

Sgt. Henry E. McCurry, Jr., Tells Of Interesting Experiences In Battling Japs On Philippines; Of Friendly Natives And Their Many Kindnesses; His Ocean Cruise On Hospital Ship

Sgt. Henry E. McCurry, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry McCurry, 820 Puritan, writes interestingly of his work in the Philippines where he went through the Leyte campaign; his ocean cruise aboard a hospital ship from yellow jaundice. His letter follows:

Somewhere on the Pacific. Dear People: You see, I must have been waiting for this for a long time and the old worries have started again. I've tried to tell you in my letters that there is no sense in worrying about me 'cause I'll get along pretty good. Right at present I'm living like a king on an army hospital ship curing the seas. I think we are going back to where I left from. This thing is just about like traveling on the City of Bristol except that the meals are cheaper. Nothing to do all day except to walk the deck, sit in the deck chairs in the sun—listen to the music, see the movies at night, and that and that.

As you probably gathered from the last couple of letters I didn't care much for what I was doing and I got myself changed to the forward echelon and then tried to get me a job in the C-3 section (operations). I was forward just two days and I got a chance to do some work. It was just a matter of mail boxes on Cocosan trees and that is all I saw for a long time. I also had a fondness for the jaundice and although I feel pretty healthy now, I guess I go back for a month or so.

I have just been given on the idea of learning very much of the language around here as in one season you learn one thing and then you move 20 miles up and the people there don't understand. They speak a different dialect so you get along better with signs, English and cigarettes.

I have been looking around for stuff to send home but the souvenir business is just about getting started. It is remarkable how quickly after action has taken place in an area. It is cleaned up and you would never know any thing had happened. But it takes a little while for the businessmen to start up. They are starting to make slippers and other little bamboo knickknacks but I haven't been around much of the stuff. By the time I get back I suppose they will have all the stores going strong and the prices the same.

While we were over on the western side of the island I got one day off in and some good eating. Six of us got three natives with out-gigger canoes and we went fishing. We had no lines but I'll tell you a hand grenade doesn't do bad. The water was so clear we could see the fish and when we would find a school of them we would drop a grenade in the water and then after it went off dive for the fish. We got a bushel of fish in no time. We took what we wanted and gave the rest to the natives for the use of the boats. I don't know what the fish were—they were all kinds of colors but the natives said they were good—and they were.

Tells of Christmas. We spent Christmas day with two Filipino families. We set up right next to their house Christmas eve and they invited us for dinner the next day. It was quite a meal and experience. We ate on the floor, of course, and we had a main dish of roast pig. There were lots of other things, also, made out of rice and coconuts.

I did, and in the morning I really didn't feel so good, so over to the man I went. He just looked at me and said "You are going to the hospital." So that's how I spent New Year's Day. I checked in at the field hospital and by then I didn't feel good at all. Although I was listed as a walking patient, I took my shoes off because on the hospital ship instead.

I don't mind at all 'cause the rest isn't so bad for a change. Right now I feel as healthy as I ever did. Of course I have to eat chicken and ice cream and drink orange and grapefruit juice four or five times a day but I'm able to be up and under it.

I had packs of cigarettes and I gave four to each of the naps and the other fellows gave what they could spare. It wasn't as good as being at home but I did a Christmas anyway. While we were out we ate often with natives. We used native guides a lot and although I have heard a lot about the American Indian I'll make one of these trips to get me through the brush and woods and mountains. They have a head full of eyes and a compass each foot. I learned a lot that the Boy Scouts never heard about moving around in jungle country.

Learn Native Building. I can make you one of the dryest native houses ever lived in out of bamboo and banana leaves in no time at all and it will stand a typhoon too. Also, if you had a coconut tree I could put you in business with the local wine merchants, selling "Tuba." There is one place on the top of the tree that you tap and you can get about two quart over night. The juice ferments as it drips and in the morning you can sell it or drink it and it doesn't take much to make you walk sideways. The natives like it but I don't see how. To me it smells like rotten, rotten eggs and it tastes much like it smells. Anyhow by now I could get lost in the woods and live in comfort for several months.

I hope you get all of this at once as soon as I hit shore I'll give you my new address but this will be on its way. HENRY.

Pause in Belgium

Evidencing friendliness in Belgium. Pvt. Manuel Calvillo of San Antonio, Tex., gets a light from an outgoing steam train. (Signal Corps photo.)

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Communications Across the Roer



In the new Western Front offensive, a U. S. 9th Army wire team carries drums of communications wire over a pontoon foot bridge across Roer River in Germany. (Signal Corps Radio-Telephoto.)

Hungry Two Years!



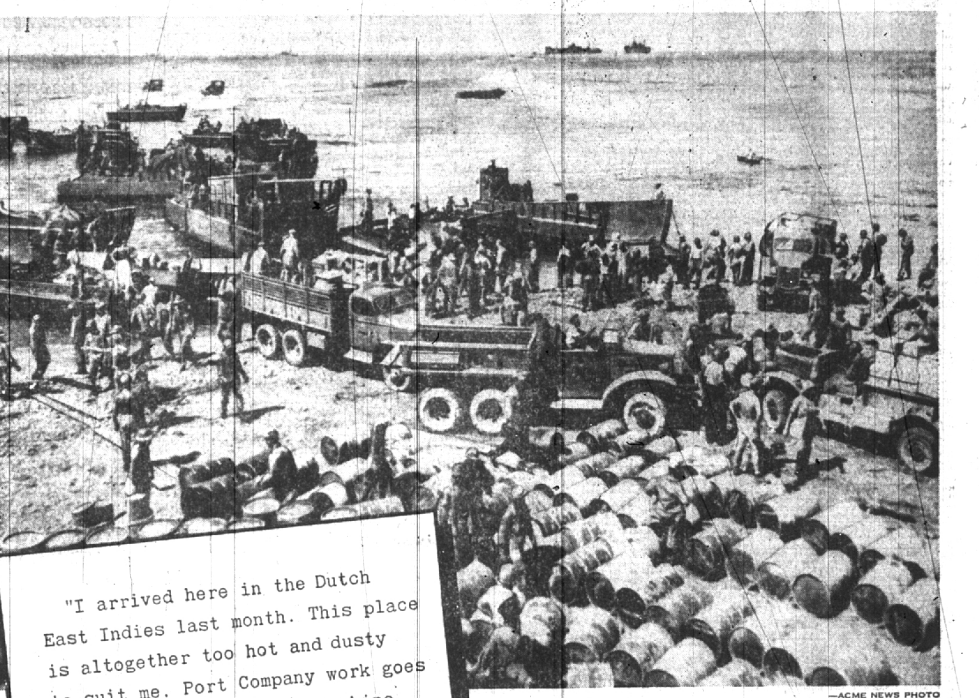
Just skin and bones is the picture Charles O. Sipler (shirtless) presents after two years of internment in Biladison in Manila. With him, talking to American soldiers, is another liberated internee, Joe H. Clemens.

Pollywogs



Pollywogs skittering over a pond is the picture presented by this aerial view of waves of invasion west, churning toward two Jims carrying the first U. S. Marines to land there. (Navy photo.)

"On the Job... Rain or Shine Seven Days a Week"



—ACME NEWS PHOTO

"I arrived here in the Dutch East Indies last month. This place is altogether too hot and dusty to suit me. Port Company work goes on 7 days a week, rain or shine, and we work 6 hours on and 12 off. "This kind of schedule sure gets a person down in time. I am not kidding when I say I would gladly change places with any man in the States."

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Religious Activities of Servicemen

Comforting news of the religious activities of American servicemen and women comes to Birmingham homes from time to time the latest coming from far-away India. A Birmingham serviceman has just sent home the following V-Mail letter, believed of much interest to all fathers, mothers, wives, sweethearts and other relatives concerned with the welfare of their men overseas: "Somewhere in India, Dear Mom and Dad: You will be glad to know that I have attended church services recently. This may be 'far-off' India," and everything else may be different, but when I go to church I feel God's Presence even here. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? at whether shall I flee from thy presence?" (Ps. 139). The Chaplain at this camp asks me to give you this message: "The Army is doing everything possible through its chaplains, to provide normal religious activities for all our soldiers. Protestant, Catholic and Jewish. Fine chapels, equipped with electric organs, are seldom available but where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Mat. 18:20). "It is inspiring to reflect that not only in this camp, but on ships at sea, in steaming jungles, on tiny islands... in a thousand outposts all over the world... our American boys are finding for themselves a Christian way of life. I wish that I could tell of all the good Christian things they say and do. Truly they are learning that 'if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even then shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me.' (Ps. 138). Even when no Chaplain is available, as sometimes happens, these soldiers pick right in and have their own worship services. I know that God blesses them all. May they return to home and loved ones soon, stronger than ever in their faith and knowledge of the Truth that maketh all men free. "Sincerely yours, "JOHN L. DIER, "Post Chaplain."

Before the Japs occupied the Philippines there were thirty-six thousand two hundred and twelve Boy Scouts in the Islands.