

# SOONER MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED EVERY MONTH BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION

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## Riding the Sooner Range

By TED BEARD

The Time: 12:00 noon, Monday, 15 April, 1946.  
The Place: Silver Glade Room, Skirvin Tower Hotel, Oklahoma City. The Event: An hour spent in retrospect—a period devoted to the re-dedication of mind, body and soul "to the memory of those Oklahoma boys who did not come back from the Philippines."

Four long, eventful and historic years ago at this same hour these men, sons of O. U.—citizens of Oklahoma, were in the throes of the March of Death—struggling and stumbling forward, beaten, punished, persecuted and tortured—mutilated at the hands of a merciless and heartless captor—Japan!

This mere two dozen, at the special guest table in this assembly of 1031 Oklahoma Rotarians and wives, representing 79 Oklahoma Communities, have accepted the invitation to be present to assist in paying a just tribute to their Comrades of Bataan and Corregidor—an hour dedicated to their comrades *who will not come back*. These mere two dozen—steadying themselves on artificial limbs, proceeding forward with difficulty as they arose from Army General Hospital beds early this morning; as they broke into the routine of rest furloughs at their state homes; as they requested delay enroute on their army orders wherein transfers to new stations are in store for them—are here under difficulty and strain. Are here to see, for the first time, many of their comrades of the Philippines, from whom they were separated four years ago this hour, in the Death March, by the ruthless conqueror—the Jap! Here to meet on the level of free American citizens; here to drop all thoughts of rank—with the Pfc. and the Sergeant unashamed and undaunted—placing their arms about their then commanding officer—the Colonel, and to reverently in their hearts and soul give thanks to God that they too, enjoy the heritage of AN AMERICAN!

It's a supreme hour for these men! Indeed, it is a supreme hour for all assembled! Over there at that table is "the kid" of ten years ago (now, in body, aged far beyond his mere 30 years). "The kid" who because of the cruelties on Bataan—because of torture, beri-beri, malnutrition and barbarity, grew over night, physically far beyond his years BUT true to the tradition of the American Soldier, has the song of youth in his heart because *he paid* to protect his country. "The kid" who came through his University and College career, the hard way—over steam tables washing the greasy pots and pans, earning a student helper's salary, devoting a portion of those earnings to contribute to the support of a widowed mother. Yes, there at that table is "the kid." He is there at that table today as a distinguished Major of the U. S. Army. Those seven stripes on the left sleeve of his Officer blouse plus the Presidential

Unit and personal citations and decorations tells the story!

At this "speakers' table" is another soldier of the Death March—a native son of Sooner soil. From his Command Post at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where he again, in peace as was the case four years ago this hour in the Death March, is privileged to serve on the staff of GENERAL JONATHAN WAINWRIGHT—he was invited and urged to appear here today to meet his comrades his fellow state citizens and to participate in this Victory Rotary Conference paying a tribute to "Oklahoma men of the Philippines."

This soldier? The speaker of the hour—COLONEL JAMES "VIC" COLLIER, O.U., '17-'18, of the U. S. Army. And, here is what he said to that Oklahoma audience:

"Rotarians, visitors and you boys from Bataan, Corregidor and the Philippines, I am glad to be here. I am glad to be present at a time when the statewide association of Rotary Clubs are asking the survivors of the men who were on Bataan and Corregidor to be their guests at a convention, one meeting of which is dedicated to the memory of those Oklahoma boys 'who did not come back from the Philippines.' I feel that my effort in saying a few words to the memory of those boys will be so terribly inadequate, for I am one of those unfortunate individuals who find it almost impossible to express in words the feelings that are in the heart. So please, bear with me, take me for what I am trying to say and not for what I may be saying, or the manner in which I say it.

"I do not know the number of Oklahoma boys who were in the Philippines, neither do I know the number that died there, but I do know that the state of Oklahoma can well be proud of her sons, who "paid the hard way!" I knew Oklahomans over there of all ages; the boy of twenty who had enlisted to see the world; the young reserve officer who had just graduated from one of the state R.O.T.C. units; the old regular army man who had years of service back of him and who had the traditions of his profession to uphold, and while the acts or service rendered by these men ranged, of course, over a wide scale it is with pride that I can say to you that not one failed in his duty, not one failed to prove himself a man of whom Oklahoma can be proud.

"I feel that a brief outline of the events leading up to Bataan and Corregidor will help you to understand the final days there.

"I was ordered to duty in the Philippines early in 1940, and arrived there with my family in July. Therefore I saw the Islands and the people before the tenseness of war days. The Filipino lived a happy, carefree existence. He possessed a minimum of worldly goods, but nature was kind to him. His climate required little in the way of shelter and clothing. A little rice and fish for bodily nourishment and a fighting cock for pleasure

### The Cover

For services to their country, Col. Clive Murray, United States Army, who, during the war years of World War II and until he returns to his civilian position as president of the Murray State School of Agriculture at Tishomingo on July 1, has been the commanding officer in charge of a selective service system for the State of Oklahoma, presents medals to a former governor, Leon C. Phillips, and to the present governor, "Bob" Kerr, for their contributions as executive officials of their state in carrying forward the program under the selective service act of the nation. Both Mr. Phillips and Mr. Kerr are alumni of the University of Oklahoma.

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Col. J. C. "Vic" Collier, graduate of the University of Oklahoma and now of the United States Army. Colonel Collier was one of the many University of Oklahoma alumni who made the Death March. At the Fall of Bataan, Colonel Collier was a member of the staff of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's command and when General MacArthur was ordered to Australia, he was transferred to the staff of Gen. Jonathan Wainwright. Colonel Collier and his commanding general (Wainwright) made the Death March together and were prisoners of war of the Japs for more than three years. In recent weeks, Colonel Collier was transferred back to the States and is again on the staff of his old commanding general (Wainwright) at the Fourth Army headquarters, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

and amusement was all he asked of the world. His Islands had very little in the way of industrial development, and only a few towns and cities. The native Barrio was his principal habitat; the rice paddies and sugar plantations the bulk of his labor. "It was not until about February or March of 1941 that a feeling of coming war began to quicken and change the slow, placid way of life of the Philippines.

"On January 1, 1941, the United States Forces in the Philippines numbered around 8,000 to 10,000 Americans and 6,000 Philippine Scouts. The infantry was armed with the Garand rifle, but there were no other modern weapons. The only anti-aircraft guns were on Corregidor and there were no tanks or armored weapons. Due to the world political situation President Roosevelt ordered the Philippine Scout units recruited to the full strength authorized by law. By March 1, 1941, this had been accomplished and the Scout strength brought from 6,000 to 12,000.

"In April all the families of military personnel were ordered to return to the United States. My family left on 14 May and I shall be eternally grateful that on that day I could not know that four and one-half precarious years were to drag by before I was to see them again.

"26 July. General MacArthur, who had been retired from the United States Army and who was in the Philippines as Military Adviser to the President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, was called to active duty and appointed to command all United States Forces in the Far East. A high-sounding title but at that time those forces con-

sisted only of the American troops in the Philippines with perhaps a few scattered individuals on missions to Malaya, or the Netherlands East Indies. General MacArthur however, was also authorized to mobilize and induct into the service of the United States the Philippine Army."

"The Philippine Commonwealth Government had, as a preparatory step toward the independence promised by the Tydinge-McDuffy Act, adopted measures for National defense. These measures included conscription or compulsory military training in order to provide a reserve army. A number of draftees, the number depending upon the funds appropriated by the Commonwealth Assembly, were called each year for five and one-half months training. For several years preceding the war this number had totalled only five thousand a year, the expense had proven to be a considerable burden on the Commonwealth treasury. On completion of training the trainee was assigned to a reserve unit. At the time General MacArthur took command the reserve army totalled ten divisions, each with a strength of about 7,500.

"General MacArthur selected a staff, set up his headquarters in Manila and determined to mobilize the Philippine Army at once. I was ordered from the Field Artillery at Fort Stotsenburg to his staff as Assistant to G-3, the general staff section which has charge of mobilization, training, and operations. This mobilization was not a simple matter, the problems were many and difficult. There were no housing facilities available for the divisions. Supplies of all kinds were pitifully inadequate. However steps were initiated to effect

the mobilizations as rapidly as possible, because by 1 August it was evident to most observers that war was almost certain to come to the Philippines. Cantonment areas were selected and construction of temporary barracks and quarters pushed as much as possible, using local building materials such as bamboo, nipa and suwale.

"The Philippine Army divisions consisted of three infantry regiments, a field artillery regiment, an engineer battalion and supply and service units. The total strength of 7,500 was but little more than half that of an American division. On 1 September one infantry regiment of each division was ordered mobilized and quartered in the Philippine Army draftee training barracks. Remaining units to be called as rapidly as housing facilities could be provided. November 15 a second regiment was called and in a few areas some of the service units. By 1 December it was determined that all the units could be housed on or before 31 December, and assembled in division cantonment areas.

"On 8 December 1941 the Philippine Army was but little more than half mobilized. Not a single division had completed mobilization, and only a few, very few of the regimental commanders had been able to assemble their units into a regimental formation, and none had been able to hold regimental maneuvers, maneuvers so vitally important for battle training. The individual was not a trained soldier. The five and one-half months training had at most taught him to march, to execute the manual of arms and to perform the simple squad, platoon and company movements. Worst of all, modern arms and equipment were not available. Automatic weapons, all of World War One vintage, were far short of requirements; the field artillery consisted of a few British 75mm. guns and a number of our long obsolete 2.95-inch Mountain Howitzers. Not a single regiment was fully equipped with even these guns. For heavy artillery we had about thirty 155mm. guns and two 155mm. howitzers. The infantry had a small number of our old 3-inch Stokes mortars, and twenty-six brand new 86mm. mortars, the latest and newest just received from the States, but not one single round of ammunition for them. The infantry was armed with our old Enfield rifle and the ammunition supply was ample, but even here all was not well as the small statured Filipino found it decidedly difficult to aim the long-stocked rifle, which had been designed and built for a much larger Americano. In personal equipment the shortage was even worse. None of the troops could be equipped with steel helmets or entrenching tools. Less than half possessed a blanket, only a few could be given a shelter-half or raincoat. About half could be provided with shoes, the majority being issued "sneakers" or low-cut rubber soled shoes. Our problems did not end with clothing and equipment. Upon mobilization several regiments were discovered that spoke as many as seven dialects; speakers of one dialect unable to understand any one of the others. Officers of an infantry company used one interpreter to speak to the non-commissioned-officers and another to speak to the men. Incredible, of course, and corrected by transfers as soon as possible.

"Time was our all important need. The War Department had decided to augment our small American force, but shipping was scarce and we were some seven thousand miles away. During the last few months of peace we received an A A Regiment, the 200th C.A. (AA), New Mexico National Guard; two tank battalions, mostly Kentucky National Guard and about three thousand air corps troops. Given six months and we would have had a fair army, but on 8 December 1941 we did not have an army!

"The Jap had planned well and struck a quick, powerful blow. Within three days our air force was practically destroyed, and by 22 December he had landed close to 80,000 troops on Luzon. The raw Filipino troops, many of whom had never fired a rifle, was thrown against this well trained, well equipped army, which was supported by Modern artillery, automatic weapons, armored units and large scale air attacks. They did well



under the circumstances and conditions, but had to withdraw. The withdrawal was not a rout, that those raw regiments maintained any cohesion at all is an undying tribute to the Filipino soldier and a handful of American officers. By 8 January 1942 the American-Filipino forces were in Bataan and the Japanese, jubilant with victory, pushed rapidly forward to the kill. Then something happened, something that the Japanese could not understand and probably never will, that force which had retreated for more than one hundred miles from Lingayen Gulf to Lyac Junction stiffened and refused to retreat farther. Along a battle front across the neck of Bataan Peninsula known as the Abucay-Moron Line the American-Filipino forces crouched in the dense undergrowth of the tropical forest and shot it out with the invaders. The Japanese Commander in a fury of haste to conclude the conquest threw his forces forward in mass formation down the few roads leading into Bataan. The Scout Infantry armed with the Garand rifle standing astride these roads and supported by the Scout field artillery poured a murderously deadly fire into those masses. After ten days of frightful losses the Jap was forced to pull back, lick his wounds and seek for safer and less costly methods of getting into Bataan.

"American-Filipino forces in Bataan numbered about ten thousand Americans and seventy thousand Filipinos. Of the Americans only two thousand, the 31st Infantry, were combat troops. The remainder were air corps or service troops and not trained in the use of or armed with the rifle. Two thousand of the air corps boys were formed into a provisional infantry regiment and fought as infantry. We found on checking up that we had come into Bataan with only twenty days ration, and that in addition to our soldiers we had some twelve-thousand civilian refugees to feed. There were no food supplies growing or stored in Bataan.

"The Abucay-Moron Line was close to eighteen miles long, and we had about seventy-five miles of beach line to defend. An attack from the sea to our rear seemed to us the logical step for the enemy to take. That long beach line was a constant nightmare and during February and early March the Jap did make four widely divergent landings in our rear, two in connection with front line attacks, but not a Jap soldier survived those landing attempts.

"5 January we were placed on half rations, and during the month we used all our coffee. During February bread and sugar disappeared and we ate all the horses and mules brought into Bataan by the 26th Cavalry and two pack trains. Food dwindled to rice and occasional carabao meat. Men were shooting and eating birds, monkeys, pythons and any other animal that could be found. During March our total daily ration averaged about fourteen ounces. (The normal American Army ration totals more than eighty-four courses.) Malaria, dysentery and other tropical diseases were spreading rapidly. Quinine was practically used up in January and all other medicines were scarce. By 1 April seventy per cent of our troops were suffering from disease. Many, many men in front line units were too sick and weak to climb from their fox-holes. The suffering from starvation and sickness beggars description. The Japs re-enforced with two veteran divisions, one from China and one from Singapore, launched a new all out offensive on 1 April. The blow could not be stopped. Starvation and sickness were the Japs' best allies.

"Since my return to the states I have hardly met a single close friend who has not, after the first five minutes conversation, asked me confidentially if the atrocity stories of the "Death March" and prison camps are true. I do not blame them. How or why the people of a modern nation could have perpetuated or condoned such crimes is beyond reasoning. The atrocity stories are true. Human beings were starved, beaten and murdered in prison camps; herded and jammed like cattle into the hold of prison ships without food or water.

"At Camp O'Donnell, situated on the dry, hot central Luzon plain, some thirty-five thousand

Filipinos and nine thousand two hundred and seventy-one Americans were penned within a cantonment area which had been planned and built to house eight thousand Filipino soldiers. For three weeks one was lucky to get a cupful of drinking water a day, none for any other purpose, and a handful of cooked rice. Within one month over twelve hundred Americans and five thousand to ten thousand Filipinos died. The living could with only the greatest effort bury the dead. O'Donnell was but the start, for over three and one-half years the dwindling number of prisoners were subjected to starvation and unbelievable treatment. They were deliberately exposed to American bombings, and moved by ships at a time when the seas were known to be thoroughly policed by American submarines. *Today we do not know the total number of survivors, but from available figures we can estimate that less than twenty-five per cent will return.* Three out of four paid with their lives the price demanded by a brutal captor as his means of showing his conquering strength. That any at all lived through those long lean years of humiliation and torture was due not only to a determination to live but to the American ability to laugh, to find something "funny" in his own desperate plight. A laugh a day not only puzzled and frustrated the Jap but helped one stay sane. One of our early laughs came at Tarlac where the senior officers had been assembled. Our food was rice, a little rice without salt or other condiment. General Wainwright at every opportunity asked for and stressed the urgent need for additional food and particularly meat. After some five or six weeks the Nips promised meat once a week. Soon after they brought in a yearling Brahma steer. The prisoners butchered it and the Jap guards took the hindquarters. A week later we were given a couple of pigs; we got all of them except the hams. The third week an almost full grown carabao was brought in. It looked as big as an elephant. A veterinary officer with us, conscientious in spite of all handicaps, had been faithfully inspecting all animals for whatever ailment vet's inspect animals, so he walked up to the carabao to look him over. The animal jerked sidewise, gave a plunge, broke the grass rope around his horns and charged through the fence, immediately every prisoner that could walk, trot or run took after him.

"The Jap sergeant of the guard bounced about like a flea on a hot stove. The prisoners he was charged with guarding and safe keeping were rapidly scattering all over the country side as they chased the galloping, dodging carabao. The chase continued for well over an hour before the carabao was finally caught and brought back. As Prisoners and carabao came into the enclosure the sergeant frantically hopped up and down yelling, "tinko, tinko, bango, bango" (fall in and count off) but the prisoners' first thought was the carabao. When he was safely disposed of, then and then only would they line up for roll call. The carabao was led directly to the butchering place and again the Vet started to examine him when General "Skinny" stuck his head out of a window and shouted, "Get the sledge hammer and hit that bull between the eyes, and if that horse doctor gets in the way hit him too."

"On behalf of the men from the Philippines I want to express to Rotary our sincere appreciation for this meeting. We are glad to be here with you, but most of all we are grateful to you for this opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of those boys, "Who will not come back;" those boys who died in battle on Bataan and Corregidor; those boys who died of starvation or disease in prison camp; those boys who were beaten to death or executed for no reason other than to satisfy the whim of a brutal captor, those boys who, locked in the dark, foul hold of a prison ship, died at sea; to the memory of all those boys we reverently pay tribute today. May God in his infinite mercy and mysterious way let them know that we are thinking of them. That they are not forgotten, and that they shall live in our memory so long as we shall live. And in the words of one of our greatest Americans, "May they not have died in vain."

## Flying Program Announced

State highschool graduates will be eligible for the new naval aviation officer candidate program, Comdr. W. M. Rakow, executive officer of the University N.R.O.T.C., has announced. Upon selection by regional boards, students will be given two years of college work before taking flight training. Pay will be \$600 a year. Other benefits both during and after service will be offered candidates.

## Air Photo Major Arrives In Marshalls

Announcement of the arrival of Major Charley Griffin on Kwajalein Island in the Marshall group, where he will serve as public relations officer with the air photo unit of the now famous *Crossroads* project, was made this week by the headquarters of the joint task group I.5.

Major Griffin, a former student of the University, was a journalism major and served as editor of the *Covered Wagon* during the year 1940-41. He joined the Army in the spring of 1942 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant upon graduation from the photographic laboratory commanders school at Lowry Field in May, 1942.

Since that time he has served as a production director and for the past two and a half years, as commanding officer of the Air Forces film strip preparation department at Lowry Field, where he supervised the production of some 300 technical Air Force training film strips.

The air photo unit, of which he is a member, is charged with the photographic coverage of all aspects of the coming atomic bomb trials to be held at Bikini atoll this spring and summer and are utilizing some ten photographic aircraft to accomplish the job. Eight are F-13 ships, better known as B-29's when used for bomb dropping planes. The other two are Army versions of the Douglas DC-4 four engined passenger planes. Each plane is equipped with approximately 26 of the latest types of aerial cameras, ranging from the Fastax cameras capable of making thousands of exposures per second to the standard large size still picture aerial cameras.

The unit is expected to obtain a complete picture story of the bombing from the instant the bomb is released from the B-29's bomb bay until the last vapors of the explosion have vanished, giving scientists and the public a complete and accurate version of the facts surrounding the mystery of the atomic bomb.



MAJOR GRIFFIN