

Austin, Texas
August 15, 1945

Bataan Relief Organization
Office of the Secretary
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dear Sir:

We received our August 6th copy of the bulletin yesterday. My wife has been receiving this publication for over two years and it meant so much to her during the time I was in prison. She has fought tooth and nail for each program and piece of legislation advocated by the organization.

The information in your issues means more to me than most people could ever understand. I was with the 59th C.A. and surrendered on Ft. Drum (Manila Bay) with the fall of Corregidor. The Ft. Drum personnel was taken to WaWa about 30 miles south of Manila Bay and after two weeks was moved to Bilibid in Manila. Then in 5 or 6 days we were moved to Cabanatuan.

During the march from Cabanatuan to our prison, I met two New Mexico boys who later became my best friends. One was Capt. Frank Turner. He kept my mind off the march by describing how he, aided by friends, had built his home in New Mexico.

The other was Capt. Bill Foster of Deming, New Mexico. Everyone in old Cabanatuan will remember Bill as one of the most lovable, cheerful personalities in the prison. Bill and I lived together in the early days and were seldom separated. We lived together the last year and one half until the camp was broken up and Bill was shipped to Manila. to go to Japan. He suffered from pellagra and beri-beri almost as much as any one in that camp. Old rugged Bill lost about 160 pounds but he always smiled and joked and helped his comrades. He made an amazing recovery in 1944 and gained weight up to 154 pounds. Bill and I had one standing joke. We always said we liked that camp and we would just refuse to leave when the Americans came. We always said we would just stay on at the old home as caretakers and "yasimae" the Jap word for "take a rest".

Bill is just one of the hundreds of my dear friends who won't come back. A thousand memories like the one above are branded in my mind forever. This is the reason I could not laugh and shout and strew toilet paper up and down the avenue on "V-J Day*.

So, Bill won't come back to his mother, his little niece and Miss Fern. At least 10,000 Bills who fought and died together on Bataan and Corregidor won't come back. Bill's heroic efforts in leading a battalion of the glorious Filipino soldiers, starved, tattered and fever ridden in vicious counter attacks against the arrogant, well fed, well armed cream of the Japanese army has already been forgotten by 130 million Americans. In fact, it is my opinion that it was never even known by them.

I use the name of Bill Foster because he is the symbol to me of my comrades and your husbands, sons and loved ones. What were your Bill Fosters armed with? I would be a traitor to them if I did not tell you. The Enfield Rifle, you have to turn to your history books to look this up, was the predominate arm. Then we had some Stokes Mortars, veterans of World War I will help you with this one. The projectiles for these mortars were only about 20 years old and for some peculiar reason most of them would not explode, we had quite a few good artillery pieces. The fact that a large number of them were British, 1916, seventy-fives did not bother us. The hand grenades were just a little on the old side. The fact that they either would not explode or failed to explode in about five seconds (most of them could not make it much short of ten seconds) gave our boys lots of fun playing catch with the Japs. We had some good artillery on Corregidor. I had four 18-inch mortars, model 1896, and four of later model, 1908 to be exact. No small amount of our artillery powder on Corregidor was made in 1917 and 1919. The fact that the silk bag holding these charges had just about disintegrated did not bother us too much. I will never forget the anti-aircraft machine guns my battery was equipped with. The fact that they were all 30 caliber on 1918 mounts did not keep them from doing a good job. My boys either wired up the mounts with good old bailing wire or replaced the worst mounts with posts set in the ground. The fact that the "tables of equipment" stated that my battery was to be armed with 37 MM cannon and 50 caliber machine guns for use against enemy planes was a comforting thought.

I will always have a tender place in my heart for the only truck which the 59th regiment had.. It did, yeoman service 24 hours a day. It was made by Major Julian (RSO) and his men from salvage parts of a 1926 Cadillac car. Major Julian

would come grinning like a cowboy on that old wreck,
through the Jap fire to bring us supplies.

What did your Bill Foster eat? W don't have to go
into that, you know the answer, I will say that quite some
time before the war some of us who were officers in the
Harbor Defenses of Manila & Subic Bays worked through
channels to get the army to make vitamin and salt tablets
an item of issue to the troops. We did not get them but
were very happy to read in one of the service magazines
about August or September, 1941, that vitamin tablets would
made an item of issue in such localities as the War
Department deeciaed necessary. I believe Alaska, Iceland and
Greenland were mentioned,,

I, for one, believe that it is erroneous to place the blame
for our misfortunes on the War Department. Think rather of
a powerful, misguided "bunch of American pacifist voters
who elected narrow minded, short sighted men to power who
in turn fought every attempt to prepare our departments for
defense. These same people have now become great fighters
and flag wavers. It is to be regretted, that they could,
not have been with us to wave a moth eaten musket in
defense of their homes.

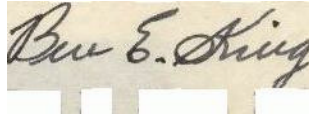
Of course I am just a small Reserve Officer in this great
nation of ours and my remarks and opinions carry no weight,
What I will say to you is that you may print this in full
if you desire. Every word of it is the careful truth, and,
I will back my statements personally. If the truth hurts,
it is just too bad. What I have personally gone through
with has taught me to able to stand against anything. This
also goes for my family.

My wife and I have written hundreds of letters to relatives
since I returned. We would have written more but my
notebooks were lost the night of January 30th, 1945 when I
was liberated by the Ranger raid at Cabanatuan,

I know that your facilities are limited, but will you please publish a complete casualty list of those who died in prison or were lost on prison ships at some future date? Also, those who are going to be liberated.

My thoughts are ever with the loved ones of my comrades. Enclosed is a contribution to assist you in your splendid efforts,

Very truly yours

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ben E. King". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured paper. The signature is centered horizontally and is the only handwritten element in the document.

Ben E. King, Major, CAC Unasgd
3210 Fairfax Walk

P.S. I will be in Santa Barbara, California from August 22nd to about September 1st for reassignment. Please change our address for the bulletin to 3210 Fairfax Walk, Austin, Texas.

cc - Mrs. Foster (Mother of Bill Foster)
Deming, New Mexico