SOCIAL SCIENCE DILIMAN (December 2010) **6:2**, 1-28.

COPING WITH WAR: KGST 'RADIO' AND OTHER MEDIA STRATEGIES OF CIVILIAN INTERNEES IN THE PHILIPPINES IN WORLD WAR II

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Abstract

The experience of the almost 4,000 internees, mostly American, at the Santo Tomas Internment Camp (University of Santo Tomas campus) shows how the media may help tide people through even the most difficult conditions. Thrown into confinement during the Second World War from January 1942 to February 1945, the internees built a community that struggled to sustain itself through self-government and the management of everyday necessities such as food, health and sanitation and other resources, as well as the performance of normal activities like educating the young and organizing recreational activities. Communication among the internees, the need for which was heightened by the conditions of war and the uncertainty brought about by incarceration, was aided by camp newspapers until paper became scarce in mid-1942. A makeshift radio station soon replaced the newspaper, which the internees fondly called KGST. While not a broadcast station in the technical sense of the word, it served the important function of keeping morale high until the internees were freed towards the end of the war.

Keywords: *Coping with war, media as coping strategy, KGST, camp newspapers, Little Theater Under the Stars*

Introduction: Surfacing material on the Santo Tomas Internment Camp (STIC)

There is quite a bit of literature on the experience of the Second World War in the Philippines[1], including accounts of the battles fought along ideological and cultural lines, such as in the media of newspapers, film and radio. However, recent investigations of archival materials have provided opportunities to discover previously unnoticed details that now bring to light a fresh insight into the ways people lived through war. Among such materials are the papers of Robert

ISSN 1655-1524 Print / ISSN 2012-0796 Online

Edgar Cecil dated 1942 to 1945.2 Moreover, survivors who were children at the time have kept enough memories and, in some cases, written materials from the period.[3]

The presence of clandestine radio receivers in the camp has been amply written about, and is not the subject of this paper. Rather, this article looks at the particular experience of the civilian internees inside the Santo Tomas Internment Camp (STIC) during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines[4], and focuses on the ways the internees imaginatively created their own media as a coping strategy while enduring incarceration. Almost all of the internees, at some point numbering almost 4,000 in the more than three years they were forced to live together, were American civilians of varied backgrounds living in the Philippines under American colonial rule. Confined by the Japanese Military Administration within the walls of the University of Santo Tomas, the internees attempted to re-create the society they knew outside the walls by establishing mirrors of institutions such as church, school, government, economic structure and media. These institutions provided the bond that kept the internee society cohesive while forced to suffer the restrictive confines of the camp.

The focus of interest is the media produced and circulated within the camp, particularly the makeshift radio station "KGST". The media referred to did not fit the classic definition of the media during the period, such as newspapers and radio broadcasting, which, before the war, were already produced using sophisticated technology and distributed widely to hundreds of thousands of readers and listeners. The newspapers produced by the Santo Tomas internees relied for their technical production on the rudimentary capabilities of a mimeograph machine while the broadcast system, which internees came to refer to as "radio", complete with the call letters KGST, was but a public address (PA) system. But the media men and women among the internees produced their newspapers and radio programs to function as media, with the intent and the effect of circulating among the internee population information and entertainment that became crucial to their survival, employing whatever technology was available to approximate mass-circulated media.

The presence of professional media workers among the internees made possible the efficient management of the campus newspapers and the broadcast station, as well as the staging of plays and vaudeville shows and the screening of movies. According to Sascha Jean Jansen (personal e-mail, August 19, 2006), among these media workers were Russell Brines, an Associated Press correspondent; Carl Mydans, a *Life* magazine photojournalist; Bert Silen, station manager of the pre-war KZRH; and news announcer Don Bell, who used his real name Clarence Beliel in the camp to hide his radio identity as he heard that

the Japanese military administration was looking for him. Beliel was also with pre-war KZRH and is remembered for announcing the first Japanese military attack on the Philippines on December 8, 1941. Brines edited a newspaper and a magazine in the camp, while Silen edited another newspaper. Beliel was involved in the running of the two newspapers and was also one of the announcers of the camp broadcast station.

Among the other media professionals in camp were Hal Bowie and Al Naftaly, both of pre-war KZIB. Dave Harvey, whose real name was David Harvey MacTurk, produced, directed, wrote and emceed the stage productions. Harvey was also a radioman before the war. Bessie Hacket of the pre-war *Manila Bulletin* and *New York Times* correspondent Ford Wilkins helped with the campus newspapers, according to Curtis Brooks (personal e-mail, September 4, 2006). Professional radio engineer Earl Hornbostel was among the first of the camp engineers to set up the PA system, which was subsequently referred to as the "broadcast system". Among the professional performers were radioman Don Rutter and singer Elena Cotterman (Norman, 1999, p.149). Artist-architect James Stuart drew all of the editorial cartoons in the STIC newspaper *Internews;* they illustrate how well the internees coped with their situation, with a rather large dose of good humor, despite their deprivations (Figures 1-3). There were also a few dozen men and women who were not media or entertainment professionals, but rose to the occasion when the opportunity presented itself.

While references are made to established sources, this paper draws from the STIC materials that are to be found in the collection of Robert Edgar Cecil found in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., composed of 3,000 items dated 1942 to 1945; the American Historical Collection at the Ateneo de Manila University; and the Archives in the University of the Philippines Main Library. Robert Edgar Cecil was an American businessman in the Philippines when he was caught in Manila by the Second World War. He was among the thousands of largely American civilians interned by the Japanese forces at the Santo Tomas Internment Camp in Manila during the occupation. As soon as the Japanese entered Manila at the beginning of 1942, non-Filipino enemy civilians were ordered to register, were detained upon registration, and were subsequently held captive in internment camps. The University of Santo Tomas was transformed into such a camp. Cecil's papers consist of manuscripts, typed and near-print copies of minutes of meetings, reports of committees, notices and orders, camp publications, rules and regulations, financial reports, studies of food and nutrition, organizational charts, memoranda and other material relating to the conduct of the camp. Also in

the collection are radio scripts presumably aired on KGST. Cecil was interned in Santo Tomas from January 1942 until May 1943, after which he was transferred to another civilian internment camp in Los Baños. The bulk of his papers, however, is concerned with the camp at Santo Tomas.

The American Historical Collection at the Ateneo de Manila University is, next to the holdings of the US Library of Congress, the largest collection of materials on Americans in the Philippines and the relations between the two countries. It contains extensive records of the internment of American and allied citizens, such as the British and the Dutch, at Santo Tomas and Los Baños. Copies of the Santo Tomas manuscripts, bound in four volumes, are also kept at the University of the Philippines. This paper also relied on the recollections of surviving STIC internees who were children and young teenagers during the war.

Internee self-government

Under Japanese authority, the internees established a form of self-government operated by an Executive Committee. Cecil served as secretary of this committee as well as the head of the committee on sanitation and health in the camp government at some point. The historical accounts of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during the Second World War tell us about the brutality, torture and death suffered by Filipino and American soldiers in military camps. However, in civilian camps such as the one established in the campus of the University of Santo Tomas, where thousands of non-military foreign nationals were confined, the Japanese were less malevolent and more indifferent, at least in the beginning, unless one tried to escape from the camp, in which case one was doomed to execution (Hartendorp, 1964, pp.39-43; Stevens, 1946, pp.386-387). Almost as soon as the camp was established on January 4, 1942, the Japanese commandant of the camp ordered the first group of internees to set up their own administration to manage the camp's day-to-day affairs, including funds from the Red Cross meant to sustain the daily necessities of the internees.

Two committees were organized–the advisory and the executive committees.[5] The executive committee set up subcommittees on administration, essential services and social services, under which were more committees. Under the subcommittee on administration were sub-subcommittees on discipline, census, work assignment, public relations, information, censorship, suggestions, vegetable garden, roll call, treasurer, and messenger service. Under the subcommittee on essential services were smaller committees on sanitation and health, hospital, building and construction, electrical, and fire prevention. Under

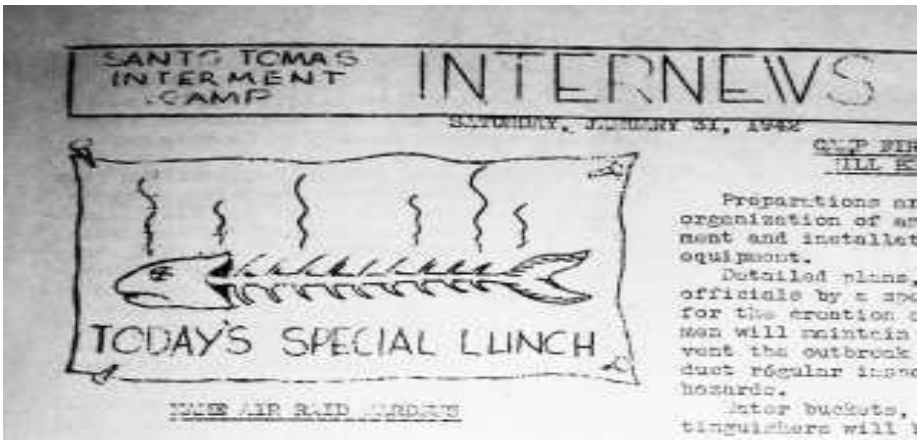
the subcommittee on social services were more committees, such as on release and welfare, education, recreation, religion, *Internews* or the camp newspaper, entertainment, library, indigent relief, youth advisors, and lost and found In other words, the internees put in place a government that may be seen as a scaled-down model of the American bureaucracy (a replication of which had earlier been established in the Philippines under American colonial rule), albeit a bureaucracy that operated only within the confines of the internment camp and circumscribed by the Japanese commandant.

The community forged inside the camp may have been contrived as a result of the Japanese occupation. Indeed, the fact that the executive committee was not an elected one was a source of discomfort for some internees who would have been more cooperative had their leaders been democratically chosen. But the rapidly increasing numbers of internees especially in the early part of 1942 and the dire effects of captivity and uncertainty suddenly shared by all the internees, regardless of their social stature before the war, encouraged team spirit and produced a social structure that functioned and depended on the relative cohesiveness of a society (Hartendorp, 1964, pp.53-73). The committee structures were later amended as the requirements of an evolving society inside the camp changed, but its members remained more or less integrated into a community, even if more out of necessity. Subsequently, vacancies in committees were filled through democratic elections.

Socio-cultural organization

As could be expected of a community of individuals whose common culture and ideology encourage a capitalist socio-economic structure, the entrepreneurial spirit was alive inside the camp. Some internees made and sold goods such as processed food and recycled clothes, and offered services such as hairdressing and building construction. A chemist found a way to make lipstick, which she retailed, while someone – and this may sound bizarre – rented out condoms. Someone else appropriated the landing between flights of stairs, hung sheets around it and rented the space to 'lovelorn couples' (Angus Lorenzen, n.d., Chap. 15, personal e-mail, September 11, 2006; Norman, 1999, p.146; McCallus, 1999, p. 26-27).

One internee survivor wrote that apart from the scarcity of food and medicine, the biggest problem in the camp was boredom. However, she added that work was the best antidote (Norman, 1999, p.149). Everyone had a duty and a role to perform, be it in the kitchen, in the vegetable gardens, in the toilets, in the school set up for the children internees, or in one of the services


SANTO TOMAS INTERMENT CAMP

INTERNEWS

TODAY'S SPECIAL LUNCH

Figure 1. (*Internews*, January 31, 1942, p. 1)

Figure 2. (*Internews*, February 21, 1942, p. 1)

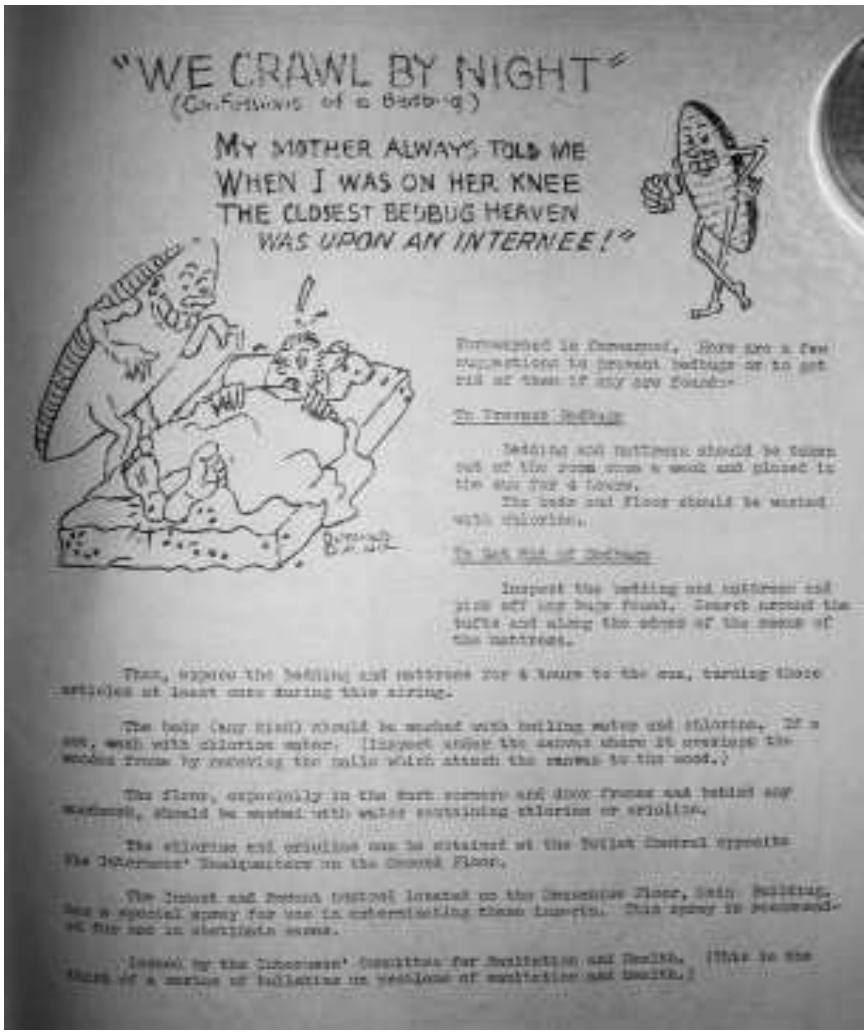


Figure 3. A Campus Health loose leaf illustrates concerns with health and sanitation (no date, probably between March and June 1942).

managed by the various subcommittees. Within the restrictive confines of STIC, the internees struggled to maintain normal activities like school, sports and recreation, reflected in the cartoons on camp publications (Figures 4, 5 and 6). The presence of at least 23 primary, intermediate and high school teachers made possible the setting up of a school for around 600 children while the internment of clergymen assured the camp of religious services and Bible classes. Athletic teams were put together and games held, such as in baseball, softball, soccer, basketball, boxing and hockey as well as board games like chess and card games such as bridge. There were golf and calisthenics lessons

as well as lessons in arts and crafts, languages, music appreciation, typing and shorthand. With the aid of a deck of cards, one internee served as the camp's fortune-teller (Norman, 1999, pp.149-150; *Internews,* 1942, January-June).

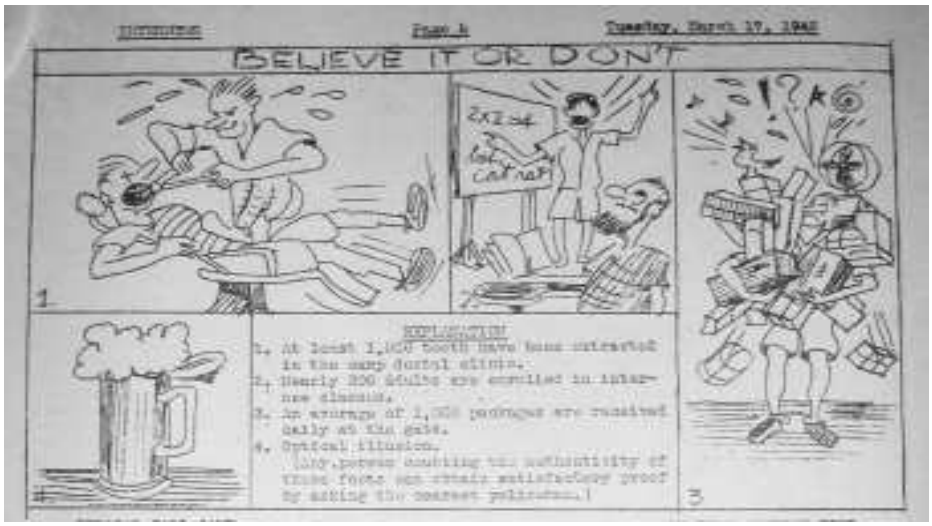


Figure 4. (*Internews*, March 17, 1942, p.2)

Dances were held; choral singing groups were practiced and performed; and vaudeville shows were staged, made possible by the internment of some professional singers, dancers, musicians, actors, emcees and an assortment of aspiring performers. Among the latter were imitators of various sounds and a sword swallower who may have improvised a sword for the in-camp performances given that deadly weapons were obviously strictly prohibited. One of these shows, which inspired a number of internees to construct a wooden stage and improvise theater lights after having appreciated some performances on tabletops, was called "Theater Under the Stars", and was later expanded to "Little Theater Under the Stars". It may have been produced almost every week during the first year of the internment camp in 1942. It was so popular that when the entertainment committee attempted to cut the productions down to twice monthly, they were faced with considerable protests from the internees (Santo Tomas General Committee, April 1942).

Some internees built a large outdoor movie screen in the plaza in front of the Main Building, which later also served as the stage of the Little Theater Under the Stars. Towards the end of the internees' first year of confinement,

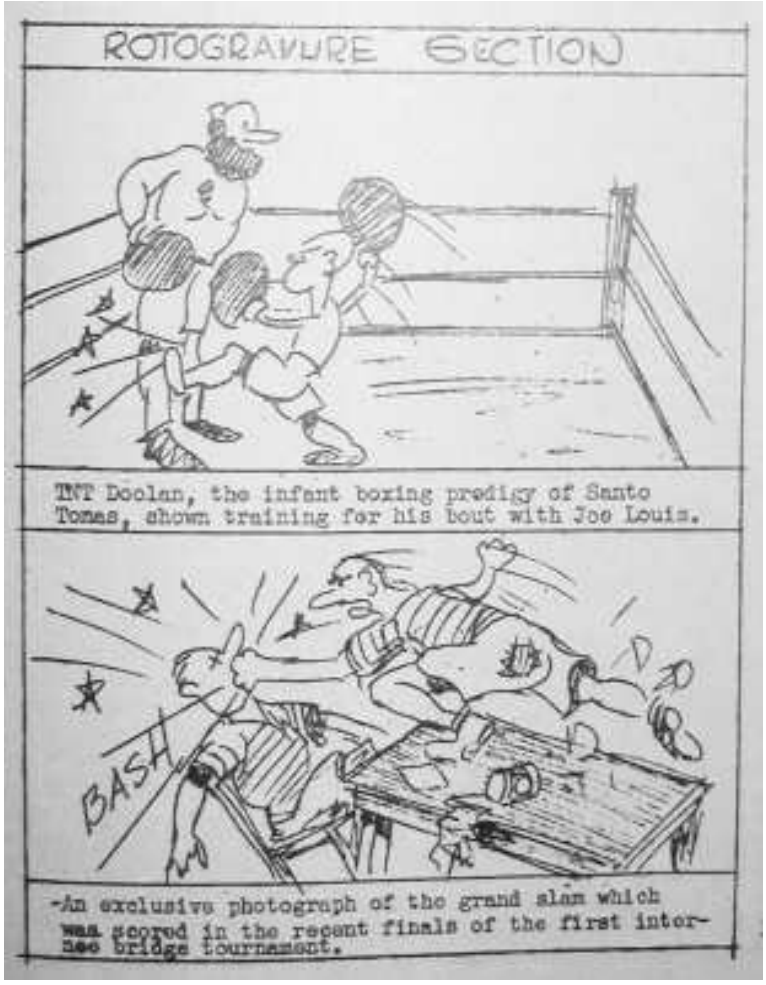


Figure 5. (*Internews*, April 14, 1942, p. 22)

on December 23, 1942, the first motion pictures were shown. Two short films containing Japanese propaganda were shown first, followed by a movie titled *The Feminine Touch*. It was not particularly regarded as a work of art, but the internees were hungry for the familiar images of Hollywood, so many appreciated the show (Hartendorp, 1964, p.106). Subsequent film screenings included 1930s films such as *The Student Prince* and those starring Shirley Temple, the Marx Brothers, and Abbott and Costello, as well as Disney cartoons and song-and-dance movies of the time. The movies were considered a real treat, especially by the children, such that the internees endured delays for changing the reels of film on the only projector available and for re-threading the film when it broke (Lorenzen, n.d., Chap.15, personal e-mail, September 11, 2006).

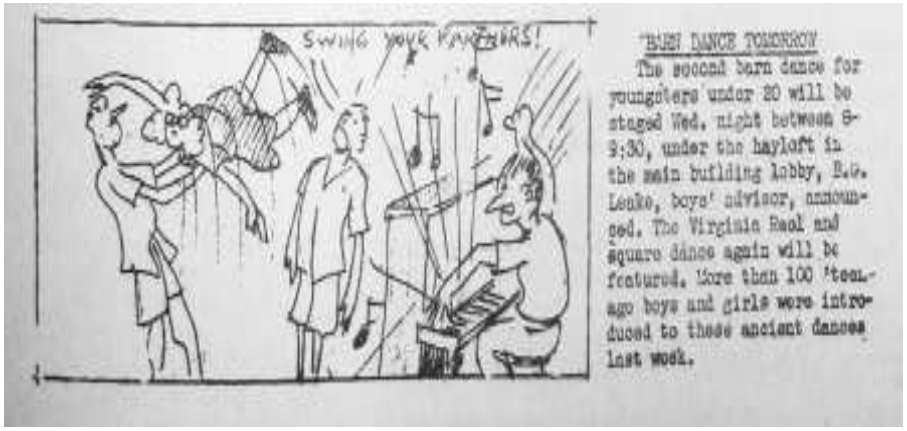


Figure 6. (*Internews*, March 10, 1942, p.1)

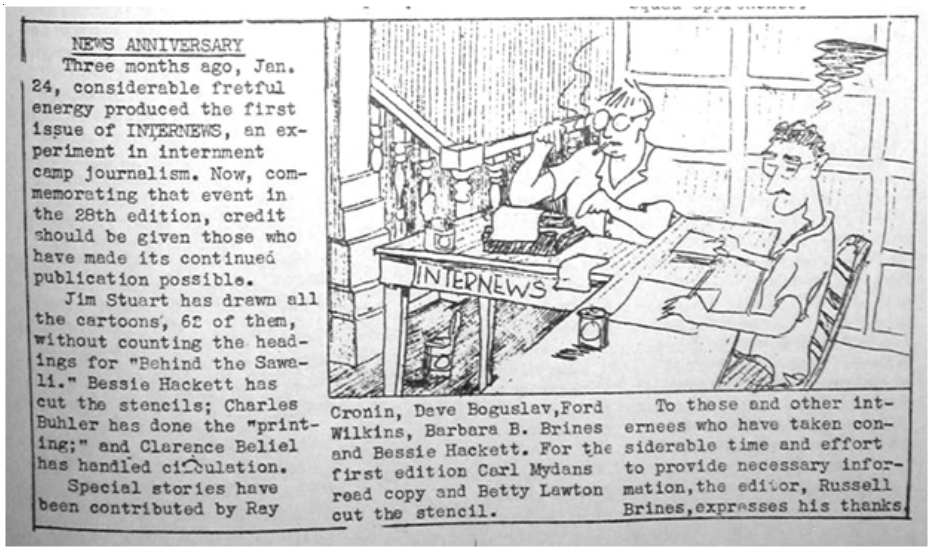
Camp newspapers

On January 24, 1942, less than three weeks after the internment camp was established, the first issue of *Internews* was published. It was a two-page back-to-back mimeographed publication on legal-sized newsprint. The demand for information was so great and took a considerable amount of time and energy of the executive committee that it decided that a newspaper was the best way to disseminate information quickly and efficiently and to avoid the circulation of rumors. Moreover, the unelected executive committee was conscious of the need to gain the cooperation of the internees, and the publication of a newspaper was viewed as an appropriate method (Brines, 1944, p.145; Hartendorp, 1964, p.12).

In the first issue of *Internews* were stories about the establishment of the internment camp, the organization of the camp government and one about the newspaper itself, in which editor-in-chief Russell Brines explained its purpose:

> This little sheet is intended primarily to supply internees with news of their internal government and to report negotiations between camp officials and Japanese authorities. Announcements published in *Internews* will be official. Rules and regulations will be explained, when clarification is needed.
>
> Beyond that, this newspaper will attempt to mirror a fragment of the daily life within the Santo Tomas camp. It is not concerned with external affairs. But the activities of internees, from baseball to church, are news within the scope of this journalistic effort. *(Internews*, January 24, 1942, p.1)

On its initial issue, *Internews* immediately established the safe boundary of the world it would concern itself with. While the Japanese at this point did not censor the newspaper, the editors were careful not to displease the Japanese for fear of provoking the latter's wrath that may be turned on the internee population (White, 1942). The article then solicited reports of activities from the leaders of the various committees. Because of the limited supply of paper, only two copies were distributed to each room" (*Internews*, January 24, 1942, p.1). As it promised, *Internews* put out stories about camp activities, announcements, a regular editorial column titled "Behind the Sawali" and even editorial cartoons and advertisements. The editorial cartoons drawn by Jim Stuart illustrate how well the internees coped with their situation, with a rather large dose of good humor. The paper was issued thrice a week in the beginning, then twice weekly from February until May 1942, then less often as paper shortage became more acute. It appears that *Internews* stopped publication in September 1942, with its last issue a one-page edition dated September 1, 1942.



NEWS ANNIVERSARY

Three months ago, Jan. 24, considerable fretful energy produced the first issue of INTERNEWS, an experiment in internment camp journalism. Now, commemorating that event in the 28th edition, credit should be given those who have made its continued publication possible.

Jim Stuart has drawn all the cartoons, 62 of them, without counting the headings for "Behind the Sawali." Bessie Hackett has cut the stencils; Charles Buhler has done the "printing;" and Clarence Beliel has handled circulation.

Special stories have been contributed by Ray Cronin, Dave Boguslav, Ford Wilkins, Barbara B. Brines and Bessie Hackett. For the first edition Carl Mydans read copy and Betty Lawton cut the stencil.

To these and other internees who have taken considerable time and effort to provide necessary information, the editor, Russell Brines, expresses his thanks.

Figure 7. *Internews* editor Russel Brines thanks the camp newspaper staff on the April 25, 1942 issue of the camp newspaper (p.2).

There was another camp newspaper called *Campus Health* published by the health and sanitation committee. Edited by Bert Silen and Clarence Beliel, *Campus Health* had the same back-to-back two-page mimeographed format. It came out every Friday from March to early June 1942, with at least 14 issues. As its name implies, the newspaper brought to light the executive committee's concern for issues that had an impact on the health of the internees, given the state of inadequate nutrition, cramped quarters, insufficient toilet and bath

facilities, scarce medical resources and the presence of vermin such as bedbugs, flies, mosquitoes and rats (*Campus Health*, March-June 1942).

Both *Internews* and *Campus Health* were official publications of the executive committee, and were distributed for free. There was another publication, which was an entrepreneurial project of Brines and Stuart. Like *Internews* and *Campus Health*, it was mimeographed on newsprint. However, it was folded over to pocketbook size, had as many as 24 pages at the peak of its short life, and was sold for 25 centavos as a monthly magazine called *Internitis*. It contained cartoons, short stories, poetry, and feature articles, all about camp life. Producers of the various products and services provided inside the camp advertised in the magazine (Brines, 1944, p.153).

In September 1942, after three issues of *Internitis*, Brines and Stuart joined a group of internees, including Mydans and his wife, whom the Japanese allowed to return to Shanghai and other parts of Northern China, where they formerly resided before they got caught on assignment in Manila when the Japanese took over the city. Brines and Stuart sold the magazine to Dave Harvey, who continued publication until no more paper could be purchased by the end of 1942 (Hartendorp, 1964, p.80).

Meanwhile, Silen and Beliel revived the *Internews* and renamed it *STIC Gazette*. However, the shortage of paper forced the *STIC Gazette* to fold up after its January 22, 1943 issue.

Campus "radio"

In March 1942, a music committee was appointed to arrange for the broadcasting of recorded music twice daily through a public address system. A PA system is an electronic communications system that amplifies speech and music to make it audible to people in a large area with the aid of loudspeakers. It started as an informal activity of a group of internees in the early weeks of 1942 to organize a turntable and loudspeakers in the open ground in front of the main building and play music every day. When the music committee was formalized, the operation expanded until those involved were given a room to shield them and their equipment from the fickle weather.

It should be pointed out that the growing number and complexity of the equipment available to the music committee was made possible by the Filipino friends of one of these internees, radio engineer Earl Hornbostel. His friends brought more loudspeakers, turntables and microphones into the camp for the use of the broadcast system, such that it progressed into a professional

radio studio, with only a broad-scale radio transmitter missing. Nevertheless, the sound was engineered so well that it flooded the front part of the campus and was faintly heard in the rear side of the camp. Internees listened outdoors, perched on benches or on the ground, when the weather was good, and indoors in the rainy season (Stevens, 1946, pp.195-199).

The presentations, made possible by borrowing music records from the internees and from their Filipino friends who brought their own records into camp, began with light classical and symphonic music while the music committee solicited suggestions from internees. The committee was initially headed by Geoffrey Morrison, a British merchant. Its members were Pomponette Francisco, Johanna Elvira Gebhardt, described in the archival sources as a housewife, and Cortland de Linder, who was in the shipping business before the war. A Mr. A.B. Collette, who owned the first set of equipment, operated the amplifier (*Campus Health*, 13 March 1942, p. 2). The committee eventually built a music library of 3,000 records (Stevens, 1946, p.197; Holter, 1945, p.5).

Three weeks later, in early April 1942, almost 1,000 internees had expressed their music preferences through a survey conducted by radioman Don Rutter, which resulted in a programming mix of light classical music such as those of Gilbert and Sullivan, Victor Herbert, and Strauss; popular hits from fast fox-trots to romantic waltzes; and "heavy" classics including Beethoven, Bach, Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, Mozart, Debussy, Chopin and Mendelssohn (*Internews*, 4 April 1942, p.2; STIC, 4 January 1942 - 3 February 1945, Vols. II & IV). The daily programs were presented from 9:45-11 a.m. and 6:15-7:30 p.m. On some days, programs were also broadcast from 8-9 p.m. It appears that the composition of the music committee had changed at this point, with Adolph Claud Brunner, an engineer turned salesman, as chairman. The members were Lucian Loring Rocke, a manager; Philip Durkee Carman, a real estate agent; Bert Silen; and A.B. Collette. Cortland de Linder was now called program director (*Internews*, 4 April 1942, p. 2, STIC, 4 January 1942 - 3 February 1945, Vols. II & IV).

The broadcasts must have gained quite a following from the internees, with an audience estimated at around 2,000 every night ("Campus Health Takes to the Air," 1942), or more than half of the camp population of around 3,200 in 1942, which rose to almost 4,000 in 1944 (Lorenzen, n.d., Chap. 15, personal e-mail, September 11, 2006). Those who preferred classical music complained when at one point there appeared to be more popular music being aired, particularly jazz (Santo Tomas General Committee, April 1942). In response, the music committee reserved Sunday evening broadcasts for classical music as it continued to receive suggestions for future programs (*Internews*, April 21,

1942, p.2). By mid-May 1942, another survey had been conducted and as a result, the music committee announced a new schedule for the evening broadcast, which by this time had been rescheduled to 7:15-9 p.m. The Sunday evening program, which aired classical music, was called "Appreciation Night". The Monday program was titled "Make-Believe Ballroom Time", which implies that ballroom dance music was played; on Tuesdays, it was concert music called "Memory Lane"; on Wednesdays, "Folk Music and Waltz Time"; on Thursdays, "A Night at the Opera"; and on Fridays, musical comedies and dance music. On Saturday nights when there were no stage plays or vaudeville (or what the internees called "floor shows"), or the more formally called "Little Theater Under the Stars", the program called "Saturday Night Jamboree" was aired, which, judging by its name and pre-war radio conventions, must have been a program of lively popular music (*Internews*, May 16, 1942, p.1).

One may notice that titles had by this time been given to what were soon called programs rather than simply record or phonograph music played and amplified for everyone's pleasure.

In a statement through the *Internews*, music committee chair Adolph Claud Brunner expressed appreciation to A.B. Collette for the use of the latter's amplifying equipment and to internees whose loan of records or labor had made the regular programs possible. Brunner said the committee required 9 pesos and 65 centavos (P9.65) to pay for the lumber used for the new loudspeaker frame and other improvements in the broadcast system. He asked that donations be given to those in charge of the equipment during the airing of the programs (*Internews*, April 21, 1942, p.2). It is not clear whether the donations were collected, but the effort demonstrated that the broadcast operation was becoming more structured.

Camp newspapers go on air

In the regular meeting of the executive committee on May 23, 1942, it was agreed that the PA system would be used for airing announcements that were deemed important for the internees to hear (Santo Tomas General Committee, May 1942) Until this time, the camp newspapers *Internews* and *Campus Health*, and later the *STIC Gazette*, served as the main means of communicating information and instructions to the internees. But paper stock was becoming scarce, so the executive committee must have felt more acutely the necessity of finding alternative means of disseminating information to the internees. Broadcast scripts, while also requiring paper, needed as few as only one copy, which was the announcer's copy, while the camp newspapers must have required a print run of a few hundred copies per issue.

On June 26, 1942, *Campus Health* was aired rather than published. The program was called "Campus Health Newspaper of the Air". For a few minutes, announcer Hal Bowie broke into the regular music program and read the usual news about health and sanitation issues in the internment camp. He also explained that until the shortage of paper eased up, the newspaper would go on the air every Friday evening. Moreover, Bowie announced that *Internews* would also soon be on the air ("Campus Health takes to the air", June-December 1942). The absence of any trace of any further issues of the camp newspapers as well as *Internitis* after January 1943 may mean that they were unable to publish again. The radio scripts in Cecil's papers and in the Ateneo and UP collections, and the accounts of the internment camp survivors show that the camp broadcast system, which was already in place airing music programs, became a substitute for the newspapers.

The "Campus Health Newspaper of the Air" became a regular Friday evening program. Towards the end of Bowie's spiel on July 24, 1942, he announced that beginning the following evening at 8 p.m., listeners would hear important notices from time to time through the program. Such notices included changes in curfew and roll call, lists of names of people who were required to report for various duties, information that was to be reported to camp committees, reductions in rations, and others (A. Lorenzen, personal e-mail, August 17, 2006). This may have signaled the growing role of the broadcast system in keeping the camp community informed in the absence of the newspapers. There were no scripts among Cecil's papers that would prove that *Internews* actually went on the air as a radio version, but a review of the broadcast scripts indicates that its usual contents were integrated in the radio programs, such as various instructions to the internees, announcements of activities and events, and news about camp life. Even the "Little Theater Under the Stars" began airing in 1943, starting with a program on the first anniversary of the camp on January 4, 1943 (Stevens, 1946).

KGST

It is not certain exactly when the broadcast system earned its call letters KGST. The practice of combining letters and sometimes numbers to identify radio stations on the air had already been established internationally at the time. Called "call letters", this system of combinations remains in use today. Some of the early stations in the United States had three call letters instead of the now more common four. In 1912, the London International Radiotelegraph Conference – later to become the International Telecommunications Union or ITU – assigned initial call letters to particular countries. The letters W, K, N and much of the A series were assigned to the United States. When commercial

broadcasting began in the 1920s in the United States, all broadcast radio stations west of the Mississippi river were assigned the initial call letter K, while those east of the river, the call letter W (Sterling & Kittross, 1978, pp.10-11). As a colony of the United States and reckoned as located west of the Mississippi, Philippine radio stations adopted the call letters KZ, the same initial call letters used by radio stations in Hawaii. Radio operators then and now have selected the other call letters in the block to stand for someone's name initials, a city's motto or nickname, etc. (Enriquez, 2008, p.40).

Thus, it may be inferred that the ST in KGST must have stood for Santo Tomas. However, it is noticeable that the call letters begin with KG rather than KZ. It is possible that the G in KGST was inspired by KGEI, the call letters of a shortwave station in San Francisco, California, which was owned and operated before the war by General Electric International; hence, the call letters KGEI. KGEI beamed its signals to Asia across the Pacific ocean to promote the GE brand name in electric appliances and other electronic products. The U.S. military took over this station in September 1941 to air counter-propaganda against the Japanese (Winter, 1994, pp.15-50). When the Japanese took over the Philippines, they made it illegal to listen to shortwave radio precisely to control information. However, there were countless shortwave radio receivers secretly kept by many people in the country, including at least one in the internment camp operated clandestinely by the internees.

The scripts in Cecil's papers as well as in the Ateneo and UP collections must have been incomplete compilations and, unfortunately, some of the extant scripts were typed on paper that has now deteriorated such that it is difficult to read. It is therefore difficult to surmise exactly when the PA system came to be referred to by call letters. However, the call letters KGST must have already been in circulation among the internees by December 1942. The script prepared for the Christmas Eve program in 1942 referred to KGST and implied that it was the carrying station of the program. The script included a parody of the poem *T'was the Night Before Christmas* by Clement Moore, presumably written by Clarence Beliel:

Good evening to you and attention now please,
While we read these announcements to all Internees…
It's the night before Christmas, so be of good cheer,
The finest of all our great seasons is here.
Let nothing prevent our observance of this,
The season of good will, of cheer and of bliss.
There may be no Christmas tree for us to trim,
There may be no money to buy gifts for them,

And water replaces good punch for our Skoals…
And nothing to find in our stockings but holes.
Tomorrow there may be no turkey to eat,
No puddings or pies; just *talinum* and meat.
No chances for carolling from house to house…
No houses for silence including the mouse.
We think of our friends who are far from us now,
And wonder if they are enabled, somehow,

To celebrate, too, this one shining Day…
Yes, we long for our friends, who are far, far away,
And we hope that they, too, wherever they are,
May be filled with the spirit of Christmas, afar…
Our hopes for our loved ones, our dreams for tomorrow,
Must fill all our hearts, leaving no place for sorrow.
The sadness and darkness of this long, dull year,
Will pass. And tomorrow, why, Christmas is here!

No stockings to fill, and no candles to light?
Well, turn on your smiles, let your spirits be bright,
We're all here together; so, three thousand strong,
Let our voices be raised in one great Christmas song.
The season of gladness and good will is here…
To all, Merry Christmas… and a Happy New Year…
Tonight, Dickens' story is read once again,
Then we sing Christmas carols, and all please join in.

Nine-thirty's the time when all the crowds roll
On down to the game in our *talinum* Bowl.
The Packers and Bears are all set for the game
That will bring one of them victory and fame.
The game will be broadcast by KGST
So you can all hear; though some cannot see.
Then we shift to the Annex; that's at about three,
When the children go wild with laughter and glee

As Santa Claus visits and, under the tree,
Gives presents to children – and ice cream, maybe.
Tomorrow at seven, a special event,
When two hours of fun and enjoyment are spent,
There's music and everything… they made us swear,

Not to divulge more – you just be there…
So this is our greeting to all of you here
Happy holidays to you – and better luck next year.

The parody implied that not only has the PA system acquired the personality of a radio station. It also pointed to an expansion of its programming, which by then included what today we call sportscasting, or the live annotation on the air of athletic competitions, as well as literary readings, which were common in pre-war radio programming.

By this time, KGST had become the principal organizer of the day-to-day existence of the internees. Each morning, it signed on with reveille music to rouse everyone from sleep. The broadcast then began with a time check called STIC Standard Time that was repeated throughout the day, followed by a report from the STIC weather bureau. It is doubtful that there was a functioning weather forecast and monitoring observatory inside the camp as the weather report was chiefly a report on the previous day's weather. Regular announcements included the evening's supper menu, duties of internees, lectures, concerts, productions of "Little Theater Under the Stars", movie screenings, athletic events, dances, worship services, lost-and-found, exhibits of crafts and hobbies groups, library notices, school activities, and announcements about important events such as Halloween and Christmas. Health continued to be a major concern among the internees, indicated by the regular announcements of inoculations, first aid lessons, availability (or not) of medicine, hospital notices, and contests involving the extermination of the most number of vermin. There were also notices on sales of items in short supply or are rationed, such as food items like eggs and coconut (from which coconut milk was extracted, replacing cow's milk), soap, and textiles. Schedules of deliveries of notes and parcels to and from the internment camps in Baguio, Los Baños and Davao were part of the regular announcements. Even the Japanese commandant went on the air to give various instructions as well as to announce the punishment of those who violated camp rules.

"Little Theater Under The Stars" on KGST

Before the 1942 Christmas Eve program ended and the air turned over to the regular music program, the announcer bade the audience goodbye, once again in verse:

To you who have lived a year in restraint;
So steady, so brave, so full of complaint;

A spirit lofty, a body free,
Is our wish for you in '43.
(KGST Christmas Eve program, 1942 [Cecil Papers, 1942-1945])

On the first anniversary of the camp on January 4, 1943, a longer-than-usual and elaborate program of music, poetry, commentary and other readings went on the air. The show, produced by Dave Harvey, lasted 35 minutes. Designed in the same format as the "Little Theater Under the Stars", it was described as an anniversary production presented to the internees over KGST. In spite of the paper shortage, an anniversary program was mimeographed – with the detailed script in the inside pages, a cover bearing the title of the production, "Our Time –1942", and the list of the production staff on the back cover, on which a reference to the PA system says, "affectionately known as KGST". It is not known how many copies were printed, but the autograph page, the space for which listeners could ask for the autograph of the stars of the show, indicated that it must have been for general distribution. Apart from a review of the year 1942, the program numbers included a graduation speech, which suggested that a number of internee children must have graduated from the in-camp school and a graduation ceremony may have been held earlier. Beliel's parody of *T'was the Night Before Christmas* was reprised in spite of the date, in addition to another humorous but ironic poem, written and recited by Dave Harvey, which revealed the deteriorating conditions inside the camp, titled *Cheer Up, Everything's Gonna Be Lousy*:

Our lot is getting better and the country's getting wetter,
So I'm no longer sad and pessimistic.
Conditions are chaotic, but I'm very patriotic,
And I want to show that I am optimistic.
I wouldn't say a word to make you blue (Oh, no)
I've come to bring a word of joy to you.
Cheer up, everything's gonna be lousy!
You'll still be eating cracked wheat every day;

You may have built a shanty, but it won't be there for long,
'Cause the sides are going higher, so they say;
You'll eat your mush without any milk in the morning…
But the prune juice works in the same old-fashioned way.
You may have been the president of Manila's leading store,
But you've still gotta haul the garbage from the third and highest floor;
You may grumble now at beans and peas,
But wait till you start on the bark off the trees,
Cheer up, everything's gonna be lousy!

I've plenty to be thankful for, although it's hard to bear,
Things could be a darned sight worse, although I don't know where;
Now don't think I'm complaining, 'cause it's really not the case;
And if I look disgusted, why, it's just my natural face.
I haven't a pot to cook in, but at least I have a bed…
It may belong to the Red Cross, but it's a place to lay my head;
So smile and show your dimples – they're worth their weight in gold;
You may as well, my friend, before you know it, you'll be old.

Cheer up everything's gonna be lousy!
The rules are getting longer every day…
You can't do this, you can't do that…
You can't even romance in your shack –
I know because I tried it yesterday.
You think the Flit is decreasing mosquitoes in numbers,
But they're going in mass production any day;

The lines are getting longer, just like the ones in your face…
But wait till you're five years older
And you're still in the same old place.
The rumors may be all that you need,
But you'll soon begin to believe what you read,
Cheer up, everything's gonna be lousy.
(STIC anniversary program, 1943, [Cecil Papers 1942-1945])

Semiotic dance

The poem reflects the increasing hardships of the internees. Food and other resources were becoming alarmingly scarce and the internees' behavior was increasingly circumscribed by the Japanese. Right from the beginning, men were kept apart from women and children and the internees lived in cramped dormitory-like conditions. Families were separated and the prudish Japanese forbade public displays of affection. Couples met surreptitiously and when a woman became pregnant, the responsible husband or boyfriend was jailed and the woman confined in a hospital outside the camp (Hartendorp, 1964, p.126).

When the tide of war began to change in favor of the Allied Forces in 1944, the Japanese increased restrictions on the internees. Now more vigilant and suspicious, the commandant at one point sealed the broadcast room, stopped the regular programming of KGST and took an inventory of all the equipment

and supplies in it (Stevens, 1946, p.435). His suspicions were not unfounded. There were secret shortwave radio receivers in the camp hidden by some internees who regularly listened to KGEI in California, the BBC in London, and other overseas shortwave stations. These men were the source of so-called "rumors" about the war hinted at by Harvey's poem and circulating in the camp (Hartendorp, 1967, II, pp.522-523). The Japanese did not find the secret radios but took the electrical parts that they suspected may be used to communicate with the world outside the camp (Stevens, 1946, p.449). They then ordered the transfer of the PA system equipment from the Main building to the Education building, where the office of the Japanese commandant was located (Stevens, 1946, p.461). The broadcasts were allowed to resume under close surveillance (Stevens, 1946, p.435; Hartendorp, 1967, II p.420). The commandant also took to the air, sometimes every night, scolding and preaching to the internees (Hartendorp, 1967, II, p. 263).

In spite of the constraint on communication among the internees, rumors of the war reversals wildly circulated, sometimes with astonishing accuracy. The survivors remember the introductions Beliel gave the song numbers. In August 1943, Beliel became KGST's "official announcer of notices" (Frank Stagner, personal e-mail, September 25, 2006). By many accounts, he and the others who broadcast on the station made allusions when introducing the songs that were aired. It did not take long for the internees to surmise that the music records KGST's announcers played had some relationship to the events of the day (Holter, 1945, p.5). They must have been privy to the news secretly listened to by a small number of internees in the camp – news which in turn they transmitted to KGST's audience by imputing new meaning to song lyrics. How they and the internees came to tacitly agree on the meanings of the allusions and metaphors that the songs implied, it is not clear. Perhaps, the direness of the situation and the hope for optimistic news encouraged the internees to read between the lines. Internee Curtis Brooks noted that the music served as confirmation of what they already knew based on the hundreds of rumors that floated each day and on which they hung their hopes (C. Brooks, personal interview, February 27, 2009).

Broadcaster and listener engaged in a semiotic dance, both ascribing unspoken connotations to musical numbers, which departed from the usual denotations of the lyrics of the songs. The hidden but widely acknowledged connotations, which were missed by the Japanese, gave the internees clues to what were happening outside the camp, especially news about the return of American forces to the Philippines. For example, news of the first American air raid in late September 1944, implying that the war would soon be over, was

relayed by the song "Soon" (Margaret Hoffman Tileston quoted by Lou Gopal, personal e-mail, September 7, 2006). When the tune "There Will Always Be an England" came on the air, internees guessed that Great Britain had just weathered another Nazi blitz (Norman, 1999, p.150). Then, from September 1944 through February 1945, the following songs became especially meaningful: "Pennies From Heaven" meant bombs were dropped by the Americans; "You're Here, You're There, You're Everywhere" signified that American planes were flying over Manila; while "Onward Christian Soldiers", played in December 1944, made Christmas of that year especially hopeful (Hoffman Tileston quoted by Gopal, personal e-mail, September 7, 2006). A lull in the bombing prompted "Lover, Come Back to Me" and "I Cover the Waterfront, I'm Watching the Sea for the One I love is Coming Back to Me" (Holter, 1945, p.5).

Other songs relayed other types of messages. Internee Don Wendell Holter wrote that the Imperial Japanese Army decided in early 1944 that STIC should take on a more military mien. Hence, KGST signed on at 6:30 every morning and roused the internees with a recording of the military reveille bugle call in time for the morning roll call. On the day this took effect, KGST aired "You're in the Army Now" (Holter, 1945, p.5). When the internees' money was confiscated by the Japanese to be deposited in the Bank of Taiwan, "for the protection of the internees", the news was communicated through the song "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby" (Holter, 1945, p.5; Hoffman Tileston quoted by Gopal, personal e-mail, September 7, 2006). Even announcements that could have been made in unambiguous terms were given in song, such that when cooking in the shanties was forbidden, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" was played (Wholey, n.d., p.122). Even the weather was forecast through song, although impending rain may have also meant the imminent dropping of bombs in "It Looks Like Rain In Cherry Blossom Lane". Referring to the Japanese, the internees felt intense pleasure in the song "I'll Be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal You" (Hoffman Tileston quoted by Gopal, personal e-mail, September 7, 2006). The welcome but false rumor that Adolph Hitler had been assassinated was conveyed in "The Old Witch is Dead" (Holter, 1945, p.5).

MacArthur's landing on Leyte in October 1944 was big news. Beliel gave the hint not through song but through the phrase "better Leyte than never". Beliel was making routine announcements, but this time concluded with a reminder for some inoculations (Curtis Brooks, personal e-mail, September 4, 2006). Other internees have a slightly different recollection of the broadcast. One internee remembers that Beliel instructed the listeners to provide a certain piece of information to the administrative office, and then ended with the

admonition, "better Leyte than never." Within hours the word had spread around camp that the Americans had landed on Leyte (Lorenzen, n.d., Chap. 17, personal e-mail, September 11, 2006). At least one internee inferred the landing on Leyte from the song "Shadows In The Sand" (Hoffman Tileston quoted by Gopal, personal e-mail, September 7, 2006). When John Phillip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" was broadcast at high volume, P.O.W.s (prisoners of war) at the nearby Bilibid stomped their feet and sang loudly with the march, angering the Japanese personnel in a nearby installation and causing the Japanese commandant to temporarily suspend the broadcast (Frank Stagner, personal e-mail, September 25, 2006).

The final broadcasts

In early 1945, the internees sensed that rescue was just round the corner. On the 3rd of February, at around 5:30 p.m., U.S. marine bombers flew low and directly over the Santo Tomas Internment Camp. The internees cheered and waved at the bombers. The Japanese commander of the camp guards, Lt. Abiko, who enforced the discipline that ruled the lives of the internees, addressed the internees through one of the camp interpreters, Frank Carey, on KGST, reminding the internees that such demonstrations were strictly forbidden and that the camp was still under Japanese control. The use of the word "still" startled internee Curtis Brooks. "Up until that time," he wrote, "February 3rd (1945) had been a more or less routine day with little hint that American forces were any closer than fifty miles of Manila" (C. Brooks, personal e-mail, September 4, 2006). Brooks said that Carey's translation of Abiko's announcement was possibly the last broadcast on KGST while under the Japanese. Shortly after dark, the camp and the rest of the city were plunged in darkness as the Japanese fiercely resisted the Americans, who then took Manila back. Within a few hours, most of the camp would be free, and Abiko would be dead (Curtis Brooks, personal e-mail, June 8, 2007). The internees stopped using the PA system to broadcast their regular programming. However, the sound system that for over two years they affectionately called KGST continued to be used for announcements for the internees, such as to ask for volunteers to help clean up the camp after the Japanese had been driven away (Curtis Brooks, personal e-mail, June 13, 2007). By then under the protection of the American military, the internees who stayed in the camp while the war was still raging outside enjoyed American magazines brought by the troops, watched film screenings, and listened to more records and American radio – presumably amplified over KGST (Esmerian, 1955, pp.17-19).

Coping with war

The story of KGST, the camp newspapers and the theater productions of STIC is a story of a group's way of coping with the difficult situation of incarceration under the conditions of war. The internees, who were civilians engaged in all kinds of non-military pursuits, were involuntarily thrown into each other's company, living in cramped quarters and putting up with the lack of the resources that they had come to take for granted. Their shared circumstances and shared mass media culture constrained them to forge a community. In spite of their material losses and deprivations, they remained relatively cheerful. Many of the survivors attribute their high morale, in part, to the daily broadcasts on KGST (Gardner, 1965, pp. 44-52). The songs, in particular, gave the internees hope that they would eventually be rescued, that they would survive.

This story may be regarded as nothing more than a historical footnote from the point of view of historians who are engaged in writing and re-writing the past. However, an insight from this story may explain the function of the media in such a situation, and that is to help build and maintain society over time and space and especially through the most difficult situation when that society is under threat of breaking down. KGST, in particular, performed this function especially well when the camp newspapers and magazine stopped publication. KGST was an indispensable tool to keep the internal camp government functioning, informing and disciplining people into maintaining their commitment to the internal society of the internees. Literary scholars tell us that the textual productions of contemporary cultures define such cultures. The representation of shared beliefs through texts, such as media texts, is a powerful means of producing reality for a society, and for maintaining, repairing and transforming that reality for its survival (Baran & Davis, 1995, pp.284-285). KGST, along with the camp newspapers and the "Little Theater Under the Stars", which it later assimilated into its programming, performed this function for the small community of American civilians and a few other foreigners who found themselves caged in the Santo Tomas Internment Camp as they waited out the Second World War.

Endnotes

[1]The reader is invited to consult standard works on the Second World War experience in the Philippines such as those of Morton Netzorg (1977, 1985) and James J. Halsema (1990, 1994).

[2]I became interested in this topic while I was researching on the history of radio in the Philippines and stumbled upon these papers at the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. At the time I knew it had very little, if at all, of the kind of information that I needed for my research project, whose focus was the cultural practice of radio broadcasting by Filipinos during the American colonial period and the Japanese occupation. Cecil's papers, it appeared to me, tell us very little about the development of a Filipino broadcasting. Nonetheless, I decided to procure copies of selected items from the papers because a number of folders contained information that struck me as fascinating. In some of the papers in these folders are references to KGST, the call letters of what I describe in this paper as a makeshift radio station. By the time I saw the papers, I had already scoured archival and published materials about the call letters of radio stations that existed in the Philippines from 1922 to 1946. I found no reference to any KGST anywhere, so I thought Cecil's papers were worth a second look.

Subsequently, I consulted the American Historical Collection at the Ateneo de Manila University and the archival collection of the University of the Philippines.

[3]Coincidentally, a few years ago, I connected with a few survivors of the camp via e-mail. These survivors were children at the time but have kept enough memories and, in some cases, written materials from the period that they generously shared with me. Their recollections confirm some of the information in Cecil's records. I have since been communicating with them via e-mail. They are Mr. Curtis Brooks, Mr. Angus Lorenzen, Mr. Frank Stagner, Ms. Sascha Jean Jansen and Ms. Heather Ellis, all living today in the United States. Mr. Brooks generously shared with the author his translation of the diary of Frenchman Paul Esmerian, one of the few Europeans jailed in STIC during the war. Mr. Lorenzen e-mailed me part of his personal memoir about the Philippines, which was intended only for his family. Ms. Jansen regularly organizes sentimental tours to Santo Tomas for the surviving internees. Ms. Ellis sent me copies of some of the papers of her parents, Don Wendell Holter and Isabelle Elliott Holter, who, along with her, were also STIC internees. I have also communicated with Mr. Lou Gopal, who produced a video documentary on the experiences of internees in Santo Tomas. Mr. Gopal has shared with me details from the diary of another living survivor, Ms. Margaret Hoffman Tileston. In addition, I am in contact with Clarence Alton Beliel Jr., the son of internee Clarence Alton Beliel, announcer and news commentator on pre-war KZRH.

[4]There were other civilian internment camps established by the Japanese in Baguio, Los Baños and Davao.

[5]Both Hartendorp (1964) and Stevens (1946) describe and comment on the internee organization extensively.

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Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges the support of the University of the Philippines Diliman Office of the Chancellor and Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Development in the production of this paper.

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