

EVELYN CREW BARNES  
November 30, 1906 - October 29, 1994

Many of Evelyn's closest friends do not fully realize what searing memories she had of her three years as a war prisoner of the Japanese - nor how strong her mind and body had to be to endure these years of daily deprivation and unremitting fear of death in the Philippines during War World II.

Evelyn and her late husband, Porter Barnes, had been living and working in the Philippines for several years prior to December 7, 1941. They, like other civilians, were terrified as the bombing of Manilla continued, and they tried to stay out of the streets. As it became obvious that the Japanese would defeat our forces, Evelyn has said, (in one of <sup>the</sup> ~~her~~ few articles published about her) and I quote,

"It just didn't seem possible. We couldn't realize. We thought the United States was so big, and it was simply incredible that something like this could happen."

As Bataan and Corregidor were overcome in early 1942 and surviving American soldiers were taken prisoner, so were Evelyn and Porter - along with 3300 other American and foreign national civilians - men, women, and children - were picked up by the Japanese and taken in trucks to Santo Tomas University. At first they had to sleep on the floor. The Japanese

promise that they would be released to go home soon lengthened into three years. They endured daily a routine of harsh rules, many sleepless nights, insufficient food supplies that became less and less adequate as the years rolled on. People died from malnutrition and lack of medical attention. There was overcrowding and inadequate sanitation. There was boredom and fear and worse, an increasing sense of hopelessness.

Husbands and wives were separated -often even families were. Meals were reduced to two a day, mainly rice. Bodies became thin as the only food was doled out by the Japanese. Deficiency diseases, especially beri-beri, became prevalent and the death ratio increased among the weaker and older persons. It was heart breaking to see children starve. Clothing, adequate in the beginning, gradually turned to rags.

When a death occurred, carpenters among the prisoners made wooden caskets and burial took place in the compound.

There were isolated cases of cruelty.

After Evelyn and Porter returned to America, and resumed a normal life, they made an effort to put this trauma behind them, but, she has told me, the memories stayed with them every day of their lives, and the after effects never ended.

Porter died in 1962. They had no children. Their bodies survived the ordeal, but for many years before she passed away Evelyn wore a back

brace, and as she aged she suffered increasing unremitting pain both day and night. She was ever a devout Christian but in recent years she had to give up church attendance because of the pain in her back.

But her dauntless, brave, spirit was unconquerable. Among her war mementos has been found several copies of an unsigned poem which she must have treasured as her credo.

It said:

[H.I.] → I

Evelyn did want to live on, and she did. She kept in touch with other prisoners of war, and she made new friends with P.O.W.'s as the years went on. War time suffering makes a binding tie of comradeship that only one who has been there fully appreciates. Two such people are here today with their wives. Regis Theriac of Wheatland and John Crago of Huntington were American soldiers who were prisoners of the Japanese, and they have kept in close touch with Evelyn. Mr. Crago and Mr. Theriac are both survivors of the Bataan Death March.

Evelyn, together with the Cragos, returned to the Philippines 15 years ago, an emotional experience, and Evelyn went back to the very room she had occupied at Santo Tomas.

As a war veteran myself, I think the stories of their successes and

suffering should never be forgotten and bear retelling on occasions such as this. We should not forget that Evelyn and 2200 other American civilians were rescued from death by execution on February 23, 1945 by soldiers of the 11th Airborne Division who arrived just in time to save them at Los Baños, a place to which they had been moved by the Japanese.

A soldier who was there wrote a book called "The Los Baños Raid, The 11th Airborne Jumps at Dawn" which was published in 1986. Here is how General Flanagan concludes the U.S. Army's daring rescue of Evelyn and Porter:

[H. I.] → II

In the end, Evelyn had every reason to be proud of the United States - and herself.

May the Lord bless and keep Evelyn and Porter now and forever, and give them peace.

*Remarks at the Funeral  
of Evelyn C. Barnes by  
Robert A. MacCormick*