

RELIEF FOR AMERICANS IN PHILIPPINES

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The Gripsholm docked on the morning of December 1st one day ahead of schedule and by noon of the following day all the passengers were off. This was much quicker than the last time. By that time many of the repatriates were already flocking to our office, particularly those whose relatives were unable to meet them in New York. Almost all appeared remarkably well and seemed overjoyed to see so many familiar faces about. First news of our Committee and its work had reached them at Mornagao and later they had details when our special notice was posted on the bulletin board, for which arrangements had been made months ahead. All the Philippine Group were "tremendously thrilled" to learn of our existence and our work and as a result of this we have had their unselfish cooperation and assistance in compiling information in regard to individuals and conditions in Santo Tomas, Los Banos and Camp Holmes. A few of them worked as late as nearly two o'clock in the morning using our stenographic service in order to relay first hand information to relatives and friends in this country. Besides this they have taken precious time from family reunions and necessary rehabilitation to give us all aid possible. In spite of all their happiness in being free and home again they have the fate of those left behind very much at heart, and their one idea is to go to Washington and stress the vital need of further repatriation.

With all this splendid cooperation on their part we are now able to give a clearer picture of conditions in Santo Tomas, Los Banos and Camp Holmes.

Up to September, 1943, the combined report on Santo Tomas stresses the fact that most of the nearly four thousand internees were in excellent health and still displayed splendid morale and this after nearly two years of hardships and an unbalanced diet. They all agreed that time passed very swiftly because they were kept so very busy. This is by far the best news which has come out. However, they are now facing probably the severest test of all. The general food shortage is their most pressing problem and one which threatens to become worse as time goes on. The Red Cross supplies recently delivered at Manila should help the situation for the time being. Many of the internees have been able to augment their diet with provisions from the camp canteen supplied from the outside, such as vegetables, fruits and a few staples but these are now not only becoming scarce but more and more expensive. However, they still have meat three times a week. Sugar, which used to be very plentiful in the Philippines, has now to be severely rationed. Rice flour is substituted for wheat flour, which entirely disappeared, some time ago. Coconut milk or carabao milk is now in general use. Leather shoes are very scarce and costly and clothing and cloth severely rationed. Eight meters a year is allowed per person. For men one pair of long trousers and one shirt, or one pair of shorts and two shirts, or two pair of shorts and one shirt is the allowance.

For thousands to be living in such close quarters without a single epidemic is indeed a remarkable record and a great tribute to the physicians in charge of the health and sanitation of Santo Tomas, a University which was never designed for mass living. Illnesses which occur from time to time and which do exist are not considered above normal. The most astonishing report is that with 900 children interned there has never been a case of the usual children's diseases. In fact they are the healthiest inmates of the camp. Their diet is especially taken care of and they are given the precedence in whatever is obtainable; such as milk, eggs, and vegetables. The produce of the kitchen garden in Santo Tomas is reserved entirely for the hospital and the children. The milk allowance is 2 1/4 ounces of milk a day for a child up to 1 year, 12 ounces from one to 8 years, and 4 ounces from thereafter. Boys and girls are kept in excellent physical condition by supervised exercises and boxing was taught by a professional to the children of 5 years and up. Matches are frequently held with all the rules adhered to and participated in by the boys and girls with a great deal of enthusiasm, fighting to a finish and ending with childish and sportsman like hugs.

Movies for the adults are regularly shown but after spontaneous outbursts of applause for President Roosevelt by the Americans, and Mr. Churchill by the British, news films are not permitted but news of the outside world does trickle in by various means. Everyone is most hopeful as to the outcome of the war.

Dec. 1943

Relief for Americans
in the P.D.