

Samuel Robert Owens

from

Bilibid Hospital

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For ENGL 618: Research Methods in English

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## Introduction to the Series

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography were prepared by students in ENGL 618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English at Western Carolina University. The learning outcomes for this class include the following:

1. Conduct appropriate, effective, and ethical scholarship
  - a. Effectively find and use advanced research tools (handbooks, databases, guides, bibliographies, etc.) appropriate to a subject.
    - Students will be able to use a wide variety of such tools and evaluate those tools.
  - b. Find appropriate advanced research (print and electronic scholarship) and apply that research to specific disciplinary questions or issues.
    - Students will be able to find a variety of scholarship, evaluate both the appropriateness and rigor of that scholarship, and incorporate that scholarship correctly and effectively.
  - c. Develop accurate bibliographies and reference citations.
    - Students will be able to annotate, abstract, and cite materials following standard MLA format.
2. Understand the process by which the texts we use are made available.
  - Students will be able to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is presented as submitted by the students. While these students take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are always possible. As these students learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires checking of sources and corroboration by authoritative sources.

It is hoped that the transcription and annotation of WCU Special Collections materials will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, and other patrons and users of WCU's Special Collections materials.

## **Introduction**

The following pages are diary entries written by Samuel Robert Owens during a stay in hospital in Manila after twenty months of being a Prisoner of War. According to the *Sylva Herald Ruralite* from July 18th, 1945, the diary was found on Corregidor by the U.S. Navy after the island was liberated by U.S. Troops, and after Owens was transferred as a POW from the Philippines to Japan. The Navy found three entries and sent them home to his mother. The accompanying note the Navy sent spoke of hoping that all U.S. POWs would be liberated soon and that their country would not forget their great sacrifice.

The entries provide insight into the nature of day to day life as POW and detail the resourcefulness of the prisoners. Owens takes a positive view on his situation, believing that all he has learned through the experience will be useful in later life as well as make him appreciate the luxuries he experienced back home. Page B has some evidence of wartime censorship. The letter is torn at the top, and there is indistinguishable handwriting in red at the left-hand corner. It is, however, impossible to determine if the tearing is from censorship or the general tearing of the page from the notepad. Also on page B one phrase is marked though, though still legible, and is marked censored, the use of pen and a red pencil also indicates editing via a censor. The censorship practice used on this letter makes it difficult to pinpoint just who did the censoring, as a POW, Owens' writing would have been filtered through the Japanese military as well as the U.S. military. The common practice for U.S. censors was to cut out any offending material. However, nothing is cut out of the Owens letter, only marked though. The entries came into U.S.

hands after the war was over. Through both entries, the reader is given a true sense of Owens one desire, to be able to return home to the US.

**Editorial Notes:**

In transcribing the diary entries, attention was paid to keeping the diary entries in their truest and most accurate form. While line breaks were not taken into consideration, all other punctuation and spellings have been honored. Any obtrusive spelling errors that would affect readability and source accuracy have been noted in footnotes.

Diary Entry Side A:

S.R. Owens TM 1/C <sup>1</sup> U.S.Navy

Well I am here in Bilibid<sup>2</sup> in the hospital after being a prisoner of war twenty months and I'm still going strong, I never would have thought we would be here in this status this long because we have the richest and most productive nation in the world behind **us**<sup>3</sup>, but I expect to see them some day.

The Americans that I have come in contact with as prisoners of war have taught me much. I have learned to cook to sew my own clothes and many other things that I was dependent on someone else for. Some substitutes that I have used for common commodities have even amazed me.

This episode, I do believe, will help me in later life to appreciate the smaller things in life that I always took for granted before the war started.

Samuel Robert Owens

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<sup>1</sup> Torpedoman's Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class. As a Torpedoman's Mate.

<sup>2</sup> Bilibid, prison in the Philippines. Bilibid was used by the Japanese as a POW camp during their occupation of the Philippines. Known for its harsh conditions and overcrowding, Bilibid's conditions would not improve until 1945 and liberation by U.S. troops. (Defenders)

<sup>3</sup> "Us" is marked over in dark ink on the document. This may have been an edit by Owens himself as it is not indicative of censorship practices of the time.

Side B:

We were moved from the “Rock”<sup>1</sup> to a camp on Luzon<sup>2</sup> near Cabanatuan<sup>3</sup>, I stayed there two months a volunteered to go on a work detail, I was transported to another island, Palawan<sup>4</sup> where I stayed for one year and (15) fifteen days doing manual labor,

When I became sick I was moved to the hospital in Manila<sup>5</sup> where I am at present. ~~My greatest desire is to return to America!~~ CENSORED<sup>6</sup>

Samuel Robert Owens

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<sup>1</sup> The “Rock”, common Naval reference to Corregidor, the fortress island that guarded Manila Bay. Corregidor acted as the protective barrier for U.S. Troops from Japanese attacks during the four-month siege of the Philippines by the Japanese in early 1942. (Alexander)

<sup>2</sup> Luzon, the largest island in the Philippines. Luzon is home to Manila, the capital city.

<sup>3</sup> Cabanatuan, one of the largest POW camps in the Philippines. (Alexander)

<sup>4</sup> Palawan, Province of the Philippines.

<sup>5</sup> Manila, Capital City of the Philippines. Manila fell on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1942 to the Japanese. The Japanese were unopposed by U.S. Troops, as the U.S. considered Manilla Bay the more important stronghold in the Philippines. (Alexander)

<sup>6</sup>On the document this phrase is marked though but still legible. The word “CENSORED” is labeled next to it in capital letters. This practice does not follow guidelines for censorship of the day and may have been edited by Owens.

## Annotated Bibliography

Alexander, Irvin, and Dominic J. Caraccilo. *Surviving Bataan and beyond: Colonel Irvin Alexander's Odyssey as a Japanese Prisoner of War*. Stackpole, 2005, [proxy195.nclive.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=41945&site=ehost-live&scope=site](http://proxy195.nclive.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=41945&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

This text recounts the POW experience of Colonel Irvin Alexander, specifically details of camp life and the treatment of prisoners in Japanese POW camps in the Philippines.

“Defenders of the Philippine.” *Bilibid Prison*, [philippine-defenders.lib.wv.us/cgi-bin/search/fcp.pl?words=bilibid&d=%2Fht%2Fml%2Fbilibid\\_prison.html](http://philippine-defenders.lib.wv.us/cgi-bin/search/fcp.pl?words=bilibid&d=%2Fht%2Fml%2Fbilibid_prison.html).

Website describes the conditions and issues faced by soldiers imprisoned in Bilibid Prison during World War II.

“Military Ranks and Ratings Key.” *National Parks Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior, [www.nps.gov/valr/learn/historyculture/ratesandranks.htm](http://www.nps.gov/valr/learn/historyculture/ratesandranks.htm).

National park website that details the various ranks of officers and enlisted men in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

“Part of Diary of Jackson Soldier Found by Army.” *The Sylva Herald and Ruralite*, 18 July 1945, pp. 1–4.

Newspaper article from 1945 detailing how the army found part of Samuel Robert Owen’s diary from his time as a POW on Corregidor.