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### Sweet Dreams: An American POW Longs for Home

This is a story about survival, memory, and chocolate. Harold Baker, a twenty-year old corporal in the U.S. Army in December 1941, fought and surrendered to the Japanese in the Philippines, survived the Bataan Death March, and endured prisoner of war camps for three and a half years. When he came home in 1945 he carried with him a journal kept on precious bits of stolen paper that he had buried in the dirt under the barracks during inspections by Japanese guards. In it he kept lists of addresses, his friends, his ailments, his pay, things to buy and things to do when he got home, but most of all, he kept lists of food. Dominating these lists were chocolate bars, candies, pies, cakes, desserts, ice creams. For a prisoner of war, sweets, and especially chocolate, had many meanings—nourishment, family, love, the good life, the USA. Sweet dreams of a happy past and an abundant future had helped Harold Baker make it home.

Harold's record of sweets conjured up a place where children lingered at a drugstore candy counter mesmerized by the bright packaging of familiar brand names, where girlfriends expected gifts of assorted confections, and mothers baked treats in cheerful kitchens. Such images were enhanced by advertisements promising happiness

with descriptions of delicious sweet chocolate, caramel, peanuts, coconut, or mint flavors that melted in the mouth. Yet the abundance that Harold remembered ceased to exist in the United States shortly after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the same time his own troubles began. Stateside civilians learned to make do with less, especially less sugar, while the mobilized economy boomed, changing the country that Harold Baker returned to in 1945, carrying his careful lists.

### Looking for Adventure

Harold Baker was born and raised in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, a small town of about eight thousand people, the kind of place where “everybody knew everybody else.” The second of two sons of a prosperous lawyer, Harold lived with his family in a comfortable home near Glenbard High School. An average student, he devoted his attentions to theater productions and the football team. After high school, Harold, with his two friends, Joe Hancock and Ted Lindholm, took a job in Chicago with Butler Brothers, a wholesale company that provided cheap goods to dime stores. A child of the Depression, Harold valued a stable job, but longed for excitement. By the late summer of 1940, Europe was at war, with Nazi Germany controlling most of the continent. There were troubles in Asia as well, where the Japanese had invaded China and began eyeing territory in Southeast Asia. As it had done at the beginning of World War I, the United States opted for neutrality, but President Franklin D. Roosevelt was preparing the country for war. Harold knew the army would teach him useful skills, pay him a decent wage,

and give him the chance to travel beyond the Midwest. Even if that meant fighting in a war, he was game. Eager and confident, he enlisted at age nineteen.

Despite his dreams of the air corps, the army posted Harold to the 7<sup>th</sup> Division's 32<sup>nd</sup> infantry at Fort Ord, California, where he trained in heavy weapons. When one of his superiors realized that he had graduated from high school, Harold was assigned to Headquarters Detachment III, Army Corps as a clerk typist, enjoyable but not exciting work.

In July 1941, Harold requested assignment to the Philippines, which moved him from the infantry to the air corps, where he joined the 20<sup>th</sup> Headquarters Squadron at Nichols Field just outside the city of Manila. He loved the Philippines--"good food, good living, beautiful country" and he lived comfortably. His workday was split by a four-hour siesta, Filipino houseboys called "dog robbers" attended to domestic chores, and social opportunities abounded. He remembered a competition between army cooks and their pastry crews "so every Sunday you'd have a smorgasbord, you'd go from one barracks to another checking out their cook's goodies." The tasty food did not distract soldiers from speculating about the Japanese threat. Writing to a high school friend in November 1941, Harold predicted, "Something was going to break open in a month."

### Japanese Attack

On December 8<sup>th</sup> (December 7<sup>th</sup> on the other side of the International Dateline in the United States), Harold was operating the projector in the movie theater at Nichols, showing the 1939 blockbuster *Gone With the Wind*. When word came in that the

Japanese had bombed nearby Clark Field, he abruptly shut off the projector and helped evacuate the theater. For the next three weeks, Harold manned machine guns salvaged from damaged P-40's as Japanese planes bombed and strafed Nichols airfield every day. 'It was havoc,' he recalled. On December 21, Harold received orders to report to G-2, the intelligence division of the Far East Air Force Command, where he typed reports from returning American pilots. The Japanese attacks culminated in a major invasion on December 22 at Lingayen Gulf in northern Luzon. Two days later, the Japanese landed in south Luzon, at Lamon, threatening Manila Bay. G-2 evacuated Harold to Manila, and from there, he made his way to Mariveles on the Bataan peninsula. "So there I was," he recalled, "Christmas, standing alone on the dock, separated from my unit. It was a lonely, frightening time for me and everybody. Many had become separated--there was no organization of units at all--it just disintegrated. Twenty years old, separated, nowhere to go."

Almost the entire U.S. Armed Forces Far East (USAFFE) retreated to the few hundred square miles of the Bataan peninsula by early January 1942: about 78,000 soldiers, 6000 Filipino civilian army workers, and nearly 20,000 refugees. Surrounded by the sea on three sides and the Japanese on the fourth, it would have taken a miracle to free them. They fought for three months, retreating and running out of food and ammunition. "Our group had a supply of canned corned beef and stewed tomatoes," Harold remembered. "Two meals a day were provided for a while and you were on your own for the other. You couldn't hunt with ammunition due to the shortage, even though I carried a .45 then. So, we made traps and sling-shots and supplemented our diet that way." The Japanese dropped propaganda leaflets, encouraging the USAFFE to surrender, while

General Douglas MacArthur, who had retreated to Corregidor, reassured his men that reinforcements and supplies were on their way. Not everyone believed him. Two soldiers from the 194<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion composed new words to the tune of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” with the first line, “Dugout Doug MacArthur lies ashaking on the Rock.” Every verse and chorus ended, “And his troops go starving on.” The defining cry of the men on the peninsula was a poem written by United Press International war correspondent Frank Hewlett:

We’re the battling bastards of Bataan;  
No mama, no papa, no Uncle Sam;  
No aunts, no uncles, no nephews, no nieces;  
No pills, no planes, no artillery pieces;  
And nobody gives a damn.

When the Japanese halted to await reinforcements in early February, all the USAFFE could do was wait and deteriorate. Poor nutrition and lack of medicines led to illness, leaving approximately 24,000 men sick by the end of March 1942 with diarrhea, dysentery, malaria, scurvy, pellagra, and beriberi. American and Filipino soldiers were in no condition to launch a counterattack. On orders from Washington, General MacArthur evacuated to Australia, and General Jonathan Wainwright commanded the Bataan effort from Corregidor as conditions worsened. Soldiers learned to eat whatever meat became available---carabao (water buffalo), calesa ponies, mules, horses, iguana, pythons, rats, and monkeys. Tired, hungry, dispirited, the American soldiers craved sweets. They foraged for sugarcane in the fields, liberated blackstrap molasses from now idle sugar

mills, and offered each other outrageous sums of money for cans of sweetened condensed milk or candy bars.

### The Best-fed Troops

American G.I.s with chocolate is a familiar image, made especially so by war movies showing friendly soldiers tossing candy bars to children as they march through liberated European villages. Chocolate and marching men have been partners for a long time. When Spanish explorer Hernan Cortes first visited Mexico in 1519, his host, the Aztec ruler Montezuma, offered him a golden goblet of a chocolate beverage believed to be a gift from the god Quetzalcoatl. Cortes, the soldier, discovered a martial application. He wrote to King Charles I of Spain that chocolate “builds up resistance and fights fatigue. A cup of this precious drink permits a man to walk for a whole day without food.”

During the First World War, the U.S. government provided its troops with chocolate, a food high in calories, easily carried without perishing, and inexpensive. In World War II, the American candy industry sent seventy percent of its production to soldiers’ rations. The Hershey Company, with its factories running around the clock seven days a week, produced over one billion candy bars for American G.I.s.

For its men under fire, the U.S. military packaged C-rations, consisting of two cans containing meat, vegetables, instant coffee, sugar, and biscuits for each meal. For those soldiers cut off from supplies of C-rations, the military designed an emergency ration—a chocolate bar. To inhibit melting, it was made with oat flour and, unlike its World War I counterpart, had special packaging impermeable to gas attack. According to

its inventor, this bar, which contained twenty-four hundred calories to the pound, was “the nearest approach to straight fat (the most concentrated form of calories known) that we could make edible.” In 1942, the year Harold Baker found himself trapped on Bataan, the military replaced this emergency ration with the more sophisticated K-ration, which weighed only two and a half pounds and included the essential chocolate bar. The men who had to eat them detested such nutritional innovations as dehydrated soups and vegetables. Unaware of its future as a cultural icon, soldiers derided Spam as “ham that didn’t pass its physical.”

These combat privations contrasted sharply with what GIs ate during training and behind the front lines. The U.S. military made it a priority to provide their fighting men with a healthy, balanced diet including meat, vegetables, fruit, milk, and ice cream so that each soldier received all the necessary nutrients and at least five thousand calories a day. By 1941, military nutrition experts favored “master menus” that ensured that all soldiers ate the same no matter where they happened to be.

This new system meant that most servicemen, who had come of age during the hard times of the 1930s, ate more and better than they ever had before. The army quartermaster corps set up rules that required a soldier to eat his vegetables, deliberately served as a large portion of the meal, if he wanted more meat. A G. I. could have seconds or thirds of beef, the national favorite, only when he showed a “clean plate.” The men stationed at Randolph Field, Texas, in 1942 gained ten to twenty pounds a month. A look at an ordinary day’s menu explains why.

Breakfast: Assorted fruit, dry cereals, broiled bacon, two eggs, French toast and syrup, toast and butter, coffee or milk.

Dinner (midday): Hearts of celery, green olives, head of lettuce, roast turkey and cranberry jam, mashed potatoes, raisin dressing, giblet gravy, buttered jumbo asparagus tips, creamed cauliflower, lemon custard or ice cream, rolls and butter, layer cake, preserves, coffee or tea.

Supper: Fresh celery, smothered round steak, escalloped potatoes, frosted peas, strawberry ice cream, layer cake, bread and butter, coffee or milk.

For Harold Baker, who had savored army food in the Philippines in 1941, such a menu in 1942 was the stuff of fantasy and would be for three more years.

### Surrender and Death March

On April 3, 1942, the Japanese, now at full strength, launched a new offensive that the starving and disease-ridden American and Filipino troops on Bataan could not possibly withstand. Only about fifteen percent of the fighting force could walk a hundred yards while carrying a weapon. The soldiers destroyed everything that could be of use to the Japanese, shooting up their own tanks and blowing ammunition dumps. Harold Baker burned maps and reports because he knew that “it was just a matter of days.”

Yet MacArthur expected the men to fight until the very last man stood, orders that Wainwright obeyed by issuing a counterattack order on April 6. But Major General Edward P. King, directly in charge of the Luzon forces on Bataan, knew a counterattack would be suicidal; on April 9<sup>th</sup> he unconditionally surrendered to Colonel Motoo Nakayama, senior operations officer to General Masahura Homma. Tens of thousands of Americans and Filipinos then became prisoners of the Japanese.

General Homma resisted pressure from some senior officers, who tried to convince him that the emperor's policy was to kill all prisoners. He decided to move the POWs to Camp O'Donnell, located in central Luzon, calculating that the surrendered forces could make the march over a period of several days, with food stops along the way. He had not anticipated the large number of prisoners nor their debilitated physical condition, and he did not make allowances for it. The capitulated forces had little to prepare. Harold remembered receiving instructions to head for the Mariveles cut-off wearing a white handkerchief tied around his arm to signal surrender. Japanese soldiers stripped the men "of everything, canteens, mess kits, utensils, watches, rings, etc. Anyone caught with a ring or something in their mouth or hidden were beaten to death—so it was very brutal. You learned fast."

About 11,500 Americans and about 65,000 Filipinos, began their 60-odd mile trek in 90-degree weather on April 9, 1942. Optimistic hopes of being taken to a hospital ship or even being sent back home quickly faded as Japanese guards refused to provide water or rice during the first day's march. Harold put stones in his mouth, desperate to get moisture from any source. Some courageous Filipino civilians passed food and water to the prisoners even though they risked a beating or execution if the Japanese caught them.

The Japanese provided their prisoners salted, dry rice on the second day but still no water. Only that evening, when Harold's group was allowed to sleep near a stream, did he and the others manage to filch some drinking water. There the men talked about where they would rather be, most of them naming their favorite places to eat. When Harold heard someone mention the Tally-Ho restaurant, he hooked up with Emory Boardman of the 187<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, an old Glen Ellyn buddy. Talking about food, though, was the closest the prisoners would get to it. When a few of the men broke out of the line to grab some sugar cane, the Japanese shot them. The more fortunate picked up pieces of cane that had fallen off some hauling wagons and chewed all that they could, even the indigestible woody part. When they reached San Fernando, the Japanese lined up the prisoners and packed them into railroad boxcars, one hundred men per car. Everyone had to stand during the four-hour ride to Capas; some of the men died on their feet in those airless steel-sided cars. The survivors walked another ten kilometers to Camp O'Donnell.

This was the end of the line for the surviving prisoners. No one knows for certain how many died on the road from Bataan, probably between 500 and 1000 American soldiers and perhaps as many as 10,000 Filipino soldiers. Camp O'Donnell, a former firing range, was not welcoming. Harold, by now "weak as a baby," stared bleakly at a huge Nipa shack devoid of bunks or anything to make it livable. He hooked up with some men from Headquarters III Army Corps for companionship but did not cultivate any close friendships. He had learned his lesson during the death march: rely on yourself only. The Japanese bayoneted Emory Boardman the day after he and Harold shared the Tally-Ho reminiscences. From then on Harold decided to go it alone: "don't associate with

too many guys, you never know if you see them the next day or not. The friends weren't long lasting friends, I'll tell you that. Not through choice, but just through circumstance."

## Prison Camp

Over the next three weeks, prisoners were marched into the camp until tens of thousands swelled the barbed-wire confines. Conditions in the square-mile campground were appalling; it was as if the nightmare of Bataan had merely changed location. A shortage of water meant that prisoners could not quench their thirst, much less keep themselves or their living quarters clean. Food was meager and tasteless: lugao (a kind of rice gruel), rice, camote (Filipino sweet potato). Disease ran rampant, unchecked by medicine or doctors. Already weakened by hunger and illness from their months of retreat, one out of every six American soldiers who survived the death march perished in the first six weeks at Camp O'Donnell. One of those dead was Harold's friend Joe Hancock. By the time the Japanese closed the camp in 1942, about 1500 Americans and 50,000 Filipinos had died there.

Harold decided that if he was going to live, he had to leave O'Donnell, so he looked for a work detail. Work meant food, for the Japanese believed that only useful prisoners should be fed. In October 1942 the Japanese drew up official ration scales for their prisoners: working enlisted men received one pound, four ounces plus an additional seven ounces. (The U.S. Army provided the same enlisted men, during peacetime, with four pounds, seven ounces of food per day.) But this represented an official ration; prisoners usually received even less, barely enough to sustain an adult man. The luckiest

were the one or two men per hundred who worked in the cookhouse where it was possible to skim extra calories from the camp chow.

By May 12, 1942, Harold secured a position on an outside work detail when the Japanese recruited one hundred volunteers to go to Clark Field, located about seventy miles north of Manila, to repair and rebuild aircraft, buildings, and airstrips. Harold and several other prisoners had to share one wrench and use rocks in place of hammers. "We all were very weak from dysentery," Harold remembered. "We'd be working all the time, if we didn't they would hit us with pick handles." When the prisoners got soaked during the rainy season, they stayed wet; none of them had a change of clothes. Harold mended his clothes, using scrounged bits of thread or string, creating patches from already threadbare clothing. Lice, bed bugs, and other vermin nestled into the folds of the patched clothing, tormenting and bringing disease to the human owner.

In October 1942 the Japanese sent Harold to Hospital 1 at Cabanatuan, a prison camp located about ninety miles north of Manila, for treatment of a contagious skin disease called yaws. Harold suffered from dysentery; beriberi, a vitamin B deficiency, both the wet and dry varieties; scurvy, a vitamin C deficiency; and pellagra, caused by a lack of niacin. In addition, there was the problem of starvation. One prison camp doctor explained that POWs' bodies were like big houses in the wintertime without enough fuel to heat the entire house. Just as the homeowner might decide to close off the bedrooms so everyone could stay warm in the living room, the body was shutting down non-essential parts like hair and fingernails, sex organs, or the eyes so that the rest could keep functioning.

When Harold contracted diphtheria in the early summer of 1943 the Japanese moved him to the Zero Ward, assuming that he would die. Major Roy L. Bodine, Jr., a dentist, described how in the Zero Ward “the men were nearly all naked, having soiled and thrown away their clothing and blanket, as there were no means to wash them and no one to do it...A haze of giant green flies covered the area and crawled over the eyes and in and out of the mouths of the dying men.” Exhausted doctors had little in the way of equipment or medicine with which to aid the sick. Luckily for Harold, the Japanese had allowed a shipment of medicine into Cabanatuan in August, which consisted of quinine to combat malaria and an antitoxin that had proven effective in treating diphtheria.

Diphtheria caused a temporary partial blindness yet Harold scoured the floors of the ward looking for cigarette butts that he could trade for food. He got a break when a Colonel Cavendish appeared at his bedside, asking if Joel Baker was his father. Harold, unsure where this conversation was headed, cautiously replied yes. Cavendish then asked if Harold’s father was a Mason, and Harold said that he did not know, but would take the colonef’s word for it. Cavendish informed Harold that as the son of a Mason he was entitled to a small monthly allowance that would help him buy food. The Masons in Manila had somehow smuggled money into Cabanatuan, destined to ease the suffering of Masons and their relatives so Harold received P2.50 (Filipino pesos) per month to buy food from Filipino vendors.

As Harold regained his strength he looked around for other ways to make money for more food. He became a dog robber for the officers who did not have to work, earning twenty-five cents here and there for doing laundry, running errands, anything the officers needed. He bought raw peanuts to ease the symptoms of beriberi and bananas for

potassium. Prisoners constantly scrounged for food. Rice never satisfied the Americans, no matter how much of it they ate. They needed extras—~~meat~~ (even dog and rat) and sweets (sometimes resorting to toothpaste powder)-- which they referred to as quan, a variation of the Tagalog word “kuwan.” “Quan came to be the high point of life, according to writer Gavan Daws. ‘Quanning in private, alone or with close friends, was the warm heart of the ritual. For intensity, the only thing in life to compare with it was sex. And because sex was long gone, quanning turned into the very sex of existence.’”

Harold survived the Zero Ward and returned in the fall of 1943 to a regular work detail at Camp I in Cabanatuan. Life had improved in the camp since the Japanese provided reasonable rations of rice, and Americans with money purchased additional food. Enlisted men like Harold, however, who received about ten cents a day in wages, did not have as much money to spend on food as did the officers, but both grades of prisoners benefited from smuggling organized by two American women, Margaret Utinsky and Claire Phillips. These Manila-based civilians, whose husbands had died in Cabanatuan in 1942, managed to evade internment by the Japanese and organized smuggling networks responsible for bringing into the camp money, food, and medicine. With a little more food, some prisoners found the energy to organize entertainment. The Cabanatuan Cats imitated well-known orchestras and the Mighty Arts Players dramatized *Gone With the Wind*, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and *Frankenstein*.

If food fed the body, rumors fed the soul. The most tantalizing were speculations that the war would be over within thirty days, sixty days, ninety days, by Christmas, by the end of 43, the end of 44. Men would latch on to a rumor and ride it out, then grab on to the next one. Harold kept track of rumored gifts for the ‘Bataan Boys’ along with their

total estimated value of \$3302. No one knew how these rumors started, but a litany of consumer goods, most unavailable to civilians during the war, provided the imprisoned with a way of remembering the old pre-war life or the promise of an even better post-war one.

When the rumors of Red Cross packages reached Cabanatuan before Christmas 1942, men talked of nothing else for ten days. POW Andrew Carson recalled that, like little kids on Christmas Eve, they were filled with unbearable anticipation: “What was in them, what could it be?” After they arrived, the men carefully divided these treasures—Harold remembered two or sometimes even three men sharing one Red Cross package. Men often traded the items they received for others they wanted more. Carson swapped three packs of cigarettes for three chocolate bars, a box of prunes for a can of corned beef. He forced himself to make a chocolate bar last for days. When prisoner Bernard Fitzpatrick received a melted candy bar in his package, he ate it, paper wrapper and all.

The Japanese only allowed their prisoners to receive a few shipments of Red Cross packages. The first Asian shipment arrived in August 1942, containing over 22,000 food packages, along with drugs, clothing, shoes, toilet kits, soap, and cigarettes. In December a second, smaller shipment reached Manila. The eleven-pound food packages, consisting of goods from the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and South America, were handed out at Christmas 1942 and in January 1943. Although some of the packages’ contents had rotted or been damaged, these infusions of food, medicine, and vitamins improved the physical condition of the prisoners. On January 18, 1943 the men at Cabanatuan celebrated. For the first time, no one had died that day.

Along with food, Harold craved mental inspiration, so with the help of a lieutenant he recalled Rudyard Kipling's poem "If," which he had memorized as a boy, his father paying him ten cents for every correct line. Looking back Harold remembered, "There were days when you felt you couldn't think of anything to say—you felt you were going crazy—you had run out of things to talk about. We had talked ourselves out of cars, personal life, past history, games, movies, books—movies was a big topic. We would play word games—a game could go on for days. Talk about food seemed to be more at night when we had something on our stomachs." Food fantasies helped to pass the time, fantasies that usually involved something sweet. "I'll have a Hershey bar factory," one POW declared. "I'll have Hersheys all over me, I'll swim in them, they will cover my head, I'll step in them barefoot, sleep in them, and I'll eat a hundred per day after every meal." Discussions became so frustratingly detailed that some huts forbade talk about food, rules that were usually disregarded.

Harold Baker believed that it was dangerous to think about home and loved ones. He saw men, in agony because of hunger and disease, give up the fight to survive because of the pain of longing for home. Instead he made meticulous lists of the pies and cakes his mother had taught him to make back in Glen Ellyn. He remembered recipes for devil's food cake, mocha frosting, divinity fudge, chocolate macaroons, marshmallow peanut butter pie, and Milky Way pie. He recalled creaming the butter and sugar, mixing in the dry ingredients, beating the egg whites, melting the chocolate and baking the cake in a moderate oven. In recording his recipes, he found a way to think about home. As for his mother, we can only imagine what she thought when using her sugar ration to bake cakes and pies during the war.

## Prisoners in Japan

On August 24, 1944, while working at Clark Field as part of a six hundred-man crew that maintained airstrips, Harold received notice that he would be shipped to Japan the following day. This relocation put a new stress on the debilitated Americans.

Violence erupted among the prisoners as they attempted to collect from each other money and goods that had been traded. No one wanted to lose out on the deals they had made.

The POWS fittingly called their transports the "Hell Ships." The Japanese admitted that of the 50,000 Allied prisoners transported by ship, some 10,800 died at sea. On the *Noto Maru*, Harold recalled how "1035 [men] were put into the 40' x 60' hold. We couldn't lay down due to space, and had to sit back-to-back to support ourselves to fall asleep. If one could sleep. There was too much dysentery and vomiting and it was hotter than Hell down there. We had just one opening for air. We had just one pail to use for all of us and of course, it would slop over. There were some murders on that boat."

Harold's unmarked ship was shelled and torpedoed by American warships and submarines, but unloaded its prisoners at Moji before sinking. Harold and ninety-nine other men were taken to Mukaishima on the island of Shikoku, to Zentsuji Camp I. There the men were photographed, received their prisoner of war (*horyo*) numbers, which they had to learn to answer in Japanese. If a man escaped, the prisoners with the next ten numbers would be executed. The POWS called their group of ten "blood brothers."

Harold and the others moved scrap iron, plate steel, pipes, and cement, and unloaded and cleaned marine transport vessels. While working on the docks, he saw his

first American planes: “the air raids were increasing then the bombers started going over and that’s when our pulses started to quicken. God, what a thrill to see wave after wave of planes going over and our planes!”

As the Allies advanced, the Japanese continued beating their prisoners. Undeterred, Harold claimed proudly, “we were very accomplished thieves” and “we’d steal like hell.” He was punished on Christmas Eve 1944 because while unloading a ship, he and another man stole and drank a bottle of saki. Somewhat impaired, they attempted to smuggle some new potatoes into the camp. Harold recalled, “Both of us were smashed that saki is pretty potent. We couldn’t get up the gang plank without crawling on our hands and knees. The guards from camp were waiting for us when we got out and put us in the Box where it was dark and cold too low to stand up. At that point, we could care less. We had had our Christmas cheer and we had passed out some potatoes to the guys.”

In 1945, the survivors of Bataan began their fourth year of chronic starvation. POWs judged their conditions this way: “if all we talked about was food, we were starving. If all we talked about was home, we were being treated rough and our minds dwelled on happier times. If all we talked about was women, we were well fed and had a soft detail.” Harold never had a soft detail; in Japan, he and his fellow prisoners talked about food. Harold planned his menu for what he entitled “My Day,” featuring a breakfast of orange juice, cantaloupe, oatmeal porridge, cinnamon rolls, buckwheat cakes and pork sausage, coffee, eggnog, butter, and syrup, a dinner of shrimp cocktail, fruit salad, cream of mushroom soup, fried chicken, french fried potatoes, carrots and peas, ice cream cake roll, coffee, milk, sweet pickles, stuffed celery, bread, and rolls, followed by a supper of tomato juice, pineapple cream cheese salad, oyster stew, baked sugar cured ham, candied

sweet potatoes, baked Idaho potatoes, bread, rolls, nuts, mints, milk, hot fudge sundae, chocolate gingerbread cake, and coffee. Once he got started on “My Day,” he could not stop; he made up menus of equal length for four more “My Days.”

He traded recipes for dishes like apple snoodle and trifle with the English POWs in his camp. After sharing hours and hours of descriptions of food from home, the POWs promised to exchange specialties after the war. Harold’s specialty was usually candy. He planned to trade it for cheese from Evan Bunn of Green Bay, Wisconsin, for apples from Bill Gunip of Longview, Washington, and for Louisiana sweets from A. J. Stanley of Baton Rouge. To his English friends, Harold pledged some beer labels and candy to Edward “Wimpy” Wringe of Lincolnshire for a Dundee cake and scotch shortbread, a pumpkin pie to “Tiger” Workman of Glamorganshire for cheese and glazed fruits, and candy to John Shorrocks of Lancashire for raisin wine.

At the end of his address list, Harold noted Mr. Kaoru Fukuoka of Onomichi, a kind, retired shoe salesman who was Harold’s honcho or guard. They became “as friendly as one could,” teaching each other Japanese and English. When the war ended, Fukuoka presented Harold with two pairs of cufflinks for his father and brother and a Kabuki doll for his niece “as a farewell gesture.” In return, Harold planned to send him some candy. Harold never sent any of the items or contacted any of these people. When asked why, he simply shrugged. When it was over, it was over. These were “mental games you play with yourself.” “By the time we got home,” Harold remembered, “we were so dog gone relieved to get rid of all the past.”

During the war, commentators speculated that far-flung American G.I.s would develop a taste for foreign foods and bring back couscous from North Africa, curries

from India. The results were quite the contrary, claimed food historian Harvey Levenstein; rather, the military's production of "square meals" and insistence on "familiar food" contributed to a nationalization of American tastes. No grits for the Southerners, no sauerkraut and onions for the New Yorkers, menus consisted of "All American"---basically Midwestern---beef and potatoes, peas and carrots, salad, dessert, and milk. As a POW, Harold's food experiences during the war consisted of inadequate rice and memories. He already knew the basic meat and potatoes meal, which, along with his beloved shrimp, headlined his "My Day" menus. But in their long conversations POWs preserved regionalism in the detailed descriptions of specialties from home so Harold developed a reverence for food wherever it was from. On his "Things To Do Upon Return" list, he noted, "Set aside specific days to have solely foreign menus (Spanish, German, Italian, French, Chinese, Jewish, and Polish)."

Quantity was of the utmost importance. At the end of Harold's journal he kept a list of "Various Foodstuffs to Buy (To Be Kept Handy for Brief Snacks)," including: 10 cans sweetened powdered milk, 10 bars German's Bittersweet Chocolate, 4 pounds mixed nuts, 4 boxes California glazed fruits, 10 cans sweetened condensed milk, 4 boxes of graham crackers, 4 pounds of oatmeal cookies, 2 pounds of peanut butter, 1 jar of honey, an assortment of pastries and cupcakes, 1 sample box of Baker's products, and 1 sample box of Mar's products. Like Scarlett O'Hara, Harold was determined to never go hungry again.

During the spring of 1945, rumors circulated that the Germans had surrendered and that the Soviet Union was going to enter the war against Japan, which actually proved to be true, but Harold could not know that at the time. Yet somehow freedom was

in the air; both sides knew that the war was just about finished. On August 6, 1945, Harold “noticed an influx of people coming up the hill from the docks towards the hospital with bandages, etc., and we thought, hey, obviously burn cases, so we thought some incendiaries had been dropped in the area.” In fact, Hiroshima, located just across the bay, had been destroyed by the first atom bomb dropped on a human population. On August 9, when the Japanese guards halted their prisoners’ labor, Harold knew the war was over. Most camp commandants gave the official word on August 15—the emperor had announced the end of the war.

### Liberation and the Meaning of Chocolate

Liberation did not come immediately. The prisoners, Harold recalled, “set up our own rules and such.” On August 31, Harold remembered, “I took my first free walk out of the compound with another guy. We walked, smoked, a Japanese barber gave me a haircut—the guards were gone?” Navy planes dropped leaflets, advising that help was on the way, and also gum and cigarettes. Then Red Cross food supplies rained down—“all we could eat.” During the next three weeks, one thousand planes flew nine hundred missions over the approximately one hundred and fifty prisoner of war camps in Japan, China, Manchuria, Formosa, and Korea. They dropped about 4500 tons of supplies to the 35,000 military prisoners and the thousands of civilian ones, most of it canned food: beef stew, fruit cocktail, soup, butter, and jam, and of course, chocolate. Leaflets warned the newly liberated not to overeat but some could not stop themselves from gorging, like one

POW who gobbled down candy until “he could feel the sugar firing up his body, his blood coming to a roiling boil, and still he could not stop.”

Why is chocolate irresistible? According to nutrition researcher Michael Levine, chocolate’s “unique mixture of fat and sugar is pure heaven to our brains. Chemically speaking, chocolate really is the world’s perfect food.” It contains phenylalanine, a feel good amino acid, magnesium, which helps produce serotonin, caffeine, and theobromine, which like caffeine enhances alertness. Two additional chemicals in chocolate— anandamide and phenylethylamine (PEA)—arouse emotions and heighten physical sensation. PEA is linked to feelings of happiness; when people fall in love, their PEA level shoots up. The connection between chocolate and good feelings exists.

Along with the craving for food, especially the taste and texture of candy, Harold remembered that thoughts of candy bars had an amazing psychological effect: “You want to get back and get some of those goodies.” First, there was the bright wrapping designed to attract and please, a sign of a consumer-oriented world in which the individual seemed to matter. Second, there was the exercise of autonomy in those moments of anticipation before the candy counter when all that stood between you and a delicious mouthful was your own decision. Third, chocolate is a food with highly symbolic meanings, presented as a gift, a reward, or a gesture of love. For some, chocolate can serve as a substitute for love and a feeling of comfort; that is why many people consume sweet foods in times of stress. For the deprived POWs, memories of chocolate engaged all of the senses.

POWs lived in two worlds, the real world of their imprisoned bodies and the imagined world of their home. In prison they often practiced a self-imposed isolation, endured endless work, arbitrary beatings, sickness and starvation. They saw human

nature in the raw. Men cheated, stole, and betrayed each other, while learning that “courage is a shining thing when you see it.” As Harold put it when asked about thoughts of home and candy bars, “you know you’re grieving but you can hope.”

During September 1945, the liberated POWs, now classified as RAMPs (Recovered Allied Military Personnel), were moved to Yokohama where Harold ate as much of the Red Cross food that his shrunken stomach would allow. From there he flew on to Okinawa, then to Manila and Nichols Field. While in Manila, the POWs who had no money or clothes were provided with a check off list of items—three cans of beer a day, a couple of candy bars, cigarettes, toothpaste, shaving cream, etc.—to acquire for free at the canteen. Andrew Carson recalled that no one seemed to mind when they erased the clerk’s pencil mark and went back for another candy bar. He didn’t realize until later that the military deliberately stalled their departure, “hoping to fatten us up before letting the folks at home get a look at us.”

Harold traveled on the *U.S. Storm King* to San Francisco, docking on October 25, 1945. He spent a couple of days at Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco, where he and his fellow liberated prisoners remained sequestered. Doctors and military officials worried not only about communicable diseases, but also about the mental stability of these men, about how they would react to being home again. In their robes and slippers, Harold and four of his friends managed to slip out of the hospital one night and headed for a local tavern where they received free drinks from just about everyone in the place. They had a good time, really tying one on, until the MPs found them and escorted them back to the hospital.

On Harold's train ride from California to Mayo General Hospital in Galesburg, Illinois, "all the blinds were drawn, we couldn't look out or nobody could look in, we were truly ostracized." Anxious to see the country that they had missed for over three years, the liberated POWs were kept in seclusion by the authorities. According to Harold, the officials "didn't know what sort of minds we had." Although he ate nine meals a day and had milkshakes at least three times a day (bringing his weight up to two hundred and ten pounds), Harold could not get rid of his worms—and as long as he had worms he could not go home. Weary of hospitals, he traded stool samples with another patient and was finally cleared for release.

When Harold finally returned to Glen Ellyn in October, Harold began his rounds of visiting old friends, "catch-up time," he called it, "party, party." His hometown welcomed him back with a parade about a week after his arrival. For a time he dated a former high school classmate, now working as a reporter with the *Glen Ellyn News*, but he found casual conversation difficult, as if he had little in common with others. After years of repressing emotions, he found intimacy disconcerting. Paradoxically, he had no difficulties talking to groups of people about his wartime experiences—he felt more comfortable in speaking situations that were not one-on-one. He tried to live for the future, not dwell on the past.

Harold quickly returned to Butler Brothers, working in the purchasing department, but he left there at the end of March 1946 to take a job with Electro Galvanizing Company, starting a forty-year career in the metal finishing business. Two months later he was honorably discharged from the Air Force and he received back pay for the three and a half years of his imprisonment, minus the wages the Japanese had paid

him for his labor. That year Harold met Roberta Claffy, a graduate of MacMurray College; the couple married in 1947 and had one daughter, Diana. Harold has settled into retirement now, living with his wife in a small home in Bloomingdale—not far from Glen Ellyn—a home that strongly resembles the dream home he sketched during the war. When his grandson Matt visits, Harold insists he eat more food, because, as he explains, “He’s so thin. You should always have a little fat on your bones in case anything happens.”

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