

The Silence of a Soldier
The Memoirs of a Bataan Death March Survivor
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This book is dedicated to Gertrude Merrill (nee Worfolk). This courageous woman remained loyal, loving, and hopeful during the long years of silence imposed on her beloved friend Bub, because of his imprisonment by the Japanese. This book is dedicated to all those courageous women who shared Gertrude's travail. They waited, hoped, and prayed that their loved ones would return. In Gertrude's case, her prayers were answered.

This book would not have materialized were it not for the complete cooperation of Smith (Bub) Merrill. When I first approached Bub about writing his story, he was reluctant. He did not think his experiences were worth a story. Also, these events happened so long ago, he didn't think he could remember events accurately. It was the Internet that would refresh Bub's interest and memories. The exchanges between old comrades brought to life the many events that Bub had suppressed for so many years. When I approached him again, he was very responsive. I believe that Bub's story is worth telling.

It will bring to our minds an understanding of the suffering and sacrifices endured by these silent soldiers.

I want to thank Treg Merrill for her kind support. She assisted in maintaining accuracy. Her proof reading was invaluable. I thank also my wife, Barbara, who made sure my sentence structure and spelling were correct. I owe a debt of gratitude to Robert H. Curran who artfully crafted the maps. They add greatly to the story. In a category all his own, I thank David W. St. John, Editor of Elderberry Press. His patience, humor and suggestions were constantly helpful toward completion of this book.

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Prologue

The day was cool and breezy. The sky was speckled with white fluffs of cotton. The bright sun rendered the clouds even more amorphous. "Mares" tails trailed high above; a premonition of troublesome weather ahead. My wife and I were visiting our home construction site high on a bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. The month was July. The year was 1997. We could not determine whether the construction had progressed or regressed. Such are the fits of anxiety suffered by most potential home owners. We talked ourselves into the dubious fact that indeed progress had been made. It was our hope to be in the house by mid-August.

As we left the site, we noticed a car in the driveway one lot down from us. There was an empty lot between our house and this newly built home. We could see an older couple sitting in the car. We pulled into the driveway to introduce ourselves. It was obvious that the couple were attacking McDonald hamburgers and fries

with a vengeance. We kept our introduction brief because we didn't wish to interrupt their lunch. The couple introduced themselves as Smith and Gertrude Merrill. As we prepared to make our departure, Gertrude said, "Now don't you mind us because we are kind of queer" With a chuckle we replied, "Well, aren't we all!" From that time on we became good neighbors; never intrusive, but always willing to lend a helping hand.

We moved into our home in mid-August. Since both our lawns were young, they needed some tender loving care. Bub (Smith) and Treg(Gertrude) Merrill were often outdoors working on the lawn or the flower bed. Bub and I would occasionally meet in the vacant field between our houses. We chatted about this and that, complained about the owner's association, talked about the lawns. I did not know at that time that Bub was a survivor of the Bataan Death March. He never mentioned it. It was a neighbor across the street who told me about Bub and Bataan. Being somewhat of a WW11 buff, Bub Merrill took on a new fascination for me.

Bub's formal name was Smith Merrill, the son of Laura and Leigh Merrill. This did not mean much to me at first until I made the connection that Bub's mother, Laura was the daughter of Christopher Smith, the founder of The ChrisCraft Corporation. As a child, I grew up in Detroit. Along the Detroit River, the names of ChristCraft and Gar Wood were household names, especially in the world of power boat racing. In the late summer of 1997, I read Mitch Albom's book, "Tuesdays With Morrie." It was a heart warming story about the relationship between a former student and a lovable professor in the last throes of a killing disease. The thought struck me that Bub Merrill was truly a wonderful subject for a book. His personal experiences as a Japanese prisoner of war would provide any reader with greater insights into the tragedy of the Bataan Death March and of Japanese imprisonment. There was just one problem; Bub was very reluctant to talk about it. He had taken great pains to block out from his memory these terrible experiences He was also afraid that he wouldn't be able to remember specific times and places. I did not press Bub any further, that summer. When the winds of October blow off Lake Michigan, it is time to head south. The snow blizzards are not far behind. We winter at Seabrook Island, a few miles south of Charleston, South Carolina. This area is one of God's garden spots known as "the low country". Bub and I would communicate via the Internet. Mostly, we would exchange the innumerable jokes that would float across our screens. Bub took an interest in the Internet. He made an effort to find some of his fellow prisoners. He was amazed to learn how much information about the Bataan Death March was available via the Internet. The Internet served as a key to open his memory. He began to remember more clearly the sad events of his life. As he sent and received information about fellow prisoners who shared similar experiences, the cloud of silence concerning these events began to lift.

The title, Silence Of A Soldier, has a twofold significance. When Bub was captured by the Japanese, a veil of silence lingered for four years. His mother and father had no word from him. The last word his beloved Gertrude would receive was a Christmas card from Del Carmen, Philippines, dated December 19, 1941. She would not hear from or about him until 1945. This remarkable young girl had a deep love for Bub. She knew in the depths of her heart Bub would return. She never faltered in this belief. The second aspect of this soldier's silence was that for many years after the war, Bub would not talk about The March nor his imprisonment. These memories were simply too painful. He blocked them from his mind. Only time would heal the scars inflicted upon his body and soul by a brutal and inhumane enemy.

The summers of 1998 and 1999 were spent pretty much the same We frequently saw Bub and Gertrude working outdoors. Our routines were occasionally broken by having lunch at one of our favorite hamburger joints. In the spring of 2000, I approached Bub once again about writing his story. He was quite responsive. He was willing to talk about his experiences. He felt he owed an accounting to his children. The story that unfolds is a true story. It reflects the memoirs of a man in his eighties. But, these memories are quite accurate when cross checked against the vast materials that are available. What unfolds is not a history or a chronology. It is anecdotal: the story of a young man caught up in the Japanese invasion of the Philippines and his subsequent imprisonment. It is a story of the will to survive expressed by the survivor. It is a remarkable story about a remarkable man; simple, honest, and courageous. He would blush at my use of these words. But, they are true.

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Before The War

In 1930, the Great depression was in full swing. The Worfolk family had moved from Detroit to Algonac Michigan. Many homes were lost during the depression. Gertrude Worfolk was ten years old. Although Gertrude's father had a good job with Hudson Motors, he could not sustain the mortgage payments. It was not uncommon in these hard times for families to move back in with the grandparents. Gertrude's grandmother had a spacious home in Algonac. Smith Merrill lived across the street from Gertrude. The advent of Gertrude would prove to be one of the most significant events in Smith Merrill's life.

Algonac, Michigan is a small town situated on the St. Clare River, across from Harsen's Island. Both sides of the Smith Merrills' family made a living on the water. Smith's (Bub's) grandfather, Christopher Smith, had his ChrisCraft plant in Algonac Bub's father, Leigh Merrill, was in the marina construction business.



At first, Gertrude and Bub were just neighbors. But, gradually, they became friends. The age difference between Bub and Gertrude was three years. In a town the size of Algonac, teenagers will pal around together regardless of the age differences. Bub and Gertrude became friends in just such a group.

Bub graduated from Algonac Highschool in 1934. Gertrude was finishing her freshman year. Gertrude was not a person to accept the ordinary. She did not like the nicknames, Gert or Trudy. With some imagination, she called herself Treg which is Gert spelled backwards. She informed the family of this when she was six years old. She was known as Treg from that time on. As the years drifted by slowly as they do when you are young,

Bub and Treg became very close friends. Bub took Treg to her senior prom. This was the first real date for both of them. From that time on they kept steady company.

After his graduation, Bub worked for his father at the Merrill Dredging Company. Bub was intent on learning the business from top to bottom. He did not want to go to college. Bub's uncle, John Wetzel, offered to send Bub to Engineering School. He graciously declined. Bub's eye doctor offered to pay for Bub's training in that field. Again, he declined. Bub admits that not going to college was one of his biggest mistakes. The truth is that Bub loved working with his father. They were not only son and father, but good friends.

One of Bub's primary jobs with his father was to pull scows with a 225hp Chriscraft Runabout out into the depths of Lake St. Clare. The scows would be filled with the dredging. After his work was finished, Bub would wander over to the Chriscraft shop. He was fascinated with marine engines. He learned as much as he could from the men in the shop. One evening as Bub left the shop for home, he noticed a fire underneath a staircase. Bub was able to put the fire out. There was a union strike at the plant which probably was the root of the trouble. His first cousin was grateful for Bub's action and offered him a position in the Chriscraft office. Bub preferred to work with his father and politely declined the offer. After Treg graduated from high school, she worked at the Chriscraft switchboard. Bub and Treg were never very far apart. Bub would often take a noon break to have lunch with Treg either on the Chriscraft pier or at the Merrill marina.

Bub's uncle John was a colorful man. He loved to wear a derby most of the day. One day, Bub told him how fine he looked in the derby. Whereupon, his uncle took the derby off and placed it on Bub's head. Bub wore the derby everywhere including at work. On one occasion when Bub and Treg were having lunch, Treg grabbed the derby and ran to her house. She could run every bit as fast as Bub. The house was a large old colonial two story with many rooms both upstairs and downstairs. Treg had the advantage because she knew all the hiding places. Bub chased Treg throughout the house; upstairs, downstairs, kitchen, dining room, bedrooms and closets. The derby was finally retrieved but only after each had collapsed from exhaustion. This story serves to point out that there was more than a little of the old nick in Treg. Her love of fun would stand her well for the years to come.

Bub did not speak very often about his parents. It is a silence born more out of love and respect than indifference. Gradually, after a few conversations, a sketch of each parent begins to shine through. Bub's father, Leigh Merrill, was a hard working man. The marina business during the Depression was at a low ebb. He served on the local school board for which he received fifty dollars annually. He always gave the money to the school superintendent to be given to the teacher most in need. He could have used the money himself, but he was concerned about those who were worse off than he. Bub's father had a terrible temper and swore like a trooper. But, beneath the rough facade was a man deeply concerned about the welfare of the townspeople. No one knew who or how many Leigh Merrill had helped through tough times. He invoked the strictest confidence.

Bub's mother, Laura was very similar to her husband when it came to the needs of others. She was very generous to anyone who was in need. She did not wait to be asked; but simply kept her eyes and ears open. In a small town, there are no secrets concerning whom might be in dire straights. Laura would do what she could unpretentiously. In difficult times Laura Merrill had a gift of remaining calm. She was a second mother to Treg. Treg describes Laura as a loving mother and wife. Her husband Leigh was her first and only love. She would say to Bub, "If you turn out as good a man as your father, you will be a great man". The friendship between Laura and Treg became a great source of comfort as they both faced the long silence of Bub as a Japanese prisoner.

This kindness and concern for others would be inherited by Bub. There was a group of native Americans on nearby Walpole Island. They were very poor. Bub would hire as many as he could in order for them to provide for their families. He treated them with fairness and more importantly with respect. This was not always the case with the townsfolk of Algonac. Bub tells the story of one very large native American. His name was Big John. He came to Walpole Island from Sault St. Marie. Big John could outwork any three men. He would carry an eight inch pipe twenty feet long through three feet of marina muck. Big John would on occasion run afoul of the law. Bar fights were his biggest problem. One Saturday night Big John wrecked a local bar. The police put him in jail. The next morning Bub went to the bar owner. He offered to pay for the damages if the owner would drop the charges. The damage was calculated at three hundred and fifty dollars. In those days that was a sizable sum. Bub paid and obtained the release of Big John. Within a few years Big John drifted away.

Bub was learning his father's business inside and out. His friendship with Treg had grown into a loving relationship. There was, however, a cloud on the horizon. Germany invaded Poland. England declared war. The US instituted the draft in preparation for America's inevitable involvement. The storm clouds would darken. Bub and Treg knew instinctively that their lives would change. Bub had a great survival kit. What he had learned from his father, his love for his mother, and his love for Treg would form the cornerstone of his struggle for survival.

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The Army

Bub received his draft notice in March, 1941. He and his Dad were involved in a major project to remove a sunken hulk from East Tawas Bay in Lake Huron. The hulk was a hazard to shipping. Bub requested and received a three month deferment. In June of 1941, he reported to the Ft. Wayne induction center in Detroit, Michigan. He said his good-byes to his Mom, Dad, and Treg in Algonac. The trip to Detroit was fifty miles. Little did he know as he held Treg tightly in his arms that he would see her only twice more before the bamboo curtain would cut him off from all means of communication with his friends, family, and Treg.

During the physical examination, the doctor was concerned about two things. Bub had his back tightly taped because of a fall two days earlier. He was removing a battery from the trunk of a car. He fell backwards with the battery in his lap. His back was very sore from the fall. The doctor was also concerned about the fact that both of Bub's eardrums had been ruptured. Two of many adventures on water skis resulted in the busted eardrums. Bub was careful to point out to the doctor that the back was healing quickly. As to the eardrums, they had been treated medically and presented no loss of hearing. Bub pleaded with the doctor that these minor conditions should not keep him out of the army. He could not live with himself if he did not do his duty. The doctor gave Bub a clean bill of health.

The army into which Bub was drafted was far from the caliber of today's army. The pre-war army of the late thirties and early forties was a conglomeration of malcontents, misfits, and social pariahs. The enlisted men were crude and uneducated, but quite skillful at goldbricking. The non-commissioned officers (NCOs) were not much better. They would march and drill the men; but cared little about them. The social life of the NCOs was a continual round of drinking, gambling and fighting. They also took great pride in conning the draftees out of as much as they could. The officers, from lieutenant through major developed their own ritual of survival. They did not know how to control the NCOs or the men; so they ignored them. The senior officers were the elite country club types. Some of them would rise to greatness during the war. One has to wonder why the Marshalls, MacArthurs, Eisenhowers, Pattons, and others would let the US army deteriorate to such a low level. In this environment, Bub developed a healthy dislike for the army.

The same evening of Bub's physical examination, He left for Ft. Grant, outside of Chicago. It was not so much a boot camp as a center to identify the specific skills of the draftees. From there, the men would be sent to camps which had a specific mission. It was very early in the morning when the train from Detroit pulled into Ft. Grant. The sergeant in charge asked for volunteers for KP duty. The understanding was that those who volunteered would be excused from the morning drills. Bub was not very sleepy. He volunteered. His job was to crack open several crates of eggs for the morning breakfast. There was a specific procedure. A bucket was placed on each side of the cracker who sat with another bucket between his legs. Picking up an egg in each hand, the eggs were cracked on the edge of each bucket. The shells were deposited in the bucket between the legs. The sergeant in charge supervised several operations. He spotted Bub standing up and stirring one of the buckets. "Hey soldier, What are you doing there?" Bub explained that one of the eggs had feathers on it. He was trying to find it." Hell, soldier, don't worry about that, this is the army and the men will eat anything."

Bub went to sleep about four AM. At six AM the sergeant came roaring through the barracks. He awakened everyone for the morning drill. Bub told the sergeant that he was one of the KP volunteers. He shouldn't have to drill. The sergeant yelled, "This is the army, everybody drills!" Bub felt he had been lied to. After the drill, he walked straight to the Colonel's office. The desk sergeant said, "What's up soldier?" Bub replied, "I want to see the Colonel!" "No way soldier, he's busy." Bub walked over to the Colonel's door and opened it. The Colonel was sitting at his desk with his feet propped up. Bub saluted the officer and said "Sir, I volunteered for

KP this morning with the understanding I would be excused from morning drill. The sergeant did not keep his word. Now, if it is OK for the army to lie to me, I assume it is OK for me to lie to the army. I don't think that is a healthy relationship." The Colonel said, "Go back to the sergeant and tell him you are excused from drilling the rest of the day." Bub returned to the sergeant and informed him of the Colonel's orders. The sergeant was enraged. Bub was taught by his Dad that a man must keep his word. He would pay for this moment of truth.

During the various drills, all of which were new to Bub, the sergeant put him through the traces. "OK soldier, you messed that up. Put on your knapsack and we will run around that track over there." Gradually, the sergeant fell farther and farther behind. From a distance, Bub could hear the sergeant's voice call out, "OK soldier, that's enough, fall out!" After that, the harassment dwindled considerably.

After two weeks at Ft. Grant, Bub was transferred to Ft. Leonard Wood, a camp which hosted several engineering groups. Bub's experience with earth moving equipment was the primary reason for this assignment. He would spend two and one half months at Leonard Wood. Boot camp training became more intensive. Bub was finally issued a rifle; a WW I Springfield. Marching, drilling, and firing the rifle were much of the routine. On the firing range Bub achieved a badge for expert marksmanship. On one occasion overnight maneuvers were ordered. Apparently, no one bothered to listen to the weather reports. The men put up their pup tents on a field adjacent to one of Missouri's small rivers. A thunderstorm hit around midnight. The river overflowed its banks, flooded the field, swept away the tents, and buried the rifles in mud. The men sat on nearby picnic tables waiting for the waters to subside. Cleaning the muddied rifles became the main chore for the next day.

The sergeant in charge was looking for a man who could operate a gasoline powered shovel. Bub volunteered because of his experience with large machinery. He was instructed to fill a dump truck with either dirt or gravel, take the load to a construction site and offer it to the construction crews. He filled up the truck with dirt, drove it around to the construction sites and offered the load to the crews. There were no takers. He drove the truck back to where he got the dirt. He dumped the dirt and filled the truck with gravel. He drove the truck to the various construction sites. Again, there were no takers. All day long Bub drove back and forth with alternative loads of dirt and gravel. Load it up, drive it around, take it back and dump it. It was rare that anyone wanted either the dirt or the gravel. One good thing about the job was that Bub could hit the mess hall for lunch and for dinner when it best suited him. For two and one half months he performed his job meticulously, seasoned with occasional drills and rifle practice.

Bub's parents drove from Algonac to Ft. Leonard Wood. The ever faithful Treg was their companion. Given the absence of interstate highways the trip took two and one half days. Motels were few and far between. Lodgings were hard to find. On the first evening a farmhouse could accommodate the trio. The house had a spare bedroom. Leigh and Laura were the prime candidates. The lady of the house had a sewing room in which there was a cot. Treg gladly accepted the room. She was young and could sleep on almost anything. What did she care; she was on her way to see Bub. Treg had a wonderful relationship with Leigh and Laura. They were very considerate of her needs and her feelings. The visit was truly a happy family reunion.

From Ft. Leonard Wood Bub went to Westover Field, Massachusetts. The troops were trucked to Chicago where they boarded a train for New York. From New York they caught another train to Westover Field. The train was loaded with soldiers and sailors. There were no sleeping accommodations for the entire trip of two full days. They slept where they sat. A dining car was on board, but the soldiers ate only what they could afford which was very little. At Westover Field the 803rd Aviation Engineers was formed. Bub was assigned to B company. Rifles (still WW I Springfields) and winter clothes were issued. Then they were told that they would be going to the Pacific. So much for the winter clothing. They lollered around Westover Field for two weeks.

The only eventful thing about Westover was the visit by Treg and Laura. Leigh drove the ladies to Detroit where they boarded The Wolverine, an overnight train to New York. The ladies had berths, but the train was filled with military personnel. It was a challenge for the ladies to change discreetly into sleeping garments. Beyond the frail barrier of heavy curtains was the hustle and bustle of the soldiers and sailors. Actually, the men were extremely polite to Laura and Treg. The ladies reminded them of their own mother and sister. The ladies were thrilled with the excitement of seeing Bub. Again, the visit was a delightful family affair. Bub missed his Dad who could not get away from work. When the time came to say goodbye, he kissed his Mom. He then held Treg ever so tightly as if he had a premonition of the next few months. Little did Bub and Treg know that this would be their last kiss for some four years.

From Westover Field, the troops were sent by train to Ft. McDowell, an island outside of San Francisco. Winter clothing was exchanged for tropical wear. The men marched and drilled in their newly acquired clothes. There were no laundry facilities at Ft. McDowell. The laundry was stuffed into barrack bags and sent to the Alcatraz prison laundry. It so happened that a riot broke out in the prison laundry. The clothes were laundered but were dumped into one huge pile at the foot of the Ft McDowell flag pole. The men had to rumage through the pile with the hope of reclaiming socks, shorts, undershorts, and outerwear. It was not easy to find the appropriate fit. One man was quite large. There was only one pair of trousers that would fit him. He reclaimed them but one leg was missing from the knee down. He marched and drilled and went to mess with the one legged trousers. Officers would, of course, upbraid him. He would simply say, "Sir, If you can find me a pair of trousers that will fit me, I will be happy to replace these." The men began to exchange clothes. The short ones wore clothes that belonged to the tall ones. The tall ones wore clothes that belonged to the short ones. Peals of laughter could be heard as the men paraded in these ill-fitting uniforms. The officers suspected that some collusion among the men had taken place.

The 803rd was at Ft. McDowell for a short time; two weeks at the most. The NCOs tried to con the men into buying all sorts of useless things; jackets, knives and bayonets. Bub wouldn't buy anything from them. He knew the proceeds were needed to pay gambling debts.



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The Philippines

The 803rd left Ft. McDowell near the first of November, 1941. The troop ship, Tasker H. Bliss awaited the men at a San Francisco pier. The Bliss was the former ocean liner, The President Cleveland. Bub was chosen for M.P. duty. This was fortunate because the MP quarters were aft, separated from the rest of the troops. A large room housed the MPs; each having his own cot. They also had their own latrine. The rest of the troops slept on army cots crammed into the hold of the ship.

Passing under the Golden Gate Bridge was a beautiful sight. One not to be enjoyed again until four years had passed. The sky was a light blue and the sea a dark green. A breeze was playing with the wings of the gulls. The ship cut through the water like a knife through butter. One day out and this would change dramatically. A severe storm came up suddenly. The ship was buffeted with fourteen foot waves. Seasickness was rampant. The latrine floors were covered with the fluids from retching stomachs. Bub was not prone to seasickness. His many years on the Great Lakes had given him worthy sealegs. The mess hall was empty. Bub had a great choice of food from a lineless buffet. The food aboard the ship was far better than what the army had provided to date.

The 803rd had its equipment stored on the foredeck of the ship; bulldozers, graders, dump trucks, and power shovels were rolling freely back and forth with the roll of the ship. Help was needed to lash down the equipment. Bub volunteered. It was impossible to secure the machinery because of the pitch and roll of the ship. Bub asked an officer to have the Captain head the ship directly into the wind. The Captain not only steered the ship into the wind but also slowed the ship down. After four hours of intense work, Bub and his crew were able to secure the equipment. Bub's job as an M.P. was to protect the nurses quarters from possible intruders. The nurses were young women on their way to wonderful times in Manila. Their deepest wishes were that they might meet attractive officers with whom they could share their lives. Sometimes they would leave their cabin in the evening to catch the fresh sea breezes. Always pleasant and proper, they liked to chat with Bub about their hopes and dreams. Little did they realize how their dreams would be shattered, how dreadful their lives would be, when Manila fell to the Japanese.

The ship made a port of call at Honolulu on its way to the Philippines. The soldiers put on their best attire with the expectations of going ashore. They learned quickly that only the officers were given shore leave. The problem was that a few ships before had let the soldiers go ashore. It took days for the Shore Police to round them up. Most of them were quite drunk. What Bub saw of Honolulu was from the ship's railing. Occasionally, a launch with hula dancers aboard would circle the ship as a ritual of welcome. So much for Bub's adventures in Honolulu. When the ship pulled into Manila harbor, the troops disembarked. They were loaded into trucks and transported to Ft. Stotsenburg in the Philippine interior. What they saw of Manila was through the truck's tarpaulin. The 803rd would stay at Ft Stotsenburg for five days. There was no marching or drilling. The men were not allowed outside the compound. Time and inactivity increased the anxiety that began to build up. But, this would be short lived.

The 803rd was ordered to Del Carmen, a sugar plantation. (See maps and notes at end of chapter.) The mission was to build an air strip. In addition to their construction machinery, they were issued WWI Springfield rifles. They had little else with which to defend themselves. The "Aviation" Engineers began construction of the airfield. Del Carmen had new barracks. The roofs were thatched. The bunks were reasonably comfortable. The men were at Del Carmen for six weeks. During this time Pearl Harbor was bombed. Bub was on a grader when the first Zeroes flew over. They bombed and strafed the field. Bub's first instinct was to take cover in the sugar cane field. He soon discovered that the cane was very poor cover from the Zero's machine guns. The fox hole was far better and Bub learned exactly where the fox holes were dug. On one occasion a Zero was strafing the airfield. Bub and a few others rose from their fox holes. They hid behind a large Palm tree. When the Zero made another sortie, the men fired their rifles. The Zero was hit and crashed. The men ran to the downed Zero. They put out the fire and retrieved the machine gun. It became their main defense against the Zeroes. On another occasion when the Zeroes flew over, the men remained on their machines. They had learned that the Japanese were not the greatest marksmen. For his bravery under fire, Bub would receive the Bronze Star and the Silver Star with the Oak Leaf Cluster.

American fighters began to use the airfield. The dust was kept at a minimum by treating the surface of the field with molasses. As the day heated up, the molasses would seep further into the dirt. A junior officer got the bright idea to put the molasses on the thatched roofs of the barracks to camouflage them. He also ordered the

barracks bags and rifle to be brought out of the barracks and placed underneath the thatch overhangs. As the day heated up, the molasses moved downward toward the edge of the thatch. From there it dripped on the bags and the rifles. It took hours to clean the rifles. It took days and several washings to get the molasses out of the clothing in the duffel bags.

Bub and a crew of four engineers were sent about twelve miles south of Del Carmen to begin construction of a new airfield. The field would be quite close to the northern part of Bataan. After a full days work, the men would usually, but not always, return to Del Carmen for food and sleep. One of Bub's officers was a ROTC man. When it came to construction problems, he consulted with Bub. He was a fine leader of men. When the Zeroes flew over to bomb and strafe, the officer remained at his desk and sang at the top of his voice, "This is not my home, I am just passing through", a hymn of great beauty. When the Japanese invasion of the Philippines began, the mission of the 803rd changed to keeping the road open between Del Carmen and Bataan. The hope was that vital supplies for the men on Bataan would be trucked down this road. The supplies never came.

Notes:

1. Ft. Stotsenberg was in the southeastern part of Pampanga Province-The Philippines. It is referred to in Gavin Daws, "Prisoners Of The Japanese", New York, William Morrow &Co.1944, p.62

2. Del Carmen was a sugarcane plantation ten miles due west of Ft. Stotsenberg and ten miles north of the Bataan peninsula. The 803rd Aviation Engineers built an airstrip at Del Carmen. It is referred to by Ray C. Scott, "Behind Enemies Lines", University Press of Kentucky,1986, p.7. Scott refers to the strip as a sugarcane field where the P40 squadron landed its planes.

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