

Final letter from my brother in law -

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(Copy letter received Monday February 26th from
Sanford Ladic - Bilibid Prison, Manilla, P.I.)

February 7th, 1945

Mrs. Catherine Grogan,
1020 W. Garfield Blvd
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Catherine:

We are allowed to write only one letter, so please see that my brother hears that we are all O.K.

This morning received your letter, also my brother's, Abrams, one from Harrigan, also Sister Robertus. Certainly glad to hear from you folks.

Will now try to tell you what we have been up against - very hard for me to write a letter - nerves a little shot and it has been ages since I have written a letter, but will do my best.

December 28, 1944, we were given a few hours notice to get ready to leave Baguio for Manila and take only what baggage we can carry. The japs loaded us like sardines on the trucks with baggage and it took us over 22 hours to make the trip. It was a hard trip but everyone made it OK.

A day or two after our arrival, the firewords began. American bombers came over every day, and bombed all around us.

----- (Next six lines cut out by Censor) -----

January 9th, our boys made the landing at Lingayen, and we knew that it won't be long before we are free. Chow has been terrible, corn mush for breakfast and corn mush for supper - with a few greens, two meals a day.

February 3 - The Japs guarding us were taken by surprise. Our tanks came in at night on the 3rd. They stayed outside, and the Japs left us on the 4th of February. We are in Bilibid Prison, which is a dirty hole and near ammunition dumps.

Cele is down with dysentary - children and myself are in good health.

February 5 - At 7 p.m., we were told by U.S. Army to take beddings and overnight bag and get ready to leave. They took us to a shoe factory, several miles from here, because the Japs burned Manila and fire was near us and coming closer, and rumor is that Japs are going to attack us. We stayed over night in factory and during our absence, everything here was looted. All our bedding, mattresses, hospital supplies, everything carried away. For that reason all sick were taken to Santa Tomas, where there are 5,000 Americans interned, here at Bilibid, there are 1,300. Cele is at Santa Tomas - and we might go there tonight.

We are being well taken care of by the Army. They feed us well - and doing all they can for us. We lost everything, but we are HAPPY to get through with our skins. We have been in the Center of street fighting. A trench mortar exploded on wall - less than 20 feet from Cele, and she did not get hit.

Do not worry about Cele - or any of us. We are in good hands. Cele will be up and around in a couple of days. Children are in best health and have seen a lot of fighting. In a day or two we can write all we want, so we have a lot to tell you. Fighting is still going on - shells exploding nearby.

Rumor has it - we are to fly today and to be put on boats for home.

Love to all

Sam

(C O P Y)

Dated February 16, 1945

Dear Marge and Bill:

The Ladic's thank God they are still alive. We had our closest call yesterday. Francis visited us yesterday afternoon and he knows how close a call we had.

As I have told everyone, the eighteen foot concrete wall that surrounds us is 1 1/2 feet thick and it saved our lives yesterday, together with twenty others who live in cell blocks. Most of the internees are living in a two-story concrete building and several of us live in cell blocks.

Yesterday morning, the three children and myself were nearly thrown out of bed at 6:15. It is hard to describe just what happened. There was a big flash and things began to fly. I thought a shell had hit the roof - we all hit the floor and stayed there for awhile. It was too dark to see what really happened, and we ran over to the main building in case of another shell hit.

This is what happened. A jap plane was looking for our battery and dropped a bomb which hit alongside the wall, less than two feet away from the wall and directly in front of our cell block. The force of the blast moved the wall a couple of inches and threw pieces of concrete into our cell.

Several days ago a tank corps with Captain Rogers in charge set up their kitchen just outside our corner. There is a 12" circular hole in the wall and I talked to him and several of his crew. Rogers asked me if there was anything we needed or wanted. I told him that I would like to have some hot cakes. So he gave us hot cakes and jam, and the children candy and gum. The hot cakes were the best yet - they were delicious. Now to get back to yesterday morning. We remained in the main building for awhile. Then I went to the hole in the wall and talked to one of the tank corps. I asked him if anyone was hurt and he said Captain Rogers and four of his men were killed, also several Philipinos. The captain and his men were sleeping alongside the wall when the bomb hit - cut the captain in half. When it was light we saw what happened to the wall. The army trucks and a couple of the natives homes were wrecked. I asked Francis to go out to the rear and see just where the bomb landed. According to the soldiers it was right against the wall. We are not permitted to go out.

The children and myself talked to the Captain (a young fellow) the day before. He asked us if we had any foxholes dug, and if not, it would be smart to have a foxhole handy. There are a couple of foxholes dug by the Japanese, but they are not much good. However, we intend to use them if we get a warning.

Cele returned home yesterday at eleven a.m., just in time for a real treat. We were given frozen fresh beef from Iowa and I fried them over a charcoal burner and they were marvelous. The other day we were given fresh eggs from California. We are being well taken care of, and well fed.

Cele was glad to get home and we were more than glad to have her back with us. Cele has had her share of excitement. She was at (CENSURED) when the Japs shelled that place and the Japs shelled (censured) it last night while Cele was there.

Yesterday was a big day. We were given two canvass army cots and Cele brought one with her so last night we had a good sleep. Maryann, Cele and myself havean army cot, while Marie and Cele slept on wooden beds. To soften the hard bed, Marie and Cele had a blanket under them which Cele brought back with her.(from hospital).

Francis spent about three hours with us yesterday afternoon. We were glad to see him. Army life agrees with him. He is in good health and looks fine. The children are fine. Cele with good food will be back on her feet in a short time. I am getting fat on the good food. Boy the food tastes good. We are not overeating like a great number of people here.

Will write again. Love from all the Ladic's to all. Cele will write one of these days when she feels better. God keep you and yours.

Sam