

AROUND A WORLD AT WAR MAKES A GOOD NEWS STORY

Charlie Harlow Experiences Jap Raids At Rangoon

Around the world at war is an experience that can be told by Charlie Harlow, local man, who docked at San Francisco, California, on April 16 after traveling 17,000 miles aboard an unarmed merchant vessel, much of which journey was through war zones in the Pacific.

Added experiences encountered in such war embattled cities as Rangoon, Burma, Manila, Shanghai, Calcutta, Soerabia, Honolulu and others, can be recounted now and told in years to come to grandchildren.

Arriving in the city early last week by train from San Francisco, Charlie talked to a Herald reporter. Much of what he told about his experiences is being published daily in the newspapers throughout the country. In this instance, however, those daily happenings can be told here with the emphasis on "seeing is believing", and by one who grew up in local environment.

Early last October, Charlie went to Norfolk with the intention of looking for a job. The smell of the salt air got him, and he shipped as a crew member on the merchantman "Wah-Wah", owned by the Standard Fruit Steamship Company and bound for South American ports and to further destinations unknown.

After visits to South American and Canal Zone ports, the ship sailed for Hawaii, arriving at Honolulu about November 1. A short stay in Honolulu brought forth no signs that war was a short month away. The ship left the peaceful islands for Shanghai, arriving in that city on November 7. Here too, was little sign of an impending struggle.

However, the fact that the Japanese were preparing for some form of venture into the war was brought out when the ship on which Charlie was sailing was fired upon by Jap machine gunners while the vessel proceeded up the Yangtze River toward Hong Kong enroute to Shanghai. The vessel, under strict Japanese regulations, was supposed to have stopped at some point up the River and be certified before entering Hong Kong, which is and has been in Japanese hands for more than a year. When the ship finally stopped after being fired upon by shore batteries, the Japs treated the ship's captain in an extremely ungentlemanly manner.

"It looked for a while like they were going to hang the skipper", Charlie said. "They finally let us go, and we proceeded on to Shanghai. I was certainly glad to get there."

In Shanghai, Charlie decided he had had enough of the "Wah-Wah" and quit the ship there. And he says he is certainly glad he did quit the ship.

While he was still in Shanghai, the "Wah-Wah" left for Hong Kong again, and hasn't been heard from since she sailed. Whether the ship was sunk after the war started, or whether she was taken over by the Japs and her crew interned, isn't known.

After remaining in Shanghai for a short period, Charlie, with the help of American Consular officials, took passage on a Free French ship bound for Manila, Philippine Islands. Arriving there several days later, Charlie ran into another Roanoke Rapids native, Willie Strickland. Willie was sailing to Calcutta on the merchantman "Day Star" and he assisted Charlie in securing a seaman's berth on his ship.

So together the two sailed for Calcutta, via Rangoon, Burma, leaving Manila on December 3rd. Enroute to Rangoon, the ship re-

ceived orders to pull into Soerabia, Java. That was about the time that war was declared. Charlie and his mates, on this trip, had the war brought home to them for the first time while their ship was enroute from Manila to Soerabia.

The Day Star was being followed some 75 miles back by an American Auxiliary Navy cruiser, "The Blackhawk", a merchant vessel converted into an armed raider. It was learned later that a Jap submarine rose to the surface with intent to torpedo the "Blackhawk", but was driven off by Dutch shore patrol planes before it could launch its torpedoes.

Charlie remained in Soerabia for five days, and saw feverish war activity as the Dutch prepared for their part in the struggle. There was no sign of hostilities while he was in Soerabia, although war had by then been declared and the Dutch were in the thick of it.

From Soerabia, the "Day Star" sailed for Rangoon, arriving there just about the time that embattled city was undergoing a severe bombing by Jap planes. But let Charlie tell it:

"We arrived there about 12:00 noon and the city had been bombed and machine gunned by Jap bombers and fighters starting about 9:30. We were told that the American Volunteer Group of fighters in Rangoon had given the Japs their money's worth, but I was later to find out just how much those AVG's, as they are called in Rangoon, did give the Japs.

"I remained in Rangoon for 42 days and nights. During that time the city was attacked from the air almost daily, sometimes as many as four to five times a day. The Japs were never able to get directly over the city because the American volunteers who were serving with the Chinese always met them coming in. Those Americans sure do know how to handle their planes, and they are what I would call fighters.

"One day, the AVG's shot down a Jap bomber near the city. After the bomber was hit, a Jap crew member bailed out of the crippled plane and parachuted to earth. When he came down he had a sub-machine gun in his hands. He was determined not to be captured. Had he come hown unarmed, he would have been captured and interned. But the machine gun put a different light on the question, and Rangoon police put an end to him on the spot.

"On one occasion, a Saturday afternoon, I watched an air battle between American Volunteer fighters, assisted by Royal Air Force planes, and 17 Jap planes. All told the Allies had 9 planes in the air. When the battle was over nine of the Japs had been shot down. I think we lost a plane or two. I couldn't tell very well.

"The city was bombed incessantly during the entire time I was there. Always ready to meet them were the AVG's, who were in battle just about every day."

Charlie said that when his ship docked at Rangoon, they pulled in beside another merchant vessel which had a gun mounted on the prow. One day, he said, the Japs raided the harbor at Rangoon. Sailors manning the bow gun on the adjacent ship shot down two Jap planes in the raid. Charlie said he was an eyewitness to this thrilling exploit from the deck of his own ship.

After undergoing war at its worst in Rangoon, Charlie's ship sailed out of Rangoon across Bengal Bay for Calcutta, via Colombo, Ceylon. The ship left unescorted, although another merchant vessel was a short distance behind and three others were at some distance ahead. Enroute to Colombo, the three merchant ships ahead were sunk. About midnight one night, Charlie said the watch on deck reported that a U-boat had

come to the surface and fired a torpedo at the "Day Star". The torpedo missed its mark and somehow the "Day Star" continued its journey. However, it was later learned that the ship in back of the "Day Star" had been sunk by a torpedo at just about the spot where the attempt had been made on Charlie's ship.

After pulling in at Colombo, the "Day Star" continued its long journey across enemy waters to Calcutta. Arriving in Calcutta, the ship put in port and stayed for 12 days. During this time, Charlie said, Willie Strickland was taken ill and was sent to a Calcutta hospital. The ship left Calcutta without him, and Charlie said he hadn't seen or heard of him since.

From Calcutta, the ship sailed for Cape Town, South Africa. Between Cape Town and Calcutta, when the ship was about 2,500 miles out of Calcutta, Charlie and the crew of the "Day Star" had an opportunity to witness a night sea battle between Allied and Jap naval forces. Charlie said that he was unable to tell whether there were any American ships in the fight or not, because the battle occurred at night. He said that those watching could see the flashes of the guns from about three miles away and they could hear the hum of the shells as they flew overhead.

The "Day Star" came out of this without accident and proceeded on to Cape Town. From Cape Town the ship sailed to Trinidad, in the West Indies, and from Trinidad back to the Canal Zone, through the locks and on up to San Pedro and San Francisco, California.

Asked as to whether he intended going back to sea, Charlie said he was waiting to see what the local draft board was going to do about his draft status.

"I'd rather go back to sea than to go into the Army," he said. He added: "Don't quote me as saying that our ship was unarmed. It was armed, all right. The Captain has a pistol."

HOSTESS AT BRIDGE

Mrs. E. B. Smoot was hostess on Tuesday evening to her bridge club with three tables in play.

Attractive arrangements of flowers were used throughout the living room.

When the scores were added Mrs. Bill Alligood held high score, Mrs. Allie Wood second high, and Miss Edna Wafford travelling. After presenting the prizes a salad course was served.

Those playing were Mesdames Allie Wood, Bill Alligood, R. M. Pope, Ivey Mohorn, James Curran, George Pappendick, M. F. White, A. O. George, Earl Rook, Sam Bunn, T. N. Adams and Miss Edna Wafford.

TYPHOID CLINICS PLANNED

By ROBERT F. YOUNG, M. D., County Health Officer

The smarting humiliation from the five cases of typhoid fever in Halifax County during 1941 is still with us. Two of these cases were patients who refused to be vaccinated against typhoid even though the free clinics were held within sight of their homes.

This year, beginning on May 11th, free immunization clinics will be held throughout the county on a broader scope than ever before. A special fund has been made available to the County Health Department to provide for the services of five physicians and five nurses whereby additional clinics may be held. These funds were furnished by the Children's Bureau through the North Carolina State Health Department.

Immunizations will be given for typhoid fever, smallpox, and diphtheria. Children under one year of age will be vaccinated against whooping cough. All these vaccinations are free.

Fifty of the one hundred counties of North Carolina are having this special program. It is fortunate that Halifax County is among the lucky fifty.

This special immunization program is concentrated in sections where typhoid fever still persists. The schedule will begin as follows:

Scotland Neck—Clinic Rooms, May 12th, 1:00 P.M.; Mary's Chapel—School, May 12th, 3:00 P.M.; Roseneath—School, May 12th, 1:00 P. M.; Mullins—School, May 12th, 3:00 P. M.; Hobgood (white)—White's Store, May 12th, 2:00 P. M.; Hobgood (col.)—School, May 12th, 3:30 P. M.; Crowell's X-rd—Filling Station, May 15th, 1:30 P. M.; Tillery—Park's Store, May 15th, 3:30 P.M.; Enfield (white)—Clinic Rooms, May 11th, 1:00 P. M.; Enfield (col.)—Clinic Rooms, May 11th, 2:30 P.M.

The above schedule will run for six weeks.

All diseases that can be prevented must be prevented. Typhoid fever, smallpox, and diphtheria can be prevented by vaccination. Then with vaccinations provided absolutely free in every section of the county, there is no excuse for these diseases. There is only an occasional child that cannot be satisfactorily immunized against diphtheria.

The rest of the vaccination schedule, which will be held by the personnel of the County Health Department, will be posted next week. This schedule will run for five weeks.

No Exercises In Grammar Schools In This County

The Halifax grammar school will hold its last school session of the present school year tomorrow (Friday), it has been announced.

There will be no seventh grade graduation exercises this year, due to the fact that an extra grade will be added to the grammar school, beginning next Fall, and children will merely advance into this extra grade, without benefit of graduation.

Other grammar schools in the county system are also calling off seventh grade graduation exercises because of the extra grade, it was learned.



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