



THE SCOOP:

LIFE IN SANTO TOMAS INTERNMENT CAMP

Rosemary didn't talk much about what she went through as a POW, but others have shared their experiences.

In June of 1945, American Red Cross worker Marie Adams made a report to the Surgeon General on conditions inside the Santo Tomas Internment Camp in the Philippines. Adams was held in the camp from May, 1942 to February, 1945. The following is an excerpt of that report:

"Among the minor irritants toward the last was the fact that we had to bow to every Jap we met. That seemed to get on people's nerves more than any other single thing...

During the last few months there was a tension among the internees that is almost indescribable. Irritability is one of the first symptoms of starvation, and certainly that symptom was marked among us. We were all cross, irritable, and edgy; we argued about things that were utterly insignificant. We were ready to claw each other's eyes out -- over nothing at all. We were hungry. We were starved. When I went to bed at night, I felt just on the verge of screaming. I ached to the ends of my fingers and toes, with the most horrible ache I had ever experienced. We were so thoroughly depleted that frequently I would sit on my bed and stare at the sink in the corner of the room, wondering whether it would be worth while to make the effort to get up and go over to it and wash my hands...

Everyone was stooped with fatigue. Many had horrible skin conditions. Tropical ulcers and boils were developing everywhere, and infections were on the increase."

Adams, a trained nurse, estimated that if they had not been liberated most internees would have been dead in a few weeks. Because of her exhausting work caring for others, she felt she would have died within four or five days.

Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration