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THE WAR CRIMES OFFICE

Judge Advocate General's Department — War Department

United States of America

In the matter of treatment and conditions existing at Woosung Camp, Bridge House Jail, Kiang Wan Military Prison, Ward Road Jail, Nanking Military Prison, and Peking Military Prison, from 23 December 1941 until 24 August 1945	* Perpetuation of Testimony of Winfield Scott Cunningham, Captain, U.S.N., Ser. No. 056074.
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Taken at: U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland.

Date: 1- November 1945.

In the Presence of: W. H. Abrams, Captain, USMCR (Ret'd.), War Crimes Office, Washington, 25, D. C.

Reporter: Martha L. Winblad, Y1/c, USNR, War Crimes Office, Washington 25, D. C.

Questions by: W. H. Abrams, Captain, USMCR (Ret'd.).

Q. What is your name, rank, serial number, and permanent home address?

A. My name is Winfield Scott Cunningham, Captain, U.S.N., serial No. 056074. My permanent home address is Cedar Park, R.F.D. #2, Annapolis, Maryland.

Q. Have you recently been returned to the United States?

A. Yes, from China on 7 September 1945.

Q. Were you a prisoner of war?

A. Yes, from 23 December 1941, until 24 August 1945.

Q. Will you give us chronologically the places at which you were interned.

A. I was kept on Wake Island for twenty days until the 12th of January 1942, and with about 1200 other prisoners left Wake Island for Shanghai. We stopped at Yokohama on 17 January 1942 and we were interviewed there by Japanese interpreters of the Navy Department and by the Tokyo Press. I was allowed to make a recording to be used as a radio broadcast saying

A. (Con'd.)

that I was well and was being treated well. We arrived at Shanghai on 23 January and went to Woosung on the 25th, disembarked there and marched five miles to a prison camp, known as the Shanghai War Prisoners camp, and from there on 9 February was taken to Shanghai for questioning by the Japanese Intelligence, and was returned to Woosung on 26 February. I escaped from there on 11 March, and was recaptured the next day with four others. Their names are, Commander Woolley, Royal Navy, Lt. Commander C. D. Smith, USNR, Mr. N. D. Teters from Seattle, Washington, and a Chinese boy whose name was Lu.

We got out of the prison camp by digging under the electrified fence and went on foot to the junction of the Yangtze and Whangpoo Rivers, where we planned to cross to Pootung. We were unable to get a boat to cross the river. The morning came and we went to a Chinese farmer's barn near the village of Powashan. During the course of the day, the word got around that we were there, and the Chinese farmer reported us to the local Chinese puppet troop authorities, who captured us and turned us over to the Japanese. We spent two days in the Woosung military police jail and were taken back handcuffed and led around the prison camp to show them how we escaped. We were then moved to Bridge House. We were kept there a month under investigation and were confined in cells in the Bridge House, one of us in each cell; however, in these cells were 12-15 Chinese prisoners and 4-5 American prisoners (civilians). The treatment was fairly good compared to the treatment of the other prisoners because the Japanese lieutenant, Kawai, was apparently trying to make an impression on us by giving us especially good treatment. We were allowed to buy clothing in the city and also extra food because the Japanese food was very poor. While we were there under questioning, we received no ill treatment other than that our cells were infested with lice, and that we were required not to talk, and were required to sit in the same position all day long. Those of us who did talk, on some occasions, including myself, were hit over the head with a club by the Japanese guards, which was done more or less as a matter of routine.

On the 14th of April, we were taken to the Military prison at Kiang Wan where we were kept for two months while awaiting trial. We had a trial on 14 April, the day we arrived, but it apparently did not suit the Japs, so they gave us another one on 2 June. The conditions of our confinement were bad only from the point of view that we were actually confined in solitary confinement for 23-3/4 hours a day as an average. The food wasn't bad, and we were able to keep fairly clean. We exercised every other day for about thirty minutes. The trials were not really trials in the ordinary sense of the word, but were merely hearings because we had had nothing to conceal. The Japs did not try to get information by forceful means. The trial was presided over by a Jap General with one Colonel and one Major as the other members, and a prosecutor with the rank of Captain. We brought attention to the various international conventions and pointed out that under these agreements, the maximum

punishment for escape was 50 days of solitary confinement. We already had undergone two months of solitary and a month of other confinement. The Japanese court contended that they were not signatories of the convention and were not bound by the provisions of the Geneva Convention. They tried us under provisions of Japanese military law as deserters from the Japanese Army. The three military members of the escape party were sentenced to ten years confinement, Mr. Teters, to two years, and the Chinese boy, to one year confinement. On the 8th of June, we were moved to Shanghai Municipal Jail, locally known as the Ward Road Jail, to serve out our sentences. We remained there for two years and four months. Mr. Teters was released at the expiration of his sentence on 2 June 1944. On the 6th of October 1944, we escaped from the Ward Road Jail. Eight escaped this time. They were Commander Woolley, Lt. Comdr. Smith, Marine Cpl. J. G. Storey, Cpl. C. W. Brimmer, Marine Sgt. R. F. Coulson, Marine Pvt. 1/c C. A. Stewart, and PhM2/c A. T. Brewer. The enlisted Marines had escaped later than we did the first time. Three of the prisoners, Woolley, Smith, and Storey, completed the escape and reached Free China and eventually the United States. The other five were captured in Shanghai by Chinese police supervised by Japanese, and were returned to the Bridge House on the 7th of October.

We remained there until 3 November, and were moved back to Kiang Wan Military prison. We were tried again on 11 December. Brimmer and I were sentenced to life imprisonment, Stewart to ten years confinement, and Coulson and Brewer to eight years confinement. At the same trial they were trying three civilians who assisted in the escape. These three civilians were Peterson, Olafson, and Halverson. They were sentenced to 10, 8, and 6 years, respectively. The three civilians were moved to Ward Road Jail on 23 December 1944. The other five were kept in the military prison. On 19 January 1945, we were moved to Nanking Military Prison. When we got there, we found another Marine Corporal by the name of Battles, and also a civilian from Wake Island named Herndon, who was serving a two-year sentence for fighting in a prison. There were also present in the Nanking Prison the four surviving Doolittle fliers. We did not actually see them, but we knew they were there.

On 1 August, we were taken to Peking (the five of us who escaped the second time and Battles). On 18 August we were taken from the military prison and moved to Fengtai, the civilian internee camp outside of Peking together with a civilian named Raymond Rutledge who had been sentenced to one year in July for attempted escape. That made a total of seven who were moved to the internee camp. The next day we moved back to Peking and were kept under guard by the Japs until 24 August. On the 20th of August we were contacted by the Army rescue Mission which had dropped in by parachute on 17 August. On 24 August, the Army brought in two B-24's to Peking and took out twenty-seven prisoners of war and took us to Sian, China, and then to Kunming. I was kept there for eight days undergoing a medical check over and then flown back, with other prisoners from Mukden, leaving Kunming on 2 September and arriving in the States by way of India and North Africa on 7 September.

Doc. No. 8209*

Q. How was the treatment on the Nitta Maru between Wake and Shanghai?

A. The officers were all confined in the mail room of the ship; thirty in a small room. We were not allowed to talk. The food was very light. They evidently wanted to keep the prisoners from being in good physical condition and wanted also to keep our spirits down if possible. We were fed twice a day; the food consisted of thin rice gruel and a small bit of fish or pickle for the afternoon meal. The sanitary facilities were altogether lacking; there were none for washing or shaving. The plumbing was in the nature of five-gallon tins.

Q. Were any of the officers sick at this time?

A. I do not believe anyone was sick except from digestive troubles.

Q. Did the Japs make any attempt to furnish any medical treatment?

A. Very little treatment was given to us. Capt. E. Frueler had been wounded in aerial combat on 22 December. He had two bullet wounds in his shoulder and had great difficulty in getting attention. He occasionally was given a little treatment.

Q. On this trip did you witness any beating of the officers and men?

A. Yes. One officer, Capt. W. M. Platt, USMC, was beaten with a club for talking. I didn't witness any other beatings, but many took place among the enlisted prisoners and civilians elsewhere on the ship.

Q. Did you see the conditions of the enlisted men's and civilians' quarters?

A. They were similar to ours, but were colder. We were over the engine room. I could look down the passage-way and get a glimpse of them, but could not inspect them in any way.

Q. Was your money and other valuable collected?

A. They confiscated all our possessions and forced us to leave them on the deck. They also took all the extra clothing we had. They issued each of us a small wool and cotton undershirt to add to our wardrobes. The officers had sufficient blankets but I don't believe the rest of the people did.

Q. Would you have anything of note to report of your stay in Yokahama?

A. They took several of us from the compartments to be interviewed by the press and Naval intelligence, and in several cases, made recordings for our dependents in the States, saying that we were well, and in order to get these announcements through on the radio, we said we were well treated.

Q. Did they take all your money?

A. Yes, all of our money except for some which a few of the men managed to conceal was taken either at Wake or on board the ship. They also took all our jewelry, watches, fountain pens and anything else which had any value.

Q. While you were in this first prisoner of war camp near Shanghai, did you suffer any beatings?

A. No, I did not.

Q. Did you witness any beatings administered to any of the prisoners.

A. I saw several officers and men beaten by Japanese sentrys and supervisory officers for failure to salute, or for other trivial reasons.

Q. Can you give us the name of the commanding officer of the Nitta Maru?

A. No.

Q. Did you know the names of any officers on board the ship?

A. Lieut. Saito was in charge of the prisoners.

Q. Do you know the name of the commanding officer of the first prison camp?

A. Yes. Col. Yuse was the commanding officer. His No. 1, was Captain Endo who was assisted by Lieut. Akiyama and Dr. Shindo.

Q. Do you know the names of the interpreters?

A. They had several interpreters, one was a Korean - a civilian - I do not know his name. There were two Japanese non-commissioned officers who knew some English.

Q. Is it a fact that in most instances the beatings were executed upon the orders of the interpreters?

A. The interpreters were very arrogant and overbearing and took it upon themselves to slap the prisoners.

Q. Did you at any time see prisoners abused in the presence of Captain Endo?

A. I do not recall that I did.

Q. Or in the presence of the Commanding Officer of the camp?

A. No. They were aware of the beatings.

Q. Did you report to the top-side that the men were being abused and beaten by the sentrys and the inferior in command?

A. Yes, on many occasions.

Q. In this jail, Bridge House, will you tell us what treatment was received and anything you know concerning the running of that place in the nature of atrocities?

A. The only atrocities I witnessed was beating of Chinese prisoners by the guards. They were severely beaten at times for smoking or stealing food. I heard them beating and torturing other prisoners in other rooms of the Bridge House, while we were in the offices of the Bridge House, though I could not see what was going on.

Q. At Ward Road, did they administer any corporal punishment to you?

A. None of the prisoners of war were punished by corporal punishment. Some were confined on bread and water for smoking violations. Nobody was struck.

The Japanese officer in charge of the prisoners of war was a member of the gaol staff called Mori, in charge of the foreign section in which we were confined along with a group of other prisoners convicted of espionage and sabotage. These prisoners were nationals from all over Europe including fifteen political prisoners who had been convicted of espionage. Five of them were Soviet citizens who were sentenced for espionage activities in Shanghai. We found there also seven other political prisoners - 6 British and one Russian - who had been convicted of organizing a sabotage ring. Mr. Gande, a British citizen, who was a Shanghai merchant, was the leader of this ring and sentenced to four years confinement. Another, Mr. Elias, was a Shanghai broker.

Q. These people you just mentioned were civilians who were convicted of offenses against the Japanese regime?

A. Yes. There were also upwards of 100 assorted consular prisoners and white prisoners of no nationality (mostly White Russian) serving time for ordinary crimes.

Q. These civil criminals were confined in the same place as the prisoners of war, weren't they?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you make any complaint to the person in charge of the war prisoners that this situation was contrary to the rules of land warfare?

A. Yes, we made several written complaints to the superior Japanese Army officer in that area protesting against being confined with criminals and about the fact that we were allowed no tobacco and no writing

materials and also requesting that we be allowed to supplement our food supply from outside. These requests were ignored. From about the middle of June for about six months, however, we were allowed extra food on advice of the doctor.

Q. At Nanking, did you suffer any abuses?

A. This second trip to Bridge House, we were in a cell with a large number of Chinese and conditions were very bad because of lice. The food was poor consisting solely of rice and resulted in my case in malnutrition, indigestion, and beri-beri. At Kiang Wan the Japs who dished out the food saw to it that the Americans got the thinnest soup and the smallest portions of rice. We had no medical attention. Some of the prisoners were suffering from bad skin infections; I had a couple of infections on my leg as a result of the escape, that lasted quite a while. We suffered quite a bit from cold. They gave us no clothing other than what we had escaped in, in early October, and the four or five blankets they gave us were thin and had very little warmth. We were in solitary confinement and averaged fifteen minutes of exercise two or three times a week.

In August 1943, while in Ward Road Gaol, the Swiss Consul commenced to furnish assistance in the way of small amounts of food sent in, and also small allowances of money and a certain amount of clothing and soap and things of that nature. The Jap in charge, Mori, took about 40% of everything and used or sold it to others. At first, the governor was a Jap, but he was retired in July 1943, and replaced by a Chinaman. The Chinese took no action but left everything to Mori who stole the goods and food sent in to us, and also the money we used to supplement the food. We were supposed to be able to write to our relatives at home but because of Captain Mori, occasionally they failed to supply us with writing materials. We received mail which had been censored by the Japanese military police. I got some three dozen or more letters during my imprisonment. Some of the prisoners got as few as two letters during the whole time of confinement. This was probably because the Japs took no pains to censor and issue it to them.

Q. Did they allow Red Cross packages to be sent to you?

A. The prisoners in the prisoner of war camp received them but we did not. The help we got from the Swiss was not from the Red Cross.

Q. Do you have any complaints to make relative to the treatment you received at Nanking?

A. The treatment here was a little better, with better food. We received a small amount of medical attention. We were not allowed any reading matter, and were punished for talking. They usually handcuffed us so we could not move our hands at all. In the Spring and Summer, we were with a shortage of water. At one time we were confined four in

a cell with no room to lie down, but most of the time we had enough space. For the most, you could say we received fairly moderate treatment. This was true except for one time we were severely punished for a violation of the prison regulations. They tried to keep us from talking, and the guards tried to control the situation by adopting measures of their own. On the 25th of June 1945 in Nanking, we were seven in a cell which was pretty crowded and we had been warned to stop talking. This we failed to do so the guard closed the windows of the cell and it was very hot. The plumbing consisted of a bucket in the corner. One of the prisoners broke a window to let in some air. Everyone from the Commanding Officer down, came down to investigate and took out five of us who were in good health and put us in leather strait jackets. They were then taken out in the yard and water was thrown on them, so that when the leather dried, it would draw up. Coulson had been very ill. I had recovered from my illness but had dropped in weight down to 115 pounds. We were given extra consideration by not being put into strait jackets. We were put into heavy leather belts to which were clamped hand cuffs, for fifteen days.

- Q. What were the conditions at Peking?
- A. It was run much more tautly. They pushed us around considerably, but there were no beatings. The food was very poor. From 6 October 1944, until we were released, we were not allowed to have any contact with outsiders such as the Swiss Consul, nor receive any outside aid. We were not allowed to write letters. We received several letters during the first few months, but during the last six months we did not. We were not allowed any tobacco. When we were in Kiang Wan and Nanking, both places were bombed several times by U. S. Army bombers.
- Q. Were your places of confinement close to military action?
- A. Yes, right in the midst of it. We could hear the Japs drilling in our vicinity.
- Q. Were there any anti-aircraft guns in your vicinity?
- A. Yes, there were many guns in both places and we could hear them firing at the bombers as they flew over the area. On some occasions we could see the American P-51's and B-29's.
- Q. Did any bombs fall within the prison?
- A. The prison at Kiang Wan was a very small building and no bombs landed actually in the enclosure, but they shook the building. The Jap guards wore steel helmets and unlocked all the cell doors with the idea of moving Jap prisoners out, but we were not taken to shelters. The sanitary facilities here were very bad. The prisoners who were sick got very little medical treatment, and nobody was allowed any dental treatment.

