

Sgt. Joe Lawson Returns To Klamath After 3 Years In Jap Prison Camp

By JOY BIGGS

Prisoner Number 21, of Jap Prison Camp 7, Fukuoka, city of Dmuts, returned to his home in Klamath Falls December 2.

Twenty-one was the number given to 1st/Sgt. Joe Lawson, son of Mr. and Mrs. G. M. Lawson, son of 109 N. Broad, who was held a prisoner of the Japs from May 6, 1942, when he was captured on Corregidor, until he was liberated September 16, 1945 by recovered personnel groups from the U. S. navy.

Joe doesn't care much about eating rice now and wouldn't choose to work in a coal mine. He had his share of both during the three years he was a prisoner. He lost 45 pounds during his imprisonment.

Early to Work

Joe left for work in the Jap coal mine at 2:30 a. m. and was in bed again at 7 or 8 p. m., as soon as he got back from work. He received 15 sen per day wages. Of course, his board and room were thrown in.

His bed was the thick mat floor of a barracks housing 50 men. A "box" lunch was taken to the mine. It contained about 550 grams of steamed rice with a "pickled" radish (vitamin B), rice for supper, or sometimes soup made with plenty of water and a few leaves from vegetables. Sometimes the odor of meat was present from the 30 kilos or so divided among 500 men.

GI spoons and mess kits were used with bowls or cups cut from a section of bamboo trees. Joe was issued short pants and a shirt for work and one uniform for dress inspection.

U. S. Machinery

Machinery used in the mine was American and new—20 years ago. The name General Electric was on it, and there were American steel rails shipped in before Pearl Harbor.

Joe was an assistant section leader part of the time, over 50 to 75 men. The rest of the time he worked as one of the gang excavating coal.

The work week was nine days with the 10th off, and no holidays observed. The prisoners were docked wages for sick time. On Christmas work progressed as usual; the boys celebrated on their nearest day off.

Christmas of 1943, each man was issued an individual relief box from the Red Cross, containing what was left after the Japs had first choice. Christmas of 1944 each box was divided between two men.

Between Christmas and V-J Day pairs of boxes from shipments received previously were issued, and on August 15 boxes which had not been picked over were given the prisoners and they knew then it was all over.

About 300 or 400 B-29's had been seen over the camp for some time and the men were betting on how long it would take before the Japs surrendered and called it V-J Day. One officer bet on August 15 as the day. It was.

Clouds from the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, less than 100 miles from the camp, were seen

"Welcome Home, Son"



G. M. Lawson welcomes his son, Sgt. Joe Lawson, home after three years' internment in a Jap prison camp.

and there was some speculation regarding the type of bombs being used. Joe was down in the mine that day and didn't see the clouds.

Red Cross packages containing food and medical supplies which had been held out were now issued. Then the guards moved out and the prisoners took charge of the camp themselves. Some left immediately to try and hitch-hike to the coast and home, but Joe stayed with the majority, many of whom were too ill to be moved.

After V-J Day, B-29's dropped supplies by parachute, of medicine, food and clothes, so they had about 30 days of better rations before they were released.

George Weller, war correspondent of the Chicago Daily News was the first civilian Joe saw.

Joe was due for a furlough in February, 1942, but he couldn't get out of Corregidor. He was captured in May.

First he was taken by way of Formosa to Moji on the island of Kyushu and from there to Camp 7, probably the biggest Jap prison camp.

Other Klamath Falls men in the regiment whom he met in prison were Alonzo Palmer, Ralph Floyd, James Orth and Maj. Denton J. Rees.

Joe was used as a section leader in the Philippines, which kept him from the regular detail, but just before they were moved he did work on the detail with 500 others, cutting wood and gardening.

He received about nine letters from home during his three years' internment and one package which was opened by the Japs. All packages were opened and writing materials, paper, pencils and knives were all confiscated.

A very few men were allowed to fill out forms to be broadcast saying they were "fine and get-

ting enough to eat." Joe filled out one. The messages were to be broadcast toward the United States from a radio station near Tokyo for interception by U. S. forces. He never knew definitely whether his message was used or not.

Once some canned meat disappeared from the Jap supplies and the whole camp was punished by having three meals withheld.

Sgt. Lawson is home on a 90-day furlough; he is still in the army. He wears ribbons for the Asiatic-Pacific theater, American defense, Philippine defense, Victory, Purple Heart, Presidential Unit citation with two Oak Leaf clusters, four battle stars for major campaigns in southern Luzon, Bataan and two on Corregidor.

KUHS Graduate
Lawson is a graduate of KUHS. He has two brothers in the service, one in the navy stationed in Alameda, Calif., and one in the Seabees somewhere in China.

He came home on an aircraft carrier to Okinawa, from there by navy transport to Manila, and on to San Francisco on the Marine Shark. Transportation was pretty crowded and it seemed terribly slow, Lawson said.

LAST WORD
ALBUQUERQUE, N. M., Dec. 6 (AP)—Anything can happen these days when it comes to renting a house. George C. Taylo, district OPA rent attorney, says this happened.

An apartment house owner evicted four families to raze the building as the site for a business structure.

One of the evicted tenants bought a house and evicted the renter who was the apartment house owner.

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Student Aviation Pilot William David Ganger, son of Mrs. Gladys J. Ganger of Tulelake, has completed the navy's pre-flight training course at Iowa City, Ia. Young Ganger was active in Tulelake high school affairs and a member of the basketball and track teams. At Washington State college he studied to be a veterinarian. Ganger was in the navy two years before taking flight training.

Sgt. Eddie C. Owens, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Owens, 2144 Vine, has been assigned to headquarters of the Middletown air technical service command at Olmsted field, Pa. Sgt. Owens is a graduate of Klamath Union high school and prior to entering service was employed at the Willard hotel. His wife lives in this city.

In the United States after 30 months overseas is Sgt. Allison Chamberlain. Before entering service, June 10, 1941, he was a "moulder operator for the Weyerhaeuser Timber company in Klamath Falls.

He was discharged in October at Fort Lewis. He has the combat infantry badge, Philippine liberation medal with two Bronze Stars, Bronze Star medal, Asiatic-Pacific ribbon with four Bronze Stars, American defense ribbon and good conduct medal.

His brother, S/Sgt. Harold Chamberlain, is on his way home after 29 months in the South Pacific.

John Paul McCulley, F 2/c of Malin, and Walter Smith, F 2/c of Bonanza, served during the war on the attack transport USS Barnstable which saw action from Guadalcanal to Japan, and which is engaged at the present time in serving with the "Magic Carpet" fleet, helping to return high-point veterans to the United States.

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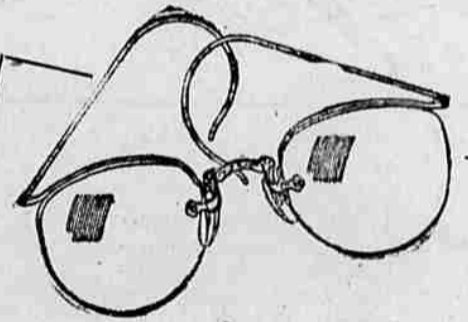
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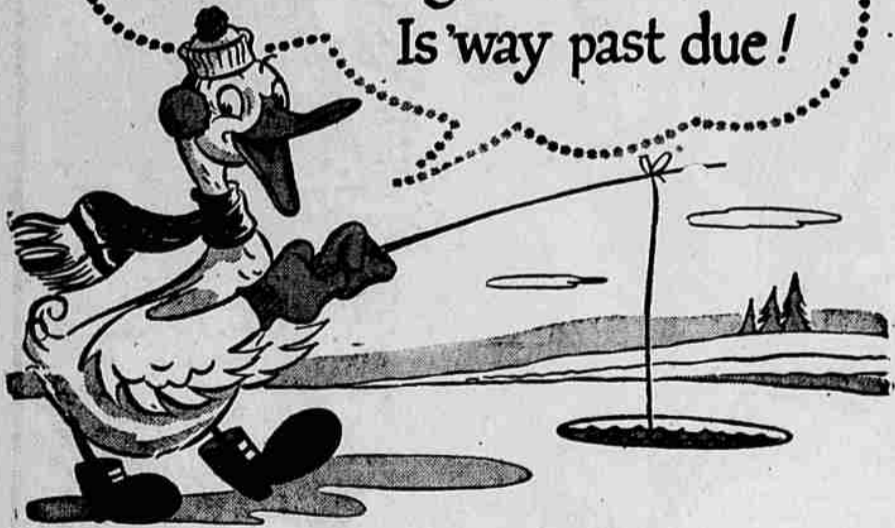
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