

PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS IN JAPAN & JAPANESE CONTROLLED AREA  
AS TAKEN FROM REPORTS OF INTERNED AMERICAN PRISONERS  
LIAISON & RESEARCH BRANCH AMERICAN PRISONER OF WAR INFORMATION BUREAU  
by JOHN M. GIBBS 31 July 1946

MITSUSHIMA, KNOWN AS TOKYO CAMP 2-D

1. LOCATION: Mitsushima Prisoner of War Camp was located in Central Island and was situated on the Eastern banks of the TENRYU River in latitude 35-55-00 North and longitude 137-39-00 East.

2. PRISONER PERSONNEL: On Aug. 12, 1944, the following prisoners were confined in this camp; 93 Americans, captured in the Philippines, 116 British, captured in Singapore and Java. The senior American officer was Boatswain Ernest W. Downey, U.S. Navy. The senior British officer was Lt. Rhys of the Royal Air Force.

On Oct. 15, 1944, Capt. Weinstein of the U.S. Army Medical Corps arrived in camp. He became the senior American officer, making a total of 94 Americans confined.

On March 2, 1945, Lt. George Estabrook Brown, U.S. Navy, and Lt. Van Womer, U.S. AAF arrived in camp along with one British officer making a total in camp of 96 Americans and 117 British.

On June 27, 1945, a group of 100 British officers arrived in camp. Capt. Gordon, Royal Navy and former Capt. of the H.M.S. EXETER (sunk by the Japanese) was the senior British officer of this detail.

Five deaths occurred during internment which are listed elsewhere in this report.

3. GUARD PERSONNEL: The camp was commanded by a Japanese Army Lt. whose name is not known. He was assisted by 8 to 12 guards, and among them were the following:

MACHETA, Interpreter	HIRAMATA, Big Glass Eye
TCHUCHIA, Little Glass Eye	KENMORE or KENMUTA, The Punk
NISHINO, One Arm	MATSUZAKI, Scar Face
ORI or AURI, Sergeant	WATANABE, Sergeant or The Bird

These nicknames were given the guards by the prisoners for reasons of identification. The Japanese camp commandant was seldom in the camp, therefore, the sergeant had charge of the prisoners most of the time.

Among the guard staff were three Japanese civilians who were interested in the procurement of food for the camp, supposedly they were hired by the Construction Co. for that purpose.

The prisoners were sent out to work on details for Japanese civilian contractors and among these individuals were the following: KAMIJO, IGARASHI, TAKASHINA, OIWA, IWATIA, and NIPOTS.

4. GENERAL CONDITIONS:

(a) Housing facilities: This camp, first opened in Nov. 1942, was occupied by Americans from the Philippines, Eurasians from Singapore and British Army personnel from Singapore and Java. It consisted of 13 structures and was surrounded by a 10' wooden fence with nails protruding from the top boards. There were 3 gates to this compound but only 2 were used from Aug. 12, 1944 until Sept. 4, 1945. The main gate was on the southern part of the compound and was guarded at all times by 2 or 3 guards.

The living barracks were approximately 18' x 75' and housed 120 prisoners. These barracks were built of 1/4" wood and covered with shingles or tree bark. The interior was divided into 3 sections with an upper and lower tier for sleeping purposes. Each individual was allowed an area of 30 x 73 inches for his living quarters and stowage of clothing.

The floor was dirt and sand. During the rains it would be flooded and, as no proper drainage was provided, water, in depth from 2" to 3", stood on the floor during the rainy seasons.

During the winter, ice would form under the mats in the sleeping area. The prisoners would wash this area down on their day off and rid the quarters of the fleas and lice would form before it could be properly dried. This condition existed throughout the winter of 1944.

For heating these barracks, a 3' x 3' fire pit was placed in the center of each section and a very small amount of wood was allowed between the hours of 1700 (5P.M.) and 2000 (8P.M.). The wood supplied on an average day was 10 sticks about 4" in diameter and 2' long.

There were no flues to carry away the smoke from the fire pits and, as the barracks were inadequately ventilated, the smoke would become so dense that the eyelids of the prisoners would swell to such an extent that vision would be cut off. Many days wood was not furnished when the thermometer registered as low as 9° Fahrenheit. The guards would attempt to justify this action upon the claim that rules had been broken by some individual.

A small amount of disinfectant was allowed but not in sufficient quantities to rid the camp of the flies, fleas and bugs. The prisoners would have "fly campaigns" in which they would spend their rest hours killing flies and vermin to ease the terrible condition. Fleas were uncontrollable and rats were a continuous source of worry.

A small washstand was erected in the center of camp which had 12 spigots. This stand was for washing clothes and

dishes. No hot water was supplied for this purpose.

Water was pumped into camp from a well along the water edge of the TENRYU River. This water was not fit for human consumption unless boiled and there was a small boiler provided which held about 15 gallons. All the drainage from the town of Mitsushima entered the river just a few feet from the well. This well was approximately 30' deep. Water was not at all times available and had to be carried by buckets from the river in severe cold weather when the lines and pump would freeze up.

(b) Latrines: There were two latrines in a separate wood building large enough to accommodate 30 men at a time. They were of the same variety as used throughout Japan, "straddle trench".

There were no drainage facilities, consequently they had to be hand dipped out and the accumulation was distributed to the camp garden and the countryside for fertilizer. The latrine openings were not covered consequently flies abounded and maggots crawled around the building and into the living quarters.

(c) Bathing: One bath tub was provided. It was a box affair about 6x6x3 and was filled on the average of once each ten days for the prisoners' baths. The water was heated by piping running along one end and fired by a small fireplace. Cold showers could be had by those risking pneumonia due to their weakened condition.

(d) Mess Hall: There was no mess hall but each barracks was provided with three tables. To eat the food, the men either sat on their bunks or the dirt floor.

(e) Food: The general run of food was a mixture of barley and rice in a proportion of 8 to 2 respectively. The issue would very seldom be other than grain but occasionally vegetables and beans would be provided.

Meat and fish were seldom provided but the prisoners would occasionally get the stomach and bones of the cattle butchered in the area. The meat and fish would normally be (in American minds) unfit for consumption but it would be boiled sufficiently to make it palatable.

The food was issued every three days and was weighed and cooked by the American personnel. The average issue was from 400 to 500 grams per man per day.

(f) Medical Facilities: There were no Japanese medical officers attached to the camp but a British doctor (Richard G.S. Whitfield, Royal Navy) attended the sick until Oct. 15, 1944 when an American doctor (Capt. Weinstein, Medical Corps, U.S.ArmY) arrived in camp and assumed the medical officer duties. Two corpsmen of the British Army assisted the doctors. There was very little medicine provided and the doctors gave the most severe cases special consideration in using the scant supplies furnished. Surgical cases were taken to the company hospital. A Japanese doctor visited camp one time during 1945.

(g) Supplies: (1) Red Cross issue: There was an ample supply of Red Cross clothing in this camp for everyone but it was never issued in any quantity, consequently the men were compelled to work in straw shoes or go barefoot. The sick were employed in the making of these straw shoes for the well. A civilian was employed in instructing the prisoners in their manufacture, supervised by a military guard.

The following Red Cross items were received by each individual between Aug.'44 & Sept4,'45. Sept. 4, 1945..

Dec. 25, 1944

Cheese	8 oz.	Cigarettes	120 each	Soap, bath	2 bars
Corn Beef	12 "	Salmon	8 oz.	Milk, Powdered	16 oz.
Chocolate	8 "	Jam	6 "	Spam	24 "
Coffee (sol)	4 "	Liver pate'	6 "	Gum	2 pkg
Sugar	8 "	Butter	11 1/4 "	Raisins	4 oz.

Jan. 15, 1945

Coffee (sol)	1/3 oz.	Cigarettes	2 each	Salmon	2/3 oz.
Sugar	5/6 "	Jam	7/10 oz.	Butter	4 "
Milk (powdered)	8/9 "				

Feb. 15, 1945

Cheese	2 oz.	Corn beef	3 oz.	Chocolate	2 oz.
Coffee (sol)	1 "	Cigarettes	25 each	Salmon	2 "
Jam	1 "	Liver pate'	1 1/4 oz.	Prem	6 "
Butter	3 3/4 "	Soap, bath	1/2 bar	Milk (powdered)	4 "
Gum	2 1/2 sticks	Raisins	4 oz.		

Mar. 15, 1945

Milk (powdered)	8 oz.	Coffee (sol)	2 oz.	Sugar	4 oz.
Corn beef	6 "	Chocolate	4 "	Raisins	7 1/2 "
Prem	12 "	Salmon	4 "	Jam	3 "
Liver pate'	3 "	Butter	8 1/2 "	Cheese	4 "

Chewing gum	5 sticks	Cigarettes	50 each	Soap, bath	1 bar
<u>Apr 5, 1945</u>					
Soap, bath	½ bar	Soap, laundry	¼ bar	Shoe polish	¼ can
Razor blades	3 each	Shoe laces	1 pr.	Thread	1 spool
Pencil	1 each	Shaving cream	¼ tube	Tooth brush	1 each
<u>Apr 19, 1945</u>					
Milk (powdered)	8 oz.	Coffee (sol)	2 oz.	Sugar	4 oz.
Corn beef	6 "	Chocolate	4 "	Raisins	7½ "
Prem	12 "	Salmon	4 "	Laver pate'	3 "
Butter	8½ "	Cheese	4 "	Gum	5 sticks
Cigarettes	50 each	Soap, bath	1 bar	Toilet tissue	80 sheets
<u>May 15, 1945</u>					
Milk (powdered)	4 oz.	Coffee (sol)	1 oz.	Sugar	4 oz.
Corn beef	6 "	Chocolate	4 "	Prunes	8 "
Salmon	4 "	Jam	3 "	Liver pate'	3 "
Butter	8½ "	Cheese	4 "	Peer (meat)	12 "
Gum	5 sticks	Cigarettes	70 each	Soap, bath	1 bar
<u>Jun 14, 1945</u>					
Milk (powdered)	8 oz.	Coffee (sol)	2 oz.	Sugar	4 oz.
Corn beef	6 "	Chocolate	4 "	Raisins	8 "
Prem	12 "	Salmon	4 "	Jam	3 "
Liver pate'	3 "	Butter	8½ "	Cheese	4 "
Gum	5 sticks	cigarettes	50 each	Soap, bath	1 bar
<u>Jul 15, 1945</u>					
Coffee	4/7 oz.	Sugar	1 oz.	Chocolate	7/12 oz.
Raisins	2 "	Cheese	4 "	Gum	1 stick
Cigarettes	17 each	Mor (meat)	6 "		

(2) Japanese issue: There were no other supplies in the food line received but there were a few items of athletic gear supplied by the YMCA and also a few books from the same source.

The Japanese supplied scrap cloth for repairing clothing. In Aug. work clothing consisting of one suit of work clothes and one pair of rubber soled shoes were issued to the new arrivals. This clothing had previously been used by Chinese and Eurasian prisoners who had been transferred.

(h) Mail:

(1) Incoming was received sporadically, probably an average of once in 4 months. Mail would be received by the prisoners in camp and would be held by the interpreter, one Japanese named MACHETA. This individual would notify the prisoners that they had received mail. It was distributed at his discretion.

(2) Outgoing: Communication cards were allowed to be written on: Jan. 5, 1945, Mar. 5, 1945, Apr. 5, 1945, May 5, 1945, June 15, 1945 and July 15, 1945. The majority of these cards were received by the addressee after the surrender having been forwarded by American occupational forces.

(i) Work: Many men were required to work regardless of health as each contractor requested a certain number of men daily. If a man became too ill or weak to perform his work he was given the job of "tea boiler" and made tea on the job for the workers. The civilians, as a whole, were very considerate and at times let men rest at the rick of their necks.

The military guards in this camp were very rough on the prisoners. They invariably made their own rules at every change of the guard and would go out and look for someone to beat for infractions of rules that never existed officially.

(j) Treatment: - Was rather severe at this camp. The continuous "heckling" by the guards caused unimaginable hardships on the prisoners. They would, for no reason known to the prisoner, call him out of the barracks and beat him severely for being uncovered while asleep or for smoking while not sitting near a tin can or some other excuse. Each change of the guard brought new rules and excuses to beat. Many times men were taken out of their barracks in the middle of a cold winter night and forced to stand at attention in front of the guards for no apparent reason other than to amuse them. The general description of treatment could be boiled down to two words, "very severe". Justice was a forgotten word at Mitsushima.

(k) Pay: (1) OFFICERS: Pay for officers was 50 yen per month.

(2) Enlisted Men: Pay for Non-Coms was 15 sen per day, for privates 10 sen per day and for warrant officers

25 sen.

(l) Recreation: None.

(m) Religious Activities: Church services were occasionally allowed by the Chaplains attached to the camp but no area was allotted for that purpose. A memorial service was held on Nov. 28, 1944 in memory of the Americans who died at this camp. It was also a service for the opening of the camp. A Jap Christian Minister performed the ceremony and was followed by a British Medical Officer (Dr. Whitfield).

(n) Morale: Was very high throughout the years 1944 and 1945. This can be attributed to the fact that prisoners were able to steal and purchase newspapers and keep up on the advances of American forces.

5. FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT: A hand drawn fire wagon was available and was kept in camp near the Japanese headquarters. A fire drill was allowed on the average of once every 2 months. Buckets and water boxes were provided.

6. AIR RAID SHELTERS: An air raid shelter was built in 1945 to accommodate about 200 men. The Japanese compelled the prisoners to build it near the Jap headquarters. Also there was a spud cellar for that purpose. They were flimsily constructed jobs with only a few branches of trees thrown over an 8' hole and dirt thrown on top of the branches. They would have been perfect graves in the event of a bombing near that area.

7. Deaths: The following deaths occurred in 1944 and 1945:

Dec. 27, 1944:	Wilson, Harold and Westwood, Bernard	Privates, Royal British Army
Mar. 17, 1945:	Williams, Benjamin S	PVC, U.S.M.C.
Mar. 22, 1945:	Newstead, H.	Private, Royal British Army
Apr. 12, 1945:	Skubinna, Norman Johnny	PFC, U.S. Army
July 19, 1945:	Mitchell, A.E.	Capt., Royal British Army
July 26, 1945:	Atkins, Leslie M Jr.	Private, U.S.M.C.

8. Movements: On Sept. 4, 1945, after disarming the camp guards, the officers and men fell in and marched out of the camp along with the Japanese camp commander and proceeded to the railroad station, arriving there 1120 and train departed at 1204. They traveled through small villages while proceeding to the seacoast, arriving at TOYAHASHI at ARAIMACHI at 1630 (4:30 p.m.) and reported to Americans there.

The Mitsushima Prisoner of War Camp was cleared of all Allied prisoners at exactly 1112 on Sept. 4, 1945 and "Taps" was blown by a bugler with a bugle that had been used by the United States troops in the Philippines.

This report was made by Lt. Downey, Navy in May 1946, while on detail from New Orleans to the American Prisoner of War Information Bureau. Lt. Downey was a prisoner in this camp.