

War Era Story Project 2012

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Age: Not Given

The Ohio 37th Infantry Division liberated Manila and rescued 1,275 internees that had been prisoners of the Japanese for three years. There were 447 civilians consisting of men, women and children; among these were several missionaries. 828 internees were members of the United States armed forces. The rescue happened Feb. 5, 1945. Several soldiers that were rescued were survivors of the infamous Bataan Death March. They were so weak they had to be removed on stretchers. The prison was called the Bilibid Prison.

The rescue came just three days before they were to be executed by order from Tokyo, Japan. Bessie Crim, one of the missionaries born and raised in Logan County, Ohio, was the leader of the prisoners and was shown the telegram from Tokyo by the Japanese officer in charge of Bilibid Prison. I got to know Bessie Crim when she spent her last days living at the Brethren Home at Greenville, Ohio. Dora, my wife, and I attended Bessie's funeral. Bessie did not tell the other prisoners of their fate to be executed.

I served in the 37th Inf. Div. and got to talk to some of the civilian prisoners while they waited for army trucks to remove them from the combat zone. The 148th Regiment of the 37th Div. performed the rescue.