

Ex 1812

Evidence of Mrs. Ann Lillian ROLFF taken on 27 September 1945 at the Prisoner-of War and Internee Reception Depot, Morotai, in the presence of His Honour, Mr. Justice Mansfield.

My full name is Ann Lillian ROLFF. I am a widow. My husband was killed in action. I am of Dutch nationality.

I was first interned at Tomohon prison camp but in March 1943 I was removed to Aermadedi camp. The guards at Aermadedi camp were Paula, Colowig and Wonso; they were not Japanese. Altogether, there were eight guards, four of whom were on duty at a time. I have no complaints about these guards.

YAMADA was a Japanese and in control of Aermadedi camp. He used to hit the women when they went outside the camp to try to smuggle in food; we were reported by the guards. YAMADA had any offenders sent to his office and then he would beat them about 10 or 15 times with a whip, the number depending on how energetic he felt. He beat us on the back. I have not actually been beaten myself, but I have seen other women beaten.

I remember the occasion on which four girls were ill-treated by YAMADA on 9 August 1945. The girls were Anka Bloom, Rientje Symons, Rientje Faber and Svenra Stelma. They were aged respectively 18, 15, or 16, 14 and 12 or 13.

These girls had been caught out of bounds. It was prohibited to go outside the compound but these girls were looking for cocoanuts and any food they could find. They were discovered by one of the guards and brought along the main road back to the camp. YAMADA ordered that they be brought to him at his office. Then the whole camp was called up and paraded in front of his office. If anyone had to be punished, we were always paraded in this manner; a bell was rung and we had to line up - women and children.

The four girls were then beaten in turn with a whip across the back and on the arms. I could not say exactly how many strokes each received but they had about 10 or 12.

After the beatings, the girls were forced to stand before YAMADA's office night and day for about a week. Although I am not sure, I think that after the war had ended, they were ordered to stand there another day. They were not allowed to go home and, according to YAMADA, they were not to have anything to eat or drink, but food was smuggled to them. They were compelled by YAMADA to stand the whole time although they had an opportunity of sitting when he was not present; if he was in his office all day, the girls had to stand all day.

When two girls were found outside the compound one day YAMADA deprived two-thirds of the camp of food for one day. There were approximately 340 in the camp altogether.

The condition of the girls mentioned above who were forced to stand before YAMADA's office was poor at the end of the six or seven days; they were fairly exhausted. They have now recovered, as far as I know.

Mrs. Symons, mother of one of the girls, was beaten in 1942 before we went to Aermededi, to Tomohon. YAMADA was also in charge at Tomohon. On this occasion, Mrs. Symons tried to smuggle a letter out to one of the drivers of the truck that brought our food. Every ten days our rations were brought, and she tried to get a letter to her husband, who was in a camp about 60 miles distant. She was reported and paraded before YAMADA. We were then all paraded in front of his office and the people in the street were able to look in also. Then he punched her in the face with his fists many times. They were hard punches and her face was all swollen as a result. Also, she had trouble with her ear after the beating. I saw her fall down during the beating and while she was on the ground YAMADA kicked her on the legs; I turned away when he did this. YAMADA then addressed the rest of the camp, telling us that if we were caught out of bounds, we should receive the same treatment and this would be a lesson to us. We were told we were rotten through and through. Mrs. Symons walked around the camp for a little time on the morning she was beaten in order to give YAMADA the impression that she had been affected by the beating, but immediately he had gone she took a few day's rest; exactly how long I cannot say.

Mrs. Radema was also at Aermededi during this year; it may have been about March or a little later. She was also outside looking for coconuts on one occasion and was brought in by one of the police who was dressed in civilian clothes. She was brought before YAMADA and then she was called everything from a dog down and was beaten on the back by YAMADA with a whip. I cannot say how many strokes she received but it was approximately 30; they were heavy strokes. After having given her this beating, she had to stand outside his office for two days and two nights. YAMADA would not allow her to have food but food was smuggled in to her. According to YAMADA, if any person was called before him on a charge of smuggling in food, that person was not allowed to have anything to eat.

Mrs. Bruckel was assaulted during 1945 at Aermededi camp. She was found cooking outside the kitchen. We were not allowed to cook outside the kitchen, but sometimes some of the women tried to cook something extra. I saw Mrs. Bruckel being hit in the face by YAMADA; I was about the kitchen at the time. YAMADA smacked her in the face two or three times with his open hands. Then he sent her to his office. He drew a circle on the ground in the boiling sun and put a guard over her; she was to stand there facing the sun for the whole day. When YAMADA had gone, the guard let her go out of the sun. She was at the office altogether for about two days and two nights.

Mrs. David was also interned in the camp at Aermededi, I think some time during this year. I saw her beaten by YAMADA. We were all paraded again before his office. Mrs. David had been caught cooking outside the kitchen. She had to go to the office and explain what she had been doing and to bring the food along. She also had to stand outside YAMADA's office for about one day and one night, as far as I can remember. We saw her being taken into the office at night but what happened in there I cannot say.

Mrs. Van Doggenear came to Aermededi camp in about September of last year. She was beaten at night. I saw her the following day and she was black and blue and her face was swollen up and her ankle was very sore for two or three weeks after. She had bruises on her ankle and on the calf of her leg, and she was sick.

The food supplies at Aermadedi were very poor. We were allowed 1200 kilos of rice and maize every ten days. There were about 300 or 400 kilos of rice, the remainder being corn. Sometimes we had to grind the corn ourselves and sometimes it was sent to us already ground. For the first few months we received 1200 kilos every ten days but it gradually dwindled to 900 and 800 kilos. Then a Japanese called Takasaki came to the camp and I asked him to look into the matter of food. He said he would see about it and the position did improve after that. We then had only rice.

Beri beri was rampant in the camp and 28 died altogether. The beri beri was the cause of their death. At Tomohon for the first couple of months, we were allowed to go to hospital when we were sick but in Aermadedi camp we were not allowed, except on one occasion when two women went to hospital and subsequently died; they were too far gone when they were taken away.

Medical supplies at Aermadedi were very poor. YAMADA would give us only 200 quinine tablets for 300 people; this was given us only once. Later, he gave us 300 on one occasion and 700 on another. There was much malaria in the camp. Every time we asked for medicine YAMADA always replied in Malayan, "What use have you people for medicine?" The sooner you die the better I shall like it." If anybody was dying and we asked for a light at night, we were not allowed one.

A few children were born in camp. When the first baby was born, the mother was attended by one of the nurses in the camp, who were also internees. The mothers of the other babies born in the camp were sent to the hospital up in the country. There was a doctor there, but he did not bother about them and they were attended by native nurses. The mothers were alright, although they were not supplied with extra food. Some of the children in the camp; I think about seven or eight of those who died were children. All died from beri beri.

When we were interned, we did not take any of our own property into the camp except a few clothes; the Japanese went through our bags and cases and took anything of any value. I managed to save only a gold case.

My little girl now aged five years, suffered from dysentery at the camp. She is at present in hospital.

Whenever YAMADA went to the laboratory he did not bother about covering himself very much. He lived in a bamboo hut with three open sides and although he had a screen he never used to use it but dressed and undressed in front of the women. When he went to the lavatory, he went in cotton shorts only but might as well not have worn anything.

The guards at the gate had to sign for rations coming into the camp. I asked YAMADA once for extra food and we received 900 kilos instead of 800. The guard signed for the 900 kilos but when the food was brought inside YAMADA would take one of the sacks which had been signed for.

We were never visited by any Red Cross people at Aermadedi. Japanese officers visited the camp occasionally. One man, TAKASAKI, came about four times. Complaints were made to him which helped us for a few days while he was present.

But as soon as he had gone away the old rations of food were reverted to. TAKASAKI was a baron and a naval officer.

When women died in the camp, other women had to dig the graves and carry the dead to the graves. We also had to dig our own latrine pits.

The washing facilities were very poor. We had no running water and had to go outside the camp with a guard at 4 o'clock every afternoon and carry about 20 buckets of water to the kitchen. After that, we had to carry one or two buckets of water for ourselves. We had to wash our clothes and bath in that water.

When YAMADA was expecting any visitors, he always sent for me and told me how long we would be allowed to talk to them and on one occasion he threatened that if I made any complaints I would be beaten. I did complain, however, but YAMADA did not get to hear about it so I was not beaten.

About four or five days after the signing of the peace, we were allowed to walk about the streets. We were actually released on 15 September 1945.

I would be able to identify YAMADA; he was commonly known as "The Beaver."

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I certify that the above evidence is true and correct.

Taken and sworn before me at Morotai
on this 27th day of September 1945.

Signature: /s/ A. J. Mansfield /s/ A. R. ROLFF
Commissioner

I have this day seen the Japanese named YAMADO and have identified him as the person mentioned in my evidence as being in control of Aermadedi camp.

- /s/ A. R. ROLFF - - - - -

28 September 1945