

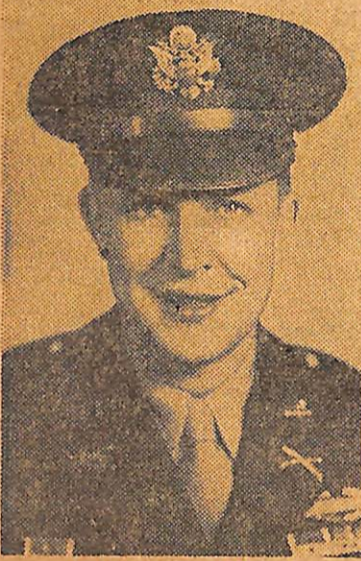
# The State

SECTION B, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1945

## Maj. Lawton, Who Spent Three Years as Jap Prisoner, Tells Of Hardships Enemy Imposed

After three and a half years of starvation in the hands of the Japanese, Maj. Manning R. Lawton of Garnett, has returned to the land of good food, and he has certainly been making the most of it, he says.

Major Lawton, who was captured by the Japanese during the fall of Bataan, experienced the torturous March of Death in addition to the



MAJ. M. R. LAWTON

many other brutal acts the enemy inflicted upon him and his companions while on the way to a permanent prison camp.

Telling of the long historic march, Major Lawton said that at one time they walked for 24 hours straight, stopping only for five or ten minute intervals. The greatest misery along the way was the lack of drinking water. Many were killed either by having a bayonet jabbed through them or being shot for breaking ranks to quench their thirst wherever water was available.

The native South Carolinian was in several Pacific island prisons before being shipped to Japan. In those on Luzon and Mindanao the captives were fed a standard diet of potato vines and rice. Occasionally they would be treated with fish and a very few times one beef was slaughtered for 2,000 men with the guards taking at least half of it for themselves.

During this time of neglect, starvation and poor living conditions, Major Lawton lost 60 pounds. In the prisons some of his companions were sometimes beaten severely for no reason at all. Usually, however, the major said, the guards would become angry and strike the prisoners for stealing food or not working as they were told. The principal delight of the tiny Japs was to humiliate the senior American officers before the junior officers and enlisted men. Nevertheless, rank made no difference when it came to work on the islands.

On September 21, 1944, the men saw the first American planes since they had been taken captive. Soon afterwards, the Japanese began evacuating the men to the islands of Japan. From the first of October through December they were in Manila where AAF planes bombed the beaches. Often the Japs closed the windows in order that the prisoners might not see the damage done by the United States planes.

It was during the last part of December that actual moving from the island to Japan began. The hold of a ship was jammed with 1,619 prisoners all of them near-

ly suffocating to death during the encounter. On the way across the ocean United States planes bombed the convoy, but never sunk the craft transporting the American prisoners.

Following that, the men were released on an island tennis court where they remained for a week broiling in the scorching sun and freezing during the tropic nights. Afterwards they traveled to northern Luzon and were moved onto a boat from which horses had just been taken. As it was growing colder, many men died and 20 or 30 were buried at sea each day.

The group reached Honshu island in Japan with only 250 of the original 1,619 left. Snow was on the ground and it was terrifically cold, said Major Lawton. Fortunately, they were allowed enough blankets, but there was only one charcoal stove for 100 men. There they were fed gruel and hot tea.

When they were to be moved on in April, a merciful Japanese officer refused to take them, demanding that they immediately be hospitalized. When the men were able to be transferred, they were split up with Major Lawton being sent to Jensen in Korea. On August 15, the group at Jensen heard a rumor that the war over, but they refused to believe it as so many had heard the same thing for three years. But two days later an official announcement was made and a Japanese officer surrendered to the senior officer among the prisoners, a Marine lieutenant colonel.

All were hilarious! They ransacked the warehouses and gorged themselves with all kinds of food. Several days afterward when some B-29's dropped bundles of food the men stuffed themselves with it disregarding the doctor's orders that they "take it easy" at first. Incidentally, the major remarked, the doctor couldn't resist the food, either.

Actual release came when the Seventh Division liberated those at Jensen and put them on a hospital boat bound for Manila. Major Lawton describes the meeting with his brother there as the "greatest treat of all." Capt. Paul S. Lawton had managed a delay to Japan when he heard of his brother's liberation several days earlier. When he finally arrived in San Francisco a cousin, Maj. Tom Lawton of Garnett flew him to Savannah, Ga., where he met his mother, Mrs. Brewton Lawton.

Major Lawton, who has been visiting the Foster Marshalls and Mrs. H. W. Richardson on Forest drive, wears a number of ribbons: the Purple Heart, Philippine Liberation with one star; American Defense, Asiatic-Pacific with two stars; Philippine Defense with one star, the Presidential Unit Citation with two oak leaf clusters, the Combat Infantryman's Badge in addition to the seven stripes he wears for service overseas.

"It's wonderful to be back.... everybody has been so nice," the major asserted yesterday. A Clemson alumnus, he left Thursday for a hospital in Pennsylvania before the Carolina-Clemson tilt which took place that afternoon. However, he did attend the Clemson alumni banquet Wednesday night at the Wade Hampton hotel.

## Kitty Adelle Funderburk

Mr. and Mrs. J. Baxter Funderburk of Columbia and Washington announce the birth of a daughter, Kitty Adelle, at the Columbia hospital Saturday, October 13. Mrs. Funderburk, before marriage, was Miss Delle Fair of Columbia.



MARTHA BRENT LAWTON

wedding is to take place

The engagement of Martha Brent Lawton and Jesse Bradley Cooper, son of Mrs. Bradley P. Cooper of Columbia, is announced by the bride-elect's parents, Col. and Mrs. William Henry Lawton of Waco, Texas. The wedding is to take place February 14 in the chapel at Hunter Air Force Base, Savannah, Ga.

COLUMBIA, S. C., SUNDAY



**SC MAN NAMED:** Col. Thomas L. Lawton, Jr., of Garnett, has been named Assistant to the Director of Procurement and Production, Warner Robins Air Material Area, at Robins Air Force Base, Ga. Colonel Lawton is the son of Thomas O. Lawton of Bluffton, and received his Bachelor of Science degree from Clemson College in 1939.

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