

BATAAN AFTERMATH

Part I — Filipino Hostages in Japan

By Mariano Villarín

Bloomington, Minnesota

After the fall of Bataan and Corregidor, some 12,000 American and 75,000 Filipino prisoners of war (POW's) were herded into Camp O'Donnell. Here, some 33,000 died during the first few months of captivity. This appalling figure will remain etched in the memory of those of us who survived.

It was at this stage that the Japanese forces began a series of moves to utilize the surviving Filipino POW's in some form or another, rather than lose them at O'Donnell from the ravages of malaria, dysentery and starvation. Most of the American POW's had already been shipped to Japan and Manchuria to work at the mines, airfields and war production plants; others had been sent to Cabanatuan, Bilibid and Davao. The Filipino POW's were being "paroled" to show the extend of Japanese "magnanimity, benevolence and generosity" and, according to them, to help in the rehabilitation of the puppet Philippine Republic.

I still remember the statements that the Japanese forced all Philippine Army (PA) and Philippine Scouts (PS) personnel to sign while at O'Donnell. These statements were:

1. That I shall never raise arms against the Imperial Japanese Forces.
2. That I shall never attempt to escape from this camp or any other camp to which I may be assigned.
3. That any refusal to obey orders of any Japanese soldier will be considered a hostile act.
4. That all prisoners committing hostile acts or attempting to escape will be shot.

One of the projects of the Japanese was the establishment of the Bureau of Constabulary (BC) to maintain a semblance of law and order in the various Philippine cities and provinces. They felt that the best nucleus for this force would be the able bodied survivors from Bataan and Corregidor who were still at O'Donnell. Since there was no response from volunteers, the dreaded Japanese Kempei Tai (Military Police) took over and made the selection themselves. I was in a group of about 500 POW's selected and sent to Camp Dau, near Clark Field, in box cars under heavy guard for our first indoctrination that lasted three months.

It was here that we POW's discussed our future among ourselves and agreed that, since we had no choice, having Filipino policemen in towns was far better than having a garrison of Japanese troops who were living off the land, humiliating a vanquished population, and molesting our "magandang dalagas" (pretty girls). The humiliation consisted mostly of Filipinos being slapped in the face whenever they passed Japanese soldiers without bowing. We felt that United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFPE) veterans would serve as an effective "buffer" between the Japanese military forces and the local population.

Russell Brines, an Associated Press correspondent stranded in Manila, interned at Santo Tomas University, and repatriated on the exchange ship Gripsholm, wrote a book during the war entitled *Until They Eat Stones*. In his book he referred to the BC as the "hostage army." Excerpts from it read as follows:

"Filipino soldiers who survived the weary days of Bataan share the accumulated misery of prison camps with their American comrades; shared it until their spirits were so broken that no price seemed too great for release. There was a price when thousands of them finally were granted "freedom" — continued military service under the Japanese.

"Propagandists screamed about the "generosity" of this policy . . . They were not interested in humanitarianism or in winning popular support by freeing war captives. They wanted trained men for their new army . . . Those whose pro-Americanism or anti-Japanism had not been destroyed by hardship were left to rot, at least until they were more amenable. Several thousand were involved in the widely publicized releases, occurring every few months, usually one thousand at a time. Many were required to report for constabulary duty . . . The remainder, most of whom were ill, were given more time.

"Before the war, that organization was the police force for the archipelago's outlying districts, with a deserved reputation for integrity and bravery. Today it is the openly labeled army of the bogus
12 — The Quan

"republic." It will be sent to the battle-front when Allied forces attack the Philippines . . . Behind the Filipino troops will be Japanese machine guns."

The above expressed the author's fear, which never really materialized. Except for perhaps a handful, who even then did not fight the Allied forces, the BC was mainly anti-Japanese, deserting at appropriate moments. The desertions with arms of the entire BC force in Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija province, in 1944 were only one of several instances in the archipelago.

The paragraphs excerpted above were corroborated by Dr. Alvin C. Poweleit in his recent book USAFFE. He was among the last American POW's to leave Camp O'Donnell for Cabanatuan. Entries in his diary quoted in his book read as follows:

"January 2, 1943 — On this day large

numbers of Filipino patients were discharged to subgroups for military training.

"January 9, 1943 — Fifteen men were released from our hospital to the subgroup. Also 500 men were released to the constabulary, and 3,000 were to be used for the Imperial Guard."

From Camp Dau I was sent to the BC Academy No. 3 in Caloocan with 300 other POW's for three months' training under the Kempei Tai. When they asked me if my father and two younger sisters were still living at the same address in Manila, I realized that they were ready for reprisals on families of those who decided to take to the hills. The addresses and names of members of families of those conscripted at O'Donnell was apparently on file at Kempei Tai headquarters. Since the PA personnel records had been taken to Bataan and burned before the surrender, it dawned on me that the information on families had been apparently furnished by Japanese civilians who lived in prewar Philippines. They were gardeners, carpenters, fishermen and businessmen, most of whom held reserve commissions in the Imperial Japanese Army. The most notorious of them was the owner of the Mori Bicycle Store in downtown Manila, who at one time was the commandant of the POW camp at Cabanatuan. Apparently, a Japanese named Hashimoto, who operated a "halo halo" (refreshment) store a few doors down the street where I lived, must have furnished information about me and my family to the Kempei Tai. His family knew my family. They used to see me daily going to work in my PA uniform.

At the training camp we were roughed up and a lot of faces were slapped when we failed to understand or obey Japanese military commands. They practiced their favorite judo tricks at our expense. But we had a few choice words for them in Tagalog which, luckily, they did not understand. One of the most tiring routines was the Japanese goose step during drills. As punishment for mistakes committed by a POW, the entire company would be made to run around the streets of Caloocan for miles until a dozen or so would drop from exhaustion.

The armed Japanese MP's at the academy would always manage to outlast any of us when it came to long distance running. They were well fed, while our meals were rationed. Besides, we were just recovering from a long siege of starvation while at O'Donnell, not to mention malaria and dysentery. These had been preceded by a two-meal a day diet of mostly "lugao" (rice soup with little milk) on Bataan and Corregidor since February 1942. My occasional detail as kitchen police helped me considerably as I managed to steal bananas and eggs intended for the Japanese mess.

Some of the POW's in our group

(Continued on Page 13)

managed to contact emissaries of guerrilla units from the respective provinces. We were told to stay where we were and obtain information on the Japanese for transmittal to the guerrillas. Somebody had to be on the other side as the "inside" men. We were never bothered by guerrilla units because they knew we were all USAFFE personnel biding time. At this time, we were aware of hundreds of executions by decapitation daily. Young starving Filipinos would trespass into Japanese camps for the purpose of scavenging through garbage cans. When caught, the poor fellows would face the samurai sword without any trial.

Not content with the Philippine projects then in effect, the Japanese Military Administration took an additional step to insure the cooperation of the Filipinos. They decided to send a representative group to Japan consisting of PA commissioned personnel paroled from O'Donnell and now in the BC, and young civilians whose fathers had no choice but to serve under the puppet regime. How I was selected from among thousands in the BC I'll never know.

There must have been some 60 Filipino hostages in different locations in Japan when the program was in full swing, and many more were being sent from Manila. One of the early civilian hostages was the son of Chief Justice Jose Abad Santos of the Supreme Court who had been executed by the Japanese for refusing to cooperate. There were many high ranking figures summarily executed during the occupation, including five paroled Filipino West Pointers who had served on Bataan and Corregidor (Brigadier General Fidel Segundo, Commander of the First PA Regular Division, and Colonels Eustaquio Baclig, Juan Moran, Pastor Martelino and Alejandro Garcia). Brigadier General Vicente Lim, the first Filipino West Pointer and Commander of the 41st PA Division, was killed in action on Bataan.

The noncooperative attitude of the Filipinos was very evident. Those who were not formal members of clandestine or guerrilla organizations resisted the Japanese in their characteristically Filipino ways — warning guerrillas of Japanese troop movements, furnishing aid, shelter and supplies to such guerrillas, and playing docile in the eyes of the Japanese but planning mischief behind their backs, such as stabbing a Japanese soldier in some dark alley. The Japanese felt that one good way to make the Filipinos cooperate, or keep them from going underground, was to hold the sons of important people as hostages by sending them to Japan as "students". The POW's were part of the scheme since the Japanese also wanted to win the military over on their side. The Japanese called it "spiritual rejuvenation" in order to cleanse from our system the remaining vestiges of American influence. They

claimed that Uncle Sam had poisoned our minds and they wanted to show their generosity to their fellow orientals by teaching them the Japanese language, culture and history.

There were 30 of us selected to form the first group. We underwent rigorous "brainwashing" and were held in seclusion for two months before sailing for Japan. The civilian group included the son of President Jose Laurel, two sons of Chairman Jorge Vargas of the Executive Commission, and the scions of two of the most powerful families of the Muslim provinces of Cotabato and Sulu in Mindanao. Then there was Benjamin "Benjo" Osias. The son of the Minister of Education, Benjo had spent seven months in Fort Santiago following his capture by the Kempei Tai for his guerrilla activities with Hunter's ROTC and also Cushing's guerrilla units.

Minister Camilo Osias was the Propaganda Minister in President Manuel Quezon's cabinet at the time of Pearl Harbor. Because of his position, the Kempei Tais were out looking for him during the occupation. He had been in hiding, and to save him from execution in the event of capture, President Laurel made him the Minister of Education. Benjo's older brother, Victor, a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, had served on Bataan and Corregidor with the Philippine Air Force. The designation of the new Minister of Education was apparently instrumental in the release of Benjo from Fort Santiago. For Benjo, being one of the hostages to Japan was far better than facing execution or death from starvation in Fort Santiago.

President Laurel's main objective was the survival of the Filipino people. At great personal risk, he staunchly refused to declare war against the United States which the Japanese had prevailed him to do. He successfully resisted Japanese insistence that he allow Filipinos to be conscripted for the Japanese Army. He absolutely refused both demands in the Philippines and even later in Japan when he was held hostage with his family. A man of integrity, courage, and intellect, he was well liked and respected by his people — guerrillas as well as nonguerrillas.

A publication written by Grant Goodman entitled "An Experiment in Wartime Intercultural Relations: Philippine Students in Japan 1943-1945, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University 1962" is quoted below:

"Most of the interviewees . . . expressed the opinion that they had been chosen by the Japanese as hostages. . . on the other hand many of those interviewed mentioned that their families encouraged them to go, believing that they might be safer in Japan than in the Philippines.

"The reactions among the Constabulary group were . . . 'I was completely against it. I was sick with malaria which was recurring and tried to allege this as an

excuse, but we had to be very careful.'

"More than one of the Constabulary group claimed they had gone into the program with the encouragement of the guerrillas who needed Japanese language experts and who were eager for information on the internal situation of Japan, the idea apparently being that the BC students would go to Japan, learn the language, learn as much as they could about conditions within Japan, and on returning to the Philippines would slip away and join the guerrillas."

Since there was no way out of this so-called spiritual rejuvenation, those of us from the military held secret meetings to work out certain objectives to make good use of our stay in Japan for the USAFFE cause.

Captain Elpidio "Duke" Duque, the ranking officer of our group, was voted the leader of the entire group. He had been a professor of mathematics at the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio and, by an odd twist of fate, he ended up in an unseemly capacity of a combat lieutenant in command of an artillery unit (PA), attached to a U.S. Army (PS) unit on Fort Drum just off Corregidor. It was a mission with a detachment of PS soldiers that won Lt. Duque and his intrepid Scouts the U.S. Silver Star for gallantry in action. They volunteered for that mission. Besides recommending them for the decoration, the Fort Commander, Colonel Boudreau, promoted Duke to Captain. Here was a brilliant scholar who had ranked highest in his classes throughout his schooling and ultimately graduated cum laude with a degree in mechanical engineering. He even ranked the highest in the cadet entrance examination to represent the Philippines at West Point but he already had a scholarship at the University of the Philippines, and declined the appointment. Duke is now a retired PA Colonel.

Our objectives, as outlined by Duke, were to be accomplished subtly, although some were to be done openly and the others secretly. The objectives were to (1) foil attempts to make us subservient, or to Japanize us; (2) win the Japanese to free, democratic American ways; (3) sow a spirit of dissension among the Japanese; and (4) engage in espionage when ever possible. While in Japan, we carried out the first three rather openly, and although planned to be accomplished subtly, our activities in this regard brought some of us into unpleasant situations due to impulsiveness or sheer carelessness. The last objective, of course, was carried out secretly.

We sailed from Manila Bay on the Miike Maru on July 9, 1943, arriving at Moji, Japan, two weeks later after following a zigzag route to evade American submarines. We were lucky not to share the same fate of three other Marus which were torpedoed by American planes or submarines, and thousands of American

(Continued from Page 13)

POW's on their way to Japan were killed or drowned.

After two days out of Manila Bay I was thrown into a cubbyhole in the hold of the ship. The Japanese said something about a diary. My diary was missing from my personal belongings. I put two and two together. They kept me in that little compartment until we approached Moji, Japan. Not to be outdone, I started another diary in Japan. This diary contained the usual inflammatory stuff, besides three entries on Tokyo Rose in Radio Tokyo in 1943 and 1944.

The Japanese showed us around military installations, airbases and war plants. We were unusually observant — with ulterior motives. We saw some American POW's working at the Kawasaki Iron Works and at the Shinagawa railroad station. I'm sure they realized we were Filipinos on their side after a surreptitious exchange of "V" signs. If they only knew we had served with them on Bataan and Corregidor.

Back in our confinement quarters in Tokyo, Duke and the rest of us would exchange notes and commit to memory the strategic locations of military places we had visited. Captain Duque and Benjo Osias even made drawings of bomb targets on two separate sheets which, when overlaid, pinpointed choice targets for bombing. Benjo's architectural drawings supported by the trigonometric abilities of Duke provided the answer.

To avenge the loss of Bataan and Corregidor, the atrocities during the march, the starvation and beatings at O'Donnell, the barbaric treatment of our civilian population during the occupation, and the rape of our women, and to prove our loyalty to the USAFFE, we had no recourse but to engage in subversive activities while in the enemy homeland and obtain as much intelligence information as possible for transmittal to General MacArthur's headquarters at the proper time. It was the most we could do for the USAFFE while we were in Japan as hostages. Besides, we just could not reconcile ourselves to the Japanese way of thinking and their ideologies.

We were aware of the "I Shall Return" matchbooks circulated by the guerrillas in Manila as early as 1943. We knew he was coming back. MacArthur had served in the Philippines a long time and he loved the Islands. He organized the PA into 10 divisions and was a very close friend of President Quezon. His father had been the Commanding General of the Philippine Department. Douglas MacArthur was like a national hero to the Filipinos. We revered the man. When he "returned" on his last sentimental journey to the Philippines in the late 50's, 1.5 million Filipinos gave him a tumultuous welcome in Manila as the liberator of the Philippines. MacArthur exemplified the fighting soldier who refused to die. He lived up to

14 — The Quan



For Part 1

Villarín (center) with the Philippine Army in prewar days.

his self-built reputation that old soldiers never die. He just faded away.

When General Masaharu Homma, the conqueror of the Philippines, heard that PA survivors from Bataan and Corregidor were in Tokyo as "students," he invited us for an informal visit. Our Japanese "supervisors" took us to Homma's place and also to Premier Hideki Tojo to pay our "respects." Big deal. Down deep inside of us we were giving the Japanese military clique in power the Bronx cheer. Both were hanged later for war crimes. Homma was responsible for the death march, and Tojo for starting the war.

After a few months in Tokyo, we were pretty well fed up with our regimented life. The Japanese had completely failed in converting us to their way of life. Although we received better treatment than our American POW counterparts, the humiliations and undue hardships were something else. Knowing that they wanted to win us over to their side, we continued to resist within the bounds of discretion.

They really tried to make us subservient. Twice a day we had to perform the ceremony of facing toward the Emperor's palace and executing a 90-degree bow; they made us take part in Buddhist and Shinto ceremonies in their temples even if we were of other religions; they made us run for miles to purge the last traces of American influence from our systems once and for all; and then there were the frustrating and time-consuming "tenkos" and "bangos" (roll call and count) for just a small group. We had to do it right if it took a dozen times. Entries such as "hungry today" or "could not eat Japanese food" were very common in my diary.

Among the students from Japanese-occupied countries (Burma, Thailand, Java, Sumatra, Annam, etc.), the Filipinos became notorious as the most rebellious group at the International School for the Japanese Language. With Captain Duque as our spokesman, we

argued with our Japanese "supervisors" to do away with our daily marchings in formation to school and return, to allow us greater freedom during our off-hours, and to ease other rules which we considered oppressive or unreasonable. We won our points. They even allowed us to attend Mass at a nearby Catholic church where the German priest recited his sermons in Japanese. The group of 17 younger civilians staged numerous student strikes.

There were daily cases of insubordination and discontentment. The most daring was the case of Jose Ungria who attempted to escape. He got as far as the northern island of Hokkaido, then to Sakhalin near Siberia, in order to get to Russia but was captured and brought back to Tokyo. It was a Japanese girl friend whom Jose had befriended during his attempted escape who gave him away to the police. His life was spared because of the promise made by the Japanese to the puppet Philippine regime not to harm, but to indoctrinate, the Filipino students. There was also a time when, at Duke's call, we staged a silent strike, a sort of ostracism, directed against our Japanese "honcho," whereby we refused to talk to him. This ostracism proved so effective that he was forced to plead with us later.

The civilian group staged two strikes in July and October of 1943; more in the schools to which they were "deported" from Tokyo. Mariano Laurel, the son of the President, led the young civilians the way Duke led our military group. The students figured that the Japanese had sent them to Japan as tools for propaganda. In turn, the student leaders decided the Japanese could not afford to take drastic action against them without defeating the propaganda purpose for bringing them to Japan. In any case, when you are young, you think you are indestructible. It can happen to others — but never to you.

After our "graduation" from the language school, our military group remained in Tokyo for further police training. The rebellious civilian group led by young Laurel was dispersed and its members were sent to various schools throughout Japan for specialized training. Being younger and more impulsive, they continued to get into trouble not only with their Japanese superiors but also with the police.

For example, Pet Vallejo walked out of the classroom at Kurume one day in May of 1944 following an argument with the instructor and refused to attend classes for more than a week until the school authorities and four Filipino classmates prevailed on him to return. They had a wilder scheme in mind. This group, led by Benjo, planned an "AWOL" from Kurume. They were arrested by the Jumamoto police, 70 miles away, where they had gone ostensibly to return a previous visit by Cesar Alzona, who was then assigned to Kumamoto. Actually, they went to spy out an

(Continued on Page 15)

(Continued from Page 14)

aerodrome Alzona had seen.

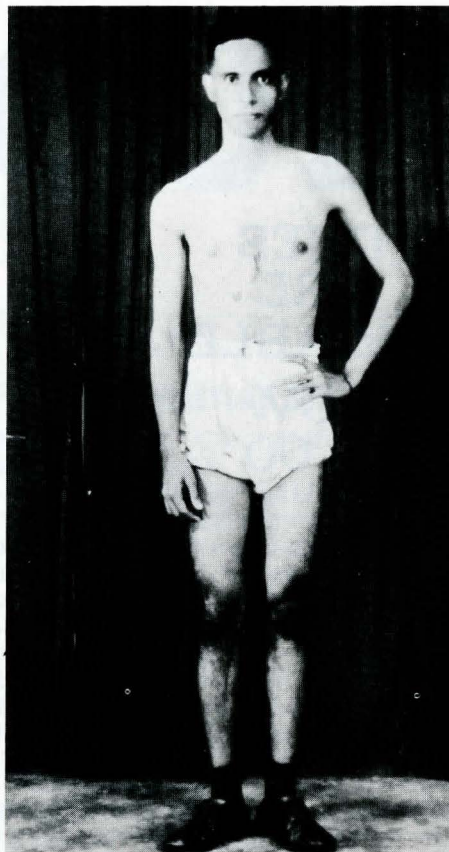
Alzona himself was arrested at Kurume and was returned to Kumamoto on representations of the school authorities. In his letter to our leader, Duke, Alzona also stated that another purpose of the visits with him of other Filipinos and one Burmese was to finalize plans of simultaneous student strikes and organization of anti-Japanese associations of Asiatics in their schools and to exchange information they had gathered regarding military and allied war matters.

On another occasion, three of our young boys at the Yokohama Police Academy got out of the compound by climbing over the wall, and sought sanctuary at the Philippine Embassy. Ambassador Vargas talked them out of staying and, in order not to put the embassy in bad light, they agreed to return voluntarily. The Japanese police lined them up against the wall and practiced their samurai sword thrusts, holding their hairbreath strike when the blades were directly above their scalp. It goes without saying they had the fright of their lives.

In July 1944 Ungria was recalled to Tokyo from his schooling in Hiroshima, followed by Alzona from Kumamoto, and by Benjo Osias, Vallejo and a Japanese from Kurume. They were branded as bad influence on the other students, having led strikes in their schools which were joined in by some Japanese sympathizers. Back in Tokyo, they were secluded in the "rebels' dormitory" at Kashiwagi, Higashi Okubo. These young rebels confided to us military elders information of military value that they had gathered as they moved away from the narrow confines of their schools and dormitories by fraternizing with Japanese Christians and other groups. Benjo also got in touch with the dreaded Black Dragon Society, which was dedicated to protecting the Emperor from the military. He promised to keep Duke informed on developments regarding this contact. Suddenly, the military group was ordered back to Manila.

Having failed with the first batch, the Japanese in the Philippines started recruiting a second batch. The arrival of this second group of students from Manila in June 1944 resulted in coordinated activities with those of us from the first group. The new group also had its share of "agitators" and "spies" and their influence spread to students from other Japanese-controlled territories. They staged a strike in October 1944 because they had been denied permission by the school authorities to put up posters on the bulletin boards about the religion, customs and culture of Philippines.

On another occasion they boycotted an athletic meet in 1944 where Japanese students and those from Japanese-controlled territories were scheduled to participate. Japanese students were looking forward to seeing the Filipinos in action



"Paroled" Villarín

again after the latter had registered the highest number of points at the athletic competition the year before. They were disappointed. Not one Filipino showed up. (On a trip to Manila with the American delegation of Bataan and Corregidor survivors to commemorate Bataan Day in April 1977, I visited with a group of students who had been with me in Japan. Pisto Tijam of the second group told me that the reason for the boycott was that they did not want to take part in one of the events where the pictures of President Roosevelt and Premier Churchill were hung in effigy as targets for bayonet practice. The students were supposed to make a bayonet thrust for so many points.)

The anti-Japanese efforts of the students got a boost in November 1944 when we, the elders, were already back in the Philippines. Nine youngsters were enrolled at the Japanese Imperial Military Academy. In February 1945, 11 more Filipinos joined them. By this enrollment, the Filipinos gained access to secret military maps and other matters unknown to the ordinary Japanese. This information was sent out through the Burmese military attache. The information gathered by the students was promptly turned over to the U.S. Occupation Forces when they landed in Japan.

Because of the forceful assurance that Captain Duque had given G-2 and CIC officers during his interviews with them in Manila in the early part of 1945 about the anti-Japanese attitude of the Filipinos still in Japan, the U.S. military immediately sought these Filipinos. They were happy to

Dear Sirs,

I have just returned from a trip to the Philippines lasting 30 days, some of which was arranging for a plaque memorial to my unit, the Provisional Tank Group. Several groups have contacted the Philippine Defense Dept. concerning such memorials and I wish to announce the following:

Col. Acosta, head of the Military Memorials Division, Dept. of Defense, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines received a decision from the board concerning the Bataan Memorial. A plaque 18" X 24" with any practical design and lettering (send picture of what you want) made of brass 1/8" thick, baked enamel colors (branch of service etc.) and the natural brass. As an example the one I ordered and paid for was as follows:

In Memory of the officers and men of the Provisional Tank Group The 192nd and 194th Tank Bns. Inf. (L) Who fought on Luzon 1941-1942. Cost of such a plaque is P1800.00 The one I ordered will be the first one up. These will be places at the rear of the Mt. Samat Memorial, on a retaining wall where visitors pass to climb the trail up to the cross.

Another official matter: The same engraver can supply the Philip. Defense and Lib. Mdeals at P50.00 ea. and the Unit Citation at P7.50. Include at least \$2.00 for air mail. Card attached is address for both plaques and medals.

Any authors or book collectors who have duplicates:

I hand carried 15 books over with me, donated by several authors and myself which started a library on Corregidor. The book case is under construction with plenty of room for more. Ship any donations with proper inscriptions to:

Donation to The Corregidor Memorial
c/o Lt. Col. Constantino P. Sibal, O.I.C.
Corregidor Memorial
MMD Dept. Vet's Affairs
Dept. of Defense
Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City
Philippines

Do not order medals etc. from Col. Acosta or Col. Sibal, order from L.C. Aguilar, Camp Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

serve as interpreters, guides and clerks attached to various U.S. Army units. Benjo served as a civilian agent of the 10th CIC and worked under a Lieutenant Fong of the US CIC. Following his recall to Tokyo in 1944, Benjo and five other young Filipinos put on a Tagalog radio show once a week on JOAK (Radio Tokyo). They often tried to tip off the U.S. forces when the best days for bombing Tokyo would be. But G-2 never caught on, apparently because the show was in Tagalog.

After their repatriation to the Philippines in December 1945, some of them served as interpreters in the trials of Japanese war criminals in Manila.

(To be continued as Part II — Tokyo Rose)

August, 1977 — 15