

# Cpl. Hoblitt, Silverton Marine, Tells of Years Of Waiting Spent in Nipponese Prison Camps

SILVERTON — Forty months in a Japanese prison camp is no holiday picnic even when you draw one of the better camps, Cpl. Frederick Marion Hoblitt, U. S. marine, said Sunday as he sat quietly smoking in the living room of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John T. Hoblitt, at Silverton.

"Time would have been unbearably long had we looked ahead 3 1/2 years. It was long as it was," Corporal Hoblitt replied to a question.

"But you don't think of time that way in a Japanese prison camp," he went on. "If you do, your morale won't hold up. It's Thanksgiving, you tell yourselves and each other that the war will be over by Christmas. It couldn't possibly last any longer. When Christmas comes, you tell each other that by Easter—that's just a little over three months longer—the war will be over. So you live to Easter. The fact that three Christmases as well as Easters, Fourths, Labor days and Armistice days come and go makes no difference to the game. You play it by the rules or you just don't play any longer."

### Was Boy Salesman

Hoblitt, who is 31 years of age, looks remarkably well — though aged a little, and thinner, in spite of the grilling experiences of the 3 1/2 years. Silverton businessmen like to tell stories of the "youngest Hoblitt kid." Whether he was selling Christmas cards or newspapers, his customers bought. He had a way with him, the business people will tell you.

It seems the Japanese bought, too, for Corporal Hoblitt claims he did not suffer as much as did so many of the other prisoners. But his listeners gather — and he doesn't mind talking to the scores of friends who crowd around him to welcome him back—that he skips rather lightly over parts of his experiences. But he frequently says "Boy, is it ever good to be home."

Hoblitt, who was with the 4th marines in Shanghai before the war broke out, was taken prisoner at Corregidor. He admitted he "was pretty scared at first, but there didn't seem to be anything to do about it."

It wasn't long until he learned that if you could say a word or two in Japanese, you could get a few favors. Favors were more than welcome. So, while waiting, he managed to get hold of a Japanese book and seriously set to work to conquer the language.

### Preaches Practice

"Learning a language is all in using it. You can learn any language in 3 1/2 years if you have an opportunity to use it," he explains.

"When the group arrived at Camp Kobi in Japan, he could manage to make himself understood and could understand part of what was said to him.

"During 1942 and 1943, it was pretty bad, pretty rough," Hoblitt said, smiling at his mother who was sitting beside him. "We didn't see anyone brutally killed as they were in some camps. Our camp commander was very strict but fair. That was all right. But the food and the lack of medicine was hard. Men died like flies. I learned the more you could talk Japanese, the more food you could get. So I talked more Japanese. They didn't send me out to work. They wouldn't let me, in fact. Afraid I would talk to the coolies and learn something. I never was really hungry but you get awfully tired of rice and soy bean soup. That was what we got. But our men learned to steal and barter with the coolies. They sneaked things from the food supply houses where they worked. Certain ones would bring it back to camp. I helped check in the workers as they returned. When one who had food hidden on him came to me, he'd fake malaria. We'd carry him in by stretcher—and the food with him."

### Meaning in Messages

In July, 1944, Hoblitt was moved to Camp Bunka, ten blocks from the emperor's palace. Here began his broadcasts as "Postman," reading the messages from the prisoners to their home folks.

"In each message we tried to say something that would mean something to our government. We were closely watched but the Japanese monitors understood only the translations of the American words. They could not understand all our meanings nor could they read between the lines," Hoblitt said.

He likes to talk of the final days in the camp. Of when Bunka which in Japanese means "culture," was bombed, but no bombs fell on the camp. During the raid, March 9, the men stood and watched the bombs drop while on their little phonograph they played "The Stars and Stripes" until the Japanese officers made them stop. Then, while the fires burned all around Bunka hill, they played "I Didn't Sleep a Wink Last Night." It all helped, Hoblitt said, to keep the morale up. But, he added, it never was down.

### Men Hear Stassen

On August 9, Hoblitt learned that "negotiations were being made." Time dragged. Finally, capitulation came. He listened to the emperor's address.

"I'll never forget when we saw the American ships pull into Tokyo harbor. We ran down toward the beach. But nothing more happened. We returned to camp. Then someone shouted that landing barges were coming. We rushed on again, tore through brush, over sand over anything. And there was Stassen standing right in front. There were tears in every prisoner's eyes. Stassen made a brief speech. He told us that on board ship were ham and eggs and beautiful blondes for all of us. The first day I ate so much I was sick for two days. The blondes weren't there, but that time we didn't miss them. There were ham and eggs. Stassen told us to get ready. They were going to take us right out of there. We were ready. Had been ready for 40 months."

Hoblitt said there were just

41 flying hours between Tokyo and Hamilton field at Oakland, Calif. They stopped briefly in Honolulu. He will have a 10-day furlough at home. Then he will report to the naval hospital at Corvallis.

### Wants to Return

"I'd like to go back in the army of occupation as an interpreter," Hoblitt said.

"But I can't think of that now," his mother declared.

"We'll see," was his reply. He landed in Portland this past weekend and was met by his two brothers, Mahlon and Lowell Hoblitt. Sunday, there was a dinner at the M. S. Hoblitt home, following attendance at the Christian church. Present at the dinner were the parents, the two brothers and their families, an uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Bert Terry; cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Lord of Ferndale, Wash.

## War Housing To Go on Sale

Privately built war housing being held for rental may now be sold, according to an announcement received from Washington, D. C., according to George W. Coplen, regional representative of the national housing agency. Owners or builders may now sell vacant houses or houses which become vacant voluntarily.

Before a rental unit is sold the state office of the federal housing administration in Portland will establish the sales price upon the

## E. Burr Miller Returns With Valley Motor

E. Burr Miller, district manager of Safeway stores in the Salem area for four years, is returning here to be permanently associated with Valley Motors company, it was announced Monday by W. L. Phillips, general manager of the firm.



Miller, who was campaign chairman of last year's war chest drive and 1945 president of the Salem Retail Trade bureau, was promoted from his Safeway position here two months ago to be company manager of the store research service department at Oakland, Calif.

He said at that time that he accepted the promotion "with reluctance," because it took him away from Salem, and Monday declared that he was "mighty glad to be back here to stay." Mrs. Miller and the three children

written request of the owner who wishes to sell the rental unit.

During the war period builders have been required to hold two thirds of their housing for rent to war workers. The removal of this restriction does not permit evictions for the purpose of selling, Coplen said.

have returned here with him. They are temporarily at the Marlon hotel.

"I've had a lot of faith in Salem and in the motor industry in this area and I feel such confidence is more than justified. I have been very happy in my relationship with Safeway, but now we are going to be happy to call Salem our home and I am gratified to return to be affiliated with the Valley Motor firm."

Phillips, in announcing Miller's addition to the firm of which Paul W. Wallace is president, said he was "just as pleased as Burr" in the new relationship.

When he left Salem in July, Miller was a director of the chamber of commerce and first vice-president of the Salem Lions club, and had long been active in the Red Cross and the Boy Scouts.

## Bank Transactions Rise in Portland

PORTLAND, Ore., Sept. 17.—(AP)—Portlanders are spending more money this year than during the 1944 peak of wartime activity, a check of bank transac-

tions showed today. For the first eight months this year transactions were \$3,338,769,900 compared with \$3,501,917,000 for a similar period last year.

Iron rails 18 feet long were imported from England into the United States in 1931.



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### CENSORSHIP LIFTED

LA PAZ, Bolivia, Sept. 17.—(AP)—All forms of censorship operative as a result of the war were lifted today by the government.

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