

Ex-POW Noel Tells About 'The Hole' Where A Man Couldn't Stand, Stretch

Editor's Note—Frank Noel, Associated Press photographer, is a free man again after more than 32 months as a prisoner of the Chinese Reds in North Korea. Now in Tokyo for medical and dental treatment necessitated by his long captivity, Noel has collaborated with AP Correspondent Olen Clements to tell of some of the things he and his fellow Americans saw and endured as prisoners of war. This is the first of three articles.

By FRANK NOEL

As Told To Olen Clements

TOKYO (AP)—Life as a prisoner of the Chinese Communists was a thing of doubt and fear—doubt of what our captors would do to us next, and fear that an incautious word might be overheard by some fellow prisoners who had become an informer.

There is a strange thing about all the Communists I have met. They trust no one—especially their fellow Communists. Somehow they managed to instill this same feeling of distrust into their prisoners, even though those prisoners had fought bravely side by side before being captured.

Some few men turned informers. Others, in the constant questioning by the Communists, said things the Communists did not like.

As a result, lots of us went into the "hole," a cell in which a man could neither stand nor stretch. One particularly bad hole was reserved for prisoners the Reds hated most. When you went into that hole, you stayed for weeks without ever leaving it, even to go to the latrine. You sat and slept in your own filth.

In winter you froze, day and night; in summer you sweated. A little food was thrown in once in a while, and a Chinese guard was on duty at all times.

Many of us spent days, weeks, months in the hole simply as punishment for not thinking the way the Communists wanted us to think.

A Red prison is one of the cruelest forms of torture ever devised by man.

There are still Americans up there, some of them driven insane in prison.

I am sure there will be some of them there when the Chinese say reparations have been finished.

These men will be a club which the Reds will hold over our heads in the post-armistice political conference.

I was captured Nov. 30, 1950, in the early days of my imprisonment, the Chinese took some American officers into Antung, Manchuria. I know of one who said the people on the streets there were very friendly.

So far as I know, all of these Americans were soon returned to North Korea, but there are other Americans today in Chinese territory. They are the ones who swallowed the Communist line and chose not to come back with the rest of us.

Not all of them, however, are there of their own volition, I am sure.

I know of one man who is among seven who left us at Prison Camp No. 2 when the armistice was signed. Just two months ago this man and I planned a new escape attempt.

I had saved and scrounged some food, about 10 pounds of hard candy, five fountain pens and a wrist watch. The pens and watch would have served us better than money if we had gotten out. They were given to me by some of the sick and wounded Americans who were exchanged last April.

Our escape plan did not jell because the armistice came before we were ready. Yet this man who planned it with me did not come back with the rest of us. I will never understand why. He must be under some form of pressure from the Communists or from the "progressives," as the turncoat prisoners were called.

I personally spent many dreary months as a prisoner in Pyoktong, North Korea.

It was there that I saw two Russian pilots who had been shot up in "shie" with American planes.

Russians were flying MIG jets against the Allies all through the Korean War.

Besides the two that I saw, I heard from reliable sources—Koreans who hate communism—of at least three other Russians who were shot down in combat early this year.

There were many other Russians engaged in the Korean War.

I saw Russian truck drivers, Russian engineers, Russian intelligence agents, and a headquarters that the Russians maintained in Chongchong.

The Russian language is taught as the second language in North Korean schools.

I know seven American airmen—six officers and a sergeant—who were questioned by Russians after their capture. One of them, a captain, lost two teeth when a brutal Russian intelligence officer knocked him down.

It was about a year ago that I first saw a Russian flier. After I was permitted to take a few pictures in prison, the Communists kept me away from the other prisoners.

On this occasion I was sitting beside a road, enjoying the warm sun and pretending to read one of the Communist propaganda books.

A jeep came along. In it was a Russian flier in uniform. Part of his face was bleeding. He apparently had been injured when he was shot down. I was about 10 feet from him and could not have been mistaken.

The second Russian pilot that I saw was about two months later. He too had been shot down by an American Sabre.

When I was in Chongchong on a picture-making trip, I saw the Russian headquarters.

These are some of the things I saw and experienced in the long months of captivity.

One of the things I have learned at my present age, 48, is that a man can endure almost anything.

The facts of my capture are pretty well known. It was on the road between Kolo and Hagaru, on the coldest night of my memory.

The Reds trapped us Nov. 29, 1950, and we were taken prisoner next day, Nov. 30. The date is not important. It was a long time before any of us remembered it.

I was with some American Marines, British Marines and infantry of the U. S. Army's 2nd Division. They were going up to help the U.S. 7th Marine Regiment, which I had left a short time before to repulse my film.

I was riding in a jeep with Maj. John L. McLaughlin of Savannah, Ga., and Lt. Frank Cold of Tampa, Fla., when the Reds ambushed us on a narrow road.

We were pinned down all night behind a railroad embankment which offered scanty cover. Fifty or 60 men were killed and about

the same number wounded. The guns froze and the ammunition ran low.

Finally Maj. McLaughlin gave the order, "Fix bayonets!"

I thought to myself, "Well, this is it."

Three young fellows were crying, whether from fright or fatigue I do not know. I do know that when that dread order came—meaning hand-to-hand fighting—they immediately quit crying. It seemed to steel them, and they quietly fixed bayonets.

A Chinese called out in English, asking us to surrender.

Maj. McLaughlin asked the men what they wanted to do.

"I am willing to stand here and die if you want," he said. "You are not going to live forever. There is no ammunition and no help coming."

The men took about five minutes to talk it over. They voted to surrender if the Chinese would promise to leave the wounded to be picked up by Americans later.

The Chinese agreed. They were combat-wise veterans and so far as I could determine, they kept their promise.

We wrapped the wounded as best we could in sleeping bags and blankets and then surrendered.

Most of the next day we were kept standing on a frozen creek beneath a cliff to avoid detection by American planes. We had started on a living hell.

We hiked for months after that. Finally, after about 700 miles of seemingly aimless wandering, our captors took us to Prison Camp No. 5, outside of Pyoktong, on the Yalu River. There began for all of us a life of starvation, torture, illness and, of course, death for many.

Now I have survived and am free again. My wife met me here in Tokyo. We have an air-conditioned room in the Imperial Hotel.

I am an out-patient of the Tokyo Army Hospital. I have just had eight teeth extracted and am to go on until all are removed.

For lunch I had scrambled eggs, soup, two pieces of meat loaf, two glasses of milk, chocolate and a piece of apple pie. If anyone had told me I could eat a meal like that two hours after having eight teeth extracted, I'd have said he was crazy. I not only did eat; I have stuffed myself every day since I got out—and I'm still hungry.

Timberland Loan Bill Now Law

DENVER (AP)—President Eisenhower signed Saturday a bill to allow national banks to make loans on timberlands.

The bill was sponsored by Sen. Gordon (R-Ore.) and Rep. Ellisworth (R-Ore.). It allows national banks to make mortgage loans on commercial timber for 10-year periods with a 10 per cent annual payoff, and two-year loans on an open note basis.

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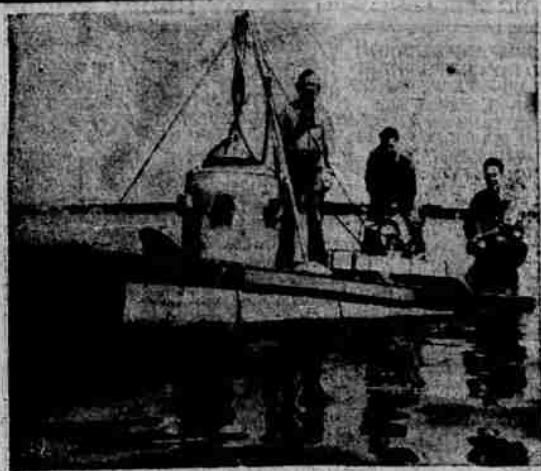
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WORK GOES TO WASTE—It took Chief Gunner's Mate Richard Rogge, right, three years to build this diving bell, but now it looks like he won't be able to try it out. The Navy transferred him to another post. Rogge and friends had planned to explore the depths of Lake Minong near Madison, Wisconsin.

Hilton Boat Mangles Girl

LAKE ARROWHEAD, Calif. (AP)—A young airline stewardess was in a critical condition today after being mangled by the propeller in a fall from a speedboat owned by hotel owner Conrad Hilton.

The stewardess, Miss Boni Buehler, 25, of Hollywood, was pulled from the waters of Lake Arrowhead yesterday by Geary Steffen, ex-husband of actress Jane Powell. Steffen was water skiing behind the boat when the accident occurred.

At Santa Anita Hospital doctors said her left arm was cut off at the shoulder in the accident. Her left leg was mangled and last night it was amputated.

Sheriff's deputies said the speedboat was being driven by Quay Sargeant, 35, owner of a Los Angeles music concern. Sargeant said he did not see Miss Buehler fall out of the boat but felt something hit the propeller so he stopped the motor.

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Ice-Box Kin See Foul Play

WEST MEMPHIS, Ark. (AP)—A deputy sheriff says a man recently twice threatened the lives of five children found dead in an old ice box.

Deputy Gladstone Williams said, "We plan to do a lot more checking on this point." He declined to identify the man.

Earlier yesterday the father, 34-year-old J. A. Hallman, told newsman he was sure the children were "murdered" because there were too many "funny things" involved. His wife agreed.

Said Hallman: "I may die before I find out. But I'll never believe those kids crawled in there by themselves. I think they were murdered."

And his wife: "I think they were put in there."

Crittenden County Coroner T. H. McCough said the children were apparently playing in the box last Wednesday when the lid, which had been tilted back against the wall, flipped shut. Death was attributed to suffocation.

However, Hallman's oldest daughter, who arrived home with Mrs. Hallman, insisted an old plow point rested on the ice box lid.

"Yes, I saw it right on top of the ice box as we came up on the porch," said 11-year-old Mary Ellen.

"How did it get there?" asked Hallman.

Among widespread rumors of foul play: A neighbor woman was quoted as saying she heard

screams coming from the Hallman house the day the children died.

Tele-fun

by Warren Goodrich



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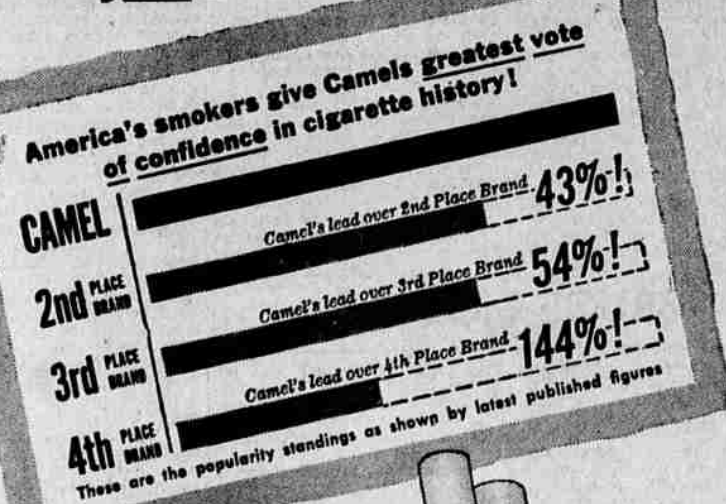
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