
Re: Video call cut off - Continued

3 messages

Ruben Q. Yabut <rqy18011@netzero.net>
To: rachel.yabut3@gmail.com

Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 7:24 PM

(2nd Installment of Re: Video Call response)

The evacuation trip to Concepcion, Tarlac, was an overnight journey. I remember being jarred awake in the middle of the night because of the rough road. I can't remember how we got to it but I saw the old truck abandoned on the road between the town proper of Concepcion and the hacienda. A hacienda in Central Luzon is a large rice plantation with houses and storage structures in a compound isolated by bamboo and other trees, usually in the middle of rice paddies. This is where the owner and care takers of the hacienda lived. And this is where we wound up in, my mother, older brother Francisco, younger brothers Eduardo and Romeo and two year old sister Norma. My father was not with us and that is another long story. The other evacuees with us were my Uncle Tolume, his half white American wife Virginia and daughter Myrna. Because Aunt Virginia was an American mestiza, a troop of Japanese soldiers once came hunting for her that made us fled into the forest for a while.

We stayed in Concepcion until the Japanese Army secured most of Luzon. We could tell because the sound of fighting wound down. Artillery, machinegun and small arm fire diminished and went farther and farther away. Smoke billowing in the sky and fires in the distance died down. A semblance of peace descended in Luzon so we went back to the town of my birth. And so also the four war years under the occupation of the Japanese began. Four long years of deprivation. Scarce food because the Japanese Army has to be fed first. I remember drooling thinking of fried rice and sausage; of harvesting kangkong, a vegetable growing on ponds, boiling and salting them and eating them until I got sick from too much salt. It was a rough four years, no medical care, no dental care. no school.

(To be continued tomorrow)

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Tue, Jan 26, 2021 at 9:36 PM

(3rd Installment of Re: Video Call Cut Off)

Tarlac City must have sprung up because of a river running along its western side. The Tarlac River served as a drainage for the flood waters coming from the mountains during the rainy season. A concrete dike protects the city from the flood waters that receded to a stream during the dry season, leaving a large sandy basin where people did their laundry, swam, played and where a troubled Japanese fighter plane landed amid a lot of explosions and flares lighting the sky. The basin also served as a stage for public execution of suspected guerrillas by the Japanese. The dike was the balcony from where people watched the goings on in the basin. The dike also served as my shelter when sirens were sounded to warn of air raids and other emergencies. It was from where I watched the American fighter planes, Mustangs, strafed and exploded the ammunition train that supply the Japanese army. I remember, after the US army liberated Tarlac, picking up a sack full of lived ammo for their scrap value but a big bang set off by a guy tapping a tune, with a machinegun cartridge, on the concrete bench he was sitting on, killed the idea. My brother Ed and I discarded the ammo quickly.

Life was terrible in the middle of a war, but I was a child. In the middle of it all I lived. I ate when there was something to eat and played wherever and whenever.

(Will try to finish up tomorrow)

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Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 7:49 PM

(3rd Installment of Re: Video call cut off)

The end of World War II for the Philippines started when General McArthur returned in Leyte in 1944. American planes became common over the skies of Tarlac. I watched cargo planes, DC 47s, shot by Japanese fighters, some breaking in half before falling out of the sky. I remember an event where my brother Ed and I picked up some sugar canes from a plantation and started walking along the railroad tracks that led to home. Of course we had to carry the sugar canes on our shoulders. Suddenly, a B25 US bomber passed very low over us. I realized later that we must have looked, from high in the sky, like Japanese soldiers with rifles, the sugar canes, slung over our shoulders. I assumed the pilot saw enemy targets, dove for the kill but lucky us, saw children before firing. Such is life during a war. Danger all around.

IN the early months of 1945, the war ended for us in Tarlac. Food was plenty, some from left overs of US soldiers in temporary camps and others from ration stations. It took some waiting at the camps around mealtime to get left overs from the soldiers who over loaded their plates just to have some to give away to us. The ration stations gave away free canned goods. They stayed long after the camps moved on as the war front moved to new areas.

It was not until late in 1945 before the Philippines was liberated from the Japanese occupation. It was not long after that, at the urging of Uncles German and Abelardo that we moved to Manila. We stayed around the Sampaloc District of Manila. Life normalized, Schools opened in 1947. Because I was already 13 years old, in spite of having only 6 months of grade one schooling, I was placed in grade five. As a growing boy, I went through the phases when school is out. I got a shoe shine box and went around the neighborhood shining shoes. I had a newspaper route that brought the saddest part of my boyhood. One morning while waiting for the newspaper stock to come in, my brother Ed tried to pet a dog that happened to be rabid. My brother died of rabies even after 30 days of anti-rabies shots. He was my best buddy. I missed him so much I walked miles to the cemetery to visit his grave after I finished my paper route delivery.

When I got to high school, I worked in Uncle Abelardo's music record store. After graduation from high school, I took an exam for a scholarship in Australia. Someone was better

than me during the oral examination but the result of the exam gave me a civil service eligibility that landed me a position at the Post Office near my college school: FEATi. I stayed employed there until I joined the US Navy in October, 1955. My boyhood finally ended then.

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