedbugs which infested our rooms. At intervals, on a fine sunny day, mattresses, blankets, campbeds, boxes and trunks were carried outside. Every blanket was shaken, every seam, every crack was meticulously searched, every bug or bug's egg was ruthlessly hunted down and exterminated. Boiling water was poured in every crack of bed or box or wall and the sun was left to finish the job. For a time there'd be peace; then the tiny squat red-brown pests would once more creep out of cracks and holes in walls and floors and renew their nightly feasts. Once more we'd toss and turn and scratch and squash. In the morning itchy bites on the body, large smears of blood on the sheets and bits of bug carcass would tell the sordid story.

Rats, too, infested some buildings. As the problem grew worse, a rat-catching competition was organized. Ingenious home-made rat traps were produced and there was keen competition between rival teams of rat-catchers, who had to bring each corpse to Mr. Bloom, a stout, cheery, wisecracking bakery official, to be duly recorded and incinerated in the bakery fires. The winning team had a score of sixty eight dead rats as against fifty six to the runners up and the prize was a rare camp luxury, a tin of sardines.

D. described a rat hunt she saw:

> "It was in the Black Room - had been there all night... its tail was sticking out from under one of the boxes... Harrison... caught hold of the tail and had a tug of war... (it) managed to free itself... ran across the corridor into the Fraser's room. They hunted around for it. Mrs. Fraser lifted the lid of a shoe corrie and saw it peering out at her... They... took the corrie into the middle of the volleyball court, and, on opening it, chased the rats with hockey sticks. That... night I had a visitation from a rat too. I hope it was the same one."

Flies were another pest and children were on one occasion organized into competing teams of fly-killers. The champion fly-killer was a small boy called John Taylor, a grandson of Hudson Taylor. the founder of the C.I.M.. He produced a bottle of 3,500 neatly counted flies.

For schoolboys and schoolgirls lessons still had to go on as normally as possible. When exercise books were used up, children in some forms rubbed out all the pencil work and started again. The paper in other exercise books was of a coarse, almost lavatorial quality.

I was sixteen when internment at Temple Hill began. We had had a year of only part-time schooling. Now, in Weihsien, we had about six months of hard intensive study:

[10] The Japanese had been warned of the danger, but had persistently shrugged it off

Shakespeare, essay reading and essay writing, arithmetical, algebraic and geometrical problems, French grammar and French translation, Caesar and Virgil, Scribes and Pharisees, Disraeli and Gladstone...

Then the Staff decided it was time for our group to sit the Oxford School Certificate. In normal times the official Oxford papers for each year would arrive in the mail. But now we were totally cut off. Wisely, the Staff had brought sets of old papers into Internment. From these they concocted a new 'official' paper. We sat for this Exam in the sticky heat of a Weihsien summer. After the war, Dad submitted these papers to Oxford. They were accepted, examined free of charge and produced creditable results Later, they accepted me as an undergraduate.

Lower down the school my girlfriend reported on her lessons as follows:

"I did very badly in Arithmetic... with 74%. Last term I got 88%..."

"...History's about my favounte subject. Miss H takes it. Every subject... (she) takes she makes interesting..."

"I seem to be doing better at Latin now... we are learning lots of new constructions... (but) Grammar is getting more and more boring..."

“Geography is quite good because Miss P.... says... ‘perhaps you think I'm going off the track, but... you people who have been in China... do not know about these things in the home-countries’…”

Mr. C….was taking our Compo and somebody read 'spectre' instead of 'spectacle' so... he ended by telling us several ghost yarns... you should have seen him... showing us what 'simpering' means’.

After 'Oxfords' were over we 'school leavers' were free to supplement our education in other ways. At one stage in Weihsien, there were over a hundred adult education classes in languages, philosophy, theology, mathematics, art, history, and much else One of my contemporaries studied French, Greek, Hebrew and Chinese and picked up a smattennng of Japanese as well. I myself attended seminars and tutorials in History, English Literature and German. We had some of the cream of China's universities to tutor us.

A Chefoo School academic tradition of holding weekly debates which had lapsed at Temple Hill was also revived in Weihsien. The China Inland Mission Boys School Literary and Debating Society regularly debated subjects such as the pros and cons of Weibsien as against Temple Hill, State control versus Private Enterprise, Science versus Letters, and Truthfulness against Courtesy. We also held a three-cornered contest on the respective merits of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality. I defended Liberty. Fraternity won.

Our Society was fortunate enough to be unofficially 'adopted' by a distinguished American called John Hayes who frequently attended and participated in our debates. He was himself an old Chefusian and a Rhodes Scholar. His tall smiling figure, with a pink Leander boating scarf flung carelessly round his neck, was well-known and greatly respected in camp. John was one of the most kind, intelligent and thoughtful people I've ever met, with a humility,

a wisdom and a breadth of understanding that was rare then and is rare now.[11]

In the summer of 1945 we held our last debate. The news of the British General Election had percolated through into the camp so we decided on a straight political fight, Conservative v. Socialist. It was a special occasion with a guest speaker, Mr. Nathan (a fnend of John Hayes), for the Socialists and Mr. Houghton for the Tories. I was the lead 'student' speaker for the Tories. On our side of the house we could carry the sympathies of the audience with songs of praise for Winston Churchill, the war hero. I felt too that I was on firm ground with my exposition of Tory philosophy, with 'Freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent'. But what could one say about the pre-war Baldwin/Chamberlain Appeasement regime? Mr. Nathan saw our weakness and pounced. He came out with a damning quotation about Rearmament: Stanley Baldwin at his feeblest. I leaned over and whispered to Mr Houghton, asking his advice as to how I could answer that in my final summing up. The future Headmaster shocik his head sadly. "There is no answer," he said. We lost the debate.

We Chefusians had grown up in a very cloistered, old-fashioned, Bible-reading, soul-saving, religious community. Now in Weibsien Camp we found that the conservative, evangelical, puritanical tradition in which we'd been reared was, in effect, being challenged by more liberal, social and 'worldly' Christians, by high Church ntualists and by Roman Catholics. Some of us found this clash of religious ideas and practices immensely intriguing, intellectually exciting and profoundly thought-provoking.

The Weihsien Christian Fellowship included all these viewpoints except Roman Catholics, so that sometimes a Sunday sermon could arouse heated controversy about its Biblical 'soundness'. There was also a special series of public lectures in which a vanety of views on biblical interpretation were propounded: 'modernist' scepticism on the historical or scientific validity of parts of the Old Testament was matched with 'fundamentalist' scepticism on the scientific validity of the theories of Darwinian evolution. In a separate series of lectures-cumdiscussions, I listened with fascination to Langdon Gilkey, a young Peking lecturer, expounding the nature of 'Onginal Sin'. Gilkey returned to the same theme twenty years later in a brilliant study of Weihsien life entitled 'Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women under Pressure'.[12]

Nearly every week there was a wide variety of dramatic or musical performances, lectures, concerts, discussion groups. Church services, plays of all kinds, dances, sing-songs... At Christmas there were carols and a Nativity play; at Easter Stainer's Crucifixion or Handel's Messiah was performed. There was also an Easter sunrise service. On Sundays we all enjoyed hearing the band of the Salvation Army (a body viewed with deep suspicion by the Japanese!) play a lively selection of hymn tunes. And, in spite of my puritan upbringing, or perhaps because of it, I loved especially to watch the dancing, with its stately whirl of figures gliding round the floor in waltz, quickstep or foxtrot, the throb and beat of the drums and the clever fingers of smiling Percy Gleed, the Camp's musical wizard, twinkling up and down the piano.

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[11] John went back to China after the war In 1951, after the Communist armies had triumphed in the Chinese Civil War, he was arrested and imprisoned The remarkable story of his arrest and trial and his psychological triumph o"er his captors was published in the Readers Digest. August 1955.

[12] Harper and Row, New York, 1966 and Anthony Blond, London.

Internees from the cities of Peking, Tientsin, Tsingtao and Chefoo had all brought substantial numbers of books with them from the libraries of clubs, schools and colleges or from personal collections. Most of these were pooled and formed an invaluable Camp library. From its shelves I was able to study and write essays for my tutor on Roman roads, the character of Shakespeare, mediaeval chivalry, etc. I also read up some 'liberal' theology and, more as duty than pleasure, ploughed my way steadily through Boswell's 'Life of Johnson'. It kept me occupied through many a morning roll call!

A mutual interest in books and an appreciation of Scott, Buchan and other authors was a feature of the regular correspondence which I carried on with my girlfriend D.. She wrote:

"Some people think that because a book is by Scott it has to be stodgy... I don't agree. For instance 'The Talisman'... it started on a hot summer day... a terribly good description of a hot baking desert... described... so realistically that it made me even hotter, so I gave it up for a few days..."!

A month later we were still discussing Scott:

"I have... read 'Rob Roy', 'Kenilworth', 'The Heart of Mid-Lothian', 'Peveril of the Peak', 'The Black Dwarf' .. I am just reading 'Ivanhoe' for the second time... Rowena is a rather far off being... Rebecca appeals more to me...

Other books we discussed included 'The Blanket of the Dark', 'Round the World in 80 Days' and 'The Cloister and the Hearth'.

I myself devoured a whole host of thrillers, historical novels, biography, etc.. and often wrote my own 'Book Reviews'. I thrilled to the vivid patriotic prose of Arthur Bryant's 'English Saga'. In the pages of Margaret Irwin's 'Stranger Prince', I visited 17th century England and a Cavalier Court where "young people clustered round the King and Queen, brilliant in wits as well in scarlet silk, in wine-dark velvets, in tossing feathers, in cloth of gold and silver sewn with jewels..." or an English countryside where "Church bells were ringing in the distance and a soft mist sunshine was spread over the scene like the bloom on a plum.." With John Buchan I tramped the Scottish heather in the company of the great Marquis of Montrose, "the complete paladin, full of courtesy and grace, a Volcker of Alsace with his sword-fiddlebow, whose every stroke is a note of music, (who) wins fights against odds, and scribbles immortal songs in his leisure..." Lost in such books I could forget about the ghastly cabbage soup, the indefatigable bedbugs, the ingrained coaldust and the encircling walls that hemmed us in. The psalmist put it well: "As a bird out of the fowler's net escapes away, so is my soul set free."

Mr McChesney Clark of the London Missionary Society, a colleague of Olympic athlete Eric Liddell, founded a senior branch of the Scouts for about eight of us in our late teens the 1st Weihsien Rover Scout Troop.[13] We renewed our vows with a solitary night 'vigil', on the pattern of the medlaeval knights. We laboured to clean up many unsightly litter dumps and other camp eyesores. We chopped wood and carried coal for old people. We acted, debated and studied for a variety of 'badges'.

[13] Rover Scouts are nowadays known as 'Venture' Scouts

I myself was studying for a Nature Lovers Badge and kept a regular diary of my efforts to identify sycamore, white lilac, Lombardy poplar, Japanese maple, mulberry, etc. My diary also records:

"Listened for birds but could only distinguish the merry 'cheep' of the sparrows, the harsh caw of the rooks and the soft monotonous cooing of pigeons... saw an azure-winged magpie, blue, long-tailed... heard two cuckoos calling to each other... heard a musical three-note chirp from a silver poplar and discovered a golden oriole there...

Scouting/Guiding was also a topic in my correspondence with D. who was working for a variety of Guide badges and was Patrol Second in the Kingfisher patrol:

"I have just won my Athletes badge and am hoping to get my Booklovers and Signallers before the Sports. I have already got my Keep Fit badge... I am also working for Birdlovers..."

Later she wrote:

"Which is your favourite tree on the compound[9] Mine is that beautiful poplar on the north-east corner of 24... many different kinds of birds seem to agree... you should see the silver part of the leaves glistening in the sun..."

We were fortunate in having a fair-sized sports field within the camp, and even a tennis court, where I was coached by Langdon Gilkie, reputed to have once been one of the best tennis players in America. Softball was the summer game. One entirely new to Chefusians, but quickly mastered; though accustomed as we were to the gentlemanly traditions of cricket, the customary 'barracking' from the spectators came as quite a shock. D. wrote.

"I consider it horrid when people yell at somebody, especially the pitcher, until they go punk..." And later, "I have noticed that you pitch in softball... so do I. I also play most other positions except outfield I can't catch those horrid high fly-balls... I wish I didn't get cracked up so quickly when I pitch..."

In the winter the games were Soccer and Hockey, in which Chefoo shone. The camp's slender stock of Hockey sticks lasted only through the indefatigable efforts of our popular and much respected sports organizer and camp celebrity, Eric Liddell.[14]

The former Olympic runner, whose fame reached an even wider public with the film 'Chariots of Fire', was a quiet. gentle balding man in his forties with a never-ending smile He enjoyed wearing exotic coloured shirts, some of them made from his wife's curtains, and he seemed to be surrounded frequently by a horde of young people whose games he refereed, coaching and encouraging them tirelessly. He sacrificed his own sheets and table linen to bind up our damaged hockey sticks, patiently gumming the bindings with Chinese glue. Liddell also spent long hours teaching and coaching Maths and Science. He helped teenagers with hobbies such as chess, model-making or square-dancing. He carried coal and water for elderly and invalid internees, served as a roll call warden, served on the Discipline Committee and in the Weihsien Christian Fellowship His multifarious activities, invariably undertaken with

[14] Unfortunately, the ground surface in North China is so hard that rugby football cannot safely be played.

enthusiasm and infectious good humour, nearly wore him out Sadly, he died of a brain tumour six months before VJ Day.

Gardening in various small and scattered 'allotments' was another pastime for many internees, but there were many disappointments. D. wrote:

> "Allison... and I had quite a successful garden over at 24. We took an awful lot of pains over it, manuring it and putting extra clay in, etc... when we came over here (i.e. to the hospital), Miss M. asked us to swop gardens... we soon found out that she... took most of her best and rarest flowers with her while we let her have some Shirley poppies... ~so she still did the nicest part of the garden over here and only left us the watenng..."

Later, in a group plot, the danger (not surprisingly, in Camp conditions) was from 'Scrounging':

> "Most people have given up growing vegies because they get stolen, but... Frances... lives right beside our garden and we live above it so we ought to be able to keep a pretty good lookout. What I'm dreading is the watering of it... it will take buckets of water."

A month later D. reported: "our radishes are growing fine. We have also planted marigolds... which have come up very well..."

In June 1944 two internees escaped: Laurence Tipton and Arthur Hummel. Tipton was a senior executive in the British and American Tobacco Company[15] and Hummel was an English teacher working for the Fu Jen Catholic University, Peking[16]. Both spoke Chinese.

The escape was meticulously planned. Father de Jaegher, a stocky, twinkle-eyed, white-haired, Jesuit-trained Belgian priest, helped to mastermind the escape. De Jaegher was a scholar and fluent Chinese speaker who had at one time been elected District Magistrate of An Kwo and had in the past successfully undertaken several dangerous journeys, sometimes travelling incognito through warring guerilla territories. He had quickly established a network of agents among Chinese labourers who visited the camp. Through them he smuggled secret messages in and out of camp and made contact with local guerilla groups.[17]

Shantung province at this time was an extraordinary hotchpotch of warring armies' Japanese, puppets, semi-puppets, Nationalist guerillas, Communist guerillas, independent guerillas, village militias and plain bandits. The leading nationalist guerilla group was a well-organised and well-disciplined force known as the 4th Mobile Column (later it was known as the 15th Mobile Column), Shantung/Kiangsi War Zone. It was an amalgam of local militias trained and stiffened by a leavening of Chinese Army veterans Its Commander at the time of the escape was Wang Yu-min, an ex-schoolteacher of wealthy peasant stock, who had risen to

[15] Tipton's enjoyable and informative account of his adventures, 'Chinese Escapade', was published by MacMillan in 1949

[16] In l985, Arthur Hummel was the American Ambassador in Peking.

[17] Father de Jaegher's book on his China experiences, 'The Enemy Within', was published by Doubleday, New York, in *1952.* He himself had planned to be one of the escapees, but this was vetoed by his superiors in the Church

power in Chiang Kae-shek's Kuomintang movement.

General Wang smuggled a letter into camp suggesting a somewhat hairbrained scheme for 'liberating' the entire camp and flying them to Chungking from a yet-to-be-constructed secret airfield. The Council-of-Nine sent a courteous but firm refusal. When the guerillas persisted, Mclaren, De Jaegher and Tipton discussed the matter and then suggested to General Wang that the camp should send two representatives to his H.Q. to discuss matters of mutual interest and act as liaison officers. This plan was agreed and a rendezvous, two miles from camp, was fixed for the night of June 9th, 1944.

The escape was carefully timed: on the night of a full moon, to assist subsequent progress across the country; at a time when a dark shadow would cover a suitable stretch of wall; and at changeover time between two shifts of Watchtower guards. The two men, dressed in black pyjamas, climbed safely over the electrified barbed wire assisted by Father de Jaegher, Roy Tchou and Tommy Wade and made their way to the rendezvous. After walking or cycling for the rest of the night and all next day, they were welcomed at the fortified village where General Wang had his H.Q.

Mclaren knew of the escape and roll call numbers were 'fixed' the next morning. After the escapees had been given ample time to get clean away, Mclaren then safeguarded the interests of the rest of the camp and the Council-of-Nine by reporting the escape to the Japanese authorities.

The Commandant and Police Commander were furious. Troops were sent out to scour the countryside - with no result - and internees in the same dormitories as Tipton and Hummel were arrested and interrogated. But after about ten days they were released back into camp. To deter any further escape attempts the Japanese surrounded much of the camp with an enormous trench about ten feet deep and about five feet wide. Beyond this trench they erected a second set of high electrified barbed wire entanglements. They reasoned, probably correctly, that this new barrier would not only deter further escape attempts, but also discourage any local group of guerillas or bandits from attempting to liberate the camp or kidnap the internees.

The previous living Quarters of Tipton and Hummel were on the upper floors of the Hospital, the tallest building of the camp, situated near the perimeter. The Japs suspected that there had been signalling from the hospital to Chinese contacts outside. So all the internees on the two top floors were moved elsewhere. The children and some staff of the Chefoo School took their place. At first the Japs proposed that all the windows on these floors should be permanently blacked out or blocked up. But Dad, as Headmaster, personally guaranteed that there'd be no escapes by Chefoo School personnel. Thankfully the idea of a 'black-out' was dropped.

I shared a tiny room, about 12' x 6', on the top floor with three other senior boys. Two campbeds would just fit in end to end along each wall, leaving a narrow gangway down the middle. There was a small window from which, at times, I would gaze out across the Chinese countryside and yearn for freedom.

We discovered that it was possible to climb out of our window and crawl up the sloping roof of the hospital to the central ridge. One hot night I left my bed, climbed out on to the roof

in my pyjamas and crawled along the ridge, from one end of the hospital to the other. Below, in the darkness, I could make out the outline of a watchtower where a sentry stood with machine gun and searchlight. At intervals the searchlight would play along the walls and barbed wire and out over the countryside. Suddenly the guard gave a tremendous shout. I lay flat on the sloping roof, sick with terror, sure that I'd been spotted, waiting for the searchlight beam and perhaps a bullet to strike me. But nothing happened. The sentry, it became clear, had only been shouting at his guard dog!. I crawled thankfully back inside and made no more rooftop excursions after that fright!

Another discovery made by two Chefoo boys was a secret compartment in one of the walls, revealing a hidden wireless set. The boys resealed the compartment and never breathed a word about their find till the war was over.

Secret radios, secret messages from 'over the wall' and plain invention and exaggeration all contributed to the general stock of rumours.

D. wrote:

"..about three weeks ago all sorts of rumours were afloat about the war being over in 24 hours... in September people prophesied that it would end within 10 days... it'll have to finish some day".

Father de Jaegher wrote later that he deliberately "started wild rumours: that the Japanese Emperor had been assassinated, that two hundred thousand Japanese had been killed in one battle alone... mixed (with) items of real news" because "there were two or three internees who had turned stool-pigeon for their Japanese captors..."!

There were, fortunately, a number of so-called 'war experts' in the camp who gave regular semi-secret briefings or lectures to small groups of internees on the progress of the war. These lecturers had access to the occasional nuggets of hard news which came in from 'over the wall' by De Jaegher's clandestine methods, often from Tipton and Hummel, and also the propaganda of Japanese newspapers and exciting rumours from Chinese traders via the Black Market From all these sources and with maps, careful analysis and some guesswork they were able to piece together a reasonably accurate idea of how the war was progressing D. wrote:

"I like hearing the war-news when the Allies... are making big moves. I get rather bored when they are standing still waiting for supplies or something... (but) things seem to be going pretty fast..."

These war-news sessions, announced only by word of mouth and in some cases protected by a look-out system, were now becoming splendid boosts for our morale. The increasingly rosy tidings of steady Allied advances, both in Europe and in the Pacific, were as draughts of sparkling champagne, enlivening our increasingly grey, chore-bound, prison existence.

We needed such encouragement as 1945 began. We'd now had our third internment camp Christmas and morale was beginning to deteriorate. Official food supplies for the camp kitchens were shrinking. Bread porridge, bread puddings and bread-everything were now standard, but sometimes the flour ran Out so there were days without even the bread. Because there was no

milk we all had to eat a daily spoonful of 'calcium', in the form of dry, tasteless powdered eggshells. And children were taught how to identify edible weeds - dock weeds, pig weeds, etc which could be boiled up as a substitute for green vegetables. The meagre supplies available from the canteen were also dwindling and "comfort money" had stopped coming[18]. Black marketeering too became much rarer after the capture and torture of a group of Chinese traders

Many of those who carried out the heavy manual labour in kitchen, bakery and elsewhere were now steadily losing weight. Incipient malnutrition had begun. There were cases of dysentery, typhoid and malaria. Internees were now physically and mentally tired, bored, frustrated and generally run down as they waited for the war to end. More internees were 'scrounging' food and coal from communal stocks, risking the public humiliation of having their names posted on the Camp Notice Board by the Discipline Committee as convicted offenders and their Camp privileges suspended.[19]

And then one day a string of donkeys laden with boxes ambled into camp: Red Cross parcels had arrived! It was to us an incredible, fantastic sight: as if some Aladdin had rubbed his magic lamp and hit the jackpot. Here was a great table of long-forgotten, gourmand luxuries, literally being spread before us in the presence of our enemies: tin after tin of milk, coffee, butter, sugar, jam, spam, peaches, salmon, cheese, chocolate, raisins, cigarettes... Hunger was appeased and our morale soared. We learned later that such parcels had been sent regularly, but had never arrived. They were diverted en route by the Japanese Army for their own use.

The months passed slowly and the heat of summer descended once more. At night we often lay soaked in perspiration and sometimes dragged our mattresses outside to achieve a measure of coolness and a respite from the battle of the bedbugs. Sometimes I joined my mother at the sinks in the hospital basement for the laundry battle. With our worn-out brushes and strictly-rationed, carefully-husbanded bars of soap we scrubbed furiously, energetically at our grubby, sweatstained, bloodstained sheets, steered them through a small dilapidated mangle, winding it vigorously by hand to squeeze out the water, and then carried the sheets outside to flap in the breeze

Rumours of sweeping Allied victories continued to filter into the camp, bolstering our hopes. One source of messages from outside were the Chinese nightsoil coolies, with their buckets and carts. They entered the camp regularly, under close Japanese guard, to empty the cesspits. In the fashion of Chinese coolies everywhere they would frequently 'hawk' - clear their throats loudly - and spit. Messages wrapped in waterproof paper, were spat on to a pile of ashes. Father de Jaegher would be waiting nearby, or an accomplice would be busily raking through the pile of ashes in the endless search for burnable fuel~ He would retrieve the damp and nauseous offering and quickly cover it with lumps of coke.

The source of many of these messages was the escaped duo, Tipton and Hummel, and the guerilla band which they had joined They had sent a full report on camp conditions to Chungking and had also managed to establish radio contact. General Wang appointed them as

[18] Special funds made available from Allied Governments via the Swiss Red Cross representative, in exchange for promissory notes undertaking to repay these sums after the war.
[19] This meant a prohibition on the use of the Camp canteen, barber shop, etc, and attendance at Camp entertainments.

Honorary Advisers to 'the 15th'. In response to their report, American planes from Chungking dropped four large crates of sulfa drugs, anti-epidemic serums and other medical supplies for the needs of the camp. The guerrillas delivered this consignment secretly to the Swiss Consul in Tsingtao, Mr. Egger, who as the International Committee of the Red Cross representative was allowed to make official visits to Weihsien. He was also usually allowed to bring certain medicines into camp, subject to Japanese approval.

Mr. Egger had his Secretary type out a list of routine medicines available in Tsingtao -leaving four blank spaces between each item. This four-page list he took to the Japanese Consular Police for approval. Slightly puzzled by this wasteful use of Consular stationery, the unsuspecting official nevertheless put his official chop at the foot of each sheet. Egger then hurried back to his office and had all the medicines in the secret consignment typed - on the same typewriter - into the blank spaces. The next day he caught a train to Weihsien and arrived at the gates of the camp with his crates and his typed lists. The Japanese officials at Weihsien were also slightly puzzled by this long list, but since it had the official 'chop' they asked no questions and the four crates were duly delivered to the Camp hospital to the delight and astonishment of our doctors.

As the tide of the Allied naval and land victories continued to sweep across the Pacific, it was the morale of the guards that began to show signs of slipping. Some of them were now engaged in profitable Black Market activities, on a barter basis, in exchange for internees' watches, jewellery, etc. Others got drunk or openly criticized their officers The Council-of-Nine began to worry about the ultimate fate of the Camp. It was impossible to forecast what the Japanese might do when faced with defeat and humiliation. There were ugly rumours that they would massacre everyone in the camp and then commit 'han kin'.

Strong Communist forces were also massing nearby, and the local Communist Commander of the 'Chinese Communist Government of Shansi, Hopeh, Shantung and Honan' smuggled in a message offering to attack the Camp in conjunction with an internal revolt, liberate it and transport us all to Yenan. The Council-of-Nine replied with a courteous negative.

Mclaren had, in the meantime, arranged with Tipton and Hummel that the 15th would be ready to send troops or food supplies to the camp at a moment's notice if the situation required it or if the war ended. He had also recruited an 'underground' police force of internees, ready to take over control of the camp

On August 10th, 1945, Tipton and Hummel heard from Chungking Radio that the Japanese were suing for peace. They passed the word to Weihsien. The Council-of-Nine thought it best not to publicize this news immediately. The word did leak out, but many were still sceptical, regarding it as just another camp rumour. By August 15th. however. the rumours had multiplied and a crowd gathered outside the Commandant's office. An arrogant, unpleasant Japanese official called Watanabe came out of the office, panicked at the sight of the hostile crowd, took to his heels and ran like a frightened rabbit, amid howls of laughter. A Camp interpreter asked the Commandant if the war was over, but he gave an evasive reply.

Meantime in Chungking at the Headquarters of General Wedemeyer, the commander of

American forces in China, the Office of Strategic Services[20] was planning our liberation. Nine volunteer 'Mercy Teams', all trained parachutists, had been recruited to fly to the rescue of the twenty thousand Allied P.O.W.s and fifteen thousand civilian internees scattered in a variety of camps all the way from Korea and Manchuria in the north to Indo-China in the south.

On August 17th, four of these teams assembled at the Sian base of the American 14th Airforce: Mission Duck for Weihsien, Mission Magpie for Peking, Mission Cardinal for Mukden, and Mission Flamingo for Harbin. The 'magnificent seven' in our own Mission Duck were Major Stanley Staiger (the Mission Leader), Lieut. Jimmy Moore, U.S.N.R., S.I., Lt. James Hannan, AGAS, Sergt. Tadash Nagaki (Japanese interpreter), Corporal Peter Orlich (Radio operator), Eddie Wang (Chinese Interpreter) and Raymond Hanchulak (Medic.). At about 9:30 a.m. they took off in a B24 Liberator, known variously as a 'flying angel or 'armoured angel', and on reaching Weihsien City, the pilot swooped low over the surrounding area to try to identify the concentration camp.

The roar and swoop of the American plane brought pandemonium to the camp. Kitchens, furnaces, classes, chores and all else were instantly abandoned. Everyone rushed outside waving, shouting, laughing, crying, cheering, singing, and dancing in wild abandon. in an ecstasy of hope fulfilled:

> "Everyone suddenly burst out singing
> And my heart was filled with such delight
> As prisoned birds must find in Freedom...
> Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted
> And Beauty came...[21]

The plane banked steeply, circling and re-circling the camp. Suddenly seven little dots -human figures spilled from its belly. Parachutes blossomed above the nearby fields in vivid splashes of gold and blue and red. That was the final straw. Drunk with joy, in a delirium of delight, almost the whole camp, a mob a thousand strong, charged the gates or hurtled over the walls. The Japanese guards stood and gaped, dumb with amazement, paralyzed with shock and bewilderment. Wave after wave of yelling, cheering prisoners, many still bare-footed and half-naked, swept past them in a torrent.

Out in the fields, tall with yellow kaoliang, the seven armed, tense American parachutists were startled to find themselves being frenziedly hugged and kissed and their hands wrung again and again. They were hoisted high on willing shoulders and borne in triumph to the camp. The guards saluted, somewhat hesitantly, and bowed low. The American Major returned the salutes punctiliously from his lofty perch, then slid to the ground. The trombones of the Salvation Army band, long rehearsed and ready for just such an occasion, burst into 'Happy Days are here again' and a victory medley of the national anthems of all the assembled nationalities. "Maybe you were thrilled to see us," the Major said later, "but you'll never know how thrilled we were to see you... we descended. ..... guns, ready to shoot it out..."[22] An old lady ran up to the Major

[20] The American equivalent of the British S O.E., which organised help to Resistance groups, escaping POWs etc.
[21] Siegfried Sassoon, writing about Armistice Day, 1918.
[22] Mary Scott, 'Kept in Safeguard', p 91, Nazarene Publishing House, 1977

and kissed his hand. He blushed a fiery red but did not rebuff her. Carefully he checked his two pistols and then strode firmly into the office of the Commandant Lieut. Jimmy Moore, formerly of the F.B.I., was surrounded by a gang of Chefusians. "It's good to see you Chefoo kids," he told them. "Where's my old Headmaster? Where's Mr. Bruce?" Incredibly, the young Lieutenant was himself an 'Old Chefusian' well-known to Dad and most of the teaching staff. That really made the day for the School!

Mr. Izu, the Japanese Commandant sat in his office facing the tall American Major. Slowly he studied the Duck Mission's letter of authority from General Wedemeyer. Silently he placed his samurai sword and his pistol on the table in front of him in token of the surrender of his fifty-strong garrison. He had 'lost face' to such an extent by the breakout of the internees and the helplessness of his guards that he felt there was no alternative. He must accept the terms dictated to him.

Mclaren's underground police force now came out into the open and took command of the main gate. The Duck Mission and the Council-of-Nine shared responsibilities for the camp administration and the Major and his men took over the Japanese staff quarters forthwith. To the surprise of Koyanagi, the Japanese Police Commander, his men were ordered to retain their arms and their responsibility for the defence of the camp. The Americans had 'intelligence' reports to the effect that local guerilla or bandit groups were planning to capture the camp and thus acquire valuable hostages, barterable for cash.

Mclaren had also quickly dispatched a message to Tipton and Hummel to tell them of Mission Duck's arrival, and a few days later seven hundred nationalist guerrillas and their Regimental Commander, Chih-yi, arrived with the two escapees. The guerillas camped in a village nearby. Fourteen months after their escape, Tipton, Hummel and their friend Chih-yi now rode up to the Camp gates on horseback, to the astonishment of Mclaren's police, and were immediately escorted to Major Staiger.

For several hours the Major and his officers and Mclaren questioned Chih-yi and the two escapees until they had a good grasp of the military-cum-political situation locally and the complexities of the jigsaw of warring groups with their ever-shifting geographical 'boundaries', changeable loyalties and unabashed time-serving. The Major decided that the camp must remain a 'neutral' area under his personal control. The Japanese garrison would remain in defensive posture under his orders. Local 'puppet' leaders had bombarded him with protestations of loyalty and offers of assistance. Several groups of allegedly Chungking forces had also offered to 'protect' the camp! Chih-yi was asked to keep his troops in readiness nearby, in case of emergency.

More American planes were soon flying over the fields near the camp: B29s from Okinawa loaded with food, clothing and medicines. The bellies of these huge 'superfortresses' opened and a mass of coloured parachutes billowed out, with boxes, crates and drums descending at a variety of speeds The Weihsien Rover Scouts had, on the recommendation of the Discipline Committee, been enlisted by the Americans as an auxiliary force to help guard the descending supplies from Chinese looters, to assist in the stacking, loading and transport of the goods into camp and for other tasks. We stood at the edge of the reception field watching the descent. Unfortunately many of the parachutes failed to open and we had to dodge hastily as a barrage of heavy boxes and drums - lethal missiles - whistled down around our ears and burst on impact

spewing out corned beef, spam, tomato soup, California peaches, chewing gum, vitamin pills, shaving cream, cigarettes and much else all over the drop zone.

Chinese peasants, who had crowded round to join in the bonanza, ran for their lives and then returned to loot. A small Chinese boy had his skull fractured and was taken off to the Camp hospital. Another man was seen busily stuffing himself with shaving cream, while a third downed a whole bottle of vitamin pills... A breathless American officer who'd narrowly escaped a direct hit from a drum announced that this was more dangerous than Active Service in Burma, and one irate internee opined that he didn't mind dying for King and Country but saw little virtue in being killed by a tin of peaches!

The first attempt at evacuating twelve hospital patients from Erhshihlipu, the local airfield five miles from camp, was called off when Japanese Army units took up combat positions around the area. Major Staiger angrily called for an explanation, and the local Army Commander, Lt Col. Jimbo, was summoned to the camp and informed that they must not interfere with American traffic at the airfield.

Later, I was one of our auxiliary' group assigned to travel to the airfield by truck to collect supplies. Suddenly a Japanese 'Mitsubishi' appeared and started to circle overhead. The American Lieutenant rapped out an order and in ten seconds we had abandoned the truck and were sprawling in a ditch, but the plane moved on and we completed our mission unmolested.

A friend and I also went for a long walk into the local countryside, viewed so longingly in the past from our hospital window, and wandered for miles along green, tree-clad river banks and dusty rural lanes and passed high-walled villages with their barking dogs. But the walk was never repeated. Soon we were once again restricted because of the dangers of kidnapping and the nearness of fighting: fighting between Communists and Japanese, between Communists and puppets, and between Communists and Nationalists in the growing Civil War which was to rage furiously for the next four years.

Japanese troops in China had formally surrendered to Chiang Kae-shek and the Chungking Government, but had been instructed to remain in their garrison areas, retain their arms and protect lines of communication from Communist attack until such time as Chungking Government forces arrived to arrange their de facto surrender, disarmament and repatriation. The Communists, however, declined to recognise the legality of the Japanese surrender to Chiang Kai-shek and stepped up their attacks on the railway lines and on the Japanese garrisons. My twelve year old sister recorded in her Diary:

"In the night, woke up and heard the Ba 1uo[23] and Japs fighting."

We still had our regular camp jobs to perform, but now we were well fed on the canned delicacies that had dropped from the heavens and clothed in American Army vests and pants and shirts. A Chinese Market had also been set up near the camp gates where we could bargain for fresh fruit, vegetables, chicken, eggs... And at least we could dream of the wider freedoms which were now so near. To me it felt as if this was the last lap of the race. Soon we'd be rounding the final bend, entering the last straight and breasting the finishing tape. And everyone

[23] The 8th Route (Communist) Guerilla Army

who crossed the line would be a winner!

The 'magnificent seven' of the O.S.S. had departed on August 30th and in September we were under the control of a regular American Army unit led by Col Hyman Weinberg. His task was to “re-orient” us and arrange our evacuation. A young American Captain was appointed as re-orientation boss with his own special office from where he would organize music, lectures and games Loudspeakers and a public address system were installed and suddenly, at six o'clock one morning, the voice of Frank Sinatra came blasting over the air:

> "Oh! What a beautiful morning
> Oh! What a beautiful day
> I've got a wonderful feeling
> Everything's going my way"

Furious internees, sleepy. dishevelled, and half-naked, tumbled out of their huts and dormitories cursing, swearing, blocking their ears and kicking the loudspeakers. An angry deputation stormed off to the American Army H Q.. One internee said, "Bring back the war, so we can have some peace!" and another provided peace, temporarily at least, by cutting the wire. Future broadcasts began an hour later.

I attended a lecture in the new 'Reading Room' in which we were briefed by a young American officer on wartime events in Hungary. He told us how Prince Paul had been ousted by King Peter, and how General Mihailovich took to the mountains but was ousted in Allied favour by Marshal Tito. I pondered whether to tell him that it was Yugoslavia he was talking about, but didn't. Perhaps to him it was merely a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing[24]. I skipped further lectures. Nevertheless, it was true that we had much to learn. We heard about the fate of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the dropping of the atomic bomb.

Before long we were asking the same questions asked today: Did it end the Second World War? Was it necessary? Was it justified? The answers then were as varied and contradictory as they are today.

Even our vocabulary was outdated. Internees asked the Americans, "What's a pin-up girl? a G.I.? a jeep? U.N.O.?". And later, on arrival in England, a group of dockers were amazed and amused when someone asked, "What's a doodlebug?"

Meantime the American plans for evacuation were going awry. They were caught between their commitments to their wartime ally, Chiang Kae-shek, and their desire to remain neutral in the growing civil war. American Marines had, in agreement with the Chungking Government and amid enthusiasm from the local populace, landed at Tsingtao, Tientsin and Peking, and Tsingtao had become the base for their North China operations[25]. Nationalist forces had taken over Tsinan (the Shantung capital) and Kaomi (halfway between Weihsien and Tsingtao), where General Wang Yu-min was desperately trying to rally his men under heavy

[24] Chamberlain's Munich broadcast, 1938

[25] Admiral Dan Barbey's naval forces also sailed to Chefoo, but found it already under Communist occupation. After some discussion they decided that the Marines should not land and sailed off again

Communist pressure. Puppet or semi-puppet forces who had now transferred their loyalty to Chungking and the Japanese Army still controlled Weihsien and a few other small railway towns. The rest of Shantung, and indeed most of North China, was under Communist control.

Col. Weinberg planned to evacuate the Camp by rail to Tsingtao, but the defeated Japanese Army, not surprisingly, made very little effort to defend the railway line. Every day bridges were blown up by the Communists and miles of rail removed. The Colonel therefore sent Arthur Hummel and Roy Tchou on a secret mission to the Communists to try to negotiate a cease-fire while the internees were evacuated to the coast. A truce was agreed and a day was set for the first batch of six hundred to leave. All the Chefoo School party were in this group.

On September 26th instead of stumbling out of bed, bleary-eyed, at 3 a.rn. to stoke the Hospital furnaces, I had an extra two-hour lie-in before a 5.30 a.m. breakfast. At six-o'clock, carrying our handful of possessions, we left our hospital quarters for the last time. My stoking partner, Macaulay, a tall, cheerful Chefoo businessman, waved as I walked past the furnace room. He was in the second batch, delayed in camp till mid-October after the truce broke down and the railway was again sabotaged. Eventually all the remaining eight hundred were flown out to Peking and Tientsin in C47s.

We piled into trucks and, amid smiles and waves, were driven through the gateway which we had entered in such different circumstances two years before. At last we were really free and en route to England. Inwardly my heart was now singing that same American song which had blared out so devastatingly: "Oh what a beautiful morning, Oh what a beautiful day!"

We boarded our train, plastered with large Chinese 'characters' proclaiming our identity, and settled down contentedly to watch the landscape glide slowly past our windows. In the fields and villages enthusiastic farmers waved and clapped their victorious Allies, partners in the defeat of the 'little monkeys'[26]. At every station groups of people, banners and slogans hailed the Allied victory. At Tsingtao, huge crowds massed at the station and thronged the streets to welcome us with flags and more hand claps. The mayor of Tsingtao, Lee Sieu Lieng, presented each of us with a small gift. The band of H.M.S. Bermuda played martial music and her Captain came forward to welcome us in the name of the British Government.

We were whisked off by bus to the 'Edgewater Mansions', a luxury hotel on the bay commandeered for us by the American authorities. That evening, our feet sank into plush carpets as we entered the spacious dining hall. We were ushered to seats in front of gleaming white table-cloths and sparkling cutlery. Attentive waiters served juicy steaks and luscious pork chops and a jazz band played, inevitably, "Don't fence me in!"

Several golden days followed. We were entertained royally by H.M.S. Bermuda and her Commander, Capt. Bethel. We swam and walked and explored the town, the bay and the wooded hills. D. wrote later:

> "Do you remember climbing round on the rocks... we sat... for a while on a perpendicular rock watching the spray getting nearer to us... we went through a park... with lovely little paths and... horses and ponies... we had to cut twigs to beat our way

[26] A common phrase used to describe the Japanese invaders 'Dwarf-devils' was another!

through the spiders' webs..."

Another friend and I hired bikes and celebrated freedom by racing them at top speed until I crashed into a wall, broke my wrist and ended up in the hospital!

On October 7th, with my arm in a sling, we climbed aboard the American destroyer[27] U.S.S. Geneva for a one-week, one thousand mile voyage down the China coast to Hong Kong. It was crowded, but we slept in comfortable hammocks, ate well and enjoyed the sea air.

D. described her memories of it in these words:

> "...my efforts at chess and other games... standing on the quarter-deck and getting drenched from head to foot by a wave... discussing everything from a grand piano to a mouse... sitting and talking on the Captain's deck..."

Each morning we lined up with a tray to collect a mouth-watering egg-and-bacon breakfast, listening meanwhile with an affectionate amusement and respect to those drawling American voices echoing tinnily over the loudspeakers: "Now, hear this..." And we gasped in horror at seeing all those wonderful leftovers dumped unceremoniously into the sea.

On the way we hit the tail-end of a typhoon from Okinawa. Huge seas tossed the destroyer around like a toy and even members of the crew were sick. Luckily I, like my father, revelled in rough weather! A few days later, the sea, sated with its own fury, sank to a ripple and a murmur. The sun came out and shimmered across the water, sparkling among the remnants of 'white horses'. As we neared the great harbour of Hong Kong, British planes swooped from above and welcomed us with a thrilling aerobatics of diving, stunting and low flying.

An organization called R.A.P.W.I.[28] took us under their wing and billeted us in a group of empty houses in Argyll Road, Kowloon. Japanese P.O.W.s were detailed to clean out the rooms before we moved in. Hong Kong itself, which I'd last seen in 1938 basking in peace and luxury, had only recently been liberated and now seemed shabby, and exhausted, almost punch-drunk after the wartime horrors it had experienced. We learned, for the first time, of the cruel, murderous and bestial way the Japanese Army had behaved in their hour of Victory and of their vicious treatment of P.O.W.s in Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and elsewhere. We were fortunate in Weihsien, to have been imprisoned under the comparatively mild regime of the Japanese Consular Services.[29]

We were able to view hordes of war newsreels, showing the final days of the Pacific War, the bombing of Tokyo. etc.. The Hong Kong populace, who'd seen nothing but Japanese propaganda since the fall of the city in December 1941, cheered most lustily. At the nearby Y.M.C.A., still wearing a sling, I learned to play respectable 'ping pong' left-handed and devoured eagerly six-months-old British newspapers and magazines, the first I'd seen since

[27] American ex-internees were repatriated to San Francisco from Tsingtao. Commonwealth personnel were repatriated to their respective countries from Hong Kong
[28] Repatriation of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees
[29] Civilian Internees in North China came under the Consular Service because the Japanese had created a puppet 'Republic of China' under the Quisling leader, Wang Ching Wei

1941, describing the General Election and the defeat of Churchill.

I had one last walk with D., who sailed for Australia the next day. She wrote later:

> "…We talked - a favourite occupation of ours... (I remember) the big rock that I was determined to climb but couldn't... the edge sloped down to a sheer precipice and you lifted me with your left hand! I must have had faith in your left hand!..."

On another occasion I went for a day-long tramp into the mountains and from their height viewed the Chinese mainland for the last time. I also trespassed into the R.A F. base at Kai Tak Airport, hitched lifts in Army jeeps and discussed Gandhi, Nehru and the Congress Party with an Indian serviceman. One afternoon we crossed over to Victoria Island on the ferry and had drinks with an Irish cousin, then an Army Colonel, at the Repulse Bay Hotel. On a Sunday we attended a service conducted by a Padre of the Royal Marine Commandos, Maurice Wood, later to be Bishop of Norwich.

Chefusians were now dispersing all over the globe: to Canada, Australia, England and South Africa. Before the war an unknown admirer had coined the phrase, in reference to Chefoo, 'the best school east of Suez' and among the cognoscenti the nickname stuck. And now, in its final days,[30] it lived up to it.

The Australian party travelled home in H.M S Bonaventure and at Sydney, the Captain said to Mrs. Lack:

> "I did not think there were such well-disciplined children left in the world! They are a credit to their School

And when the first batch of Canadian Chefusians arrived in Vancouver, .the local newspaper headlined its story: 'THEIR INTERNMENT CAMP MADE CHARMING CHILDREN'. The reporter wrote.

> "Recipe for a well-brought up child - three years internment with the Japanese... They were merry and enormously active and quite unrestrained. But their manners were gentle and considerate. Whatever their three and a half years of privation in Japanese hands had done to them, they had come out of it as pleasant youngsters as one would wish to know… [31]..

The Bruce family also sailed to Vancouver, en route to England, because my eldest sister[32] had married a young Canadian Lieutenant[33]. So Dad and Mum wanted to meet their new

[30] The Chefoo School never returned to its own compound in the port of Chefoo (now Yantai), but was reconstituted under the same name at Kuling, West China, until expulsion by the Communists in 1950. Thereafter. the China Inland Mission (now renamed the Overseas Missionary Fellowship) established a number of mini-Chefoos, for those of prep school age only, in Malaysia, Singapore and Japan. These schools still carry on the tradition.
[31] Vancouver Daily Province, November 9th, 1945.
[32] Mary McKnight (nee Mary Bruce)
[33] Ken McKnight

son-in-law and their first grandchildren[34]. We left Hong Kong on the 'Empire Chieftain' on November 6th. Upholstered lounges, comfortable cabins, spacious decks and smooth restaurant service were all a joy and a delight. Halfway across the Pacific a fierce storm blew up. With hardly any cargo, there was little except sand in the hold to act as ballast, the ship rolled so dangerously that the Captain let down his anchor and hove to for twenty four hours till the storm had blown itself out. I watched in utter fascination as huge breakers hurled themselves across the decks and, at times, I was the only passenger who turned up for meals, sitting in solitary state at a table and chair bolted firmly to the floor.

And at last, in late November, we came out on deck one evening and saw the glittering Vancouver skyline, a kaleidoscope of colour and flashing lights. It was the final touch of magic. This was our welcome and these were the lights of freedom. As birds out of the fowler's net we had escaped and our souls were set free.

[34] At that time they were Bruce and Jenny McKnight

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