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The Story of a Prisoner of War

By James Boyd, Jr.
QM 2c U. S. C. G.

(Continued from the Nov. 16th issue of The Pilot. The story to date: The writer finds that one of the men his ship, the Dickman, is bringing home is an Englishman who was captured by the Japs at Singapore, to which he had been taken, four years before, by the same ship which is now carrying him to safety. This installment of Mills' story starts just after the surrender of the Singapore garrison.)

In November of this same year, Mills was moved to Thailand, along with thousands of others. Here started the most fantastic and horror-ridden months of his captivity. The Japs had decided to put their prisoners to work building what the Allies termed the "impossible railroad" running between Bankok and Mulmein (Burma).

The railroad ran through dense jungle filled with insects, thick underbrush, and a terrible, wet heat. The Japs saved some time by following the twisting banks of a slow, muddy river. This river was the only bright spot in Mills' life. Here he was allowed to bathe and relax for a few minutes from the ceaseless, back-breaking work. Soon after his arrival, the tropical Monsoons started in earnest. There was mud and ooze everywhere. He lived in crude shelters made of bamboo and woven leaves with mud floors. Nothing was ever dry. Either one sweated profusely or it rained. Mills still had his original clothing of shorts, socks, and boots. These did not stand up well in their new surroundings, and it was not long before he was living like a savage. After his boots went, he spent many agonizing weeks walking on bruised, bleeding feet until they became hard and tough. But the worst hardship was the food. This consisted of a little bowl of rice, two or three times a day, with a small portion of soup which was nothing but colored water. Once in a long while, trucks would struggle up from the coast bringing fresh vegetables and meat. But this supply would be consumed in a matter of days. Even so, Mills maintained that, had things just stayed in this state, life would not have been unbearable.

It was three months later that the terror struck. Four men in one of the camps died suddenly. They did not die from beating or malnutrition, but from an old and terrible disease. They vomited blood, doubled up in pain, their skins turning a dark purple or black, dying in agony a few hours later. Across the camp swept the word: cholera! Men looked at each other in dread, wondering who would be struck down next. A few thoughts of escape, but the wilds of the jungle and the death sentence, if caught, were enough to discourage them. In the wake of this disease came others—dysentery, beri-beri, malaria, and the fungi disease—gotten from a tiny scratch, causing a huge ulcer that often necessitated amputation.

The Japs did nothing. What medical care there was was given by British doctors. These men did all they could under impossible conditions, many being sick themselves. For the thousands that died, more were brought in to take their places. In one camp of two thousand men that Mills was in, over sixteen hundred died. But his immunity could not hold out forever, especially now in his weakened condition. Finally he was stricken with beri-beri, dysentery, and many times with a touch of malaria. What saved him was his fine physique, developed from a boyhood crave for sports.

Near the end of the work on the railroad, Mills thinks he must have gone out of his mind, as he can remember little except that men were shrivelling up and dying like flies all around him. In November, 1943, the ghastly work was finished, a project that had cost over twenty-six thousand lives and many more in broken spirits. Still Mills was kept deep in the jungle at the half-way point on the railroad between Bankok and Mulmein. Then in June, Mills learned he was leaving. Down to the coast he went, riding on the same rails that had killed so many of his friends.

The men were dirty, unshaven, and naked. Mills did not notice the drastic change in his appearance. His bare feet were hard and scaly and his skin, stretched tightly over his sharp bones, was black and leathery from long exposure to sun, wind, and rain. He was a walking skeleton weighing 118 pounds of his original 150 pounds. Even more fantastic, he was an inch and a half shorter. This was what twenty-seven months of captivity under the heel of the Jap had done.

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shire Avenue; thence with New Hampshire Avenue S. 36 degrees 45 min. E. 52 feet to the point of beginning, being a portion of Lots Nos. 7 and 8 in Block K&8.

This sale is had under the authority of a judgement of foreclosure made by the Clerk of the Superior Court of Moore County in the case of TOWN OF SOUTHERN PINES vs ARCHIE McMILLAN, Widower, and PEARLINA DOUGLAS, Widow, and the said lands were sold on Monday, October 29th, 1945, at 12 o'clock NOON at the Court House door in Carthage, under an order made by the Clerk of the Superior Court of Moore County, at which sale PARKER H. CHALMERS became the last and highest bidder for the above described lands, at the price of \$682.50, and that thereafter and within the time allowed by law for raising said bid, Leta McBride, filed an up set bid of \$717.50 on the aforesaid lands, and that the Clerk of the Superior Court has ordered the undersigned Commissioner to re-sell the said lands, and that accordingly the said Commissioner will on the date and at the place set forth above, sell the above described lands, and that the bidding will start at the up set bid of \$717.50, and a deposit of 25 per cent will be required of the successful bidder.

Dated this 8th day of November 1945.
J. VANCE ROWE,
COMMISSIONER.
Nov 16, 23

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NOTICE OF EXECUTRIX

Having qualified as Executrix of the estate of Hugh J. Betterley, deceased, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of the deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at Southern Pines, N. C., on or before the 7th day of November, 1946, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment.

This 7th day of November, 1945.
KATHARINE S. BETTERLEY,
EXECUTRIX OF THE ESTATE
OF HUGH J. BETTERLEY, DE-
CEASED. N9-D14.

NOTICE OF SERVICE BY PUBLICATION

NORTH CAROLINA
MOORE COUNTY

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT

SALLIE COLE GRAHAM,
Plaintiff vs.
RICHARD GRAHAM,
Defendant

The defendant, Richard Graham, will take notice that an action entitled as the above has been commenced in the Superior Court of Moore County, North Carolina, for the purpose of securing a divorce on the grounds of two years separation; that the defendant will further take notice that he is required to appear at the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court at the Court House in Carthage, North Carolina, within twenty days after the 1st day of December, 1945, and answer or demur to the complaint in this action, or the plaintiff will apply to the Court for the relief demanded in said complaint. This 29th day of October, 1945.
JOHN WILLCOX,
Clerk of Superior Court of Moore County. N9-30

NOTICE OF RE-SALE OF LAND BY COMMISSIONERS

Pursuant to an Order of Re-Sale signed by Hon. John Willcox, Clerk of the Superior Court on November 5th, 1945, the undersigned Commissioner will on

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 26th, 1945, at 12 o'clock NOON at the Court House door of Moore County, in the Town of Carthage, North Carolina, offer for sale and sell to the highest bidder for cash the following described lands:

That certain parcel or lot of land in the Town of Southern Pines, Moore County, North Carolina, and BEGINNING at the east corner of Block K&8, as shown on a map entitled "A Map of Southern Pines, Moore County, North Carolina," duly filed in the office of the Register of Deeds of said County, and running thence with the line of Saylor Street S. 53 degrees 15 min. W 100 feet to the common corner of Lots Nos 6 and 7 in said Block; thence with the dividing line of said lots N. 36 degrees 45 min. W. 52 feet to a corner; thence N. 53 degrees 15 min. E. 100 feet to New Hamp-

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