

PRISONERS OF WAR

The battle for Malaya is over,
For Singapore as well.
Those of us who survived the debacle,
Are condemned to a living hell.

After the fall of Singapore Island,
To Changi we were herded,
We marched through the streets of bodies
and rubble,
Singapore City – murdered.

The shells and bombs which caused the
wreckage,
Knew neither creed nor class,
From the cascaded ruins of bombed-out
buildings,
I retrieved ornaments of brass.

The ghecko lizard – a craftsman's pride,
A small engraved Indian chest,
And a weighty pentagon shaped object,
Obviously a crest.

During three months stay in Changi,
We existed on morale and rice,
At times and both seemed in short supply,
For defeat, this was part of the price.

On 15th May we were herded aboard
The "Tayshasi" and "Celebes Maru"
We knew not where we were going,
Couldn't guess what the Japs had in view.

We sailed up the Straits of Malacca,
And hove to off Sumatra one morn,
Took more aboard on the crowded ships
Then continued north ere the next dawn.

After several days slow sailing,
We were put ashore at three locations,
A thousand each at Victoria Point, Mergui,
Tavoy,
Our Burmese destinations.

The task each group had to perform,
Was to construct an aerodrome,
Tavoy was our location,
Oh! How we thought of home.

A few days after landing,
Eight Anti Tankers planned,
To make a break – try to escape,
From the Japs in this distant land.

W.O.II Quittenton and Sergeant Donaher,
Bombadiers Cumming, Emmett and Glover,
Gunners Jones, Reeves and Wilson,
Had hoped for jungle cover.

The Japanese camp Commander,
A strutting, arrogant sod,
After their re-capture passed his judgement,
Death – by firing squad.

In spite of pleading by officers
Brigadeer Varley and Colonel Anderson V.C.,
The execution day arrived,
And eventually would involve me.

We were extending a section of runaway,
When two additional guards appeared,
Marched sixteen of us off to the cemetery,
To dig graves for what we had feared.

A short time later sixteen armed guards
arrived,
With the Anti-Tankers, stern and steady,
As Anderson called out, "You're for it lads,"
Matt Quittenton answered, "We're ready."

They were each squatted down and tied to
stakes,
In front of the newly dug graves,
Ere the order was given for the squad to fire,
There was time for farewell waves.

As I was the only Anti tanker,
In the grave digging squad that day,
I had to identify each body,
Before it was put away.

'Twas a very sad day for our group at Tavoy,
And one I shall never forget,
I pray God hath mercy on their souls,
And has them by Him in Heaven yet.