

TESTIMONY OF PRISONER OF WAR LT. (JG) EUGENE J. TOUGAS

The following is a copy of a sworn statement executed by Lt. (jg) Eugene J. Tougas. The Statement was prepared for the War Crimes Trials held in Tokyo in 1948. This phase of the trials was referred to as The Ofuna Camp Trials. The statement is self explanatory.

1 September, 1946

My name is Eugene Joseph Tougas, Lt. (jg) U.S.N.R., file number 304369. My home address is 2 Annandale Terrace, Newport, Rhode Island. My age is 27. When captured I was a Naval Aviator, attached to Squadron VB-83, aboard the U.S.S. Essex. I was captured in the Inland Sea near Kure Harbor, between the Islands of Shikoku and Honshu, at approximately 1300 hours, 19 March, 1945, by Japanese Army Intelligence. I was interned as a "Special" Prisoner" at the Japanese Naval Base at Kure from 20 March, 1945 until 15 May, 1945. I was imprisoned at Ofuna from 18 May, 1945 until 24 August, 1945. I was imprisoned at Shinagawa P.O.W. hospital from 24 August, 1945 until 1 September, 1945.

At Kure Naval Base, after interrogation, I was put in Solitary Confinement for the duration of my stay there. I was subjected to a starvation diet and lost about 55 lbs. in about a month. I was confined with 7 Japanese prisoners in a room about 8' x 10' and was not allowed to leave that room except for interrogation, for a period of over 50 days. The food that was given to me was very salty, sometimes containing the heads, entrails and scales of fish. Water was denied me except for 1/2 tea cup per meal. Any requests for more water were denied and I was told that if I persisted in asking for more water I would have my ration taken away entirely. While in this camp requests to bathe, brush my teeth or even to wash my hands and face were denied. I was not allowed to exercise. I was compelled to sit cross-legged on a folded blanket 2' x 3' from 0630 until 2230 hours, except for time to go to the toilet, which was kept in the room. Despite the fact that I was lice-ridden, (my body from waist to slightly above the knees, was raw from lice bites and scratching) I was not allowed to wash. I was only permitted to kill lice 1/2 hour in the morning and 1/2 hour in the evening.

During B-29 raids (there were several while I was in this camp) I was handcuffed within my steel-barred cell. Just before I left this camp I was forced to bathe in water that all other Japanese Prisoners (about 200) had used. Many of these Japs had running sores and one had Elephantiasis. The top of the water was alive with floating lice. While in this camp I was given no change of clothing and requests to wash my clothes were denied.

I do not know any of the Officers well enough to identify them. The only person I saw in this camp enough to identify was a 3rd Class Yeoman who spoke good English and acted as our interpreter. It was he who denied all our requests and was the only one who spoke English to any extent of the guards. He was the one who conducted routine interrogations – and ordered food taken away for three days from Ens. Hal Eyre. Mr. Eyre had said that he didn't know the wing spread of an SB2C. This Jap is described as being about 5'7" tall, weight from 130 to 150 lbs. His right foot was either deformed or had been injured somehow. He wore glasses and had traveled extensively. He often took trips to other camps and dealt with American Prisoners. I would estimate his age between 32-38 years. His identity was known to "Toijason", the camp Commander at Ofuna because he accompanied us on the transfer from Kure to Ofuna. I saw him on other occasions at Ofuna when American P.O.W.'s were brought in.

I am unable to explain the reason for this treatment but it is a fact that our plight was known to the Officers in the camp and to those who inspected the camp. The Officer in Charge came to my cell several times – asked if I was hungry or thirsty and joked about the weight I had lost.

Other prisoners who were at this camp and suffered the same treatment as I did were:

- Ens. Hal Eyre from California
- Ens. "Pappy" Mathews from Oregon
- Lt. Worden – SB2C pilot
- ARM2c Charles Richardson from Egg Harbor, N. J.
- Ens. McCormick – liberated at Ofuna
- ARM3c Robert Williams from Ohio

There were several others but I cannot remember their names.

I was transferred to Ofuna in May, 1945. While there I was beaten and witnessed the beatings of quite a few other prisoners.

Japanese Guards at this camp were:

- James Susaki – Interpreter called "Handsome Harry"
- Tamayama – Guard called "Egg Head"
- Matsuoka – Guard called "The Sport"

A Pharmacist Mate – Guard, Camp Doctor, known as "Congo Cho"
"Metal Mouth", "The Dog", "The Baker", "The Waiter", "The Pig", "Yourashi", a Petty Officer known as "Luther Burbank", "The Monkey", – all of whom were guards whose names are not known to me. Of these guards, I saw "Metal Mouth", "The Dog",

“Egg Head”, “Luther Burbank”, “Congo Cho” and “The Monkey” beat or slap prisoners at one time or another.

About 0600 on 19 May, 1945 I was beaten by a guard called “The Sport”. He is described as 5 feet tall, weight about 145 lbs. and spoke fair broken English. I was ordered to stand at attention. While in this position I was hit on the chin twice with two “haymakers” swung from the deck with a closed fist. I was staggered but did not fall. The reason for the beating was that I did not hear, let alone understand, the call for reveille given in Japanese. I was in my cell with the door closed, in solitary confinement. I spent a month in solitary confinement while in this camp.

On 23 May, 1945, I was called into the office of James Sasuki for interrogation. My legs, ankles and feet were badly swollen and Susaki informed me I had beri-beri. I asked for medical attention and received none.

During the interrogation I told Susaki of the beating I had received from “The Sport”. He told me, quote, “You know some of these boys are from the country and play a little rough at times. You’ll have to excuse them on that account”. Unquote.

About 25 May, 1945, I was “caught” doing calisthenics in my cell. I was ordered to stand facing the wall, holding five folded blankets over my head. I was hit five times – again by “The Sport” with a club called “Bimbo”. It was a club about 36 inches long and about 3 inches in diameter, of solid wood. I was hit on the back of the legs with this club and it was swung as one swings a baseball bat. I was so sore I was unable to sit down for three days without a great deal of pain.

About 30 May, 1945, I was accused of talking with a fellow P.O.W. in the next cell. I was not guilty, nonetheless I was beaten with “Bimbo” again, in the same manner as described above. The punishment was meted out by “Egg Head” or Tamayama Keisan.

About 3 June, 1945, I was called out of my cell with several others to watch the punishment for “talking while in solitary” meted out. Tamayama Keisan, “Egg Head”, beat Harold West, AOM3/c, viciously with the “Bimbo” about five times. West was badly hurt. However, we were all sent back to our cells and I do not know whether he required or received medical attention.

About 15 June, 1945, I was standing next to 2nd Lt. Miller, USA, when “Metal Mouth” walked up to us and beat us on the face and neck with a bamboo switch. I was hit about 10-15 stinging blows, as was Lt. Miller. The reason was we were accused of having our arms folded. We were never told this was contrary to regulations.

About 17 June, 1945, while sitting in the POW compound in the hot sun – about 85 – 90 degrees Fahrenheit – “The Dog” accosted 2nd Lt. Robert Orr, USA. Because Mr.

Orr did not jump to attention fast enough when spoken to he was ordered to stand at attention bare-headed, with head shaven, for two hours, 'til he started to faint.

About 19 June, 1945, "The Dog" ordered about 17 prisoners, including Lt. Thomas Durkin to stand at "Taiso" for a period of over one hour. "Taiso" means standing with knees bent forward and arms held over the head. When anyone dropped their arms they were beaten about the legs until the arms were again held upright. The reason for the punishment was "The Dog" found a book on the ground and no one could tell him how it got there.

About 20 June, 1945, all POW's in my part of the building were made to run around the compound at top speed – 15 times because one prisoner was late for morning muster. Major Walker, USA, whose weight was about 90 lbs., was unable to keep up the pace. He was too weak from malnutrition and beri-beri to run. "The Sport" ran behind him and kept hitting him with the "Bimbo". Despite the fact Walker fell many times, he was made to run the 15 times and was hit well in excess of 30 times.

About 30 June, 1945, I was standing outside my cell next to Lt. Max Frellson, who at that time weighed about 90 lbs. He requested permission to be in a cell with Lt. Stanley. In reply "Congo Cho" turned around and swung viciously with closed fist, hitting Frellson along side of the head, smashing him against the wall. Frellson fell to the floor, stunned. "Congo Cho" grasped Frellson by the back of the neck, held him on his feet and smashed him again on the chin with closed fist. Frellson hit the bulkhead again and fell to the floor moaning. "Congo Cho" then kicked Frellson twice, walked away and left him there. I helped Frellson to his feet and put him in his cell. I was ordered back to my cell as were other POW's and Frellson was left alone. Many times during my imprisonment at Ofuna, I was slapped by "The Monkey", "The Sport", "The Dog" and "Metal Mouth" and others.

Certified to be a true copy
Sworn and Notarized at
N.A.S. Jacksonville
5 September, 1946
(signed) Eugene J. Tougas