PRISONERS OF WAR CAMPS IN JAPAN & JAPANESE CONTROLLED AREAS
AS TAKEN FROM REPORTS OF INTERNED AMERICAN PRISONERS
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ZENTSUJI HEADQUARTERS CAMP ON THE ISLAND OF SHIKOKU, JAPAN

1. LOCATION: The site of this camp was flat, fertile terrain on the southern outskirts of Zentsuji bounded on one side by the grounds of a most elaborate Shinto Shrine in honor of Japanese killed in combat, with wooded hills as a background. From the center of Zentsuji, which is within a five-mile distance of the coast of the Inland Sea to the north on the Island of Shikoku, the camp was reached by streetcar or on foot. The camp was within easy walking distance. Takamatsue, a seaport city on the Inland Sea, was 15 miles to the east of Zentsuji. The coordinates are 34°13'N., 133°47'E.

This installation was used by the Japanese as a prisoner of war camp during the Russo-Japanese war in 1904 and the Sino-Japanese war in 1937. Since then, and prior to the outbreak of the war with the United States, it was utilized as barracks for the Japanese army. The barracks, turned into prisoner of war quarters for American and allied prisoners in Jan. 1942, were surrounded by perhaps one of the largest training areas of the Japanese army.

The prison compound proper comprised an area of 600' x 900' surrounded by a high wood fence. (Incidentally this fence blew down three times during the occupancy of the camp by American prisoners.) This barricade was topped by pointed bamboo staves and as a further means of attempting to prevent escapes, the Japanese had erected an eight-strand barb-wire obstruction built from the ground up in front of the wood fence.

Zentsuji prison camp was among the first internment stations to be opened by the Japanese.

Zentsuji was a headquarters camp for a series of work camps, two or three at first but by the time of liberation in Sept. 1945 had increased to about 12.

2. PRISONER PERSONNEL: This camp was made available to prisoners of war on 15 Jan. 1942. The first to arrive was a detail of 450 American officers (350) and enlisted men, (100) from Guam. Divided by services the count is as follows: Army 271, Navy 98, Marines 77, and civilians 4. On the same day a contigent of 268 British Colonial officials and Dutch prisoners arrived from the Gilbert and Makin Islands, making the initial prisoner population 718

At intervals during 1942 and 1943 other American details arrived as follows:

18 May 1942 from Wake Island	12
3 Aug. 1942 from Wake Island	7
16 Jan. 1943 from Umeda Conshu	30
16 Jan. 1943 from the Philippines	150
1 Aug. 1943 from Umeda Bonshu	40
	957

Transfers:	In June 1945 all of the American officers at Zentsuji were transferred to Roku Roshi	365	
	In June 1945 the British and Dutch prisoners were transferred to other camps in Japan.	268	
	All of the enlisted men were released in September 1945.	150	
	During the entire time of internment at this camp the number of Americans who died was	10	-793
			164

This difference of 164 is accounted for by the unreported transfer of various details to branch camps of Zentsuji.

The Senior officer of the detail from Guam was Capt. G.G. McMillan, U.S.N.(former Governor of Guam) who, upon soon being transferred to Formosa, was succeeded by Capt. W.T. Lineberry, Navy Medical Corps who retained his seniority until transferred to Roku Roshi in June 1945.

Capt. H.J. Van Peenen, Navy Med. Corps, was Sr. Med. Officer for the American prisoners. Col. Otto harwood, Quartermaster Corps, U.S.A., was Sr. Officer of the detail of 30 men from Umeda Bonshu, reaching Zentsuji on 16 Jan. 1943, and Lt. Col. E.H. Miller, U.S.A., was Sr. Officer of the detail arriving at Zentsuji on 16 Jan.1943 from the Philippines.

Prisoner of war representatives for details other than American were: British, Capt. O.L. Gordon, Royal Navy; Australian, Col. J.J. Scanlon; Dutch, Capt. J.J. Weis.

3. GUARD PERSONNEL: Maj. Gen. Mizuhara was the first Commandant of Zentsuji. He was succeeded by Maj. Gen. Takumi who, upon transfer to other duty, was followed by Capt. Hosatani who remained in charge of the installation until it was released in Sept. 1945. Capt. Hosatani maintained an ostensible civil attitude toward the prisoners, his junior officers and guards really administered the camp affairs as they saw fit. Heckling and depriving prisoners of food and medicines were regular occurrences. Lt. Nakajima the second officer from Jan. 1943 until the liberation of the camp was impassive and inefficient. Lt. Saito, the Japanese medical officer, was not responsive to the medical needs of the prisoners despite frequent intercession by the American medical officer. Lt. Saito was assisted by three Japanese medical orderlies. Civilians Asabuki and Moriyama were camp interpreters. They excelled in heckling and trying to finagle the prisoners into doing those things which would be humiliating.

4. GENERAL CONDITIONS:

(a) Housing Facilities: The barracks proper consisted of two buildings, formerly warehouses, two stories high, approximately 60' x 200' in size. One half of one building was occupied by the Japanese camp officials. The framing and sheathing of these buildings were constructed of wood covered with stucco on the outside. Both floor levels were of wood. The roof was of plaster with tile overlay. The buildings were not heated in any way after 1943. The interior walls and ceilings were supposed to be insulated with wood. This insulation, however, was evidently applied before the wood was dry, hence it was full of cracks caused by shrinkage which, in connection with knot holes and loose windows, made structures which could not be adequately heated even though heating units had been installed.

Sleeping decks, raised 16" above the floor level lined the barracks on either side with two cross passageways in each building. The prisoners were bedded on grass mats. Each man had about 2 1/2 bed space in width. There was ample hall space between the two sleeping decks running the length of the barracks. Door openings (but no doors) led into the cross passageways from the outside to the first floor.

The interior of the upper floors duplicated the first floor arrangement.

Each barracks was divided into rooms holding 32 men. This divided space had four windows and two 25-watt electric light bulbs.

These quarters were infested with bed bugs, lice and fleas to which condition scant attention was paid. To obtain even a bare sufficiency of food and to prolong life were the two major cravings which became obsessions.

Neither of the barracks was equipped with running water or facilities for washing clothing.

A covered walkway ran from one of the barracks to the kitchen. A similarly covered path went from the other barracks to the empty canteen or recreation room.

The garden spaces worked by the officers were located at one end and one side of the barracks which was occupied solely by the prisoners. Other facilities such as latrines and wash racks were adequate although crude. The kitchen, bath and storeroom were jointly in a separate building.

(b) Latrines: Three separately constructed latrines were located approximately 50' back of the barracks each containing 12 stalls or cubicles which afforded some privacy. Concrete pits underlayed the stalls. Rectangular holes were cut through the floors. These latrines were of the conventional Japanese squatting type. Urinals in the latrines were made of cement. Excreta was removed by Japanese civilians through traps on the outside. Bamboo dippers were used and the usual time to perform this service was while the prisoners were eating their mid-day meal. An awful stench prevailed. The residue was used as fertilizer on the gardens close to the barracks.

(c) Bathing: The bathroom 25' x 25', galley and storeroom were in a separate building. A 1500 gallon cement tank was used by the entire camp. Hot baths available semi-monthly during the winter. Only cold water baths could be had in the summer. The prisoners were never allowed to immerse in the tub. The water was dipped out and poured over the prisoners. The bathroom was not heated. One shower supplemented the bathing facilities. The bathroom had numerous windows with glass panes. Clothing lockers were provided.

(d) Mess Hall: This facility should be described as the camp kitchen from which the food was taken in wooden buckets by prisoner details to the barracks where it was eaten. The prisoners were furnished with individual mess gear. Each of the 32-man rooms was equipped with two tables and four benches. The food was cooked in 20 to 40 gallon cauldrons in brick fire places. Cooking utensils were inadequate.

(e) Food: Lack of food was the monumental complaint at this camp. In quantity it ranged from fair during the early months of occupancy to a starvation level in July 1944. Many complaints were registered with the Japanese authorities by the allied senior officers; namely, for the Americans, Capt. W.T. Lineberry, Navy Med. Corps; for the British Capt. Oliver L. Gordon, Navy (Commander of H.M.S. EXETER before the sinking by the Japanese) for the Australians, Col. J.J. Scanlon, A.I.F., and for the Dutch Capt. J.J.WEIS, N.E.I. Army. Letters were written for forwarding to the Protecting Powers in Japan and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It is doubtful that any of these communications left the camp in as much as no change was made in the very light diet. Early in 1944 Red Cross food supplies and drugs were received in the camp via M.S. GRIPSHOLM and the Japanese transfer ship TEIA MARU. Notwithstanding the fact that certain articles of food in the parcels were getting moldy, and the tin containers were becoming badly rusted, the Japanese refuse] to issue them for many months.

When changes were made in the diet, or when supplemented by rarely served articles, the staple diet was reduced,

thereby maintaining a very low calorific value. For instance bread was served occasionally with an invariable reduction in the amount of rice. One egg per month was served, and soybean curd and sauce were dished out occasionally with a corresponding reduction in rice.

There was general complaint that the rice contained worms, weevil and gravel. Semi-occasionally small portions of meat were prepared, such as rabbit, pork, horsemeat, octopus and snakes. In quality the meat ranged from fresh to putrid.

The prisoners engaged in loading and unloading freight cars and cargo carrying ships were given about 600 grams of cereal night and morning and about 500 grams for the noon meal. The prisoner officers were coerced into working, and while the duties assigned to them were not as heavy as those performed by the enlisted men, they were arduous enough to justify the full ration. Instead the officers received about half as much.

The cooking was done by the American prisoners under Japanese supervision and it was drawn from the kitchen by prisoner representatives and taken back to the barracks.

(f) Medical Facilities: Notwithstanding the large prisoner personnel at this camp a hospital has not been provided. One unheated room in the barracks had been set aside as a sick room. The bedding equipment was six bunks on a platform. Rations for the sick were cut in half. As stated in another portion of this report an army Lt. named Saito was in charge of the sick and the issuance of medications and supplies for their relief. Capt. H.J. Van Peenen, Navy Med. Corps was the leading prisoner physician and he was compelled to work under supervision of the Japanese doctor. Because of Capt. Van Peenen's training, experience and persuasive manner he was able to obtain some medicines issued in niggardly quantity by the Japanese.

The American officer, also a skilled surgeon, was able to retain a small kit of surgical instruments and did surgery in the camp. He performed 24 major operations largely appendectomies and hernia repair without the loss of a patient. Spinal novocaine was the only anesthetic available. Novocaine would not be issued for minor surgery or dental operations.

Vitamins were issued fairly liberally for the treatment of prisoners having manifestations of avitaminosis. For other deficiencies where vitamins were badly needed, they were consistently refused.

Bandages were washed and used over and over again. Many of the prisoners were sick with diarrhea, dysentery, common colds, frost bite and other diseases which naturally follow malnutrition.

From 15 Jan. 1942 until transferred to Roku Roshi in June 1945 our total dead was ten, therefore indicating a very low death rate for 3 1/2 years among a group of prisoners ranging in number from 450 to 950. This low death rate is a tribute to the medical skill of the American medical officer.

(g) Supplies: (1) Red CROSS, YMCA, Other relief: Beginning with 24 Dec. 1942 and through Dec. 1943 each American prisoner received nine Red Cross food parcels, two being from the Canadian Red Cross, the remainder from the American Red Cross. From 22 Nov. 1944 to 28 May 1945, the American prisoners received 12 American Red Cross parcels, making total of 21 food parcels in 3 1/2 years per man. In 1942 and 1943 bulk shipments of food parcels were received from the American Red Cross, such as sugar, flour, corned beef, cocoa and dehydrated potatoes. No bulk food was received during 1944. Shoes were received each year from the Red Cross. Issue was made from time to time so that each prisoner had 1 pair of serviceable shoes at all times. Shoe repair equipment furnished by the YMCA was issued to the prisoner cobbler, and half-soles and heels were available in limited amounts. The American Red Cross supplied some clothing such as sweaters, caps, socks and OD woolen shirts. Japanese food rations were always reduced following the issue of Red Cross parcels.

Books, playing cards, chess and checker sets were received from the YMCA and were expeditiously distributed. Athletic gear such as volleyball and baseball equipment was restricted by the Japanese. The items were used by the Japanese during the most desirable times of the day and the same was true of the musical instruments furnished by the YMCA

From time to time there was a Red Cross Bulk issue of tobacco, cigarettes, tooth brushes, tooth paste, shoe polish, and laces and a sewing kit.

(2) Japanese issue: During the 3 1/2 year period the Japanese furnished each prisoner nine blankets. Between the clothing furnished by the American Red Cross and that issued by the Japanese it is apparent that the prisoners were fairly well taken care of in this respect. This statement is based on the report of the American medical officer from which the following quotation is taken: "Although we were uncomfortable, we must conclude, since our death rate was low, that we had adequate clothing." Shortage of socks and gloves were probably the most acutely needed items.

Upon arrival of the American detail in Jan. 1942, each prisoner was given one pair of pants, one overcoat (captured British stock) and one suit of underwear. In Jan. 1943, heavy cotton uniforms (Japanese) and captured British overcoats were issued, while in Nov. 1943 complete woolen uniforms and overcoats (both the spoils of combat with the British) were given out, plus underwear, shoes and socks.

Inasmuch as the barracks were not heated the prisoners even though heavily clothed in the winter could not keep warm. Naturally their resistance to the climate was lowered because of starvation diet and consequent malnutrition.

(h) Mail: (1) Incoming: There was no official ban on the number of letters the prisoners might receive, but due to camp censorship, the mail was usually delayed six months or more before actual delivery. However, it is estimated that

the men actually received 70 to 80 letters each during their 3 1/2 year period of internment.

A few next-of-kin parcels reached Zentsuji nearly all of which had been looted. Many individual parcel items were found, by the prisoners, to be spoiled.

(2) Outgoing: The strict censorship of outgoing mail resulted in the condemnation of much of the same by the camp Japanese authorities. It seems probable from the records at hand that the prisoners were including in their letters some subjects which American censorship would not have passed in mail destined to an enemy country. Therefore the enemy censors were merely acting within the lines of their responsibility. Notwithstanding the stoppage of much of the outgoing mail a reasonable number of communications got through and such delay as occurred may be attributed to transportation difficulties. During the long run of Zentsuji, all of the prisoners, officers included, could send one 25-word letter every three to six months.

(i) Work: The prisoners, primarily, were sent to Zentsuji to load and unload freight cars and cargo carrying vessels, regardless of weather, at Takamatsu and adjacent seaport docks. In addition to these tasks some of the enlisted men were assigned to camp police details, cooking and emptying the latrines. The work in the freight yards was hard and the hours were long, for instance after leaving the camp at 6:00 a.m. for work, the prisoners rarely got back to the camp in the evening before 6:00 or 7:00. The prisoners were given one to three rest days per month. Usually they were required to work around the camp on rest days.

The officers were coerced into working at such jobs as gardening, sanitation improvement and maintenance, sweeping compound, barracks and latrines, plus all night patrol and guard duties. The food issued to the officers was much less than the ration of the enlisted men. Further penalties were applied against the officers for refusal to work, such as hazing and calisthenics drills. The officers, unlike the enlisted men, were not made to work on the outside during rain or snow.

Running true to form the Japanese would garner the garden crops after the officers had nurtured the vegetables from the breaking of the ground, seeding the same and then harvesting the crop. It is true that all of the prisoners would get some of the vegetables but the strict Japanese rations would be otherwise reduced. The net result was that calorific values were held to the starvation level.

(j) Treatment: The Japanese camp officials apparently developed a studied starvation and humiliation program. Reference already has been made to lack of food and the effort made by the men to keep going on short rations. Any prisoner who was ambulatory was not allowed to sit or lie down on his bunk from reveille to 8:00p.m. without permission. A prisoner, worn down by malnutrition, would not be excused from work unless he had a temperature greater than 102º. Even then a day off for sickness had to be made up on one of the rest days. The appeals of the allied senior officers brought no relief.

The guards, mostly veterans, constantly prowled the buildings in search of some one to slap or otherwise humiliate or heckle.

(k) Pay: (1) Officers: Same as the Japanese officers of comparable rank. However the prisoner officers were never allowed to have more than 50 yen in their possession at any one time. All expenditures had to be accounted for. All money in excess of 50 yen was place in Japanese Postal Savings funds. (2) Enlisted Men: 10 - 15 sen per day.

(l) Recreation: The nucleus of an instructive and interesting library at Zentsuji was formed by the American prisoners transferred to this camp from Guam on 15 Jan. 1942 who brought some books along with them. When the American Embassy at Tokyo was closed, and before former Ambassador Grew returned to the U.S., he forwarded his personal library of about 200 books to the Zentsuji installation. A library committee was organized composed of one Australian Army officer, one Royal Navy officer (British) and one American Naval officer. A very efficient Chief Librarian was selected. Assistant librarians from diversified nationalities also were requested to serve in this capacity. From this small beginning the library took on added importance when about 2,000 volumes were received from the War Prisoner's Aid of the International YMCA The books covered a wide range of literary effort such as novels, hobbies, games, theatre, textbooks on accounting, geology, languages, law, agriculture, psychology, business mathematics, art, etc. In this lot of books were International correspondence school courses in automobile engines, aero engines, diesels and bookkeeping. Classes were organized by competent officers and the volumes were used a textbooks. Much recreation was provided by the books and the single benefit of occupying the mind of the prisoners undoubtedly prevented mental disorders in the camp.

Games, recreational equipment and musical instruments were liberally supplied by the YMCA as stated under "Supplies" but they were rarely made available to the prisoners.

(m) Religious Activities: Protestant, Catholic and Jewish church services were held weekly. A Japanese interpreter always attended these services but seldom interfered. Both the American and foreign chaplains were active in trying to promote the spiritual welfare of the prisoners.

(n) Morale: Low the first three months. Excellent during the balance of the internment period.

5. MOVEMENTS: All of the American officers numbering 365 left Zentsuji on 23 June 1945 for the Roku Roshi camp on the west coast of Honshu, ferrying to Takamatsu across the Inland Sea, thence by train to Uno, Okayams, Osaka, Dyoto, Fukui, and Roku Roshi after hiking about five miles up a mountain, arriving at 2:00a.m. with one officer on crutches.

These prisoners were crowded into two coaches with a normal capacity of 72 men each. Prisoners of other nationalities left Zentsuji at the same time for other camps in Japan. The American enlisted (15) men remained at Zentsuji until the camp was liberated on 12 Sept. 1945.