

Kobe House P.O.W. #13

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A.J. Locke

Old Guard Press

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Kobe House P.O. W. #13 was first published
in a limited private edition in 1998.
This is the first commercial edition.

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all my fellow prisoners of war, American, Australian, English, or Scottish, who lived, worked and suffered with me in Kobe House from October 1942 until its destruction by fire on the 8th of June 1945. They will remain in my memory for all time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my Australian friends who were so generous in giving me a free rein to use their book of collective memories, *The Story of J' Force*, in any manner I wished while writing this book, including the use of most of the photographs, which otherwise would have been unobtainable. It was an immense help while trying to remember names, dates and other trivia which happened more than fifty years ago.

I must also include my dear wife, Lorraine, whose encouragement and help, while enduring months of my typing, kept me going until the book was finished.

Last, but not least, are all those friends who kept urging me to write about my experiences while a prisoner of the Japanese. May they enjoy my book!

A.J. Locke, 1998.



The author, Honolulu, 1937.

FOREWORD

Kobe House P.O.W. No. 13 was previously self-published by my father, Arthur “Bud” Locke, in 1998, in a limited edition. I loved the book, learning so much about my father, who never really talked about his experiences to me growing up, and encouraged him to republish it. Mom showed signs of Alzheimer’s around that time and he had all he could do with caring for her, as her symptoms rapidly progressed. Mom passed away in November of 2005 and Dad died peacefully in 2007.

I am very proud to be their daughter, proud of the lives they lived and the sacrifices they both made. I am republishing Dad’s memoirs to honor him and to pass on a bit of history that should not be forgotten. I learned where my own strengths came from in reading the book and I hope to do the annual Bataan Death March Memorial Walk in New Mexico in the near future. One of Dad’s favorite sayings was you can do anything if you put your mind to it—that was how he lived and I miss them both!

Linda Locke Parkin
June 12, 2012

Chapter 1

CLARK FIELD

World War II began, for me, about nine on the morning of Monday, the 8th of December 1941. It was the 8th instead of the 7th because the Philippines are a day ahead of the United States, due to the International Date Line, which is located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

I had been stationed at Clark Field since the middle of November, when my outfit, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Far East Air Service Command had been activated. On December 1st, the Squadron had been moved to Nielson Field, just outside the city of Manila, where Far East Air Force Headquarters was located. I was the Squadron 1st Sergeant, and had remained at Clark along with my Supply Sergeant to finish up the paper work concerned with the transfer, and was ready to leave Clark and rejoin my outfit as soon as I had cleared the base.

I had been down to Manila for the weekend and slept in. By the time I woke up, Pearl Harbor had been bombed, the war had begun, and Clark was on alert status. I was the only one left in our old barracks and of course no one had bothered waking me up. As usual in the morning, I turned my radio on to get the news from Manila, and of course the air was filled with news about the attack on Pearl Harbor. At breakfast, I found out what was going on. After Clark Field had been put on alert status, all our B-17 bombers had taken off so they wouldn't get caught on the ground in an air raid, and were loafing around over the center of Luzon. Our pursuit squadron was also in the air patrolling to the north, a large group of Japanese bombers having been reported from northern Luzon. The Japanese failed to show, having bombed Baguio and other targets up north. By eleven o'clock, all our aircraft were back on the ground to be refueled and take on their bomb load for a raid on Formosa, while the air crews went to their mess halls for lunch.

I had finished packing my gear and had early chow, then walked down to Base Headquarters, which, at Clark, was located on the flight line, to turn in my paperwork and get my clearance to depart Clark. It was about twenty past twelve when I climbed up the stairs to the Personnel Section which, to my surprise, was empty. I found this rather odd, as someone should have been on duty. There was a lot of noise

outside, but most of the time engines were being run up, so I didn't think too much about it. I did walk over to the window to see what was going on, as it did seem louder than usual. I saw four P-40 fighters on their take off runs, all crowded together with an old sea-plane we called the "Duck" trailing along. As I was looking at them, everything seemed to explode in my face. Twenty-seven Japanese twin-engine bombers were making their bomb run across Clark Field and bombs were dropping everywhere. Two of the P-40s taking off were hit, and the old "Duck" disintegrated right in front of my eyes. Talk about being surprised! All the engine noise had prevented me from hearing the bombers or any other warning. Seeing all those bombs exploding right in front of me was quite a thing. All this had happened so unexpectedly that I hardly realized what was going on, and I just froze in place and kept looking out the window. It was almost as if I was watching a war movie. I wasn't even scared until the bombs stopped exploding and I had a moment to think about it. The quiet only lasted about half a minute and then another twenty-seven bombers were dropping their loads. This time I hit the deck pronto, but being ten feet above the ground, I might just as well have stayed looking out. By this time, I was really scared. It was a wonder that I hadn't soiled my britches, as a lot of people would have done if they had been in my situation. After the second flight of bombers had gone away, it became really quiet. It was like being in a church after all that noise. Actually, I suppose it was because I had been deafened by the blasts. After I had gotten my wits together, I took off down the stairs and ran back to the barracks, where a nice V-shaped slit trench had been dug during the past week.

The dust hadn't even settled from all the bombing when swarms of Zero fighters were all over Clark like hornets. I can tell you I was glad to be in my slit trench and below the level of the ground. Three of our Filipino mess boys were already in the trench, huddled together at one end. I could hear them crying "Husmariosep", which is garbled English for "Jesus, Mary and Joseph", most of the Filipinos on Luzon being Catholic. In our V-trench, we could move from one leg of the trench to the other leg, if necessary, to get the most protection. After one Zero had gone by, you had to stick your head up to see when the next one was coming, then move to the leg of the trench which was not in his line of flight. For the next hour or so, it was like a game of musical chairs, with me and the boys dashing from side to side. At first I tried to tell them what to do, but found that my voice was gone. I guess I must have been scared worse than I thought. Not being able to shout at them, I shoved

them around like chickens until they finally figured out what they were supposed to do. The Zeros shot up everything in sight for more than an hour with little opposition. Two or three of our fighters did get off the ground and shot down a couple of the Zeros before they ran out of fuel and had to land. The anti-aircraft batteries around Clark manned by the recently arrived 200th Coast Artillery (AA) were firing for all they were worth, but much of their ammunition was defective, the effective range of the guns wasn't high enough to reach the bombers, and of course being in their first action didn't help. Those Zeros did as much or more damage that day than the two flights of bombers. All those bombs had wrecked most of the buildings and the hangars and set everything on fire, but the Zeros finished off every one of our B-17s and P-40s that the bombs had missed, filling them so full of holes they looked like sieves. This first air raid just about finished the American bombing capability in the Philippines, only a dozen or so B-17s which had been sent down to Mindanao remained, and these left for Australia in the next few days.

The Zeros finally ran short of fuel and ammunition and went away, so I and the boys emerged from our slit trench, all of us unscathed by some miracle. Perhaps all the "Husmarioseps" helped out. It was hard to believe that I was still in one piece after all that, and my voice even came back in a bit, thank the Lord. I knew I had better get going and rejoin my outfit, so picking my way through and around all sorts of debris, bomb craters, burning vehicles as well as a few unlucky ones who had become casualties of the bombing and strafing, I made it back to the barracks, which had been hit but fortunately was not on fire. I grabbed my gear and took off down the main road leading to the main gate and the railroad station at Dau. I didn't think that after all the excitement anybody would worry about my clearance, so I stopped at the headquarters building to say "Adios". It was still empty, and I was astounded to see the condition it was in. All the sliding windows had been blown off, the walls and floor were riddled and the roof half gone. There were a dozen bomb craters around the building less than fifty feet away. All this destruction had been done while I was in the building and I hadn't even been aware of it. How I came through all that without a scratch was beyond me. I figured then that I was born to be hung instead of being shot. In light of what was going to happen to me in the next three years, I might have been better off if I had been shot!

Leaving Clark Field for the last time, I started walking down the road heading for Dau Station, which was the junction where the road

from Clark met Highway No. 1, the main road to Manila, as well as the railroad. Before I had gone halfway to Dau, a van belonging to the Post Exchange dry cleaner stopped and picked me up. This was a bit of good luck, as he was heading to Manila after making a delivery at Clark, and was happy to have a passenger. We had an uneventful sixty mile trip, and it was getting dark as we neared the city. The blackout was in force and I didn't want to get shot by some trigger-happy Filipino, so I decided to stop for the night at the Pilapil Isla, a small hotel in Caloocan where the men of my outfit usually stayed when on pass. About three in the morning, the thunder of bombs woke me up with a start. Nichols Field, just outside Manila, was being hit for the first of many times. I was certainly glad I wasn't there. I had had enough of bombing for one day. My last thought that night was that whatever happened from then on would be anti-climatic, but was I ever wrong!

Chapter 2

THE FIRST TWO WEEKS

The next morning I found a taxi and arrived at Nielson Field, on the other side of the city of Manila, where I was informed that my squadron had been quartered at Fort McKinley, a couple of miles away, and I was to join it there and set up the squadron orderly room. Fort McKinley was a beautiful place, the home station of the Philippine Scouts. They were already in the field, and we had moved into one of the empty barracks, the men being trucked to work at Nielson Field. Setting up the orderly room, or office, was easy. All a 1st Sgt. has, when in the field, is his field desk, which is about the size of a suit case and opens up to form a small desk. I just put it on a table and I was in business. At this time I had very little work to do, just get the men off to work in the morning and then make out the morning report. The morning report was submitted to the next higher headquarters daily, and showed the number of men available for duty as well as any change in the status of the personnel. An orderly room is normally a very busy place, with all the peacetime paper work, but paper work seemed to have been forgotten since the start of the war.

In the first days of the war, the Japanese were busy bombing and strafing all our air fields and Navy installations in an all-out effort to destroy our air and sea capabilities. Nichols Field, the fighter base just south of Manila, and the Navy yard at Cavite were each hit by seventy-six bombers on the 10th. The Navy yard was all but obliterated in these attacks, and what was left of the Far East fleet took off for safer climes in the Dutch East Indies. All that remained of the Navy was the submarine tender *Canopus* with its group of subs, a few PT boats and some harbor craft such as tugboats. The next day the Japs struck both Iba and Clark fields again, as well as destroying all the Navy patrol bombers at Olongapo Navy Base just after they had returned from patrol and were refueling. December 12 saw Del Carmen, Clark, Baguio and Tarlac getting their dose of Japanese medicine. Del Carmen, Clark, Nichols, Cabanatuan and Batangas were hit the following day. By the evening of the 14th, U.S. air and naval power in the Philippines was virtually nonexistent. Fort McKinley was the exception, never being attacked, I suppose because there was nothing there to be bombed. This was OK with me, as I had

had my fill of bombs already. We did have a ringside seat watching all the other places being bombed.

During all this activity by their air forces, the Japanese Army was also busy. They had landed at the towns of Aparri and Vigan, in the far northern part of Luzon, where they seized air fields from which their bombers could operate instead of their bases on Taiwan. The landing at Vigan was opposed by a few B-17s from Mindanao aided by the few fighters left to the 17th Pursuit Squadron, and some old P-35s of the 21st Pursuit. Two of the Jap transports were damaged and beached, one minesweeper sunk, and the other ships hit, but the damage was not enough to stop the landings. This was the last coordinated attack by our air forces, and from then on nothing but recon missions were flown by our Air Corps.

The big invasion which everyone had been expecting came on the 22nd of December at Lingayan Gulf, at the northern end of the central plain of Luzon. The beaches there were ideal for amphibious landings, and Lingayan was the logical starting point for a drive south toward Manila. The gulf area was defended by three divisions of the Philippine Army and the 26th Cavalry of the Philippine Scouts. The Filipinos had just been mobilized and were badly handicapped by insufficient training and shortages of equipment. In some of the regiments different dialects were spoken, which led to much confusion, as orders given in English or Tagalog had to be interpreted. Their officers had had a minimal amount of training, and American officers and NCOs were assigned to Filipino units to be used as a cadre. The American 31st Infantry and the two Philippine Scout Regiments were in the field but were being held in reserve and were not committed. As a result the Japanese landings at the Gulf were virtually unopposed, and by the second day they were beginning their advance down the central plain.

At this point, Headquarters Forces decided to initiate War Plan Orange-2. This was the plan to be used when the war situation became one in which the enemy forces had landed on Luzon in great strength and no immediate reinforcements could be expected from the United States. In this case, the mission of our forces was to defend Manila Bay by holding the entrance to the Bay and to deny its use to the enemy. If the enemy could not be held after landing, our forces were to fight a delaying action until all of our forces had withdrawn to the Bataan peninsula, which was to be held to the last. The withdrawal to Bataan was complicated by the fact that there was only one road into the peninsula,

beginning at the city of San Fernando on the main north-south highway, and the North Luzon Force, which was opposing the Japanese who had landed at Lingayen had to hold them until the South Luzon force passed through the bottleneck at San Fernando and were on their way to Bataan. This operation was going to be touch-and-go because the Southern forces had a long way to go, as well as holding off other Japanese forces who had landed at Legaspi and other places in the south of Luzon.

While all this decision-making was going on upstairs, the lower ranks were blissfully unaware of the true situation and were proceeding to enjoy themselves as much as possible. I passed my spare time by visiting my old friends in and around Nichols Field, where I had been stationed in '39 and '40. At Nichols, the Japanese bombing had done considerable damage to the flight line and some newly built barracks, but my old barracks had hardly been touched. The new barracks, which had housed the 17th Pursuit Squadron, were almost demolished. The squadrons had already been moved out to smaller fields, and were they lucky. It was about as bad as Clark Field had been after the first raid on the 8th. Looking around inside one of the buildings, I spotted one bunk with an eight-inch hole right through the center of the mattress. A bomb had gone through the roof, the ceiling, the bed and the floor, winding up as a dud under the building. It was a good job no one had been sleeping in that bunk! The bombs the Japs were using made holes about twenty feet across and some six feet deep—quite a hole. Not many of their bombs were duds, either, at least none were that landed in my vicinity.

In the evenings, trips to Manila to sample the famous steaks at Tom's Dixie Kitchen and tall gin slings at the Poodle Dog Bar were in order. The night life in Manila seemed to have picked up quite a bit, in fact, it seemed gayer than ever. It was as though everyone sensed impending doom and tried to spend as much money as they could and have as good a time as possible before the end came. Those civilians had the right idea, although we in the Army thought that relief was on the way from America, and that they were crazy. My right-hand man, Pvt. Sandy Blau, had an old Ford and we cruised around Manila in the blackout. There was a lot of shooting going on, Americans and Filipinos all had itchy trigger fingers and were firing at shadows or what their imagination told them was a Jap fifth column. Rumors were rampant that a fifth column was in the vicinity, but as most rumors were at this time, these proved to be false. It all served to spice up our nightly adventures.

All in all, things were going smoothly at Fort McKinley. The Japanese hadn't annoyed us at all, and the squadron settled down into a nearly normal routine. That is, until Christmas Day. We always had a big turkey dinner at Christmas, and everything was in the oven about to be dished up, when Lt. Roland Barnick, our Commanding Officer, ran in and told me to get the men packed up and ready to move out in thirty minutes, as we were going to Bataan. This was quite a shock, as we had thought the war was progressing nicely and now this. All we could take with us was what we could carry, so I stuffed all the things I could think of that would be indispensable in my haversack and a barracks bag. About all one could take was a blanket, an extra pair of shoes, toilet articles, and a few pairs of socks and shorts. I also grabbed another set of khakis and a pair of mechanic's coveralls, the Air Corps working outfit. Everything else was left behind, never to be seen again, by me at least. All my photo albums, cameras, letters, anything else a soldier has squirreled away in his foot locker was gone forever. The turkeys were left in the oven, and it wasn't too long before I wished I had had sense enough to take one of them along, it was to be almost four years before I saw another, although I did dream about them.

The Squadron was trucked to Pier 7 in Manila and then had to wait until dark before boarding the *Don Esteban*, an inter-island passenger ship, for the trip across Manila Bay to the peninsula of Bataan. All was dark on the ship because of the blackout, but we found enough space on deck to lie down and get a little sleep during the 4-hour trip across Manila Bay. Early the next morning we disembarked at a little village named Cabcaben. This was the first glimpse of what was to be our home until the middle of April 1942, and I sincerely wish I had never seen the place. If I had been looking for Hades, I couldn't have done better than the peninsula of Bataan.

Chapter 3

BATAAN

The peninsula of Bataan and its location relative to Manila Bay made it a very important piece of real estate. Manila Bay is roughly circular and about thirty miles in diameter. It can be pictured as a mouth, Bataan the upper jaw, and the province of Cavite the lower jaw. The mouth is partly open, with the island of Corregidor in its center, three miles from Bataan and five from Cavite. Three much smaller islands are located near Corregidor to the south. All these islands were heavily armed with batteries of heavy coast artillery to guard the entrance to Manila Bay. The Japanese would have to take these islands before they could use Manila Bay, which was the finest harbor in the Far East. Bataan guards Corregidor to the north, which is the reason all the prewar plans called for Bataan to be held for at least six months, by which time relief was expected to arrive from the United States. Supplies sufficient for forty thousand men for six months were stockpiled on Corregidor and Bataan for this purpose. Unfortunately for us, there were eighty thousand soldiers and another twenty thousand Filipino civilians who, fearing the Japanese, had fled to Bataan. With more than double the number of people planned for, it was easy to see that everything was going to be in very short supply in the near future.

The peninsula of Bataan is roughly twenty-five miles from north to south and twenty miles across. In 1941 there was just one poorly paved road, which ran down the east, or Manila Bay side, to the small port of Mariveles at the southern tip of Bataan. Mariveles was opposite Corregidor, and all the supplies being shipped to the troops on Bataan had to be transported by barge across three miles of water and unloaded there. This was going to create all sorts of problems as the war progressed. The paved road stopped at Mariveles and a gravel and dirt road went on about half way up the west coast to the town of Ragac. The entire peninsula consists of mountainous jungle, with the exception of a narrow strip of cleared land along the east coast as far as Cacaben. Mt. Natib dominates the northern half of Bataan and Mt. Bataan the southern half, both mountains being more than four thousand feet in elevation. A narrow dirt road crossed from Pilar on the east to Bagac on the west

coast, running between the two mountains. This road would become the main line of resistance after the battles in January 1942.

Cabacén was a town consisting of a schoolhouse and a dozen *bahays*, or *nipa* huts, common to the Philippine countryside. There was a small dock where we landed after our trip across the bay, and a lot of the supplies coming from Manila were being unloaded there. The confusion when we arrived was indescribable, but I finally located an officer who told me to take the outfit on down the road toward Mariveles until I found a suitable spot and set up camp out of sight of the road. So down the road we went until I found a halfway decent spot by a small stream, where the tents were erected and latrines dug. All we could do then was to wait for further orders. No one seemed to know what to do with all us Headquarters people, and more just like us were coming in all the time. It quickly became apparent that the food situation was bad and not going to get better. About all we were issued the first couple of days was canned corn beef hash and rice, which we ate twice a day for breakfast and supper. Our cooks had never had to cook rice as a main dish, so we got rice mush in the morning and burned rice at night. A lot of the rice was thrown out, as we weren't too hungry as yet. On our second day on Bataan, orders came down placing everyone on half rations. This didn't sound too good. If we had to defend Bataan for six months on half rations, we would be really thin by that time. I talked to some of the men I knew who had come from Manila by truck, and found out that the warehouses on the docks in Manila were open and lots of food and other things were at hand. I was an old scrounger from way back, this would be from heaven, so I picked three good men, cadged a couple of 6x6 trucks from a Master Sergeant at the motor pool I had known for a long time, and headed back up the highway toward Manila and all that good stuff. No one was heading our way because everyone and everything were hightailing it to Bataan. At San Fernando we turned south on the main highway and made better time, getting into Calocán about dark. We spent the night there at our usual little hotel and had the last good time we ever spent in the Philippines. The lights of Manila were all back on and we wondered why, as the blackout had been on since the start of the war. We found out later that Manila had been declared an open city after General MacArthur and President Quezón had left for Corregidor on the 26th of Dec. We didn't know at the time that combatants were supposed to keep out of an open city, so we took off for the docks. We found all the warehouses open, goods strewn all over the place, and everybody

taking all they could carry away. My crew joined in and managed to fill one truck with the choicest canned goods we could find, mostly canned meat and fruit. Our other truck was filled to the brim with boxes of cigarettes, as most of the men were smokers. I will always remember those cigarettes, Piedmonts in packs of ten. We may have had a lack of food in days to come, but every man in the outfit got his ten cigs daily.

About noon we headed back up the highway to San Fernando, crossing the double bridges at Calumpit which crossed the wide Pampanga River just south of the town. These bridges were blown up by the Engineers just a few minutes after we had crossed. We hadn't known it, but we had joined the tail end of the Southern Command as it passed through Manila on its way to Bataan. No wonder the traffic had been heavy! If we had been ten minutes later leaving Manila, we would have been stranded on the south side of the river, which, as things turned out, might not have been too bad. We could have headed up into the mountains and become guerrillas. I was familiar with the area and knew many Filipinos there, so with our two truck loads of goodies we would have gotten along famously. However, fate decided otherwise, and turning left at San Fernando, we went on down the road to Bataan and Cabcaben, which we reached in the evening only to find the squadron gone. We finally found it in bivouac a few miles to the south at Little Baguio, so-called because it was located on top of a ridge about halfway from Cabcaben to Mariveles. It was named after the city of Baguio in the mountains of northern Luzon, known as the "summer capital" of the Philippines, where everyone who can afford to do so goes during the hot season. It is a clean, cool city and a nice place to be when the temperature in Manila is in the nineties. At the top of the ridge at Little Baguio there was a flat area around three hundred yards in length. Base Hospital #1 was located here, just off the road to the right. A rough trail ran by the hospital, then through a large ammunition dump, then on up the ridge. Following this trail about a quarter of a mile, we found our outfit and parked the trucks on the side of the trail. Too late for supper, we made do with cans of corned beef and fruit salad from our loot. After eating, I found a pyramidal tent and set it up for an orderly room, as well as a place to live. Thus ended a day which I considered to have been well spent.

The next morning I woke up to be unpleasantly surprised by the sight of a detail of men unloading our truck of foodstuffs and carrying it away to, you guessed it, the officers' mess. How they knew that the truck was

loaded with food I will never know, because it was covered completely. But there it went, and all I ever got out of it was six cans of corned beef. If I had had the brains that a 1st Sergeant with seven years service should have had, all that food would have been distributed among the men as soon as we got in. We would have eaten a lot better in the next few months than we did with what the Army gave us. The only consolation we had was that they didn't take our cigarettes as well. From that day on, I began to be disillusioned about our officers. Officers were supposed to take care of their men before they took care of themselves, and just about all the officers I had known during my service in the Infantry did just that, but Air Corps officers didn't seem to subscribe to that theory. The excuse given to us for taking our truckload of food was that pilots had to have a special diet in order to fly in combat, but in the present situation where there were only a dozen or so planes left to fly, why did a hundred or so pilots have to be fed that special diet. We all thought it was terribly unfair and unnecessary.

We were fortunate in our location at Little Baguio. The whole mountain was covered with gigantic hardwood trees whose tops formed a canopy that provided perfect cover from enemy planes. At the base of each tree there were wings growing out for twenty or so feet. They were probably the tops of the tree roots, and a tent could be set up between two of these wings to make a cozy little spot. A small river furnished a good supply of water and a place to bathe, and due to our elevation above sea level, there was usually a cool breeze. Best of all, there were no mosquitoes and therefore no malaria, which is endemic in the lower parts of Bataan where the greater part of our troops were. In a couple of days, all our tents were up and we were snug as bugs in a rug. With plenty of bamboo at hand, the squadron clerk and I built frames for bunks and with strips of canvas nailed across the frames, had what were passably comfortable sleeping arrangements, much better than sleeping on the ground. The only fly in the ointment, and this fly was a big one, was the fact that we were on half rations, and it looked as though we would be getting less food, not more, in the foreseeable future. Breakfast was just a canteen cup of watery rice called *lugao*, sweetened with sugar to make it fit to eat, or salt if you didn't have sugar. This was supposed to last you until supper, when you were issued a mess kit of boiled rice with a small piece of whatever meat was on hand that day, together with a couple of spoons of gravy, and for the first couple of weeks, one slice of bread from the Army bakery, which was delicious. I had always heard about

the corned beef which all the troops in the Great War had complained about, but strangely enough, all we ever got, infrequently, was corned beef hash. Some days we got a bit of canned salmon in place of the meat, and perhaps a few peas or carrots, but I don't recall being issued any amount of vegetables. It was inevitable that food and how to get more of it began to be our first consideration.

The first week at Little Baguio passed quietly, but on New Year's Day of 1942, our Squadron Adjutant, 2nd Lt. Harold Whitcomb, of Fremont, Ohio, showed up and informed us that as of now we had been assigned to the 2nd Battalion of the Provisional Infantry Regiment and would be in the reserve forces for use as reinforcements when necessary. This was not unexpected, as without any aircraft we were useless. The bad part of it was that only I and one of my sergeants had had any Infantry service or fired a rifle. None of our officers had any idea of infantry training, so of course it fell to me to take care of it. Everyone was issued a Springfield rifle, Model '03, bolt action, together with a bayonet. Rifle practice was simple, only five rounds of ammunition were available for training, so each man fired at a tree. About all that did was to scare all the monkeys in the vicinity. After that I had to start close order drill and the manual of arms. I couldn't imagine why we had to do close order drill when I knew if we had to do any fighting it would be in the jungle, but the Commanding Officer insisted on it, and so for a few days I marched the outfit up and down the trail all morning. Nobody ever showed up from Headquarters to see how we were doing, so after a week I quit all that foolishness and from then on, all I inspected were the rifles to make sure they were being taken care of.

By the middle of January the squadron was well settled in our pleasant home in the jungle. The latrine rumors had it that there had been a big battle up north, where we had handled the Japs pretty roughly, but the army had to fall back on the MLR, or main line of resistance, which was along the dirt road running across the center of Bataan, from Pilar to Bagac. This line was supposed to be held to the last man. So far we had not been called on, which was OK with us. The only thing Japanese we had seen as yet was a small observation plane which came over every day around noon. We could see it through the treetops as it slowly cruised along, but I doubt if it could see anything through that mass of jungle. I suppose they could get a glimpse of the hospital, but as it was well marked with red crosses, it was not being bothered at this stage of the game.

Our only worry during this period of quiet was that of the food supply. The good bread which we had been getting stopped, the supply of flour having run out, and the coffee ration got progressively smaller. The meat ration, when there was any, was carabao, or water buffalo, and it was really tough, the carabao being used as draft animals by the natives. We began to feel hungry most of the time, which affected all of us, especially those in their teens, I suppose because they were still growing and needed more food than the older guys. This called for action, so as there were a few of the men who had some hunting experience, I thought they might as well see what they could find in the jungle. Two men who were from the Tennessee back country went out to see what there was available. When they came back, they brought in some monkeys which they gave to the cooks to see what they could do with them. Monkey meat turned out to be very good tasting, as long as you hadn't seen it when it was dressed for cooking, because it looked just like a baby in that state. To me, monkey tasted almost like pork chops, and most everybody enjoyed this addition to the food ration. Hunting began to be special duty for the two hillbillies, and they went out every day. When the supply of monkeys got low, they brought in a kind of large lizard, as well as some really big snakes. Both snakes and lizards taste like chicken, and we couldn't get enough of them. Coconuts, pineapples, and sugar are also grown on Bataan, but we were up in the mountains in the jungle, where nothing at all in the way of edibles seemed to grow. I imagine a native of the region could have found plenty to eat, but we Americans were definitely not jungle dwellers. Some of the foragers found cashew nuts, and a few deaths resulted when the nuts were eaten raw. Evidently cashews are deadly poison unless they are roasted before eating. None of my hunters brought any in, so we never had any occasion to try them out. There was one form of animal life in plentiful supply—the rat. If we had but known, it, rat is one of the most tasty and the easiest source of protein that a POW can get. Most Americans would rather die than eat a rat, and at this stage of the game we weren't quite hungry enough to eat one. Later on we were not that fussy. All we did with the hordes of rats was to try to kill them. One way to do that was to put some rice in a mess kit and place it in the middle of a tent, then douse the candle, which is all we had for light. Soon we would hear a noise from the mess kit, everyone would put his flashlight on and throw his bayonet at whatever was eating the rice. A lot of fat rats hit the dust that way. We would have eaten better if they had been given to the cooks.

Malaria had already begun to affect the troops on Bataan, especially those at sea level. There were very few living as high on the mountain as we were, and nearly everyone got malaria in the next few months. We at Little Baguio were issued one quinine tablet per day. Quinine is the ultimate in bitterness, and a Sergeant had to personally see that each man took his. It would have been more sensible to have saved them for issue when we were in mosquito country. When we really needed them, there were none left. Later on, I would have given a month's pay for a few of those quinine pills.

Our stay at Little Baguio came to a sudden end on the 23rd of January. The Japanese had landed in force on the west coast of Bataan, in rear of our main line of resistance, and the Air Corps Regiment was being rushed to the danger point as a reinforcement. We were finally going to see some action. I was to go with Lt. Whitcomb and thirty men to one of the places where the Japs had landed and the rest of the squadron went to another. No one had any spare food to take along, about all we had was our mess gear and what few personal items we hated to leave behind. This was stowed in our gas mask carrier, which made a nice little knapsack after the gas mask was thrown away. There must have been about fifty thousand gas masks littering the landscape of Bataan. About midnight we boarded trucks and headed down the road toward Mariveles and the west coast and what would later be called the battle of the Points.