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Charles Foster of Minot: Japan, World War II

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PRISONER OF WAR

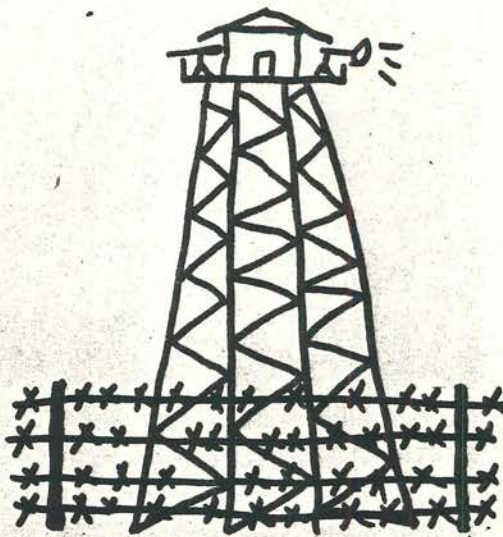
A TRUE STORY

BY: CHARLES C. FOSTER

MINOT, N. DAK.

AMERICAN PRISONER IN
PHILIPPINE PRISON CAMPS
WORLD WAR II 1941-1945

THIS BOOKLET PREPARED
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EX-PRISONER OF WAR QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name: *Charles C Foster*

Current Address:

2118- 7 ave N.W. Minot N.D.

Address at time you went into service:

Vermes town N.D.

Birthday:

Feb 24, 1913

2. Family: (spouse and children)

Wife - 4 children

3. Work and educational experience prior to going into service?

College grad. - Auditor

4. Dates and place of entry into service?

July 1941 Ft. Snelling

5. Summary of events from time of entry into service and until just prior to capture or entering status as a POW?

*Jt. Lewis, Wash. to Sept 1941 then sailed to Philippines
was instructor in Philippine Army then in combat
with them from 12-25-41 to April 1942 on Bataan
until the surrender.*

6. Unit, Country, time, area, weather, etc., at time event occurred which resulted in POW status?

51st Inf. P.I. Bataan -

7. Describe military or other events that resulted in your POW status?

All units on Batian were surrendered at same time.

8. Following your capture, describe what happened. How many men were involved? Where did you go? How did you go? What type of personnel (military or civilian) took control of you?

We marched approx. 100 miles under Jap. guards on the Death March. There were about 15000 men to start.

9. Were you able to hide or escape? If so, tell what happened. Where did you hide? Food? Clothing? Water? Weather? Sleep? etc.

No.

10. How did your escape end? Returned to U.S. control? Discovered by enemy?

11. Could you describe in sequence the various places you were interrogated and the methods of questioning the enemy used?

In O'Donnell prison - very severe.

12. Did you have a weapon on yourself when you were captured? Did it effect your treatment?

cell destroyed as per orders.

13. Were you at any time considered a civilian or an enemy spy or a wrong nationality? If so, how did this effect your treatment?

No.

14. When captured or escaping, what clothing or equipment were you wearing? What changes did the enemy make in your clothing?

shirt + slacks + shoes.

15. What was your first food you received after your capture and what was your food from that date on?

Received a dish of rice the 3rd day -

16. Did your nationality, religion, or race have a bearing on your treatment from the enemy?

No.

17. What was your impression of your captors? Were they arrogant, considerate, professional, troubled, confused, anxious, etc.?

Arrogant, anxious.

18. Were you alone or with others? How many? Same unit? Other units? Other services? Other nationalities, etc.?

With others. 1000 in our group.

19. At time of your capture, did you have higher or lower ranking persons with you? Did the difference in rank effect you?

*Being under control of enlisted men, rank was
had to have.*

20. Following your capture, how did you feel about your family at home, and at what point or time did you feel they probably knew about your POW status?

Worried -

21. When did you receive your first letter, package or information that your family knew of your capture?

2 1/2 years

22. In regards to your interrogation or questioning--was this conducted formally at a special camp or location? Did you have special or skilled interrogators? What did they want to know? How long were you there? Then where did you go?

*No - anything we could tell them which
was nothing*

23. How did you feel the war was going when you were captured?

Terrible

24. Did you think you would eventually get home?

Unknown.

25. Did you have an opportunity to observe the enemy in combat, training, camp, or moving from one place to another?

Yes in training + moving

26. Did you suffer any injury at the time of your capture? What was done about your injury or illness following your capture?

Had an eye destroyed - nothing was done.

27. At your permanent camp or camps, would you describe your conditions. Food? Living area? Beds? Food ration? Health? Water? Weather? Number of men? Guards? Size and location of camps? Organization in camp by enemy and by U.S. forces?

Everything bad. no beds, little food + water

O'Donelle, Cabanatuan, Bilibid.

very little organization

28. While in your permanent camp, did you know what was going on in the war? What did guards say about the ending of the war?

Not a thing

29. If you worked in camp or lived in work camps, please describe your daily transportation, work, food, punishment, etc.?

No.

30. Was your camp or camps ever bombed or damaged by the enemy or friendly military action?

No

31. Could you describe your roll call or counting procedure in camp?

Each AM at 6 -

32. What type of guards did you have? Age? Rank? Weapons? Number? Service, etc.?

Enlisted, young, rifle, knife, infantry

33. Could you describe your camp? Size? Fences? Guard towers? Latrine? Ration distribution? Hours? Lock-up? Heat? Recreation, etc.?

Two prisons had wire, one had 18' wall with electric wires. No recreation - Hot.

Two had slit trenches in which some prisoners fell in & drowned - Bilibid had one toilet per 100 men.

34. Could you describe the men close to you or the men you knew best? How did you get along with them?

All down physically & mentally. good

At one time Hutch Hazlett came in to see me when he was on his way to Japan. He died on the way. In 1934 he was shot under the U.S.

35. Could you tell about epidemics or sickness in camp? What were the medical facilities? How were you medically treated in camp?

Jaundice, malaria, dysentery and all other tropical diseases. Our doctors tried but were given no medicine Beriberi.

36. Were any prisoners killed in camp or taken from camp and disappeared?

Yes

37. Could you describe the ration or food distribution system? How much? Fresh, canned, stale, dried, etc.? Local foods, Red Cross parcels, parcels from home, trade with guards or civilians?

Rice + weeds mostly - I went from 190 lbs to 105 lbs + stayed there

38. Describe the type of work or responsibilities you were assigned within the camp from friendly or USA prisoners?

None

39. What were some of the things that kept you going while in camp?
Your health? Age? Faith in U.S. Armed Forces? Religion? Family?
Aid from other prisoners?

Religion + family

40. Did any prisoners become mentally sick or irrational in camp and were they removed?

yes - died

41. Did you have any secret radios, newspapers or outside news sources in camp from which you received information? What information did the enemy give you?

Once - near the end - enemy gave none.

42. Did you have any serious illness in camp?

all of them.

43. Did you have any riots in camp?

No. we were too weak.

44. How did you first know that war was coming to an end?

When American planes flew over.

45. What were some of the tricks you played on guards?

46. What about escape procedures and methods used by you or others that you have knowledge of or direct information about?

47. Were you ever bombed by friendly or enemy aircraft?

No

48. Describe any special train or ship trip you took while a prisoner?

None - except a freight train to Manila

49. When were you close to death or felt all was not worth living and you probably would die or be killed?

For 3 years -

50. Could you tell about any special religious observances by the enemy or special occurrence when they relaxed or tightened security rules?

Christmas they didn't bother us.

51. Would you describe in detail any particular holiday, if observed, by enemy or prisoners, such as, New Years or Christmas.

52. How did you feel about food in camp? How did enemy food agree with you? What was food? What were utensils? What did you make to eat with? Pots, pans, cups, plates?

*We had about 800 Cal. a day - rice, seaweed + potatoe ~~top~~ vines.
Some had mess kits, no knives or forks. Most were home made.*

53. Were you aware of any other American or Allied POW camps in your area? Civilian camps?

One civilian prison in Manila.

54. In reference to your mind or yourself, how do you feel you held up in camp? Did you suffer periods of depression, crying, hysteria, headaches, loss of memory, etc.? How about the other men in camp? How do you feel you and others were able to live without nervous breakdowns?

We had them -

55. How do you feel other American POW's behaved or acted while in enemy hands? Please do not name an individual by name if you feel their behavior was not correct or up to the standards you set for yourself.

95% were very good.

56. Towards the end of the war, what were first signs that the war was coming to an end in our favor?

Our planes

57. How did the enemy guards or administrative personnel treat you towards the end of the war or when it was apparent the enemy would lose the war?

Worse

58. Could you describe how your POW status ended?

Americans broke into our prison - killed the guards and took charge.

59. When or where did enemy guards leave? Did guards say or do anything at the end of the war?

60. What did the American staff at the camp do at the end of the war?

61. At the end of the war, where did you move? What was your food? Your health? Your morale?

We could eat very small amounts - I was 80% disabled - morale was high.

62. Could you describe some of the confusion that took place when you were liberated at the end of the war? Time, place, friendly or enemy forces involved, food, health, morale, POW discipline in camp, contact with U.S. military forces, etc.?

all mixed up -

63. After liberation or the war ending, what happened? Did you move as an individual or group, go by foot, train, bus? Where did you go, to another U.S. camp?

*as a group by trucks and then by planes
& ships.*

64. What happened at your camp prior to returning to the States? Did U.S. military officials interrogate you, examine you physically, give you food, clothing, etc.?

Yes

65. How, when and where did you arrive back in the United States? Did you stay at some camp? Did you go home by train?

Came to states on the Monterey, a large ship. was in Letterman Hospital 9 days - then flew home & then to an Army Hospital for 2 years.

66. What things today remind you of prison life in your day to day living?

None

67. Do you have any complaints about how you have been treated since your POW days?

No

68. Do you have a picture of yourself prior to being a POW, preferably a picture in uniform? Do you have a picture of yourself following the war? Do you have a picture of yourself and your family recently taken, or taken within recent years? Any or all of these pictures would be appreciated. They will be returned to you after we have made copies of them.

No

69. Do you have any copies of telegrams from the War Department or the U.S. Government regarding your becoming a POW? Or your release, or war time status as a POW? These or copies of these would be appreciated. If you wish them returned, they will be sent back to you.

No

70. Do you have any letters or copies of letters you sent home or received from home during war or during period you were a POW? These or copies of these would be appreciated. They also will be returned if you so indicate in your reply.

Yes

71. A few POW's were able to return to the U.S. or home with a few articles they may have made, been given or in some way secured in POW camp. Some of these could be: paper notes, camp regulations, clothing, cigarette lighter, insignia, hand made pans or pots, special cans used in camp, small tools, etc. If you have any of these, we would appreciate a picture of them. If you desire they could be sent with this report and we will take a picture of them and return them to you if you so desire.

None

72. The above questions or suggestions are limited and you may write or explain many items not included; therefore, feel free to express yourself in any manner you desire.

*How do I cover 3 years of prison on paper.
I was blind for 2 years & unable to walk and
I had lots of company. It is impossible for me
to put this on paper
Those of us still alive that were Jap POW's -
feel to be in a class by ourselves*

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