



Behind the Sawali : Santo Tomas in cartoons, 1942-1945

Teedie Cowie Woodcock

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One hundred and thirty cartoons of day-to-day camp life drawn by a teenage girl during 37 months in a Japanese prison camp in Manila, Philippines. Teedie Cowie Woodcock crowded her cheerful little sketches on scraps of cheap paper and "bound" these pages into a booklet for a present for her mother on Christmas Day, 1944. They had come to the end of this bleakest of years and this was the only gift she had to give. Because the booklet was intended to lift her mother's spirits, none of the cartoons stress the dark side. Most are humorous. All are exquisitely expressive, the facial expressions and body language excellent. With this expanded reproduction of the original cartoon collection (supplemented by extensive footnotes and references to other sources), the author hopes to encourage many more people to acquaint themselves with this historically significant event and the courage of these American civilians trapped half a world away from home. Most Americans do not realize that Japanese planes attacked targets in the Philippines only ten hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Japanese troop landings on Philippine soil occurred two days later. Teedie's father was killed by the Japanese bombing of Manila December 24, 1941. He had been assigned to the Manila office of the US Coast and Geodetic Survey only months before. She and her mother were arrested January 9, 1942. By this time, thousands of American civilians had been herded into Santo Tomas where they were to remain for 37 months. Hundreds died there, most of malnutrition exacerbated conditions, many of actual starvation. Santo Tomas prison camp was liberated February 3, 1945 by units of the 1st Cavalry supported by elements of the 44th Tank Battalion who broke behind Japanese lines and crashed the gate of the prison. Meaningful. Instructive. A fine collection of WWII memorabilia.

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