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**2nd Lt. John H. Allen Jr.**

**Provisional Tank Group**

Born: 26 June 1917 – Minnesota

Parents: John H. Allen Sr. & Rose Bollman-Allen

Siblings: 1 brother

Home: 225 Charles Street – Saint Paul, Minnesota

Education:

– Central High School – St. Paul, Minnesota

– Class of 1935

– The University of Minnesota – Class of 1940 – Reserve Officers Training Corps

Inducted: U. S. Army – 1941 – Fort Snelling, Minnesota – inducted as an enlisted man

Training: Ft. Benning, Georgia

Units: 753rd Tank Battalion – 192nd Tank Battalion

– volunteered of had his name drawn to join the battalion at Camp Polk, Louisiana – Provisional Tank Group

– tank group’s communications officer

The reason for this move was an event that took place in the summer of 1941. A squadron of American fighters was flying over Lingayen Gulf when one of the pilots, whose plane was flying lower than the other planes, noticed something odd in the water. He took his plane down and identified a flagged buoy in the water and saw another in the distance. He came upon more flagged buoys that lined up – in a straight line – for 30 miles to the northwest, in the direction of a Japanese occupied island – hundreds of miles to the northwest – with a large radio transmitter. The squadron continued its flight plan and flew south to Mariveles and then returned to Clark Field. When the planes landed, it was too late to do anything that day.

The next day – when planes were sent to the area – the buoys had been picked up and a fishing boat which was seen making its way toward shore.

Since communication between the Air Corps and Navy was poor, nothing was done to intercept the boat. It was at that time the decision was made to build up the American military presence in the Philippines.

– ferried to island on U.S.A.T. General Frank M. Coxe

– received physicals from medical detachment – 25 October 1941 – 26 October 1941

– men with minor health issues held back and scheduled to rejoin the battalion at a later date – other men simply replaced

– Ft. McDowell, Angel Island

Overseas Duty:

– U.S.A.T. Gen. Hugh L. Scott – Boarded: San Francisco – Monday – 27 October 1941 – Sailed: same day

– Arrived: Honolulu, Hawaii – Sunday – 2 November 1941 – soldiers were given shore leave to see the sights

– Sailed: Tuesday – 4 November 1941 – joined by S.S. Louisville and S.S. President Calvin Coolidge

– smoke seen on horizon and Louisville intercepted the unknown ship – the ship was from a friendly country

– Sunday night – 9 November 1941 – crossed International Date Line – when they woke, it was Tuesday, 11  
 November 1942. Ships pass Japanese occupied island in total blackout

– Arrived: Guam – Sunday – 16 November 1942. Ships took on bananas, vegetables, coconuts, and water

– Sailed: Monday – 17 November 1942 – Arrived: Manila, Philippine Islands – Thursday – 20 November 1941

– soldiers bused to Ft. Stotsenburg – maintenance section remained at the pier to unload tanks

Stationed:

– Ft. Stotsenburg

– General Edward King met the soldiers when they arrived – apologized to soldiers about living conditions

– lived in tents along the main road between fort and Clark Airfield – made sure they all had Thanksgiving Dinner  
 before he had his dinner.

Provisional Tank Group – transferred to the tank group

Engagements:

– Battle of Luzon – 8 December 1941 – 6 January 1942

– Battle of Bataan – 7 January 1942 – 9 April 1942

– battlefield commission – 16 January 1942

Prisoner of War:

– 9 April 1942

– Death March

– Mariveles – POWs started the march at the southern tip of Bataan

– POWs ran past Japanese artillery firing at Corregidor – Americans on Corregidor returned fire

– San Fernando – POWs put into small wooden boxcars – each boxcar could hold eight horses or forty men

– 100 POWs packed into each car – POWs who died remained standing since they could not fall to the floors

– Capas – dead fell to the floor as living left boxcars – POWs walked last ten miles to Camp O’Donnell

Philippine Islands:

– Camp O’Donnell: – 1 April 1942 – unfinished Filipino training base Japanese put into use as a POW camp

– Japanese believed the camp could hold 15,000 to 20,000 POWs – POWs searched upon arrival at camp,

those found with Japanese money were accused of looting were sent to guardhouse. Over several days, gunshots heard southeast of the camp. POWs who had money on them had been executed

Japanese took away any extra clothing from POWs as they entered the camp and refused to return it since no water was available for wash clothing, the POWs threw soiled clothing away, clothing was taken from dead; few of the POWs in the camp hospital had clothing. POWs were not allowed to bathe - only one water spigot for the entire camp.

POWs waited in lines 2½ hours to 8 hours to get a drink - water frequently turned off by Japanese guards and the next man in line waited as long as 4 hours for the water to be turned on again. Mess kits could not be cleaned. POWs had to carry water 3 miles from a river to cook their meals. A second water spigot installed a week after POWs arrived. Slit trenches overflowed since many of the POWs had dysentery, flies were everywhere including in camp kitchens and food, the camp hospital had no water, soap, or disinfectant, the senior POW doctor wrote a list of medicines he wanted to treat the sick and was told by the camp commandant, Capt. Yoshio Tsuneyoshi, never to write another letter.

The ranking American officer was beaten with a broadsword after requesting medicine, additional food, and material  
 to repair the POW huts leaking roofs

– Tsuneyoshi said that all he wanted to know about the American POWs were their names and numbers when they  
 died – refused to allow a truckload of medicine sent by the Archbishop of Manila into the camp

– 95% of the medicine sent by Philippine Red Cross was taken by the Japanese for their own use

– POWs in the camp hospital lay on the floor elbow to elbow

– operations on POWs were performed with mess kit knives – only one medic out of six medics   
– assigned to care for 50 sick POWs in the hospital – was well enough to care for the sick

– as many as 50 POWs died each day – each morning dead were found everywhere in the camp and stacked up under the hospital – the ground under hospital was scrapped and covered with lime to clean it – the dead were moved to the cleaned area and the area where they had lain was scrapped and covered with lime usually not buried for two or three days.

Work details: if a POW could walk, he was sent out on a work detail

– POWs on burial detail often had dysentery and malaria – Japanese opened a new POW camp to lower death rate

– 1 June 1942 – POWs formed detachments of 100 men – POWs marched out the gate and marched toward Capas

– Filipino people gave POWs small bundles of food – the guards did not stop them

– At Capas, the POWs were put into steel boxcars and rode them to Manila – the train stopped at Calumpit and  
 switched onto the line to Cabanatuan

– POWs disembark the train at 6:00 P.M. and put into a schoolyard – fed rice and onion soup

Cabanatuan: – original name: Camp Panagatan

– Philippine Army Base built for 91st Philippine Army Division

– actually three camps

– Camp 1: POWs from Camp O’Donnell

– Camp 2: four miles away

– all POWs moved from there because of a lack of water

– later used for Naval POWs

– Camp 3: six miles from Camp 2

– POWs from Corregidor and from hospitals sent there

– POWs later moved to Camp 1

– Camp 1:

– work details sent out to cut wood for POW kitchens, plant rice, and farm

When POWs lined up for roll call, it was a common practice for Japanese guards, after the POWs lined up, to kick the

POWs in their shins with their hobnailed boots. They also were frequently hit with a pick handle, for no reason, as they counted off.

POWs on the rice planting detail were punished by having their faces pushed into the mud and stepped on to drive  
 them deeper into the mud – the POWs had to go into a shed to get the tools, as they came out, they were hit on their head – if the guards on the detail decided the POW wasn’t doing what he should be doing, he was beaten. Many POWs on details were able to smuggle in medicine, food, and tobacco into the camp. To prevent escapes, the POWs set up patrols along the camp’s fence – men who attempted to escape and caught were executed after being beaten – the other POWs were forced to watch the beatings.

– daily POW meal – 16 ounces of cooked rice, 4 ounces of vegetable oil, sweet potato or corn

– Barracks:

– each built to house 50 POWs – 60 to 120 POWs were housed in each barracks

– POWs slept on bamboo slats – many became sick from the lack of bedding and covers – no showers

Camp Hospital:

– 30 Wards – each ward could hold 40 men – frequently had 100 men in each – two tiers of bunks

– sickest POWs on the bottom tier – each POW had a 2 foot by 6-foot area to lie in – Zero Ward – given the name  
 because it had been missed when counting wards – became ward where those who were going to die were sent

– fenced off from other wards – Japanese guards would not go near it – POWs sent there had little to no chance of   
 surviving – many deaths caused by malnutrition – others became ill because of lack of bedding, covers, and  
 mosquito netting

Hell Ship:

– Clyde Maru

– Sailed: Manila – 23 July 1943 – Arrived: Santa Cruz, Zambales, Philippines – same day

– loaded manganese ore – remained in port for three days

– Sailed: 26 July 1943 – 100 POWs permitted on deck at a time from 6:00 AM to 4:00 PM

– Water: POWs issued one canteen cup of water every two days – 3 POWs had to share the cup

– they were so thirsty that some men drank urine – other men resorted to slashing veins and drinking blood

– killed each other for water

Arrived: Takao, Formosa – 28 July 1943

– Sailed: 5 August 1942 – at 8:00 AM – part of a nine-ship convoy – Arrived: Moji, Japan – 7 August 1943

– POWs lined up on the dock – 8 August 1943 – marched to rail station & boarded a train – 9:30 am, train departed

– two-day train trip – 7:30 PM – 10 August 1943 – arrived at Omuta, Kyushu

– POWs marched 18 miles – eighteen rode truck because they could not walk

Japan – Fukuoka #17

– POWs arrived – 10 August 1943 – the camp had a ten-foot high wooden fence around it

– three electrified wires topped the fence– 50 POWs assigned to each barracks – barracks 20’ Wide by 120’ long

– ten rooms in a barracks – four to six men assigned to each room

– Allen in charge of POW show troupe – imprisoned for ten days after a theater curtain was lost –  
 the curtain was never found

– John witnessed the execution of Pvt. Noah C. Heard, C Company, 194th Tank Battalion

– Camp Commandant, Lt. Kel Yuri, ordered execution – Heard had been caught stealing food

– Allen’s Account of execution:

“Yuri stood in front of Heard drawing his thumb along the blade of his sword. Then he put the sword in its scabbard but pushed Heard’s head back with the scabbard.”

– Allen stated it was at that point the Heard staggered as he was taken behind the commandant’s office.

“At the command of the Yuri, a Jap guard bayoneted Heard in the middle of his back. Heard grunted and as he rolled over, he screeched. A second Jap bayoneted Heard in the abdomen. Yuri and others examined the body. It was still twitching so another guard slashed Heard vertically across the throat. Other guards came out and slashed his abdomen to ribbons.”

2nd Hell Ship experience:

– Selected for transfer to Mukden, Manchuria – Unknown Interisland Steamer

– April 1945 – POWs informed they are to be transferred – taken by train from Omuta to Fukuoka

– boarded ship

POW Camp: – Korea – Fusan – POWs disembarked the ship and took a three-day train trip to Manchuria

– Arrived: Mukden, Manchuria – April 1945 – Manchuria – Mukden

– 29 May 1945 – POWs arrived – POWs lived in two-story brick barracks – divided into ten sections

– five sections on the first floor, and another five sections on the second floor

– each section divided into four double-decked sleeping bays – each bay slept, 8 men – 48 men slept in each section

– barracks infested with lice, bedbugs, and fleas – barracks had electricity and cold running water

– Meals: – Breakfast: cornmeal mush, beans, and a bun – Lunch: maize and beans – Dinner: beans and a bun

– most POWs who died in the camp died from malnutrition or related illnesses

Hospital:

– many of POWs who died in the camp died due to illnesses caused by malnutrition

– many of those who died; died from illnesses that could be treated – over 200 POWs died the first winter in the camp

– POWs who died during winter were stored in a building until the ground thawed and they could be buried

– Japanese doctor, Jiechi Kumashima, denied Red Cross medicine to the POWs

– overruled American doctors on who was ill – sick forced to work – later found guilty of war crimes and hanged

– Juro Oki, Japanese civilian doctor who smuggled medicine into the camp for POWs

– would have been shot if he had been caught

Punishment:

– POWs were beaten for no reason or for violating a rule – kicked, slapped, punched, hit with clubs, bamboo poles,  
 and shoe heals

– Eiichi Nada – born, raised, and educated in Berkley, California – considered the worse abuser of the POWs. He frequently beat POWs at morning assembly – when they fell to the ground he screamed at them “Get up, you  
yellow, white, son of a bitch!”

Work:

– POWs worked in a machine shop or lumber mill – machine shop never anything of use for the Japanese war effort

Note: Japanese doctor, Jiechi Kuwashima, asked the POWs, wounded from bombings, to write letters asking the Allies to stop the bombing of Mukden. The POWs did write the letters but told the Allies that they wouldn’t mind more bombings.

Extermination Order:

– The camp commander received orders to march the POWs into the forest and execute them 16 August 1945 – Four American OSS officers parachuted into camp and told the commander the war was over the team was held as POWs for one night and sent to Sian Camp this was the camp where high ranking officers were imprisoned

Liberated: 2 0 August 1945 – Russian Army

– B-29s appeared over the area where the POWs lit oil drums to signal planes with smoke

– the lead plane came down and saw the POWs – circle and dropped medical supplies, food, and clothing to POWs

– American planes dropped walkie-talkies to POWs – allowed POWs to talk to aircrews

POWs told the crews what they wanted – planes dropped them ice cream to now fiddle strings

POWs were taken by train to Darien, China, then taken by ship to Okinawa – flown to Philippine Islands – flown to Hickman Field, California

Letterman General Hospital – treated at Schick General Hospital – Clinton, Iowa – suffering from amoebic dysentery

Promoted: Captain

Note: Allen testified against Lt. Kel Yuroi, former Fukuoka #17 commandant

– Yuri defense was that Heard had signed a document that he should be executed if he committed another

crime. Yuri was sentenced to death

Discharged: 9 March 1948

Died: 30 January 1955

Buried: 7 February 1955 – Fort Snelling National Cemetery – Saint Paul, Minnesota – Plot: E Row: 0 Site: 186

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***Credit Jim Opolony: Battan Project: https://bataanproject.com/***