

## Sgt. Bill Lorton of Medford Tells Harrowing Experience As Prisoner Of Japs; Escape From Transport

A Medford soldier who stood guard duty at Del Monte field in the Philippine islands the night Gen. Douglas MacArthur was evacuated from the islands, and who heard the general's now famous farewell words, "I shall return," is now back in Medford trying to forget the two and one-half years he spent as a prisoner of war of the Japanese.

"It was like coming back to a foreign country," said Staff Sgt. Bill J. Lorton. His miraculous escape from enemy hands occurred last September 7 when 83 American officers and enlisted men survived the sinking of a Japanese transport which was taking 750 prisoners from one island to another. Lorton was shot in the right shoulder by the Japs as the boat sank. Handcuffed by the shattered shoulder, he swam about five miles, evading the patrolling Jap whaleboats on which were mounted machine guns, finally reaching an island where friendly Filipino natives gave the men food and tobacco.

**Three Weeks On Isle**  
Sgt. Lorton, then a corporal, and his companions spent about three weeks on the island before being taken off by American submarines. First landing at New Guinea, the men were flown from there to Australia where they were hospitalized and the wounded men were treated. In addition to the crushed shoulder, the sergeant had 11 pieces of shrapnel removed from his back.

Food was one of the main interests of the rescued men for the next few weeks. All of the men were in a half-starved condition from the effects of the slender prisoner diet. "We all ate 24 hours a day," Sgt. Lorton said. The sergeant, not a large man, has gained 63 pounds in weight since his escape. It was while the men were in Australia that the army released officially the news of their escape and their names, and the sergeant's relatives here received the joyful news. No direct word from him had been received since April 10, 1942.

**Receives Decoration**  
The former prisoner arrived in a California port November 5 and volunteered to go to Washington where he spent nine days answering questions for officers of the military intelligence branch. While there he was introduced to General Marshall, chief of staff, and Secretary of War Stimson, and was decorated by the war department.

Given a class one priority on commercial airlines, Sgt. Lorton flew to Corpus Christi, Tex. where he visited with his brother,

G. A. Lorton, AMM 1/c in the navy.

Sgt. Lorton's army career began in 1938 when he enlisted January 4. He served at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, with the 11th field artillery, from February 3 of 1938, until December 16 of 1940, studying photography in his spare time. He was discharged in January of 1941 and reenlisted in the air corps at Ft. Douglas, Utah, where he was stationed for a time with headquarters and headquarters squadron of the 5th air base group as assistant chief of section and laboratory superintendent of the base photo lab.

With the rumblings of war coming closer, Sgt. Lorton's organization left San Francisco late in October of 1941, the last to do so and to reach the Philippines before the fateful December attack of the Japs. He was at Clark Field on Luzon island on December 8, (Dec. 7 here) when the enemy attack was made on Pearl Harbor.

**In Bataan Siege**  
Lorton was on the island of Bataan for two months during the siege of the islands and then was sent to Corregidor for one week with an anti-aircraft unit. Transferred then to Del Monte field on Mindanao, second largest of the Philippine group, he served as an anti-aircraft machine gunner. He was on guard duty when both Gen. MacArthur and President Manuel Quezon were taken off by plane, the former March 10, 1942, and the latter March 25. The islands capitulated May 10.

The soldier was first interned at Camp Casisang, near the city of Malaybalay, staying there until October 17. His group was taken by truck to Lasang, from there by ship to Lasang where they marched 52 kilometers, 35 miles, to the former Davao penal colony which had been made into a prison camp. This was not the infamous "march of death" now familiar to everyone in this country, this march having taken place earlier on Luzon. However, the sergeant relates that he had had yellow jaundice for six days upon arrival at the camp and was in poor physical condition. Little medicine or medical attention was given the prisoners.

**Stricken By Malaria**  
These men, chosen because of the comparatively good condition, were put to work in rice field and vegetable gardens of the islands. On December 18 of that year Sgt. Lorton came down with malaria, his fever rising to 107.3 degrees, and he has survived 37 subsequent attacks of

## Watch for These Three Nazi Spies



MAX C. J. SCHNEEMANN, HANS R. C. ZUEHLENDORF, OSCAR MAX WILMS.  
Director J. Edgar Hoover of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has asked the public to be on the lookout for these three German agents believed to be under orders to enter the U. S. and engage in espionage and sabotage. Schneemann is 5 feet 11 inches tall, weighs about 160 pounds, has a hand tattooed on his right forearm. Zuehlendorf, 26, is 5 feet tall, weighs about 140 pounds, has two scars on his right forehead. Wilms, 27, is 5 feet 7 inches tall, weighs 127 pounds, speaks English with only a slight accent.

## Doughboys Advance Through Luzon Rice Paddies



Pushing forward single file through rice fields, these American infantrymen advance from beachheads near Binmaley, Luzon, as they pursue Nips in face of light opposition. Photo by Willard Hatch, NEA-Acme photographer for War Picture Pool.

this tropical disease. Of the approximately 2,000 prisoners in the penal colony, 650 were selected for a work detail and taken to Lasang March 2, 1944. The men were there until early August when ordered to leave, along with 100 men from another camp. All were put aboard a Jap freighter on September 7.

For some time small bombing attacks had been made on the islands by American planes and as the freighter prepared to leave the port bombs fell, Lorton remembers. About 4:30 p. m. the freighter was torpedoed twice by an American submarine. Both the stern and bow were blown off.

"I remember thinking, 'this is the end,' the sergeant related, 'but I soon found myself in the open water.' Sometime during the struggle and confusion he received the shoulder and back wounds and started his painful swim to the neighboring island.

Sgt. Lorton, who is forbidden by the war department to give much specific information about his life as a prisoner, says the work days began with a 5 a. m. breakfast, with work starting at 6:30 a. m. A two-hour rest was permitted at noon, work ceased about 4:30 p. m. and lights were out at 9 p. m. Some of the camps had small libraries furnished by the Red Cross, but the small number of books were continually in use and hardly ever available.

No work was done on Sunday and prisoner chaplains conducted Catholic and Protestant services and a Jewish layman conducted services for men of that faith.

**Rice Main Food**  
Rice was the principal item of food served at all meals in all camps. Breakfast was rice, with perhaps some fresh fish, dinner and supper menus were usually rice with about half a cup of vegetable soup. An occasional "vegetable dinner" consisted of boiled camotes, a native vegetable similar to our sweet potato. There was tea of poor quality but no coffee or milk.

Forbidden to discuss prisoner treatment the escaped soldier merely said "Everything you have heard is probably true." Sgt. Lorton said that Gen. Jonathan Wainwright, taken a prisoner when the islands fell, was very popular with his men. "They did everything in their

power to break our morale," Lorton relates, "but something in the American make-up refused to be broken. Most of us simply didn't believe what we were told. If the Japs said 30 American ships were sunk, we just reversed it and believed the Japs had lost that many. If they boasted of taking an island, or winning a battle, we just decided that they had probably lost those islands or battles. Since I have returned home I have found out that sometimes we were right."

**Many Citations**  
Sgt. Lorton wears the good-conduct medal, the American defense medal with a bronze star, the Southwest Pacific theater

ribbon with two stars, the purple heart with two oak leaf clusters, the presidential citation with two oak leaf clusters, the wings of an air crew member (combat photographer), two service stripes and six overseas stripes.

While in Medford the sergeant is visiting his father, E. E. Lorton of Stewart avenue, and two brothers, Jack Lorton of Jacksonville and R. D. Lorton of Ashland.

Sgt. Lorton has about 40 days left of a 90-day furlough and is hopeful that he can find "diverting" employment for the remainder of his stay here. He reports upon expiration of his furlough to the air force redistribution station at Miami Beach, Fla.

The sergeant has taken up residence at 146 South Holly street.

## OFFICERS NAMED FOR GIRL SCOUTS AT ANNUAL MEET

Mrs. Scott Davis was elected commissioner of the Medford Girl Scout council at the annual meeting held last week. Mrs. Davis had been serving as commissioner, filling out the unexpired term of Mrs. Myron Root who resigned several weeks ago.

Mrs. W. H. Reichstein was named vice-commissioner, Mrs. R. A. Work, secretary, and Mrs. E. H. Judd, treasurer. Mrs. R. B. Hamblin was named executive secretary of the council.

In addition to the officers other council members who will serve the coming year are Mrs. Don Newbury, Mrs. Harry Olson, Mrs. C. B. Collins, Mrs. Everett Faber, Mrs. Lester Harris, Mrs. Arnold Bohnert, Mrs. John Larwood, Mrs. O. A. Eden, Mrs. Clarence Meeker, Mrs. D. M. Zlea and Mrs. C. W. Anhorn. Past commissioners and other women who have been of outstanding service to the council make up an advisory board. On the board presently are Mrs. H. D. Byington, Mrs. Leonard Carpenter, Mrs. Paul Janney, Mrs. C. M. Kidd, Mrs. C. Reese

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