

With hostilities in the Pacific over, the Third Fleet on Aug. 27, 1945, lay at anchor at Sagami Wan outside of Tokyo Bay.

Fleet Admiral Halsey, concerned with the fate of hundreds of allied POW's in the Tokyo area, ordered Flag Secretary Commander Harold Stassen to locate the POW camps and transfer the POW's to the fleet's hospital ships as soon as possible. "Operation Quick Mercy" was activated at 1400 hours.

A detachment of three doctors and eight pharmacist mates (of which I was one) from the SODak and one doctor and eight pharmacist mates from the USS San Juan boarded four LCV's and entered Tokyo Bay. The exact location of the POW camps were unknown, but there was an agreement with the Japanese to light a bonfire at the entrance to a canal which would guide us to a POW camp. No allied occupation forces had landed in this area so we had to rely on Japanese assistance in locating the camps.

At 1730 hours, halfway into Tokyo Bay, we spotted a fire at the entrance of a canal. We entered the canal and went about two miles up the Canal arriving at the first POW camp. As we disembarked, the POW's put us on their shoulders and carried us into the camp. Many cried; others touched us in disbelief that we were real. The POW's included me that had been captured at Bataan, Wake Island, Guam and other places.

We were informed of a POW hospital some five miles up the bay that needed our assistance more than this camp. A Japanese officer who spoke English volunteered to guide us through the dark waters of Tokyo Bay to the hospital. After an hour's travel we entered the canal. We disembarked and walked up a pitch dark road to the gates of the Shenagawa POW hospital. Two Japanese guards at the gates attempted to stop Commander Stassen from entering, but I recall he just pushed them aside and we entered this notorious "hell hole".

The conditions at Shenagawa were some of the most horrible sights that I have ever seen. The inhuman treatment of the POWs by the guards and medical personnel cannot be described as they were so terrible. For eight hours we carried the many stretcher cases to the LCV's which were then ferried out to the U.S.S. Benevolence which by this time had entered Tokyo Bay.

Many of the POWs died before we could evacuate them. The majority of the POWs were those captured at Singapore, Hong Kong, Borneo and survivors from the U.S.S. Houston. The condition of these unfortunate men was unbelievable, but those that survived were now free in the hands of the best medical treatment.

The following day we released hundreds of allied POWs camps in the Yokohama area. After 40 hours without sleep or food we were relieved and taken to the U.S.S. Benevolence for food and rest before returning to our ship.

I was proud to be part of this operation in the release of first POWs from their years of suffering at the hands of the enemy. This experience was one of many I had as a crew member of the SoDak.

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