CHAPTER VII

In compliance with General MacArthur's instructions, continuous efforts had been made to establish radio contact with the United States Forces in Australia, but without success. General Sharp wished to send one of his staff officers to effect this liaison, but General Brereton had moved his few remaining B-17s, on Christmas Eve, to bases in the Netherlands Indies and Australia, and so far as was known there were no more planes in the Philippines capable of making this 2000-mile flight.

Diligent searching finally brought to light one jaded and prostrate B-18 at Del Monte. "Rosey" O'Donnell (Major Emmet O'Donnel, A.C.) listened to the feeble coughing of the two motors, considered the inadequate fuel tanks, and offered to try to get the old lady into the air once more. For days he toiled over the infirm engines, with willing and expert assistance from other grounded airmen and mechanics. The empty bomb-bays sprouted new gas tanks in the shape of fuel drums, increasing her range by hundreds of miles. Her guns had long since been assigned elsewhere — now all other surplus equipment was removed to further lighten the strain. By 13 January he reported that, provided no enemy interference were encountered, he believed she stood a fair chance of reaching Australia.

Major William L. Robinson, the Force Operations officer, had

volunteered to undertake this dangerous mission and that same day took off for Darwin with Major O'Donnell at the controls.

Major Robinson had been given detailed and explicit instructions as to his liaison mission. The troops on Luzon were in desperate need of food, medical supplies and anti-aircraft ammunition. In the southern islands, the troops must have arms, ammunition and artillery at least, if they were to effectively repel any invasion. General MacArthur had requested that attempts be made to run these supplies through the Japanese blockade as soon as was humanly possible.

General Sharp had under his control numerous small inter-island ships which were constantly operating, with very few losses, between all the southern islands of the Archipelago in spite of the Japanese patrols, by running at night and hiding by day. The General believed that the blockade of Luzon could be successfully run the same way, if the necessary secrecy were observed.

Captain C. J. Martin, of the Cebu Stevedoring Company, an expert in Philippine shipping operations, was in direct charge of these ships, and had the added advantage of knowing most of the ships' officers, their capabilities and degrees of trustworthiness.

According to the plan which Major Robinson was to submit to the American commander in Australia, large ships would bring in the needed supplies to certain designated ports in the

Philippines. These would be chosen in areas relatively free of Japanese air and surface forces. At these points the cargoes would be trans-shipped to small, interisland craft, which would then move, by night, to Bataan and Corregidor. Volunteer American officers were to be on each boat, pledged to see that every effort was made to successfully run the blockade, and to scuttle the ship rather than permit it to fall into enemy hands. Major Robinson was instructed to exchange codes and radio frequencies with the American Forces in Australia, and to do everything possible to expedite the shipment of supplies.

When Major Robinson arrived in Port Darwin he found that General Brett, commanding the American Forces in Australia and the East Indies, had moved his headquarters to Java. The flight was continued to Badoeng, where General Brett's headquarters were adjacent to those of General Wavell, who at that time commanded all Allied Forces in that part of the world.

Several conferences took place between General Brett and Major Robinson, at which General Wavell was also present. The generals were surprised to learn that flights to and from the Philippines were still possible, and thought that all of Mindanao and the Visayas were occupied by the Japanese. This was probably due to the fact that on 2 January 1942, the Department of the Army had received the following message from Colonel Elliot R. Thorpe, a G-2 observer in Batavia: "Japs have captured Del Monte airport on Mindanao, and air traffic to the P. I. now blocked".

Where Colonel Thorpe obtained his erroneous information has not been determined, but it is believed that the element of doubt thus created may have been responsible for the radiogram sent to General Sharp from Java: "Identify Robinson".

The day preceding the evacuation of Manila on 1 January 1942 the last of the commercial radio stations there was destroyed on order of USAFFE.* Thus the only communication between the Islands and the outside world was now by means of the RCA station in Cebu City.

On 11 December Colonel Scudder, in Cebu, had sent Major Ernest V. Jordan aboard a British ship lying disabled in the harbor with instructions to try to reach the United States on the ship's radio. Contact was established on that day and transferred subsequently to the RCA station in the city.

Set up on Colonel Scudder's own initiative, without orders, the existence of this station was unknown to Visayan-Mindanao Force Headquarters until the receipt of the message from Java. Colonel Scudder was then asked to explain the operation of the facilities, since the message had been transmitted via Australia, Honolulu and San Francisco and the reply must follow the same channel. The explanation was received without comment by Headquarters, and the station continued in operation without interruption until a few hours before enemy troops invaded Cebu on 10 April.

Major Robinson's identity having been satisfactorily estab-

*Orders issued by Brigadier General Spencer B. Akin, Signal Officer USAFFE, to Lt. Colonel Theodore T. Teague, Signal Officer rear echelon USAFFE, in Manila.

lished, General Brett expressed the desire to assist in every possible way to get essential supplies through to the Philippines. He promised to dispatch a submarine loaded with ammunition at the earliest possible time; and a schedule of radio codes was prepared for use between Headquarters in Java and General Sharp's Headquarters in Mindanao.

Shortly after Major Robinson reached Java, General Brett received a letter from General George Marshall, then Chief of Staff, in Washington. The letter quoted a message from General MacArthur in which he stated that the food situation on Bataan and Corregidor would soon be critical, and that every effort must be made to run the Japanese blockade with food supplies -- that this would be "the key to his salvation". General Marshall instructed General Brett that the utmost effort must be devoted to the activation of this program, that intrepid and resourceful men must be put in charge, and that ten million dollars was immediately available for this purpose. There was no limit to the amount which could be spent -- results only were important.

In the conference which followed the receipt of this letter, it was decided that, as speedily as possible, ships loaded with food for Luzon would depart from East Indian or Australian ports for Mindanao, where the supplies would be trans-shipped to the small, interisland vessels available to the Visayan-Mindanao Force for the hazardous run to Manila Bay. It was also promised that the cargo of each ship would include some ammunition for the

forces in Mindanao.

The following day, 25 January 1942, Major Robinson was flown back to Mindanao with a flight of B-17s, which also brought in 81,000 rounds of cal. .30 ammunition, and on their return to Java evacuated 34 pilots and other Air Corps personnel.

General MacArthur was immediately advised of the results of Major Robinson's trip, and that the fleet of interisland ships were being made ready to run the blockade.

Valentine's Day, 14 February, brought the first fruits of Major Robinson's efforts, when a submarine put in at Parang, on the southwest coast of Mindanao, with a cargo which included, besides 800,000 rounds of caliber .30 ammunition, cigarettes and a few bottles of whiskey.

It was hard to tell whether the ammunition or the cigarettes were immediately more welcome. We would need the ammunition, God knows, when the Japs came, but the only cigarettes we had seen in months were of raw, native tobacco, wrapped in anything flexible enough to roll, and strong enough, (as Chynoweth had complained bitterly) to "knock your head off!"

Advance notice of the submarine's arrival had, of course, been received by Force Headquarters, in order that the essential recognition signals could be agreed upon, and cargo barges and ammunition trucks readied. Also to ensure that the Air Corps personnel who were to be evacuated on the sub's return trip would be ready and waiting.

Captain Floyd Forte, my unofficial emissary in Dumaguete,

who was in charge of these preparations at Parang, sent two radiograms concerning the progress of events to Force Headquarters. The first message, in code, was sent before the arrival of the sub, and read as follows:

15/Feb/42 Commanding General VMF CPY

Rice* and corn* ready Stop Waiting End

Signed Forte

The second, after the cargo had been unloaded and its composite parts duly noted, was in cryptic phraseology whose note of levity was apparently not appreciated at Force Headquarters:

Feb 15/42 To Sharp CPY

All well Doctor issued prescription

Signed Forte

This one bears a marginal note "No action - not understood".

Five days later the steamer Coast Farmer arrived under cover of darkness at Anakan, Mindanao, from Brisbane, with 2500 tons of food supplies and 2000 rounds of 81mm (mortar) ammunition for MacArthur, plus 784,500 rounds of caliber .30 and 30,000 rounds of caliber .50 ammunition for the forces on Mindanao.

The main reason for the selection of Anakan as the destination of the supply ships was the importance of the landing and

*Rice - lighters; corn - trucks.

stevedoring facilities of the Anakan Lumber Company. With the utmost secrecy governing all operations, the food supplies and mortar ammunition were transferred to two small interisland steamers, the Elcano and the Lepus. Mr. C. E. Walter, superintendent of the Anakan Lumber Company, personally supervised most of the trans-shipment of cargo, supplying much of the skilled labor from his own crews. Other labor was accomplished by troops from the 93rd Infantry and the Butuan Provisional Battalion.

Due to almost constant Jap air observation it was necessary to anchor the three ships at points along the shore where they could be sufficiently screened by overhanging trees to be reasonably safe from air reconnaissance.

Due largely to Mr. Walter's diligent and conscientious efforts the transfer of cargo was accomplished without loss in about a week and the Coast Farmer returned to Australia with a cargo of several tons of pig tin -- the property of oil companies operating in the Philippines. By following the now-customary routine of sailing by night and hiding by day, the two interisland ships safely reached the beleaguered Rock.

Apparently, in spite of all efforts at concealment, information soon reached the Japanese of the attempts to provision forces on Luzon, for very shortly after this they began an intensive campaign of extermination on all interisland shipping. The vessels were hunted out systematically and destroyed, until within a short

time virtually the only means of interisland travel was by banca.

Meanwhile, a curious coincidence had occurred in connection with Major William L. Robinson's mission to Java. About the middle of January 1942, Colonel John A. Robenson, commanding some 5000 American troops at Port Darwin, Australia, received apparently the same message from General Marshall which had been sent to General Brett, concerning the relief of Bataan, except that in Colonel Robenson's case he was provided with cash -- millions of dollars -- with which to buy or charter and equip the necessary ships to run the blockade. This was a vital necessity since the small ship owners and crews of the East Indies would not accept checks -- only coin of their own realm. Colonel Robenson also consulted with General Brett, arriving in Java within a day or so, apparently, after Major Robinson's departure. General Brett and Vice Admiral Conrad E. L. Helfrich, of the Royal Netherlands Navy, as well as certain strategically placed civilians were all willing and eager to help, but British red tape -- a global institution -- garrotted every attempted move.

Not until 12 and 13 February was Colonel Robenson able to dispatch two ships to the Philippines, although one submarine did get off earlier with a cargo of ammunition for Corregidor. The two ships, the Florence D., and the Don Isidro, both of Philippine registry, were loaded with food, medical supplies and ammunition. Neither of them, however, got within hundreds of miles of their destination. Both were caught by Japanese bombers a few

days out of Java and destroyed.

Subsequently, Colonel Robenson, through the continued able assistance of Admiral Helfrich, was furnished with four more freighters -- ancient, battered and rusty, but sea-worthy. Crews, however, were another problem. The general opinion seemed to be that only scatter-brained, crack-pot Americans would even contemplate such a suicidal mission, and (except for the Filipino crews of the Florence D. and the Don Isidro, who were all eager volunteers) the local merchant seamen in Java just weren't having any part of such a project, in spite of the tempting bait of thousands of dollars in bonuses. Finally, by diligent scouring of the waterfront gin-mills, sufficient personnel to man one ship was secured, and the Taiyuan, carrying some two million rounds of caliber .30 and 15,000 rounds of anti-aircraft ammunition, plus a large cargo of food, sailed from Soerabaja on 26 February. Bound for Cebu, where her cargo would be transshipped, she headed all unknowingly straight into the turmoil of the epic struggle in the Java Sea. She has not been heard from since.

It is a great pity that word of these efforts to provide relief for the doomed Philippines could not have been made known, at least, to those most concerned at the time, but except for those actually involved in the movements of the ships, no word of these attempts reached the American military personnel in the Islands. The apparent ruthless abandonment of these forces by the Government was a major factor in the constantly deteriorating

morale, which the reception of radio broadcasts discussing the huge shipments of planes, tanks and arms of all sorts to the European theatre did nothing to improve. Security precautions naturally precluded any announcements in the States of the Philippine relief expeditions (which would have alleviated to some slight degree the anguish being endured by the wives and families of these men) but there were actually three distinct attempts made to send aid.

The third, instigated by President Roosevelt, also in January 1942, involved former Secretary of War, Brigadier General Patrick J. Hurley. Liberally supplied with funds, Hurley also made Java his base of operations, and reportedly chartered and dispatched five ships, carrying ammunition, food and medical supplies to the Islands. Three of the ships are said to have reached Cebu safely, while two were lost near their port of departure.

There was, apparently, some duplication of effort in these three relief expeditions, however, for the two ships mentioned above which were destroyed shortly after sailing were the Florence D. and the Don Isidro, which Colonel Robenson had seen off so hopefully from Java.

The screening of plain, unadulterated fact from the masses of evidence from many and varied sources on this subject is an extremely difficult task, but at least one fact remains: That attempts were made, and repeatedly, even though the benefits

were meagre.

At about the same time these efforts at supplying Luzon were under way in Australia and Java, General Chynoweth in Iloilo was instituting similar relief measures at much shorter range. On 24 January the S. S. Legaspi arrived at Capiz under mysterious circumstances. She had reportedly run the blockade from Luzon, and her captain had brought a letter, supposedly from a member of President Quezon's staff, to the Provincial Governor at Capiz. The letter stated that it was General MacArthur's request that the ship be loaded with food, which the governor would supply, and returned to Corregidor. The message continued that this was a most secret project, and that no one was to be informed. There was also a letter from Quezon, himself, and other individuals of importance with the very natural result that in a few days the whole island of Panay knew of the Legaspi's mission.

The circumstances surrounding the visit of the ship seemed suspicious to Chynoweth, who thought it possibly a Japanese ruse. The Japs on Luzon were said to be short of food also. He reported the matter to Visayan-Mindanao Force Headquarters and proceeded at once to Capiz to interview Governor Hernandez. The Governor -- a very able and amiable man -- drove General Chynoweth to the ship to call on the skipper, whose manner, to Chynoweth, seemed most peculiar. He appeared exceedingly apprehensive -- almost guilty. Exactly, the General thought, as a Filipino would act who was on a traitorous mission for the Japs.

Finally Chynoweth asked the skipper to explain just how the order to make the trip had reached him. "I am taken in small boat to Corregidor", the Filipino said. "The Generalissimo is there, in tunnel office. He speak to me. He ask me to bring rice for soldiers. He tell me for sake of my country and his I must do this thing. He is very tired, and very gentle. He speak to me like his own child -- and I cry like baby! Then I leave Generalissimo and bring my ship to Capiz".

This story convinced Chynoweth that the man was a duly authorized messenger. Chynoweth knew full well the dramatic power which MacArthur possessed which had brought tears to the eyes of many less emotional men than this Filipino. Furthermore, he did not believe that this would be the sort of story the skipper would be apt to invent on his own initiative, and he realized then that the man's apprehensive manner was due to a quite legitimate concern for the safety of his ship and the success of his mission. Accordingly, General Chynoweth took command of the situation at once and in a short time the provisioning of the ship was under way. Some of the food supplies, especially rice, were diverted from the supply which had been destined for our mountain caches. Every possible means was employed to expedite the loading of the ship, and in less than a week after her arrival she was on her way back through the enemy blockade with token aid for beleaguered Bataan. The load was four full days' rations or eight at their present rate. Just a

brief respite from the gaunt spectre of starvation.

During this period frequent questioning radio messages were received from Force Headquarters, concerning the Legaspi operations. Chynoweth finally replied that inasmuch as the undertaking was secret, he feared so many messages would endanger the code. The inquiries continued. Why the hell, no one knew! There was a large staff at Force Headquarters, and apparently some lack of coordination, since the messages appeared to emanate from a different individual each time, and many either contradicted or duplicated each other. Eventually, after forty messages had been received relating to this subject, the situation became so confused and the messages so conflicting that General Chynoweth became alarmed for fear the Japs had broken the code and were trying to throw a monkey wrench into the machinery. He notified Force Headquarters of his belief, and stated that until he received confirming evidence that the code was still intact he would disregard all further messages.

Considerable anxiety was felt for the Legaspi since she had sailed on a brilliant moonlight night but in a few days welcome news of her safe arrival at Corregidor was received, and a letter to Chynoweth from Major General Richard Sutherland, MacArthur's Chief of Staff, advising that the ship would be continued on its service, and that he was sending additional officers down on its next trip to assist in setting up a better organization for furnishing the food supplies. He also stated that there would be a

good many disabled men from Bataan, and that a convalescent hospital was to be set up on Panay for these men.

A few days after the receipt of this news, General Chynoweth received a radiogram from Force Headquarters in Mindanao ordering that "You will report to these headquarters immediately for a personal conference". The General considered that this message probably reflected the reactions at Headquarters to the Legaspi episode in general, but specifically to his final message that he would disregard all further communication.

This visit would mean a trip of some hundreds of miles, across enemy controlled waters, and the only means of water transportation available at this time were a few small tugboats. The minimum time such a trip would require would be two weeks and time was of the essence on Panay in arranging the food shipments for Luzon.

One small, slow, private plane had escaped damage in the bombing of the Iloilo Airfield in December, so Chynoweth consulted the pilot as to the possibility of making the Mindanao trip in it. Lieutenant Gordon Benson, who had recently crashed on a flight up from Mindanao and was recovering in the Iloilo hospital, gave them all the information he could on flight conditions, and they arranged to take off the next morning. Chynoweth radioed Mindanao asking that the field be cleared for their landing* and that he be notified when this had been done. There was no reply until late that evening, when a peremptory message

* Fields were blocked off with obstacles to prevent landings of enemy planes.

was received again ordering him to "come by tug, not by plane", and to bring with him Tom Powell, Sr., who had been acting as Civil Administrator. Still reluctant to take time off from the vital food shipments, Chynoweth and Powell started out the following evening, as ordered, by tug. Reaching Negros at daybreak, they were met with a message from Mindanao stating that the trip would be temporarily postponed.

On 27 January, just 2 days after Major Robinson had returned from his trip to Java, the following message had been received at General Sharp's headquarters in Mindanao:

TO SHARP FOR BRIG GEN CHYNOWETH COMMA 61ST DIVISION PANAY ON JANUARY 23 WE RADIOED OUR MESSAGE ZRC 1 33 GRPS TO YOU STOP MESSAGE FOLLOWS QUOTE REQUEST YOU CONTACT MASTER OF M/S LEGASPI EXPECTED CAPIZ AT ONCE TODAY 24 JANUARY 1942 AND REPORT TO THIS HQ VESSELS TIME OF ARRIVAL ALSO HER TIME OF DEPARTURE STOP SIGNED MACARTHUR UNQUOTE ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THIS MESSAGE AND ADVISE ACTION TAKEN STOP THIS MESSAGE BEING SENT TO YOU THRU BOTH GEN SHARP AND PHILIPPINE ARMY TO INSURE DELIVERY STOP URGENT SIGNALS USAFFE" UNQUOTE

The receipt of the above message caused considerable agitation at Force Headquarters, since it appeared that General Chynoweth was receiving orders direct from USAFFE instead of through Force Headquarters, and also that there would be duplication of effort

in the matter of shipping supplies to Luzon. Since the plans which General Sharp had been formulating visualized the use of all available interisland shipping it was felt at Del Monte that further information must be obtained from General Chynoweth in order to coordinate the effort. The General was accordingly ordered to Mindanao for a conference, early in February. However, on 4 February a second message was received from Corregidor which made the conference unnecessary:

"SHARP CUR GEN ORDER NO TWENTY RELIEVES ALL FORCES ON PANAY ISLAND AND MINDORO ISLAND FROM COMMAND VISAYAN DASH MINDANAO FORCES EFFECTIVE TWELVE OCLOCK MIDNIGHT FEB FOURTH AND PLACING THEM DIRECTLY UNDER COMMAND OF THIS HEADQUARTERS STOP ACKNOWLEDGE END SIGNED MACARTHUR".

Relieved of the necessity for the trip to Mindanao, General Chynoweth was now free to concentrate, without interference, on the problem of procuring food for the next trip of the Legaspi. The existing quartermaster set-up was broadened and the island combed for every possible form of supply which might be of value on Bataan.

During his travels over the island, in connection with this mission, the General was once caught in his own trap. He had issued orders that all trails and roads would be well blocked in the event of an enemy landing. Captain Chavez, commanding a

battalion of the 63rd Infantry at Alibunan had taken the orders so literally that he already had blocked all trails and main roads for two miles on either side of his area so thoroughly that they could be negotiated by a car only at the rate of about five miles per hour. The Division Commander was exceedingly annoyed at having to do a snake dance around these obstacles and directed that the barriers be removed immediately. Returning, some hours later, over the same route he found the road-clocks again set up. Chavez had received orders to block the roads, and as far as he was concerned they were going to stay blocked! (Map # 2)

Chynoweth admired his spirit, despite the nuisance it had caused him, and complimented him on it, but left instructions that he would wait for an enemy landing next time, before obstructing the main highway.

Later Chynoweth learned from Christie that Chavez maintained this same resolute determination after the invasion, and his battalion inflicted very heavy casualties on the enemy in his area. This information pleased, but did not surprise, the General who said he "felt that anyone who could be as stubborn as Chavez had been toward his own commanding officer would probably be pretty tough opposition for the enemy!"

About 11 February the Legaspi returned to Panay, bringing a considerable number of wounded officers and men from Bataan. Some of these officers were high-ranking Filipino Army officers, among them Colonel Garcia, who was a West Point graduate; Major Santa

Maria, from the Quartermaster Department on Corregidor, who brought a list of all the supplies needed on Bataan; and ex-governor Tomas Confessor, who was later of great assistance in organizing for guerrilla activities.

A letter to General Chynoweth from General Sutherland, also arrived on the Legaspi, in which Sutherland stated that it was expected soon to split the Visayan-Mindanao Force into two separate commands -- the Visayan Force and the Mindanao Force. He commented further on several other problems, and in general the letter conveyed the impression that the staff on Corregidor were without adequate realization of the difficulties confronting the southern commanders. This was perhaps natural. Apparently Headquarters believed that regulations and supply instructions received up to the beginning of the war were still being blindly obeyed. Had this been done there would be at this time only two thousand men mobilized; there would have been no transportation, no supplies; the troops would have been immobilized in their original locations; civil government would have broken down completely and chaos would have been complete. Virtually everything that had been done on the Island had been done either in the absence of orders, or in contradiction to pre-war orders.

A letter from General MacArthur also reached Chynoweth by this same boat. The letter referred in a general, but very complimentary, way to the progress on Panay. Reading between the lines, it appeared that General MacArthur realized quite fully the

problems which constantly arose, and was entirely in accord with the existing policy of substituting judgement and initiative in the absence of orders.

The Legaspi was again loaded and departed for Corregidor, and in a very few days a radiogram from General Drake, Quartermaster General on Corregidor, announced her safe arrival.

About the 21st of February the Legaspi arrived at Capiz for the third venture. By this time it was possible to load her with the completely balanced ration they had requested on Corregidor, in addition to many other items which they had hoped for. A number of the entrenching tools which had been manufactured on Panay were sent to replace the tin cans, mess kits and other improvisations with which the men on Bataan had been digging foxholes. A large quantity of candy, which the troops had been craving, was included, as well as a supply of tiki-tiki for the treatment of beri-beri. The officers who had come down on the preceding trip had told of General MacArthur's small son still on Corregidor, so a number of children's books had been collected for him.

The loading of the ship was rushed with all possible speed, but again she took off for Corregidor under an almost full moon. Days passed, but no word of her arrival was received. As the time lengthened a grim silence settled on the entire subject of the Legaspi. Much later it was learned that a Japanese cruiser had intercepted the gallant little ship off Mindoro. Strangly, (Map # 13)

the crew were not captured but were ordered ashore on Mindoro and the ship sunk by shellfire. Thus the curtain was rung down on the little drama of feeding the starving garrisons of Luzon from the bread basket of the Visayas.

CHAPTER VIII

On 20 February, General Chynoweth received a secret message from Corregidor stating that very important persons were leaving the Rock by submarine. This message stipulated that the sub was to be met, at a designated hour before dawn the next day, at a certain latitude and longitude off Guimaras Island, by a tug capable of carrying 27 people and their baggage. A short time later a similar message was received from the Navy, naming a different rendezvous some 60 miles away from the first. Apparently one of these messages was intended as a blind, in case enemy agents learned of the evacuation of these people, but unfortunately there was no way of knowing which was which. Accordingly, Colonel McLennan arranged with the Visayan Stevedoring Company for two tugs meeting the specified requirements as to capacity. At the appointed hour Tom Powell, Senior, waited patiently at the designated latitude and longitude off San Jose, on the west coast of Panay, while General Chynoweth and Major Deter, in the dark channel off Guimaras Island, watched and lingered long past the time set for the rendezvous before returning to port to discover that Powell had drawn the jackpot.

(Map #2)

When the party left Corregidor on the submarine "Swordfish", commanded by Lt. Commander Chester C. Smith, USN, the plan had

been to transfer, in the relatively safer waters off Panay, to the M/S Don Estaban for the balance of the trip to Mindanao where air transport would be arranged to Australia. The Don was to slip in to the Rock after dark the same evening, pick up baggage and additional passengers and attempt to make the rendezvous by the appointed hour. The tugs were ordered out in the event the Don became a casualty - from any one of a number of probable causes - and was unable to fulfill its mission.

However, shortly after leaving Corregidor, the air-conditioning on the submarine failed and everyone became quite ill. It was then decided that a brief stop would be made on Panay to recuperate. Accordingly, certain members of the party who were most indisposed were brought ashore by the tug at San Jose de Buena Vista, the remainder transferring to the Don, as per schedule, which then docked at Iloilo during the early morning hours.

On this eventful morning, McLennan, who was living with Tom Powell, was at breakfast when a car pulled up outside, followed in rapid succession by four more. Transportation was scarce at this time. Tires were critically short. Cars were used only on urgent, official business. This many cars in one place at one time could only indicate an occurrence of major importance. It did. The President of the Philippines had arrived for breakfast.

With President Quezon were his wife and family; General Valdez, the President's Chief of Staff; Colonel Soriano, Major Nito and several others of his staff together with Governor Fournier of Antique

Province and a number of other local big-wigs. Vice-President Osmena arrived later on the Don.

In telling the story afterward McLennan quipped that his deepest and most lasting impression of that morning was not the startling aggregation of celebrities, but the ease and celerity with which Tom Powell's cook and maid produced breakfast for these unexpected guests. "One minute, there I was, breakfasting all by myself, the cook gossiping leisurely in the kitchen, and the next minute there were V.I.Ps all over the place, all unexpected and all politely ravenous.

"I swear I never saw anything - outside of Child's window - as fast as the way those two servants got food ready for that crowd. And with no confusion, either! How they did it I'll never know, but in the time it took the notables to 'powder their noses' breakfast was served. And Tom's house has three bathrooms, too!"

The President's visit was supposed to be a deep, closely-guarded secret, but during the morning Quezon decided to take a drive around the city accompanied by Oscar Ledesma,* who was both Mayor of Iloilo City and Governor of Iloilo Province. Within an hour everyone in town had heard the news. The President followed this drive with a huge reception in the afternoon, and as a result even the nearby islands quickly learned of his presence.

Apparently the enthusiasm with which the President was received had pleased him greatly, for later in the day McLennan was advised to make the necessary arrangements for their reception in

*Replaced the Acting Governor early in 1942.

Negros, to which the Presidential party would proceed that night. Just after dusk the party boarded the Don Estaban, which soon was out of sight in the gloom of Iloilo Strait. McLennan telephoned Captain Richard Jones, the Navigation Head Officer at Bocolod, Negros, that the very distinguished party was on its way, and to provide motor transportation for their needs upon arrival a couple of hours hence. Mac then feeling that the situation was well in hand, placidly went to bed. He was snoring peacefully when, at 3:00 A. M., the telephone rang and Dick Jones blurted peevishly: "I've looked all over hell for the 'distinguished party' that was going to arrive over here in two hours. They haven't shown up yet!"

McLennan was wide awake now. "But they left here just after dark! Are you sure they haven't put in some place else along the coast?"

Jones assured him that every conceivable landing spot along that portion of the coast had been carefully checked when the Don failed to arrive at her scheduled port on time, but no trace of ship or passengers could be found.

Mac sat on the edge of his bed and wondered what particular curve Fate had pitched this time. There was nothing much he could do until daylight - if the Don had struck a mine any search for survivors in the darkness would be futile. If she had run aground, pulling her off was going to be a major undertaking. It would be impossible to assemble a crew and get power up in another ship before daylight anyway. But he did wish that some of his considerable

span of military training had included "what to do when one misplaces a President!"

About dawn Mac went down to the water front, alerting a tug of the Visayan Stevedoring Company enroute, and from the mouth of the Iloilo River saw a white ship, which looked very much like the Don, riding calmly at anchor near the Seven Sins. Very shortly Nito, the President's aide, appeared in the Don's launch and the mystery was unraveled.

On one of the seven small Isles of the Seven Sins, which lie at the north end of Iloilo Strait, a lighthouse is operated in peacetime. As the Don had approached these islands the night before, Quezon had observed that the light was not burning, and had instantly refused to complete the trip through the narrow, rock-lined strait in the darkness. At Quezon's order anchor was dropped and he and his family were taken ashore and were peacefully sleeping in the Lopez' summer home on Guimaras Island while Dick Jones and McLennan were cudgeling their brains over their disappearance.

Nito also informed McLennan that Quezon would return to Iloilo during the morning, on the Don, prepared to start for Negros again that evening, but that he preferred to make the trip this time on the Princess of Negros. No reason was given. While the Princess was a trim and fairly fast little ship, she was strictly a ferry boat, considerably smaller and less comfortable than the Don, and with no accomodations for a party the size of Quezon's.

The President was, however, quite well acquainted with the skipper of the Princess, Captain Gaudencia V. Jaime, and had profound and well-merited confidence in Jaime's navigational ability.

Unfortunately the Princess was at this time most bedraggled royalty; filthy dirty, having been used as a cargo-carrier and troop transport since the beginning of the war; her brasswork dull, her paint scarred and chipped; definitely not up to Presidential standards. But Quezon insisted, so an emergency cleaning crew armed with brooms, mops, scrub brushes and scouring powder did the best "spit and polish" job possible on short notice. Sheets, blankets, cots, crockery, cutlery, glassware, cooking utensils and rations for thirty people for ten days from the meagre supply available were put aboard.

Late in the afternoon, when it appeared that all was in order, word was received at the Navigation Head Office that the Don was sailing at once for Corregidor. This was the last straw, for the mountain of baggage, plus a number of well-stuffed mail sacks belonging to the Quezon party, was still piled on the dock where it had been off-loaded from the Don, awaiting the completion of the housecleaning before being put aboard the Princess, and it had been agreed that personnel from the Don were to attend to the loading, since no stevedores were available.

Answering Colonel McLennan's protest concerning the baggage the Don's quartermaster, Captain Wells, smiled and said casually, "Oh, that'll all be taken care of, Colonel. I'm leaving the crew

of the Aurora with you. They'll go on with the party, of course."

The Aurora, named for Mrs. Quezon, was the Presidential yacht, which had been sunk in Manila Bay by the Nips. Unknown to McLennan until this moment, her crew had come down from Luzon on the Don and were considered a part of the Quezon party. This was extremely bad news for it meant thirty-three more mouths to feed on the Princess; but at least the matter of sleeping quarters was simple. The Princess boasted no cabins, except quarters for the crew. What had been, pre-war, a fairly large ladies' dressing-room, was to be utilized as a make-shift cabin for the Quezons on this trip. As far as the rest of the party went they were free, after the supply of cots ran out, to take their choice of what seemed to them the softest spot on the decks. There was nowhere else to go.

The Princess was to sail immediately after dark. The additional rations for the Aurora's men were hastily procured and put aboard, and the baggage and mail sacks stowed in the hold. It was not known until much later that these mail sacks which had been tossed so unceremoniously from pier to ship by these sailors contained not letters and documents, but ten million pesos! It was presumed that this currency was being taken out by Quezon for the maintanance of the Government-in-exile, although it may well have been his own personal fortune.

Since it had been due to the blackout of the lighthouse on the Seven Sins which had been the cause of halting the Quezon progress on the preceding night, McLennan took steps to provide a light in

the vicinity, even though the lighthouse itself must remain dark. He called in a tug captain in whom he had great confidence, stated his problem and asked if the skipper could get close enough in to the rocks with his tug to be effective. It was arranged that the tug would be in position below the lighthouse at the Seven Sins by dusk, and would produce as good an imitation of a functioning lighthouse as possible until after the Princess had safely passed through the strait. Whereupon the light would be promptly extinguished and the tug would speed for home. Fervent hopes were voiced that only the Princess, and not prowling Jap launches, would be guided by the light.

Shortly after the last of the baggage and mail sacks had been stowed away the passengers began to straggle aboard. Preparations were being made to sail when, on counting noses, it was discovered that Nito had not yet put in an appearance. Nobody knew where he was. He had gone off, it developed, on a personal errand and had not returned.

Nito was quite capable of taking care of himself, but strange things happened these days and apprehension was mounting when suddenly a Ford came tearing down the dock, the driver half out of the car on one side, Nito clinging to the other, both laughing and in great good humor. When the car squealed to a stop beside the gangplank the reason for their precarious perches was revealed. Case after case of "bottled in bond" crammed every available inch of the old sedan.

Where Nito unearthed this stuff at this time, when all the bars in town were virtually sold out, is still a State secret, but there was food for thought in the fact that friends of Quezon in Iloilo, Elizalde and Company, had had a large, well-stocked cellar when the war started. This might call to mind the old political saw that it isn't what you know but whom you know!